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March 2023



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# SPRING MEANS BOAT SHOWS

Most of us who hail from somewhere else (up north) can recall the excited anticipation of warm spring weather. I spent many Arkansas winters being cold and depressed anxiously awaiting the end of the torture. Back in those days, boat shows, like the Miami show and Ft. Lauderdale show, offered a break from the winter's cold. Life was sort of based around boat show schedules with our return home from the Ft. Lauderdale show in late October signaling the start of our cold winter days and the Miami show in mid February foretelling that warmer spring days were not too far away.

For those of you who have never attended one of the really big boat shows (either Ft. Lauderdale or Miami) you really should give it a try sometime. With over 100 boats larger than 100 feet (guess I should call these yachts) and thousands of smaller craft on display, these shows are the biggest and most obscene shows of excessive wealth that I have ever seen. There's something about that much excess that I just can't help but love. Instead of the old adage that BOAT means Break Out Another Thousand, these should be called BOAMs because to play in their league you gotta Break Out Another Million. As Mae West said, "Too much of a good thing can be wonderful!!!"

At these shows, the really big boats (100' to Infinity) require financial statements to enter, but it's amazing how many really nice yachts the average Joe can get aboard. Here are a few tips in case you plan to go. You don't have to dress up (it's a relatively casual atmosphere) blue blazers and captain hats are best left at home. Wear decent, unripped and clean shorts and fishing shirts with boat shoes that are easy to take on and off because most yachts are boarded without shoes. Even some tee shirts with a boating theme are appropriate, however Megadeth, Lil' Bow Wow or Legalize Pot shirts probably aren't your best fashion choice if you want boat brokers to be nice to you. The only exception to this would be if you are actually a member of Megadeth or you are Lil' Bow Wow.

If you are not really a potential buyer, it is still ok to board and look at some boats but don't waste a lot of a broker's valuable time. The brokers have spent big bucks to be in the show so please let them focus most of their efforts on serious buyers. Don't act like a buyer if you aren't, you will just end up looking like a doofus. That doesn't mean that you can't talk to a broker or ask a question, most smart brokers realize that today's looker may be next year's buyer. Whatever you do, don't bring a bunch of small children with dirty diapers, sno cones, soda or cotton candy and try to board a million dollar yacht. This is only common sense, but I'm afraid common sense is not all that common these days. Treat the yachts in the show with the respect that you would expect if they belonged to you.

Lots of interesting and amusing things can happen while you are at the show. Back in the mid 1990's I flew into Ft. Lauderdale with friends to attend the Miami show. While I choose not to identify these friends, I shall call them Barbie and Ken because they looked like living versions of the dolls. While successful and wealthy, they lived in the world's largest mobile home while making plans to build their dream house. We were touring a new Lazarra 80' Yacht with a broker and we had reached the master stateroom when Barbie excitedly remarked, "gollee, this bathroom is bigger than the one in my mobile home". You have never ever seen a yacht broker shut down and hustle customers off of a boat so fast. The real irony was that I knew my friend could have stroked the check for that 4 million dollar boat.

On another such trip, with these same friends, we were hanging out at Shooters (a very popular waterfront hangout in Ft. Lauderdale) waiting to get a table after a day at the show. The line was long, so we found a seat on a bench overlooking boats and the intercoastal waterway. Ken and I went to get chilled adult beverages while Barbie (who was looking good wearing tiny black Harley Davidson shorts and tee top) sat on the bench to keep our spot. By the time we returned with drinks, a nearby yacht had sent a boarding party out to chat with Barbie and to try to get her to join them. As we approached Barbie excitedly said, "These nice people from that pretty boat want us to come party with them". Just like the broker on the Lazarra, it was amazing how quickly the nice people cut us off and went back to their boat when they realized there were guys with her too.

In addition to the incredible boats, there are many other entertaining things to see and do at these mega shows. The food courts are excellent and the floating bars are a great place to rest your tired feet while enjoying some Jimmy Buffet tunes. There are tents where you can buy everything from amazing Ginsu knives to bidets for Mega Yachts. Even if you need to borrow 5 million dollars to buy that new Hatteras, there are finance companies there ready to make your dreams come true, that is, if you really don't need the money.

There's no better way to spend a couple of days than checking out one of these shows. Even if all you buy is the ticket to the show, you will have a memorable experience.

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**ON THE COVER:** It's Tuna time in South Florida! This absolute beauty was caught using a "Slow Pitch" jigging technique outlined by our junior writer and skilled angler, Anthony Gomez. To learn how to execute this deadly tactic, please turn to page 28 of this issue.

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# THE RIVERS TO BAY REPORT

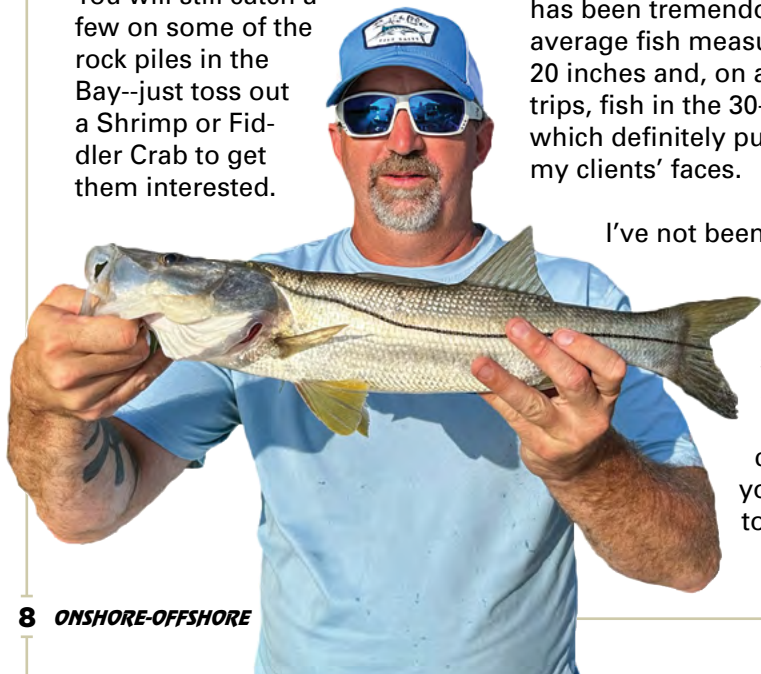
by Captain John Rivers

Despite the groundhog's prediction, Spring has shown-up in Tampa Bay and Clearwater Beach. And, not only are the tourists happy, so are the fishes!

With the warmer temps heating up the water these past two weeks, the fish are in feeding mode for sure--they have been crushing everything I toss at them. I love when I hear the sweet sound of the drag and the line peeling off, which means we've got a good one on.



What are you going to expect to catch this time of year? The sheepshead bite is still on, but not as strong as it was in February. You will still catch a few on some of the rock piles in the Bay--just toss out a Shrimp or Fiddler Crab to get them interested.



I've not been doing much Trout fishing the past three weeks, since the Snook bite has been off the charts. But, if you're looking to hook-up on



Redfishing has been pretty decent, too. We're catching a few while Snook fishing on the flats using both Shrimp and live Pilchards. I'm still using 20-pound leader and a 1/0 sized Gamakatsu circle hook.

Moving on to Snook, the bite has been tremendous, with the average fish measuring around 20 inches and, on a few of my last trips, fish in the 30-inch range, which definitely put a smile on my clients' faces.

a few Trout, move into about 3 to 5 feet of water and toss out a Pilchard on a cork and hang on--cause you'll most certainly swing a few into the boat!

So, as you can tell, Spring fishing has really fired off in Tampa Bay and the surrounding area waterways in the past few days, and March is a very good month to get out on the water.

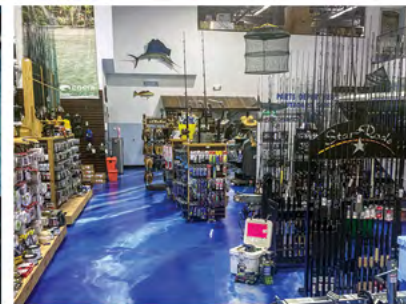
As always, if you're looking for a professional fishing guide with 20 years of experience, give me a ring and we'll definitely get you hooked up! ☑

**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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# A GOOD TIME TO SPRING INTO FISHING

by Captain George Hastick

**M**arch in the St. Petersburg & Tampa Bay Area can be a magical time to fish. This is the month that the air temperature can reach the mid 70s to even the low 80s which will start to warm the waters up and kick off some exciting fishing.

The reason this happens is the fish become less lethargic due to the warmer weather and warmer water. Most fish are cold blooded which means they are only as warm as the water they are in.

During the Winter they will seek refuge near power plants, rivers and deeper canals that stay warmer during the harsh cold nights of wintertime. Since fish cannot warm their bodies like we do, they depend on finding warmer water to stay alive through the winter.

Snook especially are sensitive to this and if the water temperature drops to fast before they can adjust and find refuge they can die. Water temperatures dropping below 60 degrees can make them sluggish and below 50 degrees they die.

So, when we first start getting those nice warm sunny days of Spring and



the water temperatures start to rise, this will make the bait start to return to the area and the flats.

When the bait first starts to reappear, it is like kids in the candy store, they just can't get enough food. Snook and redfish become the stars of the flats with an aggressiveness that is unmatched.

The water temperatures will usually be in the mid 60s to low 70s on the warmer days which will make them very active. When

we have many days of good weather in a row the bite can be phenomenal! March has a very wide range of species that are active this month depending on the weather, but my two favorites are the Redfish and Snook.

This time of year, the water temperature is perfect for the fish to get real active but it is still cool enough that you can stuff your livewell full of scaled sardines, threadfins and or pinfish and they will stay alive all day. Now with carrying that much bait it will allow you to live chum frequently which will keep the fish fired up and biting, especially during a moving tide.

For Redfish try looking for areas that combine a couple to a few things that they like which will attract them like a magnet to the area. For example, a good mangrove tree line point with an oyster bar, or a good grass flat with sand holes and an oyster bed in the middle of it.



For Snook, I like a good mangrove shoreline with either a point where the current will wrap around it or one that has cuts that go through it. Areas like this are feeding stations for the snook, since the moving current will bring bait to them and they will not have to work so hard to get a meal.

My typical gear setup is a 7'6" 8-17# fast taper rod with a 4000 Quantum Reliance reel filled with 10# test along with 4 foot of 25# test Seaguar Fluorocarbon leader and a super sharp 1/0-2/0 Owner Circle hook. 🎣

**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.**

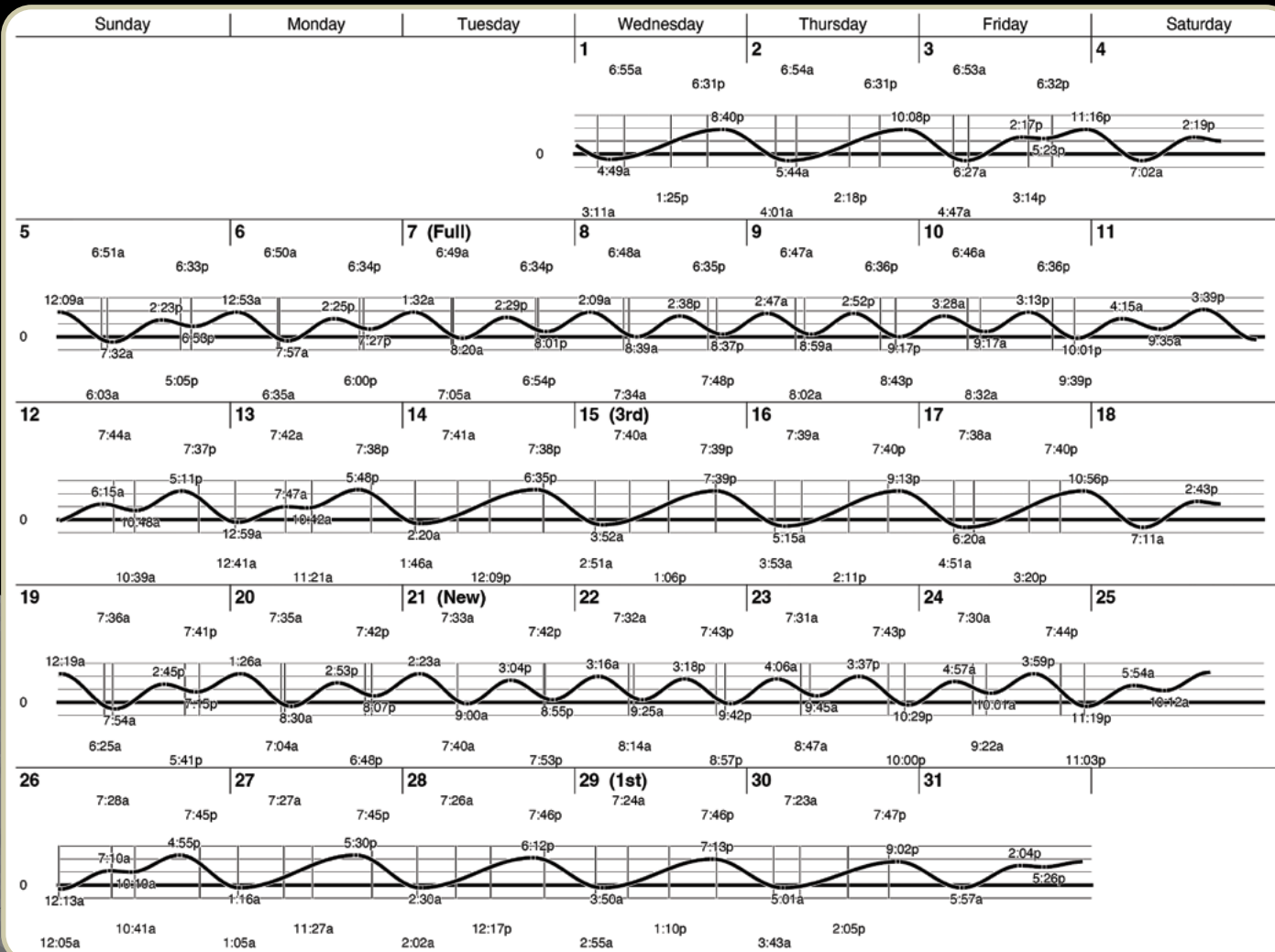


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| High  | Low   | Location                               |
|-------|-------|--|
| -0:02 | -0:10 | Dunedin, St. Joseph Sound              |
| -0:05 | -0:15 | Anclote Key, South End                 |
| +0:42 | +0:42 | Tarpon Springs, Anclote River          |
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| +0:42 | +1:05 | Hwy 19 Bridge, Pithlachascotee River   |
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| -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             |
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| +1:38 | +1:55 | Safety Harbor                |
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| +0:07 | +0:26 | Hillsborough Bay             |
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| -2:27 | -2:24 | Egmont Key                   |
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| -2:10 | -2:19 | Anna Maria, City Pier        |
| -1:24 | -0:55 | Bradenton, Manatee River     |
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| -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         |
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HOST: Capt. Sergio Atanes • CO-HOST: Capt. George Hastick



LIVE MONDAYS!

7:00 PM - 8:00 PM



# WHY IS TURKEY HUNTING SO HARD?

by Misty Wells

Wild Turkey is one of the most plentiful game animals in North America and can be hunted in almost every State. They estimate the countries total turkey population is about 7.4 million, and it's made up of five different wild species. Turkey are like superheroes; their eyesight is three times greater than a human with 20/20 vision. In addition to that turkey have a field of view of 270 degrees, this is why turkey hunting is so hard.

Each subspecies looks, sounds, and behaves a little bit differently and if you understand them, you will be able to hunt them better. Wild turkey have a well-developed communication system that they use to avoid danger, call mates, and establish dominance. Turkey use two main forms of communication,

vocal & visual and often use both methods at the same time. An example of both methods is a Tom may gobble while also strutting (the act of spreading its tail fan, dragging its wings, and making his body appear as larger as possible). It's important to know why a Tom is doing this and that will help you bag your trophy. One thing us hunters need to focus on more are turkey calls, what they mean and how they are communicating because that is what is setting the mood.

Let's get started with the wide range of sounds turkey make and why it is important to know what they mean before heading out for the hunt. The **Yelp** is the most heard sound from turkey from both male and female, it is commonly a locator saying, "I'm over here". This locating call is helping hens find other turkey in the same area, call to them asking them to join her. It is possible if you get these hens fired up enough, they may come to investigate and bring that unsuspecting gobbler with her. The **Purr** is another sound you may hear a lot from turkey, it usually means they are content.

When they are feeding or generally communicating with one another they will often use a Purr, this is why



Scott Ellis - World Champion Turkey Caller. Photo by Scott Ellis.

a Purr Pot is important to have in your calling collection. **Cutting** is another important sound they make, it is a series of loud and fast clucks with a few yelps thrown in. When a Hen is fired up and wants attention she may start cutting, this will usually get a Tom's attention quick. Let's not forget the **Gobble**, the sound all turkey hunters want to hear. This is a clear indication that a Tom is excited and looking to attract a hen. This is also used by a Tom to let the other males in the area know he is there and he is trying to deter them from coming in.



Mike Pentecost, Owner of Woodhaven Calls

My favorite brand of calls is Woodhaven Calls, the owner Mike Pentecost is a genius when it comes to designing them. Mike

is an avid turkey hunter and an expert call designer, he has also teamed up with a few other experts to bring some new items to the line-up this year. The Black Reactor was designed by 3x Grand National Calling Champion Scott Ellis, the Blue Cutter/Vyper were designed by Grand National & World calling Champion Bill Yargus and Mike designed the Hyper Ninja. Turkey calls can be expensive but once you make the investment for a few key items you are good to go. You can order calls online or if a Bass Pro Shops is close by I suggest going there, you can hold and test them right in the store.

**WHY ARE DECOYS IMPORTANT?** Turkey see in color and as we know have eyesight 3x better than humans, a decoy can give you a chance to take the focus off the

hunter and on the decoy for starters. A decoy is also important for a turkey to associate the call with, if a turkey comes in from a call and does not see a decoy he may get confused. However, make sure you are matching the call you are doing with the decoy that you have out. You definitely also want to have a Hen and a Tom decoy; this might help bring in the bird a lot faster. Toms want all the Hens to themselves so if he sees a Tom with a Hen he may move in fast to get rid of him then get careless and give you a shot. I use Mojo Outdoor Decoys; they have some great features, and the price is reasonable. For something different they have created "Mojo Outdoors Scoot N' Shoot" and a "Tail Chaser Max", I think they can give you an if used right they have tons of videos online at [mojoutdoors.com](http://mojoutdoors.com) to view.

One last thing I want to remind you of is to get out and shoot because you want to shoot straight when the time comes. I plan to hit the range and practice my skeet shooting, so when the ultimate Tom comes, I can finally bag one.

Shoot straight & tight lines; see you out in the woods. ☑

**Misty Wells Producer & Host of "Let's Take It Outside" TV show airing to 120 million on Bally Sun Sports, World Fishing Network, Waypoint TV, Hunt Channel, MOTV, TCT, Discover Florida Network & Carbon TV. Bass Pro-Outdoor Pro & Outdoor & Travel Writer. Founder of "A Reel Future" non-profit devoted to teaching the passion of fishing & conservation to foster children, over 3,800 children & counting. Visit [www.mistywells.com](http://www.mistywells.com).**



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# Marlin For Merlin?

by Merle Seamon

In January, I had the great pleasure of making my annual pilgrimage to Crocodile Bay in Puerto Jimenez, Costa Rica. This year, the trip was to celebrate my 67th lap around the sun and I was really hoping to get the opportunity to check Marlin off of my fishing bucket list.

My buddy, Lex Salisbury and his Wife, Elena Sheppa, accompanied me on the trip. When I went to book my flight, I was fortunate to discover that Jet Blue is now making direct flights to Costa Rica from Orlando. The flight was quick and easy; only three hours and I was on the ground in San Jose. From there I boarded the small plane with Sansa (a local airline) for a truly beautiful flight right up the coast to Puerto Jimenez where Crocodile Bay is located. Both flights were great, but it is a little disturbing to arrive in Puerto Jimenez to find that the town cemetery is immediately adjacent to the Airport Terminal. I sincerely hoped that this was not any indication of the safety of flying in there.

Upon our arrival, we were immediately picked up by the staff in a nice new air-conditioned van for the very short ride to the resort. When we arrived, we could immediately see that everything had changed since my trip last year. The brand new Botanika Resort has now opened and it is truly knocked out! See more about this in the following destination article titled "*Beautiful Botanika.*" We planned two days of offshore fishing and a couple days for eco tours and relaxing.



Without further ado, I'll get to the fish tales.

On our first fishing day, we left the dock around 6:30 and headed out while visions of Marlin, Sailfish, Tuna and Mahi danced in our heads. Before we got very far out into the Pacific, the captain spotted fish and we slowed to put out the spread. Their preferred approach to offshore

fishing is trolling with a combination of dead and artificial baits. The mate is a pro at quickly and carefully getting a bunch of lines rigged and out behind the boat and the captain knows where to find the fish.

Within 30 minutes of starting to troll, Elena had hooked, landed and released a nice Mahi and it was my turn to take the next fish. My timing was good and it was not long before I was hooked up with a nice Sailfish. It gave me a really good fight and we got it up beside the boat for a quick release. All of the crews are very good at safely releasing these beautiful fish to fight another day, but this makes getting good photos a bit difficult. Not long after my fish, Lex got his shot at another nice Sailfish (although his was smaller than mine) and we got it to the boat for another successful release.



The fishing got slow for a while and we began to wonder whether we should have kept that first Mahi for dinner. The resort offers a great deal on a fresh, "you catch it we cook it," fish dinner and we definitely wanted to take advantage of that. In the end,

the Mahi bite warmed up, later in the day, and we got several more nice ones (40 to 60 lbs. or so). We wound up bringing two back for dinner and to share with friends. We ended a great day by returning to the dock by around 3:00 pm and headed for the beautiful new pool to chill and tell fish stories until time for dinner. The Mahi was out of this world and they prepared it several ways including a ceviche that was to die for.

The second day of fishing dawned clear and we once again headed out in the *Strike*. It wasn't long before we were trolling again because the fish were in quite close to shore. The day started a little slow, but by mid-morning, it was on. Lex started it out with a sail and Elena got another nice Mahi and then it was my turn. The next fish to enter the spread was a beautiful Blue Marlin that the mate said was 13 to 14' in length. I was thrilled to step-up and get a chance to fight this monster from the deep. I fought the great fish for a few minutes, but then it threw the bait and



my first ever shot at a Marlin was over. I was disappointed, but also excited to even get the chance to do battle with the fish.

Once the mate got the spread back out and we were trolling again, it wasn't long before we got our second Marlin bite. This time, a pair of really nice Black Marlin charged into the spread and wreaked havoc for a while. Both of the fish hooked up briefly and the reels were both really singing for a bit, but it did not take long before both fish spit out the baits and were gone. What a thrill it was to see a Marlin doubleheader, even if it was short lived. Shortly after that, a pair of nice Sailfish swam right by the boat while we were re-rigging and I got a chance to fight one of them on fairly light spinning tackle. It was a thrill that was,



unfortunately, short lived as the big sail was quickly able to break free, but just getting a shot was thrilling. We wrapped up the day by catching and releasing a few more nice Mahi, then we headed to the pool to "recover" from our exciting Marlin encounters.



In addition to the great fishing, we also enjoyed a couple Eco Tours to experience the wealth of wildlife and plants that are native to the Osa Peninsula region of Costa Rica. The Osa Peninsula is one of the most biodiverse places in the world and it has really become my favorite place on the planet.

If you are interested in booking a trip to the area, just refer to the following destination article for the contact information. ☑

Merle



## BEAUTIFUL BOTANIKA

by Merle Seamon

**C**rocodile Bay in Costa Rica has long been one of my favorite places in the world. It was a quaint little resort with a stellar staff and the best of fishing opportunities.



Over the course of the last two years, Crocodile Bay has been undergoing a transformation. All of the good parts of Crocodile Bay are still there, but now it is home to a truly world class resort named Botanika. The resort is a Hilton Curio Collection property that is exceptional in every way.

The accommodations are fantastic, the restaurants and bars are spectacular and the staff is the best that I have ever experienced anywhere in the world. You can tell from the photos how beautiful the facilities are, but what you can't see is how nice the staff and everyone around the place really is. Everyone there is welcoming and friendly and after a day or two there, they make you feel like extended family.

The resort has world-class amenities, like the beautiful lagoon pool, a great gym, a spa and naturally one of the best fishing fleets in Costa Rica. The lodging includes everything from studio rooms to three bedroom condos. The rooms are all beautifully appointed with local hardwoods and art and they are more modern than most places that I stay in the US. They do offer sales of the units where you can choose

to spend as much time as you like in your unit and they will manage and rent it out for you the rest of the time, or you can just book it as a standalone hotel room from Hilton.

They are proceeding with plans to build a world-class marina that will accommodate everything including megayachts and even more luxurious lodging is planned for the waterfront area.

The fishing and Eco tours are what bring most guests to the area; there is plenty to do here. Puerto Jimenez is a great little town and also has many nice local restaurants, shops and other related businesses.



Wildlife including monkeys, sloths, reptiles, birds and much more can easily be seen, even on the resorts property.

One of the main accolades that I typically hear other guests saying about the place is simply

that the resort and the experiences that you enjoy here are real. There is nothing fake or contrived, you can experience the real Costa Rica here and still stay in the lap of luxury. ☑

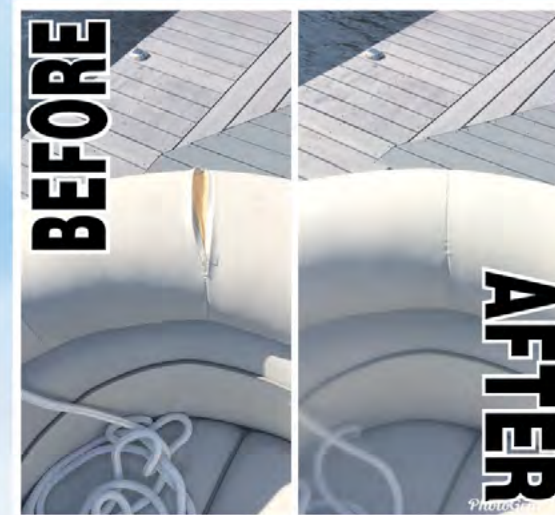
**To make reservations, contact David Kanski, Reservation Director at Costa Rica Fishing & Adventures, the Preferred Agent for Crocodile Bay Resort at 1-800-733-1115 x1002 or by email at david@costaricafa.com. Learn more at www.costaricafa.com.**



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## THE 32ND ANNUAL OUTDOORS EXPO & BOAT SHOW

Calling all OUTDOOR enthusiasts, WATER and NATURE lovers!

The Outdoors Expo and Boat Show is back; it's outdoors, family and dog friendly at Armature Works! Who says the best things in life aren't free? Well, they were wrong because this amazing outdoors show is free and tons of fun for the whole family. News Channel 8 is teaming up with the beautiful waterfront view of Armature Works in historic downtown Tampa to bring the 32nd Annual News Channel 8 Outdoors Expo and Boat Show.

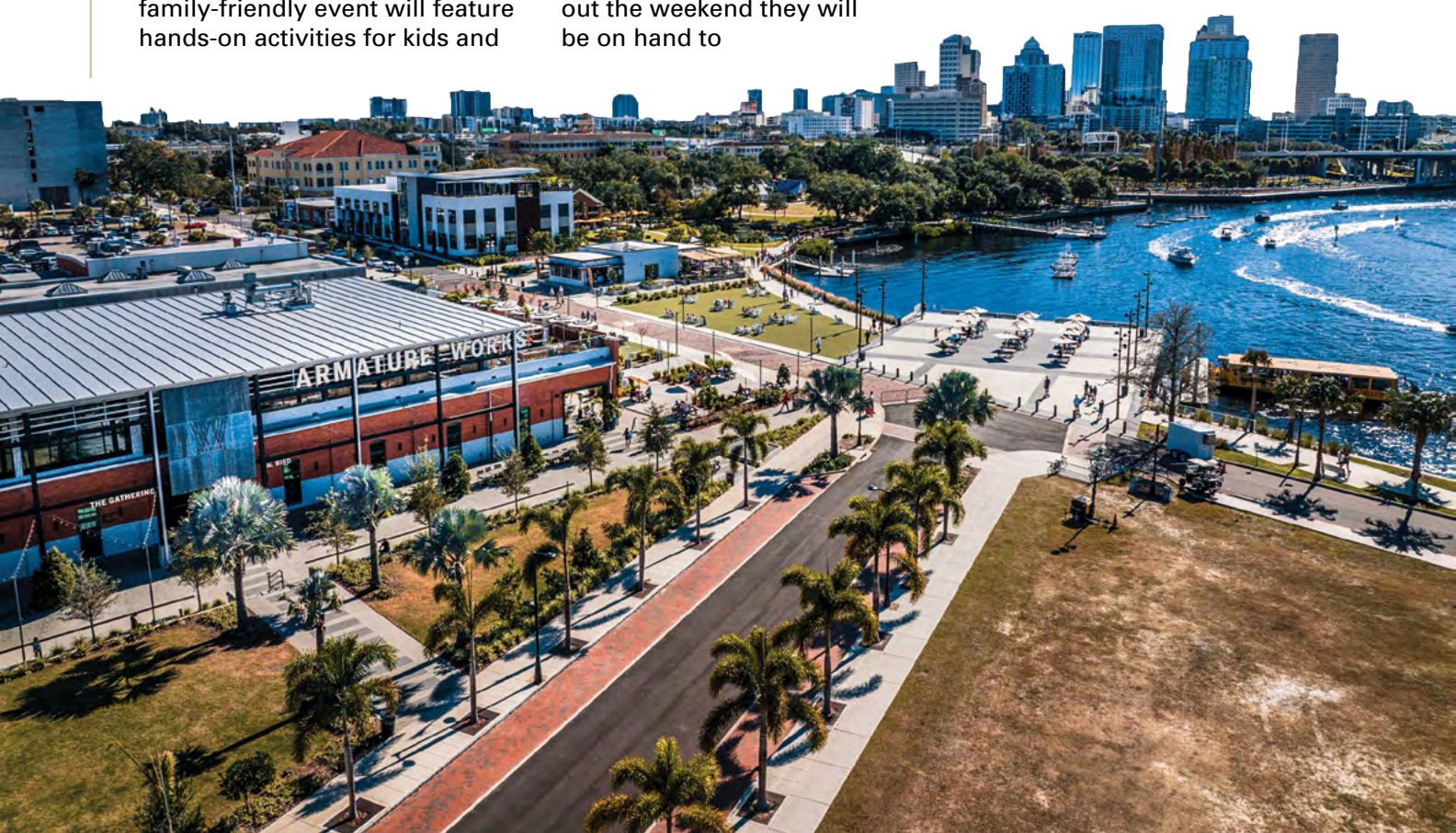
This Annual Outdoors Show will span over three days with admission free to all and will include tons of activities and local vendors all weekend! This family-friendly event will feature hands-on activities for kids and

families, swag from the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Tampa Bay Lightning, Boat Dealers, Kayak displays and the culinary dining of Armature works Food Hall. Misty Wells, from the hit TV Show, "Let's Take it Outside", airing to over 160 million viewers Worldwide will be there with her "Kids, Let's Take it Outside" booth all weekend. "Kids, Let's Take it Outside" is geared to hands on fun, learning and education for a kid friendly zone. Kids will learn to measure fish, learn species identification and she will be hosting rod casting lessons complete with prizes.

Have you always wanted to meet your favorite News Channel 8's anchors? Great because throughout the weekend they will be on hand to



"meet & greet" and enjoy the festivities. With over 100,000 square feet of exhibits and activity space, the Expo is the perfect place to explore boats of all shapes and sizes, boating acces-



sories, fishing gear, apparel, outdoor supplies, and much more. Boating season is here and it's time to check out high-end luxury vessels, sportfishing boats, pontoon boats for the family and speed boats for that high energy style. There will be over 20 manufacturers and dealers showcased at this annual outdoors show and it is a great time have a first hand experience in what the boating world has to offer right now.

### SHOW DATES & TIMES

Friday, March 31st: Noon to 6:00pm  
 Saturday, April 1st: 10:00am to 6:00pm  
 Sunday, April 2nd: 10:00am to 5:00pm

And, don't forget to bring your furry family member, they are a huge part of this outdoor show and welcome to come and browse some items specifically for them.



The 32nd Annual News Channel 8 Outdoors Expo and Boat Show takes place on Friday, March 31 from 12pm – 6pm, Saturday, April 1 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday, April 2 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Armature Works.

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! 📍

## 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 destruction. 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](http://DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com/Manatee-Conservation).



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As the manatee capital of the world we take conservation seriously. Learn how you can play an active role in our efforts at [DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com/Manatee-Conservation](http://DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com/Manatee-Conservation).



### Captain Sergio Atanes

Sheepshead fishing peaks out by mid-March and the big bruise-ers are active on the deeper rock piles, wrecks in Tampa Bay. Black drum start their migration towards the bridges, Gandy Bridge and Howard Frankland Bridge are my favorite. Cut fresh blue crabs on a 3/0 hook with 1oz egg sinker will do the job. Incoming tide is best since it brings the cleaner water from the gulf, and they seem to prefer it. Second choice of bait for black drum will be medium or large shrimp with a little Pro-Cure super gel crab flavored. Best time for me to fish is later in the day, starting around 9:00 am or later, giving the water temp time to increase a little.



### Captain George Hastick

The warmer days of the arrival of Spring bring in the baitfish, which turn on the bite on the Tampa Bay flats. March means clean water if it is not too windy, which equals some great sight casting opportunities, especially for Redfish, Snook and Trout. Look for fish in the 2 to 3 feet of water with a quiet approach. Depending on the bottom I like throwing a 1/8 oz jighead or 1/8oz 3/0-4/0 owner twist lock hook. I like throwing Saltwater Assassin's 4" forked tails in Alewife and Crystal Shad for the Snook and the Shrimp in Molting, Houdini and their new color, Papa Smurph for the Redfish. Add some Pro-Cure Super Gel in Shrimp scent or Inshore Saltwater scent and you can't go wrong!

### 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.

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# SLOW PITCH JIGGING

by Anthony Gomez

The sport of fishing is always changing. People are continuously trying to find new ways and strategies to catch different fish species. One technique that has recently become a hot tactic for offshore fishing is slow pitch jigging. Most people are familiar with vertical jigging. A fast paced and exhausting technique for fooling pelagic and bottom fish. Slow pitch jigging, on the other hand, is a completely different animal. Slow pitch jigging is a system where you are making the jig represent a wounded baitfish.

When vertical jigging, you are moving the jig fast through the water and creating the image of a fleeing baitfish. You constantly move the jig at a fast pace and can be very strenuous. Slow pitch jigging uses lighter rods and reels to make the jigging more comfort-

able. Also, you are moving the jig slower than vertical jigging by pitching it up and letting it fall back down.

Slow pitch jigging has allowed anglers to be able to use jigs in deeper water than ever before. That is what makes it so effective. Most fish out in the deep water have never seen a jig. By using thin line with heavy jigs, you can catch fish that you never thought would hit a jig. One of the most important parts of slow pitch jigging is the rod. You need a slow pitch specific rod because the rod must be parabolic and comfortable to use. The parabolic action on the rods allows you to pitch the jig up in the water. When you lift the rod fast and the rod comes back to its original position fast, it shoots the jig up and creates the pitch. This creates slack in the line for the jig to turn sideways and flutter back down. Usually, the rods are thin so that they are light and able to be used all day long. Even though they are thin rods, they are incredibly powerful and can get those big fish off the bottom.

Reels are also an important part as well. Conventional reels are mostly what is used for slow pitch jigging but spinning will

work as well. The key is that the reel can hold lots of line and has a fast retrieve. You need maximum line capacity to be able to fish those deep waters and not be worried about getting spooled. The reel must also be fast so that you can retrieve line quickly while fighting a fish or just bringing your jig up from the depths.



The most crucial part of slow pitch jigging is the line. Braided line is essential, and it must be

thin. The max braided line I would use is 30-pound test. The reason is that the line needs to cut through the water and create the least amount of resistance. If the line is too thick, the current pushes the line and jig away from the boat too fast and you won't be able to keep bottom contact. So, the deeper you go out to jig, the thinner the line should be so that it creates less resistance. Braided line also has a no stretch and makes everything very sensitive. Every movement of your rod is transitioned to the jig with braided line.

To the braid, you need a "top shot" of fluorocarbon to act as a shock absorber and prevent pulled hooks. Around 12 feet of 40-60-pound leader is the perfect size top shot. A "PR knot" or "FG knot" are the best knots for connecting heavy leader to very thin braid. They are also very strong and streamline knots.

Jig selection is another key to effective slow pitch jigging. All slow pitch jigs have some type

of concave or convex shape to them so that they can flutter on the fall while jigging them. This creates many unique actions that you just cannot get out of a vertical jig. Choosing your jig depends on the current and depth. In my area, 1 gram per foot is our basic principle for jig selection until we get out past 200 feet. There is a lot of current past 200 feet and it prevents us from using lighter jigs.

Around 250-400 feet we stick to around a 250-gram jig. If the current happens to be very fast that day, we may step it up to a 300-gram jig. Its trial and error because sea conditions change every day. Trying different size jigs will help you eventually get a feel for the conditions and know the proper size jig you need. The color of the jig does not matter as long as it has some glow. There isn't much light in the deeper waters and makes some form of glow important on your jig. Assist hooks on the top and bottom of the jig are used as a "grappling effect."

Once the fish has eaten the jig, the multiple hooks give you a better chance of hooking-up and creates several pressure points to prevent pulling hooks. The easiest



part is fishing with these jigs. All you are really doing is casting your jig up current, letting it hit bottom, pitching the jig up, and letting it flutter back down. Its really that simple but you need to have the right size jig. You must be pitching the jig while it is straight down. If your line is scoped out away from

the boat, your jig does not have the proper action and cannot flutter correctly. That is why we cast up current and let it drift back towards the boat. By the time it reaches bottom, your line should be straight down, and you can get the correct action with your jig.

Slow pitch jigging is a recent innovation in offshore fishing that has changed the way we fish for deep water bottom fish. I have been enjoying it for just over two years now. It is one my favorite ways to fish and has produced some of my biggest offshore fish. As long as you have the proper gear, it is a deadly tactic to catch many species of fish. 🎣



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# KNOWLEDGE IS KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL DAY

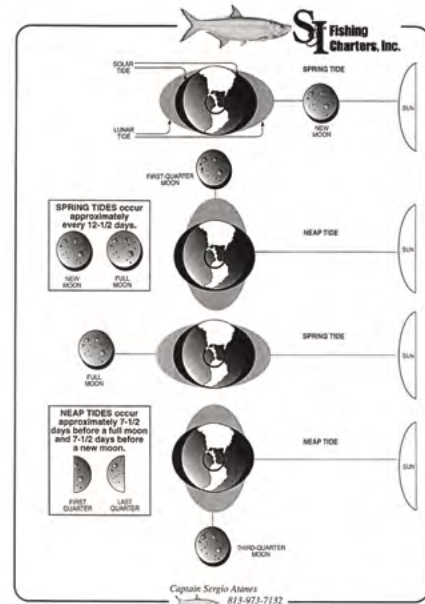
by Captain Sergio Atanes

As a captain, I am often asked the question, "how do you know where fish are day after day?" First, we are not magicians; we just apply some common sense and fishing knowledge. This doesn't mean we can't have a bad day, but our chances of catching fish are better than the chances of an average angler.

The two things we stress in our fishing school is learning the "WHEN & WHERE" of catching fish. I will try to explain each one as it relates to Tampa Bay.

**Minor periods** are good but do not last as long. These periods begin when the moon is rising or setting.

**Tides** are the result of centrifugal forces caused by the gravitational attractions between the Moon, Sun, and Earth, in combination with the Earth spinning on its axis and the Moon circling the Earth in the opposite direction of the Earth's spin. The moon rotates on its axis in exactly the length of time that it circles around the earth. The moon takes approximately 2.3 day to circle the earth.



A tide is the vertical motion or rise and fall of water. Tide tables give the daily predictions of the times and heights of high and low waters.

There are many explanations and descriptions of tidal movements, as well as reasons as to why tides occur. Much of the terminology refers to the same three tidal phenomena of spring, neap and vanishing tides.

## SPRING TIDE, NEAP TIDE AND VANISHING TIDES

**Spring tide**, the best fishing tide, is an extra high tide occurring semi-monthly at the time of the Full Moon and New Moon. It brings an extra high, highwater and lower, low water. The Sun, Moon, and the Earth are in a straight line over a given point on Earth. Waters 200 miles away will experience a different tidal occurrence because the Moon will not be directly over that geographical position.

**Neap tide**, the least desirable time to fish, is a smaller tide, occur-

ring monthly at the same time of the Moon's first quarter and last quarter. There is not much difference between high and low water. The celestial bodies are not in phase with each other, creating less gravitational pull on the water even though the centrifugal force from the spinning Earth remains the same.

**Vanishing tides**, are when the highs and lows are indistinguishable in a mixed tide.

## TERMS TO REMEMBER

When the tides are in full swing, the Flood Current will flow from the sea into harbors, rivers, and bay waters. (**Rising Tide**) When the tides are lowering, the Ebb Current from the bay, rivers, and harbors will flow in downstream direction toward and out to the sea. (**Falling tide**)

**Currents** are horizontal movements of water. The average current flow of a tide in a confined area is approximately 6.25 hours

and then it stops, reverses direction and flows for approximately the same length of time.

**Slack water** is the condition where there is no current in the water. The water is in a stationary condition just before and after a tidal change, such as an Ebb or Flood current.

For **WHERE**, we can break it down into the seasons of Winter and Summer.

During **Winter**, look for rocks that are close to the surface during low tides and seawalls. They act as a heater radiating the sun's heat into the water. Ever wondered why fish swim along the outer edges of a seawall or circle rock piles? Creeks and rivers generate heat from decaying matter, and the muddy bottom also tends to retain heat longer. Docks not only generate heat but also create a haven for many species of fish. The bigger the boat dock, the better the spot to fish, as larger boats tend to leave deeper holes from prop wash in the water. Power plants are another good source of heat, especially in extremely low water temperatures.

Always fish the West side of the bay in the morning, as the sun's rays will heat this area first. Fish the East side in the afternoon. Winter provides us the best view of the areas we can fish due to extreme low tides, which expose cuts along the mangroves, oyster beds and potholes that are hidden during Summer.

**Summer**, look for points of ambush or cuts in the mangroves where water drains with the outgoing tide. Structures are great for holding fish. I have one spot where someone threw an old truck tire; you can count on snook and redfish to be around it during high tide. Redfish tend to hang-out around schooling mullet, as they tend to stir up the bottom, bringing up small crabs and shrimp, making a feast for following redfish. Artificial reefs are also great this time of year for mackerel, snook and grouper. ☑

**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.**



To know **WHEN**, we must understand solunar tables, moon phases and currents.

**Solunar tables** are what I call nature's clock. During a 24-hour period, we have 2 major and 2 minor feeding periods. This doesn't mean that fish feed only during these times, but the chances of catching more fish exist.

**Major periods** are the best time to fish. These periods begin at the times the moon is above or below where you are fishing and lasts approximately two hours.

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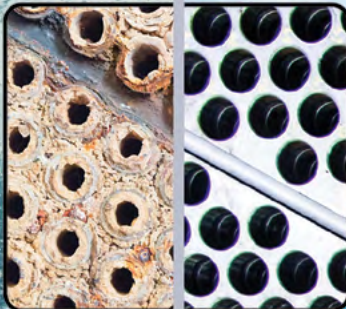




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