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# ONSHORE - OFFSHORE Magazine

April 2021



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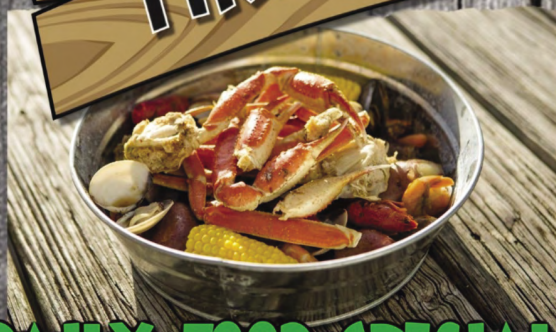


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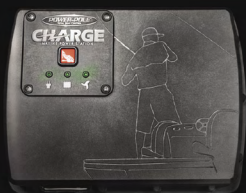


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Since Covid arrived about a year ago, our world has changed in so many fundamental ways. Many of our favorite pastimes either are not available at all or are radically different than they used to be. We sportsmen and sportswomen who enjoy boating, fishing and other outdoorsy activities are some of the lucky ones, because many of our favorite activities remain largely the same as they always have been. Our Florida waters are still as compellingly beautiful as ever and the fish are still biting and a boat is a simply fantastic way to take your family away from it all while still being safely socially distanced in the great outdoors.

I'm not trying to do a sales pitch for boating and fishing, it really isn't necessary right now. Marinas are crazy busy, boats are selling like hotcakes and weekend traffic on the water is scary at times. If you are trying to buy or sell a boat, you know exactly what I mean. People are lined up waiting to buy every decent boat that hits the market. I guess those stimulus payments are just burning holes in everybody's pockets.

Those of us who are lucky enough to be able to continue our lives in a semi-normal manner owe a huge debt of gratitude to all of the health care workers, first responders and essential workers of all types who kept doing their jobs so that the rest of us could do what we do more safely. I can't say thank you enough to all of these great folks. Within that category of essential workers, there are so many people that you might never think of. I would particularly like to offer my thanks to one small group of people who helped to make it possible for those of us who boat and fish to continue our favorite activities. That group is the staff at marinas, boatyards, bait shops and other water recreation related workers.

Through the entire Covid crisis these folks have continued to work tirelessly to insure that you have access to our beautiful waters for badly needed recreation. They showed up to work every day, even when they were frightened for their own health and wellbeing. The next time that you pass through your marina and the staff helps you get out on your boat, give them a special thank you, just for always being there to greet and assist you. Keep in mind that many of them could probably have made more money on unemployment (because of the extra stimulus money paid by the Feds), but they stuck around and worked. Also thank the mechanics, detailers and all of the others who help to make your boating/fishing experience better. Most of them don't make a whole lot of money, so if they have helped you, a generous tip is a good way to show your thanks.

This is, in no way, intended to exclude the millions of other essential workers who deserve our gratitude and support for all that they do for us. We should all show our gratitude to all of them at every opportunity, we can never thank them enough!

*Merle ≠ Flip the Bird*



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## DESTINATIONS

- 20 REEL IN AWESOME IN CRYSTAL RIVER**  
by Christine Steele

## FEATURE STORY

- 16 GONE FISHING SONGS**  
by Misty Wells



### ON THE COVER:

Matt Stell, country music superstar, with a gorgeous American Red Snapper he caught on a recent outing with Misty Wells. Read more about this adventure on page 16 of this issue!



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# SPRINGTIME FISHING!

by Captain John Rivers

**M**arch was cold and windy with cold front after cold front, but now that is over and April has arrived. The bait is back on the flats and all of us fishermen are raring to get back to Springtime fishing.

Despite all of the a cold fronts in March, the last two weeks of fishing was very good. April is probably the best month, other than May, to fish Tampa Bay for the many species that it has to offer. With temperatures ranging in the lower 80s and water temperatures in the mid 70s, the fish are hungry, the bite is good and that means a lot of bent fishing rods.

When targeting snook in April, check the tides to make sure you have good water movement. When targeting snook I like an incoming tide and I like an outgoing tide when targeting redfish. Now it doesn't always work out that way, but I've done pretty well by following these types of tides when targeting snook and reds.

A good rod and reel combo for snook and reds is a 7'2" fast tip,



medium action rod; I use Bull Bay rods, but you can find many excellent brands to suit your style and pocket-book. Matched up with the rod, I like a 3000 style fishing reel, any good 3000 reel will work; I use Shimano's Stradic, but if you don't want to spend the money on a Stradic, check out the new Spheros that came out in 2020; I also have 4 of them and they are very good.







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Back to the report. You can't go wrong when fishing in April; I've had some of my best fishing trips with clients and with my family and friends in April. If you're thinking about visiting Tampa to do some fishing or if you live here, April and May are the months to fish the bay; it's not too hot, not too cold, but the bite is on fire! ☑

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# LANDLUBBER

by Tom Mohrbach

I am a landlubber, but not completely by choice. I grew up not too far from the shores of Lake Erie, which is arguably the best walleye fishery in the world. During my early teens, my father purchased a well-used fishing boat, think African Queen and you're not far off the mark. Before this purchase, our Lake Erie Fishing was limited to the shoreline.

The trusty antique 35-horse Johnson that powered the small boat wasn't so trustworthy after all. On numerous outings, we had to outrun severe storms on a small trolling motor after the engine refused to start. The final straw was when the ole Johnson engine caught fire several miles from shore and we almost had to abandon ship! No walleye, or any other fish, was worth my life, so I returned to the safety of the shoreline.

On occasion, I still venture out on open water from time to time, but only if there isn't a storm forecast within three days! This past month, I cast feverishly from the safety of many a shoreline. I did land a couple of nice ladyfish and lost a couple more at Spring Bayou in Tarpon Springs. It does not get much safer than casting from a sidewalk. I was hoping for some jack action, but didn't have any luck.

My most interesting experience was a late morning outing at the Anclote Pier. My brother Ken and his son Andrew, were visiting from Cleveland and wanted some simple fishing for a couple of hours. When we arrived at the pier, I was surprised to see that half of the water was blown out. It was supposed to be a high-tide, but the strong wind had other plans. We focused our casts into the deeper channel that leads towards the power plant.

After just a few casts, something chomped onto my D.O.A. jig. I felt a brief resistance but soon learned it had bit the jig in half. Soon thereafter, my nephew Andrew yelled to me that there was a huge fish swimming in the shallows almost straight down from the pier. I figured it was just another mullet, but walked his way to investigate. I was shocked to see it was a three-foot snook! Two more soon followed, paralleling the pier like sharks.

I tried jigs, shrimp, and a variety of other lures that promised to land the big ones, but the snook ignored them all. They continued to swim by in the shallows every few minutes. I may as well have been at a local aquarium watching them swim past.



Two Florida Fish & Game officers sauntered onto the pier a few minutes before we were getting ready to call it quits. A couple of anglers nearby nonchalantly walked away from their fishing poles and appeared to have a sudden intense interest in their cell phones.

The officers asked if I had any luck? I told them my tale of woe of trying to entice the monster snook into biting without any success. One of them reminded me that snook was not in season. I stuttered and said well they may have been big redfish. He politely told me that the reds were not in season either. Just as I was starting to sweat, they both told me to have a good day and walked away.

Remember your seasons, limits, and licenses, so you won't break a sweat when the law pays you a visit. Hope to see ya at a nearby shoreline soon. ☑

**Tom is a retired police officer. Since his retirement he has published three novels. His latest, "Northern Nightmare", was just released. All of his books are available on Amazon. See his website: [tommohrbach.com](http://tommohrbach.com) for additional information.**

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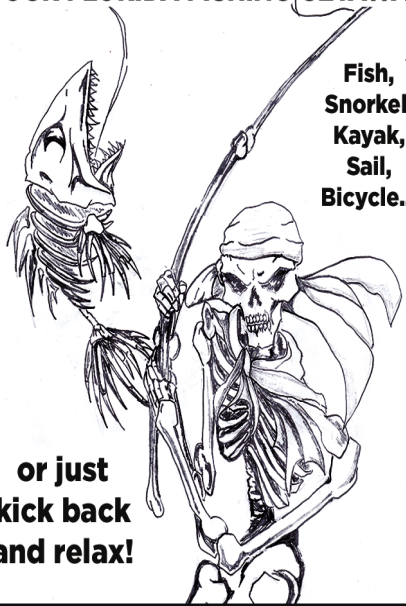


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The Channel 8 WFLA Outdoors Expo and Boat show is coming to Raymond James Stadium the weekend of May 14th and it will be hosting an All-Star lineup of Outdoor Personalities, Captains, tons of family entertainment and summertime giveaways. Among some of the featured personalities over the weekend is Misty Wells host of the TV and Radio show "Let's Take it Outside" airing on Fox Sports, World Fishing Network, Carbon TV, Hunt Channel and MOTV to over 38 million viewers. Misty is the 1st female host of an outdoor show on Fox Sports, an Outdoor Pro at Bass Pro shops and is paving the way for the next generation of female and youth outdoors enthusiasts. On "Let's Take it Outside" Misty takes you on adventures all around the globe from Wahoo fishing in the Cayman Islands, White Water Rafting Class V rapids in North Carolina, to Python Hunting in the Everglades. Make sure to stop by and see Misty, she will be giving away a "free offshore charter" for up to 6 anglers, on every day of the event.



Chasten Whitfield of "Chastention" will also be in attendance all weekend, doing what she does best, "interacting and teaching the next generation of anglers". Chastention was founded in 2015 by Chasten Whitfield. Chasten is a 19-year-old angler who proves "it's more than just fishing."

Her mission is to help kids of all ages, especially girls, become comfortable anglers while teaching positive life skills, thoughtfulness, doing what's right for the right reasons and choosing to stay active outdoors. It's not about what you look like or outside appearance, what matters is what's inside. Chasten promotes conservation and helping to teach kids and adults fishing seminars. Misty and Chasten are teaming up together to create an interactive kids area where they will learn to throw a cast net, cast a rod, knot tying, how to measure a fish and interactive species identification with prizes for the kids.



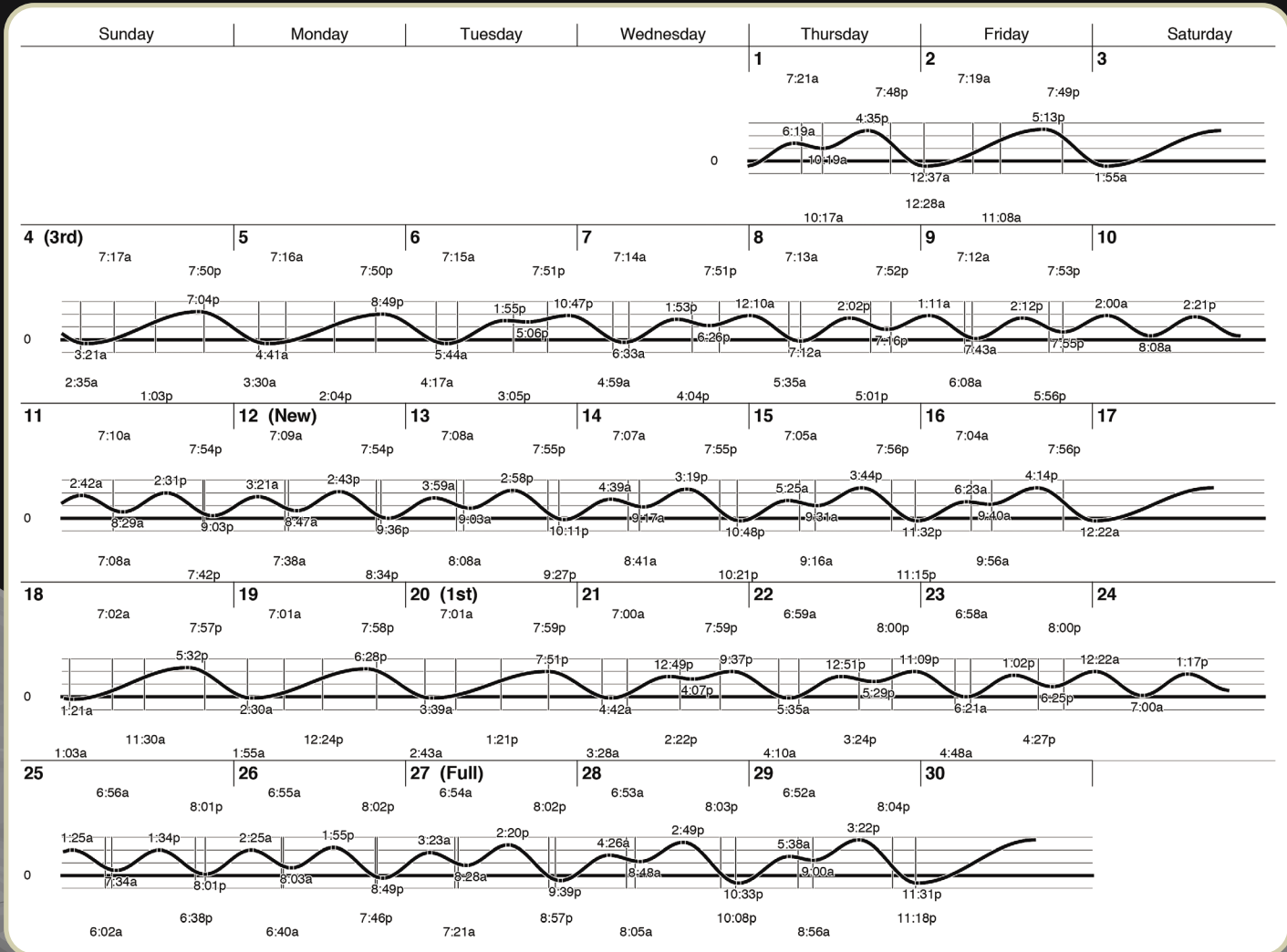
Attendees will also get to enjoy "Bass Tubs of Oklahoma" – a 10,000 gallon traveling bass fishing tank and get to watch bass fishing tank demonstrations with Chuck Deveraux. Capt. Ike of Tampa Bowfishing Charters will be hosting interactive Bow Fishing Demo's throughout the weekend at the show. Capt. Ike is "one of the best Bow Captains in the State of Florida", he will make Bow Fishing your new passion. Capt. Ike is also a Pro with Bass Pro Shops and teaches seminars monthly at the store and is ready to take you on the water.

Other Captains among the weekend up lineup is Capt. Mike Goodwine of Black-neck Adventures, based in Tampa Bay. Capt. Mike is known as one of the best in-shore Captains to take you Snook, Redfish and Trout fishing in the area. Capt. Mike will be sharing tricks of the trade, tackle tips and how to find that monster snook in his seminars all weekend. Other featured Captains will be Capt. Ryan Rickard of the "Flats Mafia Fishing Team" and Capt. Joey Antonelli – talking about his YouTube Channel and how to make fish blogging exciting.



It's not all about fishing, Channel 8 will have an Axe Throwing trailer, Motorcycles, Slingshots, Boats and plenty of outdoor fun and giveaways. Parking and Friday's admission is free to everyone and Saturday and Sunday admission is only \$5 for adults, children 12 and under are free.

**We will see you, out on the field! 🎯**



Conversions are based off of the St. Petersburg Pier. They are published strictly for reference and are not designed for navigational aid. Onshore-Offshore assumes no responsibility for their accuracy.

### Conversions for Clearwater Beach Area

High	Low	
-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	Withlacochee 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

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# GONE FISHING SONGS

A Day with Country Music Superstar, Matt Stell







FEATURE  
STORY

patagonia

I found out there is a lot more to Matt Stell than just his smooth singing voice and his ability to write 'hit song after hit song'. Let's face it, you are hard pressed to tune in to any country station and not hear all 3 of Matt's hit songs playing right now from "Prayed for You", "Moved Everywhere but On", and of course we can't forget the newest hit single "That Ain't Me No More" heading straight towards number one. As I am gearing up to start filming season two of my outdoor show "Let's Take it Outside", I got connected with Matt when he was actually heading to Florida for a long awaited "live performance" in the area and I knew I had to get him on the tv show and out on the water.



Matt is 6'7 so I knew he was not going to have any issues reeling up the big fish we were hoping to put him on, I figured all we needed to do was show him the techniques and he would be successful. We met early in the morning down on the docks at Clearwater Marina, slip 42, Legendary Adventures Charters. Legendary Adventures has the fastest fleet in Clearwater, so we loaded our stuff on Legend II the 36' Yellowfin with triple Mercury 300's and got ready to head offshore. It's essential, when you are filming a TV show, to have the best Captain you can find; "you want to make sure you end up with catching fish in your fishing

show". Captain Tommy Laronge is one of the best Captains you are going to find on the West Coast of Florida, no one knows the Middle Grounds better than him. Captains Tommy, John & Merrick have spent



over 30 years fishing in the Gulf of Mexico, and they have forgotten more than most will know about bottom fishing in the Middle Grounds.

Feeling confident, I must make sure Matt and I establish a wager of some sort on who catches the most fish and biggest fish. Country Star or not, I plan on kicking some butt. We settle into the beanbags for the ride out, we plan on fishing in about 80-100 feet of water for the tv show. Matt is pretty at ease, I guess performing in front of crowds of thousands will cure anyone's stage fright. Matt lands the first fish of the day, a nice keeper Red Grouper, using a 1/2 of Sardine on a 4/0 Penn reel with 60 lbs. test mono, a 3 ft. floro leader and a 6. oz lead. \*Always start with dead or cut bait first before switching to live bait, it helps get the bite turned on and the bigger fish will come out to play. Dropping down again, Matt lands another big Red Grouper; I am beginning to think I might be in trouble. Finally I land a nice Red Grouper myself on a Sardine, Matt and I are ready to upgrade so we both bait up with fresh Pinfish and change over to a 6/0. set up. Par for the course, Matt lands the first Gag Grouper of the day and he is just on fire from there. Next over the rail for Matt is

a huge 17 lb. American Red Snapper and then the “hit’s just keep on coming” with a huge 40 lb. Amberjack plus some Mangrove Snapper and more Grouper.



a long-lost love, “I think it’s about all the big fish Matt has lost over the years”. Matt say’s “he gets as much enjoyment out of discovering a hook in the writing room as he does hooking a fish”, I will take that as an invitation to send him some of my ideas for fishing and hunting songs. I am excited for you all to be able to watch the episode Matt and I filmed together, it will air in July on Fox Sports and the World Fishing Network, then you can find out exactly who won the “fishing bet”.

Some of these Amberjack we so big that even Matt at 6’7 could not put the brakes on them, those AJ’s were schooling us hard. Wes, the mate landed the “beast of the day” with a huge 60 pound Amberjack! The entire boat stopped to watch him land that massive fish. “Way to go, Wes!”

It was cool to get to know Matt, I found out he is an Arkansas native coming from a long line of self-proclaimed badasses. He spent a lot of time in Florida while growing up. Before Matt’s music career exploded, he was a standout college basketball player and songwriter. However, his talents on the court were no match for his writing and singing talents that propelled his very first song “Prayed for You” to #1. Just like Matt’s fishing being diverse he is also diverse in his music, “if you cut a groove too deep, it’s hard to get out of it,” he has no desire to just be a one-dimensional artist only singing love songs. Matt has another #1 song, “I’ve Moved Everywhere, But On”. He says it’s ‘autobiographical’ in the way that it tells the story of a man trying to escape the memories of



I was already a fan of Matt Stell. I really love his music, but now I’m a fan of Matt the man, angler & friend. Tight Lines! 🎣

**Misty Wells, Producer & Host of “Let’s Take It Outside” TV show airing to millions on Fox Sports, World Fishing Network, Free Digital Channels: Hunt Channel, MOTV & Carbon TV. Bass Pro Outdoor Pro & Outdoor & Travel Writer. Founder of “A Reel Future” non-profit devoted to teaching the passion of fishing & conservation to foster children, over 3,500 children & counting. [www.mistywells.com](http://www.mistywells.com).**

# REEL IN AWESOME IN CRYSTAL RIVER

**Cast your line in Citrus County, Florida for world-class fishing, year-round!**

by Christine Steele

**S**et on Florida's Nature Coast, just a short drive from Orlando, Tampa, Gainesville and Ocala, Discover Crystal River is a true sportsman's paradise. Three spring-fed rivers — the Homosassa, the Chassahowitzka and the Crystal — feed into the Gulf of Mexico and create a rich fishing habitat.

This combination of fresh and salt water fishing, along with the pristine untouched character of the landscape and easy, relaxed pace of life, make Citrus County a world-class fishing destination year-round.

## **GO COASTAL OR GO FRESH**

Homosassa Bay, with its mangrove shorelines, dense seagrass beds and network of islands, is known for its giant Redfish, but that isn't the only species that will give you reel-burning thrills in this authentic Old Florida destination. You'll also find an abundance of Spotted Seatrout, Cobia and Spanish Mackerel ready to challenge the best of light tackle anglers. The clear, pristine flats are perfect for drifting or trolling along and taking in the scenic beauty all around.

At the mouth of the Crystal River, reel in Tarpon, Cobia, Redfish, Seatrout or venture offshore to deeper waters for Snapper, Grouper and Amberjack. At the river's headwaters, you'll find Bass, Sheepshead, Mullet and Bluegill.

Off the coast, the 19,000-acre Tsala Apopka chain of lakes connect with the Inverness and Floral City pools in Citrus County that are prime for landing largemouth bass. Shellcracker and Bluegills also flourish throughout the chain, making this a quality, year-round freshwater fishing destination.

## **FISHING IS A WAY OF LIFE**

Fishing goes back generations in Citrus County. Guides with a lifetime of experience on the water can help you find the best honeyholes to access boatloads of fish, both inshore and offshore.

While visiting, be sure to spend some time swapping fish stories with the locals at unique spots like MacRae's or the Monkey Bar in Homosassa, or Peck's Old Port Cove in Ozello. Or, just sit back and watch the boats go by as you relax with a cold one after a successful day on the water.

During the summer months, Citrus County's famous scallop season is in full swing. The waters off Crystal River and Homosassa are two of only a handful of places in Florida where you can gather buckets of fresh, juicy scallops. Dive into this local tradition likened to an underwater easter egg hunt.

## **FROM FISH TO FORK**

After a fantastic day on the water, pull your boat up to shore and bring your buckets of crabs, cleaned scallops or fish to one of more than a dozen restaurants or seafood shacks where a local chef will cook your catch in this time-honored Florida tradition.

Call ahead and let them know you're coming, then have a seat and let them serve it up to you with all the fixin's, fresh from the water and onto your plate.

With so much to see and do, plan your next fishing trip to Citrus County and discover authentically awesome fishing and more in the soul of Florida.

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# APRIL FOOLING SOME SNOOK

by Captain George Hastick

**A**pril can be one of the best months for snook fishing. The bait has returned to the flats and the feed bags are on, for both small and large female snook. The great thing is that the water temperature is not too hot yet and you can really load up your live well with scaled sardines and black the well out.



As long as you have a well that can hold a lot of water (35-60 gallons) with a good pump(s) that will allow for a lot of water exchange, you can carry 500-1000 baits to be able to chum for hours to have an extended great snook bite. Large, scaled sardines also work especially well on the larger female snook, but you will have to back off on how many you can put in the well to keep them alive.

Scaled sardines are great baits though, because many times when cast netting them, you will catch a variety of sizes from 2" to 5" and they stay lively in the well. This is great because it enables you to



live chum with the smaller baits, while fishing with the larger baits that cast farther and can be more enticing to larger snook. This is not to say that you can't catch an over 40" snook on a 2 inch bait, because you can and my clients and I have.

I love when I have a mixed size of bait because it can give you an advantage to see

what the fish want and novice anglers will catch more fish on average 3-4" baits because the hook up ratio is better. When fishing larger baits, 5" and above, you have to give the snook a little more time to get that 2/0 circle hook into his mouth. Many times, a snook will grab a bait in the middle and



crush it to kill it, then it will suck it in the rest of the way to eat it and if you set the hook at the initial hit, you will get the short drag scream and feel a pop like your line just broke. When you reel in there is nothing wrong with your set up, but you will just have an empty hook with no bait or fish. When you get the hit what you should do is let the rod bend slightly at the tip, keeping that same bend let the snook pull the rod for a 2-3 feet to get the line straight and give the fish time to get the hook into its mouth, do not move the rod tip too fast and let the line go loose, let the fish pull the rod. Now pull back slowly and when you have a lot of pressure, give it a quick short jerk to set the hook. This will give you a better hook-up ratio while using a circle hook.



great. Your better tides happen on and around the new and full moons. If you can time the moving water in the area you are fishing at the same time as a major or minor solunar is happening, the bite gets even better.

If a sunrise or sunset is also happening at the same time as your moving water and solunar feeding period, the bite can be magical with every bait cast out being blasted by hungry snook! It is not uncommon to catch 30,40 or even 50 plus snook in 4hrs when the bite is on! 🎣



On the flats, I like to use 5 feet of 25lb fluorocarbon leader (or 30lb if the fish are not being leader shy) with a 1/0 or 2/0 circle hook, depending on the size of the baits I have. Around docks and bridge pilings 30-40lb leader is best and at night, if you are fishing larger fish at bridges, you can up your leader to 50-80lb leader, since they can't see it like they do during the day. The same goes for the main line which I like to use spiderwire stealth in 10-15lb on the flats and 20-30lb on the bridges and rock jetty areas. If you are fishing big snook on structure. especially at night, your braid can be anywhere from 30-50lb test with a larger 5/0 hook with 5-7-inch baits.

When fishing for snook, moving water is definitely the key to a good bite. You can get them to feed by chumming on a slack tide, but when the water is moving the bite is



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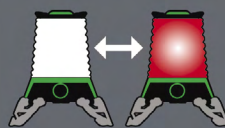


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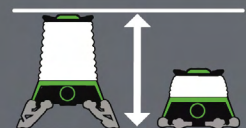
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# A KINGS WELCOME

by Captain Sergio Atanes

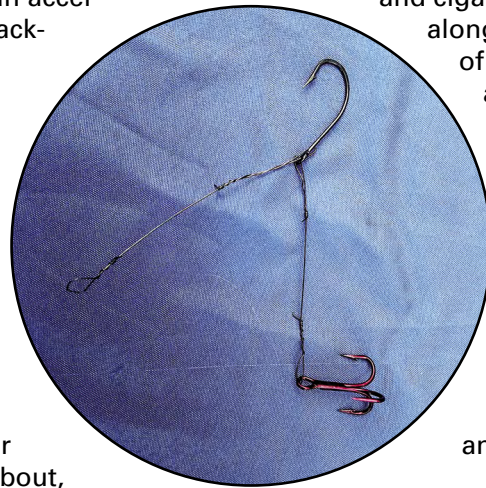
**T**he large school of baitfish made a dash to one side, barely avoiding the gleaming teeth of a large king mackerel. The fish turned and this time hit his target with deadly precision.



My bait was the first to hit the water, Rolando was a second behind and we both spotted the silver flash of an accelerating king mackerel. In a split second, the water exploded and the large predator rocketed into the sky with my hapless bait clinched in its gleaming teeth. This is what fishing for kingfish is all about, the run, the fight and the glory if you get the chance to land the big one.

The longer days of spring and warmer waters bring the schools of baitfish to the shallow Gulf waters. When water temperatures start to increase to 72-de-

grees, king mackerel start their northern migration, stopping to feed on the schools of sardines and cigar minnows along the coastline of Florida. Kings are caught each year from many Gulf piers and extend out to twenty miles from shore, which puts them well within range of the average angler.



Rolando prefers to use heavy tackle that insures more boated fish; 40-pound coffee colored wire, black swivel, long shank 3/0 hook tied to 40-pound 4-foot-long fluorocarbon leader with 45-pound braided line on a conventional reel, and a 7-foot medium heavy rod. My preference is a medium spinning outfit, including 20-pound braided line and a number 10-barrel black swivel tied to 40-pound fluorocarbon leader with a stinger rig. Although Rolando and I have our own preferences in the type of tackle to use, we both agree on two types of fishing methods that work well for Kings: drifting and anchoring.



Many anglers prefer trolling for kingfish, I am one of those who love to watch the fish strike and make that long first run, especially early on a calm morning when the water looks like a calm peaceful lake. Trolling allows you to cover more areas, but I

prefer to sit and chum; one side note, I have caught many a permit while anchored waiting for the kingfish to arrive.

#### CONVENTIONAL TACKLE

- MK-C-701MH Okuma 7' Rod
- KDS-463P Okuma Komodos SS Reel
- FINS 40G 45-pound braided line

#### SPINNING TACKLE

- SRT-Elite SRTE-S-761H 7'6" rod
- Z-40S Okuma Azores reel
- FINS Windtamer 20-pound braided line

Many ledges and artificial reefs can be found on Florida's west coast, especially between Tarpon Springs and Boca Grande. If you decide to drop anchor, make sure you are up current from any ledges or reefs to prevent getting snagged. Getting too close to these areas can cause you to lose not only your rigging, but also your fish. By cutting some bait into small pieces and allowing it to drift with the current, king mackerel will quickly pick up the scent and zero in on the bait.



When drifting, first find a school of baitfish and start your drift up-tide from the school while free lining your bait on the outer edges of the school. Repeat the process when the school is out of casting range. Using live bait, whether drifting or anchoring, will increase your chances of boating a king mackerel.

Live bait can be easily caught on the grass flats, along the edges of the channels, or around channel markers. A 10-foot bait net is best for the shallow waters and a 12-foot larger mesh net is recommended for deeper waters.

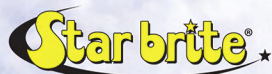
Baitwells are a necessity; sardines require a large volume of moving water and oxygen to stay healthy. I recommend adding an aeration system



to insure lively baits. Several add-on systems are available for either bridge anglers or boats that are not equipped with baitwells.

King Mackerel are fast swimmers that need a constant supply of oxygen to stay alive. Even a short period out of water can be fatal. It is important to be ready with gloves and pliers for a quick release. King mackerel have a 24" fork size minimum and a 3-bag limit per day in Gulf waters. Keep only what you can eat and release the rest for another day. ▣

**Captain Sergio Atanes is host of Florida West Coast Fishing Report on Facebook and YouTube every Monday night 7-8 p.m. live. He is also host to Aventuras De Pesca USA on national TV and Radio Show. Email the captain at: [atanes@msn.com](mailto:atanes@msn.com), call 813-973-7132 or visit: [reelfishing.com](http://reelfishing.com).**



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