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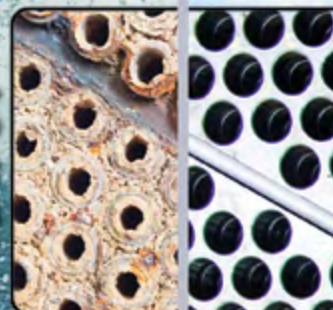


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SAIL ON JB

We all lost a friend on September first. All of us who enjoy the Florida lifestyle including boating and fishing in the sunshine have probably enjoyed spending a little time listening to the music of Jimmy Buffett. For almost as long as I can remember, his songs have provided the soundtrack for my life. His music is probably responsible for my wife and I making the move to Florida to start a new life while in our 40's. His classic lyrics were the siren's song that gave us the courage to turn our backs on our past and start all over. Lines like *"Mother mother Ocean, I have heard you call, wanted to sail upon your waters since I was three feet tall, you've seen it all, you've seen it all"* and *"there's this one particular harbour, so far but yet so near, where I see the days as they fade away and finally disappear"* and *"Now the sun goes sliding across the water, sail boats they go searching for the breeze, salt air it ain't thin it can stick right to your skin, and make you feel fine"* and so many others made us certain that there was a better place where we needed to be.

In the last few weeks, I have read hundreds of beautiful tributes written by people who loved Jimmy. Some of these tributes came from big celebrities, some from his friends and some from regular people who just loved his music. After reading many of these tributes, especially the ones from those who knew him well, I have to say that Jimmy was the real deal in every way. He didn't just promote the beach lifestyle to sell records, he lived and loved the lifestyle to the fullest! He spent his down time surfing, flying to beautiful places, sailing, fishing and so much more. Without exception everything I've ever seen written about him is positive, he was a genuine good guy who loved his family and his dogs, and he supported and even founded many charities like the Save the Manatee Club. He truly was a kindred spirit to all of us who love this lifestyle. While I never got the pleasure of meeting the man, I want to thank him for being a positive influence in my life. It isn't just his music or the love we shared for the water; I can tell that he also had an incredible sense of humor. He was always smiling, and he used his songwriting talent to pen some of the funniest lines ever written.

As a lighthearted tribute to the man, I would like to offer up my top ten favorite truly funny lines from Jimmy's songs:

- 1. *"Evolution can be mean, there is no dumb ass vaccine"*
- 2. *"I'm growing older but not up, my metabolic rate is pleasantly stuck, let those winds of time blow over my head, I'd rather die while I'm livin' than live while I'm dead."*
- 3. *"Ain't it funny how we all turned out, I guess we are the people our parents warned us about."*
- 4. *"Is it ignorance or apathy? I forget these lessons taught to me, some say life isn't fair Hell, I don't know, I don't care."*
- 5. *"Maybe it's all too simple for our brains to figure it out. What if the hokey-pokey is all it really is about?"*
- 6. *"Everybody's on the phone, so connected and all alone from the pizza boy to the socialite, we all salute the satellite."*
- 7. *"I'm only half drunk, this night is half gone, and I'll be long gone before too long."*
- 8. *"So, I got motivated gonna prove 'em all wrong, I made a real big deal out of a little beach song."*
- 9. *"Back in the fifties, they thought it made good sense
To teach all the school children about civil defense
Don't be scared, do not cry (Please don't cry)
Just dive under your desk and kiss your ass goodbye"*
- 10. *"I've seen too much not to stay in touch with a world full of love and luck
I've got a big suspicion 'bout ammunition, I never forget to duck"*

Here's hoping that Jimmy has found his *One Particular Harbor*.

Merle & Flip the Bird



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ON THE COVER: Onshore-Offshore Magazine staff writers, Captain George Hastick & Captain Sergio Atanes, with a pair of beautiful Tampa Bay Redfish. Now is the time to get out there and find your own "Pumpkin Patch" of reds! Learn how by turning to page 10 of this issue.

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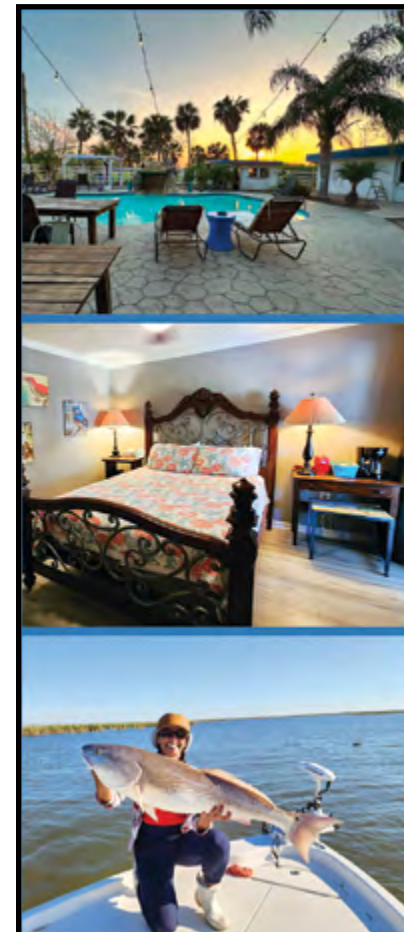


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FROM FOSTER CARE TO FISHING

How Fishing Changed One Man's Life

by Misty Wells

This is a story I have been waiting to share with my readers for several years and I finally found time to sit down and put it together.

In 2013, when I was still somewhat new to tournament fishing, I was getting ready to fish the "King of the Beach" Kingfish Tournament, so I headed down to the captains meeting. As many of you may know, the "King of the Beach" is one of the largest tournaments in the state of Florida and possibly one of the largest Kingfish tournaments still happening today.



The night of the captains meeting, I was introduced to a local captain by a friend and his name was Captain Tommy Laronge. Captain Tommy seemed nice enough, but I had no interest in really getting to know him as he seemed like all the rest of the captains that were hanging around these tournaments telling "fish stories" all night long.

Tommy had gotten my number from a friend and over the next few weeks Tommy called me several times to "go out", but I was too busy, so I never called him back. He was pretty persistent and finally against my better judgement I returned his call and agreed to meet him for lunch. Seemed

harmless enough. Over lunch, Captain Tommy & I chatted and I was enjoying getting to know him over some Grouper sandwiches and cold beer on Indian Rocks Beach.

As the day went on, one hour turned into two and we were really getting to know each other; sharing stories and as a normal progression, I asked him about his childhood and where he grew up. Tommy paused and was quiet for a moment, then he started to share with me how when he was six-years old when his parents, as he put it, "gave him away". Being a single mother of two amazing kids, I was dumbfounded on how that could possibly happen and why someone would do that. Tommy shared with me the day that he got dropped off at child-care services and then told me that was the last time he ever saw or heard from his mother again. Honestly, I did not know what to say; I just could not imagine ever doing something like that. Tommy said he remembered his father coming to visit him once and that he took him for ice cream and after that, he never saw him again either. Of course, I told Tommy how sorry I was and that he did not have to share any more of his story, but he really seemed to want to keep going, so I let him.

Tommy shared how he grew up in the foster care system back in the 70s and 80s and how horrific the experience was. Tommy was in no less than 16 group foster homes before he finally decided at age 17 to run away and try to live on his own. It did not seem from his experience that there was any thought of his wellbeing, and they would put him with anyone who wanted that monthly check. I will be honest, at that time I did not know

much about the foster care system and the fact is, "it is not something that is front of mind for many people."

I had no idea how many kids, right now, are in foster care and how many kids will age-out of foster (meaning they never get adopted and then turn 18). Tommy shared with me the physical abuse he suffered at the hands of his father before he was given away, and the abuse he suffered while in foster care. Tommy was very hurt



and very angry by the time he turned about 12, he was very unruly, but who would really blame him?

So, what does all this have to do with fishing, I am sure you are beginning to wonder? Well, Tommy got transferred to another foster home in Alafaya, Florida and unbeknownst to him this is a place that would change his life. There was a counselor on campus that took an interest in Tommy and really wanted to try and reach him and help manage his anger. One day he decided to invite Tommy fishing on a local lake and told him they were going to catch some Bass. Reluctantly Tommy decided to go, but he figured anything is better than chores or homework, so off he went. Once Tommy landed that first Bass, he was hooked and could not wait to catch another fish. All he cared about from that moment on was... when are we fishing again? Tommy didn't care too much about schoolwork like most boys that age, but he was ready to study fishing and learn how to be a better angler and learn to catch the biggest fish. Tommy became obsessed with fishing and, of course, wanted his own rod and tackle, so the counselor made a deal with him; stay out of trouble, quit fighting, and go to school and he would get him a new rod and reel. Little did that counselor know from that moment

on...that deal, would change the course of Tommy's life forever.

Now, because this is an article and not a book, I am going to skip over a lot of details and fast forward to Tommy as a young man. Tommy wanted to start working in the fishing industry anyway he could, so one of his first jobs was cutting fish with Timmy Nachman of Nachman Seafood in Redington Shores. If you have ever seen Captain Tommy filet fish you will understand that all those years of cutting for Timmy paid off. Tommy would cut fish in the evening, and during the day he started mating on Commercial Fishing boats earning his sea legs and getting offshore experience. Over a period of years things went fairly well in Tommy's life even though he was in and out of trouble. Finally, one thing led to another and his anger, hurt and self-destruction got the better of him and he got sentenced to 3 years in prison for a multitude of charges. Now for many, that seems to be the end of their story. Prison is something hard to come back from and even harder to turn your life around afterwards. **FACT: by age 17, over 50% of foster children will have an encounter with juvenile legal system through arrest, conviction, or detention and 90% of foster children that have moved**

to five or more placements are at risk of being involved with the criminal legal system.



Tommy served almost two and half years in prison, then got early release and vowed to never return again. Tommy decided to make some serious changes and it was time to truly focus all his attention on fishing and the happiness that it brought him. In

some ways fishing helped him curb his anger and resentment and allowed him to focus on something much more positive. Not only did Tommy keep fishing, he studied and got his Captain License and started running boats on his own. After years on a Commercial Fishing boat Tommy made the transition to Charter Captain. Tommy became very successful because he knew how to find fish and how to fill the box for his charter clients after all his years of commercial fishing. His reputation began to grow over the years and Tommy accelerated in fishing on the West Coast of Florida. Of course, always in search of the next step up in fishing Captain Tommy made the leap up to running multi-million-dollar Sportfishing Yachts, upgraded his license to a 499 Ton and on top of that added lots of additional credentials to his license. It was then he then started to hone his skills in the Bill fishing arena and began

a life of travel all over the Caribbean and beyond. Tommy fished and won lots of Billfish Tournament to include the Key West Marlin Tournament, tournaments in the British Virgin Islands and many here in the states, as well.

When you think back on all the challenges that Tommy faced growing up in Foster Care, always moving from one group home to another, being abandonment, all the anger and hurt, one can understand how these foster kids don't make it. We all have experienced how hard life can be, I would imagine lots of people reading this story can identify with some or all of what Tommy went through. The thing that I found the most encouraging is the one person in his life made the difference and took the time to not only show him how to fish but shared compassion for him. This counselor used the tool of fishing to teach Tommy that he could have something positive in his life and could accomplish something, even as simple as catching a fish. In 2014, a year after I met Tommy and heard his story, we decided that we were going to start a non-profit and call it "A Reel Future". "A Reel Future" is designed to work with children and young adults in Foster Care and take them fishing, giving them the experience of being on a boat, learn about fishing and conservation. Fishing may seem like a simple thing to you, but when you think of all the hundreds of thousands of children in foster care ask yourself "who is going to take them fishing"? Who is going to teach them a passion for the outdoors and conservation of our resources, if not us then who? To date we have taken over 3,800 children in Foster Care fishing, I am hoping we can finish out the year and round it out to 4,000 Foster children. I don't know if any of these kids are going to become a Captain or make a living from fishing like Tommy did, but I do know they will always remember catching their first fish and spending some time on the water. I always say, "at the very least we are working to replace some bad memories with good ones". There are a lot of ways to get involved in making a difference in someone's life, Tommy is forever grateful that one person took the time to make a difference in his life. It just goes to show you, "Fishing is not just a hobby or something to do on the weekends, it can change someone's life".

To learn more about "A Reel Future", our mission, get involved, donate equipment or cash to help us keep kids on the water, please visit www.areelfuture.com. Captain Tommy is back in the saddle and running fishing charters out of Clearwater, so if you want to book a memorable trip on his new 34' Sea Vee, go to www.ucatchfishg.com. Thank you for reading this and I would love to hear your story of how fishing made a difference in your life! 🎣

Misty Wells, Producer & Host of "Let's Take It Outside" TV show airing to 374 million on Discovery Channel, Bally Sun Sports, Waypoint TV, World Fishing Network, Hunt Channel, MOTV, TCT, Discover Florida Network & Carbon TV.

RED OCTOBER IS HERE!

by Captain George Hastick

It's here; the spawning season for Redfish. Late August through November, Redfish will school up in the Tampa Bay area to spawn but October is probably my favorite month of the spawning season. The flats will usually have different schools of reds gathered up in different areas in the bays from Tarpon Springs to Charlotte Harbor and slightly further.

When targeting Redfish in October you will have many days leading up to the new and full moons where the tide height reaches over the two-foot mark. These tides will allow the Redfish to get up onto the lush grass flats with sand holes, into the mangrove shorelines, and get onto the numerous oyster mounds that dot the abundant Tampa Bay area flats to feed. And, small islands are also Redfish attracters. These are all things I consider Redfish magnets and if you can combine one or more of these items together, it will up your chances for Redfish success.

One of the other things that can greatly affect Redfish and all fish for that matter is your minor and major solunars. A moving tide is also another key

factor for catching Redfish, but Redfish are a little more forgiving than let's say Snook when high tide is in and the tide goes slack. At this point chumming; whether it's live, cut or both, it can keep your bite going. There are things like a rising or setting sun at the same time the tide is moving, while a major solunar is happening that can be a magical fishing event. I have caught plenty of Redfish on an outgoing tide, but I prefer an incoming tide to catch those fish when they first are able to get to their feeding zones and they are hungry! If you run into a hungry school of Redfish, every bait will get inhaled because of the competition factor; first fish to the bait, get to eat. When fishing is like this, literally every bait that goes into the school gets demolished within seconds of hitting the water.

Do your homework before you go or before the tide comes in. What I mean by this is look at what time the tides are happening, look at when the major solunars will happen (days and times, so you can go on the best day you have available) and look at Google earth to find areas that have a combination that will attract Redfish if you don't know areas already. You can see deep holes,



oyster mounds and grass flats all from aerial views from Bing and Google maps.

Once you have a location picked out make sure to get there early enough not to miss out on that incoming tide with that major solunar that is happening. You do not want to be traveling during this peak fishing time. Now just to set things straight, if you have to choose between a moving tide or when a solunar is happening, always choose moving water. The combination of the two is great, but if you are sitting in slack tide during a solunar, it doesn't help you. Moving water will always produce a better bite.

Now that you are at your spot, let's say about 2 hours before high tide, get yourself within casting distance of the mangrove shoreline, the island, the oyster mound or all of these if you have found that

sweet spot that has them all. At this time the tide is starting to come in and hopefully the reds are making their way to you. They will be complacent since you are there and not chasing them or making a lot of noise; they will be more apt to feed. If you chase a school of reds, they usually will get lockjaw and then you will have to wait and let them get comfortable again before they will eat. Since you are already anchored down and setup, the fish will feel virtually no pressure.



At this time, I would start chumming some cut bait like Pinfish, Ladyfish, Mullet, Threadfin or Scaled Sardines. Try to throw out chunks about 2 to 2.5 inches thick in an area near the oyster mound or shoreline where you think the reds will come. Keep chumming in the same area to build up the scent in that area and then put some lines out in that area with larger chunks than what you threw out for chum, this will last longer on your hook from the baitfish eating on it and will also look more attractive and have more scent for the Redfish to key in on. Put a few poles in the rod holders with the cut baits and leave them alone, so that the scent can build up in one spot around your bait.

If you have live bait like scaled Sardines, start chumming some of those live baits out in the same area while the cut baits are doing their job in the rod holders. Now watch for the large telltale boil of the Redfish. If you see that, make a quick cast with a live bait to that spot. Usually if you make a good cast, you will get the hit.

Another spectacular thing that happens with Redfish during the spawn is large breeder reds will

move into the passes of the estuary bays in our area to a few miles offshore of the passes. Even some of the nearshore reefs will sometimes attract schools of big breeder Redfish in the neighborhood of 20 to 35 pounds. It is quite spectacular to see! The big reds will be in a feeding frenzy where their heads are coming out of the water chasing every bait in sight. At this point any bait, lure or cigarette butt on a hook is going to get hit. Just make sure you use heavy enough tackle to get them in, without exhausting them to the point of death. Remember these are the breeders so enjoy them but take care of them. Make sure you keep them in the water revive them, take a quick photo and revive them some more and when they feel strong, send them off back to the school. Good luck! 🍷

Captain George Hastick of "Fish Hunter Fishing Charters" in St. Pete has been fishing the waters of Tampa for over 35 years & guiding over 20 years. From novice to professional; Captain George will make you feel as if you have been fishing buddies for years. Contact him at 727-525-1005, www.FishTampa.com or email CaptGeorge@TampaBay.rr.com.



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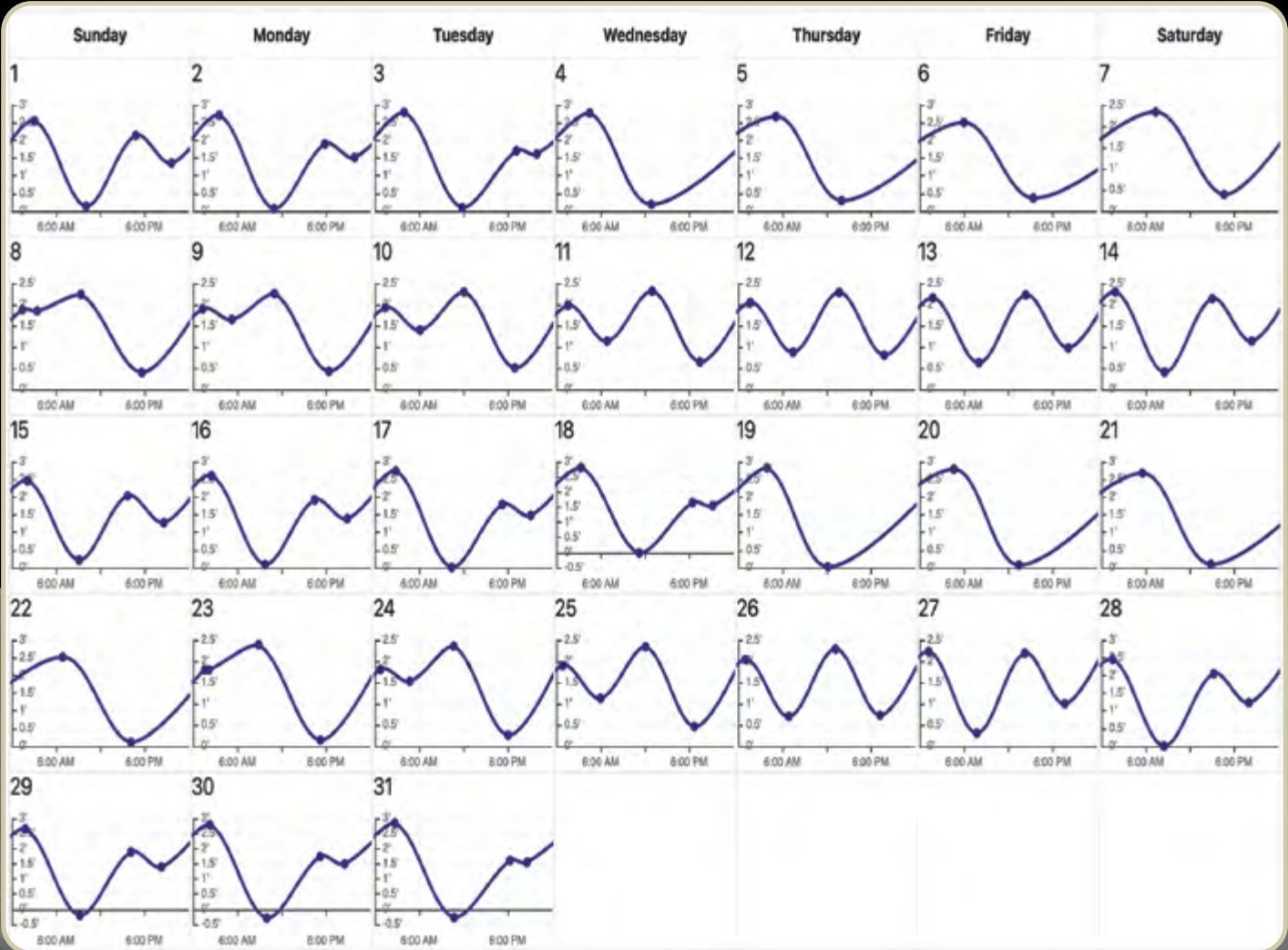
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Conversions for Clearwater Beach Area

High	Low	
-0:02	-0:10	Dunedin, St. Joseph Sound
-0:05	-0:15	Anclote Key, South End
+0:42	+0:42	Tarpon Springs, Anclote River
-0:07	-0:03	North Anclote Key
+0:41	+0:39	Old Port Tampa
+0:33	+0:53	Gulf Harbors
+0:42	+1:05	Hwy 19 Bridge, Pithlachascotee River
+0:50	+1:35	New Port Richey, Pithlachascotee River
+0:36	+0:43	Hudson, Hudson Creek

Conversions for St. Marks River Area

High	Low	
+0:23	+1:18	Everglades City
-1:17	-1:03	Cape Romano
-1:04	-1:08	Marco Island
-1:59	-2:04	Naples
-0:46	-0:09	Indian Bay
-0:59	-0:42	Bayport
-0:25	+0:23	Withlacoochee River

Conversions for Tampa Bay Area

High	Low	
+0:49	+0:58	Gandy Bridge
+1:38	+1:55	Courtney Campbell Cswy.
+1:38	+1:55	Safety Harbor
+0:20	+0:22	Ballast Point
+0:07	+0:26	Hillsborough Bay
+0:21	+0:29	McKay Bay Entrance
+0:41	+0:39	Old Port Tampa
-2:27	-2:24	Egmont Key
-2:53	-2:46	Anna Maria, Bradenton Bch
-2:10	-2:19	Anna Maria, City Pier
-1:24	-0:55	Bradenton, Manatee River
-0:30	+0:14	Redfish Pt., Manatee River
-2:22	-1:58	Mullet Key Channel, Skyway
+0:08	+0:17	Shell Point
-0:22	-0:29	Point Pinellas
-1:34	-1:30	Pass-a-Grille Beach
-1:32	-1:05	Gulfport
-1:18	-0:44	St. Pete Beach Causeway
-2:14	-2:04	John's Pass
-1:40	-1:18	Madeira Beach Causeway
-2:00	-1:25	Cortez, Sarasota Bay
-1:38	-0:58	Sarasota Bay
-2:02	-1:38	Venice Inlet
-0:57	-0:40	Englewood, Lemon Bay
-1:27	-0:59	Placida, Gasparilla Sound
+1:38	+1:56	El Jobean, Myakka River
+1:52	+2:30	Shell Point, Peace River
+1:06	+1:27	Punta Gorda, Charlotte Hbr.
-1:12	-1:56	Boca Grande, Charlotte Hbr.
-0:19	+0:26	Pineland, Pine Island
+0:43	+1:28	Matlacha Pass
-0:55	-1:14	Redfish Pass, Captiva Is.
-0:46	-0:20	Captiva, Pine Island Sound
-2:20	-2:28	Captiva, Gulf Side
-0:25	+0:16	Galt Isle, Pine Island Sound
-0:30	-0:44	St. James City, Pine Island
+2:08	+2:44	Fort Myers
+1:15	+2:02	Cape Coral Bridge
+1:08	+1:40	Iona Shores
+0:51	+0:42	Indian Rocks Beach, ICW

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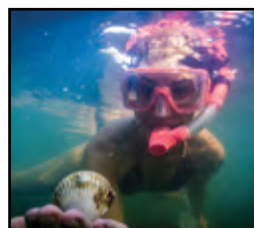
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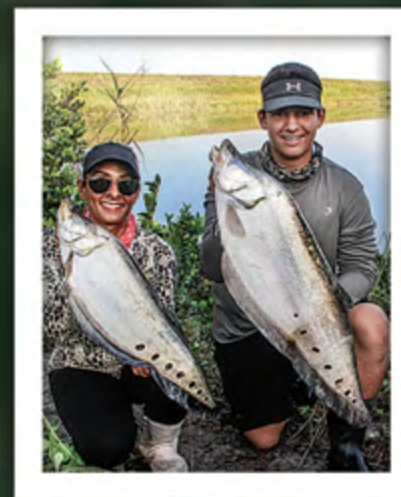
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**EVERY SUMMER
HAS IT'S OWN STORY...**



MINE IS AN EXOTIC ONE!

By Rosemary J. White: Mom, Angler and all around Wonder Woman!



Life is colorful, simple, exotic, extravagant and complicated. In order to fully enjoy what life has to offer, I have resolved to, first and foremost, collect adventures and experiences to reminisce about. It is the simple part of life that gives me the most joy. How do you collect adventures cost effectively in today's economy, moreover, how do you involve and incorporate kids into the mixture when outside influences such as video games and the internet are prevalent?

Freshwater exotic fish, such as Peacock Bass, Cichlids and Oscars provide one of the most spectacular color shows imaginable. I compare them to Parrots; water Parrots that is. Just as cool colors can have a calming effect on the body, bold and bright colors such as red, orange and yellow evoke feelings of happiness, optimism and energy! Who doesn't want their children to embody these wonderful emotional states of mind? Fishing has been an important tradition in my family that has provided life-shaping experiences for my children. There are very few memories that stick out in our minds as clearly as catching our first fish and who we were with when we caught it. Fishing provides the opportunity to spend quality time with the ones you love in a peaceful and picturesque setting, talking and reconnecting.

Fishing for freshwater exotics is one of the simplest ways to catch a child's first fish. For years my kids and I have been taking road trips to the East Coast. For us the 4-hour car ride provides unforgettable road trip experiences. Driving also provides the opportunity to fish smaller bodies of water most often passed up by "avid" anglers. We have caught some big fish by stopping at the side of the road and casting into what seem to be little ponds. Florida has 3 million acres of lakes and ponds and 12,000 miles of rivers and streams; you can always find a little spot to fish from land.



Fishing does require a recreational license in Florida. Children under the age of 16 are not required to purchase most recreational licenses. For us adults as Florida Residents, we need a freshwater fishing, or saltwater fishing license. There are several exemptions for those who cannot afford a license! You can find these exemptions on the My FWC website.

Freshwater exotic fish include some of the following: Jaguar Guapote, Midas Cichlid, Myan Cichlid, Bullseye Snakehead, Clown Knife Fish, Oscar, and Pacu. The by-catch possibilities are not too bad either, including but not limited to, Large Mouth Bass, Florida Gar, Pickerel, Snook, Tarpon, Bowfin etc. These fish can all be found in the same general areas of South Florida's diverse ecosystem. These exotics have been introduced into the canals of South Florida in one of the following ways: aquarium release and/or aquaculture escape, released by the Department of Medicine, University of Miami and released by FWC to control other nonnative fishes. New species are being caught and discovered regularly. Many of these fish can be caught quite easily from a land/bank-based location. This is great for those who do not own a boat. Kids love live bait and so do many of these fish. Shiners have produced some of South Florida's biggest freshwater exotics. A simple bucket and aerator is all you need to keep your bait lively. For more experienced anglers seeking a challenge, artificial and fly tackle are also a great option.

Lighter tackle provides an awesome "fight" for young anglers. Light tackle can include ultra-light rods/reels. Fishing with ultra-light tackle, as its name implies, entails using a very light action rod, light line (usually in the 2 to 10-pound range), and small lures. While some may fail to acknowledge smaller tackle, ultra-light gear and the tactics associated with the technique often times catch more fish. This type of tackle is perfect for any little pond or canal in Florida. If you

or your youngsters have progressed into using lures, I highly recommend an ultra-light. When it comes to those times throughout the year when fish are inactive or sluggish, most anglers will find more success catching fish by downsizing tackle. Kid size tackle! Since most exotic species do not get that large, lighter tackle is the way to go! Even if you get a "biggie", the fight on light tackle is thrilling to say the least.



Let's talk about one of the realities of South Florida exotic fishing. There is the summer heat, which is great for fishing for exotics in South Florida, but not so much for you. Many bugs, bugs, and oh bugs! Not to mention snakes, alligators, and even crocodiles! My kids and I always wear boots of some sort to bank fish. We wear performance apparel (does not have to be expensive name brands), hats, and sunglasses. Backpacks are a must filled with drinks, snacks and, of course, fishing tackle. Educating your kids on their surroundings ensures that they are vigilant when walking through brush, water and/or rough terrain to get to a "spot". A VERY important reality? Silence! Make it a game to see who can get to the fishing hole in the quietest manner possible. Fish can hear. They can feel the vibrations long before you have reached that honey hole. Parents it is up to you to watch for gators and crocs!

Here is another reality you may not know, Florida anglers spent almost 1 billion dollars on fishing in some way, shape, or form in 2011. This generated an economic impact of \$1.7 billion, which supported more than 14,040 jobs according to the FWC. So, you and your kids are positively contributing to our economy when you fish! It is no wonder Florida is considered "the fishing capital of the world". Who knew that when you took your kids fishing you were inadvertently teaching

them about conservation, economics and geography? Try getting that in such an impactful way in a concrete walled classroom!

Our most recent trips to South Florida have been unsurpassed! The boys and I caught our personal best Peacock Bass, Clown Knife Fish, Midas Cichlid, First Peacock on Fly and first Snakehead for Daryn. Both Daryn and I achieved South Florida slams as well! These include Largemouth Bass, Peacock Bass, Snakeheads and Clown Knife all in the same day. When the kids were younger, we exclusively used live bait, as it was the easiest way for them to catch fish. Now that they are both older and their skill set has evolved, they also use artificial lures and flies. They can also throw a cast net and catch their own live bait! Over the 16 years my kids have been fishing, they have learned to love and understand our fragile environment. Daryn has also developed his passion for photography and many of his pictures have landed me on magazine covers. They appreciate and fully understand the role that they play in conserving and enhancing our resources. Does it make them better people? I sure believe it does! Both of my sons are stewards of our environment, and they have taught others to do and be the same.



Fishing for Freshwater Exotics has also taught them the education behind where these non-native species of fish have come from. A round about Geography class if you will. Bright and beautiful, these fish capture the eyes. The education that stems from the catch lives with them for a lifetime.

"GET CRACKIN'" FOR STONE CRAB SEASON

by Misty Wells

Stone Crab season is finally here in Florida and the West Coast of Florida has hit the ground running with the season opener on October 15th.

There are a lot of newcomers to Florida this year and I have found many of them don't know much about Stone Crab season and how it works. One of the things that is most unique about Stone Crab and harvesting their claws is that it is a sustainable fishery; you are only 'popping claws', you are not killing the crabs.

So, there are two legal ways of Stone Crabbing; one is recreational and the other is commercial. If you have a valid Florida Fishing License, you can legally have five Stone Crab traps for the season, and a lot of folks don't know that.

It is easy to become a Stone Crabber. You can go to your local tackle shop and buy traps that are already made, or you can buy the kits and make them yourself. My local supply shop in Pinellas is FISH (Fishermen's Ideal Supply House)

located in right off Madeira Beach on Welch Causeway, in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Once you get your traps built, you will need to bait them up and get ready to drop them offshore. I have found having them in about 40 feet of water works quite well. Pigs feet are the "go-to" bait for me because it stays in the trap longer and the crabs seem to like it the best.

TIP: Make sure whatever bait you are using it is not sticking out of the trap. If so, the crabs will just grab that bait and pull it out and not enter the trap.

Now, here is the fun part. You need to mark where you dropped your traps and let them soak for about 7 to 10 day, depending on weather. If a cold front is coming, pull right before or after. If you are a recreational crabber, you most likely will be hand pulling your traps; it's

not really that hard as you are only pulling few and bonus; it's a nice work out.

You will now need to know how to measure your crabs claws.

Remember you are only taking the claws if they are the correct size; if they are small, the crabs go right back into the water. To measure, you need to carefully grab the crabs by their back legs then fold in the arms to their bodies, then take the measuring tool and make sure that

the knuckle to the tip of the claw measures 2-7/8 inches, which is an 1/8-inch increase than previous years. When catching stone crabs both claws can be removed if they both measure correctly, also keep in mind that recreation harvesters who are 16 and older are required to complete an online, no-cost recreational stone crab registration, then follow the instructions. Commercial fishermen are able to have hundreds or thousands of traps as long as they purchase the tags to go onto the traps and have all the proper licenses. ☑

Misty Wells, Producer & Host of "Let's Take It Outside" TV show airing to 374 million on Discovery Channel, Bally Sun Sports, Waypoint TV, World Fishing Network, Hunt Channel, MOTV, TCT, Discover Florida Network & Carbon TV. Bass Pro-Outdoor Pro & Outdoor & Travel Writer. Founder of "A Reel Future" non-profit devoted to teaching the passion of fishing & conservation to foster children, over 3,800 children & counting.





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CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN THE MANATEE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

Discover How Conservation Efforts in the Crystal River Area Impact Fish, Wildlife and More!
by Josh Johnson

As the Manatee Capital of the World, Crystal River takes great pride in being at the forefront of manatee and local ecosystem conservation. These continued efforts help ensure these gentle giants have adequate food sources and a safe refuge yearly from November to early April.

Healthy ecosystems in the Crystal River area greatly benefit us all. Here are two ways you can help take part.



Practice Responsible Boating

A recent study by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission shows that only 4% of observed adult manatees show no sign of watercraft-related scars. As you can tell by this staggering statistic, boats pose one of the single largest dangers to manatees' health and safety.



When posted regulations and signage are not followed, this can physically harm both manatees and their feeding grounds. For these reasons, it's essential to follow all posted signs and listed regulations and ensure responsible boating is practiced at all times.

Other responsible boating practices include wearing polarized sunglasses during boat operations and observing all manatee speed zones and caution areas.

So whether you're enjoying a sunny day on the water or hunting for your next catch before the sun rises, please remember to practice your manatee manners!

Catch and Release

Unsustainable fishing practices threaten local ecosystems and their resiliency in a few ways. Primarily this happens through overfishing and, in turn, habitat de-

struction. Habitat destruction not only impacts the quality of fishing but also directly impacts manatees and their ability to thrive here.

Groups in the Crystal River area, like Save Crystal River, have spent time and resources breathing new life into the local ecosystem by planting fresh eelgrass and combating harmful invasive species. And because of this, habitats in the area continue to grow and thrive! Now it's up to all of us to keep them that way.

Besides curbing potential habitat destruction, catch-and-release fishing also improves native fish populations. How? Because it ensures that more fish remain and reproduce in the ecosystem. This practice allows anglers to enjoy the bounty of fish in the Crystal River area while increasing their chances of successfully catching fish.

Practicing catch and release of native fish also ensures that the opportunity to enjoy this national pastime and recreational opportunity will be around for many years!

Conservation in the Crystal River Area

As you can see, there are many ways for you to engage in conservation efforts. If you're interested in discovering more about the continued progress being made by conservationists and eco-tourists alike, we have created a Conservation Hub filled with more information. Topics include how to be involved, from the comfort of your home to a deep dive into the invasive aquatic species that threaten the local ecosystem. There's a wealth of knowledge ready for you! ■

Learn more at DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com/Manatee-Conservation.



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Captain Sergio Atanes

Time for a change of pace. Look for good Grouper and Snapper action along the shipping channel in Tampa Bay from inside Skyway Bridge to the "F-Cut". Cut bait like Spanish Sardines, Threadfin or medium-size Pinfish all are excellent bait choices for Grouper.

Also try using what we call "Yellowtail jigs" with cut Greenback Sardines while putting out a chum block behind the boat or cutting up some dead baits while keeping a steady chum stream going. Mangrove Snapper will sometimes almost come to the surface on a feeding frenzy.

ABOUT THE CAPTAINS

Captain Sergio and Captain George Hastick fish the Florida waters, specializing in and around the West Coast of Florida and Tampa Bay. Their show, Fishing Adventures Florida, is about two captains sharing their knowledge and experience of the local waters. Encouraging others to share in their love of what the outdoors has to offer. Their goal is to educate, entertain and share the experience of fishing opportunities the state has to offer.



Captain George Hastick

October is a month of opportunity with the air & water temperatures cooling. This month the water temps are typically around 80 degrees. This makes the fish become more active and the bait stay really frisky in your livewell. There is variety of fish in Tampa Bay this month including Grouper, Redfish, Snook, Trout, Tarpon, Spanish Mackerel, Flounder, Mangrove Snapper and more, due to this being a transitional month, not cold or hot. Typically this is usually a great month to target Redfish, but with a shortened season, Gag Grouper or Snook might be taking the spotlight.

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TALES FROM "THE OLD GUY"

by Dave Mallory

Hello fellow readers. Last month for my initiation, I brought you back to 1947 in Burlington, Vermont, for my very first fishing trip with my Dad and his brother. This month, you will be in Tampa Bay during the month of August, 2023. Did you feel anything during the jump of seventy-six years?

A good friend, who we will call Willie, asked me if I could get Captain George to take us fishing along with a friend of his named Ron. Willie and I have hunted and fished over the years in Florida, Missouri and Anticosti Island in Canada, usually very successfully. I asked him what he wanted to catch and he said Ron had seen some of our pictures and wanted to get some big fish like we had in the photos. I

called our Captain, got some dates (he always checks the tides and other conditions if we are flexible on dates) We coordinated the date and agreed to meet.

The day arrived and we met at 7:30am. Three of us got there on time but George called and said he was having a hard time getting bait so he was going to be late. We wanted "whitebait" and pinfish and that is what was in the bait well when he arrived. We like to check the weather on the TV, the internet and our phones. We had three DIFFERENT reports and tried to guess which one might be the closest. They all said winds were going to be 5 to 10 knots. It was also supposed to be sunny all day. At the dock, the wind was closer to twelve knots.

We had a good tide, so we went to a spot where we often do well catching snook. We caught a few Mangrove Snapper and a couple Snook. We had a flock of egrets and herons which liked our bait but we were able to keep them away by changing sides and "chumming" (throwing bait to stir up the fish) away from them. We have hooked a few birds over the years, but have always managed to get the hook out and not hurt them.

Moving around to other spots, we picked up more

snook and a speckled trout. The trout is one of my favorites because it reminds me of the fresh water brown trout in Vermont. We saw some dolphin, but they weren't hungry so they didn't bother us. Many times they will hang around the boat and snap up the fish we catch and want to release. We sometimes put our catch in the bait well and release them when the dolphin seem to be away.

We went to a reef and caught a few trout and I caught a 39 inch Bonnethead Shark. That gave us quite a fight but we got him

in, took a photo and let him go. We think it was a boy because he was thin with no little ones inside. As we were fishing, we noticed some black clouds moving our way with thunder, so we made the decision to move closer to the dock. So much for the "sunny weather" all day. We skipped around two storms and got closer to port. We made up our mind to have this be our last stop. Two of us each caught a nice gag grouper which went back in the water because they were a little under the size limit, and on the last cast of the day, I caught a nice 38 inch Snook!

For the day, we ended up catching Mangrove Snapper, Trout, Snook, Grouper, Shark and Catfish. The three of us each caught about twelve fun fish. Our Captain got us some nice, big fish and we each had a few Snapper and Trout to eat. Good job, Captain! 🍷

Dave Mallory can be reached by email at: Dave_Mallory@msn.com



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IMPRESSIONIST RODS

by Mike Moroney

Like the famous impressionist painters, fishermen have the opportunity for their rods to speak to both current and future generations. Most custom-built rods carry a signature of sorts. I am not referring to the physical signature that a builder might place on a rod she/he builds. I am speaking metaphorically about the fact that every custom-built rod reflects the owner and the purpose for which the rod was designed, whether that be performance, artistic beauty, commemoration, or something else. Frankly, even if a rod is designed to be a simple, inexpensive, unfancy fishing rod, that is the reputation, or the inherent message, that the rod will carry for as long as it exists. Suffice it to say that whatever the objective is, the rod speaks to those who see it and use it. And, because the rod often becomes a family heirloom, it speaks to the following generation or future generations. How often have you known someone that wanted to restore a rod that was owned and

used by a loved one? The memories that accompany that rod speak to the person that wants it restored.

"Painters, being dead and buried, speak to a following generation or to several future generations through their works."

- Vincent van Gogh

A custom-built rod can carry a variety of messages. It could be simply the purpose for which a rod is built. But it could also be more than that. It could be an expression of beliefs or values, a depiction of a great adventure, a tribute to a loved one, or something else significant to the owner for whom it is built. I recently read about a rod that has weaved pictures of every member of a family on it. It is amazing work and reflects what is important to the owner of that rod. I also know a fisherman who compiled a collection of rods with weaves of various cartoon charac-

ters. It's an awesome display and it aligns with his desire to encourage kids to take up the sport of fishing. I am hopeful to someday build a rod that will express my faith, though it will be represented more symbolically by colors and various motifs. Frankly, this is one more reason to "build instead of buy." In addition to enhanced performance and unique personalization, a custom rod can carry a meaningful message and remind future generations of what was important to the rod's owner. If you have taken time to read or watch the various articles and videos that Bill Batson has produced about the *Batson Enterprises* rod collection, you have witnessed this first-hand. Bill is the CEO/Owner of Batson Enterprises. Each of the rods he describes speak to him in some special way. Each represents a person, an event, a memory, or something that is significant to him. Each area, or rack, where the rods are displayed, does the same in a more collective way. I recently had the privilege of speaking with Bill about one of the rods in the collection that is very special and meaningful to him. It hangs beneath a giant ulua in his office. Though it speaks loudly to Bill, we should all treasure its messages.

Imagine growing up on Maui, one of the Hawaiian Islands, living a very simple life and frequently needing to fish for food to feed your family. And imagine as a young man, coming home one evening to find your father on the floor with a make-shift hand-wrapping machine with thread running through a stack of encyclopedias for tension. When Bill told me this story, I asked him why his father decided to craft a rod. He told me it was to build a better fishing tool because they depended on

their rods for their livelihood. The giant ulua hanging in Bill's office is a testimonial to the specialized rods that his father built. Otherwise known as a giant trevally, the ulua is a very elusive fish found around the Hawaiian Islands. Prized for its size and power, it is large enough to provide a feast for a large family. The ulua hanging in Bill's office was caught by Bill's father, Bob Batson. Many fishermen go their whole lives without catching one of these trophies, so you can imagine the memories that fish represents for Bill and the rest of the Batson family.



Yet perhaps of even larger significance is that night on the floor began Bob's journey into custom rod building. Bob eventually formed *Phantom Custom Rods* where he became well-known for his custom rod building skills and knowledge, as well as his integrity and honesty. He built customized rods for a couple of charter services, was highlighted in the famous book, *Fishing Hawaii Style* by Jim Rizzuto, interviewed on television, and more. Suffice it to say that through hard work and high ethics he established a strong position for himself in the rod building industry. The rod that hangs beneath the ulua, built by Bill's father, speaks loudly about Bob's journey. It speaks about his ingenuity and intentionality, and his courage to undertake something new in hopes of a better life for his family.

Bob eventually closed *Phantom Custom Rods* and moved his family to the mainland, where the cost of living was lower than on Maui. In the year 2000, after leading another major rod component company for ten years, Bob Batson took a leap of faith and started a fishing rod blank and component company that would reflect his own mission and values. Bob and Connie Batson's first employees were their son Bill Batson and nephew Karry Batson. Bob set out on his mission draw-

ing on his experience, integrity, and network of worldwide manufacturing partners, and in a few short years transformed Batson Enterprises from a humble home-based business into the most trusted rod component supplier in America. Where the original mission of the Batson family was to make a living and feed their family, they are now part of an industry that feeds thousands, if not more. In some ways, their mission hasn't changed much!

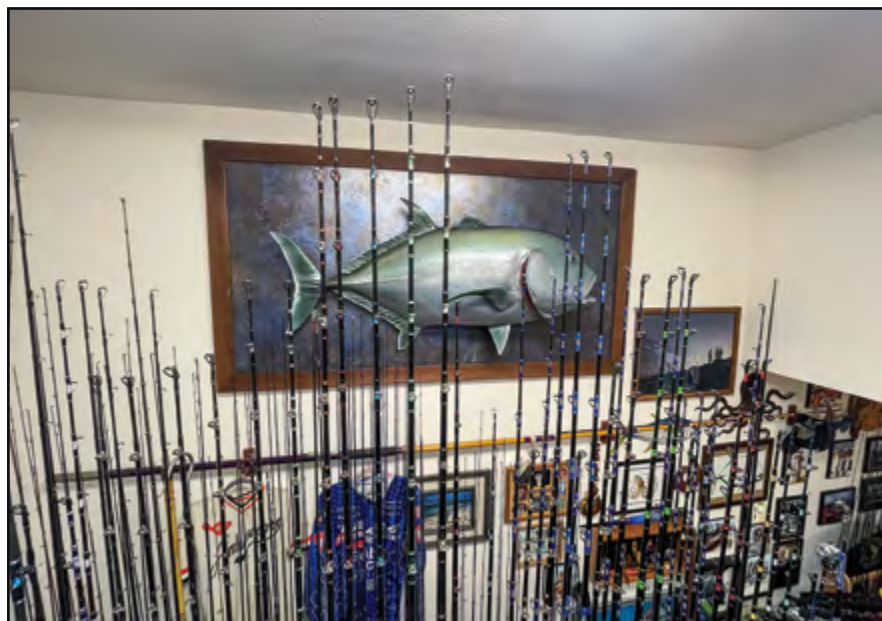
It should be evident why the rod in Bill's office speaks loudly to him and the Batson family. Now that you know the story, perhaps it speaks to you as well. It certainly does me. Although this rod speaks about a journey, as pointed out earlier in this article a rod might also carry a message that is embedded more deliberately. The family rod and the cartoon collection mentioned earlier are just a couple of examples of messages that were intentionally included.

As mentioned above, this is one more reason to "build instead of buy." In addition to enhanced performance and unique personalization, a custom rod can carry a meaningful message, become a treasured heirloom, and speak to future generations about something of importance to the rod's owner.

If you decide to have a custom rod built for yourself, perhaps you will want to not only be asked questions like, *what are your color choices, or would you be interested in some type of decorative flair?* Perhaps in addition, you would appreciate some larger questions such as, *what do you want the rod to say, and who do you want it to speak to?* That will undoubtedly be a most interesting and fun conversation! If you are a serious fisherman, you might be thinking to yourself, "I just want it to be the most productive and attractive rod I own." Of course! That is a given. But it can be more. The rod that you will be known for could be one that is both a superior performer and highly customized to your personal preferences with a theme that you don't want forgotten. It could be a treasured legacy for your family and future generations. And because the rod's primary purpose is to catch fish, it is a piece of art that doesn't just hang on a wall. Rather, it can be viewed and enjoyed whenever and wherever it is used.

And hopefully that is often! 🎣

Note: Some portions of this article contain excerpts from an article titled, "Rods That Speak," written by this Author and published in the Fall 2023 RodCrafters Journal. They have been used here with the Journal's and the Author's permission.



JIGGING FOR GROUPEL & SNAPPER

by Captain Sergio Atanes

Deep jigging or vertical jigging is a fishing method that has been practiced around the world but is just now getting acceptance from the salt-water anglers on the East coast. California, Mexico, and Cuba have been "yoyo jigging" for years and its been very productive.



The introduction of the Butterfly jigging system several years ago opened the door for other manufacturers producing new versions of jigging products. Many of the local companies have also added new jig head designs and soft baits to match the hatch.

JIGGING BASICS

Find a location with moderate current and look for rocky areas, ledges, or other structures. A good bottom sounder is important to read not only the bottom, but the fish. Position the boat directly over the structure or fish and drop a jig. The weight of the jig is determined by the current and depth of water, so I recommend having a good selection of jigs before starting your jigging trip.

TECHNIQUES FOR GROUPEL

This simple technique allows you to drop the jig to the bottom, always staying in touch. By this I mean you must always feel the jig, as this will help in hook setting and keeping the jig from twisting around your leader or line.

There are several methods of deep jigging. One is positioning the boat directly over the fish or drifting over the bottom across the rocks or wreck. Always drift parallel to the rocks or wreck. Once the fish are located, it's time to decide which jig will work best, metal jigs or jig head with soft plastic bait. Please note that your jig should be heavy enough to always reach the bottom.

When you drift beyond the ledge, rocks, or wreck area, crank up and start another up current drift. Drop down to the bottom, crank one to two turns on the reel, this should get you several feet of the bottom start jigging by lifting the rod tip up in a quick motion and dropping down again this creates the effect of a wounded bait. Once a fish is hooked, drop a marker over the side or hit your GPS button as this will give you a reference point for your next drift or to do a stationary drop. When drifting for your best position in the boat, a good point to remember is that when "the wind is in your face you are in the right place."

Anchoring is another choice if there is a strong current or strong wind, here you have a choice use an anchor or if you have one of the newer

trolling motor's us spot lock. Position the boat over the structure and start jigging, allowing the jig to hit bottom every time. Grouper will follow and attack a jig up to five or six feet from the bottom its best to keep the jig at least several feet from the bottom to avoid losing them to the rocks.

TECHNIQUES FOR SNAPPER

Mangrove snapper jigging is slightly different in that you are fishing right on the bottom rather than above the bottom. A good bottom machine will mark mangrove snapper as they are grouped together. Drop the jig and follow it down on your bottom machine until it reaches the area where the snapper is showing up and start your jigging at that point. It's a trial and error for the novice, but with a little hard work you can manage the technique. Jig heads with soft baits work best and a little Pro-Cure Saltwater Super Gel scent on the soft baits works wonders to help increase the bite.

GROUPEL TACKLE

With metal jigs in fast currents or deep water, I prefer OKUMA Azores 5000 spinning reel medium heavy action rod with 40-pound test FINS Windtamer braided line tied to 40-pound test clear mono leader at least 40-inches long. I find that a good grade of clear mono-filament line



works well and has a thinner diameter than fluorocarbon and a lot cheaper in cost. A tight drag is recommended since you are fishing over structures, and these fish will head for the nearest hole or structure when they strike. Under normal conditions I would use a conventional reel for Grouper fishing, but I find spinning tackle to be less straining and easier to maintain the proper motion & technique for longer periods of time.

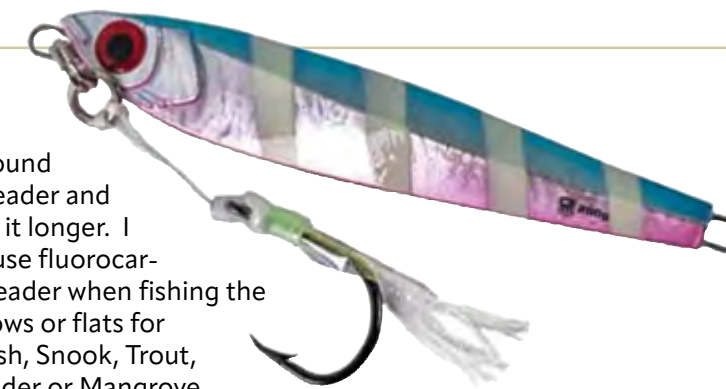
SNAPPER TACKLE

In shallow waters of 15 to 25 feet I prefer jigheads and soft baits on spinning tackle; medium action rod spooled with 15-pound test FINS Windtamer braided line and a 36-inch fluorocarbon leader of 30-pound test. If the water is clear I might even go down to a

20-pound test leader and make it longer. I only use fluorocarbon leader when fishing the shallows or flats for Redfish, Snook, Trout, Flounder or Mangrove Snapper. ☑

ANNOUNCEMENT: Capt. Sergio's Saltwater Fishing School will be held on October 20th & 21st on "When, Where and How to Catch fish in Tampa Bay". For more information, please email: atanes@msn.com. Thanks!

Captain Sergio Atanes is a native resident of Tampa and has been fishing the water of Tampa Bay and Boca Grande for over 40 years. He is the owner and operator of S & I charters which is one of the largest charter booking services in the West Coast of Florida with 100 professional captains on staff. Capt. Sergio Atanes can be reached at (813) 973-7132 or www.reelfishy.com.



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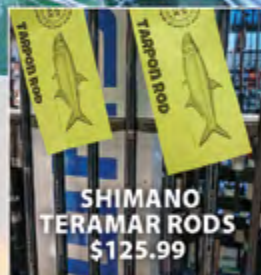


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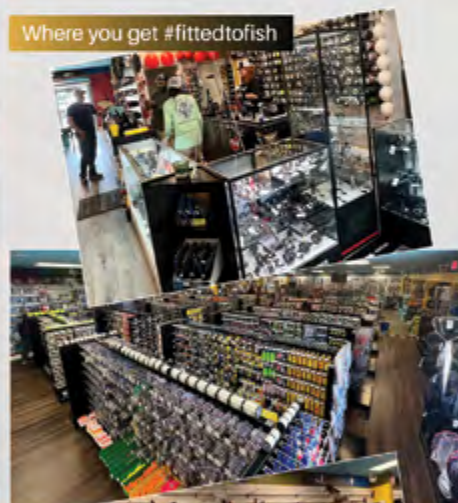
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