

FISHING PROSPECTS FOR DECEMBER

December is the beginning of the winter weather pattern. The cycle begins with a cold front followed by northwest winds that cause the fishing to be less productive. After a day or two the wind will shift to the east and the temperature will rise somewhat and fishing will improve or at least it will be more pleasant to be on the water. Then another cold front will arrive and the cycle starts over. With the cooling temperatures afternoons may be more productive than mornings.

Last month chasing bait was a rewarding activity. This month as the bait becomes scarce finding pockets of clear water will be a key to success. The wind combined with the tide will frequently muddy the water in the bays making clear water scarce, but it is worth finding.

To summarize December the over-slot snook and giant tarpon will be gone from our waters, but they will be replaced by pompano, trout, sheepshead, redfish, small snook and juvenile tarpon. Not a bad trade from my perspective. Keep in mind that fish rarely look at the calendar other than to note when seasons open and close. So comments about the month really refer to changes in the temperature of the water. So the key will be the frequency and severity of the cold fronts.

For the latest information on license requirements, open seasons, sizes and possession limits check the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission website for at www.myfwc.com.

SNOOK

In our area (Everglades National Park, Gulf of Mexico, and Monroe County) the snook season closed on December 1. Catch and release of snook is permitted so minimize the handling of any snook caught and return them to the water as quickly as possible.

As long as the bait remains along the beaches there will be snook in the vicinity. As the bait disappears work the backcountry for snook. While the larger snook will be hard to find this month smaller snook should be plentiful.

REDFISH

Look for reds in the holes around the oyster bars. Shrimp and crab patterns are the most commonly used flies for redfish, but at times small baitfish patterns will also work.

TROUT

Check the grass flats for trout and do not overlook the deeper water nearby.

TARPON

With December and winter weather the giant tarpon will be gone but juvenile tarpon may still be found in the creeks and in the back bays.

POMPANO

With the cooler weather and lower water temperatures pompano should begin showing up on the grass beds along with the trout.

OTHERS

If the weather stays warm and the bait remains along the beaches look for jacks, ladyfish, and mackerel to be there also. As the temperature drops try fishing the deep water in the rivers and creeks of the backcountry for jacks, ladyfish and sheepshead. Baitfish patterns will work well along the beach and try shrimp patterns in the backcountry.