Naples & Collier County Fishing Cheat Sheet

Collier County — FishSonar.com

Top Species: Snook / Redfish / Tarpon | Best Months: Oct – May | Water: Backcountry, Bays, 10K Islands

Common Snook

Centropomus undecimalis

Oct – May | Slot 28–33" | C&R Summer



WHERE TO FIND THEM

- Mangrove shorelines throughout the Ten Thousand Islands
- Naples Bay dock lights at night — October through May
- Gordon Pass and Wiggins Pass mouths on falling tides
- Marco Island channels and residential canals
- Fakahatchee Strand backcountry creeks in winter

BEST TIMES

Fall through spring is prime. Gordon Pass stacks fish during the mullet run in October and November. The Ten Thousand Islands backcountry holds snook year-round in deeper creek mouths.

REGULATIONS

Slot: 28"–33" total length. Limit: 1/day. Season closed June 1–Aug 31 (Gulf side). Saltwater license + snook permit required.

BEST BAITS & LURES

- Live pilchards free-lined at pass mouths
- Gulp! Alive Shrimp under popping cork on flats
- DOA Bait Buster 7" worked along mangrove edges
- Live pinfish drifted near dock structure at night

TACKLE SETUP

Medium-heavy spinning, 20–30lb braid, 30lb fluoro leader. Circle hooks 3/0–5/0 for live bait presentations.

Red Drum (Redfish)

Sciaenops ocellatus

Year-Round | Slot 18–27"



WHERE TO FIND THEM

- Shallow grass flats in Rookery Bay and Naples Bay
- Oyster bars throughout Ten Thousand Islands at low tide
- Marco Island backcountry flats — tailing fish on low water
- Wiggins Pass area grass edges on incoming tide
- Fakahatchee Strand creek mouths after cold fronts

BEST TIMES

Year-round in Collier County waters. Fall and winter produce consistent tailing fish on shallow flats. The 10,000 Islands backcountry is one of the top redfish destinations in Florida.

REGULATIONS

Slot: 18"–27" total length. Limit: 1/day per angler. Saltwater license required.

BEST BAITS & LURES

- Gold weedless spoon worked over grass and mud
- Gulp! Alive Shrimp free-lined on shallow flats
- Live blue crab near oyster bars and mangroves
- Owner SSW circle hook with live shrimp under cork

TACKLE SETUP

Medium spinning, 20lb braid, 20–25lb fluoro leader. 1/0–2/0 weedless hook or 1/4oz jig head in grass.

Spotted Seatrout

Cynoscion nebulosus

Oct – Apr Best | 15" Minimum



WHERE TO FIND THEM

- Grass flats in Naples Bay and Rookery Bay, 2–4ft depth
- Sand-grass transition zones in Marco Island waters
- Ten Thousand Islands shallow bay grass areas
- Gordon Pass area flats on incoming tide
- Wiggins Pass flats and adjacent channels

BEST TIMES

October through April is prime. Trout most active in water 60–72°F. Cold fronts push fish deeper — work channel edges after a front. Best action at first light on shallow grass flats.

REGULATIONS

Minimum: 15" total length. Limit: 3/day. Enhanced size limits may apply — verify at myfwc.com before keeping fish.

BEST BAITS & LURES

- Gulp! Alive Shrimp 3" under a popping cork
- MirrOlure 52MR suspended plug retrieved slowly
- Live shrimp on 1/8oz jig head, free-lined on flats
- D.O.A. paddle tail shrimp on grass flat edges

TACKLE SETUP

Light-medium spinning, 10–15lb braid, 20lb fluoro leader. 1/8oz jig head or small circle hook under cork.

Mangrove Snapper

Lutjanus griseus

Year-Round | 10" Minimum



WHERE TO FIND THEM

- Mangrove shorelines throughout Ten Thousand Islands
- Dock and bridge pilings in Naples Bay and Marco Island
- Deeper holes and creek bends in the backcountry
- Rookery Bay channel edges and oyster bars
- Gordon Pass channel during outgoing tide

BEST TIMES

Year-round availability with peak action in summer and fall. Mangrove snapper are most aggressive at night or during low-light periods. They school tight to structure and are leader-shy.

REGULATIONS

Minimum: 10" total length. Bag limit: 10/day per angler in Gulf state waters. Saltwater license required.

BEST BAITS & LURES

- Live shrimp on light fluorocarbon leader — top bait
- Small live pinfish near mangrove roots
- Cut shrimp or pilchard on a small jig head
- Light jig tipped with shrimp, worked near structure

TACKLE SETUP

Light spinning, 10–15lb braid, 15–20lb fluoro leader. Small hook 1/0–2/0. Light presentation is key — they are line-shy.

Tarpon

Megalops atlanticus

Apr – Jun Peak | C&R Only



WHERE TO FIND THEM

- Gordon Pass — prime tarpon staging area April–June
- Naples Bay on incoming tides in early morning
- Ten Thousand Islands backcountry — rolling fish on flats
- Marco Island bridges and channels at night
- Wiggins Pass in May and June on incoming tides

BEST TIMES

April through June is peak season for large tarpon in Collier County. Gordon Pass is one of southwest Florida's top tarpon spots. Fish the first incoming tide after a calm warm night for best results.

REGULATIONS

Catch-and-release only unless you have a $50 tarpon tag. Handle fish in the water when possible. Revive completely before release. No harvest needed — protect this fishery.

BEST BAITS & LURES

- Live crabs drifted through Gordon Pass — the best bait
- Live mullet or large pinfish under a float
- Large swimbaits and paddle tails for rolling fish
- Black or purple streamer fly for sight fishing on flats

TACKLE SETUP

Heavy spinning or conventional, 50–80lb braid, 60–80lb fluoro leader. Circle hook 5/0–8/0. Set drag at 15–20lb. Use a fighting belt on larger fish.

Tides & Timing — Naples & Collier County

Falling Tide — Best for Snook

Snook and reds funnel bait through Gordon Pass and the Ten Thousand Islands creek mouths on falling tides. Work the last two hours of outgoing water with live pilchards near pass mouths and channel edges.

Rising Tide — Best for Redfish

Reds flood onto Rookery Bay and Marco Island flats as the tide rises. Look for tailing fish on the flat edges in the first 2 hours of incoming. A gold spoon or weedless shrimp works best.

Slack Tide — Trout and Snapper

Seatrout hold on Naples Bay grass flat edges during slack water. Mangrove snapper stack near structure in creek bends during slack tide. Work light presentations slowly near the bottom.

Tarpon & Pass Timing

Tarpon push through Gordon Pass and Wiggins Pass on strong incoming tides in May and June. Arrive before sunrise and position upcurrent. Live crabs drifted in the current produce the most strikes.

Top Gear for Naples & Collier County (Amazon)

DOA Bait Buster 7"

Killer snook lure along mangrove edges in the backcountry

~$12

Buy on Amazon

Seaguar Blue Label 20lb Fluoro

Clear backcountry water demands low-vis leaders

~$18

Buy on Amazon

Owner SSW Circle Hook #1

Top hook for snapper and snook on live bait

~$7

Buy on Amazon

Gulp! Alive Shrimp 3"

Works on every species in Collier County waters

~$15

Buy on Amazon

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