



# The Reel News

The Newsletter of the . . .



*Serving the Northeast Florida Fishing Community Since 1959*

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July 2023



## PRESIDENTS CAST NET CAPTAIN

Chris Jones



Greetings JOSFC,

July is here, and the fishing opportunities in Jacksonville, FL, are heating up just like the summer weather! It's time to grab your gear, pack your sunscreen, and get ready for some unforgettable angling adventures in our beautiful coastal city. Let's dive into what July has in store for us on the fishing front!

Remember, it's crucial to stay informed about local fishing regulations and obtain the necessary licenses and permits. Respecting bag limits and size restrictions helps preserve the fishery for future generations and ensures a sustainable fishing experience.

For our new members and visitors, July offers fantastic opportunities for chasing pelagic species such as mahi-mahi, king mackerel, and even the occasional sailfish. Trolling with brightly colored lures or live bait can entice these high-speed predators to strike. Keep an eye out for weed lines, floating debris, or any structure that might attract fish.

Lastly, don't forget to share your fishing tales and photos with us! We'd love to hear about your adventures, the biggest fish you've caught, and any tips you might have for fellow anglers. Submit your stories and pictures to Bill Breen, and we'll feature them in our upcoming newsletters and social media platforms. Also, please take the moment and complete our annual JOSFC survey, we need to hear your valuable feedback.

Wishing you tight lines, joyful moments, and memorable catches throughout July. Stay safe, have fun, and savor every moment you spend on the water.

Be well and sail safe,  
Captain Chris

## For JULY, Kingfish are the Target!



See page 3 for more great info on Fishing for Kingfish! ( Note I said "Fishing for" not catching. ) As a member of the Tuna family They prefer water above 68 F and below 88 F Optimum is 68 to 76 F.

# REMEMBER

## WE HAVE MEMBERS

### LOOKING FOR A RIDE!!!

When yo are going out and have room for one more, or need crew to help pay for gas, we have several members that do not have boats, and are always looking for someone to take their gas money!

Just either give me a call, text or E-mail [breenw@bellsouth.net](mailto:breenw@bellsouth.net).

904-254-2791

Or post it on the club's **Dock Talk** page. We will get you that extra person to fill out your crew!

Who knows, you just may find a new great friend!



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#### NEWS From BoatUS

Boat Owners Association of The United States  
 5323 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22151

## Don't Hit the Water This Summer Without a No-Cost, No-Penalty Vessel Safety Check

### Top 3 reasons why boats fail

SPRINGFIELD, Va., April 4, 2023 - How do you know your boat is ready for a safe summer boating season and complies with new U.S. Coast Guard regulations? A no-cost, no-penalty vessel safety check from the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and U.S. Power Squadrons/America's Boating Club can help. Scheduled inspections are often offered at launch ramps, marinas and boat clubs, or appointments can be made for a vessel examiner to come to your boat. Go to [cgaux.org/vsc](http://cgaux.org/vsc) to learn more. The program is sponsored by the [BoatUS Foundation for Boating Safety and Clean Water](http://BoatUSFoundation.org).

Upon successful completion of the exam, which typically takes less than 30 minutes, the vessel is awarded a U.S. Coast Guard / Auxiliary / U.S. Power Squadrons decal that informs law enforcement and safety agencies that your boat was in full compliance with all federal and state boating laws during a safety check for that year. So just what items do vessels typically fail on this important early season inspection? According to the U.S. Power Squadrons/America's Boating Club, the top three reasons are:

1. Navigation lights 19%
2. [Fire extinguishers](#) 18% I keep Telling you to get 2 bigger than that little 2 pound usless thing that came with the boat!
3. [Distress signals](#) 16%

"The numbers tell us a vessel safety check can help owners of every type of boat," said BoatUS Foundation assistant director of boating safety Ted Sensenbrenner.



## July is the Month of the KING!

King Mackerel or Kingfish are thick off Jacksonville now, and the Greater Jacksonville Kingfish Tournament runs for the week of July 17<sup>th</sup> through the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

SO, How do you catch a big King? By SLOW trolling live Pogies. However there is another bait that they call Kingfish Candy . . . Ribbonfish!



I like to use a down rigger to troll a Ribbonfish about 10' below and 15' to 20' feet behind my Pogies. This makes the Pogies very nervous and a lot more active, therefore attracting more Kings. I have caught more Kings on the Ribbonfish than the Pogies.

Get big Ribbonfish for your bait, and you want the best ones you can find, well brined and frozen without a lot of scales missing. I also recommend checking them often and replacing them when needed.

Here is something that most people do not realize. Think about this, When the shrimp boats are culling their catch, there is always a feeding frenzy behind their boat. The disturbance of the bigger predator fish feeding and competing for the choice morsels attract more big predator fish. ANY disturbance in the water is seen as a feeding frenzy and attracts fish to it. SO, when you are trolling for Kings or any striking fish like Dolphin, Wahoo, Sailfish, you want your boat to make as big of a disturbance as you can!

When Kingfishing, I like to drag a Chum bag over the side of my boat, and I tilt my Engine UP some to make it splash the water up behind the boat. IF you have something like a Dredge or Bird that you can hang over the side partway out of the water so it splashes that also will help. You want to create as big of a disturbance at the surface as you can. This will attract the Kings to you and away from that guy that is trolling 50 or 100 yards to your side.

## WHAT GEAR DO YOU NEED TO FISH KINGFISH?

First thing to start and get ready are the rods and reels, were going to pray for a 50 lb fish on 15# test with 30 yards of 20 # fluoro carbon leader down to #4 wire and a #6 x-strong tremble hook rig. The rod has to be at the least 7 feet long, with a real flexible tip so we don't put undue stress on our little poggie buddy. The reel has to hold at least 400 yards of this line, with at a minimum a 6.2 to 1 retrieve ratio so if that 50 lb fish makes a run at the boat we can keep up?? Let's get to the rigs. #4 wire, that is 30lb test at best, ( And don't worry about the kingfish seeing the leader! ) #6 treble hooks.

No they don't see the wire, hooks or line, that is just not in their brain to see the gear and think, "Something is wrong here!"

I use the same setup for the Ribbonfish, just the Ribbonfish rig has at least 4 hooks along the wire and is as long as the Ribbonfish.

There is one last item ( Or two ) and that is a good GAFF. You will need one 5' or 6' Gaff, and most Kingfishermen also have that 10' to 12' long Gaff for that big fish that just hangs out about 10' from the boat and you just can't get it closer without pulling the hook!

Now the cast in stone rule for operating the GAFF!

ALWAYS bring the Gaff from behind the line to gaff the fish. Fish don't swim backwards and if you miff the gaff shot, you will not break the line on that possibly winning fish with the gaff!

Be sure or what is BEHIND you when you go to gaff a fish. I have seen people get black eyes from the elbow or gaff handle as it is pulled backwards with great force.

DON'T just gaff the fish, be sure to FOLLOW THROUGH with the gaff action pulling the fish into the boat in one quick motion!

Good luck, ANYONE can catch that big winner!

## What's in Your Ditch Bag? You do have a Ditch Bag don't you?




Boating accidents, they happen every week. Usually the difference between a sad ending and a happy ending is preparedness. Since you can't always count on Lady Luck ( In case you haven't noticed, you are in a predicament because she isn't with you today, she's fickle, in case you haven't heard), the best thing to do is be like a Boy Scout. Veteran captains going offshore - no matter what size boat they are in -- carry emergency "ditch bags" because they never know when the catastrophic might happen.


OK, lets get started. . . . Your Ditch Bag should be a container that will FLOAT, is secured closed so that if your boat overturns or goes down, it will be on the surface with you, and all of it's contents inside. When you leave the dock, it should be sitting on deck, NOT in the cabin or a locker.


I have seen everything from Ice-Chest that latched shut as ditch bags to \$300 specially made ditch bags. These soft sided insulated coolers will work quite well, just make sure it will float with a full load of your gear.


Now for what you put inside. This can vary a lot from boat to boat or Captain to Captain.


The little Sailfish signify priority items!


 You should have your required flares. ( Make sure they are not out of date.) I also carry several arial flares or rockets.


 First Aid supplies.


 A good waterproof sun block. Neutrogena now makes one ( SPF 70 ) that goes on wet skin, kind of handy if your already in the water.


 You should have some rope to tie everyone together so you don't drift apart. ( A group of people are easier to spot than a single person. )

 Your bag should have a waterproof strobe light attached to it. ( Be sure to test it before every trip, and change the batteries once a year. )

 A signal mirror works well in bright daylight to get attention.

 Drinking Water! This is left out of most ditch bags because most people do not think of it. A single gallon of water will help keep up to 4 people from becoming dehydrated for a couple of days.

 Whistles for everyone! It beats yelling 10 ways to 1. Yelling is exhausting, and uses up a lot of energy, and can not be heard for a very long distance, whistles carry for a mile or more!

 At the least you should have PLB ( Personal Locator Beacon ) like a Spot. Or an EPIRB

A drift marker is nice. It is a long 20 or so foot long bright red streamer that floats out along the surface to increase your spotability from the air.

A bright die marker also helps increase your spotability from the air, but it does dissipate, so maybe a couple of them.

If you can afford it, a hand held VHF, and a hand held GPS unit.

I also carry several Chem-Lights or Glo Sticks that last for at least 12 hours once you break the glass vial and activate them.

I also have attached one to each Life Vest to increase visibility for each individual and the group.

That covers the basics for your ditch bag. To put all that in your bag cost a lot of money, and if you are like me you couldn't afford to do it all at once. That is OK, but start building your bag with the items that you have or can afford. You can add the hand held VHF or GPS or a big EPIRB later as you can afford to buy them. A life is worth every dollar you spend even if it stretches your budget!

OK, you have assembled your Ditch Bag, now what ?

Like I said at the start of this article your bag should be ON-Deck when you leave the dock. You should then assign a primary person and a secondary backup person to be responsible, to make sure in an emergency, it goes over with them and does not get stuck in the boat!

## Catching Ribbonfish

Take a look at a Ribbonfish's intimidating assortment of dental equipment and it's easy to see that this guy's built for grabbing live prey. Needle like canines line the top and bottom jaws, with elongated lances protruding from the front. Therefore, sturdy rigs are a must. Eight to 20 pound main line with 30 or 40 pound mono filament leaders tied to 2/0 long shank hooks will suffice, but adding a 6-inch trace of No. 3 wire will minimize bite-offs. For simplicity, use pre-rigged wire with barrel swivels for attaching to the main line and snap swivels for hanging the hook.

Ribbonfish thrive in estuaries and other muddy bottom environments from Maine to South America. In Florida waters, they're found more commonly on the East Coast, particularly in major inlets such as St. Johns, St. Augustine and Port Canaveral. Although ribbons occasionally turn up in castnets full of menhaden (pogies), it's tough targeting these fleet-finned hellions with anything but hook and line. It mostly entails night fishing because, like goggle eyes, that's when they feed most. Fortunately, hook and line operations can produce 100 or more in a good night.

Kingfish tournament veterans Steve and Scott Senecal catch their ribbons mostly in Port Canaveral, where the voracious bait fish put on quite a show as they leap across the surface to nail finger mullet and other forage species. Sometimes, the nocturnal action grows so intense that all you need to do is drift an area and watch for the carnage.

Ribbons follow schools of smaller bait fish from the open water to sea walls, jetties, piers and bridges. To find the concentrations, work chrome or blue Rat-L-Traps in the likely areas. After a busy night, Scott said he often retires bald lures, completely stripped of paint by ribbonfish ferocity.

Their shiny, hi-vis profiles appeal to kingfish.

Ribbonfish experts congregate the critters by hanging a fluorescent light tube, connected via alligator clips directly to their boat's main battery, from the stern. Casting an eerie green glow, the light attracts small forage fish, which in turn draw in the ribbons. Once you've located a concentration of ribbonfish, thumbnail size chunks of fresh shrimp or previously caught ribbons will bring plenty of action. These perceptive hunters will sniff out anything edible, but mini light tubes clipped to the hook shanks add just enough visibility to make the baits stand out in dark water.

Medium-action 6 1/2- to 7 foot spinning rods, the same ones you'd use for sabiki (gold-hook) duties, will handle most ribbonfish. A hooked ribbon fights a respectable fight, but it's wise to get them in fast. Intense feeding competition reaches cannibalistic heights when the struggling commotion of a hooked ribbonfish presents an easy target for its brethren. Reeling up half a ribbon is nothing rare. Maximize this aggression by tossing in rigs with fresh bait near the point of attack.

Ribbonfish are almost always fished dead, but handling the fresh catch requires planning. Prior to the trip, prepare a brining solution, which toughens the big baits for freezing. Without this step, thawed ribbons turn mushy and wash out quickly. In a 70- to 130-quart cooler, mix two 1-pound boxes of baking soda, three 3-pound boxes of coarse Kosher salt (not iodized) with a 5-gallon bucket of sea water and an 8-pound bag of ice. Initially, the brining solution should sit just above the cooler's drain plug.

Add more ice as needed to maintain a chilly slush, but don't let the ice form a solid sheet over your ribbons, premature freezing prevents thorough brining. Conversely, leaving ribbonfish in the brining solution for more than 24 hours tends to blow out their stomachs and ruin the baits. After 8 to 12 hours of brining, remove and freeze.

Plastic food storage sleeves closed with a vacuum sealer will keep ribbonfish in good freezer condition. Depending on the size of your ribbonfish, freezing multiple baits in the same sleeve works fine as long as baits lie flat with at least 1/4-inch of surrounding space. Lacking this option, double wrap them in heavy-duty aluminum foil and be sure to force out all of the air.

To thaw, just put the fish on the deck for a few minutes. (Tip: It's actually easiest to rig bait fish when they're still partially frozen as the rigidity facilitates handling. In the water, the bait will thaw quickly.)

When it comes to rigging ribbonfish for king mackerel, a stinger rig with multiple trailing segments is the way to go. A common setup uses a 1/4-ounce jighead as the lead hook, because a jig keeps the bait tracking straight through the water. Run through the bait's lower jaw and out the topside.

However, the Senecal brothers also rig ribbons with a single lead hook, which allows the baits to flutter and flow erratically.

With the right handling and preparation, ribbonfish will add a productive facet to your kingfish arsenal, they seem particularly attractive to big smoker kings.



# MAN OVERBOARD!

Do you know how to handle this emergency?

As some of you already know, in April, 2019, we had a club member fall overboard while fast trolling. The only damage was to his ego, he was retrieved safe and sound, BUT it could have been bad! They had a full spread of Wahoo lures with BIG bad hooks out behind them. Not a good scenario!

That is why we advocate wearing your life jacket while underway!

As part of your safety lecture or tour for your crew before you leave the dock, you should go over the drill for a MAN OVERBOARD!

When someone makes an unexpected departure from your boat while on the water, the person seeing it and yelling the warning IS the designated "Pointer". ( Unless it is the Captain, then he assigns that duty to someone. )

The "Pointer" actually POINTS ( Arm extended with the finger pointing directly at the swimmer. ) at the person in the water and never takes their eyes off the person or stops pointing until it is time to help them back into the boat! This makes it easier for the Captain to know where to maneuver the boat to correctly position it to pick up the person in the water. In calm seas this seems silly, but should still be done, but if it is at all sloppy, this could be the difference between losing a person or successfully recovering them!

When you approach the person in the water with your boat, you should approach them from UP-Wind, so your BOW is Down-Wind and you are **beside** them. As you get close, shift to neutral or if calm enough, turn the engine off to avoid the possibility of the propeller hitting them. If you go sideways to them from up-wind your boat could drift over them before you can pull them in, injuring them., If you try from down wind it will drift away faster than they can swim to you.

Do you have a rope set aside and easy to get to, just for throwing to the person to help pull them to the boat?

Do you have a way to get back in the boat? What if YOU fall overboard by yourself? can you get back in without help? Make sure you have a way to self rescue!

It can happen to the best most experienced of us, so be prepared !

## Better Boating Tips

I know that some club members tow their boats down south, so here is a great tip. Before a long tow ( Specially through "Love-Bug" country ) wipe your boat with liquid dish soap, ( No don't wash it off yet. ) and after you get where you are going, bugs and tar will come right off!

If you have a really bad tar or scum line, Easy Off oven cleaner will remove it and sticky residue from stickers, without damaging your gel coat.

Instead of using BLEACH to clean your boat, try a cup of VINEGAR in a gallon of water to make a great cleaner that is both environmentally safe, and it destroys orders better than bleach!



*Loud Hailings*

Bill Breen  
Newsletter  
Editor

*Just a reminder, ANYONE and everyone can submit something, a good story, joke, or you can also submit photos to be included in our Newsletter. Just get your article and or pictures to me by the 18th of the month, to be in the next months newsletter. Just hand me a copy at any meeting, or E-mail it to me at : [breenw@bellsouth.net](mailto:breenw@bellsouth.net)*

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
	<b>July</b>					1
2	3	4 <sup>th</sup> of July	5	6 Club Meeting	7	8
						
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
						
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
						
23	24	25	26	27 Club Meeting	28	29
						
30	31 Board Meeting	<p>Key - The more little black fish on a day means better fishing</p> <p>July 4<sup>th</sup> - <b>Independence Day !</b></p> <p>July 6<sup>th</sup> - Club Meeting.</p> <p>July 17<sup>th</sup> through 22<sup>nd</sup> - Greater Jacksonville Kingfish Tournament!</p> <p>July 27<sup>th</sup> - Maybe, Maybe not a Club Meeting. TBA</p> <p>July 31<sup>st</sup> - Board Meeting.</p>				
						

**COMING  
EVENTS:**



July 17<sup>th</sup> through 22<sup>nd</sup> - Greater Jacksonville Kingfish Tournament!

July 27<sup>th</sup> - Maybe, Maybe not a Club Meeting. TBA

July 31<sup>st</sup> - Board Meeting.

We still have 3 months of Club Tournaments to fish!

July - Offshore is the Kingfish Tune-up - Inshore is the Roulette

August - For both inshore and Offshore we Honor our Ladies with the Ladies Tournament

September - Offshore is Bottom Fishing - Inshore it is Flounder.

October - AWARDS BANQUET

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