

As always, in dirtier water, darker or more vibrant colors excel and inversely in clean water, lighter, more natural colors are best. Once you've fooled a linesider, be sure to boat it quickly. Heavier equipment can be paramount around structure, and handle the fish with care. The snook's elongated lower jaw makes a great handle but be sure to support the weight of his body as well. Boat side, if you cradle a snook on his side with your hand a little behind the gill plates, they will almost always lie still as though in a trance. On the release, be sure the fish is fully refreshed by allowing it to "suck" your thumb with its head upcurrent until it shakes off on its own accord.

If you're struggling to find snook and it feels like you're taking everything into account, it is helpful to look at the bigger picture. Satellite imagery maps are best for this, giving you a bird's eye view. You'll want to look for flats that should have current funneled to them without being directly blasted by the wind, particularly ones with mosquito ditches or deeper water nearby. For example, you may note a series of islands that have close to parallel shorelines with shallow flats in between them. The second or third islands, going down wind, will catch some



**Captain Hunter Bach poles a likely shoreline, watching for shadows.**

of the flow without the turbulence, offering optimal ambush spots for snook. A more obvious element to keep an eye out for is bait. Shrimp, unlike mullet, rarely jump from the water without being spooked or pursued. In an ideal looking area keying in on a flicking shrimp is a great way to capitalize on the active fish in the area. It's not uncommon that after thoroughly fishing a shoreline, a frantic shrimp narrowly escapes the audible suction of a snook's chomp where you had cast moments ago. Getting a bait in there quickly is almost a guaranteed bite.

For those keen to fry up some snook nuggets, keep in mind snook season is closed in the Atlantic region Dec. 15 –

Jan. 31 and again during June 1- Aug. 31. Only one fish may be kept per snook-permit-wielding harvester, per day according to the current FWC regulations, and that specimen must fall between the 28" - 32" slot.

Shallow water snook fishing is an exciting new aspect of Mosquito Lagoon yet only a small component of what this body of water offers. Extra large trout, exceptional sight fishing for redfish, dock-light fishing and more is all on the table here. Being prepared for it all is the best way to capitalize when fishing Florida's "miniature ocean." **FS**

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