



## Newsletter for the south Florida canal and urban pond angler

*Our Purpose: To identify excellent south Florida freshwater fishing opportunities and to provide urban anglers with relevant information that will enhance the quality of their outdoor experience.*

### A bevy of bream

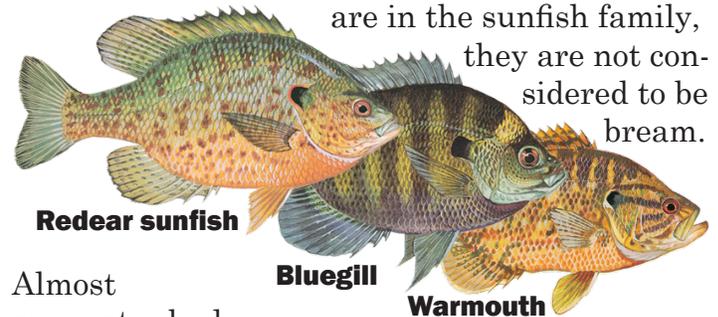
*By Bob Wattendorf*

Most anglers start fishing in fresh water, often from a bank or pier, and their first catch is usually a bream. The image of a boy and his dog, with a cane pole and a can of worms, brings to life a symbol of the American tradition of fishing and stresses the ideal of youth connecting with nature and learning independence. Just think—it all began with that first bream.

Florida’s 7,700 named lakes and ponds and 10,500 miles of streams and rivers, brim

with bream. “Bream” is a local term used throughout the Southeast and includes various deep-bodied panfish from the sunfish family.

The most common are bluegill, redear sunfish (shellcracker), spotted sunfish (stump-knocker), and warmouth. Although black bass are in the sunfish family, they are not considered to be bream.



Almost any water body in the Sunshine State, regardless of size or locale, contains hungry bream.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) anticipates that good year classes of sunfish produced in 2004 and 2005 will maintain the fisheries in 2008 in southern Florida. Shellcracker often spawn during March or early April, and will bed well into August. Bluegill will begin bedding about a month after shellcracker (April or May), periodically spawning throughout the summer and even as late as November in south Florida. Bedding bream will usually be found in water depths ranging from 3 to 10 feet.

Bluegill are easily the most popular “bream” in Florida because of their abundance and availability, although the equally tasty and somewhat larger shellcracker appeal to

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**Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission**

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many anglers. Found in lakes, streams, rivers, ponds, and canals, bluegill are caught on a wide variety of live offerings including earthworms, crickets, and grass shrimp. Anglers who use spinning gear won't go wrong when tossing or trolling tiny beetle spins. Fly rod buffs particularly enjoy this little scrapper because of its eagerness to clobber both popping bugs and sinking flies.

Ounce-for-ounce, the abundant bluegill is a strong battler when not over-tackled. Those caught will range from an average of 6-8 ounces to an occasional 1-pounder. Florida's record bluegill scaled 2.95 pounds.

"Shellcracker" is the locally popular name for the redear sunfish, the Sunshine State's largest "bream," which is easily identified by the red margin at the edge of its gill flap. The average size for redear sunfish is about 10-12 ounces, but 1-pound fish are frequently caught on spawning beds. Florida's record is 4.86 pounds. Favored live baits include snails, mussels, earthworms, crickets, and grass shrimp. Redear are seldom caught on artificial lures, but fly-rodders can occasionally connect with this hard fighter by casting popping bugs with a small sinking fly tied to an 18-inch light monofilament dropper. Shellcracker usually hang around areas with hard, sandy bottoms or shell beds, but may also be targeted near grass patches, pads, reeds, snags, and stick-ups.

If panfishing is your passion, don't overlook Florida's many streams, rivers, and canals for more opportunities. These gems are teeming with spotted sunfish (stumpknocker) and warmouth. Although none of these fish grow to the proportions of their bluegill and redear cousins, they are worthy fighters for their size—and tasty, too. Spotted sunfish and warmouth will typically be found near woody structure, while redbreast sunfish favor vegetation such as lily pads or eel grass. Earthworms are the best live bait for this pair, but small spinners and popping bugs also work well.

The preceding article was excerpted from one of Bob Wattendorf's monthly **Fish Busters'** columns. He recently received the "Outdoor Ethics Communication Award" from the Izaak Walton League for an article on ethical fishing. For more of his writing, check out:

[MyFWC.com/Fishing/Updates](http://MyFWC.com/Fishing/Updates)

## Interview D.C. Bienvenue Kayak fishing guide



**Biography:** D.C. Bienvenue was born in Massachusetts and grew up fishing the mountain lakes and streams for trout, bass, and pike. After high school, D.C. graduated from the famed Johnson & Wales University's College of Culinary Arts. He built a reputation as an award-winning chef in the Northeast before moving to Sarasota, Florida. Here, D.C. Bienvenue rediscovered his love for fishing and the outdoors—and bought his first kayak. Within two years time, he left the world of Culinary Arts to establish his popular kayak fishing business.

**The City Fisher:** From chef to kayak fishing guide . . . how exactly did that come about?!

**D.C. Bienvenue:** Have you seen the weather and fishing in Florida? It wasn't a hard decision (laughing). Seriously though, being a guide was a lifelong dream and the circumstances were right.

**CF:** I know you occasionally make it to the east coast for some fishing, but where do you normally guide?

**DCB:** Typically I guide from southern Tampa down through Sarasota and into northern Charlotte Harbor. But my range extends as far north as Ocala and into Orlando, and south through the Everglades canals into Miami and

down through the Keys. Now that I fish for peacocks and exotics I spend as much time in Miami and the Everglades canal system as I do on the Gulf coast.

**CF:** As you've become more experienced with kayaks, what have you found are the advantages of these craft over conventional or larger boats?

**DCB:** I love the thrill of kayak fishing. To me there is something very primal about it which really appeals to me. You are not only fishing but stalking them as well. And you are so close to the action and your senses are so much more attuned to what is going on around you. It really is amazing what you notice from a kayak that you never did from a larger boat.

**CF:** Lack of fishing and boating access is an increasing problem in urban south Florida, and is one of the biggest issues identified by our stakeholders. How do you see kayaks addressing this continuing challenge?

**DCB:** I see kayaks as a huge benefit in this situation. They are light, portable, easily transportable, and inexpensive compared to traditional powerboats. Pretty much anywhere there is a few feet of access can serve as a launch for your kayak.

**CF:** What features would you recommend for a good, basic freshwater fishing kayak?

**DCB:** You are looking for a stable boat that tracks well and still retains a tight turn radius. If your fishing consists mostly in canals, rivers, and small lakes (as well as the Intracoastal or near-shore waters), then a boat between 12' and 14' will be more than adequate. I also recommend a sit-on-top model for ease of use and accessibility to stowed gear.

**CF:** Any other features or add-ons to look for?

**DCB:** By law you are required to have a type III or better PFD as well as a whistle or other manual noise making device. If night fishing you are required to have a single 360-degree white light. I also strongly recommend a first aid kit and a small compass. As far as rod storage I am a big fan of two flush mount rod holders behind the seat for ease of accessibility. Plus, you can't beat a really light paddle—your arms will thank you. The carbon fiber paddles are more costly but so worth it.

**CF:** Do you recommend “try before you buy”?

I've noticed that there are occasionally local “kayak expos” where you can do so.

**DCB:** Absolutely. You wouldn't buy a car without a test drive. Many shops offer free demo days and they are a great opportunity to not only try different makes and models but also ask questions too. I also recommend a basic paddling class for every new kayak angler.

**CF:** Now on to actual fishing . . . any particular tackle or techniques that are better suited for kayak angling in fresh water?

**DCB:** When fishing freshwater I stick to two tried-and-true methods that work well on both waters I have fished before and new waters. The first is slow-trolling along structure and open areas. The purpose of this method is to cover a lot of ground rather quickly searching for active fish. There are days when I will even troll the entire day because the bites are almost constant. Some days we can boat and release as many as 300 fish using this method. If I find a good concentration of schooling fish or large sized fish in a given area, I will then pull close to the dominant structure in the area and fish parallel along it, casting my baits and pulling them through the strike zone for as long as possible—using erratic movements of the bait—to trigger strikes. The stealth of the kayaks and the low profile they give off allows me to maneuver into the area without spooking fish, even in heavily fished areas.

**CF:** Although kayaks are among the easiest craft to transport, I'm sure you have some tips and recommendations . . .

**DCB:** There are so many ways to transport your kayak that I could spend a whole article talking about just this topic. The best recommendation I can make is to stop at your local kayak dealer and have them outfit you with a system that is right for your vehicle and for your kayak.

**CF:** What are your thoughts on the new “pedal kayaks”?

**DCB:** I have used them at different times and found them to be at once somewhat helpful but also a hindrance. While they do offer hands-free fishing, you lose some storage in the cockpit because of the pedal system and it's location. The systems are also prone to breaking due to the amount of torque produced by the pedals against the housing for the unit. But

I do know a lot of people who enjoy them and use them with success. So once again, I recommend try before you buy. Call me old fashioned or a traditionalist, but I will stick with the paddle kayaks.

**CF:** Finally, what do you enjoy most about your unique method of guiding?

**DCB:** Honestly, the coolest thing for me about being a guide is to help people have a memorable fishing experience, as well as bringing new people into the sport of kayak fishing. On top of that, just being able to make a living on the water and having a great tan are great job benefits.

**Sun Coast Kayak Fishing Tours** “exists to offer the ultimate light tackle, kayak sport fishing experience to anglers and paddlers of every age and skill level.” The website is located at:

[www.suncoastkayaksportfishing.com](http://www.suncoastkayaksportfishing.com)

(Appropriately enough, the site will soon feature a “recipes” page!) You can also call 941-809-2703 for additional information, or request a free guidebook (with information about charters and lodging) at:

[www.suncoastkayaksportfishing.com/  
CONTACT\\_INFO.html](http://www.suncoastkayaksportfishing.com/CONTACT_INFO.html)

For information on boating safety, whether in a kayak or an ocean sportfisher, check:

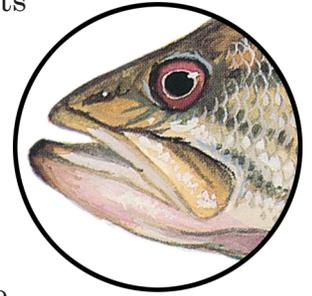
[myfwc.com/boating/safety/default.html](http://myfwc.com/boating/safety/default.html)

## **Fish biology: Open wide!**

Abraham Lincoln once stated, “It is better to keep one’s mouth shut and be thought a fool than to open it and resolve all doubt.” If you can tell something about a person by what comes out of their mouth, you can tell a lot about a fish by looking at the *shape* of its mouth. For the most part, this is determined by what a fish eats—which can also have other dramatic implications (see **Issue 17** for examples of how a fish’s diet can also relate to its body shape).

The largemouth bass (aka “bigmouth bass”) didn’t get its name for nuthin’. This ambush predator eats just about anything: fish, reptiles, amphibians, crustaceans, insects, and even birds! In order to effectively capture such

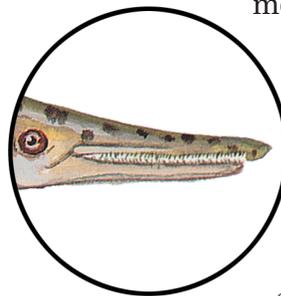
a wide variety of fast-moving prey, this fish’s “bucketmouth” is a great help. A bass will literally inhale its prey into its cavernous mouth, then expel the excess water. Its gill rakers allow water to pass through, but make sure that dinner stays put. The bass is definitely one fish whose dental gear tells a lot about its lifestyle.



(And the *smallmouth* bass, of course, is only so in comparison to its close relative.)

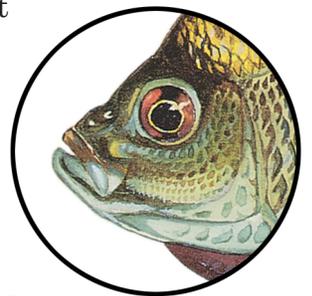
Gar and pickerel feed almost exclusively on fish. Their long, thin mouths present a streamlined frontal surface so that they can

move forward quickly and efficiently to run down their agile prey. Once they bite, they have mouths loaded with teeth to keep hold of a wriggling fish. If bass are buckets, these fish are spears. If you’d never



seen a gar before, you’d still be able to guess pretty easily that its mouth is designed to hang onto something fast that’s usually pretty good at getting away.

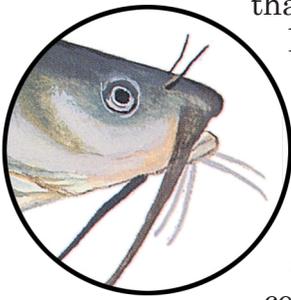
Bream have tiny, dainty mouths that are a pretty good match to the tiny critters they eat. Although they also eat a variety of prey like bass do (insects, crustaceans, worms, fish), the difference is that they don’t eat nearly as wide a variety of foods, and most of their prey is much smaller. A bluegill, for example, has an ideal body shape for making short dashes to nab grass shrimp or dragonfly larvae out of dense vegetation, and it doesn’t need a bigger mouth for grabbing such tiny morsels. A redear sunfish’s mouth is similarly



matched for such meals. The redear’s mouth also accommodates its habit of picking small clams and snails off the bottom, and in an even more advanced adaptation actually has hard crushing plates in the back of its mouth for breaking them open.

Catfish probably exhibit the greatest mouth specialization, not because they eat a very narrow range of foods (they don’t), but be-

cause of how highly adapted they are for finding it. Catfish are scavengers that have taste- and touch-sensitive barbels around their mouths



that help them to smell and locate any food in the immediate area. Commercial “stink baits” capitalize on this by having strong-smelling ingredients that will attract catfish. Going one step further, sensory

cells on catfish barbells practically allow them to taste their food, outside of their mouths, before they swallow it. The underside of a catfish’s mouth is flat, also allowing it to more easily feed along the bottom.

So the next time you see a fish, remember Abraham Lincoln’s advice. And take a close look at the fish’s mouth—you might learn something important!

### Photo Tournament still underway



There’s still time to enter the **City Fisher Photo Tournament!** The goal is to have fun and showcase the great freshwater fishing we enjoy in southeast

Florida. Send photos of any interesting catches, big or small. The tournament also emphasizes “first fish” and youth catches. Entries must be received by **February 28, 2009**. For details, go online to:

**[Floridafisheries.com/offices/cityfish/CITFISH34.pdf](http://Floridafisheries.com/offices/cityfish/CITFISH34.pdf)**

### Fishing forecast

#### October, November and December 2008

**Osborne Chain-of-Lakes (Palm Beach County):** Only small amounts of hydrilla remain in the system after efforts to control it this past spring. Eel grass is prevalent in the north lobe of Lake Osborne and should provide opportunities to target bluegill and bass near shore in these areas. Anglers have been catching lots of bluegill and numerous small bass along the shoreline edges. Grass shrimp, crickets, small jigs have been the preferred baits and the bluegill should continue to cooperate through October. Expect to take bass in the early morning with topwater lures and later in the day with plastic worms,

crank baits, and live shiners. As water temperatures begin to drop in late October, live shiners freelined in deep holes will be an excellent producer for sunshine bass as will fresh shrimp fished in areas such as the 6th avenue pass that funnel migrating fish. Black crappie anglers can expect more action as water temperatures start to decrease, particularly around fish attractors and other brush piles in late October or early November. Jigs and live minnows should be excellent producers. Nice size channel catfish can be caught using chicken liver or live worms. Warm days should continue to provide anglers with Peacock bass action as long as we avoid any sustained period of cold weather. Small shiners or lures retrieved fast will be the preferred presentation for Peacock bass. Mayan cichlid continue to be prominent in the lake and can be taken near shore next to the vegetation using grass shrimp, live worms, crickets, and small artificial lures such as beetle spins and jigs. They will become less prominent as water temperature drops below 70° F. — *by Ralph LaPrairie*

**Everglades Water Conservation Areas (Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade counties):** Water levels in the Water Conservation Areas (WCA’s) typically reach their highest during this quarter. This year should be no exception; heavy rains in late summer pushed water levels high enough to force the closure of several Everglades area Wildlife Management Areas: [http://myfwc.com/whatsnew/08/south/News\\_08\\_S\\_Storm\\_FayWMAs1.htm](http://myfwc.com/whatsnew/08/south/News_08_S_Storm_FayWMAs1.htm). The high water tends to disperse fish by giving them access to the extensive marsh areas. Some fish will, of course, remain in the canals, but anglers should not expect the same catch rates they enjoyed during the spring and early summer. This same high water allows anglers to utilize the numerous marsh access trails off Alligator Alley and the L-67A Canal to pursue bass in the marsh (“the flats”). Anglers will also be able to gain access to marsh fishing in areas of WCA 2, although no marsh access trails are maintained there. Anglers putting in the effort can be rewarded with good catches. Please remember that displaying a 10x12 inch orange flag 10 feet above the bottom of the hull is required for all vessels entering the marsh. Anglers seeking panfish should probe deeper pockets along the vegetated edges with crickets or worms, moving frequently until fish are located. Anglers preferring lures should make long casts with Beetle spins or tiny crankbaits parallel to shoreline vegetation. — *by Barron Moody*

**Metropolitan Miami Canals (Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade counties):**

**Miami-Dade County:** Alan Zaremba (954-961-0877) who guides for Butterfly Peacock in southeast Florida canals said this should be a great time for some good morning topwater bites. Butterfly Peacock can often be found schooling in the fall, and Zaremba suggests anglers watch for Butterfly Peacock breaking the surface then throw a Husky Jerk Bait, Heddon Torpedo, or small (3") floating, gold or silver Rapala for some fast action. In the afternoon or if you lose the school, Zaremba recommends switching to sub-surface lures such as Rapalas, Rat'l Traps, and Pro Traps for continued success.

Zaremba said fishing for Largemouth Bass should improve as the water temperature cools off. The same lures will catch Butterfly Peacock and Largemouth Bass and Zaremba suggests anglers cast a #9 or #11 Rapala right to the shoreline, twitch the lure, then stop, twitch, stop. If a Largemouth doesn't hit, then reel in quickly with some good rod action and a Butterfly Peacock may! Zaremba said Largemouth Bass anglers can't go wrong using a Bass Assassin, Flappin Shad, or Flukes in watermelon or salt and pepper. Live shiners are a top choice for Butterfly Peacock and Largemouth Bass no matter what time of year, especially for inexperienced anglers. Wigglers fished under a bobber are an excellent way to catch Bluegill, Redear Sunfish, Mayan Cichlid, and Oscar in urban Miami-Dade canals. Small Rapalas, Roostertails, and Beetle Spins are also effective lures for bream fishing. Zaremba suggests anglers try Black Creek (C-1), Cutler Drain (C-100), and Snake Creek (C-9) canals for some great fall angling opportunities.

**Broward County:** Bill Sears of Les Wills Bait and Tackle in Ft. Lauderdale (954-583-7302) said that cooling waters should improve the largemouth bass bite. Sears suggests trying Rapalas in gold/black or silver/black early in the morning. Later in the day, switch to 8"-10" rubber worms in black or red shad, 4-6" lizards in watermelon seed or cotton candy, or watermelon seed colored Flukes.

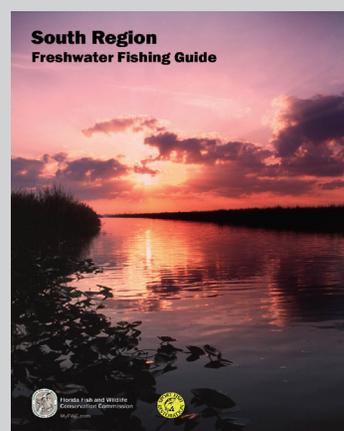
Butterfly Peacock should continue to hit well during the fall and Sears suggests anglers try green and yellow Roostertails, and gold and silver Rapalas late in the morning through the afternoon for some fast action. Live shiners are a very effective bait for largemouth bass and butterfly peacock no matter what time of day.

Sears recommends wigglers or crickets for those anglers wishing to do a little bream fishing. Fishing these baits under a bobber is a great way to introduce kids to catching bluegill and redear sunfish as well as the non-native Mayan cichlid. Black, chartreuse, and white Beetle

Spins and crappie jigs are also effective lures for bream and small bass. Sears recommends Plantation Heritage Fish Management Area and the Plantation Canal (C-12) that parallels Sunrise Boulevard as great places to wet a line.

**Palm Beach County:** George Lott of Lott Brothers Bait and Tackle in North Palm Beach (561-844-0244) said largemouth bass action should improve as water temperatures cool. While it is still hot, Lott suggests deep water areas with plastic worms in dark colors including black shad, red shad, and purple shad. If the area is pretty weed-free try a deep running Rapala or Yo Zuri lure. As the cold fronts pass through and the water cools in November, the bass will move into shallow water and Lott recommends try a topwater lure like a Tiny Torpedo or spinner baits for some fast action. Speck (black crappie) fishing should also heat up with the change in the seasons. Lott recommends Missouri minnows or 1/16 or 1/32 oz Beetle Spins in black and yellow or white and yellow, or white or chartreuse crappie jigs for specks. Look for specks in deep holes in local lakes and around fish attractors in the Ida-Osborne chain-of lakes. Native and exotic bream (particularly Mayan cichlid) can be caught on a variety of baits and Lott suggested fly rod enthusiasts try a bumble-bee popper and traditional anglers try wiggler worms or night crawlers fished under a bobber with a long shank, fine wire hook. Lott recommends anglers try the Loxahatchee (C-18), Lake Catherine on the Earman River Canal (C-17), or canals in the Hungryland Wildlife Management Area for some fun fall action. — *by Kelly Gestring*

**South Region Freshwater Fishing Guide now available in hard copy!**



This 32-page booklet provides a guide to regional fish camps, access points and boat ramps, as well as containing information regarding local fisheries such as the Everglades and Lake Okeechobee. It should prove to be a valuable re-

source for local anglers as well as visitors. Hard copies are now available via the contact information on the front of this newsletter.

The digital version is still available online at:

[Myfwc.com/Fishing/pdf/South-FFguide.pdf](http://Myfwc.com/Fishing/pdf/South-FFguide.pdf)

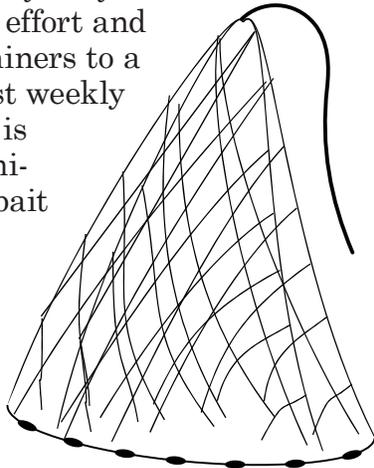
## Net gain

Recent regulation changes have clarified the laws regarding taking baitfish with nets in the fresh waters of the South Region (see last issue). That makes this a great time to learn how to use a net effectively in the fine art of catching your own bait.

### Cast nets

A cast net is probably the most widely used net in south Florida. It has the advantages of a long reach and wide coverage. However, a cast net is also the hardest net to learn to use, although many bait and tackle shops will provide demonstrations and there are also plenty of videos and books that cover the subject.

Cast nets are ideal for taking shiners and shad. Shiners can be baited to a particular area with bread, uncooked oatmeal, or chicken laying mash (check your local feed store for the latter). A good place to start up a “shiner hole” needs to have some open water with vegetation, such as hydrilla, close by. If you’re willing to put in some effort and cash, you can chum shiners to a particular area at least weekly (twice a week or more is better) and have a semi-guaranteed supply of bait when you want it. In such a situation, you can chum your “shiner hole” and start tossing your cast net within five or ten minutes to collect your bait. If chumming “cold” (you haven’t been baiting the area previously), I recommend chumming for about fifteen to twenty minutes before throwing your net. In either case, make your first cast count because the sound of the net hitting the water will scare the baitfish and, while you can still catch them, your chances on subsequent throws won’t be as good. For keeping your shiners alive, an aerated livewell or cooler is best. However, anglers can also make do with a plastic five-gallon bucket with half-inch holes drilled in it for circulation; throw on a bait lid available at any tackle shop and keep the bucket in the water on a rope until you need your next bait.



Shad are a different story—they can’t be chummed up, and their occurrence in most waters is much less predictable. They are schooling fish constantly on the move, and are usually found in open water instead of orienting reliably to vegetation. This also means that they’re often found farther from shore than shiners are, sometimes putting them out of reach unless you’re throwing your net from a boat. Your best bet for a steady supply of shad is to keep a sharp eye out for schools on the surface or crashing bass. Shad are also much more delicate than shiners—you’ll need a well-aerated baitwell to keep them alive, the bigger the better. Shad schools are usually denser than shiner schools, though, and one lucky cast is all you need to fill a baitwell.

I have two cast nets that I use for shiner and shad collecting. My “big” net is an eight-footer that I use when chumming or when throwing from my boat; I use it when I want to cover the largest possible area and can get pretty close to the fish. My “throwing” net is a small five-footer that’s had the original handline replaced with a longer thirty-foot line. This small net is easily tossed twenty feet or more; I use this one for pinpoint-targeting a school of shiners or shad from shore. You’ve got to be very accurate, but this small net is much easier to aim than bigger ones and I usually get my fish. With this method, learn to look for the distinctive feeding dimples of schooling shiners or the “ripple” of a school of shad cruising the surface. After the throw, I usually start pulling in the net almost immediately, but if chumming up shiners (or in deep water) I’ll let it sink a few seconds first to catch fish that might be following the sinking food. Avoid letting the net reach bottom to prevent snagging.

You can pay anywhere from \$30 to almost \$300 for a cast net. The cheaper nets are machine-made and will not have as much weight on the lead line. Make sure you get a monofilament (not braid) cast net, as the mono sinks faster. This is critically important if your net is going to see double duty in saltwater; if so, you should seriously consider going with one of the better hand-tied nets that are more durable and carry more lead. These will sink faster and are more likely to nab the bait before it can swim out from under the net. If you only get one net, it should be bigger rather than smaller, particular if you’ll be using it for saltwater fishing too.

## Dip nets

Dip nets are simpler in every respect, as well as cheaper. You'll probably never catch a shiner or shad in one, but if you want some grass shrimp or minnows for bream fishing this is all you'll need. If you're using a dip net you'll be restricted to shore, but then that's where you'll want to be using this net anyway. I usually beat the net through shoreline vegetation, and will pass the net through the same path several times. Good vegetation to "beat" includes any grass, shallow hydrilla, or bacopa. After "sweeping" a couple of spots I'll stop and pick through the vegetation in the net for my bait. **Note: most emergent vegetation worked this way will spring back**

**up in a few hours, but be careful not to damage any desirable plant species.** Grass shrimp usually announce themselves by jumping all over the place inside the net bag, and are a bait par excellence for bream (I've had bass up to a couple pounds take them too). Minnows aren't quite as fantastic a bait for bream, but are still good and I've found that large bluegill in particular have a preference for mosquitofish. Bluefin killifish work about as well, as will smaller sailfin mollies. Larger mollies also make good bass bait. For help identifying the minnows and other interesting critters you might come across while dipnetting, check **Issue 4** at [floridafisheries.com/offices/cityfish/CITFSH4b.pdf](http://floridafisheries.com/offices/cityfish/CITFSH4b.pdf).

A good dip net will set you back about \$15-\$20. The decent ones I've found have a sturdy wooden handle about six feet long and a heavy-duty wire net frame with a 1/4" mesh bag. Don't go any bigger on the mesh size, or most of what you want to catch will be able to get through it.

## Minnow seines

It's been a long time since I've seen someone pulling a minnow seine. They're not as effective or convenient for shiners as a cast net, and are more cumbersome for shrimp or minnows than a dip net. You also can't work one solo—it takes two for this one. They do have the advantage of being capable of covering a lot of territory, however. And seines make great educational tools, if you want to see (or teach your kids about) the variety

of life in your local pond.

If you're going to use a minnow seine, do yourself the favor of attaching five- or six-foot broom handles or one-by-twos at the ends—this will make the net much easier to work, and make it much easier to keep the lead line on the bottom. (They also make the net easy to roll up for storage.) To work the net properly, choose a path that will run the net through promising-looking water a few feet deep and then up onto the bank. A gently-sloping bank without much vegetation or brush on it is best if available. Both team members should grasp the broom handles upright and try to keep the lead line on the bottom as they work. There will be a deep bow in the net as you both walk forward in unison. Move as fast as you can to prevent fish from escaping, and—again!—keep that lead line on the bottom or fish will also escape under the net. Run the seine right up onto the bank to inspect your catch, giving priority to releasing any game fish first. **Obviously, you should exercise the same caution when seining as you would when wading, watching for deep spots and potentially dangerous wildlife.**

Minnow seines aren't very expensive, and they don't vary in quality or construction as much as cast nets or dip nets. Expect to pay about \$25 or so. These nets do require a bit more care than the others—just make sure the net is clean and completely dry before rolling it up for storage.

## Netiquette

There are some final points every net-toting angler should consider that have nothing to do with catching fish. First, don't trespass. Respect the space around other resource users nearby. Also, don't leave a trail of weed piles along the shoreline behind you. A lot of folks—including some anglers—don't like seeing people with nets, so be polite to anyone that asks you what you're doing. Take a moment to explain how much fun it can be to catch your own bait, and maybe even show them some of the interesting critters you come across doing it.

The current regulations regarding using nets in fresh water are found on page 11 of the **Florida Fishing Regulations Freshwater Edition**, available online at:

[Floridafisheries.com/pdf/08FLFW\\_rules\\_web.pdf](http://Floridafisheries.com/pdf/08FLFW_rules_web.pdf)

