



# The Newsletter of the ... **The Reel News**



*Serving the Northeast Florida Fishing Community Since 1959*

Volume 58 Issue 3

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## It's



## Here !!!

### **THE 18TH ANNUAL EL CHEAPO SHEEPSHEAD TOURNAMENT AND FISH FRY WILL BE HELD ON: MARCH 3, 2018**



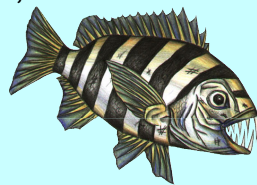
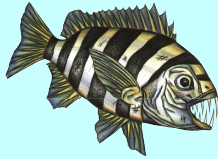
For those of you who have never fished this tournament before, welcome to "The World's Largest Sheepshead Tournament"! For those of you who have fished it before, welcome back! --- and I'm sure you'll find the 18th edition of this tournament the best one yet!

This year our Grand Prize winner will receive an 18' J VX Center Console Carolina Skiff with a Suzuki 60 HP 4 stroke motor on a Magic Tilt Trailer. plus a Replica Taxidermy Mount of the winning fish! This is the 10<sup>th</sup> year for Carolina Skiff.

Rounding out the top 5 places, we've got a combined value of over \$45,000.00 for just the top of the payout! When you add the Junior Angler, Platinum, Gold, and Silver level sponsor's contributions along with all the bonus prizes we've got, you end up with over \$100,000.00 worth of prizes being given away! This event truly has become one of the best Family fishing tournaments in all of Florida.

## ***SHEEPSHEAD RECORDS***

- **EL CHEAPO SHEEPSHEAD TOURNAMENT RECORD:**
- 14.3#'s, 3/4/17, Chris Beasley, Mayport, FL
- **FLORIDA STATE RECORD:**
- 15# 2oz., 1/29/81, Eugene Lechler, Homosassa Springs, FL
- **WORLD RECORD:**
- 21# 4oz., 4/92, Wayne Deselle, Bayou St. John, Louisiana



## **PRESIDENTS CAST NET**

*Trina Polkey*



I don't know about you, but I think that old groundhog just may have got it wrong. What beautiful weather we have been having! Beautiful weather brings great opportunity to fish and boy have I seen some nice fish coming in. Wahoo, cobia, pompano, whiting, redfish, sheephead, trout...there's something biting right now for everyone! Get out there and enjoy this incredible fishery we have been blessed with.

By the time you receive this we will be just a few short days away from our biggest fundraiser, and the world's largest sheephead tournament, the El Cheapo. As we have mentioned, this is a major event and it takes some doing to pull it off. Thank you to those of you who came to the volunteer meeting and signed up to help, and to those of you who made sure to let us know to put you on a list. Even if you did not sign up you can still come help, and don't worry, volunteering doesn't disqualify you from fishing! Here is where we will need bodies:

March 1<sup>st</sup>, 6:00pm - Captain's buckets ·  
March 2<sup>nd</sup>, all day - Site set up · March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4:30 on - Captains meeting · March 3<sup>rd</sup>, Noonish on through the night - Weigh in, fish fry, clean up and many other things

Our next tournament is the Non-Live Tournament...meaning your bait cannot be alive, it doesn't just have to be artificial baits. For this tournament we open the east boundary to extend 100 miles offshore so the opportunities



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# SHEEPSHEAD

Order: Perciformes  
Family: Sparidae  
Genus: *Archosargus*  
Species: *probatocephalus*



Although it reaches a maximum size of about 29.5 inches (76 cm) and 22 pounds (9.6 kg), adult sheepshead are most commonly about 1-8 pounds (.5-3.6 kg) and 14-18 inches (35 cm). Maximum known lifespan of the sheepshead is at least 20 years with maturity typically reached at 2 years of age.

This fish is highly valued for human consumption due to its fine white flesh and mild flavor. However, its heavy scales and strong fin spines make it difficult to clean and fillet. It is marketed fresh and frozen and may be prepared by frying, broiling, microwaving, and baking.

Primarily occurring inshore around rock pilings, jetties, mangrove roots, and piers as well as in tidal creeks, the euryhaline sheepshead prefers brackish waters. It seeks out warmer spots near spring outlets and river discharges and sometimes enters freshwater during the winter months. This fish moves to offshore areas in later winter and early spring for spawning, which sometimes occurs over artificial reefs and navigation markers.

Sheepshead average about three pounds but can get over ten, and are terrific fighters who like to run anglers' lines around the pilings where they are most often caught. Their bite is very hard to detect and they are a difficult fish to hook if you don't know what you are doing.

Sheepshead are tied to hard structure such as bridges, jetties, docks, and piers. They use their sharp teeth to scrap barnacles from this structure and gobble up and break the shells of barnacles, mussels, and crabs. They do not travel in schools but orientate themselves around a food source and become very territorial, often staying in an area until the food supply is used up.

Catching sheepshead is not easy. They are not often caught incidentally by bottom fishermen but are hooked and fought by local anglers in many states who target them. A strong rod and heavier than usual line, around 20 lb test, is recommended as when hooked

sheepshead quickly try to run the line around those pilings. It is important to put strong pressure on the fish to bring them away from the hang-ups.

Sheepshead are caught on unusual saltwater baits and rarely take usual ones such as cut shrimp, squid or cut fish. Instead they hit fiddler crabs, pieces of larger crabs such as cut blue crab, sand fleas (also called mole crabs) or even barnacles scrapped from a piling and held together by their own sticky mesh or rubber bands.

- Despite their brute strength Sheepshead have a bite that it is so soft it is often impossible to detect. ***The old saying among sheepshead fishermen is that you must set the hook just before a sheepshead bites!*** It's not that difficult, but almost. One trick is to watch the rod tip, which will have a slight dip from the weight of your sinker. When a sheepshead bite the dip will disappear as the tip rises. Even if you feel nothing, set the hook.

Sheepshead anglers don't stay in one place but move from piling to piling. Sometimes they can be seen in clear water rising up and slowly working on the barnacles and mussels of the pilings.

Sheepshead have protruding lips that give the fish its name. They also have a white body and big, black bold stripes. They are sometimes confused with black drum, another inshore structure fish that covers the same areas but is easier to catch.

Sheepshead are a hearty, tasty fish that yield delicious white meat fillets which fit into many seafood recipes. Sheepshead fillets are also very good simply breaded and fried.



This is your target for the month of March, the Sheepshead, 7 Striped Jetty Snapper, or as I like to call them . . . . DINNER!

## It only takes ( 1 ) ONE fish, a Sheepshead, to win!

Here are a list of the El Cheapo past winners, and their winning fish!

2001 - Mark Collins - 8.3 Pounds  
2002 - Tom Meyer - 11.0 Pounds  
2003 - Jerry Alvarez - 11.1 Pounds  
2004 - Jim Thomas - 11.0 Pounds  
2005 - Jim Thomas - 12.7 Pounds  
2006 - Tyler Patterson - 10.5 Pounds  
2007 - Tim Price - 11.9 Pounds  
2008 - Paul Taylor - 10.7 Pounds  
2009 - Shawn Parnell - 12.9 Pounds  
2010 - Chuck DeGrove - 10.8 Pounds  
2011 - Alan Hodges - 10.7 Pounds  
2012 - Steve Austin - 10.1 Pounds  
2013 - AJ Proescher - 11.7 Pounds  
2014 - Chuck De Grove - 11.8 Pounds  
2015 - Alan Hodges - 9.49 Pounds  
2016 - R.L. Hood - 11.1 Pounds  
2017 - Chris Beasley - 14.3 Pounds

Now some nice to know information.

Over the last few years, there have been at least ( 2 ) Two Sheepshead that were caught RIGHT HERE in the Jacksonville area that BROKE the State Record! I am not naming names as the fish were eaten before they realized it was a record fish!

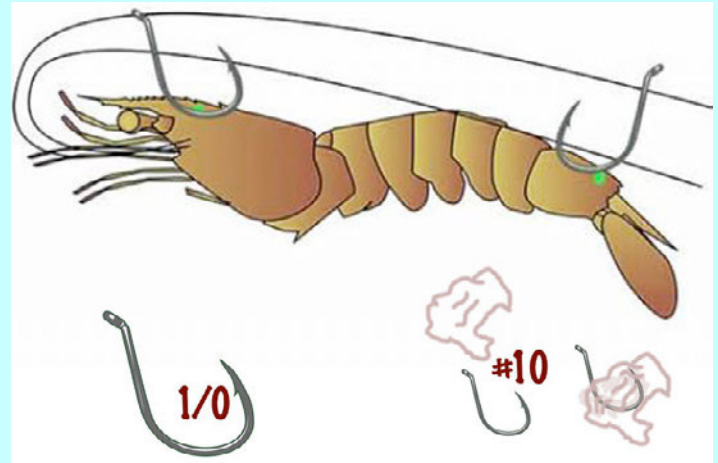
If you can't find Fiddlers, try this.

Buy frozen shrimp. Or freeze the ones you don't feed to the Sheepshead.

Take the meat out of the tail and, instead of using a 1/0 hook, use a #10.

Bury the tiny hook in the meat you pulled from the shrimp's tail.

Put it where the fish are.



When you feel the bite, just pick up. Don't set the hook, just start reeling. This works well with J-hooks and the fish won't swallow the bait. These are a sustainable species you should try eating.

### Chumming with the Shells

Since you're taking the tail meat out of the shrimp, you have the heads, feet, and shells left over. Put them in the water. If you want to be even more effective, try freezing them and putting them in a small mesh bag and making your own chum blocks. They'll work to get the Sheepsheads to come eat that small soft bait so you can easily pick them out of the water.

Learn More - Visit our Sheepshead Species Portal

More On: sheepshead, winter

- See more at: <http://www.theonlinefisherman.com/how-to/best-trick-for-catching-sheepshead#sthash.AkQ5a8YR.dpuf>

## Presidents Message Continued

are endless. The tournament will be on March 17<sup>th</sup> and you will want to be sure to attend our meeting on March 15<sup>th</sup> when tournament director Tom Darga goes through the rules to make sure you have a good understanding. For complete rules and to register, please visit [www.jaxfish.com](http://www.jaxfish.com), any questions please call Tom at 904-521-5364.

We will meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> again this month and are working on lining up speakers to touch on non-live and offshore fishing this month. We will be opening the building up around 6:00 each meeting to allow for more time to visit, and we start at 7:00. Hope to see you there and at the El Cheapo!

## TOWING & AT THE RAMP

I recently experienced a boater that was in need of this Boat Launching and Retrieving list. He pulled his Jet Skies onto his trailer, cleared the water, and still blocking the ramp started securing his gear and Skies to the trailer

### PRE-TOWING :

- Check cold tire pressure on the tow vehicle and trailer.
- Make sure you are towing the trailer in a level position.
- Verify that lug nuts on the tow vehicle and trailer tightened to the correct torque setting.
- Stow all required U. S. Coast Guard Safety equipment in the boat.
- Secure outboards or stern drives in the full-up position.
- Securely tighten the boat cover if it is used when towing.
- Secure the coupler. Insert a bolt or other locking device into the coupler so it does not pop open.

- Connect the trailer lights and check to make sure they are working properly.
- Secure the safety chains and emergency brake cable.
- Raise the trailer jack and lock it in place.
- Ensure that the boat is snug against the bow stop and secured with a winch strap, plus a safety chain or tie-down.
- Make sure the transom tie-downs are tight.
- Properly secure all equipment inside the boat.
- Adjust the tow-vehicle mirrors as needed.

### BOAT PRE-LAUNCH IN PARKING AREA OR READY LANE ( NOT blocking the ramp):

- Remove tie-downs.
- Remove engine support.
- Disconnect trailer wiring from tow vehicle.
- Load and stow gear to be carried on board.
- Check all boat systems: engine, bilge pump, lights and horn, etc.
- If equipped, turn on the engine compartment blower.
- Make ready all dock lines, fenders and boat hook.
- And, last, **DO NOT FORGET TO INSTALL THE DRAIN PLUG.**
- 

**Retrieve your boat: Clear the ramp and reverse the above. Be courteous to other Boaters.**

Capt. Steve Kalaitzis with one FINE Trigger Fish!





# Gary Newman

## INSURANCE

*Family Owned & Operated*

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- Auto
- Home

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**241-0777**



In every Newsletter I strongly suggest that you wear your Life Jacket at least while your boat is underway.

Here are some other safety things that you should consider.

Is your Fire extinguisher current? Do you have a big enough one, or more than one?

How about a "Ditch Bag" is it properly stocked, and sitting out where it is handy?

First aid kit current, plenty of fresh Hydrogen Peroxide to clean wounds?

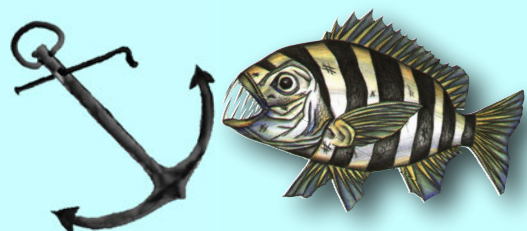


































Below is Rhonda Thompson with a really nice Sheepshead!



That is AJ & Tina Proescher with Tina's best Sheepshead ever!

It was a 10 pounder and I bet it's



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
<b>March</b>				1 CLUB MEETING El Cheapo Capt. Bucket Stuffing 	2 El Cheapo Set-Up & Captains Meeting 	3 The El Cheapo 
4 	5 Board Meeting 	6 	7 	8 	9 	10 
11 	12 	13 	14 	15 Club Meeting 	16 	17 The Non-Live Tournament 
18 	19 	20 	21 	22 	23 	24 
25 	26 	27 	28 	29 	30 	31 



## Coming Events

March 1st - Club Meeting / Captains Bucket Stuffing

March 2nd - El Cheapo Set-Up, all day & Captains Meeting 7:00 PM

March 3rd - The El Cheapo

March 17th - The Non-Live Tournament

**CAROLINA SKIFF**  
ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE



## 2018 Captain of the Year Tournament Schedule

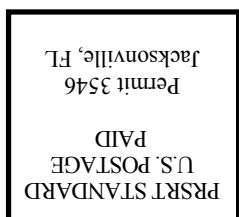
Tournament	-	Date	-	Rain Date
The Non-Live Tournament	-	March 17th	-	25th
The Unlimited Trolling	-	April 14th	-	21st
The May Trolling	-	May 5th	-	12th
The Junior Angler	-	June 23rd	-	30th
The Kingfish Tune-Up	-	July 7th	-	14th
The Ladies Tournament	-	August 4th	-	11th
The Bottom Tournament	-	September 8th	-	15th



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