The Acute Angler

June 2026
Volume 59, Number 6

The monthly newsletter of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club

In this Edition

Upcoming Events	P2
From the Editor	P3
Steinhatchee report	P3
Chasing Flounder	P4
Crystal River report	P6
Kayak Corner	P7
Charlie's Kitchen	P9
Tournament results	P12
What's in Season	P15
For Sale Items	P17
GOFC Merchandise	P18

President's Message

Well, we are finally getting some good rain which hopefully reduces our wildfire risk without upsetting the delicate fresh/brackish/salt balance in our inshore waters. I hope it continues…

We had our fifth general meeting of 2026 this past Tuesday. Florida Sports Hall of Fame member, Leiza Fitzgerald from CCA, discussed as promised the latest updates that CCA Florida is working on for us and her "baby", the STAR tournament with its new focus on youth anglers. Leiza shared some of the current tips and techniques she is using to target inshore species including a couple hot tips we cannot reprint here! If You missed it, the presentation was fun and informative.

Upcoming events for us to take note of; our all ten species Spring Tournament is scheduled for this Saturday the 6th so hopefully the weather forecast allows all to get out. Reminder to make sure you register for it, you can fish all ports, weigh-in at Slaughterhouse Seafood in Cedar Key 5:30 to 6:30. Also on the schedule is the 2026 Fish Fry at Ken and Debby's boat barn, look for announcements on that soon. Price of admission? Desert, side dish to share, or fish for the fryers! My adventures on the Dusky continue; I am getting out as much as the weather allows, Upped my Spanish Mac with a larger one for the Ellett contest on a solo trip, caught a respectable 13 pound Kingfish with Tim P on board (see picture above), and had my favorite fishing buddy, oldest daughter Ceara out twice and on the last trip she hooked and landed this gorgeous 25" Gag. Not sure who was happier: dad, Ceara, or the Gag upon being released! We have a scalloping scouting trip planned this week if weather is favorable to map the route from Cedar Key up to Horseshoe and besides hopefully finding some clear water and spots where the scallops are showing up, will look for Tripletail and Cobia on markers and crab buoys on the way up and back.

On that note, scalloping season is just a week and a half away! Reminder that for the first 2 weeks the bag limit is reduced to 1 gallon per person/5 gallons per boat. Only on July 1st does it go back to 2/person and 10/boat traditional limits. The tournament committee and board are looking to have a Scalloping "Funament" this summer so stay tuned for this very family friendly event!

Hope to see you at some of our events and on the water! So, until then, tight lines and following seas to all.

John Ebbs — 2025 to 2026 GOFC President
352-213-4350

The Acute Angler

June 2026
Volume 59, Number 6

The monthly newsletter of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club

Upcoming Events

Spring Tournament – Saturday June 6th

Members may fish from any port in the club's home waters. **Weigh in:** 5:30 to 6:30 pm at Slaughterhouse restaurant in Rosewood, 9 miles from the Cedar Key ramp on SR 24.

Fish Fry – Saturday June 20th

Knopf's boat barn. Start time 3:30pm till dusk. Bring a side dish or dessert to share. Free to GOFC members.

General Meeting – Tuesday June 23rd

Doors open for fellowship at 7:00 pm, meeting starts at 7:30 pm. Location is at Best Restoration's meeting room; 6933 NW 4th Blvd. This is just off Tower Road ***NEXT TO*** the Home Depot. Speaker TBD. Watch your email for an update

If you've not already done so, now's time to renew your GOFC Membership for 2026!

It's as easy than ever!

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

(http://www.gofc.us/wp/join-now/)

Then fill out the form online and pay using PayPal, or you can pay Debby at the monthly meetings!

Edward C. Ellett, CPCU, CIC, CLU
King Insurance
643 SW 4th Avenue
Gainesville, FL 32601
352-415-8244
352-317-8601 fax
www.king-insurance.com
ed.ellett@king-insurance.com

KING INSURANCE

- Life Insurance for dying too soon.
- Annuities for preserving what you have.
- Long Term Care Insurance when longevity becomes challenging.
- Home, Auto, Boat, Umbrella, Disability and Business Insurance for the challenges in between.

Auto-Owners INSURANCE

LIFE · HOME · CAR · BUSINESS

The Acute Angler

June 2026
Volume 59, Number 6

The monthly newsletter of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club

From the Editor

So long old friend.

I haven't been able to find out when the Steel Tower (or Iron Beacon as some call it) was placed at the southern end of Seahorse Reef, but it has been a landmark and fishing destination for as long as anyone in GOFC can remember. After trolling for Spanish mackerel it was often worth cruising out to the Steel Tower to see if a cobia or two might be loitering around the pilings. I've caught a few there as well as memorable over-slot snook a few years back. It also used to reliably hold spawning sheepshead, although less so in more recent years.

Time had taken its toll on this structure and it finally succumbed to Hurricane Debby (August 6, 2024) which broke off most of the top portion of the tower, with only a few feet of four pilings sticking out of the water. The fish didn't seem to mind though and the extra debris to one side of the original tower created more habitat. However, what was once an aid to navigation was now a hazard. In March of this year, the US Coast Guard requested bids to remove the remaining pilings and associated debris field. Ed Ellett heard from a friend that a marine salvage company was working on the job earlier in May and sure enough on a recent trip to the reef we motored all around the gps coordinates for the Steel Tower and found nothing but memories.

Another item that seems to be missing from Seahorse Reef is the big schools of Spanish Mackerel that take up residence during the warmer months. On the same trip with Ed, we caught no macks and probably by way of explanation saw no bait schools. Hopefully, the late cold snap is responsible and the Spanish will show up in numbers soon.

John Byatt (GOFC newsletter editor)
jcbyatt@gmail.com
352-727-8029

STEAM CLEAN
POWERFUL STEAM MACHINE FOR CARPET, UPHOLSTERY, TILE & GROUT
CUSTOMIZED
HOUSE CLEANING
PRESSURE WASHING
WINDOW CLEANING
10% OFF
ANY SPECIALTY SERVICE
(EXCLUDING HOUSE CLEANING)
RUB A DUB DUB
352.336.8570
www.rubadubcleaning.com

Steinhatchee Report: Capt. Bobbi Brady

In Steinhatchee, June brings some of the best mixed-action days of the season. We are seeing cobia and mackerel on the flats. Be prepared with some heavy leader if you plan to target either of them. Reds are schooling more right now, so look for rocks or creek mouths with mullet splashing around. As for trout, we have been finding more abundant numbers in 5 to 7 foot. Using jig heads with plastics have been the go to for all hookups this week. Different weights for different depths.

Florida Saltwater Flats Fishing Charters:
352-318-8429

The Acute Angler

June 2026
Volume 59, Number 6

The monthly newsletter of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club

Flat-Out on the Nature Coast: Chasing Flounder from Homosassa to Keaton Beach: by Ryan Kremser

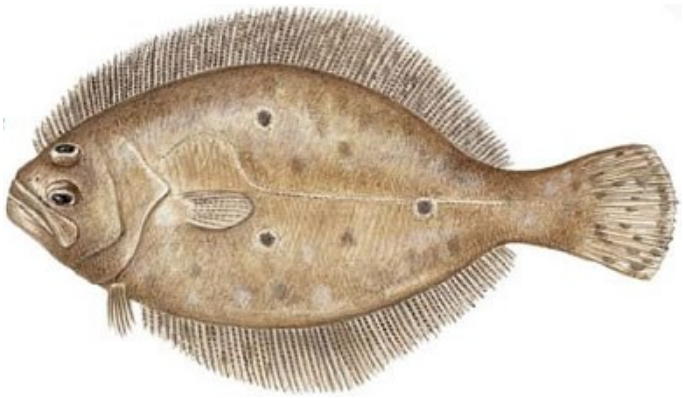
Florida's Big Bend hides one of the Gulf's most rewarding ambush predators in plain sight — along oyster edges, creek mouths, and sandy potholes from Citrus Coun-

There's a particular kind of angler who loves flounder. Not the run-and-gun crowd chasing busting trout or

tailing reds across a flood tide, but the patient ones — the bottom-readers, the structure-pickers, the folks who can feel a soft *thump* through a braided line and wait that extra half-second before setting the hook.

Along our club's home fishing range, from the spring-fed creeks of Homosassa north to the tannic mouth of the Steinhatchee River and on up to the grassy flats of Keaton Beach, flounder reward exactly that kind of patience.

Our little stretch of the Gulf is unglamorous in the best way: no high-rise condos, no crowded inlets, just mile after mile of seagrass, oyster bar, limestone hard-bottom, and tidal creek draining the marsh. It's flatfish country. Here's what you need to know to fish it well — and an honest look at where the fishery stands right now.

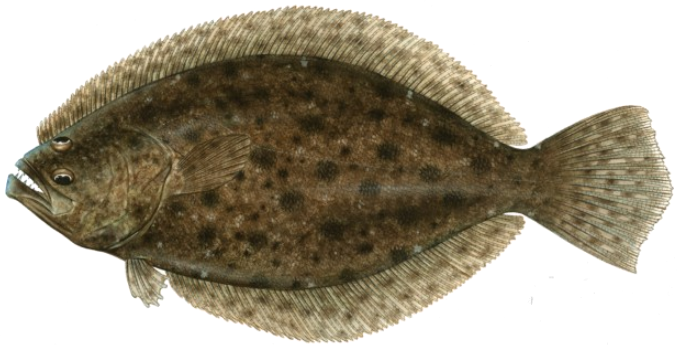


A Gulf flounder shows the three distinct eye-like spots in a triangle that distinguish it from the southern flounder that lacks any eye-like spots.

Know Your Quarry: A Little Flounder Biology:

Two species share these waters, and being able to tell the difference can pay off. The **Gulf flounder** (*Paralichthys albigutta*) is the smaller, more abundant of the pair on this coast. It is easily identified by the three distinct eye-like spots arranged in a triangle — one near the base of the tail, two behind the pectoral fins. As adults Gulf flounder favor hard, sandy bottoms, while juveniles settle into high-salinity seagrass beds. They live roughly 7 to 10 years, females mature young (between one and two years), and the species' center of abundance in the Gulf of Mexico sits right along its northeastern coast – which is to say, *here*. Males rarely exceed 13 to 14 inches. A Gulf Flounder over 14 inches are fairly uncommon and would almost certainly be a female that is at least two years old.

The **southern flounder** (*Paralichthys lethostigma*) is the larger of the two species. It carries *no* eye-like spots at all — instead its olive-brown back is marked with diffuse, smudgy blotches that often fade altogether on big fish. It is thought to be the largest flatfish in the Gulf of Mexico, with mature fish reaching up to roughly 36 inches and better than 12 pounds, so if you boat a heavy "doormat" with a plain, blotchy back, chances are it's a southern flounder.



Southern flounder have no eye-like markings. The olive-brown back is marked with diffuse, smudgy blotches that often fade altogether on big fish

The southern flounder is far more estuarine and freshwater-tolerant than its cousin: it prefers mud and silt bottoms, pushes well up into the lower reaches of rivers and tidal creeks, and tolerates a wide sweep of salinities. Juveniles are strongly tied to low-salinity estuarine nursery habitat. The two species do overlap here, but as a rough rule of thumb, the fish you pick off hard sand and shell tend to be Gulf flounder, while the bigger fish holding in the muddier, lower-salinity creek and river reaches are more often southern flounder. This is where knowing the difference pays off. If you're after a big southern flounder and you keep pulling up Gulf flounder, then you're probably fishing over the wrong type of bottom.

Both species are left-eyed flatfish, meaning they lie on their right side with both eyes migrated to the upward-facing left side — an adaptation that develops as the larvae settle out of the water column.

The behavior that defines *both* species as gamefish is the ambush, and here they're genuinely alike — so the techniques discussed later in this article apply to both.

Continued on P8

STATE-OF-THE-ART SECURE STORAGE
NO MOVE-IN FEES OR DEPOSITS
CONVENIENT ROUTE TO I-75
ACCESS ANYTIME
24/7

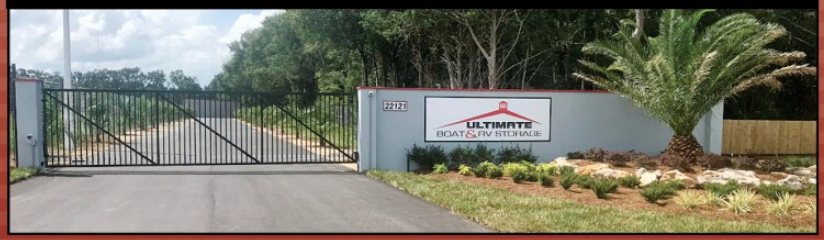
ULTIMATE BOAT & RV STORAGE

When you're not out enjoying your big toys, store them safely with us!

WHERE BOYS STORE THEIR TOYS

Discounts available! Ask for specials!

COVERED, ENCLOSED OR OPEN PARKING
Month-to-Month leases • Pre-pay discounts



- Hurricane-Resistant Steel Canopy Covers
- 24-Hour Self Service Check-In
- Automated Security Flood Lights
- Covered Wash Station
- Air Station for Tire Inflation (90*/120psi)
- Sanitary Dump Station
- Self-Service Ice Machine
- Security Access Keypads
- 24/7 Recorded Security Cameras
- High Security Fencing
- Electric Service (15, 30 & 50 amp)
- Facility Fire Extinguisher Stations

Easy Online Account Management & Payments

Call or visit our website today for more information

UltimateBoatRVStorage.com

22211 WEST NEWBERRY RD. • NEWBERRY, FLORIDA 32669 • 352-472-3337

Fishing Report Crystal River, FL:

By Capt. Andrew Meyer

The redfish bite continues to remain strong. Fish of all sizes are often mixing in together, especially where there are good concentrations of mullet. With the fish's metabolism rising, high water is often seeing fish tee off on larger baits like live pinfish, cut mullet, pin, or ladyfish. However, low water fish often still need some finesse. A larger baits splashing down can still spook these fish. Live shrimp, small pins, or smaller pieces of cut bait will often produce better results in these scenarios. When downsizing bait, it is usually best to also downsize hook size to 1/0-3/0, and leader to no more than 20-25lb.

The trout haven't moved a ton lately. Fish are spread out at a variety of depths on the flats. Checkered bottom on grass flats has typically been best. Drifting with light jigs or popping corks has been producing quality fish.

The black drum bite up toward and around Yankeetown has been really picking up, with some very large fish being caught as of late. Fish are in a variety of locations around bars, rocks, mangroves, and deeper water channels. Live shrimp or crabs fish on the bottom or drifted at or near bottom height under a cork is the best for getting tight on a big ugly.

Cobia are in good numbers in our area right now. While a few fish have been landed shallow, the majority are offshore a bit in 15 plus feet. Most larger structure like ledges, rocks, or reef/wrecks will attract Cobia this time of year as they migrate through. Live pinfish, shrimp, mullet, cut bait, bucktails, swim baits, or eel jigs are all effective. A good chum line is helpful when trying to attract Cobia to the boat. It is a good idea to keep at least a bait or two moving constantly. I like to drop a jig or shrimp on a jighead, bounce it for a minute, then slowly reel it up. Cobia will often see this and follow it up. Sometimes the jig will draw the strike, and other times the fish will seek out a live bait nearby and hammer it. Either way, it gets their attention and gets them up and investigating. Don't fish light if you are targeting keeper size Cobia. These fish will test the limits of even tarpon size gear.

Speaking of tarpon, we are seeing good numbers of fish migrating across the flats and out front of the channels.

Live pinfish, threadfins, mullet, or ladyfish are great presentations as well as cut bait. These fish can also be targeted on fly over the shallow water flats.

Snook, while closed to harvest until September, have been ready and willing to eat. For catch and release fisherman, this is an excellent time of year to land a big snook. The fish are fired up and aren't being pressured super hard. Live baitfish and artificials are both producing quality fish. Points off mangrove islands, rock jetties, and oyster bars are snook ambush points when the current is moving. Beefing up to 40-60lb fluorocarbon leaders is ideal when targeting big snook, especially around heavier structure.

The mangrove snapper/grunt bite is improving on the rockpiles in 10-20ft. While there are some much bigger fish in the deep water, keeper size mangroves and grunts are abundant in shallower water this time of year and make for excellent action, as well as table fare. Live shrimp on a 1/4 ounce jighead w 15-20lb leader is all you need.

Mackerel are also around in fairly good numbers. Much of the same areas holding mangroves, grunts, and cobia also have mackerel murauding around. When targeting macks, it is a good idea to use a small section of wire on the leader or at least beef up the leader size. A chum bag is also helpful for bringing fish to the boat.

Keep your eye out for tripletail, especially near buoys and pilings. While the spring run is rarely as strong as the fall, some quality fish have been caught. Have a live shrimp ready free lined, or under a cork. Tripletail will often be nosed up to a buoy in current, or even free floating on the surface.

This is an excellent time of year for a wide variety of species. It is also the beginning of thunderstorm season. Make sure to keep an extra close eye on the weather reports and check radar throughout the day.

For those who would like to join me for a charter. You can reach me via text or phone at 352-601-8786, and check my website https://www.tailwalkercharter.com/ or Facebook https://www.facebook.com/share/1EHvEL2NfP/?mibextid=wwXIfr.

For everyone going at it on their own, be safe and good luck out there!

The Acute Angler

June 2026
Volume 59, Number 6

The monthly newsletter of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club

Kayak Corner by Al Clements

The same question seems to come up every week, “Where are the fish”. With the water temperature rising the fish are moving and difficult to find inshore. It seems that they are not as concentrated as they were this time last year.

Two weeks ago on a flooded tide, I found the large trout and redfish back in the grass in less than a foot of water. This past week, I found just the opposite on a flooded tide.

Two weeks ago, the lure of choice was the Bait Ball hard bait. This past week the reds and trout wanted the 6 inch Skitterwalk at 4pm on a blue bird sky. Six casts produced five reds on the Skitterwalk.

The dry conditions and barometric pressure have these fish as confused as we are. My job is to find where they are feeding and what they want to eat. As I am sure by now you can see all the hard work that I have to put into a day’s fishing to make it successful. The hard work pays off but the hundreds of casts make it a tough day for the trip home.

My suggestion for inshore fishing is planning your day according to the tides and the barometric pressure. If you feel that the fish will be close to the bank and in the grass, go for it. If after 30 minutes you don’t have good results, move to the flats slowly in deeper water. I say slowly because a slight change in depth or temperature can cause the fish to hold and feed in that area. I have my side scan on looking for anomalies on the bottom. Any slight change in depth or structure can result in finding the feeding fish.

At the present time here in north Florida, you have to look at a snail’s pace. It really pays off when you do find a change in depth. One degree of temperature will make a fish stop and feed. As long as the tide is constant the fish will stay in that area.

I will say that the fish are larger this time of year than they were last year. With all this crazy weather it does make it more difficult to find a large group of feeding fish. They are more scattered so patience is the key.

If you are not having success, try something in your tackle box that you would never think of trying. I do that many times a day and find that it confuses the fish as much as it does me. Like last week throwing the Skitterwalk at 4:00 pm on a blue bird day with the water temperature over 80 degrees paid off.

Now that the rain is constant the searching will change considerably. Trout will be looking for more solidity. The amount of rain we are experiencing will move the trout from where they were last week to a completely different environment and location.

Fishing is tough right now but with a great deal of patience and some knowledge you should come home with your limit of trout and reds.

Flounder seem to always be in the same locations every time I go.

Have a great time on the water and stay safe.

TIGHT LINES

AFL
ALACHUA FARM & LUMBER
EST. 1984

- Complete Feed Store
- Hardware
- Farm & Fencing Supplies
- Fishing Tackle & Supplies
- Archery & Gun Pro Shop
- Boots & Apparel

14101 NW 145th Ave.
P.O. Box 2290
Alachua, FL 32616-2290

(386) 462-3003
FAX: (386) 462-7923

NORTHWEST GRILLE

5115 NW 39th Ave, Gainesville, FL 32606

Watson Realty Corp. REALTORS®

Mark Robinson, Realtor

352.215.7265

"Don't wait to buy real estate. Buy real estate and wait." -*Will Rogers*

Let's Go Fishing!

MLS REALTOR

Flounder — Continued from P4

ambush, and here they're genuinely alike — so the techniques discussed later in this article apply to both.

Flounders bury themselves in sand or mud with only their eyes exposed, waiting for current to sweep bait past its nose; smaller flounders key on shrimp and other small crustaceans, while larger ones (southern flounder especially, given their size) take blue crabs and baitfish such as mullet, menhaden, anchovies, and pinfish. Either species will often follow a lure for several feet before committing, and the take is famously subtle — more like a *weight* than a *strike*. That single shared trait drives almost every technique decision you'll make.

A Short History of the Nature Coast Flatfish:

Flounder have always been part of the Big Bend's working waterfront, though rarely the headliner for recreational fishermen. For generations they were the bonus fish — taken incidentally by anglers targeting trout and redfish over the grass flats, or harvested at night by giggers wading the shallows with lanterns and, later, spotlights and airboats. The Gulf flounder has long been an important commercial species in Florida specifically, more so than in any other Gulf state, marketed fresh or frozen and often lumped into landings recorded simply as "fluke."

The fall flounder "run," when fish stage near passes and creek mouths before moving offshore to spawn, became a calendar event for coastal communities from Crystal River to Steinhatchee. Gigging culture runs especially deep around Crystal River and Ozello, where the maze of mangrove islands, creek mouths, and oyster bars creates ideal shallow-water stalking grounds, and at Keaton Beach and Steinhatchee, where nighttime airboat trips for flounder remain a tradition.

But the fishery changed. Like many fishes in the northern Gulf, flounder declined in abundance over the late 20th century, driven by a mix of warming sea temperatures, trawl bycatch, and rising recreational harvest. By the late 2010s the decline was sharp enough — particularly on Florida's Atlantic coast — that regulators acted.

The Current Status:

In response to a stock assessment showing the fishery in decline and likely overfished, Florida implemented significant new flounder regulations effective **March 1, 2021**: the minimum size rose from 12 to 14 inches, the recreational bag limit dropped from 10 fish to 5, and a seasonal harvest closure was added for **October 15 through November 30** — timed to protect fish during the fall spawning migration.

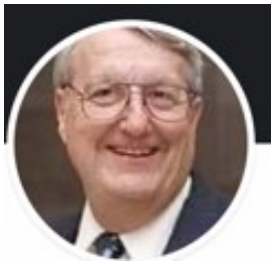
Continued on P11

The Acute Angler

June 2026
Volume 59, Number 6

The monthly newsletter of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club

Charlie's Kitchen
By Charlie Courtney



SEATROUT

PAN SEARED SEATROUT

Seatrout, both the spotted seatrout (a.k.a. speckled trout) and sand trout, are arguably the most commonly sought after and caught saltwater game fish in Florida's Big Bend region. They are also easy to clean — one swipe down the side of the fish with a sharp knife removes the fillet. Then a quick trim out removes the ribs since there are no feather bones to fuss over. One more pass with a skinning knife and you are ready to cook. Unfortunately, the flavor of seatrout is rather bland, so the fillets benefit from recipes that will amp up the taste.

Pan-searing fish offers a perfect balance of health and flavor. This method requires significantly less oil than frying, cutting down on overall fat and calories. The faster cooking times at controlled temperatures also better retain the fish's delicate Omega-3 fatty acids compared to prolonged, high-heat deep-frying. Searing creates a beautiful, crispy, golden-brown crust on the outside while ensuring the inside remains incredibly moist and flaky. The Maillard reaction (browning) achieved in a hot pan unlocks deep, savory flavors that you simply cannot get from frying, steaming, or poaching.

Pan-Seared Seatrout with Lemon Butter Sauce

Because seatrout (or speckled trout) is a delicate, flaky, and mildly sweet fish, one of the best ways to cook it is pan-searing with a garlic, lemon, and butter sauce. This easy, restaurant-quality meal takes only 15 minutes from start to finish and keeps the fish wonderfully moist.

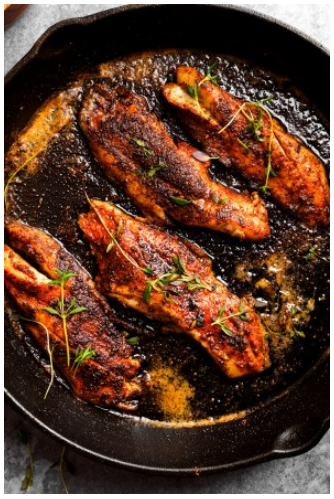
Ingredients:

4 seatrout fillets
Salt and pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/4 cup unsalted butter
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

Instructions:

Season the seatrout fillets with salt and pepper.
Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
Once hot, add the fillets to the skillet and cook for 3-4 minutes per side, until golden brown and cooked through.
Remove the fillets from the skillet and set aside.
In the same skillet, add the butter, lemon juice, garlic, and red pepper flakes.
Cook for 1-2 minutes, stirring constantly, until the butter is melted and the sauce is heated through.
Pour the sauce over the seatrout fillets.
Garnish with chopped parsley and serve.

Blackened Seatrout



Blackened fish first appeared in 1980, when the late, legendary Chef Paul Prudhomme introduced his famous blackened redfish at his restaurant, K-Paul's Louisiana Kitchen, in New Orleans. Prudhomme invented the technique as a way to mimic the charred, flavorful crust of charcoal-grilled food in a commercial kitchen that lacked a grill. The dish quickly became a massive national culinary craze. The recipe was so incredibly popular that it actually caused massive overfishing of Gulf redfish, nearly wiping out the species. This forced conservation efforts, so today you will often see blackening applied to other more abundant fish, such as seatrout.

Blackened seatrout is a quick, flavorful dish made by coating fresh fillets with bold Cajun spices and searing them in a smoking-hot skillet. Basically it is the above pan seared recipe on steroids! The method cooks the fish in minutes while building a signature dark, crispy crust on the outside and keeping the flaky fish tender inside.

Ingredients:

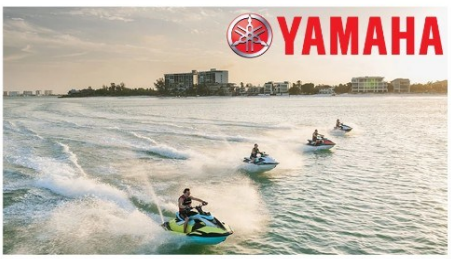
2 fresh seatrout fillets (about 1 lb total)
olive oil or melted butter
Blackening Rub: 1 tbsp paprika, 1 tbsp smoked paprika, 1 tbsp kosher salt, tsp garlic powder, tsp onion

Continued on P11

POLARIS
OF GAINESVILLE

SPLASH INTO
SPRING SAVINGS!

CAST. CRUISE. REPEAT.



Spring is here and so are the savings! Save big, upgrade your ride, and get on the water today!

Ranger BOATS
MAKO
NITRO PERFORMANCE FISHING BOATS
TAHOE

Full service center with certified technicians!
$99 diagnostics & 20% OFF annual boat service!
Through 5/31/2026

VISIT US TODAY!

12556 NW US Highway 441
Alachua, FL 32615

(386) 418-4244 (call/text)
www.polarisofgainesville.com

The Acute Angler

June 2026
Volume 59, Number 6

The monthly newsletter of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club

Charlie's Kitchen — Continued from P9

powder, tsp black pepper, tsp oregano, 1/2 tsp thyme, and 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper (add more for extra spice).

Instructions:

Prepare the Fish: Pat the trout fillets completely dry with a paper towel. Rub the fillets liberally with olive oil (healthy) or melted butter (yummy).

Season Liberally: Generously coat both sides of the fillets with your blackening spice blend.

Sear the Trout: Heat a heavy-bottomed skillet—ideally a well-seasoned cast iron—over high heat until it is smoking hot. Add 1 tbsp of olive oil, then place the seasoned fish in the pan.

Cook: Sear for 1.5 to 2.5 minutes until a dark, crust forms. Be careful here as you want a dark, flavorful crust, not a bitter, burnt crust. Carefully flip the fish and cook the other side for another 1 to 2 minutes until the fish flakes easily.

Serve: Plate immediately. The bold spice pairs perfectly with sides like fresh lime wedges, mango salsa, or cheese grits.

Note: Be sure the skillet is hot enough and absolutely dry. Be sure not to over season – the herbs and spices should highlight the taste rather than hide or overpower it. You don't want to overcook the fillet – there's a big difference between blackened and burned.

Warning: This dish will set off every smoke alarm in your neighborhood! Blackening fish creates a lot of smoke, so be sure to turn on your kitchen exhaust fan or cook outside! Trust me, it is better to cook it outdoors on a gas grill or propane burner.

Flounder — Continued from P8

So, four-plus years in, is it working? The most recent data available — FWC's 2025 Status and Trends Report, which runs catch and survey indices through 2024 — does **not** yet show a clear recovery on the Gulf coast. The Gulf recreational catch rate for all flounders combined ran well above 0.3 fish per hour through 2020, then fell to roughly 0.26–0.29 per hour in the years right after the regulations and has stayed there. The fishery-independent surveys tell a similar story: the abundance indices for Gulf flounder, including the juvenile young-of-the-year index that forecasts future adult stocks, remain low and flat, with the longer-term trends flagged as statistically significant declines. The one bright-looking number — rising commercial pounds-per-trip — is largely an artifact of the bigger size limit and reduced effort, not proof of more fish in the water.

None of this means the rules have failed. Flounder are short-lived, and a rebuilding response would be expected to lag the regulations by several year-classes; "no improvement yet" through 2024 is genuinely too early to call. It also bears noting that these figures are summarized at the Gulf-coast scale, not specifically for our home waters.

Shallow areas lots of oyster encrusted rocks, sand bars, and drainage channels, and mud flats like this one on the south side of Atsena Otie Key are prime habitat for both species of flounder.

Where to Target Flounder:

The constant up and down this coast is the *transition* — the place where one bottom type meets another. Flounder stack up where hard bottom meets sand or where an oyster bar gives way to a sandy trough. Keep that in mind and the whole region opens up.

Homosassa & Crystal River (Citrus County). The southern anchor of the range and arguably its richest flounder structure. The backwaters around Ozello are a labyrinth of mangrove islands, creek mouths, and oyster bars — textbook ambush country. Work the creek mouths and dock lines where current, bait, and structure intersect. Crystal River's network of back bays and nearshore cuts holds fish shallow, often in less than three feet of water, especially on a rising tide.

Cedar Key & the Suwannee mouth (Levy / Dixie counties). A genuinely outstanding mixed fishery of mudflats, grass flats, and oyster bars. Fish ride the tide in from the Gulf to hunt the tidal creeks and bars, and the run from the mouth of the Suwannee down to Cedar Key concentrates them on moving water. Target sandy potholes within the grass and the down-current edges of bars. The oyster bars near the mouth of the channel that passes through Atsena Otie Key is a great, easy to access location to target flounder.

Continued on P12

The Acute Angler

June 2026
Volume 59, Number 6

The monthly newsletter of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club

Flounder — Continued from P11

Steinhatchee & Deadman Bay (Taylor County). Classic Big Bend terrain. Focus on creek mouths and the troughs that drain the flats, plus the transitions where hard bottom meets sand or oyster.

Econfina & Keaton Beach (Taylor County). The northern end of the range. Creek mouths and narrow funnels that concentrate bait on a falling tide are the play here. A defining feature of this whole zone is the extreme tidal influence: a single vertical foot of water can move the shoreline hundreds of yards, completely redrawing where fish stage from hour to hour. The best window is often a low tide that has just begun to rise, pulling fish back onto the warming mud flats.

Lures, Rigs & Techniques:

Because the flounder's strike is so subtle, **braided main line is close to mandatory** — its lack of stretch transmits the faintest *tick* straight to your hands. Add a fluorocarbon leader and you're set.

Soft-plastics on jigs (the workhorse). Scented baits bounced slowly along the bottom are the regional favorite. Berkley Gulp! in the Swimming Mullet and 3-inch Shrimp patterns has an almost cult following on this coast; white and natural "molting" shrimp colors are local confidence picks, though bright "electric chicken" tones have their devotees. The method is simple and deadly: cast, let it sink to the bottom, and crawl it back with short hops, keeping contact with the sand. When you feel weight, *drop the rod tip, count, then set.* Just watch out for the rocks.

ChatterBaits in current. When the tide is really moving through the creeks, a bladed jig (a ChatterBait with a 3½–4" CrawZ-style trailer, or a ½-oz chatter head with a 5" paddle-tail) slow-rolled along the bottom deflects off pilings and shell and triggers reaction strikes. When mullet schools push through, match that bigger profile.

Weedless spoons. A gold or silver weedless spoon will catch plenty of flounder, but set the hook *quicker* than with plastic — they won't hold a hard spoon as long as they'll chew on a soft bait.

Live bait, for the cooler. If you simply want to fill a legal limit, it's hard to beat live bait. A Carolina rig with a

mud minnow, finger mullet, or pinfish dragged slowly across the bottom will take flounder anywhere from Cedar Key to the Panhandle.

The Bottom Line. The Nature Coast asks more of a flounder angler than most places — more patience, and more attention to tide and bottom. The payoff is a quiet, beautiful stretch of Gulf where the flatfish still ambush bait the way they always have. Fish it thoughtfully, mind the rebuilding stock, respect the closure, and this corner of Florida will keep rewarding the angler who knows how to feel that soft *thump* on the bottom.

THE BEST RESTORATION
Masters of Disasters

Sincere thanks to Sergio and the team at **Best Restoration** (https://thebestrestoration.com/) for generously allowing GOFC to use their meeting room and facilities for our general meetings.

THE BEST RESTORATION
Masters of Disasters

Become A Florida Friendly Angler!

https://www.flseagrant.org/fisheries/florida-friendly-angler-certification-program/

Florida Friendly Angler (FFA) is a free, online, do-at-your-own pace educational program designed for any angler who wants to learn more about sustainable fishing and boating practices while interacting with Florida's aquatic environments.

Florida is the fishing capital of the world with **over 4 million unique fishing license holders!** Annually, recreational, and commercial fisheries provide our state with a combined $17 billion of economic impact and support tens-of-thousands of jobs. With all this pressure, and significance fishing has on this state's economy, environment, and culture, **it's up to all of us** to educate both Floridians and visitors to make sure we're able to enjoy our natural resources and environment for years to come!

Florida Friendly Angler (FFA) is a free, narrated, online, short, do-at your-own-pace educational program that informs users about our state's aquatic environments, best practices when fishing and the inner workings of fisheries management. By teaching the how and why behind topics that anglers encounter while fishing in Florida, the program reinforces practices that can reduce our impact while fishing, ensuring the creation of great future fishing stories!

The Acute Angler

June 2026
Volume 59, Number 6

The monthly newsletter of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club

B&S Trailer Manufacturing

Boats
Jet skis
Kayaks
Airboats
Pontoons
Any Watercraft!

We design and manufacture custom aluminum trailers to perfectly fit your boat, your tow vehicle, and your lifestyle.

Now offering Waterjet Cutting!

Trade-ins are welcome • We repair any trailer
Mobile repair service now available! Let us come to you!

(352) 591-2161 • Reddick, FL

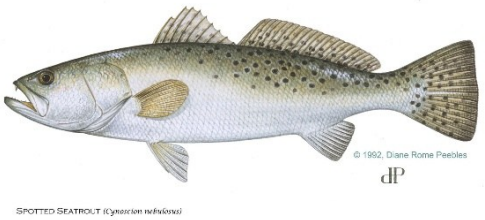
www.bstrailer.com

The Acute Angler

June 2026
Volume 59, Number 6

The monthly newsletter of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club

What's in season, size and bag limits

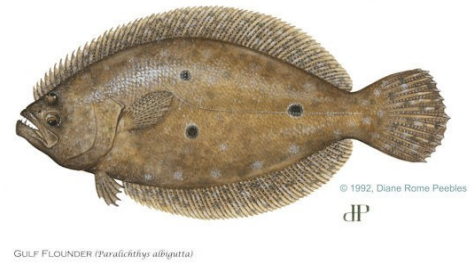


Seatrout (Big Bend Area)

Slot size - Not less than 15" or greater than 19" total length. May possess one over 19 inches per vessel or, if fishing from shore, one over 19 inches per person, included in the bag limit.
Bag limit - 5 per person
Season - Open year-round

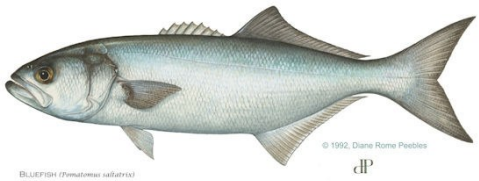
Redfish

Slot size - 18 to 27 inches total length
Bag Limit - 1 fish per person, with a 4-fish vessel limit.
Season - Open year-round



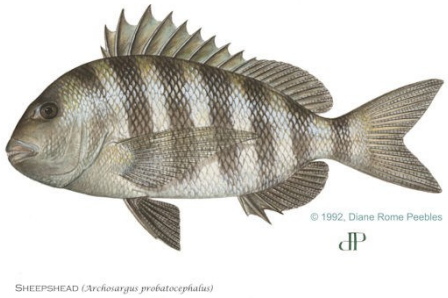
Flounder

Minimum Size - 14 inches total length
Bag Limit - 5 fish per person, daily
Season - Closed October 15 – November 30
Applies To - Gulf, Southern, Summer, and Fringed Flounder.



Bluefish

Minimum Size - 12 inches, fork length
Bag Limit - 3 per person
Season - Open year-round



Sheepshead

Minimum Size - 12 inches total length
Bag Limit - 8 fish per person, daily
Vessel Limit (March & April) - 50 fish per vessel
Season - Open year-round in Gulf state waters.

Red Grouper

Minimum Size – 20 inches total length
Daily Bag Limit - 2 per person within the 4 grouper aggregate
Season - **State:** Open year-round
Federal: Closed Feb. 1-March 31 seaward of 120 feet

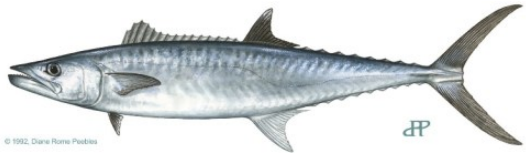
The Acute Angler

June 2026
Volume 59, Number 6

The monthly newsletter of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club

Spanish Mackerel

Minimum Size - 12 inches, fork length
Bag Limit - 15 per person
Season - Open year-round
Gear Restrictions - No multiple hooks (e.g., treble hooks) when using live or dead natural bait



King Mackerel

Minimum Size – 24 inches, fork length
Bag Limit - 3 per person
Season - Open year-round

Cobia

Minimum Size - 36 inches, fork length
Bag/Vessel Limit -1 cobia per person, or 2 per vessel (whichever is less)
Season - Open year-round
Waters - These rules apply in both Florida State waters and Federal waters in the Gulf.

Gag Grouper

Minimum Size – 24 inches total length (assuming no change from 2025)
Daily Bag Limit - 2 per person within the 4 grouper aggregate (assuming no change from 2025)
Season - Open on **September 1, 2026** and will close at 12:01 a.m. on **October 1, 2026**

Greater Amberjack

Minimum Size – 34 inches fork length
Daily Bag Limit - 1 per person per day
Season - Open on **September 1, 2026** and closing at 12:01 a.m. on **October 14, 2026**

Black Sea Bass

Minimum Size - 10 inches total length
Bag Limit - 100 pounds per person, per day
Season - Open year-round

Mangrove Snapper

Minimum Size - State: 10 inches total length**. Federal:** 12 inches total length.
Daily Bag Limit - State: 5 per person within the 10 snapper aggregate bag limit**. Federal:** 10 per person within 10 snapper aggregate bag limit
Season - Open year-round

Hogfish

Minimum Size - 14 inches fork length
Bag Limit – 5 per person, per day
Season - Open year-round

Gray Triggerfish

Minimum Size - 15-inch minimum fork length
Bag Limit - 1 per person
Season - Likely rules for 2026: Opens March 1, closes May 31; reopens Aug 1, closes Dec 31.

The Acute Angler

June 2026
Volume 59, Number 6

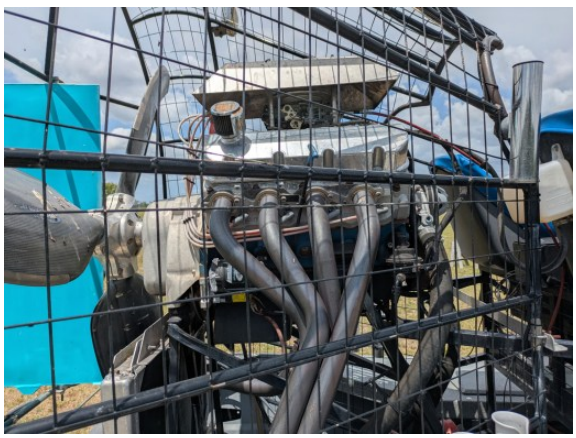
The monthly newsletter of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club

For sale items from club members:

Skinny Water fishing machine! Alumitech Hull, 16ft by 7.5 ft. 3-foot Rake. 540 CI Stroker engine 680 HP (dyno tested) Whirlwind 3-blade prop. 2.38 Stringer gear-box . Full cage. 40 gallon gas tank. 2 live wells. Bottom and side hull polymer. Non-skid decks and walks. 2 Batteries. Dual axle Ramlin trailer with spare. Seating for 4.

Asking $52,000.

Please contact Mel Lauderdale at 352-316-1164 or at paintedskylodge@gmail.com



Shirts and Hats are Here!

It has been since before the pandemic that the club has offered shirts and hats with our logo on it. Well the wait is over! At our General meetings we will be offering long sleeve performance hoodies, heavy weight hoodies, long and short sleeve cotton shirts, vented and canvas backed hats for sale at a reasonable cost. We will have Medium, Large, and X-Large shirts. If you pre-ordered a small, or XXXL shirt please see Mark Rustemier or John Ebbs at the meeting.

Also don't forget we have window stickers available, ask Dawn for them at the meeting, 1 for $2 or 3 for $5 to help cover our costs to provide them.