

Fishing Trends

LAKE OKEECHOBEE

With the status of Hurricane Wilma uncertain, the prospects for fishing are equally uncertain. Those who fish before the storm arrives should find schooling bass feeding heavily at the south end of the lake and biting topwater lures, jerkbaits and lipless crankbaits. Flipping Gambler Ugly Otters has produced several tournament-winning stringers. The lake level was 15.55 feet.

FRESHWATER/EVERGLADES

Some small bass were biting plastic frog baits and buzzbaits in the vegetation lining the canals along Alligator Alley. Good numbers of bass up to 5 pounds were biting plastic stick worms along the edges of the canals north of Lake Ida.

FLORIDA BAY/10,000 ISLANDS

Capt. Brian Sanders guided Mason Moyer, who turns 7 today, and his father, Harry, to a bunch of redfish, a few snook, plus ladyfish, a flounder and jacks Thursday fishing out of Chokoloskee Island. "There's a lot of bait around," said Sanders, who added that they started to feel some of the outer feeder bands of Wilma on Thursday.

GOLD COAST OFFSHORE

Reports have been sketchy, as most anglers have been getting ready for Wilma. Capt. Al Sitnick of *Suddenly* found kingfish on the bottom in 300 feet south of Boynton Beach Inlet on Thursday afternoon. He and Andy Alvarez caught their limit of kings 5-10 pounds, lost a 15-pound dolphin and boated a nice yellowtail snapper in 80 feet. Kingfish also were biting from Lake Worth Inlet to the Hobe Sound Loran Tower in 90 feet.

PIERS

Juno Beach Pier had bluefish and Spanish mackerel. Deerfield Pier had some blue runners. Pompano Pier had lots of bluefish, mackerel, pompano, snapper and a couple of cobia earlier in the week. Anglin's Pier had lots of bluefish, a few nice-size snapper and lots of small pompano Thursday.

THE KEYS

"Not a soul is fishing," said Richard Stanczyk of Bud N' Mary's Marina in Islamorada, where charter boats were leaving in preparation for Wilma's arrival. Before Wilma became a threat, anglers were catching yellowtail, mangrove and mutton snapper on the reefs, blackfin tuna on the humps and dolphin 12-16 miles offshore.

— STEVE WATERS

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Steve Waters' recent stories, fishing reports, outdoors calendar, coastal marine forecasts and current radar can be found online at www.sun-sentinel.com/sports/outdoors

Calendar

Saturday: *Strictly Florida Fishing*, 6-8 a.m., 790 The Ticket (WAXY-AM), with Tim Mullin and Todd Kersey.
Saturday: *Florida Sportsman Magazine Radio Show*, 7 a.m., WKAT 1360-AM, with hosts Alan Sherman and Rick Berry.

Saturday: Fort Lauderdale Power Squadron GPS Course, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., 2029 SW 20th St. Registration 8:30 a.m. Cost \$50, includes lunch. Visit www.flpowersquadron.org or call 954-523-3577.

Saturday: South Florida Junior Bass Fishing Classic, C.B. Smith Park, Pembroke Pines. Call tournament director Gary Waingrow at 954-914-5827.

Tuesday: Boynton Inlet Fishing Club meeting, 7 p.m., Boynton Boat Ramp Park, Boynton Beach. Professor Ray Waldner will discuss dolphin and answer questions about their feeding habits, migration, fishing tactics and tackle. Free pizza and beverages will be served. Call Capt. Al Sitnick at 561-414-8004.

Tuesday: IGFA Hall of Fame induction of Stu Apte, Johnny Morris, George Parker, Don Tyson and Edward vom Hofe.

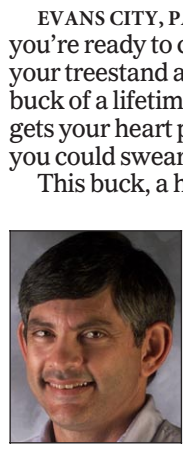
Wednesday: West Palm Beach Fishing Club meeting, 7 p.m., 201 Fifth St. Capt. Jon Tucker shares smoker kingfish tips. Call 561-832-6780 or visit www.westpalmbeachfishingclub.org

Thursday-Oct. 29: Bassmaster Southern Open, Lake Toho out of Kissimmee. Visit www.bassmaster.com.

Thursday-Oct. 31: 46th Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show. Call 954-764-7642 or visit www.showmanagement.com.

Nov. 11-13: 40th annual Fort Lauderdale Billfish Tournament, Las Olas City Marina. Visit www.billfishtournament.com.

Pennsylvania's hunting is as good as advertised, but some shots go awry.



STEVE WATERS ON OUTDOORS

EVANS CITY, PA. • Just when you're ready to climb down from your treestand and call it a day, the buck of a lifetime shows up and gets your heart pounding so hard, you could swear he can hear it.

This buck, a huge eight-pointer that went about 200 pounds, was ready to give me a pounding. I had been using a grunt call to imitate the sounds of another buck, and the big bruiser had suddenly come out of the thick woods to my right looking to take on the intruder.

Darkness was ready to descend as I watched the buck walk along the edge of a food plot. He stopped to thrash a bush with his antlers and continued in my direction, finally coming to an opening between the trees where I could see his impressive antlers in the fading light. So intent was he on fighting that he never noticed me draw back my bow, but I just didn't have enough light to be sure of the shot, so I let down and watched him amble away.

I had been tipped off to the presence of a good buck by my hunting companions: Brian Sanders of Davie, Casey Hunt of Pompano Beach and Ed Gaw of Lighthouse Point, who owned the 100-acre farm just north of Pittsburgh where we were hunting.

The three men have an incredible knowledge of fish and fishing in South Florida. Sanders and Hunt are charter captains and members of the highly successful *Get Sum* tournament fishing team. Gaw, who founded Hi-Liner Fishing Gear and Tackle, did his thesis on swordfishing in the Florida Straits while getting a master's degree in fisheries from the University of Miami.

I was impressed and thrilled to discover that all three are just as knowledgeable about hunting deer. As Sanders, who guides out of Chokoloskee Island, said, they keep on top of the movements of fish and do the same with deer.

Gaw, who purchased the property four years ago to be close to his sons, Eddie and Timmy, who live nearby with their mother, Lisa, had pointed out numerous rubs in this particular patch of woods as he showed me the farm.

Sanders had hunted the spot from a tripod stand the first afternoon and seen a nice buck. As a fishing guide, Sanders strives to put his customers on good fish, and since he already had the mounts of two big deer on his wall at home, he wanted me to have a shot at the deer.

I had already seen a bunch of deer my first day in the woods, including a young six-pointer that would have been a trophy on any of the wildlife management areas I frequent in South Florida.

In an effort to grow big bucks, Pennsylvania recently enacted regulations that require bucks in much of the state to have at least three points on one antler to be legal. Here in the southwestern part of the state, bucks must have four points on an antler.

Gaw further bolsters the buck potential of his property by following the guidelines of the Georgia-based Quality Deer Management Association. QDMA promotes the taking of adult does



SUCCESSFUL OUTING: (l-r) Ed Gaw with Sox the wonder dog, Brian Sanders and Casey Hunt with the doe Hunt shot at 37 yards with his bow and arrow during their Pennsylvania archery hunt. Staff photo/Steve Waters

Tech tips: Quality gear contributes to success

As successful offshore tournament fishermen, Casey Hunt and Brian Sanders always use the most advanced equipment they can, from their Mercury Verado motors to their Momoi fishing line to their Rugged Shark boat shoes. They do the same when they're deer hunting.

Both insist on keeping human scent to a minimum. They wash their camouflage clothes with special laundry detergents, only wear their camo in the woods and shower with soap and shampoo that neutralizes human scent before going into the woods. They also wear Scent-Lok.

Scent-Lok clothing has an activated carbon lining that filters human odors as they pass through. A deer has a terrific sense of smell and will not come in or stick around if it smells a human. I borrowed a Scent-Lok suit from Hunt and was amazed at how close I had deer come in to me without

ever knowing I was there.

Both men take binoculars when they hunt, which not only allows them to see far-off deer, but also lets them evaluate the antlers of a nice buck. Rather than having the glasses dangling from their necks, they wear them on a Bino-System from Crooked Horn Outfitters. Basically an elastic harness, the Bino-System takes the weight off your neck and puts it on your shoulders. The binoculars rest on the middle of your chest, where you can easily raise them up and where they remain out of the way when you draw back your bow.

They also carry rangefinders so they know the exact distance of various landmarks such as trees, rocks and bushes. That way, when a deer walks in, they know how far a shot they have, which is critical when bowhunting because being off a few yards can result in a shot that's too high or too low. I used a Bushnell Yardage Pro rangefinder

because it's small and can be operated with one hand.

Another essential piece of gear for those who go into the woods before sunrise and come out after sundown is a good flashlight.

The best one I've ever used is the new Buckmasters Twin-Task 2-L from Streamlight. The rugged, hand-sized flashlight, which is powered by two lithium batteries, has an extremely bright white Xenon light as well as a green LED light that can be seen by your hunting companions from a long way.

One thing that I always bring deer hunting is a grunt call. My favorite is the RubberNeck from Primos Hunting Calls.

The soft rubber call makes the grunts of a mature buck or a young buck as well as the bleat of a doe. I had big bucks as well as curious does come in to the call, which I also used to put them at ease.

— STEVE WATERS

and restraint in killing young bucks. With a balanced deer herd, only the bigger, better bucks do the breeding, which results in healthier deer. By not shooting young bucks, they grow bigger bodies and antlers.

In addition, Gaw provides plenty of food for the deer by planting corn, oats and other deer favorites. On his 100 acres, there are seven food plots totaling 17 acres. Last year, which was only the second season the farm was hunted, Gaw shot a 160-class buck, which refers to the total inches of its antlers. Anything over 150 inches is considered a trophy anywhere in the country.

"It is a science," Gaw said of deer management. He keeps data on his property's deer and takes the jawbones out of all the does that are killed so a state wildlife biologist can determine their ages. "Over the next couple of years, the picture will start coming into focus."

The main thing for Gaw, who grew up in South Georgia doing more fishing than anything else and didn't get seriously into deer hunting until he attended Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, is for his guests to have fun.

With all the deer running around his farm, and knowing that you

could have a shot at a huge buck at any moment, hunting there is a blast.

You can also shoot a doe, as Pennsylvania's deer management assistance program allows for 14 does to be killed on Gaw's farm this season.

I had numerous chances, but managed to mess them up. The first morning, two young deer walked past my treestand, stopped and looked back. It didn't register that they were probably looking at their mother. When she appeared moments later, 18 yards away, I was facing the wrong way for a shot. When I awkwardly drew back my bow, she caught the movement and bounded just out of range.

Another morning, hunting from a ground blind, I watched two does slowly zig-zag their way through the woods to me. As they neared, I would draw back, only to have them walk behind a tree.

Amazingly, the does ended up coming within 10 feet of the rear corner of the blind. I turned to face them, drew back and raised my bow. Somehow, the string on my release slipped and the arrow zinged through the bottom of the blind and sent the startled deer fleeing. You're doing a heck of a job, Brownie was all I could think as I sat there, equally startled.

Fortunately, Sanders and Hunt performed much better. Sanders, 38, shot a doe at about 10 yards first thing one morning, which gave us plenty of time to cut her up — after Gaw examined her stomach contents to see what she had been eating — and ready the meat for a dinner of fried backstrap and grilled rump roast.

Hunt, 32, who started hunting in New Jersey and has hunted with a Hoyt bow since he was 13, made a great shot on a doe the final afternoon. A member of the Hoyt pro staff, Hunt is on an archery lease at the Fisheating Creek Hunting Camp in Palmdale where he kills a lot of wild pigs. That experience paid off when he drew back his Viper Tech bow and dropped the deer at 37 yards, taking out her heart and lungs.

"I'm so happy," Hunt said. "That's exactly where I wanted the arrow and that's exactly where it went."

I was happy, too, for my friends, for a memorable hunt and for knowing exactly where I'm going to be hunting the next time I get up to Gaw's farm.

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Outdoors Notebook



Freshwater summits: A freshwater fisheries summit is Oct. 29, 6:30-9 p.m. at the IGFA Fishing Hall of Fame & Museum

in Dania Beach. Held by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the summits invite stakeholders to organize and team with the agency. These organized groups will help the agency identify areas of public concern and launch management plans that will have a major effect on the future of Florida's freshwater fisheries.

Bass tournament: The 22nd annual Ghost & Gobblins open bass tournament, originally scheduled for Sunday, has been rescheduled for Oct. 30 on Lake Okeechobee out of Clewiston. Entry fee for the

tournament conducted by Big Reel Bassmasters of Margate is \$120 per two-angler team and includes the big-bass pot. Entries will be accepted Oct. 29 from 1-5 p.m. at Anglers Marina and starting at 3:30 a.m., Oct. 30 at the boat ramp. Proceeds of the tournament benefit Kids In Distress. Contact **Jim Pollock** at 954-695-6035 or bigreeljim@aol.com.

Everglades results: **Mike Allgair** caught 12 pounds, 9 ounces of fish to win the Everglades Bass Anglers monthly club tournament Saturday on Lake Istokpoga. **Pete Cox** was second at 10-11, followed by **Bob McDaniel** at 8-14, **Scott Christophel** at 7-15 and **George Howes** at 7-14. Allgair had the big bass at 6-1.

Bassmasters results: **Don DeMott** flipped hyacinths to catch a total of 17.5 pounds of fish to win the Everglades Bassmasters of South

Florida monthly club tournament Saturday and Sunday on Lake Kissimmee out of Camp Mack. **Sal Ambrico** was second at 10.32, followed by **Ed Knorr** at 9.02, **Cliff Worley** at 8.94 and **Bob Gallik** at 8.84. **Armando Blondin** had the big bass at 7.54.

Fools results: **Mark Escobar** caught 14.8 pounds of fish to win a Bass-N-Fools club tournament on Alligator Alley out of the mile marker 41 boat ramp. **Wayne Loring** was second at 14.11, followed by **Chuck Ervin** at 12.86, **Randy Norton** at 12.34 and **Luis Ortega** at 11.04. **Jim Anderson** had the big bass at 5.44.

WMA closures: The threat of Hurricane Wilma has prompted closures of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission wildlife management areas. The Big Cypress Wildlife Management Area closed at 12:01 a.m. today. Picayune Strand

Wildlife Management Area and the Division of Forestry's portion of Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest also are closed to public access. The FWC portion of the OK Slough WMA remains open through Saturday to allow for the scheduled dove hunt. Visit www.myfwc.com.

Gun bill: With a 283-144 bipartisan vote, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a landmark bill Thursday to block lawsuits that seek to hold firearms manufacturers liable for the criminal misuse of their lawfully sold products. The Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act bill will now head to **President Bush**, who has said he would sign it if it reached his desk. The U.S. Senate passed the bill in July with a 65-31 bipartisan vote.

Although 30 states have passed similar legislation preventing such lawsuits, the federal legislation will

provide the full protection sought by the firearms industry, nullify pending lawsuits and prevent such lawsuits from being filed. Among those cases nullified are suits from New York City and Washington, D.C.

Bass tournament: The Everglades Bass Anglers are holding a charity Bass Team Tournament Nov. 6 on Lake Okeechobee out of the Belle Glade public boat ramp to benefit Pets in Distress. Entry fee is \$70 plus \$10 for the big-bass pot. Call **John Nydam** at 954-771-7752 after 6 p.m.

Captain's reunion: The ninth Captain's Reunion for captains, crew and friends is Nov. 11, 6 p.m. at the Downtowner Saloon, 408 S. Andrews Ave., Fort Lauderdale. Cost for a buffet dinner featuring prime rib, chicken marsala and a cash bar is \$25 per person. Call **Skip Smith** at 954-784-1807 or **Laura Hogle** at 954-926-5044.