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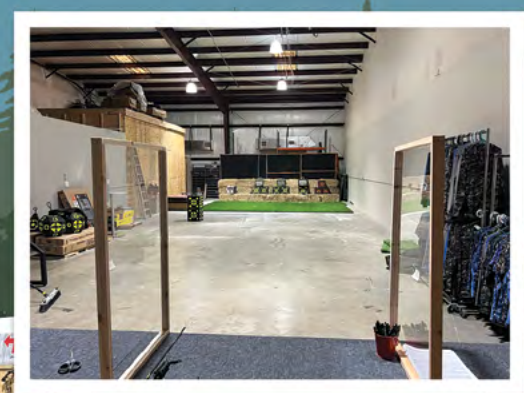
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IF I HAD A BOAT.

Lots of you readers out there already have boats. This column is not for you, although you might still learn a little or get a chuckle out of it. This column is intended for those of you out there who are absolutely certain that everything will fall right into place and your life will be complete, if you only had a boat.

The idea of a boat is just so damn romantic. They give you access to the open seas where you can break the bonds of your work-a-day life and really find true freedom, right?? There are so many different types of boats that there is something for everybody, from the smallest dingy to the largest megayacht.

The reality of the boating experience can be pretty close to the heaven described above, or it can come very near to experiencing the fiery pits of hell. It is really pretty much up to you to determine which way your boating experience goes.

The whole experience starts with the choice of the boat. Pick something appropriate for what you want to do and where you want to go. If you have never ever operated or maintained a boat, start small. Small boats are fairly simple, they are easy to get unstuck (if you happen to forget about the tide) and generally, they are cheaper to fix when you do mess up. I have seen far too many people buy a big complicated boat (because they can) and wind up having a hellish time because they exceeded their skill level. New boats can be quite expensive these days, but you do get a dealer who should stand behind them and help with some of the troubles. If a new boat is your choice, look for an established dealer who has been in business for years. Dealers who survived the 2007/2008 economic crash probably offer good service and aren't going anywhere. If you are going for a used boat, make sure that the major systems are in good order. Get a mechanic to check the compression of the motor and find out the hours, when possible. Most marine motors are capable of running way more hours than you might think, I have almost never seen a worn out boat motor, it is corrosion and improper maintenance and misuse that kills them. Don't worry so much about the little stuff like horn, lights, pumps, etc. They are important for safety, but they are generally easy and cheap to fix.

The most important thing to realize is that, while they may seem to have similarities, a boat is absolutely nothing like your car. Boats are produced by hundreds of relatively small manufacturers, not a handful of mega corporations with billion dollar-automated factories. Boats are much more hand crafted than cars and quality of wiring and other critical systems varies widely between builders. Unlike cars, boats also sit for weeks or months at a time during off-season periods. This is a phenomena that I don't really understand in Florida, but despite year round beautiful weather, many of our friends who came here from the North have retained old habits and they only use their boats during spring and summer. Batteries, fuel systems and electronics, like to be used regularly, when they sit, the gremlins creep in. I can't believe how many of our storage customers show up in April after not seeing their boats for 4 to 6 months and just don't understand why they won't start.

Last, but certainly not least, don't be afraid to admit what you don't know. In our rental fleet, we have very few problems with novice boaters who admit their lack of knowledge and ask for instruction. The boaters who have issues are the ones who think that they know everything and are unwilling to listen and ask questions. A USCG Auxiliary or Power Squadron class is a good place to start and these classes teach you the basics of navigation and safe boating, but they are not really able to offer hands on instruction on the water. There are many well qualified boat Captains who will be glad to go out on your boat and teach you the in's and outs of boating in our area. Don't be afraid to call on them.

Boats can be a lot of fun, but the best advise that I ever saw about having fun on a boat was to go on somebody else's. If you heed this advise, you are almost certain to have a good time, but don't forget, your buddy's boat runs on gas, not thanks, chip in if you want to ever be asked back.

Merle



16



8



10



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ON THE COVER: Captain Jimmy Nelson with a large and very "toothy" King Mackerel caught on a recent outing offshore. Nice fish, captain! Wanna catch one? Turn to page 16 of this issue for some great Mackerel fishing tips!

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LIKE A BLUE MOON...

by Tom Mohrbach

Like a blue moon and planetary alignments, every so often, it seems that the intangible elements necessary to succeed at a goal finally come together. Such a rare moment occurred to me on September 8, 2022, at approximately 8:40am. Standing on the edge of an undisclosed small pond in southwest Pasco County, I watched as ominous thunderclouds marched steadily towards me from the west.

A stand of lush green pine trees of various sizes filled a small island surrounded by black water reminiscent of a moat was before me. A tangle of wild grass and weeds prevented me from getting closer than a dozen feet to the waters edge. It was a peaceful scene except for the thunder rumbling and nearby home construction noises.

A week ago, I spied the pond amid a new development and noticed a lone fisherman there. On this lucky day, I decided to give it a try. A distant lightning bolt concerned



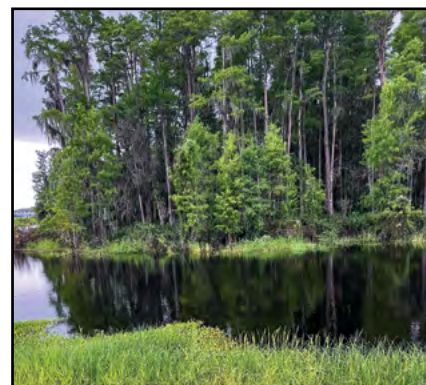
me that I would not even get a cast in, but the storm seemed to pause where it was. I had my trusty "Ugly-Penn" (my combination Ugly Stick Rod and Penn reel) in hand. A black rubber worm, rigged Texas-style, was attached to the line.

Undeterred by the approaching storm, I launched a near-perfect cast to the opposite bank. My worm dropped just a foot or so from the islands shoreline. I wasn't rewarded with a strike until my fifth or sixth such cast when it suddenly felt like a freight train slammed into the bait.

Holy moly fisherman, I thought, this bass was a dandy. It dove deep and hard as I quickly fumbled with my drag. I focused on reeling the fish towards me, something I must admit, it strenuously objected to by the numerous tugs and pulls it exhibited.

I was beginning to make some progress when it erupted from the water like a cruise missile launched from a submarine. I gasped as its tail danced across the black water while marveling at its bulk. On three similar occasions this year, at other ponds, I had hooked such monsters, but each time the dreaded tail dance ended with my lure/worm/spinner being shaken loose. The fishing gods smiled upon me as the hook held and the bass dove beneath the dark waters.

I sensed it was tiring a tad and reeled quickly, fearing I would once again lose a "big-un". The dream bass did one final nose-dive for the grassy reeds before



me. The trusty Ugly-Penn held its ground as I hauled the black beast from the water and pulled it through the twelve feet of weeds. I was praying mightily my braided line would hold.

Once onshore, the bass wasn't finished fighting as it flipped, flopped, thrashed, and bashed on the ground near my feet. I finally wrestled it into submission before removing the nearly straightened hook from its lower jaw.

I snapped a few quick selfies before returning the biggest Florida bass I ever caught back to its lair. No, I didn't weigh it or measure it. No, it wasn't an eight-pounder, but it was plenty big enough for the world's worst fisherman. Beware, bass, I'm starting to figure this fishing thing out! 🎣

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

October usually is the start of our cold fronts and I'm excited because it will definitely fire up the trout and other species! October nights are cooling around the middle 50s which will drop the water temps. It will take a day or two for the fish to adjust, but when it does, the bite will go off for sure!

Redfish are showing up in the middle of Tampa Bay near Picnic Island and up in old Tampa Bay. I've also done very well with Mangrove Snapper in a few of my honey holes.

During these cold fronts look for the trout bite to get better in depths from 4-6 ft of water; top-water and soft plastics are my choice of baits when it comes to fishing for trout.

The snook bite in October is usually very good due to cooler water temps which makes for a fun day on the water. After you've had some fun with the snookies, it's time to play with the Redfish on the flats, which in October, us anglers call them the pumpkin patch.



Over in St. Joseph Sound, the redfish bite and trout bite has been very good. Snook are staging up in the passes and near a few of the bridges.

Thanks for stopping by and have a safe and Happy Halloween. Go out and catch a pumpkin, also known as a big Redfish! ☑

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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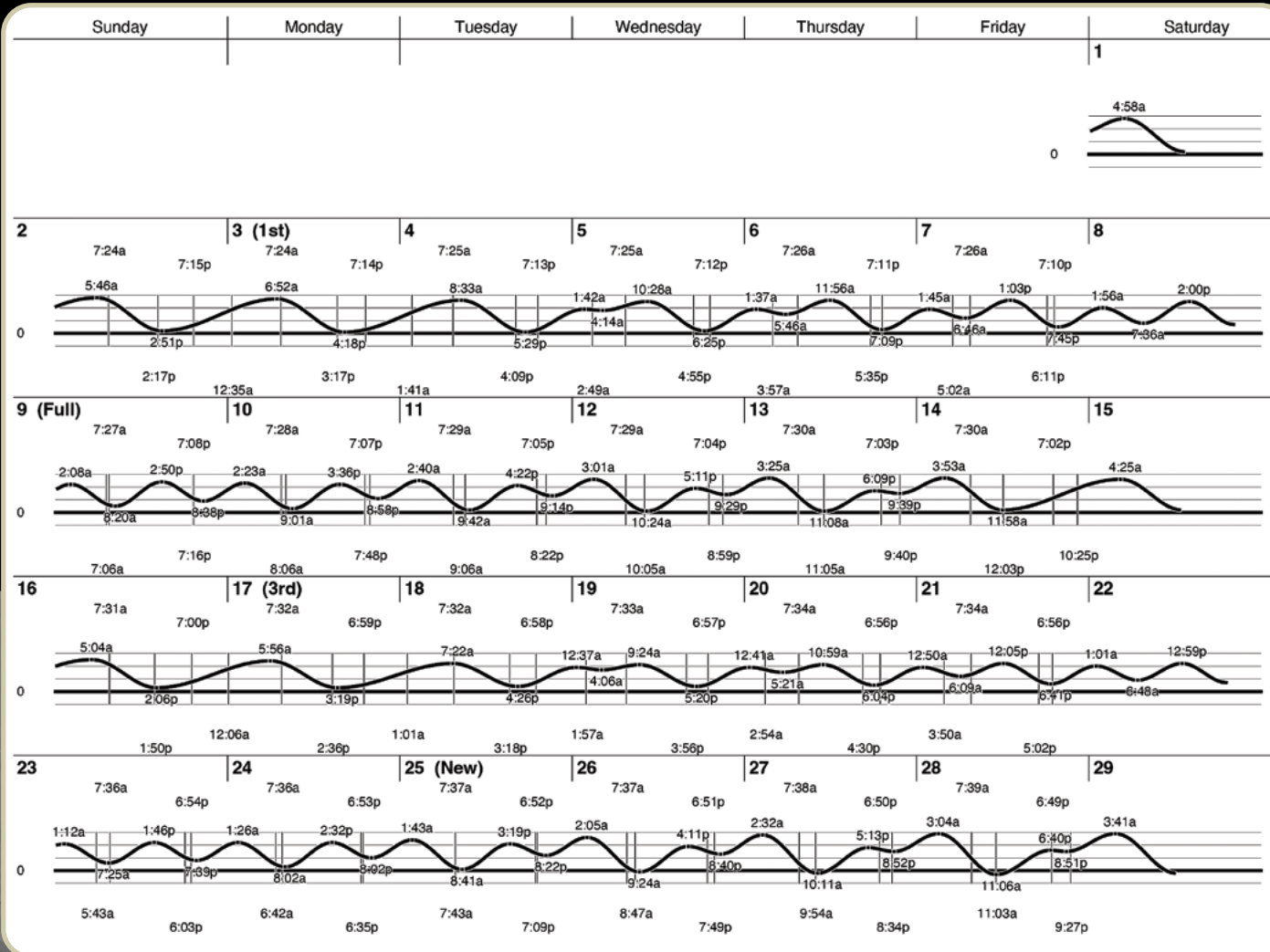
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Conversions for Clearwater Beach Area			Conversions for St. Marks River Area		
High	Low		High	Low	
-0:02	-0:10	Dunedin, St. Joseph Sound	+0:23	+1:18	Everglades City
-0:05	-0:15	Anclote Key, South End	-1:17	-1:03	Cape Romano
+0:42	+0:42	Tarpon Springs, Anclote River	-1:04	-1:08	Marco Island
-0:07	-0:03	North Anclote Key	-1:59	-2:04	Naples
+0:41	+0:39	Old Port Tampa	-0:46	-0:09	Indian Bay
+0:33	+0:53	Gulf Harbors	-0:59	-0:42	Bayport
+0:42	+1:05	Hwy 19 Bridge, Pithlachascotee River	-0:25	+0:23	Withlacoochee River
+0:50	+1:35	New Port Richey, Pithlachascotee River			
+0:36	+0:43	Hudson, Hudson Creek			

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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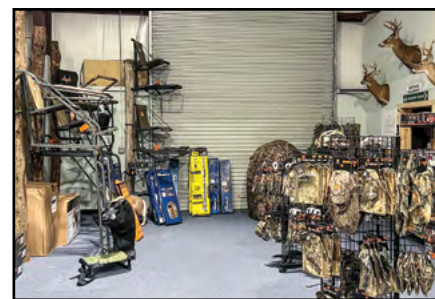
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Droptine Proshop can be reached at 813-541-7180. Current hours are Tuesday - Friday from 10:00am to 6:00pm and Saturday from 9:00am to 2:00pm.



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.

First opened in 1974, Southeastern is one of the oldest and most established fishing tackle companies in the Tampa Bay area. They can outfit any angler for any species of fish for any season at any budget. All their trusted employees have decades of fishing experience, and they are more than happy to share their knowledge with you.

They have a full line of rod and reel repair services on every make and model. Their chief technician,



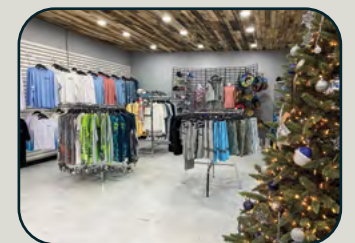
Gary Westphal, can do it all. They make custom rods to your specifications for inshore and offshore fishing. They can also personalize your existing rods and decorate them to your

liking. They can put line on all your reels, whether it's spinning. Conventional, or baitcaster. They have the finest selection of braided line and monofilament in the bay area. You name the fish, they have the line to catch them. They carry every major brand and if they don't have it, they can get it for you. They ship nationwide with same day service. They also accept phone orders with real people who know how to fish answering the phone.



Southeastern is proud to be part of this amazing community here in the fishing capital of the world. They are committed to building and maintaining long term relationships with their clients, fishing charter captains, non-profit organizations, and community leaders. Their friendships and partnerships are the bedrock of who they are.

You can come into their store knowing nothing about fishing and you will leave with everything you need to catch fish that very same day. They will rig your setup for you, tell you how to use it, tell you where to get live bait, and tell you about all the great fishing spots.



They are open seven days a week; Monday thru Saturday from 9 am to 6 pm, and from 10 am to 4 pm on Sunday. And, check out their ad in the front of this issue for a 10% off coupon on your next visit!



MACKEREL MAGIC

by Captain Brent Gaskill

The fall migration of mackerel happens this month in the Tampa Bay area. The local unofficial kickoff is typically around Columbus Day. Fish don't have calendars to pinpoint migrations, however, so tuning in to daylight hours, water temperatures, moon phases, and bait availability will give you the same information the fish know and offer clues of when to be there.

The first places to look for mackerel are anywhere that you see concentrated bird activity. Terns and gulls will follow feeding fish and give away their location. The edges of the main shipping channel and perimeters of artificial reefs are where many fish will show themselves slashing through tightly balled up bait schools. Trolling spoons can be an effective method for finding fish early on, as this allows more territory to be covered in a shorter amount of time.



Once the fish begin to fill into the area they will spread out to hard bottom areas, wrecks, or any structure that holds baitfish. The key to finding large concentrations of mackerel is focusing on their food source. Mackerel are not finicky eaters, but they will hone in on specific



species in certain scenarios. Spanish sardines, scaled sardines, and thread-fin herring are some of their favorites. Catching bait on site typically leads to immediate hook-ups, as it presents a bait that they are currently seeing in that particular area.

Live bait tactics are varied and all have pros and cons. Learning how and when to use these methods can be a matter of personal preference and experience. Generally, live bait fishing for mackerel falls into these basic categories: slow trolling, drifting, and anchoring. All methods can and should include chumming, as mackerel will respond to combina-





With so many choices, how does one decide what to do? First, determine which mackerel you are after. Everything mentioned previously applies to both Spanish mackerel and king mackerel. Then begin to learn how to fine-tune your presentations to specific situations to lure in your targeted species. Considerations could include, but not be limited to current flow, bright, overcast, or low light conditions, wave action, wind speed and direction, type of structure being fished, as well as the size and type of bait being used.

Yes, that's a lot to contemplate. Go experiment, learn, and have fun. 🎣

Capt. Brent Gaskill charts both inshore and offshore in the St. Petersburg area. He can be reached at 727-510-1009. Instructional trips aboard personal vessels are also offered that provide an excellent hands-on learning experience. View Capt. Brent's web site at www.summervacationcharters.com or contact by e-mail at captbrent@summervacationcharters.com.

tions of frozen chum blocks, fresh cut chunks, and handfuls of free live baits spread out in the mix.

Varying the depth of live bait presentations is another key factor that fits into the equation of all three methods of trolling, drifting, and anchoring. Mackerel will feed anywhere from the top to the bottom of the water column. Figuring out what they want is a matter of spreading baits through the entire water column. Again, there are variables; anything from simple floats or biodegradable balloons to down riggers can accomplish the job.



INTERNATIONAL SAWFISH DAY OCTOBER 17

International Sawfish Day (ISD) is held annually around the world on October 17th as a day to celebrate sawfish by learning more about these highly threatened and poorly known rays. On ISD, aquariums, zoos, museums, schools, and other institutions hold outreach events and online presentations to educate the public about sawfish, their habitats, and the threats they face. The public is encouraged to attend one of these events or to celebrate in their own way with their friends, family, and coworkers.

PLAN YOUR ACTIVITY AND SHARE



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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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FALL FISHING IN THE GULF

by Misty Wells

Fall is here and the locals and visiting anglers alike are setting their sights on the Kingfish migration. Kingfish are in the mackerel family; they are a migrating and schooling fish that is found off the coast of Florida this time of year. Spring and Fall are some of the best times to target these "Kings" of the Gulf. Kingfish, like many other species and humans, like warmer waters from 67 to 84 degrees. So in the colder Winter months, they travel South and as the waters begin to warm up, they will migrate back up North. Kingfish favorites to feed on are Sardines, Ladyfish, Cigar Minnows or Ribbonfish a.k.a. silver eels. Kingfish are constantly on the move and looking for their next meal, so it's all about the bait schools.

Some of the best locations to troll for Kingfish are wrecks, reefs, ledges, shipping channels and natural hard bottom. Kingfish, however, can be caught both inshore and offshore. I have seen them caught right off the beach in Clearwater and right off the John's Pass & the Skyway Bridges. I personally have had my best luck in the morning, right as the sun is coming up and for the next few hours after that.

On average Kingfish weight between 6 to 30 pounds, but if you are looking to break a record, you will have to beat over 90 lbs. for the Florida record set in 1976 and over 90 lbs. for the World IGFA record.

When you hook a Kingfish it is impressive as they leap and spin out of the water and they will turn your reel into a "screamer" taking so much line, so fast, it's screaming for mercy! They travel in schools searching for food, so if you hook one you may get multiple hook-ups, as well. If you are fishing in a location that does not have structure, you can use chum to possibly gather a school of bait to bring the Kingfish to you.

A standard "stinger" rig is a great go-to setup because it helps eliminate the short strikes by placing a hook at both ends of the bait. Kingfish are all about speed and can hit your bait traveling about 30 miles per hour, so your set up must be right. If a kingfish strikes and misses, hit the free spool cause odds are they will come back for a second strike. You can buy pre-made stinger rigs or there are a million online videos to show you how to make your own. If you want to skip the learning curve and go with some pros, I would book a trip with a local charter company. Salt Cracker Charters on Clearwater Beach or Captain Mark Fewox with Markin' Fish Charters will certainly put you on the king fish!

Another Fall favorite is Gag Grouper. As the water temperatures start to cool, they will start to move closer inshore. It is relatively easy to get started and I am going to share a tried-and-true method for shallow water trolling for Grouper. The great thing about this type of fishing is you don't need an offshore boat and you aren't going to burn a lot of fuel during your trip.



I like to use an open face Penn Senator 4-ot. setup with 60lb. test mono line, then measure out a 30-foot leader also using 60 to 80lb. test mono line. If you want to use a spinning reel, I recommend a 6 to 7 foot, medium to heavy action Penn Slammer 2 setup with 60 to 80lb. braid with the same setup for the leader as above.

Now depending on the depth of the water you are fishing, you have to decide what size Planer to use; either a #1-10 foot, a #2-20 foot, a #3-30 foot and so on. Planers run at about a 45-degree angle and achieve about 1 foot of depth for each 2 foot of Planer line. When trolling with these Planers I suggest running about 5 to 5.5 knots. As the water temps cool the fish do become more lethargic so slow and steady almost always wins the race.



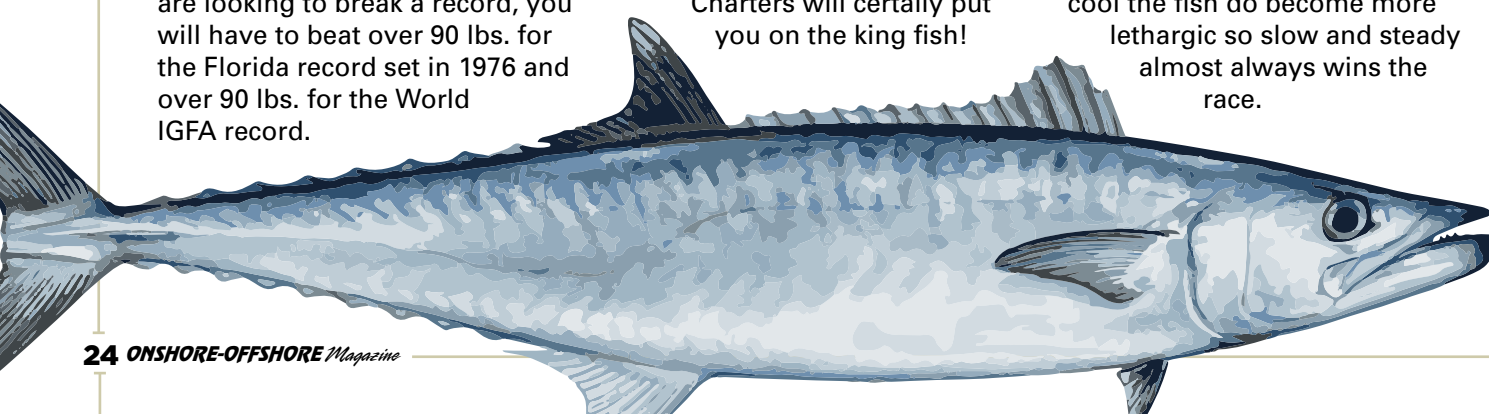
My secret weapon on these Grouper is using a giant lipped lure or a White Curly Tail Pumpkin Jig. You can pick them up at "FISH" on the Pinellas side or "TA Mahoney's" in Tampa. Using my favorite Pumpkin Jig in 1 hour my daughter and I landed a Snook, Tarpon and a keeper Gag Grouper. It works! This method is one of the best ways to prospect for large Grouper in an area, so keep working a location with several runs because you may not get hit the first time through. Remember, before you head out, fill up the live well with some lively Pilchards or Pinfish. At some point you may come across a nice rock pile or structure where you can freeline back a bait on a spinning rod and see what's for dinner.

Anglers are also getting a Fall American Red Snapper season this year, thanks to our governor. The 12-day fall season will be spread across weekends in October and November, including Veterans Day weekend and the weekend following Thanksgiving.

The dates are Oct. 8-9, Oct. 15-16, Oct. 22-23, Nov. 11-13, and Nov. 25-27. The setup for catching Red Snapper is the same as bottom fishing for Grouper. I use my Penn 4-ot. with a terminal tackle setup of 100lb. test line and a circle hook.

No matter what species you choose to pursue this Fall, I hope some of this information helps you land a monster fish or two! 🎣

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.



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WELCOME TO RED OCTOBER

by Captain George Hastick

The term "Red October" can have many different meanings to individuals. It can mean a war battle in history, a book, movie, drink, submarine and cyber malware to name a few.



To me it is the month that the water starts to cool and the redfish start to gather! When this happens, redfish can be found on many of Tampa Bay flats ranging from the northern part of the bay above the Courtney Campbell Causeway, all the way south to where the bay meets the gulf.

Some of the productive areas (but not all) to find good numbers redfish and redfish schools are Tarpon Key,

Indian Key, Jackass Key, Cow and Calf Key, Fort DeSoto, the clam bar, South Shore, Pinellas Point, Cockroach Bay, Mouth of the Alafia, Legion flats, Weedon Island, Big Island, Mouth of the airport canal, Northwest flats of Courtney Campbell Causeway, Mobbly Bay and double Branch, to name a few.

There is something about latching onto a big red and just feeling the relentless power this species can produce. But the main reason we call them the bull dogs of the bay, is that they do not give up until they are in the net. That being said, make sure your tackle is up to the task and have your drag set tight enough to get the fish

landed while enjoying the fight but not killing the fish. I like a Temple Fork Outfitters pole in 8-17lb to a 10-20lb with Mod-fast to fast action in a 7'6" length. Pair that up with a size 30-40 Quantum Cabo or

Reliance Spinning Reel depending on how much you want to spend. The Cabo 40 has a beast of a drag system coming in at 30lbs max and if you want the most bang for your buck the Reliance 40 has 25lbs of drag and is a workhorse.

For the angler that throws a lot of lures and prefers a smaller reel, the reliance 30 has 20lbs of drag and is a sturdy aluminum frame and spool, but lighter than most reels in this class.

Reds can be out on the open flats roaming but will also tuck way under the mangroves for protection from the sun and dolphins. The best is when you are looking for them with your trolling motor on a low setting and you spot a school of



them. Most rod and reel setups spooled with 10-15lb braid can cast extremely far, especially when using lures, cut bait or larger live baits. Use this to your advantage as not to spook the school and the last thing you want to do is chase them. This will give them lock jaw and shut down the bite.

If they have passed you by, steer out away from the school, get in front of them and let the fish come to you. Cast a few second before they get to you as not to spook them and let them come to your bait. Depending on bait size I like a 1/0-2/0 owner circle hook on about 5 feet of Seagar 25lb leader.



If you are seeing random reds on the flats, anchor down and cut up some pieces of chum, like pinfish, ladyfish or threadfin in a small area to concentrate the scent. Then put out a few poles with cut bait on them and put them in rod holders and let the reds find your baits with their keen sense of smell. A live Pinfish under a cork or a freelined Scaled Sardine are also great tactics you can do while dead sticking the cut baits.

You can also throw lures like Mirrolure's Mirrodine CS17MR-Mullet or 17MR-18, a Johnson gold spoon or a Saltwater Assassin 4" Sea Shad in the "Texas Roach" color. ☑

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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CHANGES ARE ON THE WAY

by Captain Sergio Atanes

October has a lot to offer depending on the weather. Some years, the water temperatures drop quickly due to early cool fronts but typically they should start a gradual drop as the month comes to an end.



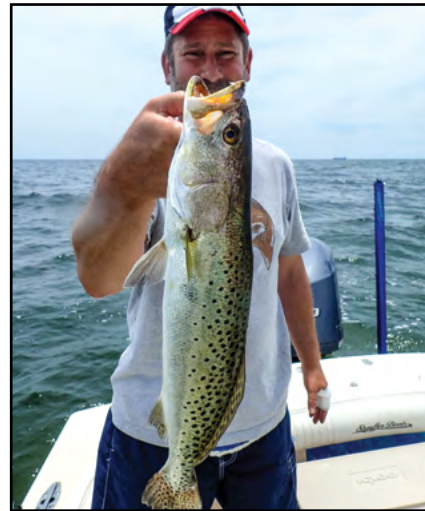
Two things that are also typical for this month is Cobia make their last showing around buoys and range markers—making them easier to catch. And, Redfish get pumped up and start getting ready for the

winter weather. Both scenarios offer a fun catch and delicious eats.

When Cobia fishing, I prefer weak tides; the slower the better as this makes them come up around the surface more to feed and thus, easier to catch. I use medium spinning tackle; 40-pound braided line, a 3-inch float with 40-pound leader about 5-feet long tied to a 3/0 circle hook. Top live baits for me are a live Pinfish or a large Threadfin Sardine.

Many of the imitation crabs or long eel types also work great and you should always have one rod ready to go in case a cobia shows up close to the boat.

"Buoy Hopping" is considered one of the best methods for Cobia fishing in October. Simply put, get there first. Go early, drive from one buoy to another and you will



find them. It takes time and money for gas, but its well worth the trip when you can end up a nice one for dinner. **Note that new rules are now in effect for size and total allowed on a boat per day.**

Lets talk Redfish. Patterns have changed over the past years and the redfish have shifted from the flats to the docks from Covert Isles to Snell Isle. Most of us captains haven't quite figured out why this has happened, so we can only guess. We have noticed more action around the docks and structures than on the flats.

So, what is my secret to catching a big Redfish? Its simple. Use cut dead bait on the bottom. My years of experience tell me they love cut Pinfish, Threadfin Sardines and Ladyfish. 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 40-pound fluorocarbon leader about 3-feet long. Depending on

the depth of water, I add a number 3 or 4 split shot or even a 3/8-ounce egg sinker rigged Texas style to keep the bait on the bottom. And, I do have an advantage using my dual 10-foot Power Poles.

My method is to drop anchor just past the end of the docks and back my boat between the two docks and then drop my Power Poles keeping the boat anchored parallel to the docks. This way I can fish my clients from either side of the boat depending on the current tide movement.

First, I bait my clients up and cast their lines about midway under the dock. Then I start tossing some small pieces of cut bait every few minutes to create my own feeding station or you can make your life easy and use a Lee Fisher Chum Ring, which makes chum from any bait you have on board. 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 a few big reds.

Cobia Tackle Recommendations:

- Okuma Cedros 7ft Rod & Okuma Azores 6000H reel
- Line: Fins Windtamer braided 40-pound test
- Leader: SoftSteel Stretchable Fluorocarbon 40# test
- Hook: Trident 3/0 Circle

Redfish Tackle Recommendations:

- Okuma SRT Inshore Elite MH Rod & Azores 4000H reel
- Line: Fins Windtamer braided 20-pound test
- Leader: Softsteel stretchable Fluorocarbon 40# test
- Hook: Trident 3/0 Kahle circle

On another note, the big Speckled Trout fishing is just starting this month and as the weather cools, the bigger they'll get. Look for "gator" trout around the edges of channels and any drop-offs in the flats that tend to be at least 4 to 6 feet in depth. The Gandy Bridge has always been a great spot for me as the cold fronts move in, so don't overlook this great eating fish thats also fun to catch. Trout are excellent to fish for with artificial baits. Use light tackle to make the adventure even better! 🎣

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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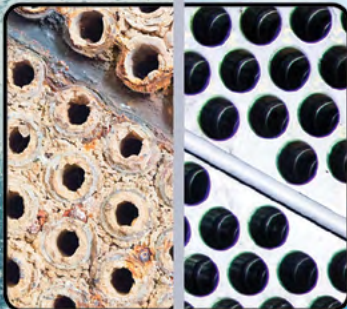
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