

Observations and Notes on Wade Fishing Tampa Bay

By Walt Durkin, President of the TBFFC

Introduction. Wade fishing is a great way to fly fish in the flats surrounding Tampa Bay. Almost the entire bay is lined with shallow water flats, many suitable for wading. Find one or two flats and make them your own by fishing them consistently over several seasons. Be patient and watchful as you study the flat over time. Learn to fish low tides for the best chance to find fish and to sight fish. Sight fishing will allow you to optimize your choice of flies as you watch the fish react. Expect to find redfish, snook, trout, black drum, sheepshead, small sharks and stingrays on the flat. Redfish are my favorite as they travel in schools and will readily tail. Stay safe on the flat and fish with a buddy to share the experience and help each other out. Learn what gear you need and what you can do without. Finally, just get out there and enjoy the hunt whether you catch fish or not. I have caught from zero to 20 fish a day and the zero is more common. Nonetheless, just going out and finding fish to try for is a hoot. These notes are designed to help you get started and to improve your wade fishing experience in Tampa Bay. They are based on about 600 trips on the water since I retired in 2012 and I hope you enjoy them.

Winter is best. Secret number one; wade fishing in winter is especially good with the lowest and clearest water. Fish are more likely to tail under these winter conditions, rewarding you with the ultimate in sight fishing. Wade fishing is especially good in the winter because we have extra low (negative) tides in the morning. These negative lows expose the terrain of the flats so you can observe features such as sand bars, troughs, pot holes and oyster bars.

Seek low tides. The best way to learn to fish a particular flat is to fish the lowest tides and observe and make notes of the terrain. This understanding is key to your success as the tide comes in and covers the flat. Arriving at the flat about an hour before the low is a good idea and gives you time to get on the flat and get ready. A few inches of water depth will make a difference in shallow water and the deeper troughs will become fish entry routes where you can set up and watch for fish. Additionally, your goal while wading should be to sight fish. This means seeing the fish or at least signs of the fish before you cast. Thus, sight fishing combines fishing and hunting as you first find your quarry before you try to catch it.

If you have the flexibility, where and when you fish will determine your chances for success. Tides are the most important variable when choosing where and when to fish. I prefer low tides because they offer the best chance to sight fish. The next most important variable is wind. I prefer calm days that making casting, seeing and finding fish easier. If you do have wind, then look for north, northeast or east winds. Other winds can fish okay, but are not as good because Tampa Bay is oriented from the north or northeast and to the south. Thus, a north wind will move the tide out more quickly and result in a lower tide. This is important as you want to fish around the lowest tides where the fish are more concentrated and you can observe and learn the terrain of the flat. A 15-20 MPH north wind will make the tide up to a foot lower than predicted. Seek out these days for great wade fishing opportunities to sight fish.

Find your flat! Along these lines, find one or two flats and make them your own. Fish them thru a season or two and watch how the fishing changes. Seek

flats that are dry or almost dry on a mean low or negative low tide. I also like flats that look to the south, so those north or northeast winds are at your back. Since those are the best winds, you don't want to cast into them if you don't have to. Flats that are dry at low tides will move all the fish off the flat and bring other forms of life, including prey out and onto the flat. Meanwhile, gamefish will have to wait in the nearest deeper water waiting to come back on the flat. They can be easy to find and catch under these conditions, either sight casting or blind casting.

Summer is not as good. As I mentioned earlier, winter provides the best low tides in the morning. Super clear water and low tides optimize your sight fishing opportunities. In the summer the conditions are reversed. The best low tides are evening or midnight and the water has more grass and algae. Thus, sight is more limited and you must do more blind casting. In the summer, look for good moving tides and schools of baitfish. Go out early and cast into schools of mullet milling about on the surface. Also, fish good structure such as points, mangrove edges, oyster bars and potholes you found on the low tides. Summer fishing can be good, but it is harder to find and sight-fish.

Look for tails. Low tides often provide optimum conditions for redfish to tail. Tails are easy to spot and show that the fish are feeding. Fish will tail when they find food or more often when just rooting around looking for food. You can usually cast close to a fish with his head down and tail up. If you miss that chance it's often best to wait for the fish to tail again unless you can see the fish in the water and watch its movement. Tailing fish can be easy or tricky to catch. Try small crab or shrimp files as the fish are bottom-oriented. Once the tide comes in the fish may still tail under water, making them harder to spot. This still offers a

great opportunity to catch them. Watch for swirls in the water or the occasional big fish showing a bit of his tail. Redfish tail most often in calm conditions, but not always. Other fish that tail include black drum, snook and sheepshead.

Tailing fish are exciting, but a patient approach is best. Tailers can be very spooky and require a careful approach especially when fishing calm water. If you are on a flat under calm conditions, early in the morning, wade out slowly until you are in about a foot of water. Then, stop and watch for a few minutes. If you don't see fish tailing continue to move slowly and watching for 270 degrees around you. Once you see a tailing fish try to see which way it is going. Redfish are often in schools so look for other tails nearby. You don't want to cast to the first fish and spook several others. Once you have an idea where they are heading either wait for them or move carefully to get into position for a cast. Try to have your cast land close to the fish when its tail is up. Tailing fish are looking for food and are hoping to find something as they tail. If you can't get a cast with the tail up, then cast about three to five feet ahead of where the fish is moving. If the fish sees the fly enter the water it will likely spook so don't cast too close. Hopefully the fish continues toward your fly so that you can give it a little bump to entice a strike. Remember, real prey will likely try to hide on the bottom and not move much at all. If the fish does not take the fly, let it pass, pick up carefully and try again. Your best scenario is a school of tailing fish moving along the flat. They are often in a tight group and have either found prey or really looking for prey. Here you can cast pretty close to the front of the school. If you spook a couple of fish, another one may still take your fly. Sometimes they are reckless under these conditions and will readily eat. Also, don't be surprised if you pick up a jack, trout or snook when you cast to a school of tailing reds. Other game fish will travel with

the reds and are often quicker to grab your offering. I once got three or four small snook out of a school of reds before I caught a red.

Those cool days after a front when the wind blows hard from the North can produce super lows, 6 to 12 inches below predictions. Don't be afraid to dress warmly and go out for what may be your best day of the winter. We have often had 20-fish days under these windy conditions. Flats with a southern expose with the North wind at your back are the best. Redfish seem especially active on those windy days with the moving water. We usually have good sun on those days after a front, which helps with warmth and sighting fish.

Learn patience. In general, be patient and learn to move slowly on the flats. Mimic the herons and cranes you see standing still and carefully watching. Walk onto a flat slowly and find a spot to begin to fish in about 12 inches of water. Stop and watch carefully for 5 minutes for fish or signs of fish. Swirls, bait present or fleeing, nervous water, mullet jumping or fish pushing are all good signs. Be especially observant for schools of mullet as game fish often travel with mullet. If you don't see fish move slowly along a bit and then stop again. You will always be most observant when you stop to look. Try to see that first fish coming before he see you and spooks. As the water gets too deep to sight fish, start casting at likely spots you found while the tide was low. Potholes will be visible as well as some oyster bars. Mangrove edges will be good spots as the tide gets high, especially if you have moving water.

Strong tides with flowing water produce good fishing conditions on the flats. Flowing water will move food for the fish making it easier for them. Fish will often feed into a good tide so walk with the tide to spot them coming. Outgoing

tides often fish well also depending on the terrain. After a strong high tide, food will flush out and off the flat to waiting fish. Again, understanding the terrain of a flat will help guide you to the best spots to sight fish or blind cast. Moving water is essential to night fishing around docks as fish use the pilings as ambush points for bait moving with the tide.

Flies. Salt water flies are pretty easy to select and you can do well with a variety of shrimp, crab and bait fish patterns. Fish are bottom-oriented in the winter, thus, crabs and shrimp are a good choice. Conversely, minnow and attractor patterns work best in the summer. Colors should generally mimic the bottom conditions and water color. Have some flies that are light and land softly for use in shallow water for spooky fish. On the other hand, have some of the same style flies with weighted eyes for deeper water (3 plus feet). Crabs and shrimp flies should be on the bottom when the fish sees them so choose the weight of your fly according to depth. Many inshore game fish are found on or near the bottom. That is one reason the Clouser minnow has fished so well over the years. Those lead eyes keep the fly down or diving. You can fish minnow patterns higher in the water column as game fish are used to chasing bait when they see it. Clouser minnows, bend-backs, Puglisi minnows and Seaducers are all good patterns. A few of all of your flies should be weedless for fishing in grass beds. Additionally, have a few Gurglers or poppers in different colors for top water action. I like to tie my own spoon flies with a flash tail in gold. This great attractor pattern is good for reds, snook and trout.



Flies can fall into two categories: attractor patterns and imitations. Both styles work well and should be in your box. Attractor patterns will be a little larger and have more flash and movement. A game fish might mistake them for a crab, shrimp or minnow or just something that looks alive and tasty. Attractor patterns include gurglers, poppers and seaducers, among others. Imitations will look more like game fish prey, but still are only caricatures of the real thing often with exaggerated features. Primary imitative patterns include crab, shrimp and minnow patterns.

Once you select a pattern think about size, weight and color. Size is an important variable for minnow patterns. If fish are feeding on a certain size of bait

schools, then you should match size closely. The same goes for color in that situation. You attractor patterns are usually a little bigger, two to four inches. Crab and shrimp patterns are usually fairly small, one to two inches. If the fish are spooky, then smaller is usually better.

Weight is the second important variable. Most Tampa Bay game fish are found at the bottom half of the water column. In general you need heavier flies for deep water (+3 feet) and lighter flies for shallow water. For crab and shrimp flies you must have some that dive for the bottom. Ideally, especially when sight fishing, your fly should be diving to the bottom or on the bottom when the fish sees it. So, for minnow, shrimp and crab patterns carry three weights: bead chain, medium and heavy. Gurgler and poppers will have no weight and Seaducers are generally fished shallow without weight. Bendbacks are good shallow patterns and need little or no weight. Use Clousers for your deep minnow patterns or other weighted minnow patterns.

Color is the third variable to consider. A general rule is dark water, dark fly and light water, light fly. Matching your fly to bottom colors is usually good. Your attractor patterns can have more flash and varied color. White is always a good color and white and chartreuse is very popular for minnow patterns. Having said that, all-black flies can be effective.

Finally, another feature for your flies is weed guards. If you are dropping your crab and shrimp flies into grass, then weed guards are essential. I usually tie all my minnow patterns except bendbacks with weed guards. The weed guard does double duty as a keel for your fly. I tie all Seaducer patterns with a weed guard for the same reason. One or two strands of Mason hard mono works great

and are easy to tie in. That plastic coated braided wire also makes a good strong weed guard for your bigger flies. Weed guards are also very helpful if you are making lots of casts to a mangrove shoreline.

Once you have selected a fly the real fun begins. The best advice I can give is to make your fly, whatever it is, behave like prey. Remember the common advice about bears. If you encounter one, don't behave like prey and run. Thus, when you tie your fly on, consider for a moment what your target game fish would expect its prey (fly) to do when encountered. If a crab is caught in mid- water and sees a fish approaching it will dive to the bottom and hunker down. As the fish approaches, the crab may try to wiggle a little deeper in the sand or grass. So, fish your crab flies in this manner; get them to the bottom and move them very slowly. Shrimp often sit in grass or move with the current. Thus, you should bind cast shrimp with moving water. Let your fly drift naturally and give it a tug every 10 seconds to represent startled movement. In shallow water sight fishing, fish your shrimp flies like crabs, on the bottom. Naturally, if fish are chasing bait, then get your minnow pattern into the fray and strip fast. Minnows when not being chased will swim along the bottom slowly. If a game fish follows your minnow fly, it's best to keep it moving a little faster. Gurglers and poppers represent wounded minnows, so bring them in slowly with some surface disturbance.

It is interesting to note bonefish feed most often on small clams. I suppose you can tie a clam fly and just chunk it out there and wait, but, perhaps too boring. It does remind me of the story of two guys fishing in Mexico and finding tailing permit. After throwing a variety of flies with no luck, they noticed a bunch of small clams on the bottom. One guy takes a button off his shirt, lashes it to a

hook and has a permit on in a few minutes. For permit especially, make sure your crab or shrimp pattern is heavy enough to dive. Ideally, your fly will be below the fish and diving when seen. No matter what fly you have on, the diving action often triggers the strike you want from permit and often other game fish. Think of the success of the Clouser minnow, which is always diving when you pause your retrieve.

Finally, here are two examples of this important point from trout fishing. When fishing a dry fly it must float along without drag the way natural prey does. Trout simply ignore flies that drag. Secondly, the Booby Fly is quite interesting tied with foam sacs near the hook eye. Fished on a sinking line and short leader near the bottom, the fly will rise when not stripped representing an emerging nymph. Again, fished this way the fly depicts natural prey coming to the surface and this movement will trigger a strike.

Mullet are your best friends. Mullet often travel in schools and are a welcome sight on the flats. They also jump and no one knows why. They will occasionally hit a fly, another mystery. Watch for schools of mullet milling around on the surface often times over grass or oyster beds. They will also cruise the bottom in schools or in a long string. Observe mullet behavior carefully as game fish often associate themselves with mullet, seeking safety in numbers. Additionally, as they move and feed on algae, mullet will stir up food for game fish. Thus, game fish mixed in with mullet are easier to catch as they are looking for and expecting food to pop-up. Trout, snook, reds, sheepshead and drum will all travel with mullet offering a smorgasbord of opportunities. Signs of mullet

should be the first thing you look for on flats. Often times no mullet equates to few game fish. Even if you see no game fish, cast into very mullet school you see.

Redfish are best. Redfish are my favorite flats fish. They travel alone, in pairs, small groups and big schools. They push water, chase bait and tail. They are easy to catch at times and other times nearly impossible. Lefty used to joke about practicing on reds in Tampa Bay before going to Andros for bonefish. Sight fishing for reds in winter is also similar to bone fishing. You can see them coming over nice sand flats in shallow water and they will eat the same flies as bonefish. Reds coming straight at you offer the best chance. Cast your fly out in front of them far enough to get it on the bottom. When you think the fish can see your fly give it a little bump. If they come up and follow the fly, I like to keep moving it a little until they eat or turn away. If the fish turns away, try another cast. For spooky fish try smaller flies and longer leaders (12-14 ftee). Reds will also sit in potholes to ambush prey. Make a careful cast to avoid spooking them. Reds over grass are harder to see, but their blue tail is a sign to watch for. Try a worm fly for reds over sandy bottoms. Get your fly in front of a moving fish and let it sit still and hope for the best. Sometimes they are on the hunt for worms down in the sand a bit and will spook when shown other flies.

Sheepshead are a prize. Sheepshead are also fun to catch on a fly. They are spooky and will usually follow and examine your fly closely. You will find them in singles, pairs and small schools. They will also follow mullet. Sheepshead are crab eaters, thus try small crab and shrimp patterns. Or, a small spoon fly may work. Your best chance will be a small school heading towards you. Get your fly out in front of them and bump it as you would for reds. They are very hard to

fool and you should take great pride in catching one. They are also great table fare if you so desire.

Snook and trout. Snook and trout are also great fish on the flats. They are ambush feeders and on the flats will hang out in depressions, potholes or edges. However, they will also travel with mullet or reds at times. Baitfish patterns are best, but they will take crab and shrimp patterns. They can be hard to see as they are often not moving. Try to present your fly so they see it out of the corner of their eye moving away from them. It's usually best to keep the fly moving if they show interest. Beach snook require small white flies that match the sand bottom. Use a 25-30lb bite tippet for snook.

You can find other fish on the flats including pompano, blue fish, jacks, catfish and puffer fish. Jacks often mix in with reds or other fish chasing baits. A big jack on the flats is a hoot and they will hit most flies. They move fast so act accordingly and strip your fly quickly. Pompano will hit a small clouser bumped along the bottom. Look for them over sand near channels.

Safety. Wading is generally safe if you use common sense and follow a few rules. One, shuffle your feet as you walk and look for rays on the bottom. Rays will hide in the sand and usually spook as you approach, but not always. Be particularly watchful over sandy areas where they will dig in; rays usually stay above grass. Wear good wading boots for extra protection and foot and ankle support. Wade slowly and watch out for little potholes. Do not wade on oyster bars as they have sharp edges and you don't want to damage oysters or fall down. A small whistle and compass can be handy if fog moves in. Foggy mornings can fish well, but you can also get disoriented as you lose sight of land. Avoid fishing

solo if you can as it's safer and more fun with a buddy. Small sharks often cruise a flat and will swim up to you. They always turn away at about a rods length when they find out you not food. Small sharks will hit a fly if you want the adventure of hooking and landing one. Large sharks are not usually on the flats and should be avoided if you see one. Use sunscreen and cover up well with a buff and gloves. Wear a pair of polarized sunglasses for eye and sun protection. They are also a must for good visibility into the water to spot fish. I like to carry a small plastic fish clamp to hold the fish I catch. This makes it easy to avoid teeth and keep them steady as you unhook them. Always de-barb your hooks for safety. Hooking yourself is not uncommon and the fish will also appreciate a barbless hook. I wear waders in the winter for warmth and wear shorts in the summer. Wading in salt water with an open cut is not advised as you risk exposing yourself to nasty bacteria. If a cut or bruise gets painful, red or infected seek medical treatment immediately as these bacteria are fast acting. Advise medical personnel you have been in salt water. Keep your cell phone handy and make sure people know where you went and when you will be home. Watch for and seek shelter from thunderstorms.

Places to Wade around Tampa Bay

1. **Ben T Davis Beach, Courtney Campbell Bridge.** This in on the east end of the Courtney Campbell Causeway (Rt #60). This sandy shoreline can be fished all along the park. Avoid any crowds of swimmers, but it is easy access.

2. Cypress St Park. The park opens at sunrise and you can park in the main lot. Straight off the western sides of the beach are numerous deep holes. They hold fish, particularly in the winter. Fish clouser minnows deep along the bottom for snook, trout and lady fish. However, the best sight fishing is to the North on both sides of the sand bar. Wade near the sand bar going north in shallow water and look for fish. On negative low tides the reds will wait in schools for the tide to come in. They will be spooky and hard to catch so make the most of your first presentations. As the tide comes in the reds will move over the bar onto the grass flats. Here they will spread out and tail at times. Wade slowly and let the fish come to you. The bottom outside the bar is nice and firm, but can be a little soft on the inside. Best times to find them tailing are winter morning lows and late afternoon lows in the summer. The flat around to the South also holds fish and is worth a try, especially on a mid-to-high tide. As always, watch for and fish around mullet when you can. You can wade to the east here and find a small channel coming out from the left. This channel is about foot deeper and fish will travel along or set up in it. Past the channel are oyster bars and sand flats. Wading is okay and not too soft. You need about 18 inches of tide to fish the back of this flat where you will see reds coming on with the tide. The small cove to the east of and behind the beach is also a place to wade. Work the mangrove edges for snook, trout and reds. The Cypress is one of the best in Tampa Bay. The flat to the south of the beach is smaller, but can also hold fish. Work the edges of the sandbar and grass areas as you would on the north side.

3. American Legion Flat. Take Prescott St off S. Westshore and drive to the Legion. Don't park in any of the marked spots, but the Legion is friendly to fisherman. If in doubt, stop in and ask. The flat to the North is popular and also called the

Westinghouse flat. You can wade north about ½ mile and find oyster bars and numerous pot holes and grass. On the high tides, fish along the mangrove edges. On low tides, fish out along the sandbar. A good hole at the NE end of the Legion holds big snook and trout at times; work it with a clouser. You can wade to the south also starting the other side of the boat ramp. Be careful of rocks as you go in. Work around the mangroves and you will come to a creek flowing in to the East. Fish along the sides of the creek on a good incoming tide for snook. A gurgler works well in that situation. To your right are several large oyster bars to explore.

4. Picnic Island. Take a right on Interbay Blvd from S. Westshore and follow the signs to the park. This area provides easy access to the flats between the park and MacDill AFB. As you come in you can park by the boat ramp and wade the sandy shore to the south. Here you will find sand and grass flats that hold fish. The flats at the end of the park are also good. Look for snook just off the rocks at the end. On a low tide you can wade quite a ways east toward MacDill. Fish all the way up to the signs, but not past them. This is a good area for reds in the winter on low morning tides. The mangrove islands and creeks to on the northeast side also hold fish. This area is a little easier to fish from a kayak, but can be waded. You will blind cast on the higher tides so use attractor patterns. On low tides, try to sight fish. This is a good spot in winter on negative low tides and a north wind.

5. MacDill AFB. This is a great area to fish, but you need access to the base (ID card or a friend). Once on base you can wade almost everywhere along the Bayshore road as you drive in. Most of the shore is sand with grass and potholes. As you come to the golf course, take the access road that goes straight and park

on the left about 100 yards down. You can wade out here, soft at first, then firm, and wade to the west. Numerous oyster pots along this shore will attract fish. Next, go the Marina and park. You can walk behind the boat parking lot fence toward the water and come through the mangroves. Wade east carefully along the shore to a creek. Cast into the creek for snook and trout and fish out to the south. It is soft here until you get out a bit and then firm. Fish back to the east a bit if you wish. Finally, go around to the west end of the beach and fish in the creek coming out of the mangroves. Mostly trout and snook here, but anything can cruise through, coming or going. The best fishing is across the creek, out and to the west. On a low tide you will be ½ mile from shore after passing a series of sand bars. You can wade out and to the west until you see another creek coming out. Do not approach this creek mouth as it is off limits due to the gun range. You can fish further out towards the St Pete skyline. This flat is so good because the base forbids boats in the ½ mile along the shore. It has become a real fish sanctuary and we have had multiple 20 fish days. Sight fishing in the winter is especially good.

6. Pinellas Point. This area is at the southern tip of St. Petersburg. Drive south on 1-275 to exit 3. Turn left at the end of the ramp, then go right on 16th Street S, left on Pinellas Point Drive, and right onto 14th Street S. Take the last right before the end of the street and curve around to the left, which ends in a small parking area. You can fish anywhere in the large flat. Some grassy spots are a bit muddy, but soon give way to harder bottom. There are oyster beds to the right, and one or two shallow sandbars as you head outward. A walk to the left takes you to some good snook fishing around privately owned docks.

7. Ft Desoto Park. Jim Wilson is the park supervisor. Stop by the park office and look at the maps they have. They will show holes, ditches and other useful terrain features.

Captain Dan Bumgarner shares these tips: You can fish basically anywhere that you can get access to the water; however, use caution as some areas have soft bottoms that make for miserable wading. As you enter the park you will see an area on the left where you can park and launch a kayak or wade the shorelines in either direction. The little bridge just after the toll station would be a good place to explore. There is an area just south of the small bridge where you can park and walk back to the bridge. The culvert under the bridge connects Mullet Key Bayou and the waters west of Bonnie Fortune Key. Continuing east from the intersection at the flagpole you will find the roadway to the maintenance area on the left. You cannot go into the maintenance area but you can access the water on either side at the entrance. Farther to the east you will come to the end of the bike/multipurpose trail on the south side of the roadway. This is a good spot to reach the grass flats in that area. The bottom to the south and east of Conception Key and the turnaround area is soft but the bottom on the north side is good. Going west from the flagpole you will find a sand road on the right that leads back to the old ferry landing in Mullet Key Bayou. The area to the east of the landing is soft and may prove difficult to wade. Wading is much better to the west. Continuing around to the northern end of the park you will find the Arrowhead picnic area. From this area you have easy access to the Bunces Pass area. Wading straight out from the Arrowhead Picnic area you will find good grass flats with very good tidal flow. Casting out into the channel and retrieving up over the drop off should get you some trout.

The southernmost point in Pinellas County offers numerous places to wade. They begin as soon as you get on the causeway heading south from the Bayway (exit 4 from 1-275). There is a large grass flat surrounded by deep water on the west side, about halfway between the condos and the first bridge. Park in the grass and wade until you see the drop off. Another area is past the second bridge, opposite the entrance to the boat ramp. There is a narrow flat that ends at a deep channel that parallels the road. When the main road dead ends, a left turn will take you to a point in the middle of a very large grass flat. Wade south toward the middle of the bay and fish the area near the sand bar. Walk toward the island in the direction of the Sky Way and fish the grass.

East Beach at the end of the road is a good spot. You can wade on the outside on the Gulf side or to the inside. Conception Key lies off the end of the East Beach. You can wade toward it and find reds, snook, trout and flounder.

North Beach at the very tip is good spot also. You can find multiple species including pompano along the sand bottom. It's also a good spot for beach snook on early spring and summer mornings. As you head toward the North Beach you will see kayak rentals on the right. The water there consists of deep canals that hold fish including rolling tarpon from time to time.

Shell key is across Bunces Pass, so you need a boat or kayak to get there. That beach holds less people and is a good beach for summer snook. You can sight fish and see snook close to the shore in the swash channel. Fish small white flies carefully and stay well back from the water. Try to see and cast to the snook before they see you.

8. North Skyway. 1/2 mile north of the rest area, west side. Exit Skyway rest area exit southbound, make a right at the stop sign and go to where the road ends. There is an opportunity between where you park and the bridge to the north. You can fish from the land or walk out to knee deep water.

9. South Skyway. Rest area side, Joe Island. Here you will find all hard sand and good fishing opportunities. It is a walk to get to better fishing but it is doable on foot. It is about ¾ mile walk over to Joe Island where you can find redfish in the pot holes on an incoming tide.

10. Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center 1800 Weedon Drive NE St. Petersburg, FL 33702. It is located off the St Pete side of Gandy to the south. Watch for the brown park sign off Gandy. Park at the round-a-bout at the end. This is a popular kayak launch point, but people wade here also in the shallow areas. Good for snook, trout and redfish. Fish the mangrove edges, potholes and cast into the channel.

11. Honeymoon Island. North Of Dunedin and East of US#19 on #586 a long causeway with 2 bridges ends at Honeymoon Island Park. The park opens at 8.00 am. You can fish the pass from "dog beach" to your left or drive to the northern most parking lot and park near the last "beach house". The beach in this area has lots of rocks and troughs that hold fish. The area is fishable up the long beach to the point. This is a tough place to fish if there is much wind coming from the west and watch your back cast if there are people walking the beach.

12. Phillippe Park, Safety Harbor. Take the Courtney Campbell Causeway west to Clearwater and turn to the right on S Bayshore Blvd and drive about 2 miles north

to find the park signs on your right. The south side of park has a good walking bottom where you can find snook, trout and redfish.

13. Boca Ciega Millennium Park, 12410 74th Ave. N. (Old Oakhurst Rd.), Seminole, FL 33772. This park has a canoe launch, boardwalk and nature trails and access to the bay. An Average Angler show featured kayak and wade fishing for multiple reds. Follow the canoe launch and creek down to the bay. The park is a stop on the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission's "Great Florida Birding Trail". You can view shore birds, wading birds, birds of prey, upland birds & water fowl.

14. Weedon Island in St Pete across the Gandy Bridge. Drive to the end of the park where you will find a kayak launch and pier. You can wade from here on a low tide and find good oyster bars to prospect. Using a kayak is easier as you can cover more water. Or, on the way in, about a half mile from the end you will see four parking spots on the left. Start down the sandy trail here and watch for the sign for Lookout Point. From Lookout Point you can wade east and then north or south and find tailing reds on the low tides in the winter. This area is lightly fished on the low water and can be very good. As always, seek the lowest morning tides in the winter months for your best opportunity.

Tight lines and loops and the best of luck. I hope to see you on the flats. //Walt Durkin 16 Dec 2021.