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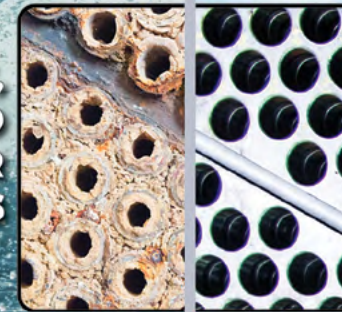
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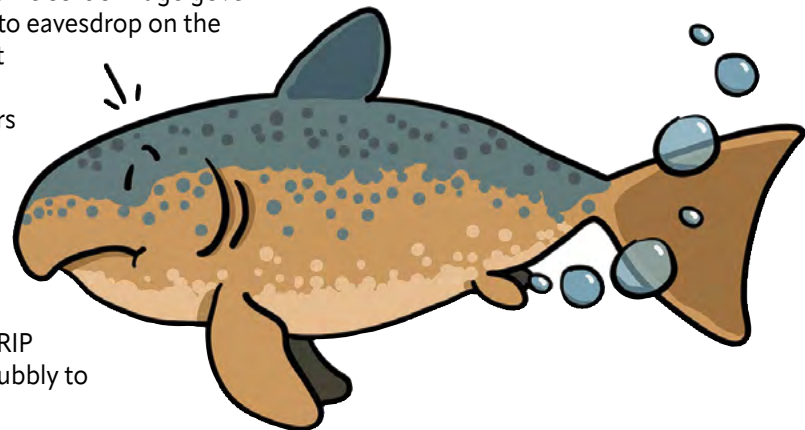
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FISHY FLATULENCE

Those who know me best would certainly verify that I usually try to steer away from discussion of puerile subjects like flatulence, but recent news reports make it imperative for me to bring you up to speed on researcher's discovery of fish farts. Apparently a study performed by USF researchers in St. Pete identified several new noises, emanating from the depths, which they felt were best described as tuna toots.

These researchers (almost certainly funded by some sort of huge government grant) sent a robot glider out into the gulf to eavesdrop on the daily lives of our fishy friends. While they did not discover any terrorist threats or make any breakthroughs that would locate the undersea wonders of Atlantis, they did determine that there are a variety of fish species that pass gas producing underwater fart sounds.



I can picture it now. Researchers listening to the sound recordings jump from their chairs and shout, "EUREKA, I JUST HEARD A HERRING RIP ONE" while his or her associate breaks out the bubbly to toast their monumental discovery.

Is it possible that this is all just a cruel joke? Did they consider the possibility that it was all just a playful scuba diver with a waterproof case for his iphone who was playing with the Atomic Fart App?

Don't get me wrong, I am a proponent of undersea research that can teach us how to better preserve our fishy resources, but I am not quite sure how fish farts play an integral role in this type of research. The gliders that collect this sort of information cost a lot of money. Some typical base prices of models that I could find on line start at \$120,000 to \$140,000 and go up from there. Researchers and labs don't come cheap either. All I'm saying is that perhaps all of this money could be better spent doing something like teaching wiener dogs to talk or balancing the Federal Budget?

Perhaps this discovery will lead to even more valuable research studies to determine the effect that fish farts are having on the Ozone layer. In recent years the US Government has given nearly 20 million dollars (I am not making this up) in Conservation Innovation Grants to 51 different projects studying the environmental impact of cow farts and belches, fish flatulence will surely be next.

I have to wonder which fish are the most flatulent? Does it depend on their diet or does it vary by species. Does Mrs. Shark tell Mr. Shark, "you have got to stop eating those blowfish, they give you such terrible gas?" Did they find that young male fish were more likely to sneak up behind their friends and rip a big bubbler? Could they also hear nervous fish giggles after the toots?

A veteran sonar tech from submarine duty said that none of this came as a surprise to him. Apparently the size of humpback whales is not the only thing that is monumental about them. That she blows may have had more than one meaning to early whalers. It really only makes sense that fish too would have some gas to pass. I can't really see why this is such a big discovery, I realized, many years ago, that my dog farts and you never saw that in the news (till now).

Most of the information in this column is actually true or at least based on truth, which may be slightly embellished for my amusement. This is definitely another instance of when the truth is stranger than anything I could make up. Even Flip the Bird occasionally passes a bit of rancid methane.

Flip and Merle can be reached at Belle Harbour Marina in Tarpon Springs just in case you have valuable information to share about your own experiences with flatulent fish or try merle@shoredev.com.



16



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ON THE COVER: Rosemary White with a nice Black Drum caught while exploring Plaquemines Parish in Southern Louisiana. Read more about her adventures by turning to our feature on page 16 of this issue!

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THE RIVERS TO BAY REPORT

by Captain John Rivers

The inshore bite has been very good for many species in Tampa Bay lately, so let's start with Spanish Mackerel. These toothy critters are found all over Tampa Bay including the markers and near flats where there is a lot of bait around.



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

Redfishing has been off and on, at least for me, over the past few weeks. I know a few areas that are holding them, but getting them to eat is another story! You must catch the tide right and have the right bait, which is either a fresh, cut Pinfish or fresh, dead Threadfin. I put a small split shot weight on the line to hold it in place and stick the rod in the holder. When it starts to bend over and the fish takes off...is when I grab it. Don't and I stress...do not move the bait if the fish hits it and doesn't take off; he'll just spit it and you won't get the hookup!

Snook fishing has been great. The fish have been started to migrate out on the beaches and passes and there are still many fish that stay in the bay all Summer, so no worries, you still have your chance to catch a big Snook in June. That's the best time to hook a monster or at least I think it is. You can



catch a trophy at any time in April, May, June or July, but I just feel that June is a very good month to hook into that once in a lifetime Snook. Mine was on my 52nd birthday; I caught my first 40-inch Snook.

Just remember they are out of season and if you don't know the rules and regulations to saltwater fish in



your area, check out www.fwc.org or find a FWC rules and regulations brochure at any local tackle shop.

Trout fishing is also very good both in the bay and off the beaches. The key is to hit them early in the morning

or close to sunset and you'll do well. I personally like to fish for Trout and do well in 3 to 6 feet of water.

Over the next month, the fishing will pretty much stay the same and you will just need to find clean water for snook, fish shaded spots for reds in the middle of the day and the mackerel are plentiful and pretty much on every marker and near the flats.

Yes, June will start to get hot outside, but don't let that prevent you from getting out on the water.

If you've never fished Tampa Bay, my suggestion is hire a fishing guide for your first couple times to learn it if you're living here. And, if you're visiting, definitely hire a guide cause our fishery is world renowned and you'll enjoy yourself. I hope to see you on the water and tight lines! ☑

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.



THE FISH IN JUNE...FEEL THE MOON!

by Captain George Hastick

June is one of the peak months in St. Petersburg and Tampa Bay for Tarpon & Snook.

First, Tarpon can be found throughout the bay from the backwaters all the way back out to the beaches. Some of the places to look are marinas, bridges, artificial reefs, jetties and drop-offs where it goes from 10 to 14 feet deep. The bridges, in particular, are a magnet for bait, which in turn becomes a magnet for Tarpon and the same holds true for the artificial reefs.

through the bridges. Crabs especially will be flushing out which is a great tarpon bait. Tarpon will stack up in the passes and anywhere these baits are being funneled with the outgoing tidal movement. The thing you must watch out for is the actual day of the full moon and the next day; sometimes Tarpon will have lock jaw or will have left the area and possibly push offshore to spawn. You can



have an area loaded with Tarpon one day and the next day, after a full moon, you might not even see a single fish. I personally like the few days right before the full moon. The stronger the tides, the better the flush and the bite is usually good. This also happens on and around the new moon days.

The setup I like to use for freelining crabs is a 7-8' 20-40lb class rod with a medium-fast action, so you have good backbone to fight the fish, but a flexible enough tip to make long casts with the crab. Spool up with 30-50lb braid and a 40-80lb fluorocarbon leader.

Snook are also affected by the moon and will move to the passes and sometimes nearby reefs to spawn. At times, Snook will overfeed the morning of a setting full moon and shut down since they fed all night. But, no worreis, they should kick back in on

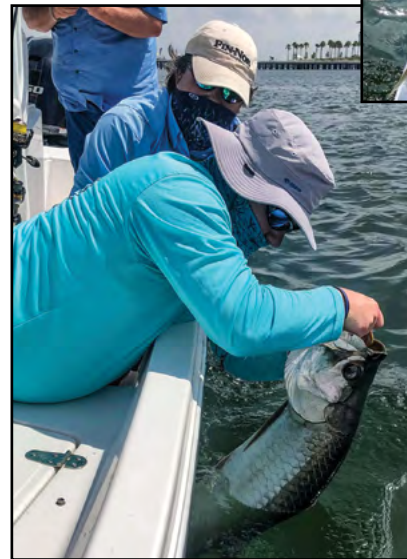
the latter half of the day. The pass- es will hold larger females. So, if you're looking for a trophy Snook, that is the time to check out the passes, spoil islands and bridges.



You might be surprised to find out that Snook, besides eating live Threadfin, Pinfish, Scaled Sardines and many more, they will add crab and shrimp to their diet this time of year. This is because of the tidal flushes on and around the full and new moons flushing out crabs and shrimp. It is an easy meal for them since they are an ambush predator, and the bait is coming to them with these tides.

If you are fishing at night, you can use a heavier leader, especially if you are fishing near a bridge. But during daylight, don't go heavier than 30lb fluorocarbon leader or you will not get many hits. ☑

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.



The days leading up to a full moon and a few days after can welcome in a tremendous Tarpon bite due to the "higher" high tides that will move more water on the outgoing tide and the current will be stronger. This will flush all kinds of bait out of the bay through the passes and



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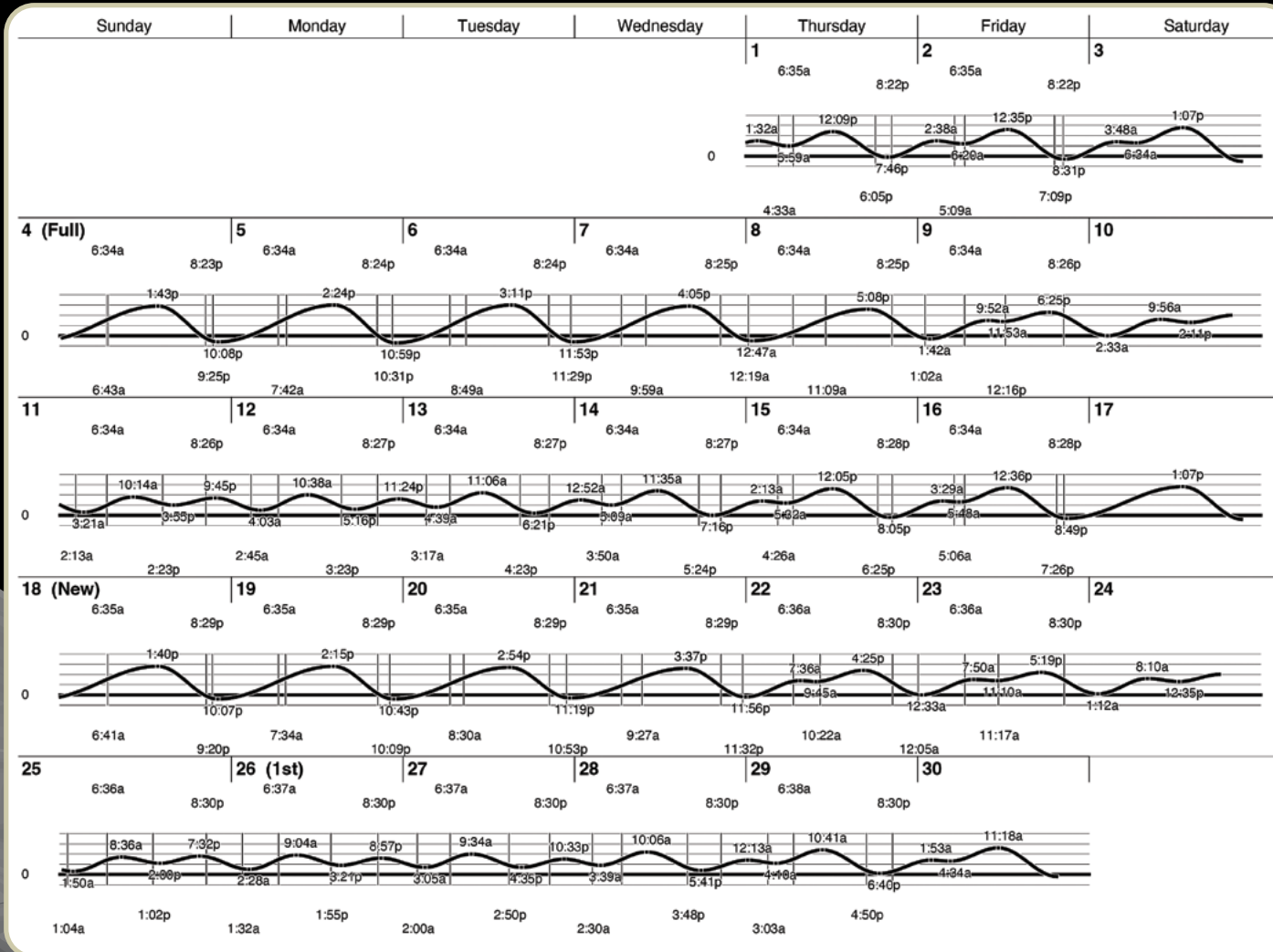
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Conversions for Clearwater Beach Area			Conversions for St. Marks River Area		
High	Low		High	Low	
-0:02	-0:10	Dunedin, St. Joseph Sound	+0:23	+1:18	Everglades City
-0:05	-0:15	Anclote Key, South End	-1:17	-1:03	Cape Romano
+0:42	+0:42	Tarpon Springs,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

Conversions for Tampa Bay Area

High	Low	
+0:49	+0:58	Gandy Bridge
+1:38	+1:55	Courtney Campbell Cswy.
+1:38	+1:55	Safety Harbor
+0:20	+0:22	Ballast Point
+0:07	+0:26	Hillsborough Bay
+0:21	+0:29	McKay Bay Entrance
+0:41	+0:39	Old Port Tampa
-2:27	-2:24	Egmont Key
-2:53	-2:46	Anna Maria, Bradenton Bch
-2:10	-2:19	Anna Maria, City Pier
-1:24	-0:55	Bradenton, Manatee River
-0:30	+0:14	Redfish Pt., Manatee River
-2:22	-1:58	Mullet Key Channel, Skyway
+0:08	+0:17	Shell Point
-0:22	-0:29	Point Pinellas
-1:34	-1:30	Pass-a-Grille Beach
-1:32	-1:05	Gulfport
-1:18	-0:44	St. Pete Beach Causeway
-2:14	-2:04	John's Pass
-1:40	-1:18	Madeira Beach Causeway
-2:00	-1:25	Cortez, Sarasota Bay
-1:38	-0:58	Sarasota Bay
-2:02	-1:38	Venice Inlet
-0:57	-0:40	Englewood, Lemon Bay
-1:27	-0:59	Placida, Gasparilla Sound
+1:38	+1:56	El Jobean, Myakka River
+1:52	+2:30	Shell Point, Peace River
+1:06	+1:27	Punta Gorda, Charlotte Hbr.
-1:12	-1:56	Boca Grande, Charlotte Hbr.
-0:19	+0:26	Pineland, Pine Island
+0:43	+1:28	Matlacha Pass
-0:55	-1:14	Redfish Pass, Captiva Is.
-0:46	-0:20	Captiva, Pine Island Sound
-2:20	-2:28	Captiva, Gulf Side
-0:25	+0:16	Galt Isle, Pine Island Sound
-0:30	-0:44	St. James City, Pine Island
+2:08	+2:44	Fort Myers
+1:15	+2:02	Cape Coral Bridge
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"FLY INN" TO LOUISIANA'S DELTA COUNTRY

PLAQUEMINES PARISH

by Rosemary White

Plaquemines Parish is Louisiana's southernmost parish (a territorial division corresponding to a county in other states) where the Great Mississippi River meets the Gulf of Mexico. Plaquemines is the final stretch on the long winding course of the mighty Mississippi. This parish creates a corridor surrounding the river as it flows to the Gulf of Mexico.



“Down the road” as many of the local residents call it, is the perfect balance between urban and rural lifestyles. Its 1-hour location from the Greater New Orleans Metro area enables tourists to experience one of America’s most colorful and unique cities either going into the parish or whilst on the way out.

The people of Plaquemines Parish are rich in culture and pride. The ancestry of its peoples are mainly Louisiana French, West African, Spanish and Native American in origin. Cajuns make up a significant portion of South Louisiana. Cajuns came primarily from the rural areas of Western France and Nova Scotia, and with them they brought a style of cooking that has made Louisiana famous, but that we will explore shortly.

The parish resembles my home town of Tampa Bay, Florida in many ways, and much like Florida, I consider it an ecological wonder! With its abundance of waterways, fishing & hunting grounds, trapping and birdwatching with over 470 different

species of birds, it has been called a “Sportsman’s Paradise” with some of the best commercial and general sportsman fishing areas in the world!

My personal best Redfish, measuring in at 52” was caught in this angling wonderland. Inshore species include Speckled Trout, Black Drum, Tripletail, Flounder, various Snapper, Sheepshead, and of course the world-renowned Louisiana “bull” Redfish. Just as exciting are the offshore trips that bring in Tuna, Billfish, Sheepshead, Swordfish, Amberjacks, Grouper, Snapper, Cobia, Wahoo, Triggerfish, Tripletail and Mahi.



Many travel from far and abroad to delight in catching “bull reds” on fly tackle, as well. With over 7,700 miles of coastal shoreline, Louisiana hosts many of the best saltwater fly fishing destinations in the world.

Let’s get back to the Cajun talk. Being a “foodie” I tend to gravitate to areas with the best in fresh and local foods and Plaquemines has no shortage of some of the best seafood in the world. Crawfish, oysters, crab and shrimp line most, if not all menus found in local restaurants. Gumbo, Jamba-

laya, Boudin (sausage made from pork liver and rice) add spice and zesty flavor to the palate. Cajun food is heavily rooted in seafood and is a melting pot of African, French & Spanish cooking techniques.



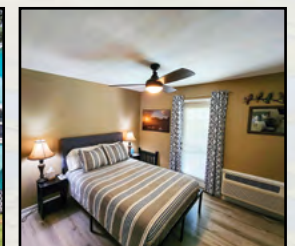
Now let's talk about location, location, location and where to stay once you have decided on your fishing adventure! A hidden gem within the heart of the parish is the resort style lodge and airport called the Lematidora Inn (airport identifier LS84).



Catering to those who are all things fishing, boating, aviation, and outdoors, this inn offers simple comfort, angling amenities, and a relaxed atmosphere. I stumbled upon

this little getaway a few years ago and was impressed by its central location and all it has to offer.

Let’s explore some of the provisions and conveniences. The inn features double rooms, interior/exterior queen rooms, a Captains Suite and a Commanders Suite. This is very important for those who have a large fishing group and want to share costs, at the same time enjoying each others close company. For those that want their own space they have that option as well. For the family, Lematidora also offers cabins with a king bed, kitchenette, kids room and bathroom.



Each main house room has a mini refrigerator, microwave, and DirectTV; a no brainer for anyone. A fully equipped and commercial size community-style self-service



kitchen is also at your disposal to cook your own meals and store food for your stay. Buffet style seating at the bar or private dining tables line the kitchen. Feeling the need to lounge? The downstairs level has a living room area complete with recliners, 77” smart

TV, coin operated pool table, dart board and various board games. There are also snack and drink vending machines, an ATM and a change machine. For those that are feeling the bar vibe, you can BYOB and settle down at the bar adjacent the kitchen.



able to taxi their aircraft up to the flight line just outside the hotel where passengers can disembark and walk inside.

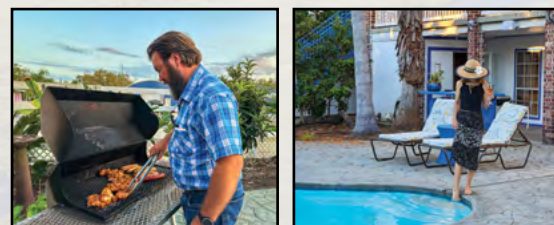
One of the best features by far is the 20,000 gallon saltwater pool. This is a welcome indulgence after a long hot day of fishing, hunting, hiking, birding or anything else you choose to do outdoors. The outdoor grill is perfect for oysters by the pool and the pool deck boasts poolside lounge chairs, bar tops and family sized dining tables. There are several restaurant, grocery store, discount, hardware store, tackle shops, boating and marina options within a 15-30 minute driving distance from the inn.

Complimentary WiFi access is available throughout the inn and a must for posting those fishing pics at the end of the day! To wash the fish blood off your clothes there is a 24-hour coin operated laundry room. To clean your harvest there is an outdoor fish cleaning station and an outdoor fridge/freezer to store the days catch. You can also wash your boat in this area. A commercial style ice machine is right outside the front door of



the inn to load up all your coolers and your boats cold storage box. This is a huge savings in and of itself as bags of ice are a hot commodity, it seems these days.

Another cost cutting advantage here is complimentary vehicle, boat (large & small), and airplane parking. Yes, I said airplane parking. You see the Lematidora Inn is a unique one of a kind (in the parish) fly in hotel. Private & general aviation pilots are



And the lagniappe, as they say? Your private walking access to the Mississippi River and the breathtaking batture along its banks for hiking, bird watching and beautiful wildlife photography.

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CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN THE MANATEE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

Discover How Conservation Efforts in the Crystal River Area Impact Fish, Wildlife and More!
by Josh Johnson

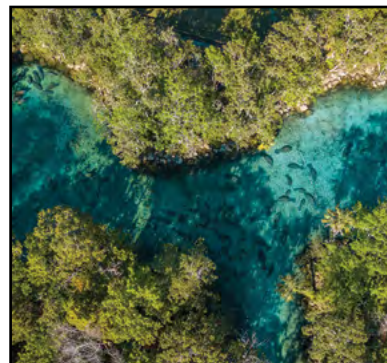
As the Manatee Capital of the World, Crystal River takes great pride in being at the forefront of manatee and local ecosystem conservation. These continued efforts help ensure these gentle giants have adequate food sources and a safe refuge yearly from November to early April.

Healthy ecosystems in the Crystal River area greatly benefit us all. Here are two ways you can help take part.



Practice Responsible Boating

A recent study by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission shows that only 4% of observed adult manatees show no sign of watercraft-related scars. As you can tell by this staggering statistic, boats pose one of the single largest dangers to manatees' health and safety.



When posted regulations and signage are not followed, this can physically harm both manatees and their feeding

grounds. For these reasons, it's essential to follow all posted signs and listed regulations and ensure responsible boating is practiced at all times.

Other responsible boating practices include wearing polarized sunglasses during boat operations and observing all manatee speed zones and caution areas.

So whether you're enjoying a sunny day on the water or hunting for your next catch before the sun rises, please remember to practice your manatee manners!

Catch and Release

Unsustainable fishing practices threaten local ecosystems and their resiliency in a few ways. Primarily this happens through overfishing and, in turn, habitat de-


struction. Habitat destruction not only impacts the quality of fishing but also directly impacts manatees and their ability to thrive here.

Groups in the Crystal River area, like Save Crystal River, have spent time and resources breathing new life into the local ecosystem by planting fresh eelgrass and combating harmful invasive species. And because of this, habitats in the area continue to grow and thrive! Now it's up to all of us to keep them that way.

Besides curbing potential habitat destruction, catch-and-release fishing also improves native fish populations. How? Because it ensures that more fish remain and reproduce in the ecosystem. This practice allows anglers to enjoy the bounty of fish in the Crystal River area while increasing their chances of successfully catching fish.

Practicing catch and release of native fish also ensures that the opportunity to enjoy this national pastime and recreational opportunity will be around for many years!

Conservation in the Crystal River Area

As you can see, there are many ways for you to engage in conservation efforts. If you're interested in discovering more about the continued progress being made by conservationists and eco-tourists alike, we have created a Conservation Hub filled with more information. Topics include how to be involved, from the comfort of your home to a deep dive into the invasive aquatic species that threaten the local ecosystem. There's a wealth of knowledge ready for you! 

Learn more at DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com/Manatee-Conservation.



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Captain Sergio Atanes

The "early bird, gets the worm" this time of year because the best bites are going to be before 10:00am and after 7:00pm.

And try to forget live bait and give artificial baits a chance. Not having to catch bait before fishing allows you to have lines in the water just before daybreak or it allows a quick stop on the way home from work for casts from the shoreline, bridge or seawall.



Captain George Hastick

Tarpon will continue to be one of the highlights in the Tampa Bay area in June. Look for Tarpon along the beaches and passes. They will also be throughout Tam-

pa Bay with the bridges and reefs being Tarpon magnets. Also, the Snook will be a fish to key in on. They will be hiding under the mangroves but will also be making their way to the passes for their spawning. Mackerel and Cobia will be good targets this month also. Look for them near bridges, reefs, and channel markers.

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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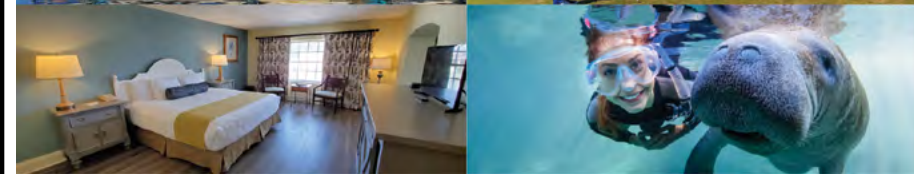
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GAME ON IN THE GULF!

by Misty Wells

Fishing in the Gulf of Mexico never ceases to surprise me; anything can happen and it usually does! This month I got invited to fish the "Grand Snapper Slam" out of Venice, Florida, a relatively new tournament that I had never fished before. But the timing was right and the species were right up our alley. So, we put together a pretty good team of anglers that included Matt Clapp, Tiki Serralles, our mate, Alex, me and Captain Tommy Laronge. Of course, the captain had put together a great plan of action that included leaving at 2 a.m. Saturday morning out of Treasure Island, Florida. We all met up at the boat, loaded up, caught some live bait on the way out of John's Pass and then headed West to our first location.



Lines in the water was not until 7 a.m., so we arrived at our spot around 6:15 a.m. which gave us time to stash the beanbags, check the tackle, get the flatline ready, cut the chum and drop them in right on the dot at 7. Right off the bat, one of the main target species, Yellowtail Snapper started to show up even before the chum had a chance to flow down into the water column. The method we were using to target the Yellowtail is pretty simple, a jighead with 20# mono on a spinning rod, so you can feel the bite and the fight. My rod of choice for targeting Yellowtail

was my Penn Battle III medium-action rod with a Battle III spinning reel. To be successful with Yellowtail Snapper you need to first chunk up small pieces of Sardines, then spread out the pieces out in the water, so they slowly float down into the water column. Next you want a small piece of Sardine on your jighead, then keep your bail open and let the bait flow down just like the pieces of chum, naturally falling around your bait. Once the Yellowtail strike & take the bait, close your spool and start reeling. Our first fish of the day was the biggest, but unfortunately got taken by the "tax man". In other words, a huge Barracuda showed up and showed us who is boss. All you can do when Barracuda show up is just hope that he gets full and goes away; you are not going to out reel them.

We got some nice Yellowtail in the box, then I decided to change up the game because we also needed a Mangrove Snapper to compete in the tournament. I switched to my favorite conventional reel, a 4 ot. Penn, setup on a Crowder rod. We were fishing in about 160 feet of water, so I was using my typical "terminal tackle" setup, meaning 60# test mono with a 60# leader, paired with a 4-ounce weight and circle hook. We started to get some nice Mangrove Snapper to the boat until another type of "tax man" showed up, the Goliath Grouper. He was relentless and they eat at least their body weight in food everyday, so with all of us dropping down together, at least two of us would get our fish to the boat before he got them. It got so bad between the Barracuda

and Goliath Grouper, we just had to move spots and get out of there. It was a tough pill to swallow having to move from there, cause that was that best spot of the day, but we just got ran off.



The next stop we continued to target Mangrove Snapper, the biggest ones we could catch. Captain Tommy put us on another good spot! Things were going pretty well, and the bite was starting to get hot, when bam, the flatline went off! Matt jumped into action, grabbed the rod and held on while the reel was screaming. We had put out a flatline with a live Goggle Eye on a stinger rig and just cast it off the back of the boat, using 60# test mono on a spinning rod. Well, that Wahoo was mad cause he really took off, dragging us over a mile off the spot we were fishing on before Matt was able to land him.

When you have a big fish like that on the line, you need to pull anchor and help the angler land that fish by using the boat, especially on lighter test line. Alex jumped behind the wheel while Captain Tommy stood on the front of the boat pointing which way to turn the boat, all the while Matt was keeping that line tight and working to land our trophy fish. I would say it took about 45 minutes to get that fish to the boat, then Matt brought him to the side and our captain got him on the 1st gaff, landing a 55.9 lbs. Wahoo. Needless to say, we were really happy because that could be the fish that gets us "in the money" in the tournament as they also had "fun fish divisions".

Once the excitement was over, we had to get back to fishing. In a tournament, "time is money out there." Then suddenly I got lucky; the flatline went off again and I was able to get to the rod and start to see if I could land the next Wahoo. It felt like a decent size fish and it was dumping line, so I was working the rod to keep it in the upper column of the warm water, so I did not lose it. Wahoo are smart and they will sound down to the cooler waters which helps them revitalize themselves and put up a bigger fight. It is you against them, all the way! As the Wahoo is taking me around the boat, I am keeping the line tight, with rod tip up while letting it run when it wants, then working it back as soon as it stops taking line. For a moment I thought I had lost the fish; the line did not go slack, but it stopped fighting and just rolled over. I still felt pressure but thought a big shark had taken his share of my prize. The great news, however, I kept the pressure on and got that fish to the back of the boat and Alex climbed over on the motors and gaffed it, first shot, at 44.9 lbs. Now we had two nice Wahoo in the boat, exactly 10 pounds different in weight.

Time was running out to fish, but we were still trying to upgrade our Yellowtail Snapper, so we hit two more spots. As you can see, we caught some nice Gag Grouper, American Red Snapper and quite a few Amberjack but never could get back into the Yellowtail again.

It was time to wrap it up and head back for the weigh in but we had 60 miles and 2 hours to get there with 3-to-4 foot seas. The weigh in was at 5 p.m. and after getting a pounding, we made it to the dock with 5 minutes to spare. I was really ready to be on land after that ride!



In the end, I'm excited to say that I won the Ladies Division and we also placed in the Snapper Aggregate as well! What a day! We were pumped to show up with both of those nice Wahoo and we had an impressive box of Snapper to showcase, as well. I want to thank Captain Tommy for a stellar day on the water and my crewmates for having me as part of the team. It turned out to be a 20-hour day by the time we got home, but for a day like that of fishing it was worth every minute. This story is just one of a thousand stories anglers have to share of why it is epic to fish in the Gulf of Mexico in my backyard. Fishing out of Pinellas County on the West Coast of Florida is one of the most diverse places on the planet to have the fishing trip of a lifetime. Want more info on fishing in my hometown, please visit www.visitstpeteclearwater.com.

Misty Wells Producer & Host of "Let's Take It Outside" TV show airing to 374 million on Discovery Channel, Bally Sun Sports, Waypoint TV, World Fishing Network, Hunt Channel, MOTV, TCT, Discover Florida Network & Carbon TV. 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.

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WARM WEATHER POMPANO

by Captain Sergio Atanes

The Florida Pompano (*Trachinotus Carolinus*) is a hard fighting fish that is often overlooked. They're fun to catch and even better to eat. A feisty fish that is a lot of fun on light tackle.



One old trick is to run your boat on a plane through the flats and watch for them to skip in your wake. Once you see them skip, work the area with jigs & live Shrimp while drifting the flats.

My favorite tackle for Pompano is 10-to-15-pound braided line on a medium spinning reel paired with 7.6-foot spinning rod. I found that using 20-pound fluorocarbon leader works best tied to a #1/0 circle hook with a Fiddler Crab or Shrimp. When fishing the beaches Sand Fleas are also a good choice and easy to catch.

my favorite are using jigs. They give me the ability to cover a larger area whether I am fishing the shoreline or drifting the flats in a boat. You want to bounce the jig off the bottom so that when it falls, a puff of sand pops-up making it look like a crab trying to bury itself. Some of the best jigs I have found are the 1/4 and 3/8-ounce Pompano Jigs that look like a Banana in Pink & White or Yellow. The other is a feathered jig with chrome head

Live baits are fished on the bottom with a small split shot just enough to drag the bottom and stir-up some sand drawing the attention of the Pompano. When using live Shrimp, I prefer to run the hook from the back and under the tail of the Shrimp, so as drag the Shrimp. This makes it look like it is avoiding another predator and increases the bite. Another method and

Pompano are in the Jack family and first cousins to Permit. Juvenile Permit and Pompano school together in many areas and are often difficult to tell apart. Since the net ban, the Pompano population has increased tenfold giving local anglers a chance to catch fish.

Pompano are found in warm waters of Tampa Bay and shorelines of the gulf beaches. This year has produced more Pompano than I can remember, perhaps due to the lack of Greenback Sardines in the area. More fishermen, including us guides, started using live Shrimp as a backup source, which happens to be one of their favorite baits.

Now having said all of this, Pompano fishing is very time consuming and lots of work, as they can be caught from the shore around bridge pilings and while working the grass flats.



with white-red and silver feathers. Both of these are killers on Pompano, as well as, other species.

Pier or bridge fishing for Pompano is challenging; I use a 3/8 or 1/2-ounce Pompano Jig, depending on the current at the time. Drop the jig along the piling and bounce it off the bottom. The sinking motion of the jig entices strikes. Find the area with the best current flow for best results. When fishing around pilings or dock it makes sense to increase your leader size to 30-pound test to avoid break-offs. The lighter the line, the less weight needed to keep the bait on the bottom. ☑

Captain Sergio Atanes is a native resident of Tampa and has been fishing the water of Tampa Bay and Boca Grande for over 45 years. He is owner and operator of "S & I Charters" which is one of the largest charter booking services in the West Coast of Florida with 55 professional captains on staff. Capt. Sergio Atanes can be reached at (813) 973-7132 or www.reelfishy.com.





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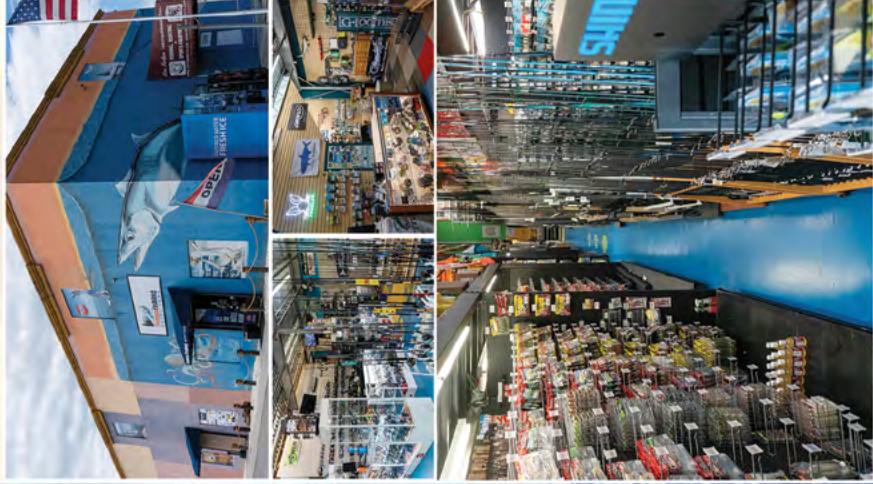
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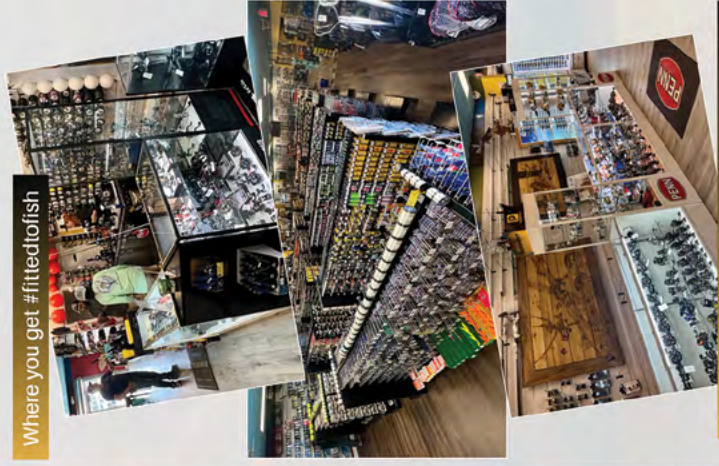
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