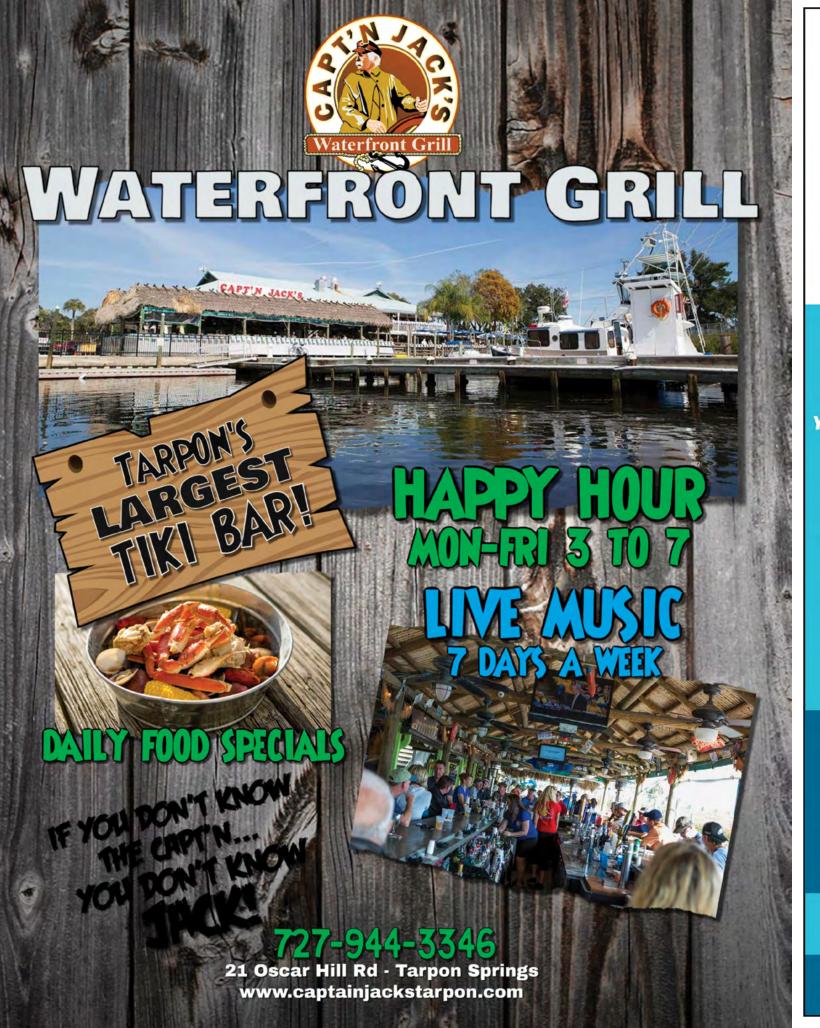
# FLORIDA'S COMPLIMENT

FREE

onshoreoffshore.com || facebook.com/OnshoreOffshoreMagazine || instagram.com/onshoreoffshoremagazine

PORTSMAN'S PUBLICATION

UADAZHIO May 2023





The Tampa Bay Boat Show will be overflowing with water craft and exhibits for the boating enthusiast. This is an event you don't want to miss. Millions of dollars of inventory on display indoors! You could be on the water... before the weekend is over!

# June 23, 24, 25

Fri. 10 a.m. - 5 p.m • Sat. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m • Sun. 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

# **FREE ADMISSION!**

# **Florida State Fairgrounds**

4800 U.S. Hwy. 301, Tampa, FL 33610

# **FISHING SHOW**

**Gulf & Bay Florida Fishing School** 

Learn from the pros on Friday, Saturday & Sunday FREE seminars presented by the area's top fishing experts & captains

**New Boats • Watercraft • Exhibits & More!** 

www.tampabayboatshows.com • 727-893-8523







## **MERLE'S MIND**

## THE PERFECT BOAT

In my 67 years of life, I have owned a lot of boats. The number has gotten so high that I can no longer say how many, I just know for certain that it is north of 100. At the time that I owned them, I thought each of them was perfect, but it turns out none really were. A boat can be perfect only for a relatively short and very finite time, because as our lives change, so do our needs and wants in a boat.

Back in the 60's in Arkansas, my first need for a boat was to go lake fishing with my Dad. The perfect boat was a 14' aluminum skiff with a 5 hp motor. We quickly outgrew the 5 hp and made the quantum leap to a 10 hp. This allowed us to venture farther from the dock and even, believe it or not, teach me to water ski. I don't know where it got the power, but that little 10 hp Johnson (yes, I had a small Johnson) actually did a fairly respectable job of keeping 10-year-old Merle on top of the water. About the time that I became a teen, the uqly little aluminum boats became too uncool for me and I convinced my Dad to buy me a 13'-6' Boston Whaler. Not only did this little boat have style, but we once again doubled our horsepower. The 20 hp Johnson really did push that little boat fast; it ran so well that I could even drop a ski and slalom.

My fishing addiction also began to mature during this time so I went to great lengths to customize the little whaler for Bass fishing. I installed swivel pedestal seats, a trolling motor and a most magical device from Lorance called a fish finder. This primitive fish finder included a round transducer that you mounted on the transom and the display was round and had a little light in it that went round and round on a circle of numbers at high speed while lighting up only to indicate the depth of the bottom. I think that it cost about half as much as the boat and all it really did was tell you the depth, but at the time it was revolutionary.

By the time I was 14 and had my Learners Permit, my dear Saint of a Mother was even willing to ride with a buddy and me to the lake, let me launch the boat and she would leave us there for the day and pick us back up in the evening. I bet there aren't many moms today who leave teens to their own devices all day in a boat on a lake 30 miles from home. I like to think that it was because I was such a virtuous and respectable young man, but in retrospect she may have just been happy to get me out of the house for a whole day.

Eventually college, marriage and a responsible job got in the way and the little Whaler went the way of all things. I spent a number of very misquided years without a boat in my life until, eventually, we reached the point where we could take a little time off and had a little (very little) to spend on recreation, so we bought a little 16' Arrowglass bow rider. This boat was a truly ugly banana yellow (we were called the banana boat by our friends at the lake) but it provided the means for us to join our friends who spent their weekends camping on a beautiful island in the middle of Lake Ouachita. After the first weekend that I spent carrying everything we needed to survive in the wilds of Arkansas (you can't imagine how much crap we took) and everyone who did not have a boat of their own back and forth to said beautiful island. After that experience we said, "we're gonna need a bigger boat".

At this point we made that first fatal step towards what has become a lifetime affliction with a terrible boating disease known as 5-foot fever. The disease in me progressed quickly, with jumps from a 25' Wellcraft to a 48' Nautaline and it finally cumulated in a 81' custom livaboard Lakewood Yacht and a 65-foot Cheoy Lee long range cruiser. There were also lots of interesting smaller craft that shared the slip with these larger boats, but I'm beginning to lose track of many of these. In more recent years I have realized that big boats require more care than I have the time and/or ability to provide, so I have downsized to my 27' World Cat.

I quess, for now, it's the perfect boat, but...

Stop in at Belle Harbour Marina, 307 Anclote Rd. in Tarpon Springs if you want to talk with Flip the Bird and I about boats, rent one of our new boats, buy one of my old boats or try riding our new Hydro Bikes.

MERLE







#### **Boat and Motor Superstores HOT BOAT OF THE MONTH!** Blackfin 302CC

Featuring a 10'0" beam, and LOA with engines of 32'8", the 302CC has an open, and well-designed layout making it the perfect choice for offshore fishing, recre-

ational activities or destination boating. With an extensive choice of Mercury engines, and featuring a double stepped hull designed by Michael Peters Yacht Design, the 302CC offers one of the smoothest and most efficient rides in its class.

Give us a call at 727.942.7767, stop by our showroom or visit us online today at www.BoatandMotorSuperstores.com for more information on this beautiful, state-of-the-art boat!



ON THE COVER: Noah from "Kickin Their Bass TV" catching absolute "TOADS" on his first time out on a Kaku Zulu I-Guide. To learn more, please visit kickintheirbass.com and kakukayaks.com.



#### DEPARTMENTS

- **MERLE'S MIND** 4 Random Thoughts from Merle
- 12 TIDE CHECK Florida West Coast: May 2023
- **26 FISHING FORECAST** with Captains Sergio & George

#### FISHING

- THE RIVERS TO BAY REPORT 8 by Captain John Rivers
- 10 MAY I HAVE ANOTHER? by Captain George Hastick
- **28 MUTTON SNAPPER MADNESS** by Anthony Gomez
- **30 QUEEN OF THE TAMPA BAY FLATS** by Captain Sergio Atanes

## DESTINATIONS

24 CRYSTAL RIVER, FLORIDA by Josh Johnson

## FEATURE STORY

16 CROCODILE BAY For the Best of Costa Rica by Merle Seamon







**Publisher & Chief Bottle Washer** Sal Liggieri 727.359.3471 sal@onshoreoffshore.com

#### **Design & Layout**

><[[[> FISHBONE CREATIVE **Bryan R. Hudson** 616.250.0522 fishbonecreate@icloud.com www.fishbonecreates.com

#### Staff Phot

**Captain Jimmy Nelson** www.livinthedreamtv.com

#### **Contributing Writers**

Merle Seamon Josh Johnson Anthony Gomez **Captain George Hastick** Captain John Rivers **Captain Sergio Atanes** 

Report violations of fish or wildlife laws by calling the Wildlife Alert Hotline, 1-888-404-3922, or text the information to Tip@MyFWC.com. Tipsters can remain anonymous and might be eligible for a reward. Protect Florida's waters!



Letters, questions, subscription information and comments can be sent to:

**Onshore-Offshore Publications, LLC** P.O. Box 861 Tarpon Springs, FL 34688 727.902.3735

No portion of this magazine may be reproduced without the written consent of the publisher. Onshore-Offshore does not necessarily advocate or agree with the beliefs, expressions or opinions of the writers or advertise



#### Feel the Power HIGH POWER | 115-250HP

Tohatsu offers the best outboard motors. including the 250 hp, 225 hp, 200 hp, 150 hp, 140 hp and 115 hp.

# Feel the Wind™

#### Feel the Extreme MID-RANGE | 25-90HP

Tohatsu offers an outstanding line up of four stroke outboard motors, including the 90 hp, 75 hp, 60 hp, 50 hp, 40 hp, 30 hp and 25 hp outboard motors.

## FIVE-YEAR WARRANTY - TOHATSU 100% FINANCING PROGRAM Now Available **100% FINANCING AVAILABLE AT 4.99%**



# **BEST PRICING GUARANTEED!**

## **GULFCOAST #1 REPOWER SPECIALIST SINCE 1990**

12330 49th Street N, Clearwater, FL 33762 • 727-327-7341 8:30am - 5:00pm Mon - Wed / 8:00am - 4:00pm Thurs & Fri

# www.northeastmarine.net

# TOHATSU

UPTAHOT 🐨

0

250

#### Feel the Difference PORTABLE | 2.5-20HP

Our first priority when developing these engines was to make them lightweight and compact without compromising reliability or the quality performance associated with the Tohatsu brand name



## THE RIVERS TO BAY REPORT

by Captain John Rivers

ood things come to those who wait and well, the waiting is over, because May is here and the Summer fishing season has begun!

First up, the Snook bite will be off the chain on the flats and in the deep water passes and just off the beaches.



Next up, love is in the air or more accurately, love bugs! Before you groan, remember it's a good thing, because when the love bugs show up, the Tarpon show up. May is when the Tarpon show usually happens, and once it gets going, it usually lasts until August. They will be all along the beaches of Anna Maria Island, the Skyway Bridge, and inside Tampa Bay just to name a few areas. Live Threadfin is usually the bait of choice or if



you're chunking, cut Threadfin and they'll show up behind your boat if you're fishing the bridge.

If you're more comfortable doing some light tackle fishing, then I recommend targeting the Spanish Mackerel, as they'll be all over the beaches and inside the Bay. I use long shank hooks with a short wire leader or a 40# monofiliment leader with a small Pilchard hooked through the nose.

King Mackerel will also be here; usually from 1/4 mile off the beach to 25+ miles out. I like to use a flat lined Cigar Minnow, but you can use any bait you like and they will more than likely smash it. My rig is usually a Gamakatsu #1 or #2 live bait light wire hook, with a #4 treble hook on the side.

Last, but certainly not least, let's head into the backcountry for Redfish. They will be where the schools of Mullet are and cut Threadfin or cut or live Pinfish are my two baits of choice when fishing for these bronze bruisers. If I'm using live bait for reds, I'll be using a cork to keep it out of the grass.

May is a great time for fishing, because even though the weather is a bit warmer, the winds have laid down, and every day is just about picture perfect.

So, after you read this, grab your rod and reel, load the boat, kayak or hit the bridges and go fishing!

Or, give me a ring and we'll spend a great day on the water.

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.



Small Boat Dry Storage Special for 17' to 21' boats without fixed tops only \$13 per foot, per month, plus tax. No minimum charge.

# Are you tired of fighting the crowds and waiting in line to get your boat? Bring your boat to Belle Harbour and let our friendly staff remove all of the stress from boating!

**Boat Rentals | Ethanol-Free 90-Octane Fuel** 

## Located on the Beautiful Anclote River at 307 Anclote Road

For more info, check out our website: www.belleharbourmarina.com

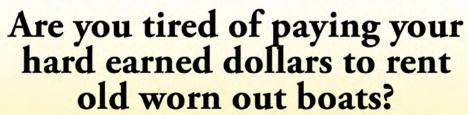




**Enjoy trouble free boating on** our rental boats, all of the fun without any of the work!







BELLE HARBOUR **BOAT RENTALS** 

VEEKDAY SPECIALS

Visit our website at www.belleboatrentals.com to see our boat rental options and to make your reservation today!

## **MAY I HAVE ANOTHER?**

by Captain George Hastick

ay is a month of choices when it comes to what fish you want to target.

Tarpon will invade the Tampa Bay area in full force. Look for them along the beaches, passes and the Skyway Bridge. One technique that is popular around the Skyway Bridge is to "spot lock" at the bridge and start cutting pieces of Threadfin Herring; dropping them overboard at a slow but steady pace. The scent and flash of the pieces as they sink will attract the Tarpon into your chum line.

Cobia will also be making their appearance and do not be surprised if you catch one while Tarpon fishing. If you want to target Cobia look for them around bridge pilings, range markers, channel markers, rock jetties and reefs. You can also find them on the flats, especially under or near large stingrays and manatees. On the flats they like to stay very close, if not next to them, because they scare bait like crabs, shrimp and fish out of their hiding places as they go over them which makes easy pick-

ings for the Cobia. Be ready with a live bait or lure if you see this extra shadow by the stingray or manatee and be sure to make a good cast. Many times, the Cobia will not travel too far away from its host. A Saltwater Assassin Artemis Shad on a 5/0-7/0 jighead or weighted hook would be a good lure to have ready in both light and dark colors to cover water color and daily weather conditions.

Snook will be under the mangroves, so good casts are a plus if you want to catch many of these fastambushing predators. You can also live chum to try to get them active and out from under the bushes. Scaled Sardines, Threadfin Herring and Pinfish are a few good baits that the Snook like live or as cut bait. If your using a Pinfish you might want to put it under a cork, so they don't swim down into the grass or roots. If you like artificial baits, a White or Crystal color jerkbait is a good option on a 1/8oz twist-lock hook.

Redfish will be on the flats roaming but they will also hide from the sun under the mangroves, so don't



be surprised to catch some Redfish while fishing for Snook. They also like oyster mounds and if you can find an area that has both, you might be golden. They will hit the same livebaits as the Snook but also love cut baits like Pinfish, Threadfin, Ladyfish and Mackerel to name a few. A shadtail in Gold Pepper on a 1/4oz jig head or twistlock hook







is also a good choice for covering ground and finding Redfish.

Trout will be hanging out on the flats near the drop-offs where the water just starts to get a little deeper like 4-5 feet or in deeper potholes. They will also be on raised grass flats with deeper water surrounding them. I like a 1/8-1/4oz jighead with a 4" fake Shrimp like Saltwater Assassin's Shrimp Cocktail or a baitfish imitation plastic shadtail in White, Molting, Papa Smurph and New Penny.

The fishing is great, so get out there and fish!

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.





# Did you know you can get your With 360 days of boating experience?

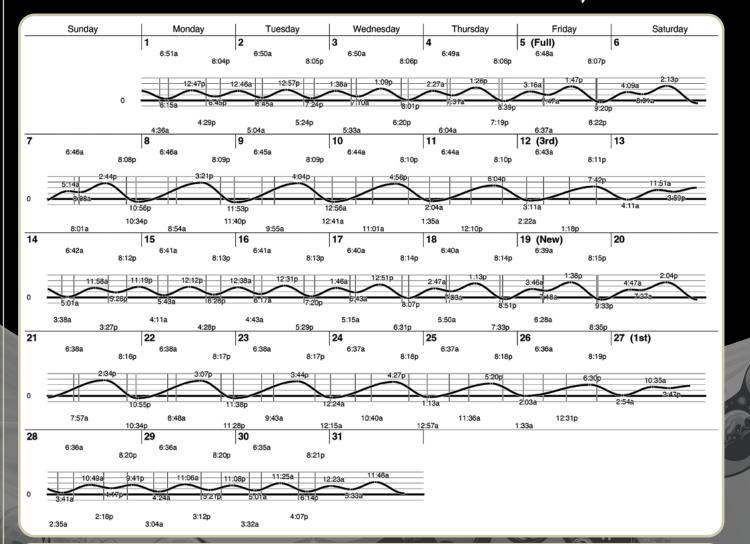
Sea School is the premier maritime training school in the country with over 36 years experience in dealing with U.S. Coast Guard Licensing, Regulations & Maritime Education, and over 52 USCG Approved Courses. Sea School is family owned and operated, so come join the Sea School family. Call us today and let us show you how we can take you where you want to go.



**TIDE CHECK** 

May 2023





Conversions are based off of the St. Petersburg Pier. They are published strictly for reference and are not designed for navigational aid. Onshore-Offshore assumes no responsibility for their accuracy.

#### **Conversions for Clearwater Beach Area**

High	Low	
-0:02	-0:10	Dunedin, St. Joseph Sound
-0:05	-0:15	Anclote Key, South End
+0:42	+0:42	Tarpon Springs, Anclote River
-0:07	-0:03	North Anclote Key
+0:41	+0:39	Old Port Tampa
+0:33	+0:53	Gulf Harbors
+0:42	+1:05	Hwy 19 Bridge, Pithlachascotee River
+0:50	+1:35	New Port Richey, Pithlachascotee River
+0:36	+0:43	Hudson, Hudson Creek

#### **Conversions for St. Marks River Area**

High	Low	
+0:23	+1:18	Everglades City
-1:17	-1:03	Cape Romano
-1:04	-1:08	Marco Island
-1:59	-2:04	Naples
-0:46	-0:09	Indian Bay
-0:59	-0:42	Bayport
-0:25	+0:23	Withlacoochee River

#### **Conversions for Tampa Bay Area** High Low Gandy Bridge +0:49 +0:58 Courtney Campbell Cswy. +1:38 +1:55 Safety Harbor +1:38 +1:55 +0:22 Ballast Point +0:20 +0:26 Hillsborough Bay +0:07 +0:29 McKay Bay Entrance +0:21 +0:39 Old Port Tampa +0:41 -2:27 -2:24 Egmont Key -2:46 Anna Maria, Bradenton Bch -2:53 Anna Maria, City Pier -2:19 -2:10

-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	-1:14 -0:20	Redfish Pass, Captiva Is. Captiva, Pine Island Sound
-0:46 -2:20	-0:20	•
	-0:20	Captiva, Pine Island Sound
-2:20	-0:20 -2:28	Captiva, Pine Island Sound Captiva, Gulf Side
-2:20 -0:25	-0:20 -2:28 +0:16	Captiva, Pine Island Sound Captiva, Gulf Side Galt Isle, Pine Island Sound
-2:20 -0:25 -0:30 +2:08	-0:20 -2:28 +0:16 -0:44	Captiva, Pine Island Sound Captiva, Gulf Side Galt Isle, Pine Island Sound St. James City, Pine Island
-2:20 -0:25 -0:30 +2:08	-0:20 -2:28 +0:16 -0:44 +2:44	Captiva, Pine Island Sound Captiva, Gulf Side Galt Isle, Pine Island Sound St. James City, Pine Island Fort Myers



 LIVE MONDAYS! 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM f y 0 in P

# 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL FREE KIDS FISHING CLINIC

**PRESENTED BY CAPT. SERGIO ATANES - RISE TAMPA AND YERRID FOUNDATION** 

## JUNE 10TH, PICNIC ISLAND 9:15 AM TO 12:30 PM



ur goal is to educate future anglers 15 years old and under and teach U them how to fish the Tampa Bay area. Fishing is a great way to get kids to bond with their parents, siblings and friends. Learning how to fish and being outside will provide a new experience away from computer games. Not every child can be an athlete, but every child can be an angler. We will teach each child the where and how to catch fish. Our staff includes some of the top charter captains in the area. All captains are donating their time to educate every child. Topics covered will be the types of fish to catch in the Tampa Bay area, knowing the types of live baits and artificial baits, casting and how to throw a net.

For the first 120 RSVPs, each child will receive a rod and reel combo to take home at no charge (a \$50 value). Our sponsors will be donating fishing tackle products to all children participating in our fishing clinic. Free food and drinks will be available at the end of the clinic.

ALL CHILDREN MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT First 120 kids that register will get a free rod and reel combo with tackle.

RSVP to Capt. Sergio Atanes E-Mail atanes@msn.com Parents or guardians name-contact number and child's Tee Shirt size For more information, call or text 813-973-7132



Capt. Sergio Atanes Capt. George Hastick Capt. Michael Dawson Capt. John Garcia Capt. Mike Morse Capt. Andrew Echenique Capt. Larry Fritch Capt. John Rivers Capt. Mark Gore Capt. Brian Goldman Capt. Phil Pegley **Donald Waiberman** 

## VOLUNTEERS

**MAYOR JANE** CASTOR VILL BE HERE AT 10 A.M. ELCOME THE KIDS



Some examples of popular items that we carry are hooks, sinkers, floats, fishing rods, reels, baits, gaffs, traps, waders, tackle boxes, lines and etc. We carry many of the most demanded brands to ensure that you find exactly what you are looking for. From novice to serious professional, you will find the tackle you most need.

# 36851 U.S. 19 NORTH | PALM HARBOR, FL 34684 727.942.7767 | BOATANDMOTORSUPERSTORES.COM

Monday - Friday: 8:00am - 5:30pm • Saturday: 9:00am - 4:00pm • Sunday: Closed

# PENN *St.Croix* SHIMANO

# **WE CARRY THE FISHING EQUIPMENT YOU NEED!**

A DOWNARD AND A DOWNARD AND A DOWNARD

Boat and Motor Superstores is the newest tackle store in town. Many locals consider us to be one of the best places to find unbelievable deals on fishing gear and much more. Before you head on over to the big store, shop with us first. We proudly carry many of popular brands including: Shimano, Avet, Penn, Diawa, St. Croix and Costa Del Mar. Though we feature the best products the industry has to offer, the employees are what make us truly special. We continue to offer our customers the best in customer service and product selection. This is what has earned us a notable distinction amongst our competitors.







just returned from another trip to one of my very favorite places in the world, Crocodile Bay Resort in Puerto Jimenez, Costa Rica. Crocodile Bay is located on the beautiful Osa Peninsula far south in Costa Rica on Golfo Dulce, which opens out to the Pacific Ocean. Much of the Osa is made up of Corcovado National Park and because of that, there is great emphasis on preserving the rich natural resources of the region. The Osa Peninsula is one of the most ecologically diverse regions in the world.

Accompanying me on this trip was my buddies Marty Cohen and Lex Salisbury and Lex's lovely and very understanding wife Elena Sheppa. Lex and Elena even love the place so much that they are purchasing one of the new condo units there.



8 ONSHORE-OFFSHORE M



At Crocodile Bay, the emphasis is on worldclass sportfishing, but there are also plenty of other things to do. On this trip our plans were to spend two days offshore fishing, one day inshore fishing and also try to enjoy a little down time and take an ecotour or two.

We flew into Puerto Jiminez late on Monday and made plans to begin by going offshore on one of their beautiful Strike sportfishing boats. These boats are very well maintained and they are the perfect platform for four anglers to enjoy a day seeking sailfish, marlin, mahi mahi, tuna and more.

We woke early Tuesday and were at the lodge for an excellent breakfast at 5:30 am. This early start got us to the boat by 6:30 and our Captain and Mate had everything ready to go for us. We quickly boarded and we were off. Because of

the Lodge's location on Golfo Dulce, we had a little longer trip to the area where would be fishing, but the time flew by as we watched a variety of dolphin species, sea turtles, flying fish and the incredible scenery. By around 8:00 am, the lines were all out and we were trolling. It did not take long before there was a sail in the spread and, being the gentlemen that we are, we asked Elena to step up for the first fish of the day. After an epic battle that included several spectacular jumps and runs, Elena had the beautiful fish boatside and our mate got the leader and brought the fish up where we could get a few pictures before releasing it to fight another day. The crew is very respectful of these fish and they make very sure that the fish are released quickly and in good physical condition.



#### really thought that

this was a good sign and we looked forward to a great day of fishing, but the Fishing Gods had a different plan. Marty and Lex did manage to boat a couple of large mahi mahi in the afternoon, but that was pretty much it. These went on the ice to help with dinner tonight. I had a shot at a large tuna, but it appeared to have hit the leader with its tail and unfortunately broke it off clean. We returned to the



ONSHORE-OFFSHORE Magazine

lodge tired and happy; it was time to chill in the pool with a tropical adult beverage.



Wednesday and Marty and I spent the day driving over a mountain on questionable roads to take a tour of the Serpe River by



20 ONSHORE-OFFSHORE

boat. The drive over the mountain was an excellent 4-wheel drive adventure and the ride on the river was like a trip back in time. We saw a lot of wildlife including crocodiles, caimans, three monkey species, dozens of birds, vampire bats, and much more. On the return trip our excellent guide took us to an archaeological dig and museum that exhibiting gigantic stone spheres (up to 3 meters in diameter) that were carved by the indigenous population between 500 and 1500 AD. The precision of the carving of these spheres is quite amazing. The spheres were used for public prestige related to the authorities social and political level. They served to point out the importance of villages or to mark ceremonial sites. Over 350 of these balls have been discovered in Costa Rica.

We rose early again on Thursday for breakfast and to once again board one of

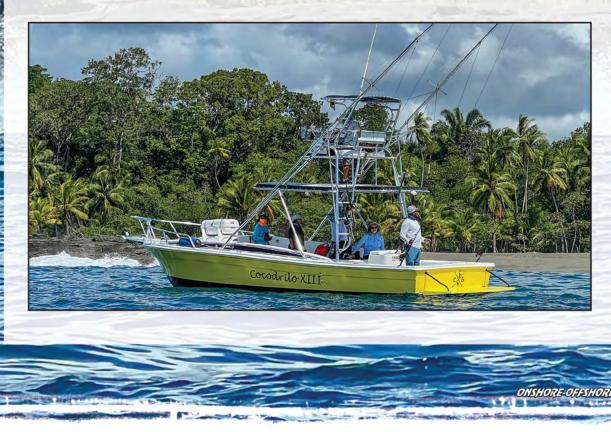
the Strike Sportfishing boats. We headed out and were trolling before 8. We experienced better action and wound up boating quite a few 40 to 50 pound mahi mahi. We actually had three times that two big mahi

were hooked up at the same time. These fish were truly beautiful and they absolutely wore us out. Their tall, flat body shape allows them to turn sideways and resist almost any angler's pull. We boated several of the beautiful fish, but all were released unharmed after taking some nice pics, as we had plenty of mahi at the lodge left over from Tuesday.

Friday was our final day there so Marty and I chose to fish inshore for the beautiful roosterfish. We boarded one of Crocodile Bay's really nice 26' Boston Whalers with Umberto serving as our Captain. The mahi mahi had worn us out the day before, so we decided to start just a little later, but we were still on the water by 7:30 am. The trip out was considerably shorter, as roosterfish are caught right off of the beaches. Before 9 we were slow trolling with goggleeye or sardines and it was not long before the action started. Ultimately, we caught several large jacks and Marty chalked one up for his bucket list when he got his first Roosterfish. It had been a successful day and we returned to the lodge tired and happy.

Saturday, we sadly departed the lodge to fly home, already thinking about the next trip to Crocodile Bay!

For booking information concerning Crocodile Bay, please contact Dave Kansky at Lynch Creek Travel by calling 800.733.1115 at extension #1002 or visit their website at: www.crocodilebay.com.





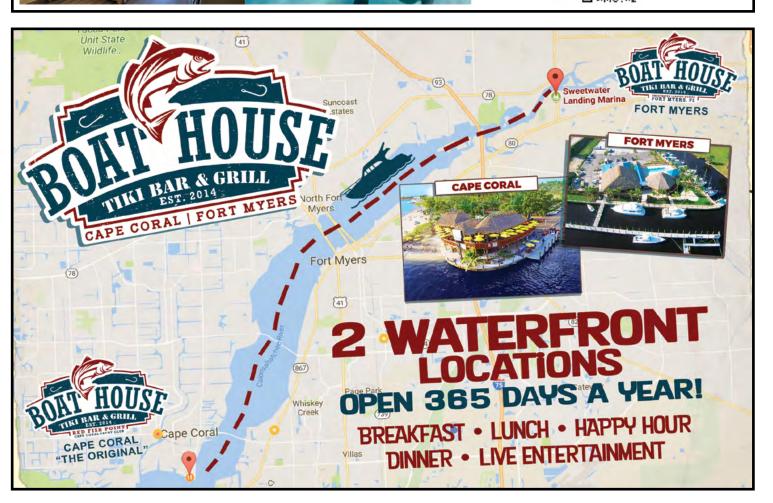


- World-class inshore, offshore, freshwater fishing, and snorkel for scallops
- Catch Trophy Tarpon, Snook, Gag Grouper, Redfish, Sea Trout, and Red Snapper
- Tie you boat up outside your lodging or rent a boat on-site
   Fine resort accommodations and golf villas
- 27 holes of golf, Florida style
   Kayak the pristing waters of Crystal I
- Kayak the pristine waters of Crystal River
  Dive and swim with the gentle manatees
- Pamper yourself at our premium spa
- 4 restaurants on the grounds, for drinks, dining, and fun
- 12,000 sq. ft. of function space for weddings or meetings





9301 W. Fort Island Trail, Crystal River, FL 34429 www.PlantationOnCrystalRiver.com



## **30th ANNUAL LOWER KEYS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE DOLPHIN TOURNAMENT**





# JUNE 2nd, 3rd & 4TH, 2023

# OVER \$35,000 IN CASH & PRIZES

Kiki's Sandbar MM 28.5 Little Torch Key—Friday, June 2nd, Registration, Appetizers, & Cash Bar at 5:00 p.m. Sunday, June 4th, Dinner & Awards Ceremony 6 p.m. \*See Official entry form for all rules and info.

# LARGEST DOLPHIN OVER 50 LBS. WINS \$20,000

First 50 Boats to register are eligible for the \$20,000\* Fees: (Entry & Banguet for 4) \$450 per boat if received by May 29th, 2023 \$500 after that date. Banquet : (Food Only) \$25/per person For more information, contact: The Lower Keys Chamber of Commerce (305) 872-2411. Applications for download at FIRST LOWER KEYS MEDICAL CENTER STATE COAST2COAST ions MORTGAGE KEY WEST - FLORID **BANK OUIK CHIK** JIG'S Destinati@n BAVIT®TAVCKUS GUNS AND AMMO

Ime

NSURANCE

CENTENNIA

Keys Federa

ews-Barometer





## **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

s the Manatee Capital of the World, Crystal River takes great pride in being at the forefront River takes great price in boung at the 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, catchand-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'reinterested 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.





#### DISCOVER CRYSTAL RIVER FLORIDA FLORAL CITY || HOMOSASSA || INVERNESS

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.







#### **Captain Sergio Atanes**

Warm waters and calmer winds should help anglers, both offshore and inside the bay while they look for big Snook making their way into the passes for their yearly

spawning until late August.

The Mackerel bite will also be hot around the bridges and artificial reefs with Mangrove Snapper a good, solid second choice. Lastly, Redfish action improves with live bait moving into the flats and around oyster bars.



#### **Captain George Hastick**

May is an exciting month in Tampa Bay! Tarpon will show up in numbers along the beaches, passes, bridges and move up into the bay.

Along with tarpon, cobia will make their appearance on the range markers, channel markers and the flats up inside Tampa Bay. Mackerel will make their big push up into the bay over the many artificial reefs, range markers and the skyway bridge.

#### **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.

#### **"TACKLE TALK"**

#### SPONSORED BY FLORIDA FISHING OUTFITTERS

Make it easy on the fish and yourself with these new products from Lee Fisher **International** that includes several new landing nets with soft rubber netting and a folding handle thats perfect for smaller boats or kayak fishing.



Also available is an extendable handle model thats great for landing fish on boats with higher gunnels.

Another new item is the **ZIPPY Fish Bag** made with

high buoyancy foam tubing, vinyl coated nylon netting, a nylon heavy duty zipper and nylon handles for easy transport. Great for kayakers, wade fisherman and shore anglers. Learn more about these and other fine products from Lee Fisher International at www.leefisherfishing.com.







## **MUTTON SNAPPER MADNESS**

by Anthony Gomez

utton Snapper are one of the most prized fish in Florida's offshore fishery. They are targeted all over the state and are known to be one of the smartest Snapper species. Since these fish are so smart, it often takes a lot of time and effort to dial in and get some of these big Mutton Snapper to the boat. Many different factors play a role in being able to effectively target and catch these intelligent fish.



Location is the first key to getting hooked up on a big mutton. They are fish that like to patrol around structure and stay on sandy bottoms. They like to roam the outside edges of wrecks and reeflines to hunt baitfish on the bottom. These fish rarely venture on top of any structure to ensure less competition for food and to avoid any predators like sharks and Goliath Groupers. It's great because most other fish don't venture on the perimeter of these structures. Sometimes you run into a different fish on the sandy bottom, but the majority of your bites will come from Mutton Snapper.

The next important factor in catching a big mutton is the bait. Depending on the area where you target Mutton Snapper, the best bait of choice can vary across the entire state. In our area, live baits such as Sardines, Threadfin Herring, and Pilchards seem to be the best options. These baits are very prevalent in our area from Spring through Fall and tend to attract the bigger fish. When fished on the bottom, they put out tons of vibrations and attract those hungry muttons. To catch them, we hit some shallow structures with small Sabiki Rigs to load the livewell with these beautiful live baits. Having live bait for big Mutton Snapper is important but not a necessity. When it's tough to get those Sardines and Pilchards, we use dead

baits such

as big



Bonita strips, cut Grunt, and even whole Squid to entice these fish. If you can't find the live bait, neither can the muttons. They feed on a variety of baits depending on what forage is in the area. That is why we always have multiple types of bait when targeting this species. I have opened the stomachs of many Mutton Snapper and have seen everything from juvenile Blue Runner to tiny Blue Crab. With an appetite for many baits, it can sometimes be difficult to find out what those fish are feeding on that day.

> Since Mutton Snapper are so smart, you must have the proper rig to get them to bite. We use a bottom rig that contains a leader at least 30 feet in

length. This is essential in keeping your bait as far away from your weight as possible. Mutton Snapper can spook and become lock jawed if they hear your weight bouncing along the bottom. Some guys will use leaders up to 100 feet long, which in my opinion, is just overkill. Around 30-50 feet is the ideal leader length. The leader line is often 40-50 pound fluorocarbon for invisibility and abrasion resistance. Sometimes we bump it down to 30-pound leader if the bite is tough, but it increases the risk of losing fish to structure or a predator like Goliath Grouper or sharks.

There are many variations to this rig. The most popular ways to connect your lead weight and leader is with two barrel swivels, a three way swivel, or rubber bands and balloon clips. These rigging styles allow for your bait to stay on the bottom while still being far away from your lead. Bank sinkers ranging from 5-12 oz are ideal depending on the depth and current strength. When







reeling in a mutton, you must be ready to handline your leader when using a rig with swivels. Using a balloon clip or rubber band on your rig, you can remove your weight and reel your leader completely in. This creates a slight advantage to your rig, but both rigs are equally effective. Conventional reels are better to use on these big muttons compared to spinning gear. You have more power with a conventional rod to get that fish off the bottom and land it quicker.

Bottom fishing for a big mutton is the most efficient way to get hooked up, but these fish can be caught using other techniques. We have been chumming along sandy bottom and gotten those fish to come up in the chum slick. We feed back pieces of cut bait on small jigheads and lighter gear with great success. Other times when there are lots of Kingfish around, live chumming and feeding baits back on triple hook rigs can get you tight on some nice muttons. These fish will come off the bottom and feed on the scraps that the Kingfish leave behind. If you are trying to get on a steady mutton bite, bottom rigs on sandy bottom with very long leaders is a proven and reliable tactic. It can produce tons of quality size fish and get the cooler loaded up. You must always be ready because at any moment, the Mutton Snapper of a lifetime could strike your bait and you may only get one shot at that "slob". Also, it is likely to hook an unexpected fish like a Cobia, Amberjack, or another big snapper like a Mangrove or Red Snapper. That is why you should always have all your tackle in great conditions to ensure you catch that fish!







## **QUEEN OF THE TAMPA BAY FLATS**

by Captain Sergio Atanes

ing, the Rachycentron Canadum or just Cobia, is a familiar sight in Tampa Bay all Summer into late or mid-October according to water temperature. In Tampa Bay they range in size from 30 inches on the flats to 48 inches around the flats, structure, and wrecks. Cobia must be at least 36 inches long, from the fork of the tail, to be legal. Daily bag limit is 1 per day or 2 per vessel, whichever is less. They are also known as "Crab Eaters" and "Lemonfish". Common from 10 to 50 pounds in the Gulf and 10 to 25 pounds inside of Tampa Bay.

#### "GO-TO" BAITS

Greenback Sardines, Threadfin Sardines, Blue Crab, Grunts and Pinfish are the baits of choice. I find an area of grass flats close to a channel or drop-off. I prefer the water depth around 2 to 4 feet. I then start by chumming for the bait with a mixture of tropical fish food, Anise Oil and some saltwater mixed to a "cream of wheat" texture. The secret to chumming is not to feed the bait

but attracting them to the boat. I prefer to use a Humpback Flats castnet weighing 1-pound per foot. This makes life a lot easier when you have those days where it takes 20 or 30 throws to get enough bait for a days fishing. I start the season with a 10-foot, 1/4-inch mesh net and when the bait gets bigger or when throwing under a bridge or range marker, I switch to a 3/8-inch mesh. It sinks quicker and increases your chance of catching bigger baits.

A livewell is a 'must have' on any boat, and if you don't have one, portable units can be purchased at most retail tackle outlet stores. A good livewell needs to be at least 26 gallons or bigger with a 700 gallon an hour pump; the larger the better. Most boats come equipped with a livewell system from the factory or are ready for one. Unless you are skilled and confident, I suggest you find a local shop to install it, as most applications require making a hole through your boat hull to install a pickup tube.





#### THE FLATS

Ok, now we've caught our baits, but what next? That's simple: start cutting some Greenback Sardines in half and make a large pile on the cutting board. Start by tossing pieces into the water around the boat, but remember you are anchored in 3 to 4-foot of water. Now just wait for rays to start showing up. Southern Rays or Brown Rays are attracted to chum and along with them, come the Cobia.

Remember, Cobia like structure and are lazy to feed, but as the rays move in on the scent of the chum, they stir up the bottom with their wings and this brings up all the small Shrimp and Crab and pieces of your chum to the surface of the flats. The Cobia will be just under the rays or next to them picking off the pieces of bait the rays leave behind. Toss a live Pinfish, Greenback, Shrimp, or Crab at them and hold on. A word of caution: leave the bail open on the reel until the Cobia gets at least 20 feet from the boat before you set the

hook, or they will head for the nearest structure which is your boat. I have several broken rods at home to remind me of this costly mistake.



**BEACH BUOYS** 



channel markers & range markers) to another looking for fish hanging around them during the slack tide periods. As mentioned, Cobia are structure-oriented fish that like wrecks, buoys and anything that creates a shadow line.

Buoy tending is a method that works but is expensive on the pocketbook with gas prices so high. The term, "early bird gets the worm" applies in this case, as the first anglers to the buoys have the best shot at catching them.





Master Angler titles & Most Releases awarded to Men, Women, Junior & Peewee anglers Certificates for all entries & Trophies awarded for the heaviest of 37 species in 9 different line classes



Approach upcurrent from the marker with a live bait ready to go. When a fish is sighted toss up current allowing the bait to drift naturally towards the fish rather than throwing the bait on top and spooking it. Cobia can be picky eaters and may refuse your offer. Don't waste your time; run to the next buoy or range marker and start all over again.

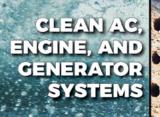
#### SUGGESTED TACKLE

On the flats I prefer a medium-action spinning outfit with 20-pound test braided line, 40-pound fluorocarbon leader and 3/0 circle hook. For buoys, a heavier outfit is needed with a large spinning reel with 40 pound test braided line and 50 pound test fluorocarbon leader paired with a 3/0 or 4/0 circle hook under a large float.

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: reelfishina.com.



BLAST AWAY SCALE & BUILD-UP IN PIPES





**Starbrite** 

Starbrite.

MARINE

ESCALING



TAME

YOUR

WATER

SYSTEMS

RAW

New Marine Descaling Fluid by Star brite safely and quickly **busts through scale, salt, and calcium deposits** in raw water-cooled systems, **maximizing power** at a fraction of the cost of similar products.

When your raw water system is barnacled with deposits, it can cause your engine to run hot or result in AC system inefficiencies by restricting water flow. A simple recirculation of Marine Descaling Fluid can **remedy these unseen overheating issues** without a costly repair. Plus, it won't damage seals, gaskets, or rubber impellers.

Find this perfect DIY solution in stores nationwide. Available in concentrate and ready-to-use.

Visit www.STARBRITE.com to learn more.