

GOFC Inshore Report

By: **Richard (Bite Me!) Davidson**

& **Capt. Tommy Thompson**

On a recent winter day, fishing at Steinhatchee, the co-authors of this celebrated column had a near-mystical revelation:

Sometimes winter inshore fishing is so bad that the best thing to do is beg an offshore trip from another club member .

We tried ever trick we knew. The tide was OK, the weather warm and sunny. We'd had a recent cold snap, so the trout should have moved into the river. We used FishBites. We used live shrimp. We threw plugs, both topwater and slow-sinkers. We fished the flats, the bars AND the deep cuts. Rick even fished a DOA Terror-Eyz jig. We saw trout in the shallows, but couldn't get them to eat. Tommy almost giggered a baby flounder with the pushpole just to get some meat in the boat.

So...what did we do? What any normal inshore anglers would do under the same circumstances--we went to Roy's and ate fried seafood! The take-home message for inshore fishermen? Expand your group of friends. Listen intently to what Tommy Hines, Dave Abril, Charlie Courtney, Richard McDavid, Wiley Horton, and Brian Kiel have to say, even if it's boring as hell. These guys can be the key to a decent winter. At the very least, they can get you some sheepshead over a few months' time.

That failed trip aside, winter fishing so far has really not been that bad. In fact we had a report from Denny Smith that he and his party got some nice keeper reds and bunches of smaller fish on the same day that Rick and I 'struck out' at Steinhatchee. Of course, he's keeping his spot a big secret!

The Crystal River/Yankeetown area has been producing pretty nice catches of trout at the Florida Power hot water discharge. It's crowded there—Bernie Fowler, Brian Kiel and Tommy T. found 5 boats there the other morning at 7:30AM on a very cold day. They managed limits of trout and lots of yellowtail jack action. Tommy Hines and T.T. fished another day there and caught some small reds along with jacks, and we, Rick and Tommy, did well on big jacks another time. We urge you to get there early, preferably after a long, hard freeze, and to fish live shrimp on jig heads very slowly on the bottom. There were 31 boats in the canal on the day after Christmas at 9 AM! Capt. Ed of Yankeetown Marina also reports good catches of reds north of the Withlatchoochee, mostly in the potholes in the very shallow areas of Low's Bay. Remember, don't try this in anything but a jet drive or an airboat.

As for Cedar Key, we've not had much word, but assume the reds are in the deeper sloughs and potholes up towards Shell Mound and down towards Corrigan's Reef. Tommy Hines has been doing some night-time giggering of mullet and has seen lots of redfish, so I assume they're waiting to be had on rod-and-reel during the daylight hours.

Billy Miller at Miller's Marina in Suwannee reports good catches of reds in the river and in East Pass caught by trolling large plugs. Good catches of trout are reported in Salt Creek, but it's not been really cold enough to drive them into Dan May Creek or into Barnett Creek. Bernie Fowler and Tommy T. gave it a try before Christmas and got only one (a 20-incher) keeper trout in Salt Creek. They caught several smaller fish in Dan

May and Salt Creek on sinking Mirrolures and the keeper on a DOA Terror-Eyz (what else?).

As for Steinhatchee....??? The flats are beautiful this time of year...clear water...but with the water temperature below 50, there will not likely be any trout to be had on them. The river situations in all the big rivers has been very inconsistent. Rick actually caught one 20 inch trout in the river in late November after a mild cold snap, along with a big sand trout. However, the next week, with colder temperatures, brought nothing. For several days in early December there were good catches at Steinhatchee all the way up to the Suicide Hole, which is in front of West Wind Marina. It is almost random. The best bet as far as the rivers are concerned, is a really good cold snap that lasts for 2 days or so; the fish WILL move into the river and eagerly await your shrimp and Mirrolures. Just watch the weather, get out your long johns and hot coffee thermos, and go get 'em!