

INSHORE FISHING REPORT

September 2003

Capt. Tommy Thompson

I can't believe it! I stepped overboard the other day on a wade-fishing trip and the water actually felt cool. I'm not sure if that was due to rainwater or the approach of the fall fishing season, however.

As we approach the first of October, the summertime doldrums should be ending. It's been an interesting summer with lots of rain and brown water ranging from Crystal River to Steinhatchee. Scalping was good, but not great. Redfish were abundant, but only in very shallow water, and trout fishing was just 'OK.' There were some interesting catches. Pat Curry got a nice snook (and I lost one!) at the spoil banks near Crystal River and Sidney Hazen got a really big flounder in 50' of water while fishing with Tommy Hines. All in all, it just wasn't a very good summer for inshore fishing.

It's always difficult to predict early fall fishing on the Big Bend. As I'm writing this article (on Labor Day) there is a tropical storm about to hit Texas, a Category 3 hurricane (Fabian) heading westward from the mid-Atlantic and another big storm right behind it. If we get a hurricane, we get more rain. If not, maybe the rains will end and the water will clear up again. That's the key to this fall's inshore fishing on the Big Bend.

I'm going to be optimistic and assume that the water will clear substantially by the first of October and make some suggestions:

- First, fish the close-in flats, island edges, and grassy points early in the morning on rising tides. Using Chug Bugs, Catch 2000 Mirrolures, Slapsticks and SkitterWalks, you'll likely get some reds and have a chance at some big (Daniel Basta Big) trout. Remember to be as quiet as you can. Trolling motors are good, poling is better, but wading is best. Those of you who fly fish should see the action pick up as the water cools and clears.
- Second, move to deeper water as the tide falls and fish for trout and Spanish mackerel on the flats. Look for areas of 'mixed' bottom and as always, look for signs of baitfish (birds!). You'll want to troll these areas (for Spanish), or chum heavily while fishing shrimp (or fake shrimp) under Cajun Thunder corks for both species.
- Finally, on that falling tide, when you're moving from the inshore shallows towards the flats, try hooking up with some flounder on the sandy ends of offshore bars. I like to slowly work (almost drag) a root beer colored DOA TerrorEyz jig over these areas in the early fall. Those of you live bait 'purists' might want to use a mud minnow on a jig head.

Eventually, we will have a great fall fishing season. To make the most of it, you'll need to keep an eye on the tides, the weather, the water color and salinity and fish when everything is just right. Looking ahead into October, I think the best tides will be during the weekend of the 11 th and the 25 th (GOFC Fall Tournament Day!), as there will be mid-morning strong lows with fairly substantial highs in the afternoons. The October 4 th weekend will be OK, but there won't be much tidal flow until late in the day. I'd stay home and mow the lawn on the 18 th as the tides won't be moving much at all!

As always, these opinions are mine, and are most likely suspect. Your Inshore Report columnists (Rick

Davidson and I) would love to hear from you if you have an inshore catch to report or if you've proved our predictions wrong.

Boat safely, use sunscreen, don't drink and drive...and remember...'plastics.'

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