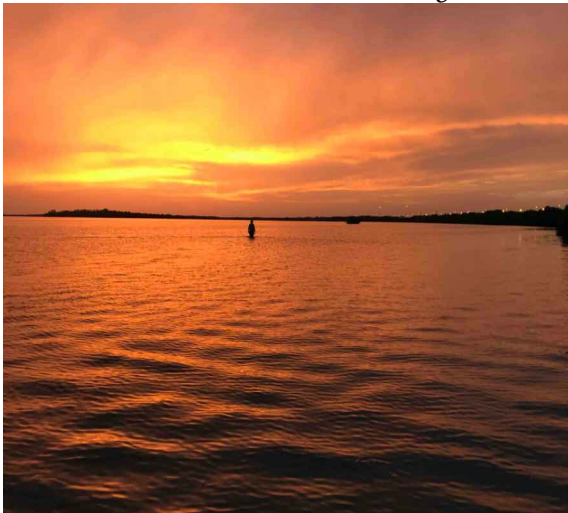


# On The Fly

Newsletter of the Suncoast Fly Fishers of St. Petersburg

Oh what a beautiful morning P 7



Tarpon experts tell all P 8-11



© Diane Peebles

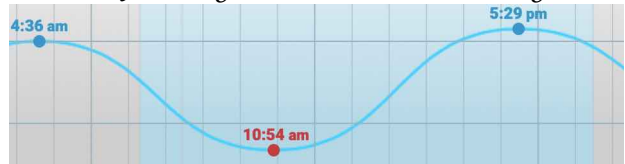
Bruce's fly of the month P 18



Smitty's fly of the month P 17



Gandy Bridge tides for the outing P6



Old fishing photos: Can you name these club members? P 21





## *President's Letter, September 2020*

Suncoast Fly Fishers,

It's September and that signals the start of our 2020 membership drive. That means it is time for existing members to renew. It's also time to invite all of the local fly fishermen and anyone who has an interest in fly fishing, fly casting or fly tying to join our club.

It might even be a good time to hold an open house so we can show any prospective members the joy of gathering together to tell stories, renew old friendships, learn the best places to fish and the best ways to catch them, spend a day on the water together and to relish the comradery that is derived through personal interactions with an exceptional cast of characters. We could even let them in on the secret that what we really are is an eating club with a fishing addiction. The problem is that our house isn't yet completely open.

We are not able to hold meetings in person and we are not yet sharing meals at our outings but we are taking some creative measures to stay relevant and we still have a lot to offer. The SFF board is working harder than ever. We have a regular board meeting once a month on ZOOM but we also have numerous side meetings and share phone calls to work on club issues. In addition, we have many committees working to keep the club going and I am proud of all that has been accomplished.

After suspending all club activities for March and April we started getting back in operation with a virtual outing in May and our regular dock light and beach fishing outing in June. Since then we have been scheduling regular monthly outings without our normal group lunch. We can still gather together in the parking lot at first light as we rig our rods and prepare to fish. It is a pleasure to look down a shoreline to see a string of fishermen stretched out over a half mile plying the water socially with a long rod. And we can share a few moments of comradery at the start and end of the day social distanced and brimming with anticipation as we leave to fish and satisfaction as we return.

We hosted our first ever digital dock light panel on Facebook Live, launched a brand new website, started having our member meetings using ZOOM video conferencing, we started a series of fly tying videos on Facebook featuring Bruce Evensen and we had the world's most entertaining and informative panel discussion on tarpon at our last member meeting. We have increased our social media footprint by 1000 fold. You can find us online on these websites:

Club website: <https://suncoastflyfishers.com>

Facebook website: <https://www.facebook.com/scff2020/>

Club You Tube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCX1AWZ32-vjZTzEfCHJfkkQ/>

In November, world renown Olympic skier, expert fly fisherman and author of [A Passion for Tarpon](#), Andy Mill will be the guest speaker at our ZOOM member meeting.

I whole heartedly encourage you to join the club, renew your membership and participate in everything that we have to offer. Tune in to our ZOOM meetings, watch our videos and come out to our outings. SFF is doing great things now. Just wait until once again we can do it all in person!

Stay safe and keep fishing!

*Rick* Rick Warfel, SFF President

## Meetings, Outings, and More

### **ZOOM in on September**

#### **Thursday, September 17, 7 pm**

- Plan to be in front of your computer at 6:45 pm and sign in for the September meeting on ZOOM. Members will get an email with sign-in instructions.
  - President Rick Warfel will update members on all the need-to-know info including future meetings and outings and when the Covid-19 virus will give us permission to meet again in person.
  - Heads up: If it's September, that means it's membership renewal time. More info below.
  - Our September meeting speaker will be Capt. Pat Damico including one of his always entertaining and informative Q&A sessions. BTW, read the newsletter very carefully. We are going to have a fun game of newsletter trivia at the next meeting.
  - If you're attending the Zoom meeting your name will be in the hat to win a one-year subscription to TAIL MAGAZINE. Be sure to sign on to the meeting so you'll have a chance to win.
  - Congratulations to Andy Constantinou who won a year's subscription to TAIL MAGAZINE at the August Zoom meeting.
- 

### **September 19 Outing - Weedon Island Preserve**

*Post your pictures on [Facebook.com/scff2020](https://www.facebook.com/scff2020)*

#### **Saturday, September 19 Outing**

- This is our Tampa Bay North outing, which means we're fishing anywhere in Tampa Bay from Weedon Island Preserve north to Highway 60 (Courtney Campbell Causeway)
  - The outing prize will go to the member catching the longest snook, longest redfish, and longest seatrout. Measure it. Shoot a picture. Email or text your picture to our outing chair, Bob Burkard, at [robertburkard9@gmail.com](mailto:robertburkard9@gmail.com)
  - No, we won't have a picnic lunch, but if you like to wade fish then you can join Bill AuCoin and other waders meeting up in the main parking lot at Weedon Island Preserve at 6:45 am.
  - Fish with friends and fellow members. Take pictures of each other and their fish, the scenery, the fly casting, the whatever and post them on our club's Facebook site....[facebook.com/scff2020](https://www.facebook.com/scff2020)
- 

### **More 2020 Outings**

Sit down meals may or may not be possible but we can yuk it up on the water and on Facebook.

- October 17 Outing - The October outing will be at Fort DeSoto Park.
  - November 21 -- War Veterans Memorial Park near Bay Pines.
  - December 5 -- Fort De Soto Park. Will we have a chili cook-off?
- 

### **Time to Renew your SFF and Fly Fishers International memberships**

- Make out a check to Suncoast Fly Fishers and mail it to  
*Suncoast Fly Fishers, Post Office Box 40821, St. Petersburg, FL 33743-0821*
  - How much? Each member will get an email explaining exactly what each one owes at renewal.

*Continued*

## P2/Meetings, Outings, and More

### **Big Gun Shootout**

Quin Berry is leading the charge for the Suncoast Fly Fishers to participate – and win! – the Big Gun fly casting competition this fall. Quin will continue to hold Big Gun Shootout practice on the second Thursday of each month at Walter Fuller Park. Quin sets up the markers for all the different accuracy and distance competitions. If you would like to be notified of meeting days and starting times phone or text Quin at [870-656-9677](tel:870-656-9677).

### **Bruce Evensen teaches fly tying on ZOOM**

On the second Monday of each month Bruce Evensen will tie his fly of the month on ZOOM. This way members can watch it in real time and participate just like they were there in Bruce's fly tying studio. Members will get an email with the Zoom sign-in link.

On Monday, September 14, at 7 pm Bruce leads a ZOOM group how to tie his Green/White Polar Fiber Minnow. ZOOM sign-in link is...

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82338249159>

Coming up on the second Monday of the coming months:

- Spider/shrimp (October)
- Hannukah Fly (November)



### **Board Nominations Invited for FFI Florida Council**

Because of COVID-19, the FFI Florida Council Expo for November this year has been canceled. Meanwhile, the FFI Florida Council is asking for nominations for the Florida Council Board of Directors. The term is 2 years and is renewable. President Tom Gadacz said, "We are seeking diversity, and Board members must participate in Board activities and be willing to work on a committee and coordinate activities with FFI headquarters." The nominating committee consists of Chair David Olson, Tom Logan, Rick Warfel, and Mona Brewer. Please email the name, contact information, and a brief description of the nominees' qualifications to Tom Gadacz. [thomasgadacz@yahoo.com](mailto:thomasgadacz@yahoo.com). Add a photo if you have one. The deadline was September 11 but Tom said late entries will be considered.

### **Also coming up**

- Online Auction – Quin Berry heads up the fundraising committee. They're developing an action plan to present to directors at the October meeting.
- Coast Guard Auxiliary Marine Flea Market, Nov. 21, Apollo Beach. More later.
- Christmas Party/ Silent Auction – Maybe. Maybe not.
- Hog Roast. Eventually.

### **Welcome new members**

- Welcome Jack Diballa of Ruskin, who has joined Suncoast Fly Fishers and Fly Fishers International (FFI) in the youth category.
- Suncoast Fly Fishers now has 129 individual members, 16 family members, and 6 honorary members.

# We are Suncoast Fly Fishers of St. Petersburg

## Aims and Purposes

The Suncoast Fly Fishers, Inc. (SFF) is an organization of fishing enthusiasts who love fishing with the fly rod. We welcome all people of all ages with similar interests, regardless of their fly fishing skill level. We enthusiastically teach those that wish to learn or improve their fly casting, fly tying and related fly fishing skills. SFF meets monthly where we talk fly fishing, tie flies and most months feature a speaker with a program highlighting local fly fishing opportunities.

Suncoast Fly Fishers (SFF) is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization. SFF is a charter member of the Fly Fishers International (FFI). SFF is a member of the Florida Council of FFI. SFF supports the conservation of natural resources, boating safety and fishing regulations.

## Monthly Meetings. Guests welcome.

Third Thursday of every month (except December) at St. Pete's Walter Fuller Park Rec Center, 7891 26th Ave. N. 6 to 8:30 pm.

**Directions to our meeting at Walter Fuller Park.** From 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue N turn North on 72<sup>nd</sup> St. N. Turn left (West) on 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue N. Then turn right into the rec center parking lot.

## Monthly Outings

Club members meet up every month for a fly fishing outing and lunch. Usually it is scheduled on the Saturday after the monthly meeting on the third Thursday of every month.

**Contact us by mail:** Suncoast Fly Fishers, P.O. Box 40821, St Petersburg, FL 33743-0821

## Visit our website and Facebook pages, too

[SuncoastFlyFishers.com](http://SuncoastFlyFishers.com)

[Facebook.com/scff2020S](https://Facebook.com/scff2020S)

## Membership update

Suncoast Fly Fishers now has 129 members including 16 family members and 6 honorary members. Annual dues are payable in September. This also includes benefits and annual membership in [Fly Fishers International](#) and the [Florida Council](#) of Fly Fishers International

###

## Suncoast Fly Fishers

P. O. Box 40821  
St Petersburg, FL 33743  
[www.suncoastflyfishers.org](http://www.suncoastflyfishers.org)

## Club Officers

Pres: Rick Warfel  
Vice Pres: Quin Berry  
Secretary: David Redd  
Treasurer: Tom Gadacz

## Board of Directors

Bill Scarola, Bob Burkard, Bruce Evensen, Ryan Sollars, Cliff Nigh, Karen Warfel, George Haseltine, James Davis

**Committees--**Members are encouraged to serve on one or two committees. Do you? If not, speak to one of the officers at the next meeting.

Casting: Pat Damico, Dayle Mazzarella

FFI Liaison: Pat Damico

Conservation: Cliff Nigh

Fly Tying: Myron Hansen

Membership: Tom Gadacz

New Members: Rick Warfel

Webmaster: Dennis Marquis

Facebook: Cliff Nigh

Hog Roast: Open

Outings: Bob Burkard, David Redd, Bill AuCoin

Outreach, shows: David Redd, Bob Burkard, Bill Scarola, Tom Gadacz

Raffles: Dave Barson

Succession Plan: Rick Warfel

Programs: Board of Directors

Publicity: Bill AuCoin

Social media: Anne Hays

## On The Fly

Bill AuCoin, editor; Duane Mertz, Anne Hays, Bob Hood, Tim Elms, Marshall Craig.

# Bob Burkard: September 19 Outing, Tampa Bay North



*Bob Burkard, Outings Committee*

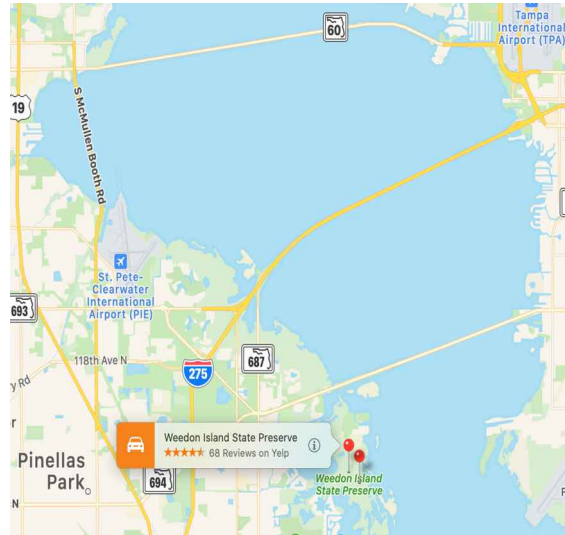
Fishing for September's outing is in Tampa Bay from Weedon Island Preserve north to the Courtney-Campbell Causeway (Highway 60).

We won't be having a picnic lunch – I really miss John Craig's Low Country Boil – but all members are invited to meet up at **Weedon Island Preserve** to wade fish the surrounding waters. Club waders will be meeting at 6:45 am in the parking lot at the headquarters building. Bill

AuCoin is the wade-fisher-in-chief. If you don't see him or other fly fishers text him at [727-417-6676](tel:727-417-6676).

The address is 1800 Weedon Drive N.E., St. Petersburg.

There are no set hours. You can fish all day and even all night so long as the date is September 19, 2020.



*Fish anywhere in Tampa Bay between Weedon Island Preserve and Highway 60. Wade fishers are meeting up in the parking lot at 6:45 am.*

- Fish with friends and fellow members. Take pictures of the fish, the scenery, the fly casting, the whatever and post them on our club's Facebook site....[facebook.com/scff2020](https://facebook.com/scff2020)
- There will be outing prizes for the longest snook, the longest redfish, and the longest seatrout. Measure and email photos of your fish to [robertburkard9@gmail.com](mailto:robertburkard9@gmail.com)

For our October outing we are considering a bring-your-own-brown bag approach to see if that will boost participation. Club member Tom Gadacz, MD will be consulted on this before any final decision is made.

*Bob*

### 2020 Outing Tournament Leaders

Species	Length	Winner	Outing (Month)
Longest bream	9.5"	Tim Elms	Virtual outing (May)
Longest black bass	17"	Tim Elms	Virtual outing (May)
Longest snook	34"	Jack Collins	Virtual outing (May)
Longest redfish	22"	Mark Hays	Docklight Outing (June)
Longest ladyfish	25"	Mandy McGarry	Weedon Island Preserve (January)
Longest seatrout	19"	Mandy McGarry	Docklight Outing (June)

## Bob Burkard: August Urban Outing Review

This year, Covid-19 is talking to us. Don't meet up for lunch. Just fish.

The weather was good (beautiful sunrise, btw) and some nice fish were caught. However, outing participation was down, maybe about 10 people. In any normal year one of the really great things about our outings is the picnic lunch. For the past few years we'd fish in the morning then meet up at the big pavilion at St. Pete's Bay Vista Park to share our day's fishing experiences and to gobble-gobble the brisket slow-cooked by President Rick Warfel and myself.

Another thing: If we don't have one of those amazing club picnic lunches, then we don't get to tell our fishing ~~hes~~ stories.



*Wade fishing a pure gold sunrise*



*Bob Burkard selfie with his 20 -in. snook.*

Well, I, Bob Burkard, humbly swear in the presence of this jury of peers that I caught a 20-inch snook. I caught it fly fishing the mangrove shoreline wading east from the South Skyway Rest Area. It hit a chartreuse Gurgler fly that I tied. I was fishing an 8-wt with a floating line.

I fished with other members -- Chris O'Byrne, Bob Hood, Karen and Rick Warfel, Bill AuCoin -- and we all gave that flat a hard workout. Karen had a powerful hit and it broke her leader. She never saw the fish. Chris caught some fish but he said none was impressive enough to deserve a picture. Bill said several huge seatrout crashed his gurgler but they all unhooked themselves, untouched by human hands.

**Seatrout winner** Dennis Marquis, aka Captain Seatrout, caught several speckled trout and submitted a photo of one that measured 15.5 inches, the winner. Congratulations, Dennis. Also Dennis and Tim Elms provided a picture of a trout "Double Header"

None of our Suncoast Fly Fishers caught a redfish at the outing, or if they did they didn't submit it for the longest redfish award. However, I watched a "Bait Fisherman" catch a huge redfish about 100 yards from where I was fishing, and I did cast to a tailing redfish. So, I know that I will be returning to this area in the next few weeks in pursuit of these elusive prizes.

I understand that Robert Mitchell caught two snook fishing that pond behind Skyway Jacks restaurant on 34<sup>th</sup> street in south St. Pete. One snook was 18 inches. Attaboys. He fished with Annie Hays and her dad Mark.



*Bob Hood, South Skyway Wader. Bob caught catfish.*



*Chris O'Byrne keeps a tight line.*



*Burkard does the double haul*

# Duane Mertz: Panel--How to find and catch tarpon

Tips on how to find and catch more tarpon was the subject of a wide-ranging panel discussion at the August 20 virtual meeting. If you missed it, you can view the entire panel discussion on the [SFF Facebook page](#) and on [YouTube](#).



Duane Mertz

Panelists included:



**Captain Dave Dant**, a local fishing guide who has 15 years' experience catching tarpon in the Tampa Bay fishery.



Tim Elms, a club member and local pond fishing expert who specializes in catching juvenile tarpon.



Mike Larkin, Ph.D, fisheries research biologist with NOAA. Mike specializes in tarpon and bonefish. *(Editor's note: Some of Mike's comments on tarpon migratory patterns with the SFF from his May 16, 2019 discussion are included in this article.)*



Kathy Guindon, PhD, Director of the **Suncoast Youth Conservation Center** and a 14-year research biologist with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

Locating Tarpon

*Guindon: Tarpon have COLOR vision too. They see into the ultraviolet light spectrum - far better vision than we humans who only see visible light; the colors of the rainbow. So on a sunny day along the beach they can see the purple and black flies and other colors, too.*

Early in the season when the water is cool tarpon typically follow bait fish pods upstream into canals where the water is warmer. As the water warms these laid up fish will emerge for the Spring migration in the first week of May. When you move into open water you want to study the beach and find current lines where tarpon will feed on bait fish. The beach changes every year so the informed angler will make a new study of the beach every year.

The two best seasons to catch tarpon on the fly are during the Spring migration from May-June and in July after the migration is over. A second season occurs in October when the water has cooled. During the hot summer months tarpon move to passes after the May offshore spawn. They can be located sitting on the bottom in passes. Optimal water depth is 4-8 feet of water.

The ideal catching situation is to find fish moving at medium speed. You want to cast your line at the tail of the lead fish which is typically a large female. Placing your fly in the correct location is key to catching tarpon.

Their best field of vision is upward and forward of their head. When tarpon feed they suction-strike their prey. Favorite prey are crabs, and bait fish like menhaden.



*Former SFF member Wes Demmon caught this tarpon on a purple toad fly*

Fly color is less important than having the correct fly size. There is typically a two-hour window on both sides of the tide change twice a day when the best tarpon fishing can be found. These fish do not feed in heavy moving water. *Continued on next page*



## P/2: Finding and catching tarpon

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### Juvenile Tarpon Fishing

This season starts in April where juvenile tarpon can be found in fresh and brackish water. Land locked juveniles of 30 inches or smaller are found in canals and ponds and they can put up the same great fight as their larger brethren.

Land locked fish are found in lakes that do not have saltwater access. They are typically driven into these waters as 1-1/2-inch larvae by flood waters and can grow to 3-4 feet in length, but they won't reproduce.

Informed anglers will look for their silver bellies or fins when stalking juvenile tarpon. If there is mangrove cover search the water 3-feet in front of the mangrove. Place your fly 5-feet in front of the juvenile. Because they have smaller body weight, juveniles are harder to hook-set than mature fish. Do not use a trout-set. Keep your false casts down to one or two.

If you can shoot 60-feet of line you will do well. Be sure to keep your rod low and fight the fish with side pressure and your leverage. Look for mullet in brackish water and blue crabs. An 8-weight rod with a 30-pound test tippet is recommended. Catch and release them as quickly as you can.

### Tarpon Migration

Using satellite technology, scientists have tracked Florida tarpon ranging from Florida Bay to the panhandle of Florida and from Miami to Chesapeake Bay on the east coast of the U.S. A second population of tarpon range from Louisiana near the mouth of the Mississippi River to the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico. These are separate bodies of tarpon and they do not co-mingle.

Tarpon travel as far as 20 miles in a day and over 2,000 miles in their annual migrations. They generally move north in summer months and south in the winter following 79-degree water.

Tarpon will travel over 300 miles offshore to reach water with depths of 200 feet. Once there the females and males make steep vertical dives to lay and fertilize their eggs. Scientists believe the deep dives use building water pressure to release eggs from the females. They spawn their entire lives on full and new moons. (The major spawning time for Tampa Bay tarpon is on the first full moon of June). There are four main spawning areas for Atlantic tarpon including Florida Bay, near Homosassa Springs Florida, near the mouth of the Mississippi river, and off the Yucatan Peninsula.

Not all tarpon migrate. Fish that have found enough food and stable water temperatures will hold in certain areas. Tarpon may live up to 75 years, but the average age is 25. Catch and release has helped stabilize the population. If properly revived at release, tarpon will survive to fight again



*Jack Collins caught this juvenile 'poon in the Snug Harbor area of middle Tampa Bay.*

###

*Duane*

## Why do tarpon roll? Maybe they're just happy.



*Kathy Guindon, Ph.D*

*By Kathy Guindon, Director, Youth Conservation Center  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission*

For the last decade, I have fondly referred to certain groups of rolling tarpon as “tail-slapping happy fish.” I love seeing hundreds of tarpon boiling at the surface or simply a few rolling in synchronicity. Upon first studying tarpon, I, too, wondered why they roll. So I decided to share a little of the science behind this behavior.

One reason tarpon roll is to breathe atmospheric air and fill their swim bladders, thus obtaining more oxygen to supplement their gill breathing capabilities. A tarpon’s swim bladder has a direct opening to its esophagus, or throat, so it fills quickly and efficiently. Inside the swim bladder are four longitudinal rows of spongy tissue very similar to a human lung. This tissue is what accesses the oxygen that fuels the tarpon’s muscles, which is needed for endurance during bouts of exercise (i.e., the angler’s battle is prolonged).

Examples of tarpon “exercise” could be battling an angler on hook and line, performing long distance swimming migrations or out-swimming a shark. Australian research showed that ox-eye tarpon permitted to breathe air at the surface after angling recovered back to “normal” in one hour, relative to tarpon that took several hours to recover if prevented from doing so. Tarpon will also roll more frequently for breathing when inhabiting water with low dissolved oxygen concentrations.

There is also a social aspect to tarpon rising to the surface together. A study conducted in 1940 placed small tarpon (*ca.*10cm) in tanks for observation. One fish rising to the surface induced others to do the same. The rolling in this study was a social and respiratory movement triggered by the visual cue.

Further experiments in 1941 used artificial objects to test if biologists could induce tarpon to rise together in a more social nature. A wooden model of a tarpon, painted silver, yielded the best results. Statistics showed the induced movement was significant and it was not by chance that the fish rose together. A small school of tarpon in one aquarium even induced the movement of another group of tarpon held in an adjacent aquarium. When researchers blinded some tarpon and placed them in an aquarium with sighted tarpon, no imitative rises occurred by the blind fish when other tarpon rose to the surface. Blind fish still rose to the surface at the same rate as other tarpon, but for breathing purposes.

In 1942, these experiments were repeated in an outside canal with five tarpon four to five feet in length. Scientists found comparable results to that of the small tarpon with one note: the large fish did not rise as frequently as the small tarpon, but when they did, the movements may have been a social response. In larger bodies of water, the authors suggested there may be less mimicking of behavior because such fish can be separated more easily than fish in a river or canal.

It appears that tarpon do have a social nature to rise together, so those “tail-slapping happy fish” may be just that!

###

## Atlantic Tarpon FUN Facts



© Diane Peebles

- There are two species of tarpon in the world: Atlantic tarpon and Indo-Pacific tarpon.
- *Megalops*, the genus of tarpon, is of Greek origin and means 'large face'.
- Tarpon earned the nickname Silver King because of their majestic size and color.
- Tarpon have hard, overlapping scales like a suit of armor.
- Tarpon eyes see more colors than humans and they can see in the dark.
- They have a large upturned lower jaw and long threadfin on the dorsal fin.
- Tarpon like to eat fish and crabs and will crush their prey or swallow it whole.
- Fossils show us tarpon have been swimming in the oceans since before the dinosaurs.
- Tarpon commonly weigh more than 100 pounds. Lucky anglers might catch one over 200 pounds.
- The largest tarpons tend to be females and well over 2m (6-feet) in length.
- It takes a tarpon 8 -10 years to mature into an adult.
- Tarpon from the wild have been aged at 55 years. The oldest known tarpon in captivity was 63 years old. Science provides evidence that they might live up to 78 years.
- The all-tackle world record tarpon weighed 286 pounds, 9 ounces and was caught in Guinea-Bissau, Africa.
- The Florida record using conventional tackle is a 243 lb. tarpon caught off Key West.
- Atlantic tarpon are found from Virginia to central Brazil, throughout the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico, and along the tropical coast of Africa.
- Tarpon like a variety of habitats. They are commonly found in shallow coastal waters and estuaries, open marine waters, around coral reefs, and even in rivers.
- Tarpon like it hot! They can handle water temperatures between 63° and 102°F (17-39°C) but prefer 82-86°F (28-30°C). They can also freeze to death if water gets colder than 50°F (<10°C).
- Tarpon can be seen swimming in a slow circular motion lined up nose to tail while moving down the beaches. This is known as a "daisy chain".
- One female tarpon may release between 4.5 million and 20 million eggs during spawning season.
- In Florida, most tarpon spawn from late April through July.
- Tarpon eggs hatch into microscopic larvae that have a ribbonlike body with fanglike teeth.
- Transparent larvae about 1-inch long will take 30 to 50 days to drift inshore to estuaries and have been found as far as 125 miles offshore in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Tarpon form scales when they are two inches (40mm) long.
- Tarpon nursery habitats are marshes and mangrove swamps where they spend their first year.
- Tarpon can grow 12 to 16 inches in their first year.
- Tarpon breathe using gills, **BUT**...they can breathe air using a swimbladder. This allows them to survive in harsh environments.
- Because of its strength, stamina, and fighting ability, the tarpon is a premier game fish.
- Tarpon support a popular recreational **catch-and-release** fishery in Florida.
- Tarpon are so cool Michelangelo even painted one on the roof of the Sistine Chapel with Jonah

*Facts courtesy of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Updated 4/7/2020*

## Dennis Marquis: Docklighting Adventure with Quin Berry

*One snook pulled Dennis' 21-foot boat around.*



I headed out for a night of docklight fishing with Quin. Tides were not in our favor. According to the FWC mobile app we should not have expected to find eating fish. Also, thunderstorms were possible. In addition, my trolling motor battery charger had failed leaving sub-optimal power levels. I never told Quin, but I was considering canceling the trip. We left the dock at 9 pm for the Broadwater canals located in the southeast corner

of Boca Ciega Bay. We understood there were juvenile tarpon patrolling the docklights.

We found the tarpon, and spent the first several hours trying to get a hookup. Quin had one monster take, but no hookups. So, with only a couple of trout landed, we headed to Mud Key (Vina Del Mar). Little did I know that poor start would be the genesis of a double slam adventure. As we came through the St Pete Beach Bridge, we hit the first light we saw on Mud Key and stayed on the lights facing open water for the remainder of our trip.



*Vina Del Mar docklight beast*

First several docklights had marauding snook, but between Quin and I we really managed to mess things up such that we had nothing to show for our time. We took a breather and collected ourselves. As we approached the next light we could see snook busting shrimp. Currents were strong, so I managed the boat and let Quin make the initial casts. Long story short, we had fun!



*Dennis' 22-inch redfish*

We both landed snook and redfish, Quin handled a 30"+ snook and a 28"+ Red. I landed a 22" red (entered into the CCA tournament) and a 26" snook. We also landed snook at 19", 22" and 28". We lost an easy half dozen in the process. Each of us had fish go to reel and fight the drag. By nights' end, we both accomplished the Tampa Bay Slam. When Quin hooked the 30"+ snook, I had to increase the trolling motor to above half power in order to move the boat away from the dock. Think about that a bit. My 21' Sportsman, with  $\frac{3}{4}$  fuel, two men and the snook

was pulling the boat. It wanted to go under the dock in the worst way.

We fed the fish small mostly white bait patterns. We were casting floating lines with 9'+ leaders and 30 lb fluoro tippet. Success was predicated on being away from the light with most casts easily 60'; the longer the better. I was using the Thunderstruck Minnow (a la Cliff Nigh), and Quin was launching micro bait patterns.

I try to learn on every trip I take. This trip helped remind me:

- 60'+ casts will increase your chances at dock lights...
- if you think you tie small bait patterns, try flies even smaller and with less material...
- explore the darker regions away from the light first...
- take your time...
- and try to be as quiet as possible.



*Dennis' Thunderstruck fly was a docklight winner.*

*Dennis*

## Tim Elms: Filled to the Brim?



Howdy! Bream? Brim? Sunfish? Panfish? Bluegill? Coppernose? Who knows? We all probably started on them.

I think back to my first bluegill, (maybe my first fish ever) my family moved from Colorado to California for a short time when I was 9-yr old and my oldest brother was just getting into fishing. We would go to a tiny creek behind the Junior High School and use a dry fly on a spin rod. It was crude but it worked wonderfully. Never did I think 40-yr old me would be catching 11+ inchers on a fly rod while targeting tarpon or largemouth bass. But I also did not know what a fly rod was.



*Let 'em grow big.*

I started to come across some rather large bluegills while popper fishing for bass. The bigger ones were usually too slow to eat the popper before the 5-inch ones would. But occasionally, a decent 9"-incher would surprise me. I would toss it back without much hesitation or respect for the little guy or even his big brothers.



*Dennis Marquis' trophy*

A couple months went by and Dennis Marquis and I were fishing for snook or bass or whatever would eat a small minnow and Dennis caught a monster BG on a tiny Clouser! Then, it happened again for Big D in a different area, this time though a tarpon is thrashing around trying to eat his bluegill. You gotta love Florida with all its crazy fisheries.

Curiously, Dennis and I had to look-up the bluegill record in Florida. It's 2.95lbs! That is a big bluegill for sure. I think we weighed one around the 2-lb marker if I remember correctly. But we were fly fishing. I think we need some respect on these "record" books; don't you?

I started to do some additional research about "Trophy" bluegills and I was pretty surprised that any fish in the 10-inch range around the USA can be considered a Trophy or basically a bluegill of a lifetime. Twelve-inch fish are considered monsters and I have seen a good number of those now. Yes, I am still counting my blessings.

While fishing for tarpon, snook, and large mouths, we found we could catch a large BG with a slow, steady retrieve with any small minnow pattern.

Soon, I may just challenge myself to target these big fatties and go for a new FWC record. Next time you are in a freshwater situation give it a try! You never know what's in there looking for a big meal.

*Strip Strip Strip!!!—*

*Tim*



*8wt overkill: 11.5"*

## Annie Hays: Back to the Skyway



Dad, Robert, and I went to Skyway Jack's for breakfast on the day of the Urban Outing. We were anticipating bad weather for the second year in a row, so like last year we packed our raincoats and fly rods. After breakfast, we went to the pond behind the restaurant and fished.

We didn't get any Mayan Cichlids this year, but Robert caught two snook. The first one was 18 inches and the second was 8 inches. Both were caught on a DT Special.



*Robert Mitchell, pond snook*

We saw several large swirls from young tarpon, but Dad couldn't get them to take his fly.

### *Announcement*

All of our long-time members were blessed to know one of our founding members, Paul Sequira.

For newer members who did not know Paul, he was one of the most accomplished fly-fishermen, rod builders, and fly-tiers I have ever met.

Paul's family has graciously donated a living-room full of classic fishing books, fly tying materials, etc. to the SFF. Mark Hays has everything under lock and key until we begin meeting in person again.



*Paul Sequira. RIP*

Mark asks that you not ask to go through the collection early as that would not be fair to other members. He thanks everyone in advance for not breaking into his home.

## *Annie*

*Paul Sequira, a long time and valued member of Suncoast Fly Fishers, died October 1, 2018. More details about his contributions to our club are in the **October 2018 edition of On The Fly.***



*Then club president Tom Gadacz, right, awarded Paul the club's Values and Vision award in 2017.*

## Dayle Mazzarella: Wyoming's Ham Fork trout are fat n feisty

Here are some photos of two of our clients - Chuck and Ken - enjoying a day of fishing last week. Fishing has been great. The fish are fat, and they fight so hard!

*Dayle*

PS: Update from Barbara M. on Dayle's recovery from the you-know-what.

*Hope all is well there. Dayle is very close to 100% well and has been guiding for a week now. YAY!! Take care and be safe! Barbara*



## Andy Constantinou: Hey Mister, throw me a sardine



This is not a fishing story, but this egret flew onto my boat as I was leaving Little Harbor. Unfortunately for him, he was not to know I am a fly fisherman so I could not give him any food.

A beautiful bird.

*Cheers, Andy*

## Marshall Craig: A guitar and a fly rod



Marshall Craig

*(Excerpt from a new blog post by SFFer Marshall Craig, who recently started taking guitar lessons. Yes, there are similarities. Read his full blog post [here](#).)*

There is magic in challenging yourself and developing a skill when you trundle beyond gainful employment, whether it be using chopsticks or riding sidesaddle. The more difficult, the better. This brings me to Dame Juliana Bernes, a nun, who wrote a *Treatyse of fysshynge wyth an Angle* in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. She is to blame for a legion of frustrated fly fishermen right up to this century who have shivered in frigid trout streams as a leak in their waders trickles down their leg and a creature with a brain the size of a pencil eraser sneers at their fly.

It is difficult to explain to people why a person would fly fish. It is not socially acceptable to collar someone and expound on why you fly fish. Under the terms of the Geneva Convention this is considered torturing civilians. Furthermore, fly fishing is not generally a very productive way to catch fish. Maimonides is thought to have said “Give a Man a Fish, and You Feed Him for a Day. Teach a Man to Fish, and You Feed Him for a Lifetime.” He was not talking about fly fishing.

Like playing the blues on a guitar, fly fishing is both a skill and an art form. Learning to fly cast contradicts everything your Uncle Bud taught you when he put a spinning rod and reel in your hands at his pond, hooked up a worm and had you chuck it in the water with one simple motion (of course, at Uncle Bud’s pond you caught fish). In fly fishing, the weight of the fly line is what carries the lure – feathers and a hook - out over the water. The fly connects to the fly line with ten feet of clear monofilament. The magic lies in the flexing of the eight-foot rod and the pull of the heavy fly line, streaming out some thirty feet behind as it loads on the back cast with the cocking of your forearm and then releases as your forearm snaps down, like hammering a nail. The objective is to deliver a fly to the water’s surface as gently as a lover’s kiss, the fly line carrying the fly out with minimal fuss. Piece of cake.

There are two types of places where fly fishing particularly comes into its own. One is wherever the fish’s diet consists mainly of small, crunchy insects and the other is where the water being fished is very shallow and the splash of a large lure would cause every fish within a quarter mile to vamoose. In both cases a carefully presented fly fits the bill. It is a benediction on the lives of fly fishermen that these locales are trout streams and Bahamian bonefish flats. Fly fishermen can exercise their skill in gobsmackingly beautiful surroundings.

Fly fishing is one sport where you get better as you get older. Like learning to play guitar, it requires practice. One afternoon I was out casting on the lawn bordering Pioneer Park in downtown St. Pete, careful to avoid stepping in dog poop. A patron of our local saloon, Courigan’s, spotted me and hustled over, crossing the street, careful not to spill his beer. He came up alongside and said “Hey, fly fishing huh? Pretty cool!”

I said, “Yeah, it is cool.” I thought, *you should hear me play the guitar.*

*Marshall*



## Smitty's Fly Box: Silverside/glass minnow



Layne (Smitty) Smith

*Occasionally fish will be feeding exclusively on small minnows. When they do that, you need to get a good fry-minnow imitation out there. I tied this to be very realistic and mimic the small glass minnows that inhabit our gulf coast waters.*

*Smitty*



*Silverside Glass Minnow.  
Also known as glass minnow and anchovie*

### Materials

Hook: Gamakatsu SC15 #1/0 or Daiichi 2546 #4

Thread: Fine monofilament thread

Flash: Pearl Krystal Flash

Body wrap: Pearl braid

Body: Pearl flash dubbing

Gills: Red braid

Overwing: Holographic silver flash dubbing

Eyes: 3/32" Silver eyes

Epoxy: Solarez thick formula

### Tying Sequence:

1. Attach thread ¼" behind hook eye and wrap back to mid hook shank. Fold Krystal Flash around the standing thread then tie down to hook bend. With staggered snips, cut flash to size you want minnow to be.
2. Tie in pearl braid and advance thread to halfway point of shank. Wrap pearl braid forward to standing thread and tie off and trim.
3. Tie in red braid then advance thread to original tie in position. Wrap red braid forward to standing thread and tie off and trim.
4. Measure pearl dubbing for length, tie off and fold excess to back and tie down. Repeat the same process with holographic dubbing.
5. Apply eyes to either side of fly at original tie in point making sure they are even. Add a drop of resin on top between eyes and cure.
6. Apply resin to the body of the fly back to hook bend and allow to totally saturate the body material (make sure to stretch body material backwards as you do the curing process).
7. Overcoat resin with "Bone Dry" making sure to apply over eyes as well.
8. Trim body material to desired minnow shape. Go fishing!!!

**Bruce Evensen: Green 'n' White Polar Fiber Minnow**



*Bruce Evensen*

This is my fly of the month for September. Note the circle hook. If a fish takes it don't "set" the hook. Just take up the slack and the hook sets itself.

*Bruce*



**Materials**

Hook: #1 Octopus circle hook

Thread: White flat waxed nylon

Body: White Polar Fiber

Body: Pearl flash

Body: Dark Green Polar Fiber

Gill Plate: Red Sharpie marker

Eyes: 4mm 3D silver/black



**Tying Sequence**

Step one: wrap 1/4 inch of thread behind hook eye.

Step two: take small amount of Polar Fiber white and tie it on top of the hook shank facing upward.

Step 3: take pearl flash and tie it on top of the white Polar Fiber.

Step 4: take 1/2 to 1/4 of dark green Polar Fiber and tie it on top of the pearl flash.

Step 5: take silver and black 4 mm eyes and glue them on just behind the thread wraps and slightly above the hook shank on the white and green material.

Step 6: with epoxy, coat eyes, thread wraps, and between the eyes and then set.

*Bruce*

## Capt. Pat Damico: Captain's Corner



### *See a shark? Go for it! Here's how.*

Tarpon get most of the attention when we talk about exciting fly action for large fish in our area. Earlier in the year as the water warmed and baitfish became more prolific large tarpon followed their forage and populated most of our local water. Following the tarpon were fish that consider tarpon as their favorite food. These top of the food chain predators are a variety of sharks. Waiting patiently for a tarpon that will take a fly can make for a very long day. How many times, especially in shallow water, have you seen sharks patrolling your tarpon hot spot? If you cast to them with a tarpon setup and did get a hookup, a frayed leader was usually your reward. A slight modification in your tarpon setup is needed. Ideally have a second rod already rigged to save time and not ruin your tarpon

chances. A 10 wt fly rod, 200 yards of 30-pound backing and a leader with a 4 ft 60-pound butt section, twenty-pound class tippet, and a 1 ft wire bite tippet will attach to the fly. Use a Bimini twist to double the section next to the 40-pound single strand wire. Attach the wire to the double-strand leader with an Albright knot. The bright orange or red fly size 3/0 will need a haywire twist to complete the connection to the wire leader. Cast ahead of the shark and work the fly with a slow, teasing erratic motion. A hookup will need several serious strip sets low and to the side, then hang on! If not familiar with some of the knots, an internet search is needed. When using single-strand wire, a right angle back and forth motion will break the tag end of the wire with a clean smooth finish. Using a tool to cut the wire will leave a very sharp result that will injure you or cut your leader while playing the fish. Catch and careful release is encouraged.

*Fly fisherman Pat Damico charts Fly Guy in lower Tampa Bay and can be reached at [captpatdamico.com](http://captpatdamico.com) and (727) 504-8649.*



*Pat didn't see any sharks when he was fly fishing in Montana recently. But he did hook some cutthroats. Be careful out there, Pat.*

## Tim Elms: Leaders and Knots. Oh my!

Howdy! I get a lot of questions from trout friends back home and salty fly guys here about what leaders and knots I use. I thought a refresher for the club, or if you are just starting out this may be helpful. Consider my typical setup for all things slam inshore. Fishing an 8wt and floating line.

Leaders: 3 typical ways.

1. Buy a Tapered leader from a fly shop or online from Rio, Umpqua, Orvis what have you. If you want to fish the slam remember whatever the # (lb) or X of a leader is rated, that is the TIPPET strength. Meaning the last bit of the line. So, in my situation I would buy a 20lb or 30lb tapered leader. But for snook and Tarpon (baby) I would add about 18" of "shock" or bite to that. Basically an 18" tippet of 30lb fluoro... You can also give in to marketing and buy a shock leader. Its just what I previously said for about \$2 more...
2. Straight leader. Yep, you can do this just tie 30lb straight strand from your fly line to the fly. Maybe 8-9ft. This is ok in a dire situation, but it does not turn a fly over very well. And god forbid you snag on anything its exceedingly difficult to break and not damage your fly line.
3. Make your own tapered leader. This is my preferred way as I like to know what DIAMETER my line tapers from. Diameter matters most on knot strength. The easiest way to accomplish a steady diameter progression is just use materials from the same manufacturer. My go to leader for most things on my 8wt is the 60% 20% 20% rule. So, on my 8wt targeting the slam I do a butt section to match the stiffness of my fly line, which is around 40lb mono. 4ft of 40lb, 2ft of 30lb and 2ft of 20lb all in mono because I'm cheap and I fish a lot. Then if I'm targeting snook, or if there is a chance of snook I will add about 18" of 30lb fluoro for my SHOCK tippet. If its all reds and jack or bass or other soft mouth fish I won't worry about the shock tippet and run the 20lb to my fly.

### **Knots:**

There are endless videos on the web for tying knots. The Orvis learning center is one of my favorites. Here are my knots from welded loop to fly:

1. Loop to loop (handshake) knot is extremely easy and you need to know the proper direction of it. You can watch here: <https://howtoflyfish.orvis.com/fly-fishing-knots/loop-loop-connection-animation>
2. To make that loop in the butt section of your leader you need the perfection loop. Watch that one here: <https://howtoflyfish.orvis.com/fly-fishing-knots/perfection-loop-animation>
3. Sections of leader is a contentious conversation, blood, surgeon or double uni. I'm a double Uni guy all the way. Its fast to tie and is as strong or stronger than a blood knot. When tying I will usually do one additional turn on the thinner line than the larger line. [https://www.netknots.com/fishing\\_knots/double-uni-knot](https://www.netknots.com/fishing_knots/double-uni-knot)
4. Knot at the fly! I have gone to only the non-slip loop knot. This is a very strong knot and the reason I prefer it is when you use a very stiff tippet this allows the fly to move freely and not be just another part of the stiff tippet. <https://howtoflyfish.orvis.com/fly-fishing-knots/non-slip-mono-loop>

Ok, that's all go fish! ---- *TIM*

## Fly Gear for Sale or Swap

### 9-foot Sea Eagle Frameless Inflatable with Honda 2.3 hp outboard. Used 4 times. Best offer over \$500.

Former member Bob Bargamin died in May. His widow, LeAnne, is offering it for sale for the best offer over \$500. It weighs 42 pounds and packs into a small bag. It comes with a swivel seat, wooden floorboard, and a foot pump. Call 904-315-2771



### Price lowered from \$1,500 to \$900 -- Ocean kayak and extras from Frank Moss. Call 727-421-5354

Ocean Kayak, sit on top Prowler 15'. Extras include a paddle with tether, roof top car carrier, 6 plugs, sea anchor and lead anchor, two fly rod holders, one spinning rod holder, stick-it anchor pole, ceiling hoist, beach launch wheels, several nylon lines, a fly fishing vest. \$900

### Lynn Skipper has two fly rods and an Orvis Battenkill reel. 813-542-3195.

[hurricaneskipper@gmail.com](mailto:hurricaneskipper@gmail.com)

- ROSS FLY STIK HEAVY 10 wt 7'11" 4 piece with tube. Ideal rod for those night trips after snook under the docks where you need to horse them away from the dock quickly. Originally \$200, now \$100. Barely used with no nicks, blemishes etc.
- ORVIS TLS Power Matrix 4 piece 3 wt 8'4" Midflex with case. Originally \$175, now \$100.
- Orvis Battenkill  $\frac{3}{4}$  wt reel with backing and 3 wt WFF line. Used one trip to Montana last year. Originally \$125, now \$75 OBO.

Want to sell or trade? Need some fly gear? Email [Bill AuCoin, wmaucoin@verizon.net](mailto:wmaucoin@verizon.net)

## Do you recognize these club members when they were kids?



Answer at the bottom  
of the next page

## Bill AuCoin : Flyfisher Flyover



**Help the tarpon cause** – While we’re on the subject, here’s a way we can help future tarpon populations. Bonefish and Tarpon Trust has an ongoing habitat mapping initiative asking anglers to report the location of any tarpon 12-inches or less. ([BT&T](#))

**Snook season is open** -- But not in Pinellas County. If you want to keep a snook you’ll have to catch it north of the Hernando/Pasco County line or south of Gordon Pass in Naples. Plus, it has to be between 28-33 inches. What the heck, you can’t buy them in the store. So what’s a consumer to do? The season ends November 30. ([FWC](#))

**Scroll down and look at the pictures.** Do you recognize some of the people? Yep. Suncoast Fly Fishers. And why is that? ([Tampa Free Press](#))

**Decisions, decisions.** Should we head off to college now or just go fishing? I have to say, I kind of admire these two guys who are at a certain stage in their lives. ([Angler’s Journal](#))

**CBS is asking why fly fishing is so popular.** My theory is that some of us just want to make things harder than they need to be so the reward is bigger. Also, it’s satisfying when we make a good cast or catch a fish on a fly that we tied. And when we do catch a fish...omg. ([Yahoo](#))

**What do Oprah and Jimmy Buffet have in common?** No, they’re not running for president. Oh, c’mon man, don’t act so surprised. Also, I admit, I’d never heard of Zac Efron. But then, I’m not “everybody.” H/T Rick Warfel. ([Flylords](#))

**Of course it did.** Did the 2017-2019 red tide event affect marine businesses? I remember those stinky Southwest Florida shorelines. It certainly wasn’t fun to fish the beaches then. Anyway, University of Florida researchers are doing an impact survey to find out just how bad it was for manufacturers and retailers. ([Tampa Free Press](#))

**Teaching the teachers.** Now there’s a free online course for fishing guides about how to reduce our environmental footprint and more. Then guides can share what they learn with their clients. It’s a collaboration between the FWC, University of Florida, and Florida Sea Grant. ([The Fishing Wire](#))

**Do you know your baitfish?** I found this very, very helpful. I’ve been fishing Tampa Bay for 35 years and I’ve never been sure whether this or that baitfish was a Spanish sardine, a scaled sardine, a threadfin herring, or an anchovie. Btw, Bruce Evensen’s fly of the month is the Green ‘n’ White Polar Fiber minnow. That’s a threadfin herring, aka “greenback.” Smitty’s Fly Box fly this month is an anchovie, aka glass minnow, aka silverside. Warning: do not put Smitty’s anchovy on your Caesar salad. ([Shrimp n Fish Florida](#))

## Who are/were these guys?

That’s Dennis Marquis in the photo on the left. The young man in the photo in the middle is David Redd, and in the photo on the right that’s angler-in-training Scott Russell, once upon a time. Got a fishing picture of yourself as a youngster? Email it to me. [wmaucoin@verizon.net](mailto:wmaucoin@verizon.net)

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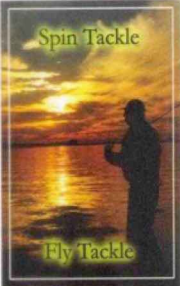
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