

# First Coast Fly Fishes

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www.fcff.org

August 2008



*Chan Ritchie Pompano Fishing, Little Talbot Island*

(see related story on page 3)

FCFF photo: Everett Melvin

## MEETING & SPEAKER

**Monday, August 4 - FCFF Meeting.** Southpoint Marriott, Salisbury road. Speaker: Capt. John Bottko. Topic: How To Be Successful Flyfishing at little Talbot Island. John is a past-president. He guides from and lives near Little talbot Island. Come

learn to be successful fishing this beautiful coastal flat.<http://www.saltyfeather.com>

## COMING EVENTS

**New Moon -- Friday, August 1; Full Moon - Saturday, August 16**

**Saturday, August 16 -- Fish Little Talbot Island.** Come fish one of our more interesting and unique fisheries for Pompano, Redfish, Blues, Sheepshead, Black

Drum, maybe Shark. Walkers, meet at north parking lot of Little Talbot Island State Park at 8 a.m., then cross the dunes and head north. The walk is 1.5 miles, about 20-25 minutes. See page 2 for outing information

**September 8 - FCFF Meeting** - Capt. Larry Miniard - Cedar Point -- Larry Miniard is one of the most respected, most talented fishing guides in florida. He's fished virtually all forms of fishing in the area, from Blue Water to Backcountry. His topic is tailing reds. <http://www.larryminiard.com>

**Saturday, October 18 - FCFF Casting Day w/ Bruce Richards.** See page 4 for more information.

# Little Talbot Outing Aug. 16

*Perfect Walk-in Outing, Most Productive of Year?*

by **Bob White**  
rgwhite@lycos.com

Come use what you learn from Capt. John Bottko (August 4 meeting speaker) at the Little Talbot Island Outing, Saturday August 16. Little Talbot is one of our best wading/walk-in fisheries. If the weather holds, this outing should be excellent. Possible catches would include redfish, blues, sheepshead, pompano, shark, jacks. The time and tides are perfect for this fishery -- high outgoing tide in midmorning, sun overhead, low wind (hopefully).

Bring 8 or 9 weight rods, intermediate lines (but floating lines work, too). Best flies are the Surfin' Woolie, Sar-Mul-Mac, Raghead mullet, Oyster Mullet, and baitfish patterns. The Michaelson Sand Flea works great for pompano (see the August FCFE newsletter page 3 for photo and tying instructions). Wear wading boots, hats, glasses, and bring water, and sunscreen.

Walkers park in the north parking lot of Little Talbot Island State Park. This is an excellent outing for non-boaters. Meet together at 8 p.m. in the north parking lot of Little Talbot Island State Park. Walk over the dunes, then head north at the northern tip of the island, about 20-25 minute walk, or 1.5 miles.

Boaters, we'll meet at the Big Talbot Island Boat Ramp around 8 a.m. then head to the tip of the Island.

I have attached some information about fly fishing the surf at the FCFE Forum site, <http://www.fcfe-form.org/phpBB3/index.php>

## Scientific Anglers, FFF Casting Ace Bruce Richards Here For Fall Casting Day

Ace casting instructor and Sci-Anglers' fly line developer Bruce Richards is coming to FCFE Saturday, October 18, for our Fall Casting Day—a full day of casting instruction, diagnostics, and good times. Bruce Richards heads the Federation of Fly Fishers' Casting Board of Governors and is recognized as a world class casting instructor, diagnostician, and coach. Bruce is known as “the most influential fly fisherman most anglers have never heard of.”

In addition to developing fly lines, Bruce and bio-mechanics professor Noel Perkins have developed and market The Casting Analyzer (formerly Sage Casting Analyzer), a tool which measures and graphs the quality of your cast. The Casting Analyzer is now used world-wide to help casters visualize their cast, compare the cast against other casters, and help them improve. Bruce will bring the newest version to FCFE Casting Day the club for us to use during his visit.

Bruce was named the 2007 Angler of the Year by editors at Fly Rod & Reel magazine. Richards is now part of a list that includes noted fly fishing legends and noted anglers such as 'Lefty' Kreh, Leon Chandler, Nick Lyons, Bob Clouser, Joan Wulff, John Gierach, Rusty Gates and Craig Matthews. “We usually don't name ‘industry’ people as Angler of the Year,” said Paul Guernsey, editor at Fly Rod & Reel, “but Bruce is such an obvious choice as much for his character as for his accomplishments that we couldn't allow ourselves to pass him over.”

Among his credits to fly fishing include the creation specialty fly lines for specific species, techniques and conditions, and his efforts with co-worker Del Kauss in developing Scientific Anglers' patented Advanced Shooting Technology.



**Line Designer, Casting Guru Bruce Richards**

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# Fast Fish Love The Michaelson Sand Flea

*by David Lambert*

Put a real bend in your rod this month at the August outing in Little Talbot Island State Park. Tie on a Michaelson Sand Flea and search for pompano and redfish in the surf.

Past FCFE president Chan Ritchie caught three of the mirrored speedsters using this fly July 25 fishing in front of the wreck in the flats on the north tip of the island. (See cover photo)

Pompano are in the surf at local beaches, but the trick is to get their attention. These fish are difficult to see and they move extremely quickly. On the plus side, they usually swim in small schools, which means they can get very aggressive and competitive about their food. Use an intermediate clear line or floating saltwater blue line to make the line hard to see. Pompano have very good eyesight and the water in which you'll find them is very clear. Use as long a leader as you can control. Cast 3-5 feet in front of the oncoming fish and a don't move the fly. When they are very close, twitch it gently, but don't strip it hard.

Pre-empt your drag, but not too tight for your tippet. When pompano strike, they provide high-speed runs.

**Materials:** #4 regular-shank hook. Natural deer hair. Natural colored marabou. Small or medium lead eyes. Light brown saltwater thread. Epoxy, shoe goo, or hard as nails.



**Sand Flea with Hair Legs at top; Marabou at Bottom**

**Tying Instructions:**

1. Place fly in vice, hook point down. Tie in small to medium lead eyes on top of hook shank 1/8-inch ahead on hook bend.
2. At hook bend, behind eyes, tie-in small pinch of marabou with the tips facing away from hook point.
3. Spin a pencil thick clump of deerhair in front of marabou, just behind the lead eyes. Remember to whip a half-hitch in between each deerhair clump you spin. (Some tyers place a small drop of head cement on the half-hitch between each tie-in.)
4. Spin deerhair over eyes and forward to within about 1/8-inch of hook eye. Tie off the deerhair and throw a couple of half-hitches.
5. Just behind eye, tie in a small clump of marabou with tips facing away from hook point, with tips facing down about 1/4-inch down.
6. Whip finish thread and cement.
7. Female sand fleas have an orange egg sac that pompano and other fish key on. You can create that using a magic marker, if you like.
8. Trim the spun deer hair with scissors or double-edged razor blade to look like oval shape of a sand flea. Make sure not to clip the front and back marabou legs.
9. Make a hard carapace on the top of sand flea (side with the eyes) using epoxy, Shoe Goo, or multiple coats of Hard-As-Nails.

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## Sand Flea Tempts Pompano and Redfish in Summer Surf

*by Chan Ritchie*

Sometimes you find something really good while you are searching for something else. Serendipity, I believe it is called. Well there are serendipitous pompano biting in the surf. I went Sunday with the intent of finally catching some of those lock-jawed puppy drum that are everywhere. Friend and fishing buddy Dick Michaelson tied up some deer hair sand fleas just for the purpose.

As the tides began to come in the water was sandy, making sight casting nearly impossible. I began to blind cast. I had already surmised that the diminutive sand flea would not be swimming against the current so I took a lesson from my off-shore days and a little trout stream experience and I began to cast down current then walk with the current keeping the line tight but trying not to stop the flea's natural drift rate. On my very first "walk" I got nailed hard. I thought it was a powerful jack, but to my joy it turned out to be a Pompano. To me this was much better than a puppy drum. The little Pompano is like a sleek Ferrari...is halls ass. She spun my handle three times before I beached her with my 10wt. I hooked up again shortly with another but she got off. Then I caught a second one. I had two more hard hits. I think they hit while running wide open. I only got bit while walking with the current. Pompano are not hardy fish so fight them fast or you may have a dead fish on your hands. Good luck. PS. There are sharks in them thar waters...big sharks. Wear your chainmail underwear.



FCFE Photo: Everett Melvin.

**Pompano Caught with Michaelson Sand Flea**



# BIG Snook Under Lights

*And Trout. And Ladyfish. And Jack Crevalle. And Catfish*

by Travis Brown

Last week, I returned home from an outstanding night fishing trip on the St. Lucie River. If you have never experienced dock light sight fishing for snook, I totally advise you to plan a trip to Stuart, Florida. We had incredible action catching mix bags of medium to large trout and Snook. Both species ranging from 18 to 30 inches. I was taken into my backing at least once every night on my seven weight.

There were also “encounters” with ladyfish, catfish, and pods of 2-pound jacks boiling on baitfish. I do recommend beefing up a little on your tippets. (Minimal 20-pound due to barnacle busting runs under the docks) I was very lucky not to have broken off too many times, which I credit the use of a furled leader. This gave me a little more cushion to apply more pressure. The trip was not too expensive (except gas prices)

as we stayed at Pirate’s Cove Marina. They had a great restaurant and a marina to dock your boat in the day as you sleep. There are two outstanding fly shops within a few



Nice Lights-Caught Snook From St. Lucie River



Hefty Seatrout Under Dock Lights, Too

minutes ride from the marina—The Southern Angler and John B’s (Fly Shops) . Locating fish was easy. Just cruise the river north of the canal the marina is located in. Locate dock lights. The most preferred are docks located closest to deeper water with lights

pointed down which penetrate deeper into the water column. Small size 2 flies mimicking shrimp or glass minnows worked best and produced more frequent hook-ups. The larger fish stayed deeper and preferred flies with a little larger profile and quicker sinking rate.

The best times were marked by the start of the outgoing tide, as soon as the current began to flow. My friend Buzz and I averaged 10 to 15 fish a night with 10-fold that amount of good memories. This was our last trip for a while due to his desire to move to Livingston,

MT to become a “Trout Bum.”

If anyone needs information on this trip drop me a line and I assist as best I can. This was a great trip and I know I will return soon.

# Casting Under the Wind

*The Wind Always Blows Where We Fish*

by Larry Pratt

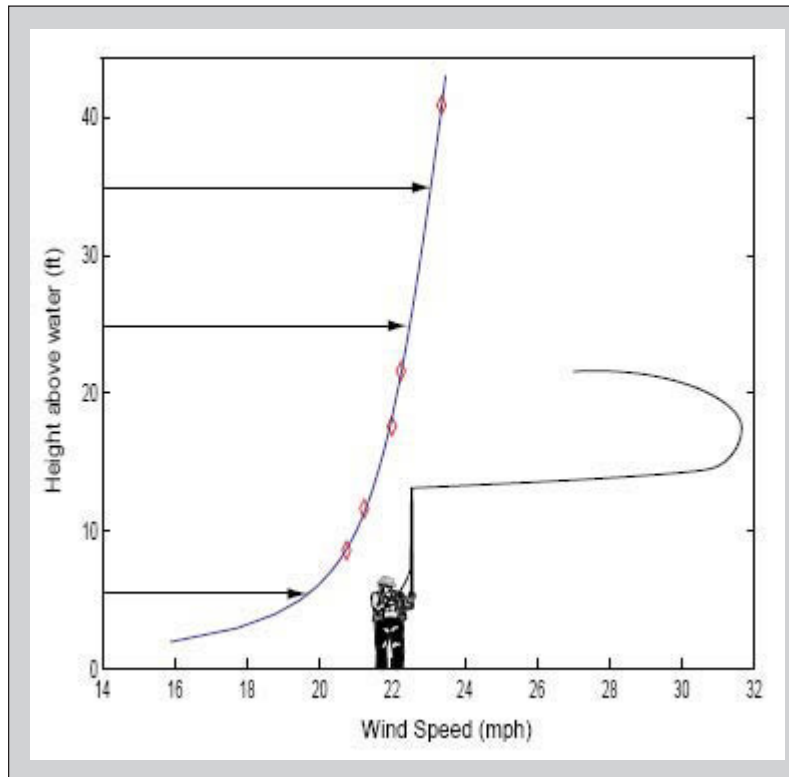
In order to help students deal with a head wind we often advise them to cast 'underneath' it, either by using a side arm motion or by tilting the trajectory to make a high-to-low forward cast. These tricks are based on our vague belief that wind speed diminishes near the ground. But how much does the wind actually decrease and where does this decrease occur?

Although direct measurements of wind profiles over land are quite common, profiles measured over water are quite rare. Luckily, my colleague Dr. Jim Edson at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution has made the type of measurements we are looking for. The figure shows a typical example of a mean wind profile measured over the Pacific Ocean.

The shape of this profile is typical over open water or on a bonefish flat, but not necessarily over rough terrain. The figure also shows a 6-foot person who is using a 9-foot rod to cast into the wind. Unfortunately, the caster's loop is quite open, probably because he has not been heeding the advice of his local FFF Certified Instructor. The result is that his fly is more than 20 feet above the water surface.

This wind profile was taken on a moderately windy day. The average speed at the eye level of the caster is just over 20 mph. Significantly, the speed at the level of the fly is not much greater: about 22 mph. Throwing a tighter loop (and maintaining an upright casting posture) will lower the path of the fly and will diminish wind resistance. It will not, however, significantly alter the wind speed at the fly level. To do that the caster could use a side-arm motion, putting the loop in a horizontal plane perhaps 4 feet off of the ground. The wind speed at this elevation is more like 18 mph, giving some advantage but not a lot.

I earlier criticized the caster for have such an open loop. However, an open loop on the backcast actually leads to a slight assist from the wind in straightening the backcast. The loop extends over an elevation of about 15-22 feet and the



**Throw A High Wide loop Backcast, Low Forward Cast with Tight Loop To Minimize Effect of Headwind**

average wind speed over this range is greater than it is over the 15-17 feet that would be sampled by a tight loop. Of course, the forward cast is an entirely different matter. The loop needs to be tight to penetrate the wind.

You may have heard it said that the wind speed actually decreases to zero at ground level. This was a matter of great debate among fluid dynamicists during the early part of the 20th century. Eventually it was shown through visualization

of microscopic parcels of air that the wind speed does indeed decrease to

zero at the solid ground. Over the ocean, the wind speed decreases to whatever the speed of the water is at the surface.

For the conditions under which the figure was made, this surface speed is very small (< 2 mph). As the figure suggests, most of the decrease in the wind actually occurs in a very thin layer right next to the ground. For example, note that the wind speed at the level of our caster's knees is still about 15 mph.

Why is it that tilting the trajectory of a forward cast (such that the cast begins high and finishes low) yields some dividends? By finishing low, the wind-vulnerable leader and fly can turn over within a few feet of the ground where the wind speed is significantly lower than it is aloft. Other than the distance added by a complete turnover and straightening of the leader, it is hard to see, however, why this trick should give any additional advantage.

The conclusion? Although tricks such as opening the loop on the back cast, tilting the cast trajectory, or using a side-arm motion offer some advantages, the most important trick in penetrating the wind is a tight loop. Tight loops, everyone!

*(Dr. Larry Pratt is a Certified Casting Instructor and an oceanographer at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. He also teaches fluid dynamics at M.I.T. (Illustration by Jack Cook, Jim Edson, and Larry Pratt)*

# A Rookie in the Grass

*Common Sense Approach Will Up Your Fish Catch*

*by Chan Ritchie*

With the flood tides on us, many of us will be chasing redfish or sheepshead in the spartina and cordgrass that edges the Intracoastal. Just a few years ago I had never done this. I made many mistakes as a rookie. Fortunately (for me) I invited myself to fish with Dick, Doug, David and Ted. I watched and learned. I have since caught many reds and a sheepshead.

If you are new to the grass, maybe a few of the things I learned will help reduce your learning curve. Below are things I learned. I hope they help:

**Your Rig:** You need a 6 – 8 wt fly rod with a floating line and a 6 ft leader. 15-lb tippet is plenty. I paint my rod with flat grey paint....don't cringe...I have not spooked a single fish from reflected sun light since I painted my rod.....and your rod will spook them on a bright day.

**Your Cast:** Keep your cast stroke low to avoid detection. If you are fishing from a boat, then keep the boat moving until you see fish. Do not pick a flat and wait for fish to come. Keep moving and you will find them....a lot of them. Once you see the fish take a deep breath and slow way down. He is not going anywhere.

**Your Approach:** Do not park the boat in the feeder creeks—these creeks are the sidewalks for the fish! Walk



**Simple Crustacean Selection Is All you Need**

to within 15-20 feet of him. Do not make the mistake of casting to him while his head is buried in the bottom. Wait to see which way he is traveling then gently cast in front of him 3 feet. He must see it to eat it so when he gets close let him know it is there. I like fast strips, but have caught 'em slow also.



**Chan Ritchie and His First Sheepshead**

**Your Silhouette:** Don't have one. If the sun is low on the horizon, then be sure not to silhouette yourself or a red will blow out every time. If the sun is high, then I like it at my back. Same with the wind. I now wear shirts that are white or sky blue. I spook a lot less fish. I wear a contrasting color long pant. If he sees you, then he will not bite! If you do not see tails, then look for backs and water movement. Half the fish I catch are not tailing when I spot them.

**Your Flies & Leaders:** Put a spare leader and a couple of flies in your pocket along with some forceps. I use four flies; my own tiny crab, a Dupree Spoonfly, a Ted Mayhew Epoxy Spoon and a

Bottko Fiddler In The Grass. Ted murders them with his Epoxy spoon. It moves a lot of water and the fish see it well. If the fish are spooky I go small. Sharpen your hooks and mash down the barb. Good weed guards are a must... And stay out of the tall grass.





## Quips and Pics: FCFF Fernandina Outing from The FCFF Forum

**Woody Huband** - Don Edlin and I hit the Fernandina ramp about 10:00 this morning for an exciting day in Tiger Basin. We started off on the full high tide seeing bonnetheads chasing crabs along the shoreline. We saw one crab literally scramble up the bank as the jaws of death tried to grab him. This happened about 15 feet from our boat. Then we met up with Jazz who was christening a new boat. Encouraged by the action we fished hard through the falling tide, but had only one trout to show for the effort, which was considerable (the effort, not the trout). Tiger Basin looks like redfish nirvana, but today it was not to be. By the late afternoon both of us had our worn out knees barking at us, so we hung our heads and with great humility motored back to Fernandina. It could have been worse. We could have been paddling.

**Bart Issac** - To paraphrase Woody...."it was tough out there today". Rob and I were paddling.....logged around 14 miles (not recommended). We launched at daybreak and searched through the incoming and into the afternoon through the fall. We saw some sights out there today but unfortunately, redfish activity was really in the minority. The high-light of the day for me came about an hour and a half into the falling tide. We noticed a dorsal fin swimming in a linear direction. Shark. I thought it might be a good idea to cast a fly to it. I placed a black fly well in front of the fin and began stripping (the fly, that is). The shark turned and chased it. The next thing I know it feels like I'm hooked to the bumper of a car. I'm not sure if it was hooked in the mouth or foul hooked but I did have it on the line for about 5 minutes.....saw parts of my backing not seen since the purchase of the reel. I began to put some pressure on it and the line broke inside my loop. I was able to sight fish a lower slot red.....appeared to be in the 22 inch range. Didn't seem to pull as hard as the shark but I was able to land the red. I think I'm gonna feel the effects of that paddle tomorrow.

**Bob White** - I took a new member "Tom" out. Since our ride had boat problems I thought it would be good to show Tom some areas that he could fish without a boat. He was impressed with the water clarity and we saw a lot of bait fish being chased. After many casts to the areas of bait no hookups. We had a very good time and I think Tom has a lot of new places to fish the next time he visits Jax.

**Photo Captions:** Top Left - Rob Benardo Fights a Fernandina red; Top Right - Dick Morris Readies for Outing; Middle Left - Bart Isaac Palms a Redfish; Bottom - Jazz-man in the New Jazzcraft.

# Plan Ahead for Homosassa Trip



## Lots of Very Good Fishable Water Around Homosassa on the West Coast

Plan ahead for December 16 Outing in Homosassa. Red-fish in shallows, seatrout & flounder on warm bottoms, possibly the errant tarpon, if the water's warm.

Homosassa is a great, inexpensive fishing getaway, only 3.5 hours from Jacksonville. Bring the family or bunk up

with club members. Either way, you'll enjoy the experience and you may catch some really nice fish.

Stay at MacRae's in Homosassa. Cabins are \$85 for 1-2 people; kitchenettes are \$125 per night and have a pullout double sofa and two singles in the bedroom. Weekends, MacRae's offers live music from The Shed, a Tiki Bar with short order food and some seafood. Last visit, the drafts were \$1.50. This is a very fun-loving, fishing oriented motel. Lot's of fun. Call at 352-628-2602, or email for information, [macraesofhomosassa@yahoo.com](mailto:macraesofhomosassa@yahoo.com). The website is: <http://www.macraesofhomosassa.com/>



Our friends at FWC stopped and checked FCFF members during the Fernandina outing in July.

## Dove, Deer, Turkey Hunts Open at South Prong Hunt Club

FCFFer life member Doug Moore's South Prong Hunt Club has memberships available to FCFF club members for General Hunts and Dove Hunts. South Prong Hunt Club is located on 4200 acres of private land in Baker County, off County Road 229, south of Sanderson and west of Maclenny. Go to [www.southpronghunting.com](http://www.southpronghunting.com) for more information, or call Doug Moore, 904-545-0602.





**Redfish & Black Clouser**

photo: Woody Huband

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