

FLORIDA'S COMPLIMENTARY SPORTSMAN'S PUBLICATION

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July 2024



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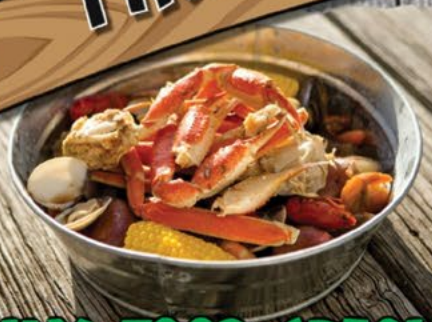


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## So You Want to Buy a Boat?

They say that the happiest day of a Man's life is when he buys a boat. They also say that the second happiest day of the same Man's life is when he sells it. From my years of experience with boats, I agree that both of these are often true.

There is currently something like a disturbance in the Force that makes people buy boats. While high rollers are still spending money like there is no tomorrow on outrageous fuel guzzling monster boats, your average Joe is cutting back and being much more cautious about their purchases. As a seller, it has become very frustrating dealing with lots of prospective buyers who are not really interested in buying something. In an effort to help sellers of moderately priced boats everywhere, I am going to post some recommendations for prospective buyers. Most of these will probably appear obvious, but given the people I see, apparently they aren't.

**#1:** If you make an appointment to look at a boat, you are expected to have the common courtesy to show up at the appointed place and time or at the very least call or text. On Memorial Day Weekend, I had three specific appointments to show a boat and not one of those three people showed. I had the boat pulled down and cleaned and prepped by the marina, on a busy holiday weekend and I spent a total of about three hours of my holiday, when I had better things to do, waiting for them. All three refused to even respond when I messaged asking where they were and if they were running late.

**#2:** If you are a married person, may I suggest that you inform your wife or husband that you are interested in buying a boat and that you have scheduled an appointment to look at one. Decisions like buying a boat should be made jointly and before you take an hour or more of a seller's time. I may really enjoy taking time out of my day to talk to you, but I really don't appreciate getting a text after your visit stating that your significant other forbids you to buy a boat this year, that's kind of a decision that should have been made before you came to see me.

**#3:** Any sellers have to wade through scads of scammers to get their boat seen by the very illusive and skit-tish real buyer. In order to not appear to be a scammer, there are some things that you have to do. If you see that an ad has just popped up, do not text or call immediately because 99% of the people who contact you in the first hour after posting are scammers. They constantly monitor new ads in hopes of finding a sucker who doesn't already know their scam. Plan on actually going to see the boat in person. Close to 99% of the potential buyers who say they cant come see it because they are on a world cruise or some similar reason are scammers.

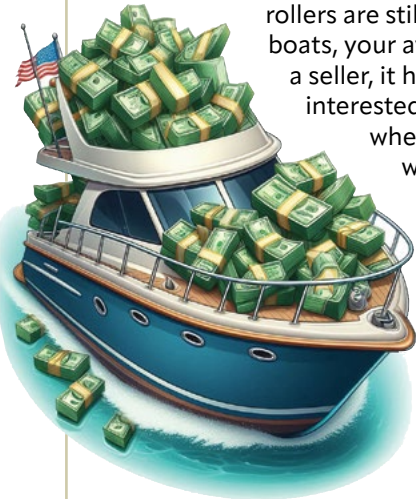
**#4:** Do not begin your relationship with a seller by asking offering them half of their asking price in a text message. They are not going to sell it to you for that and you probably will never hear from them again. If their price is too high for you to come close to, don't waste everybody's time. In addition to this, if you simply have no money to spend, but you are bored and lonely, don't waste people's time. You aren't going to make a bunch of happy new friends by taking their valuable time looking at their boat when you can't afford McDonalds, much less a boat.

**#5:** When buying from individuals, expect to pay in cash or cash equivalent. Don't try to use PayPal, Zelle and other similar systems. I know saying this makes me a Dinosaur, but there are just too many unscrupulous folks out there who spend all their time trying to find a way to scam the seller out of their property

**#6:** This one is a tip for buyers instead of sellers. NEVER NEVER NEVER pay for anything with gift cards. If a seller asks you to send him a card or cards and says he will then send you the boat or other merchandise, run, do not walk, away from that deal as fast as you can go because you are about to never see your money again, and 99% you wont get the merchandise either.

I hope these thoughts help someone successfully buy or sell a boat. Enjoy the happiest day of your life.

Merle & Flip



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# IT'S BUG & SCALLOP SEASON!

by Misty Wells

July is the start of a lot of fun in Florida and for all of you that like to take it outside, great ready for Scallop and Lobster season. It's time to grab your mask, fins, bags and tickle sticks, because "Yes" its time to get wet and jump in the water in the State of Florida.

Let's start with Scallops, which includes three of my favorite things; snorkeling, treasure hunting and eating! July 1st is the opening of Scallop season here on Florida's West Coast and if you have not tried, it's a "bucket list" item. Each year we gather our mask, fins, snorkel and scallop bags and head offshore to what some call "Florida's largest Easter egg hunt". I suggest getting the items you need purchased before heading to your scallop location, as they sometimes tend to run out of gear and it might be hard to get last minute items. If you are looking to make it easy, book a local charter guide. They'll have the locations dialed in and you don't have to worry about towing or launching a boat. One of the remarkable things about scalloping, is it can be enjoyed by all ages. Its mild exercise and a wonder-

ful way to spend a family day on the water. In general, when scalloping, you will be in about 4 to 6 feet of water, swimming along the top until you see your treasure. Once you know what to look for while scalloping, it will become easy because Scallops don't move very fast and are easy to grab. A good snorkeler can spot a Scallop lying on top of the sea grass or they may be along the grassy, sandy edges, just hanging out. I have noticed that they tend to hang in small groups, so before you dive down, look for other Scallops in the area and see how many you can get in one dive.

Scallopers can have a total of 2 gallons of Scallops each (in the shell) or 10 gallons maximum per vessel. Make sure you have a valid Florida fishing license if you are required to have one, and you're going to need a 5-gallon bucket to measure your catch. I recommend after harvesting your catch, put them in the live well, if you have one. If not, keep a towel

over the water filled bucket to keep them fresh.

Another helpful hint for beginners is to wear a long sleeve PFG shirt while in the water. I learned the hard way that your back can get pretty sunburnt. Be careful out there, make sure you have your "Diver Down" flag and it is best to have someone stay on board the boat to keep a watch and ward off boaters that may get too close. There have already been some serious incidents in past years and injuries caused by careless boat-



ers; don't trust that other boaters know practical boater safety.

Next, Lobster lovers get ready because Governor Ron DeSantis just added an extra Lobster harvest day this year for Florida Residents only on July 14th, in addition to the regular mini-season on July 24th and 25th. The main season begins on August 6th and goes through March 31st, 2025. Regardless of whether you are a beginner or expert, one of the most important things is location and knowing how to find the sometimes-elusive bugs. One of the important things about Florida Spiny Lobster is they are nocturnal, so that does make them easier to catch during the day. Popular Lobster hang outs are ledges, patch reefs, holes, big coral heads, sunken boats and just about any type of structure the lobster can hide. A lot of seasoned "pros" have their secret spots and many of these gems can be found in shallow water. I have limited out on Lobster in 3 feet of water in the Keys. A telltale sign to look for is their antennae sticking out as they use these extremely sensitive append-



ages to detect danger and if touched, they will then start to go deeper into their hiding places. Once you locate a set of antennae, take your tickle stick and place it behind the Lobster to gently urge them out and slowly walk them into your net. Once they are in your net, grab the excess material to quickly close the net or they will do the "tail dance" and be gone. Unlike Scallops, Lobster are really fast and can quickly swim out of sight in a matter of seconds. The great news is you can use the same equipment from Scalloping to Lobstering; just add a Tickle Stick, Gloves and a Lobster bag and you're good to go! There is a great product I think is a "game changer" called "Lobster League". I don't know about you, but when I am freediving for Lobster, the hardest part for me is keeping them in the net once I catch them. Well, my buddy Vinny has solved the problem with the first ever "Lobster Flip Close" net. You can capture a Lobster in the net and with the flip of your wrist, you can close the net underwater so they can't escape. I already have mine, but if you are looking to up your game, go to [www.lobsterleague.com](http://www.lobsterleague.com) and grab one. You won't regret it.

Another important reminder is to have your measurement gauge attached to your tickle stick for Lobster because they must be measured in the water. The Lobster carapace must be larger than 3 inches, which means the Lobster is at least 2 or 3 years old and has reproduced at least one season. To measure the Lobster, place the end of your gauge between the horns and the other at the end of the carapace body, if it is under 3 inches release and keep looking. Again, use a dive flag, put it UP when diving and take it DOWN when underway. Divers must stay within 300 feet of their dive flag and 100 feet if you are diving in a channel; however, I don't recommend swimming in channels. Know your limits, as each Lobster hunter only gets (6) Lobster per day. Please do not double trip during the day. Be sure to have your fishing license and your Lobster stamp, so you don't get a fine or ticket; go to [www.myfwc.com](http://www.myfwc.com) and you can get it online fast.

Lobster and Scalloping are a lot of fun and can be great memories with your family and friends, but only if you come home safe. Be sure to check your safety equipment on your boat before you go, keep a lookout on the vessel while swimmers are in the water and make sure the person in operation of the vessel is the designated driver for the day. Florida is the best place to "Take it Outside", especially this Summer. ☑

Misty Wells Producer & Host of Award Winning "Let's Take It Outside" TV show airing to 220 million on Discovery & Discovery GO, Bally Sun Sports, Wild TV, Water TV, Waypoint TV, Hunt Channel, MOTV, TCT, Discover Florida Network & Carbon TV. Bass Pro-Outdoor Pro & Outdoor & Travel Writer.



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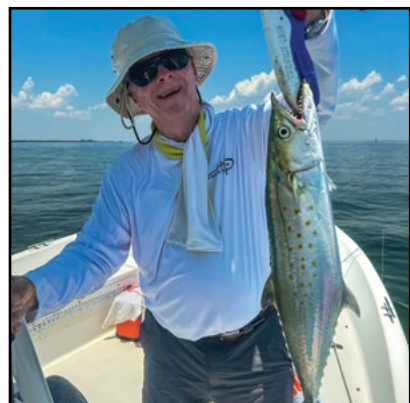
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# BIG MACK ATTACK!

by Captain George Hastick

Spanish Mackerel will still be inside Tampa Bay and along the beaches in July. When the summertime flats get too hot, it can be a good time to target Spanish Mackerel in deeper water, where it will be cooler than the flats and you might catch a little more of a breeze to keep cool yourself. Some of the things that can be great about mackerel fishing, is once you find them, they are usually schooled up, so the bite can be as fast as you can get a bait or lure casted out.



Finding them can be as easy as looking for birds diving on bait schools, seeing mackerel crashing baits on the top of the water or seeing mackerel coming out of the water as they attack baits pushed up to the waters surface.

If you are not seeing this or if you are not



having any luck working the bait schools, Spanish Mackerel are also structure oriented, since structure holds bait and schools of bait bring in predator fish, such as mackerel. Range & channel markers, artificial reefs, bridges, fishing piers and drop offs where flats stop and drop down to 8-feet or deeper and shoals are all good areas to fish when searching for mackerel. You can throw spoons or jigs while fan casting to see if there are any in the area. Another deadly tactic is to chum with live scaled sardines, start spraying some live baits out and look for topwater explosions!

Many times, you can setup, up tide of the structure and put out a chum bag which will attract baitfish and mackerel behind your boat. You can also

cut up pieces of Scaled Sardines or Threadfin Herring and put a steady stream of pieces in the water. This will attract mackerel and sometimes even King Mackerel to your boat. Then freeline a live bait or chunk in with the chum that is drifting with the current. A ¼ to ¾ ounce spoon is also a great mackerel catcher but you might want to put about 6 inches of 30-40-pound wire with a swivel to tie your line to. This will lessen the number of cut-offs you will get



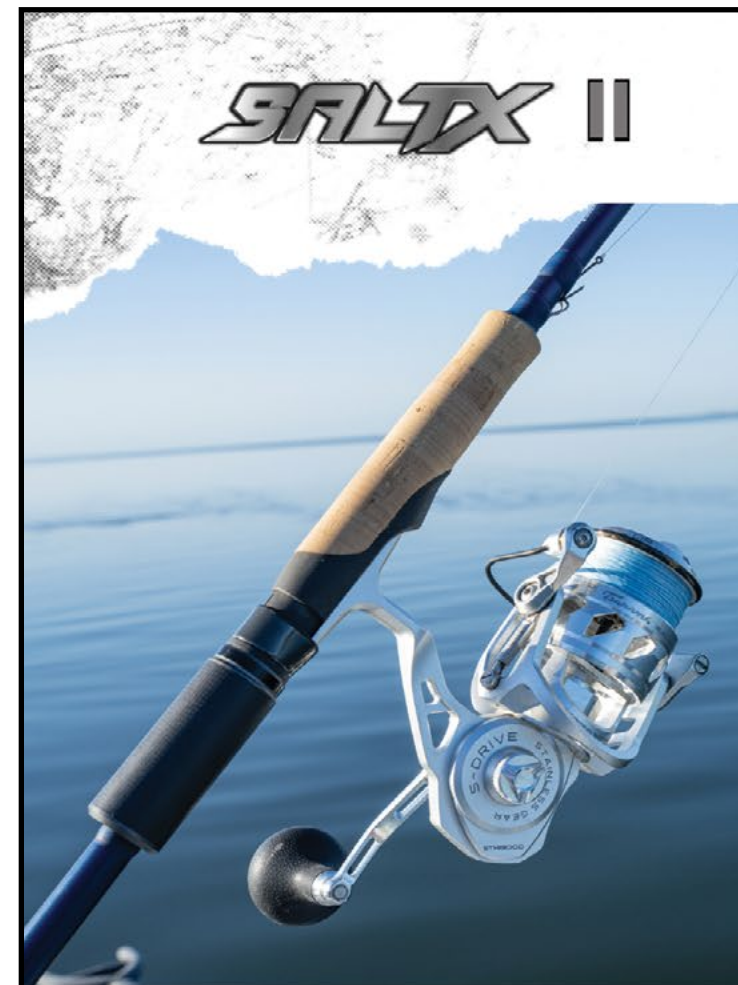
from their sharp teeth and lures can be expensive. Live or cut baiting I like to use 25-30lb leader with a 3x long shank hook for the same reason. If you are still getting cut off to much you can add the same 6-8 inches of wire to your hook with a swivel to tie your line to. I always like to use black swivels since silver or gold swivels will reflect the sun and sparkle in the water, which will make them a target for the mackerel and defeat the whole purpose for using the wire.



When the mackerel are keyed in on smaller baits you can throw a small spoon with a 1-1.5 oz cigar trolling weight to help cast further and keep the spoon lower in the water while you are reeling. Again make sure the swivels are black as not to catch the attention of the mackerel. A fast retrieve is usually what gets the attention of mackerel and this is where the weight will help keep the smaller and lighter spoons a little deeper in the water column during the fast retrieve. Vary your speed and depth until you find what is working.

So, get out there, chase down some mackerel and have some drag screaming fun! 🎣

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](http://www.FishTampa.com) or email [CaptGeorge@TampaBay.rr.com](mailto:CaptGeorge@TampaBay.rr.com).

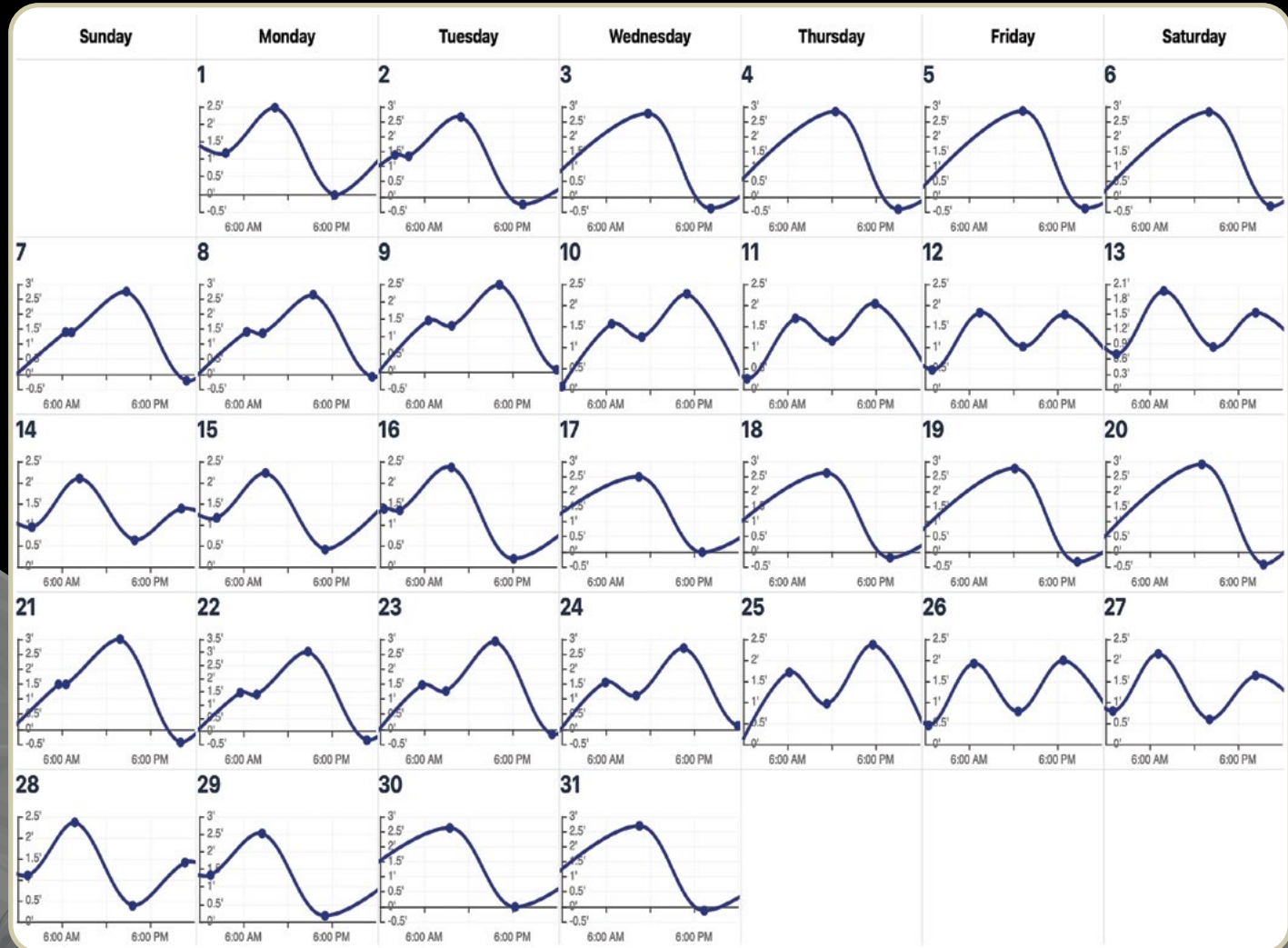


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### Conversions for Clearwater Beach Area

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
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# SPECIALTY SUMMER SPORTFISH

**T**he late summer sportfish typically found around Key West are thriving. The long, hot days are filled with fun as we get to hunt a few select species. Getting out in the backcountry to sight fish these species can be difficult, if the water temperatures have risen too much during the day, so getting out early is preferred. The tides are really the key to success on hot summer days. Cooler waters filling in the shallow areas can really make a big difference in productivity.

A rare Key West species that can be caught this time of year is snook. We don't have many snook down here in Key West, but this is the time of year where we do see a few here and there. The very clear waters help us see into spots we would normally overlook. Snook in Key West are usually in areas that are nearly impossible to fish effectively. They hide in the mangroves sharing their habitat with baby mangrove snappers and barracudas. Who do you think is going to get your bait first? Snook usually won't hop out into the middle of a hundred baby mangrove snappers or charge in front of a barracuda to eat a pinfish. Snook fishing in Key West requires precision bait presentation as close to the fish as possible. This can sometimes mean waiting for them to move out of their comfortable habitat. The best way I've found to catch snook down here is by stalking them when they move to a sand flat near their habitat and then casting small live bait as close as possible in front of them. Using 2/0 Owner circle hooks and twenty pound fluorocarbon always seems to do the trick.

Permit, the most popular and hard-to catch sport fish in the Lower Keys, are also a summertime favorite. Permit are found in a bunch of different environments, but mostly fished







"SaraCuda" enjoyed a double header of permit. Brought to you by Hunter Skipper Clothing. Photo by Lance Skipper.

for on the flats in the backcountry. Finding areas with lots of tidal flow onto the flats is a good place to start. A variety of bait is now available for permit to eat as the tide slowly comes in. The fish work their way along the edges of these shallow areas until there is enough water for them to get up on top of the flats. This can be a very good time to hunt for these fish, especially if you aren't in a boat with a real shallow draft. Using a trolling motor, you can cruise these shallow edges and look for signs of fish waiting for the tide. Permit usually won't stick their tails out of the water during this period, so looking for shadows and outlines of them is your best bet. This requires the maximum



"SaraCuda" is all smiles with her permit. Brought to you by Hunter Skipper Clothing. Photo by Lance Skipper.

amount of patience. Permit can be caught with buck tail jigs tipped with shrimp, live shrimp on a 1/0 Owner J hook or a small live crab (their favorite). The smaller permit are usually fished with buck tail jigs simply because they can't fit a cast-able size crab in their mouth. Permit are also abundant



Alex Kaye enjoyed catching her first permit. Brought to you by Hunter Skipper Clothing. Photo by Lance Skipper.

around many reef structures and shallow wrecks. I rarely use anything else other than crabs in these environments, since there are so many other types of game fish that will rip you off. There are only two types of fish on the wrecks or reefs that will typically eat a crab at the surface: cobia and permit. This will help stop other un-targeted species from robbing your crab.



Lastly, bonefish are a big time summer fish that everyone raves about. Even though they are harder to find and spot than the permit, they are easier to hook up to. Bonefish push up on the flats and push off of the flats with the tide, just like permit. The best way to look for them is on the first of the incoming or the last of the outgoing tides. Bonefish are one of the first fish to enter the shallows and the last ones to leave. I like to look for the incoming tide spots early in the morning when the water is still cool. Regardless of most wind speeds, water this shallow will always be pretty calm, so seeing their wakes is easy. Since our waters are so clear right now, actually seeing their shadows and outlines as they move along the flats can be pretty amazing. The best thing to throw at bonefish is a small buck tail jig with a piece of shrimp to help seal the deal (scent wise). Bonefish will surprise the most experienced angler with their hard runs and drag ripping fight.

Regardless of which species you're after in Key West, you'll be sure to experience beautiful weather, active fisheries and rich wildlife like no other coastal Florida ecosystem. ■

Captain Kyle Kelso of All Water Charters in Key West, Florida. Call 305-509-2201 or visit him online at [www.allwatercharters.com](http://www.allwatercharters.com) to book your very own Key West Fishing Adventure!

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those with a keen eye and an adventurous spirit.

On Florida's Sports Coast scalloping isn't just about the catch; it's about the camaraderie and shared joy of the experience. Whether with family, friends, or fellow adventurers, the excitement of each discovery is contagious. Back on the boat, the fun continues as you compare your day's haul and recount stories of the scallops that got away.

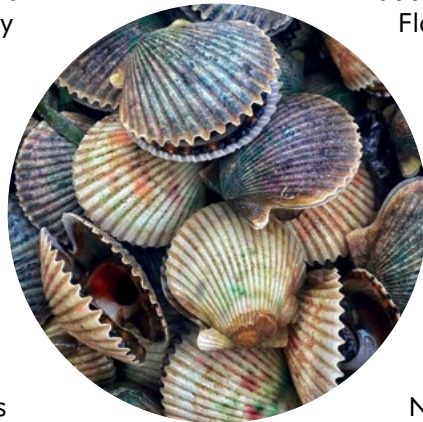
After a successful day on the water, indulge in the freshest seafood Florida's Sports Coast has to offer. Whether you cook your catch or dine at one of the many waterfront eateries, the local culinary scene won't disappoint. Savor fresh seafood dishes, crafted with locally

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

But there's more to Florida's Sports Coast than scalloping. Explore vibrant downtown areas, venture through lush nature preserves, or simply soak up the sun on the Gulf of Mexico.

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# FISHING FLORIDA'S GULF COAST

by Captain Justin Searcy

July on Florida's Gulf Coast is a paradise for inshore saltwater fishing enthusiasts. As a local fishing guide captain, I've witnessed firsthand the excitement and abundance that this season brings. From the bustling scallop season to the exhilarating lobster season and the thrilling catches of snook and tarpon on the beaches, July offers something for every angler.

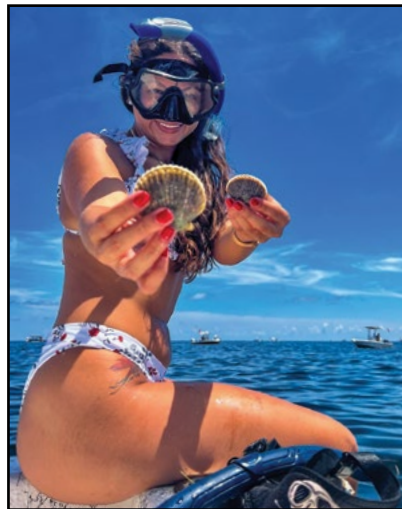
## Scallop Season

The month of July marks the beginning of the scallop season, a much-anticipated time for both locals and visitors. Scalloping in the shallow, clear waters off the coast is not just about the harvest; it's an adventure in itself. Donning snorkel gear, families and groups dive into the warm waters to collect these delicious mollusks, creating memories that

last a lifetime. Scallops are found in the seagrass beds, and their presence indicates healthy marine ecosystems. The thrill of spotting the iridescent blue eyes of a scallop before it propels away adds an element of challenge and excitement. The daily limit ensures sustainability, allowing everyone to enjoy this treasure for years to come. For those new to the activity, guided tours offer an excellent introduction, providing all the necessary equipment and tips for a successful outing. Hiring a local captain or guide can significantly enhance your experience, offering expertise and knowledge of the best spots and techniques.

## Lobster Season

Following the scallop season, the lobster season kicks off, providing another layer of excitement. Spiny lobsters, known for their sweet meat, are the target, and catching them requires a bit more skill and patience. Equipped with gloves and tickle sticks, divers explore the crevices and coral reefs where these crustaceans hide. Lobstering is more than just a hunt; it's a test of agility and precision. The thrill of a successful catch is unmatched, and the reward is a delicious feast. For those less experienced, hiring a guide can greatly enhance the experience, ensuring safety and increasing



the chances of a bountiful catch. Local captains possess the expertise to navigate the best spots and provide the necessary equipment, making your lobstering adventure both enjoyable and productive.

## Snook & Tarpon

In addition to scalloping and lobstering, July is prime time for catching snook and tarpon along the Gulf Coast beaches. Snook, with their distinctive lateral line and aggressive fight, are a favorite among anglers. These fish are often found near structures such as docks, mangroves, and oyster bars, where they ambush prey. Fishing for snook requires skill and knowledge of their habits. Early mornings and late evenings, when the water is cooler, are the best times to target these elusive fish. Light tackle and live bait such as pilchards or shrimp are commonly used, though artificial lures can also be effective. A local captain can provide invaluable guidance on the best times and places to fish, as well as the most effective techniques and bait. Tarpon, on the other hand, are the ultimate challenge for any angler. Known as the "Silver King," tarpon are prized for

their acrobatic leaps and powerful runs. These giants migrate through the Gulf Coast waters, offering anglers a chance to engage in epic battles. Catching a tarpon is a test of endurance and technique, often lasting over an hour as the fish tries to throw the hook with spectacular jumps. A seasoned guide can make all the difference in landing one of these magnificent fish, providing tips and support throughout the fight.

## Conservation Efforts

Fishing in Florida's Gulf Coast is not just about the thrill of the catch; it's also about preserving these precious ecosystems for future generations. Organizations like Bonefish & Tarpon Trust and Captains for Clean Water play a crucial role in conservation efforts. The Bonefish & Tarpon Trust focuses on research and conservation to ensure healthy populations of bonefish, tarpon, and permit. Their work helps maintain the balance of these vital species, ensuring that anglers can continue to enjoy the thrill of the chase. Captains for Clean Water advocates for clean, healthy waterways and ecosystems. They work tirelessly to address water quality issues and protect the habitats that support our rich marine life. By supporting these organizations, anglers contribute to the sustainability of the fishery and the overall health of the environment. Hiring a local captain or guide who is involved with these organizations ensures that your fishing practices are aligned with conservation efforts, promoting sustainable fishing and environmental stewardship.



## The Benefits of Hiring a Local Captain or Guide

Hiring a local captain or guide can significantly enhance your fishing experience. Local guides bring years of expertise, intimate knowledge of the best fishing spots, and insider tips on the most effective techniques and bait. They can tailor your trip to your skill level and in-

terests, ensuring a rewarding and enjoyable experience. Additionally, they provide all necessary equipment and ensure that you follow local regulations and conservation practices, promoting sustainable fishing.

July on Florida's Gulf Coast is a fisherman's paradise, offering a plethora of activities and species to target. Whether you're diving for scallops, hunting for lobsters, or casting for snook and tarpon, the experience is both thrilling and rewarding. Hiring a local captain or guide can significantly enhance your experience, providing expertise, equipment, and insider knowledge of the best spots and techniques. Moreover, by supporting conservation organizations like Bonefish & Tarpon Trust and Captains for Clean Water, you help protect these precious resources for future generations. As a local fishing guide, I'm here to help you make the most of this vibrant season. Join us on the water and create unforgettable memories while enjoying the best that inshore saltwater fishing has to offer. 🎣

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### Captain Sergio Atanes

July is a great month for doing some T & M (Time & Money) that means looking for new places to fish, especially deep-water species like grouper, mangrove snappers, cobia. Spending the time and money on gas pays off if you can just find one new ledge or rocky patch no one else has it will be well worth your time and effort. Hot water temperatures make it harder to fish the flats so why not try your luck at grouper or cobia. Slow trolling the ship channel with deep running plugs will get you some grouper and keep you cool at the same time. The other choice is to start early before daybreak, work in the flats and start home by 10:00am before the temperature gets too hot.

### 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

July can be tough, since the choices seem endless this month with so many different exciting species available to catch. Some of these species include Tarpon, Snook, Redfish, Trout, Mackerel, Cobia, and Black Drum to name a few. Look for Tarpon in passes, channels, around bridges and beaches. Large Snook will also be in these same areas fattening up for their Summer spawn. Redfish will be on the flats and under the mangroves trying to beat the heat. Trout will be on the flats but look for deeper water in 6-8 feet for better quantities and larger fish. Spanish Mackerel and Cobia can be found over good hard bottom, bridges and range markers. Black drum will be attracted to the many bridges up inside the bay.

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# MAKING CONNECTIONS – LINE & LEADER

by Dave Ulgenalp

One of the most important but often, least considered pieces of your wade fishing gear is the line and leader. Several factors need to be considered when deciding what will be connecting you with the giant snook, redfish or trout you are hoping to land. Like rods and reels, there are enough line and leader options to make your head spin, but please allow my experience to help you narrow things down.

Let's start with your main line. The debate over braided versus monofilament line has been settled by almost anyone that has used both over the last several years.

Braided line, due to its thinner diameter and lack of stretch, casts further, is more sensitive, provides better hooksets and has a higher breaking strength than mono of the same diameter. After using many of the most popular braided lines, I settled on Daiwa J-Braid Grand x8 several years ago and have never been tempted to try another. I've used lines ranging in breaking strength from 6 to 20 pounds and found that 10-pound line provides the casting distance I need and breaking strength necessary to land trophy fish. It's also thin enough to keep from spooking most fish

in clear water but not so thin that knot tying, and tangles are a problem. My colors of choice are Island Blue or Dark Green, but I don't have any evidence that one color is better than the other. Braided line is much more expensive than

mono but there's no need to fill the spool of your reel with braid. You can help offset the added cost by filling your spool with 10 lb or 15 lb mono until there's a quarter of an inch between the mono and lip of your spool, and the rest of your spool with braid. I prefer to use Clear Ande Premium monofilament for my backing, and can buy a 600-yard spool, which will provide backing for numerous reels, for less than \$18. Connect your mono backing to your braid with either an FG or Uni to Uni-knot. 150-yards of braid should provide enough line to fill the spool of most 2500 sized spinning reels and shouldn't cost more than \$17. If you're filling the spool of a 3000 sized reel, you will need to use more mono backing to adequately fill your spool with 150 feet of braid. In either case, it's important that you fill the spool so that there's no more than a sixteenth of an inch gap between the spool lip and braid. If you under fill your reel, you will reduce your casting distance and if you over fill it, you will likely encounter wind knots or tangled line in your guides.

If the process of filling your spool sounds daunting and or time consuming, take your reel to a local tackle shop and ask them to do it. Just be sure to let them know the brand and breaking strength you prefer for both the mono backing and braided line. You will get your spool filled to the right level and can ask for the exact amount of mono backing and braid that was used so you won't have to guess when you do it yourself.

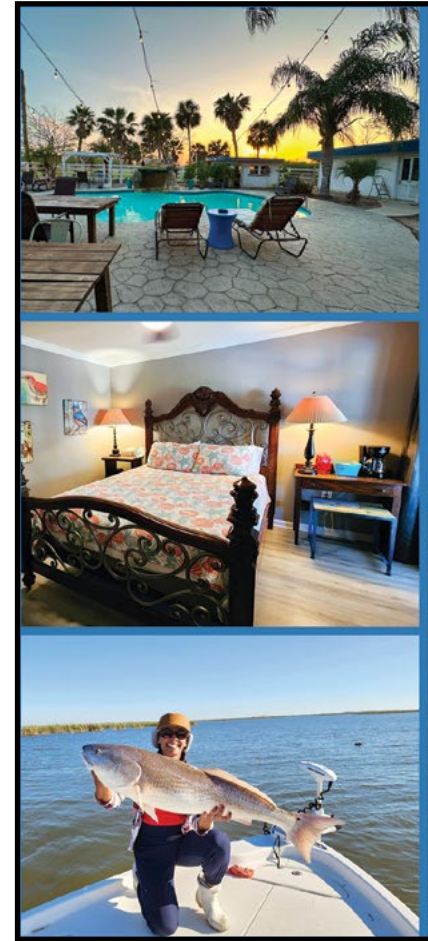
When using braided main line, it is important to tie on a leader of either fluorocarbon or monofilament. The best choice between the two is the subject of yet another debate amongst fishermen. Fluorocarbon is thinner than most monofilament lines of the same breaking strength and many believe it to be less visible to fish, resulting in more strikes. Advocates of monofilament leader, including myself, don't believe they catch any fewer fish than when using fluorocarbon. They also prefer the greater abrasion resistance and the little bit of stretch that mono provides but it's the cost that is the biggest difference. Premium fluorocarbon leader typically runs fifty cents a yard versus three cents a yard for premium monofilament. Regardless of your line preference, I suggest using three to four feet of 20 lb leader when targeting trout and reds and 30 lb leader when targeting snook, and using an FG or Uni to Uni knot to connect it to your braided main line.

Next month, I will share the lures I carry in my wading bag and recommend you consider carrying in yours. Until then – tight lines! 🎣

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](http://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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## TALES FROM THE OLD GUY

by David Mallory

When I retired from being an oil salesman in Vermont and Pauline retired from teaching, we moved from cold weather and high taxes to warm and sunny Florida. She found our new house and my job was to unpack everything and get the house settled while Pauline started teaching at a private school. As she became friends with the people who worked with her, one of them happened to mention her husband was a charter captain. When she told Pauline, I asked if she could find out about him. Very soon thereafter, we setup a trip on the water with him.

Captain Lin was a retired police officer near where we lived and worked part time at a boat store. He was able to take days off to fish when he wanted to. We learned very quickly that he wanted us to catch fish; BUT, also do what he said to learn.

Our first trip was for Mackerel off the beaches of St. Petersburg. He picked us up at the dock near Bay Pines VA Hospital and we had a short ride out to the beaches. He set out two lines and trolled along the shore. I was a little curious because there were no other boats. I wondered if he knew something that nobody else knew. He did! We caught many Spanish Mackerel and had a fun day. I guess the two of us passed his test because he asked if we would like to try tarpon fishing next. Without hesitating, I said "yes"!

My Dad had caught a 100 pound Tarpon in 1952 when we visited his brother in Florida. He talked about what a thrill it was for him as he had never fished outside of Ver-



mont and his biggest fish was an eight pound Northern Pike; a very nice catch, but not a Tarpon by any stretch. From that day on, I wanted to catch a Tarpon, any Tarpon.

Lin set a date for us and we met at the dock and headed to Egmont Key Island. He said people had been catching Tarpon around the shore. Again, no other boats! What does this guy know that nobody else knows? He set out two large, oily Ladyfish on the bottom. Our job at that point was to wait for a Tarpon to come along and eat! We waited all morning with no action, but right when I decided to eat MY lunch, Lin and Pauline yelled at me because one of our lines started spinning out of control and the fish was jumping wildly. Lin pulled the anchor, told Pauline to real in the other line, and started chasing the fish. After a few minutes, we had caught up to the fish and he handed me the pole. He said

to me, "Dave, you have no idea what you have on there. That is a real trophy that would win a lot of tournes around here." I sat down to began the fight. There were people on the beach pointing and yelling as the fish started pulling the boat away from the island, still jumping and rolling, trying to throw the hook. I had never caught a Tarpon, but I could tell it was a large, powerful fish.

As I was continuing the fight, I noticed he had pulled us a long ways away from the island. Lin said he thought the fish was getting tired because his runs were getting much shorter, but I was wearing down also! I got the beast up near the boat twice and Lin said it was an easy 200 pounds. As I worked him close again, I had been fighting him for over 45 minutes. Lin said, "I'm going to tighten the drag. I want you to lift the fish up to the side. I will measure the girth and length. I can tell you within a couple of pounds what he weighs." I followed the Captains orders and started lifting the fish to the top. Lin got his tape ready; I got the fish up, Lin bent over to measure and the hook came out. The trophy slowly swam away!

We all sat back down, then Pauline and Lin looked at each other and waited for my reaction. I was very tired and disappointed as it would have been nice to get the actual measurements and a picture, but I wasn't going to mount it anyway, so it was fine. Lastly, Lin turned to Pauline and asked her if she wanted to try for one. She replied with a very emphatic, "NO"!

Dave can be reached by email at: [David\\_Mallory@msn.com](mailto:David_Mallory@msn.com)

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# THE SUMMERTIME BLUES WITH KIDS

by Captain Sergio Atanes

Handling the summertime blues can be fun if done the right way. Perhaps a little "R&R" on the beach, dock or pier could be the answer? Time spent with children while they are young could prove to be one of the best things we can do for our kids. I am speaking from experience as a young kid growing up in Ybor City with nothing to do. If it wasn't for my uncle who got me hooked on fishing, I may not be the person I am today, so please take a little time now for their future.

Fishing is a sport for families to spend some quality time together. Not all kids are created equal when it comes to sports, but fishing is different, and any youngster can learn the basics and catch fish. In fact, fishing is 20% knowledge and 80% luck.

Let's start with the basic tackle; a saltwater rod and reel combo can be purchased for under \$45.00 at most tackle stores. Add a small tackle box, some hooks, sinkers, lures, and swivels, all which can be purchased for under \$50.00. For

less than the cost of one football game, a family of 4 can get started for under \$200.00.

The next question is where do we go from here? That is easy, because the Tampa Bay area has plenty of fishing piers both inside Tampa Bay and on the Gulf of Mexico. We are also blessed with miles of shoreline.

Pier fishing is simple. Just pick an open spot, especially next to the guy catching fish (*just kidding*) and ask questions at the bait shop. This could be your best source of information on what is biting and how to rig them. Look for the anglers with wagons or small shopping carts converted to carry rods and tackle. These guys are what I call "pier pros" and they know their stuff. Fishermen are good-natured and most are always willing to extend a helping hand to get someone else started.

Different baits are used for different fish. Trout, Mackerel, and Redfish prefer Greenback Sardines, and they can be caught using a



Sabiki Rig, BallyHoop Net or by throwing a bait net. If catching your bait is not in the game plan, live medium shrimp will work fine; its just a little more hassle keeping the Pinfish off or maybe not, if they kids are having fun! Cobia, Grouper, and Tarpon mostly caught from the piers prefer Pinfish, and they can be purchased or caught using a small gold hook tipped with shrimp. Sheepshead love Fiddler Crabs. When my kids were young

this was a favorite of ours to catch. Fiddler crabs are those small quick running little crabs you see along the shoreline on low tide. My kids really enjoyed chasing them down to catch them. They are fast and run into holes they have burrowed in the sand. To catch one, first get a small, slender stick about six or eight inches long. Stand very still close to the holes and wait until a Fiddler

starts to poke his head. Place the stick behind the hole about three inches and place the other hand in front of the hole so when the Fiddler is forced out, he has nowhere to go except into your hand. It's a great way to start the day.

Surface feeding fish like Cobia, Mackerel and Tarpon can be caught by freelining your bait with the current or if fishing from the shore I recommend using a float to keep the bait from sinking to the bottom.

For bottom feeders such as Redfish, Flounder, Mangrove Snapper and Pompano, attach an egg sinker just heavy enough to keep the bait on the bottom. Look for structure, old dock pilings, rocky bottom and oyster beds as they all make for a great place to start. Sheepshead make their home around the pilings, and a simple rig consisting of a #1 J-hook with 24 inches of 20-pound test mono leader and a 1-ounce sinker depending on current flow will surely help you land one. Sheepshead are known as one of the best bait stealers around, but when hooked they will give any youngster a great battle they will soon not forget.

Another source for action is along the miles of shoreline and beaches. Wadefishing can be both fun and refreshing during the summer months. Add a picnic lunch and you are ready for action.

Shorebound anglers can catch as many, if not more, than pier fisherman; you have miles of shoreline to

walk and try your luck. Some examples are the Courtney Campbell Causeway, Cypress Creek Park (great wading area for redfish), the South end of Picnic Island, Gandy Bridge on the east



side around the radio towers are all perfect for shore anglers and waders.

Weedon Island has a productive fishing pier, kayak ramps, a museum with lots of history about the island and is a great place to spend some time fishing and bonding. In the Tampa Bay area you also have Ballast Point Pier, Weedon Island Pier among many miles of productive shoreline.

### TACKLE BOX SUGGESTIONS

- 1/0 - 2/0 Trident hooks.
- 1/4 - 3/8-1/2 - 1-ounce egg sinkers.
- One pack of #10 swivels.
- 20 & 30-pound test Fluorocarbon Leader.
- Fishbites Chunks in Shrimp & Crab flavors.
- Jigheads paired with Saltwater Assassin Paddletails.
- Green and yellow floats.

When looking for a suitable rod and reel combo, a medium-weight outfit is perfect and Okuma makes a great priced outfit for newbie anglers. I would use a 10 to 15 pound test line or 20-pound braided line when fishing for bigger fish. There are many brands on the market, and I find Fins Windtamer works best with almost no wind knots.

A family that fishes together stay together. I am always willing to help kids learn more about fishing, so do not hesitate to call me with any questions you may have. And, please check your local listings for fishing piers as they all do have different regulations and time schedules. ▣

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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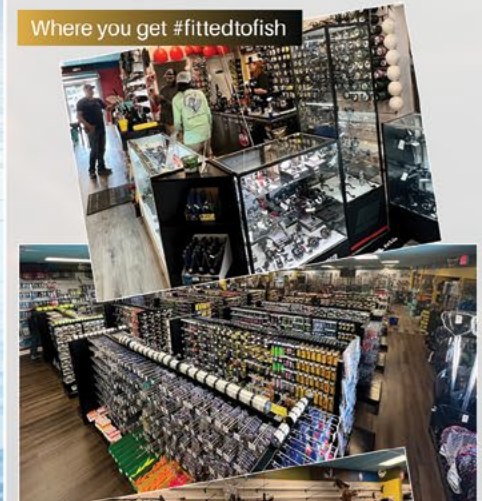
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