Big Bend Angler

The Quarterly Journal of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club
Volume 48, Number 1 Winter, 2015

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Volume 48, Number 1 Winter, 2015

Big Bend Angler

The Quarterly Journal of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club Founded 1968

Your GOFC Team

President:	Leroy Holmes
Vice President:	Hal Wilson
Secretary:	Jay Peacock
Treasurer:	Debby Knopf
Webmaster:	Carlos Morales

Your Big Bend Angler Team

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Offshore:	Wiley Horton

GOFC Information

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GOFC Meetings

When:

4th Tuesday of each month.
Fellowship begins at 7:00 PM,
program begins at 7:30 PM

Where:

U.F. College of Veterinary Medicine's New Lecture Hall

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Events Calendar

Monthly Meetings

Monthly club meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month (note that this is ***not*** the last Tuesday in those months having 5 Tuesdays). Fellowship begins at 7:00 p.m., with the meeting program beginning at 7:30. No monthly meetings are held in February, June, November or December, being replaced, respectively, by the the **Seafood and Awards Banquet**, **Fish Fry**, the **Cookout & Auction,** and your own Christmas holiday activities.

Your GOFC Board of Directors meets at 7:00 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at the Northwest Grill. Interested GOFC members are invited to attend.

Coming Events

The **January 27th monthly meeting** will feature Bill Lindberg, a professor in the UF Department of Fisheries who will talk about his research on groupers and artificial reefs in the Big Bend area. Bill has spoken to the Club on a number of occasions, and his talks are always informative and interesting. Also, bring your scales to the meeting for their annual re-certification.

The annual **Seafood and Awards Banquet** will be held on Friday, February 27th In lieu of the February monthly meeting. This event is hosted once again at the home of Ken and Debby Knopf. Richard McDavid and family will be continuing the tradition of providing great eats. Come celebrate GOFC award winners with great eats and good company. The menu includes, stone crab claws, snow crab legs, shrimp, fried fish and an assortment of side dishes. Please bring a dessert to share and your favorite adult beverage (club will supply soda and bottled water).

Cover

The first place winner in the annual GOFC Phot Contest was made by Bob Hudson of his son, Rob, and grandson, Wes following a successful air boat fishing trip at Cedar Key last February. See more photos on page 14.

Red Grouper, Amberjack & Triggerfish Opened in Federal Waters

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council reminds recreational anglers that red grouper, greater amberjack, and gray triggerfish reopened January 1, 2015.

Red grouper has a 20 inch total length size limit. The bag limit will remain 4-fish per person until a pending rule reducing the bag limit to 2 fish is approved and implemented. The harvest of red grouper is prohibited when fishing beyond the 20-fathom break (waters deeper than 120 feet) from February 1 - March 31.

Gray triggerfish and greater amberjack have an annual seasonal closure of June 1 - July 31. Size and bag limits are as follows:

Gray triggerfish: 14 inch fork length, 2 per person/part of the 20-reef fish aggregate

Greater amberjack: 30 inch fork length, 1 per person.

Fishing is allowed year round for king and Spanish mackerel as well as for cobia.

T-Shirt Fire Sale

To make room for new GOFC merchandise we are blowing out the remaining stock of GOFC T-shirts at the ridiculously low price of $5.00! Lou Graf will have these for sale at the Oyster Roast and the January Meeting.

Our club must be full of big guys since we are out of most XXL sizes.

President's Message

By Leroy Holmes

I am excited to welcome you to a new year of fishing and fun! We have lots of activities planned that I am sure everyone will enjoy.

First of all, a great big thanks to everyone who showed up for our annual Oyster Roast, hosted by long time GOFC members Ed and Sheila Crapo at their home. Those of you who could not make it missed a great time.

The January meeting will feature Bill Lindberg, a professor in the U.F. Department of Fisheries who will talk about his research on groupers and artificial reefs in the Big Bend area. With any luck he will give us some new reef numbers!

There will be no monthly meeting in February. Instead, the annual Seafood and Awards Banquet will be held on Friday, February 27th at the home of Ken and Debby Knopf. Come enjoy some great seafood and celebrate our award winners. Ed Ellett promises to once again thoroughly embarass the Ellett Award winners!

Hope to see you at these events.

Gator Domino's is a Proud Sponsor of Doug Johnson's Reeling For Kids Celebrity Fishing Tournament.

Official Pizza of Gainesville Anglers.

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Doug Johnson's Reeling for Kid's Fishing Tournament August,22 2004

"Friends of the fisherman who hooked an Austin A40 in the Exeter Canal last week are already sick of hearing about the Cadillac that got away because it had bigger fins.."

— Author Unknown

Fishing Reports & Forecasts

All GOFC Members Are Invited to Submit Reports of Their Latest Fishing Trips

Our fishing report section include reports for the previous 3 months of fishing activity. In addition to our regular contributors, all GOFC members are urged to send us their reports for inclusion in the member reports section of the next quarter's issue of Big Bend Angler. By tracking these reports over the year, readers should gain a stronger understanding of how things change with the seasons and what to do about it, so that you too can catch your share of the big ones.

Short Cedar Key Grouper Trip

By Captain Brian Keil

I left Ponte Vedra (East Coast) at 5:30 a.m. to trailer *PLAN B* back to Cedar Key where it's normally kept. A front was supposed to push through Cedar Key later in the day so I was hoping that I'd get in a short pre-front grouper trip.

The plan was to do a quick shallow water grouper troll, so I could get to Gainesville by 6:00 p.m. for that night's Ducks Unlimited Banquet. As I was fishing by myself you won't see any great fish photos.

At 10:30 a.m. in Cedar Key the winds were light and the water was glassy. I didn't see a wave the whole day.

Stretch Plugs did the trick at the last stop!

I was headed to a favorite spot where I used to stone crab with the kids, about 7 miles offshore in 24 feet of water, but I didn't get to fish this spot as a boat was on the small set of rocks (go figure). I moved on as I didn't want to crowd him.

Pushing to 34 feet I hit a several old numbers, but I struggled finding any fish. I trolled some pretty good bottom, but my plugs didn't even get a sniff from the usually problematic black seabass or lizard fish. let alone a grouper. Totally untypical!

Not knowing the area where this fall's red tide went through, I was thinking maybe that was the problem. At 38 feet I switched over to bottom fishing, and I picked up a number of black seabass and white grunts for a fish fry.

Mixed in were a number of small red grouper plus 4 legal red grouper from 8 to 12 pounds – all released since the season is closed. It's hard to keep up with different coastal regulations that change frequently.

Although running late, I stopped at another favorite spot in 23 feet for a few minutes and trolled through the area. In fifteen minutes I had 3 grouper on the deck, keeping the largest two, and I then headed back in.

GOFC Auction Trip

By Captain Ed Ellett

In late November, Jay Peacock took Jack and Melvina Cutright on a GOFC Auction trip they won year before last. I was invited by the Cutrights to round out the crew.

Jay was an excellent host/Captain! We were all spoiled with his tackle preparation, boat preparation/clean up and Grouper fishing knowledge. He was most attentive, and, got in very little fishing himself. I'm sure this same scenario plays out when he fishes with his more regular partners Lou Graf, Hal Wilson...Lou, Hal, is that so?

Though I think he was somewhat disappointed that a limit of gags was not caught to close out the season, we all had a great time with plenty of action including two keeping gags and what may hold up to be the the largest flounder caught by a GOFC member for 2014.

Thank you Jack Cutright for including me, and, thank you Jay for being a great host. There sure are some nice, occasional, opportunities coming up at GOFC auction!

Holiday Son, Son in Law Visit – Time to Go Fishing

By Captain Ed Ellett

Out of town family visits often present a challenge when a fishing trip is in order. The old saying "good fortune is where luck and preparation intersect" comes to

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mind. I visited Texas Trailers, L&S Auto/Boat Trim, P&J Marine, Gary's Tackle Box and Brian's Boats in the months before the visit to cover the preparation part. Now if I can have a little weather and fishing luck!

My son, Cole, and his family, were visiting over Thanksgiving week from Nashville, TN, and, son-in-law, Bill, and his family from Jupiter, Fl. Between a wedding for my niece and various other commitments, Wednesday, November 24th was the only available day for the guys to go fishing.

In Gary Simpson's, Gainesville Sun, fishing article the week before there were enticing fishing reports from Cedar Key and Suwannee — weather conditions steered us to Suwannee.

We woke up Wednesday morning to the sound of rain on the roof. Rather than groan and go back to bed we all got up and checked the radar. The weather was moving from the Northwest to Southeast and we were heading to the Northwest. Clearing looked to be forthcoming. We donned rain gear, hooked up the boat and were on our way.

Our tradition was to stop on the way for breakfast in Old Town. To our disappointment, the restaurant we frequented in the past was closed/out of business. We settled for a nearby Hardees, and, still saw several of the former restaurant "regulars". By breakfast end the weather was starting to clear — no rain, yeah!

On arrival at Miller's Marina for launch, we did our good deed for the day. A gentleman was working his sunken boat to the ramp. We assisted with picking up ice chest, tackle box and paddle floating debris.

Make sure your bilge pump works or else this may happen!

The owner had been there for week with his family. Heavy rain the night before and a bilge pump malfunction are not a good combination! He did not have the most pleasant surprise when he woke up in the morning. The silver lining - it was their last day and they'd had excellent fishing during their week — mostly small reds, yet, he had caught several keepers.

I then questioned him thoroughly about where, when and how. My son and son in law thought my questioning was somewhat crass during the gentleman's misfortune. I explained this was expected behavior, the gentleman did not mind, and, he openly shared that they caught most of fish on live shrimp in deep holes. I don't think any profound secrets were passed on under the duress of my questioning. I think my son and son in law have forgiven me .

Ed's "boys" and their catch.

Millers had no live shrimp — with demand and weather conditions they were out. I had brought some mullet to try, had Gulp and various casting lures, yet, I still decided to buy a small bag of frozen shrimp. I visited with Bill Miller, he noted trout fishing had been slow and red fishing had been excellent.

We ran directly to Barnett Creek to get in before 10:30 a.m. low tide. We started casting Gulp in the mouth and were rewarded by a couple small reds plus Cole caught two 16" speckled trout. Bill had on a nice fish —

Beautiful redfish!

turned out to be a freshwater gar. Though we see them all the time, we rarely hook up — sure is a strange, prehistoric looking creature! As the day progressed we had more freshwater action.

By lunchtime we had worked to the middle of Barnett, and anchored in a deep area to have lunch after putting out some mullet on the bottom. Bill immediately hooked up and caught a nice, 3 pound freshwater catfish. First time a freshwater cat in Barnett Creek has ever been caught in my boat.

We lingered, but no further action, so moved on. We hit one more area in Barnett where we caught a red on every cast (with mullet and Gulp), yet, they were all small. The action was fun, but we left them biting and ran back into East Pass to finish up our day.

A few boats were fishing the Pass, but we didn't note any action. We did see a number of mullet jumping — good sign. We tried anchoring/fishing several spots to no avail other than another smaller freshwater cat. We anchored in a promising looking spot, but had no luck on Gulp or mullet.

I then broke out the frozen shrimp and immediately caught a legal red. Cole changed baits and immediately caught a legal red. Bill soon followed suit. We had about 20 minutes of fast action before they quit. I don't know if the school moved on, or, we caught what was there.

If I hadn't been taking so many pictures we probably would have caught our limit before the bite stopped. We ended up with

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Inshore Report

by Captain Russ Roy

It is a new year, 2015 to be exact, and we have already had a very successful GOFC oyster roast. Virgil's smoked trout fish dip, along with many other dishes, was outstanding.

The rest of us might want to start looking into getting together the ingredients for smoked trout. OK! So here is a culinary secret: to make smoked trout, you need trout. (It is rather a poorly kept secret.)

It is seasonably cold right now, as usual, and finding trout, and redfish, depends very much on local conditions. "Local" in this case means an area as small as ten or twenty square feet that would be a bit warmer than the surroundings.

When we anglers get cold at home, we can turn up the heat. When we go outside, we dress warmly, and we don't go swimming to look for fish. Duh.

Fish don't like to be cold; they get sluggish and can die if they get too cold. Their technique is to find warmer water even if it is only a degree or two warmer.

We don't know exactly how they do this, but that isn't what we need to know. What we need to know is how do we find the warmer water– swimming in it is out, already covered that. So we are out on the flats and we are looking around for warmer water because that gives us a chance to work on our fish dip.

The biggest factor for our hunt is lots of nice bright sunshine. It feels pretty good for us sitting in the boat and it will feel better for the fish as well.

The next factor is to look for a patch of darker bottom, maybe one that is a little deeper than the surrounding area. The darker bottom will absorb more sunlight that the lighter colored surroundings and the water there will be a bit warmer. At night the water cools and the top layer usually cools the most, so a little deeper might also be a little warmer.

If we can see such a spot from a distance we can stay far enough away to cast to it, without getting close enough to spook the fish. We also, as always, want to be quiet– the less noise the better.

What kind of bait to throw? We want something that we can retrieve slowly, because even in this warmer spot, the fish are slowed down by the cold water. We want something that isn't too noisy and spooky, because nothing much is noisy and spooky in cold weather. We want something that will sink slowly or suspend so we don't get hung up in grass or the bottom.

One of the baits that many folks like for this kind of fishing is the Paul Brown type of soft plastic baits. These are now sold by MirrOlure. The "Devil" model is a popular one for this kind of fishing. If you want

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New Rules for Club Contests

By Jay Peacock, GOFC Secretary

Since it is a new year I thought I would take some time to let you all know about new rules the GOFC Board of Directors have passed during the past few years. You may have heard of some of the rules in President's Messages or other articles already. In order of implementation from newest to oldest:

1. Fish that are caught outside of the season for legal possession can be entered for the Big Ten award. These fish must be of legal size and must be released unharmed. This in no way changes the rules for other club contests. Fish caught outside of legal possession seasons cannot be entered into any other club contest and will not count toward Ellett points or species size contests. (December 2014)

2. The redfish club record was was changed to only include legally sized fish based on current regulations. The old record will remain in place with an asterisk indicating it is a legacy record from when regulations allowed large redfish to be kept. (August 2014) OPPORTUNITY ALERT: As we are starting fresh with the redfish club record now is the chance to get your name in the records (at least for a little while).

3. Tournament Master Angler clarification: The Master Angler for Tournaments is determined by the highest Ellett Point total with no requirement to enter fish in offshore and inshore categories. The winner of the Master Angler Award is not eligible to win the Inshore or Offshore Angler Awards.

4. Changes to how many times members can win the Ellett and the Master Angler category added. Once a member wins the Ellett Contest three times they are no longer eligible to win this prize and are designated a GOFC Master Angler. An award for the Master Angler who earns the most Ellett Points in a year was implemented with this change.

Breaking in My Jon Boat

By Captain Charlie Courtney

On December 14th, I had John Patrick for my guide on the shakedown cruise of my new (used) jon boat. We spent a morning sneaking around the mangrove creeks between Shark and Mangrove Points to no avail. Not even a bite, let alone a keeper fish. With the best fisherman in the Club getting skunked on his home grounds, I was worried that the boat had a geas on it.

Four days later I took the jon boat for a solo trip up the creeks near the mouth of the Steinhatchee River. The boat performed superbly up the creeks, especially nice was the GPS-guided iPilot trolling motor. Although conditions were beautiful, I caught no fish, not even a missed strike!

The larger trout and redfish are usually found up the creeks at this time of year, but today's high tide had let them leave the creeks and spread out onto the flooded cordgrass marsh where I could not follow.

I finally gave up in disgust and headed back to the ramp. As I neared the slow speed maker, I saw Ed Ellet, Jack Cutright,

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Inshore
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a hard lure, the MirrOdine is also a good suspending bait that can be worked slowly.

As you find spots, you should eventually find fish. Don't forget to take a number on a likely looking spot — you may find fish there another day, and you can position yourself in a better casting position if you already have the number. (You want to work the lure with the tidal current towards the spot holding the fish.)

Also as you take numbers and explore, keep a close eye on the water temperature. Your depthfinder might not work too well in shallow water, but it should be able to read the water temperature. Work slowly and quietly, and note even small changes.

Remember that as you have tidal flow, the water doesn't just move horizontally, but it will also go up and down as the bottom contour changes. Hey, if a fish can do it, you can too. (Not sure if I really believe that.)

Once you have the fish, you can call Virgil and ask for the recipe. If you don't catch any fish, call him and ask him where his "fish market" spots are. I'm guessing you'll have more luck with the former than the latter.

Jon Boat
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and Jack Helseth fishing a nearby mud flat. They waved me over and said they were worn out from catching trout, so I anchored up next to them and started casting a Corky Mullet.

Finally, the stink was off my new jon boat, for I caught a trout almost every cast. It was great fun, but they were running small -- all but two were just under the 15 inch minimum size.

It is easy to tell tourists from tarpon. Tarpon have a narrow, bony plate inside the mouth of their lower jaw. Tourists have both upper and lower plates.

— Ed Zern, "How To Tell Fish From Fishermen, 1974 "

The cure for anything is saltwater — sweat, tears, or the sea.

— Arthur C. Clarke

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five legal reds — one shy of limit. All were on the lower end of the 18-27 inch slot limit. I did get several good photos — amazing the deep bronze color that reds take on when you catch them in dark Suwannee water - beautiful!

We called it a day about 2:30. I sure was glad I had purchased the small bag of frozen shrimp. We may not have caught a keeper without! I wish I had tried earlier.

Great fun to arrive home and have seven month old, one year old and two year old grandsons view their first redfish up close and personal. Given their mothers' kind "oohs and ahs" I think they will remember it for some time.

Our spouses prepared an excellent fresh fish dinner that evening. Nice when preparation and luck come together! Our visitors and Marcia and I have a nice memory!

Steinhatchee River Trout Fishing

By Captain Ed Ellett

For a week, Jack Helseth, Jack Cutright and I had a fishing trip planned on December 18th. The day before our trip we received Sea Hag's e-mail noting that trout were in the river, with pictures of club members Rick Davidson and Tommy Thompson showing off nice specimens.

The day after our trip, I enjoyed reading Gainesville Sun, Gary Simpson's article about nice trout catches at Steinhatchee. In between the two reports, we were able to confirm nice reports for ourselves.

We stayed in river for our trip. Most of our fish were small — i.e. for every four fish caught, one would be of legal size. Our largest was 17.5 inches with most 15-16 inches. We had our limit by noon, and they seemed to strike almost anything we tried. We caught 10-15 on topwater plugs — first time I've done that in the river.

Afterwards we cleand the fish at the Sea Hag cleaning table. Since we all enjoyed eating fish, we were pleased to have fresh catch filets to take home.

Charlie Courtney was anchored nearby breaking in his new jon boat. We watched him catch fish after fish. It was nice to have him nearby with his veterinarian's knowledge when a pelican hit my topwater plug and got hooked — Charlie helped coach Jack H. and I on our dehooking technique. I salvaged my lure, and the pelican escaped unharmed except for an "up close and personal" experience with a human.

More Steinhatchee Trout

By Captain Ed Ellett

John Byatt and Lou Graf served as a able crow for our December 20th trip to Steinhatchee. How conditions change in a couple days!

I induced Lou and John to go with glowing report of all the trout Jack Cutright, Jack Helseth and I caught in the River on last Thursday's trip.

They went for the "limit by noon", "though most of trout small, lots of action, catching four small fish for every legal fish".

The first hour of our trip we fished the same area as Thursday with nary a bite. Finally, we found a few trout and boated three legal fish in the river. We enjoyed visiting with a nearby boat, *Bald Eagle*, owned by past GOFC President, and, his wife, Gary and Wendy Warren. You would think when four past GOFC Presidents are in the same area there might be a fish or two around, yours truly — 1979, Gary Warren — 1986, Lou Graf — 2013, John Byatt - 2014, and, last Thursday,

Only a couple of keepers this time.

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Reports
Continued from page 8

Charlie Courtney, GOFC President — 1999, all were sighted in same area!

By 11:30 the incoming tide had built and the wind calmed to point that we decided to go fish the outside flats. After some exploring, we found one area holding a few trout and boated eight fish. John definitely had the touch for coaxing the larger ones to bite, though Lou and I managed to boat a couple.

John's largest was a fine, 19 inch specimen. He was looking for the 5.7 pounder to best Phil Horn, Virgil Cooper and Carlos Morales, but that trophy was not located. We called it a day at 3:00. A nice Florida December day before the rain from an incoming front set in over the next few days.

After a really challenging trip a few weeks ago, old friend Captain Joseph Jacobs was again passing through, so we made arrangements to try again on a Sunday, the 26th of October. A mild cold front had passed through, and the mornings of the 25th and the 26th were the chilliest of the year, with low temperaturess in the high 40's.

With a negative tide at 10:00 a.m. I wasn't that optimistic, but I went to one of the few places at Steinhatchee where I can get close to shore on a negative tide. This is an area several miles to the north of the river, with a cut that runs fairly close to shore, and it's navigable even on a very low tide. When we got there, I was surprised to find mass quantities of mullet schooling around the exposed rocks, more than I had seen in some time. Much of the seagrass had died down in this area, leaving large expanses of mud bottom with scattered patches of oysters and rocks. Because the water was only 18 inches deep, we were fishing with topwater plugs. Within a few minutes of arriving, I caught a slot redfish, around 24 inches, and shortly after, a 4.5 pound trout. Both were clearly hungry in spite of a water temperature in the high 60s.

As the tide continued to fall I moved out but only slightly, to maintain our depth. I lost a much larger redfish when one of my trebles actually broke. Over the next few hours we caught a total of 8 redfish, the trout and a nice bluefish. All were caught on topwater plugs. Two of the redfish were

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A Puzzlement

By Captain Rick Davidson

I fish differently with a client/guest than when I'm with myself, or fishing with my buddy Captain Tommy Thompson. When the pressure to catch fish is less, I can spend more time trying to figure things out.

Fishing these days has been a bit of a challenge, and it seems to be related to a late arrival of baitfish. When fishing gets tough, the guide's credo is: keep moving…. keep moving until you find fish. But it's always a great idea to put some thought into why things worked, and maybe more important into why they didn't work. Here's a perfect example.

They say fish should swim thrice . . . first it should swim in the sea (do you mind me?), then it should swim in butter, and at last, sirrah, it should swim in good claret.

— Jonathan Swift

Meet A Board Member

Dale Reed

Dale is a 3 year GOFC Member and has served for 1 year on the Board of Directors where he heads up Club promotions.

"My motivation to serve on the board is to promote inshore and offshore fishing for young and old, support recreational fishing in our area, help educate members, and share fellowship.

"I have lived in Gainesville for about 30 years, and I own Rub-a-Dub-Dub cleaning service, Inc., with my brother, Mike. I've been married to Liz Reed for 27 years and have two boys, DJ and Alex, ages 25 and 22.

"I really enjoy offshore fishing and diving, and I love to catch grouper. Getting the chance to be underwater teaches a fisherman a lot. Spearfishing is also a huge passion of mine. I have been a certified diver for 26 years, and one of my sons, DJ, and my wife are also divers.

"Crystal River is one of my favorite places to fish because of the diversity. There is freshwater and saltwater inshore and offshore fishing in this area. A lot of good size fish can be caught here due to the rocky region. On one trip there, I caught a 21 pound cobia, a few large groupers, and a 36 pound kingfish. My goal for 2015 is to teach more members about fishing and promote conservation."

"Limititis" is the affliction, endemic within our sport, which causes anglers to misread "limit" as "target". It is probably the sport's greatest cause of stress, frustration and unhappiness, and it matters not how often anglers are told that the limit is simply the maximum number of fish they are allowed to catch during a session, there will always be those who see it as target and feel inept or cheated whenever they fail to achieve it.

— Peter Lapsley, *Fly-Fishing and Fly-Tying Magazine*, 2011

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New Dixie County Reefs

Capt. Cliff Clark
Rig it up Charters.

Pictured below is a side scan image of the first of nineteen new reefs deployed last year. Its GPS location is Lat. 29°19.846′ / Long. 83°26.379′. The 3-5 foot tall reefs were built with about 30 tons of natural limestone boulders, concrete rubble and culvert pipes.

They hold Goliath Grouper, Gag Grouper, Mangrove snapper, sea bass, Grunts, and many other marine species. The reefs are located in 24 feet, approximately 11 miles offshore in federal waters.

They are easily reached from Suwannee or Horseshoe. This makes them an ideal location for that " short run with the family." Most people don't like the pounding of a 30 mile run, not to mention the kids getting seasick. Another bonus is if the weather kicks up, it is just a short run back to port. So get out there and enjoy these reefs. I hope to see a new club record caught from one of them.

Additional reefs in this area can be found at the following near by locations:

Lat. 29°19.682′ / Lon. 83°26.313′
Lat. 29°19.692′ / Lon. 83°26.252′
Lat. 29°19.720′ / Lon. 83°26.247′
Lat. 29°19.750′ / Lon. 83°26.192′
Lat. 29°19.624′ / Lon. 83°26.299′
Lat. 29°19.622′ / Lon. 83°26.256′
Lat. 29°19.624′ / Lon. 83°26.301′
Lat. 29°19.675′ / Lon. 83°26.212′
Lat. 29°10.679′ / Lon. 83°26.210′
Lat. 29°19.682′ / Lon. 83°26.313′
Lat. 29°19.692′ / Lon. 83°26.252′
Lat. 29°19.720′ / Lon. 83°26.247′
Lat. 29°19.739′ / Lon. 83°26.306′
Lat. 29°19.750′ / Lon. 83°26.208′

Men's Ellett Point Standings

31 December 2014

GOFC member	Amberjack	pts	Bluefish	pts	Cobia	pts	Flounder	pts	Grouper	pts	King Mackerel	pts	Redfish	pts	Sheeps-head	pts	Spanish Mackerel	pts	Trout	pts	Bonus points	Total points
Reed, Dale		0.00	2.25	12.39	21.00	15.00	2.10	16.15	13.50	21.09	36.00	25.00	4.75	16.96	5.00	16.62	4.90	23.33	3.80	17.08	1	164.64
McElroy, Ross	16.25	23.21	3	16.52	19.91	14.22	1.20	9.23	13.80	21.56	4.75	3.30	6.50	23.21	5.25	17.45	3.81	18.14	2.00	8.99	0	155.85
Wilson, Hal	17.5	25.00	1.7	9.36	17.85	12.75		0.00	11.20	17.50	8.00	5.56	4.00	14.29	4.76	15.81	3.59	17.10	4.40	19.78	0	137.13
Cooper, Virgil		0.00	4.54	25.00	19.24	13.74	1.16	8.92	12.12	18.94		0.00	5.54	19.79	5.12	17.02	1.32	6.29	5.51	24.76	1	135.46
Byatt, John		0.00	2.9375	16.18	35.00	25.00	1.13	8.65	7.00	10.94		0.00	6.63	23.66	4.69	15.58	1.69	8.04	2.19	9.83	0	117.88
Morales, Carlos		0.00	2.5	13.77		0.00	1.50	11.54	12.00	18.75		0.00	4.50	16.07		0.00	4.50	21.43	5.00	22.47	0	104.03
Ellett, Ed		0.00	0.98	5.40		0.00	2.27	17.46	6.30	9.84	9.10	6.32	3.63	12.96		0.00	5.25	25.00	2.81	12.64	1	90.63
Horn, Phil		0.00	2.5625	14.11		0.00	2.25	17.31		0.00		0.00	5.43	19.39		0.00		0.00	5.56	25.00	1	76.81
Roy, Russ	16	22.86	1.5	8.26		0.00		0.00		0.00	13.00	9.03		0.00	3.50	11.64	2.00	9.52	1.00	4.49	1	66.80
Shands, Joe		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	6.75	24.11	7.52	25.00		0.00	3.00	13.48	3	65.59
Baillee, Waldon		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	5.19	18.54	6.27	20.84		0.00	4.55	20.45	0	59.83
Graf, Lou	16.125	23.04		0.00		0.00		0.00	11.50	17.97		0.00		0.00	2.00	6.65	1.40	6.67		0.00	1	55.32
Daniels, Eric		0.00	2.27	12.50		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	4.43	14.73	4.93	23.48		0.00	0	50.70
Cutright, Jack		**0.00**	**1.03**	**5.67**		**0.00**	**3.25**	**25.00**	**6.25**	**9.77**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**2.64**	**11.87**	**3**	**55.30**
Clark, Cliff		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	7.00	25.00		0.00		0.00	3.50	15.73	3	43.73
Magnific, Justin		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	16.00	25.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	3	28.00
Kiel, Brian		0.00		0.00		0.00	1.12	8.62		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	1.90	8.54	1	18.15
Browning, Mike		0.00	0.93	5.12		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	2.65	11.91	1	18.03
Robinson, Andrew		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**10.44**	**16.31**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**16.31**
Robinson, Mark		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**10.06**	**15.72**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**1**	**16.72**
Hinton, Chic		**0.00**	**0.77**	**4.24**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**2.27**	**10.20**	**0**	**14.44**
Daniels, Ian		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**3.43**	**11.40**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**0**	**11.40**
Carter, Dennis		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**1.50**	**6.74**	**0**	**6.74**
Allen, Charles		**0.00**	**1.0625**	**5.85**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**0**	**5.85**

Elite Angler Ellett Point Standings

31 December 2014

GOFC member	Amberjack	pts	Bluefish	pts	Cobia	pts	Flounder	pts	Grouper	pts	King Mackerel	pts	Redfish	pts	Sheeps-head	pts	Spanish Mackerel	pts	Trout	pts	Bonus points	Total points
Knopf, Ken	36.2	25.00		0.00	32.20	17.14	2.38	25.00	12.10	23.27	15.00	13.02	8.39	25.00	6.21	25.00	3.30	20.73	2.60	16.51	4	194.67
Knopf, Debby	16.7	11.53		0.00	46.97	25.00	2.2	23.16	6.8	13.08	28.8	25.00	4.0625	12.11	3.14	12.64	3.6	22.61	1.4	8.89	4	158.02
Patrick, John		0.00	4.34	25.00		0.00		0.00	13.00	25.00		0.00	5.50	16.39	4.99	20.09		0.00	3.94	25.00	4	115.48
Turner, Allen		0.00	1.26	7.26		0.00	1.23	12.95		0.00		0.00	3.45	10.28	2.58	10.39	3.98	25.00	3.18	20.19	1	87.06

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enormous, given the shallow water; both were 37 inches long. These were not schooling fish; they were scattered over a large shallow muddy flat.

This was by far the best morning I had had in some months. Clearly the tide had turned, if you will, and fishing was on the way back to normal. I was excited, in part because one of my good buddies, Jerry McBride, was coming to Gainesville to give a talk about kayak fishing, and we had plans to fish just three days later. The low tide was a little later, and there was a pretty impressive warming trend, but my plan was to get to the same area on the same tide, just a bit later in the morning.

We ran to several areas on the higher tide that had been productive, but the number of mullet and whitebait was minimal. We found several trout on topwaters but nothing substantial at all. And we saw a lot fewer mullet on the shoreline. After trying several areas unsuccessfully, we ran to our chosen spot.

On a similar tide, there were fewer mullet, but still some present. However, the redfish and trout were nowhere to be found. There were lots of glass minnows (rainbait), and schools of very respectable jacks and bluefish….but no redfish or trout. And we tried mightily for a long time. Friend Doug Barrett was in his Gulfshore 20, fishing in similar areas, and caught nothing. It was as if it were a totally different area.

So it was time for reflection. It's easy to throw out excuses when you're on the water…there are a million of them…but another thing to sit down and try and sort out what happened. The differences between the two days were few; a two hour later low tide, and a warming trend. Otherwise the conditions, including the level of the tide and the presence of baitfish, were identical. So given those two variables, how to

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Women's Ellett Point Standings

31 December 2014

GOFC member	Amberjack	pts	Bluefish	pts	Cobia	pts	Flounder	pts	Grouper	pts	King Mackerel	pts	Redfish	pts	Sheeps-head	pts	Spanish Mackerel	pts	Trout	pts	Bonus points	Total points
Rothfork, Brittany	13.8	25.00		0.00	21.80	25.00		0.00	6.90	14.38		0.00	3.30	25.00		0.00	2.60	20.00		0.00	0	109.38
Reed, Liz		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	12.00	25.00		0.00		0.00	4.80	25.00	2.50	19.23	3.50	25.00	1	95.23
Byatt, Terry		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**3.25**	**25.00**		**0.00**	**0**	**25.00**
Daniels, Gwendolyn		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	3.21	16.72		0.00		0.00	1	17.72
Cutright, Melvina		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	2.25	16.07	0	16.07
Carter, Debbie		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**1.75**	**12.50**	**0**	**12.50**

Youth Ellett Point Standings

31 December 2014

GOFC member	Amberjack	pts	Bluefish	pts	Cobia	pts	Flounder	pts	Grouper	pts	King Mackerel	pts	Redfish	pts	Sheeps-head	pts	Spanish Mackerel	pts	Trout	pts	Bonus points	Total points
Wagner, Reid	23	25.00		0.00	14.92	25.00		0.00	8.00	25.00	29.20	25.00		0.00		0.00	1.54	10.69		0.00	0	110.69
Baillie, Mikayla		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**3.29**	**25.00**		**0.00**	**1.34**	**25.00**	**1**	**51.00**
Wagner, Riley	**22**	**23.91**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**5.29**	**16.53**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**0**	**40.44**
Thomas, Charlie		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**3.60**	**25.00**		**0.00**	**0**	**25.00**
Wagner, Ryan	**21**	**22.83**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**0**	**22.83**

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explain the difference? I really don't think it's that hard.

First, the time. While it's true that legend says that the topwater bite ends in the early morning, those committed to topwater fishing know better. I have caught fish throughout the day as long as the conditions (wind, chop, water depth) are reasonable. I don't think that the time of day had anything to do with the outcome.

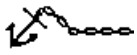
A fine topwater redfish.

What about the warming trend? The air temperatures had increased, from a low in the morning of 48 to a low of 55. Additionally, because we were a little later, the water was warmer regardless. In fact, from a water temp in the mid to high 60s, the water temp had risen to the low to mid 70s. This is a huge difference to a cold blooded organism like a fish, especially when it's the first cold front of the year.

The area we fished was lacking the usual Steinhatchee lush grasses and was instead a dark mud bottom (which you can see on the video). That dark mud holds heat much better than grass bottom. So do rocks, oyster bars and other structure when they get direct sunlight. My conclusion is that the cold front caused the fish to find an area that was just a few degrees warmer, but three days later, they were more comfortable in their usual haunts….in creeks, behind oyster bars and hiding in potholes in the grass.

That's the thought process. Of course, it boils down to an opinion, and you know what they say about opinions (no, I'm not going there). Traditionally the trout bite improves with chilly weather, and we'll get a chance to see this week, because tonight will be the first REALLY cold night of the year, with a low in the 30s. And I have a charter in two days, when the high will be in the mid-70s.

Either it will be a fantastic day, with a massive trout bite, or everything will be shut down because of the severity of the front. But hey….that's kind of the way every day is during this time of transition into winter.



Are Old Dogs Really Hopeless?

By Captain Rick Davidson

Lots of people have some exciting times when they're young and carefree, but my old high school friend, Joe Jacobs, kind of wrote the book on that. Without going into great detail, think of a pirate living in St. Barts, illicit cargoes, Princess Caroline of Monaco, and starting a new country with your partner Mikhail Baryshnikov. But I digress.

After escaping the Caribbean, Joe hosted a TV show, did some guiding in our home town of Lake Worth, Florida, and

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Photo Contest Winners

Judged by Charlie Courtney, Mark Robinson and Russ Roy

Thanks to everyone for entering the 2015 GOFC Photo Contest. We had almost 60 entries. The $100 first place prize is for a photo made by Bob Hudson of his son, Rob, and grandson, Wes. The unusual composition caught the judges' eyes.

Phil Horn wins the $50 second place prize for his beautiful North Key sunset.

Phil Wagner won the $25 third place prize for his photo of lots of little kids and big fish. Phil also wins an honorable mention for his photo featuring dead fish galore plus kids.

First Place: Bob Hudson
"Cedar Key Airboat Trip"

Second Place: Phil Horn
"North Key Sunset"

Honorable Mention: Phil Wagner
"Fun Times"

Third Place: Phil Wagner
"Kid Krazy"

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embarked on an adventure in documentary film-making involving rare and lost cultures…naturally with a tie-in with fishing. His films are currently being considered in several markets.

Given Joe's vast world-wide experience at fishing, one would be led to believe that he is an expert in the latest high-tech tackle, lures, and obscure techniques. Actually he considers himself a true world-class expert in only one kind of fishing…using jigs and soft plastic tails. In his travels around the world, jigs were easy to carry and replace and were usually the only tackle he had with him, except for a fly rod or two.

I don't usually fish with jigs. I lean toward lures, primarily topwaters, but suspending lures as well, especially in the winter. Over the years I have become convinced that while catching fewer fish, they tend to be larger with lures…and I love big fish. I fish with jigs when forced…drifting for sand trout, or fishing in holes for seatrout. Oh, at one point years ago I used to fish with live shrimp, or cut bait, or popping corks, but left to my own devices, it's plugs.

I talked about a hot day for redfish while fishing with Joe in the previous story. While I didn't give specifics, the fact is that during that trip, I caught all the redfish and the one trout. Joe was skunked. He fished jigs with soft plastic tails, and then switched to a topwater I gave him which he claims had lost its ability to rattle. The water was flat, calm, clear, and very shallow, warming up after a cold front, and we were fishing over a mud bottom. That's the kind of day that can make you want to try again, and Joe, Captain Tommy Thompson and I went fishing a month later.

It was a cold windy morning but warmed up nicely, and unlike the last time we fished, the water temperature was in the high 50s and we had a good mid-morning high tide. We ran to fish some points that had rocks around them (which describes just about every point in Steinhatchee) a few hours before the high. There were good concentrations of mullet. Joe was fishing his secret weapon soft plastic while Tommy and I fished topwaters and suspending lures, and at one point I tried a soft weightless jerkbait.

Joe started catching redfish, and he was catching them in exactly the places where we were throwing plugs. In fact, he caught 8 redfish before we caught anything; finally Tommy got a trout, the only one of the day. As the tide peaked and started moving, the fish became more active and we started to catch some fish on plugs, but Joe still was killing us. We ended up with 22 redfish; 17 were caught by Joe using his jig and soft plastic tail. The largest was 24 inches, but all were quality fish.

Now if that kind of result doesn't lead to a reflective re-examination of your fishing philosophies, as I mentioned in my previous post, you are in for a rough fishing career. I asked him to give me some tips about his passion for jigs.

Captain Joe preparing his jigs

Joe doesn't just LIKE fishing jigs with soft plastic tails; he has studied heads and tails for years, and has strong feelings about how they should be fished and how they should be rigged. He also believes color and the transparency of the tail is significant. He stores his favorite tails in plastic bags with mineral oil to keep them slick. In terms of colors, he likes to use light colors in clear water (like many people) but favors translucent bodies with or without glitter. In darker water he chooses a jig tail to match the water. If mildly turbid, he might choose a midrange brown or gray translucent tail. To him, the fact that light can pass through the tail is important.

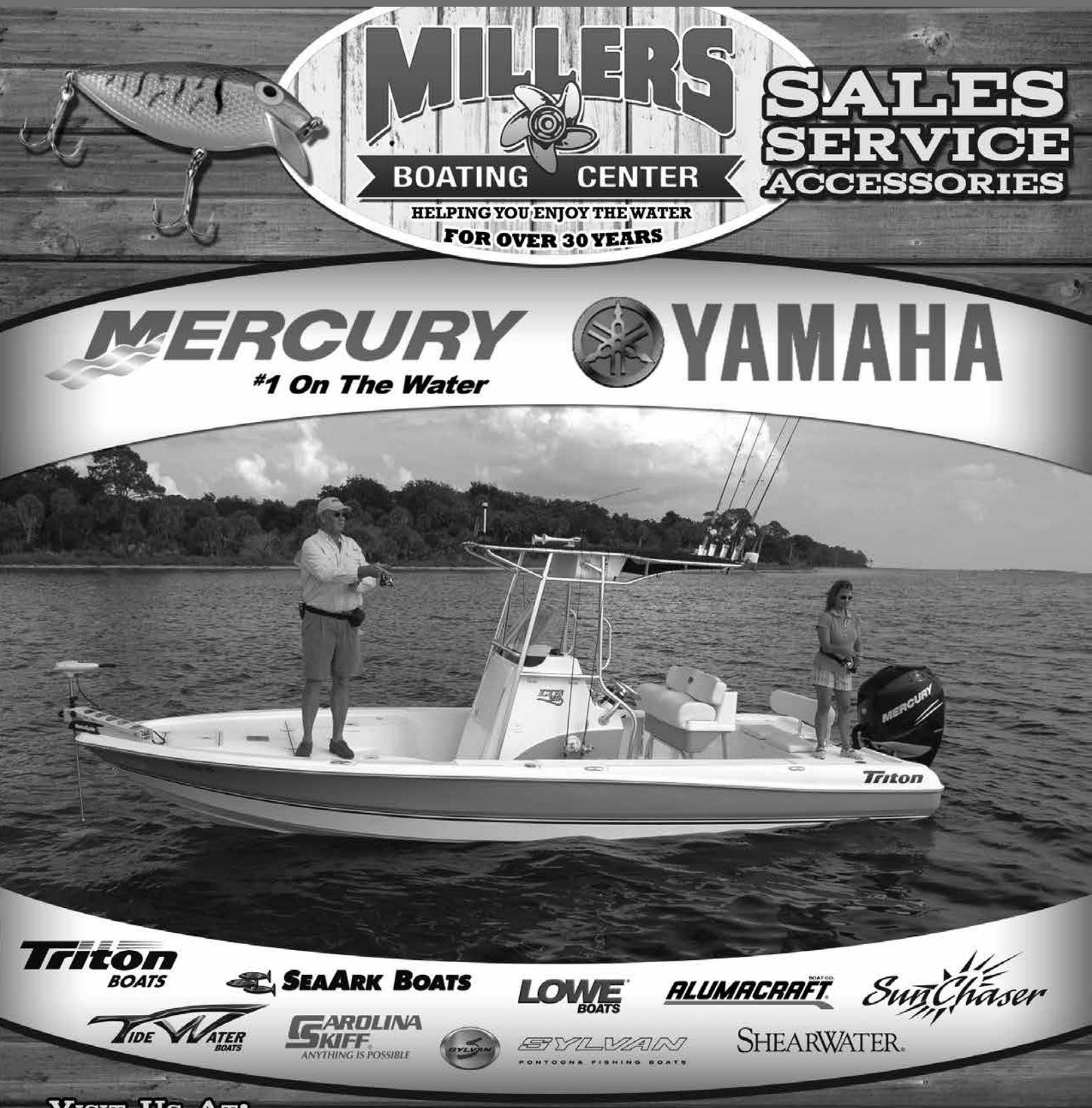
I have always tended to use light colored lures in any conditions, assuming that the contrast makes the plug easier to see in turbid water, but Joe feels that real forage (shrimp, pinfish, mullet, crabs) are almost never as brightly colored as my lures; therefore, fish see those colors as abnormal and not likely to be what they are looking for. Rigging is important to Joe; he feels he catches a lot more fish if the rigged jig runs perfectly straight through the water, with no cartwheeling or asymmetrical motion. He uses a variety of heads and tails, choosing the heads based on depth and water color as well, with unpainted heads getting used frequently in clearer conditions. Most of his tails are simple, without shad tails and some are very simple, like the Mirrolure Little John tail (click on these pictures for more detail).

Rigging is something that has to be just right, according to Joe. As mentioned, the combination has to run perfectly straight, or he will re-rig it immediately.

What he is looking for when working the jig is for it to bounce off the bottom and settle back down. As he points out, that gives the jig both an active motion (during the quick jerk) and a more passive motion as it settles and sits on the bottom. He notes that live shrimp have a similar kind of motion. It means you may end up getting soft plastics hung in rocks or in heavy grass, but at least they cost considerably less than a $14 plug. And with practice you can learn to use the spring of the rod to loosen many jigs that do get hung up.

What's the take-home message? Well… Joe and I fished one day, and I caught all the fish using topwaters; the next time we fished he caught almost all the fish using jigs. You don't have to be a member of MENSA to determine a useful message. It's actually implementing it that's the challenge for me.

Many fishermen fall in love with one type of fishing…they have confidence in what they are using, it's worked in the past, and it's what they do. The flexibility to move on and try something different seems to get worse with age, just like actual physical flexibility. In fact, probably the best fisherman I know, Jerry McBride (please don't let him see this) moves easily from jigs with soft plastics to lures to artificial shrimp without a thought. Can I change my approach to my plan when things aren't working? I've got first-hand side-by-side evidence now that suggests that would be a wise move…thanks to Joe for expanding my horizons. Now to figure out that precise rigging.



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