

FLORIDA'S SUPPLEMENTARY SPORTSMAN'S PUBLICATION

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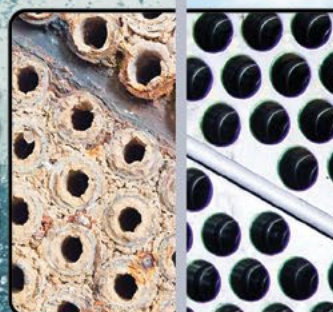


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BOATER TRAINING

I see a lot of people sharing our waterways that really need a little boater education. I'm not even talking about boater safety class; it goes without saying that everyone on the water should have taken this at some time. I'm talking about getting a basic understanding of the way that powerboats work. To help those who have not yet had the opportunity to learn some of these basics, I provide my top ten tips for operating a powerboat. For those of you who are experienced boaters I'm sorry if I am wasting your time.

- #10 – **Water is wet.** If you do not want to get wet it is wise to avoid proximity to water. Wearing a body condom really does not help much.
- #9 – **Laying a rope loosely around a cleat is not tying up your boat securely.** Tightly wrapping, knotting, binding and otherwise generally tangling up 10 feet of rope all around a cleat so that Houdini couldn't get it off is also not the way to tie a boat up properly. Use a little common sense when attaching your ropes to cleats. Keep in mind that it is also important to attach the anchor to the boat in a secure manner, before throwing it overboard; I really wish that more of our boat rental customers would remember this.
- #8 – **Know what the tide is doing while you are boating.** Going for a nice walk on the beach and coming back to find your boat 50 feet up on dry land does not make for a fun afternoon!
- #7 – **If your boat has a kill switch then it will not start without the switch and lanyard properly in place.** THAT IS WHY IT'S CALLED A KILL SWITCH!!!
- #6 – **If your boat is in gear (forward or reverse) the motor will not start.** Make sure it is in neutral BEFORE YOU CALL SEA TOW! If you don't do this they will laugh at you and call you silly names.
- #5 – **If you are docking and the boat is not quite going where you want it to, giving it more throttle will not fix the problem.** When docking, even the best captains occasionally get screwed up by wind or current and wind up bumping the dock. Boats do not have brakes, pushing on the floor with your foot will not keep you from hitting the dock, that is what reverse is for, if used properly. If you are going to hit something, hit it slowly; idle is your friend!!!
- #4 – **Jet Skis are an exception to #5; they do not steer without some throttle, however with too much throttle they may jump over the dock.** It really is just best to avoid these entirely as they are no good for fishing anyway.
- #3 – **When launching your boat at the ramp, it is important to insert the drain plug first.** The drain is not a one-way hole; it will let water in too. It is much easier if you put the plug in before putting the boat in the water, the launch ramp is not a nice place for a swim! It is really better to just store your boat in a nice dry stack marina, perhaps somewhere like Belle Harbour Marina in Tarpon Springs.
- #2 – **It is not a good idea to attempt to boat where birds are walking.** This usually does not end well for you or the birds.
- #1 – **Alcohol and driving a boat do not mix.** In a best case scenario, you can wind up looking really silly stuck on an oyster bar in Fernandina, waiting for the tide and in a worst case scenario, you can do serious damage to your boat and possibly even serious bodily injury to yourself or others.

If you follow these tips, you are sure to have more fun and fewer problems on the water and...avoid annoying me at the same time.

Merle and Flip the Bird can be reached at Belle Harbour Marina in Tarpon Springs, Florida by calling 727.943.8489 or by emailing: merle@shoredev.com.

Merle



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ON THE COVER: Captain Jimmy Nelson and crew with a trio of Wintertime catches. Now is the time to get out and target Kingfish, Cobia and shallow water Grouper! For more info on Captain Jimmy, please visit his website at: www.livinthedreamtv.com.

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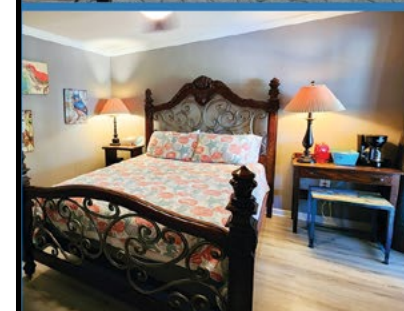
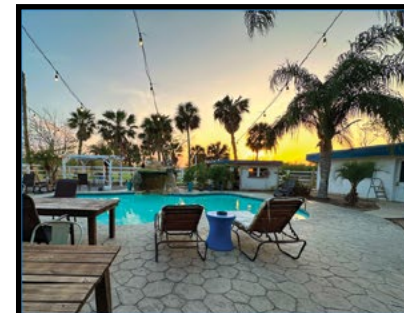


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LET'S TAKE IT OUTSIDE

by Misty Wells

The weather in Florida is working on warming up, and as we follow the weather in other States around the USA, we are very happy to reside in Florida right now. As we ease into warmer weather, outdoor adventure travelers are starting to make outdoor plans for the Spring, Summer and Fall.

Last year was an exciting year for my outdoor, adventure and travel show "Let's Take it Outside" as I was able to travel to several exciting destinations around the world. And, I was blessed to be added to the line up on the Discovery Channel and Discovery GO, which now brings me to 8 networks worldwide in over 220 countries and 50 languages.



In the spirit of planning, I wanted to share with you some of the great locations that I have filmed recently in hopes you may want to make some plans to discover some of these destinations.

My first destination for filming this past season was Pinellas County, Florida, "the Grouper Capital of the World". The first episode was filmed in Clearwater, my hometown, and true to form, I planned an offshore Grouper trip to the Middle Grounds. The Middle Grounds is one of my favorite places to fish and if you've

read my articles, I fish there as often as I can. I booked a fishing charter with one of my favorite companies "Salt Cracker Charters", as they have a nice fleet of boats and great local guides. Captain Nick and Captain Kevin took us offshore that day and our goal was to catch as many species as possible and I think we made it to 12 species that day. We started off trolling through a school on Bonita and Kingfish, then headed out to try some light tackle spinning rod action on some Yellowtail and Mangrove Snapper.

After filling the box with some great meat, we decided it was time to bottom fish and start showing the viewers how big some of these Red and Gag Grouper can get. It was an epic day out on the water and one you will have to watch to see who caught the biggest Grouper! Was it me or Captain Kevin? While in Clearwater Beach we could not miss a chance to swing by the World Famous "Frenchy's Rockaway and grind on the original Grouper Sandwich and take a Dolphin Cruise on the new Paddle Pub Boat Tour. Clearwater has been voted "#1 Beach in America several years in a row, however, there is much more to Clearwater than sugar sand beaches!

Our next episode in Pinellas County was filmed in St. Petersburg and just like the Clearwater episode it



did not disappoint. In this episode we hopped on board Captain Chris Wiggins' boat looking to get our Inshore Slam: a Snook, Trout and Redfish. Let me tell you, we are blessed with some amazing Captains in Pinellas County, because not only did we land our slam, but I caught a huge female Snook right at the end of the day. When you are in St. Pete, I highly recommend renting some E-Bikes from "Bay E-Bikes" and following their guide on a downtown Mural Tour.



I must mention one of my favorite parts of the episode was having dinner at **Taverna Costale**, a restaurant owned

and created by one of my favorite Chefs from the TV Show "Top Chef", Chef Fabio Viviani. If you are looking to take it outside, but also find exciting new eats for the "Foodie" inside you, St. Pete will not disappoint!

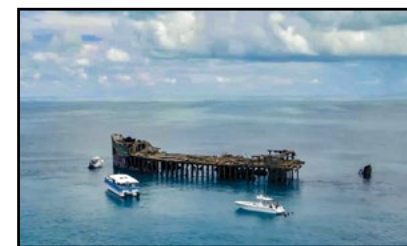
It seems each year I am able to find my way back to Bimini in the Bahamas and discover new adventures. If you are new to the area and not familiar with Bimini, it's an island just 51 miles from the coast of Ft. Lauderdale. You can get to Bimini by boat or plane, but my favorite mode of transportation is on the Balearia Ferry; just sit back relax and enjoy the 2-hour cruise.



Last year when I was talking about my future trip to Bimini, I had a Hammerhead Shark dive planned for early Spring and the great news is we did it! We headed

over to Bimini on the Balearia for a 5-day shoot that was being titled "Shark Mania". In the Bahamas, Sharks swim in protected waters year-round so there are no shortages of almost any type of warm water shark in Bimini. We started off somewhat easy, heading out to Triangle Rock for some shallow water shark snorkeling.

At the reef there are usually two types of sharks: the Blacktip Reef Shark and the Whitetip Reef Shark. You will also encounter a few Nurse Sharks from



time to time. You do have to have a bit of a "thick skin" to jump into the water and allow these quick moving sharks to dart all around you. We did temper the episode with some more "normal" activities like snorkeling the Sapona and looking for the "Road to Atlantis" before turning up the heat and gearing up for our dive with the huge 16 ft. Hammerheads towards the end of the week. I booked my dive with a very well-known company called "Neil Watson" based out of the Bimini Big Game Club on Bimini. They have taken hundreds of divers safely on this journey, so I felt good about the dive. Bimini is one of only three locations in the World I have heard of where you can safely interact with and swim with these majestic creatures.

A lot of folks ask why these large Hammerheads show up in Bimini during the late Winter, early Spring? I have researched this and these large Hammerheads usually are made up from a group mostly females and quite a few of them are pregnant when they arrive. It is believed that they are coming down in their final trimester to fatten up before giving birth back home up North.



One thing I found out about this species is that they will return to the place of their birth when they are ready to give birth to their young. They will travel hundreds of miles from the East Coast of the United States down to the Bahamas and back each Winter. Who knows...maybe they are very relaxed and ready to chill when they arrive on vacation in the Bahamas, so they just don't want to bother with humans?

Yes, I would say I do have one of the most fun and adventurous jobs in the World and I love almost every minute of it. It is exciting to be able to travel throughout Florida and beyond to highlight wonderful and fun outdoor experiences. Our viewers say my show is a good mix of seemingly normal outdoor activities to...I would never do that! "Mild to Wild" episodes you could say.

I hope this provides a glimpse of "Let's Take it Outside", a show that will inspire you to get outside and try something or someplace new. This month I am beginning to film and launch Season 5 of my TV series that will air on Discovery Channel and Discovery GO this Summer. If you are a new fan or wonder where you can watch Seasons 1 – 4, goto the free On-Demand Waypoint TV Channel or Carbon TV Channel. You can also download the free app from either channel to watch all kinds of awesome outdoor content and do some catch up on my show. I promise you will enjoy all the great ways to experience Florida and beyond and learn about a new destination or experiences. Until next time remember to "Take it Outside" whenever you can in the great State of Florida and beyond! 🐟

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.

A COLD WATER GEM

by Captain George Hastick

February can be one of the best months for Sheepshead fishing in the Tampa Bay area. This cold water gem is probably one of the most underrated fish when it comes to table fare and fight, especially the battle a larger Sheepshead can put up.

When fishing deeper water rock-piles, they can be very large and feel as if you are fighting a Grouper with their downward lunges.

On the inshore scene, many times you are sight fishing and it can take an accurate cast to put the bait where it needs to be with many of those casts being under a dock. Then, the challenge is to get them out from between the pilings without getting broken off. There is a real sense of accomplishment when you get a

larger Sheepshead out from those barnacle encrusted pilings without parting ways. Making things tougher, in some areas, depending on water clarity, you can not use heavy leader to be able to get a bite and that is when it can get really challenging.

Other areas to look for Sheepshead are reefs, bridges, ledges, seawalls and any other structures that will hold a food source that they like to eat. They eat barnacles, crabs, worms, oysters, clams, mussels and shrimp, just to name a few. They are known to eat small fish, but I wouldn't use baitfish if I were targeting them. They love crustaceans, so crabs and shrimp would be my first choices and I have done well using mussels. Sheepshead are also known for their incisor human-like teeth, but they have incisors, molars and grinders to be able to eat the

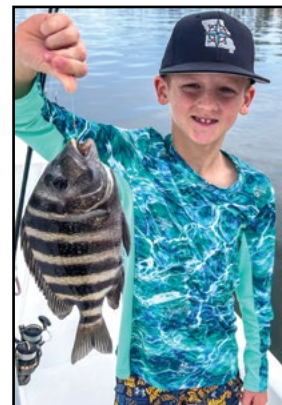
barnacles and other crustaceans. Large Sheepshead have the ability to crush the shells of crabs and mussels for example, so keep your fingers out of



reach, since they have been known to snap a hook in half.

For the setup, start with 4 feet of 25lb. test fluorocarbon leader with a #1 hook. If you are seeing them and not getting bites, first try different baits and then go lighter on the leader. If I am inshore with little to no current, I like to use no weight or as light as possible, like a split shot.

In deeper water or current, use a small jighead or a small egg sinker knocker rig; where the leader goes through the egg sinker and the weight slides down to the hook. Sheepshead are bait stealers and they are good at it, so don't get mad if you miss some. Like an old Sheepshead fisherman once told me, "the trick to catching Sheepshead is to set the hook right before they bite". They can have a very subtle strike, so let them put a steady weight on your line and when you feel that steady weight, lift your rod tip and that should do the trick. Once you get the 'knack' for it, you will catch what they call the "convict fish," whether they are named that due to the prison stripes on their body or because they are such good thieves is to be determined.



When it comes to cooking this great tasting fish, I like to dip my Sheepshead fillets in an egg batter and then coat with some Italian style crispy Panko Breadcrumbs. Then place in some hot Olive Oil in a frying pan for a few minutes, flip once and cook until it just turns white and flaky.

Another favorite of mine, if you have some thick fillets, is to cut 2-inch medallions out of the fillets and soak them in some Caribbean Jerk Marinade (or any flavor you like) and place in a Ziplock bag for about 2-hours. The longer, the better. Then take them out and place them on a cookie sheet and wrap the outer edge with bacon. Secure the bacon with a toothpick through the center. Now take some fresh marinade and brush them liberally and place the cookie sheet in the oven and bake them at 375-400 degrees until the bacon is cooked; approximately 15-20 minutes. Flip once at the halfway point & enjoy!



With that said, get out there, so you don't pass up the opportunity to have some fun and enjoy a great fresh caught meal! ☑

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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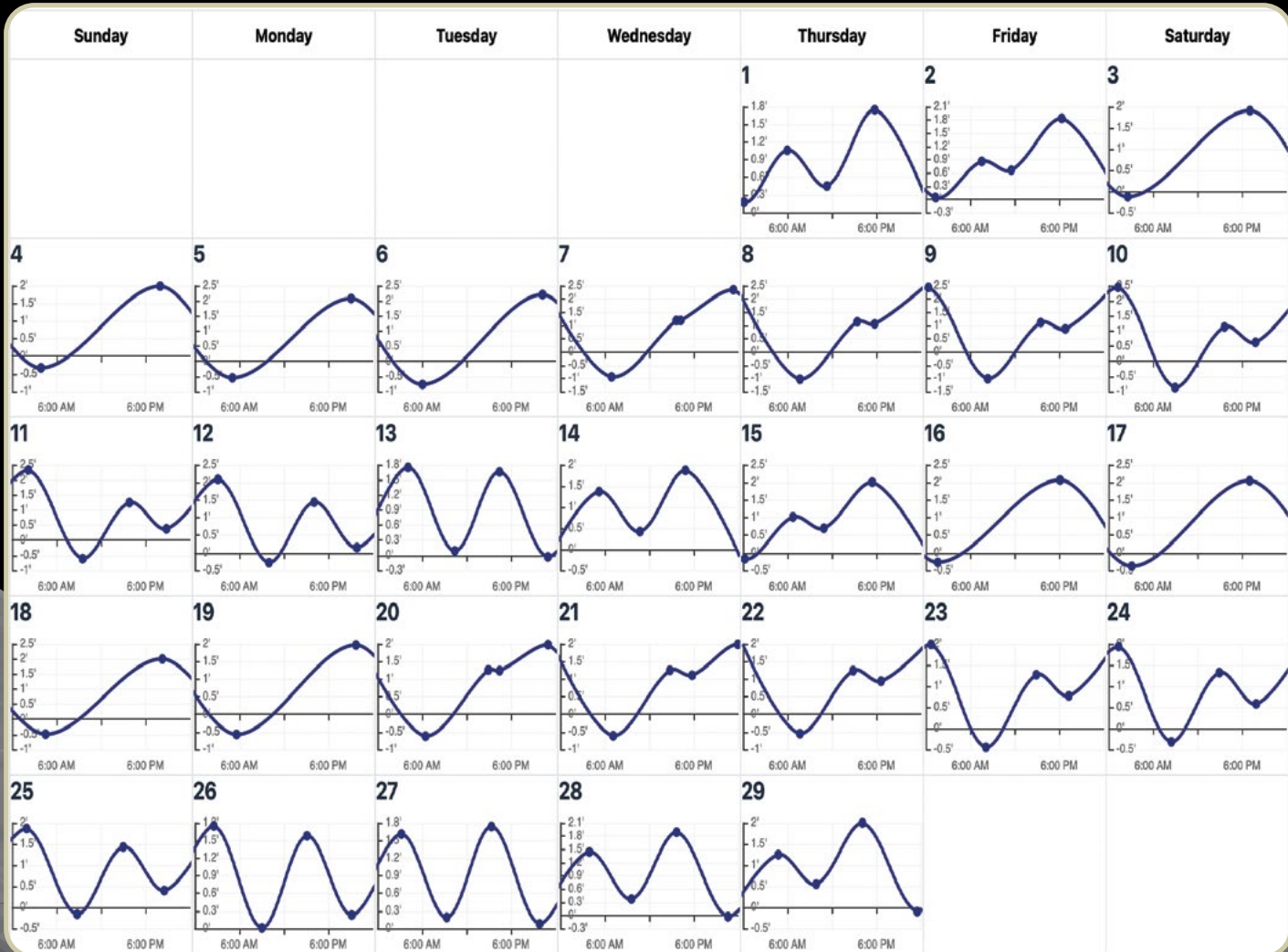
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Conversions for Clearwater Beach Area

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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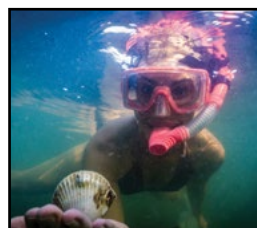


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MARINE

This time of the year is a good time to target fish that are hiding way back in the residential canals, or deeper backwater creeks. We like to target fish that are pushed back seeking shelter from the frequent cold fronts, high winds, and extreme low tides that occur in the winter months. The wade fisherman and those fishing from seawalls, should take advantage of the canals and creeks that are easy accessed, because these tend to hold the fish throughout winter. Casting from land in public parks, back along river banks and similar places that you can reach on foot while staying dry is a great strategy this time of the year. If you can stand to wade out to reach areas that still hold water on a negative low tide, you may find them full of fish. The secret to locating a pile of fish up a creek, river or canal is finding the dark water that can hold at least 4ft of water on a low tide. Fish can still hold in shallower flats, but the bigger numbers of fish usually come from a place with deep water nearby.



Jon Mulliken used his kayak to reach fish over a mud bottom flat still holding a couple feet of water on a negative low tide. Photo by Bernard Ward

The temperatures here are always changing, so try to think like a fish. In the colder mornings, fish will be seeking heat. Look for things like that seawall radiating heat, or dark colored mud. Sometimes the fish have a really lethargic attitude. Waiting for the sun to come up and warm things up often will yield more fish activity than getting out real early. "Focus on the seawalls facing east, as they face the rising sun when targeting a mid-morning bite with cooler air temperatures." This is a great tip Spencer Goodwin shared with me while talking about fishing the backwaters. Even though our weather has not been very chilly for long, the trout we are finding have been laying low in their winter areas and not moving too far from their safe haven until the approach of spring.



Sam Root of www.saltyshores.com, snook fishing in winter...focusing on seawalls facing the rising sun. Photo credit: Spencer Goodwin

My new fishing partner, Capt. Mike Teegarden, and I often find ourselves lost in vast systems of canals in search of the schools of spotted sea trout. We search for signs of life in places that have the most potential to hold a stack of fish and we always plan a trip right before a cold front arrives. The high pressure really seems to turn the bite on to the max. One of the many things the Captain, who is an ex-commercial fisherman, has recently taught me, is to focus on where the majority of fish would hold, not where a fish or two could possibly be. When selecting a spot to try, it is always a good sign to see mullet, as well as any type of bait fish, and crabs. Switching up

baits, or having two anglers on the boat, gives me the satisfaction of knowing that we covered the water from top to bottom. With one angler working a jig slow on the bottom and another throwing one of the many suspending stick baits or something mid column you can quickly cover the water when trying to locate fish. When a speck is hooked, we quietly drop the anchor off the bow to work the area more thoroughly and to find out just how many fish we stumbled upon. We seldom find trout sitting solo!



An up close look at a Seatrout, with my preferred Yo-Zuri suspending lip ring. Photo credit: Jon Mulliken

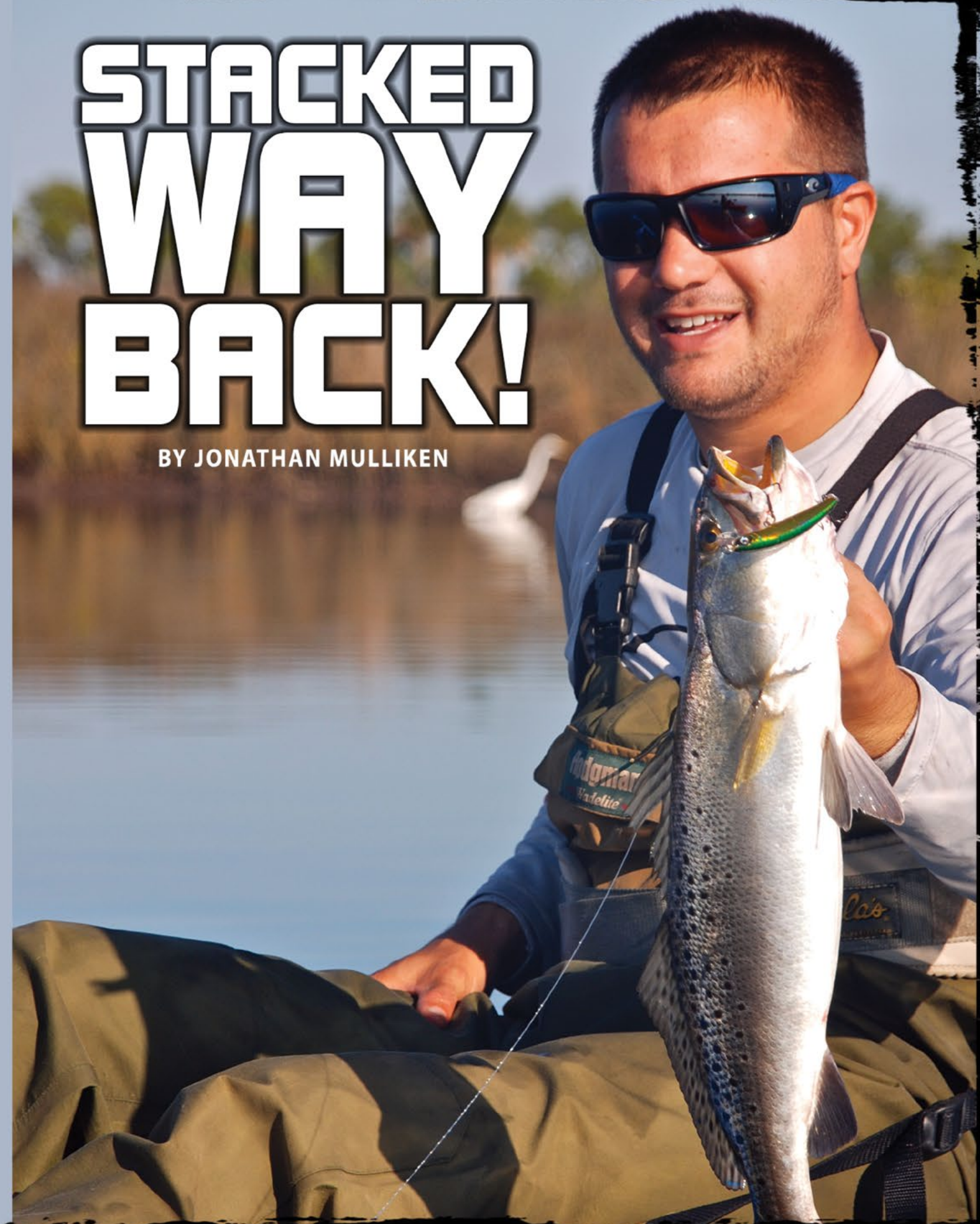
We usually encounter much more than just trout because these residential canals harbor more fish than many realize. Sheepshead are common and when you are equipped with fiddler crabs its can be like feeding candy to a baby. A small hook and a split shot will pick up the convicts and also any black drum that happen to thrive the same surroundings on the same food. Many people come out from their property never knowing that fish moved through their backyard! 🍷

Alexis Gonzalez with a slot trout, found in a deep rock bottom area, the only place left that holds water on a negative low tide. Photo credit: Jon Mulliken



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BY JONATHAN MULLIKEN



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TALES FROM "THE OLD GUY"

by Dave Mallory

Last month we talked about ice fishing for Northern Pike and Perch. What I didn't cover was how we also fished for Lake Trout and Salmon. The techniques were similar but in different areas, but will save that for another day.

What I want to talk about today is a fun encounter I had with a Dolphin a few years ago. To start with, there are similarities and differences between a Dolphin and a Porpoise. Let us begin with the similarities. They are very much alike and both are toothed whales, which means both are mammals, not fish. That can be a little confusing because there is also a Dolphin fish, but not related at all. Looking at the differences between the Dolphin mammal and the Porpoise, we find that the Porpoise is generally shorter, has a shorter nose, smaller mouth and usually likes to live in cooler waters. That tells us what we see here in Tampa Bay are usually Dolphin.

When a Dolphin shows up next to the boat looking for a free meal, Captain George sometimes

shoots a water gun towards them. That usually chases them off because they hate being touched by anything.

On this particular day, we were fishing for Snook and Redfish with an occasional Trout. We had a few fish to count, but not many. The good thing was, we hadn't seen any Dolphin trying to eat anything we threw back. Sometimes we quietly release them on the other side of the boat and sometimes put them in the chum bat to get them away from the boat.

I hooked a fish and it started jumping like a Tarpon, making a lot of noise. That sometimes will attract a Dolphin. What I had hooked was a big Ladyfish. As I was fighting it, a Dolphin charged up and grabbed it. Usually, as soon as they feel any pressure, they will immediately drop the fish. Not this one! He took off with my fish and the fight was on.

We tightened the drag as much as we dared because the Dolphin was taking line out at an astounding rate and all I could do was hang on.

Neither one of us would give in. After sitting there for a bit, he started going from side to

side while keeping about 80 yards off the boat. This went on for about five or six minutes. He was getting frustrated and I just hung on.

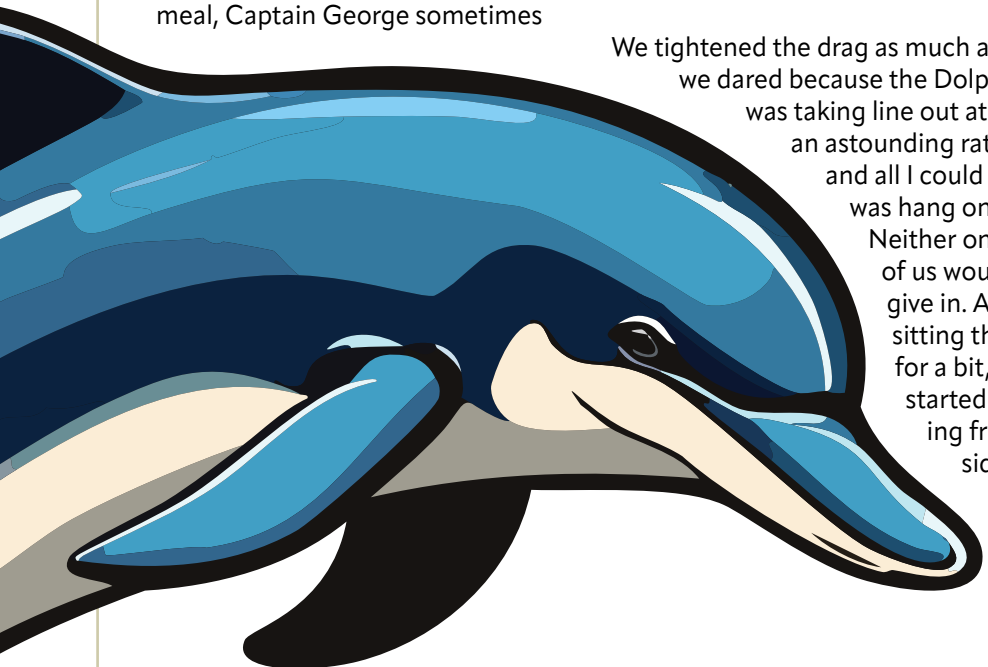
Will this ever end? I banged on the side of the pole and he didn't like that. He started moving again but this time he was slowly

coming toward the boat. I kept the pressure on him and gradually gained a little line.

At that time, I think, I backed off on the pressure a little. He turned around and started ripping out line again. He stopped when he got to about 100 yards and turned toward the boat again. He stuck his head out of the water to look at us, as if to say, "This is my fish and I want it!" He very slowly started swimming toward the boat again, stopping now and again, just to make sure we still wanted our fish. He continued toward the boat until he was about 10 yards away. He stuck his head out again, looked at us and spit what was left of the ladyfish at us. He swam away as we laughed at the whole scene. I reeled in what was left of the fish, took it off the hook and threw it back in the water.

As soon as it hit the water, the Dolphin sprang out from under the boat, grabbed the fish and swam away. We hadn't seen him get under the boat, so it was quite a surprise. We had a great laugh and went back to fishing. We ended up catching ten Snapper, two Redfish, several Snook, one Trout and the Dolphin. Just another fun day of fishing surprises! 🍷

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



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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

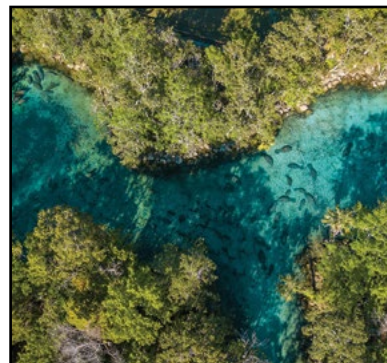
As the Manatee Capital of the World, Crystal River takes great pride in being at the forefront of manatee and local ecosystem conservation. These continued efforts help ensure these gentle giants have adequate food sources and a safe refuge yearly from November to early April.

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

Sheepshead fishing is at its prime the large female are hanging around the ledges and rock piles in Tampa Bay until end of the month. Best set up a #1 J-Hook with 15-pound fluoro-carbon leader at least 3-feet long with a ½ oz to 1 oz egg sinker depending on tide movement. My favorite "go-to" baits are Fiddler Crabs or medium-sized live Shrimp. The lighter the leader, the more bites you will get. If your tides are slow moving, I also use what is called a Yellowtail Jig; nothing more than a 1/0 hook with lead on the shank and they come in different colors. They're great for shallow water fishing around docks.

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

Sheepshead will be in full swing with shrimp and fiddler crabs being the top baits. Look for them at the bridges, docks and rock piles. This month the power plant outflows can hold a wide variety of species due to the warm water outflow. From Sharks, Cobia and Tarpon to Jacks and more. You will also find gamefish like Snook, Trout and Redfish sunning themselves in shallow water on the warmer days. This sets up the day for some exciting sight fishing. Whether you are using artificial lures or live bait try to make a light presentation to not scare the fish in shallow water. A weightless presentation is the best.

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Casting a net the traditional way is far from light work! You are often left saturated, messy and sore from heaving the net over your shoulder. The Amaross net caster is the perfect addition to your fishing toolbox.

The Amaross Caster has been designed to put less strain on your body when casting, so you can spend less time mucking around & more time doing the important stuff

(casting of course). With the Amaross Caster you will never need to haul your wet net over your shoulder again!



The caster is made from High-Tech Nylon material and weighs in at around 1.5lbs. The caster is robust, durable and octagonal in shape with a high pistol grip handle for stability. The octagonal pyramid at the centre disperses the weight into 8 individual pockets around the perimeter for even weight distribution, while the sides of the octagonal caster slope outwards for easy dispersal of the net when thrown.



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We have tested the Amaross Caster with their 6, 8 & 10 foot nets and so far, they work like a champ! Launch your net using the caster with a spiral type motion, flicking outwards and upwards; the faster you do this, the better the weights will be dispersed and as the centrifugal force gets hold of the weights, it will make a perfect circle everytime.

This product could be used by beginners, those casting in muddy messy waters and those with injuries or throwing difficulties. The Amaross Caster is the world's easiest way to cast a net. After only a few tries, you'll be casting confidently!

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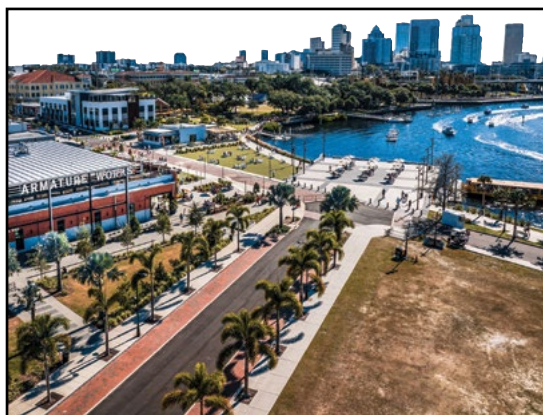
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This Annual Outdoors Show will span over three days, with raffle giveaways, dozens of fun activities and local vendors all weekend! The family-friendly event will feature the beautiful downtown Tampa skyline, ability to tour boats in the water, the Armature Works Food Hall, dog friendly outdoor space, seminars, and activities throughout the whole show.

There will also be meet and greet opportunities with the News Channel 8 Anchors and local host, Misty Wells from the hit Outdoor TV Show, "Let's Take it Outside" airing on Discovery Channel. Stay tuned because more celebrity guests and hosts will be announced as we draw closer to the event date.



With nearly 400,000 square feet of exhibits and activity space, the Expo is the perfect place to explore boats of all shapes and sizes, boating accessories, fishing gear, apparel, outdoor supplies, and much more. Check out high end luxury vessels, ski and sportfishing boats, pontoon, family, and speed boats showcased by multiple manufacturers and dealers. Guests can take advantage of weekend seminars featuring talks on fresh and saltwater fishing, fly-fishing, boating, and more. Learn

the latest tips, tricks, strategies, and advice from the industry's most renowned professionals.

The 33rd Annual News Channel 8 Outdoors Expo and Boat Show takes place on Friday, April 5th, from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday, April 6th from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday, April 7th from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Armature Works located at 1910 N Ola Avenue in Tampa. Parking at Armature Works will be event pricing in the lots, street and parking garage. You could also use the Riverwalk or Pirate Taxi! **Remember...admission to the event is FREE, so we will see you and your crew there!**



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FINDING OLD FISHING SPOTS AGAIN

by Captain Sergio Atanes

Sometimes we get carried away trying to find new fishing spots and we forget the old ones that got us started. February is usually cold and still has plenty of negative tides which are great for finding new spots and to help reunite us with some old ones. Whether you are a shore fisherman or using a watercraft, there are plenty of places to fish that are often overlooked.

First, take a few minutes and make some notes of old areas you used to fish and give them a try. The biggest problem I see, and I have lived in the Tampa area all my life, is the huge increase in population. As of last count, the number of registered boats in the Tampa Bay market is over 103,000.

So, let's get down to nitty gritty on where to start fishing in Upper Tampa Bay.

You have **Rocky Creek** which boasts great fishing in the Winter and **Double Branch** is loaded with Trout and small Black Drum in the potholes.

In the **Howard Frankland** area look at Big Island Channel on the Northwest side of bridge; plenty of Trout, Sheepshead and Redfish action, especially



around the sunken barge. And yes, there is an old barge sunken along the shoreline in front of Big Island. The charts show 1-foot or less, but the cut between the island and interstate is over 10 feet deep.



The area surrounding the **Gandy Bridge** has rock piles; just in front of Marine Reserve on the Northeast side as you enter the bridge. It holds a little of everything on high tides and the channel leading into the power plant should have plenty of Silver Trout.

The **St. Pete Airport** rocks always hold nice Sheepshead, Redfish and Flounder. Use a live Shrimp with a 1/0 circle and a #4 split shot about 3 inches from the eye of the hook.

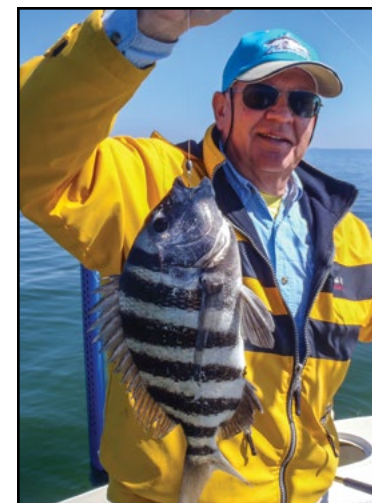
In **Downtown Tampa**, the warm Hillsborough River attracts Snook, Reds, Trout, and Sheepshead. Fish the rocky shoreline and the pillars of the bridges.

The **Apollo Beach Power Plant** is another hot spot for Pompano, Cobia and Trout early in the morning till about 10 am. The colder the weather, the better the bite. Sharks tend to hang out just outside of the mouth of the outlet part of the channel. There is a small rock jetty along side of the power plant with incoming tide; a great spot for Redfish.

The **Little Manatee River** has never let me down in February with just about every species that can be found. Fish the areas around the

drop-offs and cuts with deeper water and this location is best fished with a falling tide.

The **Port Manatee Channel** can keep you busy with Gag Grouper and Mangrove Snapper on light tackle. Cut bait or medium-sized live Shrimp works best. The lighter the tackle, the more bites you will get.

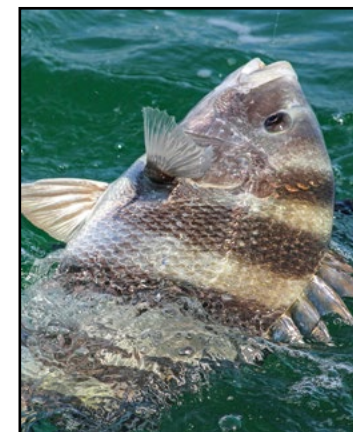


In the **Fort Desoto** area, look for the old bomb holes from the early days when the area was used as a practice bombing range. Some of them have filled in over the years, but many are left; some as shallow as 15 feet deep. The colder the weather, the better the bite, as the Trout especially

tend to migrate there. The Mullet Key shoreline is excellent for wade fishermen or Kayakers because you have a nice, large dropoff that tends to hold nice fish all year long.

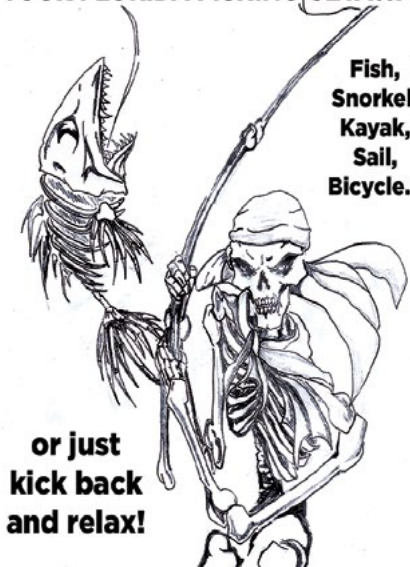
Live Shrimp is almost always my "go-to" bait this time of year. Medium size is perfect. My setup is a 7.6 medium action rod, 3-feet of 15lb fluorocarbon leader, 15lb braided line and a 3000 size spinning reel. ☑

Captain Sergio Atanes is Host of the Fishing Adventures Florida Show on Waypoint TV, Carbon TV and YouTube. He is owner of Reelfishy.com fishing charters and can be reached at: 813-973-7132 or by email at: atanes@msn.com



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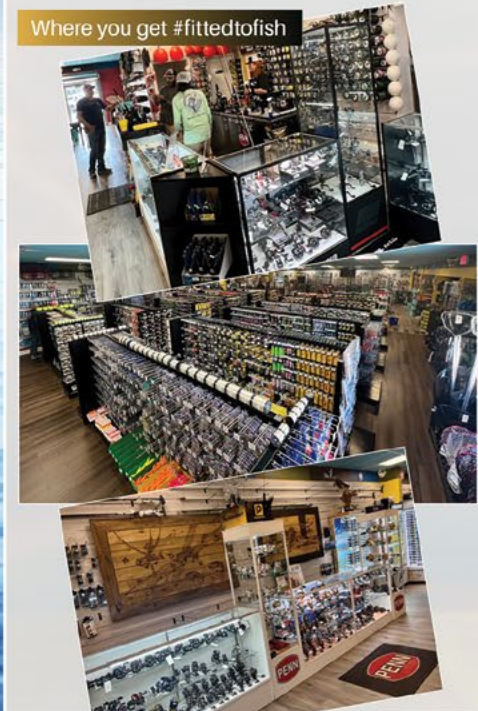
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