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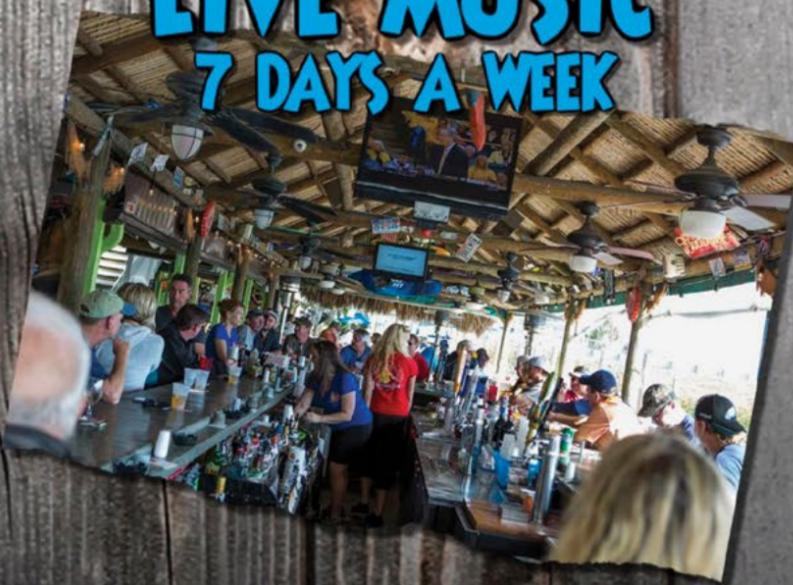
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IT PAYS TO OBEY THE LAW

I often think that Florida's fishing regulations have become so complicated that it is too much for the average guy or girl to keep up with. We have areas where limits are different, complicated slot limits, restricted areas and much more to be aware of. I always try to be in compliance, but sometimes it's hard to be sure, because regulations change so often.

As a result of our regulations, I decided to look into how other states and countries handle fish related law. After doing just a little research on the internet, I realized that our rules really are not that bad. I will now share a few regulations that are on the books in other places (and you know that these must all be true, because the internet said so).

In **Ohio**, its illegal to get a fish drunk and it is illegal to fish for whales on Sundays. I can understand the need for insuring the sobriety of our fish population, but I have to wonder how much of a problem whale fishermen were really causing on Sundays. Was Lake Erie simply overrun by whale fishermen? Why Sunday? Did these whale seekers make the boating unsafe for others who wished to use the waters for quieter pastimes like hosting the America's Cup sailing races?

You may not fish while sitting on a camel's back in **Idaho** and it is forbidden to fish while sitting on a giraffe's neck in **Illinois**. I have to wonder why the problem was more serious with Camels in Idaho while Illinois had more issues with Giraffes. I do, at least, know of places where one may ride on a camel, but I have never even heard of anyone riding on a giraffe, so I tend to discount the need for the Illinois law.

In **Minnesota** it is illegal for a human to have sex with a fish. I don't think that I really want to know why they thought that this law was necessary.

It is illegal to use a lasso to catch a fish in **Tennessee**. This one completely defies reason. I can't picture even the most skilled cowboy wanting to ride out and lasso up some catfish or bass.

No person shall take, wound or destroy any fish of **Wyoming** with a firearm of any kind or nature. This seems a bit more reasonable; I can see a cowboy using this approach.

In **Montana**, it is illegal for married women to go fishing alone on Sundays, and illegal for unmarried women to fish alone at all. How unfair it is to single out those who have not found a soul mate and then add insult to injury by restricting their fishing privileges. I would question the constitutionality of this one.

In **Indiana** it is against the law to stupefy fish. The definition of stupefy is make (someone or apparently some fish) unable to think or feel properly. I suppose that this one must go along with Ohio's restriction on getting fish drunk. I guess it could be like contributing to the delinquency of a fish. Is this the source of the expression "drink like a fish"?

And last, but certainly not least, in **Liverpool** it is illegal for a female to be topless in public, unless she is a clerk in a tropical fish shop. Clearly, the public must be protected from boobal nudity in most situations, but it is perfectly reasonable to allow a shopkeeper to expose her breast areas as a purveyor of tropical fish. I imagine that this would allow a shopkeeper to remove her shirt in order to avoid getting it all wet in the process of capturing a wild fish that has been sold or otherwise needs to be taken out for a walk.

Feel free to stop by Belle Harbour Marina in Tarpon Springs if you would like to discuss scheduling a camel back fishing expedition (they are legal here, just not in Idaho) but don't waste my time talking about Giraffe fishing, that is just ridiculous. I can hook you up with camels, but if you would rather go the more conventional route and use a boat, I can help you with that too. You can call me at 727-943-8489 or email me at: merle@belleharbourmarina.com.

Merle & Flip



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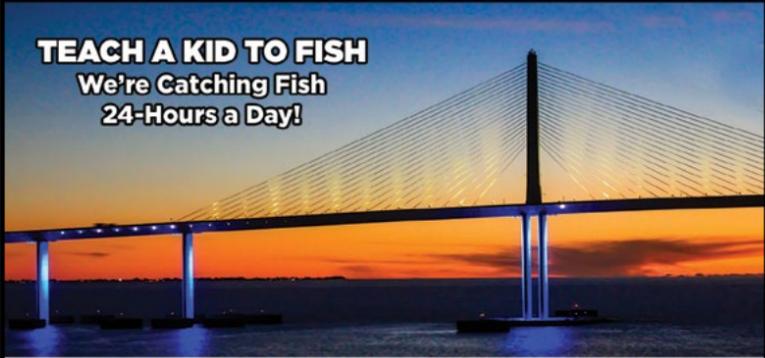
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WINTERTIME FISHING SUCCESS

by Captain George Hastick

With January usually being one of the coldest months in Florida, you might have to adjust your tactics. During this month you will have to adjust your fishing on a daily basis, depending on the weather. This can be a variety of things from baits, presentation, locations, tackle and species. Some days will be good for targeting Snook and Redfish, where other days, it would be better to go after Trout and Sheepshead when it is colder.



Some of the things you will have to deal with in the month of January in the Tampa Bay area that affect your fishing are the water temperatures, wind, water clarity (usually extremely clear), negative tides and cold fronts.



One advantage during this month is that there will not be as many people on the water like the rest of the year when it's nicer out. This means there is a good chance that some of your spots will not be bothered. The warm days between the cold fronts can have great action on the flats, since the

shallow water with dark grass will warm up quicker than the surrounding deeper water. Days like this are when you can sight fish redfish, snook and trout. You will have to be stealthier than usual due to the clear and shallow water. These conditions will make the fish very spooky, especially the redfish.

If you are throwing artificials like a Saltwater Assassin 4" Sea Shad on an unweighted Owner Twist lock hook. This will be a lighter presentation that will help to not spook the fish when it lands in the water. When casting do not cast too close to the fish as this will usually spook them in this type of scenario. Cast near the fish and reel your presentation in a way that looks like a bait crossing the fish's path but trying to flee. Bait do not attack fish.

Some of the things you can do to up your odds of getting hits with the clearer water is to downsize your leader to 25 or 20 pound Seaguar fluorocarbon leader and use smaller hooks like a 1-1/0 sized hook with like bait. Areas to look for are the shallow water flats near deeper water. These types of areas will allow the fish to go into deeper water during the night to stay warm and then migrate onto the shallow flat as it becomes warmer during the day. Another area to look at is your power plant outflows which will stay warmer as long as the outflow is flowing.



On colder days fish like trout and sheepshead do not mind the colder temperatures and will be more willing to bite. Trout can be found concentrated in potholes on those negative tide days. Sheepshead can be found on residential docks, rock piles, jetties and bridge pilings. Sheepshead will eat shrimp, but crabs are their favorite. So, a fiddler crab on a small 1-1/0 circle hook with no weight or the lightest weight possible to keep you in the strike zone where the fish are is a great setup with 20-25 pound fluorocarbon leader. ☑

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; he will make you feel as if you have been fishing buddies for years. Contact him at 727-525-1005, www.Fish-Tampa.com.



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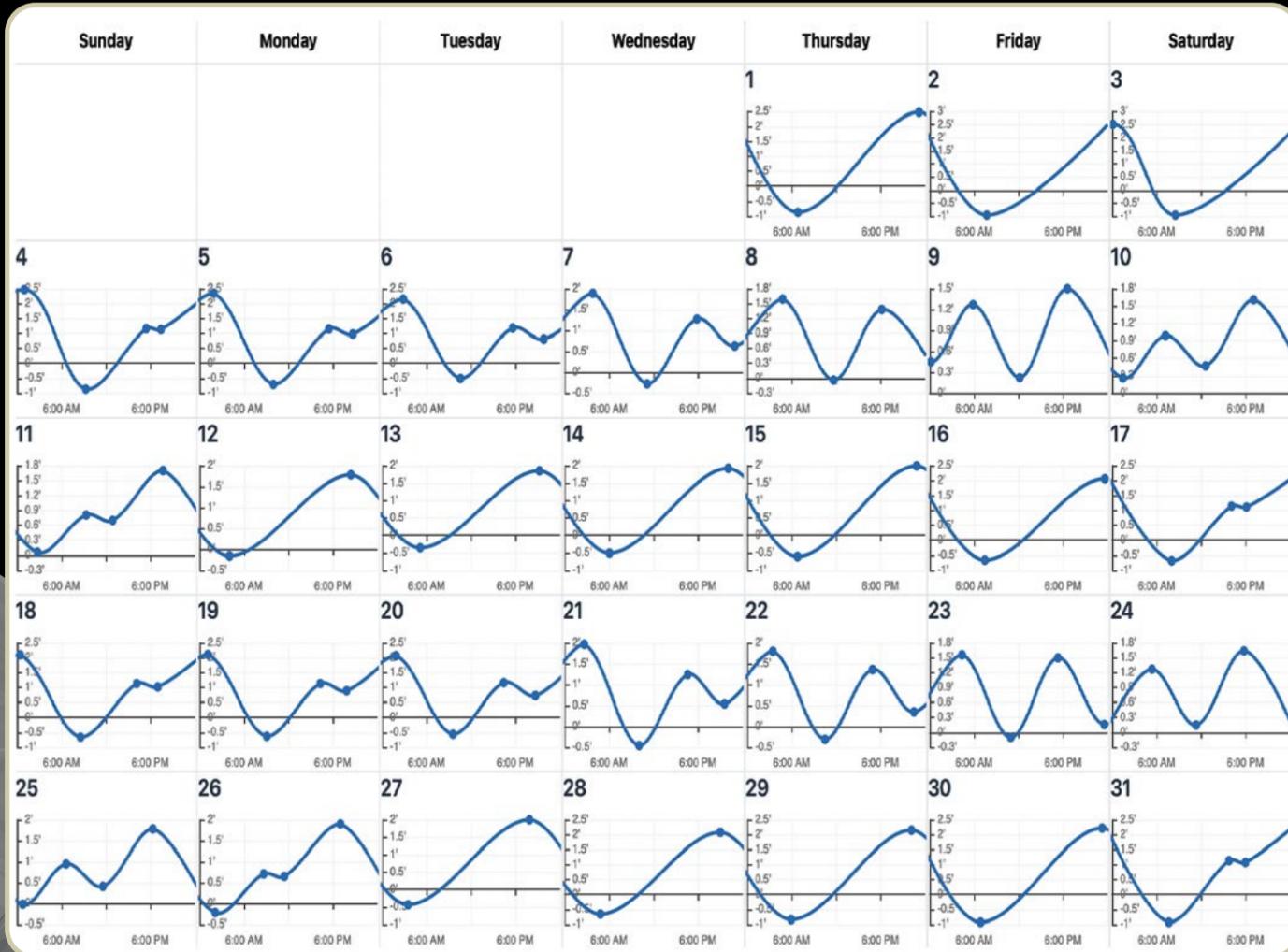
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Conversions for Clearwater Beach Area

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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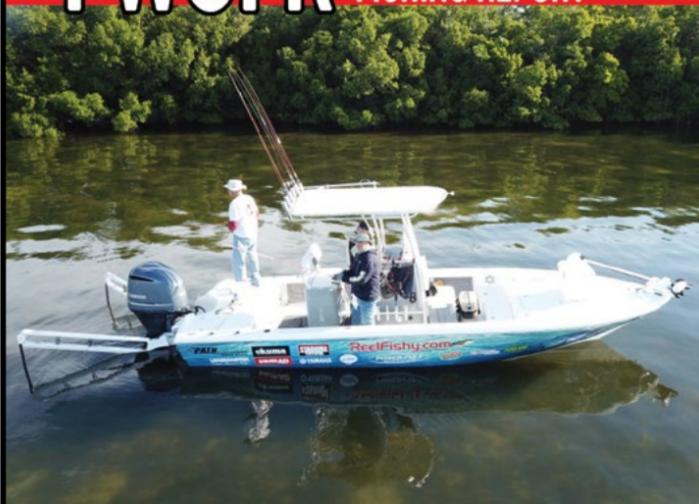

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HOST: Capt. Sergio Atanes • CO-HOST: Capt. George Hastick

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REELING IN 2026

by Misty Wells

Since the beginning of modern time there has always been a great deal of controversy between those who "hunt & gather" and those who think it is wrong for one reason or another. Now, I may be opening a can of worms here, but most of those folks that think hunting and fishing is wrong still enjoy a daily dose of protein provided "guilt free" by their local grocer. Anyone with common sense knows where their food is coming from and how it finds its way into their homes.

With that said, I would like to talk about the benefits of hunting and fishing and how by "taking it outside" more in 2026, we can all be better at preserving our sport and enhance our conservation education and efforts.

So, let's follow the money for a minute and talk about how the contributions made by anglers and hunters contribute annually to the outdoor resources we all enjoy. On an annual basis over \$1.7 billion dollars in taxes and contributions goes directly to aquatic resource conservation in various ways. Hunting licenses purchases, excise taxes, membership dues and contributions paid by hunters and shooters generate over \$1.8 billion each year for wildlife conservation in the United States. To date, more than \$12 billion dollars generated by outdoors enthusiasts have been distributed through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act. The American Sport-fishing Association reports that over 4 million anglers spent

over \$4.5 billion dollars last year while fishing in Florida. The fishing industry alone in Florida generates over 58,000 jobs and income for many families, which includes my own.

Now that we have some numbers to go on, what are some great ways to keep the fishing industry going strong, all the while practicing conservation and engaging the next generation? One thing that I acted on in 2014, was starting "A Reel Future" a non-profit that takes children in foster care fishing and teaching them about the outdoors and conservation. I realized entire generations of children are growing up in foster care, at the time it was something I did not know much about. Did you know at any given time in the

United States there are over 400,000 children in foster care right

now as you read this article?

The median age of children in foster

care is 6½ and over 20,000 youth age-out of the foster care system between the ages of 18-21 annually. I did not know what age-out meant at that time, it means

kids that never get adopted and they then are legally adults, and they are sent out on their own. I meet entire families of siblings that are all growing up in foster care together or apart, and most likely will not get adopted. With hundreds of thousands of children not being exposed to nature, our waterways, parks, and

beaches, how are they going to develop a love for nature and the desire for conservation? Now, I am not suggesting that you start a non-profit, but I am suggesting that you support one or volunteer in some way to make a difference.

You may ask why Fishing? So far after taking over 4,000 Foster Kids fishing, I have never been with 1 child that did not laugh and have the best time of their lives catching their first fish. Fishing is such an even playing ground for anyone because they don't have to be the fastest, strongest, smartest, or even have any experience to land a catch. I would say 80% of the foster children I take fishing have never been on a boat, caught a fish or learned anything about conservation. It is amazing the self



confidence that these children get by learning to fish, they even start to begin to help the other children once they get the hang of it.



In one form or another there is fishing year-round in Florida and there is always something to catch. Fishing is not always about filling the cooler, sometimes it is the thrill of the catch. Catch-and-release fishing has become an effective conservation tool and can be a lot of fun, however if the fish do not survive after being released then what is the point? I have researched some tips for successful inshore release to help keep the fish that are not going in the box alive and give them a better chance for survival.

Please remember that time is a precious resource to ensure a fishes survival. Leiza Fitzgerald, **STAR Director of the CCA Florida** put it to me the following way:

#1: "hold your breath for as long as you intend to have that fish out of water". She said, "when you are out of breath so are they". That being said, when working to release your catch, try to keep the fish in the water, if possible, this allows the fish to continue to get oxygen and reduces their level of exhaustion.

#2: try and land your catch quickly so your catch won't be as tired and will recover quicker.

#3: if you must net your catch use a rubber or mesh net, don't use anything with abrasive materials that could injure the fish's skin or gills.

#4: have your pliers or tools nearby to reduce the time spent on the fish release, and when handling a fish make sure to wet your hands or gloves.

#5: avoid handling the belly, its internal organs can be compromised, hold the fish by cradling the head and tail if possible.

#6: remove the hook, gently acclimate the fish back into the water, hold it upright in the water until it can regain its composure and swims away.



Anglers and hunters alike all have those prize trophies or catches that we want to memorialize and

either have nice pictures of, or somehow hang on our walls. Fishing year-round, a lot of times we are catching species that are out of season, not slot size, or are only catch-n-release species. Like most anglers and hunters, we want to find a way to somehow capture the moment forever and bring our story to life. I have teamed up with King Sailfish Mounts based in Ft. Lauderdale to bring my fishing dreams to life, they can do the same for you. However, I don't want you to just think of them as just a trophy-mount company, they truly are a conservation company. They are working with anglers all over the world to encourage catch-n-release on all species that swim and create art. Back in the old days of Taxidermy, anglers would have to kill their catch, drop it off, then the Taxidermist would make an authentic skin mount. I am sure you have noticed most of the old skin mounts don't last and begin to deteriorate after a few years. Since Sportsmen no longer have to have the actual fish, they can make a perfect replica based on your measurements and your pictures. Their artists will refer to your photos and will incorporate similar color patterns and marking into each mount.



The trophy is in the eye-of-the beholder, so please don't think you have to have something as grand as a Sailfish, Marlin or large species to want to have a mount. King Sailfish mounts does a lot of Freshwater Mounts, 1st Fish, Mini-Mounts and a variety of other species in house. So far I have my Sailfish, Roosterfish, Bass and Crappie on the walls with a Cubera Snapper on the way from Costa Rica. I am again, looking forward to fishing my way through 2026 this year and turning my walls into a mini Bass Pro Shop.

No matter how you decide to "Reel in the New Year" I hope that you will first and foremost "Take it Outside" as a gift to yourself. I also hope that you will consider donating your time, money and equipment to a non-profit organization based on the outdoors and the next generation. As our State becomes more and more developed it is key that we do everything we can to preserve our fish and fishing areas. Let's make 2026 the best year yet for our souls, fishing and conservation. I will see you out on the water and Happy New Year! 🎣

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 mistywells.com.

JANUARY ON THE GULF COAST

Cold Mornings, Hot Bites & Why Winter Still Wins

by Justin Searcy

The crowds are gone...mostly. The water has cleared up. And the fish? They're still there... they're just a bit trickier to entice.

January isn't about ripping across the bay at 50 mph. Well maybe it is... but It's also about slowing down and letting the day come to you.

It's the month where you leave the dock in a hoodie, question your life choices for the first 30 minutes, and then somewhere between the first sips of coffee and the warm sun finally hitting you, you're hooked. Literally or figuratively. Sometimes both.

Cold fronts push snook, reds, and trout into deeper water, tighter cover, and predictable hangouts.



Midday sun becomes prime time. If you're still sleeping on winter afternoons, you're missing out on some of the best bites of the year.

This is finesse season. Smaller baits. Slower retrieves. Longer pauses. The kind of fishing that

rewards patience and humbles anyone who refuses to adjust.

Pro Tip: If you think you're fishing slow enough, slow down more.

Both on the water fishing, helping people navigate insurance options,



and volunteering with Rotary, I often recognize a similar pattern - those who quietly prepare in January are the ones smiling later in the year.

You don't wait for a front to check your gear.

You don't wait for a storm to wonder if your boat's ready.

And you definitely don't want to wait for a life curveball to figure out your plan.



Winter rewards the prepared. But when you get it right? There's nothing better than watching a redfish slowly gulp your carefully placed bait or a snook slide out of the mangroves in gin-clear water and crush a topwater.

It's also the time of year when many of us reset. New goals. New routines. A fresh calendar. And hopefully, a little more intention in how we spend our time.

January also reminds us that the Gulf Coast doesn't take the winter off. Our waterways need protection year-round. Through Rotary and organizations like **Captains for Clean Water**, I've seen what happens when people step up. Cleaner water means better fishing, stronger communities, and something worth protecting for the next generation.

If you enjoy these waters, please take care of them. It's really that simple.

So throw on the hoodie. Bring the extra coffee. Fish smarter. And use January for what it's best at, setting the tone for the rest of the year. 🍷

-Justin Searcy





SPOTTED SEATROUT

of St. Joseph Sound

by Captain Jared Simonetti

Growing up in Dunedin, Florida, I was lucky to have great fishing just minutes from my front door. St. Joseph Sound is the area that runs from Clearwater in the south to Fred Howard park in the north. This area is known for lush grass flats and pristine white beaches, but St. Josephs Sound is also littered with spoil islands throughout its entire length.



These small man-made spoil islands are made of rock and sand that was dumped when they dredged the channel. The islands are now covered with trees, bushes, and birds, but these islands also offer some great fishing. Fishing the spoil islands is fairly easy. Everybody has easy access to them with just about any type of floating vessel. Depending upon the season, these islands hold lots of trout, redfish, snook, sheepshead, flounder, and other species.

During the colder months, these sandy, rocky islands heat up and can generate a hot bite. Due to the fact that these islands are mostly made of shell, rock, mud, and sand, they heat up fairly quickly after the sun rises. This warmth draws the fish in. These shelly, rocky islands also hold baitfish and lots of crustaceans in all their cracks and crevasses. During colder months, these spoil islands and the grass flats in-between the islands are well known as the home of many Spotted Seatrout locally know as the Speckled Trout.

When targeting trout, both live bait and artificial lures work well. When using shrimp, I like to fish either free line or lightly weighted with a small split shot. I use a 1/0 circle hook on a 20 lb. fluorocarbon leader a few feet long. If I am going to use artificial lures, I like to use jigs. A soft plastic shad tail or jerk bait will get the job done. Combine either of these soft plastic baits with a lead jig head in the 1/8-1/4 oz. size. Fly anglers will want to use a sinking line with closer minnow.

There are two basic methods used when trout fishing in the Sound; anchoring or drifting. When fishing the islands, anchoring is the most common approach, and when working the flats, drifting is preferred. When drifting, a drift sock can help slow down your drift so that you can fish more effectively.

If you plan to keep some trout for the dinner table, make sure you know the regulations first. Trout season here in the southwest part of the region is open all year and the bag limit is 4 per person. The size limit is 15-20", with one trout of the limit over 20". I personally don't like keeping any trout over 20" as these are the breeding stock. If you aren't going to keep any trout for the dinner table, make sure you have pliers and a de-hooker on board. Wet your hands before touching any fish that you plan on releasing. 🎣

If you're looking to get out & do some trout fishing in St. Joseph Sound, call me, Capt. Jared Simonetti. I can be reached at 727-831-0111. I am a Tampa Bay Native and I have been fishing St. Joseph Sound my entire life. I am a fully U.S.C.G. licensed and insured charter captain offering charters and trips throughout the Tampa Bay area with Light tackle, fly, bait, & artificial lures. Novice to Expert! Night and Day 365. My website is www.CaptJared.com. Photos courtesy of Nick Pecori.

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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

Over the years there were more and more fishing contests held on Lake Champlain, which is located between New York State and Vermont. I fished several of these tournaments with friends and my Dad. Dad and I were still fishing with the Lone Star boat we'd purchased in 1960. It worked well for us and a lot of fish had come over the side of that boat. We traded motors a few times, but were using a 35 horse power Evinrude at that time. Quite a difference to the present age!

The Lake Champlain International Fishing (LCI) Derby always took place on Father's Day weekend. Dad and I loved to fish and we thought this would be fun. We fished with a friend, Steve, in his boat on the first day and caught several nice lake trout. Steve had electric down-riggers which used a six pound lead ball to get the line to the bottom where the fish hung out. We caught quite a few trout, but nothing over 6.5 pounds.

The second day we used our own boat and drifted along in various locations on the lake. I hooked a good northern that was just under eight pounds. We caught more between five and eight pounds, so we thought we might have a chance at a prize. Suddenly, I hooked what I thought was a real big one! I fought it for about ten minutes and when we netted it, we felt like we definitely had a winning fish.

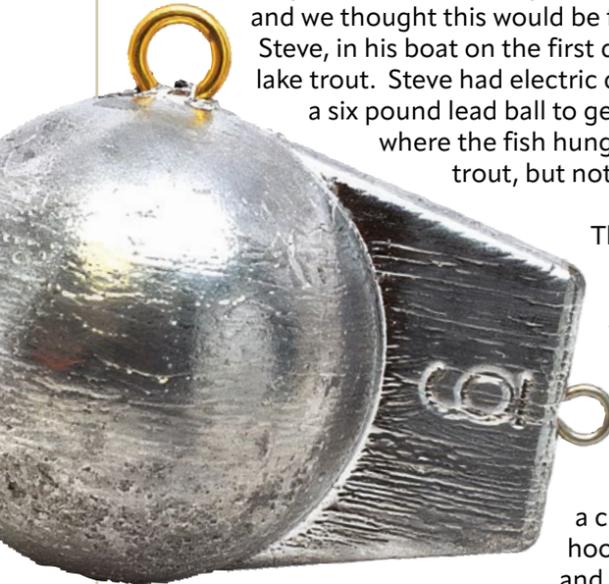
Since it was getting late, we headed back in to put our fish on the scale at the South Hero, Vermont weigh-in station located on one of the Champlain Islands. It weighed in at ten pounds and one ounce. We were very happy because nothing bigger had been weighed-in as far as we knew.

We had to wait until the award ceremony on Monday evening to see if we had won a prize. When they announced the awards, I had won fourth place in the northern pike category. My prize was a Cannon electric downrigger! That was great, except we didn't have a boat with a battery!!! What to do? The Lone Star boat had to go, so we went to *Tudhope Marine* to look at boats! We finally settled on a Starcraft sixteen foot boat with a Yamaha fifty horse power motor. We had them mount the downrigger, but bought another one just like it, which they mounted. We also bought two batteries, new life preservers and a depth finder.

Dad and I used that boat until he stopped coming to Vermont in 1994 and I retired to Florida in 2002. We only owned two boats in our fishing days, but they were both workhorses. We used them and caught, literally, thousands of fish with them.

My wonderful wife laughed over us winning a prize that cost us so much money and she's still my fishing buddy to this day! 🍷

- David Mallory



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FISHING FORECAST

THIS MONTH'S OUTLOOK WITH CAPTAIN SERGIO ATANES



If we get cold weather, look for bigger fish around the hot water runoffs in and around the power plants, rivers, and creeks. Using a live medium-sized shrimp is the game changer for me and if using artificial baits, I like the Saltwater Assassin She Shad. The colors will vary with the water color in the area. The color of the water will dictate whether to use a dark or light color tail and I prefer glitter in them.

Sheepshead should be in larger quantities around the rock piles and docks. Use live shrimp or fiddler crabs for the best bite. Trout will also venture to make their home in potholes on the flats or muddy bottom channels.

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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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.



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

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.



CONTINUING JOSE'S LEGACY

At its core, the Jose Wejebe 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 josewejebefoundation.org. Together, we can help more veterans experience the healing power of the ocean and the joy of fishing. 🎣



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CATCH THE LEGACY



TAMPA BAY AS I KNEW IT (PART I)

by Captain Sergio Atanes

Growing up in Tampa Bay in the 50s and 60s had so much to offer when it came to fishing. When we were not going to Boca Grande for the weekends, we spent a lot of time exploring new spots and there were plenty of places to find. During this time, the mindset was to fish offshore and very little attention was given to the inshore areas. While many of our friends concentrated on Grouper and Snapper, my family preferred to fish in the inshore waters of Tampa Bay. One of the things that we learned from fishing the area was that we could catch almost all the species that were available in the Gulf of Mexico, except for large Snapper and Amberjack.

Taking into consideration that in the 50s and 60s we didn't have highspeed fishing boats that we have today, it took a lot longer to get to the Grouper holes. Although Grouper could be caught within sight of land and in shallow waters, the advantage of fishing Tampa Bay was the abundance of species of fish that was available within 10 minutes of the shoreline and easily reachable in a small vessel. I remember well the boat my uncle had, which was an old



wooden 16-foot hull with a 9.9 Wizard outboard motor. It had no neutral and it started in gear. Although not as seaworthy as modern boats of today, it certainly did the job for us.

The **22nd Street Bridge** offered a lot, including Redfish, Speckled trout and Sheepshead from the bridge, down the shoreline leading to the old Seabreeze restaurant which had a boat ramp next door, so it made it convenient to fish in the area.

The **Hillsborough River** produced some nice quantities of Snook and

Tarpon. I can remember catching Tarpon from the **Columbus Drive Bridge** shoreline and large Snook under the Hillsborough Avenue Bridge at night, and something I wouldn't do today. The **Platt Street Bridge** was one of the best fishing spots for large Snook and Speckled Trout fishing in the Winter, (TECO had a power plant next to the bridge on the river) as the hot water runoff attracted the big fish during cold spells.

The **Old Tampa Bay** area also had much to offer. Above the **Courtney Campbell Causeway** was the Lopez hole area of a big dredge

hole that held large trout all winter long, but over the years silt has filled it in. The last little bridge on the Clearwater side of the Courtney Campbell Causeway was a hotspot for Speckled trout and Redfish for waders during the winter months.

Where the **Howard Franklin** 4th Street exit is today there used to be an old crabber's shack and next to it a deep dredge hole that held large trout all winter long, and to this day is still considered a hotspot for fishing. Although the hole is not as deep as it used to be, trout can still be found during the winter months when high pressure systems move in, and the tides drop below normal levels. Big Island sits in the same area and to this day holds a fair share of Snook and Redfish all year long.

Gandy Bridge was the main fishing bridge for the Tampa natives, and I remember catching large Speckled trout, Black drum, and Redfish at night. We would hang a Coleman lantern close to the water attracting shrimp and with it plenty of fish. When we were not fishing Boca Grande on any given weekend, Gandy Bridge was our second choice from shore. Boaters would fish the bar that extends south between the center span and the St. Pete side of the bridge. Its well known for the Speckled Trout and Cobia action and still to this day a hot spot, although not fished much by this generation of anglers.



Yes, **Weedon Island** did exist in the 50s and 60s, although very few anglers fished in the area. You must remember that Snook was considered a soap fish, and not a very edible species. Redfish was also considered trash fish in that era; trout was the mainstay of Tampa Bay. **Port Tampa** was also a well-known spot in the 50s and 60s, and Grouper could be caught off the rocks,

along with common guests such as Seabass, big Key West Grunts, large Redfish, and even Tarpon. Anglers could average at least one Goliath grouper a month in the channel leading into Port Tampa, and I remember fishing from that little 16 foot wooden boat using 3/8 anchor line with a large hook, an old sash window weight, putting on one large Mullet for bait and tying the anchor line to the stern of the boat and fishing for Redfish and Grouper while we waited for the Goliath to bite.



Tampa Bay has over 26 wrecks that are listed on the old charts, and some of these wrecks were exposed along the shoreline and produced large quantities of Redfish, Snook, Sheepshead, Speckled Trout and Mangrove Snapper. However, the shallow water wrecks have been covered over the years with silt and sand from the storms, but the deepwater wrecks are still there. I fish these wrecks for Gag Grouper, Mangrove Snapper and Grunts during Summer months. These wrecks are also home during the Winter season for big Sheepshead, Flounder and Speckled Trout.



Next month, I will cover the south end of Tampa Bay with some stories and information most residents and even the locals don't know about.

For more information you can visit **FISHING ADVENTURES FLORIDA** on YouTube with weekly local fishing information and our how-to segment Capt. Sergio Fishing Academy teaching new techniques and tackle to help you catch more fish. Good fishing and tight lines! 🎣

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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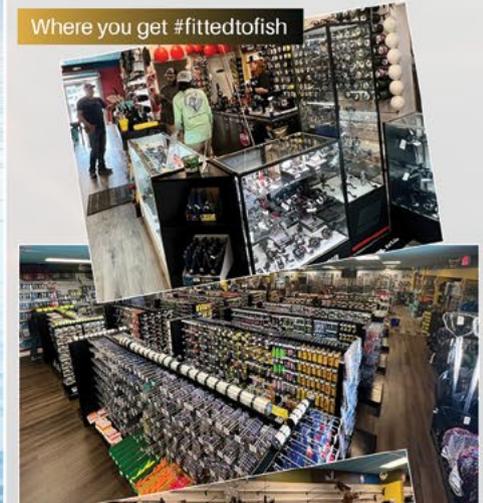
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