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**October Newsletter!**

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From Fish On Club <fish-on-fishingclub1@80249862.mailchimpapp.com>

Date Sat 10/5/2024 10:29 AM

To fishonclubnpr@gmail.com <fishonclubnpr@gmail.com>



## October Newsletter!

**The next general membership meeting is Tuesday, October 8th. Doors open at 5:30, a special dinner for all members provided by Rich and June Robinson will be served at 6:00 with the meeting starting soon after. (Since we need a head count to prepare, please RSVP TEXT John Grieder 973-557-3054 ASAP)**



**Please welcome new members:**



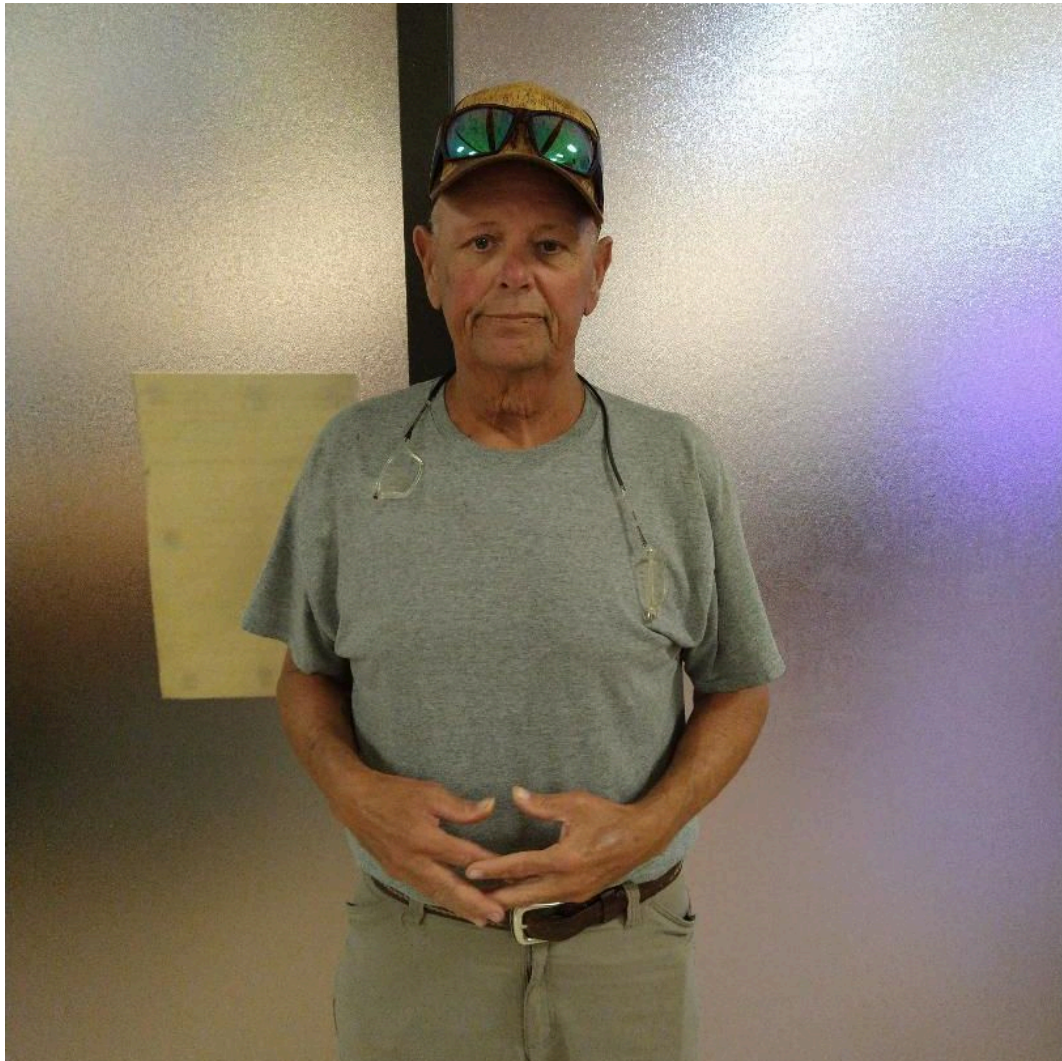
**Dale Rollston and daughter Estibaliz Stommel**





**Joe and Laura Neri with Laura's mom Ethel**





**Our guest speaker at the September meeting was Captain Dencil Powell - the Rajun Cajun. He gave a very informative talk about the how, why, what and when to go fishing. All members are encouraged to come out and join our meetings with these very experienced anglers. The information they provide will make us better at what we love to do!**



### **General Membership Meeting Minutes – September 10, 2024**

**The meeting was called to order by President Mark Morningstar at 7:00pm.**

**Mark introduced the Board members to the group and for the benefit of many new members who have just joined.**

**Socials: The next social in September will be at Whiskey on the River. October's social will be at Gulf Harbors Yacht Club. Signup sheets are available for both.**

**Our semi-annual picnic will be October 19<sup>th</sup> at our usual spot at Anderson Park on Lake Tarpon. Frank Bellizio and Carol Smith will host.**

**Mike Spanhel said that our Wish to Fish subsidiary is sponsoring charters on the Miss Virginia on September 22<sup>th</sup> for Fostering Hope Florida; and another on December 8<sup>th</sup> for the Boy Scouts.**

**Our guest speaker was Captain Dencil Powell (The Rajun Cajun) who led a fine discussion on the intricacies of the what, when, how, why of fishing in any kind of water: Shallow, deep, hot or cool.**

**Fishing reports: Mike Spanhel and Frank Bellizio said they were out on the water together and with Captain Carlos and had a great grouper trip with him.**

**Tournaments: Free-to-play (all members can join in):**

**September – grouper and trout**

**October – redfish and hogfish**

**Prizes – 1/2/3 - \$25/15/10**

**Pay-to-play:**

**September – November snook \$20 longest fish; winner takes all.**

**The next general membership meeting will be October 8<sup>th</sup>.**

**The 50/50 winner was Patrick Driggers - \$100 and the winner of the Tarpon Fishing Outfitters gift certificate was Jim Ross.**

**Meeting adjourned at 8:10.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**John Grieder**

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**From the FWC**

**For you freshwater anglers:**



## Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Sept. 10, 2024



**FWC's TrophyCatch program hits 15,000 catches: A testament to Florida's premier bass fishing**

**The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) announced a significant milestone for its TrophyCatch program, marking the approval of 15,000 trophy bass catches!**

**The TrophyCatch program, a cornerstone of FWC's efforts to promote and conserve Florida's world-class bass fishing, invites anglers to submit their impressive catches of bass weighing 8 pounds or more. Designed to enhance understanding of the state's bass population and encourage conservation, the program has achieved a remarkable level of participation and success.**

**Since its launch in 2012, TrophyCatch has grown into a widespread community of anglers committed to fishing responsibly while celebrating their catches. Participants in the program submit photographs and other documentation of**

their bass, and those that meet the program's criteria are rewarded, recognized and celebrated.

"Reaching 15,000 trophy catches is an incredible accomplishment for our program," said Tom Graef, Director of FWC's Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management. "This milestone underscores the enthusiasm of our anglers and the exceptional bass fishing opportunities in Florida. It also demonstrates the value of the data we collect, which is essential for ongoing conservation and management efforts."

The program's success is a testament to Florida's status as a premier bass fishing destination. Through the TrophyCatch program, the FWC collects crucial data on bass sizes, weights and locations, aiding in the ongoing efforts to manage and sustain the state's abundant fish populations.

Many TrophyCatch conservation partners have supported the program since its inception. Their dedication and investment in Florida's conservation efforts are key to the program's successes. Industry partnerships including Bass Pro Shops, Mercury Marine and Pheonix Bass Boats reward anglers for their contributions to science and ultimately to freshwater management efforts.

TrophyCatch is a citizen-science promotional conservation program that rewards anglers who catch, document and release bass weighing 8 pounds or heavier throughout Florida. Data collected by the program help the FWC better enhance, conserve and promote trophy bass fishing. Anglers who wish to participate — and who want to be included in this year's boat drawing — can visit [TrophyCatch.com](https://www.trophycatch.com) to register and learn more.



**Florida Fish and Wildlife  
Conservation Commission**

**Sept. 30, 2024**

**Applications for limited recreational harvest of goliath grouper in state waters open Oct. 1**

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) will begin accepting applications for the 2025 annual limited harvest season of goliath grouper in state waters. Those interested can apply anytime from Oct. 1-15, for the upcoming 2025 season.



This unique recreational opportunity is possible through successful conservation efforts by state and federal agencies over the past three decades that aided goliath grouper population rebuilding. Permits to participate in this limited-entry harvest will be awarded by a random draw lottery. The cost to apply for the lottery is \$10 plus fees, and permit lottery applications will be available online at [GoOutdoorsFlorida.com](http://GoOutdoorsFlorida.com).

Details for this limited, highly regulated harvest include:

- Total recreational harvest of up to 200 goliath per year, with a maximum of 50 from Everglades National Park.
- A goliath harvest permit and tag, issued via a random-draw lottery (\$150 for residents, \$500 for non-residents, plus fees) are required to participate. Permits and tags are non-transferable, and no exemptions apply.
- A limit of one fish per person per open season with permit and tag.
- An open season from March 1 through May 31.
- Hook-and-line as the only allowable gear.
- A slot limit of 24-36 inches total length.
- Post-harvest requirements include proper application of the tag, reporting harvest data and submitting a fin clip for genetic analysis.
- Harvest will be permitted in all state waters except those of Martin County south through the Atlantic coast of the Keys, all of the St. Lucie River and its tributaries, and Dry Tortugas National Park.
- Harvest will continue to be prohibited in federal waters.

This opportunity is intended to provide additional access to this fishery while balancing the values of various stakeholder groups. Adult goliath grouper will continue to be prohibited from harvest statewide as well as goliath in heavy dive ecotourism areas. This limited harvest is not intended to address fishing depredation concerns.

For more information about the goliath grouper harvest permit and details on the permit lottery and eligibility requirements, visit our [Goliath Grouper Harvest Permit](#) webpage. For more [information about goliath grouper regulations](#), visit [MyFWC.com/Marine](http://MyFWC.com/Marine) and click on “Recreational Regulations,” “Reef Fish” and “Goliath Grouper.”



**Florida Fish and Wildlife  
Conservation Commission**

**Sept. 13, 2024**

**Record-breaking year as 2024 FWC Lionfish Challenge crowns Recreational King and Commercial Champion**

**The ninth edition of the FWC Lionfish Challenge recently concluded on Sept. 2 with competitors battling until the last minute and the record number from 2023 shattering. In a year that demolished previous records, participants showcased their determination to rid Florida waters of invasive lionfish and claim the coveted titles of Lionfish King or Queen and Commercial Champion.**

**The 2024 Lionfish Challenge witnessed an increase in participation, with 285 dedicated divers submitting their lionfish harvests. These dedicated divers embarked on over 700 trips throughout the state during the Challenge and removed 31,773 lionfish from the waters of Florida.**

**This is the highest tournament total since the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Lionfish Challenge inception in 2016. Amidst these awe-inspiring results, two participants emerged as the victors. Introducing the winners of the 2024 Lionfish Challenge:**

- Lionfish King (First Place Recreational Division): Baye Beaford (Duval) – 915 lionfish**
- Second Place Recreational Division: Dale Wolber (Duval) – 866 lionfish**
- Third Place Recreational Division: Tim Robinson (Broward) – 726 lionfish**



### ***Lionfish King Baye Beaford***

- **Commercial Champion (First Place Commercial Division): Matt Myers (Duval) – 1,785 pounds of lionfish**
- **Second Place Commercial Division: Jerry Butler (Duval) – 1,426 pounds of lionfish**
- **Third Place Commercial Division: Isidoro Bedoya (Duval) – 845 pounds of lionfish**



***Commercial Champion Matt Myers***

"We're grateful for the Lionfish Challenge participants who worked hard to shatter the previous year's record in removing these invasive species," said FWC Commission Chairman Rodney Barreto. "Congratulations to our 2024 Lionfish King and Commercial Champion; your exceptional efforts are helping defend our precious marine ecosystems."

"The Lionfish Challenge raises awareness of this invasive species and serves as a great way to get people outdoors and involved in conservation by removing invasive lionfish," said FWC Executive Director Roger Young. "We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the 2024 participants for their collective effort in removing over 31,000 invasive lionfish from Florida's waters. Your dedication is truly commendable."

As a testament to the dedication and conservative thinking of Florida's divers, there has also been an influx of new lionfish tournaments across the state of Florida. Excitement is already brewing for the 2025 FWC Lionfish Challenge as we look to shatter more records.

## Background

The Lionfish Challenge is a summer-long tournament that rewards divers for their lionfish harvests. The tournament is open to everyone, is completely free to enter and participants can compete from anywhere in the state. Divers receive prizes throughout the challenge based on the number of lionfish they harvest and compete for the prestigious title of the Lionfish King/Queen or Commercial Champion.

Issue 38

October - December 2024



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*Our Purpose: To identify excellent Florida freshwater fishing opportunities and to provide anglers with relevant information that will enhance the quality of their outdoor experience.*

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**Ronnie Ray Eckenwiler caught-and-released this fine 9 lbs. 6 oz. Lake Okeechobee bass! The **OCTOBER 15 deadline** is rapidly approaching for submitting your Season 12 catches.**

TrophyCatch Season 12 ended on September 30, and you now have through **OCTOBER 15** to submit any catches caught *since October 1, 2023*. Thank you to all our program participants as we tally a successful season and wait with anticipation to see who the **Hall of Fame Champion** will be! Make sure you follow us on [TrophyCatch Facebook](#) for end-of-season news and updates. We are still tallying submissions, but the current program numbers are:

- 12,273 Lunker Club (8-9.9 lbs.)
- 3,093 Trophy Club (10-12.9 lbs.)
- 153 Hall of Fame (13+ lbs.)
- **15,519 TOTAL approved submissions to date**

Of course, don't stop fishing! Season 13 is now underway, and we look forward to what your catches and the next year will bring to our program.



***Over 15,000 TrophyCatches have informed and guided Florida bass research and conservation since 2012!***

And the latest season is ending with fanfare. In its twelfth year TrophyCatch reached the incredible milestone of over 15,000 approved submissions! That is an incredible number of documented catches, and about ten times more trophy bass data than FWC biologists could normally obtain using standard fisheries techniques. This information has revealed unprecedented new insights about Florida bass ecology and continues to help inform the future of Florida bass research and conservation. We thank each of our participants who has made such an achievement possible!

[Register for TrophyCatch](#) or view approved angler catches to help plan your next fishing trip at [TrophyCatch.com](https://www.trophycatch.com). Follow [TrophyCatch Facebook](#) for featured big bass, program updates and partner highlights. For more news and freshwater information also follow us on the [FishReelFlorida Instagram](#).

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## [Featured Fish: Striped Bass](#)

**Size:** The [striped bass](#) is Florida's largest freshwater game fish! The state record is 42.24 pounds, though fish more typically caught weigh in the 10 to 20 pound range.

The Big Catch minimum qualifying sizes are 12 pounds or 30 inches for adults, and 9 pounds or 22 inches for youth (see [BigCatchFlorida.com](http://BigCatchFlorida.com)).



**Appearance:** Striped bass are fast, powerful fish with silvery sides and a white belly. They have seven or eight black stripes along the sides. Stripes are absent on young fish of less than six inches, though this fish can usually be separated from similar species ([sunshine bass](#) and [white bass](#)) by its much larger size.

**Where to catch them:** In Florida, striped bass are found primarily in the St. Johns River and its tributaries, and a few panhandle rivers. Specific sites include the Apalachicola River and Lake Seminole, Lake Talquin and the Ochlockonee River, Lake Harris, and the Escambia River.

**Sporting Quality:** Striper fishing is best from fall through spring. Live shad are very effective. Use heavy tackle with 3- to 4-ounce weights in high flow areas. Baitfish-like lures, such as heavy jigs or sinking or floating minnow imitations, also work well. White, chrome or chartreuse colors will all produce fish.

Striped bass need long stretches of flowing water to reproduce successfully. These conditions are rare in Florida. Stripers do not tolerate water temperatures over 75° F for long. During Florida summers, striped bass become less active and must find cool water to survive. Striped bass populations depend on annual stockings from FWC and federal hatcheries.

*Fish illustration by Duane Raver, Jr.*

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[Outdoors Techniques: Aquatic Bird Identifier](#)





***Observing the birds (like this tricolored heron) that also inhabit Florida's fishing spots can not only make you a better angler, but will increase your appreciation and enjoyment of your time outdoors.***

Last issue challenged you to "[Double your fishing fun](#)" by slipping a pair of binoculars aboard or in your tackle bag and observing our feathered friends on your next trip. Birds are not only constant companions on the water, but close observation can reveal the location of bait schools, following game fish, or even suggest a new fishing spot. Just be sure to not interrupt the birds while they fish; let them leave of their own accord before moving to these spots. Below are some of Florida's most iconic birds, the elegant and graceful herons and egrets. Grab your binoculars and see how many you can spot on one trip!



### **White Herons and Ibises**



**Great Egret** — 32"; abundant. One of our most common and easily found waders. It is a large species with *yellow bill* and *black legs*. Sometimes seen feeding along roadsides or hedgerows.

**Snowy Egret** — 20"; common. A medium-sized heron with a *thin black bill* and *black legs with yellow feet* (referred to as "slippers"). Smaller and daintier than the great egret. This bird was once hunted to near extinction for its beautiful plumes, used at the time to decorate ladies' hats.

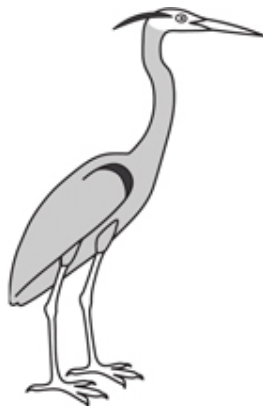


**Little Blue Heron (immature)** — 22"; common. A medium-sized white heron with a *bluish, black-tipped bill* and *bluish to greenish legs*. As a juvenile matures, it will have more and more patches of blue on its body, until it becomes entirely dark.

**White Ibis** — 22"; abundant. Medium-sized, with black wingtips, *red legs*, and a *distinct curved red bill*. Juveniles are similar but mottled white and brown. This species is aquatic, but is also observed on fields, golf courses, or lawns. Unlike most waders, the white ibis may use its long bill to probe into the ground for food.

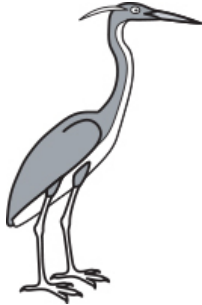


### Dark Herons and Ibises



**Great Blue Heron** — 38", common. *Our only large, dark heron*. Head is whitish, with the rest of the body various shades of blue-gray. Black head crest may also be visible. Feeds on the largest food items of any of our herons and has a particular preference for snakes!

**Little Blue Heron (*adult*)** — 22"; common. A medium-sized bird with a bluish, black-tipped bill and a *dark blue body* and reddish neck and head. Appears to be a single, dark color from a distance. Compare with the tricolored heron, below.



**Tricolored Heron** — 22"; uncommon. Medium-sized, and very similar to the little blue heron above. Note, however, the *white throat stripe and white undersides*, as well as the yellow legs and white head crest. The back of the head and white throat may have patches of rusty-brown during the breeding season.

**Glossy Ibis** — 20"; uncommon. *Entirely dark with a curved dark bill*. Although it appears black at a distance, good light and a closer look reveal an iridescent dark red bird with iridescent green wings.



**Green Heron** — 14"; common. *Our smallest dark heron*. The green heron has a *shorter neck* than other herons, and often keeps it coiled so that it is not visible, giving this bird a very “chunky” appearance. Also note the dark crest on the head and the short legs. Rather than wading directly in the water, this species is often seen perched on shoreline branches or walking on floating vegetation. More secretive than most other wading birds.

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[Featured Site: Hardee County Lakes Park](#)



***Hardee County staff with Florida bass sampled during an electrofishing survey.***

**Location:** Hardee County

**Size:** Lake Hardee (120 acres), Deer Lake (110 acres), Lake Firefly (97 acres), and Gator Lake (47 acres)

**Description:** Located off Ollie Roberts Road in Fort Green, [Hardee County Lakes Park](#) is a 1,200-acre park owned and operated by Hardee County. The park has a number of amenities including hiking, biking, and horse trails, campsites, picnic pavilions, a playground, and a small camp store. Emergent and submerged vegetation is plentiful in all of the lakes, including spikerush and bulrush that was planted by FWC to improve habitat.



***FWC biologists deploying fish attractors in Hardee County Lakes Park.***

The lakes in the park are reclaimed phosphate pits and offer a wide variety of angling opportunities. All four lakes have concrete boat ramps and shore access, though Hardee and Deer Lakes are the most accessible for bank fishing. Depths and contours vary by lake, with most reaching up to 20 feet deep. FWC biologists have recently added fish attractors to Hardee, Deer, and Gator Lakes to increase angler success and improve habitat. The fish attractors on Hardee and Deer lakes can be accessed from the fishing piers, while the attractors on Gator Lake can be accessed by boat.

Florida bass, bluegill, redear sunfish (shellcracker), black crappie (specks), and catfish can be caught in all four lakes and are stocked regularly. Hardee Lake and Gator Lake are additionally stocked with sunshine bass.

Hardee and Deer lakes offers great opportunities to catch bass and bluegill. If you are targeting catfish, lakes Firefly and Gator are your best bet.

**Note:** See the [Hardee County Park Fish Management Area regulations](#) for rules designed to improve fishing success at this site. This county park is also part of the Florida Fishing Trail, a new trail of waterbodies that will be opening in this area in early 2025!



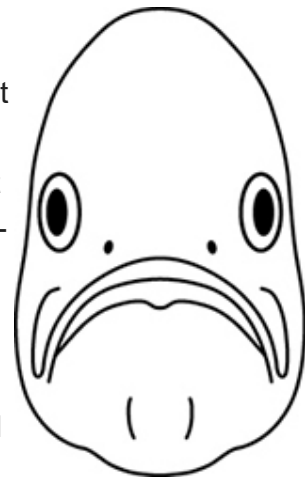
***FWC biologists conducting an electrofishing survey to monitor fish populations.***

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## Fisheries Biology: What fish see Part 2

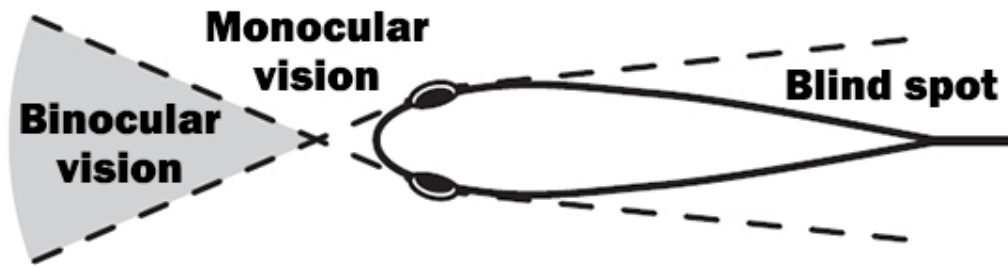
In the last issue we learned some of the basic principles of seeing under water. This issue will continue exploring the sight of fish and provide some practical suggestions for anglers. Underwater, where visibility is usually limited to dozens of feet under even the clearest conditions, there is little need for long-range vision.

Fish have been described as being nearsighted and can probably focus on objects much closer to their eyes than humans can. Cast a popping bug near a school of bluegill and one of them will often approach within an inch of the lure to inspect it—something that would leave an angler cross-eyed! Even when a fish first detects an object off to the side, it will usually turn and face it in order to examine it. Why? The likeliest explanation is that this brings the object within the narrow range of a fish's binocular vision.



Unlike humans, many fish have their eyes set far apart on the sides of the head rather than to the front. This allows a very wide arc of monocular side vision for spotting predators or prey, but provides only a narrow range of overlapping binocular vision to the front. There is a blind spot to the rear, and the range of binocular vision to the front encompasses only about 30-45 degrees. For this reason, some experienced anglers believe a fish is more likely to spot a lure if it is cast to the fish's side instead of directly in front of it. Once a fish spots something, turning to face it

undoubtedly gives the fish a better estimate of the object's distance. Even though fish will turn to examine objects, their eyes do have limited independent movement within the sockets. Like humans, a fish's eyes move in unison when looking around.



*A fish has a narrow range of binocular vision to the front, a wide range of monocular vision to both sides, and a narrow blind spot to the back.*

And finally, the big question facing anglers and lure manufacturers the world over: Do fish see color? Yes, they do! In many cases, fish color vision is probably comparable to that of humans. Like those of humans, fish retinas possess both cones for color vision as well as rods for black and white vision. During daylight, fish use primarily cones for vision. At night, the rods, which provide much higher light sensitivity and resolution, are used instead. The process of switching between using cones instead of rods (and then back again) may take two hours, and a predatory fish whose eyes adjust more quickly than those of forage fishes will have a visual advantage during dawn and dusk—at least one reason why these times usually provide the best fishing. Sharks, interestingly enough, do not see color.

A very important factor in fish color vision is water depth. Water completely absorbs (or **attenuates**) different colors of light at different depths, affecting which colors are visible to a fish. Water attenuates red light from the spectrum first, oranges and yellows next, and blues and greens last (see the chart below). What this means is that at a particular depth a red lure will no longer look red but might appear as black or brown, while a green lure at the same depth could still look green. At even greater depths, colors are no longer visible, and fish probably see objects in varying shades of gray. It is therefore not surprising that within both fresh- and saltwater fishes, shallow-dwelling species have better developed color vision than deepwater fishes. Of course, water turbidity that inhibits light penetration greatly reduces the depth at which a particular color is visible.



*Colors disappear with depth. Red is no longer visible at 20 feet, but green is visible down to 30 feet or more.*

Despite the fact that red is the first color to disappear from the underwater spectrum, some research has shown that red elicits the strongest response from largemouth bass. Yellow was the next most important color for this species. Other research has suggested that largemouth bass also possess some of the better color vision among common sportfishes, followed by smallmouth bass, muskie, northern pike, rainbow trout, bluegill, crappie, and gar. Fishes which feed primarily by smell, such as catfishes, may have poor color vision in comparison.

We hope you "see" what fish see a little better now!

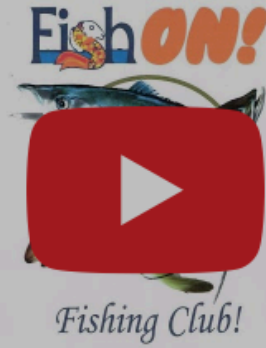


**Our fall picnic is right around the corner.**

**Just click on the image below to see the reminder.**



Don't miss the FishOn Club Fall Picnic

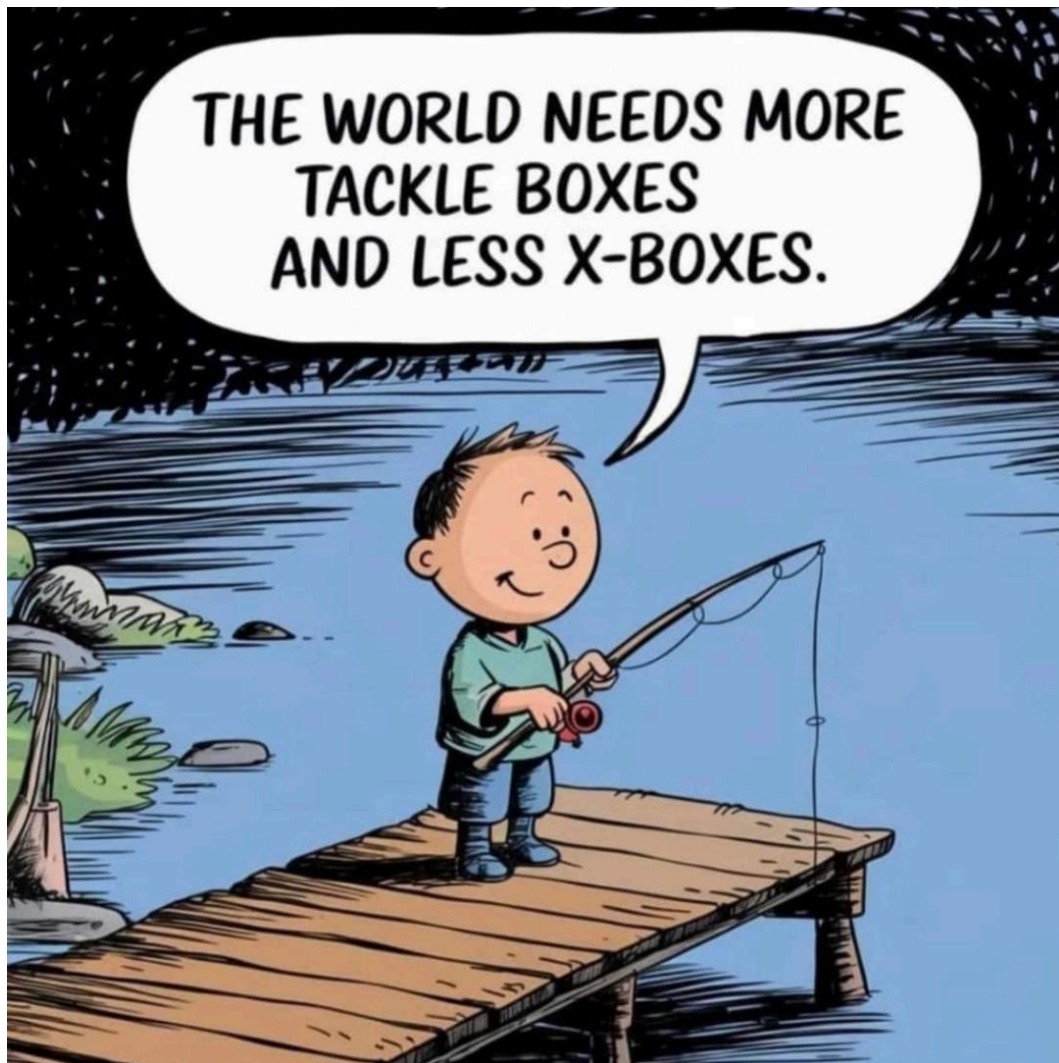


**Saturday, October 19, 2024 at 10:30 AM  
Anderson Park, Tarpon Springs, Pavillion 4**

Click on the arrow to see the video!



*thnx and a tip o'the hat to frank bellizio*



**See you all at the meeting!**

***Tight lines!!***

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