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IT'S SIMPLE ECONOMICS

I was out boating during one particular weekend last Summer and I was truly amazed to see the numbers of folks out there looking for the not particularly elusive scallop. Boats and snorkelers were 'wall to wall' on the grass flats near Anclote Key.

So, this made me begin to think about how much people are spending to chase after these tasty mollusks.

There are many different ways to go after these delicacies from the deep, so lets consider both a best case and worst-case scenario.

One of the more expensive ways to seek scallops would be on your 35' boat with triple or quadruple mega outboards. To start out, your boat might have cost a cool half a million and even for a fairly short run, you might drop \$500 or so on fuel. In addition to this, you probably have another \$750 per month to store the boat and an equivalent amount in other various maintenance expenses.

Finally, you would have probably spent another \$500 on food drinks and equipment. Obviously, it is not fair to consider the full cost of such a boat in this calculation, but the investment would easily justify \$2000 per month for interest and another \$2000 for depreciation.

All in all, if I'm anywhere close, you would have around \$6500 invested in your scallops. The boat limit is 1/2 gallon of shucked meat per day and based on the best information that I can find, this is about 4 pounds of meat. This means that you are paying about \$1625.00 per pound for your scallops; I hope that you really enjoyed those tasty nuggets!!

Obviously, there are cheaper ways to catch the stealthy scallop. Probably the most economical way to go after them is to rent one of my pontoon boats. A pontoon that will carry 8 intrepid scallop seekers costs \$325 to \$375 per day plus tax and fuel, so lets say \$450 total to be sure everything is completely covered.

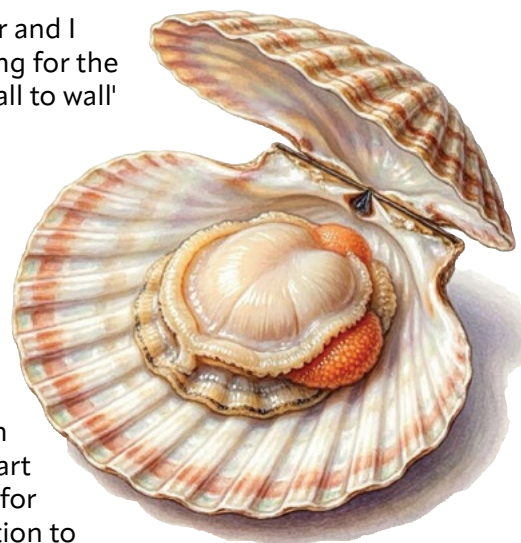
On top of this, you need some food drink, ice and stuff like that. Lets call that another \$150 or so. That gets you out there on the flats to get the same 4 pounds of scallops as the expensive guys get for only \$600.00, what a deal, only \$150.00 per pound.

There is a 3rd option and it is probably the one that I would choose. I would simply go to Pelican Point Seafood in Tarpon Springs and buy plenty of tasty scallops. The other thing that I prefer about this option is that there is no limit and there is **NO SHUCKING!!**

Don't get me wrong, I have spent many thousands of dollars buying boats and/or traveling to exotic fishing destinations when I could have easily bought the fish for much less.

It is usually the experience that is important, not the fish that you eat.

Merle & Flip



16



22



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ON THE COVER:

Jeff Dudley with a beautiful male Peacock Bass caught on a recent trip of a lifetime in the Amazon. Read more about his adventure by flipping to page 16 of this issue!

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PASS & BEACH FISHING MAGIC!

by Captain George Hastick

In the Tampa Bay area pass and beach fishing is in full swing and the great thing is, you can fish them from a boat and from shore. The creeks and the beaches leading to the passes are like fish magnets along with the bridges in our area. If you do not have a boat these areas allow the "landlubber" access to high caliber fish.

Many of the passes, like Johns Pass and Bunces Pass are fishable from land or vessel. Areas like these can give you a shot at larger fish like Tarpon, huge Snook and Redfish, but also Trout, Mackerel, Pompano, Mangrove Snapper and more. Think of these areas as a funnel where all the baitfish and crabs & shrimp get pulled in and out with the tides, making it a condensed area of food sources for the fish.

The great thing is you can catch these fish from land also. The beaches leading into all the passes will hold fish. When fishing the beaches with live or artificial baits cast diagonally out and fish the swash channels.

Also keep an eye open



for spotting Snook in this area, especially early morning before the beachgoers get out there in full force. At the same time, keep a look out for rolling Tarpon and have a setup that will hold 300+ yards of 30 to 50 pound braided line to be able to handle the long runs of the Tarpon. You also might have to run up and down the beach so as not to get spooled by these beasts!



Sometimes at edge of the water, you will see baitfish that you can catch and use right there for Snook, Redfish and other species.

You can also use a white

Seashad on a 1/4 oz jighead or a white bucktail jig. At the beach the baitfish are very light in color, so white works very well.

This time of year, in the passes there will be large Snook, some over the 40-inch mark, so now is your time for a shot at the 40-inch club. Besides that, bull Redfish will move into the area and be in deeper pockets in the

passes. They will also be on some of the bridge pilings and docks that are near these passes. Besides scaled sardines many of the fish in the passes will feed on threadfin herring and crabs since there is an abundance of them at the passes.

One of the most enjoyable, easy way to fish at the passes is throwing jigs and spoons, which can catch many species like Snook, Tarpon, Mackerel, Bluefish, Redfish, Trout, Flounder, Pompano, Shark and more.



Use a gold or silver spoon with a short piece of #3 or #4 wire with a small black swivel to catch Mackerel and a few other toothy fish. The swivel will stop line twist and black stops them from biting the swivel like they would when it is a shiny gold or silver swivel.

Throwing a bucktail jig or a jighead with a soft plastic that makes it to the bottom will catch your fish that feed on the bottom, but you can also swim this bait to

get mid-level feeding fish, so it is versatile. I like white and chicken on a chain colors for my Saltwater Assassin Sea Shads. Adjust the weight of the jig head so you contact the bottom when you pause your retrieve. Make sure to fish the whole area because they can hold different species, meaning fish the pilings of the bridge, the grass leading into the pass, eddies and the deep part of the channel.

Enjoy your pass to fishing and good luck. ☑

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. FishTampa.com.



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. ■

At the heart of Wells Cove is an impressive 845-foot private dock, thoughtfully designed to accommodate serious boaters. Owners can drive their golf carts directly to their boats, making everything from early morning fishing trips to sunset cruises effortless. This level of convenience reflects the careful planning that went into creating a community specifically for those who live an active boating lifestyle.

Situated on a prime stretch of river, Wells Cove enjoys sweeping views of the iconic Dames Point Bridge. By day, the bridge provides a striking architectural backdrop; by night, it becomes a beautifully illuminated landmark that enhances the riverfront setting. These views add a strong sense of place and visual distinction to the community.

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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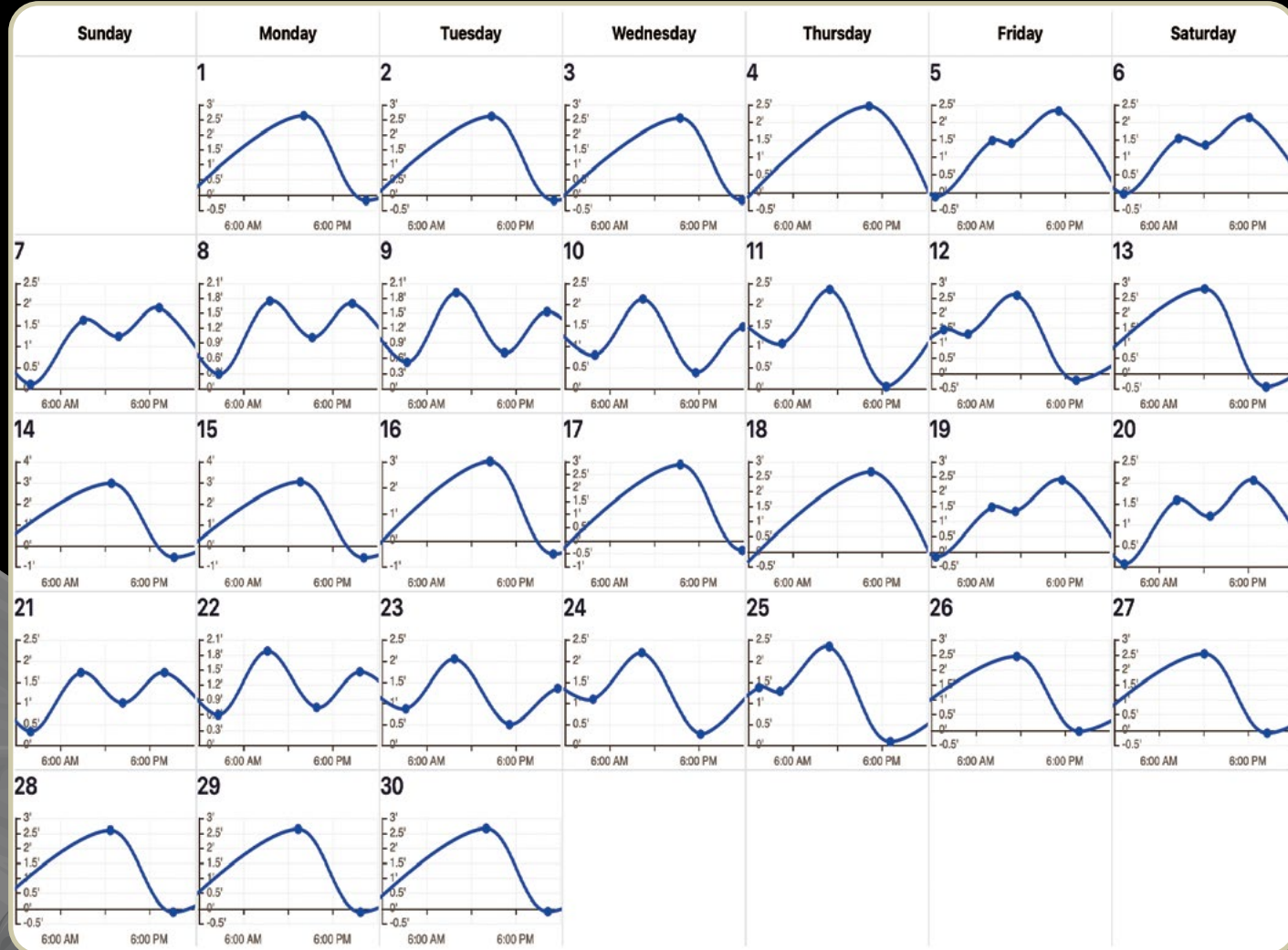
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Conversions for Clearwater Beach Area

High	Low	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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SUMMERTIME IS EASY

by Misty Wells

It absolutely is! There is nothing quite like hitting the water when the summer bite heats up. Whether you are aiming to gear up for a major offshore trip or just looking to spend a quiet morning casting on our inshore waters, early summer is fishing primetime.



June in Florida is an incredible time to be on the water. Late May and June bring flat seas, rising water temperatures, and massive migrations of baitfish, making it one of the most action-packed windows of the entire year. Whether you are hitting the backcountry flats or running way offshore, here is what is firing right now across the Sunshine State.

Let's start with the inshore and near-shore heavyweights in our area, first in the lineup is the "Silver King" 'aka' the Tarpon. Right now, is peak Tarpon season with massive schools migrating along both coasts, stacking up in passes, around bridges, and along the beaches. Tarpon are legendary for their explosive power, massive leaps,

and notorious ability to spit hooks. Landing one requires the right gear, precise presentation, and a lot of patience mixed with some luck.

Sometimes you can be doing all the right things and there are hundreds of Tarpon all around and they just won't bite. Whether you are fishing the beaches, passes, or backcountry flats, there are some primary techniques and strategies used to hook and land a giant Florida Tarpon. Early morning are usually a golden time to fish, your go-to baits are pass crabs, pinfish, and threadfins drifted with tide, or sight cast some swim baits. One unconventional strategy that I have been successful with is getting ahead of a school that is daisy-chaining below the surface and dropping down a lightly weighted live bait right in the middle and getting a hook-up. Sometimes they are so focused on each other they will not take a bait; this strategy basically drops the bait right in front of their mouth.

This is also a great time of year to chase your "Inshore Slam", Snook, Redfish and Trout. Like most species of inshore fish "the early angler gets the bite". With the sun beating down midday, the real magic



happens during the dawn and dusk transitions. Fish are active, feeding and much happier before the shallow water heats up. Snook are moving out of their winter refuges and stacking up in the passes, inlets, and along the surf on the beaches for their summer spawn. The Redfish are usually schooling up on the shallow flats or following schools of mullet along with the Trout on the grass flats.

For Snook, look for moving water around structures like docks, mangrove points, and bridge pilings. Those are great ambush points where the Snook can easily prey on any bait swimming by. Look for moving water around structure (docks, mangrove points, and bridge pilings). Free-lining live greenies (scaled sardines) or tossing topwater plugs at first light will yield explosive strikes.



Summer brings those beautifully flat days and warm currents, pushing pelagic species into overdrive. It's peak season for explosive topwater strikes and deep-sea action. Fishing for King Mackerel, also known as Kingfish, is one of the most thrilling offshore or near-shore experiences you can have. These apex predators are built for pure speed; don't just strike they skyrocket out of the water. Kingfish will make blistering, 40-mph runs that will literally make your reel scream. Larger Kingfish are called 'smokers' anything over about 30 lbs. and with these epic fast runs, they'll 'smoke' your reel.

Another offshore species that will be around in this early summer is the Wahoo, one of my favorite species to catch and eat. If kingfish are "smokers," then Wahoo are full-blown rockets. Ounce-for-ounce, Wahoo are widely considered one of the fastest, hardest-hitting gamefish in the entire ocean, capable of reaching swimming speeds of nearly 60 miles per hour!



When a Wahoo hits a bait, the strike is so violent and the initial run so blindingly fast that it sounds like your reel is about to explode. They sport brilliant iridescent blue zebra stripes when alive, a razor-sharp set of scissor-like teeth, and some of the finest tasting white meat you can harvest from the sea. Wahoo require incredibly heavy-duty gear, we often target them at high-speeds, and they possess a mouth full of razor blades so standard setups won't cut it. Heavy wire is mandatory; unlike kingfish you can't use just a single-strand wire. Your best bet is a 50W or 80W wide-spool reel spooled with 80 to 100 lb. test line, topped with a long monofilament "top-shot" so you have that stretch. A curved-butt rod is preferred so they sit low in the funnels during times when you are high speed trolling. Wahoo are reactive predators-the faster a lure moves, the angrier they get so speeds from 12 to 18 knots are a good gauge. Always be prepared for a

big one you never know what is going to take that bait, just ask Jimmy Houston. Jimmy landed his 107 lb. Wahoo high speed trolling at 13 knots, on the North Drop of the British Virgin Islands with Captain Tommy Laronge.

Last but not least, our summertime favorite is the American Red Snapper and this season on the West Coast, we have been given a great upcoming season. American Red Snapper is one of the most highly prized game fish in the Gulf of America. They are known for their vibrant red coloration, fierce fighting ability and incredible table quality. American Red Snapper season is a massive draw for recreation and commercial anglers, a huge boost for Florida tourism. Of course, when targeting them bottom structure is key, and once you find them, they are fairly easy to catch. Offshore in the Gulf you need to typically be in about 70 to 80 feet of depth, then start looking for the show on the bottom. American Red Snapper are aggressive bottom-dwellers that congregate around structure, the same as Grouper. They are not too picky of eaters, you can send down anything from natural bait, dead or alive sardines, pinfish, squid or boston mackerel. If you want to change things up, try vertical jigging-fluttering jigs can trigger a massive reaction strikes when dropped down into a school.



No matter what you are targeting on this early summer bite, be sure to keep an eye on the weather as we come into our storm season, have all your safety gear aboard, and keep your lines tight. See you out on the water, Misty Wells. 🎣



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.



THE AMAZON

A FISHING TRIP OF A LIFETIME

There are fishing trips and then there is the Amazon. For those of you that don't know, the Amazon River is the largest river in the world by volume of water and one of the longest rivers on Earth. Flowing through several South American countries, including Brazil, Peru, and Colombia, the river stretches for more than 4,000 miles before emptying into the Atlantic Ocean. The Amazon River basin covers an enormous area and supports the Amazon Rainforest, the world's largest tropical rainforest.

The river plays a vital role in the global environment. It produces a significant amount of the world's oxygen and helps regulate Earth's climate by absorbing carbon dioxide. Thousands of species of animals and plants live within the Amazon ecosystem, many of which cannot be found anywhere else. Creatures such as pink river dolphins, jaguars, piranhas, and anacondas are closely associated with the region.



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The Amazon River is also an important source of transportation and livelihood for millions of people. Many communities along the river rely on fishing, farming, and trade to survive. Boats are often the primary method of travel because dense rainforest and limited road systems make transportation difficult.



Despite its importance, the Amazon faces serious environmental threats. Deforestation, illegal mining, pollution, and climate change continue to damage the rainforest and surrounding waterways. Conservation groups and governments have worked to protect the region, but challenges remain. Preserving the Amazon River and rainforest is essential because they are not only valuable to South America, but also to the health and balance of the entire planet.

The undisputed king of these waters is the peacock bass. These fish are pure muscle aggressive, explosive, and impossibly strong. Few experiences in freshwater fishing rival the explosive thrill of targeting peacock bass in their native waters. These remarkable fish were landed using traditional rod and reel setups, paired with a dynamic mix of bass lures crankbaits, poppers, and topwater presentations all designed to provoke aggressive, heart-stopping strikes.

What sets peacock bass apart is their raw, visual intensity. Unlike many freshwater

species, these fish often reveal themselves in dramatic fashion, surging from beneath the surface to crush a lure with unmistakable force. The anticipation builds with every cast, and when the strike comes, it's sudden, violent, and unforgettable.

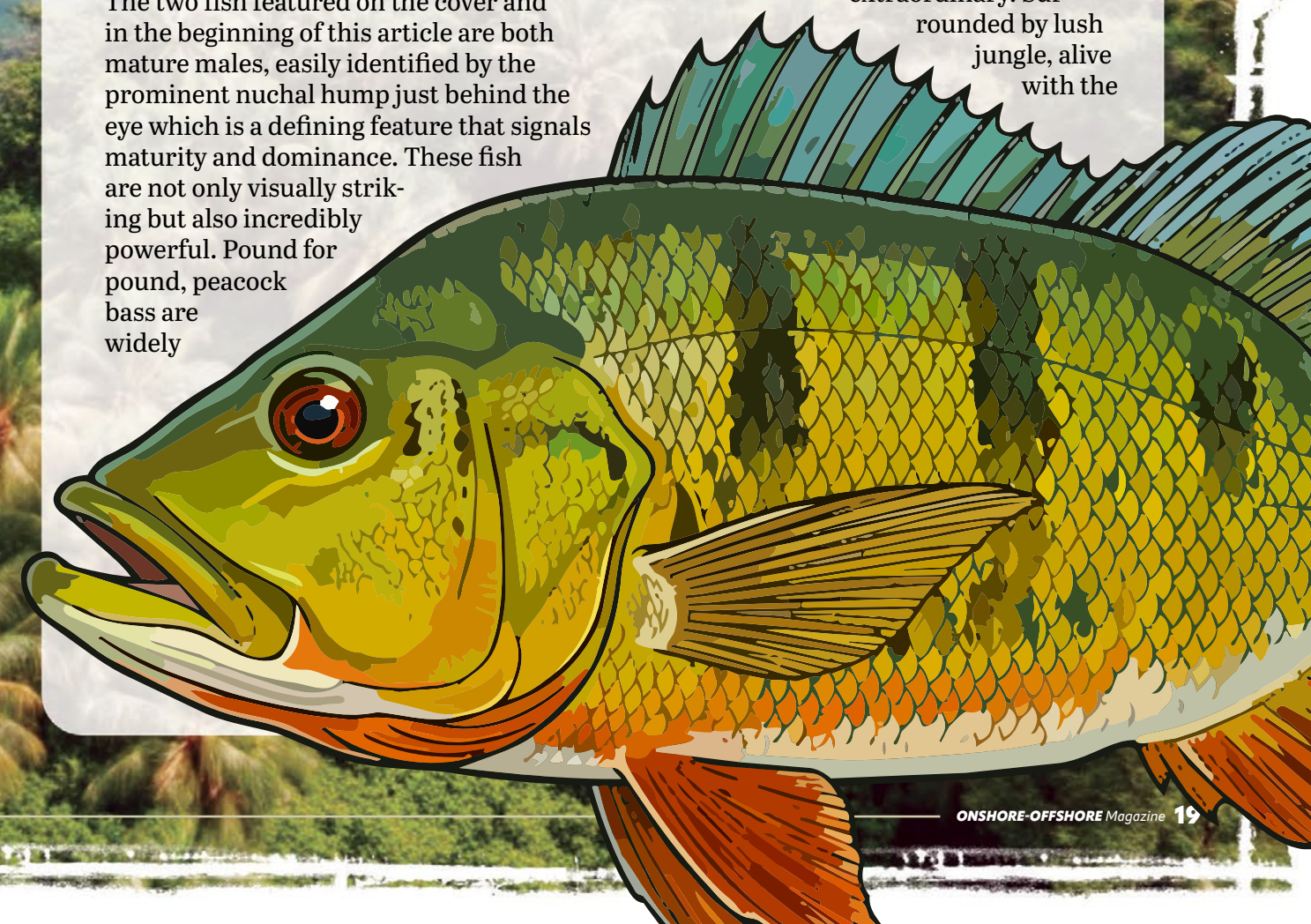
Guided by experienced local experts, anglers are quietly paddled through prime habitat, where structure and vegetation create ideal ambush zones. The guide maneuvers the boat with precision, allowing for accurate casts toward the grassy edges where peacock bass lie in wait beneath the cover. Each and every cast feels like it could produce the fish of a lifetime.

The two fish featured on the cover and in the beginning of this article are both mature males, easily identified by the prominent nuchal hump just behind the eye which is a defining feature that signals maturity and dominance. These fish are not only visually striking but also incredibly powerful. Pound for pound, peacock bass are widely



regarded as one of the hardest fighting freshwater species known to man, out-matching even the tenacity of the well-known gamefish, the Largemouth Bass.

While the gear and techniques may feel familiar to bass anglers, the environment transforms the experience into something extraordinary. Surrounded by lush jungle, alive with the

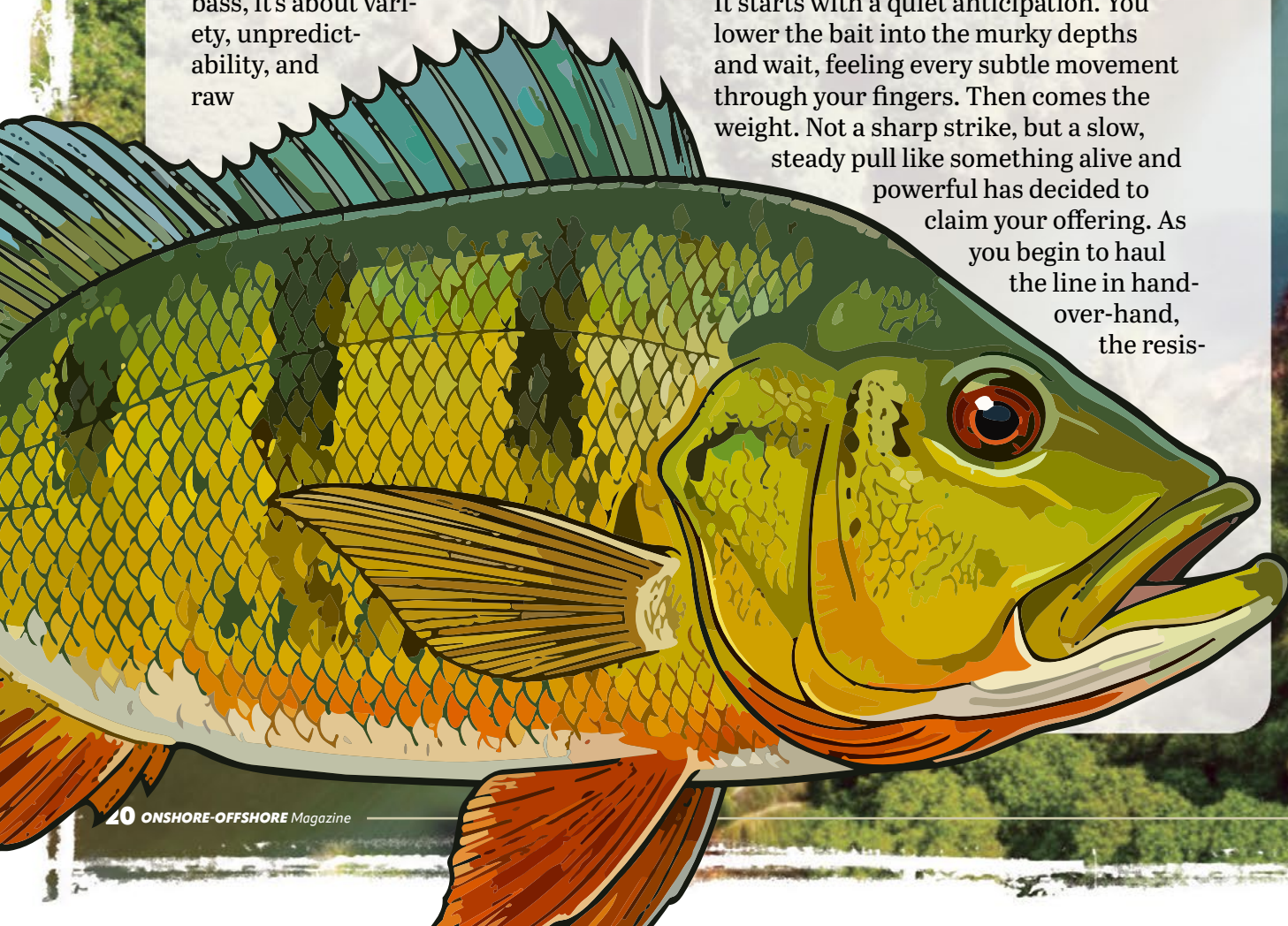




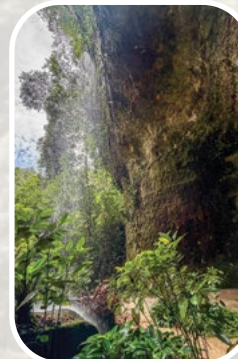
sounds of wildlife and the pulse of untamed water, every moment on the water becomes more than just fishing, it becomes an immersion into one of the most captivating ecosystems on Earth. But the Amazon isn't just about peacock bass, it's about variety, unpredictability, and raw

adventure. One of the most unique and unforgettable experiences is catching a freshwater stingray on a simple handline. No rod, no reel, just you, the line, and whatever is on the other end.

It starts with a quiet anticipation. You lower the bait into the murky depths and wait, feeling every subtle movement through your fingers. Then comes the weight. Not a sharp strike, but a slow, steady pull like something alive and powerful has decided to claim your offering. As you begin to haul the line in hand-over-hand, the resis-



tance builds. The stingray fights differently than a fish; it hugs the bottom, using its broad body like a suction cup against the riverbed. Every inch gained feels earned.

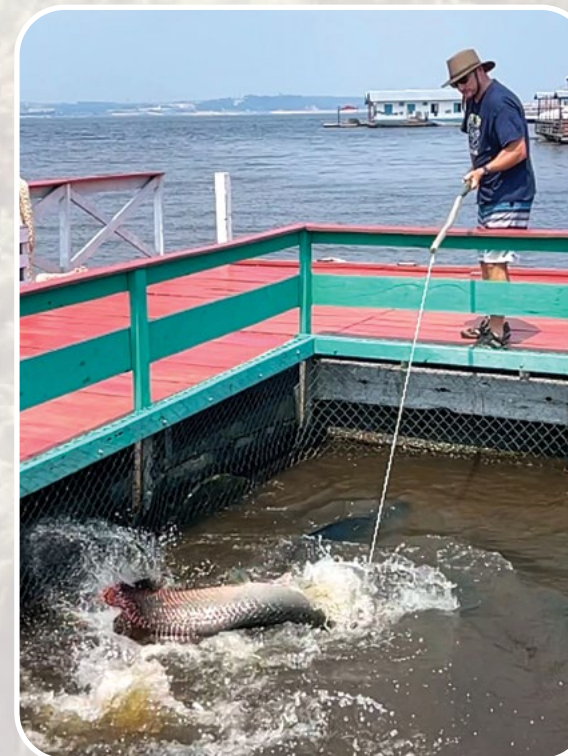


When it finally breaks the surface, it's a surreal sight, a wide, disk-shaped creature, patterned with earthy tones and spots, its long tail trailing behind. It's ancient, almost alien, and handling it demands respect. Guides expertly assist, ensuring the safety of both angler and animal, turning the moment into not just a catch, but a story you'll tell for years.

That's the essence of Amazon fishing. It's not just about numbers or even size it's about intensity, connection, and stepping into a world that operates on its own terms. Every cast, every bite, every fight carries a sense of unpredictability that keeps your heart racing.

By the end of the trip, your hands may be sore, your arms tired, and your clothes soaked but none of that matters. What stays with you is the adrenaline, the beauty, and the sheer awesomeness of fishing in one of the last truly wild places on this earth. 🎣

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CHASING FLORIDA GOLD

Sea Scallop Season Returns to the Big Bend

by Terri B. Huffmaster

Every summer along Florida's Big Bend coast, something special happens beneath the shallow grass flats. Families load coolers into skiffs before sunrise. Huge buzz with excitement. Restaurants prepare for crowds, and small fishing towns come alive with visitors eager to take part in one of Florida's greatest coastal traditions sea scallop season.



From the clear waters of Steinhatchee to the grassy flats near Keaton Beach and Horseshoe Beach, bay scalloping is more than just harvesting seafood. It is part treasure hunt, part family vacation, and part celebration of Old Florida coastal life. For 2026, Florida's Fenholloway through Suwannee River Zone — the heart of the Big Bend scallop fishery — is scheduled to open June 15 and remain open through Labor Day. For many outdoorsmen and coastal communities, the countdown has already begun.

A TRADITION BUILT AROUND THE WATER

Unlike commercial scallop fisheries found in other parts of the country, Florida's bay scallops are

harvested recreationally. That means everyday people can jump into shallow Gulf waters with a mask, snorkel, and dip net and gather their own dinner straight from the seagrass beds.

The experience is simple enough for beginners yet exciting enough to keep longtime scallopers returning year after year. The Big Bend region remains one of the last strongholds for healthy bay scallop populations in Florida thanks to its extensive seagrass meadows and relatively undeveloped coastline.

That combination has helped turn towns like Steinhatchee, Keaton Beach, and Horseshoe Beach into summertime destinations where scalloping season feels almost like a holiday.

In many ways, scalloping captures everything people love about Florida's Gulf Coast. The water is shallow and clear. Dolphins often cruise nearby. Sea turtles occasionally surface beside boats. Children laugh through snorkels while adults scan the grass for the bright electric-blue eyes of scallops hiding below. It is hard work to call "work."



WHAT EXACTLY IS A BAY SCALLOP?

Bay scallops are small bivalve mollusks that live in shallow seagrass habitats. Scientifically known as *Argopecten irradians*, these shellfish are closely related to oysters and clams. Unlike oysters, however, scallops can actually swim.

When threatened, they rapidly clap their shells together, propelling themselves through the water in short bursts. Their shells are lined with tiny blue eyes that help detect movement and light changes a feature many first-time scallopers notice immediately. Most Florida bay scallops live only about one year, which means ev-



ery season depends heavily on successful spawning from the previous year's population. That short life cycle is one reason state wildlife officials carefully regulate harvesting seasons and limits.

Healthy seagrass is also critical. Scallops rely on grass flats for shelter, food, and protection from predators. Without clean water and thriving seagrass meadows, scallop populations decline quickly. That reality has made conservation a major focus throughout the Big Bend region.

WHY THE BIG BEND MATTERS

Florida once had abundant scallop populations stretching across much of the Gulf Coast. Over time, habitat loss, pollution, and declining water quality caused major population decreases in many areas.

The Big Bend remained different. Its marsh coastlines, spring fed rivers, and massive underwater grass flats continued to provide the conditions scallops need to survive. Today, the region is considered Florida's premier scalloping destination.

The waters off Taylor and Dixie counties are especially famous for productive scalloping grounds. Areas around Steinhatchee and Keaton Beach often become the center of the action each summer, drawing thousands of visitors. Tourism tied to scallop season has become a major economic boost for local communities. Hotels fill up months in advance. Boat ramps overflow before daylight. Guides book solid schedules. Restaurants serve baskets of fried scallops and fresh seafood to hungry visitors returning from the water.

For many businesses in these small coastal towns, scallop season is one of the busiest and most important stretches of the year.

THE OPENING DAY EXCITEMENT

Opening morning of scallop season has a unique energy all its own. Long before sunrise, navigation lights dance across marina channels as boaters idle toward the Gulf. At boat ramps, people compare weather forecasts, tide charts, and water clarity reports while finishing last-minute preparations.

By midmorning, the grass flats become dotted with snorkel flags and anchored boats. Some scallopers search in just three or four feet of water. Others run farther offshore to less pressured areas. Success often depends on water clarity, tides, weather, and simply being willing

to spend time searching. Veteran scallopers know that patience matters. The best grass flats often hold scattered concentrations rather than dense schools. One minute the bottom appears empty. The next, a dozen scallops may suddenly come into view tucked among turtle grass. Once someone spots one, excitement spreads quickly across the boat. Then comes the race to fill the limit.

REGULATIONS & RESPONSIBLE HARVESTING

Florida's scallop fishery is carefully managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to protect future populations.

Current regulations in the Big Bend zone generally allow harvest from June 15 through Labor Day.

Harvesters are also subject to daily bag limits. Rules can change from year to year depending on population health, so checking current regulations before heading out is always important. Anyone harvesting scallops typically needs a Florida saltwater fishing license unless fishing from a properly licensed charter. Responsible boating practices are also heavily emphasized.

Seagrass damage from boat propellers remains one of the biggest threats to scallop habitat. Running boats through shallow grass flats can scar the bottom for years, damaging critical nursery habitat not only for scallops but also for redfish, trout, and countless marine species.

Organizations throughout Florida continue encouraging boaters to use designated channels and practice "seagrass-safe" boating whenever possible. Conservation





efforts matter because healthy scallop populations depend entirely on healthy habitat.

MORE THAN JUST SEAFOOD

For many people, the best part of scalloping is not even the meal afterward. It is the memories made during the day. Children catching their first scallop often react as though they discovered buried treasure. Families float together over crystal-clear grass flats while laughing through snorkels. Friends spend entire weekends at river camps, grilling fresh seafood after sunset and retelling stories from the water. Scalloping blends fishing, swimming, snorkeling, and family vacation into one uniquely Florida experience. Even those who return home with only a small harvest usually leave satisfied. The scenery alone makes the trip worthwhile.

The Big Bend coastline still feels untouched in many places. Marshes stretch for miles. Ospreys hover overhead. Dolphins cruise alongside boats. The Gulf remains shallow enough in many areas that sunlight penetrates clearly to the bottom. That natural beauty is part of why visitors return every summer.

PREPARING FOR THE SEASON

For first-time scallopers, preparation can make the difference between frustration and success. Basic equipment includes a mask, snorkel, fins, mesh bag, and a small dip net. Many people also wear light-weight gloves and sun-protective clothing.

Good weather is important because calm conditions improve water clarity dramatically. Light winds often produce the best visibility across the grass flats. Many experienced scallopers also recommend arriving early during peak weekends. Popular boat ramps in the Big Bend can become extremely crowded once the season opens.

Locals often keep a close eye on tides and wind direction in the days leading up to a trip. Clear incoming tides usually provide the best underwater visibility. And while limits matter, longtime scallopers understand something else: The experience itself is the real reward.

Anticipation for the upcoming season is already building across Florida's Gulf Coast. Marinas are preparing for another busy summer. Guides are booking trips months ahead of opening day. Families are planning vacations around the season calendar.

The Big Bend's combination of healthy seagrass habitat, coastal charm, and clear Gulf waters continues to make it one of Florida's most treasured outdoor destinations.



In an era where many coastal areas feel crowded and overdeveloped, scallop season in the Big Bend still offers something increasingly rare — a chance to slow down and experience Florida much the way it used to be.

Out on the grass flats, with sunlight dancing through shallow water and blue-eyed scallops hiding below, it becomes easy to understand why so many people count the days until scallop season returns.

And once June arrives, the wait is finally over and the fun begins, but please always be aware of your surroundings for divers, diver down flags and other sea life you may encounter. 🚩

- Terri B. Huffmaster



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NORTHEAST MARINE

IT'S SUMMERTIME & THE BITE IS HOT!

by Captain Justin Searcy

It's June and the signs are everywhere. The mornings start earlier. The afternoon thunderstorms begin building over the mainland before sliding west toward the coast. The bait schools grow thicker along the beaches and passes, and the water temperatures climb into that range where everything feels more alive.



Early mornings become increasingly important. Cleaner water, lower boat traffic, and more comfortable temperatures often create the best feeding windows before the heat and pressure of the day settle in. Whether you're targeting snook on the beach, redfish along the mangroves, or cruising the flat

looking for tarpon, timing starts to matter more and more this month.

The tarpon migration continues to be one of the biggest attractions across Florida's Gulf Coast this time of year. Watching rolling fish at sunrise never gets old, especially on calm mornings when the Gulf lays down and everything seems quiet for a few moments before the day picks up. Some days they cooperate. Some days they humble you quickly. That's tarpon fishing.

One thing I always tell people is that June fishing is heavily connected to bait. Paying attention to the movement of threadfins, pilchards, crabs, and other baits often tells you more than staring at electronics all day. Fish follow food, and the anglers who understand that relationship usually stay around the action longer.

This time of year also reminds us how important responsible boating and fish handling become. Summer pressure on our local waters increases dramatically. More traffic at the boat ramps, more

fishing pressure near the beaches, and more stress on fisheries during hotter water temperatures all make conservation awareness increasingly important.

SIMPLE THINGS MATTER:

- Handling fish efficiently.
- Respecting seagrass flats.
- Avoiding unnecessary wake damage.
- Keeping your distance from active tarpon schools.
- Educating new boaters & anglers instead of criticizing them.

Florida's Gulf Coast remains one of the most unique fisheries in the world, and protecting it is everyone's responsibility.



Outside of fishing itself, summer also brings a different energy to the waterfront communities along our coast. Places like Tarpon Springs continue filling up with visitors, boat traffic and families enjoying the water this time of year. It's part of what makes living and working along the Gulf so very special.



That local connection to the water and fishing heritage is also a big reason why I'm proud to be helping bring back a longtime Tarpon Springs tradition alongside the Tarpon Springs Rotary Club - the Peter T. Assimack Fishing Tournament. The tournament was last held in 2019 and will officially return at

the end of April 2027 in the same format and season longtime locals remember. It will be hosted at Rusty Bellies Waterfront Grill, a place that represents the heart of this community and continues supporting the local commercial fishing industry that helped build Tarpon Springs into what it is today.

For me personally, June is always a reminder that preparation matters. Boats need maintenance. Our gear gets tested harder in the heat. And, afternoon weather changes quickly.

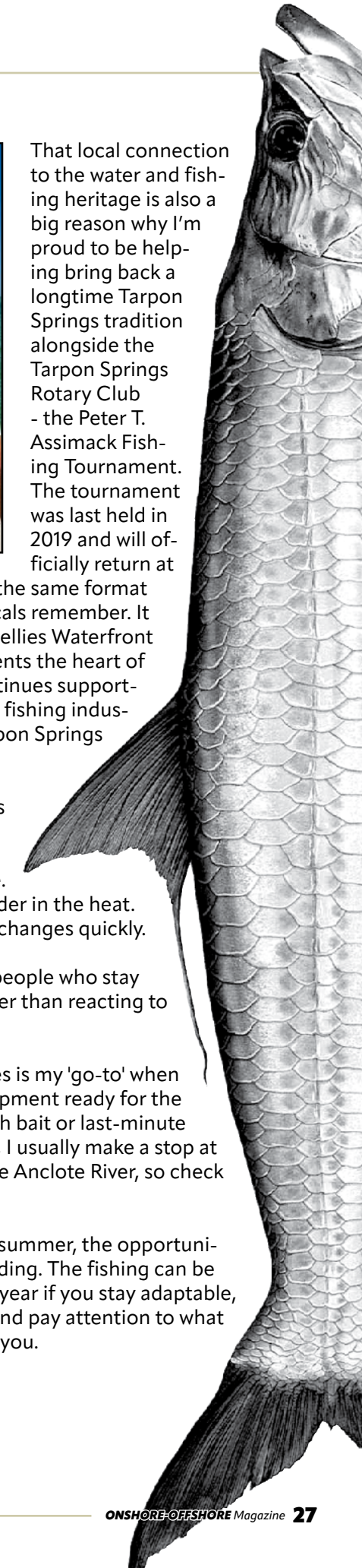
The Gulf waters reward people who stay ahead of conditions rather than reacting to them late.

Boat & Motor Superstores is my 'go-to' when it comes to keeping equipment ready for the season, and if I need fresh bait or last-minute gear before heading out, I usually make a stop at 'Get Bent Live Bait' on the Anclote River, so check them out!

As we move deeper into summer, the opportunities only continue expanding. The fishing can be outstanding this time of year if you stay adaptable, respect the conditions, and pay attention to what the water is trying to tell you.

See you on the water. 📍

@capt_justin_searcy



FISHING FORECAST

THIS MONTH'S OUTLOOK WITH CAPTAIN SERGIO ATANES



Tarpon will remain the main focus this month particularly near the Skyway Bridge and the bay area beaches with smaller tarpon moving into canals and rocky areas in the bay. Snook will be feeding best early in the morning, but noon often yields top catches if the tides are stronger. The "trash fish" action seems to pick up as the day progresses. Exceptions occur, especially with favorable tides on cloudy days.

It's also a good time of the year to have some live shrimp or a few fresh blue carbs as Black Drum schools migrate through the flats and they are not sardine eaters. Catching some 2 to 30-pound Black Drum on the flats with light tackle is an absolute blast. Enjoy!

ABOUT THE CAPTAIN

Captain Sergio Atanes has been fishing the waters of Tampa Bay since the age of five years old. He has seen all the changes over the last 50-years and loves to share his knowledge and experience with anyone interested in fishing especially kids which are the future anglers and captains. His goal is to educate and share the experience of fishing opportunities all over the Tampa Bay area.

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KAYAKING TAMPA BAY

by Captain Sergio Atanes

As a charter captain I spend more time on the water than on land, and yes, I get asked the question, "don't you ever get tired of taking people fishing?"

My answer is always the same, no.

Many of my clients are new to fishing or to our area and they prefer that I pick up a rod and fish with them to acquire some quick tips on setting the hook and fighting a fish, so I do get to fish on many of the charters.

On the other hand, there are days when I want to get closer to nature and the fish. I want and need some personal time to myself and that's when kayaking comes into play.



Several years ago, I had the chance to try kayaking with a friend who could not afford a boat and loved to fish the backwaters of Tampa Bay. He introduced me to the sport and today it has become my time away from the noisy world of outboard motors and it gives me a chance to fish areas that I normally could not get into with my boat. Kayaking is the most stealth fishing method I can think of for fishing other than standing on a shoreline.



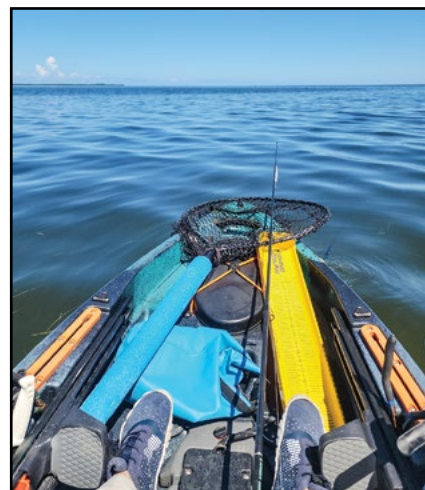
Furthermore, kayaks are ideal for fishing in the waters of Tampa Bay; they have a closed cockpit versus a canoe that has an open cockpit. Another major difference is in the way the paddler sits in the boat. In a Kayak you sit on a seat in the bottom of the boat with your legs extended, but in a canoe, you sit on an elevated bench.

Ocean Kayak makes a model called the Prowler that can be ordered with an angler package in sizes from 13 to 15 feet and the "Big Game" model comes with a slew of accessories and add-ons to help you catch the big ones.

If you're looking for a peaceful way to enjoy Tampa Bay, kayaking offers an unmatched experience. Whether you're exploring hidden coves or drifting along the tranquil shoreline, the sense of freedom and connection with the environment is truly remarkable.

Beginners will find the learning curve gentle, making it accessible for almost anyone seeking adventure or relaxation.

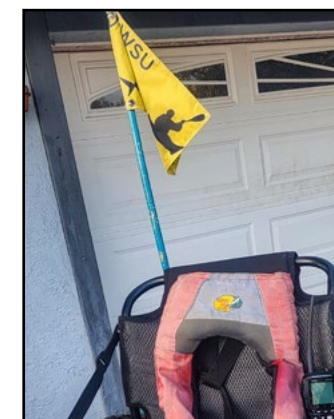
A big advantage of kayaks is that they can be launched almost anywhere and can be carried on the back of a pickup truck, on the roof of your car, or transported with one of the many carriers available from the dealer.



Some of the places I personally enjoy kayaking are the backwaters of Mullet Key Bayou, west side of St. Jean Key, Cabbage Key, Tarpon Key and Indian Key. Tarpon Key has some beautiful areas to explore, and kayaks were made perfect for this area.



On the upper part of the bay we have another beautiful area that was made for kayaking that is known as Weedon Island Preserve. With its many small bays and cuts, it's a perfect place for just spending some time relaxing and getting in touch with nature or fighting some Snook and Redfish. If you never tried kayaking you need to know it's just what the doctor ordered to calm you down, and whether you like fish or just relax, I found no other sport next to my fishing that works so well, your one time investment in a kayak is your only expense; just add water and you are ready to go.



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NOTE: Captain Sergio will be hosting the 5th Annual Free Kids Fishing Clinic on June 6 at Picnic Island Park. The first 100 registered children will receive a rod and reel, a tackle box with gear, and hands-on instruction. The clinic is open to children ages 6 to 14. Registration is required. For details, please email atanes@msn.com or call 813-973-7132. 📧

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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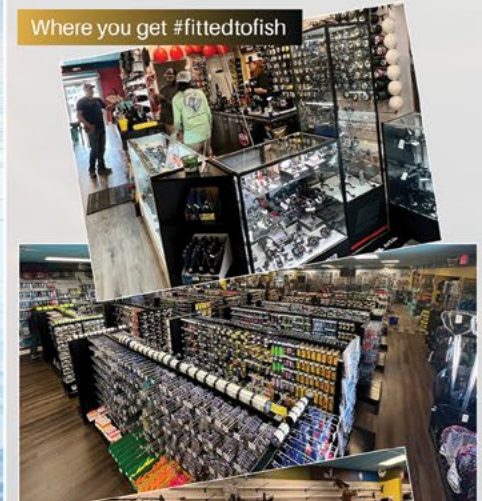
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