

FLORIDA  
SPORTSMAN

# BLUEWATER ANGLER

JULY 2019 // NEWSSTAND SPECIAL

## NEW REEFS NEAR YOU

**WRECKS AND ARTIFICIAL REEFS:  
THE ANNUAL REPORT**

**DEEP DRIFT BOTTOM  
FISHING**

**STRUCTURE TACTICS  
FOR TUNAS**

**DIY REEF ANCHOR**

**DREDGE UP SAILS,  
MAHI & MORE**



**BONUS  
2 IN 1  
ISSUE**

FLIP  
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SUCCESS

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ON THE COVER Philomena swims with the fishes off Volusia County. FWC Photo. Inset by Joe Suroviec



# SEA-LION BOATS

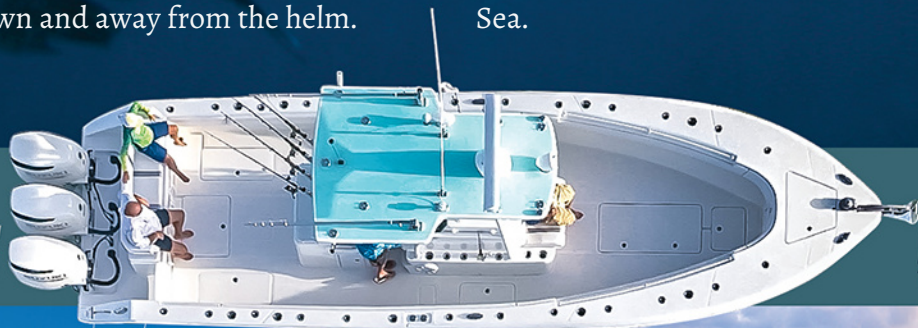


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# New Reefs Review

A Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) report on recent reef construction projects.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Following are summaries of artificial reef development efforts around the Florida coasts during the last year. For complete lists of permitted sites, updates on material deployments and other details, find the link to Artificial Reefs on the Saltwater Fishing page at [www.MyFWC.com/](http://www.MyFWC.com/)

## WALTON COUNTY

Walton County deployed 48 concrete reef modules in the Topsail Hill permitted area. All modules were manufactured and deployed by Walter Marine Services. Three designs were used during the deployment on June 25, 2018 to create twelve (12) patch reefs. Each patch reef contained at least two different module designs. The first and largest structure was a pre-fabricated module called a "Florida Limestone Artificial Reef." This is a concrete tetrahedron measuring 8 ft. tall and 10 ft. wide at the base, with three 12-inch by 18-inch rectangular openings through each of three upright limestone studded concrete sides.

One of the three sides contain a 36-inch-wide opening at the top to allow for turtle escapement. There were 12 of these units deployed, each weighing approximately 6,000 lbs.

The second type deployed is the "Ecosystem Reef." The main structure is supported by a concrete pedestal and different number of 52-inch concrete discs can be added for increased habitat complexity. Each disc is separated by at least 12 inches and has limestone rock embedded in the concrete. A three-disc Ecosystem measures 3.75 ft in height and weighs 5,000 lbs. Eighteen of these units were deployed as single structures.

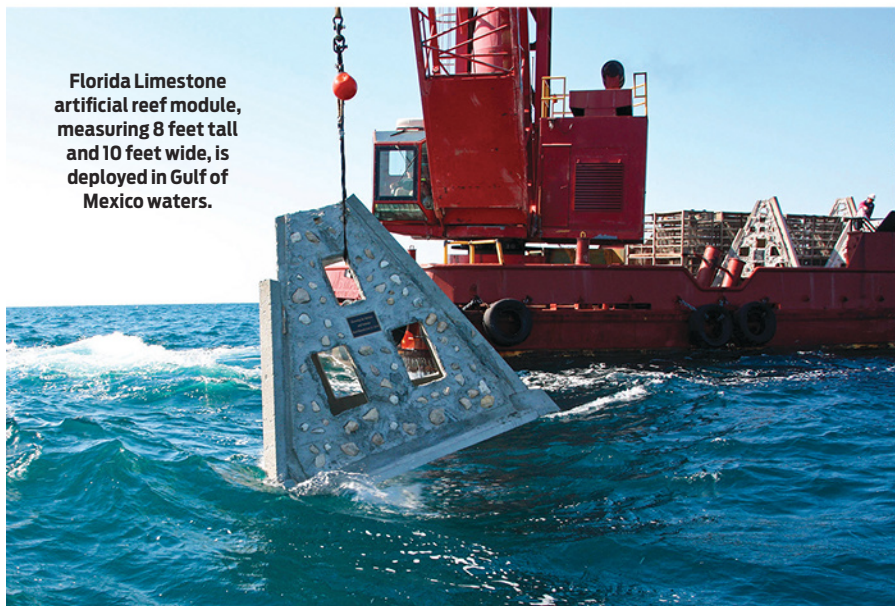
The third module type deployed was a "Lindberg Cube" measuring 3 feet by 3 feet with a single 24-inch circular opening. These units were design by Dr. Bill Lindberg with the University of Florida to study grouper aggregations along the Big Bend of Florida. There were 18 of these units deployed, each weighing approximately 1,500 pounds.

All modules were deployed as planned with three patch reefs in the four corners of the site. Post deployment survey dives were completed by the South Walton Artificial Reef Association on July 1, 2018, and all modules were reported intact and upright. Total cost for this project was \$59,999.42. The state share was \$19,999.42 and the federal grant funds expended were \$40,000.00.

## WALTON COUNTY – UNDERWATER MUSEUM OF ART

On June 25, 2018, the first Underwater Museum of Art in the United States was deployed in the Gulf of Mexico off Walton County. Seven sculptures of concrete and/or steel were deployed

Florida Limestone artificial reef module, measuring 8 feet tall and 10 feet wide, is deployed in Gulf of Mexico waters.



in a circular pattern by Walter Marine Services approximately 0.7 miles from Grayton Beach State Park at a depth of 58 feet.

The sculptures were created by local and nationally recognized artists who applied and were chosen by the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County (CCA) to be part of this historic museum. This was the first year of the contest and plans have been made to continue to select artists and add to the underwater collection annually.

A post-Hurricane Michael assessment dive found no lateral movement of the art modules, but there was damage to the "Grayt Pineapple," an 8-foot stainless steel hollow sculpture. The Grayt Pineapple remained attached to its base, but no longer erect. The steel was bent by the base cause the entire structure to lean at a <45 degree angle. No other modules showed any damage.

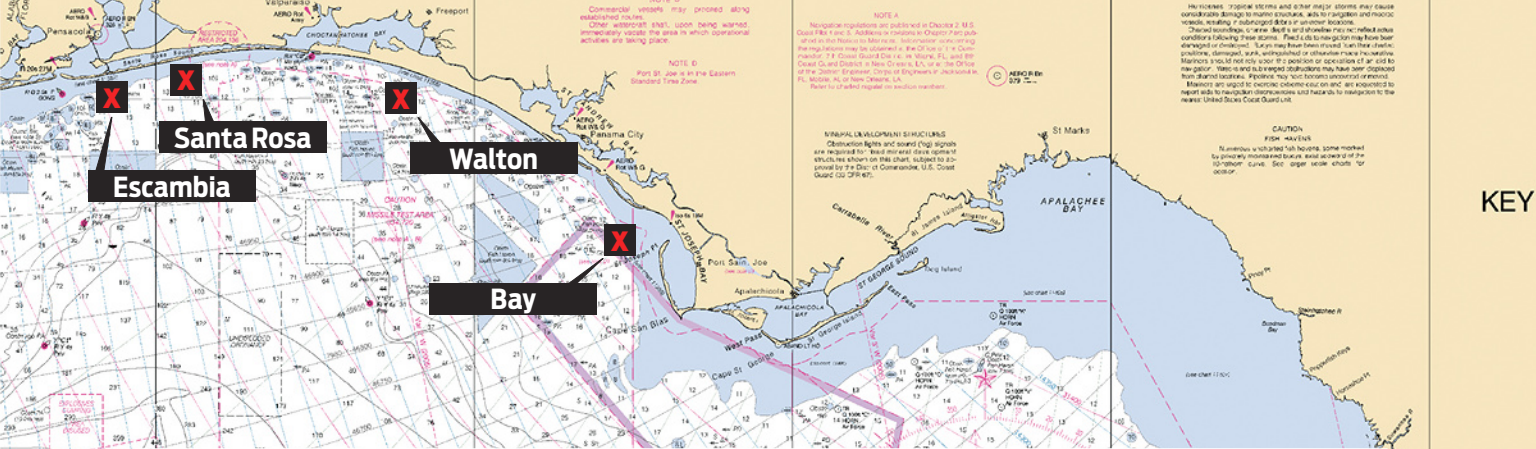
## BAY COUNTY – DANNY GRIZZARD

On July 6, 2018, Bay County, Panama City Diving and Panama City Dive Center partnered to deploy a 65-foot aluminum-hull retired U.S Navy research vessel within LAARS A permitted area. The vessel rests in 92 feet of water.

## BAY COUNTY – HOPPER BARGE

A 98-foot steel hopper barge was deployed on July 11th, 2018 in the LAARS B permitted area by the Bay County Artificial Reef Association (BCARA). The barge was deployed ~40 miles offshore of Panama City in 148 feet depth (29° 38.537, -85° 58.669).





## PANHANDLE - NORTHWEST

NAME	DESCRIPTION	DEPTH	RELIEF	LONG	LAT
<b>ESCAMBIA</b>					
ESERS536	Tetrahedron	89	15	87° 10.616' W	30° 10.874' N
ESERS542	Tetrahedron	87	15	87° 09.865' W	30° 10.996' N
ESERS564	Tetrahedron	80	15	87° 07.116' W	30° 11.441' N
ESERS020	Tetrahedron w/Disk	93	18	87° 10.118' W	30° 12.207' N
ESERS032	Tetrahedron w/Disk	92	18	87° 08.617' W	30° 12.446' N
ESERS047	Tetrahedron w/Disk	80	18	87° 06.743' W	30° 12.751' N
ESERS155	Tetrahedron w/Disk	85	18	87° 06.243' W	30° 12.584' N
ESERS528	Tetrahedron w/Disk	82	15	87° 11.617' W	30° 10.711' N
ESERS531	Tetrahedron w/Disk	101	15	87° 11.241' W	30° 10.773' N
ESERS537	Tetrahedron w/Disk	87	15	87° 10.491' W	30° 10.894' N
ESERS565	Tetrahedron w/Disk	80	15	87° 06.992' W	30° 11.462' N
ESERS025	Tetrahedron w/Disk	84	15	87° 09.491' W	30° 12.307' N
ESERS034	Tetrahedron w/Disk	92	15	87° 08.367' W	30° 12.489' N
ESERS040	Tetrahedron w/Disk	85	15	87° 07.617' W	30° 12.611' N
ESERS052	Tetrahedron w/Disk	84	15	87° 06.242' W	30° 12.708' N
ESERS364	Tetrahedron w/Disk	83	15	87° 06.241' W	30° 11.956' N
Sage Mem. Reef	Tetrahedron	50	8	87° 14.060' W	30° 17.768' N
Walsingham Mem. Reef	Tetrahedron	50	8	87° 14.063' W	30° 17.816' N
ESERS208	Tetrahedron	84	15	87° 12.618' W	30° 11.301' N
ESERS520	Tetrahedron	83	15	87° 12.617' W	30° 10.550' N
ESERS013	Tetrahedron w/Disk	90	15	87° 10.991' W	30° 12.064' N
ESERS007	Tetrahedron w/Disk	89	15	87° 11.742' W	30° 11.943' N
ESERS529	Tetrahedron	88	15	87° 11.492' W	30° 10.733' N
ESERS535	Tetrahedron	90	15	87° 10.741' W	30° 10.854' N
ESERS036	Tetrahedron	84	15	87° 08.116' W	30° 12.530' N
ESERS042	Tetrahedron	88	15	87° 07.367' W	30° 12.651' N
ESERS048	Tetrahedron	82	15	87° 06.618' W	30° 12.773' N
ESERS006	Tetrahedron	87	15	87° 11.867' W	30° 11.923' N
ESERS012	Tetrahedron	85	15	87° 11.117' W	30° 12.044' N
ESERS024	Tetrahedron	89	15	87° 09.617' W	30° 12.285' N
ESERS030	Tetrahedron	94	15	87° 08.867' W	30° 12.408' N

## SANTA ROSA

SR-27 Reef 7	SuperReef (6'), Grouper Boxes, Tetrahedrons (8')	66	16	86° 51.562' W	30° 21.555' N
SR-27 Reef 21	7 Grouper Boxes, 4 Tetrahedrons (8')	64	8	86° 50.729' W	30° 21.549' N
SR-27 Reef 10	SuperReef (6'), 20 Grouper Box w/Ecosys, 4 Tetrahedrons (8')	60	16	86° 50.751' W	30° 21.670' N
SR-27 Reef 6	SuperReef (6'), 4 Grouper Box w/Ecosys, 8 Tetrahedrons (8')	66	16	86° 51.704' W	30° 21.534' N
SR-27 Reef 17	3 Grouper Box w/Ecosys, 8 Tetrahedrons (8')	63	8	86° 51.649' W	30° 21.418' N
SR-27 Reef 3	2 SuperReefs (6'), 4 Grouper Box w/Ecosys, 22 Tetrahedrons (8')	65	16	86° 52.443' W	30° 21.442' N
SR-27 Reef 4	SuperReef (6'), Grouper Boxes w/Ecosys, 4 Tetrahedrons (8')	66	16	86° 51.984' W	30° 21.495' N
SR-27 Reef 24	2 SuperReefs (6'), Grouper Boxes w/Ecosys, 22 Tetrahedrons (8')	64	16	86° 52.398' W	30° 21.198' N
SR-27 Reef 1	2 SuperReefs (6'), Grouper Boxes w/Ecosys, 22 Tetrahedrons (8')	62	16	86° 52.724' W	30° 21.402' N
SR-27 Reef 15	SuperReef (6'), 3 Grouper Box w/Ecosys, 6 Tetrahedrons (8')	63	16	86° 51.930' W	30° 21.376' N
SR-27 Reef 26	SuperReef (6'), 4 Grouper Box w/Ecosys, 8 Tetrahedrons (8')	64	16	86° 51.748' W	30° 21.277' N
SR-27 Reef 27	SuperReef (6')	64	16	86° 51.606' W	30° 21.297' N
SR-27 Reef 22	2 Tetrahedrons (6'), 6 Regular Tetrahedrons (8'), 4 Box w/disks	70	16	86° 52.678' W	30° 21.157' N
SR-27 Reef 11	3 Grouper Box w/Ecosys, 8 Tetrahedrons (8')	61	8	86° 52.699' W	30° 21.267' N
SR-27 Reef 23	3 Grouper Box w/Ecosys, 8 Tetrahedrons (8')	64	8	86° 52.535' W	30° 21.164' N

## WALTON

FWC Topsail Hill Reef 1	FL Limestone Module; 3 Ecosys Pedestals w/3 discs	60	8	86° 19.430' W	30° 21.470' N
FWC Topsail Hill Reef 2	FL Limestone Module; Ecosys Pedestal w/3 disc; 2 Reef Cubes	60	8	86° 19.469' W	30° 21.447' N
FWC Topsail Hill Reef 3	FL Limestone Module; Ecosys Pedestal w/3 disc; Reef Cube	60	8	86° 19.430' W	30° 21.438' N
FWC Topsail Hill Reef 4	FL Limestone Module; 3 Ecosys Pedestals w/3 disc	60	8	86° 19.281' W	30° 21.473' N
FWC Topsail Hill Reef 5	FL Limestone Module; 2 Ecosys Pedestals w/3 disc; Reef Cube	60	8	86° 19.252' W	30° 21.460' N
FWC Topsail Hill Reef 6	FL Limestone Module; 3 Reef Cube	60	8	86° 19.284' W	30° 21.442' N
FWC Topsail Hill Reef 7	FL Limestone Module; 2 Ecosys Pedestals w/3 disc, Reef Cube	60	8	86° 19.467' W	30° 21.289' N
FWC Topsail Hill Reef 8	FL Limestone Module; 3 Ecosys Pedestals w/3 disc	60	8	86° 19.432' W	30° 21.313' N
FWC Topsail Hill Reef 9	FL Limestone Module; 3 Reef Cube	60	8	86° 19.427' W	30° 21.282' N
FWC Topsail Hill Reef 10	FL Limestone Module; 3 Ecosys Pedestals w/3 disc	60	8	86° 19.281' W	30° 21.309' N
2018 UWMA Grayton Beach	7 Art Sculptures	59	10	86° 09.562' W	30° 18.754' N

## BAY

BCARA Hopper Barge	98' Steel Hopper Barge	148	15	85° 58.675' W	29° 38.521' N
MB-248	18 Modules incl. Super Reefs, Pedestals, FL Limestone, Boxes	78	16.5	85° 38.055' W	29° 55.105' N



## WEST CENTRAL-SOUTHWEST

NAME	DESCRIPTION	DEPTH	RELIEF	LONG	LAT
<b>MANATEE</b> BOR4W-1807	575 Tons of Limestone Boulders	40	9	82° 47.857' W	27° 24.498' N
<b>SARASOTA</b>					
Silvertooth Reef Balls	7 Bay Balls, 4 Pallet Balls, and 1 Ultra Ball	30	4	82° 35.971' W	27° 17.135' N
Eternal Reef #6	5 Reefballs; 4 Bay, 1 Pallet	14	3	82° 35.589' W	27° 22.574' N
Younkmon Reef	6 Reefballs; 5 Bay, 1 Pallet	14	3	82° 35.593' W	27° 22.571' N
Silvertooth #24	16 Reefballs; 11 Bay, 5 Pallet	30	3	82° 35.977' W	27° 17.160' N
Tom Wallin Reef M-2 2018	35 modules incl. Pallets, Block Reefs, Other	40	6	82° 43.001' W	27° 18.745' N
<b>CHARLOTTE</b>					
Jeff Steele Memorial Reef #3	445 Tons Culverts, Junction Boxes, Poles	61	15	82° 35.941' W	26° 55.791' N

### MANATEE COUNTY - SFR

On July 27, 2018, Manatee County and McCulley Marine Service deployed 575 tons of clean limestone boulders within the Borden Reef permitted area. The barge anchored at the planned deployment site and deployed limestone boulders off both sides of the barge creating two low-relief linear piles approximately 50 feet apart. The center coordinate of the patch

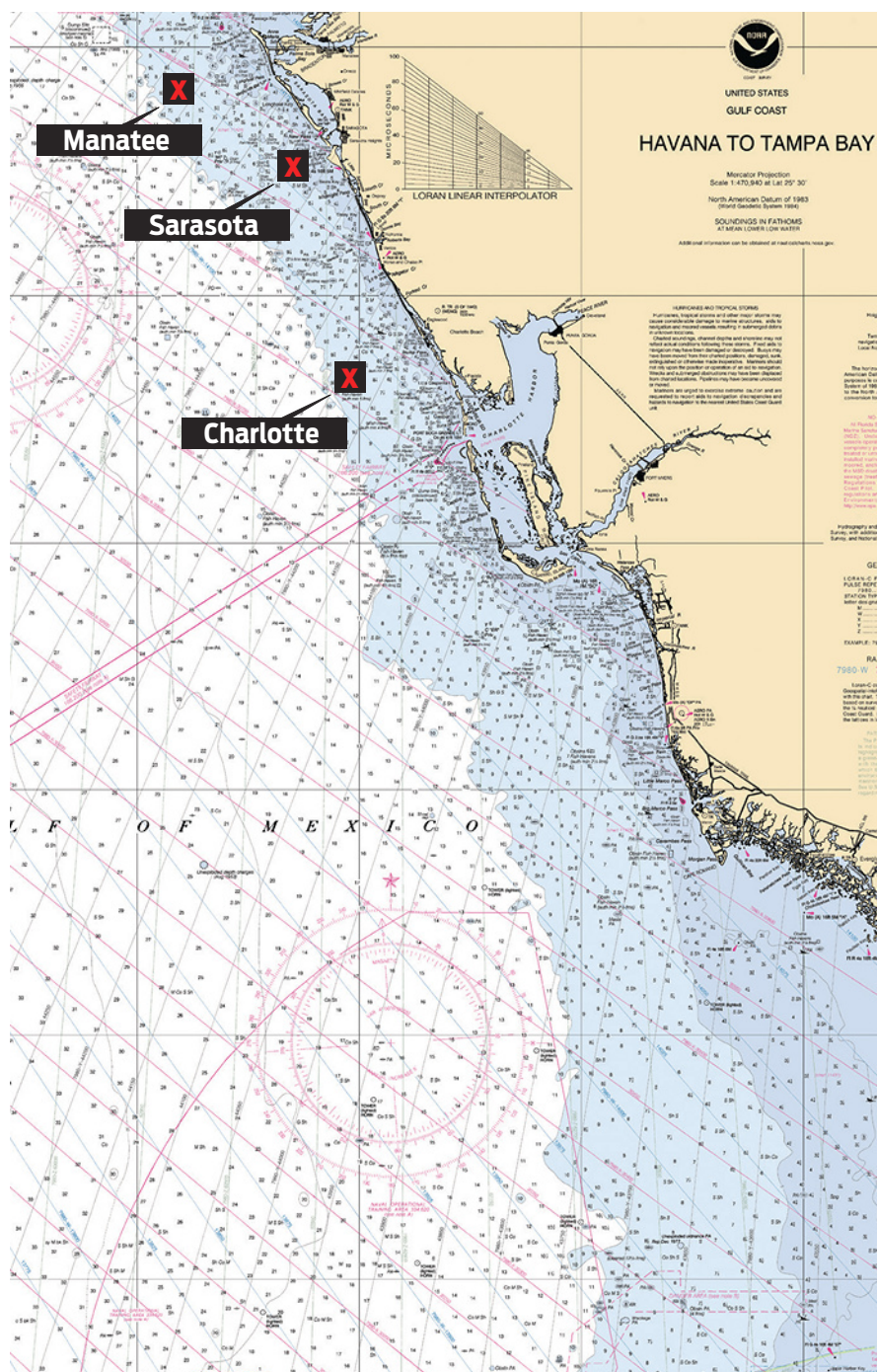


Reef Balls remain a popular and versatile option for augmenting reef sites.

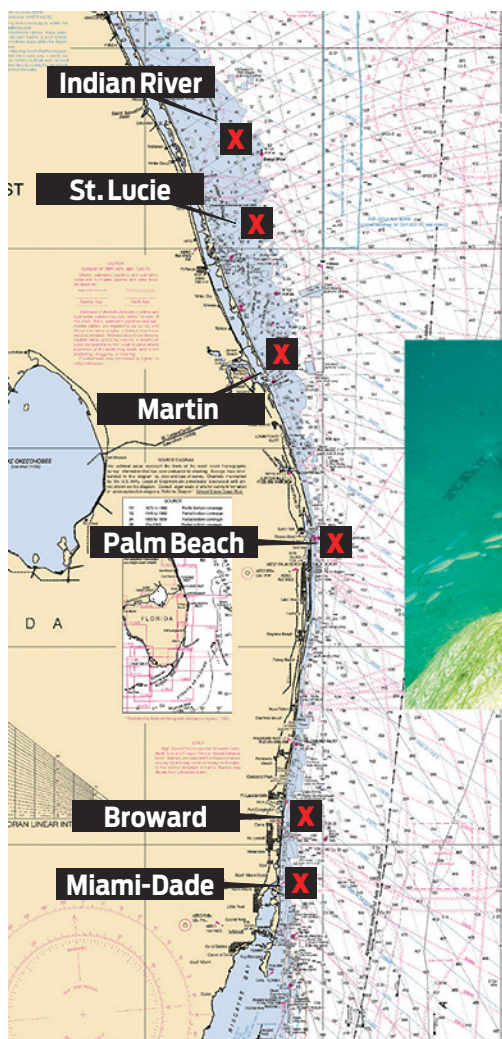
reef is at 27° 24.498' N, 82° 47.857' W.

Post deployment side scan were completed by Manatee County the same day as the deployment and a post deployment dive survey was completed the following week. These surveys confirmed that the deployment coordinates were accurate and that the limestone boulders were stable. The maximum relief of the boulder pile is nine feet, which allows a navigational clearance of 31 feet.

The total cost for this project was \$97,600.00. Manatee County contributed a total of \$37,600.00 in local match, the state share was \$25,000.00 and the federal grant funds expended were \$35,000.00.







## ST. LUCIE COUNTY – KERRY DILLON MEMORIAL REEFS

St. Lucie County deployed a 195 ft. by 35 ft. barge and 1,000 tons of concrete culverts, railroad ties, light poles, storm water basins and other concrete construction materials as two separate patch reefs within the Fort Pierce Sportfishing Club permitted area. Total cost for this



Limestone boulders attract bait schools off Palm Beach.

project was \$72,414.50. St. Lucie County contributed a total of \$12,414.50 in local match, the state share was \$60,000.

## MARTIN COUNTY - SFR

Martin County deployed 1,567 tons of clean secondary-use material (culverts, slabs, poles and barricades) within the Donaldson permitted area: 27° 11.876 N; 80° 05.873 W and 27° 11.820 N; 80° 05.539 W.

This reef was named in honor of Kerry Dillon who had recently passed. Kerry Dillon was essential asset to the artificial reef community providing pre and post assessments, specifically for deep reefs found below recreational diving depths. The shallow depths of this site allows for Kerry's children and more recreational divers to enjoy the memorial and the future habitat the material will provide for reef fish species.

The total cost for this project was \$86,250.00. Martin County contributed a total of \$26,250.00 in local match, the state share was \$25,000.00 and the federal grant funds expended were \$35,000.00.

## PALM BEACH COUNTY - SFR

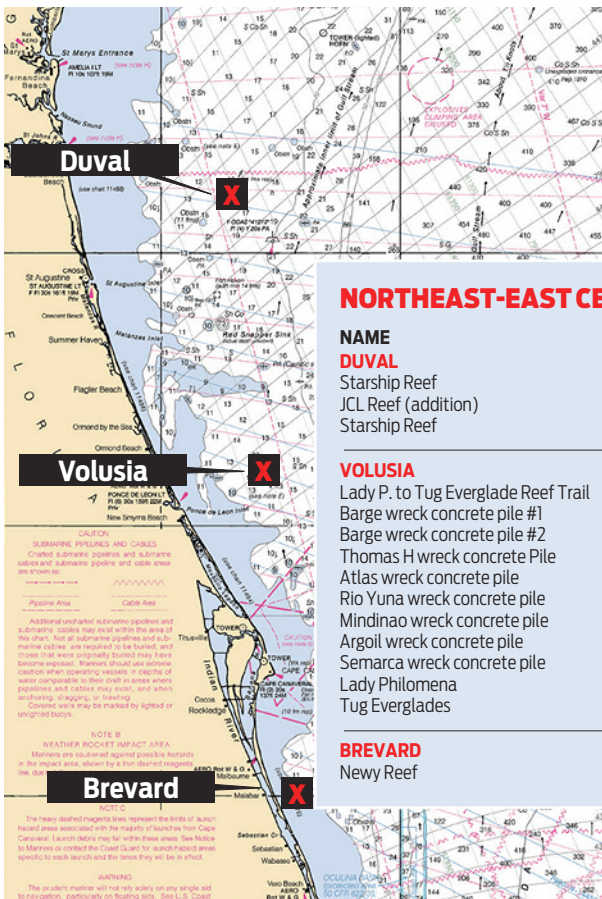
Palm Beach County deployed 530 tons of clean limestone boulders within the Boca Inlet permitted area. All limestone boulders were deployed by McCulley Marine Services, Inc. on August 1, 2018 to create one patch reef. The barge anchored at the planned deployment site and deployed limestone boulders off both sides of the barge creating two high relief piles approximately 100 feet apart despite the rough seas (4+ ft.). The center coordinate of the patch reef is at 26° 20.553' N, 80° 03.888' W.

## SOUTHEAST-SOUTH

NAME	DESCRIPTION	DEPTH	RELIEF	LONG	LAT
<b>INDIAN RIVER</b> Alan's Reef	10 Modules, Tetrahedrons	55	8	80° 21.639' W	27° 50.127' N
<b>ST. LUCIE</b> Fort Pierce Sportfishing Club Concrete Pile	1,011 tons concrete culverts, pilings, slabs	122	14	80° 02.124' W	27° 23.485' N
<b>MARTIN</b> Brause Girls Reef	100 ft. Steel Tug	188	63	80° 00.236' W	27° 12.463' N
2018 Kerry Dillon Site 2	800 Tons of Concrete Culverts, Poles, Slabs, Barricades	42	5	80° 05.539' W	27° 11.820' N
2018 Kerry Dillon Site 1	765 Tons of Concrete Culverts, Poles, Slabs, Barricades	56	12	80° 05.873' W	27° 11.876' N
<b>PALM BEACH</b> Andrew Red Harris Foundation Reef	32 Reef Cell Modules and 500 tons of Limestone Boulders	75	15	80° 01.871' W	26° 52.751' N
PBFF Reef	24 Pre-Fabricated Reef Darts	110	35	80° 00.144' W	26° 47.661' N
Boca Step Reef	530 tons of FL limestone boulders deployed in two adjacent piles	35	15	80° 03.888' W	26° 20.553' N
<b>BROWARD</b> John Michael Baker Memorial Reef	50 Tons of Concrete Culverts	70	6	80° 04.721' W	26° 09.482' N
John Michael Baker Fishing Reef	572 Tons of Concrete Culverts, Junction Boxes, Pilings and Beams	155	5	80° 04.134' W	26° 09.457' N
Limestone Boulder Piles 1-5	1800 Tons of Limestone Boulders	39	14	80° 05.790' W	26° 03.165' N
<b>MIAMI-DADE</b> Eternal Reef #29	11 Dome-shaped Modules (4 Pallet balls and 7 Bay balls)	43	4	80° 05.890' W	25° 57.725' N
Neptune Memorial Reef - Phase II	8 Concrete Arch Modules	43	14	80° 05.398' W	25° 42.021' N
Eternal Reef #27	7 modules; 4 Pallet Reef Balls, 3 Bay Reef Balls	43	4	80° 05.895' W	25° 57.785' N
Larson Barge	80' Steel Barge with 6' pilings (4)	30	10	80° 10.269' W	25° 48.899' N
Key Biscayne Connectivity Project - Pile D	310 Tons of Limestone Boulders (3-5')	72	7	80° 05.217' W	25° 41.793' N
Monty's Pier	1192 Tons of Slabs and Pilings	23	7	80° 09.870' W	25° 48.810' N



## New Reefs Review



### NORTHEAST-EAST CENTRAL

#### NAME

##### DUVAL

Starship Reef  
JCL Reef (addition)  
Starship Reef

#### DESCRIPTION

14" square concrete pilings of various lengths  
4 Concrete Blocks (4' X 4' X 4'), 3 Reef Balls  
6 Concrete Blocks (4' X 4' X 4')

#### DEPTH RELIEF

70  
70  
70

#### LONG

81° 09.351' W  
81° 09.626' W  
81° 09.358' W

#### LAT

30° 10.177' N  
30° 10.158' N  
30° 10.205' N

##### VOLUSIA

Lady P. to Tug Everglade Reef Trail  
Barge wreck concrete pile #1  
Barge wreck concrete pile #2  
Thomas H wreck concrete Pile  
Atlas wreck concrete pile  
Rio Yuna wreck concrete pile  
Mindinao wreck concrete pile  
Argoil wreck concrete pile  
Semarcar wreck concrete pile  
Lady Philomena  
Tug Everglades

375 tons culverts, light pole footers, misc  
Culverts, light pole footers, misc.  
Culverts, light pole footers, misc.  
Culverts, light pole footers, misc.  
Culverts, light pole footers, misc.  
Culverts, light pole footers, misc.  
Culverts, light pole footers, misc.  
Culverts, light pole footers, misc.  
Culverts, light pole footers, misc.  
150' Steel Cargo Vessel  
90' Steel Tug Boat

75  
65  
65  
80  
80  
80  
85  
72  
75  
75  
75

15  
7  
10  
12  
12  
14  
16  
10  
35  
25

80° 46.154' W  
80° 42.871' W  
80° 42.890' W  
80° 44.888' W  
80° 45.019' W  
80° 44.827' W  
80° 44.887' W  
80° 41.560' W  
80° 40.638' W  
80° 46.130' W  
80° 46.181' W

##### BREVARD

##### Newy Reef

24 Dome modules (4.5' tall, 6' diameter)

80

5

80° 18.368' W  
28° 23.824' N

Concrete pilings deployed  
on the Starship Reef off  
Jacksonville.



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## CITY OF JACKSONVILLE – STARSHIP REEF

On October 13 and 20, 2018, CCA Florida joined with the Building Conservation Trust, CCA's national habitat program, to deploy 1,200 tons of concrete materials within the Floyds Folly permitted area at an average depth of 72 feet. The material was deployed in two patch reefs centered approximately 0.25 nm. Between four existing deployments.

Post-deployments surveys were conducted less than 10 days from the final reef deployment. Reef material was found dispersed randomly with both densely clustered congregations as well as isolated pieces.

Dames Point Workboats and Lambs Yacht Center supplied the concrete reefing materials and Shell donated 20 tons of limestone boulders. The total project cost was \$200,000.

## VOLUSIA COUNTY – LADY PHILOMENA AND TUG EVERGLADES

The Lady Philomena and Tug

Everglades were deployed on June 23, 2018 within the Volusia County Site 12 Permitted area located in federal waters in the Atlantic off the coast of Volusia County resting at a depth of 75 ft. The Lady Philomena is a 150 ft. cargo ship donated to the county by the U.S. Customs Service and Tug Everglades is a 90 ft. steel tug boat. Prior to deployment, the County hosted an event for the public to tour each vessel.

The total cost for the purchase, cleaning, and deployment was \$125,000 per vessel. Project costs were paid for jointly using local donations from CCA and Yamaha and County funds.

## BREVARD COUNTY - SFR

On August 7, 2018, Brevard County and Callaway Marine deployed 24 pre-fabricated concrete reef modules in the Brevard County Artificial Reef Site 2 permitted area. The pre-fabricated module design is called an "Ultra Ball". This 4,000 lb. concrete dome-shape module measures 4.5 ft. tall and has a 6 ft. diameter closed bottom with differ-

ent sized circular openings throughout. All modules were deployed in a grid pattern forming a patch reef measuring approximately 100 ft by 100 ft. at a depth of 80 ft.

Post deployment survey dives were completed by Brevard County Natural Resource Department on August 20, 2018. The County confirmed the location and approximate 10 to 15 ft. spacing between modules. However, there was one module deployed closer causing it to lean against another module.

The total cost for this project was \$65,724.95. Brevard County contributed a total of \$6,000.00 in local match, the state share was \$9,724.95 and the federal grant funds expended were \$50,000.00. [FS](#)



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# Deep Drifting the Outside of the Reef

How to tackle bottom fish on the move.

By Joe Suroviec

**M**y heavy spinning rod was bent double as I strained against the fish some 115 feet below. My 25-pound-test monofilament was stretched to the breaking point as I pulled hard to stop whatever I had hooked from getting to the bottom or some unseen snag or crevasse where it could easily break the 30-pound fluorocarbon leader. The fish gave ground after several bursts downward and slowly I was able to work the fish up through the water column until the changing pressure expanded its swim bladder and made the job a tad bit easier. A few minutes later I slid my hand behind the gill plate of a beautiful 15-pound class mutton snapper.

Deep reef drift fishing usually starts in the depths that most reef anglers fish by accident. By this I mean they misjudge

and unless you have a good sense of where you anchored in the first place you may end up deeper than you want to be more than once. I have done this so I know others will, too. I prefer to deep drift when fishing the outside of the reef. The usual depth of the deep drifting primarily takes place in the 100- to 250-foot depth ranges as anything deeper requires much heavier tackle and the heavy tackle, although effective, takes the fun out of the fight.

Obviously, one needs to first determine the speed and direction of any reef current that day as well as pay attention to the wind velocity. If the conditions allow, you can expect a general speed and direction each area you drift in and can consistently target the outside edges of the reef that have scattered bottom where fish love to congregate. Most times

they are the larger species that feel more at home in the deeper waters and have evolved into well-educated, predator-avoiding machines by then. That is why I prefer to use 30-pound-test fluorocarbon as my leader. These larger fish are smart and command special tactics to consistently lure into your cooler.

In the Florida Keys, where I fish most often, the reef fish I target on deep drifts are the larger snappers and groupers. With the limits on snapper and grouper being constantly reduced, the smart angler tries to make each catch count by targeting larger species and

the deep drift program outside the reef does exactly that.

The late and great Capt. Ralph Delph of Key West once told me that deep reef fish have a tendency to “snorkel above the bottom like a person would when looking for lobster.”



**One advantage of hooking a big fish from a drifting boat: Less chance of getting rocked up. Still, you'll need good tackle and steady pressure.**

the current or wind direction when anchoring on the reef and when the boat finally settles to where the wind and current conditions take it, you are deeper than you want to be. Re-anchoring after an initial anchor set is time-consuming





A nice black grouper for the successful angler who played it right, opposite.



# Deep Drifting

From a slightly elevated position they are able to scan a wider area and notice any type of small movement from their prey, especially crustaceans that evidently make up a large portion of deepwater snapper and grouper diets. Delph noticed that deeper fish seemed to hang above the bottom more than the shallower fishes. He also told me that mutton snappers usually inverted their stomachs when hooked and during pressure changes on the ascent, and the dispersal of stomach contents stimulated other fish in the area to feed. Delph was quick to return to the area where a bite had been marked and a fish taken, and he would drift that area several times before moving on. In effect, a hooked fish may be deep chumming for you.

Close attention to your depthfinder and GPS will greatly aid you in identifying where to start and stop your drifts. Deep drifting is a series of events where paying attention to small details produces

big results. The direction of your drift, as well as the speed, can change without notice and cause a normally productive area to seem devoid of fish, so take note of your speed and direction while drifting an area.

Also while doing this type of fishing, do not ignore the midwater. Baits deployed halfway down are often slammed by wahoo, kings and amberjacks. Groupers and muttons sometimes take drifting baits set at or near the 60-foot level.

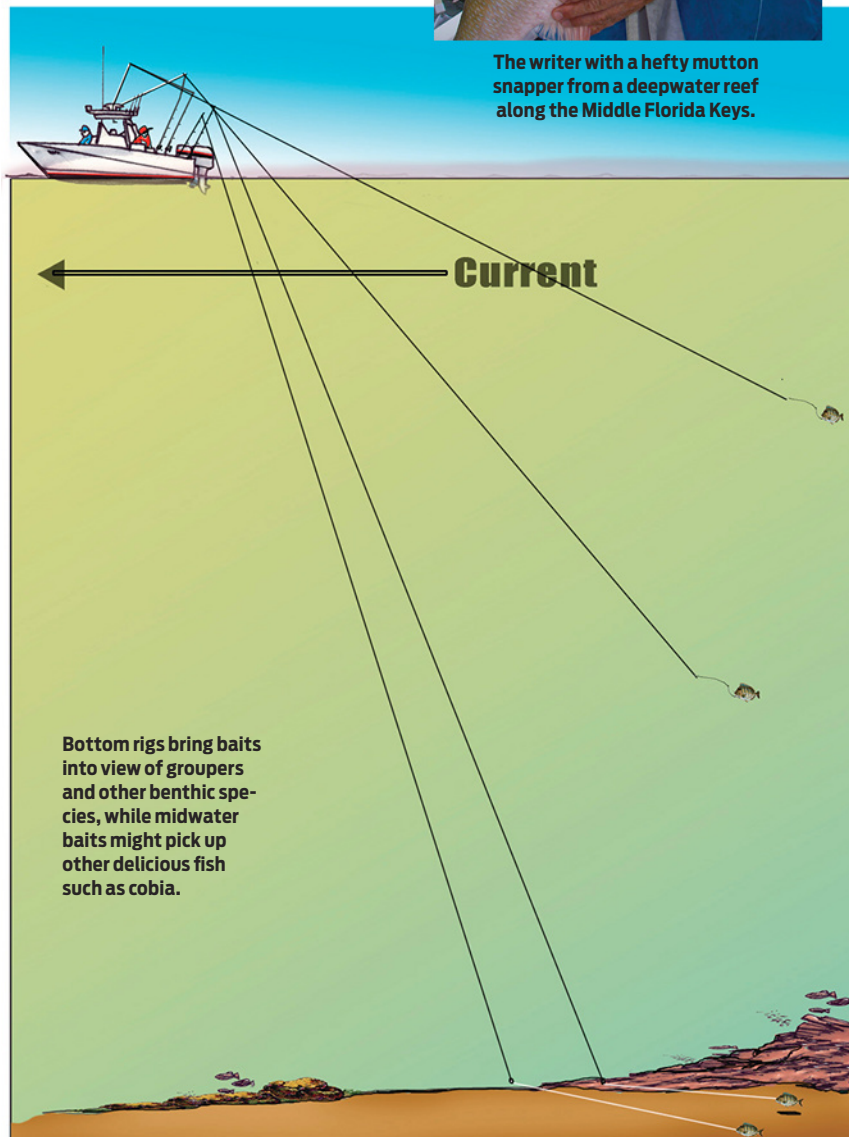
I prefer to set two spinners out on my riggers that have a 14-inch trace of No. 7 wire on them. Captain Brad Simonds of the *Southpaw* out of Key once told me that, "Number 5 wire will break your heart." He was been proven right too many times until I made the switch to the heavier wire. I now save my No. 5 wire for Florida Bay Spanish mackerel, grouper and snappers. Even supposedly picky fish such as sailfish will strike baits on the heavier No. 7 wire.

For live baits, I prefer large pilchards or trap-caught pinfish. The reason for this preference is they have a tendency to slow swim once hooked instead of a panicked swim action that fresh-caught pinfish do and especially blue runners. When you are fishing multiple lines anything you can do to eliminate tangles is a plus, as tangles do nothing but eat time and tackle. Be sure to stagger the baits at different depths when running the mid column baits, as baitfish are schooling fish and tend to run together when they see other. I like the upward line to be at around 20 feet below the surface and the downwind line of the mid column set ups to be the one at or near 60 feet.

I prefer to use the Ultra Point Mustad circle hooks on the mid range rigs because the fish hooks itself in most cases and you simply walk over to the rod and lift it out of the holder and fight the fish while another person reels in the deep setups. Heck, depending on what type of fight you have, many times I allow the deep rods to stay in and this has resulted in multiple hookups of multiple species, which makes for an interesting fire drill in the cockpit. It is usually the experience of the captain that comes into play in these situations. Other anglers on board, if not fighting a fish, should be ready to help land the fish, steer the boat, stay



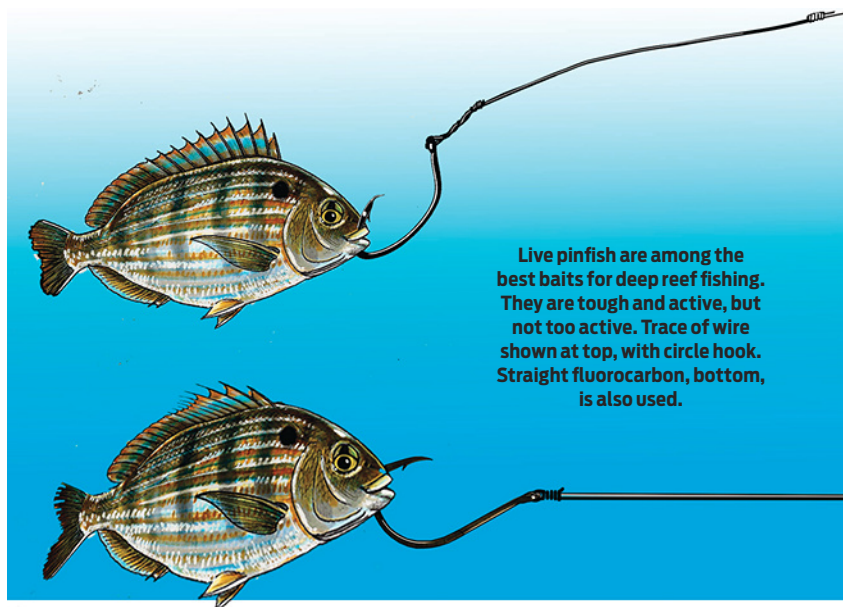
**The writer with a hefty mutton snapper from a deepwater reef along the Middle Florida Keys.**





on the drift line at the time and then help reset all the lines back in for maximum exposure. A practiced crew can do all this in a series of several minutes once they do it for several trips or even several drifts.

I like to use at least 12-foot leaders for several reasons. First,



**Live pinfish are among the best baits for deep reef fishing. They are tough and active, but not too active. Trace of wire shown at top, with circle hook. Straight fluorocarbon, bottom, is also used.**

using a long leader allows for the bait to act more natural the farther away from the sinker it gets. Secondly, when using the lighter leader for the bigger fish the leaders have to be checked on every catch as it does not take much to chafe a 30-pound test leader. You simply cut off about 6 inches of the leader and re-tie your hook on after any catch that chafes or alters the leader in any way. I prefer to not get below 8 feet or so but that still allows for quite a few nice catches to be made before a complete swap is in order. Remember that most chafing occurs near the hook. However, a quick check of the entire leader takes seconds and may save a nice catch from escaping. The leader may be snagged or damaged from an underwater obstruction or a passing toothy fish that slices at it during the initial drop, so pay attention when using the lighter leaders for deep drifting. You want to make sure that entire 30-pound test is working for you when targeting larger fish.

Although you can work the same rigs with 50-pound test, I've found that you get more bites, hence more chances, at landing fish when the lighter leader is used. I always use fluorocarbon both for its strength and for the near-invisibility factor. In the grand scheme of things, fluorocarbon leaders are among the least expensive items needed and used during any saltwater fishing trip. I like the 5/0 and 6/0 hooks by Mustad in black for my bottom rigs because most times there is usually an angler watching each one of these rods intently. The other rigs have the same size black finish 5/0 and 6/0 hooks but they are of the circle hook variety and tend to hook the fish themselves during the strike. Although circle hooks will indeed work for the bottom rigs I prefer the standard hooks for those rigs.

Watching the bottom machine while drifting pays big dividends when deep drifting, as many times new areas are discovered. A piece of structure may be small compared to

the larger area of the reef, but sometimes it's the isolated patch that draws fish seeking prey in deeper waters. Watching the finder also can lead to finding new wrecks or areas that hold or attract fish.

When good-looking spots are noted, jot down the depth and GPS location and specifically target these spots when the current is slow or non-existent. It can really lead to some great catches. I knew one area that produced bites on a stiff current and the same area was a ghost town without any current. Only by trial and error can the angler find out the truth about these spots.

Another great idea when drift fishing is the handy location of a spinning rig or two filled with Power Pro or other braided line to aid in long distance casting. At the business end of these rigs I tie on a surface lure that makes a lot of noise and has a flat nose and some type of rattle inside the lure for extra calling power. I remove the last hook from the surface lure (leave the front hooks alone) and instead tie on an 18-inch section of 30-pound

test mono holding a yellow or white 3-ounce jig to where the back hook was taken off. The topwater splashing attracts any lurking gamefish and the jig trailing below offers both added weight to the casting efforts and serves as a very effective lure either plain or with a small strip bait on the jig for scent. Also, should any fish hit the top water plug the front hooks do a good job of hooking the fish. And many times when fighting a fish that took the surface lure that trailing jig gets hit by followers.

At times a gamefish will present itself on the surface or far back behind the boat while drifting, so watch for wakes or fins out of the water. Cobia during slack tide do this maneuver all the time, as do dolphin and sailfish. Having a rod and reel rigged and ready can make the difference when fish present themselves for that brief moment. Being ready while deep drifting allows a variety of variables to happen and all the while the anglers aboard are ready for them should they present themselves. You cannot expect to rig up a rod and have the fish wait around for you to get the rig ready. You need to be ready for them ahead of time.

Drift speed is important and can easily be tracked by watching your GPS unit. Remember the speed of your drift is an important consideration. Something as elaborate as a drift sock attached to the front of the boat down to a short section of rope and a few 5-gallon pails work just fine to slow down a drift if the current and wind are combining to make your drift a tad too fast. Watch how your baits react up near the boat when it comes to judging the speed of the drift.

Deep drifting is a section of the fishing pie that's a reliable method of pulling larger fish into your boat, but it requires constant monitoring and attention to detail. Paying attention to the small things will put more big things your cooler. I guarantee it. **FS**





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# How to Make a Reef Anchor

Build an inexpensive, customizable rig for temporary holding on foul bottom.

By David McGrath

**T**he modern reef fisherman has many tools at his disposal for holding the boat on the fishing grounds. Electric trolling motors with GPS navigation are a hot ticket, for some. Others depend on strong Danforth, claw and plow-style anchors. Many rig the terminal chain to trip, facilitating retrieval in the event of a hangup (some of those premium anchors are pricey!).

Yet another solution is an inexpensive grapnel-style anchor with sacrificial prongs that straighten with a reasonable amount of

force. This is the style I use fishing the rocky bottom and artificial rubble reefs on Florida's southwest Gulf coast—it's very handy.

A manufactured reef anchor with aluminum prongs can be purchased for between \$50 and \$100.

Or you can make one at home for a fraction of that. Here's one way to do it.

At your local hardware or building supply store, pick up two 4-foot lengths of 3/8-inch rebar and a standard length of 1-inch diameter conduit (shouldn't set you back much more than \$10).

Take one length of the rebar, and using a workbench vise, bend the bar in half, drawing both halves together so it resem-

bles a 2-foot-long bobby pin (cotter pin, if you are too young to have ever seen those black metal hair stays called bobby pins).

Do likewise with the second piece of rebar.

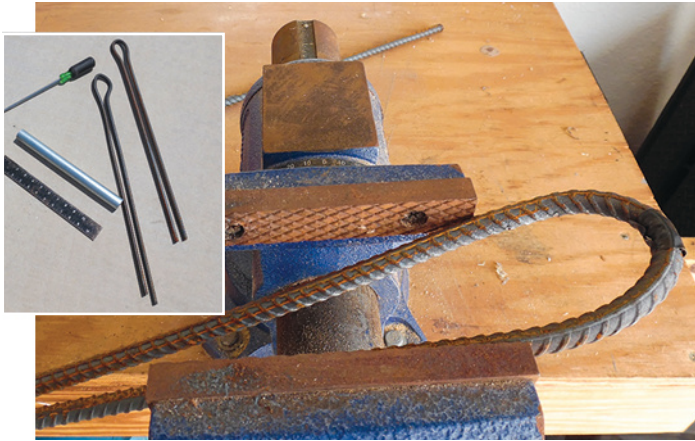
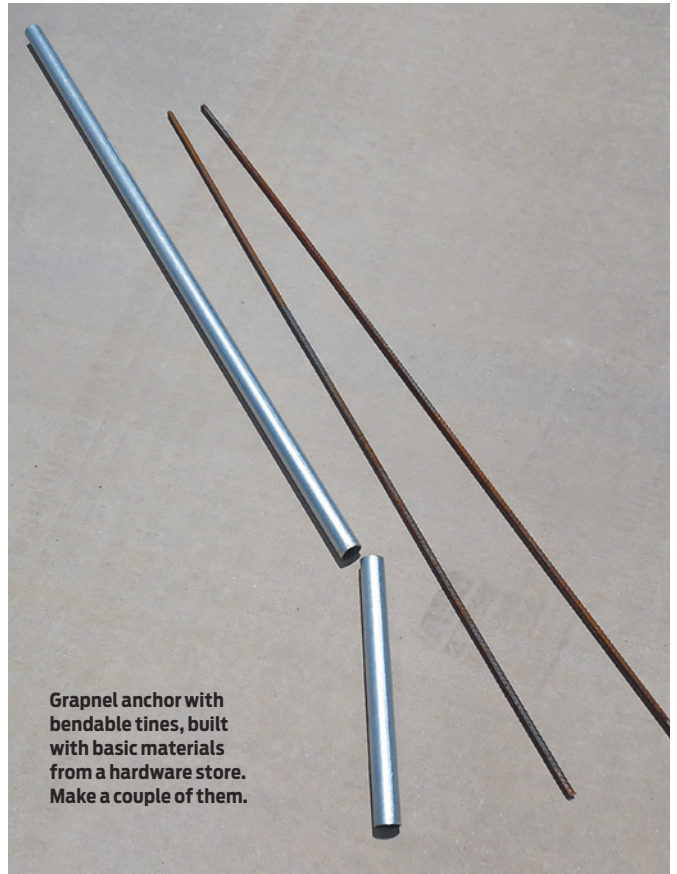
If you don't have a vise, instead of rebar, purchase the more pliable 3/8-inch galvanized threaded bar for pennies more, and bend them manually.

Now jam both bent bars or "cotter pins," feet first, into a 12-inch length of the conduit. Turn it upside down and bang it on your workbench or a block of wood, until both bars are driven as far as they will go through the conduit.

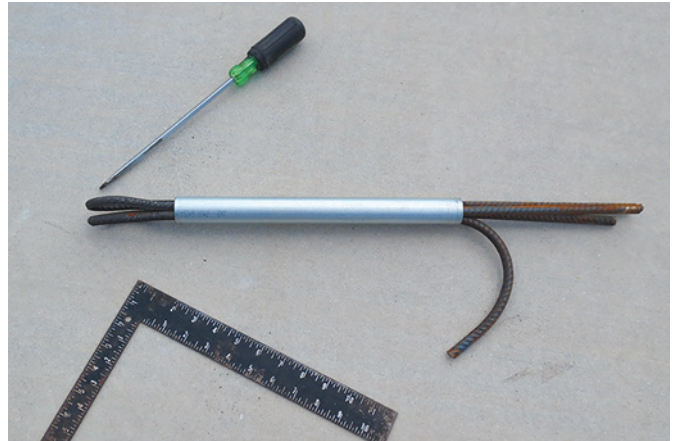
What you end up with are four, 9-inch

*Continued page 20*

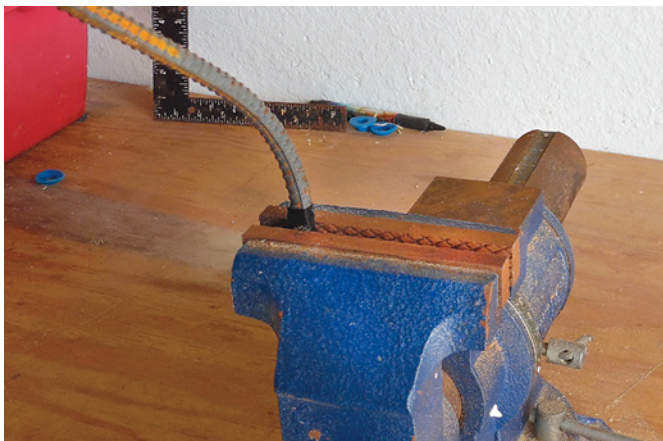




First, double over the rebar using a vise. Squeeze tight to form a kind of cotter pin.



Insert each of the two doubled sections of rebar into a 12-inch section of conduit, as shown.



Back to the vise, to bend and curl each of the bars upward.



Finished product, ready for painting and shackle.



# Reef Anchor

long rebar ends emerging from the bottom of the 12 inches of conduit, with the top two inches of each “cotter pin” protruding like hook eyes.

Bend and curl each of the 9-inch bars upwards, to make evenly spaced hooks that will grab the sea bottom or any part of a manmade reef.

As rebar is prone to rust, paint the finished product with Rustoleum.

Attach an EZ clip to the top, or hook eye,

for fastening a 4-foot chain and anchor rope. The finished product is now a light but effective hook for holding your boat over any kind of manmade reef material.

As with other anchors, if the water is, say, 30 feet deep, let out five times as much rope, or 150 feet in calm or moderate seas. In rougher weather, let out 8 times as much. Anything less, and the bow can pull seaward with considerable force, slamming hard against each swell,

rather than porpoising smoothly.

If your reef anchor gets stuck, a steady vertical pull will cause one or more of the prongs to straighten out and release. In the rare instance that it refuses to dislodge, you can cut the line and “donate” an added piece of material to the underwater reef.

Then make yourself another reef anchor for even less money than the first, with your leftover conduit and two new pieces of rebar. **FS**

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G. Loomis IMX-PRO

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Grundens Deck Boss Sandal



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# A Structured Approach for Blackfins

Methods for catching the small but feisty tunas over deep-water humps, wrecks and other “reefs.”

By Jeff Weakley, Editor





**Fast action off Marathon, Florida Keys: Marc Toledo gaffs a blackfin tuna for Chris Megan, as Bernie Perez, right, hustles to reposition the boat.**

**T**he spectacle of blackfin tuna reacting to a handful of minnows thrown into deep water must be among the most remarkable displays in all of fishing. What these fish are capable of boggles the mind.

In ocean currents swift as the Colorado River, these smallish tunas can identify 3-inch targets two or three hundred feet above them. Racing to the surface, a blackfin somehow manages to process which of the targets is burdened by a hook or too-heavy leader. Streaking through the sapphire depths, straight into the sun, the tuna selects the most natural-looking of the baits, swallows it on the fly and bursts 6 feet out of the water.

Now put yourself at the helm of a center console, looking at a sonar screen. You're in 800 feet of water, and there's a sea mount nearby topping out at 500 feet or so. Tempting as it would be to scrutinize the bottom, your fishing partner has selected only the top half of the water column. This is the Marathon West Hump in May, premier time and place for tunas. By magnifying the view on the 15-inch Garmin screen, the echoes of 20- to 30-pound tunas may become visible on screen. And they do—little red hyphens and commas strewn about at the middle depths.

"We've got tunas!" says the wheel man, Bernie Perez of Miami.

His friend, Marc Toledo of Fort Lauderdale, is standing in the cockpit of the 45 SeaHunter, with a dipnet ready.

Bernie pushes the throttles forward, trying to get upcurrent of the tunas. If we were to stop and drop lines here, where we've marked fish, within seconds we'd be far beyond them. Not even Michael Phelps could keep up.

Holding position at the humps means trolling speed, and in fact many local anglers will deploy artificials while nosing into the current—little black sand eel lures, Rapalas, feathers. The GPS might indicate your vessel is standing still, but to the tunas, the baits appear to be swimming.

Bernie and Marc have their money on the pilchards they've acquired from a friend in Marathon that morning. The plan is to chum up the blackfins.

"Allright, they're back there. Go!"

Bernie says from the helm. Marc pitches a half dozen pilchards behind the boat, and he'll keep doling a few out as he attends to other business. First, Marc lip-hooks two baits with 3/0 Mustad Ultra Point J-hooks on 25-pound leader, tethered to 50-pound braid on 6000-class reels.

"Once they start coming up, I'll start belly-hooking the baits," he says, a method which causes the pilchards to dive. Meanwhile, another netful of chummers: Thrown.

The baits, chip after chip, disappear into the vortex, sucked astern on the choppy sea. It's rolling like a whitewater river behind the boat, the waves jacked up as an easterly wind clashes with the east-bound current. Sooty terns, ever-present on the hump this time of year, screech as they bank into the wind and peel back to where our baits are going. The terns have eyesight even more formidable than the tunas. These pelagic seabirds spot baits from miles away. For that matter, they can probably see clear to their nests at the Dry Tortugas. But today they aren't as quick as the blackfins.

"Whoa! Look at that! They're on 'em!" Marc shouts. Back a few hundred yards: geysers. A couple of black silhouettes arc out of the water, WAY out of the water.

With the other guests on the boat, I squint and marvel at the scene. But then my rod bends and I hear the drag slip. It's the whistle blow to start my wrestling match.

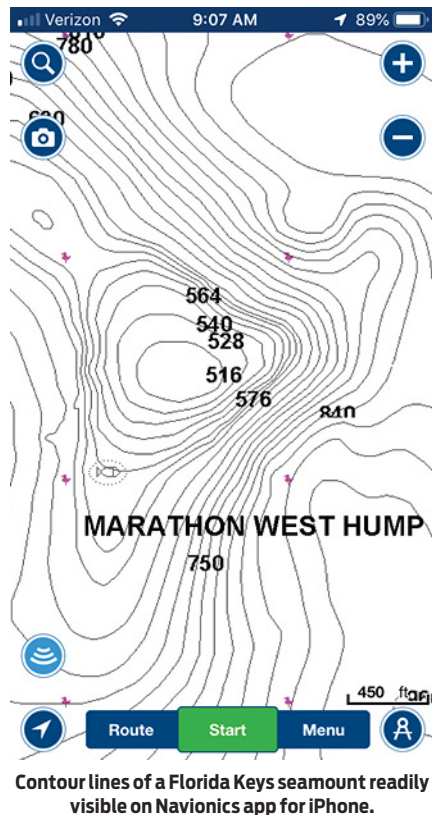


# Blackfins

After making three chumming passes over the hump, we have three fat tunas in the SeaHunter's ice box. There's room for an entire school of them in there, but no need. Three is plenty. We've released three smaller ones, too—two of them taken on lures deployed while repositioning the boat. While there isn't, at present, a minimum size on blackfins, scientists indicate the species reaches maturity at around 16 inches. The little ones come quickly to the boat and once de-hooked, go just as quickly. Blackfins are delicious when eaten fresh. A quick sear on a hot grill or skillet and they hold their own with yellowfin, bluefin, anyfin. Cooked through, the fillets also make an excellent base for tunafish salad or casserole, way better than the canned stuff. But don't bank on freezing them; thawed blackfin is of questionable table quality.

Pilchards, or scaled sardines, are ideal for attracting blackfins over deepwater humps—and of course there are several of these up and down the Florida Keys chain. Background charts from Garmin, Navionics and others will reveal likely spots—look for the tight bathymetric gradients where the humps rise up off the bottom. As already hinted, don't be deceived into thinking you can simply plop your boat on that pinnacle and start catching fish. That Gulf Stream is a raging river.

Shipwrecks, too, are places where blackfins might be lured into biting by a stream of flashy, frisky baits. For as much as blackfins lose their minds over these baits, however, their appetite wanes as the sun crests. Getting there early, or staying



till sundown, is key. Livebait vendors in the Florida Keys (and elsewhere) are well-acquainted with the calculus. If you have a good idea where the pilchard schools are, and can count on getting a couple of quick castnet throws before the sun gets too high, it makes sense to catch your own. Pelicans are your friend—if you see them diving first thing in the morning, good chance they're on the baits. Best scenario is, you've got a few days to fish, you found baits yesterday, you're ready to capitalize on that intel today. A 10- or 12-foot net with quarter-inch mesh and fill 'er up. But if you're flying blind, it may be smart to buy baits. Smarter yet to consult with the local bait guy the day before you're to fish.

What if you don't have pilchards? You have options. Lots of them. I do a lot of fishing on a seamount 12 miles east of St. Lucie Inlet. The depth here goes from 400 feet up to 280 in about a quarter mile, and most days the Gulf Stream races up that slope just as it does on the Marathon Hump. Chumming

pilchards works very well here, when the baits are available (May through October, generally) but deep-jigging with metal jigs (speed jigs, diamond jigs, they all work, basically) is my favorite method. I prefer it for a few reasons—one being that I'm frequently fishing either solo or with just one other angler. It's not practical to steer into the current while attempting to fish with a lean crew (and downright dangerous, if you're solo). Instead, I stop the boat a half mile or more upcurrent, south, of my spot and drift with the current. Tying on jigs of about 5 ounces, we'll freespool until our lures hit bottom or

## Blackfin Management Under Review

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will be meeting this month (July 17-18) in Stuart, FL to review scientific advice and public input on potential management measures for blackfin tuna.

At present, there are no size or bag limits for blackfin, other than the blanket 100 fish or 100 pounds per person max which the state of Florida applies to unregulated species (little tunny, whiting and jack crevalle are some which fall into same category). Neither the federal South Atlantic nor Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils list any regs for blackfins. The fish aren't targeted by the commercial fleets, and the populations appear to be localized in the western North Atlantic.

Scientists have a pretty good idea of the age and size of maturity for blackfin; about half of the fish are reproducing at 16 inches. For species not managed by the federal councils, state limits would extend into adjacent federal waters (beyond 9 miles on the Gulf, 3 miles on the Atlantic).

Maybe a 20-inch minimum, the same as for mahi in Atlantic waters? Perhaps a 2-fish bag limit, same as for wahoo? (Again, blackfins aren't worth stockpiling in the freezer. They just aren't.)

What do you think? Share your thoughts with the FWC, either at a meeting or through the Public Comment link at the commission's Saltwater page.



This immature blackfin (caught on plastic sand eel) was released. Time for a minimum size?

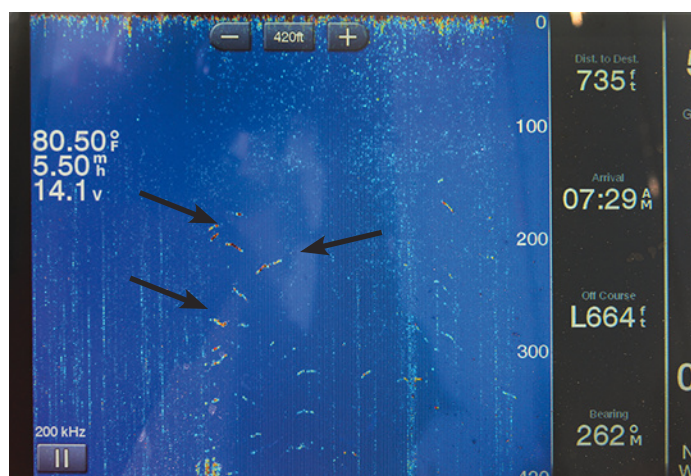


get close, and then retrieve with long, fast whips of the rod tip, reeling quickly the whole time. A little mental trick for this business: Whip and reel that jig as if you're trying to take it away from a fish, trying not to get bit.

Deploying a live bait on a jighead—again, in that 5-ounce range—while drifting is another good tactic. On a recent trip targeting blackfin, the jig-and-bait combo pulled up welcome bycatch—an Atlantic bonito, with light meat, almost like a mini-wahoo.

Posting up over a spot like this with a magnum-grade electric trolling motor is another option. On a friend's 27-foot twin-engine center console, we've live-baited the seamount with a bow-mount, 112-pound-thrust Minn-Kota motor in Spot Lock mode. It's a strange and liberating feeling, sitting there in a 5-knot current, ocean rushing by your boat, your baits flying out behind you. Tricky, though, when the seas are up and your bow is tossing, pulling that prop out of the water.

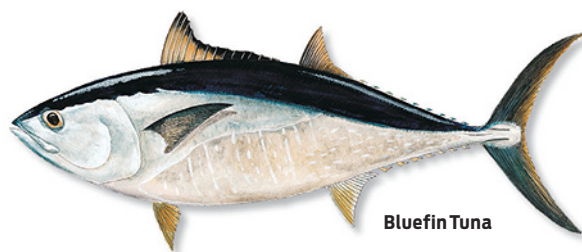
For traditional trolling, productive patterns run the gamut. In the Keys, blackfin anglers are obsessed with tiny lures on very light leader, often fluorocarbon. They troll far back, 100 yards or more. Tackle shops up and down the chain do brisk trade in wispy feathers tied to chrome or stainless darts no larger than the cap of a ballpoint pen. Black, purple, orange, red and combinations thereof are desired. Eel-like soft plastics



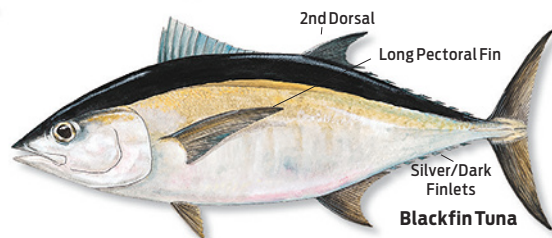
**Marathon Hump blackfin tunas marking on Garmin GPSMAP8215 with GSD26 black box sounder.**

imported from striped bass country are another popular trolling bait. The Redgill is one brand. But I've seen blackfins clobber all manner of lures—Rapala X-Rap Mag 20 divers, the Bonita model from Yo-Zuri, cedar plugs. Just depends on their mood.

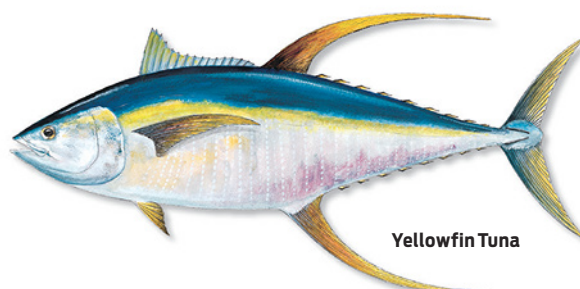
Lastly, anglers fishing for snapper and grouper on wrecks or reefs in conventional anchor depths (70 to 120 feet or so) should always be aware of the potential for blackfin tuna. Always send out a live pinfish, pilchard, herring or other bait on a flatline. Scaling back on the leader, and avoiding wire, is one way to encourage tuna bites, but also means you might miss that rogue wahoo that's prowling the reef. It's a calculation you'll have to make. I like very light singlestrand wire, the Number 4 size, and I use only about 12 inches of it at the terminus of a long, monofilament or fluorocarbon leader of 40-pound test or so. The short piece of wire doesn't seem to deter bites. **FS**



**Bluefin Tuna**



**Blackfin Tuna**



**Yellowfin Tuna**



**Bigeye Tuna**

## Telling Tunas

There are a few other tunas which, at size, might be misidentified as blackfin in Florida's offshore waters: Yellowfin, bluefin and bigeye. The blackfin is far and away more common in our waters, and at maturity (20-30 lbs.) is diminutive by comparison to the others.

### TWO MAIN THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

One, look at the small "finlets" on the underside of the tail. On the blackfin tuna, these ventral finlets will be silvery or dark, not yellow. (The top finlets may be yellow, however—hence a source of confusion with yellowfin.)

Two, look at the pectoral, or side, fins. The blackfin has long pectoral fins; laid flush alongside the body, the tip reaches the second dorsal fin.

Juvenile bluefin and yellowfin tunas are sometimes encountered near schools of blackfin. These two larger, highly migratory tunas are known to spawn in the Gulf of Mexico, and their fast-growing offspring sometimes mingle with other tunas. Both have yellow ventral (underside) finlets. The bluefin has short pectoral fins.

Differentiating among these species is very important, as there is a minimum size for yellowfin, bluefin and the somewhat rare bigeye (27 inches). Also, a NOAA Highly Migratory Species (HMS) permit is required to land these three. (Bluefin are subject to additional size and seasonal limits; consult NOAA HMS website for full details.)





# Wake Up the Bite

Use the dredge  
teaser to pull fish  
into your trolling  
spread.

By Rick Ryals



Dredge teaser with  
six arms and squid  
array, trailing a “mud  
flap” tuna silhouette.  
Heavy weight will  
be snapped to front  
and the rig pulled off  
downrigger, stocky  
rod or possibly a  
sturdy outrigger.



**M**y southern pride makes it difficult for me to believe any good fishing ideas ever came from north of the Mason

Dixon line, but anyway you cut it, the concepts of “dredges” or “niners” as they were called up north from whence they came, made their first appearance in the yankee striper fishery.

Roland Beamish of Beamish Custom Tackle says they first started showing up as umbrellas with several tube baits imitating schools of sand eels off Montauk, New York. They were usually pulled on wire lines, and were the downfall of many a trophy striper.

There’s plenty of stories about how they made their way to the Florida sailfish scene. I just wish I had been smart enough to know what I was looking at some 35 years ago when I saw Capt. Chip Schaeffer aboard the *Temptress* pulling one off Fort Pierce during the winter sailfish run. What I did see was him running up 10 sailfish flags to every one of mine.

The original dredges in the Florida fishery were natural and almost always made with silver mullet. There’s plenty of debate about who first started the art form of prepping a mullet for use on the dredge, but I can promise you it’s an art form. The masters can wedge a mullet’s head, and leaving nothing but two tough sides with tails dancing a dance that sailfish can’t resist. The first dredges I ever saw had a dozen mullet hanging from a six bar dredge. It wasn’t long before the top sailfish guns were pulling one bar ahead of another, doubling the dredges, and pulling them from the bridge on electric reels, with a pulley system designed so the line went from the reel through a pulley on the lower part of the outrigger. A second pulley is attached to the head of the dredge, and the line off the reel was run through both pulley’s, then back to the base of the outrigger. I have been aboard tournament boats that went through 200 mullet during the course of a competitive fishing day. Now give that a thought. Trolling next to a boat that is pulling an extra 100 baits is going to make things difficult for you.

On the downside is the \$5 average price of per mullet. Take cost and labor into ac-

## Consider how much room you have to store it, and how you plan to deploy it.



**Mylar strip teasers are very effective, and particularly so at idle/slow-speed livebait troll. Also easy to store.**

count it’s easy to see why a better idea was necessary for small boats to be able to cash in on the “new standard” for raising billfish.

It wasn’t long before companies like Williamson and Bully Hoo started building dredges made out of rubber baits. Now, while they were effective, they were still just too cumbersome for most small boats, not to mention they were heavy, and usually required a downrigger to work as a small boat version of an electric teaser reel.

Today, the small boat dredge market has exploded. Strip teasers, which are simply clear mylar with fish stickers in between two clear strips, can be stored in the bag your mono leader comes in. Also popular are rubber squid and mud flaps (small rubber cutouts of baby tuna) and combinations thereof. One of the reasons strip teasers have become so popular is because they are the only dredges I’ve ever seen that look

great at the dead crawl speed required for trolling with live bait.

What has to be considered in picking out an artificial dredge for your small boat, is how much room you have to store it, and how you plan to deploy it. Squidnation has become a major player in the dredge industry, making everything from big boat dredges full of dozens of rubber squid, to small boat dredges designed to store in a 5-gallon bucket. For most small boats a combination of mylar fish strips and strings of rubber squids hanging off six, 24-inch arms rigged on 250-pound-test mono is a great imitation of a ball of bait.

Dredges are all about attracting attention. Anybody who has watched videos of bluewater predators working a school of baits understands that predators corral baitfish into a ball, but it’s the stragglers just out of the pack that they feed on. Keep that in mind when selecting what type of dredge to buy for your family boat. For sheer volume it’s impossible to beat a cluster of mylar strips, a strip teaser. Mine has 72 “fish” stamped on it, and I have had sailfish go crazy trying to figure out just what in the world it is.

I know my strip teaser and rubber squids work, but I also know that any pro that competes in major billfish tournament will tell you that the 100 mullet tails beating a steady drumbeat through the water is almost impossible

to duplicate. I recently caught up with noted tournament angler Paul Dozier who blamed a recent tough tournament day on his dredge: “I think we brined our fresh dredge mullet a little too long. They just didn’t swim like they should.”

I’m going to continue to experiment with a combination of mylar strips and swimming rubber tails until I find a combination I’m happy with. I have to be able to pull it off my outrigger, and pull it easily on a manual teaser reel. Swimming shad tails on three arms of my dredge with three mylar strips on the other three arms is my current favorite.

Just remember, if you decide a dredge is just too much trouble to mess with, you’re bound to find yourself trolling near a boat that is pulling 100 baits as opposed to your five.

I wonder which boat will have a better chance of attracting fish. **FS**



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**Editor's Note:** How many anglers have achieved the Billfish Royal Slam? Hard to say for sure. At press time, the number of "official" entries in the International Game Fish

## All Nine Billfish Made Easy



Association book stood at 196, reflecting entries approved by IGFA since 2002. At least one noteworthy mark is missing from that list, however: Florida Sportsman writer Don Mann, of Miami, is widely credited as having been the first to document catching all nine billfish species in one year. The magazine published a series of articles in 1987, in which Mann chronicled his catches and provided valuable advice to anglers. Mann, who worked in pharmaceutical sales before retiring to write about big-game fishing, passed away in 2004.



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**AN OUTDOOR  
HAPPENING**

# A Royal Quest

Florida man catches the Billfish Royal Slam, 9 species, in one year.

By Trent Glaub

**I**n March 2018, my wife Stacy, our 7-year-old daughter Marlynn and I traveled from our home in North Palm Beach to Los Sueños, Costa Rica. On our second day, with Capt. Randall on the *Go Fish*, we were slow-trolling small tunas. We had a bite right away and my wife caught a jack. I was letting out another bait on 30-pound standup tackle when I got a bite. I started cranking, assuming it was another jack, but then a huge dorsal fin broke the service and Randall, in Spanish, yelled, "Negro! Negro!" It was a black marlin we estimated at 400 pounds—my first!

After that, I was addicted to marlin fishing, and set a goal to catch all five species.

The next would come at the Mike Schmidt Winners Circle Charities Tournament out of Old Bahama Bay, Grand Bahama. I was fishing with my normal tournament team with Capt. Joe Garbo on the *Fragrant Harbor*. I caught a white marlin while trolling and I had Phillies Hall of Fame third baseman Mike Schmidt sign my release flag and pose for photos.

The prospect of the Royal Slam entered my mind.

In Hawaii for a family vacation in June, I fished with Capt. Kevin Hibbard on the *Divergent* to tag my first Pacific blue, estimated at 500 pounds.

Three species down and still looking for the Atlantic blue, I fished the Bahamas and pulled hooks and broke a line. I fished Puerto Rico with no luck. In the Dominican Republic in September, we raise 7 blues, I hook 5 of them and go 0-5. The curse of the Atlantic blue!

October rolls around and back to Puerto Rico, for the San Juan International Billfish Tournament. It's four days of fishing and you are a rotating angler on a different boat each day. Final day I am aboard the *Heavy Duty* from Arecibo. We get a fish up in the spread pretty early. The crew pulls the teasers out and the blue makes the switch to my lure and I'm hooked up and

soon releasing my Atlantic blue marlin.

In December, on a trip to Mexico, we targeted striped marlin out of Cabo aboard the *Rebecca*. The ocean was alive with birds and porpoises balling schools of bait. Soon we were dip-netting sardines, hooking them and pitching them to catch striped marlin, nonstop. My daughter caught 6, my wife caught 4 and I caught 10.

With the holidays approaching, as well as my 40th birthday, which is December 25, I decided to take the

girls to Casa Vieja Lodge in Guatemala. Fishing with Capt. Niko aboard the *A-FIN-ITY*, I quickly knocked Pacific sailfish off the list and we went on to catch sailfish after sailfish, with Stacy and Marlynn sometimes having two on at once.

Atlantic sailfish? Piece of cake. I've been fishing sailfish tournaments in South Florida for years. I've fished the Silver Sailfish Derby with Capt. Joe Garbo for the last 13 years and this year we finally won it by 1 fish. It was very special



Trent Glaub, one of relatively few anglers to reel in the Billfish Royal Slam: "In the end, it is all about the journey and the friendships made along the way." That's Trent at top right, with spearfish.

and that is why I choose to count this sailfish toward the Billfish Royal Slam.

Approaching one year from when I caught the black marlin, I needed a swordfish and a spearfish.

Perfect Florida swordfish weather on February 16. It's a beautiful night, just me, my 32 Intrepid *No Worries* and my buddy Connor McKee. We get a bite, and I pick up the reel. The fish is swimming to the surface, and I crank as it swims up. It swims into the light: It's a big fish and it takes off straight for the bottom, dumping my Shimano Tiagra 50W.

We had our hands full that night. Turned out to be a real nice fish, 74 inches and 180 to 220 pounds.

With only one fish left, the girls and I went back to Kona, Hawaii, to fish aboard the *Huntress* with Capt. Steve Epstein at the helm and my good friend Capt. Kevin Hibbard in the cockpit. Not long after lines in, I have my spearfish and my Billfish Royal Slam in just under a year, 361 days! **FS**



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