



Ladies Choice

Merry Beth Ryan

period of time. They can easily tolerate water well into the 80's.

The keys to locating snook are simple. look for structure and current. They usually prefer shallow water areas with good structure. Mangroves, seawalls, bridges, shallow reefs, pilings, to submerged rubble. The other major key when it comes to locating snook is moving water. If there is no moving water then your not snook fishing .

Snook do a lot of their feeding at night but that does not mean you cannot catch them during the day. Snook are ambush predators and will use structure as cover. They are known to break straight towards that structure once hooked. They also use their razor sharp gill plates to cut the line to escape being caught.

Watching a snook crash a bait is as intense as it gets. Your adrenalin level will be at its peak to say the least. As with all our fish we catch it is necessary to properly handle the fish and revive all our release fish with tender loving care. If you want to take a photo of your snook make sure you hold the fish horizontally placing one hand under the belly for support. Make is a quick photo and get the fish back into the water as soon as you possibly can.

Live bait as well as artificial baits work well when targeting snook. Snook feed usually on small minnows as well as crustaceans. They are not like snapper and sheepshead who will peck at your bait taking little nibbles. Snook strike with force and are great fun to catch. If you have never seen a big snook swallow your live bait or artificial bait it is something to add to your " bucket list" of things to do in this lifetime.

For shallow water snook live pilchards are pure candy.

There are many other fish out there that strike just as hard or harder than a snook but I assure you catching snook is one fish that you will always remember catching. Talk about pure excitement and adrenalin rush , snook are bound to give you that and then some.



Just ask angler Larry Dean from Ohio. On a fishing trip with Captain Van Hubbard of "Let's Go Fishing Charters" in an area known for spectacular snook fishing Larry hooked into a 29 pound linesider. To call that fish a fish of a lifetime would be an understatement. His snook was a fish that most anglers can only dream about. The best part of his trophy catch was the fact it was Larry's first snook he had ever caught. I would say he is off to a great start and he has definitely caught "snook fever". Live white bait was the bait of choice that day.

After a few quick photos the huge snook was released carefully boatside as we all watched the fish swim away we knew Larry had just caught a fish he would remember a lifetime and so would we. Make sure you get snook back in the water quickly. Never hold a snook in a vertical position for pictures. Hold the snook horizontally with one hand under the belly to help cradle the fish with wet hands.

More and more anglers are using catch and release techniques especially when targeting snook. Many anglers feel the Florida snook are better off being released to swim away then they are on their dinner plate. A great deal of respect is given to the snook in our state.

Organizations such as the Snook Foundation and Mote Aquarium as well as Fish and Wildlife take extreme measures to ensure the snook population continues to grow .

Something to avoid at all times is feeding our released fish to the dolphin that will be lurking near by on any given day. Yes dolphin are so very cute to look at and so very cute to take photographs of just please do not feed your fish to them. If you spot dolphin around your fishing spot it is probably best you move to another spot . I would say that the dolphin have quite a size advantage as well as a speed

advantage over the smaller fish being released and they will not leave that area when they know they can get a free meal from the fish you are releasing.

Keep only what you and your family at home can eat. Fish is best when it is fresh not frozen in your freezers for weeks and months at a time. September is very well known for being one of the biggest baitfish months of the year. Where there is bait there is fish so keep that in mind when seeking your bait for the day.

Those anglers who have a flexible schedule can do well with big snook by keeping an eye on the weather. This time of the year summer downpours usually move in daily we just never really know when. There have been some wicked storms brewing lately so always be on the lookout and be safe on the water. Mother Nature is not someone or something to second guess. Just before a rainstorm and just after a rainstorm are often some great fishing. The fish definitely sense the barometric pressure changing so they therefore also change their feeding habits to adjust.

As with any type of fishing patience is a must. Patience is that long lost art of waiting quietly and without complaint for something to happen. (Something I struggle with in my fishing daily.) It is true that anglers often appear to be doing just that , but I am not so sure any person has endless patience. Just being out on the water in such a serene spot usually is enough and if a fish suddenly happens to intrude upon a fisher persons recreational routine so be it. That would just be an added fringe benefit to an already perfect day.

Merry Beth

Merry Beth Ryan was born & raised in upstate NY and has always loved the outdoors. She is currently a columnist for "South Florida Sport Fishing" Magazine. Growing up, when she was not on the basketball court playing Point Guard for Syracuse, she was spending her time fishing. Merry Beth can be seen fishing the beautiful waters of Charlotte Harbor almost every opportunity she gets. Living with a full time fishing guide definitely helps feed her passion.

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