The Acute Angler

January, 2023
Volume 56 Number 1

The monthly newsletter of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club

January Hot Shot

You'd be smiling too!

Beautiful day, calm seas, on a boat with friends and a big gag grouper!

John Byatt landed this nice gag on a recent Cedar Key outing with Captain Mark Rustemier and Ed Ellett.

BTW, the 2023 gag grouper season for state and federal waters is limited to September 1 — November 10. Now that's not something to smile about!

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President's Column

When COVID struck in 2020 and completely shut down the clubs in-person activities, GOFC found itself in perilous waters. We didn't know how long the shut-down would last, and we didn't know how the club would weather the storm.

Thankfully, we had the right man at the wheel. Mark Haberman did a magnificent job of guiding us through those dark days, holding the club together, and getting us back on course once the skies began to clear.

In 2022, Ross McElroy took the helm and it was full steam ahead. With a steady hand and tireless work ethic, Ross made certain that we returned to our full schedule of meetings and events in 2022. We've had more and more boats sign up for club tournaments, participate in activities, and attend club events. It was a fantastic year with lots of wonderful memories.

I'm honored to have been selected by the Board of Directors to be the Club President for 2023 and I'm looking forward continuing the excellent work of my predecessors. Your Board of Directors and I have laid out a vision for 2023 that builds upon the momentum of previous years. We will continue reaching new members and growing our numbers, continue improving and strengthening our organizational tools and systems, and most of all, continue increasing member engagement. We have a fantastic Tournament, Events, and Speakers committees already in place and this is going to be a jam-packed year with lots of ways to get the most out of your GOGC membership. We'll keep doing it bigger and better and we're all going to have a great time in 2023!

Your 2023 GOFC President,

Ryan Kremser

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Just go to the "Join now!" tab on the GOFC website.

https://gofc.us/join-now/

From the Editor

By Jeff Gartland

GOFC Editor

The winter fishing season is upon us. The migrating pelagics have moved through on their way back south. Red snapper and gag grouper are out of season. The focus is shifting more to inshore activity. Redfish and trout are abundant in the tidal creeks and deeper holes. Flounder are stacked up on nearshore structures and the sheepshead will soon start their inshore spawning migration.

Knowing how fishing patterns in our Big Bend area change with the seasons and how to adjust your fishing to it is a key benefit to being a club member. Make an effort this year to take advantage of the opportunities to learn that your club offers. Attend the meetings, participate in tournaments and volunteer to help. Get out and meet your fellow club members. Ask questions. You'll be surprised how much your fish catching will improve by this time next year.

January is also the time to renew your membership. At $50 this is the best value you will get in 2023. You can pay your dues at the January 27 meeting or follow this link to pay online. "Support your club, pay your dues."

With no small amount of sadness, I am announcing that this is my last column as Acute Angler editor. Life is calling my wife Jo Ann and I back to our hometown of Houston. I leave the newsletter in the capable hands of new editor, John Ebbs. It has been my pleasure to have been privileged to be your editor for the last year. I thank you for all your help and participation in creating this monthly publication. The fellowship and knowledge I have gained has been more than worth the effort.

Best wishes,

Jeff Gartland/GOFC Editor

RENEW 2023 MEMBERSHIP NOW

To pay 2023 dues or sign up as a GOFC member just follow the link below.

https://gofc.us/join-now/

The January 27 Oyster Roast and February 17 Awards & Seafood Banquet are members & family only events.

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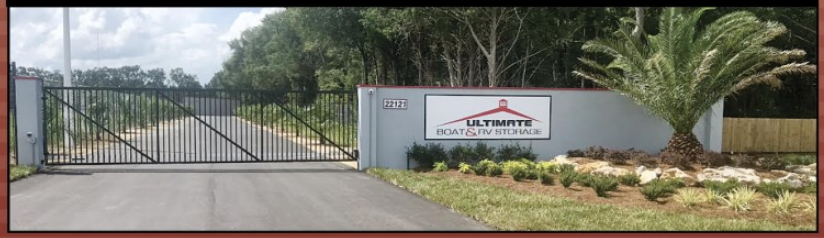

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Upcoming Events

January 24, 2023 General/Speaker Meeting. Ed Ellett will explain how to participate in the year long John Ellett (Big 10 Species) contest. Ken Knopf and Virgil Cooper will discuss tournament strategies. The meeting is in the U of F Veterinary Medicine Academic Building lecture hall off SW 16th Av. Fellowship begins at 7:00 pm and the meeting proper begins at 7:30. Watch for email announcements.

January 27, 2023—Annual Oyster Roast at Tim Pedersen's boat barn, Trenton. Watch for email announcements. Members & family only.

February 17, 2023 - **Seafood Banquet and Awards Ceremony**, Ironwood Golf Course. Watch for email announcements. Members & family only.

Monthly Meetings—Next General meeting is January 24, 2023. Upcoming meetings will be announced by email. Typically we meet on the fourth Tuesday of each month at the Veterinary Medicine Academic Building. Fellowship begins at 7:00 pm and the meeting proper begins at 7:30.

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The 2023 GOFC Oyster Roast will be held on
Friday, January 27th at the Pedersen's starting at 5:30 PM
This is a members only event.

What is it?

The Annual GOFC Oyster Roast is a great opportunity to spend an evening having fun and roasting oysters over an open fire while swapping fishing stories with your fellow GOFC members. This year Tim and Linda Pedersen have graciously offered to host the event at their boat barn in Trenton. In addition to the delicious roasted oysters, there will be fried oysters, hamburgers, hotdogs, sodas, and all the fixin's provided by the club.

Everyone is encouraged to bring a side dish or desert for sharing.

The Oyster Roast will be free to all GOFC members in good standing.

When and Where?

The Annual Oyster Roast will be held **Friday, January 27th** starting at **5:30 PM**

at the home of Tim and Linda Pedersen at **16251 42nd Court, Trenton, FL**.

What to Bring:

A side dish or desert for sharing, your favorite shucking gear if you have it, and a comfy chair for relaxing around the fire.

Directions from Gainesville:

Head West on Newberry Road (FL 26) to Main Street in Trenton (US 129)

Turn Left on Main Street (US 129) and head south for 3.6 miles

Turn Right on NW 160th St. and head west for 1.3 miles

Turn Right on to NW 42nd Ct. and follow the lime rock road around two turns until the road ends at the Pedersen's boat barn.

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The Captain's Log

By Joe Richard

I don't fish the Gulf often in winter but when I do, I carry a survival bag. All sorts of bad things can happen when boating in the fog, mostly running into solid objects, sandbars and other boats. Sometimes other boats might run over you. Running offshore in 30-yard visibility is just hazardous without radar, leaving little time to react. It can get crowded out there, too; one February we made it out of Steinhatchee without radar, turned right and ran to the artificial reef off Keaton Beach. In the gloom while running, we didn't see another boat. Dropped anchor and turned off the engines, and moments later began to hear voices all around. Invisible people. Then we heard a boat getting louder and louder. Was he headed straight for us? There was nothing we could do, except start the engines and prepare to hit the throttles if another boat appeared, pointed right at us. Yet, we never saw that boat.

We went back to casting with voices all around. The fish were biting, which usually happens in warm foggy weather. When the sun burned off the fog at 11 a.m. there were at least 20 boats anchored all around. The sky turned sunny and blue and everyone had a great time, except the sheepshead.

More recently I fish inshore, especially in foggy weather. It's nice to have a solid shoreline close by in shallow water, where you won't be run over. (Okay, except for airboats). We see these airboats during winter, running shorelines looking for fish, usually with a gillnet visible on the bow. So, it wouldn't hurt to carry a big flashlight to warn boat traffic on foggy days. That same light would be very handy if something happens and you get stuck out there overnight. Wrap a prop around a crab trap, run hard aground, and you can get marooned out there for the night because its "Who Ya Gonna Call?" Sea Tow has big boats but I doubt they run around out there in 1-2 feet of water. Winter generally has bigger tides at night, and that could float your boat free, but add fog to the equation, and you might be stuck out there. Combine fog and darkness, and that's a bad mix.

That's why we carry warm clothing on the boat in winter, even though the day might be warm. Also a small zipper survival bag with canned soup, matches, a new tarp, Cliff bars or chocolate, and a small bottle of snakebite medicine. Enough to survive a chilly night. If nearby firewood is damp, we've used gasoline from the boat. Poke a fishhook into the very end of the gas hose, pushing the little metal ball back, and then squeeze the gas hose. A small bucket or coffee would be very handy. That metal can would even host a small fire. Mix sand and gasoline and it will burn without risk of spilling.

Bigger boats carry radar or dashboard navigation electronics that show the coastline and many other features. The small boats, not so much. However, even in 40-yard fog all day long, we've been able to salvage trips by following the coastline while using the iNavX ap uploaded to our cell phones. That's a handy tool that can be used as backup on bigger boats, if they have electronic or navigation problems. You *really* don't want your cell phone battery to give out and that's why we carry a phone-charging battery at all times.

The trip that prompted us to purchase iNavX happened on a sunny, bluebird day in February. We were catching trout and around 11 a.m. these fast-moving thin, gray clouds began running across the sky, coming from the east. We kept fishing and as visibility turned to thick fog, the trout really turned on. (Shallow water fish love the fog). By 2 pm it was so foggy, we couldn't find the buoy we'd tossed out when the action began. It was clearly time to head in. And fortunately, it was dead high tide. The fog was so thick, we had to closely follow the shoreline mile after mile. So thick, we had to run *inside* the mouth of each creek or we'd lose sight of land, which had no appeal. It was a good thing we were in a shallow-running jonboat, scooting along at high tide. Otherwise…Low tide would have meant staying a quarter mile offshore, nothing in sight but gray, and without even a compass.

Catching (Up) with Friends

By Dale Reed

Last month I had a few friends in from out of town, and we decided to go to Cedar Key and do a little fishing. I had not seen a couple of these guys in quite some time and was looking forward to time on the water together. Our plan was for the four of us to catch some nice gag grouper before the December 31closure.

The weather was fair and we loaded up with frozen threadfin, herring, squid, shrimp, and trolling plugs. The boat ramp was crowded. A lot of other people had the same idea. I took us to about 20 feet of water where we would bottom fish and see if we could catch some larger baits. After about an hour and had several nice squirrel fish, grunts, and a variety of small and medium sized live baits.

Still in shallow water, I put a couple Nomad 25 foot plugs on two trolling rods and picked up our speed to about five or 6 knots. Right away we caught two nice keeper gag grouper along with a few shorts. After trolling for a while longer with no more action we decided to venture out to deeper water.

The wind had died down a bit and we got to about 50 feet of water. There we locked up on a nice rock pile. We dropped some shrimp and squid on some smaller poles to see if we could get the bottom fired up. The four of us caught a few short grouper and a few more nice baits but no keepers. Soon we decided to cut our losses and try another spot in about the same depth. Again, we caught a few short grouper, a variety of triggerfish, and even a few hog fish, but not the larger grouper that we were after. Feeling a little dejected, I thought to myself, let's go to shallower water where we caught the first few nice fish.

Staying in about 30 feet of water we started trolling again, a little faster this time at about 7 knots. For the next 30 minutes we trolled up for keeper seabass, which I have never done before. We marked the spot, went back and bottom fished it by sending frozen threadfin, herring, and squid to the bottom. We started to get some action. Looking at my Simrad machine, the bottom was starting to light up. I had two guys bait smaller poles with shrimp and fish the bottom. They started catching some nice mangrove snapper!

With the wind picking up and us not catching any big grouper we decided to start trolling again. This time we trolled Mann's stretch 30s in about 35 feet of water. My buddies and I are having a great time just being out on the water together and telling fish stories and we were getting hit on the trolling plugs!

Going over some GPS marks from previous outings, we got a double hook up on the troll. A good rule of thumb when you are trolling is using your man overboard icon when your plugs are getting hit, then go back to that area and bottom fish it. That is exactly what we did. Bam! Over the next hour, we caught multiple species and a couple more nice keeper gags.

The sun was getting low so it was time to head on back. We had a great day catching and catching up.

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Charlie's Kitchen

Seafood on the Flat Top Griddle

Part 2—Cooking on Flat Top Griddles

By Charlie Courtney

Last month I introduced you to the flat top griddle, and now it is time to cook something on it. The trick to cooking seafood on a griddle is very simple — just treat it as if you were cooking on a very large skillet, for that is essentially what a griddle amounts to. Almost all seafoods can be cooked on a griddle — shrimp, scallops, some fish, crab cakes, and calamari. Oysters have been griddled, but it is not optimum. As for fish, salmon cooks extraordinarily well on a griddle as will any fairly firm fish. However, very thin, skinless fillets may break apart when manipulated when they are nearly done, so handle them carefully.

How to Cook on a Griddle.

First, you must warm up your griddle. This takes about 15 minutes and is always done with the burners set to "low" — warming up on high may warp the top! Also, never add a large quantity of frozen foods to the griddle at once, because that also runs the risk of warping your top. The griddle is ready when the temperature of the top reaches 350-400 degrees, although a temperature of 250-300 degrees is preferred when cooking eggs.

Most of your cooking will be done with the burners set to "low" as well. However, if you place a lot of food on the griddle at once, you may increase the burner above "low" as needed to maintain a temperature of 350-400 degrees on your griddle top. (The "high" heat setting is almost never used in cooking.)

Unless the food is very fatty or oil coated, you must lay down a thin layer of cooking oil, since you are essentially shallow frying the food. It is best to use a high smoke point oil, with avocado oil being my preference. Others include canola oil, peanut oil, and grape seed oil, although many people simply use plain old vegetable oil.

Mixing one of these oils with a more flavorful source of fat, such as butter or bacon grease, also works well. A favorite trick of some is to cook a few slices of bacon on the griddle, which provides a flavorful source of oil in which to cook the main meal, especially any vegetables and potatoes.

As you are cooking your meal, take time to clean up as you go by periodically scraping debris off the griddle surface. This will make the final clean up much easier. Once you are done cooking, clean the griddle top by scraping away any remaining oil and debris. If your griddle top is fairly clean at this point, all you need to do is to wipe on a thin coat of oil for protection from rust. However, if stuck on gunk remains on the griddle, it must be removed by steaming — add water to steam the hot griddle's surface until it is mostly clean, but don't add a large quantity of water at once to avoid warping. The recommendation is to clean the griddle in quarter sections — add water, scrape, and wipe with a rag or paper towel, then repeat until the water runs clear. After such a deep cleaning is complete, apply a thin layer of oil and heat until the oil just begins to smoke. This will both protect the griddle's surface and renew its seasoning. Do not store your griddle without cleaning and oiling first, and always store your griddle with its surface protected from the weather.

Seafood Recipes

There most definitely is an art to cooking on the griddle that is best learned by watching, so rather than going into great detail about how to cook various seafoods on the griddle, I have given below only a brief description followed by a link to a YouTube video that covers a recipe in much more detail.

Griddled salmon (or any fish): Preheat the griddle on low until the surface temperature is 350-375 degrees, then add a thin layer of oil where you intend to place the fish. After seasoning the fish as desired, place it on the griddle with the non-skin side down just long enough to get a sear, then flip it skin side down and cook until done. Easy peasy. Here is a YouTube video in

Charlie's Kitchen
(cont'd)

which the Hungry Hussey cooks a full meal with salmon as the meat course: Quick Easy Mustard Glazed Salmon and Yellow Squash on the Blackstone Griddle https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUknPwKPE0

Shrimp may be cooked skewered, loose, or in a stir fry. Season or marinate the shrimp as desired. Preheat the griddle and add a thin film of oil. Place the shrimp on the griddle and cook briefly until one side is opaque, typically just a few minutes, then flip and continue briefly cooking for a few more minutes until done. Here is a YouTube recipe for Cajun Shrimp Fried Rice by the Flat Top King: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAvCD3jCmxQ

Scallops may be cooked loose or in a stir fry. They are cooked just like shrimp except that bay scallops will cook faster — overcook them and you will feel like you are eating pencil erasers! Larger sea scallops will take longer and should be given time to develop a tasty crust. Here is a video from GQue BBQ in which he griddles sea scallops in beer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTqN8OG3KoQ

There are thousands of ways to make crab cakes. Most often crab cakes are seared in a thin layer of oil to generate a crust and finished in the oven, especially the thick Maryland style crab cakes. However, thinner crab cakes can be cooked entirely on the griddle. Here is Chef Nathan Lippy cooking crab cakes on a Blackstone griddle: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RTpw1GlenNA

If you want to binge watch a few more griddled seafood videos on YouTube, then you're in luck:

The Flat Top King serves up Blackened Salmon and Shrimp on the griddle: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAi2w9ybVRI

Todd Toven makes Fish Tacos on the Blackstone Griddle: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXjiq3lvCCc

Hungry Hussey makes Bacon Wrapped Shrimp: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6vi5YeJ9bg

Here are some of my favorite Griddling Video Content Producers on YouTube . . .

The Flat Top King: https://www.youtube.com/c/theflattopking

Hungry Hussey: https://www.youtube.com/@thehungryhussey

Todd Toven: https://www.youtube.com/@praisehisawesomename

Waltwins: https://www.youtube.com/@waltwins

The Crazy Pop: https://www.youtube.com/@TheCrazyPop

Marine Medicine Pearls

By Mark Rustemier M.D.

PEARL; keep a pair of small bolt cutters in the boat

There are several ways to remove fish hooks from anglers depending on the situation, but with large gauge hooks a small bolt cutter can save the day.

Fifteen years ago, I was running out of Cedar Key with my son Eric for some offshore fishing/diving when we were flagged down by a boat that on approach, I realized was one of our GOFC board members (who will remain nameless). It was not an engine issue but a trolling plug issue. A successful family gag grouper trolling trip had been interrupted by a large trolling plug treble hook being imbedded in the captain's hand. They had separated the treble hook from the plug

(always good practice to remove the plug or tape off the other hook points before hook removal) but could not remove it from his hand. Of course, they were catching gags and he did not stop fishing. It was imbedded well beyond the barb with the point tenting up the skin. No tendons or other structures involved. The best method for removal at that point was to push it through with a twist of the needle nose pliers and cut the barb off (in a medical setting you would get some local anesthesia first). However, they did not have a pliers with a cutter that would cut the heavy 4x treble hook. I happened to keep a small bolt cutter in the console for just that purpose. It cut the barb off easily and the hook was backed out. Day saved. He continued to fish and eventually recovered without any issues. While still on the boat, I would recommend rinsing the wound with clean water, covering with a topical antibiotic and bandage, then observing for infection for a few days. If there is persistent pain, swelling or redness, that may indicate infection and will need medical evaluation. Of note, for minor clean wounds, adults previously vaccinated for tetanus, need a booster if it has been over 10 years, unless the wound is contaminated by soil, etc. then 5 years.

I personally have two pair of bolt cutters, a 24-inch set for lock/chain cutting and an 18-inch pair for the boat and our field fences. You can go down to a 12-inch bolt cutter but I prefer the 18-inch size for ease of use and it still fits in the console. Lower end bolt cutters are $10-20. Bolt cutters are a handy tool to have at home anyway but when you really need one in the boat, they are invaluable.

GET READY!

Sheepshead Shootout Tournament

When: March, 2022, Final date TBD, First safe light —4:00 PM

Where: Launch at Cedar Key . Weigh in is at Robinson's Seafood, 6991 SW State Road 24, Cedar Key, FL

Cost: FREE to MEMBERS who have paid their 2022 dues.

More details to follow.

Understanding the Ellett Contest

With credit to Brian Kiel

Understanding the John Ellett Contest

The John Ellett contest is a club contest that runs one year long and pits club members against each other in a friendly fishing contest encompassing three categories: Men's, Women's and Elite. A simplified formula awards points on a relative basis based on the heaviest fish of each species, with the exception of amberjack and kingfish which are based on length. Each species category has a maximum of 25 points and points are totaled to give an overall Ellett standing. For example, if the heaviest trout entered was a 6 lb. trout, this trout would receive the maximum 25 points, while a trout weighing half of that weight (3 lb.) would receive half of the 25 points (12.5 pts.). A 1.5 lb. trout would receive 6.25 pts. Current Ellett standings are printed in the club's Acute Angler newsletter, magazine, and on the GOFC website (Ellett standings).

It's easy to participate in the contest. All that's required is that you submit a weigh slip of any or all of the ten species the club fishes for: spotted seatrout, redfish, flounder, sheepshead, cobia, kingfish, Spanish mackerel, greater amberjack, bluefish, and grouper. Any scale can be used to estimate the fish weight, however, when a fish exceeds the maximum weight for a particular species (see bottom of weigh slip under Heavy Catches), that fish must be weighed on a State certified scale like those found in commercial establishments that use a scale to determine the value of an item sold to the public. A fish house like Northwest Seafood in Gainesville will usually weigh fish, if asked nicely. The weight should be noted on a receipt or store weigh slip, signed by the individual weighing the fish, and attached to the GOFC weigh slip to be turned into the club. The club Weighmaster keeps a certified club scale at home for members to use (contact the GOFC Weighmaster/Record Keeper, weighslip@gofc.us).

To win the contest you don't have to catch the largest fish, just catch as many of the 10 species as you can (hopefully a couple will be heavy fish). Participation in club events also helps as points are awarded for participation in club Tournaments (2 pts.) and Funaments (1 pt.). Writing an article for the Acute Angler is worth 3 points.

Awards are given to three places with the top male & female angler receiving a coveted inscribed pewter plate from the Ellett family, who happen to have sponsored this contest since its inception. The Ellett contest dates run from January 1st to December 31st with awards given out during the March Awards Banquet.

In addition to the Ellett awards, the club also gives awards and recognition for the heaviest three fish of each species. The club also maintains a list of GOFC Record Catches that include 109 species, so keep any species that is either not noted or exceeds the record. You can also submit a weigh slip for one of the "Other Two" species (dolphin and tripletail) to be computed for a separate award following the same guidelines for Special Category

GAINESVILLE OFFSHORE FISHING CLUB

Ellett Contest Recent Catches

New Entries from December 1, 2022 — January 10, 2023

Angler	Species	Weight/Length	Date	Location	Bait or Lure
Dale Reed	Grouper - Gag	14.96 lbs	12/19/2022	Cedar Key	Plug
Marcia Ellett	Seatrout	2.06 lbs	1/2/2023	Keaton Beach	Artificial
Ed Ellett	Seatrout	4.36 lbs	1/2/2023	Keaton Beach	Twitch lure
Marcia Ellett	Bluefish	2.18 lbs	1/2/2023	Keaton Beach	Artificial
John Byatt	Grouper - Gag	13.25 lbs	12/29/2022	Cedar Key	Threadfin
Ed Ellett	Seatrout	4.32 lbs	12/21/2022	Keaton Beach	Twitch lure
Virgil Cooper	Greater Amber-jack	38.25"	12/12/2022	Cedar key	Live bait
Phil Horn	Grouper - Gag	25.82 lbs	12/10/2022	Cedar Key	Trolling
Tim Pedersen	Grouper - Gag	11.80 lbs	12/10/2022	Cedar key	Lure
Virgil Cooper	Grouper - Gag	16.17 lbs	12/10/2022	Cedar key	Lure
Ed Ellett	Grouper - Gag	14.74 lbs	12/10/2022	Cedar Key	Mega Bait trolling plug
Staci Sanders	Seatrout	2.4 lbs	12/6/2022	Keaton Beach	Lure
Tim Pedersen	Flounder	2.96 lbs	12/7/2022	Keaton beach	Lure
Ed Ellett	Greater Amber-jack	34.5”	12/7/2022	Steinhatchee 75'	Live bait
Jeff Gartland	Seatrout	2.41 lbs	12/3/2022	Keaton Beach	Live shrimp

Ellett Contest 2022 Standings

- Men’s Division
- Women’s Division
- Elite Division
- Inshore Standings
- Offshore Standings