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Brook Trout Fishing in Vermont

Life in Burlington, Vermont without a car made it difficult to enjoy many opportunities to hunt and fish. Dad walked to work to the University of Vermont Medical College where he was the Director of Medical Photography and I walked the two blocks to school. Vermont had deer, bear and, eventually, moose to hunt. Lake Champlain had lake trout, salmon, bass, northern pike and a large variety of many smaller fish. The streams had brown trout, rainbow trout and brook trout.

Dad could get out to hunt or fish when one of his two brothers would invite him to go with them, but I was not old enough for that. When we could borrow my grandfather's car, it made it possible for me to go fishing with him.



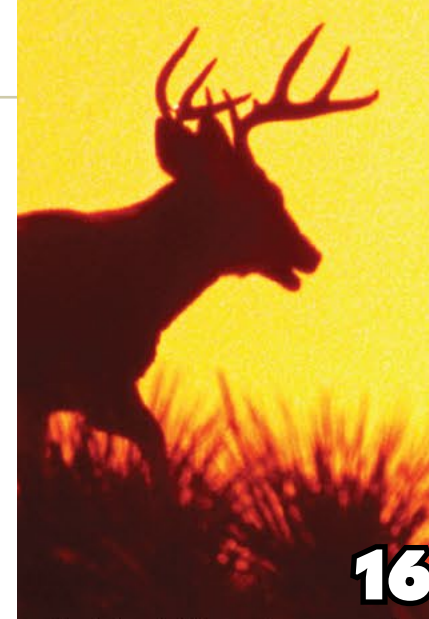
The Federal Government had an 11,500 acre piece of property in Vermont. It was used mainly by GE to test mini guns and the Vermont National Guard used it for training. They could fire rifles, pistols, machine guns and even howitzers. There was a brook that ran off Mount Mansfield, the highest mountain in Vermont (4395 feet), which ran through the government property. On the edge of the brook was a Camp Fire Girls Camp which also had permission to be on the property. The brook was full of brook trout. It was a hard place to fish because of all the alders that had grown up along the banks. However, Dad felt I was old enough to give it a try. I had been fishing with a casting rod which didn't work very well on a small brook with brush all over. I had a new spinning rod which was a lot easier to use to get my worm to the fish, usually!

Dad borrowed my grandfather's car, Mom made a lunch, and we were off to fish trout. It was a short drive of about 15 miles from Burlington and then up Barber Farm Road to get to the brook. Eventually many years later I would buy a house on Barber Farm Road and continue fishing the brook. Dad went to the edge of the brook and found a fishing hole that looked good. He was a good guide with a lot of experience. He told me to follow him and not get close to the water to scare any fish. He told me to toss my worm into the hole and let it float with the current back toward me. There was a hungry trout which ate my bait and ended up on the bank with me. That broke the ice and we were off to catch more if we could. He had me work downstream and he came along to fish behind me. After an hour or so, we thought it was time for lunch. Mom made baloney sandwiches and a gallon of a drink made of red cool aid and lemonade, which Dad christened "belly wash", and the name stuck. This would be our normal fishing lunch for many years.

As we worked our way out of the woods, following the stream back toward the road, one of us would catch a trout (Dad) following behind me, and I would pull one up and surprise myself. Dad said we should stop and count our catch. We were allowed to keep 12 apiece, but they had to be at least six inches long. We dumped them on the grass and found out Dad had ten and I had three, and the ratio would stay about the same for many years! We could keep fishing or clean the fish in the stream and then go get a creemee ice cream. That was an easy choice! So we cleaned the fish in the brook; left "lunch" for the many raccoons and otters who lived near; took off our boots and headed for Joe's Snack Bar in Jericho for a treat.

After we both had a hot dog, a Creemee and soda, we headed back to Burlington, full and happy. This became a routine we would follow on weekends until years later when I joined the Vermont Army National Guard. After that, Dad bought a small boat which changed our fishing routine in future weekends for a long time, until he moved permanently to Florida. ☑

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ON THE COVER: American Red Snapper season opens on June 1st and we have you covered on all the tips & tactics to get you in on the action! Check out Misty Wells' article on page 8 of this issue and thank us later. Tight lines!

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AMERICAN RED SNAPPER SEASON IS HERE

by Misty Wells

June 1st marks the date for American Red Snapper on the West Coast of Florida, and we are blessed to get so many fishing dates this year. Governor Ron DeSantis announced a record 103 days of American Red Snapper this year, breaking last years record of 87 days. "I am proud to announce that this snapper season will be the longest season since our state took over Red Snapper management in the Gulf," DeSantis said. "Florida is proud to be the Fishing and Boating Capital of the World."

The opening of American Red Snapper is one of the most awaited dates all year next to Gag Grouper in my opinion. As most of you know there has been a lot of controversy based around American Red Snapper that include opening dates, fall season and bag limits, but regardless of all the drama I am glad it is here. Florida's 2024 private recreational American Red Snapper season will open June 1 and run consecutively through July 31st. The ARS season will re-open in the fall for 3-day weekends (Friday – Sunday) from September 1st through November 30th. Harvest will also be

allowed Labor Day, September 2nd, Veterans Day November 11th, and on Thanksgiving, November 28th. Mark your calendars because that is a lot to remember in regards to dates, and always double check the FWC website, as we all know things can definitely change on the daily.

If you're wondering what Red Snapper have that makes people go so crazy, the answer is everything from their fighting abilities and gamefish qualities, to their market value and taste. Red Snapper is one of the most delicious fish in the Gulf and one of the most beautiful producing some "brag worthy" photos for social media.

Red Snapper are an interesting species; they are a deep rosy red with a dark fringe around their dorsal and tail fins and 14 soft dorsal fin rays. Adult Red Snapper can live to be over 50 years old and can start to reproduce as early as age 2. On average, Red Snapper start to spawn in May and it lasts until about October, with the larger females producing twice as many eggs as the smaller females. Did you know fertilized eggs float on the surface of the water and hatch within a day? As far as the economy goes...Red Snapper are among the most valuable fish in the Gulf.

The economic impact of saltwater rec-



reational fishing in Florida is over 9.2 billion and it supports over 173,000 jobs in Florida alone.

If you are new to the catching Red Snapper, it is pretty much the same as going after Red or Gag Grouper with the same tackle setup. I use a Penn 4/0 or my 6/0 Senator Reel, Crowder or Ugly Stick Rod with 100# test line, 100# test leader and 8/0 Circle Hook; I call that my "terminal tackle" setup. On the hook, its best to start off with 1/2 cut Sardines to stink up the water and get the fish heated up. Once you get the bite started you can switch over to a live bait; don't be afraid to put a big live bait on, but be ready to hold on because they are going to hit it hard.

I love fishing the Middle Grounds out of my home base of Clearwater; it is one of the most magical places on earth, kind of like "Disney for Anglers". The Middle Grounds is about 348 square nautical miles of bottom structure with depths that range from 80 to 160 feet with loads

of topical diversity. The Middle Grounds provides limitless steep ledges and peaks that hold bait fish, couple that with strong ocean currents and a bottom that has live coral formations and you have angler heaven. A lot of fishing on the West Coast of Florida is all about your bottom numbers, in the Middle Grounds if you know how to read a bottom machine you can easily start to find great spots to drop down on. One mistake the anglers make in the Middle Grounds, however, is their anchor settings most folks have trouble properly anchoring and may find the fish but can't catch them because they are not sitting right on the spot.

This year with such a limited time to catch Red Snapper, I would recommend going with a professional captain, but not just any captain will do. As more folks move to Florida or visit, it seems there are new captains popping up everywhere and honestly how do you know who is good and who is not? There is a huge difference between a Charter Boat Captain and a Fishermen who is a captain. If you are not sure who to go with I have a few tips and suggestions. There is a website that I like called, "Captain Experiences" and they personally vet their captains to make sure you have a great time and catch a lot of fish. They take the time to fish with their captains that they recommend to insure they are sending you with a quality, safe and professional captain. www.captainexperiences.com. If a private charter is not in your budget, I also recommend the head boat "Miss Virginia" based out of Tarpon Springs. Captain Erik is one of the best on the West Coast and he will put you on a lot of fish; its up to you to catch 'em. Visit them at: www.missvirginiadeepestfishing.com.

As far as personal favorites, I am always going to recommend one of the best bottom fishing captains on the West Coast of Florida, Captain Tommy Laronge, my husband. Captain Tommy started his fishing career over 25 years ago working as a commercial fisherman learning almost every square inch of the Gulf of Mexico and the Middle Grounds. When fishing with Tommy, I recommend booking an "Extreme Offshore" trip because you will not only fill the fish box, you're going to have the type of trip "fish stories" are made of. Captain Tommy is "Unreel Fishing Adventures" and has just outfitted his 34 foot SeaVee with triple 300 V-8 Mercury engines, so you get there quick and have more fishing time. www.ucatchfish.com. No matter what make sure you get out there and catch these amazing Red Snapper; it will be a trip you won't forget! ☑

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 and Carbon TV.

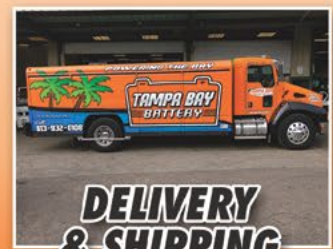


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THE BEAT OF A DIFFERENT DRUM!

by Captain George Hastick

In the Tampa Bay area this time of year Tarpon take center stage with Redfish a close second in terms of popularity, but one of the fish that gets forgotten about is the Black Drum.

The Black Drum species is in the *Sciaenidae* family of fish, along with the Red Drum and speckled trout to name a few. What they have in common is the ability to drum to call their mate.

Some people may frown upon the Black Drum, but in actuality the smaller drum (puppy drum) are good table fair and the larger ones are great tackle testers. Black Drum have to be 14-24 inches to keep in the Tampa Bay area. Around 4-7lb. Black Drum are actually good to eat with very white flaky meat, but once they start getting larger, their meat gets tough. This is where the sport of catching and releasing becomes fun. Typically 20-50lb. drum are caught in Tampa Bay with some fish even larger than that. These fish can reach over 100lbs. and can travel in small to very large schools of fish. They can be caught all year, typically around the docks, bridge pilings, oyster mounds, flats and sand bar edges.



Some of the most exciting Black Drum fishing happens at the beginning of the year between January and March depending on the water temperature, where large schools of black drum enter Tampa Bay for spawning. This is when you will see schools of them going around in circles and drumming. They will also run the edges of the flats or sand bars which is a blast to sight fish and cast to. A good spinning rod setup that can handle 20-50lb. fish is what will be needed. Live large shrimp will work but a 1/4-3/8 oz jig head with a Saltwater Assassin Shrimp or Lit'l P & V in Brown Glass Minnow or New

Penny colors with some Pro-Cure Shrimp Bait Gel to add scent will work. This pattern at the mouth of the bay just inside the Skyway Bridge and I-275 leading up to it



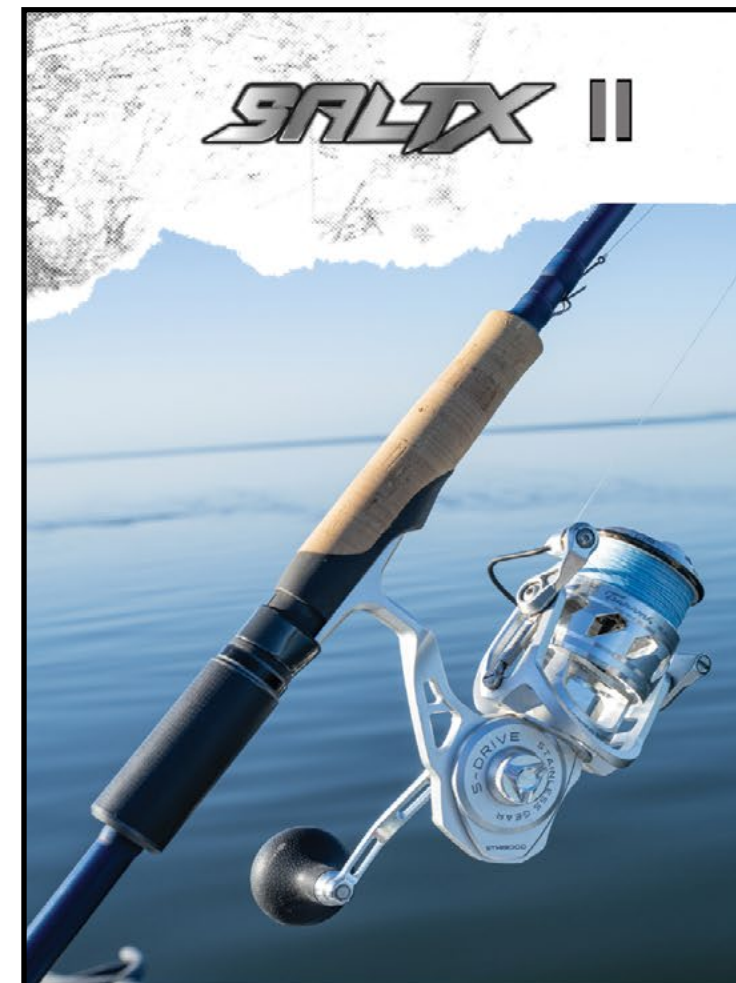
will not last long. Towards March they will usually start to migrate up into Tampa bay following the sand bars along the edges of the grass flats all the way to the major bridges like Gandy, Howard Franklin and the Courtney Campbell Bridge. They will stay at the

bridges throughout the summer until fall when the water temperatures start to drop and then the large quantities of breeder Black Drum will reverse this process and migrate back out of the bay.

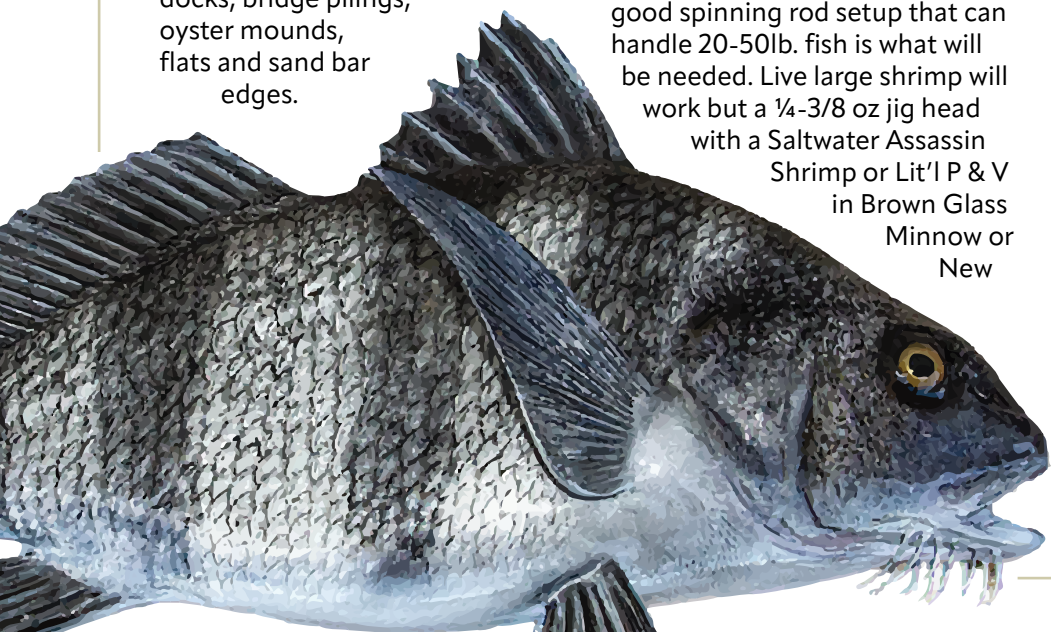
When fishing the bridges, you will have to up your tackle due to the structure and the size of the Black Drum. A very heavy spinning rod with 30-50# braid and a 60-80# 4-5foot long leader with a 5/0-6/0 hook. Also a conventional 50# set up with 50# mono, a 4oz lead with 4-5foot 60-80# leader and a 5/0-6/0 hook. My favorite bait for bridge fishing is a half of a blue crab. They will also hit lures, eat small baitfish or cut bait along with shrimp, but the blue crab really gets the nod. They like to hang out near the pilings, so make sure you get your bait close to the piling when fishing. Many times they will show up on your fishfinder so keep your eyes peeled when looking for an area to try. 🎣

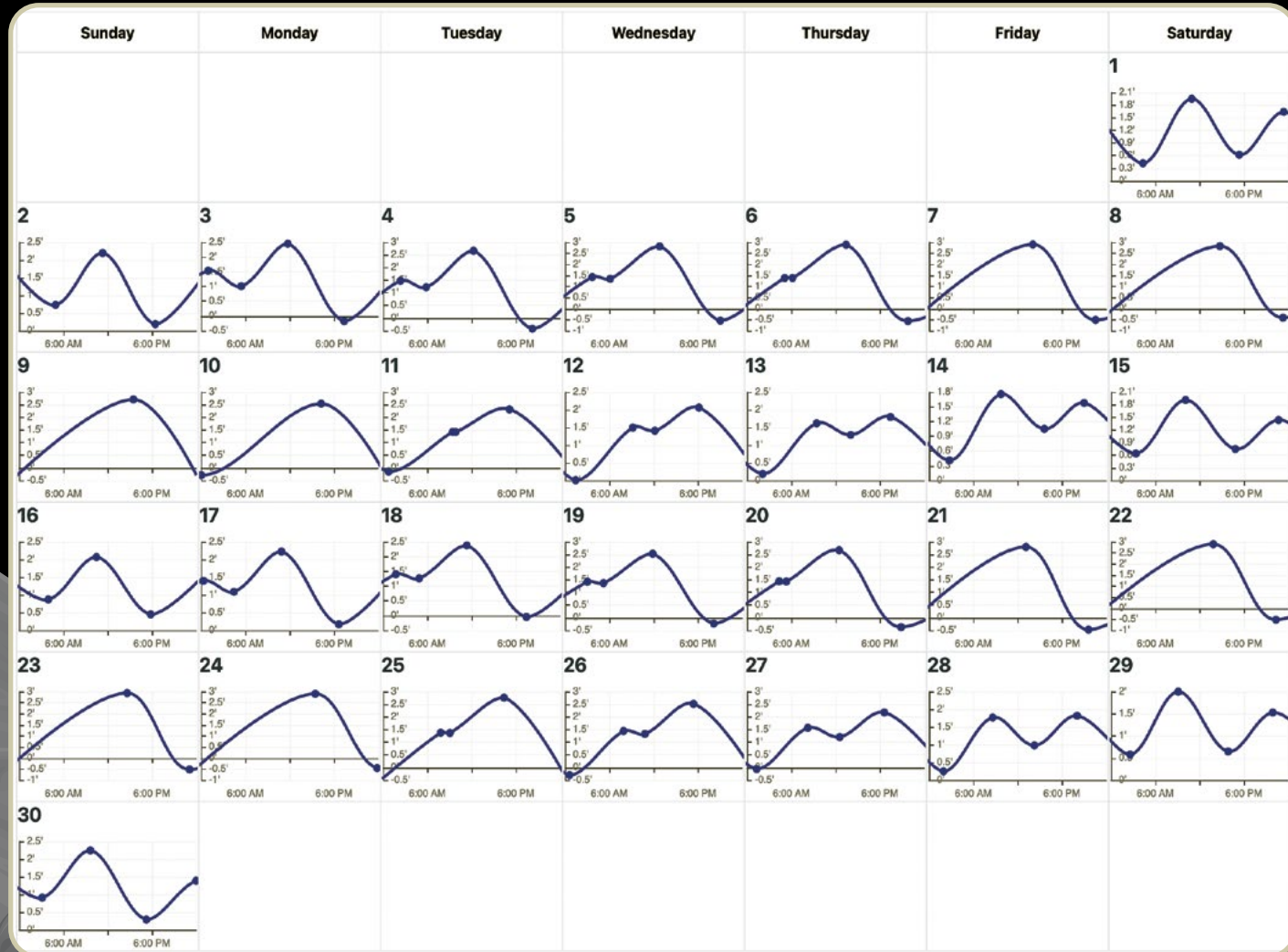


Captain George Hastick of "Fish Hunter Fishing Charters" in St. Pete has been fishing the waters of Tampa for over 35 years & guiding over 20 years. From novice to professional; Captain George will make you feel as if you have been fishing buddies for years. Contact him at 727-525-1005, www.FishTampa.com or email CaptGeorge@TampaBay.rr.com.



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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

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HELP YOUR DEER GET THROUGH SUMMER

ARTICLE BY CAPTAIN MARK W. GORE



The hot Florida Summer is here and the dry weather is hard on white-tailed deer habitat. That means the deer will be hitting supplemental feed sources where they are available harder than ever. I've already heard from numerous friends and landowners that the whitetail population is really hammering protein feeders, even on property where they have always had lots of habitat.

Because we are now in the antler-growing season for bucks, all over the state, this need for high protein will continue. Reports that I have been getting from other hunters and friends indicate that the majority of bucks have several inches of antler growth and that there are still a number of does that have not yet to given birth. Some farmers that I talked to and several game cameras that I have access to have also been seeing a number of fawns already on the ground. We all know that the natural food supplies are low and deer need a lot of high-quality nutrition to make it through the stressful times of this Florida summer heat and drought that we are experiencing.

If there was ever a time to supplement deer browse with choice protein pellets, that time would be now. Many deer managers will tell you first-hand what the addition of Protein Pellets has done for whitetail deer found on their properties. Respectable research from many different camps has found that protein pellets (16+%) really do make a difference for white-tailed deer in many ways. I have been feeding a 20% protein pellet during the doe lactating and Buck antler growing season. After that season is over, I drop down to a rut blend in the cooler months. These pellets have 16% protein with a higher carbohydrate content to give the deer the energy they need during the rut.

There are many reasons to feed protein pellets; the most frequently mentioned of these is increased antler growth for bucks. Other positives of this form of supplemental feeding include improved body condition, which translates into more milk production for lactating does and better muscle and skeletal growth for fawns. Deer that get a good start in their first year of life will be superior animals in the future. With natural food supplies running low and deer nutritional requirements on the rise, feeding protein to deer seems like the thing to do right now.

Keep in mind that there can also be some issues that arise as a result of this management practice. The first of these is, well, cost. Let's face it; the price tag of the feed is expensive. I personally have seen corn prices soar the last couple of years because of the increased use of Ethanol fuel. The cost of a 50lb bag of corn is now around \$14.00 dollars in some feed stores. The lowest I have seen it is \$12.00 a bag. If you buy the better food source for your deer herd you will not only save money but your deer herd will be stronger and healthier than ever.

My source for protein pellets is Purina Antlermax 20 with the watershield that helps protect from the humidity that we have here in Florida. The best price I have seen in town is Shell's Feed on Nebraska Ave. in Tampa, FL. This is a very knowledgeable family feed store with all your pet, garden and hunting feed needs.

Feeders for Protein Pellets: The battery operated automatic feeders that most people use to dispense whole corn are not the best tool for protein pellets. The reason for is that they just do not put out enough feed at one time for the deer. Some clubs are now using covered troughs to feed, but the most economical way is to use a gravity feeder that is high enough for only the deer to eat. This type feeder will help keep the Wild hogs out of your protein.

Interested in What a Deer Diet Consists of? Here are Some Descriptions:

Browse: This classification refers to the growing soft portion (stems and leaves) of perennial woody plants, trees, shrubs, vines and plants typically referred to as brush fall into this category.

Forbs: These are plants that are often called "weeds" by farmers, ranchers, landowners, and those that love well-maintained urban lawns. These plants are herbaceous (non-woody, normally broad-leafed, flowering plants). Forbs include all flowering herbaceous plants that are not grasses.

Mast: Refers to the fruit of the plants defined as browse species. Mast includes things such as oak acorns, Palmetto berries, persimmons, wild black

berries and similar items. As a group, mast is seasonally important in deer diets and can vary greatly from year to year.

Grasses: This includes grass and herbaceous grass-like plants such as sedges and rushes.

Grain Crops: This food class includes forage items that are planted for farming, grazing, or specifically for wildlife in the form of food plots. Cool season crops typically include clover, vetch, wheat, oats, and ryegrass. Common warm season crops include peas and other legume varieties, mile, and millet.

Commercial Feeds: This includes sacked feeds such as true supplements or those simply considered deer hunting attractant. The most common sacked supplement is a deer pellet that is at least 16% protein and is distributed through gravity feeders. The most common deer hunting attractant is whole corn distributed with timed deer feeders prior and during the white-tailed deer hunting season.

Whole Corn vs. Other Supplemental Feed

Most people I know feed their Deer herd whole corn from feeders year round. The talk now is that whole corn fed to deer is not really helping the deer at all. The problem comes from their digestive system. The deer can have a bad reaction to a belly full of corn. The studies have shown that deer fed corn in colder months can have a problem digesting their hardier winter browse because the good bacteria and rumen in their stomachs has been destroyed by acidosis caused by large quantities corn. No one really seems to know how much corn is bad for them. There is also talk that is causes them to have bladder stones like goats. These bladder stones can block their bladder and they will not be able to urinate, which in turn the bladder will burst and kill the deer. Most deer in the south seem to have grown accustomed to eating whole corn, but there are better things we can feed our deer herds to help them grow strong during the stressful months.

My goal is to help our deer herd benefit this summer by slowly taking them off the corn diet and mixing the corn with a choice protein feed. Eventually I want to have a more beneficial feeding program that would include protein pellets, mineral blocks, food plots, and most of all, habitat improvement that will benefit the deer. This may include mast tree plantings, controlled burns, and clearing more open forest browsing areas for the deer. You will see better bucks and have a stronger deer herd for years to come if you change from our old ways and give more scientific feeding programs a chance. **Good luck and have a safe & bountiful hunting season!** 🍀



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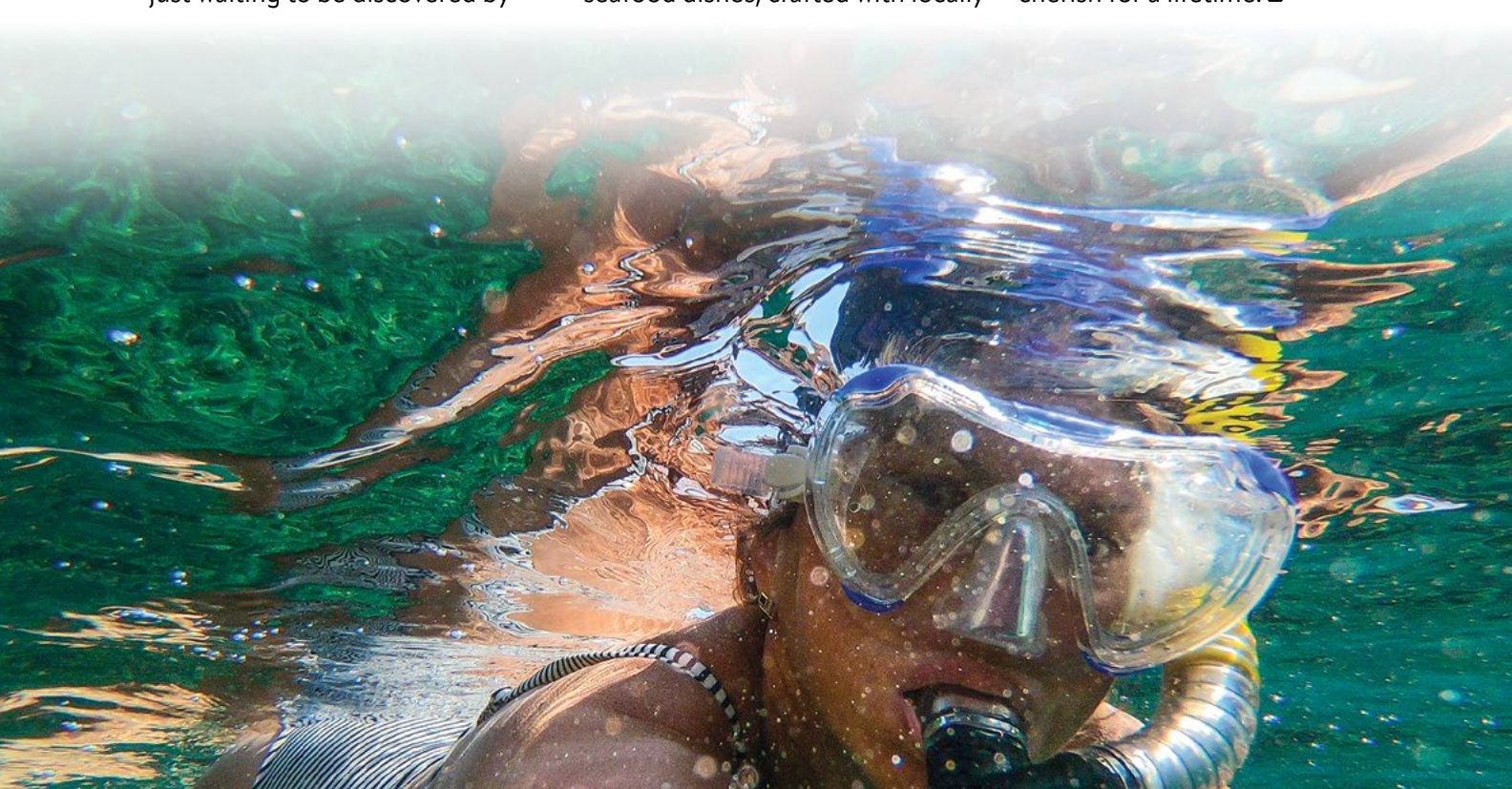
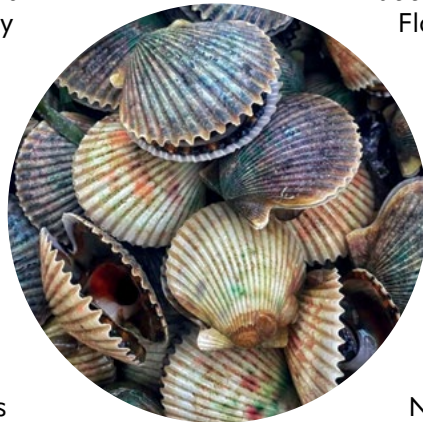
After a successful day on the water, indulge in the freshest seafood Florida's Sports Coast has to offer. Whether you cook your catch or dine at one of the many waterfront eateries, the local culinary scene won't disappoint. Savor fresh seafood dishes, crafted with locally

sourced ingredients and paired with expertly mixed cocktails, as you toast to your unforgettable day on the water.

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THE GREAT SILVER MIGRATION

by Captain Justin Searcy

Each year, one of nature's most exhilarating spectacles unfolds along the coast of Florida. The annual Tarpon migration, often referred to as the "Silver King," draws anglers from around the world to witness and partake in the pursuit of these majestic fish. This phenomenon, marked by the movement of thousands of Tarpon, is not only a testament to the intricate patterns of marine life but also a critical event for local ecosystems and economies.

The Journey Begins

The Tarpon migration is a complex journey that begins in the warmer waters of the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. As spring approaches, these powerful fish start their trek northward, driven by spawning instincts and the search for warmer waters. Typically starting in April and lasting through the summer, the migration peaks between May and June. During this period, vast schools of Tarpon, some weighing up to 200 pounds and measuring over seven feet in length, can be seen along the coast.

Boca Grande: The Tarpon Capital

Boca Grande, located on Florida's west coast, is renowned as the Tarpon capital of the world. The unique geographic features of the area, particularly the deep waters of Boca



Photos Courtesy of Poonhouse

Grande Pass, create an ideal environment for Tarpon. The pass serves as a funnel, directing schools of fish into concentrated areas, making it a hotspot for anglers. This natural phenomenon not only attracts fishing enthusiasts but also supports a vibrant local economy centered around guided fishing tours, bait shops, and lodges.

Boca Grande's local fishing culture is rich and dynamic, exemplified by brands like **Poonhouse**, which was started by

local fishermen for fishermen from the Gulf Coast. Poonhouse aims to celebrate and support the local fishing community with gear and apparel designed specifically for the needs of anglers who live for the thrill of the Tarpon season.

Ecological Significance

The migration of Tarpon plays a crucial role in the coastal ecosystem. As they travel, Tarpon serve as both predators and prey, maintaining a balance in the food web. Their presence helps control popu-

lations of smaller fish and crustaceans, while also providing sustenance for larger predators like sharks. Moreover, the spawning behavior of Tarpon ensures the continuation of the species, with millions of eggs being released and fertilized in the warm, nutrient-rich waters of Florida's coastline.

Angling for the Silver King

For anglers, the Tarpon migration is the ultimate challenge and thrill. Known for their acrobatic leaps and powerful runs, Tarpon are a prized catch. The fight with a hooked Tarpon is legendary, often described as a battle of endurance and skill. Successful Tarpon fishing requires specialized techniques, including the use of heavy tackle, live bait like crabs and mullet, and an intimate knowledge of Tarpon behavior and habitats.

Local captains, who often have decades of experience, play a vital role in guiding anglers to the best spots and ensuring sustainable fishing practices. Many of these captains have grown up in Boca Grande, inheriting a deep respect for the Tarpon and the waters they inhabit. Their expertise not only enhances the fishing experience but also promotes the conservation of this iconic species.

Conservation Efforts

As the popularity of Tarpon fishing has grown, so too has the awareness of the need for conservation. Florida has implemented strict regulations to protect Tarpon, including mandatory catch and release practices and the prohibition of certain harmful fishing techniques. These measures aim to ensure that Tarpon populations remain healthy and sustainable for future generations.

Organizations such as the **Bonefish & Tarpon Trust (BTT)** are at the forefront of these conservation efforts. BTT conducts research on Tarpon migration patterns, spawning behaviors, and habitat use, providing valuable data that informs management and protection strategies. Collaborative efforts between scientists, anglers, and local communities are essential to preserving the Tarpon's legacy.

Additionally, **Captains for Clean Water**, a grassroots nonprofit organization, plays a significant role in advocating for clean and healthy waterways essential for the Tarpon's habitat. Founded by fishing guides, Captains for Clean Water works to address water quality issues that threaten marine ecosystems, including harmful algal blooms and pollution. Their efforts emphasize the importance of protecting Florida's waters not just for Tarpon, but for all marine life and the communities that depend on them.

The Future of Tarpon Migration

Looking ahead, the future of Tarpon migration along the Florida coast faces several challenges, including climate change, habitat degradation, and increasing fishing pressure. However, with continued conservation efforts and responsible angling practices, there is hope that the majestic Silver King will continue to grace Florida's waters for generations to come.

In conclusion, the Tarpon migration is more than just a natural event; it is a cornerstone of Florida's coastal heritage. From the thrill of the catch to the importance of conservation, the journey of the Tarpon is a reminder of the intricate connections between humans and the marine environment.

As anglers and nature enthusiasts gather each year to witness this spectacle, they become part of a tradition that celebrates the enduring spirit of one of the ocean's most remarkable fish. 🎣

Follow me on Instagram: @capt_justin_searcy



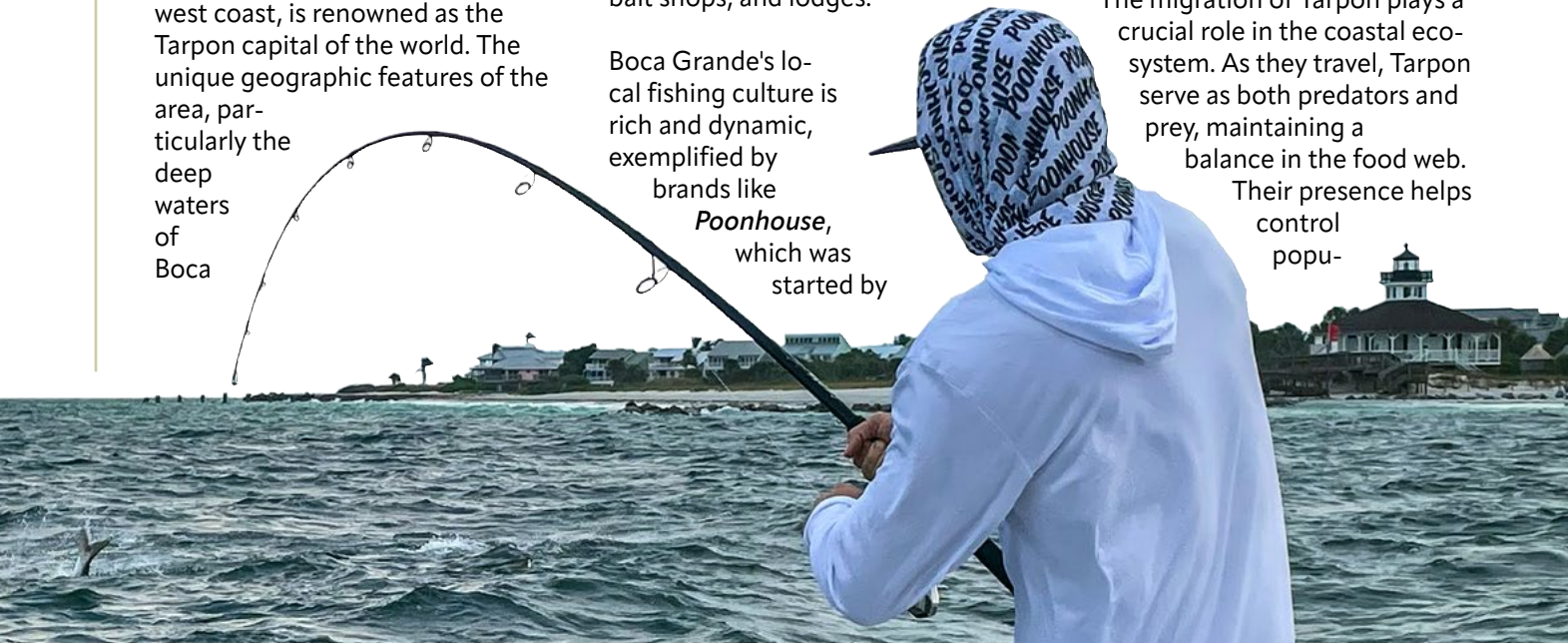
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Captain Sergio Atanes

Live bait on the flats and around the piers means plenty of activity; Mackerel bite will be hot, Cobia roaming the flats early morning hanging around Southern rays. Great Snook action till mid-day; as the sun goes up, the fish go down, so be early to catch the big ones. Mangrove snapper are around bridges and rock piles. Using live Shrimp or Sardines will give you the best chance to catch a great meal. Black Drum are under the bridges and will offer a great battle. Use cut fresh Blue Crab with a 3/0 circle hook Texas rig with anywhere from a 1 to 2 oz sinker depending on the current. Try dropping your bait behind the piling where you find the least amount of current flow.

ABOUT THE CAPTAINS

Captain Sergio and Captain George Hastick fish the Florida waters, specializing in and around the West Coast of Florida and Tampa Bay. Their 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 the state has to offer.



Captain George Hastick

It's June in Tampa Bay and if you didn't mention tarpon, you would be missing the boat. Look for them to be on the beaches, in the passes, most of the bridges, on the reefs, rivers and in some of the backwaters. Along with Tarpon look for larger Snook to be in the passes and on the flats. Larger breeder sized Redfish will also be in schools on the flats and on some of the deeper water rock piles and bridges. Trout will be on the shallow water grass flats with many sand holes. Also look for trout to be in deeper water- 6 to 8 feet of water with grass and shell bottom. Mackerel will be along the beaches and up in the bay around bridges, reefs, range markers and channel markers.

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CHOOSING YOUR WEAPONS

by Dave Ulgenalp

The beauty of wade fishing is its simplicity, and a benefit of that simplicity is that it doesn't require a lot of gear or money to properly outfit yourself. In fact, you can use the same gear to catch trout, reds and snook, whether you're fishing a beach, causeway, shallow flat or mangrove shoreline. Keeping it simple will not only save you money, it will also help you catch more and bigger fish.

The most important and expensive wade fishing gear components are the rod and reel, which will run from \$300 to \$600 for a combo that offers the necessary attributes. There's been a long running debate amongst fishermen about which is more important but when it comes to wade fishing, I consider the rod and reel equally important. There's also much debate about the advantages of using spinning versus bait casting gear and vice versa. When wade fishing, it's important to cover as much water as possible with every cast, making distance a priority over accuracy. Overcoming frequent windy conditions is another consideration and reason for my recommendation to opt for spinning gear.

Nobody wants to spend time picking out a bird's nest from a bait casting reel when they could be fishing. You will need a rod that allows for long casts of lures from 1/16 oz to 1/2 oz, has enough backbone to set the hook through a soft plastic bait when rigged weedless and is sensitive enough to feel the lightest strikes. Your reel

should be compatible with the rod and provide a balanced combination that maximizes casting distance with braided line rated from six to ten pounds in breaking strength. The reel also needs to provide a smooth, effortless retrieve and smooth dependable drag over a wide range of settings. Both the rod and reel need to be light and durable enough to stand up to the inevitable saltwater dunking they will receive when wade fishing and handle the weight and strength of a 40-inch snook or red running for cover.

There are two rods made by Temple Fork Outfitters that offer both quality and value and are worthy of consideration. The TFO Professional (PRO S 764-1) at \$129.95 is a good entry level rod and priced about as low as you will find for a rod that offers the desired attributes. The Tactical Inshore rod from TFO (TAC IS 764-1), with an MSRP of \$229.95 is a really good rod and value and will take you from novice to expert wade fisherman. Compared to the Professional, it offers a premium cork grip, more sensitive blank, faster tip and upgraded guides and reel seat. I use the

Tactical Inshore rod myself and my clients often end up buying one after using it on a guided trip. If your budget allows, I suggest spending the extra \$100 on the Tactical Inshore.

Two reels I suggest you consider are the Daiwa Ballistic MQ LT 2500D (MSRP \$229) and the Shimano Sustain HGFJ 3000 (MSRP \$319.99). Both reels are light, offer a smooth retrieve and drag, and most importantly, are rated for saltwater use. I have found the Sustain to be extremely durable and reliable over many years of use and while I have only recently started using the Ballistic, I've been very pleased with the performance so far. If you're not on a tight budget, you may want to opt for the Sustain, otherwise consider going with the Ballistic and pairing it with the TFO Tactical Inshore rod.

There are an almost endless number of rods and reels to choose from and among them are many that are less expensive than those I've suggested, but beware of their ability to stand up to the harsh saltwater environment they are being used in. If used and maintained appropriately, a quality rod and reel, like those I've suggested, should last several years.

Next month, you will take another step in becoming a "bona fide" wade fisherman, when I reveal my line, leader & lure recommendations. ☑

Dave Ulgenalp, aka "Wader Dave," is Tampa Bay's Premier wade fishing guide. You can find out more about him and book a trip at www.wadersguide.com or follow @waderdave on Instagram. Also, be sure to check out the numerous videos he's featured in on SaltStrong.com and YouTube by searching for Wader Dave.



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SUMMERTIME FAMILY FISHING FUN

by Captain Sergio Atanes

There is nothing better than spending some quality time fishing with the kids or grandkids. And, June just happens to be the right time of the year to get the family hooked (*no pun intended*) on fishing!

Summer weather brings many species closer to the shore and makes it a perfect time to fish many of the fishing piers along the Tampa Bay gulf shoreline. One often overlooked spot, right here in our own backyard, is Ballast Point Park Pier and Picnic Island Park Pier, both public & free to everyone. Ballast Point Pier, is one of the few piers that has its own artificial reef built on each side of it. It's like having your own private feeding station attracting many different species, including Grouper.

Fishing piers offer a measure of safety for parents where the whole family can fish and enjoy our great outdoors, which is just one of the many reasons for living in Florida. The seasons change

and so does the species of fish that feed there. There are always the regulars like Catfish, Trout, Flounder, Redfish, Snook and Sheepshead that call the pier their home.

Sheepshead are a great fighting fish for their size and make for great table fare. They just take a little long to clean due to their thick skin and scales. Sheepshead are known for their bait stealing abilities, but are favorites of kids to catch. Shrimp and Fiddler Crabs are their favorite baits, but small pieces of cut shrimp work great, using a #1 or #2 hook with a small sinker that has just enough weight to keep the shrimp close to the barnacles. Live Fiddler Crabs are another bait that Sheepshead

find irresistible and they can be purchased at most bait shops or better yet, get the kids to catch them on low tide along the mangrove shoreline and turn the trip into an adventure! I find the kids enjoy catching them as much as they do fishing with them and gain a sense of pride for catching their own bait.

Fishing with Fiddler Crabs is easy. Just use a small jighead and run a hook through the outside tip of the shell. The jig acts as the weight, but make

sure you buy jigs with the smaller hook size. Some are sold for trout fishing and the hook will be far too large to work on Sheepshead.



Summer weather brings larger Trout, Mackerel, Cobia, Redfish and some Snook looking to feed on the schools of live bait that like to call the piers their summer home. I find it best to use a cork and suspend the bait just off the bottom and let the current take the bait away from the pier rather than casting. This way you can cover a larger area until you find where the fish are stationed. Piers with artificial reefs offer the advantage of attracting Grouper, Mangrove Snapper and Flounder and tend to hold more fish year-round.

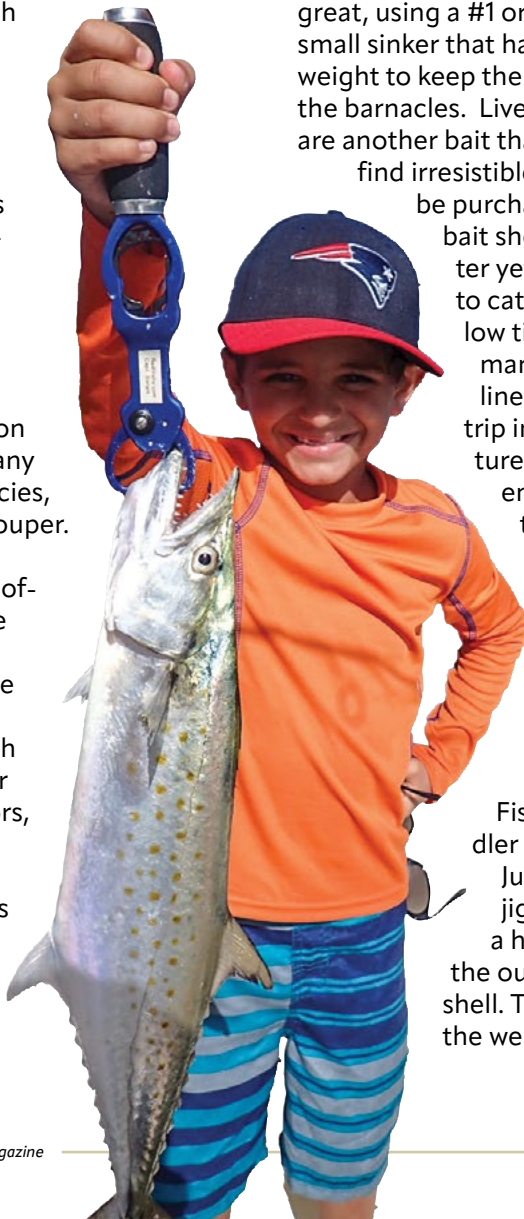


Spanish Mackerel are probably the most fun for kids to catch since they seem to hook themselves and take-off like a rocket when hooked; its an experience a kid will never forget! The Mackerel move in close to the docks to feed on the schools of sardines around the pilings. Smoked Spanish Mackerel makes one of the best fish spread around served on a saltine cracker with a shot of Tabasco sauce; a delicious summertime snack.

On June 15th, I am again hosting a FREE KIDS FISHING CLINIC held at Picnic Island Park in Tampa from 9 am to noon and the first 100 kids registered will receive a OKUMA rod & reel combo and tackle box. They'll learn how to fish with our staff of over 15 fishing captains volunteering their time. Mayor Jane Castor will be there also CCA, FWC, Tampa Police Dive Team. We would love to have your child attend; 6 to 14-year olds and you must register to get the free gear. Please send me an email to: atanes@msn.com.

Kids are our future anglers; lets get them hooked on fishing & not drugs! ☑

Captain Sergio Atanes is Host of the Fishing Adventures Florida Show on Waypoint TV, Carbon TV and YouTube. He is owner of Reelfishy.com fishing charters and can be reached by calling 813-973-7132 or by email at: atanes@msn.com



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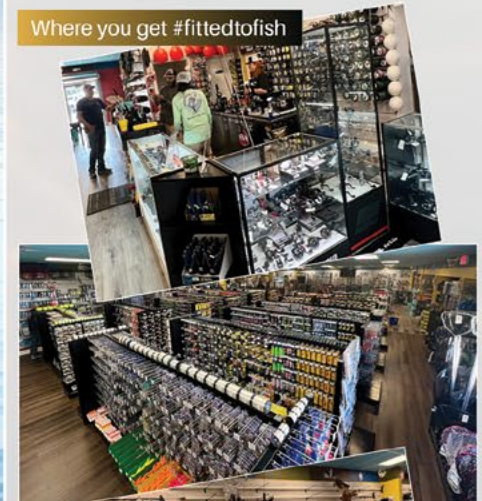
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