

I'm currently working on a book to be called ***Productive Patterns and Places*** and hope to be finished within the next month or six weeks. In the text, I describe many of the favorite places I've fished, from Sabine Lake to the Lower Laguna Madre, and I explain the patterns I've found productive in those places. A Google Earth image will be included at the beginning of each chapter, showing one of the places in it.

Tentatively, I plan to include chapters on Windward Shorelines, Leeward Shorelines for both cold and warm weather, Lakes and Coves, Reefs, Open-water Humps, Dead-end Guts and Channels, Ship Channel Spoils, ICW Spoils and Mid-Bay Boat-fishing areas.

The quoted text below is an excerpt from the chapter on Leeward Shorelines for Warm Weather. It's a draft, albeit a somewhat highly-polished one.

I may provide a button for purchasing the book on this website. If I don't, it will definitely be available for credit-card purchase on fishbaffinbay.com. When it's finished, I'll announce the availability of the book here in a blog, and will also likely include a feature article in TSF Magazine to do so. As of now, you, the viewers of this web page, have access to the one and only preview!

"Several specific conditional variables must be in place to maximize the potential in the last warm-weather leeward shoreline to be described. Along the south shoreline of Sabine Lake, from Blue Buck Point to Madame Johnson Bayou, those variables differ from the ones conducive to catching in The Bolivar Flats.

For one thing, the optimal direction of the wind is different; the shoreline is aligned much the same way as the one in Aransas Bay, so southeast winds blow directly offshore. The water in Sabine Lake is normally murkier than in Aransas Bay, since the bottom is much muddier, and the small estuary is fed by two big rivers, the mouths of which lie only a few miles north of this shoreline.

Consequently, winds in excess of about 15 mph will make a turbid mess of the water, except when those winds are blowing straight off the bank. Of course, the salinity of the water is an issue too, just as it is anywhere in Sabine Lake. If overall salinities in the lake are relatively high, many of the fish will often be found further north, closer to the river mouths.

Conversely, plenty of freshwater flowing into the north end drives salinities down, often concentrating fish in this part of Sabine Lake. In the most extreme cases, the entire body of water can become too fresh for trout and even redfish, but in most cases, areas in its south end will remain salty enough to hold fish.

I've made some impressive catches along this shoreline when the north end of the lake was cluttered with floating hyacinths, buoyed by raging river currents. The fishing is best along this bank from about the middle of autumn through winter and into the middle of spring. During these times, warming weather and onshore winds enhance the potential for catching.

Tide movement is critical, like it is everywhere on the Upper Coast of Texas. Either kind of movement will improve the catching, though not in exactly the same types of spots. Trout and redfish often set up in the ripples in front of the mouths of bayous along this shoreline on outgoing tides. They won't necessarily bunch together so tightly when the tide is coming in, preferring instead to roam about in search of prey.

Wading is my preferred method in this place, regardless of the tidal condition. In some areas, the bottom is firm and conducive to wading. In other stretches, most notably in front of the stands of tall canes, it can be more like quicksand. The transition from firm to treacherous often occurs within two steps, so all waders should be wary. It's wise to carry a probe and test the bottom thoroughly before getting out of the boat, and once in the water, to proceed slowly, with extreme caution.

Notably, I've found some good concentrations of big trout lying along these "seams", where the bottom transitions from sand over to silty muck. I've also made good catches standing on the edges of firm parts and casting into areas where wading isn't possible, focusing on moving my lures close by the mouths of tiny, muddy cuts and drains.

I like to use noisy, full-sized topwaters in Sabine, either dark or shiny ones, depending on the sky and clarity of the water. I also like sinking Corkies, though louder, flashier twitch baits like Catch 2000s and Catch 5s can be better when the water clarity deteriorates into the marginal range. Smelly soft plastics can work well too, particularly those having sharp lines between

contrasting light and dark colors on them.

Staying close to the bank is often the only option when wading, as the deep water sweeps in close to shore in many places. Many big trout are caught within mere feet of the grass and canes at times, out at the ends of casts at others. I won't pretend to have experience fishing from the boat along this shoreline, though I've observed others doing it productively, mostly by working soft plastics and large topwaters around schools of bait fish like shad and mullet.

One of my most excruciating fishing memories occurred on part of this shoreline. I and three partners had caught about 30 trout the previous day, including 10 between 25 and 27 inches, all on full-sized Super Spooks. The next day, I returned with another buddy in his boat and met up with three others in a separate craft. We parked our vessels close to the shore at Garrison Ridge and jumped out into a hot bite. I caught three trout between 23 and 26 inches in the first 20 minutes, but my stomach started churning and hurting so badly I couldn't continue to fish.

Turns out my appendix was near the point of exploding; it was surgically removed a few hours later. While I lay writhing and puking on the shell-strewn shore, wishing I could muster the strength to rise and join them, my 4 friends caught well over 100 trout, at least half of which measured 25 inches or longer. Several in the 28 inch class, weighing 8 pounds or more, came to hand, to be photographed, admired and released.

Needless to say, it was difficult to be suspended in such agony while my chums hooted and hollered, laughing and snapping pictures to document the events of the day. They all thought I was hung over and made fun of me for not participating!

I do have other memories of excellent catches made along this shoreline, though none matches the magnitude of the one those guys made. Significantly, the banner day occurred shortly before Christmas in the year 2000, during a warm, windy spell, when moderately strong, onshore winds and 80 degree air temperatures drove water temperatures into the low 70s in the shallows of this muddy, brackish bay. Such conditions can be conducive to stupid-easy catching when freshwater runoff forces so many fat trout into this corner, to the western edge of a state appropriately known as 'the sportsman's paradise'."