

GAME-ON CHARTERS

Captain Steve Fleming

“GET YOUR MOJO ON”

STOP FISHING “SPOTS”, AND START READING THE WATER



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Have you ever wondered how successful tournament anglers can go into an unfamiliar area for the first time, and continuously place high in tournaments? If you're one of those anglers that has their own lucky honey hole, have you ever wondered why they may occasionally let you down?

Time and time again, I see anglers heading out to their lucky honey hole anticipating bagging their limits, and soon after they arrive they find their lucky honey hole isn't too lucky today, or someone else has beat you to it. Captain Steve will discuss a few of the reasons behind this, and what you can do to help increase your chances of bagging your limits every time out on the water.

Most anglers who spend any amount of time on the water will have their “GO-TO SPOT”, or “Honey Hole” that consistently produce fish. But, anglers who are consistently successful will understand when they need to head to that honey hole, and when not to waste their time going to it.

As a professional guide and tournament angler, when I'm on fish, I am constantly asking myself; “Why is this particular area holding fish”.

Rarely do fish just stack up in an area for no reason. Something about the area is consistently drawing fish to it, and causing them to stay. Typically, the area will continue to hold fish until one or more of the factors that

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drew them to the area changes. Below are a few tips to consider when asking yourself Why an area is holding fish.

Structure – Most game fish are predators, and utilize structure to ambush their prey. Structure can be a subtle change in depth or contour, debris such as a piling lying in the water, grass, subtle change in the shoreline such as a small trenasse or bayou. Identify what is unique about the structure and store that in your mental notes.

Tide – Tides are driven by the gravitational force of the moon and sun. They are characterized by water moving up and down over a long period of time. In addition, there are “Low” tides, “Low-Low” Tides, “Mean” Tide, “High” Tides, and “High-High” Tides. Most people are only concerned with incoming and outgoing Tides. But the fact is, the amount of water associated with an incoming or outgoing tide can substantially influence where fish stack up. Some areas attract and hold fish on an incoming tide High-High Tide, and others on an outgoing Mean Tide. This is one of the most important factors to identify when catching fish in any area. If the water is exceptionally high, and falling out of the marsh, an angler should take mental note of High-High, falling tide.

Current – Tides create a current in the oceans, near the shore, and in bays and estuaries along the coast. These are called “tidal currents”. Tidal currents are the only type of currents that change in a very regular pattern and can be predicted for future dates. From my experience, current is one of the most critical factors to a successful fishing trip in the shallow water marsh and inland bays. Current is the mover and shaker in fish environments, and fish tend to actively feed when the current is moving. If the current is “Slack”, and not moving, we are between tides and fish tend to stop feeding. A tell-tell sign to identify current is to look for crab trap buoys. The current will push the buoy in the direction of flow, indicating the direction and strength of the current. Take note of this information.

Wind – Wind is another critical factor to a successful angler. In many situations, you may not be able to fish that favorite honey hole due to strong winds. In addition, wind direction can have a major impact on water clarity, and tide. Taking the wind into consideration, plan to fish areas on the leeward shorelines and areas where the wind doesn’t impact water clarity and tide. Situations with No wind, and no current, result in very difficult fishing conditions. Know before you go, and it will save you some time and money in fuel.

Once you understand why an area holds fish, any angler should be able to duplicate the scenarios of their favorite honey hole in any bay system under any wind conditions. You may not be able to align the stars with it, but you can increase your opportunities for success by reading the water and understanding why fish are holding in a given area.

Until next time, “Get Your Mojo On” and Tight Lines

Captain Steve Fleming

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