
July 2026 Newsletter!

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Sun, Jul 12, 2026 at 11:14 AM



Your July 2026 Newsletter!

The next general membership meeting will be Tuesday, July 14. Doors open at 6:30, meeting starts at 7:00. Our guest speaker for the evening will be Bruce Archambault who has a nice video presentation of fishing for spoonbill on Lake of the Ozarks!

You don't want to miss this one!



The guest speaker at our June meeting was Captain Pat Pinder of Florida Inshore Salt Therapy.



Captain Pat Pinder



Please welcome new member this month...



John Beckman

Welcome to the club, John!



General Membership Meeting Minutes – June 9, 2026

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

We had one guest in attendance that joined the club – John Beckman.

Our guest speaker for the evening was Captain Pat Pinder from Florida Inshore Salt Therapy. A Florida native that grew up in Tarpon Springs, he led a great discussion on where he finds bait, where he finds fish and how he goes about doing it with specific details (right down to the types of knots he uses to tie on hooks) on the gear he uses.

On the Wish to Fish front, it was noted that about 32 kids from Hope Children's Home were on the last charter; that the next few charters are scheduled for September 11 with Fostering Florida, October 11 with Scouting USA and March 15, 2027 with the Sheriff's Youth Ranch. We also had volunteers to assist in the Rusty Bucket tournament that was recently held for about 120 kids.

The next social dinner will be on June 17 at the Gulf Harbors Yacht Club. This will be the last social dinner until September.

The current club tournament is for both snapper and ladyfish, and although there were only a few entries so far, the membership was reminded that to be eligible you **MUST** submit a fishing report about your catch on the club website.

November 14th is the date of our fall picnic to be held at RL Anderson Park on Lake Tarpon.

Several members told us about their recent fishing activities.

The 50/50 winner was Frank Bellizio - \$55.

The next general membership meeting will be July 14.

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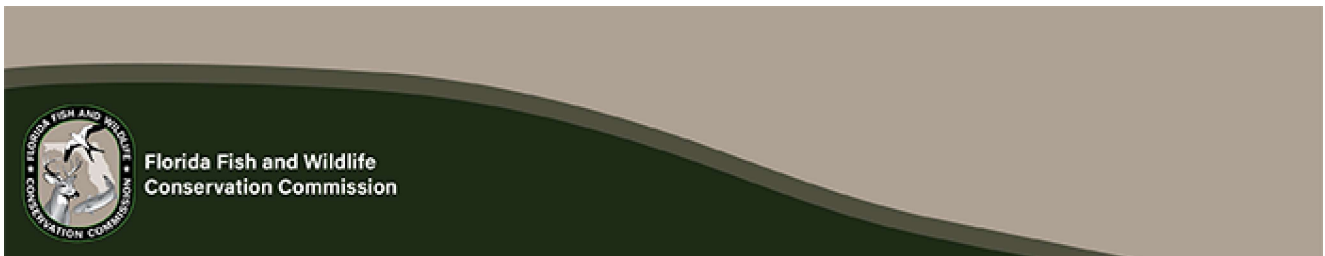
Meeting adjourned at 8:05.

Respectfully submitted,

John Grieder

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**From the FWC**



## **Bay scallop season in Pasco County opens July 10**

The 2026 recreational bay scallop season in Pasco County opens today and will remain open through Aug 18. This includes all state waters south of the Hernando-Pasco County line and north of the Anclote Key Lighthouse in northern Pinellas County, including all waters of the Anclote River.

The daily bag limit in this area is two gallons of whole bay scallops in the shell or one pint of bay scallop meat per person, with a maximum of 10 gallons of whole bay scallops in the shell or 1/2 gallon (four pints) shucked bay scallop meat per vessel per day. Throughout the season, vessel limits do not allow an individual to exceed their personal bag limit.

Harvest of bay scallops is permitted only by hand or by using a landing or dip net. Commercial harvest is prohibited.

A few things to remember that will make diving for scallops safe for divers and boaters alike:

- Practice safe boating and diving habits by maintaining 360-degree awareness and adhering to all divers-down flag regulations.
- When scalloping in open water, divers should stay within 300 feet of a correctly displayed divers-down flag or within 100 feet of a divers-down flag if on a river, inlet or navigation channel.
- Always operate your boat at idle speed when traveling within 300 feet of a divers-down flag in open water or within 100 feet of a divers-down flag on a river, inlet or navigational channel.

Visit [MyFWC.com/Boating](http://MyFWC.com/Boating) click on “Boating Regulations,” and select “Divers-down Warning Devices” for additional information.

It is a violation of Florida law to damage seagrass beds in some areas within state waters. Boaters should stay within the marked navigation channels whenever possible and avoid traveling through seagrass beds in shallow water, which can cause propeller scars. Seagrasses are the principal food for endangered marine animals such as manatees and green sea turtles, act as natural filters to help purify the water, and serve as important habitat for a wide variety of marine life, like the bay scallop.

Discarding scallop shells in inshore waters can also damage seagrass habitat and create hazards for swimmers. Scallop shells may be discarded in a trash receptacle or in larger bodies of water where they are more likely to disperse.

Recreational harvesters need a Florida saltwater fishing license to harvest bay scallops unless they are exempt from needing a license or have a no-cost shoreline fishing license and are wading from shore to collect scallops (i.e., feet do not leave the bottom to swim, snorkel, or SCUBA, and harvesters do not use a vessel to reach or return from the harvest location).



*Kaitlyn Miranda caught-and-released this 8 lbs. 4 oz. trophy Florida bass on Lake Okeechobee.*

As Florida enters the peak summer months, we encourage anglers to check the [TrophyCare](#) page for recommendations on handling your fish for a healthy

live-release during this hotter period. There are also detailed tips on properly documenting the weight and length of your catch to ensure a successful submission.



*Be sure to check the [TrophyCare](#) page for both fish handling and TrophyCatch submission tips.*

Historically, trophy bass fishing slows down during this part of the year, but if there's one thing the TrophyCatch program has helped demonstrate, it's that you can still catch a trophy bass almost any time and any place here in Florida, the Fishing Capital of the World. Wear sunblock or UV protective clothing and take plenty of refreshing electrolyte drinks along to keep fishing in safety and comfort throughout the summer.

This is also the final quarter of Season 14, which ends on September 30. TrophyCatch participants will have until October 15 to complete their submissions for the season. Until then, FWC looks forward to your submissions. The most recent totals for the TrophyCatch program are:

- 13,568 Lunker Club (8-9.9 lbs.) bass
- 3,420 Trophy Club (10-12.9 lbs.)
- 178 Hall of Fame (13+ lbs.)
- 17,166 TOTAL approved bass submissions to date



***Joseph Wood caught-and-released this Putnam County bass during the Wolfson Children's Bass Tournament. Approved Putnam County TrophyCatches are eligible for a special prize.***

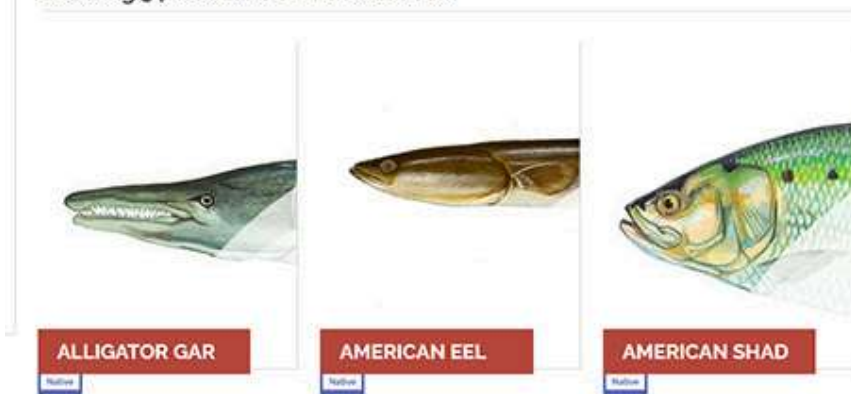
The [Hooked On Putnam](#) TrophyCatch promotion is still in play! Check the page for an exciting opportunity to win an awesome fishing trip prize package when you submit and have catches approved for TrophyCatch that are from Putnam County!

[Register for TrophyCatch](#) or view approved angler catches to help plan your next fishing trip at [TrophyCatch.com](#). Follow [TrophyCatch on Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for featured big bass, program updates and partner highlights.

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Showing 54 results for: Freshwater Fish



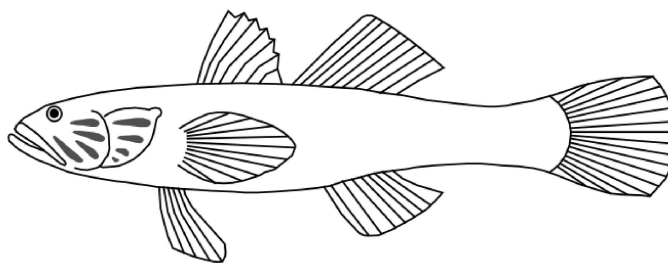
## Featured Fish: Bigmouth Sleeper

**Size:** To 20 inches.

**Identification and similar species:** This unusual fish, normally found in saltwater but able to survive quite well in fresh, is quite

distinct compared to other freshwater species. The mottled brown color, large mouth, rounded tail, and lined cheeks identify the bigmouth sleeper. Another primary identification mark, the divided dorsal fin, has led to guesses of walleye by puzzled anglers familiar with this northern species. The only similar species found in Florida is the fat sleeper, another saltwater visitor like its larger relative. Shorter, stockier, and darker, the fat sleeper rarely exceeds 10 inches.

**Angling qualities:** This uncommon fish usually arrives as a surprise to anglers expecting a better-known species at the end of the line. An ambush predator,



the bigmouth sleeper usually rests in vegetation waiting for fish to swim within feeding range. As such, it is most often caught by bass anglers use minnow-imitating lures or live shiners. Not a tremendous fighter, the challenge with this species is not so much to land it as to identify it!

**Where to catch them:** The bigmouth sleeper occurs in both Atlantic and Gulf coastal areas of much of Florida, and well inland in the state's fresh waters. Despite a fairly broad Florida range, they are usually uncommon to rare wherever found in fresh water.

**Interesting facts:** A number of saltwater species can live in freshwater, often to the surprise of freshwater anglers. See [Issue 44](#) for more information.

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## Beating the Crowd



*It can take effort to leave the crowd behind, but it's worth it! A kayak can be a great way to fish waters out of reach to bank or outboard motor anglers.*

Florida is the Fishing Capital of the World, attracting anglers from around the globe. It's great that fishing continues to be so popular here, and we will always be glad for the camaraderie of fellow like-minded outdoors enthusiasts. However, that can make finding your fish in the crowd more challenging! Here are some ways to offset the fishing pressure that you may find and bring a few extra fish to net on your next trip.

***Fish where the crowd doesn't fish*** — There are several ways to avoid fishing the very same “honey holes” that just about every passing angler tosses a bait into. One is to simply go a little farther than the average angler. Anglers willing to walk farther or spend some extra time idling through a “No Wake”

zone may be rewarded by access to lightly fished waters or fish-attracting structures that few others reach. The burgeoning popularity of kayaks offers another way to reach waters that others cannot. If you can stand on the shoreline, you can launch a kayak! This might be a way to explore untouched waters where only bank anglers normally go, and this also applies to areas beyond water control structures or low bridges that present an impassable barrier to those traveling by outboard. Biking can be another way to get farther down the canal than the next angler if no boat ramp is available.



*We think it was no coincidence that bike angler Daniel Ryle submitted the very first TrophyCatch bass from this remote canal!*

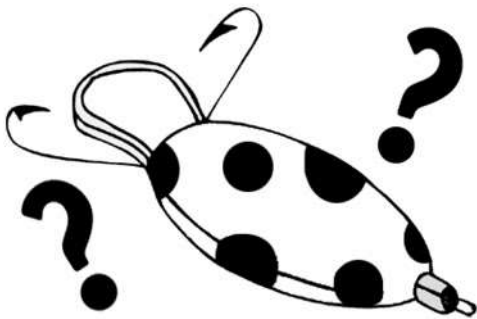
***Fish when the crowd doesn't fish*** — Most anglers are, by necessity, weekend warriors. Few can regularly fish during the middle of the week. However, most anglers can still avoid much of the regular weekend hurry by fishing the evening feed, thereby avoiding the Saturday morning rush hour. Full-fledged night fishing is also another way to beat the crowds, and a way to fish during the week in spite of a nine-to-five work schedule.

As the weather begins to warm, keep in mind that bass often feed more aggressively in the cool of the night than they do during the heat of the day. Another solution is a quick, one- or two-hour bank fishing stop at a favorite



site on the way home from work. Not only will you probably enjoy a lot more peace and quiet, but you might start landing more fish, too!

*Find fish hiding in plain sight* — Even if you fish the same lake as the crowd, you don't have to fish the same exact holes or fish them the same way. Although some sites that are obvious targets such as stumps or bridge pilings are still worth a cast or two. Concentrate on less obvious hot spots — a culvert that is well-hidden by vegetation, or an underwater point or brushpile that only careful searching with a depthfinder will reveal. Another way to quickly leave behind the anglers right around you is to fish deeper than they are. Documenting the deeper points and channels of a lake can be hard work, and patiently fishing them even harder. Most anglers won't go to the trouble or will stick with more easily-worked lures that don't go as deep and don't require as much concentration or effort.



*Fish what the crowd doesn't fish* — For years, anglers have suspected that fish know more about lures than fishermen do. While plastic worms, spinnerbaits, and crankbaits certainly land a lot of fish in this state, it sometimes takes something a little different to fool a cagey old lunker.

The easiest way to throw something new at the fish is to tie on something you haven't seen on the water, either. Spinners (Snagless Sally, Mepps, Panther Martin, and Rooster Tail are some of the best-known) don't see nearly as much use down south as they do for trout and salmon in our northern states. These lures can provide excellent action for bass and panfish, and even weedless versions are available. Spoons are another "up-north" lure that don't see much use in Florida's fresh waters (except for the popular Johnson Minnow). Tie on a Dardevle, Acme, Luhr-Jensen, or Crocodile spoon and you're tossing a bait that most fish haven't seen yet. Other possibilities for lures not every fish is familiar with include old classics that are simply not as commonly seen as they used to be (like the Heddon Crazy Crawler). On the flip side, hitting the water with the latest new lure can also give you an advantage — until the word gets around!

So, these are some ways to beat the crowd while still treating all those fellow anglers with respect. Do so, and you may find a new fishing buddy — willing to share their own secrets!

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[Featured Site: Orange Lake](#)



***Orange Lake is one of Florida's top destinations for big bass!***

**Location:** Alachua County

**Size:** 12,550 acres

**Description:** [Orange Lake](#) is situated 15 miles southeast of Gainesville in southern Alachua County. It is part of the Orange Creek Basin, which contains Orange, Lochloosa, and Newnans lakes and drains into the Ocklawaha River. At nearly 13,000 acres, Orange is the largest lake in FWC's North Central Region. Orange Lake is a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts of all types, providing high quality fishing, waterfowl hunting, alligator hunting, frogging, and wildlife watching opportunities. This lake is well known as one of the best trophy bass lakes, not only in Florida, but the entire nation! While the Florida bass receives most of the attention, the lake also supports excellent panfish (bluegill/redear sunfish, or bream) and black crappie (speck) fisheries.

Diverse and abundant fish and wildlife are found in Orange Lake due to exceptional habitat conditions. These conditions are driven by a relatively unique situation: Orange Lake is shallow (6 feet average depth) and contains numerous sinkholes that allow water levels to drop rapidly during droughts. The lake is then refilled by rainfall, often associated with tropical storms and hurricanes. These cycles of drought and refill have taken place on Orange Lake since before recorded history, and play an essential role in maintaining lake health, diverse habitat, and productive fisheries. However, these cycles can cause issues with navigation and access, and too much low quality

habitat. To prioritize lake management activities that improve conditions for fish, wildlife, and people, the Orange Lake Habitat Management Plan was developed with public input and initiated in 2016. This plan and other information can be found on the [Orange Creek Basin website](#), where you can also sign up to receive updates and public meeting announcements.



*Some of the largest bass submitted to the TrophyCatch program in recent years have come from Orange Lake. Biologist sampling supports this observation!*

The last major drought occurred in 2011-2013, where the open water area in Orange Lake was less than half of normal lake conditions. By 2017 conditions were perfect for trophy bass production. Low bass density combined with abundant habitat and prey species resulted in bass growing fast and reaching large size quickly. To maximize the potential of this “trophy bass window,” two management actions were taken by the FWC as part of the [Florida Trophy Bass Project](#). The size regulation was changed in 2024 to a 20-inch maximum length limit (5 fish daily bag limit, circle hooks required for natural bait over 3” in length). Since 2023, the FWC has also not issued tournament exemption permits during summer months (mid-June to mid-September). FWC research shows that substantial delayed post-release mortality can occur during summer tournaments. Despite angler’s [best handling/live-well practices](#), bass are easily stressed during the high temperatures of summer. These actions protect large female bass and allow them to reach maximum potential size.

Habitat management actions taken since the last major drought include converting almost 2,000 acres of shrub habitat into open water that quickly colonized with aquatic vegetation. In a given year, up to 25% of bass anglers are targeting these areas. Another habitat component is Submersed Aquatic Vegetation (SAV). The FWC has not conducted any treatments to remove SAV, and it has expanded to over 60% of the lake. While SAV can provide excellent fish and wildlife habitat, it can cause issues with access and navigation. The FWC has addressed this with an access corridor marked with buoys that focuses boat traffic to keep SAV clear using boat props, which is a passive, mechanical, inexpensive, herbicide-free approach.

The FWC monitors freshwater fisheries primarily using data from angler surveys, tournaments, [TrophyCatch](#) program submissions, and FWC fish and habitat sampling programs. The numbers for Orange Lake are impressive. Record numbers of anglers were fishing Orange Lake in 2025 and catching high numbers of large bass. Bass tournament results in 2025 show that: 69% of tournaments had big bass weight over 8 lbs., 48% of tournaments had a big bass weight over 10 lbs., 58% of tournaments had winning bag weights over 20 lbs., and two bags over 40 lbs. were reported. A single tournament in 2025 reported seven bass caught over 10 lbs. Orange Lake continues to lead Florida with the number of bass submitted to TrophyCatch over 10 and 13 lbs., with new record totals each season. Last season anglers submitted 112 bass over 8 lbs., 45 bass over 10 lbs., and 2 over 13 lbs. While Mother Nature gets most of the credit for these excellent conditions, the FWC has followed the plan, created more areas to fish, and improved angler access to these areas. In addition, bass catch data improved in several categories after the FWC implemented the bass management actions described above.

Maintaining conditions for productive fisheries can be difficult. North Central Florida is experiencing extreme drought conditions in 2026 and water levels in Orange Lake are the lowest observed in 15 years. Currently boats can only launch at one public ramp (Heagy Burry) and aquatic vegetation is getting thick. In addition, FWC monitoring data indicates that the Florida bass population may be becoming overcrowded, and anglers are catching numerous skinny bass. This is likely due to excellent spawning conditions resulting in high numbers of bass, decreasing the amount of prey available for each bass. Dense aquatic vegetation may also be limiting the ability of bass to feed effectively. Anglers can play an important role in managing their Florida bass fisheries by keeping smaller bass and releasing larger bass (following [FWC freshwater fishing regulations](#)). Removing smaller bass leaves more food for the remaining bass, allowing them to grow larger, faster. Orange Lake may be entering another drought-refill cycle, but for now, there are still plenty of giants to be caught. Go get 'em while you still can!

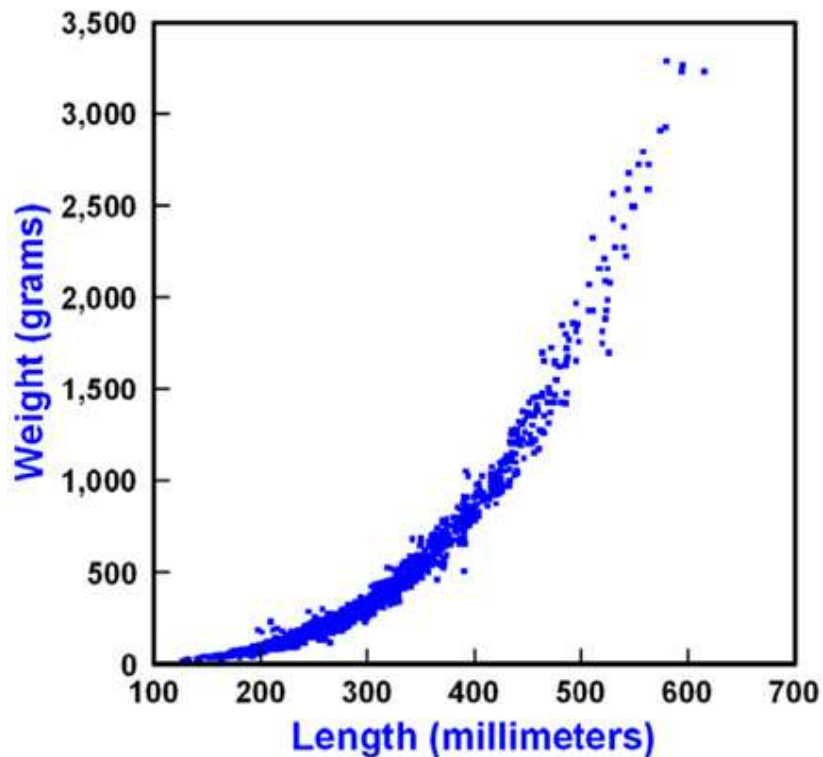


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## Fisheries Biology: Fish Length and Weight

You're on lunch break from work and decide to toss a couple of casts into the park pond you pass every day. Suddenly, something big hits! Fortunately, the pond doesn't contain too many obstacles and you manage to land one of the biggest bass you've ever seen. But you have no scale . . . All you can do is measure the bass length and girth with the tape measure you keep in your toolbox before releasing it: 27 inches long and 18 inches around. But the real question is, how much are you going to tell the guys back at the bass club it weighed?

Luckily for curious anglers, the relationship between a fish's length and its weight is a fairly consistent one. The graph below, charting the weight and length of many individual bass, reveals that a nice, consistent relationship exists between the two. This is illustrated by the clustering together of the data points (dots) and the smooth curve that they make as a group. This graph displays information from bass surveyed from the L-67A Canal in Water Conservation Area 3.



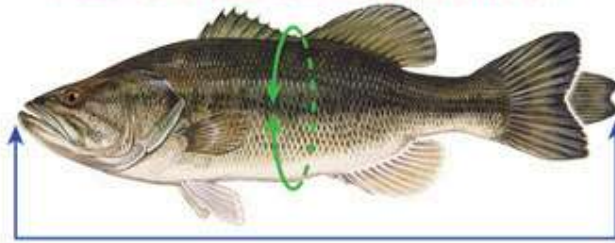
*This graph compares length and weight for 3,600 largemouth bass sampled from the L-67A Canal. Each dot represents one fish; most of the dots are so tightly clustered together that they are not individually visible.*

One thing to keep in mind is that many fish change shape as they get larger. For example, bass anglers know that a big “hawg” has a much chunkier profile than a young “bank runner”. You can also see this in the above graph. Instead of a straight line formed by the grouping of dots (which would occur if weight was exactly proportional to length for bass of all sizes), there is an upward curve. In other words, as a bass gets longer it tends to weigh more per inch.

Does all this graphing and science have any practical application for anglers? Of course! There are various equations that have been developed to estimate bass weight based on its length and girth. Fortunately, [FWC's Bass Weight Calculator](#) website saves you from doing the math: Just plug in your numbers and hit return! The first weight estimate displayed is the one the FWC considers to be most accurate, but estimates using several other formulas are also provided for comparison. Plugging in your numbers from your park pond bass, you can tell your fishin' buddies that your bass weighed about 11 pounds! (And you'll definitely take your scale next time!) *Note that estimates calculated from data like this are based on typically shaped bass. Estimates will be less predictive for disproportionally shaped larger bass.*

## Bass Weight Calculator

Measure **Girth** around the fattest part of the fish



Measure **Total Length** with mouth closed and tail squeezed together

*Bass graphic by Duane Raver, Jr.*

Total Length in Inches:

27

Maximum Girth in Inches:

18

Calculate

Reset

Total Length in Millimeters:

686

Maximum Girth in Millimeters:

457

Typically the most accurate estimate:

Weight in Pounds:

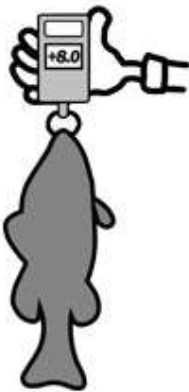
11.07

Weight in Kilograms:

5.03

*The FWC's Bass Weight Calculator website can provide an accurate bass weight estimate from a length and girth measurement. Note that these are estimates and based on typical bass. Estimates will be less predictive for disproportionally shaped larger bass.*

So far, we've only talked about largemouth bass, but most fish will have a similar relationship between length and weight. Of course, the numbers (and ratio of weight to length) will be very different for a round bluegill than they will be for a long gar. For a biologist, length-weight data like this can reveal what health condition a fish is in, whether a fish's shape changes as it grows, and other important information.



Note that for [TrophyCatch](#) submissions, you **MUST** provide a readable weight-on-scale photo and we recommend that you always carry a scale with you — you never know when a trophy will show up in Florida! However, if you are ever without a scale, a length and girth measure can help you estimate the weight of your catch, although it will be ineligible for TrophyCatch.



***Finally*** available for pix from the **last** club tournament (trout) include...



**Frank Poggio 1st Place**



**John Grieder (L) 3rd Place and Mike Spanhel (R) 2nd place**



# Tournament Board

## 2026 Tournaments

Fishing tournaments are easy and fun and there's nothing to sign up for -- these are all free to play for all members! Just make a catch, follow the guidelines posted below and you're in!

These tournaments are **Free-to-Play** for all members!

Our current tournament is:

**May 1 to July 31 - Snapper and Ladyfish**

(Please note changes to guidelines (#6) below) -- Also note there will be one additional species added for each future tournament.

Upcoming tournaments include:

**August 1 to October 31 - Snook and...**

**November 1 to December 31 - Mackerel and...**

### *Winners circle*

February 1 to April 30 **Trout** tournament:

1st place - Frank Poggio - 18"

2nd place - Mike Spanhel - 15"

3rd place - John Grieder - 14"

There **may** also be a ONE DAY tournament in November. (Details to follow)

**AND**...also a \$ prize (besides bragging rights) for the longest fish caught for 2026 (not including sharks).

**All** guidelines below must be followed for an **automatic entry** to all tournaments

**Guidelines:**

- 1 - Catch fish (!)
- 2 - Measure fish
- 3 - Take a picture of your catch
- 4 - You **MUST** post a fishing report on the club website\*
- 5 - Only species for each tournament posted will count. (Ex: if you catch a trout when mackerel tournament is running, it won't count)
- 6** - Fish caught on individually owned boats/kayaks/rentals/headboats or from the shore are ok. Starting on a trial basis effective May 1, 2026 and until further notice, fish caught on charters **WILL** count.
- 7 - Sit back (and/or keep fishing) and wait for the results which will be announced at the first general membership meeting after tournament closes

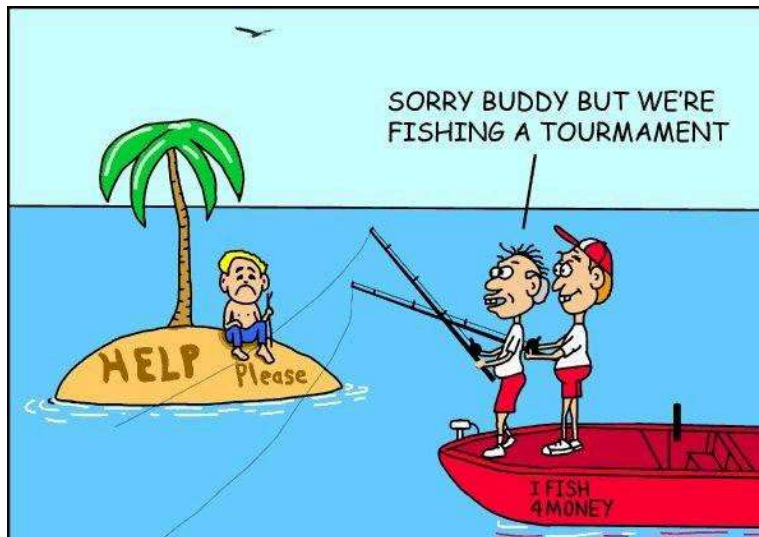
Winners circle: 1st place - \$25; 2nd place - \$15; 3rd place - \$10

\*Entering a fishing report on the club website is easy. Go to the club website ([fishonclub.us](http://fishonclub.us)) , click on 'fishing reports', then 'submit report', and enter your information along with pix. Just give it a try and you'll find the process intuitive. If you have a problem with making your report just contact any board member below for assistance.





**June 50/50 winner Frank Bellizio**



**See you all at the meeting!**

***Tight lines!!***

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FISH ON! FISHING CLUB OFFICERS

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