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Bill Wadika (Pennsylvania) caught this Queen Snapper off of Marathon on the *Island Lure*. This beauty weighed 20.9 lbs.

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Unknown Critic

Who says the glass is always half full? Our Unknown Critic certainly doesn't agree! If you are one of those positive people, hopefully you will get a giggle out of him, and if you are a crabby critic yourself, please drop him a line. You can reach the Unknown Critic at critic@weeklyfisherman.com, with complaints, comments and all those things that tick you off!

? ~ ?

From "somewhere"
in the Keys . . .



Let's try something different this week; No sarcasm, criticizing, or other fun stuff, just a few observations and an important lesson learned.

If you are reading this paper you are like me and fishing ranks right up there with the most important things in your life. You have probably invested large sums of money and time exploring all our sport has to offer. You have tried to learn everything you can and always seek more knowledge whenever and wherever you can find it. I have found that if you talk to ten different fishermen you get ten different ideas on how to improve your chances out there. That's a good thing.

Recently I have been spending parts of my Thursday night's down at Reef Light Tackle in Big Pine Key. The staff there puts on training seminars that are well thought out and well put together for those of us that are not professional anglers. Some of the seminar topics have included "How to throw a cast net", "Kite fishing", and this past week they had the host of the Spanish Fly Fishing Show, Jose Wejebe.

Of all the topics that Jose talked about, the one that hit home the most for me, was the part on taking a child fishing. This discussion triggered my favorite fishing memory.

You have to understand that I was one of those guys that put fishing ahead of all else when I came down here on vacation. Well, one horribly

hot and humid day several years ago, I actually was not interested in fishing at all when my 14 year old son begged me to go out, just him and me. I was exhausted from three straight days of fishing and wanted and needed a day off. After a couple hours of him begging, I finally gave in and we loaded the boat with food and bait. We wound up going out 20 miles or so to find the fish and proceeded to have a wonderful day catching schoolie Dolphin. It was one of those father and son moments that I will treasure the rest of my life.

Two short years later, my son would pass away and leave a hole in my soul that will not go away. I am so grateful that we had that day together and for some reason it is my fondest memory of the short time that I had with him. Every time that I go out fishing I think of that day and what it meant to my young son. So, I guess the moral of the story here is to try to take a kid fishing as often as you can and share the memories that our sport can produce.

You never know when memories are all that you will have.

I miss you Paisan, and happy 20th birthday . . . 



Marathon native Tyler Joseph caught his first sailfish with his dad, Capt. Kurt Joseph, while fishing aboard the *Stella* with Kurt's friend Rob Radical at the helm. The fish was caught just outside the reef with live ballyhoo as bait.



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 From the Skiff




A number of years ago around this time, I was fishing our church minister and the Bishop. We headed out in the Gulf, dropped over the chum and proceeded to fish. Bang, the Bishop had a fish on. He soon had it to the boat where I lifted it up and said, "That's a nice mackerel." He said, "Is that a HOLY MACKEREL?" I laughed and said I'm not sure if this ones holy but they sure taste fantastic.

Spanish Mackerel are excellent eating and many have been missing out on them. Besides the great action they provide through the winter months, I find eating them can be something special. The Mackerel in Florida Bay and the gulf side are the best, as they spend much time eating shrimp.

Ice them quickly, taking just enough for meals for that night and the next, let the rest go and try this recipe my wife Carol prepares for me.

Fillet the fish as soon as you hit the dock, remove the skin, rinse well and keep on ice until your ready to cook them. Take a large piece of tin foil, smear on some quality olive oil, put the fillets on that, baste them with a little mayonnaise, sprinkle on some fennel seed, wrap it up and put it on the grill for 15 minutes at 350 degrees. Next make your favorite yellow rice, steam some veggies, and cut up some avocado pieces. When the fish are done, I place the yellow rice in the center on each plate I'm serving, spread some veggies evenly around the rice, place some avocado chunks around the perimeter and then place a fillet of the fish right on top. Garnish with some lime wedges and enjoy. This is as good as it gets. Sure, you can use Snapper, Grouper, Cobia etc., but I will say it's best with Spanish Mackerel.

The fishing out back just gets better each day and the variety is what makes the Keys so special. If your looking for fast action, lots of pulls and some good eating fish, the next few months will be just phenomenal. Lets go catching, anyone can go fishing. See you out back! 



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Stop the Gulf Grouper Giveaway . . .

Amendment 29 gives away 65 percent of Gulf gag and red groupers to the commercial fishing industry through a catch share or IFQ (individual fishing quota) program. Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) has filed a lawsuit in federal district court in Fort Myers, Florida, challenging the adoption and implementation of Amendment 29 to the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Management Plan approved by the United States Secretary of Commerce.

The Gulf grouper catch share debate is not about conservation. It is about the allocation and the access to public resources. CCA is opposed to locking up access to a public resource in a small number of commercials interests. The Gulf recreational grouper fishery has an economic value of 223 million dollars, nearly three times larger than the economic value of the commercial fishery.

Establishing catch share programs will only benefit large operators in the commercial fishery. The recreational fishery will not be allowed to expand because reallocation of grouper take from the commercial IFQ will never occur. In the future, as more people try to fish for grouper, the bag limits and seasons will be even more restrictive until the recreational fishery is no longer viable.

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Fishing Report

Captain Nick Borraccino
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Capt. Nick Borraccino
Marathon

Some unusual scenarios have been playing out over the past week or two with regards to fishing, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. Even though the weather has seemed to moderate itself a bit, it still hasn't been warm enough, long enough to raise the temperature of the water in the Gulf and near the shore. This, I suspect, is the reason the fishing on the reef has been so good.

From Duck Key to Bahia Honda, the Mangrove Snapper bite on the reef in 20-50 feet of water has been outstanding; both in the size of the fish and their numbers. Anchor up on some live bottom, throw out some chum and you're sure to see them. Jig heads or standard bait rigs work fine with shrimp, pilchards, small pinfish, or fresh cut bait. Also stacked up in the same area are Grouper... lots of Grouper. Granted most are

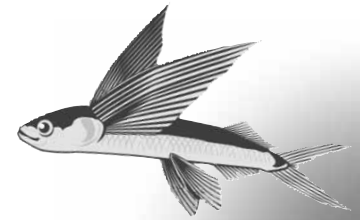
undersized, and we can't keep them anyway, but when you consider that the Grouper, Snapper, and Cero Mackerel are all biting at once and you're in for a 'every bait getting hit' type of day. Who can complain about that? As I mentioned, I theorize the cold water in the Bay has pushed all would-be inhabitants to warmer waters (i.e. the reef), making for some lovely concentrations of fish.

It appears this trend has recently carried over to Cobia as well. We normally see a migration of Cobia on the Oceanside in April, but it apparently started this week. Packs of them were seen and caught following rays, tailing on the surface, and even showing up in chum slicks. Fish in the 30 pound range have been common. Everyone is excited about this fishery right now, as the Sailfishing has been on the slow side.

If this wasn't enough for you, the wrecks out beyond 100 feet have also been productive. Big Mutton Snapper, Grouper, Amberjacks, Kingfish, African pompano, and more are on the list of species that could be putting a bend in your rod.

When you have the weather, running offshore has been worth the trip as well. I heard more than one good report about the Blackfin biting at the Hump this week, and on my last Sword fishing excursion we found the fish very active also, getting a bite on every drop.

Suffice it to say, if you're looking to fish this week, you have some great options to choose from! 🐟



Junior Anglers Club . . .

Robbies of Islamorada is pleased to announce the formation of a Junior Anglers Club. The purpose of this club is to instill a love of fishing and the outdoors in our young people. A wiseman once said that if you give a man a fish you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish you feed him for a lifetime. Robbins wants to instill a lifelong love of fishing in our junior club members.

Fishing teaches kids an entire set of values. Aside from the outdoors and nature, kids can learn what life is all about. They can learn what it means to be able to feed people. Through catch and release they can learn conservation. For something to do when they get "bored", the challenge of catching a fish can keep them out of potential trouble brought about by that boredom. Captain Ron Howell agrees "Fishing is a relaxing sport that can be enjoyed for a lifetime. You never get too old to fish! And, getting kids started young helps them appreciate nature and the ways the environment works, and helps them understand life better.

Plus, fishing keeps kids out of trouble. There is a group called "Hooked on Fishing" that has the motto "Get hooked on fishing, not on drugs." There is a lot of truth to that!"

The Junior Angler Club bestows many benefits and is open to all children through the age of 16. Members of this club will receive a Robbies of Islamorada Junior Angler Club custom-designed t-shirt. Quarterly newsletters will have articles related to fishing and ocean conservation that are fun and educational. Members of the club will be encouraged to write and submit articles for publication. Members will also get to participate in quarterly fishing clinics hosted by local Islamorada fishing captains who will teach fish identification, knot tying, cast net throwing and fish filleting, along with other great activities.

The greatest benefit, however, will be that all members of Robbies Junior Angler Club will fish on the Captain Michael party boat for FREE every Sunday (when accompanied by a parent or guardian - regular rates apply for adults). Kids will also fish FREE on scheduled days off during the regular school year, when accompanied by a parent or guardian.

It is the first few fishing experiences that will either hook kids for life, or send them running back to their play stations. Get them hooked, and you are raising your life-long fishing buddy. Show them a good time, and kids will put the outdoors on top of their list of preferred activities, which is not only good for them, but is also good for society and especially fishing. Kids are our future conservationists, our future activists for ensuring good fishing for years to come. Teach them well in the beginning, and our grandkids will thank you!

Memberships are \$25 and can be purchased online at www.robbyies.com or by calling Steve Carr (305) 664-8070. 🐟

Fishing Report

This report is brought to you by
James M. Simcic III
If you would like to learn more
please contact him by phone:
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Captain Hooks Marina
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James Simcic III Spearfishing



The skies parted, the sea flattened, and the ocean turned to gin! February 20, 2010 turned out to be an amazing day! Being on the ocean everyday has its advantages. You notice subtle changes in weather and current, among other things, that dictate what you fish for and what techniques to use. After fishing two days in a row with some family members I noticed exactly what depths were better for the Mangrove bite along with the Yellowtail and varying Mackerel species. So, with the day off, I called some buddies to go spearfishing. I rounded the crew up around 9:00 A.M. and slid westward out of Boot Key. With the rusty old bridge in the background, we paced ourselves to the hunting grounds. On board was Marathon's finest: Jeremy Foell and Alex Bell along with Big Pine staple, Steel Rocket. They are three of the most knowledgeable teenagers in the Keys when it comes to fishing. Being an older version

of these "Conchs" it gives me a big smile to have them on the boat with me for an old fashion slugfest underwater.

In and out from 20ft to 50ft we worked to the west. The boys had tons of Mangrove Snapper in the boat, so we wandered out a little deeper in search of some pelagics. We jumped in hoping to find some Amberjacks at the bridge rubble and they were there! Ten minutes later, Jeremy who is solely a free diver, boated one with ease. Helping him put his AJ to rest was Steel Rocket. It's hard to get Steel focused on anything else but he sure can put down some nice fish!

This week, be on the lookout for some nice Cobia mixed in with the Mangrove Snapper and Hogfish on the inshore patch reefs, but remember, no Grouper for a little while longer.

Grab your wetsuit and GO SHOOT DINNER!!! 



Fishing Report

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Capt. Richard Burson Key Largo Backcountry



The shallow patch reefs are where the action has been for the past few weeks and this week has been no exception. The majority of the action came from the many varieties of Groupers we were catching on the patches. My clients Bill and Betty Green were catching Gag Groupers, Black Groupers, Red Groupers, and the lesser known Nassau Grouper. We were lucky to come across the Nassau Grouper as there have been few caught since the early 80's. They were once the most caught species in the Southern Atlantic.

The Nassau Grouper has been commercially over fished for decades, therefore it is currently listed as "endangered" by the World Conservation Union (IUCN). As of 1991 all harvesting of the Nassau grouper is prohibited in the United States. To illustrate the concern scientists completed a count in 1994 at the Dry Tortugas, where Nassau

Groupers were once abundant. Sadly researchers reported seeing one roaming Nassau Grouper in the area. As a South Florida native who has been fishing these waters since I was in diapers, I have only seen two of these fish in the last three years and the second was just this past week. You can only imagine my delight when we reeled one to the boat. As the fish neared the boat, I had to take a double look, not believing my own eyes. As soon as the fish was within identifying range my immediate reaction was to get a closer look however, the law requires that Nassau Grouper are released and may not be removed from the water. We were able to release the fish using my de-hooker. This tool is a must for all fishermen! So as I said goodbye to my second Nassau Grouper I can only hope this will not be the last.

The Nassau Grouper habitat consists of offshore rocky bottoms and coral reef patches. They will range from 50 feet to 295 feet preferring to rest close to the sea floor.

Nassau Groupers are usually solitary creatures and when threatened the fish can easily camouflage itself by blending into the surrounding environment. The Nassau Grouper has a diet that consists mainly of fish, shrimps, crabs, lobsters, and octopuses. They will patiently wait in hiding until it pounces on its prey opening its mouth and engulf it hole.

So if you catch one of these remarkable fish be sure to abide the regulations so we are able to help this fish recover in time for other generations to enjoy. I am looking forward to seeing the Nassau Grouper recover from the brink of extinction. Regulations are not popular but I am sure that many of the species we enjoy catching each and every day would not be here now or for future generations if we did not have and abide by these regulations.

Until Next time ask yourself this one question . . .

Are you fishing yet? 

Fishing Report

Brought to you by
Captain Tom Aiuto . . .
You can reach him at:
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Capt. Tom Aiuto What's Hot – What's Not

The winds were averaging 5 to 15 knots last week, with water temps still below normal. Waters in the bay are averaging about 64 degrees and the offshore temps are between 68 and 72 degrees. There is plenty of live bait in our waters and fishing on a whole is pretty good. Sailfish are running hot and cold, but when you find them they will keep rods bent most of the day.

The King Mackerel are cooperating with fish between 10 and 15 lbs. The occasional Dolphin (Mahi – Mahi) is coming over the rail between 5 to 8 lbs., Cero Mackerel to 7 lbs., Amberjack to 8 lbs. and some nice size Cobia showed up to 35 lbs. The Reef has been holding its own with Yellowtail Snappers between 2 to 3 lbs., Mutton Snapper to 20 lbs., good numbers of Mangrove Snapper to 4 lbs. and Black Grouper to 20 lbs.



These fish were caught off of Marathon on the *Island Lure*. (L-R) Dave Banks, Capt. TJ Yzenas and Bill Wadika (both from Pennsylvania). Bill's larger Queen Snapper weighed 20.9 lbs. and Dave's AJ was 55.7 lbs. They also caught some respectable Blackfin Tuna.

Capt. Matt Bellinger from Bamboo Charters on the *Go Fish* reports that Spanish Mackerel fishing is in full swing. The Mackerel are all over the bay in large fast moving schools. Resort guests are having a blast fishing for these hard fighting, high flying acrobats using ultra-light spinning tackle or fly-fishing gear. Catches of as many as 25 Mackerel a day to 7 lbs. is not uncommon.

There is excellent Bluefish action as well with fish to 6 lbs. Pompano have made an appearance inhaling live shrimp to 3 lbs. There are decent numbers of Cobia also in the bay. Cobia will eat almost anything but live shrimp and pinfish are now doing the trick to 20 lbs. The Everglades is supplying red hot action with Spotted Trout and Black Drum on most days. Bonefish and Tarpon have not been cooperating. The waters are just too cold.

Tight Lines To All . . . 



This is a 164 lb swordfish, which was one of three caught with Capt. Nick Stanczyk.





▲ The sailfish was caught on a Rapala lure while fishing with Capt. Nick Stanczyk as they were trolling for Mackerel. ▼



Westley (Tampa) caught this 20 lb Black Fin Tuna while fishing with Capt. Daniel Zier on the *Second Nature* out of Key West. There were 4 Tuna and 8 Mutton Snapper caught (all over 15 lbs.). Both Tuna and Snapper were caught on live ballyhoo, using circle hooks in 190 ft. of water.



Claudio from NY, with two Muttons caught while fishing with Capt. Nick Borraccino.

Send your photos to: editor@weeklyfisherman.com – **Thanks!**
Please submit your photos with the highest “quality” setting. Photos from camera phones generally are not good enough, or steady enough (too blurry). Please do not Photoshop files.
Please remember to include “who, what, when & where” info!

Fishing Report

Capt. Steve Friedman fishes off of Islamorada using primarily fly and light tackle methods. If you would like to fish with Capt. Steve, call (305) 393-3474 or visit www.afishingguide.com steve@afishingguide.com

Capt. Steve Friedman Islamorada

Those of you just arriving to the Florida Keys may not be aware of some new fishing regulations that were issued in January of this year, or maybe you live here but aren't sure of the changes. Here is a reminder of what those new regulations mean, paraphrased from the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) website:

The harvest of Snook is prohibited until September 1, 2010, at the earliest. The harvest and possession of Bonefish and Tarpon is prohibited until April 1, 2010. However, "the FWC advises anglers that catch-and-release fishing for these important game fish species is still allowed."

Catch and release means leaving the fish in the water at all times. Respect the fishery, and enjoy the moment without getting your glory shot (for a while).

Now, let's talk about a fish in the backcountry that you can harvest: the Atlantic Tripletail.

As the bite in the Gulf of Mexico heats up along with the water temperature, you'll probably notice a lot of crab and lobster buoys in the area where you might be fishing for Mackerel. When moving from spot to spot, I like to slow the boat down and find a line of trap buoys to run in anticipation of spotting a tripletail near one of the floats. The tripletail, also known as a buoy fish, are attracted to the small crabs and shrimp that can collect in the sea grass and debris caught on the trap lines.

At first glance, the fish appears to be nothing more than grass or a floating plastic bag caught under the buoy. When you spot this, slow down and get a live shrimp ready to cast. When the fish is up close to the surface and the float, cast the shrimp on the up-current side of the float. Jig close to the surface, being careful not to let the hook get caught in the line. When the Tripletail spots the shrimp, you'll see it chase down the shrimp thinking it's an easy meal. This is also a great sight fishing endeavor with the fly rod. You can cast a shrimp pattern or clouser minnow to these odd looking fish and watch as they chase it down as aggressively as if it were a live shrimp.

Keep in mind that this fish is designated as a restricted species and there are certain limits enforced. As with all catches, it's important that you release most, if not all, of your fish caught that day. But if you want to keep one for dinner, here are a few of the rules you need to know.

With a valid saltwater license you may keep no more than two Tripletail from state waters per day that measure at least 15" overall. If you possess a valid saltwater products license with a restricted species endorsement, you can possess a limit of 10 Tripletail per day, per boat, not per commercial harvester on board.

As always, practice catch-and-release whenever possible and keep only what you might need for dinner. 



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FWC Acts to Protect Lemon Sharks . . .

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) approved a rule Thursday to prohibit all recreational and commercial harvest of lemon sharks from Florida waters. The FWC took this action to protect lemon sharks, because they have a high potential to be overharvested.

Lemon sharks are often found near shore in shallow water, especially in Southeast Florida, where they aggregate in large numbers each year. This makes them easy to locate and raises the potential for large numbers of lemon sharks to be removed from the population with minimal effort by fishermen.

Lemon sharks also are susceptible to overharvest because of their life history characteristics. They are slow-growing, reaching sexual maturity at 12-15 years of age, and have a low reproductive potential, producing 6 to 18 pups per litter every second or third year. Juvenile lemon sharks experience a mortality of 40-60 percent.

Recently, some preliminary data from an ongoing tagging study found that at least 7.5 percent of tagged adult lemon sharks from a Southeast Florida aggregation succumbed to fishing mortality in one season. At that rate, the entire lemon shark aggregation could be harvested in a few years.

In addition, recent regulatory actions for other shark species might put more fishing pressure on lemon sharks in Florida waters, where 90 percent of known lemon shark aggregations occur. The harvest of lemon sharks will still be allowed in offshore federal waters adjacent to state waters.

Healthy lemon shark populations are especially important to Florida's dive charter industry which provides ecotourism trips to see lemon shark aggregations in the winter months.

The FWC's lemon shark rule takes effect on March 23. More information about recent shark-management actions is available online at MyFWC.com/Rules, click on "Fishing – Saltwater."

FWC Proposes More Protection for Bonefish . . .

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) proposed draft rule amendments Thursday to provide more protection for bonefish, a premier saltwater game fish in Florida. "Bonefish are a tremendous Florida resource," said FWC Chairman Rodney Barreto. "These proposed rules will strengthen our management approach to protect and preserve bonefish so that anglers can continue to enjoy fishing for this great Florida game fish."

The proposed rules would include all species of bonefish in the FWC's bonefish management rules to help ensure that all bonefish in Florida waters are protected, extend FWC bonefish regulations into adjacent federal waters to aid enforcement and enhance bonefish protection, and require that bonefish be landed in whole condition to help officers in the field identify bonefish and aid in enforcement of bag and size limits.

Since 1988, it has been illegal to commercially harvest and sell bonefish in Florida, and a daily recreational bag limit of one bonefish 18 inches or greater in fork length applies.

However, there is a temporary harvest and possession prohibition on bonefish in Florida until April 1 as a precaution, because of possible impacts to fish populations that may have occurred from the recent prolonged cold weather in Florida. Anglers may still catch and release bonefish during the temporary closure, and the FWC encourages everyone to handle and release them carefully to help ensure their survival upon release.

A final public hearing on these proposed bonefish rule amendments will take place during the FWC's April meeting in the Tallahassee area.



Capt. Nick Borraccino and Owen Lau
with a 33 pound Cobia caught on the reef.



Stephen Dalton with a winter Bonefish caught while fishing with Capt. John Jackson on *Reel Easy Charters*, out of Hurricane Hole Marina - Key West.

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45mph, tops out 65mph. **Frank Piku (305) 509-1547****Jaguar 35' Catamaran**

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12 / 16

2005 Grady-White

Trailer Still Available: 2005 Road King Tri-axle Aluminum Trailer (in Key Largo) for 26'-30' boat. Great Shape. **\$3495.** Call (239) 263-6970.

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02 / 17

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Leon Shell Memorial Billfish Tournament – Hospice Florida Keys

Every March, enthusiastic anglers gather in the Middle Keys to share a passion for fishing, and more importantly, to raise money for an organization that may one day play a vital role in all of our lives: the Hospice and Visiting Nurses of the Florida Keys.

Since its inception in 1998, the Leon Shell Memorial Billfish Tournament has raised over \$125,000 for Hospice, including \$25,000 in 2009 alone. Additionally, each year the Leon Shell Tournament raises money for a Youth Division that awards academic scholarships to young anglers.

The non-profit Leon Shell Tournament and the wonderful donations made annually to Hospice, are made possible only with the support of the local citizens and businesses of the Florida Keys.

The Leon Shell Memorial Billfish Tournament, to be held March 5-7, is quickly becoming Marathon's premier sailfish tournament, with 20 boats competing in 2009 for a \$25,000 top cash prize.

With your help and support, we look to continue the success of the event and exceed last year's donation to Hospice and Visiting Nurses of the Florida Keys.

To become a sponsor, or register to compete in the tournament, please call the Key Colony Beach Marina at (305) 289-1310. For questions and additional information visit www.leonshelltournament.com, or email Drew Dinan at ddd@lonestaroh.com.

Thank you for your support!

Fishing Report

Captain Aaron Brower
 Holiday Isle Marina, Islamorada
www.killerwhite.com
 (305) 522-0374

Capt. Aaron Brower Islamorada Offshore



Hello fisherman! Well, the largest tournament of the year was this past week, The Poor Girls. I believe there were 53 boats entered and over 120 anglers. Wow, that's a lot of poor girls! Although every one is a winner in this event there can be only one first place team and that goes out to the Relentless with four releases. In second was Mondango with 3 releases, and in third was the Gold Digger with 3 releases as well. A big thanks goes to Sharon and her whole team for a successful tournament.

Obviously the Sailfish bite seems to be slowing down, but this doesn't mean they are not around. A lot more patience is required, but if you put in some hard work, you will find yourself a couple.

There is still a great bite of Kingfish offshore this week. Every boat I

talked with caught their limit on more than one occasion. When you do find a hot bite of Kings, it's a pretty cool experience. Every bait that hits the water gets attacked within seconds. Don't get frustrated if you seem to miss more than you catch, that's not uncommon with these guys. They strike your bait at great speed cutting the bait in pieces and there you are holding a rod on the other end hoping the piece they eat is the one with a hook in it.

We are starting to see a pretty consistent bite of large Amberjacks at the humps and on some of the deeper wrecks. There have been several Jacks caught in the 100lb range. So far I believe Capt. Easy might have the largest, at least in our area, weighing in at 128lbs. There is nothing I enjoy more than putting the biggest strongest guy on the boat in the fighting chair and hooking him into one of those beasts, which will humble him for sure. Better get out there and get them before the sharks show up in force eating your 60lb amberjack in one quick bite.

March is right around the corner and that means Muttons, those little pink devils sought after by most bottom fisherman. Mutton Snappers are probably one of my favorite bottom fish to target, definitely for their fight, but I also think for their bite. If you have experienced it you know what I am talking about.

So, here's to looking forward to March and keeping the rod bent . . . 



2ND ANNUAL 7 MILE MARINA MARATHON SHARKATHON SHARK TOURNAMENT OFFERS EXCITING FISHING AND \$25,000 PURSE

The 2nd Annual 7 Mile Marina Marathon Sharkathon, to benefit Forgotten Soldiers Outreach and Grace Jones Community Center, is set for Friday and Saturday, April 9 and 10, in Marathon, FL. This one-day, all release tournament boasts \$25,000 in cash awards.

This is a team tournament with points awarded based on the type of sharks caught and released. Qualifying species include mako, tiger, hammerhead, bull, black tip/spinner and lemon. The winning team with the most points will receive a grand prize of \$15,000 cash*. Cash prizes will be awarded for the second and third place teams as well.

The tournament will get underway with a mandatory Captains meeting and kick-off party on Friday, April 9 at 6:30 pm at Fat Buoyz Pub & Grill at the 7 Mile Marina (MM 47.5 Gulf side) in Marathon. The awards ceremony/banquet will feature live music plus raffle prizes and will take place at Fat Buoyz beginning at 6:30 pm on Saturday.

Fishing will run from 8 am until 3 pm Saturday. The use of non-offset circle hooks is mandatory. The killing of a shark, whether intentional or not, will result in automatic disqualification of the entire team.

The inaugural tournament in April 2009 saw more than 100 sharks caught and released. The \$5,000 top prize went to Team No Slack consisting of Capt. James "Bucko" Platt, Capt. BJ Meyer and Jamie Koval. They focused on bull sharks and their catch of 12 paid off for them. Team Carnada, with Capt. Chris Morrison and Henry Waszcuk, took second place with two bulls and ten black tips. The team was rewarded with a check for \$3,000. Third place and \$2,000 went to Team Bionic with Capt. Jack Callion, Buck Bielick, John Ryan and Pat

Lynch. They caught 12 black tips and 1 lemon.

Event organizers anticipate much greater participation this year. With more boats there is more competition, more sharks caught, more fun and more purse money! Registration begins immediately.

Entry fee is \$600 per boat, which covers the Captain and first two anglers. Each additional angler is \$100. There is an early entry fee of \$550 if received by April 1. The tournament organizers have waived a late fee this year, and registration can be performed until the evening of the Captain's meeting. The fee includes entry, three tickets for both the Captain's meeting kick-off party and the awards banquet and a tournament shirt for each captain and angler. Additional tickets can be purchased at each event.

The 7 Mile Marina Marathon Sharkathon, together with its sponsors, aims to provide an exhilarating fishing experience while benefiting charities that enhance the quality of life for Marathon's children and national charities showing support of US soldiers serving overseas, covering all world theaters. For more information and registration, contact Capt. Dan Rudacille at (305) 395-0546 or visit their website www.7MileMarina.net where a registration form can be downloaded.

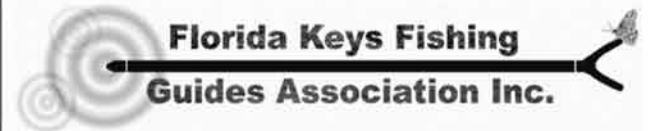
To find out about area accommodations, call the Greater Marathon Chamber of Commerce at (305) 743-5417 or (800) 262-7284, email visitus@floridaykeysmarathon.com, visit the Florida Keys and Key West website at www.fla-keys.com, or FloridaKeysVacationMagazine.com.

**Tournament reserves the right to adjust purse based on participation without notice.*

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KEY LARGO (Ocean Reef - 25.3100° N, 80.2800° W)

		High	Low	High	Low	High
Date	Day	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height
Feb 24	Wed	04:21 / 2.10 ft	10:27 / 0.28 ft	16:29 / 2.07 ft	22:56 / -0.50 ft	
Feb 25	Thu	05:23 / 2.27 ft	11:30 / -0.03 ft	17:37 / 2.28 ft	23:56 / -0.71 ft	
Feb 26	Fri	06:19 / 2.47 ft	12:26 / -0.40 ft	18:37 / 2.51 ft		
Feb 27	Sat		00:52 / -0.89 ft	07:11 / 2.64 ft	13:19 / -0.75 ft	19:31 / 2.71 ft
Feb 28	Sun		01:44 / -1.00 ft	07:58 / 2.76 ft	14:09 / -1.02 ft	20:23 / 2.85 ft
Mar 1	Mon		02:34 / -1.00 ft	08:45 / 2.81 ft	14:57 / -1.17 ft	21:13 / 2.89 ft
Mar 2	Tue		03:23 / -0.90 ft	09:30 / 2.78 ft	15:46 / -1.18 ft	22:02 / 2.84 ft
Mar 3	Wed		04:12 / -0.69 ft	10:16 / 2.68 ft	16:34 / -1.05 ft	22:50 / 2.70 ft

BIG PINE (Pine Channel - 24.6900° N, 81.3833° W)

		High	Low	High	Low	High
Date	Day	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height
Feb 24	Wed		01:55 / -0.13 ft	07:29 / 0.35 ft	12:40 / 0.16 ft	18:16 / 0.86 ft
Feb 25	Thu		02:54 / -0.15 ft	08:14 / 0.42 ft	13:56 / 0.10 ft	19:28 / 0.93 ft
Feb 26	Fri		03:42 / -0.17 ft	08:51 / 0.51 ft	15:02 / 0.03 ft	20:29 / 0.98 ft
Feb 27	Sat		04:23 / -0.16 ft	09:26 / 0.61 ft	16:02 / -0.05 ft	21:25 / 0.99 ft
Feb 28	Sun		05:01 / -0.14 ft	09:59 / 0.71 ft	16:58 / -0.13 ft	22:16 / 0.95 ft
Mar 1	Mon		05:38 / -0.10 ft	10:33 / 0.81 ft	17:52 / -0.18 ft	23:06 / 0.87 ft
Mar 2	Tue		06:13 / -0.06 ft	11:08 / 0.88 ft	18:46 / -0.21 ft	23:55 / 0.76 ft
Mar 3	Wed		06:48 / -0.01 ft	11:45 / 0.92 ft	19:40 / -0.20 ft	

ISLAMORADA (Whale Harbor - 24.9400° N, 80.6083° W)

		High	Low	High	Low	High
Date	Day	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height
Feb 24	Wed	04:36 / 1.34 ft	11:01 / 0.07 ft	16:44 / 1.32 ft	23:30 / -0.12 ft	
Feb 25	Thu	05:38 / 1.45 ft	12:04 / -0.01 ft	17:52 / 1.46 ft		
Feb 26	Fri		00:30 / -0.17 ft	06:34 / 1.57 ft	13:00 / -0.10 ft	18:52 / 1.60 ft
Feb 27	Sat		01:26 / -0.21 ft	07:26 / 1.68 ft	13:53 / -0.18 ft	19:46 / 1.73 ft
Feb 28	Sun		02:18 / -0.24 ft	08:13 / 1.76 ft	14:43 / -0.24 ft	20:38 / 1.81 ft
Mar 1	Mon		03:08 / -0.24 ft	09:00 / 1.79 ft	15:31 / -0.28 ft	21:28 / 1.84 ft
Mar 2	Tue		03:57 / -0.21 ft	09:45 / 1.77 ft	16:20 / -0.28 ft	22:17 / 1.81 ft
Mar 3	Wed		04:46 / -0.17 ft	10:31 / 1.71 ft	17:08 / -0.25 ft	23:05 / 1.72 ft

CUDJOE KEY (Pirates Cove - 24.6600° N, 81.4917° W)

		High	Low	High	Low	High
Date	Day	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height
Feb 24	Wed		00:44 / -0.21 ft	06:30 / 0.59 ft	11:29 / 0.27 ft	17:17 / 1.44 ft
Feb 25	Thu		01:43 / -0.26 ft	07:15 / 0.71 ft	12:45 / 0.18 ft	18:29 / 1.56 ft
Feb 26	Fri		02:31 / -0.28 ft	07:52 / 0.85 ft	13:51 / 0.05 ft	19:30 / 1.64 ft
Feb 27	Sat		03:12 / -0.27 ft	08:27 / 1.02 ft	14:51 / -0.09 ft	20:26 / 1.65 ft
Feb 28	Sun		03:50 / -0.23 ft	09:00 / 1.20 ft	15:47 / -0.22 ft	21:17 / 1.59 ft
Mar 1	Mon		04:27 / -0.17 ft	09:34 / 1.36 ft	16:41 / -0.31 ft	22:07 / 1.45 ft
Mar 2	Tue		05:02 / -0.10 ft	10:09 / 1.48 ft	17:35 / -0.36 ft	22:56 / 1.26 ft
Mar 3	Wed		05:37 / -0.02 ft	10:46 / 1.54 ft	18:29 / -0.35 ft	23:46 / 1.05 ft

MARATHON (Boot Key Harbor - 24.7067° N, 81.0967° W)

		High	Low	High	Low	High
Date	Day	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height
Feb 24	Wed	06:18 / 0.72 ft	10:04 / 0.49 ft	16:45 / 1.87 ft		
Feb 25	Thu		00:20 / -0.41 ft	07:00 / 0.86 ft	11:24 / 0.32 ft	18:01 / 1.96 ft
Feb 26	Fri		01:06 / -0.48 ft	07:34 / 1.04 ft	12:30 / 0.09 ft	19:05 / 2.02 ft
Feb 27	Sat		01:47 / -0.48 ft	08:07 / 1.27 ft	13:29 / -0.16 ft	20:02 / 2.02 ft
Feb 28	Sun		02:24 / -0.44 ft	08:40 / 1.50 ft	14:25 / -0.37 ft	20:55 / 1.93 ft
Mar 1	Mon		03:00 / -0.35 ft	09:13 / 1.72 ft	15:18 / -0.52 ft	21:45 / 1.76 ft
Mar 2	Tue		03:36 / -0.22 ft	09:48 / 1.89 ft	16:11 / -0.59 ft	22:33 / 1.55 ft
Mar 3	Wed		04:11 / -0.08 ft	10:24 / 1.99 ft	17:05 / -0.57 ft	23:20 / 1.31 ft

KEY WEST (Hawk Channel - 24.5450° N, 81.7833° W)

		High	Low	High	Low	High
Date	Day	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height	Time / Height
Feb 24	Wed	06:18 / 0.73 ft	10:16 / 0.38 ft	16:58 / 1.79 ft		
Feb 25	Thu		00:32 / -0.32 ft	07:01 / 0.87 ft	11:34 / 0.25 ft	18:11 / 1.90 ft
Feb 26	Fri		01:19 / -0.37 ft	07:38 / 1.04 ft	12:41 / 0.06 ft	19:14 / 1.96 ft
Feb 27	Sat		01:59 / -0.39 ft	08:12 / 1.25 ft	13:42 / -0.14 ft	20:09 / 1.96 ft
Feb 28	Sun		02:37 / -0.35 ft	08:46 / 1.47 ft	14:38 / -0.31 ft	21:01 / 1.87 ft
Mar 1	Mon		03:13 / -0.29 ft	09:20 / 1.67 ft	15:31 / -0.44 ft	21:51 / 1.72 ft
Mar 2	Tue		03:49 / -0.19 ft	09:55 / 1.82 ft	16:24 / -0.49 ft	22:40 / 1.51 ft
Mar 3	Wed		04:24 / -0.08 ft	10:31 / 1.91 ft	17:18 / -0.47 ft	23:29 / 1.28 ft

Moon Phases

Full: 02/28/10 • Last Quarter: 03/07/10
New: 03/15/10 • First Quarter: 03/23/10

Tide predictions may not be accurate. The Weekly Fisherman accepts no liabilities associated with any referenced use of the above-listed tidal information. Remember that weather conditions affect tidal ranges and current speeds, sometimes very strongly.

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.



BC-Back Country • LT-Light Tackle • FL-Flats • OFF-Offshore • GF-Gulf Fishing
WR-Wreck • OVN-Overnight • MD-Multi-Day • TP-Tarpon • FLY-Fly Fishing

Listings in this Directory are available for only \$299 / year (print and web).

Upper Keys	Key Largo to Islamorada
Captain / Charter	Contact Info
Capt. Greg Eklund Cloud Nine Charters	OFF / REEF / WR / FL (305) 360-7476 www.islamoradafishingtrips.com
Fin Razer Sportfishing	OFF / BC / REEF (305) 923-9293 captgreg@keyssportfishing.com
Key Largo Fishing Adventures	www.keyssportfishing.com
Capt. Timmy Arce Challenger Charters	BC / OFF / PACKAGES (305) 395-1691 www.challengercharters.com
Capt. Ron Allen Fish Tales Charters	(305) 664-0050 www.fishtalessportfishing.com
Capt. Jack Falcucci 50' Custom Ocean Sportfish	OFF / REEF (305) 393-0795
Capt. Ron Wagner	TP/LT/FLY/BC/FL/GF/REEF (305) 664-2028 fishwithcaptron@hotmail.com
Capt. Aaron Brower	OFF/REEF/WR (305) 522-0374 www.killerwhite.com
Capt. Steve Friedman	FL / BC / FLY (305) 393-3474 www.afishingguide.com
Capt. Richard Burson www.rufishingyet.com	BC/LT/FL/GF/TP/FLY (305) 360-3262 rufishingyet@yahoo.com
Capt. Scott Keller Bad Habit Charters	OFF / BC / WR / GF (305) 664-6678 captscott@badhabitfishingcharters.com
Capt. Z Hooked Up Charters	OFF / REEF / WR (305) 393-6931 hookedupgladius@aol.com
Capt. Joe Petrucco Killer Instinct 6	OFF / GULF / REEF / TP (305) 304-4580 joepetrucco@yahoo.com
Capt. Frank Drudi Chelsea Charters	OFF/REEF/WR (866) 431-2277 floridakeyscharterfishing@yahoo.com
Capt. Chris Barth The Hunter Charters	OFF/REEF (305) 797-6442 www.thehuntercharters.com
Capt. Tom Dudderar Dooda Charters	OFF/REEF (305) 664-4601 tdooda@aol.com

Middle Keys	Long Key to Marathon
Captain / Charter	Contact Info
Capt. Nick Borraccino	OFF / REEF / WR (508) 769-4189 www.noreastersportfishing.com
Capt. David Schugar Sweet e' Nuf Charters	OFF / REEF (305) 610-4778 www.sweetenufcharters.com

Lower Keys	Big Pine Key to Key West
Captain / Charter	Contact Info
Capt. Chris Lembo	OFF / REEF (305) 292-0067 incognitocharters@comcast.net
Capt. Andrew Tipler Last Cast Charters	BC / FL / OFF / REEF (305) 744-9796 www.lastcastcharters.com
Capt. Luke Kelly keyflat@mac.com	FL / FLY / LT / BC / TP (305) 304-3152 www.lowerkeysflatsfishing.com



TOURNAMENTS

We want to hear about your tournament!
Have it listed here for FREE by calling
Jess at (305) 852-FISH (3474), or via
e-mail: editor@weeklyfisherman.com.

Feb. 26-27: Backcountry Fly Championship. Islamorada. This new fly-fishing competition will target snook and redfish in that region of the Keys famous for them. Contact Charlotte Ambrogio at (305) 664-2444, e-mail csasun@aol.com or write P.O. Box 1063, Islamorada, FL 33036.

March 5-6: Backbone Lures “Fish ‘Til You Lose It.” Islamorada. Anglers compete to catch the finned denizens of the flats and backcountry, fishing with one lure or one fly until they lose it. Contact Paul Tejera by e-mailing captbackbone@gmail.com or visit backbonelures.com.

March 5-7: Captain Leon Shell Memorial Billfish Tournament. Key Colony Beach. Anglers pursue sailfish in honor of the late lure maker who made the Middle Florida Keys his home. The tournament benefits Hospice of the Florida Keys. Contact Terry Fisher at (305) 289-1310, e-mail kcbmarina@bellsouth.net, visit leonshelltournament.com or write to P.O. Box 510910, Key Colony Beach FL 33051-0910.

March 11-14: Florida Keys Survivor. Islamorada. In this backcountry elimination draw tournament, the winner is the sole survivor. Contact Sharon Mahoney Ellenwood at (305) 664-2012 or (305) 393-6174, or e-mail sharellen@netzero.net.

March 12-14: Key West Fishing Tournament Kick-Off. Targeting multiple species, this annual challenge starts a season-long tournament that awards certificates for outstanding catches and prizes in a host of categories. Contact Doris Harris at (305) 295-6601, e-mail director@keywestfishingtournament.com, visit keywestfishingtournament.com or write to P.O. Box 2154, Key West, FL 33045.

March 13 - Nov. 30: Key West Fishing Tournament, Inc. Key West & Lower Keys. This popular 8.5-month-long competition targets more than 40 species of fish. Contact Doris Harris at (305) 295-6601 or (800) 970-9056, e-mail director@keywestfishingtournament.com, visit keywestfishingtournament.com or write to P.O. Box 2154, Key West, FL 33045.

March 18-21: 45th Annual Ft. Lauderdale Billfish Tournament. Ft. Lauderdale. Contact: Nicole Metzger (954) 523-1004 or e-mail Nicole@billfishtournament.com, or visit www.fortlauderdalebillfish.com.



Fishing Report

Capt. Dave Schugar
of Sweet Enuf Charters
is located at Castaway's
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If you would like to fish
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Capt. Dave Schugar Marathon




Cold and blustery seems to be a theme this year. There has been cold water plaguing us here in Marathon. This was caused by the Gulf Stream shooting into the Gulf of Mexico and forcing out cold water, which inevitably was forced along the Keys and it was the reason why the Gulf Stream or warmer water was so far out this week. If you think of a bucket that has been filled to the top with cold water, then add a hose with warm water; the water leaving the bucket first will be cold and then a mix of warm and cold water. This is what we are going to experience this coming week. There will be very large spikes of warm water all along the Keys. By heading either east or west, you will find the warm water when heading out offshore. Listening to the weather report by NOAA you will be able to find out if your home port is in the vicinity of the Gulf Stream. If it isn't, you will either travel far offshore, or up and down the road where the current and warmer water comes closer to shore. Fishing in the cold water is a waste of time and money. Find the warm water and you find the fish.

Offshore has been awfully bleak. There has been a few Dolphin around the edge of the warm and cold water. Off of Marathon this week it was 30 miles out and further, but there is warm water heading our way for the rest of the week. The Gulf Stream ought to be no more than ten miles from shore if not closer. This warm water will only be here for two to five days before another body of cold water from the Gulf of Mexico is pushed around Key West and then up the Straits of Florida. Most people think we are fishing the Atlantic Ocean, but in fact we are not in the Atlantic but the Florida Straits.

The reef has been fair with some Yellowtail biting even though there hasn't been any current in three weeks. The water has been dirty green and cold, not a great combo for normally a warm water, cold blooded animal. The Yellowtails are there and schooling in the chum, but they are not motivated to eat. I fished for Yellowtails once this week and we got our limit but it took a while. The Grouper action is hot just about

everywhere. From 20 feet of water to 160 feet the Black Grouper have been on a rampage, eating most baits. It is too bad we can't even keep one a day. A few Muttons have been taken on the reef from what my friends have told me, but we didn't see any. The Kingfish are pretty much all over the place; they seem to be digging the cold water. Cobias have been spotted in great number on the ocean side following rays and turtles. I wish I were out there to see it, I was told it was pretty impressive, with many fish in the 50-pound class and bigger.

Sailfishing was a bit bleak in Marathon, but if you traveled 20 miles east or west the bite was decent. There has been cleaner and warmer water in these areas, which have been teeming with Sails and Dolphin. Set up on the edge of the reef from 80-130 feet for the Sails. Many multiple hook ups are possible and don't forget about the Wahoo, because they are still around too. My buddy John Foster got a fifty pounder this week. By using a little wire on your Sailfish rig you can capture some of the toothy critters, which are in the same areas as the Sails. Six inches of number four or five wire will work just fine and the Sailfish won't even know it was there, especially if your using ballyhoo.

Check the weather reports and fish in areas that look like they might be warmer, don't just choose an area out of a hat, and be precise with your rigging. By using all the tools and information available, a fisherman can be very productive these days, but when you fish blind sometime you get lucky and sometimes fall down. So use everything at your disposal from the internet to the electronics on your boat, and be safe! 



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This fish weighed 118 lbs! Mark Hancock and Milo Dearean (Durango, CO) were fishing on Capt. Z's boat.




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