# The Acute Angler

March, 2023
Volume 56, Number 3

The monthly newsletter of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club


## March Hot Shot

### Why we fish.

It's not always about the biggest fish **we** caught. Sometimes it's just the fellowship and friends met and friendships reinforced by sharing time on the water.

Picture to the right is some of the GOFC'ers whom participated in this years Sheepshead Shootout held due to a weather delay on March 11th.

Great time was had by all, fish were recorded on each boat, and bragging rights established for the year.

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## President's Corner

The Golden Season…

It doesn't get much better than Springtime in the Sunshine State. This is that special time of year in Florida when the air temperatures are perfect, the flowers are in bloom, and the days get longer. It's also the time of year when the fishing really starts to pick up!

We've had a lot of beautiful weather this month, but unfortunately it seems that the cold fronts keep showing up on the weekends. That makes it a bit harder to get out on the water for those of us who work during the week and it forced the postponement of the Sheepshead Shootout by a week. Hopefully the weather will give us weekenders more opportunities to get out on the water the second half of the month.

In February we held our annual Seafood Banquet and Awards Ceremony at Ironwood Golf Course. GOFC's volunteer chef extraordinaire, Virgil Cooper, put out an amazing spread of shrimp, snow crab legs, lobster tails, and the best clam chowder ever! You know it's an epic feast when people are taking home doggie backs full of crab legs and lobster tails at the end of the night! Congratulations to Charolette Pedersen for winning the dessert competition. Her award winning cake was long gone by the time I made it to the dessert table, but it looked amazing!

Our next tournament will be the Mack Attack and Cobiathon on April 22nd in Cedar Key. Prizes will be awarded for the three largest Spanish Mackerel, King Mackerel, and Cobia. An announcement with additional details will be sent out approximately three weeks prior to the event.

***RULE CHANGE***

Last year the club experimented with measuring king mackerel by length instead of weight for tournaments and contests. Reason being is a 35" King caught in the spring is going to weigh differently that a 35" caught in the fall. The results have been mixed with some members in favor of continuing to measure king mackerel by weight and those who wish to revert back to weight.

At the March Meeting of the Board of Directors, a motion was passed that changes the metric for king mackerel back to weight. Since no king mackerel have been entered into the Ellet Contest so far, the rule will become tentatively effective immediately. If no king mackerel have been caught prior to the rule change being officially announced at the club's general meeting on March 28th, the rule change will remain in effect. To be on the safe side, members are asked to record both the length and weight of any King Mackerel caught between now and the end of April.

I hope you everyone is able to get out on the water enjoy some beautiful weather during this golden season!

Your 2023 GOFC President,

Ryan Kremser

## From the Editor

It was a great past 30 days as your editor got out on 5 fishing trips (this retirement gig is not too bad), we had the Sheepshead Shootout on the 11th, with congrats to Al Clements who had biggest fish at 4 lb 8 oz and to Al and Boat Captain Logan who had the winning team aggregate at 12 lb 1 oz. Only a pound and 3 oz separated first from third place for the team aggregate!

All who attended enjoyed our annual Seafood Banquet (see the pictures later in the newsletter) and nobody went home hungry. Congratulations to all the winners!

At our February meeting we learned a lot from guest speaker, General Manager Tommy Durham from the new ***Backwater to Bluewater 2*** boat dealership here in town with lots of advice and tips. Good to have their services here in town! Hope we can get them as an advertiser!!

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This month on the 28th our guest speaker for our March meeting is local Freediver and Spearfisherman Perry McDonald who will share tips on how to get into the sport for newbies and expert tips for the more advanced divers in the club. Perry will have videos and photos from many of our spots we only see from the surface and bring along his typical gear he uses for show and tell. Even if you don't dive the videos and photos will be worth the trip!

John

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# Upcoming Events

**March 28, 2023—Monthly Meeting**—The featured speaker at the March meeting will be Freediver and Spearfisherman Perry McDonald at the Veterinary Academic Building .Perry who launches out of Cedar Key and Steinhatchee will share tips on how to get into the sport for newbies and expert tips for the more advanced divers in the club. Perry will have videos and photos from many of our spots we only see from the surface and bring along his typical gear he uses for show and tell. Even if you don't dive the videos and photos will be worth the trip!

Fellowship begins at 7:00 pm and the meeting proper begins at 7:30.

**March 28th, 2023**—Monthly Meeting UF Vet Med VAB Auditorium

**April 25th, 2023**—Monthly Meeting UF Vet Med VAB Auditorium

# Tournament Schedule

**Cobia-Mack Attack**:
Saturday, April 22, 2023 at Cedar Key, FL
Cash prices are as follows:
1st $100, 2nd $75, 3rd $50
For largest fish in each category, including King mackerel **by weight only**.

**Crystal River Spoil Banks Learnament:**
Saturday, May 6, 2023 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Dinner at Seafood Seller's at 4:00 p.m. in the West Marine Shopping Center.
Call Dale or John Patrick to enter; no limit on number of boats.
Non-boat members are welcome.

**Spring Tournament at Crystal River**:
Saturday, May 20, 2023
Weigh-in at Fort Island Trail
First through third cash prizes for all 10 species.

**Shrimp-A-Thon out of Suwanee Marina**:
Tentative in June or July, depending on the shrimp's arrival.

**Fall Tournament at Cedar Key**: All 10 species

**Trout-Redfish Tournament out of Steinhatchee:**
1st, 2nd and 3rd place prizes for heaviest redfish and 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes for 3 trout aggregate.
First prize for redfish most spots. May add flounder or remove trout; depending on next tournament meeting.

## The Captain's Log

By Joe Richard

### Sheepshead City

There must be places off our Big Bend where sheepshead hide out, that nobody knows about. Maybe they're dispersed most of the year over those countless flat, hard bottom spots with live growth, where ravenous seabass also live. How else to explain local sheepshead scarcity? The only time we see them in numbers, are spawning sites where they gather each Spring. If you miss the GOFC's annual tournament , it might be difficult to find a legal-sized sheepie during the rest of the year, and achieve their Top-10 fish list.

This doesn't seem the case, for the rest of Florida. Our Big Bend Nature Coast is lacking in bridge structures and pilings that attract these fish. Meanwhile in Jacksonville, which is Sheepshead City, they have a huge sheepshead tourney each February, awarding a new boat and prizes. They don't have to cancel in case of bad weather; their fish are caught under the many bridges, deepwater docks, seawalls, the Mayport jetties, and countless structures offshore, including big shipwrecks. Even jonboats and kayaks are welcome. Many fish are caught and it usually takes a 10-plus pounder to win.

And never mind sheepshead on the Texas coast, where I spent many years. They have eight different jettied inlets made up of granite rocks, and sheepshead swarm there year 'round, especially those beyond reach of foot traffic. (All are flat-topped, however). The oil rigs offshore are filled with them. They have plenty of old shrimp boat wrecks within sight of the beach, often in murky water, that have never been dove and seldom if ever fished. That state has also had a protective daily bag limit of five fish, for at least 25 years.

Anyway, back to catching sheepshead for GOFC's Top-10 list. My boat is too small for offshore, so my plan is to round up a bunch of choice fiddler crabs, said to be the all-time greatest bait for these fish. Yes, sheepies love live shrimp, but so does every other fish in the Gulf, who will run interference by grabbing your expensive shrimp. I think using fiddler crabs will narrow the catch, and focus on those striped prizes. So, we've cleaned up our dip net and will be chasing crabs near boat ramp in choice creeks, where those crabs are easily visible, scuttling slowly for cover. In summer, those mud banks look like the ground is moving at low tide. Where? Hagan's Cove and Rocky Creek come to mind. Big fine fiddler crabs with white claws. They can also be caught by burying a small metal can flush with the sand, leaving a small piece of fish at the bottom. They fall into the can and can't get out. That may take hours to accomplish, however.

That takes care of bait. Now, where to fish? The only off-season sheepshead I've seen in years has been the many pilings at Atsena Otie Island off Cedar Key. There, last summer, we were anchored and somewhat startled when another boat pulled up and began beating on the pilings, knocking barnacles loose, a surefire method for chumming up sheepshead. We know these fish only eat crustaceans, and that means shrimp, oysters, crabs and barnacles. Maybe juvenile oysters, too. A menu like that is why these fish are tasty on the table.

Back to my story: The other boat pounded and chummed for a few minutes and soon after, somebody's rod bent double. They soon netted a keeper sheepshead. By this boat crew's actions, it was apparent it wasn't their first rodeo. There were many pilings for them to explore, but they stayed at the same spot. Seems like a boat with electric motor could do better, checking many of those pilings, especially at high tide when the current is slow. Using a bobber rig set three feet deep. Instead of trout spin gear with 12-pound line, try using a bait caster armed with a hard 20-pound line, like Ande or Berkley Trilene, to set the hook firmly and horse those fish away from structure. Or keep it sporty, but it would be a shame to hook a stubborn 6-pounder with trout gear in such tight confines.

You never know, a club or state record sheepshead might be lurking in those pilings. I've always thought the biggest, oldest sheepies retire from offshore and move in close but the truth is, they can be found anywhere. Twenty years ago Capt. Paul Cronk in Steinhatchee was said to have caught a 16-pounder at the culvert artificial reef off Keaton Beach, in 17 feet of water during the Spring spawn. If so, it was one pound bigger than the state record. That ponderous female trophy sheepshead was unfortunately filleted and bagged up with the day's catch.

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# Charlie's Kitchen

## Paella — The National Dish of Spain

### By Charlie Courtney

Paella is a rice-based dish that has become so popular that many non-Spanish people think of it as the national dish of Spain. Paella originated in the Valencia region of Spain, and the original paella valenciana recipe consisted of short or round grain rice, green beans, lima beans, rabbit, chicken, and/or duck cooked in olive oil and chicken broth in a shallow pan.

Spices included rosemary (preferably fresh sprigs) and saffron. Since saffron is one of the most expensive of allspices, many people substitute turmeric to provide the yellow color.

In coastal regions, paella de marisco uses various seafoods for the meats. The recipe that I describe below is a paella mixta, which contains both seafood and land animal meats. There is no firm agreement on just what is and is not a paella ever since its popularity spread to the rest of the world, for many local meats and vegetables may be included in the dish. However, native Valencians turn up their noses at all these variants, referring to them as arroz con cosas (rice with things). So here is my version of "rice with things" . . .

**Ingredients**

1/4 cup olive Oil

1 onion , diced

1 bell pepper, diced (I like to use a mix of red and yellow peppers)

4 cloves of garlic, crushed

1 can of diced tomatoes, or 8 oz. of tomato sauce, or diced fresh tomatoes

1 large bay leaf

1 teaspoon paprika

1 pinch saffron threads

salt and pepper to taste

¼ cup white wine

4 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into pieces

1 lb. Smoked sausage cut into half inch rounds

¼ cup chopped parsley

2 cups rice, preferably Bomba (Spanish) rice — do not use an instant rice

5 cups chicken broth

1/2 cup frozen or fresh green peas

1 cup frozen or fresh green beans

½ to 1 lb. of shrimp, peeled, tail on

**Instructions**

Add olive oil to a large skillet or paella pan over medium heat. Sauté the sausage, shrimp, and chicken, then remove and set aside. Add the onion and bell peppers, and cook until the onion is translucent. Add crushed garlic and cook for another minute before adding tomato, bay leaf, paprika, saffron, salt and pepper. Stir and cook for 5 minutes. Add white wine and cook for another 10 minutes. Taste and add more salt if needed.

Add the reserved chicken and sausage, 2 tablespoons chopped parsley, green beans (if used), and rice to the pot. Cook for 1 minute. Pour the broth slowly all around the pan, and gently shake the pan to until the rice forms an even layer covered by the liquid. Bring it to a boil and reduce the heat to a simmer. Give the pan a gentle shake once or twice during cooking, but do not stir the food. Cook uncovered for about 15-18 minutes, then top with the shrimp, sprinkle green peas, on top, and continue to cook (without stirring) for about 5 more minutes. Most of the liquid should be absorbed and the rice at the top nearly tender. If the rice is still not cooked, add ¼ cup more water or broth and continue cooking until the rice is tender. (Ideally, a layer of roasted rice, called socarrat in Valencià, will be at the bottom of the skillet. This is especially tasty.)

Remove the skillet from the heat and cover it with a lid or foil. Place a kitchen towel over the lid and allow the paella to rest for 10 minutes before serving.

Feel free to experiment, modifying this recipe by the addition other vegetables, other meats (even wild game), and other seafoods — the more the merrier.

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**Marine Medicine Pearls**

By Mark Rustemier M.D.

**PEARL**; Shuffle your feet or bring the heat

Whether swimming, surfing or wade-fishing in Florida's beaches or estuaries it can ruin your day to step on a sting ray. Fishermen removing a hooked stingray are at risk as well. Sting rays are common in the Florida shallows, specifically the Southern stingray (Dasyatis americana). They can get to 6 feet across but on average are 2-3 feet, gray/brown in coloration and rhomboid in shape.

The business part is the spine on the tail which is about 1/3 of the way down from the base of the tail. There is no "stinger" on the tip.

The stingray uses this venomous spine to ward of sharks, etc. by flipping the tail up over its body, bringing the tail spine up and into the threat. Which with humans is more likely the foot or lower leg. They have glands that produce a very painful venom. The pain can be intense for a couple hours commonly with bleeding and swelling. Wounds range from a small puncture to a larger deep laceration. Larger ray species can be a greater threat (i.e., the "Crocodile Hunter" Steve Irwin).

Immediate treatment requires irrigation of the wound with fresh water or sterile saline, then submerging the area in hot water to denature the venom. Water temperature should be as hot as can be tolerated (110-113 degrees) for 30-90 minutes. Remove any stinger debris with tweezers, clean with soap and water, and apply topical antibiotic/dressing. More extensive wounds may need medical evaluation with x-rays to rule out retained spine fragments and local anesthesia for wound debridement to prevent infection. Also, consider a tetanus booster if it has been over 5-10 years. Watch closely over several days for infection.

If you can remember "**Shuffle your feet or bring the heat**" when it comes to stingray injuries you may significantly reduce someone's pain… maybe your own.

Dr. Mark

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# 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.

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# 2023 GOFC Awards Banquet and Seafood Feast!

# FWC statewide snook workshops start next week

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is adopting a holistic management approach for snook that includes a review of several environmental and human factors including habitat, fishing effort and stakeholder feedback to evaluate the fishery at a more local scale. FWC staff is proposing to establish 10 new management regions with snook regulations based on the status of the fishery in each region. The public is encouraged to attend one of the FWC's in-person workshops that are being held throughout the state. Here is the one closest to our area:

March 28, 6–8 p.m.
Crystal River City Hall Council Chambers
123 N.W. U.S. Highway 19
Crystal River, FL 34428

# A newbies first season of catching Sheepshead

## From the Editor

So, I must admit I had up until this past month never caught a Sheepshead: was always too early in the year, boat not ready, too cold still, etc., etc., etc. In 2023 after rejoining the GOFC I had the great fortune to be invited along on 4 trips from 3 different captains in the past month, so I wanted to share some thoughts and experiences. While no means an expert, I feel I did ok, never getting skunked and having plenty to cook up the next day and even share with friends.

**Trout Rods:** It felt very odd using light weight spinning tackle and dropping bait down into rock piles and wreaks but the key as shared by the "Old Salts" is "you need to feel the bite you cannot feel". Unlike just about everything else we target that slams the bait and tries to run into a hole or take off for the horizon, Sheepshead mouth the bait and basically suck the shrimp or crab off the hook. So, use a rod with a sensitive tip, light line, and light leaders.

**Rigs and jigs:** Of course, every fisher has a different favorite rig, and plenty of fish came over the side caught on double hook chicken rigs. I was partial to a knocker rig with a 1 to 3 oz egg sinker "knocking" against the hook, or in this case a red bead to shield and protect the knot. My second choice was a Sheepball, basically a jig ball with a free swinging small and sharp hook that allowed me to keep tension with the bait and tied directly to the line with no leader or swivel. I could only find them in weights up to 1.25 oz so if the current is ripping them the knocker rig is it.

**Location, location, location:** Old charter boat captain on the Chesapeake Bay once told me that 95% of the bay does not have any fish in it, “so John fish the 5% that does!”. For spawning sheepies, the dry docks, rock piles, artificial reefs, wreaks, etc. are the ticket and hold the greatest concentrations this time of year.

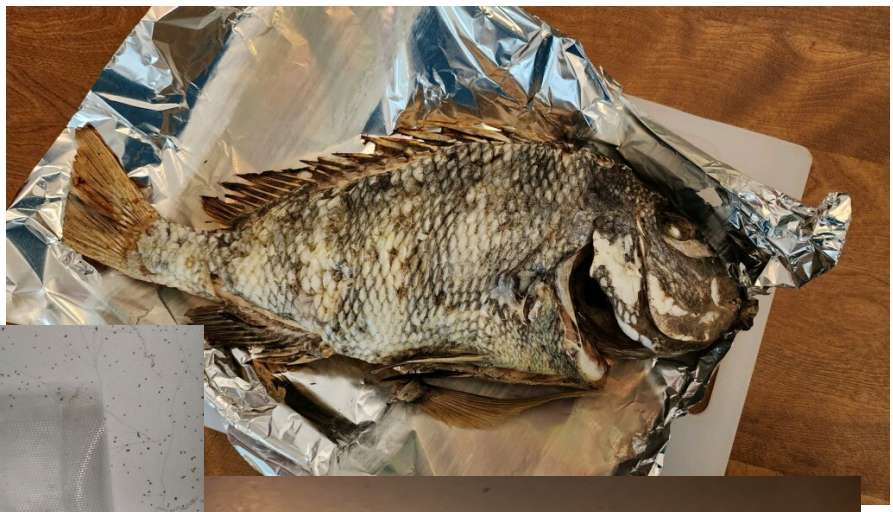
**Bring lots of bait, you will need it:** According to Judge Tom, “they don’t call them Convict fish for nothing”. Besides the back and white stripes, I found myself rebaiting every couple minutes or so if not reeling in a fish (mostly the former). I also found that fresh shrimp was a lot better than frozen, and my salted shrimp was untouched which was a shock to me. Cut or pinch your shrimp into 2 or three pieces, thread on the hook and finish through the shell (heads worked great for me btw). Captain Ellett showed me a great way to keep the shrimp alive and well without a livewell by placing them on a wet newspaper on top of a layer of ice in a cooler. Thanks Ed!

End of the day they are a fun fish to catch and eat, and it was great to enjoy getting out with friends from the club. Awesome way to start the offshore season for sure!

# So, you want to eat a Sheepshead?

Tackling a sheepie with a filet knife is daunting at first with hide tough enough to tan for leather and scales big enough to skip on the water like a rock so your editor took to the internet to find some shortcuts and expert advice, after all, the internet is full of experts! I found some good videos on YouTube with some tricks like lifting the dorsal fin up to fully extended position and finding a slit or crease right at the top of the filet that makes inserting the tip of your knife so much easier for one. So while not very fast I did an ok job in fileting the catch from several different trips. However, a tip from our favorite “old Salt” Chic got both myself and Mike Wohl going in a different direction: I always feel a bit cheated after even a great filet job on how much meat seems to be left on the carcass, and how my favorite way to cook several species like Scamp Grouper is to bake them whole after gutting and gilling. Chic shared with us to gut, gill, and them cook in the oven or on the grill the entire Sheepshead for about 30 minutes at around 350. At the 30-minute mark, you can take a pair of tongs and lift the skin and scales right off! Then cook another 5 to 10 minutes and eat! Amazing ho much more meat you can get and to quote Mike after his first attempt: “Wow. Just finished the fish. I'll never filet sheepshead again. There is so much more meat and it's all tender”.

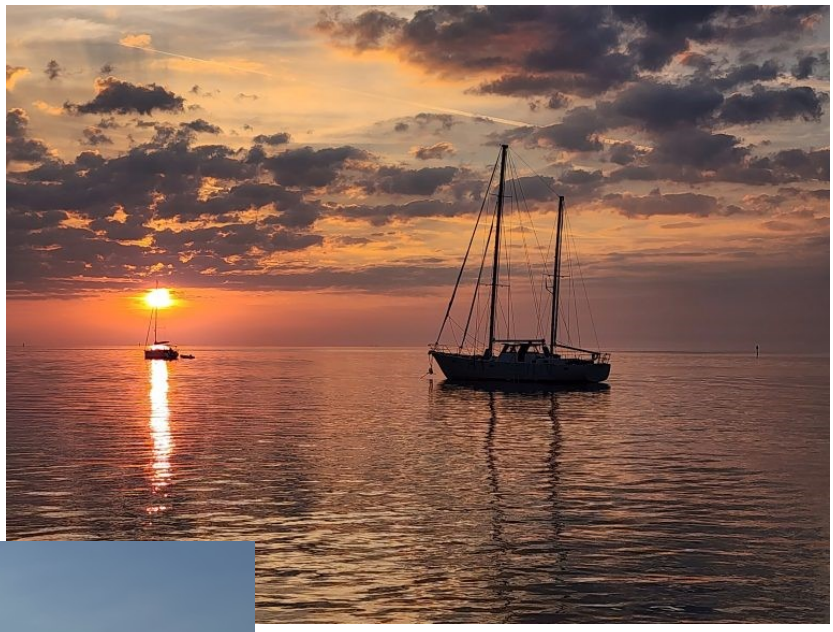
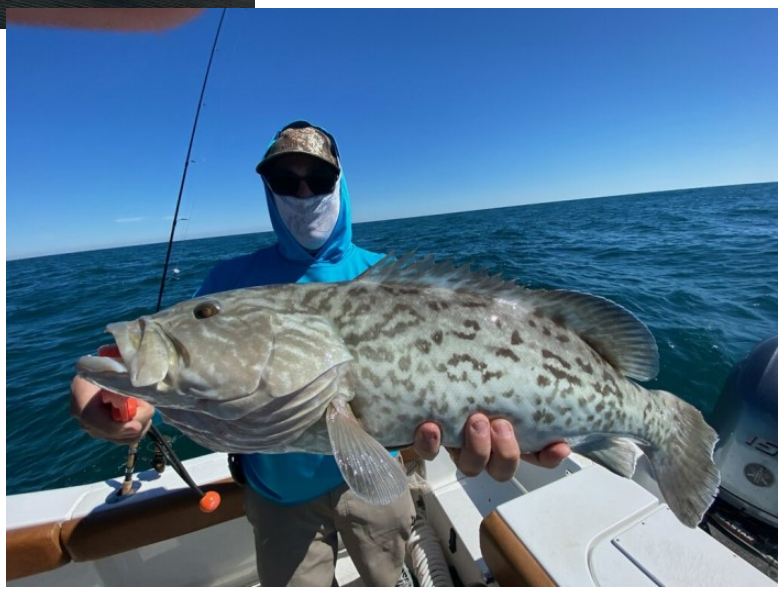
Thanks Chic for the advice!!



# 2023 Ellett Award Standings as of 3-10-23

| Mens Divison | Flounder | Pts | Redfish | Pts | Sheeps-head | Pts | Span Mack | Pts | Trout | Pts | Bonus | TOTALS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reed, Dale | | 0 | 4.76 | 15.76 | 3.13 | 16.47 | 2.76 | 23 | 3.13 | 14.4 | | 69.6 |
| Vining, Carl | 1.68 | 25 | 7.55 | 25 | | 0 | | 0 | 3.56 | 16.4 | | 66.37 |
| Hinton, Chic | | 0 | 6.31 | 20.89 | 4.75 | 25 | | 0 | 2.9 | 13.3 | | 59.23 |
| Mike Dumas | | 0 | | 0 | 4 | 21.05 | 3 | 25 | | 0 | | 46.05 |
| Ellett, Ed | | 0 | | 0 | 4.02 | 21.16 | | 0 | 4.36 | 20.1 | | 41.21 |
| Rustemier,Mark | | 0 | | 0 | 4.68 | 24.63 | | 0 | 3.14 | 14.4 | | 39.07 |
| Byatt, John | | 0 | | 0 | 2.44 | 12.84 | | 0 | 5.44 | 25 | | 37.84 |
| Ebbs, John | | 0 | | 0 | 3.38 | 17.79 | 1.56 | 13 | | 0 | | 30.79 |
| Horn, Phil | | 0 | | 0 | 3.08 | 16.21 | | 0 | | 0 | | 16.21 |
| Machin, Ariel | | 0 | | 0 | 2 | 10.53 | | 0 | | 0 | | 10.53 |

| Womens Division | Flounder | Pts | Redfish | Pts | Sheepshead | Pts | Trout | Pts | Bonus | TOTALS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Vining, Staci | 2.57 | 25 | 5.68 | 25 | | 0 | 2.98 | 25 | | 75 |
| Cross, Dawn | | 0 | | 0 | 2 | 25 | | 0 | | 25 |

| Elite Division | Bluefish | Pts | Flounder | Pts | Redfish | Pts | Sheepshead | Pts | Trout | Pts | TOTALS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cooper, Virgil | | 0 | 1.58 | 25 | 7.18 | 25 | 5.61 | 20 | 6.9 | 25 | 94.7 |
| Pedersen, Tim | | 0 | 0.95 | 15.03 | 6.81 | 23.71 | 3.75 | 13 | 3.96 | 14.4 | 66.25 |
| Knopf, Ken | | 0 | | 0 | 5.11 | 17.79 | 7.12 | 25 | 4.56 | 16.5 | 59.31 |
| Ellett, Marcia | 2.18 | 25 | | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | 2.06 | 7.46 | 32.46 |

# Parting Pics