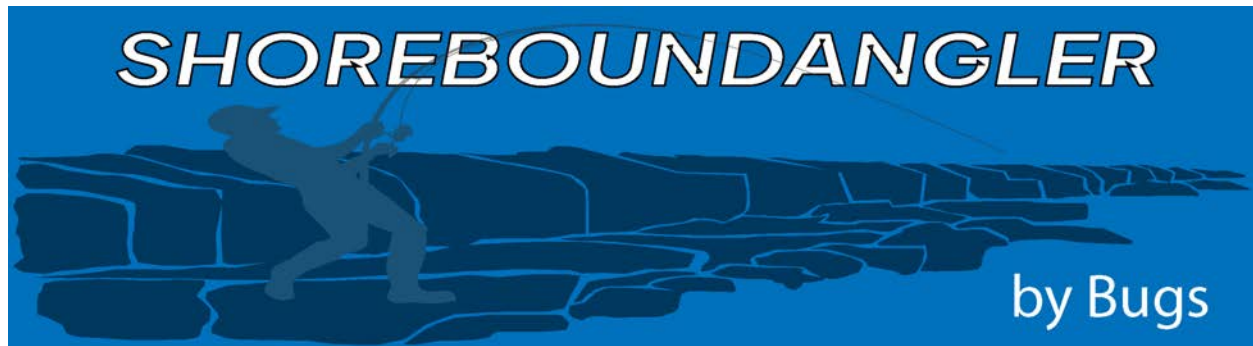




11.4.25

It's been a while since I last fished the Packery Channel jetty. I spend so much time staring at the Packerysurfcam that I usually end up surfing instead of fishing! We had a little flat spell the last few days, so I decided to hit the rocks the last hours before sunset this Tuesday afternoon.

I got to the south jetty around 3:30 pm. After loading up my jetty cart with 3 rods, tackle box, ice chest (with a couple beers!), bait bucket and cast net, I made my way out on the jetty to my new favorite spot to catch bait.

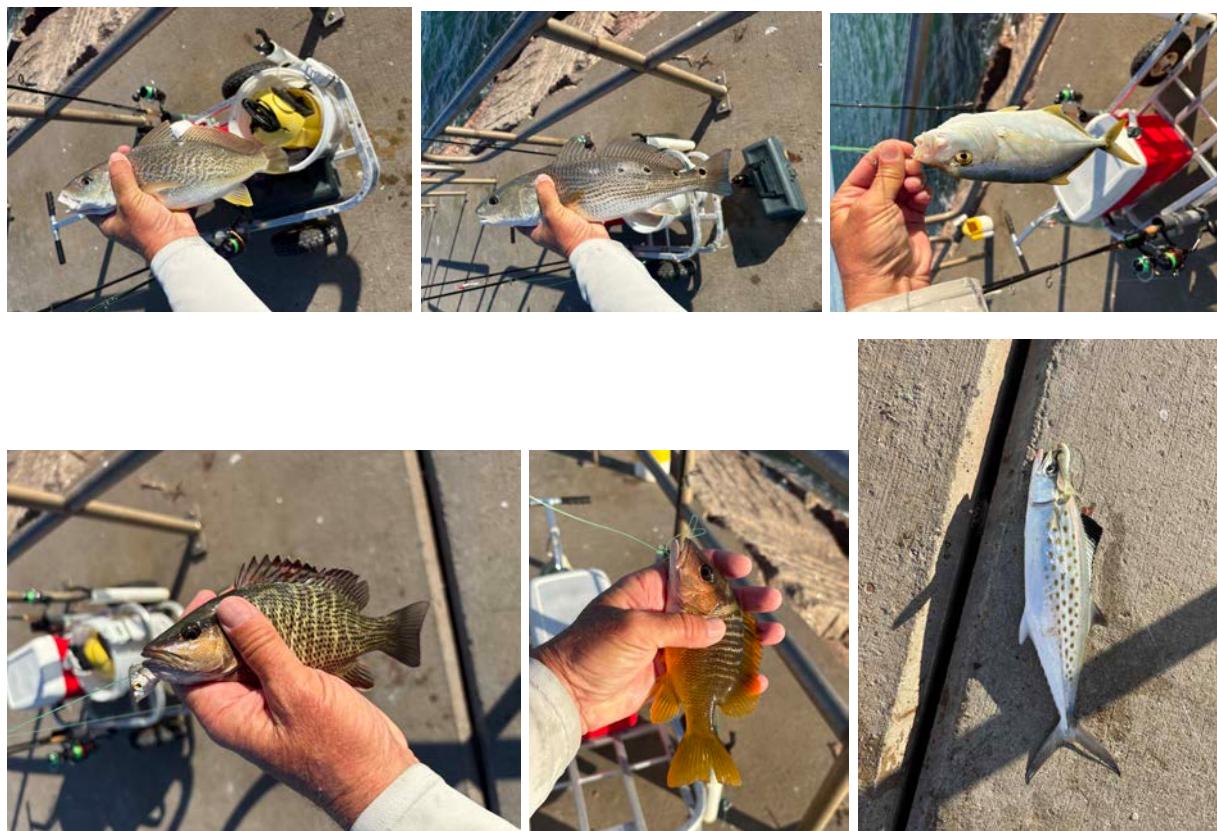
There's a little dip in the jetty rocks about a third of the way out on the channel side. At low tide, the submerged rocks adjacent to the jetty here always have at least a little water covering them. I like this because my bait catching tactic is to make blind throws with my cast net on top of the submerged rocks, targeting small baits like mojarra, scaled sardines, or thumb sized finger mullet. Today the tide was high, but I still threw my net in the dip and got a good mix of small baits.



I made my way out to the rock pile to try and catch mangrove snapper. If you don't know, there's a big pile of limestone boulders right next to the jetty rocks about halfway out on the surf side. The boulders fell off a barge that crashed on the rocks a couple of summers ago. They removed the barge, but some rocks remain, forming a mini reef of sorts that always seems to hold fish.

Using a bottom finder rig with a 1 oz weight and a 1 ought hook, I put a small live bait out on bottom on the inside edge of the rockpile. I got bit immediately! It felt like a snapper, bulldogging away from the jetty and taking a little drag. When I swung the fish up on the rocks I first thought it was a rat red. Noticing that it didn't have a spot, I realized it was an Atlantic Croaker! This one qualified as a "Golden Croaker" due to its size. It taped 12.5" and went straight into the box. Per my unwritten rule where I drink a beer after boxing my first fish, I pulled a Red Stripe beer out of the cooler and cracked it. Ya mon!

I continued fishing the same spot in the same fashion and caught a variety of fish. I got several small redfish. I caught and boxed a hardtail (blue runner). I finally caught a mangrove but it was tiny. Then I caught a small snapper that I first thought was another mangrove. It was brightly colored and mostly orange. It had a very distinct bluish stripe on its cheek. It was a Schoolmaster snapper. It was my first one ever, and as such, it was also a PB!



While admiring the Schoolmaster and snapping a picture, my buddy Bob who was throwing a lure on the channel side right behind me landed a Spanish Mackerel. He asked if I wanted it so I unhooked it for him and put it in the box. Out came the second Red Stripe!

I ran out of my smaller baits. I briefly tried a mullet with no luck. I had some frozen shrimp and tried fishing it out in the surf away from the rocks. It was immediate machine gun piggy. After losing about half my shrimp, I decided to make my way back toward the beach and fish the surf, hoping for another croaker. The plan worked out nicely. I caught and boxed 2 more croaker, both a bit smaller than the first one.

By now the sun had set and a huge full moon had risen over the eastern horizon. This was my sign to call it a day. This was a super fun outing and I had a nice box of fish to show for it.

