

Inshore Fishing Report, Yuck-uary (February) 2004

Well, it's the 5th, and I'm bored already. The weather hasn't been bad, just cold enough to keep the inshore water temperature below 50, but the winds have been non-stop. I've washed the boat, greased up and re-spoiled all my reels, and have even contemplated vacuuming out my truck. Trout fishing is closed for the month and no one, including myself, wants to go out for a day of fishing only to come back with just one redfish per person.

So, how about some February options.

Those of you lucky enough to hear Joey Landreneau speak at our January meeting hopefully came away with some ideas that will help your fishing during the better months. Joey's approach to researching fishing areas, both new and old, using photos, maps and charts is as good a place as any to spend some cold weather downtime.

Taking the idea of using bad fishing times to prepare for better ones one step further, you might consider getting the boat into the water and running around looking for good potential spots. Sure, it's likely to be windy and wet if you fish from a flats skiff like I do, but there are tons of great creek mouths and river estuaries in the Big Bend that need exploring. Just put on your rainsuit (Have you tried Froggtoggs?) and hit the water. Take a thermos of coffee instead of cold drinks, and plan to be out in the warmer part of the day. Just because trout are out of season for this short month, there's no rule about seeing them. Pole or use your trolling motor to carefully approach oyster and shell bars on the rising tide. You'll spook fish now, but next month you'll know where they are. Pole the boat over deeper holes, too, and see what runs out. This is a good time to learn just how much the sound of banging cooler lids and hatch covers affects close-in fish!

If you'd like to fish for trout, it's not illegal to just fish, but please heed John Patrick's advice to be very careful with trout during the off-season. The reason these fish are off-limits is that this is a breeding month. Don't jerk the fish out of the water and let them flop on the deck. Don't grab them and rub all that insulating slime off on your hands or a rag. Don't let them dry out. Use a fish gripper device and keep the fish in the water while you unhook them. Another bit of great advice from John is to mash down the barbs on your hooks. Sure, you won't get all of the fish to the boat, but who's counting in February?

In conclusion, do your trout research, but don't neglect those pesky redfish. On a scouting trip for trout, you'll likely see plenty of reds, and might even have the opportunity to cast at them from a short distance while quietly poling or motoring. If you get into them they'll provide a great day of action (even if you can keep only one) and a nice dinner-for-two, to boot!