

OFF THE DOCK

WITH D. A. MANN

~ The Fishing Report ~

Wednesday, October 9, 2024, will go down in history as one of the worst fishing days on record for the Venice and Sarasota areas. Tomorrow, Milton may break this new milestone (my predictions are included); but for now, here's the report.

The Jetties last week was returning to a resemblance of the days before Helene. The Reds were starting to hit on shiners and the occasional Permit was caught on jigs. Today, you can't find the Jetties. Thursday, you won't be able to get anywhere close. Friday, they may only be a memory. No more Jetty Rats drinking coffee on the benches, no more fishermen standing on the rocks, and no more tourists strolling the paths. Hopefully, you may get lucky and see a seagull.

The Bays, three weeks ago, were finally returning to a shade of green that we recognized. The dark brackish waters were receding into the Gulf with each passing tide allowing the clear incoming tide to take possession. Along with the cleaner water came the fish. Trout were plentiful in the flats, bait was surfacing everywhere, and the Pompano were schooling in the deep lagoon east of Snake Island. Good times. Today, the only reported catch was a side-by-side refrigerator floating in Robert's Bay. Tomorrow, those refrigerators will be schooling in all the Bays. No size limits, no bag limits, and no seasonal restrictions. The FWC has classified these as *Kitchen Katch* and have extended it to include stoves, washers, dryers, and hot water heaters. This *Katch* is guaranteed not to put up much of a fight; but, don't pull a muscle hauling one onboard. It is predicted that the dock fishing will probably be your best bet. Just pick a dock floating in the Bay and drift beside it.

Remember, fish like structure; and, there should be no shortage of that anywhere you go.

Midnight Pass may be renamed Big Pass by next week. The former "Big Pass" may become "Small Pass" allowing Siesta Key residents to wade across to Lido Beach at low tide. I doubt if either island will be happy to have trespassers. No more Tarpon to be caught here. Hopefully, they all made it out into the safety of the Gulf never to enter the Pass again. I'm concerned that there won't be enough left of St. Armands to make a decent statue in the center of the Circle in remembrance. Bird Key will once again be a bird sanctuary as it was before John Ringling decided to dredge the surrounding waters to lift up the land for development. He did the same thing on St. Armands and Lido - everything built on fill. All of his efforts 100 years ago will be negated and the land returned to its original state. City Island and Longboat Key will be a blank canvas allowing Mother Nature to paint it her way. So, getting to the Sarasota Bay fishing report, instead of catching refrigerators, you'll be hooking up with a nice Maserati, Bentley, or a Lamborghini if you have the patience and finesse.

Maybe in twenty years, fishing will once again make a comeback. Maybe it will be as good as it was before big money over developed the islands. And maybe some of the mistakes will not be repeated.

If it happens in my lifetime, I'll be grateful.

If not, I'll leave here with some good memories.