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Vol. XI • Issue 27



What a day on the Water!
Tony shows off his large Red Snapper caught while fishing with Capt. Steve Lamp out of Key West

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Celebrating his 8th birthday, Ryan Cano caught and released his first sailfish aboard Fin Razer of Key Largo Fishing Adventures. Also in picture is mate Bill Chrisman and Ryan's dad.



Ashley and Aaron with
Ashley's first saltwater fish,
a 40 pound wahoo
caught with Capt. Joe
Petrucchio on the KILLER
INSTINCT.

Jan. 7th, 2009

Volume XI, Issue 27


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“At the Helm” does not appear this week, as the fire at the Cheeca Lodge, and the resulting Tournament re-structuring, has put a crimp in everyone’s timing . . . See you on the water!

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IMPORTANT TOURNAMENT NEWS

Due to the New Year’s Fire at Cheeca Lodge, the tournament scheduled for Cheeca Lodge, Jan 15th thru 17th. is now the Islamorada Presidential Sailfish Tournament. The event will fish the same rules and days as the Cheeca Presidentail Sailfish Tournament. All events will take place at Marker 88.

Please call Dianne Harbaugh at (305) 852-2102, for more information.

NOAA’s Plan to Create Saltwater Angler Registry Now Set for 2010, Not 2009

Final rule gives states more time to implement local data gathering

NOAA’s Fisheries Service released its final rule today to create a national saltwater angler registry of all marine recreational fishermen to help the nation better protect our shared marine resources. A requirement to establish a registry was included in a statute approved by Congress in the year 2007.

The final rule requires anglers and spearfishers who fish recreationally in federal ocean waters to be included in the national saltwater angler registry by January 1, 2010. NOAA had originally proposed that registration be required beginning in January 2009, but based on public input decided to give states another year to put in place their own data collection systems.

NOAA received nearly 500 comments from anglers, state officials, and fishing and environmental organizations on its proposed national registry rule during the comment period from June 12 until Aug. 21. The registry is one component of the agency’s new Marine Recreational Information Program, an initiative to enhance data collection on recreational catch and effort.

To read the final registry rule and other information about the Marine Recreational Information Program, go to: www.CountMyFish.noaa.gov.

Note from Gordon Colvin, Angler Registry Team Chair

Given the interest in the final rule, we wanted you to hear the news from us first even though we know this announcement comes at an inconvenient time for many people. To help ensure everyone knows what is happening, we will re-release this announcement and hold a conference call to address partner and constituents questions in early January, 2009.

We will do our best to respond to urgent questions over the holidays in a timely manner. You may contact me directly at gordon.colvin@noaa.gov. Media questions should be directed to Monica Allen at monica.allen@noaa.gov. In the meantime, the angler registry team pages on the MRIP website contain both the final rule text and a fact sheet outlining the key changes from the proposed rule. Thank you for your patience and we look forward to continuing the dialog.

Quick Note on Photography . . .

Please submit your photos in RGB format, with the largest pixel dimension (count) set to at least 1600 (1600x1200, for example). Please do not adjust file size when sending photos.

This will enable us to publish the best reproduction of your beautiful catch for everyone’s enjoyment.

Thanks!

Florida Keys Roundup

Capt. Greg Eklund owns and operates the CLOUD NINE in Islamorada out of Bud n Mary's Marina. You can reach him at (305) 360-7476, email: info@islamoradafishingtrips.com, or visit him at: www.islamoradafishingtrips.com.



Capt. Greg Eklund Throughout the Keys

Happy New Year and welcome to the Fabulous Florida Keys, the home of the Sportfishing Capital of the World and the original Weekly Fisherman newspaper. In this week's issue you will find an overview of what has been biting Keys wide, what to expect in the upcoming week of fishing and who stand outs in the fleet were last week. You will also find area detailed reports from local Captains who bring their on water experiences back and share them with you. If I can help you get hooked up with a local crew to do some fishing while you are in the area please contact me at the information above.

From North Key Largo to Key West the excellent Sailfish bite has been a main stay for the fleet lately. The Sailfish tournament schedule continued last weekend as the Key Largo Sailfish tournament drew a field of more than 20 boats. Congratulations go to the Kalex team out of Bud n Mary's marina in Islamorada led by Capt. Alex Adler who released 11 Sails on their way to a first place finish.



have been held up on the shallower ledges of the reef from 35 to 140 feet of water. These speedy predators make for some great light tackle action and can be taken in a variety of ways. They have ranged in weight from 5 to 40 pounds and will continue to provide some excellent action for the next few weeks. The Cobias are starting to show up in force on the Ocean side of the Keys. Several boats out of Marathon caught a number of these great sport fish between 30 and 60 pounds last week. As we continue into January the Cobias will continue to show up in larger numbers Keys wide inside the edge of the reef. Bottom fishing along the reef and patch reef has continued to produce good numbers of smaller Mutton Snapper, Yellowtail Snapper, and some great Cero Mackerel action. Look for this all to continue to be good next week.

The weather man is forecasting a strong cold front to move through the Keys midweek. This front should be excellent for fishing as it will cycle the migratory fish along the edge of the

The Islamorada Invitational Sailfish Flyrod tournament kicks off this week out of the Florida Keys Outfitters in Islamorada. This event always draws some great crews and anglers from all over the Keys and takes the art of Sailfishing to the next level.

Besides the great Sailfishing we are experiencing an excellent bite of King Mackerel. These fish

reef and refresh the stocks of bait held up along the ledges of the reef. We are still holding some impressive stocks of Ballyhoo, cigar minnows, sardines, and pilchards in our area. This abundance of bait has not only made catching bait easier for the local crews but is also providing some excellent forage for all of the fish species the fleet is currently targeting. This should continue to be the case this month and help to encourage the fish migrating by our reef to stop and feed for a while in between fronts.

Further back into the Gulf the Spanish Mackerel bite has continued to be strong. These fish are in place from 5 to 15 miles to the West of the Keys and are congregated around areas of structure in 7 to 20 feet of water. There has also been some good Cobia action in the Gulf during the past ten days. Several Guides reported excellent Redfish and Trout bites in Everglades National Park to the West of Key Largo and Islamorada as well as off the Marqueses and back side of Key West. There have also been some good numbers of Snook along the outer banks of the Park and up into the estuaries of Flamingo.

This week in the Keys brings us not only the beginning of a new year but also a huge number of visiting anglers to our waters. There is no better time to come out and experience some of the best fishing the Florida Keys has to offer. Whether your pleasure is chasing Sailfish along the reef or a wide variety of fish in the backcountry you couldn't be here at a better time. We have one of the greatest collections of fishing captains and crews in the world here in the Keys so make sure you take advantage and go fishing during your visit. Enjoy your stay here in the Sportfishing Capital of the World and have a wonderful start to your New Year! Capt. Greg



Peter Merkel lands a 35 lb. wahoo on 15 lb test, while fishing off Marathon with Capt. Mike Biffel. Almost spooled him!

EPIRB Changeover Starts Next Month . . .

Beginning next month, search-and-rescue satellites will no longer process the 121.5/243 MHz signal transmitted by older analog EPIRBs. The Coast Guard is reminding mariners to replace these EPIRBs with the newer 406 MHz beacons by Feb. 1. The 406 MHz signal is 50 times more powerful than the 121.5, allowing better detection and providing a more accurate search area for rescue authorities, according to the Coast Guard.

Also, the number of false alerts with digital beacons reportedly is significantly lower than with analog units. Satellites are incapable of distinguishing between beacon and non-beacon sources using analog frequencies, resulting in only about one in five alerts coming from a beacon, according to the Coast Guard. False alert signals can come from ATM's, pizza ovens and stadium scoreboards. EPIRB users can register their beacons in the U.S. 406 MHz Beacon Registration Database at www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov or by calling: (888) 212-SAVE.

Fishing Report

This Islamorada Backcountry report is brought to you courtesy of Capt. Matt Bellinger, of Bamboo Charters. Capt. Matt operates out of Holiday Isle Resort & Marina in Islamorada. To reach Capt. Bellinger, call (305) 393-0909, or visit www.bamboocharters.com.

Capt. Matt Bellinger Islamorada Flats



Happy New Year! And what a kick off to the New Year we have had so far. It was great to see the vast majority of the area guides out on the water working again.

The best action has been out in the Gulf of Mexico, why not, you just don't know from cast to cast what you might reel in. I spent the better part of the holiday week out there just bailing fish. Its easier to list the fish we did not catch, so here it goes. We did not catch tarpon, bonefish, sailfish or dolphin but you name it we caught it out there. It is simple, go out into the Gulf and find 10 to 12 feet of depth. Get some chum going, the frozen type in a mesh bag, then start casting live shrimp out into the growing slick behind the boat. You need a 8 to 10 lb spin outfit with a length of 30 lb leader material.

Tie on a long shank jig head and pin a shrimp to it and you are loaded for bear. In the begining you will hook into snappers and groupers but soon you will play hell trying to get your bait to the bottom because the spanish mackerels will be thicker than fleas on a dogs hide. There is no nibble here from a rabid mackerel, the bite is like getting hit by a truck, then its off to the races as line will get peeled off the spool at high speed. If you start getting bit off add a short lenght of wire and you will avoid cut offs. Remember that if you plan on keeping snappers, groupers, porgies, hogfish and triggers that you catch out in the Gulf you must catch them using non-offset, non-stainless steel circle hooks to do so when using natural bait. Any of these caught using a "J" hook and natural bait must be released back into the water.

Those of you who know the Whitewater Bay area know that the Bay is getting going strong. Reds, snook, sea trout and some small tarpon have been getting going. Whitewater Bay is the true "backcountry" and an area to be very careful about when you go out there. Cell phones don't work well, VHF radio is weak out there as well. The twisty turny channels through the creeks and rivers all look alike and one will get lost right now if you are not careful when you are fishing. Hire a guide to see Whitewater at its best.

Till next week - GO FISH,

Capt. Matt



Cheeca Lodge Temporarily Closes Due to Building Fire . . .

A New Year's Eve fire at the 199-room Cheeca Lodge Resort & Spa left the resort's main building heavily damaged, but there were no injuries to guests, staff or firefighters, officials said Thursday. The resort was temporarily closed to guests until management can complete assessments to effect repairs to the main building and restore the telecommunications system that was also damaged.

Resort staff helped relocate guests and advised travelers with near-future Cheeca reservations to call their off-site reservations center at (800) 327-2888 to determine the resort's status. A resort spokeswoman said vacationers who cannot be accommodated would receive a full refund and help with travel plans to other Keys resorts. The Islamorada Chamber of Commerce at (800) FAB-KEYS also is assisting in the relocation process.

The fire began on a thatched awning on the front of the building and quickly spread round to the backside. The building encompasses administrative offices, the lobby, a restaurant, conference center and 49 guest rooms. No other buildings on the property were impacted and the conference center and administrative offices survived without incident. Other areas of the building were heavily impacted though, by smoke and water pumped to douse the flames, officials said.

Islamorada Fire-Rescue personnel and Monroe County Sheriff's Office deputies assisted resort staff members to safely evacuate guests from the building. About 80 firefighters responding from as far away as Marathon and Miami-Dade assisted efforts to extinguish the blaze, according to Islamorada Fire Chief William A. Wagner, III.

Cause of the fire is under investigation by the state fire marshal's office. "Foul play" has been ruled out, Wagner said.



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Fishing aboard the Clueless, Don Barnes, Lee Hitow, Kelly Esman, Mike Barner, Benny Spaulding, Jr and Benjo Spaulding, III along with Capt. Bart Sherwood, show off their big swordfish. They were night fishing off of Islamorada, and had a few bites, but kept this one for the photo and bar bq.

Good work gang!

Fishing Report

The Islamorada Offshore Fishing Report is brought to you by Capt. Joe Petrucco of Killer Instinct Charters, located at Papa Joe's Marina, MM79 bayside. If you are interested in fishing with Capt. Joe, call (305) 304-4580, or visit www.killerinstinctcharters.com.

Capt. Joe Petrucco Islamorada Offshore



Happy New Year! The annual Blessing of the fleet party took place this week on the First after an eventful evening at Cheeca Lodge. We are very sorry for the fire at the keys landmark. We hope that the lodge will be up and running as soon as possible to continue to serve the keys community. The blessing party was a success with a great turnout of friends and family to celebrate our fishery and a new year of hope and happiness. Thanks to everyone who contributed to make the party a hit. A special thanks to Whale Harbor for hosting the event and for providing excellent food for the occasion. We all had a fantastic time and we look forward to next year.

As for the fishing, I feel like a broken record; it is fantastic! The sailfish are here and biting well. Everyone has been enjoying multiple shots every trip out. They are good at getting away so remember, it is better to have loved and lost than to have not loved at all. Keep trying and enjoy



Mel and Lucas with 140 lb daytime swordfish caught with Capt Joe Petrucco and mate Bill Ismer on the KILLER INSTINCT.
The swordfish are snappin right now!

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the beautiful weather and the plentiful king mackerel that are more than willing to please. They have been swarming on all of the wrecks up and down the reef. Live cigar minnows work the best; however, a live ballyhoo with wire will also catch a lot of fish.

There have also been wahoo mixed in with the schools of kings so be ready if they show up. The wahoo on the reef edge this time of year run big from 30-80+ lbs so if you get one you may be in for quite a ride. They also make my favorite sushi so brine them up well in a fish bag and enjoy some fantastic eating. A fish bag can be found and purchased at World Wide Sportsman and stashed away somewhere on your boat until needed. They work out great on those days when you finally catch that huge fish too long for the cooler. They run from \$89.00-\$200.00 depending on the size you need. I have a big one that will fit a swordfish or large tuna. I had a chance to use it this week on a nice sized 140 pound broad bill that anglers Mel, and Lucas caught from the deep during a recent day trip.

The Swordfish are biting right now. The Stanzyk brothers down at Bud & Mary's marina have been doing very well all week on swords too. I know Scott Stanzyk on the CATCH 22 had landed several fish one morning and was on his way back to catch a few sails in the afternoon. These guys are the best at it and pioneered the sport here in Florida. If you want to go out and catch one now is a very good time. Many swordfish are being caught right now. They truly are a fish of a lifetime complete with an epic one-three hour sea battle. If you have not experienced the "Gladiator" of the sea, treat yourself to a day on the water strapped in to the most powerful big game fish that swims. When it is over and you have landed your trophy, have your captain or mate set you up with a Gray's trophy replica mount and remember that fish for ever in full color. You don't have to kill him to have it done. Just get a good measurement of the length and you are all set. You won't regret it.

Get out on the water this week guys, the fishing is as good as it gets!



The traditional blessing of the fleet at the Whale Harbour Bridge was successful once again. Fish Tales Charterboat won 1st place again this year.

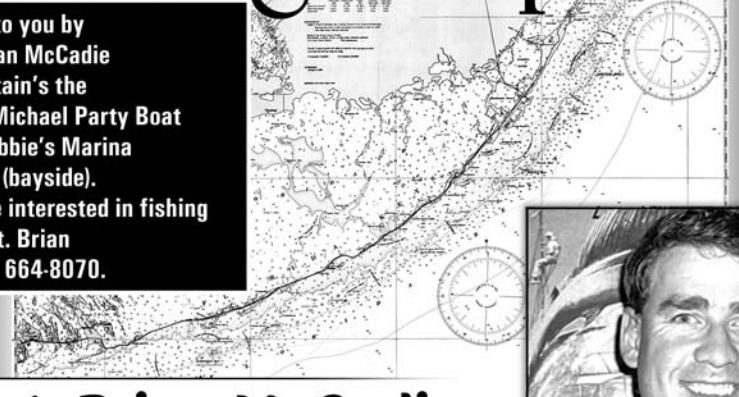

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Fishing Report

Brought to you by
Capt. Brian McCadie
who Captain's the
Captain Michael Party Boat
out of Robbie's Marina
MM 77.5 (bayside).
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with Capt. Brian
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Capt. Brian McCadie Islamorada Reef

What a fantastic Holiday week! We really had what all of us were hoping for as far as business this past week! Congrats to all of you fishermen who had a nice turn around in business this week, it was well deserved!

Unfortunately, I must also offer my condolences to Cheeca Lodge for their misfortune over the holiday. It is an absolute shame and I hope that it can be rectified as soon as possible. From myself, Capt. Brian and the rest of us at Robbie's Marina we want you to know that we are here to help if at all possible.

The fishing this week was descent, as compared to the previous few. We had amazing weather almost every single day which made it possible for boats to target every available species out there including blackfin tunas, mutton snappers, groupers, kings, yellowtails and so on. I saw the Blue Heaven out of Robbie's come in with very nice muttons, kings, and even one awesome red snapper! The red snappers aren't incredibly common around here so whenever you see one or two come back to the dock it causes quite a stir. I'm not sure how the fish was caught but I would have to assume it was in rather deep water on a long leader rig with fresh or live bait. Another nice bottom catch was brought in by the Islamorada Lady II with Capt. Jeff Everson. They found quality mutton snappers eating live cigar minnows that the kingfish didn't eat before reaching the bottom.



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Almost all of the boats that targeted sailfish this week came up with a few, but all in all it wasn't the best week for these fish. Some speculate this is due to the calm weather, others feel it's due to the heavier than normal fishing pressure they got on the busy holiday, and others just attribute it to the nature of fishing, some days are great and others are bad. One way or another if you were out there this week the weather alone made it a great day for you.

On the Capt. Michael we had some decent yellowtailing throughout the week on patch reefs and on the inside edge of the reef in about 40 feet. I can't say we ever had a red hot bite going, but if you worked at it you could come up with dinner on a four hour trip. The nights have been the best bite for 'tails recently according to Capt. Ron from Robbie's. He says that if you really want to target nice yellowtails come out after dark and he'll find 'em. They've also been catching a few kings and a lot of porgies on those night trips.

One nice change of pace was that we had a couple of good trips out in the deep water catching vermilion snappers, lane snappers and porgies. I can't remember the last time I got to write about "vermies". They are definitely one of my favorites out there so it was really nice to catch a bunch of them. The nice thing about these delicious fish is that once you get on them you can usually catch a ton of them, and as already mentioned they are great on the dinner table. We found them in the 180 foot area for the most part and they were mixed with lanes and porgies. None of these are incredibly huge fish, but they are a lot of fun when you can catch a bunch of them and your bait gets eaten as soon as it hits the bottom!

The kings are still snappin' out there in all the usual spots. They have been an staple for almost every boat fishing as the sails have been slow but the kings live in the same general area. If you aren't getting action from the sails you can almost always bend some rods with the kings. They are a blast to catch and although they have a bad reputation on the table, they are quite good when cooked fresh or smoked.

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Fishing Report

Capt. Lain Goodwin fishes the inshore waters of the Upper Keys Everglades National Park and Biscayne Bay. Capt. Lain is on the Pro Staff for Hook Up Lures, Berkley, Abu Garcia and Fenwick Rods. To book a trip with Capt. Lain, call (305) 304-2212, or visit www.dirtywaterscharters.com

Capt. Lain Goodwin Key Largo Backcountry



Due to the birth of his child, Capt. Lain Goodwin's column is being written again this week by Capt. Kerry Wingo . . .

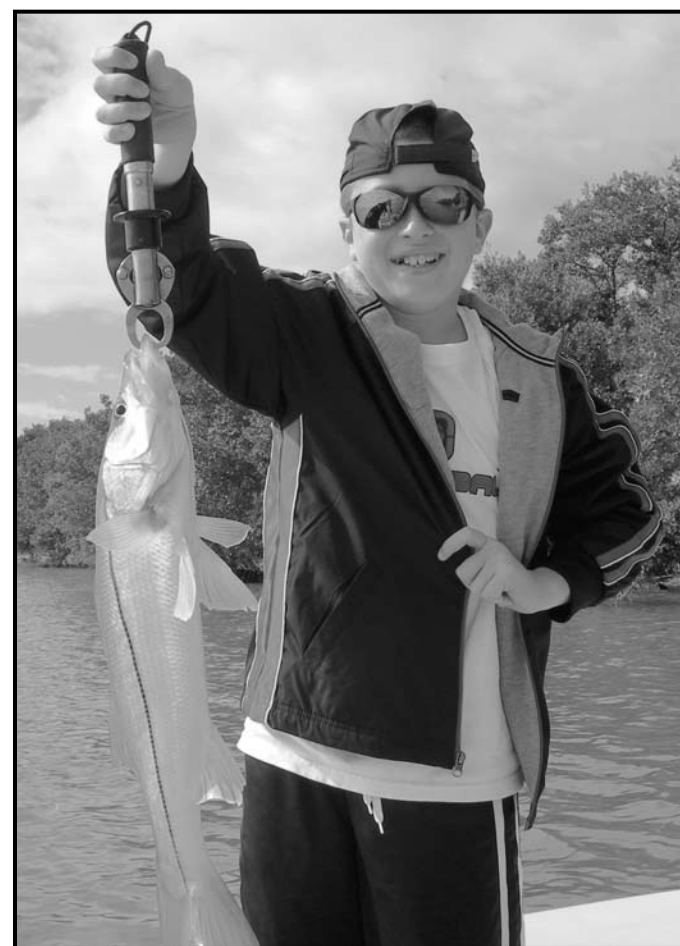
Greeting fish fans! The fishing out of Key Largo remained hot this past week. The waters of eastern Florida Bay and the Flamingo area have been alive with snook and redfish since early last spring. The coming of the new year seemed to have caused the fish to shift gears a bit. Although the snook and redfish bite slowed a little, other heavy hitters moved in to take their place. Fishing for spanish mackerel has been red hot on the edge of the Gulf and black drum have moved in to the East Cape area. I was out last Tuesday with the Hank Lewis family from Marble Falls, TX. Hank was out gunned by two of his children, Caitlin and Abraham. I say that in fun as Hank was a big help to me. The kids reeled in more

than 100 trout and kept us quite busy baiting hooks. We were using Hank Brown's Hook Up Jigs and shrimp under a Cajun thunder float. All of the fish came out of one single "mud" we found in the middle of an open bay. We were out on Sunday and found some very large sheepshead in some of the creeks closer to home.

Kirk and Jeremy Kessler from Marietta, GA were with me and both caught their first snook.

If you plan on doing some sight fishing, you'll need to wait till the Sun has had a chance to warm the water a bit. The temperature is a little chilly early and late in the day. Your best bet will be the deeper channels and run offs.

Till next time, good tides and keep the Sun to your back. 🐟



Jeremy Kessler from Marietta, GA landed his first snook fishing with Capt. Kerry Wingo out of Key Largo.

Fishing Report

Brought to you by Capt. George Clark, Jr. of RODEO CHARTERS and the 43' "Gotta Mon" sportfishing charter boat located at Key Largo Fisheries docks, 99.5 Oceanside. Capt. George can be reached at (305) 522-2638 & his website www.rodeochararters.com.

Capt. George Clark, Jr. Key Largo Offshore



Well we've had some windy days and a couple real flat ones here lately and fishing has been steady for the most part. Sail fishing has really slowed down from what it was 2 weeks ago, but if you put in the time you should be rewarded with a few shots. If you are in search of plain old action bending the rods try king fishing or hunting Cero's in the shallows. Either mackerel are very aggressive fish and enjoy tormenting sail fishermen by wounding or cutting hooks off. When you find these concentrations of crazed macks slide a few live baits out on light wire and treble hooks. It does take the right baits to fire these fish up and live cigar minnows or pilchards work great, however, bally hoo will work if you don't have the others. When targeting mackerel you can also try fishing at least one deep bait down in the water column to find fish hanging down towards the bottom. Speaking of fishing just out side the

reef, from 50 feet on in there have been a ton of Cero mackerel pounding bally hoo schools. Along with hungry sails, Cero's hang in there and blast away at shimmering bally hoo. The other bright spot this week has been more Mahi squirting thru the upper keys. Further offshore, out in 250 and deeper we have been finding some decent weed edges that have been holding some fish. These fish have been nice size averaging 8 to 12 pounds and although it's not summer time there are enough fish out there to make a day out of it. Along with the Mahi have been a steady bite of black fin and skip jack tuna around the humps and deep wrecks. These fish can be fooled on small lures or you may want to live chum them with minnows or pilchards. The water has been very clean for the most part so use light leaders and circle hooks to get connected. Belly hook these baits and you can get them to swim down a little also. Around the wrecks we are seeing some good amber jack activity too accompanied by some sharks. Cobias have also made a showing and are in on the reef as well as the wrecks. Bottom fishing is good as we are catching nice yellow tail snapper and muttons. Grouper fishing hasn't been very good this winter, but we are picking up a few here and there. We expect to see a little more activity after another strong cold front.

Good luck - Capt. George Clark, Jr. 🐟

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Fishing Report

This Key West Flats report is brought to you by Capt. Sandy Horn. If you would like to fish with Capt. Sandy, please call: (305) 393-6913, or e-mail: shorn2979@yahoo.com and make your reservation today!

Capt. Sandy Horn Key West Flats



Happy New year to everyone and hope your year was as great as mine. We went through a spell this week of no cold fronts which is great considering how cold it has been this winter. I've found the permit fishing much better this winter because I think the fish are in more of a pattern. Until this week we've had fronts coming through about once a week like clock work so you can figure out where the fish will be because the conditions stay about the same. December is not a desired time to fish for permit but on the right day it can be just as good if not better than any day you have in the spring. Here's a few key points to concentrate on when fishing during the winter for permit. The first thing I try to do is fish on an outgoing tide whenever possible. This water is going to be warmer than in other places because it has been sitting

in shallow water with the sun beating down on it for hours. Once that water starts to push out, the fish will feel the warmer water and come up to feed. The fish also seem to be a little more aggressive when you get these conditions which makes fly fishing for them that more intriguing.

Just a few days ago I saw permit tailing and splashing so hard that water was splashing five feet in the air. If you have never seen a permit tail on the flat it is something you must do. You've never felt your knees shake until you've had a permit tail fifty feet from the boat. The next thing to do is pay attention to water temperatures. There is not a real specific water temp to watch out for because everyday is different but just try and find the warmest water possible. You can even get an indication without a thermometer by the way the fish are acting. If you are barracuda fishing and they seem to be fired up the water is probably too cold for the permit in that location. Obviously, buying a water temp gauge is the easiest thing to do but you can still get a good read on how fish are reacting in the area.

The water temps aren't way down yet so barracuda fishing has been hit and miss. With the weather we've had lately I have been cuda fishing in the morning and once the water temps start coming up I switch to permit. There have been a good number of jack crevalle around in the channels so if your looking to bend a rod they are out there in good numbers. The mullet mud's are also in Jewfish and Waltz Key Basins which can be a lot of fun this time of year. I went the other day and we just caught lady fish and jacks but I'm sure there are some sea trout around if you pick the right mud. All and all the fishing has been good so there's no reason not to get out there because everyone else in America is freezing their fanny's off right now. Hope everyone has tight lines and fish boat side until next week. 🐟

Fishing Report

Brought to you courtesy of Capt. Chris Lembo of Incognito Charters, Key West. To fish with Capt. Chris, call (305) 292-0067, or visit www.incognitolighttackle.com incognitocharters@comcast.net

Capt. Chris Lembo Key West Offshore



2008 has come to a close and 2009 is shaping up to be a challenging year for most of us here in the Keys. It was a good week from Christmas to New Years and we usually get a little break for a week before the season kicks off. Fishing has been pretty good up and down the reef as well as offshore and in the Gulf.

Offshore has been pretty good for Sailfish, Dolphin, Tuna and Wahoo. Sailfish have been spraying ballyhoo close in on the reef. Look for fish under birds or wherever you see bait fleeing. Ballyhoo and Threadfin are hanging close to the reef in large schools. I have found most of the Sails to be right up tight in as little as 30 feet of water. I have had a few fish out deeper but most seem to be hanging close to the bait. Dolphin have been around but spotty over the past week. Some fish have been

caught close to the reef while they were feeding on the same bait as the sailfish and a few fish have been caught out as far as 400 feet. The water is running 75 degrees outside the reef and the current has been moving east. Tuna and Wahoo have been better early in the morning and the bite has been better to the west and early. Most boats have reported better fishing early in the morning.

The reef has been fair this week. There are good catches of Yellowtail coming in as well as a few nice Grouper and Mutton Snapper. Kingfish and Bonito are also working along the drop-offs in 75-100 feet. Live baits will bring in the Kingfish quickly. Pilchards and small Blue-Runners will get first billing. The current to the east has been a little lighter than to the west. The last couple of days it has been running right up the anchor line making Yellowtailing difficult, we managed to catch a few really big fish but noting in big quantities.

The wind has been slightly south and that makes for good conditions in the Gulf. The calm waters are great for a long run and there are plenty of wrecks and rock-piles to work in search of Cobia, Kingfish, Grouper and Snapper. A few nice Cobias have hit the docks at Murray Marine and live Pinfish seem to work best on them. Mangrove Snapper, Lane Snapper and Muttons will hang around the bottom and big Kingfish cruise the surface. 🐟



Fishing Report

This report is brought to you by Capt. Steve Lamp. He & his wife Gennifer operate out of Key West. If you would like to fish with Capt. Steve, please call: (305) 292-7212, or visit: www.fishingkeywest.com www.keywestfishingteam.com

ODYSSEY THE EXTREME BATTERY MERCURY Yellowfin

Capt. Steve Lamp Key West Flats



Welcome to the year 2009. What a week it has been. With Christmas behind us and the after effects of a grand new years eve celebration having wore off, its time to look forward to a hopefully more prosperous new year. With the big rush that the Christmas season offers all of the Florida Keys fishing guides I look at those two weeks as a practice for season, a shake down for the boats and a stimulus package of sorts financially. Moving forward into the New Year we should all learn from the lesson that was taught to us last year: Anything can and will happen; be prepared.

Evident to that lesson is the event of New Years in Islamorada with the Cheeca Lodge. What a great place and a valuable asset to the Islamorada guiding community. I hope the best for those folks to get that place back up and running and thank goodness no one was hurt.

The fishing this last week across the board was pretty darn good. Even with lots of boats in the water, Guides with their big rush of business and everyone else with a boat taking advantage of our getting ever lower gas prices, I have heard some great reports from guides and DIY'ers combined. There were many releases of Sailfish on the reef with only a few large ones to speak of, the Kingfish have totally moved in for season with a bottom fishing bite offshore that is off the hook. Inshore things are status quo and solid -- with these consistent normal temp weather patterns lots of fish being caught in the back bays and the flats fishing is red hot.

Offshore the current here in the lower keys has been almost dead especially west of Key West. Capt. Ralph Delph reported a slow day of high speed trolling for Wahoo with only one knock down, then resorting the rest of his week to bottom fishing with a mixed cart of nice sized Mutton Snappers, Reds and Big Groupers one grouper was in the 30+ lb range early last week. On board the Intense we landed a nice load of Red Snappers ranging in size from 11 – 18 lbs with a follow up on some Snowy Groupers and a few Tile Fish. With not much current, the offshore guys are reporting a few catches of Sailfish and many Kingfish just off the reef line making a fun day for their anglers.

Near shore the fishing in Hawks Channel is great. This is a great place to go for the DIY guy looking for a fun day on the water. Plenty of Grey Snappers, Red Groupers and Mackerels are being caught with a box of chum and some time spent over any one of the patch reefs in the Channel. With the water clearing up a bit you may also want to try and drag a lipped plug for some surprising results on a big Grouper or Mutton.


Last week on the flats things were perfect. The winds were down to a manageable rate and the fish were up tailing. Sight fishing was great. We were finding Permit in all their usual haunts from east of Key West all the way out to the Marquesas. One of our anglers boated a 22 lb fish last

Cont. on pg. 16

Fishing Report

Brought to you courtesy of Capt. Andrew Tipler. To fish with Capt. Andrew, call (305) 744-9796 or visit www.lastcastcharters.com scarpa1@bellsouth.net

Capt. Andrew Tipler
Lower Keys




I hope everyone out there had a safe and happy new year. What a crazy week it has been. As I write this report I already feel like drifting off to sleep. It takes a little while to get back into the swing of full time season. Being out on the water EVERY day leaves little time for getting much else done, including sleep. I am not complaining it is good to be out on the water.


I have been out on the water every day and each day has been different. The week started a little slow and gradually got better. Offshore fishing was spotty at best with a little bit of everything showing up. There were some dolphin caught but most boats did not find very many. Capt. Jim on the Sea Boots had a great day Friday with lots of nice fishing coming

from one group and then a few stragglers from there on. Trolling rigged ballyhoo in 50-300 ft of water would be a good bet if you are looking for a few wintertime dolphin. The only tuna I heard of came from around the wrecks. Troll tuna feathers of drift live baits if you feel like you might be in the zone. This week showed some kingfish moving in. It was the first time this year that we found consistent king fish action.

Reef fishing was great on Sunday. We found good action all through the water column. Look for this to continue as long as the water stays slightly cloudy. The yellowtails were quick to pop up in the chum slick but a bit tough to feed. Make sure to keep your baits moving in the current if you want to fool the big tails. Keep a rod on hand with a lure in case the cero mackerel move in. They have been big and will peel off some line. I have become a big fan of the Seabile lures, they get lots of attention. Keep a close eye on your bottom rod because the grouper have been biting steadily. There were plenty of throw backs but we did find some quality fish. Live pinfish were my bait of choice. Bring plenty with you and swap them out every so often. Live bait is only good when it is very alive and active.

Flats fishing was a little slow during the early week. Cool water kept most of the glamour species from being too active. The fun fish did not mind the cooler temperatures. Jacks and sea trout were out in good numbers. I heard some reports of some big groups of very nice sea trout out back from Key West all the way up to big pine. By the weekend water temperatures came up a bit bringing some better action from the big three. My friend Mark, an outfitter from Montana, spent a day fishing with Capt. Scott and Capt. Tom. They got into good numbers of bonefish and managed a few on fly.

Good luck and good fishing. 



TOURNAMENTS

We want to hear about your tournament!
Have it listed here for FREE by calling
Elizabeth at (305) 766-BOAT (2628), or via
e-mail: info@weeklyfisherman.com.

Fishing Tournaments coming up in 2009 . . .

Jan. 8-10: Key Largo Sailfish Challenge. Key Largo. Anglers battle sailfish during the peak of the season. The tournament also features raffles, drawings and cash prizes. Contact Tammie Gurgiolo at (305) 852-9337, e-mail or write to 124 Tavern Drive, Tavernier FL 33070.

Jan 11-12: 28th Annual Bartender's Sailfish Open. Islamorada. An all-release sailfish tournament, this challenge offers awards to winning bars and bartenders. Contact 305-852-2102. e-mail: ditournaments@aol.com.

Jan. 15-17: Islamorada Presidential Sailfish Tournament. Islamorada. In this all-release tournament, anglers fish for the mighty sailfish in waters surrounding the island known as the Sportfishing Capital of the World. The tournament is an official event of the World Billfish Series, Southeast Division. Contact Dianne Harbaugh at (305) 852-2102.

Jan. 19-20: Boomer Esiason Foundation Captain Al Flutie Over the Hill Rip-Off. Islamorada. Anglers ages 50 and over are challenged to catch and release the most sailfish. Contact Bill Kelly at (305) 394-5333.

Jan. 21-22: Islamorada Fishing Club Sailfish Tournament. Islamorada. The historic fishing club offers a \$30,000 cash prize to the winning team in this sailfish challenge. The tournament is limited to 30 boats. Contact Theresa at (305) 664-4735, e-mail: fishclubtheresa@bellsouth.net, or visit: www.theislamoradafishingclub.com.

Jan. 23-25: Hog's Breath King Mackerel Tournament. Key West. Anglers use fast boats to target the voracious king mackerel, also known as kingfish, for cash prizes. Contact Lee Murray at (305) 797-1117.

Jan. 24-25: Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association Swamp Guides Ball. Islamorada. This all-release event offers fishing for bonefish, redfish and snook in the shallows of the Florida Keys and the saltwater fringes of the Everglades. Contact Terry Albury at (305) 664-5142 or e-mail: talbury@aol.com.

Feb. 6-8: Islamorada Women's Sailfish Tournament. Islamorada. Female anglers challenge fishing's famous tail-dancers to win trophies and prizes. Contact Tammie Gurgiolo at (305) 852-9337.

Feb. 17-18: Poor Girls Sailfish Tournament. Key Largo and Islamorada. This popular Keys tournament typically draws more than 200 anglers. Contact Mark Mills at (305) 852-9085 or visit: www.keysradio.com.

Feb. 26-28: Backcountry Fly Championship. Islamorada. This new fly-fishing competition is to target snook and redfish in a region of the Keys that is famous for them. Contact Charlotte Ambrogio at (305) 664-2444.



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28th Annual ISLAMORADA BARTENDERS



Kick-Off Party

Sunday, January 11th
4pm - 8pm

Awards Dinner

Monday, January 12th
7pm - ???

Entry Fee:

\$125 per angler

Contact:

Dianne Harbaugh
(305) 852-2102
ditournaments@aol.com

Log onto: www.weeklyfisherman.com
for Rules & Entry Form



New Year's Day dancer . . .



Tracy Hartford from West Newbury MA fishing with her Dad and husband on the Miss Molly out of Sister Creek with her first sailfish. She was happy when the fight was over!!



Kyle and Garret Cavanaugh, fishing with their dad on a New Year's get-away from Orlando (aboard the Man-O-War out of Bud N' Mary's Marina), caught this African Pompano on 12 lb test – it weighed in on this digital scale at 39 lbs. This could be close to an IGFA junior category record.



Gilbert Ruiz and son Geo with nice Tripletail, fishing with Capt. Ron Wagner out of Seabird Marina.



Jared Fineman caught this Amberjack on his first saltwater fishing adventure fishing off Marathon aboard Big Dawg Charters.

Fishing Report

This report is brought to you courtesy of Capt. Ron Wagner aboard his boat the Producer. If you would like to fish with Capt. Ron, please call: (305) 664-2028, or visit: www.captainronwagner.com fishwithcaptron@hotmail.com

Capt. Ron Wagner Long Key



Happy New Year from Capt. Ron. One of the great things about this island is that its fishing opportunities are endless. From the days of the famed Long Key Fishing Club, where legends such as Zane Grey spent many of his days to Ernest Hemmingway and baseball great Ted Williams, here is where much of their sportfishing days were spent chasing Tarpon, Permit and Bonefish. And the easy access of going oceanside or gulfside catching Cobia, Sailfish, Tripletail, along with Mackerel, Snapper and Grouper. Made for memorable times on the water.

I hope I'll be able to give you a guide's input in to why this stretch from the south side of channel 5 bridge to the north side of long key bridge can be simply spectacular and why many of us love it here. From the quaint motels with some great sunsets and boat dockages to the bayside boat ramps that make it home to many anglers who leave from

these shores, Long Key has it all. And on the subject of bridges, They rank #1 and #2 for Tarpon fishing - the biggest ones too. Throw in the Permit and Snook that also reside there and you have some fabulous runs. On the north end is the Fiesta Key campground and marina that allows you to actually watch Tarpon roll right out front from your campsite. You could battle them from an inner tube but I wouldn't advise it. I spend my time fishing my charters from Seabird marina on the north side of the island, where you could, at times, expect a big tarpon within minutes of leaving port. Now that's what I call fantastic.

If you're after Bonefish, Long Key State Park, located on the oceanside is one of the areas best, with miles of prime flats. You can also RV here. Whether you're throwing flies or fishing with bait or artificials, it's all right here in one great setting. And it's where Zane Grey caught his first bone that, back then, was so impressive, he wrote a book about that fish. Bonefishing down here is as good as it gets. Right now the Mackerel fishing is in full swing and getting to them is so easy. Head straight through Yacht Channel, head towards Sprigger Bank, go west for 2-5 miles - it's that easy. The Mangrove Snapper and Sea Trout, some this week to 6lbs., have been in the same area. Methods vary and the marinas there will be happy to help you. They are very friendly folks on this island. I have been guiding anglers for 40 years and it's where you will find me 99 % of the time. Of course, finding me can be elusive, as I could be 30 miles out in the gulf chasing Permit, Cobia, Tripletail, battling enormous Sharks (no swimming out here) and giant Goliath Grouper. Or running across to Flamingo in Everglades National Park for Snook, Redfish and Trout. Now doesn't that make you want to fish. Give me a call and I'll be happy to fish you, as you would like to be entertained. I am a very patient teacher too. Nothing is better then watching young and older anglers being taught the proper methods that will be with them for a lifetime. In the following weeks, I'll share my experiences with you right here on Long Key - what a great place. 🐟

Fishing Report

Brought to you by Capt. Frank Piku. If you want to fish with Capt. Frank, please call (305) 509-1547, or visit www.captainfranksfishingcharters.com The "Golden Streaker" (a 35' Jaguar Cat) is a comfortable ride!

Capt. Frank Piku Lower Keys



My guide gave me a small fly to use and five minutes of training on casting with the fly rod. I proceeded to cast the line around myself, into the trees, and I even hooked my guides hat, while almost falling into the river. After fifteen minutes of casting, the guide announced that it was time to quit, and when I asked why, he explained that the fish were just not rising anymore.

I spent the next hour listening as the guide instructed me on the different types, sizes and colors of flies, and their various uses. He then mentioned a special fly that he had invented, and suggested that we might try it, but that it had a very special use. This fly was designed to be cast onto the opposite bank of a stream, twitched into the water, and then twitched three times specifically before re-casting because a trout knows that a real fly will fly away after the third twitch.

He expertly cast the fly onto the opposite bank and then with three quick twitches "BANG" a big trout had risen to grab the fly. He laughed as he handed me the rod, and explained that he had given this spiel one hundred times before, and this was the first time he had hooked a fish on the first try using this fly and method. Later when I caught up with Gilbert and told him about the guide's instructions and the results, Gil laughed so hard he nearly "wet his waders"!

I was hooked on fly-fishing and have improved over the years, but I am still a better boat fisherman than a stream man. The main lesson I took from my fly fishing week was; that a specific fly motion can have big results in catching a specific type of fish.

I had invited my good friend Frank Mensur to go fishing one day near a communications tower fifty miles out of Key West, in the gulf. There are some big cobia that visit this tower early in the morning, and I told him to bring his fly rod to see if we couldn't catch a cobia or two on the fly rod. Frank is an avid fly fisherman who travels to New Zealand for about a month every year, and fishes Key West for Tarpon daily during the month of May. Winds were forecast at 10 mph out of the south, a perfect condition to run out into the gulf, and we set out for a good day of fishing. [As a side note, I have just discovered a new lure for top water casting that is really great. It is called the Gopher, and this lure drives Kingfish and Cobia crazy. Go to (www.gopherbaitco.com) for more information.]

We started up the Northwest channel into the Gulf and soon encountered 4' to 5' seas. These are caused by the tide running against a strong south wind, and after hitting a few of these waves I decided to turn around and head for one of my great spots on the Atlantic side. No use beating our brains out against those seas, and Frank appreciated my decision as we ran to fish some of my favorite reef patches in the Hawks Channel.

The Hawks Channel runs between the islands and the reef on the Atlantic side. We anchored on one of my favorite humps and started catching grouper, snapper, grunts, and triggerfish. Jokingly, I suggested to Frank that he get out his fly rod and try it here. He laughed at me and kept fishing with his spinning rod.

Just to give him a hard time, I got out my Cortland fly rod and reel, tied on a bright yellow 3/8 once jig. While stripping off line, I got such a hard bite that I nearly lost the rod. After setting the hook and a fighting a small battle, I landed a nice 4-lb. mangrove snapper (gray snapper). Frank cracked that it was just beginners luck!

GROUPE AND SNAPPER ON A FLY ROD? *Cont. from last week . . .*

As soon as I start catching grouper and snapper on the fly rod, I pass it on to one of the other anglers. I usually give the rod to a female angler, because it is easier to battle big fish with the fly rod, and lots more fun as well. Trying to get the rod back from a female angler is like trying to take away a fine piece of jewelry. Most will not go back to the regular spinning reels after catching a few fish, and some have even added a fly rod outfit to their Christmas list. It is the success of my technique that has led me to bring a second fly rod on the boat for anyone else that wants to have fun.

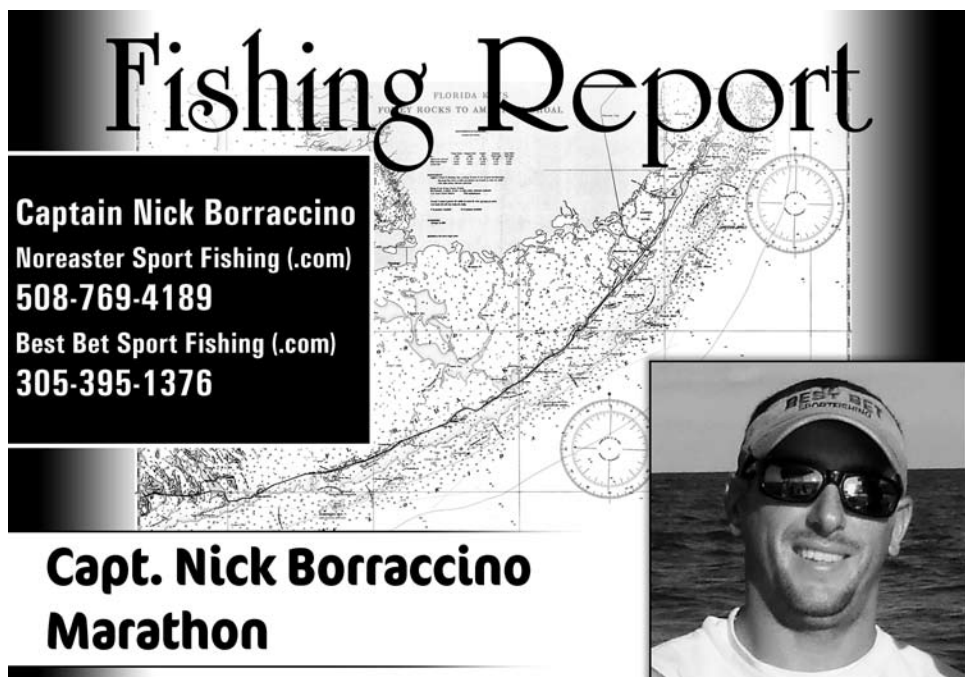
My introduction to fly rod fishing was through the invitation of my good friend Gilbert Silverman, a fly fishing enthusiast in Manchester, Vermont. He invited me to spend a week to learn fly-fishing methods and the lore of the rivers. We started out at the State Line Diner near the New York and Vermont border, enjoying a solid breakfast with all of the local anglers and guides. The guides meet for breakfast to divide up all of the good fishing spots along the river, and after a three-egg breakfast, I followed my guide to the fishing hole we had chosen.

Upon reaching the river, I proudly pulled out five fly rods that I had recently purchased at a garage sale, only to be told by the guide that these were just junk. Fortunately, I had only paid \$5 each, and the guide lent me a \$900 graphite rod to use for the day. We slipped into waders, and slipped into the river with trout jumping all around us.

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Fishing Report

Captain Nick Borraccino
Noreaster Sport Fishing (.com)
508-769-4189
Best Bet Sport Fishing (.com)
305-395-1376



Capt. Nick Borraccino Marathon

If your new years resolution is to fish more then you're reading the right paper. This is a great month for visitors to the Keys to get out and experience some great fishing. There is action inshore and offshore alike. Let's start way out, and work our way in...

When the weather permits, vessels of all sizes venture to blue waters offshore in search of their prey. In the absence of dolphin in any great numbers, the target species in the deep right now are mainly swordfish and blackfin tuna. The humps some twenty five miles off marathon are home to blackfin year round, and this is as good a time as any to catch them. The fish are there in good numbers, and are of good size. There is competition, however. The biggest downside of this fishery is the crowd. Between February and June I downright refuse to fish the Marathon Hump on a weekend. Having a speed boat piloted by a half drunk vacationer run across my transom and cut my lines off is enough to put me in a straight jacket. But that's just me. For any of you planning on fishing out there this week, please remember to be considerate on the water, pay attention to what you're doing, and exhibit some common courtesy and boating etiquette while fishing. There's plenty of fish for everyone, unless of course you start getting harassed by sharks; which brings me to my second (and don't worry, last) bad thing about targeting blackfin. The sharks are still there, and they know darn well it's easier to catch a tuna struggling on the end of a line than it is to catch a free, healthy one. The longer you fight your fish, the more likely the chance a shark will notice it and steal it from you. It stands to reason then that you are much more likely to have your larger fish taken, as you have to fight them longer, and they will be able to dive deeper (bummer, I know). While both trolling and vertical jigging will catch you fish, you'll have a better chance of landing your fish on the troll, as they will not have to be dragged up through so much of the water column attracting attention.

On a trip to the hump this week on the private boat Lazy Daze from Key Colony, we had great success on the troll, and plenty of bites on the jig. But feeding expensive jigs to sharks gets old, so troll we did. We boated at least 30 tuna. Most were around five pounds, with a dozen or so over 10 pounds, keeping 8 or 10 for the box. The most astounding thing of that day to me was what we found on the way in. About 18 miles offshore lay the weed line of all weed lines, most likely the edge of the Gulf Stream. For two miles stretched acres of sargassum weed in larger than average mats, accompanied by trees, buoys with ropes attached, a raft, boxes, bags, and all sorts of other debris. A dolphin fisherman's dream. We ran up and down twice, looking while pulling dolphin and wahoo lures without ever seeing a fish. I guess you just never know. Too bad it wasn't dolphin season!

Even further out and deeper than those tuna humps ran the boats targeting swordfish. It's been a very active bite with many boats having

multiple hookups and landings with some nice fish. I know both Snapper Charters and Main Attraction had multiple fish days this week. The action should continue so long as the current allows for dropping baits over 1500 feet down! If you've always wanted to catch a swordy... why wait any longer?

There isn't a whole a whole lot to do right now between the tuna and swordfish grounds and the waters just off the reef, as I discovered by the barren wed line. But once you get back inshore, there's plenty to do. The sailfish bite has certainly slowed down, with at best a few fish caught by any one boat in a day this week. There are a few stragglers on the reef chasing ballyhoo, but not in great numbers. I noticed acres of ballyhoo on the reef almost everyday this week near Sombrero Light with no fish in pursuit. Your best bet will be to slow troll live baits in one to two hundred feet of water and hope to raise a fish. There are enough fish around to give you a good shot at one. Also, there is a cold front coming though soon, and as of Sunday the current switched and started moving east again. These two factors should help to heat the bite back up this upcoming week.

The slow moving west current has caused an apparent hit or miss with both yellowtail fishing, and wreck fishing. On any given day on any given spot the yellowtails might pop up in your chum slick to feed, or they might seem to have vanished. All you can do is try, if they pop up, great, and if not don't hang around too long and wait. Your efforts might be in vain. The best thing to do is move in to a shallower patch reef in 20 to 30 feet of water, which have been active all week with small yellowtail snapper, mangrove snapper, small groupers and plenty of mackerel and bonito tuna to bend a rod. Again, don't be afraid to ounce around until you find a hot spot. Chum the water and present your baits (live shrimp, pilchards, pinfish, and cut ballyhoo) on jigs and light line if the water is clear. You should have plenty of action.

The wrecks have been hit or miss also. There has been some pressure on them this week, so we've had to some searching around before finding one or two that were active with mutton snappers, jacks, and kingfish. This mix will put a smile on most faces.

Once again we have seen some great action around the bridges on outgoing tides, which makes for a great half day or leisure trip in a small boat. There have been plenty of yellow jacks and mangrove snapper biting on baited jigs cast around the pilings.

Boats fishing in the gulf have had great success too this week finding a great bite of gag grouper on wrecks in the 15 to 20 foot depths, with of course the usual mackerel and mangrove snapper to accompany. If you're visiting though, you'll probably need a charter to boat to take you to one of these huny holes in search of grouper, as most of the spots are a well kept secret!

Good luck this week and enjoy fishing in the Keys! 🦞



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Captain Billy Harbaugh
(305) 481-5562

Fishing Report

If you would like to book a charter with Capt Luke Kelly in the Lower Florida Keys for fly or light tackle inshore fishing, please call: (305) 304-3152, or e-mail: KeyFlat@me.com. Visit www.lowerkeysflatsfishing.com for more information.

Capt. Luke Kelly Lower Keys



The New Year is in and weather thus far has been better than fair for this time of year. Weeks leading now have kept water temperatures relatively warm, ranging between 70 to 75 degrees, which keeps the fish biting. In the area I fish, of the lower keys, We have yet to receive our initial cold water shock that should arrive with the next real cold fronts, potentially putting water temps in the upper sixties. This cold water shock normally happens quick and is an important factor in the Lower Keys inshore fishery. Though as past days left us with these warmer temps, I feel as if the inshore fishing surrounding the Lower Keys has been left in a state of limbo. A good limbo that is, where Permit, Bonefish, and even large Tarpon potentially still exists. Nights are currently cool and this has made finding these species during the morning hours almost pointless. Yet as the mid-day sun has consistently warmed our shallow water during the past week, these three species have been showing their selves in healthy numbers. Permit, Red Fish, and Cobia can be found feeding up shallow as Tarpon crush bait of the surface in some of our more remote back-country channels and

basins, but don't expect to see them roll. Bonefish are just about entirely knocked off the flats for now, but that doesn't mean their not close by.

All fish mentioned here can be caught using the longer hair shrimp patterns during this time of year, where I prefer the lighter tan and even white colors. So much so, that I rarely carry anything else when targeting game-fish this time of year. Sinking line and or tips are also a crucial component for successful winter fly fishing in the Lower Keys. This brings me to an experience shared while on charter with John and his two boys Josh and Joe of North Carolina.

The day started with some sight fishing for Barracuda and Jack Cravel over top beautiful sand flats. They were successful here, and along with their father, Josh and Joe proved to me their huge passion for fishing. Morning wore off, the tide was flooding, and the weather was turning for the worse. The previous night's wind forecast of 10 - 15 soon proved to be 15 - 20 with vast cloud cover. Most people know these kinds of things can happen during this time of year, though I would be lying if I said I wasn't rethinking my game-plan by 9 a.m. I've heard in certain circles that most things happen for a reason, but that day convinced me of it. I did what I normally would have done in these conditions and began focusing on the deeper water of about 6 to 10 feet in depth, knowing that the wind would obviously knock everything off the flats. As a Lower Keys flats guide, for me this can be a little unnerving at times because you are literately fishing blind, leaving it up to a hunch, mother nature, and Lady Luck. Conditions leading up to that point were perfect for early winter Bonefish, so I knew we stood a chance for at least one or two as they began threading their sinking lines thru the deeper water, a stones throw from the flats. The three of them went on to catch and release seven Bonefish in the 5 - 8 lb range not before pulling the hook on at least three long screamers.

Along with it they released what seemed like two dozen Jack Cravel and Pompano. I guess you could say I was a little surprised, but then I stood back and remembered that you really never can tell what the Lower Florida Keys are capable of, especially when you have eager anglers with you. Take kids fishing! Lady Luck tends to prefer them.

Till next week, see you on the water - Capt. Luke.



Fishing Report

Capt. Dave Schugar of Sweet Enuf Charters is located at Castaway's Restaurant/Marina in Marathon. If you would like to fish with Capt. Schugar, call (305) 610-4778, or visit: www.sweetenufcharters.com sweetenufcharter@aol.com

Capt. Dave Schugar Marathon



Bottom fishing has been the key, nice muttons and AJ's have been biting very well. Although the predators have been thick, I have had many fish this week taken from my clients, mainly sharks, but I had a few muttons bitten in half or just behind the head by some really large barracudas. Never the less the action has been quite consistent. The conditions on most of the days weren't quite comfortable, but the bite is on! Plenty of kingfish out around the wrecks and the 100-foot drop off.

I did one day of sail fishing and we raised three fish and got two to eat,

but we ended up with none. The fish on the right side of the boat went lefts and the fish on the left side of the boat went right cutting one off and only to have the one still hooked up pull free. Oh well, that's fishing.

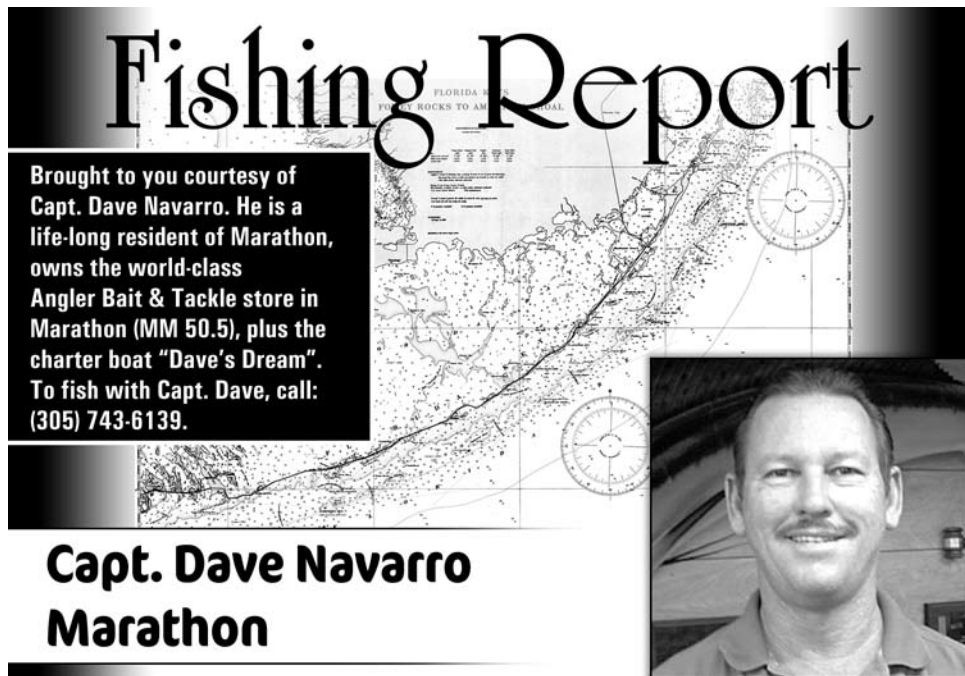
The Gulf Stream is way far out in front of Marathon so if you want to get into some numbers I would recommend heading as far east as you can go. There was a hot bite to the west off of Bahia Honda, and Big Pine. There has been a few fish out front, but not quite as good as east or west of Marathon. Just because you live, and keep your boat in Marathon doesn't mean you can't travel 20 miles east when in the summer time you sometimes travel thirty miles south to find dolphin. Finding the Gulf Stream closer to the Sailfish depths is key. The Gulf Stream in front of Marathon has been out past the edge of the continental shelf. That's over 25 miles and at one time it was 38 miles out. Up in Islamorada, the Gulf Stream has been as close as five miles from shore. When looking to find sailfish, don't be afraid of traveling a bit out of your area, you might like what you see.

The swordfish bite went off over the weekend, but died abruptly on Tuesday. Here one day, gone tomorrow. While we were out there we did a little deep dropping which has been kind of slow. It seems that each hump we went to the fish didn't want to bite, they marked well on the finder. We caught some fish like Tiles, barrel fish, rose fish, and Queen snapper. We didn't catch a lot, but we came home with enough fillets. The amberjacks and almacos have been pretty consistent out there while we have been dropping. The Marathon Hump - I don't even want to go

Cont. on pg. 15

Fishing Report

Brought to you courtesy of
Capt. Dave Navarro. He is a
 life-long resident of Marathon,
 owns the world-class
**Angler Bait & Tackle store in
 Marathon (MM 50.5), plus the
 charter boat "Dave's Dream".
 To fish with Capt. Dave, call:
 (305) 743-6139.**



Capt. Dave Navarro Marathon

It's been wild! From two feet to two hundred feet of water, there has been tons of action in just about every venue of fishing that is available here in the Keys, and that covers quite a few options. Actually, there has been good activity in even shallower as well as deeper waters than that. Weather has been the determining factor in just where you would have been able to fish any particular day. This is winter fishing in the Keys. The fronts that roll through cause winds to shift day to day which inhibits smaller boats in some areas. It also stirs up the water and causes a great deal of fish movement following bait throughout the region.

In just this past week, I have either heard of or participated in real good catches of sailfish, kingfish, tuna, mackerel, mangrove, mutton, lane, yellowtail, trout, redfish, porgy, cobia, a variety of grouper and even dolphin. Like I said, the only factor limiting the action was being able to comfortably get to them.

Just offshore the reef, sails and kings have been abundant. 200+ feet of water have produced quite a few good tunas and a very surprising number of dolphin for this time of year. Back on the edge of the reef, yellowtail and big mutton snapper have been doing well with the dark of the moon. Hanging on and not contributing to the chum line has been the biggest problem on the windy days. The patch reefs have had an unusual number of mangrove snapper for the winter along with a good variety of grouper and a few large muttons.

Inside of that, along both sides as well as in the middle of Hawk Channel, big lane, mangrove and mutton snapper have been giving anglers a good time as well as some very nice dinner fillets. Mackerel, some cobia and a good number of red grouper have also been reported. Chumming the subtle humps and bumps has been quite productive and much more comfortable with the northerly winds.

The bridge channels have been hot as well, as long as you don't get caught up in fishing the deeper channels with the winds up. There, the

heavy concentrations of weeds that have been blowing through have made keeping a bait under the surface quite difficult. Just work off the side of where the noticeable weeds are moving through and you will find that by keeping a bait down, your activity will drastically improve. Silversides have been the hottest bait here lately, even more than live shrimp!

Moving into the bay waters, all I can tell you is that if you skimp on bait, you will not be the most popular person on the boat because the fish have been chomping! Inside of 5 miles out, action has been somewhat limited unless you find some of that sought after tall needle grass bottom. Beyond 5 miles, where most of the bottom is good, mangrove snapper have been scattered throughout as well as gag and black grouper. 8+ miles has been awesome for mackerel and quite a few cobia. There is still good snapper here if you can get a bait down to them through the mackerel. Also found in this venue has been redfish, some very large, trout and a wide variety of action fish such as jacks and others.

Flats fishing has been very good on some days when the winds and temperatures allowed. Plenty of bones have been around as well as good times with many other 'critters' located in the shallow waters. Not to be forgotten have been the mangrove snapper that have been quite thick along the grass flats looking for crustaceans that have been blown loose of their cover when the winds are up. This is a good area to fish for the activity as well as having the flat provide a block to the wind and waves. You can either set up on anchor and chum the edges of the flats or just drift along them if the wind and current are cooperating. On the drift, a small jig, 1/8 to 1/4 ounce tipped with some shrimp has been killer.

All of these areas require a different type of rigging for fishing them correctly. To learn more about just how to rig for what, we will be holding, (Depending on what the dolphins do, That is the Miami Dolphins and not the fish,) a free fishing seminar this Sunday evening from 6 to 8 at our Marine Educational Center at our new location at 3740 Overseas Highway to help. Everyone is welcome to attend.

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Capt. Dave Schugar cont. from pg. 14

there. It makes a great bait stop on the way out to the swordfish grounds. The tunas have been really small and just the right size for a swordfish snack. Allot of people only use squid, but these fish are as much of a scavenger as a catfish. They will eat almost anything. I have used ladyfish, bluefish, mullet and tunas. Mackerel works well too, but I like change it up. Squid works and I use squid, but not on every drop. I caught my largest one, which weight 300 pounds on a dolphin slab.

The water has been turning yellow for a few guys out there. The yellowtails picked back up even though we are having up the rope conditions. Bridle your boat; it makes a world of difference. The mangroves on the patches have been biting as with the small muttons

and hogfish. The sea conditions haven't made it easy but at least the fish have started to feed again. Cero mackerel and cobias on the patches with some sails mixed in, really has made inshore fishing stand out this week.

Dolphin, dolphin, dolphin. Scattered to the wind the dolphin have been popping up outside of the reef, out in six hundred feet, at the humps, and beyond. There is just no telling where these fish will show up. The water temp has been really cold (72 degrees), and the fish seem a little lethargic. They are eating but it has been hard to get most of a small school like in the summer. My temp gauge hasn't fluctuated more than a degree for most of the week, and I feel that it might get colder.



Keep it safe and I will see you out there!

Capt. Dave

Fishing Report

Capt. Joe Trainor fishes multiple locations (NJ, MD, NC, FL & the Bahamas) via five boats & Over Under Adventures.

If you would like to engage Capt. Trainor, please visit www.overundercharters.com joe@overunderadventures.com.

Capt. Joe Trainor The Bahamas

First off we would like to wish everybody a Happy and Healthy New Year. This week we were greeted by some great weather and calm seas. We managed to get our first trip in this week, and it took a bit of time to find them, as the Wahoo had moved into some shallower water. Today we had our bites once again on our Billy Bait - Ballyhoo combo, as well as another on or deep rod with the a purple and black Yo-Zuri Bonita Plug. We managed to get two Wahoo in the boat, on s short half day trip, before loading the boat with some snapper while deep dropping. The Wahoo today were between 180 and 260 feet of water. On our previous outing, we had been getting our bites in 300 to 500 feet.

The deep dropping here in the Abacos, on the right days, is some of the best we've experienced in the Bahamas. We found a new spot this week that is loaded with yellow-eye and nice size queen snapper. The best bite for the tasty queens was in 550 to 580 feet. We also had an inshore trip this week, targeting yellowtails and grouper. We managed to land a couple of each but the bottom fishing was tough, due to the lack of current. We ended our inshore trip doing some deep dropping which is the exact opposite and great when there is little or no current.



Never a shortage of lobster in the Bahamas. It's legal to take them this way, which makes snorkeling even more fun...and great dinner fare too!

Capt. Steven Lamp cont. from pg. 9

week after boating his very first tarpon ever. I am excited about the water quality I am seeing on the flats, nice and clear with lots of critters in the grass. The flats feel alive, I know we will have a great next couple weeks, at least weather wise -- with the Jet Stream staying way to our North, things should stay just like they are for January sight fishing: Perfect.

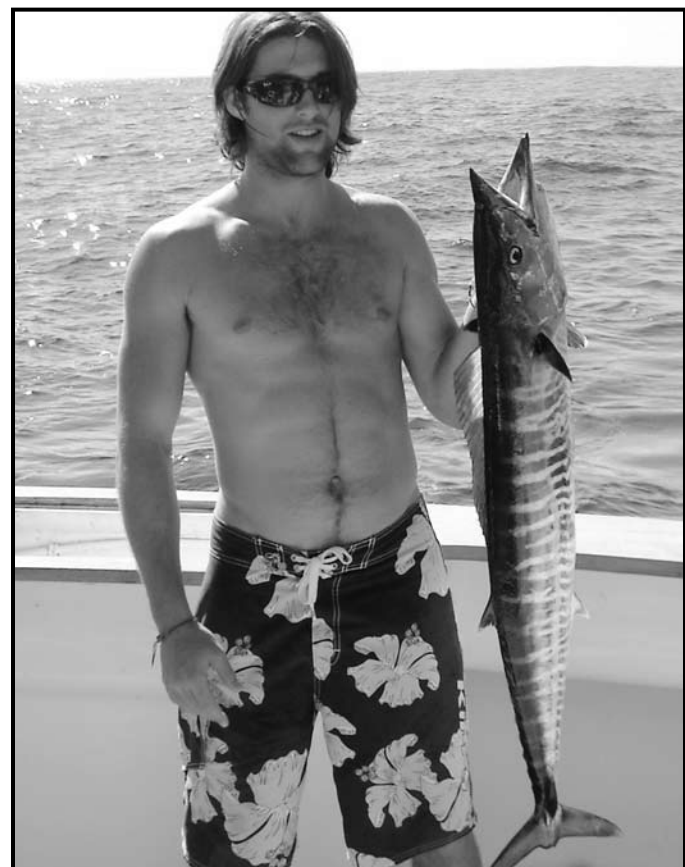
The backcountry is going nuts. We are catching lots of Pompano. Not an unusual catch but the numbers are pretty incredible. Mixed into the mudded areas with the Trout and Lady Fish the Pompano are getting

On a high note, this week one of our friends caught the first blue marlin that we've heard about this season. The fish was caught near Green Turtle Cay and was in the 225lb range. The Blue Marlin was caught on a center console just off the edge in 1000 feet of water. The water temperature is hovering around 74 degrees right now, and we are expecting one of the strongest fronts of the season, later this week.

Diving this week was superb. On rough days there is great conching in The Sea Of Abaco, as well as some really good lobstering. Also, just inside the reef there are some great coral heads with numerous amounts of grouper, yellowtails, and muttons. If anyone is planning a trip, it may be good to invest in a wetsuit as the water is a bit chilly.

A bit to our south, we had more reports of great fishing action. Cat Island had a good Wahoo bite this week, with fish to 60 pounds boated. It was also surprising to hear about a very good dolphin bite starting up this week. Fish near the 40lb range were reported. We usually don't see the dolphin bite start to happen until late March or even April, so this is great news.

All in all, it was another great week fishing in the Bahamas. The weather cooperated and allowed us to take families offshore this week. It was great to hear of the first blue of the season as well as some dolphin moving in. The wahoo bite remains one of the best we have seen. 🐟



Wahoo are still biting in the Bahamas!

quite competitive eating very well with catches on our half day trips of 10 – 12 legal sized fish. Trout Season is now open and anglers can enjoy a nice table fare. Tarpon are also in the backcountry channels here in Key West. Very typical for a mid winter warming trend for Tarpon to come in and feed, most of these fish are Gulf species and some can get quite large. Look for channels with good flow and some bottom variations, run your baits deep for better success.

Being a fishing guide is a lot like being a weatherman, you don't get paid to be right. With the weather and the fishing that is here in Key West this week and probably next I am enjoying the consistent reliable fishing. January is a great time to get down to Key West and fish. The crowds are light and the fishing is great. Give your favorite fishing guide a call and have some fun.

From my crew and I here at Dream Catcher Charters enjoy your week. Come see us soon.. Capt. Steven Lamp 🐟

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KEY LARGO (Ocean Reef)

		High	Low	High	Low	High
Date	Day	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height
Jan 7	Wed	04:41 AM / 2.34 ft	10:46 AM / 0.37 ft	04:41 PM / 2.21 ft	11:11 PM / -0.64 ft	
Jan 8	Thu	05:43 AM / 2.48 ft	11:46 AM / 0.16 ft	05:45 PM / 2.35 ft		
Jan 9	Fri		12:09 AM / -0.87 ft	06:41 AM / 2.63 ft	12:43 PM / -0.07 ft	06:46 PM / 2.50 ft
Jan 10	Sat		01:05 AM / -1.04 ft	07:34 AM / 2.76 ft	01:37 PM / -0.30 ft	07:42 PM / 2.64 ft
Jan 11	Sun		01:59 AM / -1.13 ft	08:25 AM / 2.85 ft	02:30 PM / -0.49 ft	08:37 PM / 2.72 ft
Jan 12	Mon		02:51 AM / -1.11 ft	09:13 AM / 2.87 ft	03:21 PM / -0.63 ft	09:29 PM / 2.73 ft
Jan 13	Tue		03:43 AM / -0.97 ft	10:00 AM / 2.82 ft	04:13 PM / -0.68 ft	10:21 PM / 2.68 ft
Jan 14	Wed		04:34 AM / -0.74 ft	10:46 AM / 2.71 ft	05:04 PM / -0.65 ft	11:12 PM / 2.57 ft

ISLAMORADA (Whale Harbor)

		High	Low	High	Low	High
Date	Day	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height
Jan 7	Wed	05:07 AM / 1.34 ft	11:32 AM / 0.17 ft	05:07 PM / 1.27 ft	11:57 PM / -0.30 ft	
Jan 8	Thu	06:09 AM / 1.42 ft	12:32 PM / 0.08 ft	06:11 PM / 1.35 ft		
Jan 9	Fri		12:55 AM / -0.41 ft	07:07 AM / 1.51 ft	01:29 PM / -0.03 ft	07:12 PM / 1.43 ft
Jan 10	Sat		01:51 AM / -0.49 ft	08:00 AM / 1.58 ft	02:23 PM / -0.14 ft	08:08 PM / 1.51 ft
Jan 11	Sun		02:45 AM / -0.53 ft	08:51 AM / 1.63 ft	03:16 PM / -0.23 ft	09:03 PM / 1.56 ft
Jan 12	Mon		03:37 AM / -0.52 ft	09:39 AM / 1.64 ft	04:07 PM / -0.30 ft	09:55 PM / 1.56 ft
Jan 13	Tue	04:29 AM / -0.46 ft	10:26 AM / 1.62 ft	04:59 PM / -0.32 ft	10:47 PM / 1.53 ft	
Jan 14	Wed		05:20 AM / -0.35 ft	11:12 AM / 1.55 ft	05:50 PM / -0.31 ft	11:38 PM / 1.47 ft

MARATHON (Boot Key Harbor)

		High	Low	High	Low	High
Date	Day	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height
Jan 7	Wed	06:26 AM / 0.91 ft	10:17 AM / 0.64 ft	04:52 PM / 2.15 ft		
Jan 8	Thu		12:35 AM / -0.49 ft	07:29 AM / 0.94 ft	11:21 AM / 0.57 ft	05:57 PM / 2.30 ft
Jan 9	Fri		01:29 AM / -0.63 ft	08:15 AM / 0.99 ft	12:21 PM / 0.45 ft	06:59 PM / 2.42 ft
Jan 10	Sat		02:18 AM / -0.70 ft	08:55 AM / 1.05 ft	01:18 PM / 0.30 ft	07:57 PM / 2.47 ft
Jan 11	Sun		03:04 AM / -0.70 ft	09:32 AM / 1.14 ft	02:14 PM / 0.17 ft	08:51 PM / 2.43 ft
Jan 12	Mon		03:48 AM / -0.63 ft	10:09 AM / 1.24 ft	03:11 PM / 0.07 ft	09:43 PM / 2.29 ft
Jan 13	Tue		04:29 AM / -0.50 ft	10:45 AM / 1.36 ft	04:09 PM / 0.01 ft	10:33 PM / 2.06 ft
Jan 14	Wed		05:09 AM / -0.33 ft	11:21 AM / 1.48 ft	05:10 PM / -0.01 ft	11:23 PM / 1.76 ft

BIG PINE (West Side - Pine Channel)

		High	Low	High	Low	High
Date	Day	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height
Jan 7	Wed		02:07 AM / -0.14 ft	07:41 AM / 0.42 ft	12:57 PM / 0.19 ft	06:18 PM / 0.95 ft
Jan 8	Thu		03:09 AM / -0.21 ft	08:40 AM / 0.43 ft	01:57 PM / 0.17 ft	07:21 PM / 1.03 ft
Jan 9	Fri		04:04 AM / -0.26 ft	09:28 AM / 0.45 ft	02:56 PM / 0.13 ft	08:22 PM / 1.10 ft
Jan 10	Sat		04:55 AM / -0.28 ft	10:10 AM / 0.47 ft	03:52 PM / 0.08 ft	09:19 PM / 1.14 ft
Jan 11	Sun		05:42 AM / -0.27 ft	10:50 AM / 0.51 ft	04:48 PM / 0.04 ft	10:12 PM / 1.13 ft
Jan 12	Mon		06:25 AM / -0.24 ft	11:28 AM / 0.57 ft	05:44 PM / 0.01 ft	11:04 PM / 1.08 ft
Jan 13	Tue		07:06 AM / -0.18 ft	12:06 PM / 0.63 ft	06:42 PM / -0.00 ft	11:55 PM / 0.98 ft
Jan 14	Wed		07:46 AM / -0.11 ft	12:44 PM / 0.69 ft	07:42 PM / -0.00 ft	

CUDJOE KEY (Pirates Cove)

		High	Low	High	Low	High
Date	Day	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height
Jan 7	Wed		03:09 AM / -0.26 ft	11:10 AM / 0.63 ft	01:59 PM / 0.37 ft	09:47 PM / 1.41 ft
Jan 8	Thu		04:11 AM / -0.40 ft	12:09 PM / 0.64 ft	02:59 PM / 0.31 ft	10:50 PM / 1.53 ft
Jan 9	Fri		05:06 AM / -0.50 ft	12:57 PM / 0.66 ft	03:58 PM / 0.24 ft	11:51 PM / 1.62 ft
Jan 10	Sat		05:57 AM / -0.53 ft	01:39 PM / 0.70 ft	04:54 PM / 0.15 ft	
Jan 11	Sun	12:48 AM / 1.68 ft	06:44 AM / -0.52 ft	02:19 PM / 0.76 ft	05:50 PM / 0.07 ft	
Jan 12	Mon	01:41 AM / 1.68 ft	07:27 AM / -0.44 ft	02:57 PM / 0.84 ft	06:46 PM / 0.02 ft	
Jan 13	Tue	02:33 AM / 1.60 ft	08:08 AM / -0.33 ft	03:35 PM / 0.93 ft	07:44 PM / -0.00 ft	
Jan 14	Wed	03:24 AM / 1.45 ft	08:48 AM / -0.20 ft	04:13 PM / 1.02 ft	08:44 PM / -0.00 ft	

KEY WEST (South Side Hawk Channel)

		High	Low	High	Low	High
Date	Day	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height	Time/Height
Jan 7	Wed	06:28 AM / 0.87 ft	10:35 AM / 0.43 ft	05:05 PM / 1.96 ft		
Jan 8	Thu		12:47 AM / -0.47 ft	07:27 AM / 0.89 ft	11:35 AM / 0.37 ft	06:08 PM / 2.12 ft
Jan 9	Fri		01:42 AM / -0.58 ft	08:15 AM / 0.92 ft	12:34 PM / 0.27 ft	07:09 PM / 2.26 ft
Jan 10	Sat		02:33 AM / -0.62 ft	08:57 AM / 0.97 ft	01:30 PM / 0.17 ft	08:06 PM / 2.34 ft
Jan 11	Sun		03:20 AM / -0.60 ft	09:37 AM / 1.06 ft	02:26 PM / 0.08 ft	08:59 PM / 2.33 ft
Jan 12	Mon		04:03 AM / -0.52 ft	10:15 AM / 1.17 ft	03:22 PM / 0.02 ft	09:51 PM / 2.22 ft
Jan 13	Tue		04:44 AM / -0.39 ft	10:53 AM / 1.29 ft	04:20 PM / -0.00 ft	10:42 PM / 2.01 ft
Jan 14	Wed		05:24 AM / -0.24 ft	11:31 AM / 1.42 ft	05:20 PM / -0.00 ft	11:33 PM / 1.74 ft

Moon Phases

New: 01/26/09 • First Quarter: 01/04/09
Full: 01/10/09 • Last Quarter: 01/17/09

All Tide predictions may not be accurate. The Weekly Fisherman, The Islamorada Charter Boat Association and The Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association accept no liabilities associated with any referenced use of the above-listed tidal information.

Grouper on a Fly Rod cont. from pg. 12

I cast again over the 25’ deep bottom and proceeded to strip out line. WHAM, another hook up and in a few minutes I had boated another nice gray snapper. Frank reiterated his comment about beginners luck and opined that the special jig I used that was the reason for my success. I gave him a jig just like it to use, and being very stubborn, he tied it to his spinning rod. He didn’t get one hook up in the next hour, while I caught ten gray snappers in the 3 to 5 lb. range.

Since I had caught my limit and his, we called it a day and headed home. Frank finally conceded that maybe the fly rod had something to do with my success. After all, gray snappers are line shy and have keen eyes, making them normally difficult to catch. They will eat your chum, but not bite a baited hook. This was a delightful surprise to catch them this way, however, I wasn’t sure if the fly rod had anything to do with my unusual success!

My next fishing trip, I was anxious to try the technique again and see if it was for real, or just a fluke. This trip was out into the Gulf, and after I had all my anglers set up and fishing, I reached for my Cortland fly rod and reel outfit. Because we were drifting at a faster pace than the previous trip, I selected a much heavier jig. WOW!! The first time I dropped it down, out came a nice gray snapper.

I passed the fly rod to an interested angler and surprisingly, no had no results. He gave me back the fly rod and using my technique, I hooked up another gray. This led me to believe that it was my special jigging technique and not just the jig I was using that was bringing success. I passed the rod to another angler and coached him on my technique, and shortly, he hooked up a nice snapper. He was really thrilled at the action of the fly rod, as he had never caught a fish on a fly rod before, especially a snapper. I thought to myself, if this works for snapper, how about grouper?

Meanwhile, all my anglers were catching grouper, grunts, porgies, and yellow tail snappers, all on conventional rods and spinning reel outfits, but not one angler caught a gray snapper! Had I really discovered something? You bet! What I was doing with the motion of the fly rod and jig had turned on the grays. They didn’t have time to be line shy, they had to grab this jig or miss the meal.

I varied the size (weight) of the jigs to find the right depth for gray snapper, and by accident, I discovered that with heavier jigs I started to hook up grouper. From experience, it takes a different technique for grouper because they head for the rocks as soon as they grab the bait. It is important to pull like heck when you first get a bite. Then hang on, and if you get him coming your way, you are in for a good fight. Try it, you’ll love it, and every fish will seem like the biggest fish you ever caught.

What is the technique? First, tie a 3’ mono leader with a swivel to the fly line and a jig or plastic DOA lure (Bait Buster) these have been great. The mullet or green top colors work best. If I need to get deeper in the water column, I add a small egg sinker above the swivel on the fly line. I adjust the weights so I can hit the bottom for grouper and lighter weights for snapper. By changing the weight of the jigs, you can adjust the depth of the lure to find snapper. This method also works for Bass fishing in freshwater lakes!

The action of the fly rod produces a distinctive swimming motion that excites the fish to attack the bait, as opposed to a stationary bait that is just swinging with the tide or current. The quick jerky motion of the plastic lures make them seem life like, and jigs look like shrimp that are diving into the bottom. Tipping jigs with a piece of cut bait or strip of squid that is ½” wide and 3” long, often excites the fish to strike. The added natural smell of the bait will entice a strike if all else fails.

Once the line with mono leader and appropriate weight is ready, and the lure is selected and baited, begin to strip off 2’ to 3’ lengths of line until your jig or lure reaches the bottom or your projected depth. Then, lift the rod up in long 3’ to 5’ sweeps, letting the jig or lure settle evenly between sweeps of the rod.

When you get a strike, jerk the rod up hard to set the hook, with the flexibility of the fly rod, you need a good solid jerk to set the hook. Then lift and reel like mad so the fish can’t dart back into the rocks with your lure. Settle down for a nice battle, and bring your fish to the boat to be netted. If you haven’t hooked a fish in one minute, you’ve been robbed of bait, or if you are using a plastic lure, there just aren’t any fish in the area.

My fly rod method is a real killer, and the only time it does not work is when there are no fish around, or the tide is at ebb. Remember fish feed when food is flowing around them, and no tide means no food drifting by, and thus no bites. It is similar to people sitting down to dinner, if they have an empty plate in front of them, they don’t eat. Put a full plate of food in front of them and they will eat. The best fishing is always just before ebb tide or slightly after it begins to flow again, and if you are not getting fish at this point, try a new spot.

Once you find a hot spot, try this method. If you don’t succeed initially, don’t give up! This method does work, although it takes some flexibility in presentation to start the fish into a feeding frenzy! I am surprised at how often I have to change weights or jig sizes to find the ideal combination for the conditions, but as soon as I dial in the right combination, look out! I can out fish everyone on the boat 2 or 3 fish to one against anglers using conventional spinning rods.

I recently took my friend Tucker Murray fishing with me in Key West. He watched me pull in fish after fish using my fly rod. He moved right next to me with his spinning rod and began catching more fish than any other angler on the boat. He figured that my jigging action had excited the fish into a frenzy and being close, he was benefiting indirectly from my technique.

I gave him the fly rod and coached him on my method. At first, he did not get a bite, but I coached him to use the 3’ to 5’ sweeps of the rod, and shortly thereafter, he started hooking up grouper. After landing several fish he commented “This is like cheating... it is too easy” As with most anglers who try my method, he wouldn’t give up the fly rod for the rest of the day.

I have two Cortland fly rod outfits on board the Golden Streak, and as soon as I get an angler hooked on my method, I get out the second fly rod outfit to catch a few fish myself. I have also purchased some suction cup fly rod holders made by Moonlighter (www.outercapangling.com) to hold the fly rods when unhooking fish. I also use a Boca Buddy suction cup made by Moonlighter to keep the Boca gripper handy. These accessories keep things organized in the boat when using the fly rods.

True blue fly fishing anglers will say that this is just bottom fishing with a fly rod, however, stationary bait on a spinning rod does not have anywhere near the excitement to the fish that the fly rod provides. It is more fun, it is less strain on the back, and it beats sitting on the gunnel watching the tip of your spinning rod for a bite.

I am having FUN and so are my anglers, and that is what fishing is all about. Try it and you will like it too, and you don’t have to buy a \$1,000 fly rod. Cortland makes a nice line of fly rods and reels that are modestly priced under \$200, so if some big fish pulls the rod and reel out of your hand, you won’t cry as hard. In fact, I would recommend that you purchase two fly rod outfits for your boat. Once your wife, or friends start catching fish on the fly rod, you will need a second rig to get in on the fun yourself.

Remember if you don’t get any action the first time you use the fly rod, don’t give up! Try and try again, change the presentation, and your target depth, and when you hit on the right combination of weight, lure and motion...WOW!!!! You will never give up fly rod fishing from your boat.

This article should get you started catching big grouper and snapper with a fly rod, or during the winter months, you can come to Key West and fish with me. Let me show you my technique and how it works, and if I can’t out fish you with the fly rod, I’ll give it to you. I am also available for charter during the summer in Detroit for some of the hottest small mouth bass fishing in the world.

KEYS CAPTAIN & GUIDE DIRECTORY



This Directory is a comprehensive list of the best shallow water flats guides & offshore charter skippers from Key Largo to Key West. Flats species of fish include: Bonefish, Permit, Tarpon, Redfish, Snook & Trout. Offshore species of fish include: Dolphin, Sailfish, Wahoo, Kingfish, Tuna Snapper & Grouper. Gulf species of fish include: Kingfish, Grouper, Snapper, Cobia & Tarpon.



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Lower Keys	Big Pine Key to Key West
Captain / Charter	Contact Info
Capt. Chris Lembo	OFF/REEF (305) 292-0067 incognitocharters@comcast.net
Capt. Kevin Wilson	OFF/REEF (305) 745-5634 www.fishmekeywest.com
Capt. Brad Nowicki	BC/FL/OFF/REEF/GF (305) 481-7908 www.captainbradnowicki.com
Sightfish Charters	FL (305) 304-6132 www.sightfishfloridakeys.com
Capt. Sandy Horn	BC/FL (305) 393-6913 shorn2979@yahoo.com
Capt. Steve Lamp	FL/OFF/WR/GF/FLY/TP (888) 362-3474 www.fishingkeywest.com

Lower Keys (cont.)	Big Pine Key to Key West
Captain / Charter	Contact Info
Capt. Frank Piku	OFF/GULF/REEF (305) 509-1547 www.captainfranksfishingcharters.com
Andy Griffiths Charters	OVN/MD/OFF/REEF (305) 296-2639 www.fishandy.com
Capt. Bo Sellers	BC/FL (305) 304-8442 www.sightfishingkeywest.com
Capt. Andrew Tipler	BC/FL/OFF/REEF (305) 744-9796 www.lastcastcharters.net
Capt. Tony Taverna	OFF/REEF/INSHORE (631) 355-9344 www.morningstarsportfishingcharters.net
Morning Star Sportfishing	
Capt. Luke Kelly	FL/FLY/LT/BC/TP (305) 304-3152 keyflat@mac.com

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Upper Keys Captain / Charter	Key Largo to Islamorada	Contact Info
Capt. Greg Eklund Cloud Nine Charters	OFF/REEF/WR/FL	(305) 360-7476 www.islamoradafishingtrips.com
Key Largo Fishing Adventures	OFF/BC/REEF	(305) 923-9293 www.keyssportfishing.com
Capt. Scott Keller	OFF/BC	(305) 664-6678 captscott@badhabitfishingcharters.com
Capt. Ron Moore	OFF/REEF/MD	(305) 304-9473 www.millertimesportfishing.com
Capt. Matt Bellinger	BC/GULF/REEF/WR	(305) 393-0909 www.bamboocharters.com
Capt. Joe Petrucco	OFF	(305) 304-4580 www.killerinstinctcharters.com
Capt. George Clark, Jr.	OFF/REEF/BC	(305) 522-2638 www.rodeocharters.com
Capt. Jef Pfister	BC/FL	(877) 362-5743 www.docksidecharters.com
Capt. Mike Makowski	BC/FL	(305) 481-0111 www.blackfootfishing.com
Capt. Wells Gable	BC/FL	(305) 522-2373 www.captwellsgable@msn.com
Killer White Charters	OFF/REEF/TP	(305) 522-0374 www.killerwhite.com
Capt. John Kohler	BC/FL	(305) 852-0369 jdkohler@bellsouth.net
Capt. Ann Holahan	BC/FL/TP/FLY	(305) 664-5891 www.boneranger.com
Capt. Lain Goodwin	BC/FL	(305) 304-2212 captain@dirtywatercharters.com
Capt. Tad Burke	BC/FL/GF/OFF	(305) 852-0739 (305) 451-7354
Capt. Kevin Brown	Golden Reserve Charters	(305) 394-0792 www.goldreservecharters.com
Capt. John Taskowitz	OFF	(305) 664-9202 www.suzannefishingcharters.com
Capt. Ted Benbow	FL/BC	(305) 393-0363 www.skinsandfinscharters.com
Capt. Bill Wert Whisper Charters	FL/BC/LT/GF/FLY	(305) 393-1910 mrbill54@bellsouth.net
Capt. Stephen Murray	BC	(305) 393-1641 stevemurray126@comcast.net
Capt. Ron Allen	Fish Tales Charters	(305) 664-0050 www.fishtalesportfishing.com
Capt. Butch Green	Sassy Lady Charters	(305) 394-4717 sassyladycharters@comcast.net
Capt. Jeff Van Derflue	BC	(305) 393-6940 flatitudecharters@hotmail.com
Capt. Don Clark	OFF	(305) 393-2788 www.seahorsecharters.com

Upper Keys (cont.) Captain / Charter	Key Largo to Islamorada	Contact Info
Capt. Juan Garcia Beats Land Charters	BC/GF/REEF/OFF	(305) 297-0438 www.beatslandcharters.com
Capt. Skip Bradeen	OFF	(305) 481-5151 www.bluechiptoo.com
Capt. Steve Friedman	FL/BC/FLY	(305) 393-3474 www.afishingguide.com
Capt. Larry Wren A Pirates Choice Charters	OFF	(305) 360-4900 www.apirateschoice.com
Capt. Dave Purdo	FL/BC	(305) 852-5989
Capt. J.R. captainjr@bellsouth.net	OFF	800-473-4106 or 305-481-0649 www.captainj-rcharters.com
Capt Mitch Mitchell	BC/FL	305-587-1150 www.reelchaoscharters.com
Capt. Kerry Wingo	BC/LT/FL/FLY	Klcaptkw@aol.com www.tailsupfishing.com
Capt. Augie Wampler's captwamp@yahoo.com	OFF	(305) 393-2765 www.BlueWaterPredator.com
Capt. Ron Brack Hattatude Sport Fishing Charters	OFF	(305) 484-8410 (305) 393-0452
Capt. Jeff Frasier Genesis Charters	OFF	(305) 393-3981
Capt. Donny Lange whereisdll@yahoo.com	BC/FL	(305) 522-1929 www.captdonny.com
Capt. Ron Wagner	FL/BC	(305) 664-2028 fishwithcaptron@hotmail.com
Capt. Paul Hunt captpaul@finhuntercharters.com	BC/FL/LT/FLY	(305) 393-2495 www.finhuntercharters.com
Capt. Bruce Andersen Capt. Easy Charters	OFF/WR	(305) 360-2120 www.captaineasycharters.com
Capt. Skip Nielsen	BC/FL/LT	(305) 664-9314 skipcyd@bellsouth.net
Capt. Robert Mathias, Jr "RESTLESS TOO" capt@floridakeysfishing.com		(305) 304-4422 www.floridakeysfishing.com
Capt. Bruce Pollock Edge Charters	FL/BC/LT	(305) 393-5269 CaptainBruce@florida-keys-fishing-guides.com

Middle Keys Captain / Charter	Long Key to Marathon	Contact Info
Capt. Nick Borraccino Best Bet Sportfishing	OFF/REEF/WR	(508) 769-4189 www.bestbet sportfishing.com
Capt. Pip's Sportfishing	OFF/REEF/TP	(305) 743-4403 www.captainpips.com
Capt. Butch Hewlett	Live Bait Tarpon Only	(305) 743-4594 bnbfishing@bellsouth.net
Capt. David Schugar	OFF/REEF	(305) 610-4778 www.sweetenufcharters.com
Capt. Paul Suarez	Licensed Captain Any Boat	(305) 731-7464

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