

10,000 good reasons

Too many fishing opportunities to count around among the lower Gulf islands.

CHOKOLOSKEE ISLAND • The arrival of September means great fishing for snook to most of the anglers who flock to the Ten Thousand Islands after the season opens. But to Capt. Brian Sanders, it means so much more.

"I love this time of year," Sanders said, "because there are so many different species you can catch."

Snook are certainly at the top of his list, but so are redfish, which can be caught in good numbers, as well as big permit, which can be caught not too far offshore in the Gulf of Mexico. Then there are cobia, tarpon, jacks and a variety of sharks.

STEVE WATERS ON OUTDOORS

For Sanders, of Davie, the quality of the fishing and quantity of the fish take him back to when he was a child just getting into the sport.

"I used to do this when I was 3 years old fishing with my grandfather and my father and his three brothers," Sanders said during a trip last week with me and Arnie Sedel of Lighthouse Point. "We'd catch redfish till we ran out of bait."

Soon after leaving the boat ramp at Chokoloskee Island Park, Sanders stopped near an island where schools of finger mullet dimpled the water's surface. He readied his cast net, then waited until the bait approached his 21-foot Ranger bay boat.

It took only a few throws of the net to stock the boat's baitwell with mullet. Then Sanders was off to a mangrove island that had produced a bunch of redfish the day before.

Sanders anchored his boat about 50 yards from the island and instructed us to cast a finger mullet toward the point of the island, where the falling tide coming out of an adjacent bay would carry a smorgasbord of bait to the gamefish lurking in front of the island.

Our initial casts produced plenty of hits, but only a couple of redfish. The bulk of our catch consisted of jacks and cattiefish.

The problem, Sanders said, was that the tide was not quite right and the redfish had not yet crowded into the spot. We needed more water to come out of the bay to force the reds to leave. Until then, we would fish a different spot where Sanders thought the redfish might be more cooperative.

They were, although Sanders said the fishing wasn't as good as it had been during his past few trips. But I was impressed when Sedel and



GULF ATTRACTIONS: Arnie Sedel, left, shows off a 32-inch snook and Capt. Brian Sanders displays a keeper redfish that both ate live finger mullet fished around a mangrove island in the Ten Thousand Islands. **Staff photo/Steve Waters**

Sanders — we insisted that he fish, too — each caught a keeper redfish.

Sanders and Sedel also had some excitement when each of them had to pull a redfish away from a hungry bull shark that chased the reds all the way to the boat. Then something thumped Sedel's finger mullet, and after a spirited battle on 10-pound spinning tackle, he landed a 32-inch snook, which was photographed and carefully released.

With our bait supply dwindling, Sanders returned to where he had caught bait earlier that morning. The finger mullet were still there, and with two throws of his cast net Sanders had all the bait we needed.

He went back to the first island we'd fished, and this time conditions were perfect. The redfish attacked our baits and we caught them cast after cast after cast.

Sanders would toss out a finger mullet and hand me the rod, then remove a redfish from Sedel's line, release it and get Sedel a fresh bait. He'd hook another finger mullet on a third outfit, cast it out and put the rod in the rod-holder. By then I would have a redfish at the side of the boat, which Sanders would unhook and release.

While he did that, he would tell me to pick up the rod in the rod-holder, which would be doubled over with yet another redfish. Then Sedel would land a redfish, and the whole routine would repeat itself.

Sedel figured we released at least 20 redfish in that span, all of them keeper-sized, which was the type of fishing Sanders had been talking about.

The key was all in the timing and in the captain's intimate knowledge of the area.

"With the tide falling and the fish coming out of the bay, that's the first deep area they come to," Sanders said, gesturing toward the water just in front of the island. "It's a holding area for them and a place where they can ambush bait. The bait funnels through the oyster bars off the shoreline.

"Wherever you have water flow and good bottom such as oyster bars or good grassy bottom or a combination of the two is a place where fish could ambush some bait."

To find places like that, you need to spend time on the water and pay attention.

"I would say 95 percent of fishing in general is memory," Sanders said. "If a spot works, there's a reason it works, so try to duplicate it and find spots that are similar."

That spot worked so well that as noon approached, we were ready to try something else. Sanders suggested permit, which travel in large schools around wrecks in the Gulf. The fish are one of Sedel's favorites.

"They're so strong," Sedel said. "And they fight. They don't want to give up too easily."

Sedel proved to be pretty tough, too. Our prospects didn't look so hot when Sanders arrived at a wreck whose coordinates he had in his GPS. We scanned the surface of the water for a glimpse of a permit dorsal fin or the disturbance caused by a fish swimming just under the surface against the current, but there was nothing to see.

Sanders started his boat's engine to run to a wreck farther offshore. When the 225-horsepower Mercury outboard came to life, it spooked a school of permit to the surface. All three of us could see the dark shapes of the fish as they swam away from the

boat.

With patience and a little luck, Sanders thought we might be able to get in front of the fish after they'd calmed down and cast a live crab to them. The fish didn't want to have anything to do with us at first, but they finally came close enough for Sedel to reach them, and he hooked up instantly with a 20-pounder.

After he landed and released that fish, there were several schools milling around the wreck. Sanders slowly idled over toward a group that was swimming our way. The school zigged right, then zagged left, but we were perfectly positioned.

Sedel cast and had a fish immediately start pulling drag. Then Sanders cast and told me to cast to the right of the school. He connected as my crab touched down, then I hooked a permit to give us a tripleheader.

Although all three fish came together, we managed to avoid tangling our lines. Each of us had to walk around the boat several times to keep up with our fish.

After about 10 minutes, Sedel landed his 15-pounder, so Sanders handed him his fishing rod. Ten minutes after that, I got my 20-pounder to the boat. It was another 10 minutes before a nearly dehydrated Sedel landed the permit, which bottomed out a 30-pound hand-held scale and sent us back to the boat ramp feeling exhausted, yet exhilarated.

For information on fishing with Capt. Brian Sanders, call 954-802-0868.

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NOTEBOOK



Hunting halted:

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has indefinitely halted all hunting and other public access at

South Florida wildlife management areas because of Hurricane Frances. The areas include Crew, DuPuis, Jones/Hungryland, Southern Glades, Big Cypress, Dinner Island, Everglades, Fisheating Creek, Holey Land, Rotenberger, Corbett and Spirit of the Wild. Visit www.myfwc.com for details.

The FWC also has postponed two public workshops on the management of dolphin and wahoo. The workshops were scheduled for Tuesday at the Key Largo Library in Key Largo and Wednesday at the IGFA Fishing Hall of Fame & Museum in Dania Beach. They will be rescheduled at a later date.

Tournaments rescheduled: The inaugural "Never Forgotten" Sports Classic, a tournament for billfish, kingfish, tuna and dolphin out of John U. Lloyd State Recreation Area in Dania Beach, has been rescheduled from Monday to Sept. 19 because of Hurricane Frances.

Touched By Fire Angels is running the tournament to raise money for children affected by the New York City and Oklahoma City terrorist attacks. Entry fee is \$200 per boat. The top team wins \$2,500. Call **George Martos** at 954-491-0237 or visit www.touchedbyfireangels.com.

The *Strictly Snook from Florida* radio show's Bridge/Shore Snook Tournament that was supposed to be today and Saturday has been rescheduled for Sept. 11-12. Entry fee is \$25 per angler. No boats are allowed. Entry forms are available online at <http://strictlysnookfromflorida.com> and at area tackle stores and fishing piers. Prizes include guided fishing trips, tackle and an appearance on the show, which is scheduled to air at 7 a.m. Saturday on ESPN Radio 790-AM. Saturday's show features **Tommy Greene** of Custom Rod and Reel in Lighthouse Point, **Mark Sosin** of Boca Raton, host of *Mark Sosin's Saltwater Journal* on The Outdoor Channel and Sunshine Network and FWC fisheries biologist **Ron Taylor**.

Tournaments postponed: Hurricane Frances has caused the postponement of the South Florida Bass Club's inaugural Ironman Open, which was scheduled for today from 7 p.m.-2 a.m. out of Everglades Holiday Park and for Saturday from safe light-3 p.m. on Lake Okeechobee out of Belle Glade. The new dates have not been determined.

Frances also postponed the Oh Boy! Oberto Redfish Cup that was scheduled to begin today in Titusville. Redfish Cup officials won't determine where and when the championship tournament will be held until after Frances has passed.

Wolfe honored: **Bud Wolfe**, a former range officer at the Markham Park Target Range in Sunrise and a world and national champion in sporting clays, will be inducted into the National Sporting Clays Association Hall of Fame on Thursday in San Antonio.

Wolfe, 76, will be honored for his "far-reaching contributions to the growth and stature of the NSCA." In addition to his many titles, Wolfe designed Markham Park's 12-station sporting clays course.

Junior tournament: The IGFA Junior Angler Tournament for anglers under 17 is Sept. 11 out of the I.T. Parker Community Center in Dania Beach. Entry fee is \$25, which includes lunch. Call 954-927-2628 or send e-mail to jhwellett@igfa.org.

Fishing show: A Florida Sportsman Fishing Show is Sept. 11-12 at the Miami-Dade County Fair & Exposition, 10901 Coral Way, Miami. Show hours are 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sept. 11 and 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sept. 12. Admission is \$7 for adults, free for children 12 and under accompanied by a parent. Discount coupons are available in *Florida Sportsman* magazine and at www.floridasportsman.com.

The show features seminars, demonstrations, boats, marine accessories and a huge indoor tackle sale. The Riggerin It Right Academy will teach attendees how to rig offshore and inshore baits such as ballyhoo, sardines and shrimp. You can also get instruction in tying knots, throwing a cast net and casting a fly rod. Youth events include an indoor spincast pond where kids learn casting techniques and receive a Zebco tackle box.

Bass tournament: The second Florida Bass Foundation Fall Classic Charity Fishing Tournament is Sept. 12 out of the Lox Road boat ramps at Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge.

Entry fee is \$500 per boat, and the field is limited to 20 boats. First place pays \$3,000, second pays \$1,500 and third pays \$500. Proceeds will help fund education and conservation programs.

Register online at www.flbass.org. A few tackle stores will have a limited number of entry forms. Call 561-883-1361.

Swordfish seminar: Capt. **Ray Roshner** of Miami will present a free swordfishing seminar at 7 p.m. Sept. 23 at the Jupiter Community Center, 210 Military Trail, Jupiter. Call 561-743-7335 to reserve a seat.

Redfish tour: FLW Outdoors, which runs the Wal-Mart FLW Tour bass tournament trail, the EverStart Series bass trail, the Wal-Mart Bass Fishing League and a walleye trail, announced that it plans to add a redfish tournament series to its 2005 professional fishing lineup.

The Wal-Mart FLW Redfish Series will feature a \$1.9 million cash purse and consist of two divisions — East and West — with four two-day team events apiece. Each tournament will have a \$200,000 prize purse, with the top team winning \$25,000 and an opportunity to win an additional \$25,000 in bonuses for owning a Ranger boat with a Yamaha outboard motor. The top 50 teams from each division will advance to the \$300,000 Wal-Mart FLW Redfish Series Championship, which can pay as much as \$100,000 to the winners. The schedule will be announced later this year.

FWC award-winners: Public information coordinators with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission won three international awards at the annual Association for Conservation Information conference in New Orleans. In the Print News category, former South Region public information coordinator **Jim Huffstodt** of Tallahassee won first place for a news release about a man who rescued his nephew from the jaws of an alligator. **Bill Greer**, also of Tallahassee, won first place in the Video Public Service Announcement category for a public service announcement promoting Florida as the Fishing Capital of the World.

Similar methods bring diverse results

BY STEVE WATERS
STAFF WRITER

CHOKOLOSKEE ISLAND • Despite the variety of the species his customers catch in the Ten Thousand Islands, Capt. Brian Sanders makes only slight modifications to his tackle.

He uses 7- and 7½-foot medium-heavy Hurricane Redbone spinning rods paired with an assortment of reels spooled with 10-pound Power Pro braided line, which has the diameter of 2-pound monofilament,

allowing baits and lures to be cast a good distance.

When he is fishing inshore for snook and redfish, Sanders uses 40-pound Momoi fluorocarbon leader. When he heads offshore for permit, he ties on 25-pound Momoi fluorocarbon.

His inshore rigs have a small egg sinker above the hook, which helps keep a live bait close to bottom. Whether fishing inshore or offshore, Sanders completes the rig with a 3/0 or 4/0 circle hook.

HANDFUL: Capt. Brian Sanders hefts a permit that bottomed out a 30-pound scale that he and Arnie Sedel teamed up to land. **Staff photo/Steve Waters**

FISHING

Anglers should flourish after storm

BY STEVE WATERS
STAFF WRITER

With Hurricane Frances bearing down on Florida, few anglers will be fishing today and Saturday.

After the storm passes, those who escaped without major damage to their families or their homes should find some very good offshore fishing.

The path that Frances took through the Bahamas should mean plenty of floating debris in local waters, which should attract dolphin and wahoo.

That was the case in the Keys last month after

Hurricane Charley hit Florida. Anglers in the Mercury/SeaVee Pompano Beach Saltwater Showdown, which was the day after Charley struck, caught lots of big kingfish from Boca Raton to Stuart. And reef species such as snapper and grouper typically bite well after a major storm.

If Frances dumps a lot of rain on South Florida, snook anglers should find excellent fishing at area spillways. As excess fresh water is released into saltwater canals that lead to the Intracoastal Waterway,

snook wait at the spillways to gorge on bluegills, shad and shiners that get swept through the spillway. Live bait and lures imitating baitfish will do the trick.

Fresh water that pours into Florida Bay and the Ten Thousand Islands will likely turn off the snook bite in the backcountry. If you can find salty water — look around the outside islands and flats in front of Flamingo — then you should be able to hook a snook, as well as redfish and sea trout.

Fishing from piers for snook and snapper can be good, provided the piers are

open. Past storms have damaged area piers and forced them to close until they were repaired.

Finding clean water will be the key to catching bass at Lake Okeechobee. If the rain and wind brought by Frances really dirties the Big O, it could be a while before the fish start biting.

Rising water levels in the Everglades have bass widely scattered, so Frances should allow the fish to roam even farther on the flats. If water levels really jump up, then boaters will be able to go anywhere on the flats and look for fish.

CALENDAR



Sept. 11: Start of Fort Lauderdale Power Squadron's eight-hour American Boating Course, 9 a.m., 2029 SW 20th St., Fort Lauderdale. Register by Wednesday by calling Ken Harding at 954-525-8937 or visit www.flpowersquadron.org.

Sept. 11-Oct. 10: Archery season, South Zone.

Sept. 17: Night Owls bass tournament, 7 p.m.-2 a.m., Everglades Holiday Park, \$70 per boat. Call Luke Campbell at 954-931-7366.

Sept. 22: West Palm Beach Fishing Club meeting, 7 p.m., 201 Fifth St., West Palm Beach. Commercial hook-and-line fisherman Ben Hartig discusses local bottom-fishing techniques for mutton, yellowtail and other snappers. Call 561-832-6780.

Sept. 25-Oct. 24: Archery season, Central Zone.

Oct. 8-10: Eighth annual SBI Deerfield Beach Super Boat National Championship.

Oct. 28-Nov. 1: Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show, Fort Lauderdale. Call 954-764-7642 or visit www.showmanagement.com.

Nov. 1-Dec. 31: Sea trout season closed, South Florida.

Nov. 19-21: 38th annual Fort Lauderdale Billfish Tournament, Las Olas City Marina. Visit www.billfishtournament.com or call 954-523-1004.

Nov. 18-20: Citgo Bassmaster Open tournament, Lake Okeechobee out of Okeechobee. Visit www.bassmaster.com.