

FLORIDA'S COMPLIMENTARY SPORTSMAN'S PUBLICATION

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ALMOST PARADISE

Most of us who are lucky enough to live and work on the water in the Tampa Bay area start to take it for granted after a while. We get caught up in our busy day-to-day routine and don't take the time to appreciate what a paradise we live in. We complain about the snowbird and spring break traffic and we curse the hurricanes. We hate the heat and we bitch about the winter cold.

I have recently been reminded of how great our backyard really is by the out of town customers who have been using my rental boats and kayaks. Their perspective has really reopened my eyes to the beauty that we have in our own backyards. Without exception, these nice folks return from their outing on the water with great big beaming smiles and stories of all of the great stuff they discovered. Many of them are surprised to find that we have everything here that is available in places typically considered to be more exotic vacation destinations.

This was previously driven home to my wife and I while visiting in Key West. We were staying in a small rental unit near Duval Street with no pool or yard and we had not brought a boat with us on this excursion. We spent a couple of days partying on Duval and ate some good food but then we realized that back home in Tarpon Springs we had a great house and pool on the water, a couple boats to use plus our other toys. We had to ask ourselves, why were we staying in a musty little apartment with no amenities? Needless to say, we packed up and came home where we enjoyed the rest of our vacation right here. This is not to say that the Keys aren't a great place to visit but so is Tampa Bay.

With gas prices somewhere north of insane and all of the other costs of travel going through the roof, why not plan a staycation this year. It just makes sense to stay close to home and save gas while taking advantage of all that is available nearby and helping local businesses. Maybe if we all did this and bought less gas, the prices would even go down to a level that is only ridiculous.

There is so much to do right here. If you want a really wild experience with animals try Giraffe Ranch or Safari Wilderness where you can take a real safari and see lots of exotic wildlife in a naturalistic setting. You can even feed lemurs grapes! If you want to get out on the water, you can come to Belle Harbour Marina and rent one of our great rental boats, try a charter with one of the many great captains who advertise or write in Onshore Offshore or just take a ride on one of the great tour boats running from the Sponge Docks in Tarpon Springs. If you need a change of scenery, try a few days at a hotel on one of our great beaches, I especially like the Opal Sands on Clearwater Beach.

If you like more unusual pastimes here are some fun ways to use some leisure time on your staycation:

- Take a photo safari in your local discount store. You may capture some images of unique wildlife that can even be immortalized on the Internet.
- Dress in stockings and a camisole (particularly if you're a 300 pound man) and go shopping at your local discount store so that others can photograph you, perhaps you'll get immortalized on the Internet.
- Wear an aluminum foil hat to shield your brain from the mind control rays.
- Buy birdseed at your local pet store. Ask the clerk how long it will take the birds to sprout after you plant the seed.
- Take a carton of Depends adult diapers into the changing room at your local department store and put one on over your pants. When you come out ask the attendant where the toilet paper is?

Now that I've gotten you started, I'm sure you can think of lots of other fun ways to pass your vacation time. Have fun and try to appreciate how lucky we are to be so close to so many great places.

Merle can be reached at Belle Harbour Marina, located at 307 Anclote Road in beautiful, historic Tarpon Springs or by phone at 727-943-8489.

Merle & Flip



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ON THE COVER: A happy client with a beautiful pumpkin colored Redfish caught on a recent charter with our very own Captain George Hastick. Beautiful fish and great catch!

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MR. REDFISH & MR. SNOOK

by Captain George Hastick

October in the Tampa Bay area has always been known to be a great Redfish month, but Snook fishing can be phenomenal as well, while they feed to prepare for the colder months ahead. You can catch either of these fish on incoming or outgoing tides, but Redfish are more apt to feed on a high tide during the slack tide over Snook. Yes, you can catch Snook on a slack tide but not as many as Redfish during a high tide slack. Both will definitely feed better while the current is moving. I prefer an incoming tide, especially the second half before high tide for Redfish and a strong outgoing tide for Snook. Look for these better tides to happen a few days before and after during the full and new moon phases.



Redfish. Many times, Redfish will tuck under the mangroves, but they can also be found mixed in with or near the schools of larger Mullet. Schools of Mullet travel over the grass flats spooking bait fish, shrimp, crabs and more out of the grass leaving them vulnerable and an easy target for the

For Redfish, I like to stack things in my favor in the area I am fishing, when possible, by looking for good grass flats with many sand holes, near the mangroves. If you can find a spot that also has some oyster mounds or deep holes at the point of the mangroves where the tide is bringing bait to, that will up your odds of finding

Redfish. Many times, if you spot a school of redfish at a certain tide, at a spot, they will usually repeat that pattern for weeks. When you find an area like this, try to get there as the tide first starts to come in so you can chum the area with cut bait like Pinfish, Ladyfish, Threadfin or any other oily bait that will

draw the Redfish to you as they enter the area. Redfish have a very keen sense of smell and can locate the food source. Put cut bait out in the rod holders and then start live chumming to cover both live and cut bait



while fishing with the live baits or artificials. Soft plastics like the Saltwater Assassin Sea Shad in New Penny, Texas Roach or 10w40 with Limetreuse tail worked across the flats in a medium paced twitching motion. Vary the speed until you start to get the hits.

Snook on the other hand can be a dynamite action fish that can stack up on an outgoing tide at the mouths of passes, cuts in mangroves, bridge pilings and docks. Anywhere bait will be flushed out from the outgoing tide and bring the bait to them. Snook can be the laziest fish, so a well-placed cast is a must. Live bait is probably my favorite bait for Snook like Scaled Sardines (Pilchards),

Threadfins or Finger Mullet but there is a sense of accomplishment when you entice a Snook to strike on an artificial lure.

Snook have the best eyesight so fooling them is a no small feat. Mirrolure has many great lures that mimic live baits. Their skin series lures have lifelike, photorealistic patterns in Pilchard, Shad, Pinfish and Mullet which have fooled not only Snook but plenty of Redfish and more.

I like a 7' 6" medium 8-17lb rod with a Moderate fast taper paired with a 3000-4000 sized reel. I tie on 10-15lb braid with 25-30lb fluorocarbon leader and a 1/0-2/0 circle hook. ☑

Captain George Hastick of "Fish Hunter Fishing Charters" in St. Petersburg 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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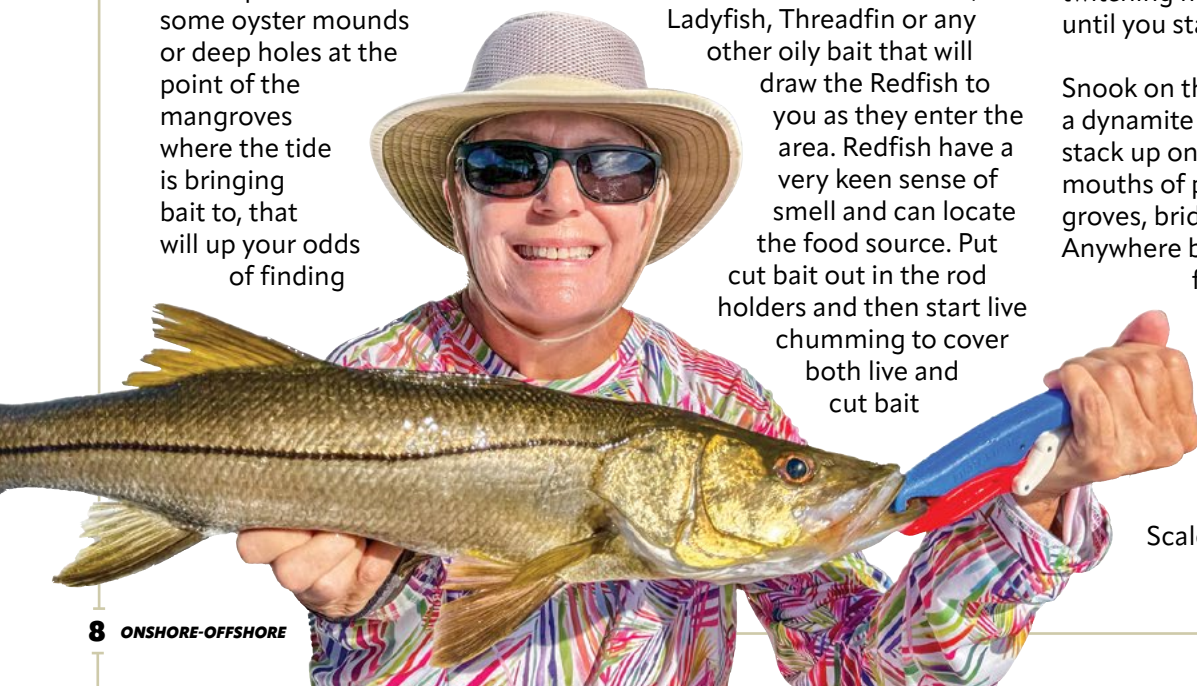
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FALL TRANSITION ON THE GULF COAST

by Captain Justin Searcy

As we roll into October on the Gulf Coast of Florida, anglers can expect to see a shift in the waters, the weather, and the species biting as the transition to fall begins. The cooler temperatures bring relief from the summer heat, and with it comes exciting opportunities to target some of the best inshore species. Whether you're fishing the backwaters or focusing on the seasonal bounty, October is a month that can produce some stellar days on the water.

For inshore anglers, the fall transition is prime time. One of the most sought-after species, snook, is still feeding heavily as they begin to move from the beaches and passes back into the mangroves and rivers. Live bait like sardines and pinfish will get the job done, but don't be afraid to throw artificial lures, especially early in the morning. Topwater plugs can create some heart-pounding strikes as snook chase bait in the shallows.

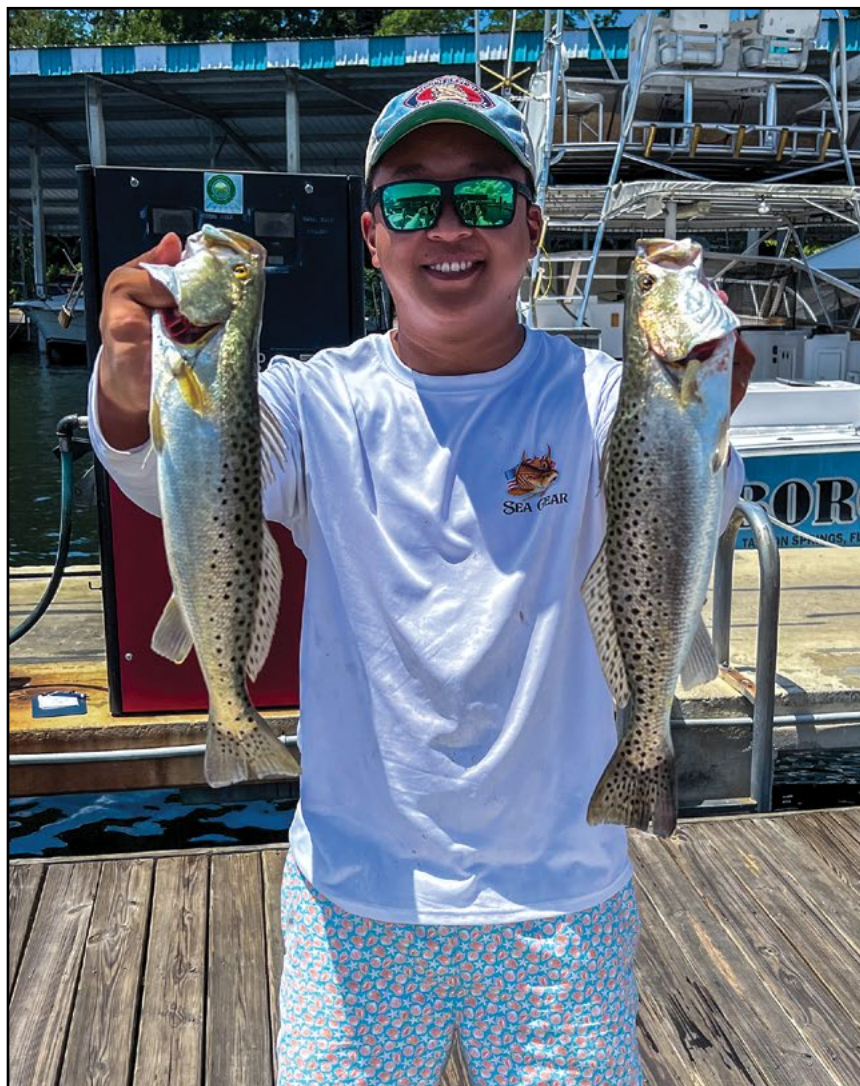
Redfish are another key target in October. The cooler water temps bring the big bulls into the flats and mangroves in schools. This is the time to break out the heavier gear and be ready for a fight. Look for them tailing on the flats or cruising along oyster bars and drop-offs. Cut bait, live shrimp, or gold spoons are great ways to entice a strike.

Trout fishing also picks up in the fall, with larger speckled trout moving into the grass flats. Focus on deeper flats with seagrass, as this is where they'll be hunting bait. Soft plastics rigged on a jig head or under a popping cork will help you locate them. As the weather cools down, the trout's aggressive nature will be more evident, making for a fun day on the water.

October also marks the beginning of one of Florida's most anticipated annual events: stone crab season. Starting on October 15th, commercial and recreational fishermen can begin harvesting these delicious crustaceans. The Gulf waters are home to some of the best stone crabs, and many local anglers combine fishing trips with setting stone crab traps to bring home both fish and crabs for a perfect seafood feast.

Stone crabbing requires setting traps in areas where crabs are likely to be foraging for food, such as sandy or muddy bottoms near grass flats or rocky ledges. For recreational crabbers, it's important to use the proper traps and adhere to the regulations. Stone crab claws must also meet the legal size limit of 2 7/8 inches to help ensure sustainability.

Pulling traps after a few days is always an exciting experience. The anticipation of seeing how many crabs you've caught is almost as thrilling as hooking a big snook. Once you've got your haul, there's nothing better than boiling up some fresh stone crab claws for a meal that epitomizes Florida's coastal bounty. Pair them with some drawn butter or Bayshore Bees honey mustard sauce, and you've got yourself a real treat.



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The best part of stone crab season is that it runs all the way until May, so you'll have plenty of opportunities to get out there and set your traps. Just be sure to check the local regulations, keep your traps properly marked, and remember that sustainability is key in preserving this valuable resource for years to come.

October is one of the most comfortable months for fishing on the Gulf Coast, and it's the perfect time to take advantage of the cooler mornings and pleasant afternoons. Make sure to bring layers, as the early mornings can be cool, but the day will warm up quickly.

Another bonus in October is the reduction of summer boat traffic, giving anglers more space to explore their favorite spots without the summer crowds. Whether you're chasing snook in the backwaters or pulling up fresh stone crab traps, now is the time to enjoy the beautiful fall weather while filling the cooler with quality catches. So, grab your gear and head out on the water this month—it's the perfect time to experience the fall fishing frenzy and stone crab season on Florida's Gulf Coast! Tight lines & good eating. See you on the water! 🎣

- Captain Justin Searcy

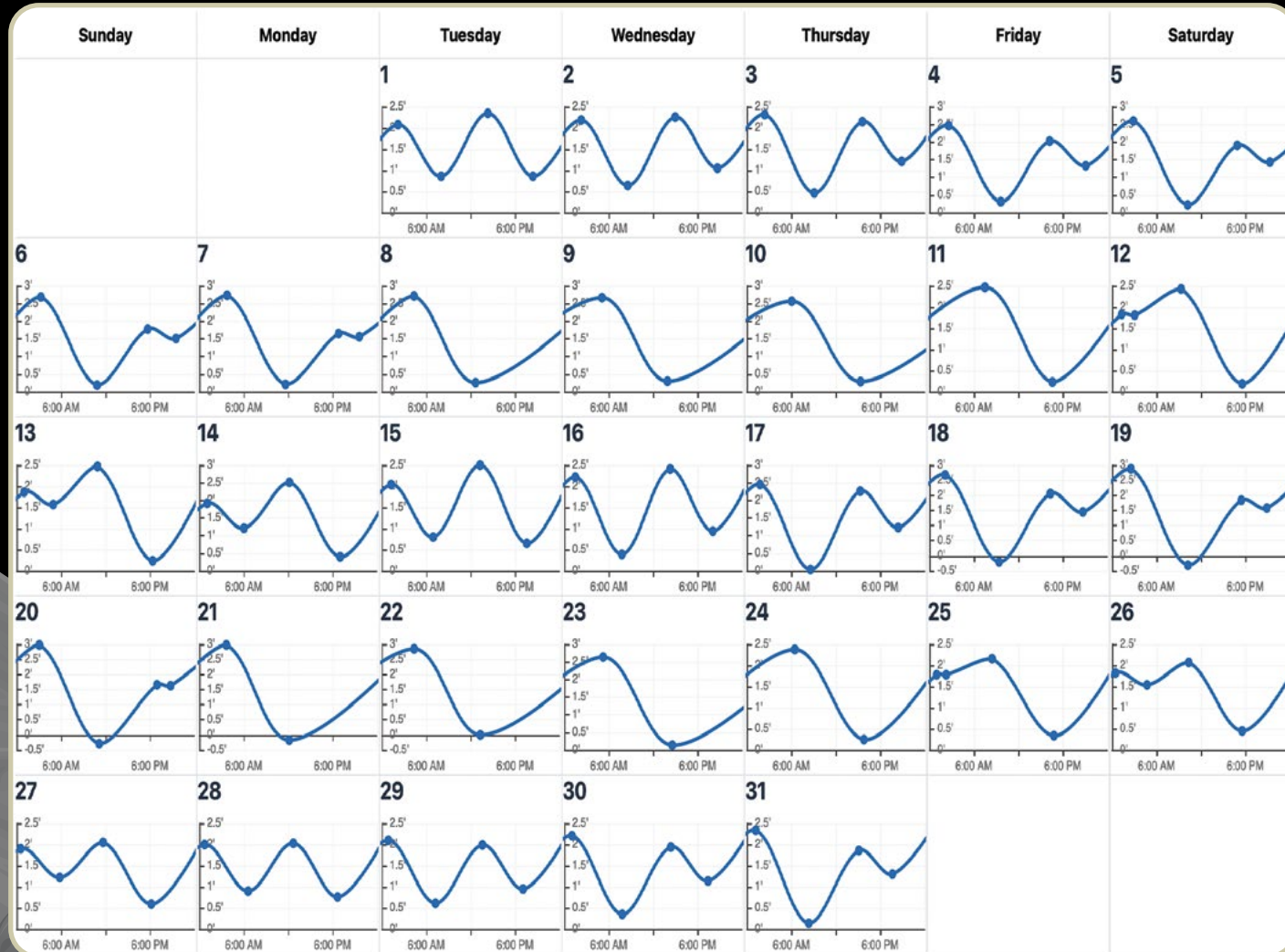
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Conversions for Clearwater Beach Area

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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FLORIDA'S FAVORITE SEASON IS HERE!

by Misty Wells

The season we have all been waiting for in Florida is here; Stone Crab season! The West Coast of Florida has hit the ground running with the season opening on October 15th thru May 15th of next year.

There are a lot of newcomers to Florida this year and I have found many of them don't know much about Stone Crab season and how it works. One of the things that is most unique about Stone Crabs and harvesting claws is that it is a sustainable fishery, you are only 'popping claws' you are not killing the crabs.

So there are two legal ways of Stone Crabbing; one is recreational and the other is commercial. If you have a valid Florida fishing license you can legally have 5 Stone

Crab traps for the season; a lot of folks don't know that. Each person can have up to 1 gallon of crab claws per day or up to 2 gallons of crab claws per vessel, whichever is less. It is easy to become a Stone Crabber by stopping by your local tackle shop. Just buy traps that are already made, or you can buy the kits and make them yourself.

My local goto in Pinellas is FISH (Fishermen's Ideal Supply House) located in right off Madeira Beach on Welch Causeway in St. Pete.

FWC Update: Recreational and commercial Stone Crab traps must have a cull ring installed on the trap as this is to eliminate all the bycatch and smaller crabs from dying.

Once you get your traps built, you will need to bait them up and get ready to drop them offshore. I have found having them in about 40 feet of water works quite well. Pigs feet are the go-to bait for me; it stays in the trap longer and the crabs seem to like it the best.

Make sure whatever bait you are using in your traps that the bait is not sticking out of the trap. If so, the crabs will just grab that bait and pull it out

and not enter the trap. And here is the fun part; you need to mark where you dropped your traps and let them soak for about a week to 10 days depending on weather. If a cold front is coming, pull right before or after.



If you are a recreational crabber, you most likely will be hand pulling your traps. It's not really that hard as you are only pulling few and it's a nice workout. You will need to know how to measure your crabs claws and remember you are only taking the claws if they are the correct size. If they are small, the crabs go right back into the water. You need to carefully grab the crabs by their back legs then fold in the arms to their bodies, take the measuring tool and make sure that you measure from the knuckle to the tip of the claw and it must be 2-7/8 inches, which is an 1/8-inch increase than previous years.

And, do not harvest egg bearing crabs. When catching Stone Crab both claws can be removed if they

both measure correctly. Also keep in mind that recreation harvesters who are 16 and older are required to complete an online, no-cost recreational stone crab registration; just follow the instructions. Commercial fishermen are able to have hundreds or thousands of traps as long as they purchase the tags to place on the traps and have all the proper licenses.

One of the great things about stone crab claws is not only do they taste delicious, they are the only renewable resource from our waters. The stone crab's ability to regenerate lost limbs makes it possible to harvest the tasty claws without killing the crab. Claws must be removed carefully, at just the right spot on the arm, in order for the regeneration to take place.

Another unique thing about Stone Crab is once a claw is harvested, they will grow back on average of about 20% bigger than the claw taken in the previous year. Keep in mind Stone Crab claws need to be cooked immediately after harvest in order to prevent the meat sticking to the shell. Commercial fishermen



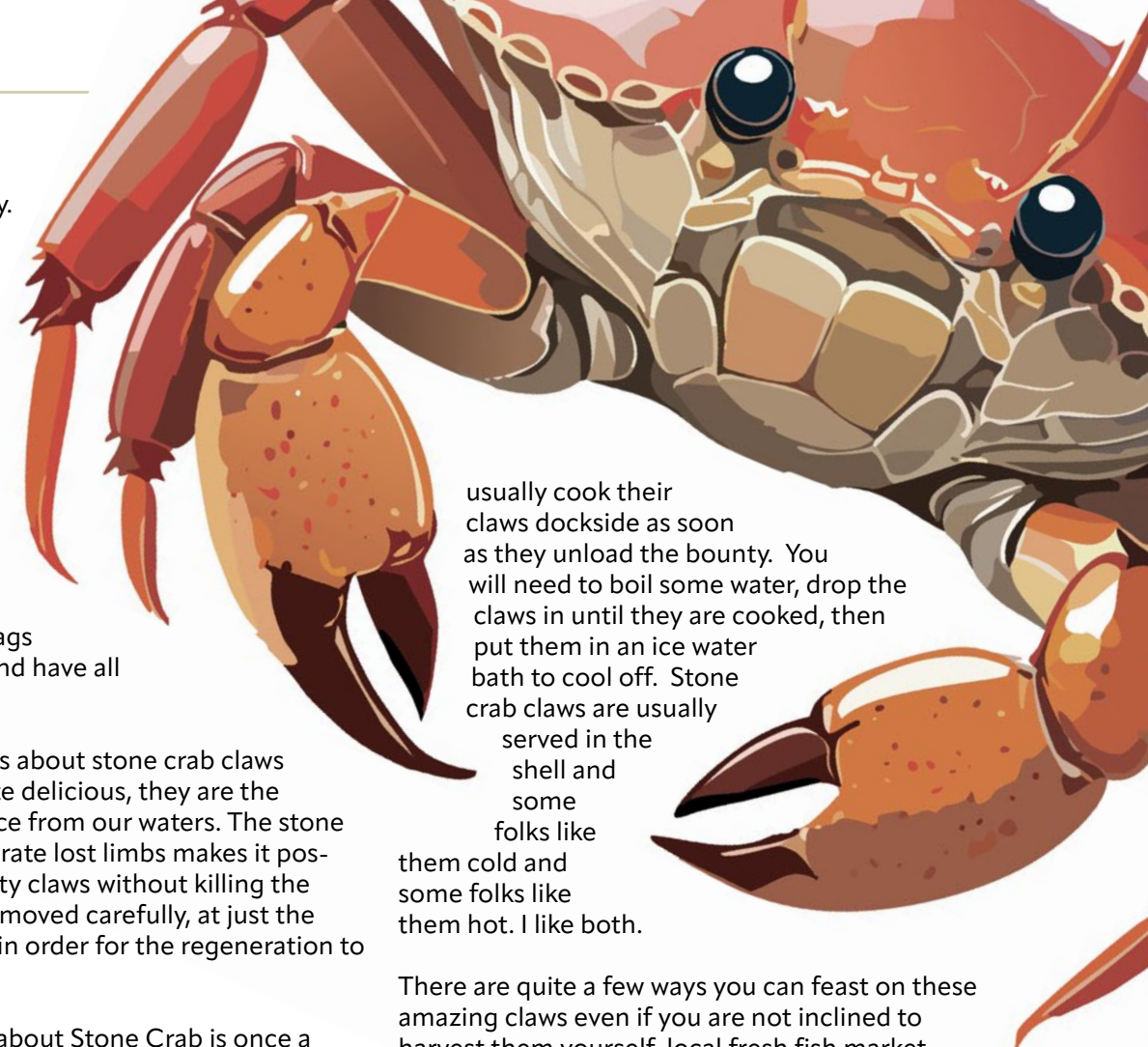
usually cook their claws dockside as soon as they unload the bounty. You will need to boil some water, drop the claws in until they are cooked, then put them in an ice water bath to cool off. Stone crab claws are usually served in the shell and some folks like them cold and some folks like them hot. I like both.

There are quite a few ways you can feast on these amazing claws even if you are not inclined to harvest them yourself, local fresh fish market like Nachman's Seafood Market on Reddington Shores, locally owned restaurants with their own fleet of crabbers like Salt Rock, Frenchy's and Island Way Grill.

If you are interested in buying fresh Stone Crab claws right off our boat, the Trap House, we own a small company called Family Jewels and have about 1000 Stone Crab traps. Text us at 727-550-7759.

Now, if you are feeling adventurous and want a fun way to spend a few hours on your boat with the family, buy a few traps, bait them up and find a good place to soak them. It's is a great day on the water out pulling traps and an even better evening crackin claws together. 🍷

Misty Wells is producer & Host of "Let's Take It Outside" TV show airing to over 320 million on Discovery Channel, Waypoint TV, Bally Sun Sports, H2O, Pursuit Up, Hunt Channel, MOTV, TCT, Discover Florida Network & 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 3,800 children & counting. www.mistywells.com





the silver prince

Written By Captain Danny Clark

With near record breaking warm weather still upon us, the water temperature remains in the mid 80's and the juvenile tarpon fishing has been on fire here in the Lower Keys.

When most people think about tarpon fishing in the Keys, they only imagine the big ones - the 100 plus pounders that cause screaming drag and make acrobatic jumps. We do have big fish that live and stay here, in the Lower Keys all year long, but the mature adults are largely migratory and aren't as available throughout the year. During the spring months, there are literally thousands of big tarpon that invade our waters, but don't overlook our resident juvenile tarpon that are here throughout the year; they hit hard, pull hard and jump just like the big ones.

WHERE TO LOOK FOR THEM?

The Big Pine area of the Lower Keys is an excellent place to find the Silver Prince. I do most of my juvenile tarpon fishing on mangrove shorelines, but deeper holes on flats and the deeper water off of the



shorelines can also be very productive, especially on the lower stages of the tide when there's not quite enough water for them to make it all the way up to shore. The flip side of that is, on some of our big tide days (king tides), which we have been experiencing lately, there can be so much water that it floods the mangroves more



than usual and the fish will travel deep into the woods. On big tide days, I try to target my tarpon areas before the water reaches the super high levels that enable this forest dwelling.

There are many types of shorelines that can hold these fish, I'd be willing to bet that most mangrove shorelines in the Big Pine area will have tarpon at one time or another, but I do look for specific areas. Shoreline that has slightly deeper water right up to the mangroves, sandy-type hard bottom right on shore and stinky water areas; these are good places to look. The stinky water is typically due to dead and rotting seagrass that floats in and sinks in these areas. As the seagrass rots, it gives off a very distinctive smell and can make the water very oxygen poor. The oxygen poor water doesn't affect the tarpon like it does other fish due to their ability to gulp air from the surface, so you will almost always see them rolling in these stinky stagnant areas.

RIGGING & BAIT ADVICE?

For spinning rods, my basic rig is a medium weight rod, with a 4000 series reel. I use 20lb braid mainline and a 30lb fluorocarbon leader for a bite tippet. I typically will tie a smaller fluoro leader to the braid (17lb) then tie a small section of 30lb fluoro at the end for the bite tippet. The reason for this is because the uni to uni knot that I use is a little large at the 30lb connection and can sometimes catch on the rod eyes when casting. The 17lb test fluoro tied to the braid offers very little resistance when

casting so it is a much better choice, in my opinion. I don't use straight 17lb test because these fish have fairly aggressive sand paper type mouths and will they will wear through smaller leader pretty quickly. For bait, I like to use larger live shrimp on a size 1 hook. If we are throwing artificial baits, I like to use shrimp style lures; DOA and Vudu are both excellent choices. Soft plastic and hard plastic twitch baits and top waters work great, as well.

For fly fishing I like a 10 weight rod and reel combo. I use a standard tapered leader, but still use a 30lb bite tippet on the business end. Flies with a barred craft fur tail are excellent choices for these tarpon. I want the fly to stay up in the water column when fishing the shorelines so I avoid any kind of weighted fly.

The fishing will remain strong as long as the warm weather continues and the water temperatures stay up. If you've never fished for juvenile tarpon or if you've caught a ton and want to do it again, now is an excellent time to fish for the Silver Prince in the Florida Keys! 📍

Danny Clark of Torch Key Charters can be reached at 305.849.0532 or visit him online at: torch-keycharters.com





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SALTWATER FUN

The Gulf of Mexico is a dream for saltwater fishing lovers. Both beginners and experts will find plenty to enjoy here. Redfish and snook are popular catches known for their strong, spirited fights. You'll find them in shallow waters

and estuaries, making them pretty accessible. If you're up for a challenge, Redfish, renowned for their strong fight and impressive size, are a staple in the region. Snook, another favorite, provide a thrilling catch with their elusive behavior and powerful runs.

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For those who prefer river fishing, the Anclote River and Cotee River



are excellent picks. They're perfect for catching catfish and various panfish. With their diverse ecosystems, these rivers are great for anglers of all experience levels.

No matter your skill level, Florida's Sports Coast in Pasco County has a wealth of fishing opportunities waiting for you. With its variety of fish species and fishing spots, it's the perfect destination for an unforgettable day on the water. ☑

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Captain Sergio Atanes

October is a great time to start catching Grouper in the canals of Tampa Bay. You can't keep them but their plenty of fun to catch. The good thing is big redfish will move in around the same area as these grouper and catching any big fish is fun. Also try your luck with live shrimp around the docks for Mangrove Snapper and even some Seabass. The canals make for great fishing in the fall when the winds kick up and flats are almost dry; our fishy friends are forced to look for protection as the canals are their friends.



Captain George Hastick

As October rolls in, so will cooler days and cooler water temperatures, usually in the low 80s to high 70s. This is going to put the feed bags on those snook and redfish preparing for the cooler months to come. Look for them on the flats and under the mangroves. Many times, the redfish will be mixed in with large schools of larger mullet. Work the outside edges of the mullet schools as not to spook them. With the cooling water we should see the start of larger trout moving in along the outside edges of grass flats. This is a perfect month to go out and target an inshore slam.

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.

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SUNGLASSES

by Dave Ulgenalp

Sunglasses offer protection for your eyes and can significantly improve your chances of success when wade fishing. Hopefully, the information below will help you choose the pair best for the job.



LENSES

Any lens you consider should provide protection from the sun's UVA/B/C rays, which can cause eye fatigue in the short term and serious damage to your eyes over the long term. Polarized lenses are a must, as they reduce the glare caused by the sun's reflection off the water. This will help you to see below the surface when fishing in clear water and make it easier to see bottom structure and spot fish. There are a wide variety of lens colors and mirror finishes to choose from but for inshore fishing, I find that brown, bronze, amber, grey and green lenses are best at providing the clarity and ability to see details under

the water's surface and under a variety of light conditions. When offered, lens enhancements or upgrades that offer greater contrast, detail, and scratch resistance should be considered if your budget will allow for it. Mirrored coatings are also available, but they add little more than style and cost to your sunglasses. You may also have to choose between lenses made from glass or polycarbonate. These days, polycarbonate lenses are the most common lens material. They are shatterproof and offer your eyes greater protection from errant lures and debris than glass lenses. They are also less expensive and lighter than glass lenses, while offering similar optical attributes. However, many people still prefer glass as they may offer slightly better clarity and are more resistant to scratching than polycarbonate lenses. Prescription lenses are also available from many manufacturers and an option to be considered for those that need sight correction.

FRAMES

When choosing a frame for your sunglasses, proper fit should be the first priority. Make sure the frame is large enough to provide your eyes with complete coverage, fits snugly against your temples without being tight and has temple arms long enough to wrap around your ears. It's also important to make sure that

they fit comfortably on the bridge of your nose and snugly enough to keep from sliding down your face when you are sweating or walking. I also suggest choosing a frame that has temple arms wide enough to keep sun from entering through the sides, which will reduce glare and improve your ability to see bottom structure and spot fish. Lastly, you will likely need to weigh the merits of style versus functionality. Unfortunately, frames that might be best for fishing aren't necessarily the most stylish, which may require a compromise between function and fashion if you're going to limit yourself to a single pair of sunglasses.



BRANDS & HOW MUCH

Like every other piece of fishing gear, there are numerous options to choose from and a wide price range. Dozens of manufacturers offer multiple

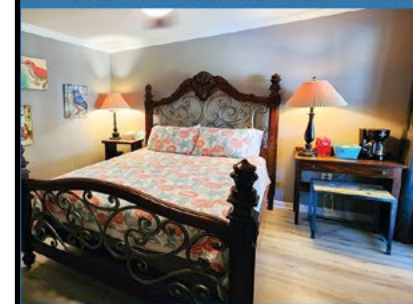
frame and lens options. Most offer the option to customize your glasses via online ordering, which I recommend, to make sure you get exactly what you want. However, I suggest you find a brick-and-mortar retailer that carries the frames you want and try them on to make sure the fit is right, before ordering online. Off-the-rack options also exist and are often less expensive than custom ordered sunglasses. Prices for a pair that provide the attributes I prefer, range from \$50 to \$500. Prescription lenses will most likely put you on the higher end of the range. **Smith Optics, Costa del Mar, Maui Jim, Oakley and Ray Ban** are among the most popular brands and are available at a large number of retailers, through optometrists and online. There are also online only providers, including **Shady Rays** and **Blenders**, which offer quality products at lower prices than many of the most popular brands.

MY CHOICE

I've owned a wide variety of brands, styles and lenses over the past forty years and have most recently settled on sunglasses from Smith Optics. They offer the lens options and attributes I recommend you consider and a

wide variety of frames, at a fair price. They are available at many brick and mortar retailers as well as through their website – www.smithoptics.com. I've been impressed with their customer service and the quick turnaround on custom orders. **My choice is the Guide's Choice frame with Chroma Pop Polarized Brown lenses.** I've found them to provide the clarity, contrast and definition I need to spot fish on the saltwater flats I routinely wade. They are also light, durable and backed up with a strong warranty from Smith Optics. They are currently available for \$215 through their website. There are many options to consider when choosing a pair of sunglasses, so be sure to invest the time and effort necessary to find the perfect pair for you — it's worth it! 🎯

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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TROLLING THE CANALS FOR GROUPE

by Captain Sergio Atanes

October is the start for some inshore fun fishing as Gag Grouper move into the canals on the west coast and the inside of Tampa Bay. The change in weather opens up the door to different types of fishing. Big Redfish move into the deeper flats, Snook start their migration into the creeks & rivers. Big Speckled Trout or gator trout named for their bright orange mouth will roam the deep waters off the bridges and edges of channels.

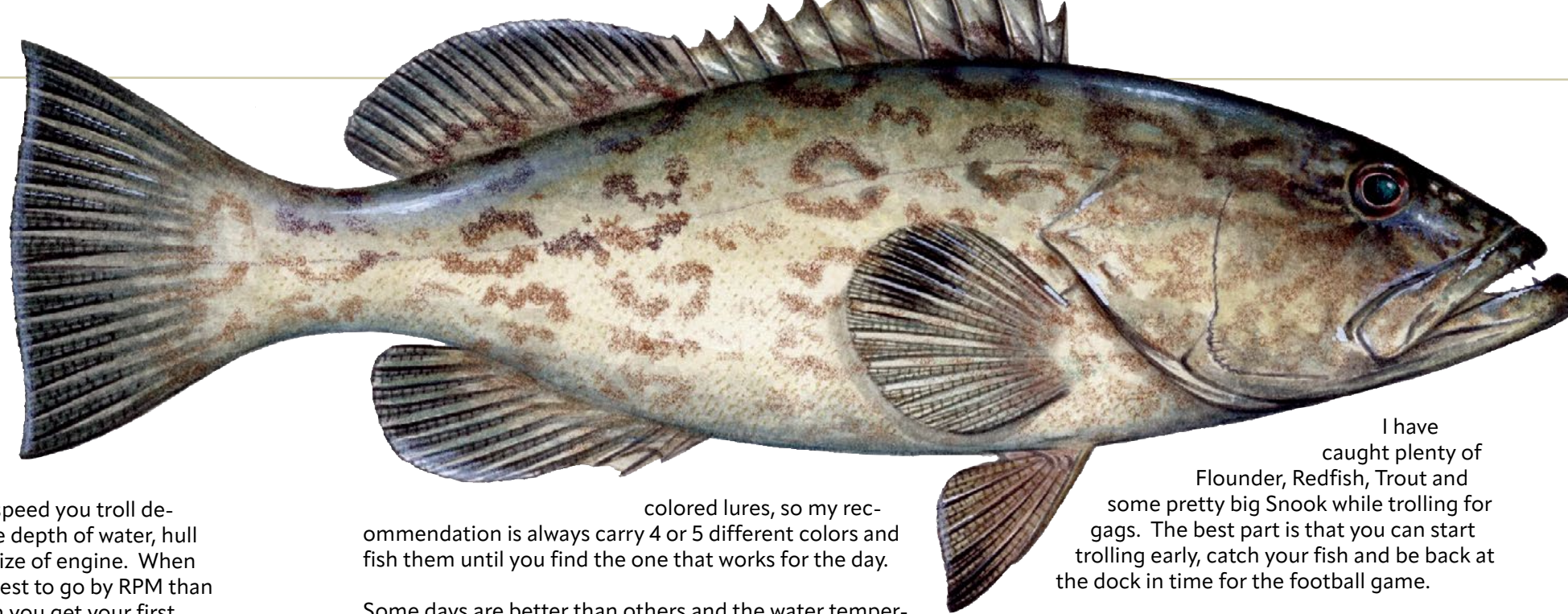


October is my let's do something different month and I spend at least part of my charter or my fun fishing day trying to catch Gag Grouper by trolling in the canals from lower Tampa Bay to Clearwater Beach. First, incoming tide is best and you need to troll the canals that hold at least 5 feet or more of water at low tide. Second, study your area first as not all canals hold fish. Find the ones that have structure as builders will dump rocks and left over concrete rubble around the docks as protection against erosion. Over the years these structures become artificial reefs or feeding stations for all species attracting small bait fish, crabs and shrimp. This also makes a great stomping ground for Grouper during the fall and winter months.

There are many manufacturers of great trolling lures for Grouper. We all have our preference and mine happens to be Manns

stretch 15 Plus. This lure works best between 6 to 15 feet of water; perfect for trolling docks. The speed you troll depends on the depth of water, hull design and size of engine. When trolling it's best to go by RPM than speed. When you get your first strike make a mental note of your RPM and stick with it. And since a change in tide movement or wind could affect your speed and you might need to change your RPM accordingly.

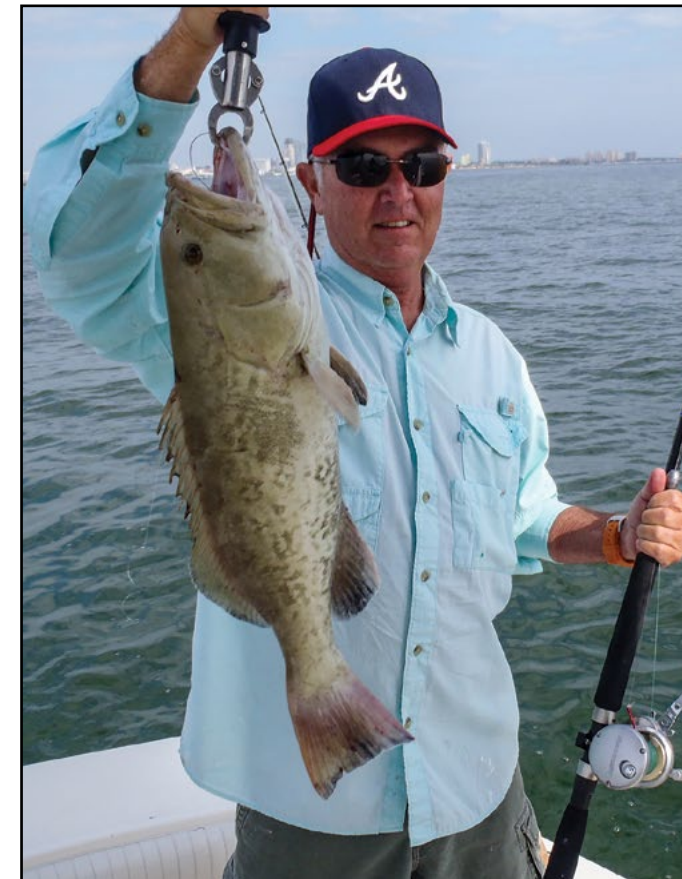
Try keeping the lure as close as possible to the outside edges of the docks, and watch the tip of your rod because you will want the lure to bump the bottom once in a while and this tells you you're on target. I always troll with two rods and each one has a different color lure, some days blue works and others they only touch green



colored lures, so my recommendation is always carry 4 or 5 different colors and fish them until you find the one that works for the day.

Some days are better than others and the water temperature has a lot to do with the bite. The cooler the water temperature, the better the bite.

Work an area more than once because sometimes "Mr. Gag" just didn't get there in time for a meal. Your second run through gives him a chance and you a second shot of landing a prize catch.



I have caught plenty of Flounder, Redfish, Trout and some pretty big Snook while trolling for gags. The best part is that you can start trolling early, catch your fish and be back at the dock in time for the football game.

MY FAVORITE GROUPE TACKLE

- OKUMA Cedros 7' Medium Rod
- OKUMA 6000 Azores Reel
- 40# FINS Windtamer Line
- No Leader-Lure to braid

- Rapala Shadow Rap Shad
The Rapala Shadow Rap Shad Shallow Trolling Lure only dives to 5-feet and imitates the action of a wounded shad. Great Grouper candy.

- Yo-Zuri Crystal 3D Minnow Deep Diver
This lure dives to 13 feet, which is the perfect!

- Manns Stretch 15 PLUS
When slow trolled in the deeper canals, these are one of my favorite plugs.

- Bass Assassin Saltwater Sea Shad
Classic saltwater fishing lure that works great when trolling for Grouper too. The rubber tail action imitates a frantic bait fish trying to escape a hungry fish.

Now get out there and catch some Grouper! 🎣

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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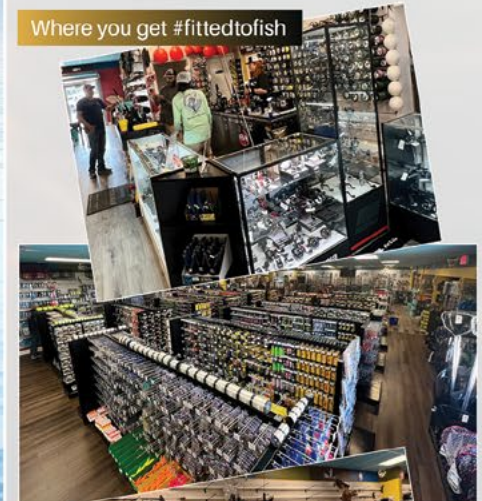
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