

IT'S SPRING TIME AGAIN, GRANDSLAM TIME

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., a member of Florida Guides Association, and The National Association of Charter Boat Operators. I am a full time professional charter guide operating Scales N Tales Charters from Keaton Beach down to Crystal River.

Here at Scales N tales Charters I am busy getting rigged up for a really busy spring fishing season. So folks, let's go fishing!

All 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 our various species that have been 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 the sandy holes meet with the grass beds. The trout will be on a feeding frenzy from a 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. From experience this is most of the time, but not always the case. Some days they love the artificial baits resembling a shrimp and may not want the pin fish at all. It is recommended to take both lures and pin fish along 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. Move to water that is about a foot or so deeper, or shallower. Look for some stained water should your area be crystal clear. It is known that water that is too clear is sometimes harder to fish because the fish have you zeroed in on their little camera before you get to them.

You will find that 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 get on the fish today",

say "guys and gals, we are **going** to find 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" not more than 20". In the North West and the North East regions the daily bag limit is 5 (five) fish per person.

As spring really gets things going you may want to look for Red Fish. 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 key on your vessel. Red Fish spook easily. Ease into your area using a trolling motor or push pole and gently anchor on the spot of your choice. Try casting your lures close to the structure you have chosen. If after a few casts you find nothing, I suggest you try a big juicy shrimp, the kind you should have for supper! Throw him out with an oval cork above him and give this a good trail period. If you know you are on a good tide and that if you use too much time you will lose that tide, then move to another spot that meets the right criteria. You can also work your spots without anchoring. My preference is using the trolling motor quietly and casting lures towards the structure being careful not to hook a ton of rock, but a nice keeper Red.

Remember, Red Fish can hear your voice if it is above a whisper. A school of red Fish can be spooked very easily. Out of courtesy to other anglers if you see them catching red Fish on a spot don't disturb them and spook their school. Look for your own spots, if they found theirs you are sure to find yours. Be patient and persistent. Should the other anglers leave their spot you can be sure that usually means the fish also have left the area. Just keep looking.

Rules for Red Fish are very simple. Not less than 18" and not more than 27". The bag limit is only 1 (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. A nice live pin fish under a giant sized bobber with a hefty leader and a lot of patience should do the trick. 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" is good cobia fishing and is usually not in the path of boat navigation. Cobia can tear up the light tackle that you use for Trout so you may want to step it up a notch or two. I personally like the light tackle. I rig my boat anchor with a marker so I can release it quickly and come back to it later. This gives me the opportunity to get the Cobia away from the marker and

use a lot of patience to fight him. If you are on the hunt for the meat and not into fighting the Cobia for 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 pound Cobia or the likes. Another good reel that will stand up to the pressure of a big Cobia is the Penn Jigmaster, although it does not cast as easily to the spot as a spinning reel.

Cobia measurement is to the fork of the tail. They must be a minimum of 33" and 1 (one) per angler per day or six per vessel, whichever is less.

The above species that we have mentioned in this article would be a North Florida "Grand Slam" if caught on the same day and registered. The west Coast section would qualify a "Grand Slam" as catching a Red Fish, 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 website at www.myfwc.com/marine. All entries are free.

Captain Rick Moseley is a U.S.C.G. licensed master captain operating Scales N Tales Charters from Keaton Beach to Crystal River. You may reach us by calling Keaton Beach at 850-578-2627 or Crystal River at 352-628-3392. If you would like to e-mail us please do so at fishrick@gtcom.net in Keaton Beach and ruffinitagain@netzero.net in Crystal River. You are invited to take a stroll through our website at www.scalesntalescharters.com

Tight lines to ya

Captain Rick and Best Mate Anita