

November 2006
Volume 2, Number 10
Upperkeysfishingclub.com



Upper Keys Fishing Club
P.O. Box 370484
Key Largo, FL 33037
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Dock Talk

The Upper Keys Fishing Club Newsletter

Next meeting – Wed. December 6, 7:00 PM, Lighthouse Boat Center
Mini-seminar – Kingfishing, Capt. Doug
December event - TBA

'Tweener Time



**Catch of the Month - Bettina and Tyler Valles
- Cero mackerel and yellowtail**

Catch of the Month - cont.

Fall has arrived, the dolphin have scattered, and the sails, kings, and wahoo have not yet arrived in their peak numbers. It's 'tweener time, the time between summer fishing and peak wintertime action. To many, this means slow fishing but this is a misperception. Yellowtail have increased their bite and the ceros are thick on the reef. Tyler and Bettina caught ceros incidentally in their yellowtail chum slick. Some anglers have targeted ceros with much success trolling small ballyhoo or pulling blue and white feathers in 60 to 80 feet in front of Davis and Pickles reefs. See last month's recipe (**Dock Talk - Sept/Oct 2006**) for spicy smoked mackerel.

President's message by Capt Doug Jeffrey

With the arrival of the first cold fronts we all know that our winter residents will not be far behind. I am not only referring to the club members but the fish that will be pushing south as well. It will be nice to see more than 12 to 15 people at the monthly club meetings. With the small local membership it is a little difficult trying holding things together until the northern members return so we are glad to see your smiling faces. Our next meeting will be held on Dec 6th 2006 and I hope to see everyone there.

While I was on vacation the club received the terrible news that we had lost another friend. That is the second of our members that has passed on this year. It will be a sad affair not seeing their smiling faces returning. The loss of these members reminds us to fish for this year, you never know what next year will bring. I constantly hear people saying "lets get together and fish" but so many times it never happens. It takes work to get a fishing trip going but it is worth the effort, please do not put it off it, you may not get another chance.

Fishing Reports, Capt. Doug

Offshore

As the cold north winds start to blow the wind and waves will be pushing the sailfish south. There have already been a few caught but as the water cool further there will more arriving. The wahoo have not made their presence felt, but should be just around the corner and should be showing up in great numbers more towards mid December. There are still some dolphins being caught. The schoolies that are being caught are for the most part running over 10 pounds. With some fish going over 25 pounds.

Reef

On the reef, the action is brisk. The kingfish have started to arrive and are showing up in the chum slicks. There are also good numbers of kings that are being

caught by live bait trollers that are working the ledges from 70 to 150 feet of water. The yellowtails are schooled up and are biting in 90 to 150 feet of water. The main problem is after a hour or so of chumming the bull sharks are showing up and are eating everything you hook. So it is best to catch them quick and to move when the sharks show up to feed. There are also some really good catches of grouper being caught. The grouper are hitting live blue runners with a passion if you do not have a live blue runner a fresh dead one makes a good second choice.

Backcountry

My back country reports have dropped to a trickle with all of the high winds keeping most boats on the trailers. A couple of things I have heard is that the redfish are tailing and are hungry. The second thing is the large snook are on fire and are trying to put on weight before the water gets real cold.

More memories of Harold Cliff

Today we mourn the loss of one of the original members of the UKFC, Harold "Fishtalker" Cliff, a resident of Maine and Tavernier. He spent the last 10 years learning to bluewater fish, always seeking advice and guidance and eager to learn all he could. Harold was 68 years old, a devoted husband and father. All of us were privileged to know Harold and are profoundly saddened by his passing. He will certainly be missed.



Beverly Rowe 9/13/2006

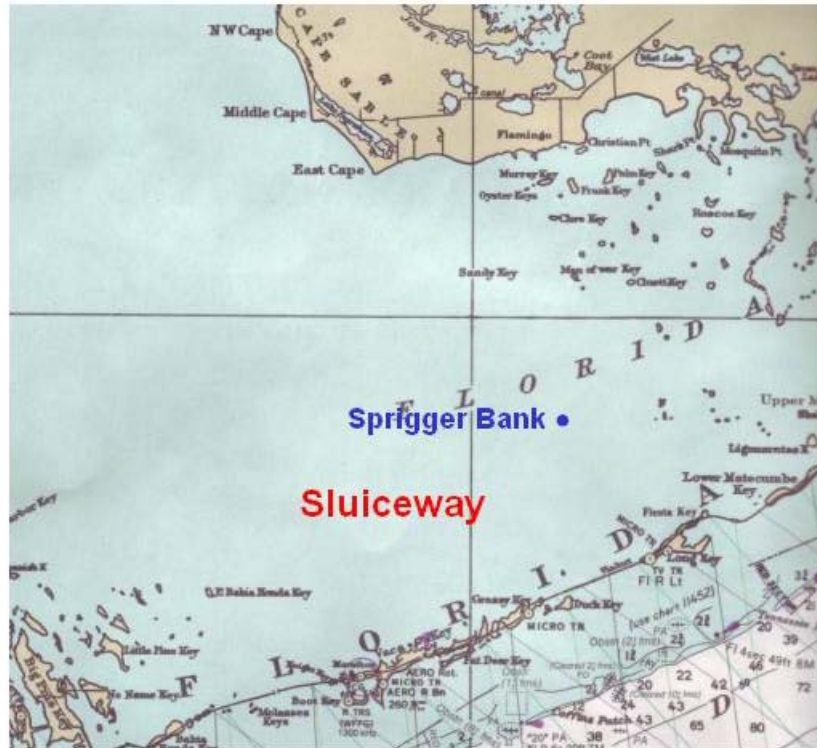
John, Beverly and Harold and some AJs,

Fish of the month – Cero mackerel - *Scomberomorus regalis*

Like yellowtail, ceros occur mostly in the Keys in US waters and inhabit coral reefs almost exclusively. Ceros are distinguished from the other mackerels in our waters by the long yellow stripe that may or may not be broken into long dashes (see cover photo). They are especially abundant this time of year and can be spotted sky-rocketing ballyhoo, just as their larger kingfish cousins do. They are much smaller than their larger cousin the king mackerel (*Scomberomorus cavalla*), averaging about 1 to 5 pounds, but they can commonly weigh in the teens. Ceros are very similar and may be confused with Spanish mackerel (*Scomberomorus maculatus*). Spanish mackerel have yellow and brown spots as opposed to the dashes and broken line of the ceros. Spanish also inhabit grass beds and open

estuaries (see **Hotspot of the Month**), areas where ceros do not normally reside. Juvenile kings are easily confused with Spanish mackerel, but close inspection of the juvenile kingfish will reveal a lateral line that abruptly drops towards from head to tail.

Hotspot of the month - Sprigger Bank - 24 54.5, 80 56.3



Sprigger Bank is a long run from Key Largo (about 35 miles as the tern flies and 1.5 hours by boat), but anglers can be rewarded with a smorgasbord of fish ranging from fiesty seatrout in the grass to 400 pound jewfish on nearby wrecks. We feature Sprigger Bank this month because of the excellent spanish mackerel fishing in the winter here in the waters surrounding and to the west of Sprigger Bank known as the Sluiceway. The Sluiceway is the area of open water west of Everglades National park portion of Florida Bay and east of the Lower Keys. It is called the Sluiceway because this is the area where Gulf of Mexico water mixes with that from the Florida Straits. The strongest tidal currents in the Keys occur in Moser Channel below the 7-Mile Bridge. An outgoing tide during a cold front will push a lot of water off the Florida Shelf exposing many of the flats in Florida Bay. This makes navigation treacherous during the winter months, best to stick to the ICW on your way down.

Because of the abundance of manatee grass (the kind that is shaped like spaghetti) in the Sluiceway, the fall shedding of seagrass leaves, and the fact that manatee grass leaves float when they are released from their shoots, the sea surface may be smothered by seagrass wrack during the fall and winter months. This makes

trolling an effort in futility. Best bet is to anchor upwind of the banks, wrecks, or the abundant "**Swiss Cheese** bottom" and chum. Mangrove snapper will gather in the chum as will spanish mackerel. Shrimp are the choice baits (use a long-shanked hook for the spanish to avoid being cut off). You will also get large seatrout and may even get three varieties of grouper (red, black and gag) which all inhabit those holes in the Swiss Cheese.

Rig of the month - Japanese feathers

Normally, we would feature a bait of the month in this section of Dock Talk, but after 17 issues and 16 different baits, the baitwell has run dry. Time to switch to artificials. If you desire or need info. on any of our local baits, search our **Index**. All past issues of Dock Talk are available in pdf format at **www.upperkeysfishingclub.com**.

We feature Japanese feathers this month, because it is an excellent trolling rig that is killer on the cero mackerel that are currently thick on the reef. Preferred colors are blue and white and the preferred sizes are the smallest 1/4 to 1/2 oz. Tie a long-shank 4/0 or 5/0 O-Shaughnessy hook below the feathers using 50# mono. If you find that cutoffs are a problem, attach some fine wire to your hook using the haywire twist. Black and red feathers are also excellent for the blackfins that will become more abundant on the humps as winter approaches. Japanese feathers are versatile baits and can be trolled at almost any speed. Anglers targeting ceros have been trolling around five knots and the feathers have been kept back very far back in the spread. Feathers are also excellent at higher speeds; keep them on the flat lines or on the shotgun rod, just tighten your release clips to hold them down on the flat lines.

Tip Corner – Line care

Is it possible to have too much of a good thing? Here in the American subtropics, the fishing is good all year round. Our "tweener times" will rival peak fishing periods in more temperate climes. There may be one drawback. We really don't have any downtime to designate for maintenance of all of our gear especially if the fish are biting all the time. One important maintenance item not to overlook is your line. Before fishing, always pull off a few yards and recycle it at the Yellow Bait House or Worldwide. Test your knots. If the line breaks, keep removing line. Also, be sure to stretch your line by letting it run off the spool prior to fishing when running to your spots. This is especially important for mono on spinning reels, as the line is easily twisted. When the spool is almost dumped, close the bail and stretch when you are underway. Be sure your drag is tight! It is also a good idea to mark the inside of your spools with the line test and when it was last changed. You can use a Sharpie to mark the line test and a small adhesive label for the line change.

Fish Feast - Recipes from the Deep - Mustard Caper Sauce - Beverly Rowe

If you are a fan of the caper and like to dip fresh fish into a dipping sauce, you must taste Beverly's mustard caper sauce. It is OOTW! (Out of this world!).

Ingredients

- 3 Tbsp whole grain dijon mustard
- 2 large egg yolks
- 2 scallions (mix both leaves and tubers)
- 1/4 tsp minced fresh marjoram
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 3/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 2 Tbsp capers well drained

Whip heavy cream until it forms soft peaks. Put aside. Combine mustard, egg yolks, onions, marjoram and lemon juice. Mix in food processor until mixture smoothens. Slowly add oil while continuing mixing until the sauce thickens. Transfer into large bowl. Fold in whipped cream. Refrigerate until served. Serve cold on yellowtail and other mild fish. The sauce also freezes well, so you can make up some big batches to combine with that in your stocked freezer.

For Sale



Shrimp runs are coming!

2 X 10⁶ candlepower cordless Qbeam

\$15

Call or email Tom at 305-852-0324 ext 0315

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