

## **Summer Time Reds?**

**By: Captain Ted Wilson**

“Sometimes I wonder what I’m gonna do, there ain’t no cure for the summer time blues.” So, the Eddie Cochran classic goes. June 21<sup>st</sup> marks the first day of summer also known as the solstice. It is also the day with the most daylight hours of the year. With all these extra hours of light to burn, there might just be a cure for Cochran’s warm weather malady. Try fishing for summer time reds.

Florida Bay is hot. True, when it comes to the weather and insects, it can be a little uncomfortable back there right now. Fortunately, the discomfort is well worth it. Redfishing around the Flamingo area is outstanding in the summer.

One way to catch redfish is by sight fishing. Pole the flats looking for anything that looks fishy. Tailing fish are always a welcome sight as the reds give away their location when they tip down to feed. Tails are nice to see but only make up a small percentage of the “tells” that a redfish is in the area. One way to find them is to look for pushes of fish as the reds school up and roam around the shallows. The water will appear nervous and “humpy” relative to the surrounding water. Always keep an eye out for muddy spots where redfish have been rooting around or shooting out of their resting spots on the grass. Finally, my favorite way to find redfish when poling the flats is by checking the backs of stingrays as they churn up the bottom. You can usually see a ray mudding from a great distance on a flat. The trail of mud created by rays kind of looks like a comet. It has a very bright and active head and a wispy tail created by the older mud as it dissipates down current and eventually back to the bottom. Move into position and look closely on all sides of the ray. Most of the time you will clearly see the redfish cruising alongside or slightly behind the ray. With all the muddy water clouding the area there sometimes is a red or two that you can’t see. For this reason, I’ll usually make a few blind casts around the ray whether I see anything or not. The worst thing that could happen is you might catch one of the jacks that commonly “ride” the backs of rays in addition to the redfish.

When it is calm, “V” wakes that cut through the water give away the presence of some kind of fish. In the backcountry, the list is long with possibilities. This list includes reds, but could very well be a shark (most common), a jack, tarpon, snook, even a dirty catfish. The trick is getting into position to intercept the wake and execute the cast. Remember, it is the tail of the fish that makes the wake, not it’s head. For this reason you must make an adjustment in how much you lead the fish when casting to it. This is important in all types of sight fishing. Considering a redfish could potentially be three-feet long and tarpon might be as much as seven-feet long, the difference between its head and tail is significant. Once in position, your offering to reds can be quite liberal. Que the list: live shrimp, crabs, soft baits, the time honored white Millie’s bucktail, weedless gold spoons and flies of all shapes and sizes have been known to catch redfish.

The real trick to catching redfish is not in the offering, but the presentation. While sight fishing, chances are the water is quite shallow. If you are in the backcountry, chances are the water is a little murky too. Together, this adds up to relatively small window where you can place your bait that the fish will actually see it. Cast a few feet in front of and beyond the fish’s projected path. Carefully time your retrieve so it intersects the path of the hopefully feeding and undisturbed redfish. Watch the fish’s reaction. If it sees your offering, game on. If it doesn’t seem to see or react to your bait, slow down your retrieve or even stop if using live bait at that critical

point of interception. The key is making sure they see your offering. If you succeed in doing that, the rest is up to the fish. This is fundamental sight fishing and pretty much applies to all types of fish we see before we cast.

The heavy fishing season is winding down for most guides in the Keys. The reason for the drop off in business has more to do with the natural cycles of tourism in Florida than the quality of fishing. In fact, the fishing in the summer is awesome and is only enhanced by the lack of boating traffic. So, if you have the summer time blues because the Keys are kind of quiet, go fishing. Out there the solace will be appreciated.