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SIMPLE ECONOMICS

I was out boating Saturday, and I was truly amazed to see the numbers of folks out there looking for the not particularly elusive scallops. Boats and snorkelers were wall to wall on the grass flats near Anclote Key. This made me begin to think about how much people are spending to chase after these tasty mollusks.

There are many different ways to go after these delicacies from the deep, so lets consider both a best case and worst-case scenario.

One of the more expensive ways to seek scallops would be on your 35' boat with triple or quadruple mega outboards. To start out, your boat might have cost a cool half a million and even for a fairly short run, you might drop \$500 or so on fuel. In addition to this, you probably have another \$750 per month to store the boat and an equivalent amount in other various maintenance expenses.

Finally you would have probably spent another \$500 on food drinks and equipment. Obviously, it is not fair to consider the full cost of such a boat in this calculation, but the investment would easily justify \$2000 per month for interest and another \$2000 for depreciation. All in all, if I'm anywhere close, you would have around \$6500 invested in your scallops. The boat limit is ½ gallon of shucked meat per day and based on the best information that I can find, this is about 4 pounds of meat. This means that you are paying about \$1625.00 per pound for your scallops; I hope that you really enjoyed those tasty nuggets!!

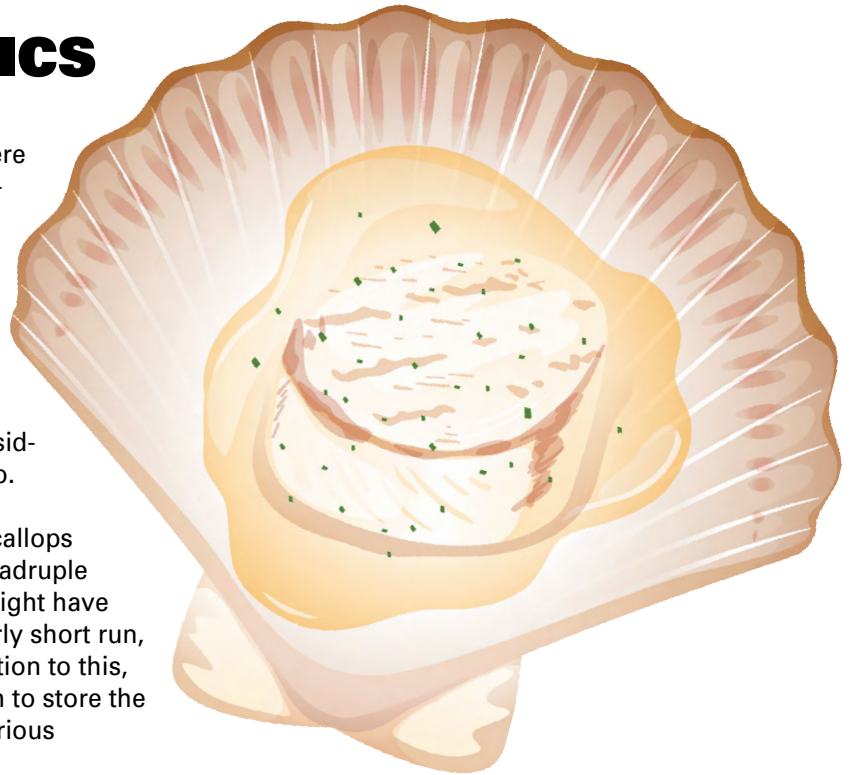
Obviously, there are cheaper ways to catch the stealthy scallop. Probably the most economical way to go after them is to rent one of my pontoon boats. A pontoon that will carry 8 intrepid scallop seekers costs \$325 to \$375 per day plus tax and fuel so lets say \$450 to be sure everything is covered. On top of this you need some food drink, ice and stuff like that. Lets call that another \$150 or so. That gets you out there on the flats to get the same 4 pounds of scallops as the expensive guys get for only \$600.00, what a deal, only \$150.00 per pound.

There is a 3rd option and it is probably the one that I would choose. I would simply go to Pelican Point Seafood in Tarpon Springs and buy plenty of tasty scallops. The other thing that I prefer about this option is that there is no limit and there is NO SHUCKING!!

Don't get me wrong, I have spent many thousands of dollars buying boats and/or traveling to exotic fishing destinations when I could have easily bought the fish for much less.

It is usually the experience that is important, not the fish that you eat.

Merle





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Co-Publisher
Chilled Out Editor

Captain Merle Seamon
merle@onshoreoffshore.com

Co-Publisher
Director of Sales

Sal Liggieri
sal@onshoreoffshore.com | 727.359.3471

The Design Dude



Bryan R. Hudson
info@fishbonecreative.com | 727.687.6437
www.fishbonecreative.com

Distributors

Sal Liggieri

Contributing Writers

Merle Seamon
Tom Mohrbach
Misty Wells
Amanda Gilbert
Captain George Hastick
Captain John Rivers
Captain Sergio Atanes
Christine Steele

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HOT & HUMID

by Tom Mohrbach

My wife and I have lived full-time in Florida for six years. We are sun lovers and knew Florida summers were hot. We were happy to say goodbye to Michigan winters and haven't missed them a bit. However, we were not prepared for the extreme June, July, and August humidity and are still struggling to adapt. Sometimes when I walk out my door, I gaze upwards to see who dumped a bucket of water on me, only to discover no one is on my roof and it's not raining! I'm hoping in another six years to get used to it, but for now, I'm a sweaty mess all summer. Thank God for air conditioning.

Fishing, although I usually love it, is difficult for me to enjoy when it is 95 degrees out and 90% humidity. I know many anglers go nightfishing this time of year to beat the heat, but when you're in bed by ten o'clock, and it's light until nine, that doesn't work out so well. My best solution is to get in the water. Nothing beats the heat and humidity like wading into the surf and doing an occasional full-body submersion to cool off. I have to come to understand that some folks even get baptized this way.

I know what regular readers of my column are thinking. There is no way that I would wade into a freshwater pond due to my ex-



treme fear of alligators. You, dear regular readers, are correct. I'm talking saltwater fishing. Surprisingly, I'm not as fearful of sharks as I am of gators. Not that I want one as a pet, nor would I get in a shark cage and be lowered among hungry Great Whites, but I'm okay wading in ocean waters as long as I don't see a fin circling the waters nearby.

Thus, I found myself fishing; wading off the north side of Fred Howard Beach with my trusty Ugly Stick and Penn reel. I was barely in the water before I saw a

decent size Snook cruise right past me.

I affixed a couple of live Shrimp to a combo hook & leader with a pyramid sinker and flung it out there. It was a heat advisory day, and the morning sun was already blazing. The big sinker no sooner splashed down than I was rewarded with a quick double tap. I jerked the rod tip back and reeled in but only had a healthy clump of seaweed on empty hooks. This routine was repeated a few more times until I finally hauled in a Sheepshead.

I would have stayed in the spot longer as, despite the extreme heat, the water kept me cool. But swimmers soon invaded the area making fishing difficult. I waded back to shore and moved out to the first bridge on the causeway.

Surprisingly it was empty despite it being high tide. There wasn't any shade, but a decent sea breeze had kicked up. I landed a couple of Mangrove Snapper but soon hooked the cover fish I had been dreaming about since I moved here.

The giant beast took a nice chunk of cut bait and practically busted my rod in half. I whooped and hollered with joy as I cranked my reel while the drag screamed. I almost fell over backward when my line abruptly became slack. A few tears rolled down my

cheeks as I reeled in the slack line, never having even caught a glimpse of the mighty fish. My entire rig was gone, and the end of the line was frayed. I returned a few days later, hoping to better my luck, but it was not to be. I wasn't alone as several other anglers fishing nearby were only catching Pinfish and an occasional Mangrove Snapper.

I heard over and over that it was just too hot! Despite the heat and lack of quality fish, a trio of boys was fishing nearby. Luke, Josh, and Taylin hooted and hollered every time they landed a Pinfish as though it was a monster. They reminded me to appreciate just being able to fish. Not every catch is a monster, but every cast definitely brings hope for hooking one! ☑

Tom Mohrbach is a retired police officer. He has published four novels since his retirement. All of his books are available to order on Amazon. Tom recommends that outdoor enthusiasts who like action/adventure stories check out his novel, Northern Nightmare. See his website: tommohrbach.com for additional information on all of his books.

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THE RIVERS REPORT

by Captain John Rivers

The inshore bite has been very good for many popular and sought after species in Tampa Bay! So, let's start with Spanish Mackerel cause they can be found all over Tampa Bay right now including around the markers and near the flats where there is a abundant amount of bait.



Next on the menu is Mangrove Snapper. The bite has really picked up the past two weeks and is only going to get better. Chum heavily, use a light leader and you'll have good results.

Redfish has been off and on, at least for me over the past few weeks. I know a few areas that are holding them, but getting them to eat is another story! You must catch the tide right and have the right bait, which is either a fresh cut Pinfish or fresh, dead Threadfin.



Snook fishing has been great even though it's July and it's hot out. The fish that have been out on the beach are starting to make their way back into the bay, but if you're out on the beach, no worries,

there are still plenty of big Snook to be caught. Just remember, they are out of season, so take extra care to make sure they swim off alive. One key thing is to find clean water and hit it on the right tide and you'll have a productive day. On my last trip, we crushed the Snook with over



20+ fish and a few over 27-inches. On light tackle these fish are tons of fun and great for families or the serious angler.

Trout fishing is also very good; both in the bay and off the beaches. The key is to hit them early in the morning or close to sunset and you'll do well. Over the next month the fishing will pretty much stay the same, and you just need to find clean water for Snook, fish shaded spots for Redfish in the middle of the day and Mackerel are pretty much on every marker and near the flats.



Yes, July can be hot, but don't let that prevent you from booking a Tampa Bay Fishing Trip with Rivers to Bay Fishing Charters, as we are still bending the rods and I'll have plenty of water on board to keep you in the fight. 🎣

Captain John Rivers has a lifetime of fishing knowledge and over 20 years of experience fishing the gulf coast. For more information or to book an unforgettable fishing trip, please call 727-313-1781.



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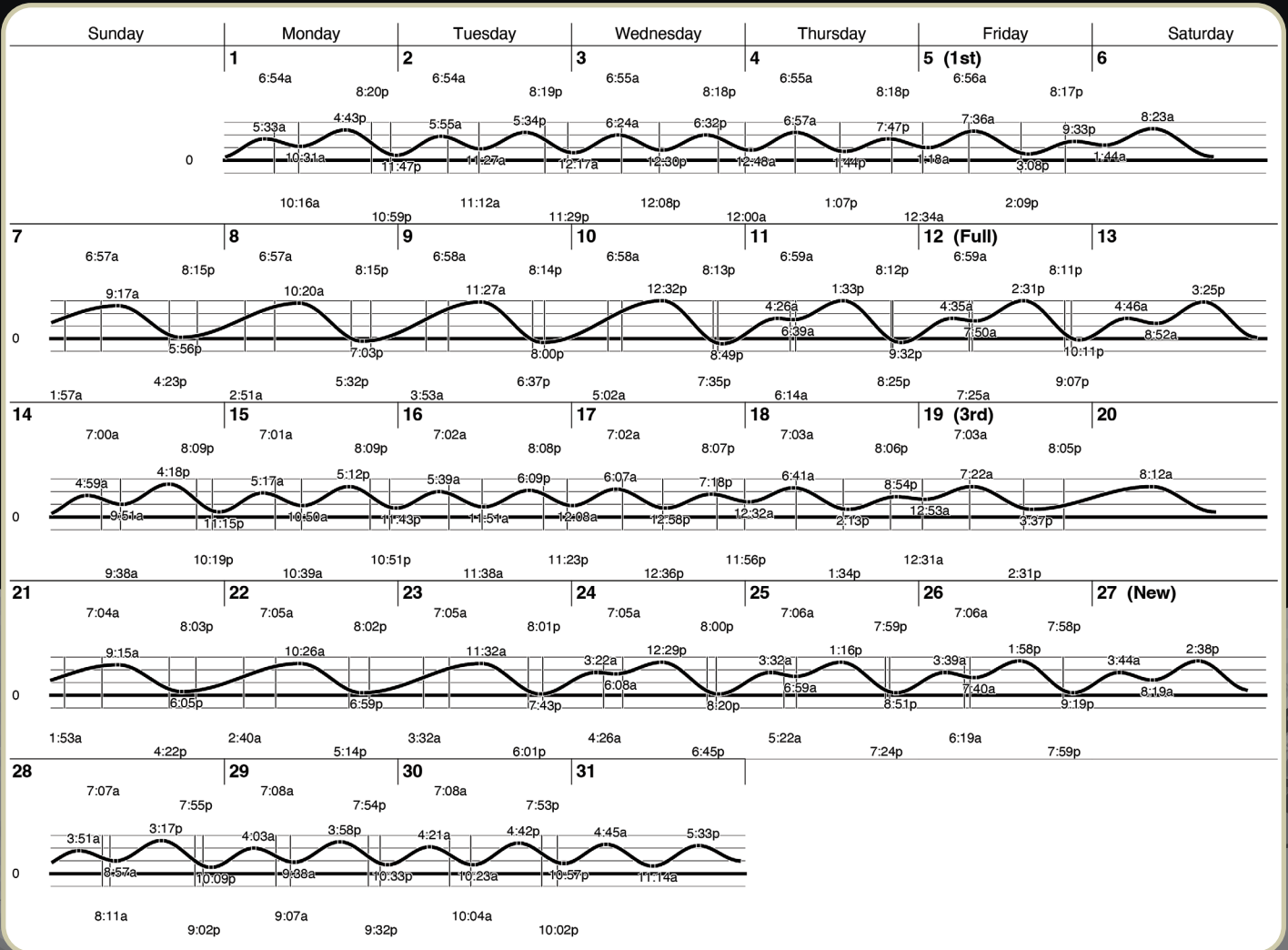


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Conversions for Clearwater Beach Area

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	Withlacochee 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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SOUTHEASTERN FISHING TACKLE TURNING HEADS WITH STUNNING TRANSFORMATION!

If you haven't been over to Southeastern Fishing Tackle lately, at the corner of North Florida Avenue and Floribraska, just north of downtown Tampa, you should make the trip. The company is under new ownership and the renovations begun months ago are not done yet. Many things inside and out have changed but their commitment to customer service and knowledgeable staff have remained the same. You've got to come in and see the new look.

"When our regular clients come in, they can't believe they're walking into the same store they've been coming to for decades," said General Manager, Doug Ray.

"We're really proud to show off our new look and we're not done with the changes to the property," said Ray.



The parking lot is going to be redone to add additional parking spots. The entire property is getting a face-lift both inside and outside. St. Petersburg muralist Jenny Pearl has completed two new murals on the walls facing North Florida with a breathtaking view of what's under the water's surface in Tampa Bay.

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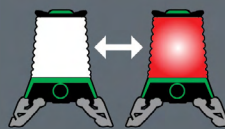


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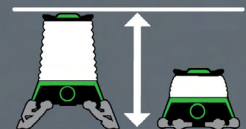
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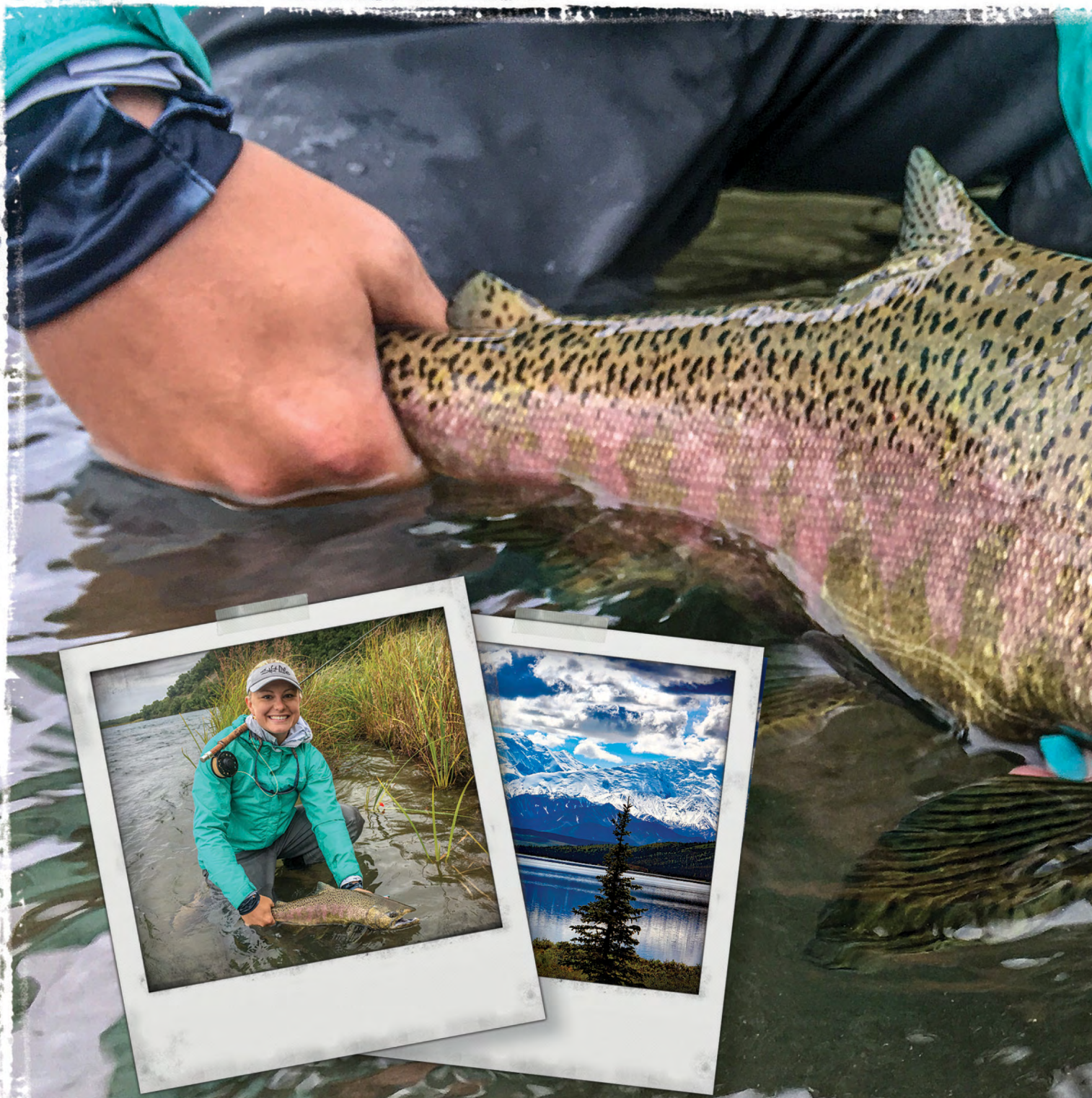


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ALONE IN



T ALASKA

"An Adventure with Amanda Gilbert"

Three connections, eight hours of layover time and eighteen hours later, I landed in King Salmon, Alaska; a 29 year old Floridian female embarking on a journey from one sportsman's paradise to another- Alone!

You see, a great journey is not measured by the distance one travels or the money one spends, but by the special moments and unique experiences along the way. Usually these memories are made with close friends or family members, but my life is never that ordinary, instead, I accidentally booked a flight one month later than the rest of the group. While panicking to find an alternative solution, I remembered a friend once told me that the best time to fish was when you can and I'd reckon the same was true for traveling.

One month later, I stepped off the 34 passenger airplane, took in a breath of fresh air and was wowed by my first view of the Alaskan mountains. Little did I know, these views would soon bring tears to my eyes. Meanwhile, Mikee the lodge manager patiently waited for me inside the airport. He walked up snickering, pointed at my flip flops and said, "You must be Amanda." We drove back to the King Salmon Lodge just in time for an evening Coho bite on the NakNek river. I



dropped off my luggage, changed into waders and within an hour I was 5 minutes downriver. I realized a long-time dream had just come true, I was salmon fishing in Alaska!!

These silver torpedoes, also known as Silver Salmon were targeting pink jig heads tied with pink feathers. A steady 3 second retrieve with a jerk-jerk of my Tsunami travel rod/reel combo had the fish pulling drag and showing off their areal skills in no time. The audience was cheering as I reeled in my first salmon, then the 2nd and then the 3rd. While fighting my 4th silver, another angler jokingly asked "are you going to save any for the rest of us?" I laughed. It must have been beginners luck because the only tight line that afternoon was mine.



Later that evening, Matt, another lodge manager introduced me to the staff, a few locals, and a wonderful group of gentleman who were also staying at KSL. We shared stories, laughed about unique experiences and before you know it, I was invited on a spontaneous excursion to a remote hunting lodge. The first leg of the trip involved a van ride to the airport and then a private jet ride to Anchorage. Hesitation set in on the second leg of the trip, "Am I really about to get on a helicopter and fly

to the middle of nowhere with 6 grown men I've known for less than 12 hours?" I prayed and prayed about it. Eventually the voice in my head said "Go for it - you only live once and this is a once in a lifetime opportunity." So, off to the middle of nowhere I went.

Alaska truly is, "Mother Nature's Showcase," and not even a thousand words could explain the amount of beauty I witnessed through those helicopter windows. I wanted to record and photograph it all and almost forgot to paint my own memories. With so many shades of yellow, green, brown and blue accompanied by ever-changing terrain, my eyes were fixed on the land in amazement. Waterfalls, rivers, streams, lakes, glaciers, valleys, snow capped mountains, bears, moose and beauty as far as the eye can see. An overwhelming amount of peace swept through my body, leaving a tear streaming down my face.

Hours later, I was walking through two rapid flowing streams and climbing down a steep canyon. Rocks were sliding out from beneath my feet and branches were breaking while



sprawled out on the steep cliff, but danger is the spice of life so I kept going. I landed at the plunge pool of a majestic waterfall, took off my shoes, and walked through one of the slower moving pools. After enjoying several peaceful moments we made our way back down the mountain and arrived at camp just in time for dinner, drinks and some campfire stories.

The next morning we ate a delicious breakfast and began our flight back to Anchorage. This time, I stowed the camera and enjoyed the view with my own eyes. Boy am I glad I made that decision, about 15 minutes into

the flight we were hovering over a valley of plane wrecks. Apparently, this was a common but dangerous pass for airline traffic. Due to unforeseen fog and other atmospheric changes, this valley had become a memorial site. The scattered debris got me thinking about the risks we take in life and whether they are worth it?

I didn't think anything could top the waterfall, but once again I was surprised with another unforgettable experience. We landed in the middle of what I called a "glacier graveyard." From the air, it was hard to grasp the grandiosity of these ice chunks. Upon



landing, they made the helicopters look like a couple of hawks among a herd of mammoths. In all reality, these glaciers could have been around since the “Ice age.” After stepping out of the helicopter I jogged over to one of the glaciers and then into a small ice cave. It was glowing a breathtaking shade of blue. I realized that mine may have been the first set of footprints ever on this piece of earth. I wanted to spend hours prancing around, leaving my imprint behind, but I had another unexpected thrill ride waiting for me back at the lodge.

Later that afternoon I parted ways with these incredibly humble men and returned to KSL. The guides were already out, so Matt dropped me off at a nearby lodge to fish from the dock. I saw salmon breaching the surface, but a cast was just out of range. I asked one of the employees if his lodge had any kayaks or paddle boards and with a bewildered look, he replied “I think so but I’ve never seen anyone use them.” We ended up finding them behind a barn and launched one from the dock. I paddled over to a small grass patch and cast in the middle of the rolling salmon and within minutes, I was hooked up. Where else on earth can you slide down huge ice chunks early in the day and then get pulled around on a salmon-powered sleigh ride? This was amazing!

The rest of my trip was spent learning a variety of fly-fishing techniques. My guide and instructor, Ryan Davey, was extremely patient with me, considering this was my first time fly-fishing. We were using ‘strike indicators,’ casting upstream and ‘mending’ with a slow ‘lift and lay of the line.’ I was instructed to set the hook by lifting and pulling the line downstream. After setting the hook, I had to ‘strip the line’ and hold just enough tension. It was a balancing act that I was not used to, but it finally clicked and eventually I landed my FIRST fish on FLY; a Jack King Salmon! By the end of the day, I caught several jack kings, dolly varden, rainbow trout and cohos—all on FLY!!

With two days left, I decided to fly out to Brooks Camp, also known as Katmai National

Park and Preserve. This park is well known for a large population of brown bears in the forest and down by the river’s edge at the base of the falls where they search for a tasty meal. August is a spectacular time to spot huge schools of Sockeye, also known as red salmon. The salmon run begins in late June, when the fish travel from Bristol bay into the Nak Nek River. The fish spawn during the months of August and September. This creates an excellent fishery for rainbow trout by using beads and strike indicators, since the trout are feeding on salmon eggs. Not only did I land several beautiful rainbow trout that afternoon, I also saw hundreds of sockeye and walked among a dozen brown bears. My final day in Alaska was spent targeting



Northern Pike on fly. My excitement was building up while Ryan tied on a new fly, a topwater popper. After two or three throws and a pop, pop, pop of the fly, I saw the first wake and then a huge topwater strike! These “water wolves” were quite vicious. As long as I cast in their line of sight and made some ruckus, it was an almost guaranteed strike. After releasing dozens of these predatory fish, we headed back towards the lodge for dinner. I landed 2 more Cohos and a beautiful rainbow trout on fly, before my last hour was up, but this trip wasn’t complete. I had one more thing on my list to-do... Swim in Alaska! I took a victory dive into the Nak-Nek, thanked God I didn’t go into hypothermia and gave him my praises for such an incredible Alaskan adventure! ▣

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REEL IN AWESOME IN CRYSTAL RIVER

Cast your line in Citrus County, Florida for world-class fishing, year-round!

by Christine Steele

Set on Florida's Nature Coast, just a short drive from Orlando, Tampa, Gainesville and Ocala, Discover Crystal River is a true sportsman's paradise. Three spring-fed rivers — the Homosassa, the Chassahowitzka and the Crystal — feed into the Gulf of Mexico and create a rich fishing habitat.

This combination of fresh and salt water fishing, along with the pristine untouched character of the landscape and easy, relaxed pace of life, make Citrus County a world-class fishing destination year-round.

GO COASTAL OR GO FRESH

Homosassa Bay, with its mangrove shorelines, dense seagrass beds and network of islands, is known for its giant Redfish, but that isn't the only species that will give you reel-burning thrills in this authentic Old Florida destination. You'll also find an abundance of Spotted Seatrout, Cobia and Spanish Mackerel ready to challenge the best of light tackle anglers. The clear, pristine flats are perfect for drifting or trolling along and taking in the scenic beauty all around.

At the mouth of the Crystal River, reel in Tarpon, Cobia, Redfish, Seatrout or venture offshore to deeper waters for Snapper, Grouper and Amberjack. At the river's headwaters, you'll find Bass, Sheepshead, Mullet and Bluegill.

Off the coast, the 19,000-acre Tsala Apopka chain of lakes connect with the Inverness and Floral City pools in Citrus County that are prime for landing largemouth bass. Shellcracker and Bluegills also flourish throughout the chain, making this a quality, year-round freshwater fishing destination.

FISHING IS A WAY OF LIFE

Fishing goes back generations in Citrus County. Guides with a lifetime of experience on the water can help you find the best honeyholes to access boatloads of fish, both inshore and offshore.

While visiting, be sure to spend some time swapping fish stories with the locals at unique spots like MacRae's or the Monkey Bar in Homosassa, or Peck's Old Port Cove in Ozello. Or, just sit back and watch the boats go by as you relax with a cold one after a successful day on the water.

During the summer months, Citrus County's famous scallop season is in full swing. The waters off Crystal River and Homosassa are two of only a handful of places in Florida where you can gather buckets of fresh, juicy scallops. Dive into this local tradition likened to an underwater easter egg hunt.

FROM FISH TO FORK

After a fantastic day on the water, pull your boat up to shore and bring your buckets of crabs, cleaned scallops or fish to one of more than a dozen restaurants or seafood shacks where a local chef will cook your catch in this time-honored Florida tradition.

Call ahead and let them know you're coming, then have a seat and let them serve it up to you with all the fixin's, fresh from the water and onto your plate.

With so much to see and do, plan your next fishing trip to Citrus County and discover authentically awesome fishing and more in the soul of Florida. ☑

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HOOKING SNOOK IN CLEARWATER

by Misty Wells

Snook, are one of the most sought after gamefish in our area and the State of Florida, for that matter. They bite and fight harder than almost any other fish; they are very smart and are quick to avoid capture. They are known for their long runs, speed, and acrobatic leaps, very similar to Tarpon. If you have ever hooked a Snook you know the minute they are hooked because they run to the mangroves or find a pylon to wrap you around for the "getaway." Snook are very important to our anglers, captains and to our area when it comes to the economics of the Sportfishing Industry.

You can fish for Snook almost anywhere as their habitat ranges from cruising the beaches and jetties, hanging out around the docks to waiting in the darkness of the passes and of course, on the edges of potholes and the Mangroves. Snook are ambush predators, so anywhere they can lay in wait undetected for a school of bait to swim by, you are likely to find them. They will also go after a wide variety of baits from live Pilchards to large Threadfins, Pinfish and even cut Ladyfish. I was inducted into the "40-inch Club" using cut Ladyfish in Tampa Bay with Capt. Brett Norris fishing right off the edge of the mangroves.

In the past we have had some severe issues with our Snook populations due to Snook being among three of the local species that are very sensitive to cold weather. It doesn't get cold in Florida often, however, there have been times where water temperatures have dropped below 60 degrees for periods of time and we have lost hundreds of Snook in our area.

The good news is whether the Snook are fighting the weather or red tide there are programs in place to combat the loss of Snook in our area and to repopulate the species. I wanted to learn more about some of the projects that have taken place in our area for Snook, so I planned a day on the water with my friend Kevin Hayslett and his wife Melisa. I figured let's keep it local style, so I called up another friend of mine Scott Flesh

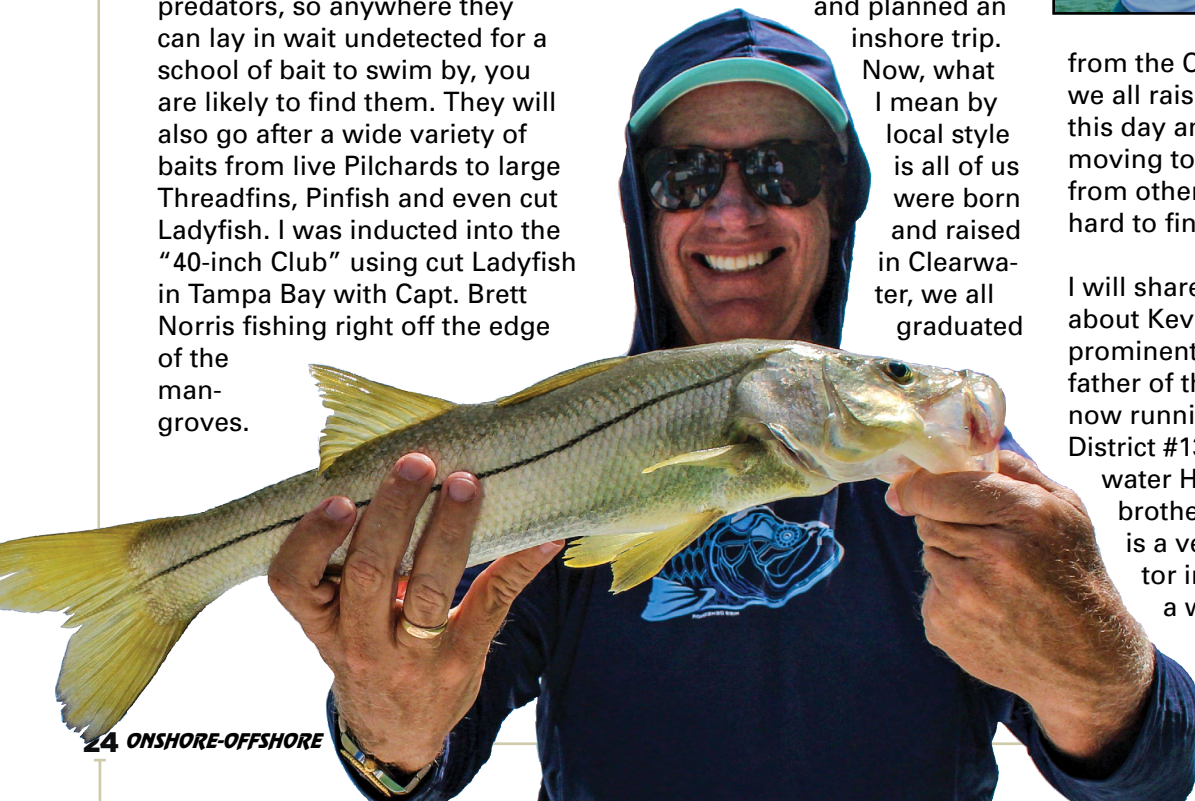
and planned an inshore trip.

Now, what I mean by local style is all of us were born and raised in Clearwater, we all graduated



from the Clearwater High, and we all raised our families here. In this day and age with everyone moving to Florida and Clearwater from other states, true locals are hard to find.

I will share a little background about Kevin Hayslett. He is a very prominent attorney, husband, father of three sons, and he is now running for Congress in our District #13. I graduated Clearwater High with his younger brother Kenny Hayslett, who is a very successful Realtor in our area, has raised a wonderful family and loves to fish, as well.



So, all that being said, in my mind I was sure that I was going to catch more Snook than Kevin because how does he have time to fish, right? Scott checked the tides and told us be ready at 8 a.m. for pick-up. I was excited because I had not fished for Snook in my own backyard in a few months.

The first spot we went to was quite a surprise. Talk about fishing off the beach; I was amazed that we were catching big Snook right there. No, I can't tell you where the spot was; however, I can tell you the go-to bait that day was live Pilchards on light tackle and light line. We moved down to some pylons and structure and caught quite a few pitching baits under the pier. Once we wore out our welcome it was time to check the jetties and the bite was hot there, as well. Its safe to say that the Snook population in Clearwater is strong and Fishing Clearwater Inshore has it dialed in. Thank you, Scott.

While we were Snook fishing it was good to get to know Kevin and Melisa. Kevin shared with me some of the Snook projects that he had been a part of with Mote Marine when he was a board member. Mote developed technology to culture common

Snook back in the 1980s, focused specifically on catching wild Snook during the spawning season then transferring them to tanks to collect the fertilized eggs which produced stock enhancement.

In 2006, Mote successfully matured and spawned Snook in captivity during the natural spawning season. In 2007 and 2008, they successfully matured and spawned Snook two months before the natural spawning season, a first for this species held in captivity. Another program they are working on is juvenile production or nursery culture, research focused on increasing the numbers of healthy juvenile Snook for stock enhancement. I learned a lot about the science of our Snook population and how much effort goes into keeping our natural resources in place.

While out on the water with Kevin I learned he is a good angler and that he truly cares about Clearwater. He has done a lot behind the scenes to make it a better place, not only to fish, but live. Kevin cares about our community and our state, he takes an active role in preserving our way of life on land and the water. We do need to think about who we

are voting for to represent our fishing district and what they stand for. Having a true local that cares about our district, cares about our environment and our way of life is crucial. Anyone who can keep up with me Snook fishing, play an active role in stock enhancement, raise three wonderful sons, and marry a wife that loves to fish, has my vote! ☑

Misty Wells Producer & Host of "Let's Take It Outside" TV show airing to 38 million on Bally Sports, World Fishing Network, Waypoint TV, Hunt Channel, MOTV, 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 3,500 children & counting.



MANGROVE SNAPPER: THE TREAT OF TAMPA BAY

by Captain George Hastick

Mangrove snapper are one of the sweetest tasting fish in Tampa Bay. I am very happy to see them making a comeback after that nasty red tide we had in 2021 that stemmed from the Piney Point dumping millions of gallons of bad water into Tampa Bay. Now they say they are going to release more water into Tampa Bay again in their efforts to close the plant down for good. This time they say it is just rainwater that is safe, but we will see about that! The water was supposedly treated and safe last time.

Well, as of right now, the Mangrove Snappers bite is alive in

the bay and they are great for a hardy fight and an even better meal. Depending on where you are fishing, Mangrove Snapper can vary in size in the bay from 10 inches all the way up to 24 inches with some trophies even larger than that. I can remember a few trips in the bay that were just stellar with fish to 24 inches which is awesome for never leaving the bay!

So, where do you start to look for Mangrove Snapper in the bay? Well, that is the thing about Snapper in the bay, you can catch them from land or a boat. Most

of your bridge pilings will hold Snapper along with the many fishing piers in the bay.



There are many small piers and residential bridges, along with the larger more known areas that can be very productive. To name a few, the Skyway and Fort DeSoto Fishing Piers, Tierra Verde, Gandy and the smaller bridges leading out to the Skyway Bridge and the Skyway Bridge itself are all Mangrove Snapper magnets. If you look on charts or Google the artificial reefs in the bay you will see a list with GPS coordinates of quite a few like St. Pete Pier Bay Reef, Picnic Island Reef, Howard Franklin Reef, Courtney Campbell Reef, Ballast Point Reef, Bahia Beach Reef and Port Manatee Reef just to name a few.



The best situation is when you can find your own rock pile or mangrove shoreline that is holding the snapper. Then you can have your own sweet spot for these tasty fish. The area around Port Manatee and the Skyway Bridge along with the edges of the shipping channel between the two can be very productive.

If the open waters of the bay are not your thing you can readily catch Mangrove Snapper on the flats in 2-5 feet of water near many of the miles of mangrove shorelines, hence the name Mangrove Snapper. I like catching them inshore myself with light tackle and even sight casting to them.

Inshore, I like to use a 7'6", 8-17 lb. rod with 10 lb. test and 20-25 lb. fluorocarbon leader. This way, if a nice Snook or Redfish takes your offering, you are not out matched and can still catch the larger fish that also hang out in the mangroves. That same set up with a 3/4 -1 oz. jighead will work in those deeper water spots and bridges. Inshore bridges, I use just enough weight to keep the bait where you need it. They will eat a variety of fresh and frozen bait, so don't worry if you do not throw a cast net, you can still catch these fantastic tasting fish.

I like to use small to medium sized Scaled Sardines, Pinfish and Threadfin in the 2-4-inch range. There are times when they will eat shrimp better than the fish, so if you really want to cover yourself, have both. In this heat we are having chunks of cut bait like the ones mentioned will also catch plenty of Snapper and sometimes in the Summer heat it can out produce the live bait.

So go out and try your luck with the Mangrove Snapper. Once you find a few



spots that hold them, it will usually repeat every year. Just take note of the time of year it is and it should repeat again the following year in that same area, at that time. ☑

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



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MY BIGGEST CATCH

by Captain Sergio Atanes

My most memorable gift was given to me by my Uncle Manuel. I was only 5 years old when he arrived from Cuba to live with us until he got on his feet, and at only 18 years old he was already a diehard fishman. In the 50's we lived in Ybor City and in those days, we didn't have parks or a Boys Club in the area. My parents didn't drive so they took the bus to work. My uncle was given an old Nash Rambler from a friend to help us out and he started working in the shipyard within a month of arriving.

He would work until 2 am and go straight to Bayshore Boulevard to tend to his tins; pieces of metal roofing bent to form a half dome. Blue Crab would go under these tins to molt. He would use his Coleman gas lantern and a #12 galvanized tub tied to his waist. Underneath would be either a soft-shell crab that was dinner or a "shedder" crab that was for bait. The "shedder" crabs would be put in the crisper bottom of the refrigerator on damp newspaper and could be kept alive for a week or more.



During the summer we would leave Friday for Boca Grande to fish, and since no interstates were available, we had to make the long trip using US 41. We had to take the last ferry boat leaving from Placida to Boca Grande since there were no bridges connecting the mainland to the island. There, we would fish the shoreline and the old phosphate

dock when we were allowed to for Grouper, Mangrove Snapper, Trout, Redfish, and an occasional Goliath Grouper.

Within a year my uncle received an invitation to join the Army (called the draft in those days) but he had lit the fire within me to become a fisherman. Thanks to his patience and time I spent summers fishing from the old 22nd street bridge riding my bike every morning with my hand made rod from an old broom stick and casting reel donated from a neighbor. While other kids were getting into trouble, I was too busy thinking of catching the big one.

As I grew older, I wanted to give back, so I started a saltwater fishing school and graduated over 7000 adult students since the 80s. Looking back, I didn't do as good a job as I should have with my own kids and now with all these computer games it seems like kids are spending too much time indoors in dark rooms, so I decided to do something about it and had my first Free Kid's Fishing Clinic held at Picnic Park in June.



Many sponsors and volunteers including many captains donated their time and gave up charters to help kids. Mayor Jane Castor also played a big role in helping me out by taking time from her busy schedule to spend time with the kids. Jane is a great angler herself.



Each kid went home with a rod and reel combo, a tote bag with fishing goodies, and hopefully we were able to light that

fire for fishing that my uncle did for me. Soon, we could have many future anglers on the water instead of being locked up in a room playing computer games.

This would be my biggest catch if I were able to get them united with mom or dad on the water sharing some time together.

Looking forward to doing this again soon and please feel free to contact me if you can volunteer or donate items to help kids become anglers.

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Special Thanks to: Leiza Fitzgerald of CCA of Florida & Gena Russo of FWC. 📧

Captain Sergio Atanes is host of Florida West Coast Fishing Report on Facebook and YouTube every Monday night 7-8 p.m. live. He is also host to Aventuras De Pesca USA on national TV and Radio Show. Email the captain at: atanes@msn.com, call 813-973-7132 or visit: reelfishing.com.

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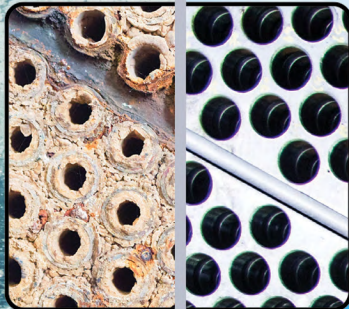

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