

## Louisiana marsh and lake Ponchartrain

My good friend Brett Bruner and I drove down to New Orleans for some fantastic food and to try our hands at fly fishing for Jack Crevalle. The Jacks are very large down there and once you get them on they are more than a handful to land. Getting them to take the fly was difficult, because they are constantly swimming extremely fast chasing bait fish. Standing on the casting deck you are looking for a wake or bait fish jumping out of the water. Cast ahead of the wake and hope that the fish doesn't change direction, which they are constantly doing. Then strip the fly back as fast as you can. No bite, cast again and hope that the fly line you just stripped back doesn't get tangled on the trolling motor or the stripping basket or the rods in the storage bins or the gear in the boat. With the wind blowing 20-25 mph, the boat moving and a fast swimming fish.. nothing to it.. try it sometime then let me know.

The first day we couldn't fish for Jacks because the wind wasn't right. So we went out for some Red fishing. The water was dirty from the wind beating the banks so seeing them was difficult. When we did manage to see some, we were on top of them so the catching was pretty poor. We found more Alligator Gar than Redfish. Brett managed to finally hook up a couple of Gar, but lost them when they came off. He had good strip hook sets, but the hook didn't penetrate enough to get the barb in. When the second one came off I checked his hook to see how sharp it was. I dug into my bag to get the stone and fix the problem. The next one didn't come off... if you look close at the photo the hook is completely through the top part of the mouth.



The second day, Brett's back was killing him so he stayed in the hotel to try to heal up so he could at least fish the third day. The guide (Brandon) and I went to a different part of the marsh on the second day, but the water was still dirty and the wind was blowing harder than it did the first day. I put a small Red in the boat and an Alligator Gar that morning. We saw true alligator and some huge Gar that were about 6 feet long. The Gator poked his head up right in front of the boat and was only about 10 feet away. After lunch we headed out to the outer banks looking for Red Fish. We were on the last bit of marsh, nothing but 25 MPH white capped water was on the other side, but we found water that was clear enough to see and allowed us to set up on the fish. I managed to put 5 more Reds in the boat that afternoon, but none of them were big. 7-8 pounds would have been the largest.



The last Red Fish of the day

The third day the wind was right for Jack Crevalle fishing. After a bit of maneuvering under the road bridge and the very low railroad bridge, (we had to take the casting brace off the deck to be able to get under the bridge), we were on our way to find Jacks. We were throwing a strange looking and difficult casting popping bug. Brett had the first one on and it was off in no time. I managed to get one to take a streamer and I thought I had set the hook hard, but it too came off. We saw several, but we couldn't get on them in time to get takes. The afternoon rolled around and we decided to change locations. We managed to find some Jacks busting bait fish and it was just a matter of getting to the school fast enough before they went back down. These schools of Jacks probably had 50 to 100 fish in them and getting a take was easy if you could get the fly close enough to the school while they were on top which was only about a minute or two at the most. Brett hooked up three times that afternoon and his line broke three times. he wasn't a happy camper. I finally got a good hook set and it was all I could do to keep this

damn fish from pulling me overboard. We were using a 12wt rod and this brute had it bent over double. At one point Brett grabbed the back of my shirt to help keep me from falling in.



Jacks are not pretty or good to eat, but they are the hardest pulling fish I have ever had on the end of my line.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of August I took a photo of a Timber Rattle Snake swimming across the 11 point river. I have never seen or heard of anyone seeing a rattlesnake swim the river. And to see two in one day was unbelievable. The first one we saw was the largest and it was about 5 ft.



This was the smaller of the two about 3 ½ – 4 foot long.