

"Because Everybody's Got A Fishing Story To Tell!"

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April 2021 • Space Coast

BITE ME!

Gib Dannehower and James Fleenor had a big day chasing tuna on the other side. The pair racked up 11 yellowfin in the 50 to 70-pound range. Here, they show one of the big ones that got devoured by a shark.

OVER 50
GREAT
PHOTOS
INSIDE!



SCAN ME

Your best fishing pictures of the month from saltwater to freshwater. Remember, there's nothing wrong with bragging!



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L/R: Cody Hagle, Andy Kraus, and Michael Melhado with a hard-earned swordfish caught during an overnight trip out of Sebastian.



BY ANDY KRAUS, PUBLISHER

Dog Gone It!

Wednesday morning. The message hit my inbox.

Hey buddy, when are you up to go fishing?

(My first thought - Always.) But life doesn't always allow it.

This was February 24th, the day the March edition of *BIG Bragger* was going to press. Fortunately, it was all but wrapped up.

Next message hit my inbox.

You think you can pull off an overnight trip? Starting tonight? Try to do nighttime swordfishing tonight and be on the tuna grounds at day break.

(No brainer.) I'm in!

I met the crew at the dock, six guys (including me) at 3:30pm in Merritt Island and we cruised down to Sebastian to have dinner at Captain Butcher's. The owner of the restaurant, Michael Melhado (also owner of River Rocks) was part of the crew that day and treated us to a nice spread.



Captain Butcher's is located at 1732 Indian River Dr, Sebastian, FL.

I was sitting there, riverside, and we all realized the wind was blowing a bit harder than forecasted. It'll die down.

After fueling up, it was time to head off-shore. We put our waterproof gear on while nearly all of the outdoor customers watched us. Half seemed jealous; half looking at us like we were crazy.



Secret fueling tip from the pros!



FREE

BIG Bragger

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Big Bragger is a monthly publication serving the Space Coast in Brevard County, Florida. Residents are encouraged to email their great fishing pictures to andykraus@live.com to be considered for publication. BIG Bragger/Andrew Kraus LLC not responsible for typographical errors or omissions. Reproduction of any materials in this publication without written approval from the publisher is prohibited.



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(Continued from page 4)

As the sun set behind us, we cleared the inlet and headed for the sword grounds. The wind made the trip out slower than expected but we pushed on and arrived.

This was my first time swordfishing and it's a little more complex than what I'm used to.

We got the drift sock deployed and lights set up. The rigging was lead by Captain Wade Stafford. Then he warned me - this is either the most boring fishing you'll ever do, or the most exciting.

The lines went in strategically staggered at various depths and distances and we were in the game.



The sun set behind us as we made our way out of Sebastian Inlet.

The hits came sporadically throughout the night. Strikes apparent by short, quick drag pulls. (It's toying with the bait.) We tried different techniques to fire up the sword and elicit a strike. Initially, no hook ups. Then it got quiet for a while.

The silence, wind, and rock of the ocean created the inevitable - nap time.

The on-and-off-kinda half sleeping, half waiting for a strike lasted for a while until I couldn't tell if I was being woken up by saltwater blowing over the gunnels, or rain. I groggily made my way over to the doppler and saw it was the only rain cloud in the Atlantic.

Either way, it was perfect timing as Michael had just come tight on a sword! This was 3:30am. The fish hit the shallowest bait off the bow and took an initial long, deep run.

From there it was a back-and-forth battle of gain line, lose line, until he finally came up to the surface. Stafford stuck it with the harpoon and we dragged it in the side door.

We celebrated, took some pictures, got him on ice, and sent another bait down - hoping to catch more, and bigger. Initially, we were

using squid for bait but this catch came on a ladyfish.



A nighttime sword hits the deck and gets the crew fired up!

The wind was just excited and refused to let up. It was a consensus by all of us that the conditions were not ideal to go further and hunt for tuna.

But if it calmed down at sunrise, we'd do some deep dropping for yellowedge group-er and tiles. No such luck.

We headed in, and like some days of fishing, it could've been better, and it could've been worse. Going out and getting back safely can never be taken for granted. And we caught a nice sword!

Back at the dock, the radio was still on and we heard someone offshore make a comment about the forecast being wrong about the wind. We all laughed and headed home with solid slabs of sword.

I've never been a huge fan of the taste of swordfish, but I brought some to a family gathering and we all agreed it was superior to any other times we've had it! The keys - simple seasoning, grill it, and more importantly - it was fresh!

A day later, I fired up the Big Green Egg to cook the remaining fillets. I cut the blood-lines out, rinsed and dried every piece, seasoned both sides and headed outside to check on the coals.



Swordfish fillets cleaned and ready for seasoning and the grill!

The lesson here - don't leave fish on the edge of the counter with two lurking dogs. While I was outside, my dogs Max and Lucy helped themselves to the entire front row of fillets.

Major bummer.

The look they gave me let me know that my *entire* family now supports me going fishing. I was only gone for a minute, but they worked as swiftly as the wind.

It turns out, the dog is mightier than the sword.

And their coats have never looked better!



L/R: Lucy and Max pretend they're ashamed, but would do it again in a heartbeat.



Another swordfish trophy for the dock and room for more!



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During the off-season, Detroit Tigers pitcher David McKay of Merritt Island, enjoys spending his free time fishing. David proudly shows off this big, beautiful red.

Major League Red!



Then & Now



Richard Raiter of Indialantic holds up a monster 30-pound snook he caught circa 1980s (the shorts gave it away). Then, not too long ago, Richard returned to the beach and landed a 27-pounder he released. The slot size on snook have come a long way in 25 years, and so have men's shorts!



BACK TO BACK!

Florida Captain Monica Flesher has a little fun lifting two Atlantic giants at one time. Definitely a feat of strength!

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“I Wanted A Puppy”



Caleb Couture’s daughter, River, holding a nice blue crab her father brought home. See dad’s monster he caught on page 30!



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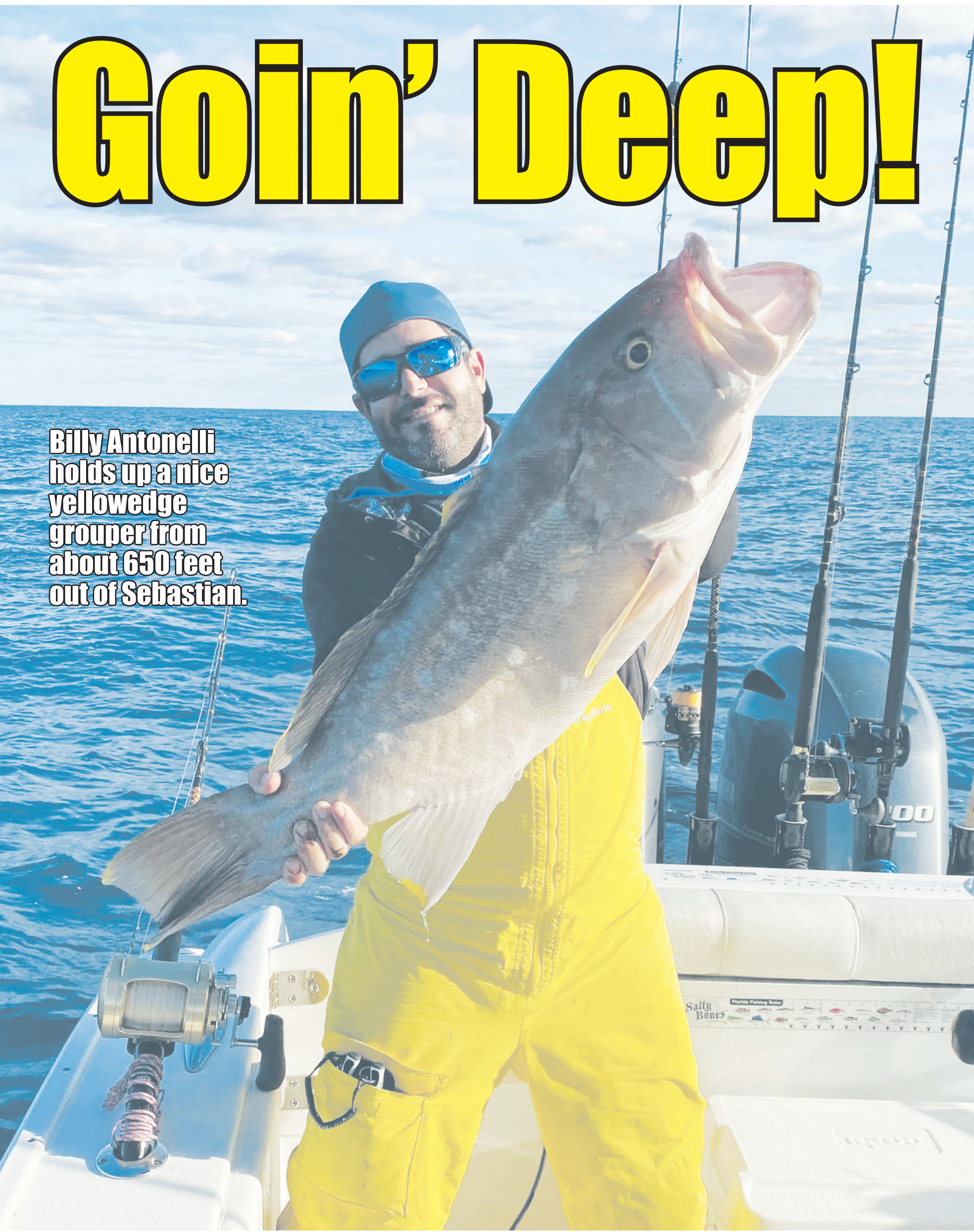


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Goin' Deep!

Billy Antonelli holds up a nice yellowedge grouper from about 650 feet out of Sebastian.



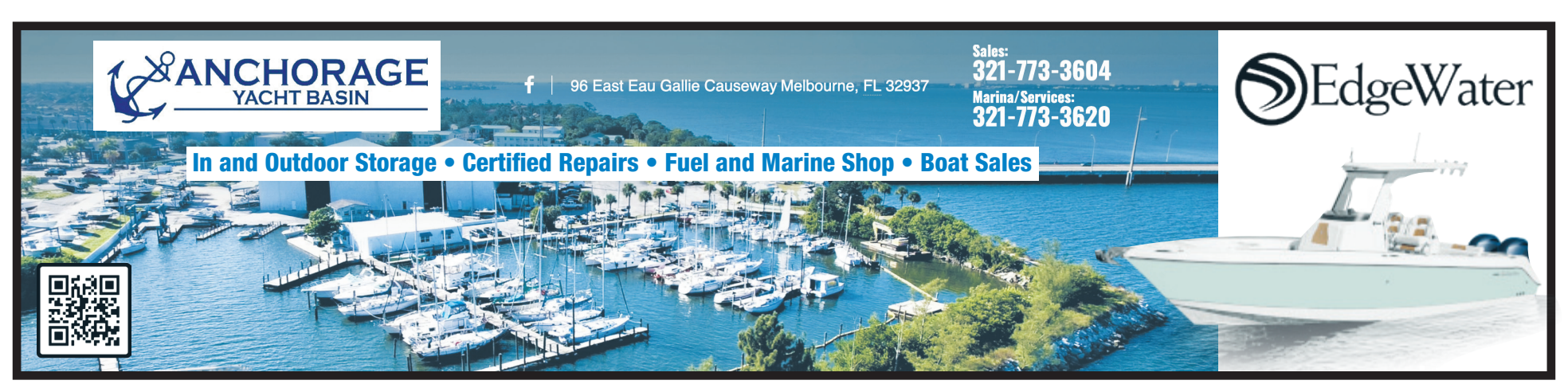
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Secret Spot



Father and son FSFA members, Mike and Alex Krenn, fish another one of their secret spots for drum.

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Now That's GOLIATH!



FROM THE TV SERIES *RIVER MONSTERS*

Mason Boyland of Melbourne hauls in this goliath grouper on the TV series *River Monsters*. Caught in Ft. Pierce, Mason estimated this beast weighed in at over 300 pounds. He used a chunk of bonito for bait. The rod was custom built by Mason and the reel was a Penn Senator 12/0, spooled with 100-lb mono and a 15 foot cable leader. Mason added that a 10/0 Gamagatsu J hook did the job! The fish was caught in May 2011.

SKIN IT!
1. Break off beak and go tip-to-tip.
2. Roll it on.
3. Cover your 'ho!

STICK IT!
1. Align pin rig and hook with 'ho.
2. Stick pin through underside of 'ho and bring hook to side.

SCREW IT!
1. Thread coil of pin rig onto pin.
2. Screw coil tightly onto head.
Dredge Rig will look like this.

HAPPY ENDING!

NAKED!
Chin weight secured by rubber band.



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BEACH CASTERS!



Father and son, Ed and Ken Caro, spend the late morning together fishing for pompano on Satellite Beach. Ken rakes in the sand fleas and Ed prepares the bait for action. First hour no luck, but it's great to see father and son spending time together. Ed lives in Viera and Ken is from Oviedo.



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Abram "Tarzan" Miller strikes a pose with this tilefish caught in about 600 feet out of Sebastian!

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

By Tarzan Miller

The bite has been hot inshore and in the surf! As for the inshore fishing, shrimp is still a good bait of choice but the spring mullet are making their way into river.

When fishing the flats, you will see jacks smoking the bait pods. There are usually bigger predatory fish following those jacks with the bait pods. There's always a red or two, or three as well.

Another fun option when seeing the jacks is to throw any artificial that you have. The jacks will smoke it and take you on a fun ride!

The trout bite is still hot and topwater plugs are working for them. If you find a deep hole in shallow water you may find a trout lurking in there.

In the surf you will find giant whiting and some nice pompano in the mix. Pompano have been a little more difficult to come by this month, but they are out there. The whiting have been hot and super easy to target. I've had a lot of luck using fishbites and fresh clams!



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This conservation-minded program is open to the public and teaches children casting, rod safety, knot tying, tackle box, boating, and conservation. HKOF is taught by volunteers who are professional guides and knowledgeable anglers from surrounding communities and directed by AFC staff.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Satellite Beach
 Date: Saturday April 10
 Time: 9:00am - 11:00am
 Location: Satellite Beach Sports Complex
 751 Jamaica Boulevard

Palm Bay
 Date: Saturday May 1
 Time: 9:00am - 11:00am
 Location: Goode Park
 1300 Bianca Drive NE

Space is limited and required by visiting:
AnglersForConservation.org/events

All registered kids will receive a free rod/reel and tackle box thanks to the Fish Florida Tag!



The Hook Kids on Fishing program is a product of the Anglers for Conservation, a non-profit-501-C3 with a mission to inspire new generations of marine stewards through education, conservation, and fishing.



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Lovin' Them Lobster

Uncle Michael Thompson of CoCoa Beach was diving with his brother Capt. Graham Thompson and his nephew, Finn. "It's a family affair! Winter, spring, summer or fall, they dive for it all," explains Tracy Dix, mother and grandma!

You Hook'em - We'll Cook'em!

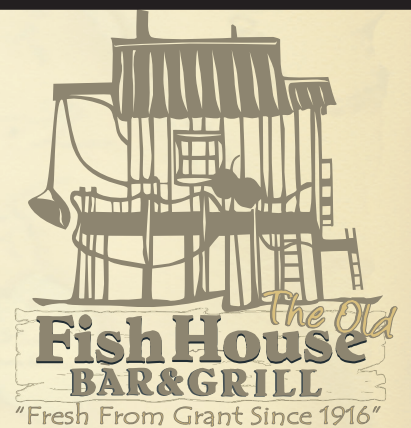
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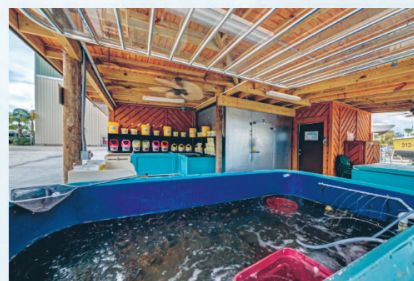
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Mincey Magic!

Bryan Mincey, owner of *Southern Thunder Charters*, makes it look easy as he holds up this good size kingfish.



Tripletail Time



Mark Hinds and his buddy Joseph Zampogna hold the tripletail they caught on a buoy right out of Port Canaveral.

Holy Mackerel!

John Dobbins of Palm Bay caught this mackerel in the flats off of Loggerheads/Grand Harbor, Vero. It was caught on a top water, Storm Chug Bug. The fish was 25.4 inches.



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Around the Waterways!



Lee!

Lee Mitchell used a live shrimp to catch this mangrove snapper.



Skyla!

Skyla Der celebrates her birthday fishing out of Port Canaveral.



Graham!

Graham Thompson is gleaming with lobster joy!



Micah!

Micah McQuaig lands and releases a black grouper in the Keys!



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Jason Brimmer battled this huge red from the north seawall under Pineda Causeway. The fish hit a live mullet and Jason measured it at 52 inches!

SWORDFISH

Featured Species Of The Month



Swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*), also known as broadbills in some countries, are large, highly migratory, predatory fish characterized by a long, flat, pointed bill. They are a popular sport fish of the billfish category, though elusive. Swordfish are elongated, round-bodied, and lose all teeth and scales by adulthood. These fish are found widely in tropical and temperate parts of the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans, and can typically be found from near the surface to a depth of 1,800 ft. They commonly reach 9.8 ft in length, and the maximum reported is 14.9 ft in length and 1,430 lb in weight.

Popular belief of the "sword" being used as a spear is misleading. Their nose is more likely used to slash at its prey to injure the prey animal, to make for an easier catch.

Various ways are used to fish for swordfish, but the most common is deep-drop fishing, since swordfish spend most daylight hours very deep, in the deep scattering layer. Swordfishing requires strong fishing rods and reels, as swordfish can become quite large, and it's not uncommon to use five pounds or more of weight to get the baits deep enough during the day, up to 1,500 ft is common. Night fishing baits are usually fished much shallower, often less than 300 ft. Standard baits are whole mackerel, herring, mullet, bonito, or squid. Imitation squids and other imitation lures can also be used. Specialized lures made for swordfishing often have battery-powered or glow lights.

Swordfish are classified as an oily fish. The flesh of some can acquire an orange tint, reportedly from their diet of shrimp or other prey. Such fish are sold as "pumpkin swordfish", and command a premium over their whitish counterparts. It's a popular fish for cooking. Since they are large, meat is usually sold as steaks and are often grilled. The meat is relatively firm. It can be cooked in ways more fragile types can't, such as over a grill on skewers.

Courtesy Wikipedia

Perfect Release!



Fisher Freeman of Indialantic caught this awesome snook on an 8-inch croaker. He fought it on a Cabo 60 with an Ugly Stick.



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James Roemer

A man with a beard and a blue cap is smiling while holding a large, shiny fish. He is wearing a light green shirt and a white neck gaiter. The fish is held horizontally, showing its side profile. The background shows the side of a boat and a tiled roof.

Andy Kraus holding a 20-pound dolphin last June. Someone on his crew asked when fighting, "Is it Big?" Andy responded, "This dolphin has a Hemi!"

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Batten 1000%



Will Batten knows how to swing for the fences and bring home the big ones! Here's just two of his recent trophy-sized winners.

Two Hour Beach BATTLE!



Ron Maio spent 2 hours on the shores of Indialantic reeling in this 5' spinner shark on only 15-pound test line.

Ocean 11 Studios
RON MAIO

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Grilled Swordfish With Herbs & Butter Sauce

By Jilly's Kitchen

Marinade:
Extra virgin olive oil, minced garlic, lemon zest, Italian seasoning, ground pepper and Hawaiian Red Sea salt.

Marinate swordfish for thirty minutes using half of the marinade. With the other half, add freshly squeezed lemon juice and freshly chopped Italian flat leaf parsley. Set aside.



Grill swordfish to taste. Depending on size, usually 3 to 4 minutes each side. Do not overcook.



Spoon remaining marinade over swordfish during last minute of grilling on each side. After plating, add a slice of butter to each piece of fish and remaining marinade.



Grilled plantains are a tasty side! Pairs well with Santa Margherita Pinot Grigio.

Enjoy!



WALK-ON'S

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Aboard *The Smithereens!*



It was Saturday, February 27th out of Port Canaveral when the Smith family, aboard their boat *The Smithereens*, celebrated Dad's (Scott) birthday, pulling in one after another, according to family members aboard.

Top photo L/R: Scott Smith and his 3 sons Dan, Jake and AJ. Left photo: The girls are their better halves Lori, Cory and Jen. Both guys and girls reeled in sails!

The Smiths released all sails successfully.



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Brevard resident, Caleb Couture can barely lift this massive 264-pound Warsaw grouper he caught off of Key West several years ago. Couture was with Captain DJ Wood aboard the *Papa Wood*. The grouper hit a large piece of squid wing.

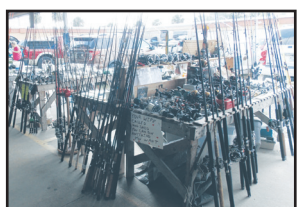
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