

The Serious Tackle Box

Experienced Fishing Advice To
Make Fishing Great Again

With Chris Gonzales

Vermilion Candy

Vermilion Candy - well, sort of -vermilion snapper eats it like candy. What is it? Soft artificial bait strips, specifically "Fishbites™".

With the long closure period of the red snapper fishery in Federal waters, vermilion snapper, which has no closure, gains in importance as a targeted offshore species. They have become the "other snapper". Vermilion are usually found in large numbers, unlike lane and mangrove snapper, which also have no closed season. Standard vermilion snapper baits are small natural squid strips – these artificials are another way to go. The captain and a fisherman earlier urged me to try Fishbites as bait. The final push came from another fellow fisherman, telling me of his success catching a vermilion snapper double limit while on an overnight offshore trip, which finally convinced me. With input from those three guys, I finally put some I'd been carrying on several trips to good use. They did indeed work not only "as advertised", but more importantly as my fishing friends and customers said they would. They are relatively small baits; their scent, look, feel and natural toughness on the hook lets you make multiple catches on each piece, coming in an assortment of shapes, sizes, and colors. The one I'm referring to comes in a resealable plastic pouch that's called Fishbites. The pouch contains 15 triangular-shaped pieces. The size of each piece is about 1 1/2" long x 1/2" wide x 1/8" thick. Mine were labeled "squid", at a cost of about \$10 which translates as a bargain for their fish catching potential.

Rigging up for Vermilion snapper is best accomplished with a double or triple drop leader. At the top is a 130# Spro™ Power Swivel, followed by three dropper knot loops, and a surgeon's loop at the bottom. Each dropper loop gets a circle hook that has its mono loop passing through its eye from the bend side of the hook and then looped around the hook shank twice. A bank sinker is attached to the bottom loop. Usually, a 4-16 oz. sinker is enough to keep the rig vertical in the water when fished, depending on the current. See the

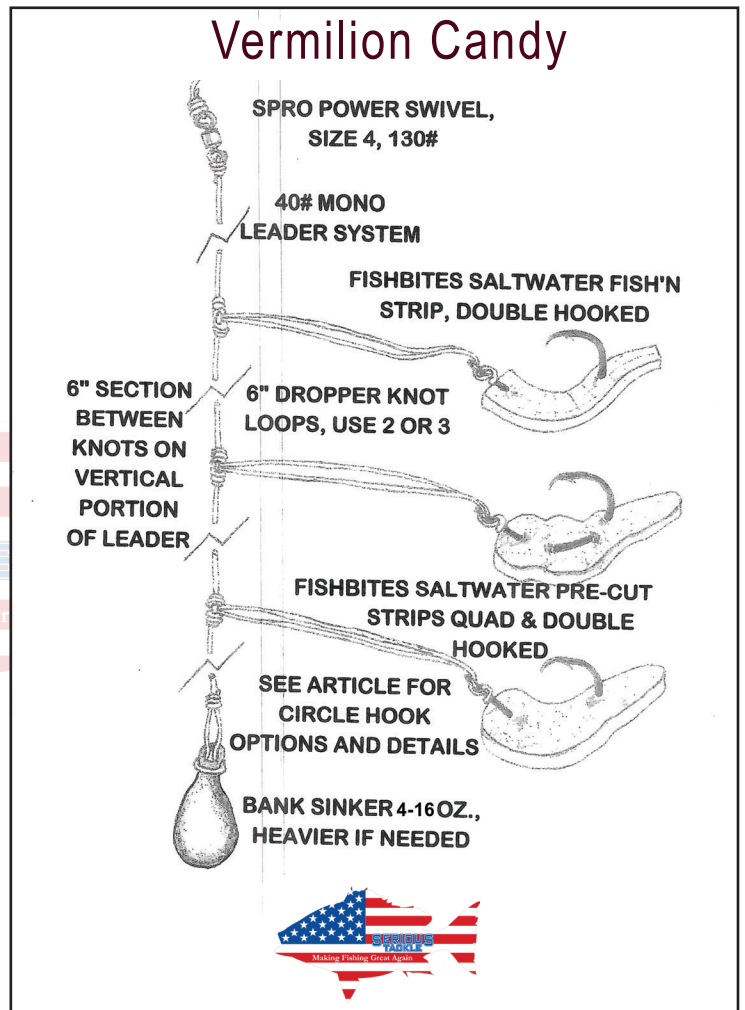


illustration for the dimensions. I use several manufacturers' circle hooks; all have a bend portion that's about the size of a nickel. They are: Gamakatsu™ 42412, 3/0; EagleClaw™ L2004EL, 6/0; Daiichi™ D84Z, 3/0 and Mustad™ 39951 BLN, 3/0. These are all inline, non-stainless steel. See the illustration for a couple of ways to securely attach the baits to the hook that will leave the hook point exposed and gap open, combined with the mono loop section shown, they aid in a surer hookset as the hook rolls into penetration as the line comes tight.



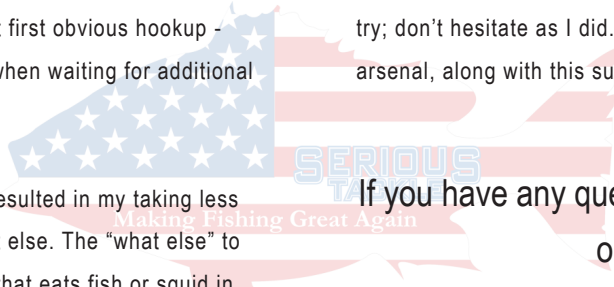
An educated guess as to the depth to be fishing can be obtained from the depth finder on your boat, or the deck crew if on a charter or party boat. Bait time in the strike zone is increased by virtue of not having to rebait nearly as often as if using natural squid. No big hookset motion with these circle hooks; the rod bows and stays down, and the hookup is generally complete. When using a double or triple drop rig as outlined, ignore that first obvious hookup - wait for a second or third; few are lost when waiting for additional hookups.

Hesitation in using Fishbites no doubt resulted in my taking less Vermilion snapper plus who knows what else. The "what else" to be caught includes just about anything that eats fish or squid in our inshore and offshore waters. Baits such as Fishbites 6-1/2" Pro Offshore Sheet Bait and down, through other various sizes, shapes, colors, and scents are available from both of these manufacturers.

These baits encourage the bite and those circle hooks provide the solid hookups.

This particular double or triple drop rig, while fished mostly at the mid-depths when targeting vermilion snapper, is really a bottom fishing rig. Built and baited as described, it's also bound to be very effective on pier, beach, and bay fishing.

These Fishbite baits are indeed "Vermilion Candy" - give 'em a try; don't hesitate as I did. They will be another part of your fishing arsenal, along with this sure-fire rig that gets it done.



If you have any questions, stop by Serious Tackle or email me at chris@serioustackle.com

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