



AUSTIN FLY FISHERS

May 2019

Volume 21, Issue 5



Club Meeting

Thursday, May 16

Northwest Recreation Center

6:00 pm Fly Tying and Social Hour

6:00 pm Casting Practice

7:00 pm Presentation by Marcus Rodriguez on fly fishing the San Marcos for bass, bream, and other species.

Ted Mendrek with bonefish
caught on Crooked Island



FLY FISHERS
INTERNATIONAL
Charter Club

President's Message **Shawn Riggs**

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I grew up in Victoria reading the columns of outdoor writer Joe Doggett in the Houston Chronicle. He wrote terrific articles that I remember well. Aside from perusing the Sports Section for my Houston Astros highlights of the ball game from the night before, my second favorite thing to do was locate his column and get lost in his descriptive storytelling about all things hunting and fishing in Texas. This is an excerpt from an article written by Joe Doggett for the Houston Chronicle called Port O'Connor: one of the best spots for natural fishing and was originally published on August 6, 2009. I think it really does a great job of describing how wonderful the POC area really is as far as fishing is concerned and thought it would be a good read leading into the Coastal trip we have planned for next month. Enjoy.

"Rudy Grigar paused in thigh-deep water and shook a trailing string of grass from the ¼-ounce gold Johnson Sprite spoon — his go-to lure in the coastal bays during mid-1970s. He smiled and hooked the spoon to the level-wind frame of the casting reel.

"We've caught enough," he said. "Let's head back to the boat."

He hitched the cord stringer on his wading belt and started the walk back to the tiny white dot of the Whaler. A gaudy assortment of speckled trout and redfish twisted and fanned against the trailing cork as he pushed against the green tide.

Then Grigar paused, sweeping the casting rod like a pointer. "I'm convinced that Port O'Connor is the best natural fishing spot on the Texas coast," he stated. "Maybe on the whole Gulf Coast. This

one area has got it all, big bays, back bays, coves, bayous, sloughs, passes, surf, and the jetties.

"Even potlickers can catch fish here."

That session with "The Plugger" occurred a long time ago as measured by the angling calendar. The coast has experienced many changes since that wade, some good, some bad, but I must echo Grigar's assessment: The latticework of water surrounding Port O'Connor (and nearby Seadrift) offers the finest natural fishing venue in the state.

Inshore anglers have trout on the rocks and reefs and in the surf, and tarpon in the pass (not to mention on the jetties and in several holes in the bay system), but Port O'Connor is mainly known today for excellent shallow-water redfish action.

The red drum population is far better now than then — a direct result of the commercial ban and the push to tighter sport limits during the '80s. Not coincidentally, many of the ramrods of the old Gulf Coast Conservation Association knew exactly where to make the turn onto State Route 185.

"The network of primary bays, from West Matagorda and Espiritu Santo, running south to San Antonio, provides a maze of back bays, lakes, islands and shorelines ideal for shallow-water redfish. The amount of fishable shin-to-thigh deep water is staggering.

On the subject of staggering, many of the secondary lakes have soft bottoms, poor for wading but prime for poling or drifting in a skiff for scooter. Redfish love rooting in the muck. Conversely, many of the primary shorelines offer a

President's Message cont.

hard mix of sand, shell and grass, a great draw for reds chasing crabs and baitfish. Afoot or afloat, the options are many and the redfish are flourishing.

Port O'Connor has seen a lot of growth, with marinas and subdivisions adding to the traffic from Houston. But POC is still small (with a population between 1,000-2,000, depending on how many boat trailers you want to count). Many guides are based in the area, and some are excellent, as good as any specialized pros on the coast.

Port O'Connor gets pressure, especially on sunny summer weekends, but remains reasonably in-

sulated — at least compared to major coastal destinations such as Galveston and Corpus Christi. Or even Rockport.

This is because it is no place for casual tourist traffic. You're stuck back on the Intracoastal Canal, not the most scenic location in the state, and there's not much to do without a boat and a fishing rod. If the wind is wrong you're stranded even with a boat and a fishing rod.

But Grigar was right. If you are serious about fishing, and willing to pay some dues, virtually every type of quality inshore option is within reach of Port O'Connor."

Financial Report

by Jim Robinson

4/1/2019 to 4/30/2019

Begin Bal. Checking	\$17,059.04
Income:	
Dues	\$30.00
Clothing	<u>\$25.00</u>
Total Income	\$55.00
Disbursements:	
Austin Orr	<u>\$150.00</u>
Total Disbursements	\$150.00
Net	(\$95.00)
Unencumbered:	\$8,483.69
Encumbered Funds:	
Casting for Recovery	\$1,047.52
SKIFF	\$7,377.83
Ending Bal-Checking	\$16,964.04

May Presentation –fly fishing the San Marcos for bass, bream, and other species

Marcus Rodriguez has been guiding in the Texas Hill Country since 1998. Three years ago, Marcus joined Living Waters Fly Fishing as their lead fly fishing guide. Marcus's home water is the San Marcos River and most of his time guiding has been on this beautiful, hard flowing, twisting and turning river. Marcus recently moved onto the banks of the San Marcos and has been enjoying his time guiding clients and showing them the wonderful fishery that is the San Marcos River. Marcus will talk about fly fishing for bass, bream and other species on the San Marcos. Marcus is looking forward to answering any questions about the river and is more than willing to point fly fishing folks in the right direction for a successful day on the river.



Marcus Rodriguez

Crooked Island 2019

by Nils Pearson

Crooked island is about 400 miles southeast of Miami and one of a group of the Bahamas islands arranged along a large, shallow lagoon known as the Bight of Acklins. Crooked Island forms the northern boundary with Long Cay forming the western side and Acklins Island forming the remainder of the northern and eastern boundary. The southern end is dotted with a few spits of uninhabited land with a 20 mile-wide opening to the southern Atlantic Ocean.

The Bight of Acklins contains about 500 square miles of shallow water with numerous saltwater lakes carved into the surrounding islands, filling and draining with the daily tides. Many of the mangroves that once thrived in this area were destroyed when hurricane Joaquin stalled over Crooked Island in September of 2015 and drowned many of these plants. Fortunately, the mangroves are making a slow comeback while the dead mangrove branches still stand guard over their former territory. In spite of the devastation from the hurricane, this Bight of Acklins has remained a prime habitat for bonefish, permit, barracuda, tarpon, and sharks. With little pressure from the 900 people who live on these surrounding islands and very limited outside pressure on the fish, this ecosystem appears to be very healthy.

This year, Brandon Rabke, Joe Andrezik and I made our third trip to the island. Carroll Hall made his second visit while John Pearson and Ted Mendrek made their first visit. From the time you land via one of the twice weekly flights, you are greeted by the friendly locals. In addition to the Bahamas Air flights, occasional private planes from Florida land at the Pittstown airport. The Bahamas Mailboat arrives 3 times a month to resupply food, fuel, and the essentials for living on this remote island. To increase the island's own resources, one of the island's bonefish guides, Shakey, has made great strides in creating a large garden producing everything from vegetables to fruit trees by composting and building soil on the island's rocky unforgiving terrain

Unfortunately, our weather for this year's trip was not the best. We had to contend with a late cold front that brought rain and strong winds. Fortunately, our guides Elton "Shakey" McKinney, Randy McKinney, and Jeff Moss



**John and Randy wade a saltwater lake
as the tide falls**

Crooked Island cont.

found productive locations for all of on our 6 days of fishing. Our accommodations and meals were taken care of by the island's unofficial mayor, Willie Gibson. We shared a wonderful beachfront house that was on par with the best of homes in the Florida Keys. After a long day of fishing, some of us could be found swimming and snorkeling in the clear Atlantic waters off our sandy beach. Evening meals at Willie's restaurant, The Gibson #2, were served family style with delicious food and generous portions.

Organizing a successful destination fishing experience is always a bit of a gamble—there's location, cost, accommodations, meals, companions, tides, and weather are factors to consider. Because of the efforts of our wonderful hosts, all of us had a great time making and renewing friendships with our island companions and catching more than our fair share of fish. And yes, a deposit has already been put down on the Crooked Island trip for April 2020!



Brandon and Randy with tarpon



John with bonefish



Joe with permit

Crooked Island cont.



Shakey and Carroll searching for bones in the shallow waters of the Bight of Acklins

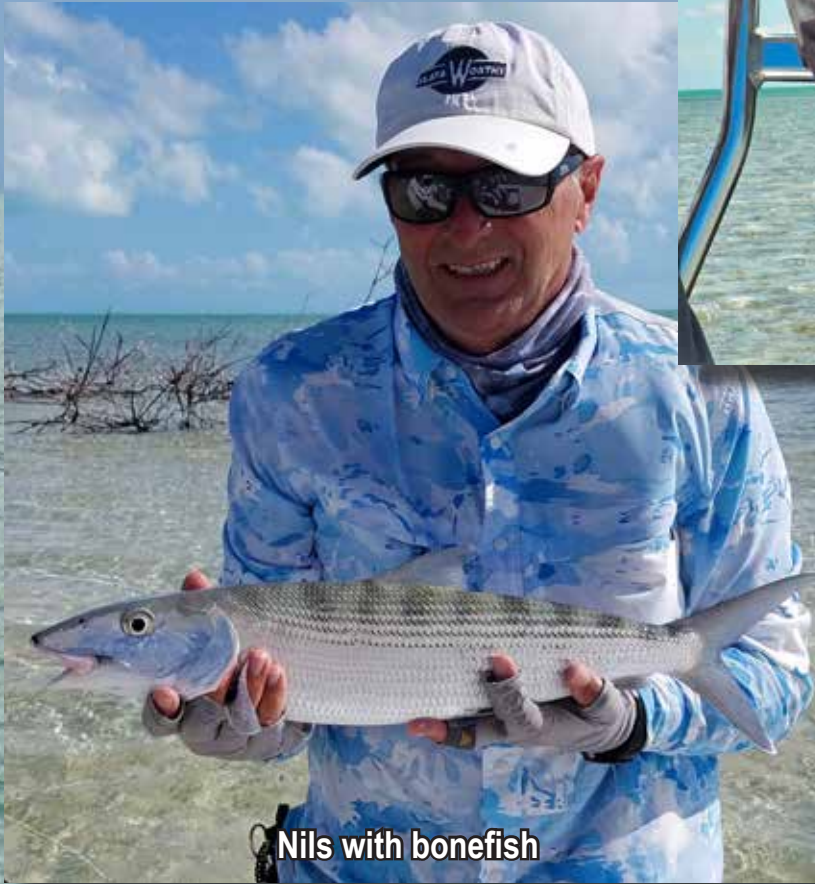


Ted with Barracuda

Crooked Island cont.



Randy and Carroll with bonefish



Nils with bonefish



Brandon and Willie

the back porch of our house and beach

AFF Outings by David Bush

June 27-30, Seadrift, TX

Our club President, Shawn Riggs, has invited club members to join him at his family compound in Seadrift, Texas. It is about a three hour drive from Austin. The place is located only 20 minutes outside Port O'Connor. There are several places to launch boats or kayaks from in the area. There is a free boat ramp in Seadrift called Sanders Park at Swan Point with access to San Antonio Bay, Charlie's Bait Camp is a mile down the road from the neighborhood and the day fee to launch a boat or kayak there is \$8.00 and there is a free boat ramp in Port O'Connor at Froggie's Bait Dock, both of these ramps have access to Espiritu Santo Bay.

This area of the Gulf Coast has great saltwater fishing for redfish and speckled trout and even the occasional flounder. There are miles and miles of shoreline to target reds via kayak or wading and open bays within paddling distance to find schools of trout. There are also several back lakes for those with a boat to reach such as South Pass, Long, Pringle, Power, Contee and Twin Lakes. There is also Boggy Bayou and Powderhorn Lake to try your luck as well as a pier in Port O'Connor on King Fisher Beach that extends into Matagorda Bay. There are really countless options when looking for bodies of water to fish in this area.

The house has two bedrooms and there is a bunkhouse in the boat barn. In all there are around eleven beds, a couple of cots, a few couches and plenty of floor space. There is also room to park a travel trailer or RV but no hookups. If you are interested please e-mail shawn.p.riggs@gmail.com and he can give you exact directions to the place....

September 22-28, South Padre Island

Our annual trek to South Texas is once again coming up in September. South Padre offers a wide variety of fishing options from wading for redfish to fishing wrecks offshore. South Padre has a lot of rental options available at reasonable rates since it's the low season. Camping is also an option. Like the Corpus Christi trip, South Padre is also a very good destination for non-fishing significant others. While this outing is scheduled for an entire week, you're welcome to attend for as long as you like. Those planning to participate should email Nils Pearson at npearson@austin.rr.com. Details for gatherings, group fishing, and guide fishing opportunities will be shared with participants as the outing approaches.

October 18-20, Oktoberfisch, Junction

The annual Oktoberfisch gathering sponsored by the Fredericksburg Fly Fishers is once again being held on the South Llano River near Junction. This popular event draws fly fishers from across the state. Details are available at <https://www.fredericksburgflyfishers.com/about-oktoberfisch>. Stay tuned for details of the club's plans for participation.

SKIFF Program by Bob Maindelle

We've all heard the saying, "It pays to advertise." Well, this is no less true for the free S.K.I.F.F. fishing program we offer to the children of military members separated from their children by their duty obligations.

Even though we offer this program at no charge and with the best of intentions does not mean those we serve become automatically aware of it, therefore, we have made and continue to make efforts locally in the Fort Hood area to communicate the existence of, and user-friendliness of, this program.

Because the military population around the base at Fort Hood is much more transient than the majority of the US population in general, the need to advertise is especially necessary as those who would otherwise share about their positive experiences with S.K.I.F.F. via word-of-mouth, typically don't stay around the area very long to do so.

To this end, I have put out some feelers recently into a form of advertising we have yet to try.

This involves setting up a small informational kiosk outside one or more of the several Wal-Mart stores in the Killeen area during a (busy) weekend simply communicating that we exist and encouraging those families who would avail themselves of what S.K.I.F.F. has to offer to sign up for a summer break fishing trip.

Talks are underway with the personnel manager at the Neighborhood Wal-Mart Market in Harker Heights which is to be used as the test location for our first try at this form of publicity.

The kiosk will consist of me, a table, a chair, a calendar, business cards, S.K.I.F.F. brochures, and the stand-up banner I have used at my Central Texas Boat Show booth for the past several years.



Picture from SKIFF trip 2 years ago of Mrs. Maria Avalos Cobian and children

The vast majority of the S.K.I.F.F. trips we conduct each season take place during the summer break from school. During this time children's schedules are more open, the weather is more predictable, and a greater variety of tactics may be used for a greater variety of species as compared to the cooler months. This is why I've chosen this season for this publicity effort.

Thank you all so much for your support. I will keep you posted as to how

this effort goes and what I learn from our first attempt at this.

Maria Avalos Cobian's children are on standby for the first available S.K.I.F.F. trip following the end of the current school year. The kids have endured three postponements, all due to foul weather on the Saturdays on which they were previously scheduled. This photo was taken over two years ago when the children's father was on yet another deployment.

If you would like to help support this wonderful program, please send a check payable to Austin Fly Fishers at the following address.

Austin Fly Fishers
SKIFF Program
P.O. Box 10504

Club Sponsors

The following individuals who made presentations to our club in 2017/2019. Please follow the links to get more information on the services they provide. You won't be disappointed.

Marcus Rodriguez – <http://livingwatersflyfishing.com/> Central Texas Guide

Capt. Billy Trimble – <http://trimbleflyfishing.com/> Fly Fishing Rockport/Texas Coastal Bend

Chris Johnson – <http://livingwatersflyfishing.com/> Living Waters Fly Shop and Central Texas Guide

Pat Dorsey – <http://www.bluequillangler.com/> Fly Fishing Colorado

Capt. Scott Hamilton – <http://www.flyfishingextremes.com/> Fly Fishing Florida's Atlantic Coast

Capt. Eric Glass – <http://www.captainericglass.com/> Fly Fishing South Padre Island

Kevin Stubbs – <http://www.expedition-outfitters.net/> Fly Fishing the Devils River

Kevin Hutchison – <http://hillcountryflyfishers.com/> Fly Fishing the Hill Country

Capt. Steve Soulé – <http://www.theshallowist.com/index.asp> Fly Fishing Galveston

Jeff Davis – <http://allwaterguides.com/jeff-davis/> Fly Fishing the lower Colorado River

Jud Cole – <http://centraltexasflyfishing.com/> Central Texas and Colorado

Capt. Rus Schwausch – <http://www.epicanglingadventure.com/> Fly Fishing Southwest Alaska

Nick Streit – <https://taosflyshop.com/flyguide/main> New Mexico and Southern Colorado



Captain Eric Glass

South Padre Island, Texas

<http://www.captainericglass.com>

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Capt. Billy Trimble
Shallow Water Flats Fishing
Texas Coastal Bend

<http://trimbleflyfishing.com/>
361-205-1266



Capt. Scott Hamilton
Fly Fish Jupiter, Florida

<http://www.flyfishingextremes.com/>
blueh20fly@aol.com



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Capt. Fred Lynch

Fly Fish Corpus Christi

<http://www.flyfishcorpus.com/>
(361) 533-4227



Kevin Stubbs

Expedition-Outfitters.net

Phone: 210-602-9284
email: kevinstu@msn.com

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