

Take the Bait

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By

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Sometimes Mother Nature can be cruel. The Red Tide that has enveloped Tampa Bay and the surrounding waters has shown no mercy to our marine life, beach dwelling citizens or fisherman. Just about all indigenous species have been affected; sharks, tarpon, trout, snook and so on. Spanish Mackerel are one of the more fortunate species that seem to be more adaptable to the current conditions and still can be targeted by anglers near channel markers around the shipping channel and the Sunshine Skyway Bridge. Managing to keep your bait alive while traveling from spot to spot may prove to be a bigger challenge than catching the Mackerel. Try a ½ or ¾ ounce silver spoon or a diamond jig rigged with a short piece of No. 4 wire leader and a small barrel swivel. Make long casts and retrieve the lure as fast as possible with a fairly light drag setting on your reel to prevent break offs. Using a chum bag may prove beneficial as well.

With local fishing prospects being less than favorable I decided to take a short vacation back to Spokane, Washington and see some family and of course do some trout fishing in my old stomping grounds. Like everywhere else things had changed a lot in 20 years including nephews and nieces that I once bounced upon a knee were now all grown up with families of their own. Unfortunately at the family gathering an hour after dinner the worst windstorm in recorded history swept through with winds reaching 80 mph. We took cover in the basement for ten minutes and ventured out to assess the aftermath.

Several 60 to 80 foot pine trees had snapped in half and blew 50 feet or more. One tree caught the corner of the house causing minor damage and ended up square across the hood of my brother's new Ford Expedition. Power lines were down throughout the county causing small fires, road closures and general chaos. Of course you know who was blamed for bringing a hurricane with him! Things changed from a family gathering to damage control crews with chainsaws buzzing, the girls dragging off limbs and the kids running around with rakes like a swarm of fire ants. Things were back to normal in short order as we enjoyed fresh carmeled apple and peach pies and gave thanks.

Never one to miss an opportunity my second night I found myself sitting on a private dock at Clear lake with my brother at midnight using float lights to fish for Rainbow and German Brown Trout. White corn, night crawlers and miniature marshmallows were the preferred baits. Several of each species were landed including a catfish or two. The fish ranged from 6 to 10 inches in length and yours truly never had a bite all night. After putting up with some harassment I calmly responded by saying it came as no surprise that even after 20 years the fish still feared me.

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