

GRANDSLAM, AN ANGLERS DREAM

By Captain Rick Moseley

SCALES N TALES CHARTERS

Captain Rick is a U.S.C.G licensed master captain designated as a certified captain by the I.G.F.A. and member of Florida Guides Association and the national Association of Charterboat Operators. He is a full time professional charter guide operating Scales N Tales Charters from Keaton Beach to Crystal River.

Here at Scales N Tales Charters Captain Rick is busy getting rigged up for a really busy spring fishing season. So folks!! Let's go fishing. Anglers along the Nature Coast are looking forward to some good springtime fishing. Why? Simple, the gulf water begins to warm up and with the warmer water comes various species that have been in hiding while the water temperatures were in the 60's. As it begins to get in the lower 70's you will start to find trout on the flats where sandy holes meet with the grass beds. They will be on a feeding frenzy from cold winter and you can catch them on many different lures and baits. Trout usually like live pin-fish in the spring and if they are fished right the trout will be somewhat larger than those caught on plastic. That is most of the time, but this is not always accurate, some days they love the artificial baits resembling a shrimp and may not want the pin-fish. Take both along on your fishing trip to have all angles covered. I know other anglers that strictly fish with live shrimp only, so take a few of them with you too.

Captain Rick's rule of fishing is to fish an area for awhile and if they are not biting then it's time to move. Go to water a foot or so deeper or shallower. Look for some stained water if your area is too clear. Sometimes water that is too clear can be hard to fish because the fish have zeroed in on their little camera's before you get to them. You will find lighter test line gives you more casting distance, therefore putting your baits out where the fish can't see you. I personally prefer a 10# braided line such as Berkley Fire Line or Power-Pro. Should you not like either of these, fish with what you are confident with. Confidence is half the success in being a good angler. Never say "**I think**" we are going to catch fish today, say guys and gals, "**we are going to catch the fish today**" so get ready for the time of your life! A friendly reminder, speckled sea trout have a slot limit of not less than 15" nor more than 20" with one fish per person per day over 20". In the N.W. and N.E. regions the daily bag limit is five fish per person.

As spring really gets things going you may want to look for redfish. As usual this time of year they are going to be around the creek mouths, oyster bars, or around any type of rocky bottom structure. Quiet is the word to say on your vessel because red spook so easily. Ease into your area using your trolling motor or push pole and gently anchor on your spot. Try casting your lures close to the structure you have chosen. If after a few casts you find nothing, try a big juicy shrimp, the kind you should save for supper. Throw him out with an oval cork above him and give this a good trial period. If you know you are there on a good tide and you waste too much time you will lose that tide then move on to another spot that meets the criteria. You can also work your spots

without anchoring, which is my favorite. Use the trolling motor quietly and cast lures towards the structure being careful not to hook a ton of rock, but a nice keeper red fish will do. Remember, reds can hear your voice if it is above a whisper so don't spook your school.

Out of courtesy to other anglers, should you see them catching redfish on a spot don't disturb them and spook their school. Look for your own, they found theirs and I'm sure you also can find yours if you are persistent. When they leave that spot is usually means the fish have left the area so it is no use in you going to that spot, just keep searching. Rules for redfish are very simple, not less than 18" nor more than 27" and only one fish per person per day.

The big cobia will be coming in at any time, so if they are what turns you on, go for it. Use a nice live pin-fish under a giant sized bobber with a hefty leader and a lot of patience. Anchor up current from a day marker out of the channel so you are not in the line of boat traffic. Cast towards the marker. An old structure known as a bird rack has proven to be a good cobia fishing area and is usually not in the area of navigation. Cobia can tear up the light tackle that you use for trout and red fish so you may want to step it up a notch or two. I like the light tackle so I rig my anchor where I can release it and come back to it later. This will give you an opportunity to get your fish away from the marker and use a lot of patience to play him. If you are on the hunt for the meat and not into playing a fish an hour or so then use the heavy tackle. A reel like a 4500 Shimano bait Runner with a 35# power pro and 50# leader gives you the edge when you have a 40# or the like's cobia. Another good reel that will stand up to the pressure of a big cobia is the Penn Jigmaster, although not as easily casting to the spot as a spinning reel. Cobia measurement is to the fork of the tail. They must be a minimum of 33" and one per angler per day of six per vessel, whichever is less.

The above species that we have talked about in this article would be a North Florida "Grand Slam" if caught on the same day and registered. The west coast section you would qualify if you caught a red fish, a snook, and a tarpon. To apply for a grand slam contact the FWC Division of Marine Fisheries Management by calling 850-488-6058 or visit their web site at myfwc.com/marine. Entries are free.

Captain Rick is a U.S.C.G. licensed master captain operating Scales N Tales Charters from Keaton Beach to Crystal River. You may reach him by calling 850-578-2627 at Keaton Beach and 352-628-3392 at Crystal River. You can e-mail us at fishrick@gtcom.net. You are invited to take a stroll through our website at www.scalesntalescharters.com

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