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Magazine

September 2023



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ALMOST PARADISE

Most of us who are lucky enough to live and work on the water in the Tampa Bay area start to take it for granted after a while. We get caught up in our busy day-to-day routine and don't take the time to appreciate what a paradise we live in. We complain about the snowbird and spring break traffic and we curse the hurricanes. We hate the heat and we bitch about the winter cold.

I have recently been reminded of how great our backyard really is by the out of town customers who have been using my rental boats and kayaks. Their perspective has really reopened my eyes to the beauty that we have in our own backyards. Without exception, these nice folks return from their outing on the water with great big beaming smiles and stories of all of the great stuff they discovered. Many of them are surprised to find that we have everything here that is available in places typically considered to be more exotic vacation destinations.

This was previously driven home to my wife and I while visiting in Key West. We were staying in a small rental unit near Duval Street with no pool or yard and we had not brought a boat with us on this excursion. We spent a couple of days partying on Duval and ate some good food but then we realized that back home in Tarpon Springs we had a great house and pool on the water, a couple boats to use plus our other toys. We had to ask ourselves, why were we staying in a musty little apartment with no amenities? Needless to say, we packed up and came home where we enjoyed the rest of our vacation right here. This is not to say that the Keys aren't a great place to visit, but so is Tampa Bay.

With gas prices somewhere north of insane and all of the other costs of travel going through the roof, why not plan a staycation this year. It just makes sense to stay close to home and save gas while taking advantage of all that is available nearby and helping local businesses. Maybe if we all did this and bought less gas, the prices would even go down to a level that is only ridiculous.

There is so much to do right here. If you want a really wild experience with animals try Giraffe Ranch or Safari Wilderness where you can take a real safari and see lots of exotic wildlife in a naturalistic setting. You can even feed lemurs grapes! If you want to get out on the water, you can come to Belle Harbour Marina and rent one of our great rental boats, try a charter with one of the many great captains who advertise or write in Onshore Offshore or just take a ride on one of the great tour boats running from the Sponge Docks in Tarpon Springs. If you need a change of scenery, try a few days at a hotel on one of our great beaches, I especially like the Opal Sands on Clearwater Beach.

If you like more unusual pastimes here are some fun ways to use some leisure time on your staycation:

- Take a photo safari in your local discount store. You may capture some images of unique wildlife that can even be immortalized on the Internet.
- Dress in stockings and a camisole (particularly if you're a 300 pound man) and go shopping at your local discount store so that others can photograph you, perhaps you'll get immortalized on the Internet.
- Wear an aluminum foil hat to shield your brain from the mind control rays.
- Buy birdseed at your local pet store. Ask the clerk how long it will take the birds to sprout after you plant the seed.
- Take a carton of Depends adult diapers into the changing room at your local department store and put one on over your pants. When you come out ask the attendant where the toilet paper is?

Now that I've gotten you started, I'm sure you can think of lots of other fun ways to pass your vacation time. Have fun and try to appreciate how lucky we are to be so close to so many great places.

Merle can be reached at Belle Harbour Marina, located at 307 Anclote Road in beautiful, historic, Tarpon Springs or by phone at 727-943-8489.

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ON THE COVER: Junior angler and OOM writer, Anthony Gomez, with a beautiful and very healthy Snook caught while pier fishing in Southeastern Florida. Nice fish, Anthony!

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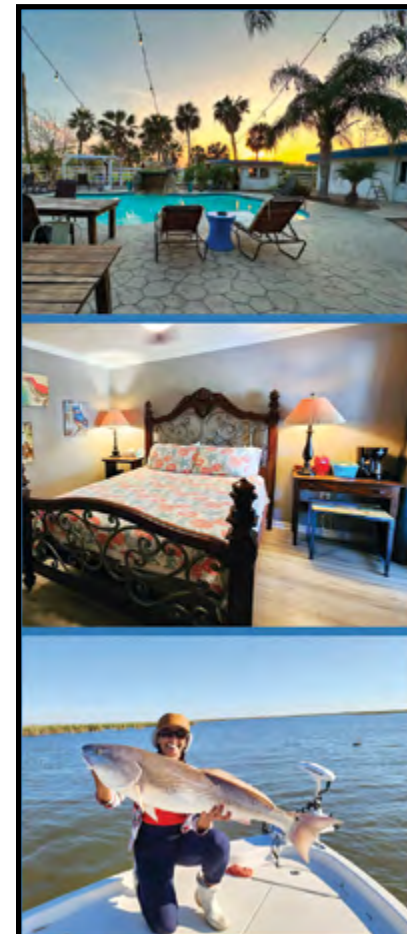


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GAG GROUPEL SEASON IS HERE!

by Misty Wells

This year has been a year of change and there have been big changes to the Grouper season on the West Coast. In the past June was always a "magic month" to fish on the West Coast because three of my favorite species used to all be open at the same time: Gag Grouper, Red Grouper and American Red Snapper.



As mentioned Grouper regulations have changed this year and now Gag Grouper is opening September 1st through the projected date of November 10th only. The minimum size of Gag Grouper for this limited season is 24 inches in total length with a bag limit of 2 per licensed angler per day.

GAG FACTS

Half of the females mature at 24 inches and 3 years of age and all fish less than 35 inches in total length are female while most gags over 45 inches are males. Gag Grouper may live for up to 26 years and can grow to be 58 inches in length and weigh up to 81 pounds.

Head out to almost any seafood restaurant in Florida and Grouper is going to be on the menu. If it isn't, you might want to reconsider where you are dining. The Grouper supply peaks in the warm months of the

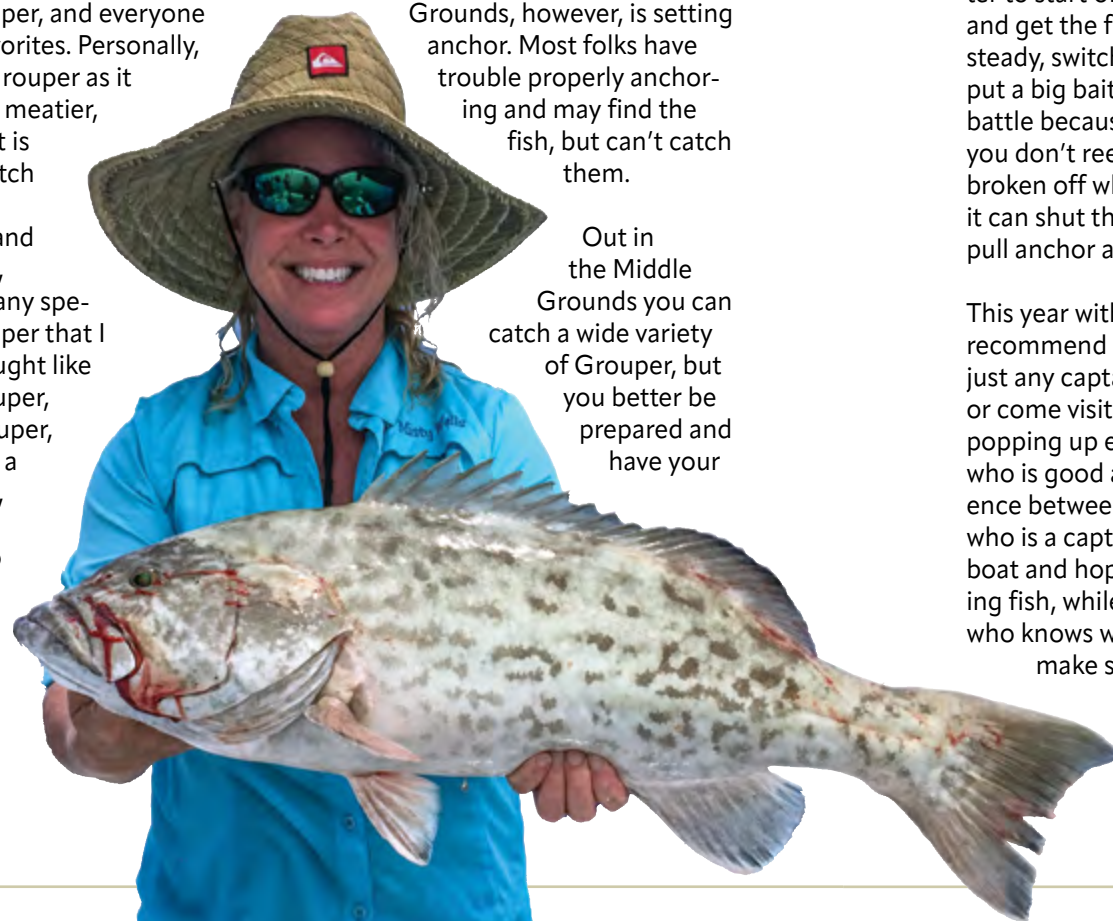
year, however it is available year-round in Florida. Grouper appeals to almost any seafood lover; it is a flaky white fish with a mild flavor that can be cooked almost any way. Florida harvests over 85 percent of the all the Grouper landed in the United States, and over 75 percent of that Grouper is caught and brought into Pinellas County. So, yes, it is true... we are the "Grouper Capital of the World". Most commercial fishermen in our area fish the tried-and-true method of hook-and line, good ole hand cranking to bring us these amazing fish from the deep. But, recreational anglers have a different set of season and size limits year-round, and this year we are getting a shorter amount of time to fill our freezers with these tasty bottom dwellers.

There are several different species of Grouper, and everyone has their favorites. Personally, I love Gag Grouper as it seems to be meatier, and I know it is harder to catch them. They can be fast and mean! Now, there are many species of Grouper that I have not caught like a Black Grouper, Nassau Grouper, Warsaw and a Yellow Edge, but they are on my list to pursue.

Here in Pinellas County, we have a magical

place off the West Coast of Florida called the "Middle Grounds" and this is a good place to start if you are dreaming about landing that prize Grouper. Let's start with a little history of the Middle Grounds and why the fishing is so "epic" there. The Middle Grounds is about 348 square nautical miles of bottom structure with depths that range from 80 to 160 feet with loads of topical diversity. The Middle Grounds provides limitless steep ledges and peaks that hold bait fish, couple that with strong ocean currents and a bottom that has live coral formations and you have angler heaven. A lot of fishing on the West Coast of Florida is all about your bottom numbers, and in the Middle Grounds, if you know how to read a bottom machine, you can easily find great spots to drop down on. One mistake anglers make in the Middle Grounds, however, is setting anchor. Most folks have trouble properly anchoring and may find the fish, but can't catch them.

Out in the Middle Grounds you can catch a wide variety of Grouper, but you better be prepared and have your



sturdy rods and reels ready, using what I call "terminal tackle". I use a Penn 6/0 Senator Reel, Crowder or Ugly Stick Rod with 100 pound test line, 100 pound test leader and a 8/0 Circle Hook. On the hook you are better to start off with a 1/2 cut Sardine to stink up the water and get the fish bite going, then once they are biting steady, switch over to a live Pinfish. Don't be afraid to put a big bait on your hook, but you better be ready to battle because a big grouper will hurt your feelings if you don't reel your hands off right away. Tip: Don't get broken off while fishing for Gag Grouper. Many times it can shut the bite completely down and you'll have to pull anchor and move on.

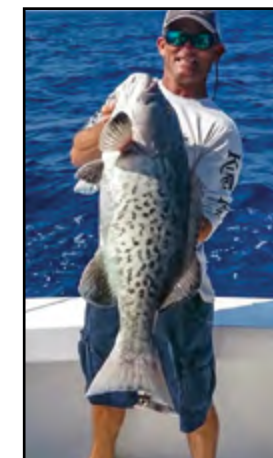
This year with such a limited time to catch, I would recommend going with a professional captain, and not just any captain will do. As more folks move to Florida or come visit it seems there are new charter captains popping up everywhere and honestly, how do you know who is good and who is not? There is a huge difference between a charter boat captain and a fisherman who is a captain. A charter boat captain has a license & boat and hopefully knows a thing or two about catching fish, while a fisherman who is a captain is someone who knows where the fish are, will put you on them and make sure you get your limits.

One of the best bottom fishing captains on the West Coast of Florida, in my opinion, is Captain Tommy

Laronge. Captain Tommy started his fishing career over 25 years ago working as a commercial fisherman learning almost every square inch of the Gulf of Mexico and the Middle Grounds. As a commercial captain Tommy would leave port for up to 5 to 7 days at a time, catch thousands of pounds of Grouper and Snapper and then head back in for a day or two until it was time to go again. This is where the work comes in; learning the Gulf of Mexico like your own backyard, and building your Loran Book. What is a Loran Book you might ask? It is what I refer to as the "Holy Grail", a captain's livelihood where all his fishing numbers and secrets are kept. Captain Tommy has spent over 25 years searching the Gulf of Mexico for what lies beneath, the secret ledges, rock piles, crevices and cracks that all are home to our beloved Gag Grouper. And, word to the wise, don't ever come between a fisherman and his Loran Book!

Captain Tommy has taught me how to become a

better angler and I usually will outfish almost anyone on the boat with what I have learned from him. I recommend booking an "Extreme Offshore" trip with Captain Tommy because you will not only fill the fish box, but you're going to have the type of trip fish stories are made of. Captain Tommy's charter business "Unreel Fishing Adventures" has just outfitted their 34 foot SeaVee with triple 300 V-8 Mercury engines, so you get there quick and have more fishing time. Go to www.ucatchfish.com or call (833) 839-FISH (3474) to book today. Gag season is here, and the weather is good, so you need to get ready and get out on the water because before you blink, it will be over. ▣



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.

THAT SIGNATURE SNOOK THUMP!

by Captain George Hastick

Snook have such powerful jaws that you can hear them hit a bait in shallow water from quite a distance away and it is an unmistakable sound. On the other hand, when fishing deeper water, you will feel the thump of a large Snook and know exactly what hit you once you have experienced a large Snook striking your bait. This thump is what all the Snook junkies live for; it is that few seconds of feeling the hit and knowing already from the severity of the thump that when you set the hook you are in for a fight.



September 1st marks the start of Snook season in our Tampa Bay area. On normal years where there are no special circumstances, the acronym "MASON" is what I like to teach at my fishing seminars to help anglers remember when the open season is for Snook. The beginning of the year, March and April are the first M&A of the year, then at the end of the year, September, October and November.

Their life cycle is similar to the Tarpon's life cycle, especially in the early stages. During the spawning season, May through September, females go to passes and mouths of bays to lay their eggs which they can do every 2 days; releasing

1.25-1.5 million eggs at a time. The higher salinity water areas are better for making the eggs and newly hatched larvae more buoyant, which gives them a better chance to float to a nearby estuary habitat suitable for their survival.

In the early stages, under 1 year old, small Snook will seek out low salinity areas and fresh/brackish water, even low oxygen areas that their young bodies can adapt to, but a predator fish cannot. Around 1 year old (10-12 inches) they will start to need higher oxygen and salinity levels which will make them move to the lower estuary with their grown counterparts. They must be careful though, because Snook will eat their own if they are hungry enough. One of the notable things about the Snook is that most males, not all, with age will turn into females.

Large Snook can be found in a variety of habitats. From the backwaters to the swash channels at the beaches and everything in between, especially bridges and piers for some big ones. The typical Fall migration would be to move from the beaches to the inshore waters, continuing to rivers or deeper canals as the water cools. Snook are cold blooded, so they are only as warm as

the water they are in. Knowing this and the water temperature can help keep you on the Snook bite as they migrate. Right now, they are out and about since the water is so hot. So up inside Tampa Bay you will have a similar pattern to the beach one described earlier but the river and creek mouths are the passes.

So, now you want to catch Snook. Well, there are many different tactics. Nighttime fishing versus daytime fishing versus live bait versus artificial; all have their place and preference. Much of this is up to each individual and the style of fishing that they prefer.

Early morning, before all the beachgoers get out there, look for Snook in the swash channels near each side of the passes leading into the gulf.

Cast parallel to the beach with lures that imitate bait fish like a White Bucktail Jig or a MirrO-dine us-



ing a slight twitch, twitch, retrieve motion till you figure out the speed that gets you the hit. At night or early morning, you can work the pass bridges with a Flairhawk Jig or something similar with the weight heavy enough to get you contact with the bottom. White and Red has always been a good choice of color but ask the tackle shops in your area for what color has been hot lately. Around the bridges you will want to use a heavier set up like 30 pound braid and a 40-50 pound fluorocarbon leader due to the pilings and at night you can get away with a heavier leader since they can't see it. Bridge fishing with live bait like Pinfish, small Ladyfish or Finger Mullet on the same setup with a 6/0-7/0 hook can also be fun.



Light tackle fishing during the day for Snook is also very fun and enjoyable. During the day most of the time, you cannot run too heavy of a leader because they will be able to see it and you will not get as many hits. Use 10-20 pound braided line with 4-5 ft of 25-30 pound fluorocarbon leader with a 1/0-2/0 Owner Mutu Light Circle Hook. A 7' 6" medium-fast taper 8-17 or 10-20 pound test pole with a size 4000 reel is a good setup to hit some inshore mangrove treelines, smaller bridges or rock jetties. On the flats, topwater lures like MirrOlure's Pro Dog or a subsurface plug like a MirrO-dine are great choices along with live baits like the previously mentioned Pinfish, Finger Mullet, Threadfin Herring and Scaled Sardines. ☑

Captain George Hastick of "Fish Hunter Fishing Charters" in St. Petersburg 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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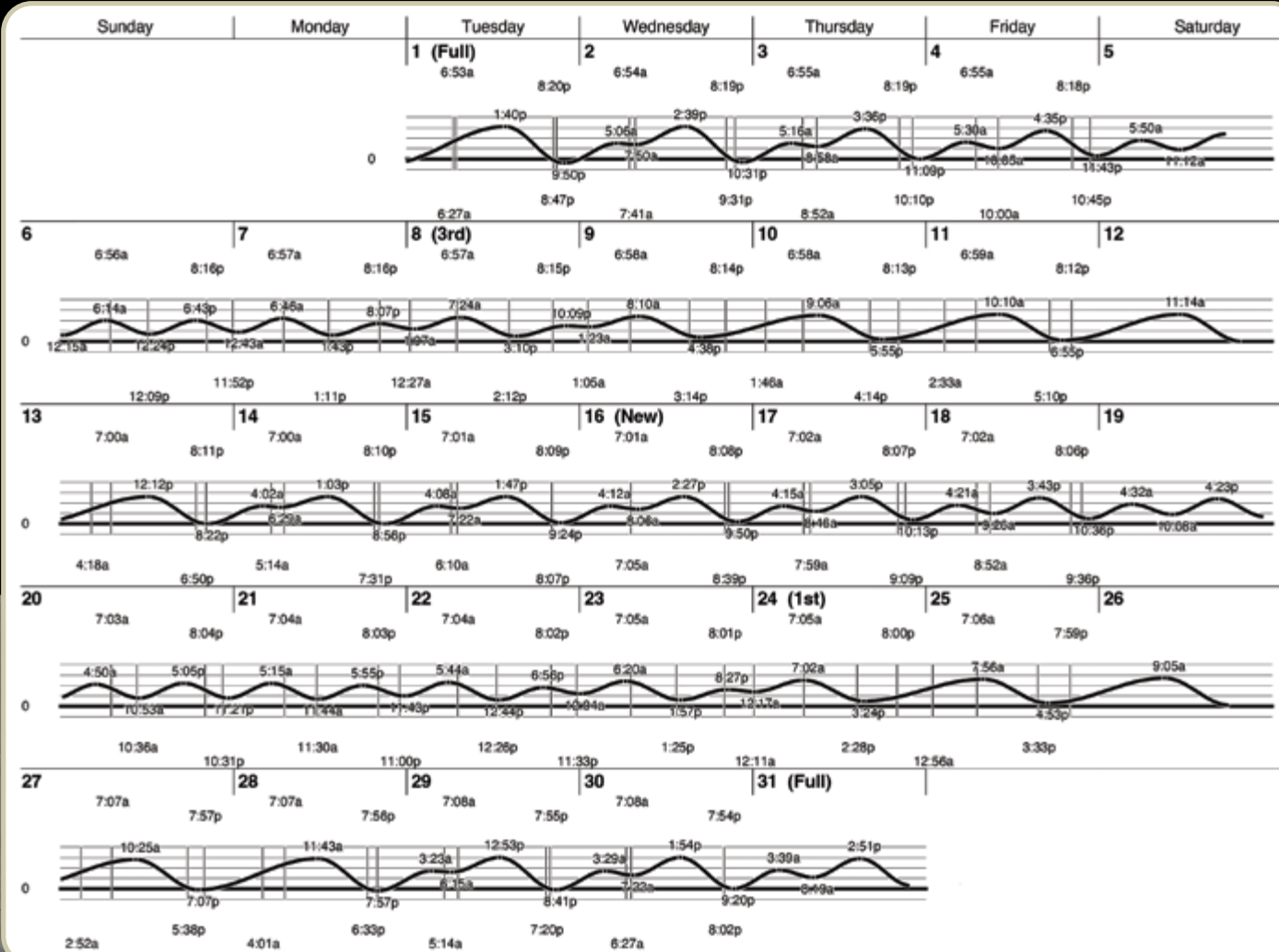
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Conversions for Clearwater Beach Area

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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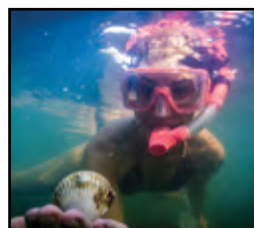
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mesh bag, snorkel set and head out to the grassy, shallow areas of the Gulf during scallop season from July 1 through August 6 for an underwater Easter egg hunt Florida-style!

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2023 SCALLOPING SEASON | JULY 1 - AUGUST 6



the silver prince

Written By Captain Danny Clark

With near record breaking warm weather still upon us, the water temperature remains in the mid 80's and the juvenile tarpon fishing has been on fire here in the Lower Keys.

When most people think about tarpon fishing in the Keys, they only imagine the big ones – the 100 plus pounders that cause screaming drag and make acrobatic jumps. We do have big fish that live and stay here, in the Lower Keys all year long, but the mature adults are largely migratory and aren't as available throughout the year. During the spring months, there are literally thousands of big tarpon that invade our waters, but don't overlook our resident juvenile tarpon that are here throughout the year; they hit hard, pull hard and jump just like the big ones.

WHERE TO LOOK FOR THEM?

The Big Pine area of the Lower Keys is an excellent place to find the Silver Prince. I do most of my juvenile tarpon fishing on mangrove shorelines, but deeper holes on flats and the deeper water off of the



shorelines can also be very productive, especially on the lower stages of the tide when there's not quite enough water for them to make it all the way up to shore. The flip side of that is, on some of our big tide days (king tides), which we have been experiencing lately, there can be so much water that it floods the mangroves more



than usual and the fish will travel deep into the woods. On big tide days, I try to target my tarpon areas before the water reaches the super high levels that enable this forest dwelling.

There are many types of shorelines that can hold these fish, I'd be willing to bet that most mangrove shorelines in the Big Pine area will have tarpon at one time or another, but I do look for specific areas. Shoreline that has slightly deeper water right up to the mangroves, sandy-type hard bottom right on shore and stinky water areas; these are good places to look. The stinky water is typically due to dead and rotting seagrass that floats in and sinks in these areas. As the seagrass rots, it gives off a very distinctive smell and can make the water very oxygen poor. The oxygen poor water doesn't affect the tarpon like it does other fish due to their ability to gulp air from the surface, so you will almost always see them rolling in these stinky stagnant areas.

RIGGING & BAIT ADVICE?

For spinning rods, my basic rig is a medium weight rod, with a 4000 series reel. I use 20lb braid mainline and a 30lb fluorocarbon leader for a bite tippet. I typically will tie a smaller fluoro leader to the braid (17lb) then tie a small section of 30lb fluoro at the end for the bite tippet. The reason for this is because the uni to uni knot that I use is a little large at the 30lb connection and can sometimes catch on the rod eyes when casting. The 17lb test fluoro tied to the braid offers very little resistance when

casting so it is a much better choice, in my opinion. I don't use straight 17lb test because these fish have fairly aggressive sand paper type mouths and will they will wear through smaller leader pretty quickly. For bait, I like to use larger live shrimp on a size 1 hook. If we are throwing artificial baits, I like to use shrimp style lures; DOA and Vudu are both excellent choices. Soft plastic and hard plastic twitch baits and top waters work great, as well.

For fly fishing I like a 10 weight rod and reel combo. I use a standard tapered leader, but still use a 30lb bite tippet on the business end. Flies with a barred craft fur tail are excellent choices for these tarpon. I want the fly to stay up in the water column when fishing the shorelines so I avoid any kind of weighted fly.

The fishing will remain strong as long as the warm weather continues and the water temperatures stay up. If you've never fished for juvenile tarpon or if you've caught a ton and want to do it again, now is an excellent time to fish for the Silver Prince in the Florida Keys! 🍷

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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.

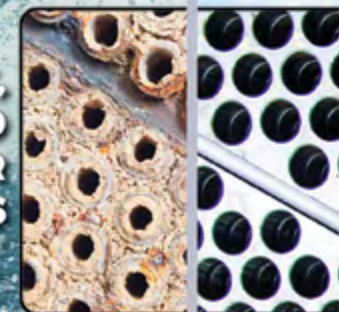


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Captain Sergio Atanes

Cooler weather should to prevail and fishing should start to get back on track. It's time to think about fishing with artificial baits! Although there are many on the market and we each have our favorite brands, the "ole' standbys" for me are from MirrOlure and Saltwater Assassin; two of my top choices for artificial baits. If you are looking for the big ones, be sure to get out early with a topwater plug like the "Skin Series Surface Walker" by MirrOlure. And, when the sun hits 10:00 am, its time try switching to a bottom jig like the "Papa Smurph" from Saltwater Assassin in Shrimp Cocktail color; it's a killer bait for me.

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

Snook season will open in the Tampa Bay area and the bite will be pretty good especially on the outgoing tides. Look for them around bridges, docks and under the mangroves feeding on baitfish that the tide brings to them. Redfish should be active especially on the higher tides. Cut bait would be a good bet if you are targeting them with the heat we are experiencing. Trout will be on the deeper grass flat edges and on 5-7 ft. shoals. There will be plenty of shark action on the flats, near channels & range markers. Any kind of oily cut baits like ladyfish will work as long as it is oily and bloody, the sharks will find it.

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"DAD AND I"

by Dave Mallory

Hello fellow readers. My name is Dave Mallory and I will be joining you monthly to share my past adventures with you. I was born in Burlington, Vermont, just after Pearl Harbor was bombed. I guess that could make me an "old fart" now. However, I was lucky enough to have parents who supported hunting and fishing. My Dad loved to do both and brought me up learning to love the outdoors. During my lifetime, I have been able to hunt and fish in places like Vermont, Florida, British Columbia, Quebec, Pennsylvania, New York, Aruba, Mexico, and Newfoundland. Pennsylvania was hunting only.

I have written four books, which you can purchase from me. My first book, *Dad And I*, is a collection

of thirty-nine short stories which took place with Dad over the years. My latest book is about fishing in Florida with Captain George Hastic, *The Fish Hunter*.

For this first article, I will share a short version of my very first fishing trip when I was 5 years old. The Vermont Chittenden County Fish and Game Club stocked Potash Brook in Burlington with trout so kids 12 and under would have a four hour fishing contest in June after school was out for the summer. I was five, so Dad thought I should enter. We didn't have a car, but my uncle, who owned a car, joined us for the adventure. The big day arrived and off we went. We arrived a little before the 8 AM starting time. The rules were explained to us: the limit was four trout and we had to report back before Noon. They said "GO" and off we went. The grass along the brook was quite high. My uncle led the way. He was about 5 feet 11 inches and the grass was up to his knees. Dad was 5 foot 2 and grass was up to mid-thigh. I was about 3 feet 6 inches tall and the grass was like a jungle for me!

My uncle found the "perfect" spot. We put a worm on my hook, I tossed it in and caught a branch and lost my worm. Another worm gave up his life and yielded a nice brook trout. I wanted to run home

immediately to show Mom, but they made me keep fishing. I was so excited, I slipped and fell part way in the brook, scaring any other trout in the pool.

Time was going fast and I only had one fish. Oh dear! My uncle found another spot where the water went under a bank. Another worm gave up his life and I caught another trout. Dad thought there might be another trout in the hole so I tossed my worm in and caught another dumb trout.

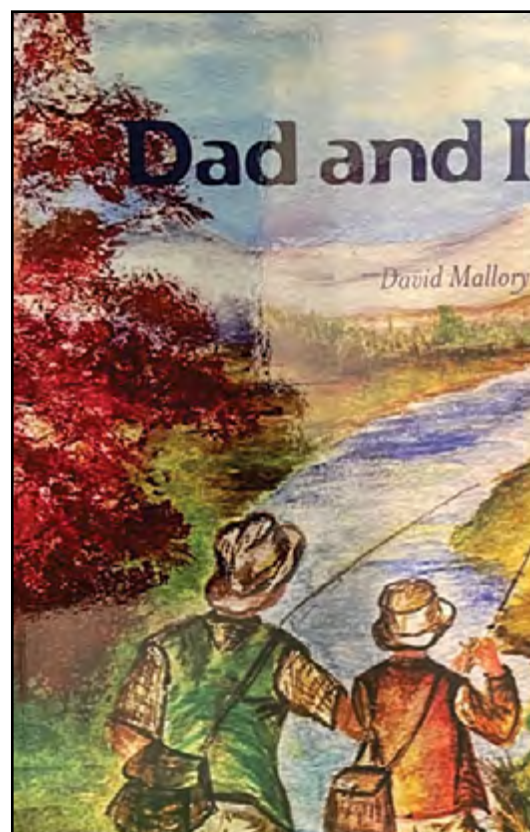
At this point, my uncle said we had time for one more hole before we had to get back

to the judges. We were all disappointed because I only had three fish. We tried another trout hole with no luck so we headed back. When we arrived back, we learned that nobody had four fish. Two other guys also had three, so we tied. All thirteen of us got a candy bar and a soda. The three winners got TWO candy bars!!

It was time to head home. My uncle said we could stop at Howard Johnson's for an ice cream on the way home. Mom cooked up the three trout for dinner along with some other goodies. We had my uncle stay to share in the bounty.

That, my friends, is a condensed version of Chapter One of "Dad and I" and my first attempt to bring you some fun fishing times in my life. I hope you enjoy my wanderings every month. ☑

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



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IT'S ALMOST WHITETAIL TIME

by Misty Wells

The wait is over and it's time to get ready to hit the woods and start getting reacquainted with your local Whitetail. Let's get ready by going over some refresher hunting tips and a few reminders to getting in the woods and being successful this season.

Scent Control: First rule of hunting is use scent control and make sure to utilize it anytime you are in the woods: when you are scouting, hanging camera's, putting up or moving stands, cutting shooting lanes, planting food plots or filling feeders. **Step 1:** Don't put on your hunting clothes until you reach your destination, your truck has a lot of odors. Put your hunting clothes in a non-scented plastic bag or something similar, dress outside when you arrive. **Step 2:** Spray from your boots up then be sure to spray and cover your head. **Step 3:** Remove your hunting clothes after leaving the woods and put them in a non-scent bag or hang outside in the open air until the next day.

Hunters think about it, we don't get much time to hunt, on average we get about 6 to 10 days a year.

Doesn't it make sense to do everything you can to be successful? Something as simple as scent control can make a difference between going home successful or with nothing.

Game Trails & Cameras: First, try not to enter the woods to scout during dusk or dawn as this is when the Whitetail are moving the most, don't break their pattern and alert them to your pres-

ence. Once you get into the woods look for some heavily used game trails with fresh tracks and scat, study the tracks to see if they are mainly Bucks or Does. A key thing to remember is if the Does are there, the Bucks will follow; kind of like \$5 drinks for "Ladies Night". Great camera locations are trails, food plots, water sources, salt licks or over bait if it's legal, and check your camera angles. Be sure your target area is at least 5 to 10 yards away, you have a clear line of sight and that you have pre-checked your camera settings. Make sure to format your memory card, re-check your settings on the game camera, and use scent control when hanging your camera's. So many hunters forget to use scent control when prepping and they ruin a great location. If you are hunting public land be sure to bring a ladder to put your game camera's up high out of arms reach so they don't get stolen.

Scrapes & Rubs: A great sign, but don't judge a Buck by the size of his scrapes or rubs. Bucks use scrapes to make their declaration of dominance by leaving scent from his nasal, preorbital and forehead glands. When the scraping work is done the buck will paw the ground and urinate to excite and draw in Doe's and trying to deter any bucks from his claimed area. Keep in mind that Doe's look for these area's and urinate in the Bucks scrapes and paw area's to let the Bucks know what stage of the breeding process she is in. The size of the tree can help determine the size of the Buck, pretty much all Bucks will rub a tree that is 1-3 inches in diameter, however, larger trees generally will be rubbed by Bucks 3 years old or older. Rub lines reveal routes, note the side of the tree they are on and note they

can also show the way to crucial bed-to-feed travel patterns. Take note of the direction of the scrape, if all the scrapes are on the south side of the tree the buck most likely is traveling north for his pattern.

Deer Stands & Blinds: Some of the best stand locations will be along heavy traveled corridors like game trails, ditches, ridges and draws between primary bedding and feeding areas. Try not to "over trim", cutting away brush and limbs around your stands or blinds giving away your location and cover. Sit in your stand or blind and draw your bow or shoulder your gun in all directions to be sure you have a clear line of fire when the critical time comes. Give your stands & blinds the silent treatment. Nothing worse than a squeaky creaky stand that alerts a deer at the worst possible moment.

Safety: Practice firearm safety, wear the right clothes, and let someone know where you are hunting and when you will be back. **And, if you are hunting in a tree stand, don't leave the ground unless you properly have on your safety harness.** My buddy Brad can tell you all about this rule from his wheelchair. He did not have on a safety harness and his whole life was changed in an instant. Also, never carry equipment up and down the tree; use a haul line to raise and lower your gear. Do not modify your stand, wear gripping boots, and take your time moving 10 to 12 inches at a time.

Using these tips should help get you in the right place to safely harvest your deer and spend some time unplugging in the woods. Just like you, I am certainly ready to kiss the heat of Summer goodbye and get into the woods! 🍷



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CHANGE IS IN THE AIR

by Captain Sergio Atanes

September is my changeup month, when the weather starts to cool just enough to get the "big boys" to bite! Snook are slowly making their way back to the mangroves after their spawning season in the passes. The breeders or large female Snook spent most of the Summer in the passes spawning and are now ready to return and prepare for the Fall weather when they work their way into creeks and rivers.



As the water temperature starts to drop the bite increases and the fish become more aggressive. I also love September for catching big Redfish; a nice change up from the

normal Summer fishing for Mackerel, Trout, and Flounder. Not to say I didn't catch Reds or Snook, but most of my Summer clients prefer fast action rather than sitting in the heat waiting for a few Redfish to bite.

SEPTEMBER TACTICS

The big Redfish start roaming the flats and are hungry, but not yet ready to chase down live bait. So, my secret to catching the big ones is using cut dead bait on the bottom, but not just any dead bait. My years of experience tells me they love cut Pinfish, Ladyfish and Threadfin Sardines. Remember that you want a nice chunk, but not too big, because you want them to be able to take it on the first bite.

I switch from my regular 1/0 to a 2/0 or even a 3/0 Kahle Circle Hook and 30-pound fluorocarbon leader about 3 feet long. Depending on the depth of water I could use a number 3 or 4 split shot to keep the bait on the bottom. I put two rods off the stern and 2 rods on the bow of the boat while tossing some cut bait around the boat



every few minutes to create my own local feeding station.

Patience is the keyword here, so don't be in a hurry. Sit, wait and the big ones will come, and yes, there is a chance you could catch a few Catfish but it's worth it if you can land the big ones. Another advantage of using dead bait and chumming is you could entice a nice Cobia to bite.

Don't overlook deepwater docks with structure, because as the sun gets high and the temperature rises, they hold big Redfish, Flounder and Snook looking for cooler water and shade. The best times are either incoming or outgoing tide around mid-day; the key is moving water.

TACKLE FOR FLATS FISHING

An Okuma SRTE-S-761M Medium action 7.6 ft spinning rod with 15-pound test Fins Windtamer Braided Line in White (braid works great around structure). Okuma Helios SX HSX-30 spinning reel with Okuma Soft Steal 30-pound Fluorocarbon Leader at least 3 foot long tied directly to the braided line using a Surgeons Knot with a 2/0 or 3/ Kahle Circle Hook.

TACKLE FOR DOCK FISHING

An Okuma SRTE-S-701MH Medium Heavy action 7 ft spinning rod with 30-pound test Fins Windtamer Braided Line in Yellow. Okuma Azores Z-4000H spinning reel paired with Okuma Soft Steel 40-pound Fluorocarbon leader 3-foot long tied direct to braided line again surgeon's knot with 3/0 Kahle circle hook.

BAITS TO USE

Fresh cut Pinfish, Threadfin Sardines and Ladyfish. The keyword here is fresh! Any cut bait not being used should be kept on ice. Greenback Sardines can be used as a substitute if the above baits are not available. In regards to the color of braided line; did you catch how I used two different colors? Its so I can



tell the client to pick the rod with white line without having to explain white is 15-pound or yellow is 30-pound. Its a simple method for picking the right rod from the rack or rodholder. ☑

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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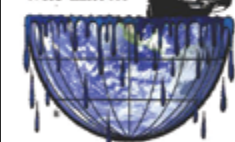
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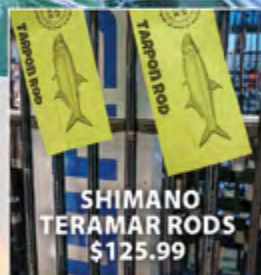


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