The Marine Scene

UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA IFAS Extension Sea Grant Florida

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Scallop Searches Scheduled for August – Spots are Filling Up Fast

In past *Marine Scene* editions we have noted that there is encouraging evidence that bay scallops in southwest Florida may be recovering almost 40 years after their disappearance in the early 1970s. Citizens can play an important role in helping scientists document whether this trend will continue and determine the extent of recovery. To do this we need long-term data from several areas throughout southwest Florida. You can help by volunteering for a fun-filled day assisting with one or all of the four scallop searches listed below.

Successful Scallop Searcher

Scallop season news: This year the scallop season extends from July 1 to September 24 (**remember taking scallops is only allowed north of the Pasco-Hernando county line**). Tip: If a scallop is less than 2 inches in size, don't take it – you won't get much meat for your effort and it is a waste of the resource. Remember scallop harvest is limited to 2 gallons of whole scallops, so you probably won't have too much of a problem getting your limit. I am getting reports that folks are finding scallops despite the impact of Tropical Storm Debby. You can find a bunch of good info on scallop harvesting at our Florida Sea Grant website. Info on the 2012 FFWC scallop abundance surveys can be found here.

Scallop Search Information

August 4	Charlotte Harbour – Info: Betty Staugler, Charlotte Co. Sea Grant Extension Agent staugler@ufl.edu Register directly Here
August 13	Sarasota Bay – Info: www.sarasotabaywatch
August 18	Pine Island Sound – Info: Joy Hazell, Lee Co . Sea Grant Extension Agent jhazell@leegov.com Register directly here
August 18	Tampa Bay –Info: www.tampabaywatch.org (click on restoration programs)

What are Fish Descending Devices?

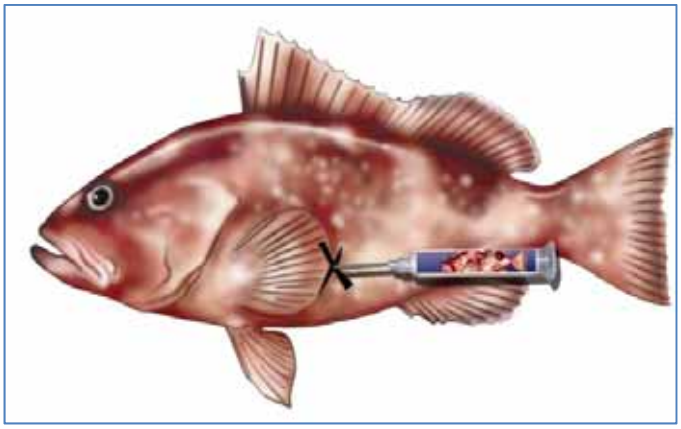
Florida Sea Grant begins project to increase survival of deep water released fish

Distended stomach of fish caught in deep water. This is not the swim bladder. Photo: Bryan Fluech

Experienced deep sea anglers are all too familiar with the problems of releasing fish (either undersized or out of season) caught in deep water. Fish retrieved from such depths (generally deeper than 60 – 80 ft.) experience problems caused by the rapid change in pressure. Gas in their swim bladders (used to control their buoyancy) expands and ruptures the bladder, releasing gas into the fish's body cavity.

When this happens the fish appears bloated and cannot swim back down to the bottom, resulting in almost certain mortality. In severe cases, the gas trapped in the body everts the stomach, causing it to protrude from the mouth. It is a common misperception by anglers that this is the swim bladder, but it is the stomach.

Obviously, fishery management regulations that require release of fish will be ineffective if the released fish do not survive. To address this problem, federal regulations in the Gulf require anglers to vent fish that are unable to swim back to the bottom. Venting involves using a sharp hollow instrument to puncture the body cavity wall and release the expanded gases so the fish can return to depth and have an increased chance of survival. However, venting is not perfect. It can increase the survival of some, but not all fish species, and obviously results in some additional injury to the fish.



Proper position for venting fish. Photo: FSG

New on the horizon: fish descending devices

The problem of increasing survival of fish caught in deep water is not unique to southwest Florida, Gulf and Atlantic. In fact, it is fair to say it is a worldwide problem. Similar problems are encountered on the U.S. West Coast for a group of bottom fish commonly referred to as rockfish. Along the U.S. West Coast water as deep as 200-450 feet is easily in sight of land. Recent research on rockfish has shown that many species of these fish can survive if they are quickly returned to the bottom. A number of ingenious anglers have developed a variety of devices that can be used to accomplish this with minimum injury to the fish. Some of these devices have just come on the market in the past six to nine months.

Here is just a sampling of some of the new devices.

There are more constantly being developed and some anglers are coming up with homemade devices.

Inverted Utility Crate – the Fish Elevator

This device can either be purchased or homemade. It consists of a weighted utility crate that can be filled with fish and then lowered till fish swim free.

Photo courtesy of Steve Theberge

Releasing four red grouper at one time

Fish descenders – Device attached to fish, rod and reel used to lower fish. Strong jerk on line releases fish

Ace Calloway Fish Descender (Blacktip)
www.git-r-down.com

Photo: Bryan Fluech

RokLees Fish Descender
www.ecoleeser.com

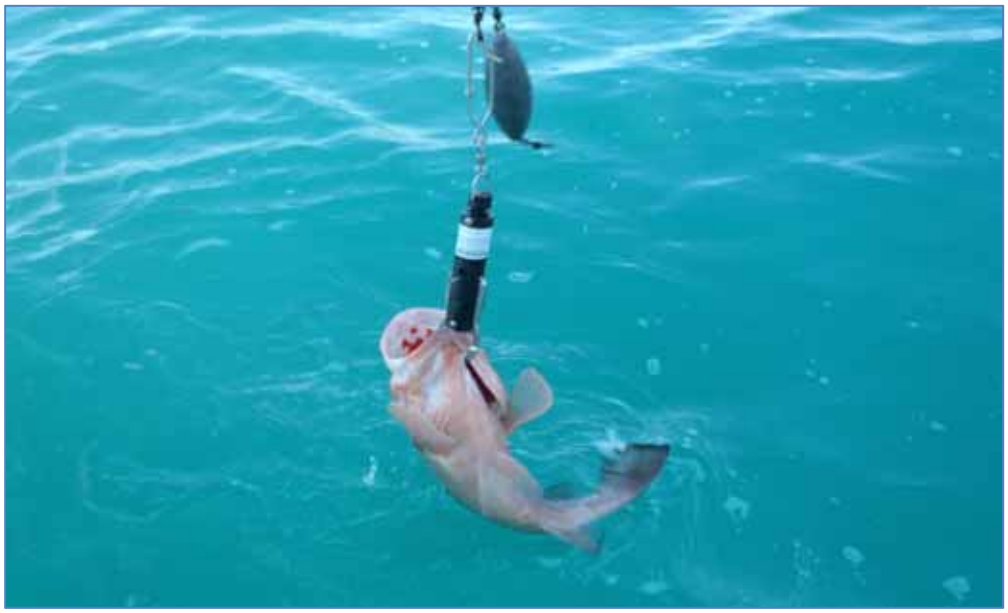
Photo: Bryan Fluech

SeaQualizer

http://www.theseaqualizer.com/SeaQualizer_-_Official_Website/Welcome.html

This device can be set to release fish at predetermined depth (ie. 50, 100, 150 feet).

Photo: John Stevely



Florida Sea Grant In Action

Florida Sea Grant Extension Agents are now conducting field trials to develop expertise in the use of these devices. Furthermore, we are conducting field trials with volunteer anglers to evaluate if these devices are practical and whether anglers will be willing to use them. The hope is that eventually, fisheries managers will be able to provide anglers with options on how best to get fish back down to the bottom to maximize their chances for survival. We must stress this work is experimental at this time and more research will be needed and is being planned.

Important note: Currently, in the Gulf, venting of fish that require assistance to return to the bottom is the only permissible method allowed. Descending devices can only be used after the fish is vented. We had to obtain an Exempted Fishing Permit to conduct this work. In my opinion, and I stress that at this time it is only my opinion, federal fishery resource managers will probably consider allowing anglers to use descending devices in the Gulf in the future. Use of all types of venting/descending devices is currently permissible in the Atlantic.

Stay Tuned for More Developments!

Amazing Story: Introduction of Red King Crab to Barents Sea

Fifty Years Later Crab Supports Lucrative Fishery, But Little is Known of Ecological Impacts

I have watched innumerable episodes of the TV show "The Deadliest Catch", the story of Alaskan crab fishermen who risk their lives to bring this delicious prized catch to our tables. However, I had no idea that a large fishery had developed in the Barents Sea based on an introduced species.

In order to increase the "productivity" of the Barents Sea, the Soviet Union decided to introduce these crabs thousands of miles from their native home in the Pacific. In the early 1960s thousands of adult crabs and more than a million crab larvae were released in their prospective new home. At first, the effort seemed like a failure. But by the 1970s egg bearing crabs were found and the population expanded rapidly.

Location of Barents Sea. Source Wikpedia

Red king crab. Mikhail Pereladov / VNIRO Institute

An experimental fishery was begun in 1994 and landings have grown dramatically since. It is now the most lucrative fishery in the Barents Sea, harvested by both Russian and Norwegian fishermen. By 2006, *Seafood Business* magazine reported there were fears that Russian king crab imports would flood the U.S. market. In 2005, 91% of the 42 million pounds of king crab imported to the U.S. were from Russia (Russia also has a major fishery in the Bering Sea).

The red king crab can live for up to 30 years and grow to leg span of two yards. The average size of crab landed in the Barents Sea is about six pounds. No one really knows what the eventual ecology consequences of this introduced species will be.

The Mohawk Has Landed

In the previous issue of the Marine Scene we ran a story about the USCGC Mohawk being deployed as a new artificial reef off of Lee County. Well, read below, it has now been deployed!

Photo courtesy John Park

On a beautiful Monday, July 2, the World War II warship USCGC Mohawk was deployed to its final resting place 90 feet under water. She is now located roughly 28 nautical miles off of Sanibel Island on Florida's southwest coast and is the first Veterans Memorial Reef dedicated to all U.S. veterans. The official name of the reef is the U.S.S. Mohawk CGC Veterans Memorial Reef.

The 165-foot World War II Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk is the last remaining ship of the Greenland Patrol. She launched 14 attacks against enemy submarines between 1942 and 1945. One of her most famous deeds was being the last ship to radio Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower that the weather was clearing for the D-Day invasion.

The warship was scuttled by six strategically placed charges designed to allow water to flow into the ship so it would sink and rest upright. It sunk in under three minutes. Over 100 boats floated on beautiful clear blue water to watch the ship sink. According to Mike Campbell, a senior environmental specialist with Lee County's Marine Division who coordinated the procurement and cleaning of the new artificial reef, "The best thing about sinking the ship was seeing the excitement in the community and businesses gearing up to take trips there." To learn more about Lee County's artificial reef program please visit http://leereefs.org/.

Visit us now at The Marine Scene Plus!
http://flseagrant.ifas.ufl.edu/newsletter

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More information on the Florida Sea Grant College Program can be found at: *Florida Sea Grant*

Share this newsletter with friends and colleagues! They can also subscribe by emailing me, jsmarine@ufl.edu.

Sincerely,

John Stevely
Sea Grant Extension Agent