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THIS JUST IN, BEES ARE FISH

Ok, once again, we are faced with another excellent example of factual news that is far stranger than anything I could ever make up. This particular example comes from California; imagine that!

In an effort to keep our readers up to date on important news about fish, I bring this report for your consideration. Bees made it on to the Federally Endangered Species list in 2017, but because of some very specific language in California's regulations the act only applies to "any bird, mammal, fish, amphibian or reptile that is considered endangered". This gave agricultural groups that oppose protection of bees a loophole to work with since invertebrates or insects were not mentioned. Since they were not mentioned, they legally could not be protected in California.



Now the Conservationists, who wanted to protect the bees, went back to their Law Library and found that the California Fish and Game Code contained a rather surprising and detailed definition of fish. The Code stated that fish was defined as "wild fish, mollusk, crustacean, invertebrate or amphibian". Because the code did not specify aquatic invertebrates only, this left the door open for Bees to qualify to be Fish in the state of California. Naturally, this had to be ruled on by a California Court and, as you would expect, they agreed that bees are, in fact, defined as fish under California Law. Bees don't even have to just identify as fish, they actually are fish under the Law. There are 4 specific species of bees that actually qualify to be protected, but the only one really of interest to me is the Crotch Bumble Bee and no, I'm not making this up. I am particularly happy to live as far away from California as possible, while still in the continental US, because I do not wish to ever encounter even one single Crotch Bumble Bee.

IN ANY EVENT, THIS BRINGS TO MIND A VARIETY OF INTERESTING & RATHER RANDOM THOUGHTS:

- Will there be a new and unexplored market in California for tiny rods, reels and baits for anglers to use while fishing for bees?
- A bee's tendency to fly in the air rather than swimming in the water increases the opportunities for California anglers to fish for bees nearly anywhere. Will this cause an explosion of tourism?
- Will PETA be outraged and suggest that the name Bee has a stigma, or perhaps a stingma, associated with it and suggest that people would be more likely to protect them if we renamed them as air kittens? For those who don't already know, PETA already has proposed that we rename fish as sea kittens.

Thanks to Jason from the office at Belle Harbour Marina for pointing this newsworthy item out to me, in the first place.

Also, Flip the Bird insists that I explain that while birds and bees both fly around, birds are clearly not fish and no one had better be out there trying to fish for birds, this would bring down the considerable wrath of birds everywhere down upon us and it would not be pretty, as Alfred Hitchcock clearly illustrated in the movie.

Flip and I are available at Belle Harbour Marina nearly every day in case you want to discuss the Birds, Bees and Fish.

Merle & Flip



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ON THE COVER:

Onshore-Offshore writer, Captain Justin Searcy, with a healthy Redfish caught on a recent trip with a client. Learn more about these beautiful fish by flipping to our feature story on page 16 of this issue!

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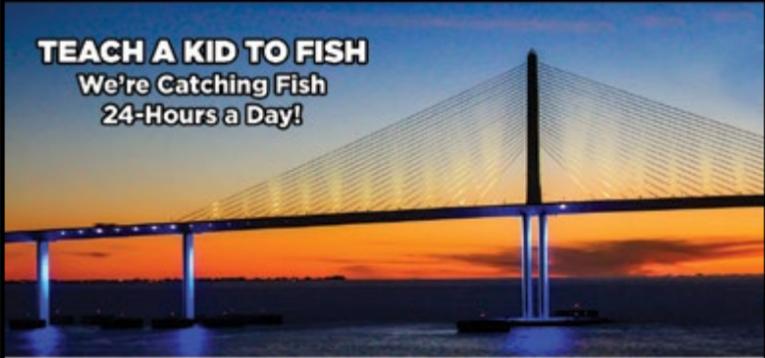
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SPRING INTO FISHING SUCCESS

by Captain George Hastick

March can be a premiere month to fish in the Tampa Bay area. With the rising water temperatures and bait starting to show up on the flats, it triggers an explosion of fish activity in shallow water that puts a little spring in a fisherman's step. It creates an excitement and anticipation that only an angler can relate to. It's that feeling the night before where you almost can't fall asleep because you know it's going to be good.



With typical water temperatures in the mid 60s to possibly 70 degrees, the fish will be active and very aggressive, which will benefit live bait and artificial enthusiasts. For the live baiter, you will be able to stuff your livewell full of bait without fear of them dying due to the cool water, which will allow you to live chum to really get the action going! For the artificial fisherman or fisherman, this is a great time since the fish are in an aggressive mood and will chase down a bait. I like to throw a Saltwater Assassin Sea Shad by Bass Assassin in various colors, but I have been having great success with "Chicken on a Chain" and "Electric Chicken". For live bait the reintroduction

of Scaled Sardines onto the flats is hard to beat.

Snook will be moving out of the backwaters and the multiple creek and river mouths to the flats just outside of these areas. They will feed very good on the moving tides, incoming and outgoing but I find when they are setup near the mouths in these areas the outgoing tide produces

a better and longer bite due to the bait being pulled out into the bay. Try to setup at points where the tides is going around a point or over a deep hole. These are ambush points where the Snook will wait for bait to come to them.

If you see Snook do not cast right at them but cast upcurrent and let your presentation come naturally to them with the moving water. The same with artificials, since baitfish do not attack Snook. Make it seem like your lure is fighting the current to get away, which really entices a strike.



Reds will be schooling up and trailing Mullet schools and will also be mixed in with them. They are picking off the baits that the mullet scares out of the grass, as the school goes over it. They will move further onto the flat as the tide rises to make it to the mangroves and any oyster mound that are in the area. Shrimp, Scaled Sardines, Pinfish and cut bait will all work.

Trout also bite much better when the tide is moving. Look for them in grassy areas with many sand holes and along the grass flat edges where it drops off deeper.

Areas to focus on are the mouths of rivers like the Alafia and the flats of Cockroach Bay, Fort De Soto, Weedon Island and Cypress Point Park, just to name a few productive areas. ☑

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; you'll feel like you have been fishing buddies for years. For more info, contact him at 727-525-1005, www.Fish-Tampa.com.

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WELLS COVE: A PREMIER BOATING COMMUNITY ON THE ST. JOHNS RIVER

For those who measure quality of life by time on the water, Wells Cove offers a rare and thoughtfully designed opportunity. This exclusive waterfront enclave is a premier boating community located along the banks of the St. Johns River, where riverfront living, privacy, and convenience come together in a way seldom found in today's market.

Wells Cove is intentionally intimate, with only seven homesites planned within a gated setting. Rather than a large-scale subdivision, the community was designed for those who value space, serenity, and a true connection to the water. Each residence includes its own private boat slip, allowing homeowners to move seamlessly from home to boat without the complications of shared marinas or off-site storage.



proximately a 15-minute high-speed run to the Atlantic Ocean and the jetties. This makes Wells Cove especially attractive to both freshwater and saltwater fishing enthusiasts, as well as boaters who want quick access to offshore waters while still enjoying the calm and protection of riverfront living.

Beyond its boating advantages, Wells Cove offers a location that balances privacy with everyday convenience. The community is just minutes from Jacksonville's beaches, providing easy access to coastal recreation and dining. Major destinations such as the St. Johns Town Center, River City Marketplace, and Jacksonville International Airport are all nearby, making travel, shopping, and entertainment simple and efficient.

Homes at Wells Cove reflect the community's upscale character,

with quality construction and coastal-inspired design. Select residences offer buyers the opportunity to personalize finishes and design details, allowing each home to reflect individual taste. Immediate occupancy is available, enabling new owners to begin enjoying the waterfront lifestyle without delay.

Pricing at Wells Cove ranges from \$899,000 to \$1,900,000, representing a compelling value for a gated, private-slip boating community of this caliber. With only seven homes in total, availability is limited, reinforcing the community's exclusive nature and long-term appeal.

Wells Cove is more than a place to live — it is a destination for those who appreciate life on the water. From private slips and rapid ocean access to iconic river views and thoughtful design, this premier boating community offers a lifestyle defined by ease, exclusivity, and enduring value. ■

One of Wells Cove's most compelling features is its exceptional access to open water. From the dock, it is ap-

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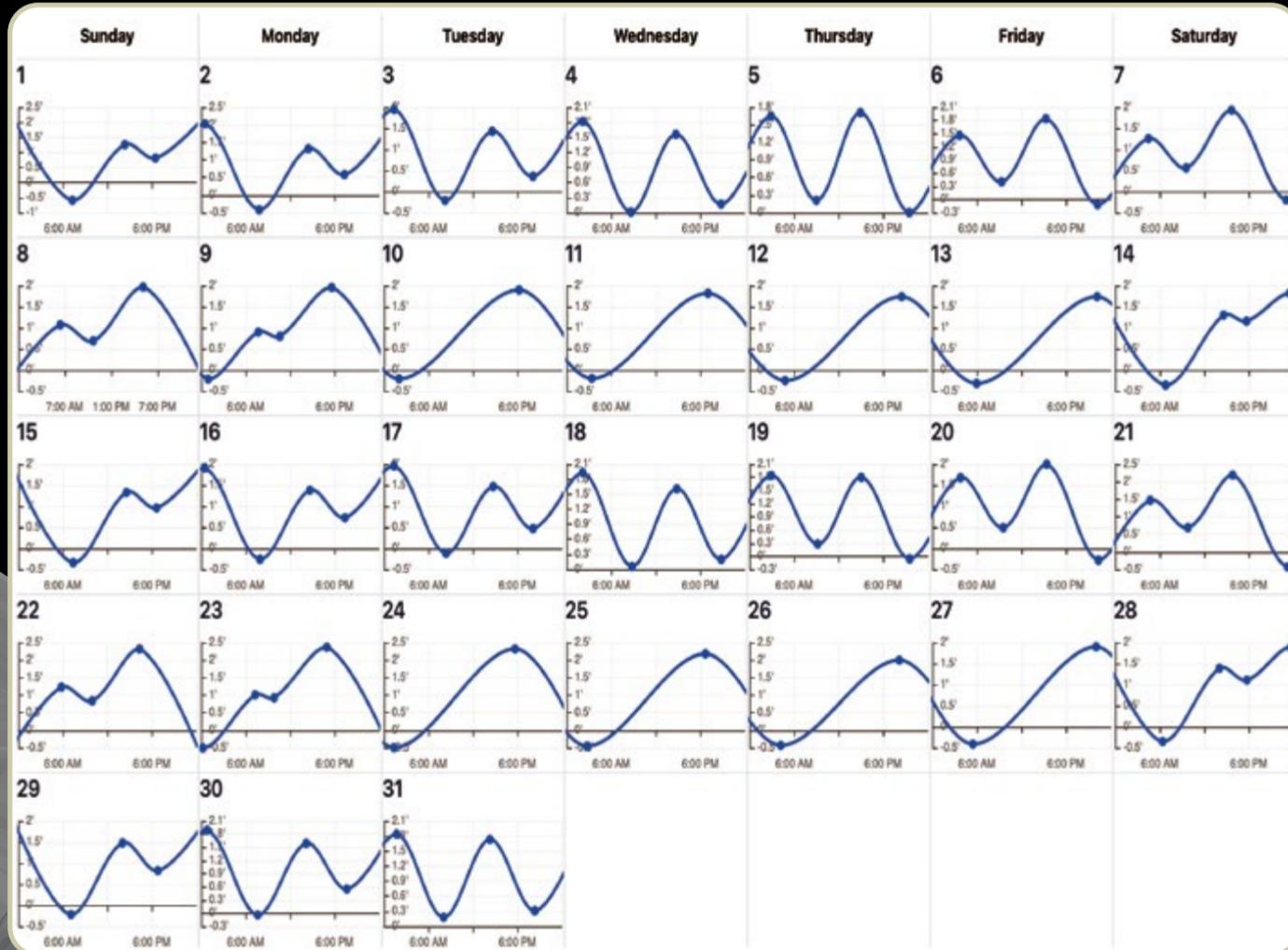
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Conversions for Clearwater Beach Area

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

Conversions for St. Marks River Area

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

Conversions for Tampa Bay Area

High	Low	
+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

CHASING TUNA WITH THE LEGENDARY BATSON FAMILY

by Misty Wells

There is something surreal about being on the water with people that have basically written the manual on custom rod building and have experienced fishing around the World. Beyond excited, is how I felt when I found out I was getting the chance to fish and film with Bill Batson, his son Keller and daughter Eden for Yellowfin Tuna. Before we jump into the filming and fishing trip let me bring you up to speed who the Batson family is and why they are so important to the fishing industry.



In 2000 Bob Batson, founder of Batson Enterprises, began his family's legacy at home in his humble garage on Maui. Fast forward 26 years later, his legacy is carried on by his son Bill and his grandchildren Keller and Eden and other members of the Batson family. Now you may say I have never heard of Batson Enterprises, maybe not, but I can assure you that you have probably fished one of their rods. They are the premier family-owned supplier of fish-



ing rod blanks and components that include Rainshadow, ALPS, and Fore-Cast brands. Bill laughs with joy as he explains to us how blessed he is and how much he enjoys his 'research and development' expeditions around the world. Bill and his family have a complete focus on integrity, quality and a passion for fishing, and they personally work with thousands of suppliers year-round earning lots of frequent flyer miles in the process.

This past season Bill and his team met me in Perdido Key, Florida to take it offshore with Captain-Tommy LaRonge and Mate-Alex Varner to target some Yellowfin Tuna. Eden and Keller Batson were especially overjoyed as they had yet to land a Yellowfin Tuna, this could be their moment. Of course, before showing up in Florida, Keller and I had worked together on some custom "Misty Wells" rods designed specifically for this trip and targeting the big Tuna's. Needless to say, I was excited to unwrap these rods and put them to the test; this was a first for me as I had never had my own custom rods.

Upon arrival in Perdido Key, we were greeted by Captain Tommy and Alex at the "Tuna Town" house we were all staying. Each year, Captain Tommy of "UnReel Fishing Outfitter" rents a large home and runs Tuna trips for adventurous anglers. April, May and June are peak season for Yellowfin Tuna fishing in the Northern Gulf and Captain Tommy certainly knows how to put you on the fish. Tommy and Alex came very close to breaking the Florida State record weighing 210# Yellowfin Tuna to kick off the season. That night we went over the game plan for the next day, and we all decided to hit the hay early as 5:00AM comes early.



Jumping right into the action of the trip, we start off with catching live bait under the bridge before we head offshore for the day. Not only

are we testing out my new rods, but we are also filming a full episode of "Let's Take it Outside" for Season 6 on Discovery Channel. Needless to say, excitement was in the air as Tommy throttled down his 42' Invincible to a cool 45 miles an hour, and we proceeded 80 miles offshore. On the way to our first stop Tommy noticed a big school of Tuna feeding on the surface, so we turned in the direction the school. The best approach when chasing Yellowfin Tuna is to go wide around the school in a large circle, drop back



hook up, but just as fast as we got two hook ups, one broke off. Bill may have lost his fish, but Keller still had his large Yellowfin on the line, and the fight was on. Even though Keller had never landed a Yellowfin before he fought that fish like a pro. Keller and Bill traded off the rod for over 45 minutes until that fish finally gave up. We estimate Keller's fish was a solid 75# as we put it in the box, but there was no time to waste we still had a full day ahead.

Now that we got fish #1 in the box some of the pressure was off, but Eden and I needed our time on the rod as well. Pulling up to the "FAD" there was a lot of action, Tuna popping everywhere. If you are not familiar with what a "FAD" is, it stands for Fish Aggregating Device. A "FAD" is a man-made object placed in the water specifically to attract pelagic fish such as tuna, mahi, marlin and wahoo. They work by providing a visual reference point and shelter in the open ocean, which attracts smaller baitfish, eventually drawing in larger predators through the food chain. Eden and I both got hooked up at the same time and we dug in for the fight, unfortunately it was short lived for both of us. Eden and I both got broke off almost at the same time, heartbreaking. But like the saying say "there are plenty of fish in the sea" so time to fish on.



As the day went on and the tides were changing the bite grew a bit slower, and the schools were harder to find. Finally, we found an active school, and we were ready to land a Yellowfin for Eden. Once we chummed the waters Eden got a nice fish on the hook and this one was "no joke". True to form our Batson customs joined us in the fight of a lifetime, working to land Eden her first Yellowfin Tuna. So many things can go wrong when you are fighting

your baits through the feeding fish.

Never run directly towards the school or through it, as they will sound and you may never see them again.

To start we started throwing a bunch of 'live chummers' to get the school into a feeding frenzy, along with 2 large live baits on 50t. circle hooks on our Batson rods. Almost in an instant we had a double

Tuna, equipment failure, knot failure, fish swimming under the boat or wrapping around the "FAD" are just a few. Eden never gave up, and for over an hour she and Captain Tommy fought that fish until she raised it to the surface. Now comes the hard part, getting that fish in the boat. Right up until the end things can go wrong, but with a perfect gaff shot, Alex got that Tuna in the boat.



Finally, our fishing mission was complete, and it was time to head back to shore, we were tired. As we all settled into our beanbags for the ride home, we all had huge smiles on our faces and were "one big happy family". Back at the dock, although tired and weary we hung our catches for the day and posed for some memory making photos. While fishing with the Batson family I realized how important those days out on the water are.

Bill Batson cherishes not only the memories he creates with his own family, but how he is able to create those memories for thousands of others he may never meet. Steeped into three generations of the fishing industry, you will find some of the deepest roots and the greatest memories created by Batson Enterprises. Congratulations on 26 years in the fishing industry Batson Family, we look forward to many more together with you and your team. Bill, Keller, and Eden thank you for fishing with Captain Tommy, Alex and I and thank you for my new Batson memories.

Readers don't forget...you can tune into watch the full action-packed episode of "Let's Take it Outside" Batson Family Tuna Trip on Discovery GO, Waypoint TV, Carbon TV, Wild TV, and my YouTube and please subscribe. If you are looking to book at Tuna Trip of a lifetime reach our to Captain Tommy at www.ucatchfish.com Until the next time, Tight Lines and thank you for following my adventures as I take you around the World "one catch at a time".

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.



If you have ever spent time near the ocean along the southern United States, you may have heard people talk about the red drum. Some people call it a redfish, and anglers love to catch it. This fish is strong, smart, and important to the places where it lives. In this article, we will learn what a red drum is, where it lives, what it eats, why people care about it, and how we can help protect it. Everything is written in simple words so anyone can enjoy learning about this amazing fish.

The red drum is a saltwater fish that lives near the coast. It is known for its copper-red color and for the black spot near its tail. Some red drum have one spot, while others have many spots. Scientists believe the spot may confuse bigger fish that try to eat it, making them aim for the tail instead of the head.

Red drum can grow very big. A young red drum may be only a few inches long, but an adult can grow longer than three feet. Some very old fish can weigh more than 50 pounds. These large fish are often called "bull reds" by anglers.

The red drum belongs to a group of fish that make drumming sounds. They do this by shaking special muscles against their swim bladder. People cannot always hear it, but other fish can. These sounds help red drum talk to each other, especially during spawning time.

Red drum live along the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. They like warm water and sandy or muddy bottoms. You can find them in bays, lagoons, estuaries, and near beaches. Young red drum often stay in shallow water where there are grasses and oysters. These places help protect them from bigger fish. As red drum grow older, many of them move into deeper water. They still come close to shore during certain times of year, especially when it is time to spawn. During spawning, large groups of red drum gather in deeper passes near the coast.

Red drum are also very good at living in different kinds of water. They can live in salty ocean water and in water that is mixed with fresh river water. This makes them strong survivors.

Red drum are not picky eaters at all!!! They'll eat anything that want eat them first. They eat many kinds of small sea animals. Their favorite foods include shrimp, small crabs, and small fish. They also eat worms and other animals that live in the sand.

RED DRUM 101

by Terri B. Huffmaster

Red drum use their mouths to root around in the sand, much like a pig looking for food. They have strong teeth in their throat that crush shell; this helps them eat crabs and other hard animals, so be sure to watch your fingers while handling them!

Young red drum eat tiny shrimp and plankton. As they grow bigger, they hunt bigger prey. This helps them grow fast and stay healthy.

Red drum grow quickly during their first few years. They usually become adults at about four or five years old. When they are ready to reproduce, they swim to deeper water near the coast. Spawning usually happens in late summer and early fall. Female red drum can release millions of eggs. The eggs float in the water until they hatch. Tiny baby fish drift with the currents until they find safe shallow water.

Only a small number of juveniles will survive to adulthood as many are eaten by other fish and birds. That is why it is important to protect adult fish so they can keep reproducing.



Red drum are an important part of coastal life. They help control the number of shrimp and crabs. This keeps the ecosystem in balance. They are also food for bigger animals like sharks and dolphins.

When red drum are healthy and strong, it means the water and marshes are healthy too. Fish are like signs of how nature is doing. If the fish disappear, it often means there is a problem with the water.

Many people love red drum because they are fun to catch. They fight hard and can make a fishing trip exciting. Anglers enjoy the challenge of finding them in shallow water or along the beach.

Red drum are also good to eat. Their meat is firm and mild. People cook red drum in many ways, such as grilling, baking, and frying. In the past, some places overfished red drum because people liked them so much. Today, there are rules to protect them.

Red drum are also part of local culture in many coastal towns. Families often share stories about catching their first redfish. Fishing for red drum brings people together and helps them enjoy nature.

Like many wild animals, red drum face dangers like overfishing. When too many fish are caught, there are not enough left to make new fish. This happened many years ago, but laws have helped red drum numbers grow again.

Pollution is another danger. Trash, oil, and chemicals can hurt the water where red drum live. Dirty water can kill the food red drum eat and it can also harm the fish themselves.

Habitat loss is a big problem too. Marshes and seagrass beds are important homes for young red drum. When these areas are destroyed by building or storms, young fish lose their safe place to grow.

Today, many states have rules to protect red drum. There are limits on how many fish a person can keep and how big they must be. This helps make sure fish have time to grow and reproduce. Many anglers also practice catch and release. They catch the fish, take a quick photo, and let it go. This helps keep the fish population strong.

People are also working to protect marshes and clean up the water. By planting marsh grasses, picking up trash and reducing pollution we can all help red drum and many other animals and mammals.

- The black spot near the tail is called an "eye spot".
- Some red drum can live to be more than 40 years old.
- Big red drum make louder drumming sounds than small ones.
- Young red drum sometimes swim in schools for safety.
- Red drum can change color slightly depending on the water they live in.

If you want to see red drum, visit a coastal marsh or bay at sunrise or sunset. Look for small waves or tails sticking out of the water. Sometimes red drum push water as they feed in shallow areas.

You can also talk to local fishing guides or visit fishing piers. Even if you do not fish, watching others catch and release red drum can be exciting.

Even if you live far from the coast, you can still

help red drum. Use less plastic, throw trash away properly, and support clean water projects. What we do on land can affect rivers that flow into the ocean.

Learning about nature and sharing what you know also helps. When more people care about fish and oceans, it becomes easier to protect.

Red drum are more than just fish. They are part of nature, part of fishing traditions, and part of healthy oceans. When we take care of

red drum, we take care of many other animals too. Future generations deserve to see red drum swimming in the shallows and hear stories about catching them. By following fishing rules, protecting water, and respecting nature, we can make sure red drum stay strong.

The red drum is a beautiful, strong, and important fish that lives along our coasts. It has a copper color, a black tail spot, and a powerful fight that anglers love. It eats shrimp and crabs, helps keep

nature balanced, and brings joy to people who fish or watch wildlife.

But red drum also need our help. By protecting their homes, keeping water clean, and following fishing rules, we can make sure red drum continue to swim in our bays and beaches for many years to come.

Next time you visit the coast, take a moment to look for this special fish. You might just see a red drum gliding through the shallow water, reminding us how amazing our natural world can be. 📸

- Terri B. Huffmaster



SPRINGTIME GOBBLE WOBBLE

by Misty Wells

Spring is wild Turkey mating season in Florida and it time to dust off those decoys and brush up on your calls. I am hoping this year will be my year to finally bag and bird, it's been a long time coming. You are probably wondering where you can hunt this year, well the FWC offers 43 public hunting areas statewide and you can basically walk right into season. If you are new to this you are going to want to understand wild turkey behavior, figuring out "why they do what they do". I did some research and found that the FWC is offering some really good advice for successful turkey hunting this year, here is what they had to say.

MY TIPS FOR A SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL TURKEY HUNT:

- Gobblers have sharp eyes so staying concealed is critical. When turkey hunting, wear camouflage or drab green and brown clothing, including gloves and a face mask. Never wear red, white, blue or black, which are colors associated with a gobbler. So replace those white socks and T-shirts with camo or earth tone base layers.

- Hunters often like to cover some ground in search of a bird. When calling, always set up against a tree taller than your head and wider than your shoulders before you start calling. Doing this will provide you with protection and make you more prepared for a gobbler that shows up more quickly than you expected. Also avoid setting up in thick cover. Instead select more open areas and eliminate movement and rely on your camouflage for concealment.

- When you hear birds, you want to position yourself for success, however, don't try to sneak up on a gobbler. You might think you're stalking a turkey, but you could actually be slipping up on another hunter. Always adopt a skeptical attitude when you hear turkey calling because good callers can sound as convincing as actual turkeys. In addition to safety concerns, the odds are against you when it comes to sneaking up on a gobbler. Turkeys have sharp eyesight and hear well, too. You'd be better off setting up and calling a bird to you.



- Even when hunting private land, don't assume you're the only hunter in the area. If another hunter approaches your set up, remain still and speak in a loud, clear voice to announce your presence. Never move, wave or make turkey sounds to alert another hunter of your presence.

- Before you pull the trigger, demand multiple points of identification to be absolutely certain it's a legal turkey. If you see movement, do you also see the turkey's beard? Feet and wings? Never shoot at sounds, color or movement.

- Always practice the basic rules of firearms safety. Review the rules



provided by the FWC at MyFWC.com/ThinkSafe.

Wild turkeys have a well-developed communication system that they use to avoid danger, call mates, and establish dominance. Turkey use two main forms of communication, vocal and visual and often use both methods at the same time. An example of both methods is a Tom may gobble while also strutting (the act of spreading its tail fan, dragging its wings, and making his body appear as larger as possible). It's important to know why a Tom is doing this and that will help you bag your trophy. One thing us hunters need to focus on more are turkey calls, what they mean and how they are communicating because that is what is setting the mood.



Let's go over a few turkey calls to get you started:

The *Yelp* is the most heard sound from turkeys from both male and female, it is commonly a locator saying, "I'm over here". This locating call is helping hens find other turkeys in the same area, call to them asking them to

join her. It is possible if you get these hens fired up enough, they may come to investigate and bring that unsuspecting gobbler with her.

The *Purr* is another sound you may hear a lot from turkey's it usually means they are content. When they are feeding or generally communicating with one another they will often use a Purr, this is why a Purr Pot is important to have in your calling collection.

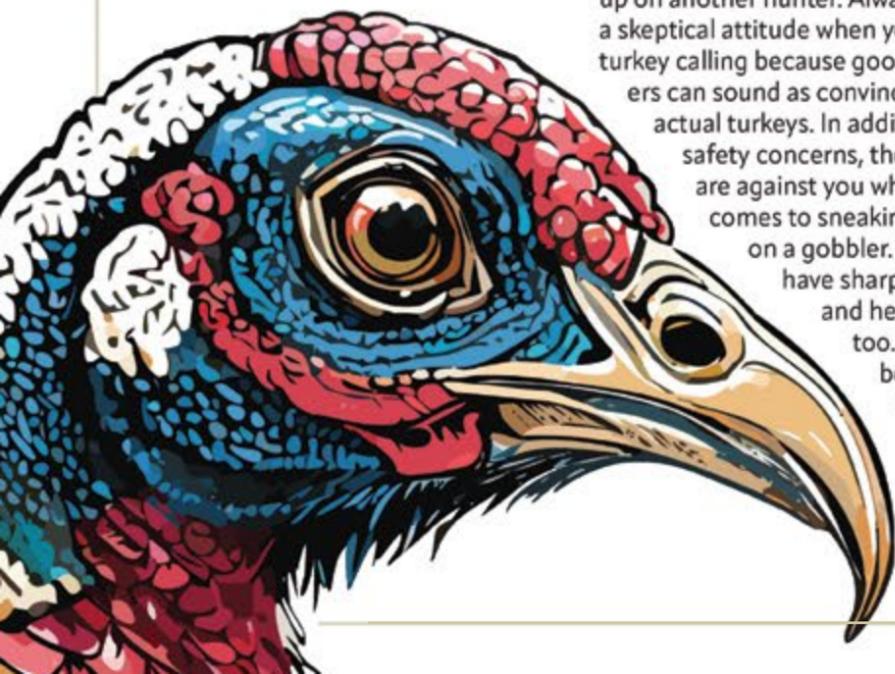
Cutting is another important sound they make, it is a series of load and fast clucks with a few Yelps thrown in.

When a Hen is fired up and wants attention she may start Cutting, this will usually get a Toms attention quick.

Let's not forget the *Gobble*; the sound all turkey hunters want to hear! This is a clear indication that a Tom is excited and looking to attract a Hen. This is also used by a Tom to let the other males in the area know that he is there and he is trying to deter them from coming in. Remember, don't over call; this can be a real turnoff!

Decoys. Why are Decoys important? Turkey see in color and as we know, they have eyesight 3x better than humans. A decoy can give you a chance to take the focus off the hunter and on the decoy for starters. A decoy is also important for a Turkey to associate the call with; if a Turkey comes in from a call and does not see a decoy, he may get confused. However, make sure you are matching the call you are doing with the decoy that you have out. You defiantly also want to have both a Hen and a Tom decoy as this might help bring in the bird a lot faster. Toms want all the Hens to themselves, so if he sees a Tom with a Hen, he may move in fast to get rid of him then get careless and give you a shot. One last thing I want to remind you of is to get out and practice shooting. You want to shoot straight when the time comes. I plan to hit the range and practice my skeet shooting, so when the ultimate Tom shows up, I can finally bag one. See you out in the woods! ■

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



TALES FROM THE OLD GUY

by David Mallory

Thinking back to some of my favorite fishing trips with my wife Pauline, I landed on our first trip to Dolphins North, a fishing lodge located on the northwest coast of British Columbia Canada. This lodge was quite unique as it was on an old fish hatchery offshore in Work Channel, situated between Prince Rupert, BC and Ketchikan, Alaska. It was accessible by scheduled commercial flights from Vancouver, BC to Prince Rupert; then we were transported to the lodge by a sea plane which landed in the water next to the lodge. Quite the adventure!



This was Pauline's first salmon fishing trip and what a place to fish! The lodge consisted of single wide modular units mounted on the docks of what was an old fish hatchery. The kitchen and fish lockers were in double wide units. It was quite unique looking and offered quite the unusual experience. From the safety of floating a good distance offshore, we often saw bears on the shore looking for scraps where the lodge dumped their garbage. Sometimes it was a big Grizzly, but usually Black bears.

On arrival, we were assigned our rooms and handed our fishing gear which consisted of a full body life immersion suit and rubber boots. The usual fishing clients were men, so the suits and boots for the women were rather large. It didn't stop the women from having a great time fishing, however. The women brought their own boots to the lodge the following four years.

Every morning around 6:30 AM we would start with a hearty breakfast and hurry to our assigned 17-foot Boston Whaler with a thermos of hot chocolate laced with cognac in hand. This first year our guide was a Canadian named Randy. When we got in the boat, he would take off to find us some salmon! He was an expert fishing guide and a very patient instructor for the novice salmon fisherwoman.

Around 11:00 AM we would head back to the lodge to eat a light lunch, take about an hour nap and climb back into our boats to go catch more fish! The fishing was not the only highlight being at this lodge. The scenery was fantastic, along with the eagles, dolphins and whales. I even "caught" a seal - it took some convincing to encourage him to let go of the herring with a hook in it. He finally got the hint!

Around 6:00 PM we would motor back to the lodge to brag about all the fish we caught, clean up and end the day with an outstanding dinner. The first night, of course, we were served fresh grilled salmon. We usually left about 5 pounds heavier after all the great dinners and desserts we ate for the four days we were there. That first year, 1987, we caught 71 salmon (King, Coho, Chum, Pinks and Sockeye). We also caught Halibut, Sea Bass, Ling & Rock Cod and a few Sand Shark. We left with two large boxes of salmon which we had to fillet when we got home. Boy, did we find fish scales for weeks stuck to various surfaces in the kitchen. We also had several salmon smoked and canned which were shipped to our house. On subsequent trips, the lodge filleted and vacuum sealed the fish which was a good change.

The fishing was so spectacular, with both of us catching all five kinds of Pacific Salmon, that it wasn't hard to convince Pauline to go back the next year, and the next and the next and the next! ☑

- David Mallory

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March weather forecasts are typically "up in the air". Looking back on the last few years March weather has not been the same, but what is certain; we can expect if the water temperature goes up, action on the flats will pick up, as well! Redfish and Snook will work their way into the mangroves. And, should the white bait show up and they move into the flats, the Spanish Mackerel bite should turn on and Mangrove Snapper will get active.

My suggestion is to be prepared to change according to the water temperature. This is also a good time of the year to fish for Grouper in the bay; they are active all year round, but March is a great time for my clients to hook some pretty big ones close to shore.

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.



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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KEEPING UP WITH THE TIMES

by Captain Sergio Atanes

Fishing in Tampa Bay has changed significantly. Once-productive spots like the middle grounds off Gandy Bridge and Weedon Island now yield fewer fish, with trout becoming scarce and only a handful of redfish and snook left to catch along mangroves. Overfishing—especially during peak season events with dozens of boats—has likely contributed to the decline. As someone who participates in these events, I wonder how we can balance organized fishing activities with maintaining good catches for those who can only fish on weekends.

Now, let's talk about how we can improvise to make up for the changes that have taken place over the years. New products and technologies can help us become better anglers and compensate for some of the losses caused by overfishing, red tide and diminished seagrass and mangrove development. The GPS has made fishing a lot easier both for offshore anglers and for inshore anglers looking for new spots to fish.

Winter (November-March): Change some of our techniques; maybe fish for deepwater species in the winter months, like grouper, grunts, seabass and sheepshead on rocky bottom. There is plenty of it in Tampa Bay and this will take some of the pressure off flats species.



Spring (April-May): Perhaps first target mackerel, cobia, black drum, trout and mangrove snapper first and leave the snook and redfish as wrap-up species.

Summer (June-September): Try mixing redfish, snook, mangrove snapper and black drum and mackerel on the long run. the damage we stand a chance for the younger generation to have something to catch.

This month, my go to species is going to be sheepshead, grunts (gray snapper) seabass and red grouper. GPS with anchor lock makes life a lot easier than in the olds trying to anchor over a rocky patch or a ledge in Tampa Bay there is plenty of software to help you read the bottom from your phone or tablet well worth the investment I was able to mark over 180 spots inside the bay sitting at home on my tablet. So, let's talk about fishing in the deeper waters of Tampa Bay.

Locations: Rocky, hard bottom and ledges. You might ask how do I find them? Simply start with a real Coast Guard chart for Tampa Bay, it will guide you to wrecks and hard bottom. Next, good software, either for your phone or Sonar unit. Study them both and make notes; write down the GPS numbers next and do some T&M (time and money)...time to

look for new spots and money for gas. Believe me, it will pay for itself in a short period of time.

Tackle: Tackle for grouper I prefer 6000 series spinning reel 40-pound braided line, 7-foot heavy action spinning rod. Sheepshead, grunts, seabass and mangrove snapper a 3000 series spinning reel 15-pound braided line, 7-foot medium action spinning rod. Hooks 1/0 to 4/0 circle hooks. Leader 25-pound for smaller species and 40-pound for grouper.



Favorite Baits: Fresh frozen spanish sardines, squid and shrimp. I start with squid to get the action started and according to the tackle I will switch to sardines for Grouper and squid (3/0 to 4/0 circle hooks) and shrimp for the smaller species (Sheepshead, Grunts, Mangrove Snapper and Seabass) with a 1/0 circle hook. Over the years I have migrated to using mor jig heads in the 1/4 to 2oz size my thinking has always best to use the lightest weight possible to keep the bait on the bottom. With slower tides pulling the fish off the bottom to feed is a blast and that's where some of the new products on the market have made it exciting and a challenge.



A big mistake most anglers make is they thaw their baits. Its best to cut the bait frozen and keep it frozen till it goes on the hook. By the time it reaches the bottom, itd ready

to be eaten. Thawing only makes it softer and easier to fall off the hook.

Here is a breakdown of the items I use to catch these species from software to tackle...

Equipment: "Move" by Power Pole with anchor lock; a must have item to help hold your marked spot.

Software: Fish Reveal (Phone-Tablet). Navionics Platinum Plus for vessel sonar.

Tackle: Blackfin 3000 and 6000 spinning reels paired with Blackfin inshore spinning and offshore spinning rods. I use FINS 15 and 50-pound test braided lines with Flashin' Assassin jigheads for Sheepshead, Grunts and Seabass. Shrimp Walkers are also excellent for Sheepshead and Mangrove Snapper, either freelined or use them with a 1/4oz or 1/2oz sinker. ☑

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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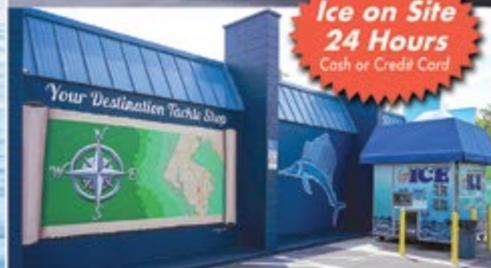


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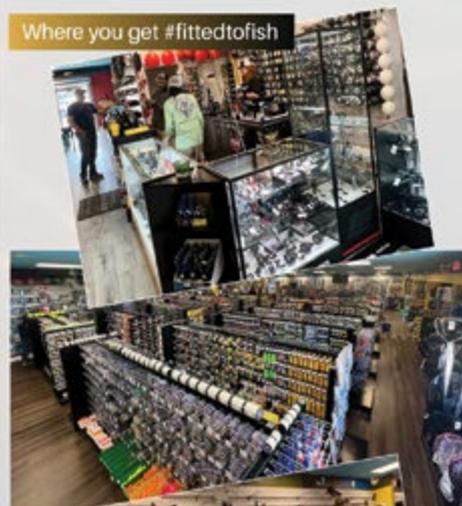
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