

FLORIDA'S COMPLIMENTARY SPORTSMAN'S PUBLICATION

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RANDOM THOUGHTS

Considering the weather we've had these last couple of months, I'm beginning to think Floridians are being punished for all of the winters that we tortured our Northern friends by posting pics of our beautiful sunny winter weather for them to see while freezing their butts off. I really could do without any more hurricanes, floods or plagues. It really rose to the level of a serious problem for me when the hurricanes caused me to have to cancel my planned trip to fish a tournament at Crocodile Bay in Costa Rica; my favorite place in the world.

In reality, I was very fortunate through all of this. We got pretty badly flooded at Belle Harbour Marina, but we are close to being back to normal now and thankfully, it left my house alone. I really feel bad for so many others who lost everything.

You can probably see that I'm struggling to find any humor in all of this, but somehow, we have to try to maintain a sense of humor and always look on the bright side of life!! As a result of spending so much quality time bonding during the storms cooped up inside together, my new French Bulldog Puppy, Mac, was very successful at teaching Flip the Bird, my African Gray Parrot, how to throw a barking fit, just like a Frenchie. Flip also heard Mac's name screamed so many times that she now screams at Mac just like I do. I must say that it is most fortunate that Mac is one of the cutest creatures on the face of the earth, because otherwise there are times that I might just have to kill him. No, I could never really do such a thing, but in the 14 years since we had a puppy, I sure forgot how hard it can be. As a result of this acquisition I have discovered that there are some advantages to getting a bit smaller dog than I had in the past. Particularly, little, short legs can still run amazingly fast and bounce off of walls and furniture, but they can't do it for very long before burning all of their energy and crashing in a heap on the floor for a couple hours. I have learned that, if he is being annoying, I can scream and clap my hands like an idiot, and he will initiate what I like to call Mac Attack mode. This involves running around like a chicken with its head cut off for 5 minutes or so and then becoming a sweet quiet puppy, other than the heavy breathing, belching and farting that is standard operating procedure for a Frenchy.

At any rate, I haven't had a chance to do any fishing recently, but I hope to soon. I see some anglers having pretty good success lately, so I think it's a good time to go, if you can catch a day without too much wind. With Christmas on the horizon, it's also time to be picking out gifts for your angler friends and relatives. I picked out a few of the best options for you to consider.

- **There's Fishinopoly, the game that will reel you in hook line and sinker. It's Perfect for those foul weather days when you can't be out on the water.**
- **There is also a Joe Biden Topwater fishing lure that they can use to catch the really big ones!!**
- **There are an amazing array of different games and items intended to allow you to enjoy fishing in the toilet. I'm not sure that I entirely buy into the concept, apparently it is for our easily amused friends. At any rate, I'm not gonna be cooking anything up from one of these expeditions.**
- **Besides these excellent options, a nice charter fishing trip with a skilled Captain can make a really great Christmas gift.**

Flip the Bird and I wish you Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, we hope the weather is better for 2025.

Merle & Flip



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ON THE COVER: Florida's Gulf Coast in December equals cool weather and a hot bite! Milan Fedorchak took part with a nice West coast Grouper caught on a recent trip offshore. Read more on page 10 of this issue!

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END THE YEAR WITH VARIETY!

by Captain George Hastick

December is a great time for inshore fishing in Tampa Bay. With cooler days, the water temperatures will drop and anglers can expect some exciting opportunities to catch a variety of species throughout Tampa Bay and the surrounding areas. In December, the water temperature drops usually between 67-71 degrees, which triggers the migration of many cooler water species into the bay. This means there will be plenty of action for a variety of species, on various live and artificial baits.

One of the most sought-after inshore species during this time is the larger Spotted Seatrout that show up during the cooler months. These fish are known for their aggressive feeding habits; especially their explosive topwater strikes, making them a thrilling target for anglers. They can be found in shallow grass flats, around oyster bars and mangrove shorelines during the warmer days and in deeper water on the colder days. Using live baits, such as Shrimp or small Scaled Sardines, and artificial lures like soft plastics or



topwater plugs can yield great results. I especially like Saltwater Assassin soft plastic "Lit'l P&V", in the color "chicken on a chain" on a 1/4 oz jighead or Mirrolure's topwater MirroMullet in the skin series. These two lures will cover everything you need for success with Trout.

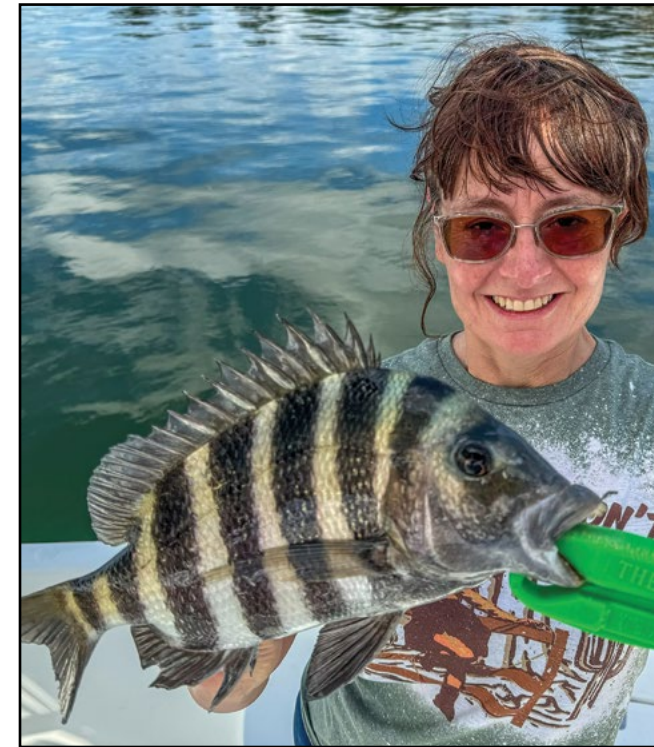
Redfish are another popular target in Tampa Bay during the cooler months and December is no exception. These strong fish can be found in the same areas as trout in good grass flats with oyster mounds, under the mangroves and docks. They tend to gather in schools, making it possible to catch multiple fish in one spot. Using live bait or lures that mimic crabs, shrimp or baitfish can entice them to bite.

Snook are also a great catch in Tampa Bay. Although their bite can decrease during the winter months, there are still op-



portunities to target them. They can be found around bridges, docks, and deeper mangrove shorelines along with warmer water from rivers and power plant outflows. Using live bait, such as pilchards or pinfish, or lures that resemble them, like jerkbaits, swimbaits like a "Sea Shad" or a "MirroDine" can increase your chances of hooking one.

Other species that like the cooler water that we target in December include Sheepshead, Flounder, and Black Drum. These fish can be found around struc-



tures like docks, bridges, and rocky areas. Using live shrimp or small crabs as bait, can be the best bet in enticing them to bite. I like to use just enough weight to keep the bait on the bottom.

It's important to remember that fishing regulations and size limits should always be followed to keep the fishery in good condition for the future. Additionally, checking weather and tide conditions before heading out is crucial for a successful and safe fishing trip.

Overall, December offers plenty of opportunities for inshore fishing in Tampa Bay. Whether you're targeting Trout, Redfish, Snook, or other species, the cooler temperatures make it an ideal time to enjoy some angling adventures in this productive. ▣

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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DECEMBER ON FLORIDA'S GULF COAST

by Captain Justin Searcy

December is a magical time on Florida's Gulf Coast. As the holiday season approaches, the cooler weather brings not only festive celebrations but also some of the best fishing opportunities of the year. Whether you're enjoying a Christmas boat parade or casting a line, the Gulf Coast offers a unique blend of natural beauty and holiday cheer.

One of my favorite sights this time of year is the annual Christmas boat parades. These community events light up the waterways with elaborately decorated boats, reminding us how lucky we are to celebrate the holidays surrounded by the stunning beauty of Florida's waters. But while these twinkling lights adorn the evenings, the daytime is perfect for chasing some spectacular fish.

With cooler temperatures settling in, the water clarity improves dramatically. The chilly nights

and mild days result in gin-clear water on the flats and around the mangroves. This is prime time for sight casting, especially to big speckled trout. December is when these fish are in their element, moving into the shallows to take advantage of the seasonally active baitfish.

If you've never tried sight casting to trout in crystal-clear water, December is the month to do it. Look for them laying in sandy potholes or cruising along the edges of sea-grass beds. A live shrimp or a soft plastic jerkbait can be deadly, but remember to keep your presentation subtle—clear water means wary fish. There's nothing like seeing a big trout settled just ahead, making your cast, and watching it inhale your bait.

And trout aren't the only fish lighting up the flats this month. Cobia start making their presence known in December, often cruising shallow waters and following



stingrays or sharks. These powerful fish provide an exciting challenge for anglers ready to test their skills and gear. Spotting a cobia in shallow water is an adrenaline rush like no other, and getting one to eat is just the beginning of the fight. Bring heavier tackle

when targeting these bruisers, as their strength and stamina will test your limits.

While sight casting is a highlight of December fishing, don't overlook other opportunities. Redfish are still active, particularly in the backwaters, and the cooler temperatures can concentrate them in deeper channels and basins. Sheepshead, known as "convict fish" for their striped appearance, are another great option this time of year. They gather around docks, pilings, and rocky structures, offering a fun and reliable bite.

The Gulf Coast's inshore fishing is nothing short of incredible in December, but it's the combination of fishing and the holiday season that makes this time of year so special. Whether you're heading out for a morning on the flats or enjoying an evening by the water with family and friends, December is a reminder of why we love this coastal lifestyle.



As you're planning your outings, don't forget to take in the sights and sounds of the season. The Christmas boat parades are a unique tradition that showcases the tight-knit communities of Florida's Gulf Coast. Whether you're on a boat or watching from shore, the festive atmosphere is contagious.

December is the perfect time to reflect on the year, enjoy the holiday spirit,

and, of course, catch some incredible fish. So grab your gear, hit the water, and make the most of this beautiful season on Florida's Gulf Coast.

From my family to yours, I wish you tight lines and a very Merry Christmas! 🎣

- Captain Justin Searcy



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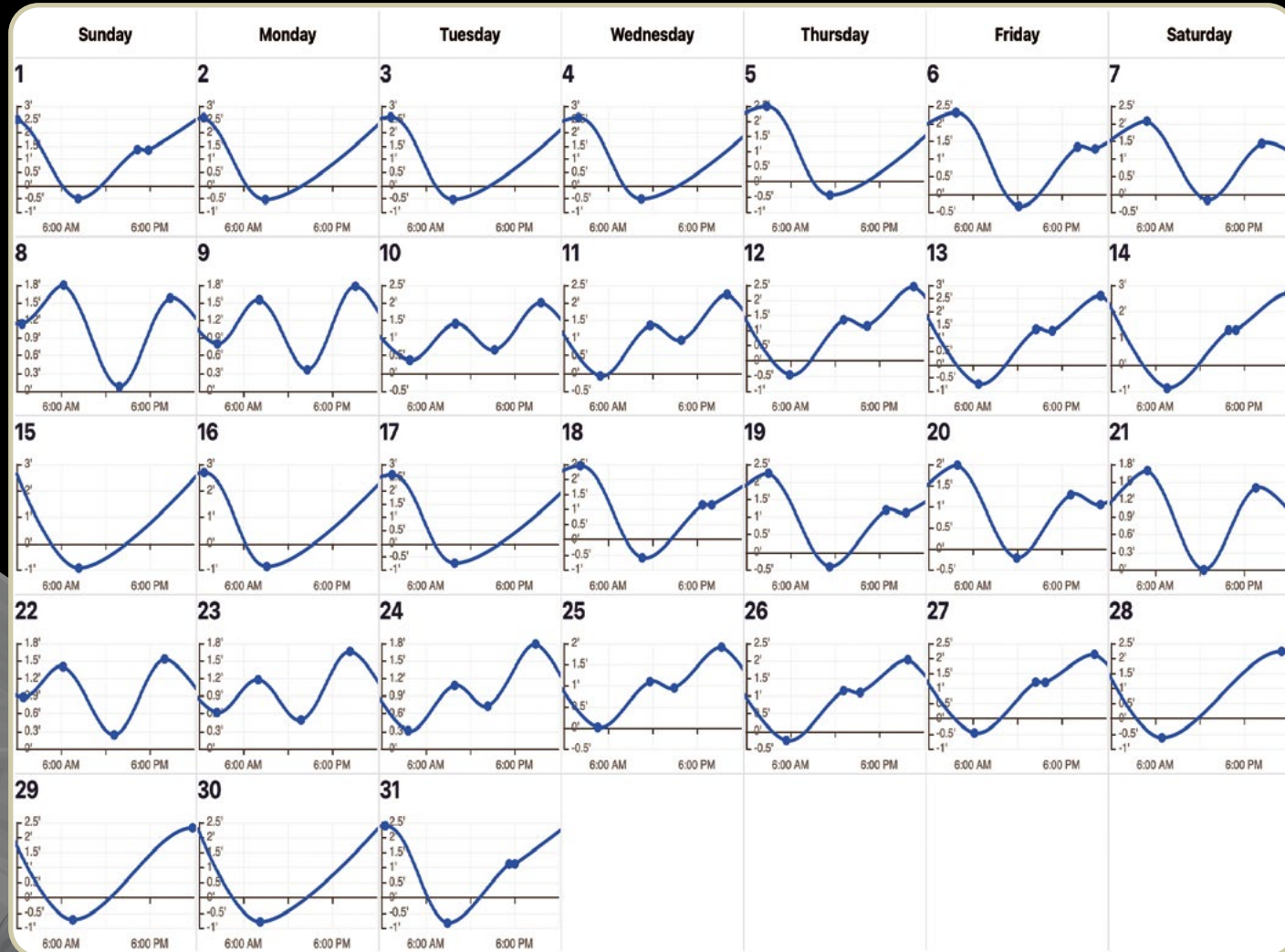
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Conversions for Clearwater Beach Area

High	Low	Location
-0:02	-0:10	Dunedin, St. Joseph Sound
-0:05	-0:15	Anclote Key, South End
+0:42	+0:42	Tarpon Springs, Anclote River
-0:07	-0:03	North Anclote Key
+0:41	+0:39	Old Port Tampa
+0:33	+0:53	Gulf Harbors
+0:42	+1:05	Hwy 19 Bridge, Pithlachascotee River
+0:50	+1:35	New Port Richey, Pithlachascotee River
+0:36	+0:43	Hudson, Hudson Creek

Conversions for St. Marks River Area

High	Low	Location
+0:23	+1:18	Everglades City
-1:17	-1:03	Cape Romano
-1:04	-1:08	Marco Island
-1:59	-2:04	Naples
-0:46	-0:09	Indian Bay
-0:59	-0:42	Bayport
-0:25	+0:23	Withlacoochee River

Conversions for Tampa Bay Area

High	Low	Location
+0:49	+0:58	Gandy Bridge
+1:38	+1:55	Courtney Campbell Cswy.
+1:38	+1:55	Safety Harbor
+0:20	+0:22	Ballast Point
+0:07	+0:26	Hillsborough Bay
+0:21	+0:29	McKay Bay Entrance
+0:41	+0:39	Old Port Tampa
-2:27	-2:24	Egmont Key
-2:53	-2:46	Anna Maria, Bradenton Bch
-2:10	-2:19	Anna Maria, City Pier
-1:24	-0:55	Bradenton, Manatee River
-0:30	+0:14	Redfish Pt., Manatee River
-2:22	-1:58	Mullet Key Channel, Skyway
+0:08	+0:17	Shell Point
-0:22	-0:29	Point Pinellas
-1:34	-1:30	Pass-a-Grille Beach
-1:32	-1:05	Gulfport
-1:18	-0:44	St. Pete Beach Causeway
-2:14	-2:04	John's Pass
-1:40	-1:18	Madeira Beach Causeway
-2:00	-1:25	Cortez, Sarasota Bay
-1:38	-0:58	Sarasota Bay
-2:02	-1:38	Venice Inlet
-0:57	-0:40	Englewood, Lemon Bay
-1:27	-0:59	Placida, Gasparilla Sound
+1:38	+1:56	El Jobean, Myakka River
+1:52	+2:30	Shell Point, Peace River
+1:06	+1:27	Punta Gorda, Charlotte Hbr.
-1:12	-1:56	Boca Grande, Charlotte Hbr.
-0:19	+0:26	Pineland, Pine Island
+0:43	+1:28	Matlacha Pass
-0:55	-1:14	Redfish Pass, Captiva Is.
-0:46	-0:20	Captiva, Pine Island Sound
-2:20	-2:28	Captiva, Gulf Side
-0:25	+0:16	Galt Isle, Pine Island Sound
-0:30	-0:44	St. James City, Pine Island
+2:08	+2:44	Fort Myers
+1:15	+2:02	Cape Coral Bridge
+1:08	+1:40	Iona Shores
+0:51	+0:42	Indian Rocks Beach, ICW

DESTINATION FOR OUTDOOR ENTERTAINMENT

Our goal is to educate on skinny water fishing. When-Where-How To also introduce new products related to skinny water fishing. From light tackle to fly fishing in the waters of Florida.



HOST: Capt. Sergio Atanes

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FWCFR FLORIDA WEST COAST FISHING REPORT



HOST: Capt. Sergio Atanes • CO-HOST: Capt. George Hastick



LIVE MONDAYS!
7:00 PM - 8:00 PM



FLORIDIANS LOVE TO SKI!

by Misty Wells

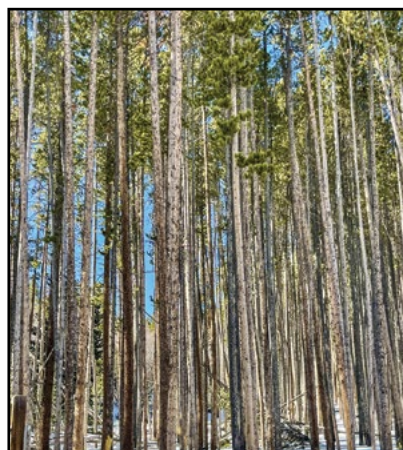
Floridians love to ski. Yes, you heard me right! Over 750,000 Floridians flock to winter states each year to ski, snowboard and enjoy winter sports. Just because Floridians love the beaches, outdoor water sports, fishing and sunshine doesn't mean we don't want a little snow in our lives. Every year Floridians pack up and flock to Winter states like Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Idaho; just to name a few.



My personal favorite winter state is Colorado, where I lived for 8 years of my life before returning

back to Florida. Colorado really seems to have it all when it comes to skiing with over 27 ski resorts and hundreds of miles of terrain for all skill levels. Before I moved to Colorado, I had only skied once before and let's say "I was not winning any medals" on that trip. For a first time winter visitor there can be a lot of misconceptions about planning a trip to a ski town or the mountains in the winter, so let's jump in! Getting to Colorado from Florida is easy, as there are a lot of direct flights and a lot of off-season deals to be had. Like any destination there is peak season, offseason and shoulder season, so just take a bit of time to look at different deals before planning a trip. Just like Florida, most of these towns offer offseason and preseason rates and some great deals for Veterans.

My daughter, Hudson and I decided we were going to plan a trip to Breckenridge for a "girls trip". I looked into flights from Tampa to Denver on Southwest and they were less than \$400 roundtrip and it was non-stop right into Denver. We chose Breckenridge because



we could be there from the airport in less than 2 hours and the drive is very easy, beautiful and scenic. Denver Airport is very easy to navigate, so we grabbed our bags and rental car and we were off to the mountains. We chose a great resort in Breckenridge called Beaver Run Resort and we were excited to give it a try. Beaver Run Resort had amazing off-season rates for our early season trip and their location is right on the mountain. Beaver Run was perfect for our trip because we were looking for outdoor adventure, but we also wanted to relax and enjoy some resort amenities.

A big fallacy about heading off to a ski town is that there is nothing to do if you are not downhill skiing, but that is definitely not the case. Breckenridge is a fun town with a very rich history. Home to the largest historic district in Colorado, Breckenridge's rich and colorful history is full of gold finds and mining, exploration and adventure, brothels, saloons, booms and busts. Founded in 1859 by a small group of prospectors, the town's "Gold Rush" brought droves of settlers seeking their fortunes.

Breckenridge was settled as a gold-mining camp in 1859 and has gone through a series of booms and busts typical of Colorado's mining towns. In the 1960s developers revived the town after decades of stagnation by starting the development of a ski town. There are many outdoor adventures that go hand in hand with a ski town in addition to downhill skiing. During mine and Hudson's trip the plan was to seek out outdoor adventures off the beaten path. After checking in to Beaver Run, we decided to take a look around this iconic resort. Beaver Run has numerous restaurants, a great steakhouse, spa, game room, indoor/outdoor pool, hot tubs and lots of outlets and bars. On day one, we enjoyed checking out the town of Breckenridge and took a ride on the free Gondola up the mountain to one of the main ski lifts. On the way up the mountain, we noticed a Nordic Track ski area, so we added that to our list of mountain outdoor activities for the next day.



going through the woods and getting one heck of a workout. I highly recommend it. Cross country skiing is a winter sport where skiers use poles and skis to move across snow-covered terrain. The equipment is much more comfortable than downhill equipment, as the boots are flexible and attach to long, skinny skis. Cross country skiing is typically done on rolling landscapes that are gentler than downhill skiing terrain.

Nordic Track Skiing is cross country skiing with very minimal downhill motion so for folks that are not ready to hit the big slopes this is a great way to spend some time on the snow. The next day we spent about 4 hours on the Nordic Track trails



At the resort we were told about Carter Park, a community park in town that has a great sledding hill. One of the nice things about Carter Park is it is not just for the residents; they welcome tourists like us and have free sleds. We spent half the day sledding down the family-friendly hills and meeting all types of locals and visitors. One thing I will say about all these great outdoor activities is it will wear you out fast! I went to bed by 9 p.m. every night.

The town of Breckenridge is full of great breweries, restaurants, shops, art and all types

of interesting people that welcome visitors with open arms. We only had time to stay for 4 days but it was a fun, exciting and sun filled trip. I wanted to share this short journey we had to Colorado with you in hopes that you might think about planning a trip to Breckenridge or another amazing Colorado town soon. We plan on coming back again this winter and will for sure look to plan a summer outdoor adventure trip, as well. I personally recommend Beaver Run Resort; the property and staff are 5-star all the way, just as wonderful as the scenery. Tell them Misty sent you. ☑

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





MAKING FISHING DREAMS COME TRUE

The Jose Wejbe Spanish Fly Memorial
Foundation's Work with Veterans

The ocean has long been a source of healing, connection, and adventure. For many veterans, it represents a place of solace and renewal after the challenges of military service. The Jose Wejbe Spanish Fly Memorial Foundation has embraced this transformative power, creating opportunities for veterans to rediscover joy, camaraderie, and purpose through fishing.



A LEGACY OF PASSION & GIVING

The Foundation's story begins with the incredible legacy of Jose Wejbe, the legendary fishing captain and host of the beloved TV show Spanish Fly. Known for his infectious passion for fishing and the ocean, Jose spent years sharing his love of the sport with audiences worldwide. But beyond the cameras, Jose was deeply committed to helping others, often going out of his way to mentor and inspire those around him.



After Jose's untimely passing in 2012, his daughter Krissy founded the Jose Wejbe Spanish Fly Memorial Foundation to honor his spirit and continue his work. The Foundation embodies Jose's ethos of generosity and adventure by focusing on creating meaningful experiences for those who need it most. Among its key initiatives is its work with veterans, a cause that holds special significance to the Foundation.

FISHING AS HEALING FOR VETERANS

Transitioning from military service to civilian life can be a profound challenge for many veterans. The physical and emotional toll of service often leaves scars that take time and support to heal. Recognizing this, the Foundation has made it a mission to give back to those who have served by connecting them with the therapeutic benefits of fishing.

Through guided fishing trips and mentorship opportunities, the Foundation provides veterans with a chance to escape the stresses of daily life and reconnect with nature. These experiences go beyond catching fish; they offer a unique environment for building relationships, finding inner peace, and rediscovering a sense of purpose.

For many veterans, a day on the water isn't just a recreational activity—it's a pathway to healing. The calm rhythm of the waves, the thrill of a catch, and the shared stories among fellow anglers create an atmosphere of support and understanding.



UPCOMING TRIPS: SUPPORTING 13 VETERANS THIS DECEMBER

This December, the Foundation is thrilled to welcome 13 veterans for a series of fishing trips in the beautiful waters of the Florida Keys. These trips are designed to create unforgettable moments, whether it's the excitement of landing a trophy fish, the peace of being surrounded by nature, or the camaraderie of being part of a supportive community.

For these veterans, the ocean will be more than just a fishing destination—it will be a place to reflect, reconnect, and rejuvenate. This opportunity wouldn't be possible without the generosity of supporters and the dedication of our volunteers and captains who give their time & expertise to make these trips so special.



expertise to donors and sponsors who believe in the mission, every contribution plays a role in creating these life-changing experiences.

If you're a veteran who could benefit from the program or know someone who might, the Foundation encourages you to reach out. And for those who want to help make these fishing dreams come true, there are plenty of ways to get involved, from volunteering to donating or sponsoring a trip.



STORIES OF IMPACT

One veteran shared how their trip with the Foundation changed their outlook on life:

"I hadn't felt that kind of peace in years. Being on the water, feeling connected to something bigger than myself, and sharing laughs with people who understood—it was exactly what I needed to start healing."

These moments of connection and joy underscore the Foundation's commitment to making a difference, one fishing trip at a time.

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At its core, the Jose Wejbe Spanish Fly Memorial Foundation's work with veterans is about much more than fishing. It's about creating moments of connection, resilience, and hope—values that Jose himself championed throughout his life.

For more information on how to support or participate in the Foundation's veteran programs, visit josewejbefoundation.org. Together, we can help more veterans experience the healing power of the ocean and the joy of fishing. 🎣



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TALES FROM THE OLD GUY

by David Mallory

The past few months, we have talked about Snook, Redfish, Sailfish and other bigger fish. This month, we change it up and try for Silver Trout. People ask, "Why do you waste time fishing for those?" I can give you a few good answers: they are fun to fight, they are relatively easy to catch, they really shine in the sun and they are good to eat. Do you need more reasons?

In the fall, when the water starts cooling down to the high 60s or less, we ask Captain George if we can go after Silver Trout. He likes to wait until conditions are right, so we can make the best of our time. A fun couple we like to spend time with are Dr. Albert Li and Denise Li, PhD, a paradox (sorry). We have done cruises, hockey games, fishing and dinners with them; all very enjoyable.

On this day, our captain said the time was now. We asked the Li's to go with us and they agreed. The captain likes to wait until the sun is high and the wind is low, so we always fish for other monsters before going to the trout. This time we tried for Sheepshead and Black Sea Bass. We caught a few



Sea Bass, (one was just over 15 inches), a Mangrove Snapper and two Sheepshead. We already had at least two meals for the four of us, so we thought we should go to the Trout.

George said the tide and wind looked good, so we journeyed over to where the Trout should be. Using the depth finder, he found a school of fish and thought they were Trout. He moved the boat around so we were over the middle of the school. He put jigs on each line with white, yellow and pink being the choices. I brought my own double jig, hoping to catch two at a time! I had a yellow and a white jig.

Albert and Denise took the port side, so Pauline and I took the starboard side. Albert always likes to be the first bait in the water to catch the hungriest fish. He did! Three of us started catching trout but Denise was catching Butterfish. We never could figure that out. She was doing the same thing we were and in the same place! Maybe her Pink jig looked better to a butterfish and not to our targeted Silver Trout?

We started keeping just the bigger fish and had been fishing the trout for about an hour when a Florida Fish and Wildlife boat came into the bay and started watching us very closely. George



took of his jacket so they could see his official guide shirt. They could see we were catching silver Trout so they didn't bother us anymore. We were allowed to keep 100 pounds! No problem. They knew we wouldn't be keeping that many fish. I did catch two fish at once on my double jig, twice. That proved that there were a lot of hungry fish down there, both Trout and Butterfish. We thought that somebody on shore was watching us and called Fish & Wildlife to tell them we were keeping too many fish.

After a while, Captain George said our time was up. We agreed because we had many meals of fresh fish and George had a lot of fish to clean. It was another "George" day; many fish of different kinds, many meals and four happy customers. It just doesn't get any better than that! ▣

- David Mallory



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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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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.

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Captain Sergio Atanes

It's a great month to find new fishing spots with clean and clear water. You can spot those deepwater grass flats rock piles around docks and oyster bars not seen during summer months. Live shrimp on a jighead fished around

rock ledges inside Tampa Bay can produce very big Sheepshead and Snook. Redfish bite gets hot around the docks with deepwater canals. A live shrimp with 1/0 circle hook and a "number 4" split shot works great once you get them started. Dead shrimp will work, as well. I always take some fresh, dead shrimp as a backup during these cooler months.



Captain George Hastick

December can be a great month to fish if we do not get too many severe back-to-back cold fronts. This month Redfish will be a good target along the mangroves and docks and don't be surprised if you catch some Black Drum.

Larger Trout will start to move into a variety of spots from deeper shell and coral bottoms to shallow grass flats on the warmer days. The cooler water will be the start of more and larger Sheepshead moving in, with the larger ones showing up as the water temperature really starts to drop. December is also a good time to try to catch some Flounder.

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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WADE FISHING ACCESSORY WISH LIST

by Dave Ulgenalp

Do you think you have everything necessary to be the best wade fisherman you can be? Maybe you do, but just to make sure, let me share a few accessories with you that might take your game to the next level. None of them are essential, but it's likely there will be times when you wish you had them with you.

Fish Grip Jr.: \$11.95

www.thefishgrip.net

The Fish Grip Jr. is a great tool to have when you hook fish that have a mouth full of teeth, sharp fins or are too big to handle with-

out a bit of help. It's light, durable and easily attaches to your wading bag, sling or belt loop. With the Fish Grip Jr, you can get away with not bringing or using a net most of the time and I always have one attached to my wading bag. It gets a 4.6 star rating on Amazon.com.



H2OX Floating Waders Net: \$19.99
Academy Sports

I don't usually bring a net when I'm wading as I try to keep the gear I use to a minimum and can usually manage to land the fish I hook without one. However, there are times when I wish I had a net and have lost some big fish that I wouldn't have if I did. This net floats, is light, has rubberized netting, a curved handle that makes it easy and comfortable to use, and is big enough to land even the biggest trout, snook and redfish. It also has a magnetized handle and lanyard to keep the net attached to your body until you need it. This net hasn't received enough reviews to offer a reliable rating on the Academy Sports website but at \$19.99 is worth a try in my opinion.



Foreverlast G2 Pro Stringer: \$24.99
Academy Sports

If you're planning on keeping fish, you will need a stringer or fish bag. A stringer is cheaper and easier to bring along than a fish bag but sticking the pin through a fish's mouth often causes the fish to bleed, which may result in attracting the attention of sharks. For this reason, you'll be glad this stringer has a quick release system that allows you to unhook the stringer if necessary. The snag free cable system doesn't kink or snag which allows for quick and easy culling of fish. The attached float allows you to keep track of where the stringer and



fish are so you can avoid getting your feet or line tangled in it. If you don't want to spend \$25 on a stringer, you can always buy an inexpensive nylon cord with an aluminum stick pin, which will get the job done. I suggest you buy a stringer that's at least 10 feet long. The G2 Pro Stringer gets a 4.75 star rating on Academy Sports website.



Foreverlast 15g Fish Net Bag: \$41.99
Academy Sports

A fish bag is an alternative to a stringer with some significant benefits. It's much easier to cull fish as you get to your limit and want to replace a smaller fish with a bigger one. It's also much less harmful to the fish that you are replacing and there's less bleeding as there's no need to poke a hole in the fish's jaw. Lastly, it's easier to transport your catch in a bag than on a stringer. The bag floats on a 4-foot tether cord, has durable rubberized netting and a hook and loop closure that makes it easy to add or remove fish. This 15-gallon fish bag received a 4.6 star rating on the Academy Sports website.



Quik Measure Pro Fishing Rod Ruler: \$9.95
Amazon

A 36" adhesive ruler for your fishing rod, the Quik Measure Pro Fish Ruler is \$9.95 for a 2-Pack. I have one of these transparent ruler decals on all of my

rods and use it frequently. It makes it easy to measure your fish when wading, is easy to install and will last years if applied properly to your rod. At less than \$5, it's a no brainer to add one of these 36" ruler decals to all of your rods. The Quick Measure Pro is made by a family-owned company in the USA and gets a 4.4 star rating on Amazon.com.



While none of these accessories are essential, they're reasonably priced and you can be sure that there will be times when you wish you had them. With the holidays coming, add them to your wish list. ☑

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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DEPENDS ON THE WEATHER

by Captain Sergio Atanes

December brings many surprises to anglers of Tampa Bay and it all depends on the weather. If it's a warm month, we can count on large schools of Redfish around the many mangrove islands and Trout on the shallow flats. A warm month can keep many species such as Mackerel and Cobia in our bay waters which are usually gone by early November.

A cold December is all a different story all together. Look for Redfish around deep water docks using live Shrimp with a 1/0 circle hook and a

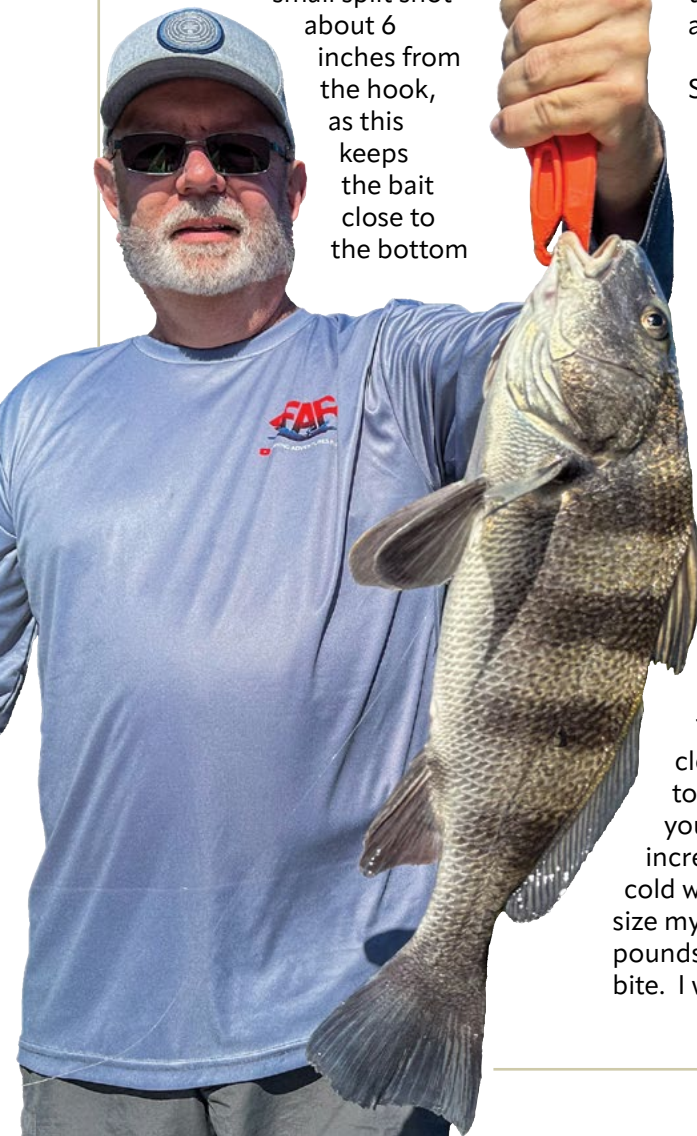
small split shot about 6 inches from the hook, as this keeps the bait close to the bottom

where the water is warmer and the fish are most active.

Flounder is another species you can count on around docks this time of year. For them, I prefer using a small jighead with a small live shrimp hooked through the tail (not the head) and dragged along the bottom. Cast the jig towards the shoreline parallel to the dock and bounce it along the bottom until you reach the front of the dock. Continue this method from one dock to another, as this allows you to cover the entire area around a dock where the Flounder are waiting to ambush their prey.

Snook should have made their way up the rivers and creeks looking for warmer water. Remember that Snook slow down on their bite this time of year, so cut bait works great on the bottom. Live medium shrimp with the tail cut off is another great bait to use. I prefer once again to use a small split shot to keep the bait on the bottom and in many cases I will work the shrimp along the edges of the river or creek bed where the Snook are most likely waiting for food.

The cold water means clear water, so you will need to drop down on the size of your leader and tackle to help increase the bite. I notice in cold water months I have to down size my leader in some cases to 15 pounds in order to get the fish to bite. I would start with 25 pound



test fluorocarbon leader and work down from there until you find what's working for you. The lighter leader means you must take a little more time in fighting the fish but the increase on the number of bites is worth it.

Artificial baits like "Saltwater Assassin P&V" are a killer bait for Speckled Trout and Redfish. Using artificial baits increases your chances by

being able to cover more ground. Work edges of canals and deep oyster bars and don't be afraid to change colors daily. "Chicken on a Chain" could be the hot ticket one day, then "Pilchard" the next day, so change often until you find the color that's hot for the day.

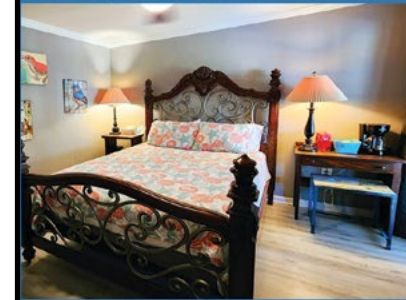
WINTER HOT SPOTS:

- The cut channel due North from Courtney Campbell causeway boat ramp.

- The old dredge hole by the 4th Street Bridge and the interstate and the sunken barge that sits on the edge of Big Island Channel the same area of St. Pete.
- Hot water outflow at both the St. Pete and Apollo power plants. Some of the areas are OFF limits, so please be careful.
- Skyway Bridge pilings for large Sheepshead using live shrimp on an incoming tide.
- The ledges inside Tampa Bay in 12 to 18 ft of water often produce big Sheepshead and Mangrove Snapper.
- Most artificial reefs inside the bay will produce some large Snook and Mangrove Snapper.

Happy Holidays and good luck! 🍀

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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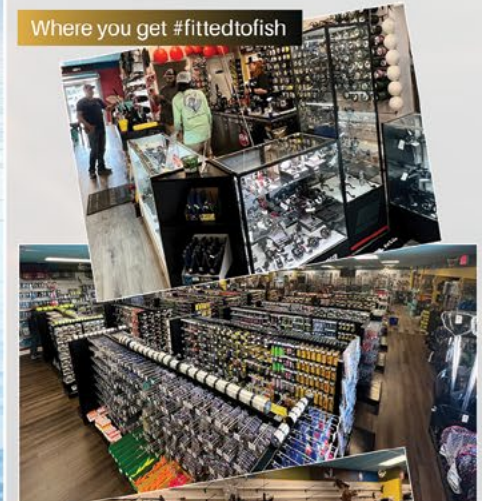
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