

From the Ol' Fish'n Hole

By Capt. Jim O'Brien

Water LIFE Englewood

Hey y-all, how has your fish'n been this last month? Great I hope. This last month has still been awesome for fish'n. The weather hasn't changed, 87 to 89 degree water temp. and 5 to 10 kt. breezes. Night time snapper fish'n's almost dead calm most of the time.

The redfish action has been best around Gasparilla Pass and around the upper part of Charlotte Harbor. Gold 1/4 oz. spoons and live shrimp have been doing the best job.

The trout bite has been slow, from talking to a few avid trout fishermen. They said they're catching a few trout around Pine Island Sound and they are catching some trout in Turtle Bay also.

Tarpon are all over most of Charlotte Harbor, and around the bridge's at El Jobean and the Peace River U.S. 41 bridge. Look for tarpon in the deeper holes of the Harbor.

The report's on snook fish'n has been pretty good. The beaches and Stump Pass are holding some nice fish. (DO NOT FORGET SNOOK FISH'N IS STILL CLOSED)

There are still a lot of sharks just off

the beaches and on most of the inshore and offshore reefs and wrecks – mostly blacktip and spinner sharks. They're also in the Harbor and just outside Bull Bay.

The grouper fish'n has been real good out 90 to 110 feet of water. The mangrove snapper and the yellowtail snapper are still chewing in 60 to 85 feet of water. The greater amberjack (a.k.a. reef donkeys) are still on most of the offshore wrecks.

This month we have no reports on cobia or permit, maybe next month we will have something to say on them.

The picture for this month is this ol' Capt. here catch'n a goliath grouper and, man, I mean to tell ya, these bad boys will test your strength and every muscle in your body. They are on about every piece of structure in the Gulf. We are getting them from 150 to 600 pounds. If they ever open a season on goliath grouper, I have places in the Gulf that have 75 to 150 of these big bad boys, places that I call my *house of pain*. Yes my friend, if you want to test your muscles out, I have just the place for you.

I have an interesting story I'd like to share with y-all. I had a call about two weeks ago from an avid fisherman that



reads the Water LIFE every month. The real twist to this story is the fisherman's name is John Chistianson and he is from Kenosha Wisconsin, over 2,000 miles away. John told me he looks forward to reading my article *From the ol' fish'n hole* every month. Now I want to tell ya, that made ol' Capt. here feel pretty dag-gum good. I have been writing article's for about 7 years. I have only had two other calls that was farther away. One was from British Columbia, and the other was from Canada, so John your in

the top 3. I think it's great. Thanks!

Well, I guess I have flapped my lips long enough, so until next month,

Remember: Get out and snort some of that good clean salt air cuz - it's good fer ya!

If you have any questions or if you have a good ol' fishin' story or a recipe for cooking fish that I can share with our readers give me a call.

To book an offshore charter with us - aboard the Predator II call (941) 473-2150

A Fishing Trip to Remember and Why I Am Now Called 'Lucky'

By Peter Sanderson

Special to Water LIFE

On Saturday July 31st I set off at 6 a.m. for a day's fishing. A friend was unable to accompany me, so I was alone.

After a good morning fishing some favorite spots for snapper and redfish, I headed for Charlotte Harbor to fish for sharks. I picked a spot 3 miles from the pass and a similar distance to land both East and West. Water depth was about 12 foot with a 10 knott westerly wind and an outgoing tide. I put out the customary chum bag, with two shark poles, each baited with hefty lumps of cut bait. Then it was time for lunch and the waiting game to see if the chum slick would attract anything interesting.

After only 10 minutes I looked over the side of the boat and saw a hammerhead, which was around 10 feet long and was coursing around the boat like it was urgently looking for dinner. While I was wondering whether I wanted to get involved with a fish that size, I noticed another large hammerhead a few feet behind the boat and even more sharks a bit further back.

I realized that if a shark that size took my bait and I wanted to bring it to the boat, I would need to gently chase it down before it stripped all my line, so I started the engine.

Within seconds the bait was taken and the shark headed forward past the bow. I was now mid-ships with the center console just behind me.

I felt the shark pulling me towards the edge of the boat, so I instinctively reached for the grab rail on the console to steady my balance. Instead of the rail, I accidentally grabbed the throttle and pulled hard. In less than a second the boat shot forward and I was in the water.

My motor is a 225, 4 stroke Yamaha, so the boat was instantly racing at 30 MPH. The steering was hard over, so the boat raced around in circles missing me by a few feet every 40 seconds. Each time it passed, a 4 foot wave of white foam passed over my head pushing me under the water and choking me.

After 10 minutes of fighting this nightmare, I was hit on my hip by the propeller, resulting in a fractured pelvis and a gash which would later require 16 stitches. I was now pouring blood and became an injured chum-bag in shark infested waters. (Have you ever noticed that water is only considered to be infested if there are sharks in it?) After a further 10 minutes of fighting to avoid my boat, my luck finally changed.

I was weakening fast and realized it was likely I was going to die. A few boats had passed, but they were at least a mile away and didn't even slow down. At last a boat slowed and came within a ¼ mile distance. They did not see me but actually stopped to see why my boat was constantly going round in circles.

Then my real stroke of luck came. I always wear a big floppy white sun hat on the boat. When I fell in it disappeared off my head. After 20 minutes of turmoil and finally an opportunity to be saved, I saw the white hat floating just a few inches from my hand.

I picked it up and waved and shouted with renewed energy and within a few minutes I was saved. My rescuers later admitted they were about to go on their way when they saw the white hat. They did not see my arm or my head.

While I was being repaired at the ER the Sheriff phoned to say that my boat had been saved undamaged and was tied up at the dock awaiting collection at my

convenience.

I hope to be fully recovered and back at work in a few weeks.

This is the first time I have described this experience in writing and I assure you it is factual. Others have exchanged this story on the Internet and Facebook and it has reached the stage where I was in the water for years and was eaten by Moby Dick!

Postscript:

I was lucky that I did not drown.

I was lucky that I was not eaten by sharks.

I was lucky that I was not killed by my boat.

I was lucky that my white hat appeared by my hand at the most opportune moment.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing:

The moment I hit the water I realized that all my forms of communication were still on the boat. The boat was fully equipped with safety equipment, but I was not wearing a life jacket. There is a kill switch on the ignition which you can attach by a lanyard to your belt. If you fall from the boat the engine immediately cuts out. I had not done this. Most people don't.

I will go fishing again. I will go shark fishing again. I will not go alone.

My white hat is now laundered and ready for future use. I am having a label sewn on the front which will say: - *Lucky, lucky, lucky, lucky idiot!*

I am hoping that this story will be made into a book and a film. I am looking for volunteers to play the part of me!