

# Alabama Coastal Fisherman's Association



## April 2009

**Next meeting:** April 2<sup>nd</sup>  
**Time:** 7:00 p.m.  
**Speaker:** Bobby Abruscato  
 "Spring Trout Tactics"  
**Quick Hits:** D. W. Garretson  
**Mini-seminar:** TBA-watch the Web Forum for an announcement  
**Next tournament:** April 4<sup>th</sup>, American Legion Post 250

## Club Officers for 2009

President:	Vince Hawkins	452-3899
Vice Pres:	Jimmy Quint	377-4879
Treasurer:	Chris Conken	209-2726
Secretary:	Vicki Foster	621-9113
Statistics:	Joe Sirmon	605-5811
Membership:	Mike Lee	665-4449
Weighmaster:	Pat Hughes	422-6992
Donations:	Alvin Bell	455-5739
Logo Items:	Justin Peacock	550-7532
Awards:	Bryan Hack	510-4196
Food:	Brenda Wilson	367-3499
Newsletter:	Jason Miller	490-3221
Webmaster:	Brandon Milam	680-1302
Advisor:	Mike Thompson	

### President's Message

Our first tournament is behind us and look forward to the rest of the year's events. Terrible forecasts gave way to a nice day, other than the wind and a wet weigh in. The food was excellent and there was a fine showing by the JR anglers and I hope this continues. I encourage everyone to take a child every chance they get! We have a full schedule for the April meeting and look forward to seeing everyone. We will try to start having name tags at the weigh-in's to assist in meeting new people. Special thanks to all members that assisted with prizes for the March meeting and donations are always welcome.

### March meeting recap

A healthy crowd enjoyed the March 2009 ACFA meeting. Club members Pete Burns and Marc Kruse kicked things off with the Mini-Seminar at 6 p.m. Burns and Kruse have many, many, decades of combined experience on the water and had many useful tips to share. Bill Midgette handled the "Quick Hits" and showed the crowd many homemade gadgets he has developed to help anglers concentrate on fishing while in their boats on the water instead of concentrating on such distractions as "where the \$#%^ did I put my fishing pliers?" Robbie Loper from Middle Bay Marine was the featured speaker and, as always, had a lot of useful information regarding keeping your outboard and other mechanical systems working in peak condition.



**Frank Mitternight displays the winning 5.9 lb trout for the 2009 March Madness Tournament.** When pressed for details, he reluctantly revealed he caught the big trout at Municipal Park on a hotdog weenie.

### In this issue:

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## March Madness tournament results

In spite of a gloomy forecast, the rain held off for most of the days leaving anglers with just a “little breeze” to contend with while trying to win a coveted ACFA plaque and tournament points. At least 46 anglers braved the conditions to fish. All of those club members, as well as many more who didn’t have fish to weigh, didn’t let a little rain stop them from enjoying the camaraderie, fish stories, and great food on the covered porch at the weigh-in site. We encourage all club members, even if they don’t have fish to weigh, or even if they didn’t have a chance to wet a line that day, to come out to tournament weigh-ins to enjoy the fellowship this club has to offer.

### Speckled Trout

1. Frank Mitternacht	5.90 LBS
2. Kyle Woodhum(J)(N)	5.20
3. Gary Tingle	4.80
4. Doug Houston	4.65
5. Ted Lawson	3.90

### Junior Speckled Trout

1. Theo Koulianos	1.35 LBS
2. Austin Lee	1.30

### Sheephead

1. Chris Nelson(J)(N)	5.70 LBS
2. Bryann Nelson(J)(N)	5.50
3. Bryan Nelson(N)	5.40
4. Dane Tomberlin	4.30
5. Patric Garmeson	3.85

### Junior Sheephead

1. Lindsey Hawkins	3.65 LBS
2. Jackson Hughes	3.00
3. Austin Lee	3.15

### White Trout

1. Vickie Foster(L)	0.90 LBS
2. George Koulianos	0.80
3. Phillip Guy	0.75
4. Les Smith	0.65
5. Donnie Howell	0.65

### Ground Mullet

1. Dane Tomberlin	1.95 LBS
2. Bryann Sullivan(J)(N)	1.05
3. Les Smith	0.65
4. David Thornton	0.70
5. Adam Barker	0.60

J= Junior angler  
N= New member  
L= Lady angler

## Last chance-dues reminder

If you haven’t yet renewed your dues by the mailing date of this newsletter, your name will be purged from the membership role for 2009. If you haven’t yet done so, please fill out the Membership Application (enclosed in the February newsletter, or available on the club website: [http://www.acfafish.com/cms/ACFA\\_Membership\\_Form.pdf](http://www.acfafish.com/cms/ACFA_Membership_Form.pdf)) and send it along with your check to: Mike Lee 4451 Nicholl Dr. Mobile Alabama 36619. You can also renew at the meeting, but we prefer that you please mail in your dues to help the meeting run smoothly..

## April tournament “Spring Breakout”-April 4th

April 4<sup>th</sup> is the date for the next ACFA Tournament -“Spring Breakout” Speckled Trout, Flounder, Sheepshead, and Ground Mullet are the categories. Plaques for 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> will also be given for Pompano, but Pompano do not count toward tournament point standings. The weigh-in is at the usual spot at American Legion Post 250 on D.I.P (Ala. Hwy 193) just north of Fowl River. If you are headed south its just past the Family Dollar, on the right side of the road, which is just past the Greer’s Food Tiger, and the blinking yellow light at the intersection with Fowl River Road. The USCG Auxiliary will be present at the weigh-in to perform courtesy Vessel Safety Checks of your boat. The inspection is voluntary, and will reveal any Coast Guard safety regulations you may be inadvertently violating. Having your vessel checked not only makes sure you and your loved ones are safe on the water, it may also allow you to avoid any costly citations later should you get inspected outside the “courtesy” context. Coast Guard Auxiliary Members Bill Lauber and Ken MacRae will also be at the April 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting to answer any questions you may have regarding Coast Guard requirements, or other safety related questions.

## Rules Clarification

Participation points will only be given to species that are a tournament category for the tournament in which the fish is being weighed. For example, in the April tournament, only Speckled Trout, Flounder, Sheepshead, and Ground Mullet will receive participation points. Fish of any Bigfish category may be weighed-in at that tournament to receive Bigfish credit, but fish that are not in a tournament category will not receive a Participation Point.

## ACFA’ers in other tournaments

On March 21<sup>st</sup>, the third installment of the GCAA redfish tournament series was held in Hopedale, LA. Two teams with ACFA members managed to finish in the money. Club member Erik Nelson, and partner Mark Wright finished in 2<sup>nd</sup> place with 14.3 lbs. Club member Paul Smith, with partner Mike Daves finished 3<sup>rd</sup> with 14.03 lbs. Three tournaments into the seven tournament series, seven of the top 10 teams in the point standings consist at least partly of current or former ACFA members. That is not too shabby, especially when considering these anglers have been fishing two states away from home against mostly local competition.

As the summer tournament season gets started, be sure to let the Newsletter Editor know of any club members that do well in any of the local or regional tournaments.

## Outdoor News

### Coast Watch Seminars

Ever seen a gillnet you thought might be in violation of the law, but weren't sure; or been disgusted by the sight of a recreational angler keeping undersized trout, but didn't know what to do about it? The CCA, in partnership with the Alabama Marine Resources Division, will be sponsoring a series of "Coast Watch" Seminars this Spring and Summer. "Coast Watch" is a community watch program of sorts on the water. The seminar teaches attendees how to spot and report fishing regulations violations. The program is useful to the Marine Resources Division because it multiplies the number of eyes on the water, and helps eliminate enforcement officers wasting valuable time with invalid reports of violations. When a call is received from a person who has attended a Coast Watch seminar, Marine Resources knows they can place far more credence in that report. Such reports may result in officers catching violators, or at the least, allow them to plan their patrol patterns to more effectively enforce fishery regulations. The seminars only take a few hours, and speaking from personal experience, are a worthwhile investment of your time. I have taken a fishing trip that didn't result in any fish caught by me, but the AMRD did catch an illegal, unattended gillnet that day thanks to a call made by me, and I can tell you that was one of the most rewarding fishing trips I went on that year. The seminar is free and open to the public. The schedule is as follows:

April 9<sup>th</sup>

Location: Guy Harvey's Island Grill-Sportsman's Lounge, The Wharf, Orange Beach, AL

Time: 6:30-800

May 14<sup>th</sup>

Location: The Original Oyster House on the Causeway-Delta Room

Time: 6:30-800

September 17<sup>th</sup>

Bass Pro Shops, Upper Level Meeting Room, Spanish Fort, AL

Time: 6:30-800

A 4<sup>th</sup> Coast Watch Seminar to occur in Mobile is being planned.

### Jemison's to close forever?

The Mobile County Commission is planning on canceling Jemison's Bait Shop's lease, and building a park at that location. A local landmark, important resource for the fishing community, and source of county sales tax dollars will be lost forever. One might question the value of a park on a strip of land just wide enough to hold a baitshop and a small parking lot, when compared with the benefit Jemison's has provided to the local angling community for years, particularly when there is apparently another public park within a few hundred yards of Jemison's that rarely, if ever, gets used. At one time or another, probably just about every local fisherman has stopped at Jemison's to obtain ice, bait, and other provisions on the way to Dauphin Island. Local, homegrown bait shops provide a valuable service, and are a dying breed. It would be a shame to lose one that has served the fishing community for decades for what may turn out to be a waste of tax dollars. Feel free to share your thoughts about it to the Mobile County Commissioners, particularly if you live in (and are a voter in) Commissioner Mike Dean's District, where Jemison's is located. Contact information is:

Mailing address: 205 Government Street, Mobile, AL 36644

District 3: Mike Dean (251) 574-3000

E-mail: [district3web@mobile-county.net](mailto:district3web@mobile-county.net)

District 2: Steve Nodine (251) 574-2000

E-mail: [district2web@mobile-county.net](mailto:district2web@mobile-county.net)

District 1: Merceria Ludgood (251) 574-1000

E-mail: [district1web@mobile-county.net](mailto:district1web@mobile-county.net)

### Redfish Club Challenge\*

In 2007, the Down Da Bayou Redfish Club, a Louisiana redfishing club, and the ACFA participated in a friendly club challenge to see which club could prevail in the 2 slot redfish catch and release tournament format. The tournament was held in Hopedale, LA, and ACFA pulled off the upset on the home state waters of DDBRC. A rematch was demanded, and a second club challenge occurred in 2008 in Hopedale. DDBRC was out for blood, and pulled off a slim victory, with roughly twice as many DDBRC boats fishing as the ACFA. This year the rubber match has been set for May 16<sup>th</sup>, again in Hopedale. If you would like to participate, or think you might, contact club member Bernie White ("Bernie" on the ACFA webforum), or any of the other redfish tournament regulars in the club, for more details.

\*The club challenge is not an official ACFA tournament.

## 2009 Tournament Point Standings

**9 pts-** Bryann Nelson (J);

**8 pts-** Dane Tomberlin;

**6 pts-** Chris Nelson(J), Frank Mitternight, Vicki Foster(L);

**5 pts-** George Koulianos, Kyle Woodham (J);

**4 pts-** Bryan Sullivan, Gary Tingle, Phillip Guy, Chase Maxwell (J)(N);

**3 pts-** David Thornton, Doug Houston, Les Smith;

**2 pts-** Adam Barker, Donnie Howell, Patric Garmeson, Ted Lawson;

**1pt-** Alvin Bell, Austin Lee (J), Billy Hurd, Bubba Williams, Bud Barr, Dave Growder, Donald Garrettson, Donna Schantz (L), Donna Schantz (L), Doug Tierce, George Harrison, Greg Walker (N), Jackson Hughes (J), Jim Foster, Jimbo Miller, Larry Watkins, Lindsey Hawkins (J), Mike Foster, O.P. Harrison, Ronnie Dyson, Theo Koulianos (J), Tim Pierce, Tom Duncan, Tommy Pond, Tracy Ainsworth (N), Vince Hawkins.

## 2009 Bigfish Standings

	Blackfish	Wt	Flounder	Wt	Ground Mullet	Wt	Redfish	Wt
1 <sup>st</sup>					Dane Tomberlin	1.95	Luke Flenikan(N)	6.50
2 <sup>nd</sup>					Bryann Sullivan (J)	1.05	Dane Tomberlin	5.20
3 <sup>rd</sup>							Theo Koulianos(J)	5.10
4 <sup>th</sup>								
5 <sup>th</sup>								
	Sheephead	Wt	Spanish Mackerel	Wt	White Trout	Wt	Speckled Trout	Wt
1 <sup>st</sup>					O.P. Harrison	2.29		
2 <sup>nd</sup>								
3 <sup>rd</sup>								
4 <sup>th</sup>								
5 <sup>th</sup>								

**CPR Speckled Trout:** 1<sup>st</sup> -Jim Foster 28.25", 2<sup>nd</sup>-Patric Garmeson-25.5", 3<sup>rd</sup>-Jim Foster-24.25"

### B-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a!!!! Its Sheephead season!

When the Dogwoods are blooming, the Sheephead are biting, or at least according to local fishing lore. Every Spring, particularly in April and March, Sheephead school up in large numbers on Bay, and near coastal gas rigs, and any other structure such as bridge pilings, reefs, and rockpiles for their annual spawn. With the smell of love in the air- erh-water, the normally crafty bait stealers get stupid, and much easier to catch. A live shrimp on a sturdy 1/0 or 2/0 live bait hook, on a Carolina rig, presented vertically near such structure is almost a sure bet. Its so simple-a caveman could do it! Try varying your depth until you find where the fish are holding. Also try using a fluorocarbon leader. If you are wondering whether it makes a difference and is worth the extra cost-YES. Also, if you are lucky enough to be able to obtain fiddler crabs, or hermit crabs (extracted from the shell), be sure to keep a firm grip on your rod.

Sheephead aren't marketed in some places as "bay snapper" for nothing. Their meat is white, flaky, and delicious; it just isn't easy to get to. Sheephead are built like tanks with thick skin and scales, and tough rib bones. Try filleting around the rib bones, instead of through them, and it is worth the effort. The spawning Sheephead tend to be of healthy size, and put up a very respectable fight. Sheephead fishing this time of year is a great way to spend the day with kids, or less experienced anglers.

Sheephead are members of the porgy family. It is a wonder that they are harder to catch at other times of the year because studies have shown them to be garbage guts that eat just about everything. It is well known that they have an affinity for crabs, and other crustaceans, but studies of Sheephead have revealed that Sheephead also eat barnacles, clams, mussels, worms, sponges, and finfish. In fact, larger Sheephead have been shown to eat quite a bit of finfish. At least one club member can attest to this by the fact that he caught a double digit Sheephead on a Mirrolure intended for trout. Perhaps the most surprising fact about the Sheephead menu is that they also eat a large amount of algae and plants. A Louisiana study showed that Lake Ponchartrain Sheephead rely on plants for more that 50% of their diet. Sheephead spawn after they reach 2 years of age, and a size of 1 ½ to 1 ¾ pounds. The current world record was caught in 1982 in Louisiana and weighed 21 lbs 4 ounces. Sheephead can live for over a decade.

There are no size and creel limits on Sheephead in Alabama waters, and there is an unregulated commercial fishery as well. When you are taking advantage of the Spring Sheephead bounty, please remember that the best conservation practice is to take what you can eat for a few meals, and perhaps share with some friends, and let the rest go. Sheephead are particularly vulnerable to over exploitation when they are bunched up and stupid, and after cleaning a handful, you will likely wish you would have let the rest go instead of having to clean that many anyway.



Club member Pete Burns puts the heat on a Sheephead at a near shore gas rig on a gorgeous April Saturday.



Wimpy live bait hooks are no match for the shell crushing dental work of a sizable sheepee. (Photos courtesy of me)

#### Reminders

- \*2009 dues are due. Pay now or you will soon be a “former” member.
- \*2009 Big Fish Contest is now running until Nov 14, 2009. Our Statistician MUST receive cards within 30 days of catch.
- \*Fill out and send Bigfish cards to: Joe Sirmon 3831 BEBEE POINT DRIVE THEODORE, AL 36582 (605-5811)
- \*Please remember, NO SMOKING in the meeting room. Thanks for helping to make a healthier family environment.
- \* PLEASE be respectful of our speakers (and members who want to hear them) by refraining from any unnecessary talking or moving about during the presentations. And we ask that you save your questions until the end of their talk.
- \*Justin Peacock, Logo Items Chairman, will be selling the usual assortment of ACFA shirts, hats, fish towels, etc. at every meeting.
- \* Meeting check-in-Those that attend and check in to at least 8 of our 10 regular club meetings will be eligible for our 2009 Grand Attendance Prize Package. Be sure to see Mike Lee at the sign-in table and please wear a name tag.
- \*Donations are constantly needed for our monthly door prizes and for the 2009 Grand Attendance Prize Package. Please see Alvin Bell if you would like to contribute, or have any leads on possible donation sources.
- \*Remember to suggest ACFA to your fishing friends and acquaintances. The member who sponsors the most new memberships will automatically win a free dinner for two and receive the Membership Sponsor Award for 2009.
- \*Please support our sponsors. ACFA sponsors include: Academy Sports + Outdoors, A-Team Fishing Adventures Canvas Products, Great Days Outdoors Magazine, L&S Bait Company/ MirrOlure, Mo Fishin Bait & Tackle, Saucy Q Bar B Q Southern Bama Bait & Tackle, and West Marine.

#### Corrections

- \*The February 2009 newsletter incorrectly referred to the October ACFA Tournament as the “Causeway Classic.” The October tournament was renamed the “Fall Out” Tournament when a November tournament was added to the ACFA tournament slate. The November tournament is now the “Mutt Burke Causeway Classic.”

**Check Us Out Online @ <http://www.acfafish.com/>**

ACFA---We catch fish---Get the net!!!

\*\*\*Under no circumstances will the Alabama Coastal Fisherman’s Association (ACFA) be responsible for the welfare of any members, guests or equipment while attending meetings or engaging in ACFA tournaments or the challenge.\*\*\*