



A Day Of Fishing In The Florida Keys

by GERALD FINKLE

My Brother Barry and I arrived at the Guy Harvey Islander Resort in Islamorada on Sunday afternoon. After a good night's rest we were on the move at 6:00 A.M. We had breakfast at Bud N' Mary's Marina and picked up our lunches at the Trading Post on the way to meet our guide at the *Lorelei* on the bay side for a 7:00 A.M. launch.

We left the dock on time and spent a little time looking for bait near the marina. There was nothing happening there so we made a run to the ocean side and spotted pelicans feeding right away. Our guide got up on the bow with a cast net while I ran the boat and he netted over one hundred 3 to 4 inch pilchard bait fish in just two casts.

After getting everything shipshape we headed back to the bay side and began our 35 mile run west to Everglades National Park and Cape Sable.



We were riding in an 18 foot, shallow-draft "flats boat" with a 150 HP Yamaha. Some of the areas were crystal clear and only a foot deep. Skimming over them at high speed made for a neat ride.

There were hundreds of birds everywhere - huge white pelicans, brown pelicans, skimmers, osprey, bald eagles, roseate spoonbills and several others.

We stopped near flamingo to fish for speckled sea trout in some of the channels there. We caught and released a mess of them and one nice snook using shrimp on light spinning tackle with popping corks and I hooked several with my fly rod. They ran 14 to 16 inches - beautiful healthy fish.

When we had our fill of that we headed west again and way up to the northern end of Lake Ingram at Cape Sable. We started working our way back down when all of a sudden our guide stopped the boat in the middle of the lake - very unusual since most of the fishing there is done along the edge of the mangroves at the shore. I hadn't seen a thing but he saw a huge school of "finger mullet" - a small local baitfish.

When we got closer we could see some large snook and a very large tarpon feeding on them - a real bonanza!

We started casting our pilchards and immediately hooked up on snook. We hooked up on almost every cast. They were all around 30 inches and very strong fighters. Too bad they were out of season.

Meanwhile the big tarpon was feeding in the same area and we could see others also. Our guide was going crazy for he wanted that tarpon and it was always just out of reach. It looked to be about 150 pounds and neither my brother nor I wanted anything to do with it. We have had our fill of 1 to 2 hour tarpon battles over the years!

After an hour and a half or so and several big snook each, the bait school broke up and we resumed moving south. We left the Cape and ran down the shore a few miles to a cove our guide liked.

There we started fishing with popping corks, pilchards, and shrimp and immediately started catching beautiful redfish in the 16 to 20 inch range. We lost count at 20 and it kept up until the tide went slack. It was 2:30 PM and time to head back to Islamorada.

The one-hour ride back was beautiful for the wind had died completely and the water was like glass with big puffy clouds off to the north that looked like they were right down to the water.

Between the sun and the fishing we were beat, but we had to have a cold one at the *Lorelei* bar before heading back to our room.

It was truly a fantastic day of "backcountry" fishing; one of the very best in my 25 years of fishing the Keys. In case you're wondering, no, they are not all like that and I have actually been skunked on similar trips down there.



Barry with speckled sea trout (above) and snook (below)

