The Acute Angler

September, 2020
Volume 53, Number 9

The monthly newsletter of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club

September Hot Shot

School is In!

Fall brings schools of Spanish Mackerel to Seahorse Reef.
Mike Browning was there to welcome them back!

Submit your photos on http://www.gofc.us/wp/photos/photo-submission/

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President's Corner

By Mark Haberman,
GOFC President

November is right around the corner and COVID-19 continues to be as stubborn as ever. Unfortunately, indoor club activities are still suspended until further notice. The good news is, the club has confirmed a zoom meeting with Captains Mark and Bobbi Brady on October 27th at 7:30PM. The husband and wife team will be discussing trout and redfish in the Steinhatchee area. This will be the perfect opportunity to get advice for our upcoming redfish and trout tournament out of Steinhatchee scheduled for November 14th. We also have an online tournament going on right now for AJ, grouper, and red snapper. Please watch your email, go to our website, or our Facebook page for more details.

Fishing in the big Bend area is heating up as waters cool down. King in Spanish mackerel are going strong, big gag grouper are moving in, and large red grouper are starting to be caught. Lets hope these winds calm down and I'll see you on the water.

Tight lines,
Mark
mhaberman68@gmail.com

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Upcoming Events

Next Club Meeting

October 27 at 7:30 PM

Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting

Link will be emailed to members before meeting

Speaker: Steinhatchee Charter Captains Mark and Bobbi Brady

https://floridasaltwaterflats.com/steinhatchee-fishing-charters-and-guides

GOFC Amberjack, Grouper, and Red Snapper Online Tournament

Location: Club Waters
Dates: October 17-18, 24-25, 31 & Nov 1, 2020

Visit http://www.gofc.us/wp/events/aj-grouper-and-red-snapper-online-tournament/ for more information.

GOFC Redfish and Trout Shootout

Location: Sea Hag Marina in Steinhatchee
Date: Saturday, November 14, 2020
Time: Weigh in will be from 3:00 pm to 4:00

An email with additional details and a registration link will be sent to all members.

Fly Fishing in Salt Water

By Glenn Acomb, GOFC Past President

Fly fishing in Big Bend waters, while not as common as in other parts of the State, offers a unique and enjoyable style of fishing in contrast with conventional casting and spin fishing. This two-part overview of fly fishing in salt water is offered as a basic introduction and to provide information to determine if you would like this fishing form.

Big Bend Seatrout caught on fly (photo by Carlos Morales)

Overview

Fly fishing is a unique form of fishing with its unique and artful appearance. Some like its wistful action of the line being cast in the air and gently laying on the water surface. Others like that it is similar to stalking prey rather than waiting for a fish to bite. And some like that one can catch a fish on a fly that was tied by the fisher. Whatever the reason, fly fishing is a worthwhile and very different experience than conventional fishing.

In the Big Bend, fly fishing opportunities are available, especially so along inshore waters where fishers tend to seek out Speckled Seatrout, Redfish, Snook, Flounder, Bluefish, Ladyfish, Spanish Mackerel and Tarpon. Certainly, there are other candidates, but these are the most common as they can be found in relatively shallow waters.

Fly fishing is quite different when compared to conventional fishing, and in particular the gear is unique. Rods are longer, typically 9 feet (in 3 or 4 ferruled pieces), and are much more limber in order to effectively cast the line. Lures are a nearly weightless fly, propelled by the fly line and "loaded" by the rod in its a back and forward cast. The flies, like conventional lures, are given action by stripping the line and allowing the fly to dart like a popper or subsurface minnow.

Fly rods and lines are classified by "weights," i.e., a 5-weight outfit or an 8-weight outfit. This is measured by the actual weight of the fly line and the rods are designed for the strength to cast the various line weights and to a lesser extent for the capacity to land the size of fish. Reels simply hold the line and in the larger weight outfits do have a drag system to land the larger fish they are made for.

Most fly rods are 4-piece

The range of rods and line weights include a 0-weight to a 4-weight, used for small fish such as panfish or small freshwater trout. 5-weight and 6-weight outfits are common for bass or larger freshwater trout. 7-9-weight rods and lines are common for inshore saltwater species such as speckled trout, slot-size redfish and bonefish. 10-15 weights are used for large fish such as tarpon, bottom fish and billfish.

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A fly line (typically 100 feet long, added to backing on a fly reel)

Specialty fly line

In addition to fly lines classified by weights, they are also specialized to reach different depths. The three main categories are floating lines (most common), sinking-tip floating lines (the tip sinks several feet), and sinking lines of varying weights and sink rates to go deeper. In choosing a line, one must match the rod and line weight, as well as the depth to be fished. If this cannot be determined before a trip, it is common to bring another outfit or a spare reel loaded with the different line to change out as needed.

Leader lengths are often 7'-9' as they must be graduated (tapered) in descending strength to enable the line to turn over easily so the fly lands gently on the water surface. Bite tippets are selected by the strength required to land the fish being sought.

Finally, the fly is the equivalent of the fishing lure, except that it is extremely lightweight. Flies are tied using either natural (deer hair or feathers) or synthetic (hair-like) materials tied onto the hook and glued to hold together. The intent is to tie a fly that mimics the bait of choice such as baitfish or crustacean and to provide its flash, shape and color as well as its movement in the water. Flies are available for purchase at most fishing outfitters that carry fly fishing gear, or flies can be tied if one wishes to acquire fly tying gear such as a vise, small tools, thread, the fly materials, etc.

A Good Saltwater Inshore Fly Outfit

So, let's get right to the heart of the matter. Here's a suggestion of a good first outfit for saltwater inshore fly fishing (with a focus on fishing Big Bend inshore waters):

Rod: An 8-weight rod. An 8-weight rod (although a 7-weight is good, too) is the most common rod for fishing inshore for reds, trout, etc. A 9-weight is useful for high winds or for larger species up to 20 or so pounds. I have been using an 8-weight rod for many years and it has served me very well.

Line: An 8-weight floating line (to match the rod). A floating line is good for shallow water (under 3' or so depending upon the weight of the fly). In addition, I frequently bring a floating line with a sinking tip, which allows the line tip and leader to sink and reach water depths to about 3'-4' depending upon the weight of the fly. This is particularly useful in winter when fish are deeper.

Reel: An anodized aluminum 8-weight fly reel that is designed to hold at least 150 yards of line and has a drag system. Drag is not as critical as in conventional gear as the rod is so limber that it absorbs much of the force. I still use my first reel, a Pflueger, which is an inexpensive (a little over $100) and well-made reel with drag. There are numerous other reasonably-priced reels.

The total cost of a starter outfit will be about $350, with the variable being the cost of the rod. You could spend less money for equipment, but one must balance the savings with the longevity of the equipment. cheap reel. The first item replaced in my first outfit was to upgrade to a better rod.

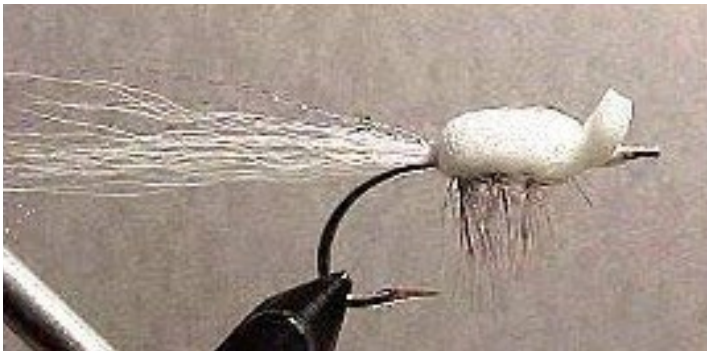
Flies

Saltwater flies are available for purchase from a variety of sources and are relatively inexpensive at around $4-$8 each. Alternatively, you can tie your own, which is an enjoyable hobby. Either way, there are several fly patterns to begin with that can provide versatile application throughout inshore waters of the Big Bend and are commonly available at most fishing stores that carry fly gear. As in conventional fishing, one needs flies for top water, suspending, and deeper depths. These should be representations of baitfish

and crustaceans of the forage that is common where you fish. Much like conventional lures, flies can be selected to impart color, action in the water, and sound.

Here are some excellent choices to start with that are proven and versatile inshore flies:

Top Water Fly: The Gurgler



Suspending or Sinking Baitfish: the Clouser Minnow

Spoon: The Dupre Spoon

Crustaceans: A Merkin Crab (left) and a Shrimp pattern (right)

In addition to the first fly selections, various colors and sizes should be considered. The action of the fly is a consideration as different materials of a fly tends to create different action in the water as the fly is stripped. Natural materials, typically feathers or animal hair, are sometimes preferred for their action, while synthetics such as mylar, offer greater flash. To add weight to flies, they can be tied with metal eyes (in a dumbbell shape) or with metal strips on the hook shank to reach deeper in the water column. In recent years, flies are now tied with rattles, jointed bodies, etc.

The flies shown below represent common baitfish and crustacean patterns, colors, size, weights, etc. With these as a beginning, one can expand the collection greatly (just as in conventional fishing).

Typical inshore saltwater fly box and patterns

A Clouser Minnow pattern with weighted eye

Part 1 is a brief introduction to fly fishing and an overview of equipment for saltwater fishing the Big Bend of Florida. It is a beginning from which to learn fly fishing, its equipment and fishing techniques.

Part 2 will follow in the next Newsletter and will address casting, retrieving, landing a fish on the fly, and a bit about fishing the types of waters of the Big Bend. For reference, there is a great deal of information on fly fishing available on the internet.

To learn more, check out the websites of the Orvis Company, Scientific Anglers, and Fly Fishers International. Good books include Lefty Kreh's Fly Fishing in Salt Water and The Orvis Guide to Saltwater Fly Fishing by the Orvis Company. When ready, see fly casting demonstrations on YouTube.

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Marcia Ellet Wins CCA Ladies Division!

By Ed Ellet

Marcia (and I) have enjoyed fishing in the Coastal Conservation Association's summer long Star Tournament for the past few years. We were initially encouraged to participate by club members Ken Knopf and Tommy Thompson.

When you enjoy fishing with family and friends, want to support the conservation of Florida's fabulous coastal resources, and don't mind the chance of winning one of the prizes made possible by numerous by sponsors who share an interest in protecting recreational fishing and coastal resources for future generations, the CCA Star tournament is a wonderful opportunity to cover all the bases.

Over the course of the summer, Marcia punched her raffle entry tickets for five of the available nineteen divisions with six entries in the Ladies Division, two entries in Non-tagged Redfish Open Division, four entries Speckled Trout Division, one entry in the Trash Division, and 21 entries in the Conservation Division. The winners in each division are determined by luck of the draw. This year Marcia won the 1st place prize in the Ladies Division, a Body Glove Inflatable Paddleboard. In 2017, she won the Cobia Division and a Bossman 19' micro-skiff and trailer powered by a 25Hp Yamaha motor. Last year, she won a $100 gift certificate in the Fun Fishing Photo Competition along with her grandson, Noah, who won a gift certificate in the Youth Fun Fishing Photo Competition.

Speaking of CCA tournament youth divisions... This year, two $25,000 scholarships and ten $5000 scholarships will be awarded to anglers in the Youth Division. The scholarships will be presented during a virtual award ceremony on Octover 28th. Our Florida grandsons definitely enjoy fishing, as do their parents, and made several entries this year, yet the luck of the draw did not go there way. There were 1884 total entries.

Overall, there were 6500 participants with 32,321 total entries for all Divisions this year. We hope these numbers will continue to grow, and help the Coastal Conservation Association continue to protect Florida's invaluable coastal resources!

Marcia Ellet with a few of the fish that earned her entries in the CCA's summer long Star Tournament.

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Ed Ellett, CPCU, CLU, CIC

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Featured Recipe

30 Minute Spicy Red Fish Stew

By Kalyn Denny

From Kalyn's Kitcen

Ingredients:

1/2 cup finely chopped red onion
1 tbs olive oil
12 oz. jar roasted red bell peppers, drained and chopped
1 14.5 oz. can diced tomatoes with juice
1 tsp. finely minced fresh garlic
1/4 tsp. red pepper flakes (see notes)
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro (plus more for garnish if desired)
1/2 tsp. fresh lemon zest
2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
1 lb. cod, halibut, or tilapia fillets, cut into 1 inch pieces

salt and fresh ground black pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. For best results with this recipe, use a small frying pan with high sides so the fish pieces will be surrounded by liquid when you add them. I used an 8 inch pan.

2. Heat olive oil in small frying pan, add chopped red onion or shallot and saute over medium heat about 3-4 minutes, until onions are soft and starting to brown.

3. Add chopped red bell peppers, diced tomatoes with juice, finely minced fresh garlic, and red pepper flakes.

4. Let mixture simmer 10 minutes over medium-low heat, until garlic is cooked and flavors are well-blended.

5. While stew mixture simmers, zest and juice the lemon, and chop the cilantro.

6. Cut fish fillets into 1 inch pieces and blot dry with paper towel if needed.

7. Add lemon zest, lemon juice, and 1/4 cup chopped cilantro to stew mixture, then add fish pieces and gently stir to combine.

8. Let stew simmer 5-7 minutes or until fish is barely turning opaque and some liquid from the fish is being released into the stew.

9. Stir again, season to taste with salt and fresh ground black pepper and serve hot, with additional chopped cilantro for garnish if desired.

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Recent Catches

Angler	Species	Weight	Date Caught	Location	Lure/Bait
Tim Pedersen	Spanish Mackeral	4.6 oz	10/14/2020	Cedar Key	Lure
Ed Ellett	Grouper - Red	10.04 lbs	10/15/2020	Cedar Key	Live Pinfish
Ed Ellett	Spanish Mackeral	3.4 lbs	10/2/2020	Seahorse Reef	Jig
Debby Knopf	Flounder	1.43 lbs	9/27/2020	Steinhatchee	Mud minnow
Virgil Cooper	Spanish Mackeral	4.08 lbs	9/26/2020	Cedar Key	Lure
Tim Pedersen	Spanish Mackeral	4 lbs	9/26/2020	Cedar Key	Lure
Ken Knopf	Spanish Mackeral	3.36 lbs	9/25/2020	Seahorse Reef	Spoon
Debby Knopf	Spanish Mackeral	3.50 lbs	9/25/2020	Seahorse Reef	Spoon
Ed Ellett	Redfish	5.94 lbs	9/23/2020	Barge Canal, Crystal River	Cut bait

FWC Updates

Greater amberjack closes Nov. 1 in Gulf state waters

The recreational harvest of greater amberjack in Gulf of Mexico state and federal waters closes Nov. 1 and will remain closed through April 30, 2021. The season is scheduled to reopen May 1-31, 2021.

This seasonal harvest closure is intended to help conserve the Gulf greater amberjack population and rebuild this fishery for the future.

Spotted seatrout central east zone seasonal closure starts Nov. 1

Spotted seatrout will be closed to recreational harvest Nov. 1 through Dec. 31 in the central east seatrout management zone, which includes all state and federal waters from Palm Beach through Volusia counties.

Spotted seatrout, as well as red drum and snook, also remain catch-and-release only through May 31, 2021, in waters from the Hernando/Pasco county line south through Gordon Pass in Collier County.

Atlantic bluefish regulation change effective Oct. 26

The recreational daily bag limit will be three fish per person along the Atlantic coast from Nassau through Miami-Dade counties.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) regulations for bluefish do not extend into federal waters of the Atlantic.

This change was approved at the July Commission meeting.

Bluefish from Maine through the Atlantic coast of Florida make up a single population. A 2019 federal stock assessment found that this Atlantic population of bluefish is overfished. Because of the assessment results, federal fishery managers adopted more restrictive recreational bag limits in Atlantic federal waters, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission requested states implement similar regulations.

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THANK YOU, FREDDIE!

New Red Snapper Findings - October 8, 2020

By Gary Simpson

With red snapper season about to reopen in the gulf for three late-October weekends, interesting news has arrived regarding the deep water favorites.

For years and years, recreational offshore gulf anglers have pleaded with fishery lawmakers to listen to their consistent and unanimous experience that there is no shortage of red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico. But for years, the science heeded by the lawmakers has insisted that the popular offshore fish are in very short supply. Sport fishers have had to catch fish quick during brief seasons --- shortened to protect the perceived sparse population of the brightly colored beauties.

Having actually spent a great deal of combined time offshore, the anglers are certain the fish are present in large numbers. While snapper are out-of-season, anglers trying to catch grouper frequently encounter clouds of them so abundant as to be 'nuisances'. But, however the data used by the Feds was derived, it consistently showed red snapper populations to be low and stressed. Over the years, I can't tell you how many exasperated anglers have vented their frustration over this at the store.

Now, there's finally solid scientific evidence that they were right all along. Yes, the heretofore ignored hook-and-liners are backed up by a finally-effective study method.

On October 2, a news release from the American Sportfishing Association (ASA) arrived titled, "Groundbreaking Great Red Snapper Count Study Releases Preliminary Findings".

On October 1, Congress was briefed on the preliminary findings of a new Great Red Snapper Count. "The state-of-the art study was funded through a $10 million Congressional appropriation, championed by Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) in 2016 and awarded by Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant".

This unprecedented study was led by the Harte Research Institute and provides an independent assessment of Gulf of Mexico red snapper stock abundance. And, according to a NOAA Fisheries statement on the study, the results indicate there are "up to three times as many" red snapper in the Gulf than previously thought.

It seems that over a two-year period, twenty-one scientists employed more effective methods, sampling both high relief areas like natural and artificial reefs, and low relief areas such as sand and mud bottom, to arrive at the absolute abundance estimate. Until then, only the high-relief areas had been sampled. But it turns out that approximately two-thirds of the gulf red snapper population was found to inhabit the low relief areas.

"The Great Red Snapper Count results validate what the recreational fishing community has long said --- that there are a lot more red snapper in the Gulf than have been reflected in recent stock assessments", said Kellie Ralston, ASA's Southeast Fisheries Policy Director. "We are grateful for the excellent scientific work by the Harte Research Institute and its partners, as well as Senator Shelby for recognizing the need to fund such a groundbreaking study".

It will be most interesting to follow how these landmark results will be incorporated into red snapper management. The release concludes, "With an interim analysis of stock abundance expected for the Gulf in early 2021, ASA is urging NOAA Fisheries to fully integrate the Great Red Snapper Count findings in this analysis to develop new catch estimates that provide enhanced and sustainable angler access to this iconic species".