

Where the current flows, is where you must cast for fish

FISH FROM P. 4

If that keeps you out of the no-motor zones, knowing how good the fishing is back there must be pretty stressful.

No product insertion

When Don and I reached the place I'm not supposed to name, we paddled into an open bay, set his two mushroom anchors and began to cast. I was throwing popping flies made of balsa wood and feathers. Don had a commotion plug on a spinning rig.

That lure has a scooped front end to splash on the retrieve and ball bearings inside to go clickety-clack.

I can tell you the lure had a silvery belly with green and blue markings topside, but I can't say its brand name.

"Don't write what it is!" Don demanded as he boated his third or fourth hefty snook.

Several lure brands match the plug's general description. I know fishing-doers who would argue that any of them would have worked.

I disagree, for I used other commotion lures that day. Mine were fat-bodied Rip Rollers equipped with propellers for turbulence. Retrieved as noisily as Don's lure, in short, violent jerks (no, not like your first husband), theoretically they should have nailed as many snook. The best strikes I got were a few half-hearted misses (no, not like your last girlfriend).

After that bite ended, we paddled here and there, casting to places where Don had seen fish before. That's not as easy to do as it is to write it or read it.

One mangrove creek looks very much like every other. Which look-alike holds fish that are ready to bite? Unless you see surface action like runaway forage fish or diving birds, you work the shorelines until something happens.

It's known that wherever you see a current flowing around a bend or a point of land, that is where you must cast for that is where fish are.

I would modify that to say it's where the fish should be, or were yesterday or will be tomorrow. You can cast into several such locations with scarcely a bite, and then one that looks like all the others will hand up a bonanza.

After missing more big snook than I'd ever seen in one day, I was feeling discouraged — until a half-hearted final cast with that fat propeller plug was grabbed aggressively by what I took to be a snook.

It turned out to be the one trout over 20 inches long that I was allowed to keep. Instead of changing lures I threw Fatso once more and caught Don's 20-plus keeper for him.

In about 15 minutes, we filled both our four-trout limits. We made one more stop on the way back to the big boat and started catching snapper. We made our five-fish bag limits easily, with nine fish well over the 10-inch minimum size.

Paddling out of the no motor zone, we encountered three people on an anchored outboard boat, fishing the end of the mangrove creek there.

"How did you make out?" one of them asked.

"We got a few small ones," Don said.

"And a lot of exercise," I added, waving my paddle and glowing with honesty.

It's true that we caught a few small ones. We just didn't have space to mention the big ones. As semi-retired journalists, Don and I are devoted to truth.

And, as everyone knows, the sport of fishing deplores exaggeration.



Photos/ARNOLD MARKOWITZ

In the silence and isolation of no-motor zones, you're more likely to see a roseate spoonbill, or whole flocks of them, than in other areas.

Keep regulations consistent statewide

BASS FROM P. 5

Bedding fish: I'm against killing them but not against catching them. How many fish do we catch off beds without realizing it? Probably many more than we realize. As long as bass remain abundant, I don't think it's much of a problem.

Lack of access to fishing areas: More than critically important. The number and frequency of locked gates at the levees is mighty depressing. The locked-off access I see on my beat is usually controlled by South Florida Water Management. I'm especially irked by the longtime lockups of several access sites (including two outstanding launch ramps) on the L-31 canal beside Krome Avenue, between Tamiami Trail and U.S. 27. The South Broward Drainage District, a public agency, shouldn't get away with posting "no trespassing" signs on public lands beside public waters that it manages.

Another segment of the survey asks us to rate the most important opportunities and programs for the FWC to pursue once the plan is made.

How important is it to have more habitat restoration projects? Critically important, it says here, and the more irrespon-

sibly our local governments act in approving development sprawl, the more critical this will get.

What about stricter bass regulations and customizing size and bag limits for individual water bodies? The last thing we need is a hodgepodge of regulatory minutiae differing from this lake to that canal to this river to that county to this town. Except in emergencies, try hard to keep the regulations consistent statewide.

Should FWC engage bass clubs and other fishing organizations more to emphasize the importance of recreational fisheries? Fishing organizations already know what's important. Try engaging their members as volunteers to help with habitat restoration and other useful projects.

How important is it for freshwater fishing-doers to participate in the survey and attend the public workshops when they're scheduled? Critically important, for if we don't tell the FWC what we want it to do, we'll have only ourselves to blame when a management plan we hate is forced on us.

Feedback: How important is this column? Critically important? Not important at all? Write to witzfish@att.net

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40'-49'	\$23.00	\$28.50	\$34.00
50'-59'	\$25.00	\$32.00	\$36.00
60'-69'	\$30.00	\$35.00	\$38.00



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