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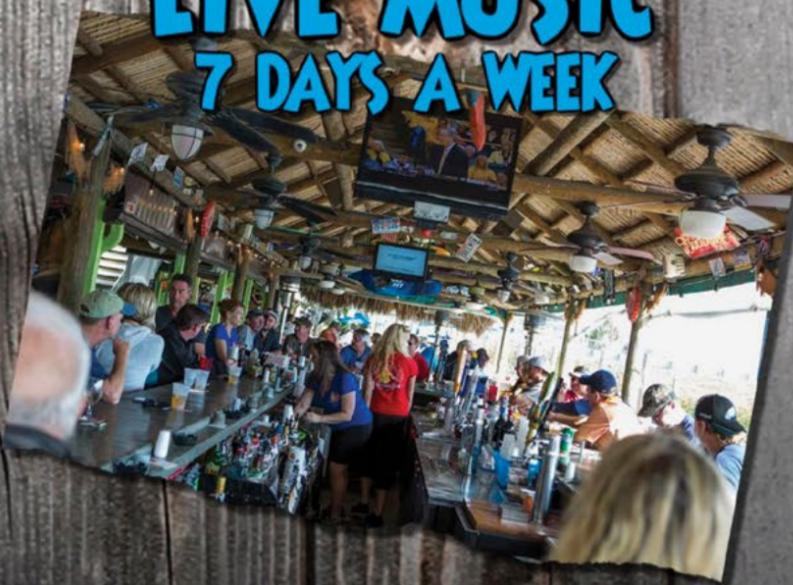
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It's the time of year when everyone who has a spouse or significant other who loves fishing is looking for the perfect gift. If, like Oprah, your shopping budget ranges to 6 figures, your choice is easy. A new boat, outboard motor and/or truck is always welcome. If your budget is more modest, perhaps I can help.

You can always visit your local tackle shop and pick out a new rod and reel that is appropriate for their favorite type of fishing. No fisherman will ever tell you that they have too many rods and reels, there's always room for one or even ten more.

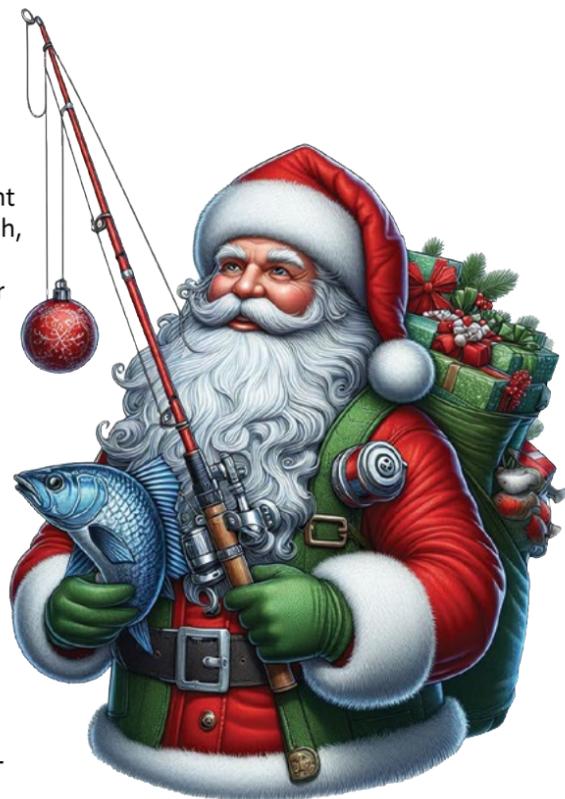
If even these are a bit too pricey for you, you can first consider your level of commitment to your significant other and if this does not do it, you can choose from a number of cheaper options like something from the following list:

1. *Camsch makes a truly ugly Blobfish toy, it is very bloblike and squeezable for stress relief for when the real fish aren't biting or the weather is simply not cooperating.*
2. *Archie McPhee makes a truly annoying Yodeling Pickle. I don't know what it has to do with fishing, but who would not want one? The chances of this gift being something that they already have is miniscule, how many people have ever shown you their yodeling pickle?*
3. *Late for the Sky makes a board game named Fishin-opoly. It's a lot like Monopoly, but with Fish. What a great way to spend a rainy afternoon with your family or fishing buddies.*
4. *Probably the most desired fishing gift on my list is the Toilet Fishing Game made by Fairly Odd Novelties. Instead of spending toilet time reading Facebook or Twitter, This, fun for all ages, game potentially provides hours of catching fun. The family will be fighting over who gets the bathroom first.*
5. *Uncommon Goods offers a Fishing Pole Campfire Roaster that allows you to grill hot dogs, roast marshmallows or your other favorite campfire foods. Perhaps you could even roast a trout.*
6. *Haiboxing offers a Radio Controlled Boat all set up for fishing. Perfect for those who just have no casting skills. With this boat, you can get that lure right to where the big ones hide, just hope they aren't stronger than the boat.*

If none of these suggestions tickle your fancy, there is always the option of scheduling a pre-paid fishing charter with one of our great contributors or advertisers. It's far cheaper than a new boat, but it nearly insures a fun family day on the water, with a great fresh fish dinner to follow.

If your significant other knows how to run a boat, but they just don't have one, you could buy a Boat Rental Gift Certificate from me and Flip the Bird here at Belle Harbour Marina in Tarpon Springs. Call me at 727.243.1493 to get one sent out to you.

Merle & Flip



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ON THE COVER:
Happy Holidays! This month's cover features two 'festive' ladies fishing out of a beautiful Kaku Kayak! Kaku paddlecrafts make great gifts for those that love the outdoors. Check out their lineup by visiting www.kakukayaks.com.

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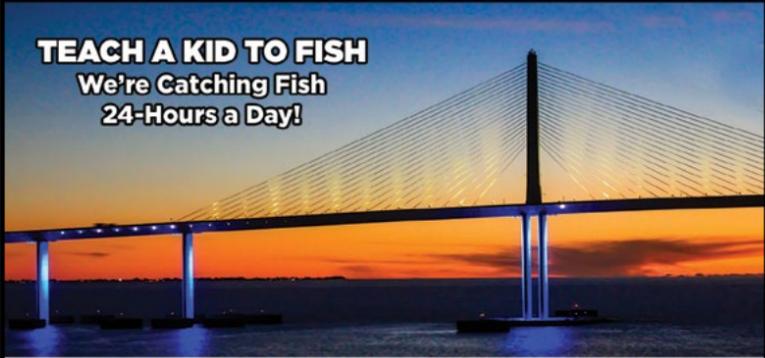
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WARM DECEMBER DAYS EQUAL A HOT BITE!

by Captain George Hastick

December can be a phenomenal month for catching the inshore slam and for sight fishing, since the water clarity is usually very good in December. You will have cold fronts that come through and slow the bite down. On those days you can leave the snook fishing alone and target the trout and redfish. If it is very cold, then you could switch to targeting trout and sheepshead that are more apt to bite during those colder days.

Now when you get a few days in a row of warmer weather this is where the magic can really happen. Those snook and redfish that slowed down (especially snook) due to the cold days are going to put the feed bags on to make up for not feeding during



ing the cold front days to prepare for the next front.

During these days it would be good to have shrimp, cut bait and live scaled sardines to have all of your bases covered, along with Saltwater Assassin's 4" Sea Shad, 4" shrimp and their 3.5" lit'l P&V if you like throwing artificials. They all come scented but if you want to add a little more kick to your baits add some Pro-Cure Super Gel Bait scents to them, like the inshore or shrimp scents.

Areas to look for your fish will change by the day and sometimes by the hour if you have a day that is heating up nicely. Your snook will have moved into the backwaters, the deeper canals and docks, power plants and riv-

ers to name a few areas. You might even see some juvenile tarpon at the power plants and rivers trying to stay warm.



Some of the flats that have deeper waters, deep holes or a deeper channel adjacent to them and those areas will usually hold fish during the night. The fish will drop into those areas because it takes longer for the deeper water to cool off. The flats will cool off fast once the sun goes down and even faster if it is windy. The next morning fish in those



deeper areas and make sure your baits are getting all the way down to the bottom where the fish are. Dark muddy bottom hold fish because the dark mud heats up during the day and retains some of that heat longer. If using artificials I like to throw a 1/4oz jig head to be able to cast farther but also get down to the bottom where the strike zone is.

Now on those warmer days we hope for, the shallow flat next to the deep water will heat up way faster and the fish will put on the feed bags and roam those flats looking for a meal. If you spot a snook, trout or redfish do not cast to close to them, as you will spook them in that shallow water.

Instead, cast ahead of them in the direction they are swimming and let them find your bait for better success.

I like to use an Okuma Epixor spinning rod with medium fast action along with an Inspira ISX 4000 reel, loaded with 15 pound Fins Windtamer braid, 4-5 feet of 25 pound Seaguar fluorocarbon leader and an owner 1/0-2/0 circle hook. ☑

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





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Your adventure awaits on the open water!

A SOLID DAY OFFSHORE

by Anthony Gomez

The day had finally come. A weather window had shown up to take the boat out offshore. I was going with my uncle and cousin on the 28 foot Cobia. We were all up at 4:30am, getting all the gear in the boat so we could get out of the inlet at around sunrise. After we were fully packed up, we went to the gas station to fill up the boat and then made our way to the ramp. We ended up getting to the ramp at sunrise but it wasn't that big of a deal. We dropped the boat in the water and we set out for the first spot.

Once we arrived, we noticed that the water was somewhat stirred up. A big storm had just passed a few days before, so it made the water a little dirty. It also

seemed to spread the fish out from our spot. Usually, we will mark multiple big schools of snappers on the bottom with the sonar. This day, we weren't marking those big schools of Yellowtail and Mangrove Snappers. We continuously moved around the spot until we finally saw a decent school of fish on the sonar. We got setup, dropped the anchor, and ended up perfectly up current of the Snapper school we had marked.

Before fishing, my cousin and I get a chum block in the water to start to get the snappers in a feeding mode. We also throw in scoops of chum that we mix with sand and oats to help create an even thicker chum slick.

While starting to chum, my uncle noticed that there was not much current at all. For 75



feet of water, the current usually runs at around 2 knots. It was only about 1 knot of current on this day. This was good for free lining yellowtails and other snappers but not good for bottom fishing with long leaders for muttons. When fishing for muttons, decent current is important to move the bait far away from the weight. With no live baits as well, it was going to be pretty hard to fish bottom for big mutton snappers. We all ended up free lining with jig heads to catch the

snappers that were moving up in the chum slick. We were using 1/8 oz jig heads with small chunks of bonita belly. A 4000-6000 size reel is the usual with a light fluorocarbon leader.

My uncle was the first one to hook up. He got a nice keeper Yellowtail to start off. We proceeded to catch an assortment of Mangrove, Yellowtail, and Lane Snapper. Mixed in with them were also some blue runners, grunts, and a lonely red snapper that my cousin was very lucky to catch. After about 15 keeper Snapper, my uncle decided that we should switch spots and go try to find more current so we could fish for some Muttons. We worked our way North for a few miles to about 90 feet of water. We did end up finding some better current but did not find the muttons we were looking for. We had anchored and tried for about an hour with no success. As we were getting ready to leave and go back to our original spot, we had some surprise guests visit the boat. 3 nice sized Mahi-Mahi swam behind the boat and started to eat pieces of chum from the chum slick. I noticed them first so I grabbed my light rod and pitched out a small swimbait that I had tied on. I always have a rod ready for when some Mahi decide to swim by the boat. As soon as the bait hit the water, the bigger cow Mahi swallowed the swimbait and I was hooked up.



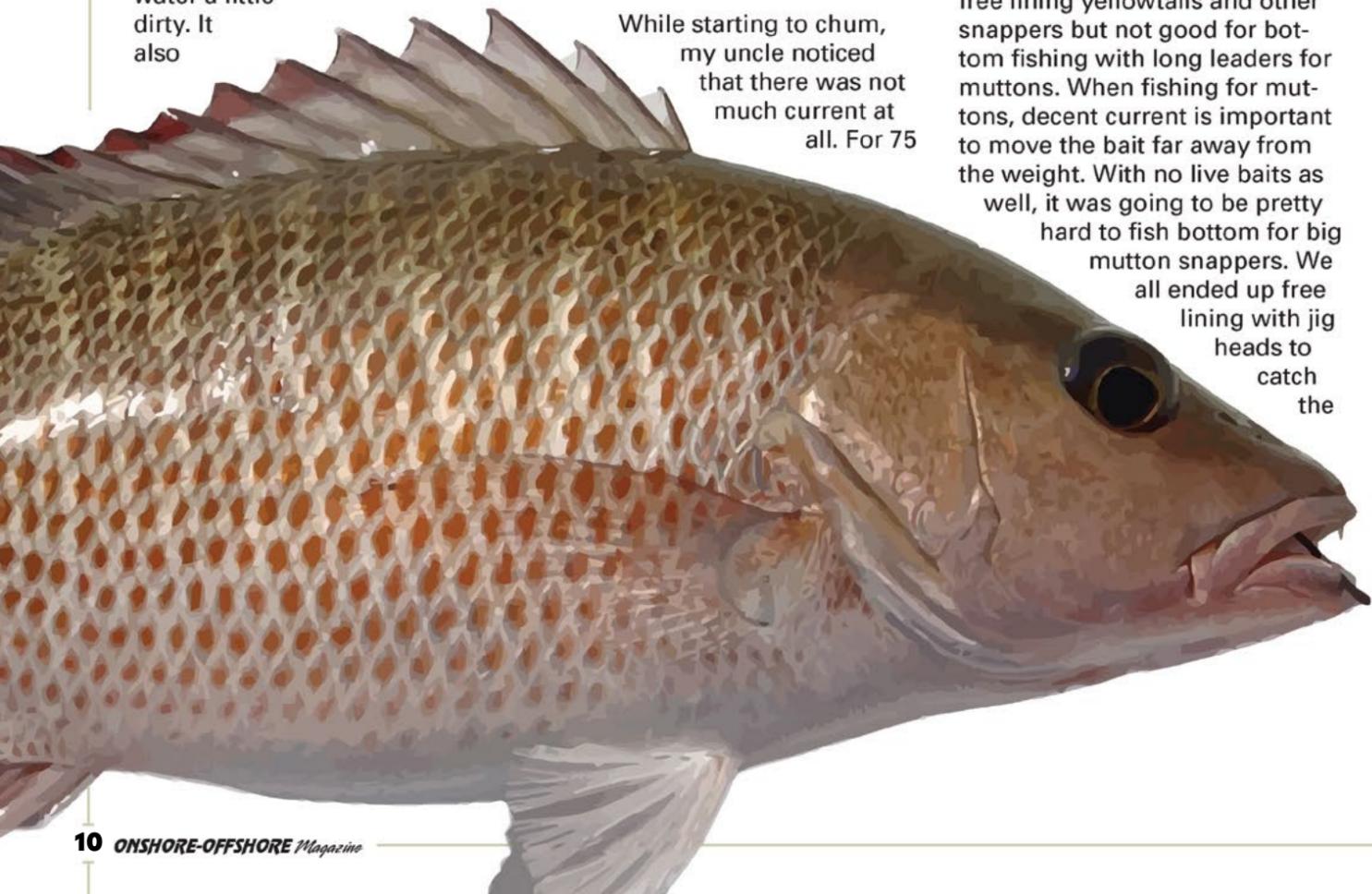
Seconds after, my cousin pitched in his shrimp lure he had rigged for mahi and hooked the big bull mahi. We both were excited to finally hook up again after a disappointing attempt at some mutton snappers. The third Mahi had disappeared for a minute but then came back and ate a chunk bait that my uncle tossed at him. Once we landed those three Mahi, we headed back South to get back on the solid Snapper bite that we had left behind.

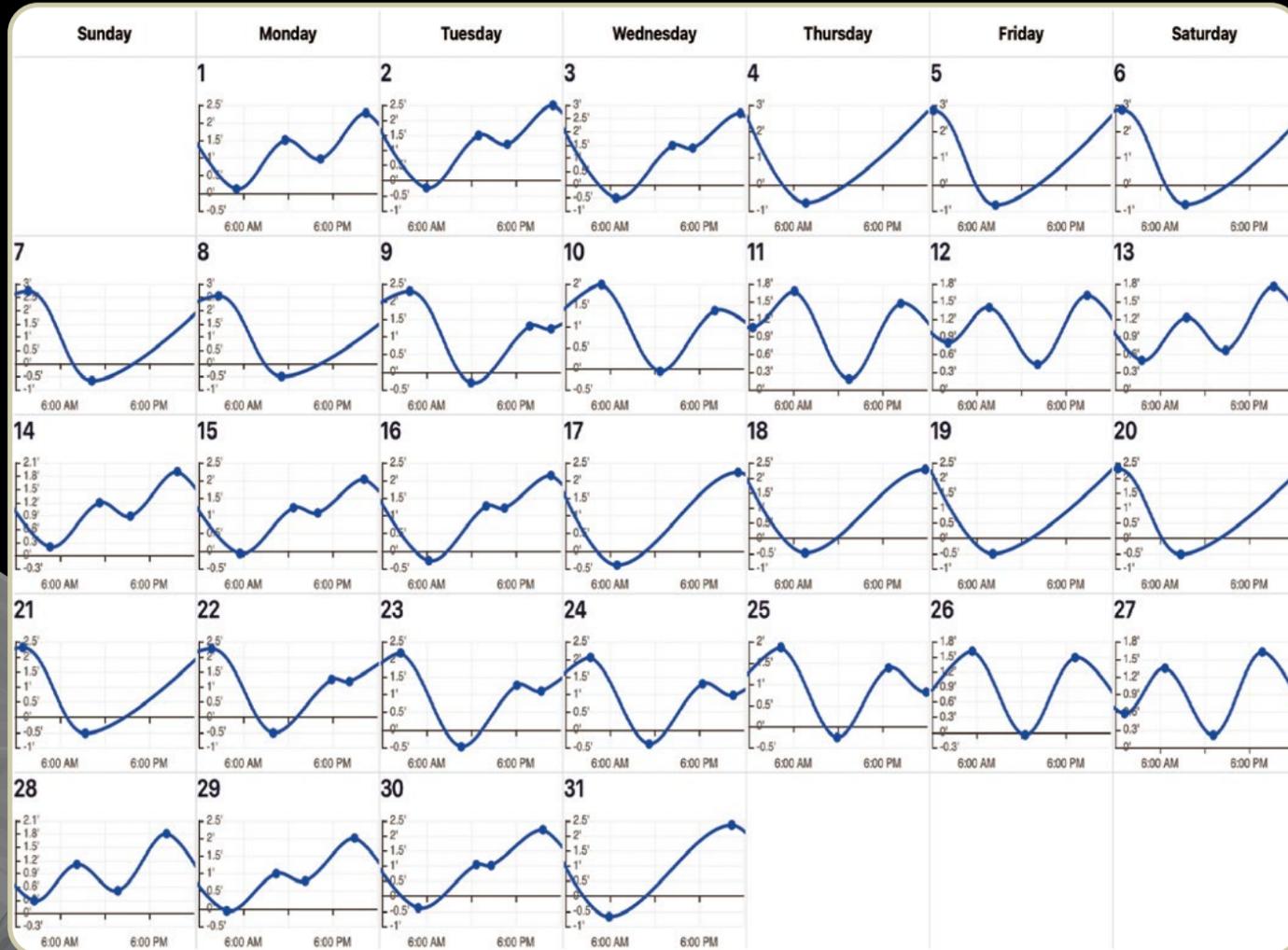
We positioned back on the same area we caught all the snappers before. During the afternoon, we still continued to catch plenty of Snapper. The only dif-



ference was we were catching more blue runners than before and a lot of short sized snapper. We still were having fun getting bit every cast but I soon got the bite that we were looking for all day. I felt a nice hit and set the hook into a heavy fish. I could feel the weight and was telling everyone that this was a nice one. The only problem was that my uncle and cousin both got tangled in my line. I ended up sitting there, holding my line tight while they both tried to untangle this mess they had made. After about a solid minute, they got the tangle out and I was back in the fight. I was trying to get this fish up quick because of the amount of goliath groupers and sharks that eat our fish, but this beast would not let me gain any line. I eventually got his head turned and up came my biggest Mutton Snapper ever. He was 27 inches long and one of the biggest ones we have caught while free lining for Yellowtails and Mangroves. If it wasn't for the stirred up water, the goliaths and sharks would have devoured him before I even had a chance to see him.

Eventually, we decided it was time to go and made our way back to the boat ramp. We drove home happy and with a cooler full of some nice fish. We ended up giving away some of the snappers and mahi to some of our neighbors and filleted the rest of the fish for all of our family. All in all, it was great to finally make it back out offshore and slay the fish with my uncle and cousin. ▣





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	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
-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	Location
+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	Location
+0:49	+0:58	Gandy Bridge
+1:38	+1:55	Courtney Campbell Cswy.
+1:38	+1:55	Safety Harbor
+0:20	+0:22	Ballast Point
+0:07	+0:26	Hillsborough Bay
+0:21	+0:29	McKay Bay Entrance
+0:41	+0:39	Old Port Tampa
-2:27	-2:24	Egmont Key
-2:53	-2:46	Anna Maria, Bradenton Bch
-2:10	-2:19	Anna Maria, City Pier
-1:24	-0:55	Bradenton, Manatee River
-0:30	+0:14	Redfish Pt., Manatee River
-2:22	-1:58	Mullet Key Channel, Skyway
+0:08	+0:17	Shell Point
-0:22	-0:29	Point Pinellas
-1:34	-1:30	Pass-a-Grille Beach
-1:32	-1:05	Gulfport
-1:18	-0:44	St. Pete Beach Causeway
-2:14	-2:04	John's Pass
-1:40	-1:18	Madeira Beach Causeway
-2:00	-1:25	Cortez, Sarasota Bay
-1:38	-0:58	Sarasota Bay
-2:02	-1:38	Venice Inlet
-0:57	-0:40	Englewood, Lemon Bay
-1:27	-0:59	Placida, Gasparilla Sound
+1:38	+1:56	El Jobean, Myakka River
+1:52	+2:30	Shell Point, Peace River
+1:06	+1:27	Punta Gorda, Charlotte Hbr.
-1:12	-1:56	Boca Grande, Charlotte Hbr.
-0:19	+0:26	Pineland, Pine Island
+0:43	+1:28	Matlacha Pass
-0:55	-1:14	Redfish Pass, Captiva Is.
-0:46	-0:20	Captiva, Pine Island Sound
-2:20	-2:28	Captiva, Gulf Side
-0:25	+0:16	Galt Isle, Pine Island Sound
-0:30	-0:44	St. James City, Pine Island
+2:08	+2:44	Fort Myers
+1:15	+2:02	Cape Coral Bridge
+1:08	+1:40	Iona Shores
+0:51	+0:42	Indian Rocks Beach, ICW

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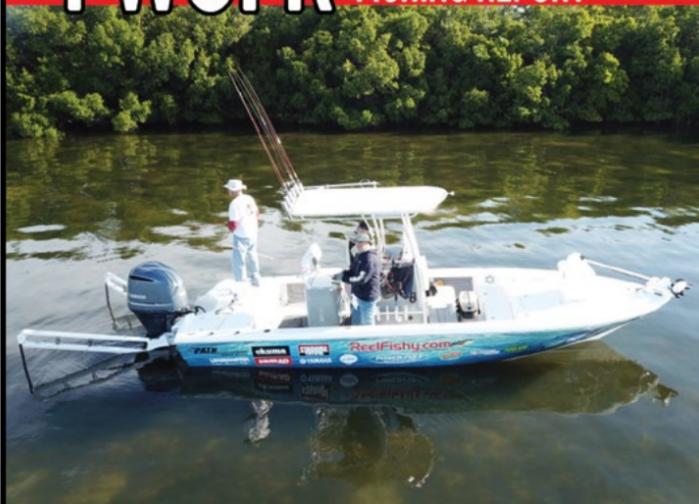

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PARADISE REDEFINED, BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

by Misty Wells

Now I know why the tagline for the British Virgin Islands is "Paradise Redefined", it truly is a real paradise in every way. Borrowing a statement from the Tourism Department "When you close your eyes and envision paradise what do you see? So, my question is when you close your eyes, what do you see? I am excited to share with you some of what I got to see and experience while I was there filming an episode for "Let's Take it Outside" that is now airing on numerous networks Worldwide.



I speak to a lot of travelers some of them have the "BVI" on their list, but have yet to visit and some don't even know where it is. The British Virgin Islands is located in the northeastern Caribbean Sea, east of Puerto Rico, between the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. They are a British Overseas Territory and part of the Lesser Antilles island chain. Last year they recorded over 1 million visitors to the "BVI" with a large percentage of those visitors being cruise ship passengers. However, the British Virgin Islands is also known as the "Sailing Capital

of the World" with over 60 islands to explore and discover it is no wonder why it is referred to as a Paradise.

In November we planned a trip to film and explore the British Virgin Islands during their Annual Lobster Festival that takes place on the Island of Anegada. Our starting point was the largest island in the BVI, Tortola "where our adventure began". Tortola is full of rich history with Ancient Ruins of historic settlements, and home it's home to the "Callwood Rum Distillery" an 18th century distillery that is the Caribbeans oldest continuously operating distiller for over 200 years. Tortola has many other exciting places to visit such as Cane Garden Bay, where you can soak up the sun on their sandy beaches or take a kayak paddle right to a sunken ship, we did both. One experience we had also at Cane Garden Bay that is a "must do" is a sunset dinner at "Rhythm & Sands Restaurant and Beach Bar". In the spirit of Lobster Fest, we were treated to fresh Lobster cooked to perfection on the grill and some award-winning entertainment on the beach stage. That night as a special treat they invited a Fire-Dancer to perform on the beach; it was an enchanting evening. The next day before we set sail to the Island of Anegada we hiked a local trail to the "Bat Cave" on Anderson Point, it was some of the most beautiful views I had ever seen. Regardless of how you choose to spend your time on Tortola you will find the landscape, the locals and the cuisine to be worldclass. Next up on our BVI Adventure was setting sail for the Island of Anegada on a private sailing Yacht provided by Marine Max. Before I start to tell you about the journey let me tell you about the luxury power Catamaran Yacht, it was out of this world. We boarded a 3-cabin yacht with a large salon and galley that offers

360-degree views with a flybridge and open cockpit in the back with full wrap around couches. Not to worry if you want to be the first to experience the views you can travel up front on the comfortable seating areas and watch the Island go by. Marine Max Vacations make it easy to relax and enjoy your trip of a lifetime in the British Virgin Islands. They customize every charter to your lifestyle-if you are seeking adventure, relaxation or both their team can provide a perfect itinerary for all the best spots in the BVI. It was time to set sail for our beautiful cruise over to Anegada for their Annual Lobster Festival. This was my first time in Anegada I could not wait to dig into some fresh BVI Lobster cooked anyway you can imagine.



Once we arrived, we docked at the historic Anegada Reef Hotel where Lorraine and Laurance Wheatley welcomed us with open arms. Walking down the dock we could hear the music and party were already in full swing and Hudson and I were ready to join in the fun. A quick stop at the "lobster motel" on the

dock you are able to watch the locals round up some of the biggest Lobster I have ever seen.

Let me explain to you how Lobster Fest works on Anegada, they set it up so that you can see the entire Island during your visit. On Anegada there are quite a few restaurants that are participating in Lobster Fest, and each location will create a custom dish each year in hopes to be crowned the winner. "In my opinion we are the winners because we get to travel around the Island eating Lobster all day", it's a win-win. Anegada Reef Hotel provided Hudson and I a "Moke" so that we could cruise around the Island in style, our first stop was Potter's for curry Lobster. During our Lobster Tour we visited "The Big Bamboo", "Cow Wreck Beach", "Anegada Beach Club" and "Pomato Point" which was crowned the festival winner. Before we left the Island, we also we able to experience "Tommy's Conch Shell Tours", I have never seen so many Conch shells in my life. Why are all the Conch shells are in that one location, Tommy's said that "Conch is a way of life in the BVI but if you discard the Conch around the Island the 'live' Conch will not come into shore" so they put them all in one location, 'makes sense to me'. Tommy also shared that the Conch Legend is...if you throw a Conch from the bottom of the pile to the top and it stays on top you get 10 years good luck, I nailed it.



In the morning it was time to set sail, but we were not going home we were heading to the Island of Jost Van Dyke and like every Island in the British Virgin Island it has its own story to tell. This time our ride over to Jost Van Dyke was a bit faster because we had booked a charter on "Kewl Water Charters" we boarded a "sexy" center console with triple 300s on the back and we were there in no time. I want to mention "Kewl Water Charters" will take you any where you want to go in the BVI, there is no faster or exciting way to spend the day Island Hopping and exploring your own Paradise. We docked at Jost Van Dyke in no time and hopped aboard JVD Mini Island Tour he was going to take us to experience the Bubbly Pools. Like most places in the BVI, the Bubbly Pool has its own mysterious story, and I was determined to find out what it was. The Bubbly Pool is hidden on the northeastern coast of Jose Van Dyke it is considered a natural phenomenon as elusive as it is enchanting. At times the Bubbly Pool looks unassuming and serene, but when the tide hits just right, it turns into a veritable jacuzzi with crashing waves. The hike to the Bubbly Pool was relatively short, easy and well worth it, and afterwards we stopped into Foxy's Taboo for lunch with an epic view.

One thing that goes without saying is you have stop at original Foxy's Tamarind Bar and see if the famous owner himself is there hanging out in his hammock. Built in 1968 Philicianno "Foxy" Callwood built his bar in the shade of a Tamarind Tree and the rest is history. For over five decades Foxy's has been known for Foxy's charming personality making it a beloved gathering place for visitors and island residents in search of rum drinks, stories and



a joke or two. Foxy has received numerous awards for his contributions to the BVI heritage and tourism, but most notably he is a "Member of the British Empire" from "Her Majesty The Queen of England, Elizabeth II". Another favorite and historic "Rum Destination" on the island is the Soggy Dollar, home of the original Pain Killer, a sunny place for shady people like us. There are so many ways to view the historic BVI sunsets, but I think my favorite way we did it was on 4-Wheelers that we rented from "Ready 2 Ride". Heading upwards on Jost Van Dyke to an elevation of 1,100 feet and sitting on top of world watching our last BVI sunset was a perfect way to end our trip to Paradise. I get asked all the time, where should I plan my next vacation or where has been your favorite place to film, my answer is to all of those questions, the British Virgin Islands. You can find out all you need to know and more if you visit www.bvitourism.com and tell them Misty sent you. Tight Lines & Merry Christmas! 🍷



Misty Wells Producer & Host of Award Winning "Let's Take It Outside" TV show airing to 220 million on Discovery & Discovery GO & Plus & 17 other networks. Bass Pro-Outdoor Pro & Outdoor & Outdoor, Travel Writer. Founder of "A Reel Future" non-profit devoted to teaching the passion of fishing & conservation to foster children, over 4,000 children & counting. Watch at www.mistywells.com.

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MAKING FISHING DREAMS COME TRUE

The Jose Wejbe Spanish Fly Memorial
Foundation's Work with Veterans

The ocean has long been a source of healing, connection, and adventure. For many veterans, it represents a place of solace and renewal after the challenges of military service. The Jose Wejbe Spanish Fly Memorial Foundation has embraced this transformative power, creating opportunities for veterans to rediscover joy, camaraderie, and purpose through fishing.



A LEGACY OF PASSION & GIVING

The Foundation's story begins with the incredible legacy of Jose Wejbe, the legendary fishing captain and host of the beloved TV show Spanish Fly. Known for his infectious passion for fishing and the ocean, Jose spent years sharing his love of the sport with audiences worldwide. But beyond the cameras, Jose was deeply committed to helping others, often going out of his way to mentor and inspire those around him.



After Jose's untimely passing in 2012, his daughter Krissy founded the Jose Wejbe Spanish Fly Memorial Foundation to honor his spirit and continue his work. The Foundation embodies Jose's ethos of generosity and adventure by focusing on creating meaningful experiences for those who need it most. Among its key initiatives is its work with veterans, a cause that holds special significance to the Foundation.

FISHING AS HEALING FOR VETERANS

Transitioning from military service to civilian life can be a profound challenge for many veterans. The physical and emotional toll of service often leaves scars that take time and support to heal. Recognizing this, the Foundation has made it a mission to give back to those who have served by connecting them with the therapeutic benefits of fishing.

Through guided fishing trips and mentorship opportunities, the Foundation provides veterans with a chance to escape the stresses of daily life and reconnect with nature. These experiences go beyond catching fish; they offer a unique environment for building relationships, finding inner peace, and rediscovering a sense of purpose.

For many veterans, a day on the water isn't just a recreational activity—it's a pathway to healing. The calm rhythm of the waves, the thrill of a catch, and the shared stories among fellow anglers create an atmosphere of support and understanding.



UPCOMING TRIPS: SUPPORTING 13 VETERANS THIS DECEMBER

This December, the Foundation is thrilled to welcome 13 veterans for a series of fishing trips in the beautiful waters of the Florida Keys. These trips are designed to create unforgettable moments, whether it's the excitement of landing a trophy fish, the peace of being surrounded by nature, or the camaraderie of being part of a supportive community.

For these veterans, the ocean will be more than just a fishing destination—it will be a place to reflect, reconnect, and rejuvenate. This opportunity wouldn't be possible without the generosity of supporters and the dedication of our volunteers and captains who give their time & expertise to make these trips so special.



expertise to donors and sponsors who believe in the mission, every contribution plays a role in creating these life-changing experiences.

If you're a veteran who could benefit from the program or know someone who might, the Foundation encourages you to reach out. And for those who want to help make these fishing dreams come true, there are plenty of ways to get involved, from volunteering to donating or sponsoring a trip.



STORIES OF IMPACT

One veteran shared how their trip with the Foundation changed their outlook on life:

"I hadn't felt that kind of peace in years. Being on the water, feeling connected to something bigger than myself, and sharing laughs with people who understood—it was exactly what I needed to start healing."

These moments of connection and joy underscore the Foundation's commitment to making a difference, one fishing trip at a time.

A COMMUNITY EFFORT

The Foundation's work with veterans wouldn't be possible without the support of its incredible community. From local captains volunteering their time and

CONTINUING JOSE'S LEGACY

At its core, the Jose Wejbe Spanish Fly Memorial Foundation's work with veterans is about much more than fishing. It's about creating moments of connection, resilience, and hope—values that Jose himself championed throughout his life.

For more information on how to support or participate in the Foundation's veteran programs, visit josewejbefoundation.org. Together, we can help more veterans experience the healing power of the ocean and the joy of fishing. 🎣



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BIG BEND SEATROUT

by Terri B. Huffmaster

It's that time of the year where cold weather moves in and the fishing is phenomenal.

One species I absolutely love to target this time of the year is the Speckled Trout also known as, the Spotted Seatrout. I particularly love to target the large ones called "Gator" Trout.

The Seatrout is an inshore fish that has a distinctive round black spots, one or two large canine teeth with dark gray and green backs and white bellies. They also have remarkable vision by being able to see in different directions and see in color. And, believe it or not, they are also related to the drum species.

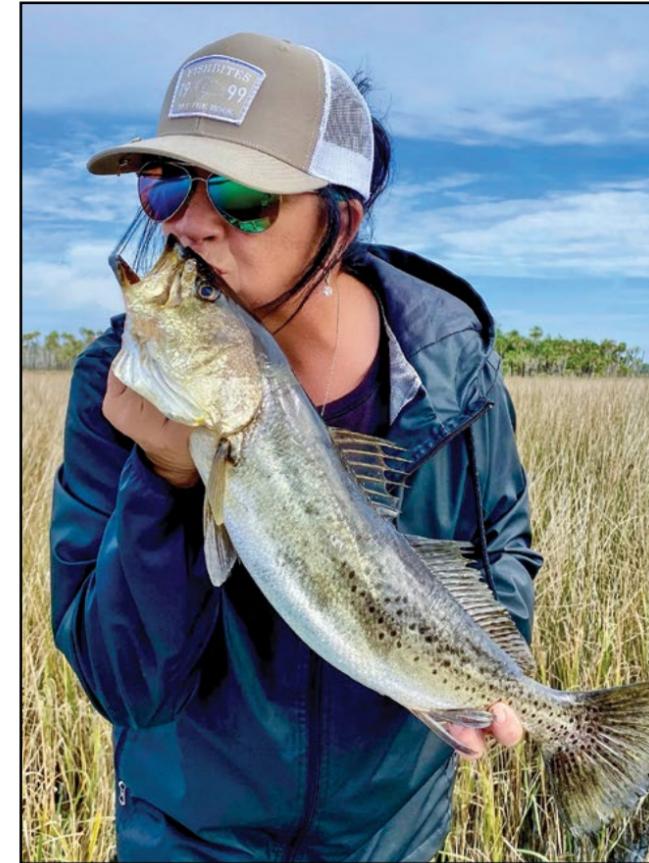
Grassy and forage areas is where they thrive at and when cold weather kicks in, they tend to move into the creeks and rivers



looking for the deep holes, sand beds or Oyster bars to keep warm.

Best results for me are after a low tide where the sun warms up the bottom and when the tide comes back in, so do the trout to lay on

or around these structures to keep warm while feeding. Trout will also get very lethargic this time of the year, as well, so I find it best to use a slow moving bait to have a better chance of bagging your limit or bagging that trophy "Gator" Trout.



Trout get cold easily to where they don't like to exert their energy chasing food so they go for slow moving artificials that carry a scent like Fishbites™, and other finesse lures. Live shrimp is usually always effective, as well. I'm not saying fast moving baits don't work, but



when water temps get to the 30s, 40s and even 50s, the slower baits, the better in my experience. Everyone has their own strategies.

Sometimes they will just nip at it and not take it so you have to present your bait of choice in a spot a few times to get them to actually take it. It can be frustrating but most cases, patience will pay off.

Also, remember Trout that measure 20-inches and over are most likely females, so if all possible release them so they can continue to lay eggs in the Spring, so our future generations can enjoy the pursuit and catch of these beautiful fish. One way to tell a female from a male is the male trout typically will grunt and females will not. And the females are normally "fatter" due to the eggs they carry. Not the case 100% of the time, but for most Trout, they are.



When ready, the females lay their eggs out in grassy inshore locations in the Spring and then for the hotter months, they tend to move out to much deeper water offshore.

The Spotted Seatrout has many fun facts about them that weren't mentioned this month, so do yourself a favor; look them up and get ready to be intrigued!

Last but not least, please follow FWC regulations on Sea Trout regarding size and bag limits in the region you fish!

Have fun and be safe on the water.

- Terri B. Huffmaster



RETHINKING THE TROLLING LURE

How Sea Lime Lures Mimics What Fish Actually Do

For decades, offshore trolling lures have followed the same basic principle: pull them through the water fast enough and hope the flash and vibration trigger a strike. But Tampa-based Sea Lime Lures asked a different question entirely. What if a lure could move like an actual baitfish instead of just looking like one?



The answer is a patented design that's changing how anglers think about presentation, especially when targeting pelagic species that have seen every conventional lure pattern in the book.

The Breakthrough: Water-Channeled Movement

What makes Sea Lime Lures different comes down to physics and observation. Founder Clint Owens developed a system that channels water directly through the lure body, creating the kind of organic, unpredictable movement that live bait exhibits naturally. Unlike traditional rigid lures that maintain a fixed swimming pattern, Sea Lime's design responds dynamically to current, speed changes, and water conditions.



The inspiration came from an unlikely source: watching a flag ripple in the wind and recognizing that same fluid motion in how baitfish move through the water column. That observation led to years of testing and refinement in Florida waters, ultimately resulting in a patented lure system that replicates the erratic darting and gliding action that triggers strikes from pelagic fish.

Why It Matters to Offshore Anglers

For offshore fishermen, the difference is in the details. Baitfish don't swim in perfectly straight lines. They

react to pressure changes, current shifts, and perceived threats with sudden direction changes and variable speed. Sea Lime's water-channeled design creates that same reactivity without requiring constant rod manipulation from the angler. Whether you're pulling lures at 4 knots to 6 knots, the Sea Lime design adjusts its action naturally rather than spinning out or going rigid like many traditional lures. Rough water that would disrupt the action of conventional lures actually enhances Sea Lime's movement, creating more erratic and lifelike presentations. In heavily pressured waters where fish have seen every lure style imaginable, a truly different swimming action can make the difference between a refusal and a hookup.



American-Made with Florida Roots

Beyond the innovation in design, Sea Lime Lures maintains something increasingly rare in the fishing tackle industry: complete American manufacturing. Every lure is designed, tested, and produced in the United States, with many materials sourced right here in Florida.

For anglers who value quality control and supporting domestic manufacturing, that commitment resonates. It also means faster product refinement based on real-world feedback from anglers fishing the same waters where the lures are tested and developed.

The Product Line

Sea Lime offers three main series designed for different fishing applications and preferences: The Signature Series (\$35, refills \$19) delivers the core Sea Lime action in classic color patterns like Pink Striped Runner and Sea Lime Stripes. These are straightforward, effective designs for anglers who want to try the unique movement system without a major investment.



The Live Bait Presentation Series (\$35, refills \$19) takes realism further with patterns like Goggle Eyed Fred, East Coast Pogie, and Yellow Tailed Ballyhoo. These lures combine the patented water-channeled movement with color schemes that precisely match local baitfish, ideal for finicky fish or clear water conditions.

The Irresistible Retro Series (\$35, refills \$19) brings back proven fish-catching colors with modern performance. Black Mullet, Red Catcher, and Teal Wahoo have historical track records for triggering strikes, now paired with Sea Lime's distinctive swimming action.

The refill system (\$19) is another practical touch. Rather than replacing entire lures, anglers can swap out bodies while keeping the same rigging, reducing cost and waste over time.

A Different Approach to Lure Design

The tackle industry has always moved forward through small increments. Slightly different skirt materials, marginal improvements in hook strength, subtle color variations. Sea Lime Lures represents something less common: a fundamental rethinking of how a lure interacts with water. For anglers tired of the same trolling spreads producing the same results, it's worth considering whether the limitation isn't the fish but the tools we're using to target them. When a lure can replicate not just the appearance but the actual movement of natural bait, it changes the equation entirely. Sea Lime Lures are available directly at www.sealimelures.com, where anglers can browse the full product line and learn more about the patented design that's bringing Tampa innovation to offshore spreads worldwide. 🎣

Sea Lime Lures is a Tampa-based fishing gear company founded in 2016, specializing in American-made lures and accessories for recreational and competitive anglers.

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TALES FROM THE OLD GUY

by David Mallory

Fishing for dinner is always my wife's ultimate goal when we go out fishing, although she loves catching lots of different fish. Sometimes the odds are with us and sometimes they're against us as we try to meet that goal. We had no idea what the odds would be this day, but we didn't really care! It was a beautiful warm sunny day and we were happy to be able to try to beat the odds of 50 percent chance of rain and catch some fish! Captain George assured us we would. We didn't know at the start that the odds were over fifty to one against us, three different ways!

We started off as we often do with the 'Captain's Meeting', meaning us at his choice spot for the day. He gets up very early to go catch the bait and scout the area for some "hot spots", and yes, he often finds some before he even picks us up! That is one of the many reasons we always use his expertise. He already knows where the fish are and what kind they are.

We stopped at a reef that we often do well at. Today we did! We both caught a 'trifecta', as I call it. Actually it's usually called a slam: a snook, a trout and a redfish. Nothing but one legal trout we could keep for dinner, but a lot of fun for both of us to catch a slam.

After we wore out our welcome there, catching 23 fish, we went to a channel that drops off to a deeper spot. This usually contains many fish, some of them bigger, much bigger. As we fished, I hooked onto something I couldn't move at first. George saw it briefly and said it was a big stingray. George said about 40 pounds, but I said at least 60, so we settled on about 50! (That was our second 50-1. Sometimes, I have a say.) The ray went as he pleased and I couldn't stop him from taking out a bunch of line. When he finally moved again, we could see he was gigantic. After a while, we finally got him up to the boat so we could cut the line to let him go. It was a struggle, but a pretty exciting challenge, to say the least.

Our next two stops were small humps which came up to within a few feet of the surface. We have always caught fish at both of them. Sometimes we do really well, but this day was not great; however, we did catch a few that we could count, but not keep. At this point we still only had one fish for dinner. Yikes!

We kept fishing as Captain George was determined we have at least two fish for our dinner. Unfortunately, they were all too small to keep. We stopped fishing when our total was 52 fish. We've had so much fun telling people we went fishing and caught 52 fish, but could only keep one! Our third odds for the day: 52-1! ☑

- David Mallory



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December is the top month for me for catching one of my favorite winter species, a Sheepshead; the hard to catch, but great to eat fish! Start of the cold fronts drive the big females into the bay to get ready to do their spawning. The colder the water, the better, as the fish start to load up on food. Tie on a Fiddler Crab, medium live or fresh dead Shrimp and let the fun begin!

I prefer to use a #1 or 1/0 circle hook with just enough weight to keep the bait on the bottom. Vary your weight according to tide and always start with lightest weight possible. Then increase the weight with the tide in order to keep the bait close to the bottom.

ABOUT THE CAPTAIN

Captain Sergio Atanes fishes the Florida waters, specializing in and around the West Coast of Florida and Tampa Bay. His 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 in the area.

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Plaquemines Parish is Louisiana's southernmost parish 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" or as many of the locals call it "DTR", is the perfect balance between urban and rural lifestyles. It's 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 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



Now let's talk about 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)**.

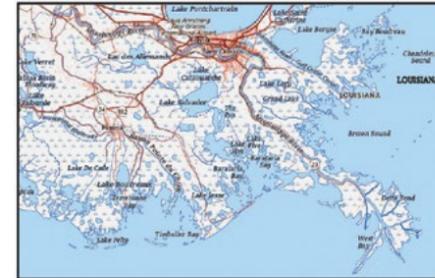
Catering to those who are all things fishing, boating, aviation, and outdoors, this Inn offers simple comfort, angling amenities, and a relaxed atmosphere. I stumbled upon this little getaway a few years ago and was impressed by its central location and all it has to offer.

Let's explore some of the provisions and conveniences. The Inn features double rooms, interior/interior queen rooms, a Captain's Suite and a Commander's Suite. This is very important for those who have a large fishing group and want to share costs, at the same time enjoying each other's close company. For the family, Lematidora also offers cabins with a king bed, kitchenette, kids room and bathroom. Each room in the main house has a mini refrigerator, microwave, and DirectTV. A fully equipped and commercial-sized 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 ma-

chines, an ATM and a change machine. For those that are feeling the bar vibe, you can BYOB and settle down at the bar adjacent to the kitchen. Complimentary wi-fi access is available throughout the Inn and a must for posting those fishing pics at the end of the day! There is a 24-hour coin-operated laundry room for those who prefer to wash clothes before packing them up. 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 and small), and airplane parking. Yes, airplane



parking! You see the **Lematidora Inn** is a unique one of a kind (in the parish) fly in hotel. Private/general aviation pilots can 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 salt water 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 pool side lounge chairs, bar tops and family sized dining tables.

There are several restaurants, a grocery store, hardware store, tackle shops, boating and marina options within a 5 to 30 minute drive to and from the Inn. And the Lagniappe, as they say? Private walking access to the Mississippi River and the breathtaking sites along its banks for hiking, bird watching and wildlife photography.

Plaquemines Parish in South Louisiana is a Sportsman's Paradise. From everything outdoors, the food, down to the accommodations, the saying holds true, life is better "down the road", aka; DTR! 🍷



made Louisiana famous, but that we will explore shortly. With its abundance of waterways, fishing & hunting grounds, trapping and birdwatching (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! 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 flyfishing destinations in the world. Some choose to just do sightseeing tours and get up close to an array of wildlife in our bayous.





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WINTER BAIT STEALERS

by Captain Sergio Atanes

December typically marks the beginning of the season for Sheepshead (*Archosargus probatocephalus*), an inshore member of the porgy family. Sheepshead are a common North American species, found from Cape Cod to Florida and the Gulf of Mexico. After the summer months, targeting Sheepshead provides an alternative to catching species such as snook, redfish, and trout. In Tampa Bay, Sheepshead are sometimes referred to as "convict fish" due to their ability to remove bait without being detected.

Sheepshead primarily feed on shrimp, fiddler crabs, small crabs, bloodworms, sand fleas, and barnacles. Their diet leads them to frequent areas around docks, bridges, and similar structures where crustaceans are present. On light tackle, Sheepshead are known for their strength, particularly larger females that can exceed 12 pounds. These females migrate from the Gulf of Mexico to spawn, typically arriving between early and mid-December and departing by early March, depending on water temperatures.



Where & How to Catch Them

Fishing techniques should be adjusted according to location. When targeting sheepshead near bridges and docks, utilize

medium spinning tackle equipped with 15-pound test braided line and a 25-pound test fluorocarbon leader paired with a #1 hook. Fish in-

habiting these areas are typically smaller males, generally weighing between 1 and 3 pounds. Larger female specimens tend to reside in deeper sections of the bay, frequenting ledges, wrecks, and rock piles at depths ranging from 12 to 30 feet and averaging between 4 and 12 pounds. For these larger fish, it is advisable to employ heavier equipment, such as a

7-foot medium-heavy action rod matched with a larger spinning reel, rigged with 20-pound test braided line and a 25-pound test fluorocarbon leader, secured with a loop knot to a 1/0 hook. A Texas rig setup is recommended, with the sinker positioned on the leader just above the hook. Incorporating a small glow soft bead can prevent the sinker from contacting the knot and may help



attract larger fish. Sinker weight should be selected based on water depth and tidal movement, beginning at 3/8 oz and increasing up to 1 oz as conditions require. Lighter weights enhance bite detection, while insufficient weight may cause bait to drift off the bottom, reducing opportunities for sheepshead to locate and consume it.

CHECKLIST & TIPS

- Check your hooks often the sheep type teeth tend to break the circle hooks at the bend or tip making for lost fish.
- Avoid soft tip rods. You need pressure on them to set the hook.
- Keep your rod tip almost touching the water when fishing from a boat. Prevent a slack line or you will not feel the bite.
- Avoid large baits, they have small mouths.
- Replace or sharpen the hook often. They need to be extra sharp.
- When fishing under a bridge or along seawall, scrape the barnacles. This creates a chum slick, drawing sheepshead to the source of food. It is like having a "Taco Bus" show up.
- Always have the point of the hook exposed.

PREFERRED TACKLE

- Blackfin 7' medium and medium heavy spinning rods.
- Blackfin 4000 saltwater spinning reels.
- FINS braided line 20-pound test. I prefer white or yellow line for sheepshead fishing.
- Lee Fisher Sports 25-pound fluorocarbon leader. The leader should be at least 30 inches long.
- Lee Fisher Sports Triden #1 or 1/0 circle hooks. Three most important things to look for in a hook is strength, size, and sharpness.

FAVORITE BAITS

Live shrimp, fresh dead shrimp, fiddler crabs, bloodworms, and sand fleas. Fiddlers and sand fleas work best, but lack of time on my part to catch them drops down to second best with live shrimp and bloodworms. Since sheepshead are bait stealers, regular shrimp works best. Do not waste money on medium or large shrimp, it is just more bait for them to steal. If using artificial baits, I like Fish-bites™ strips in either sand flea or shrimp flavor.

Sheepshead can be caught from shore, bridges, docks, and rocky areas. On the water, their favorite spots are artificial reefs, wrecks (16 alone in Tampa Bay), ledges and rocky bottom. Remember, the deeper water holds the bigger fish.



Fishing for the thieves of Tampa Bay is a fun and rewarding experience. Hooking and fighting an 8 or 10 pound Sheepshead will put a big smile on your face, and if you have kids, they will love the experience. ▣

Captain Sergio Atanes is the host of Fishing Adventures Florida and Captain Sergio Fishing Chronicles on YouTube, Waypoint TV, Carbon TV, Outdoor Action TV and Angling TV. For info call 813-973-7132 or email: atanes@msn.com.





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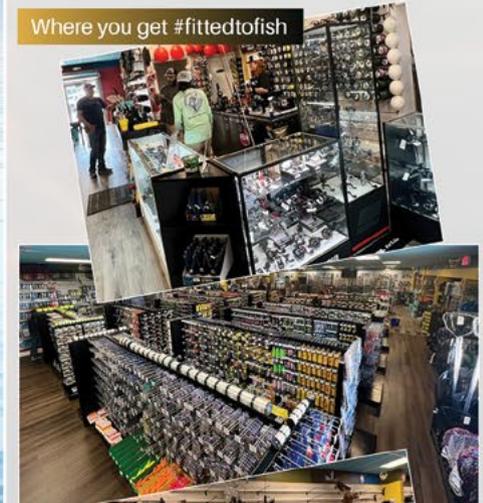
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