



## 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.*

### Featured fish: Chain pickerel



**Size:** The state record is 6.96 pounds, although an 8.00 pound specimen was reported but not verified. However, any fish reaching three or four pounds is a respectable catch.

**Identification:** The toothy mouth and elongated body of this fish is diagnostic, as is the unique, chain-like patterning along the body that gives this species its name. Also note the distinct “teardrop” mark below the eye.



**Pickerel**



**Gar**

**Similar species:** The chain pickerel's wide mouth easily distinguishes it from a gar's narrower snout. Closer in similarity, the **redfin pickerel**

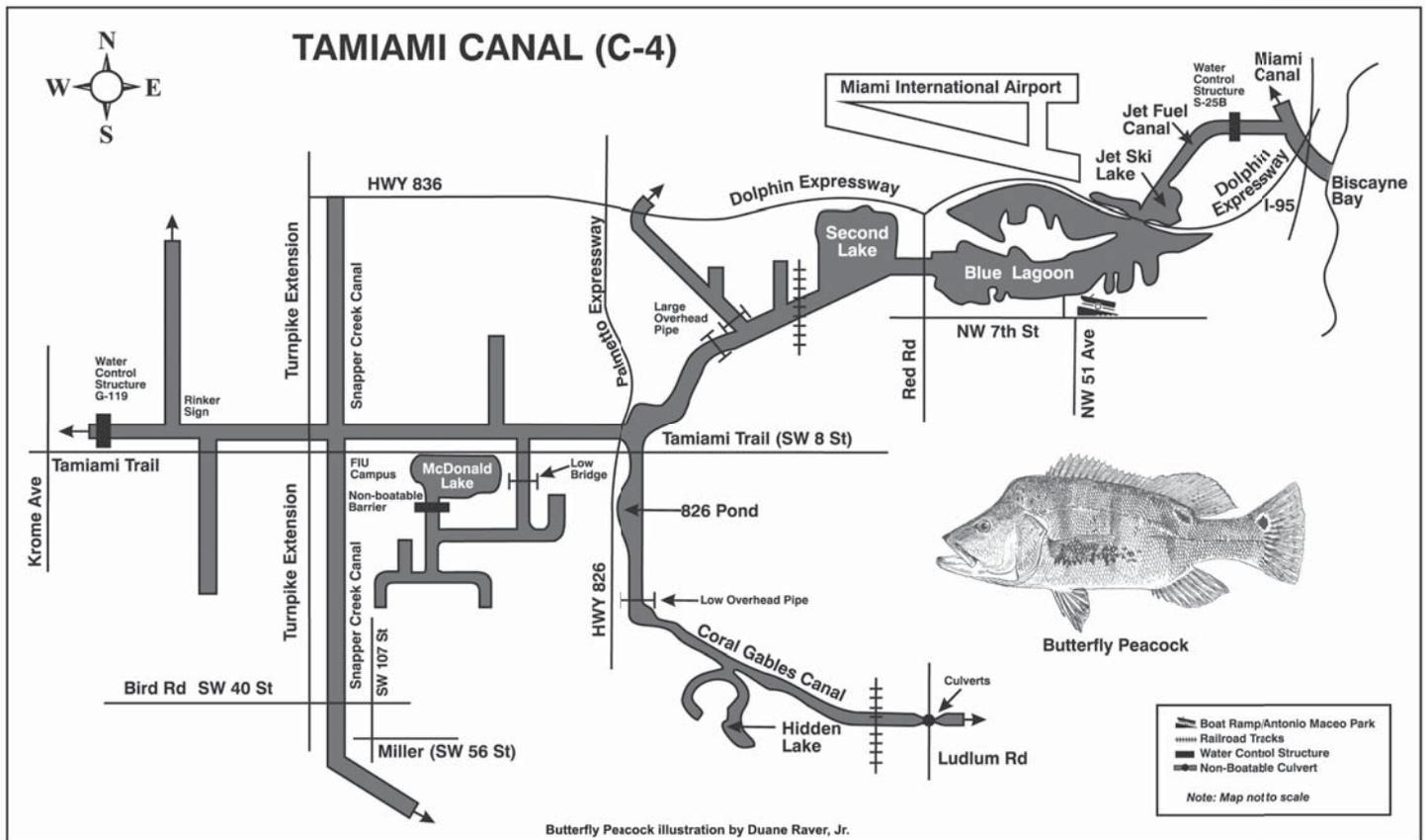
has red fins, is smaller (seldom exceeding a pound), and lacks the chain-like markings.

**Angling qualities:** More sought-after in northern states where they are more plentiful, pickerel are generally caught unintentionally in Florida—often by bass anglers due to the chain pickerel's fondness for minnows and minnow-imitating lures. Unfortunately, anglers usually relegate the pickerel to the same status as the gar—an annoyance that steals shiners and scratches up lures. However, the pickerel is a sporting catch that should garner a little more respect. Strikes are usually very fast and aggressive. Saltwater anglers will note a body design that mimics a barracuda's, and this fish is indeed built for speed and ambush. Once hooked, the chain pickerel is known for its fast runs and jumping ability. While some anglers will bemoan the damage a pickerel's teeth can do to a lure or bait, others welcome a surprise strike from this torpedo-shaped aerialist, and consider a scuffed lure a small price to pay for the adventure. Due to this toothy mouth, care should be taken when landing. Don't, however, land pickerel by gripping the eye sockets (a popular grip in the “old days”); injury to the fish will likely result. While pickerel are certainly edible, the skeletal structure and the presence of many “Y-bones” make it difficult to separate the meat, and many enthusiasts consider the pickerel to be much more sport on the end of the line than in the frying pan.



**Florida Fish and Wildlife  
Conservation Commission**

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## Featured locale: Tamiami (C-4) Canal

Butterfly peacock have been harder to find since the freeze of January 2010 (see Issue 41), but the Tamiami (C-4) Canal—one of the best traditional fishing locations for this species—continues to provide excellent catches of peacocks.

**Location:** The Tamiami Canal is in Miami-Dade County, with the famous “Airport Lakes” located just south of Miami International Airport.

**Size:** This canal system offers more than 27 miles of interconnected canals and lakes. Canal width varies between 40 and 100 feet, with canal depths averaging about 8 feet. Lake depths may go as deep as 50 feet.

**Fish species present:** In addition to good numbers of butterfly peacock, anglers can find largemouth bass, snook, tarpon, bluegill, redear sunfish, and spotted tilapia, oscar, and jaguar guapote.

**Angling information:** Offering some of the most diverse freshwater fishing opportunities in Florida, the Tamiami Canal is one of the few

waters in the state where an angler could conceivably land a “trifecta” or “grand slam” catch of a butterfly peacock, largemouth bass, snook, and tarpon all in the same water body. In addition to these popular sportfish, the canal system also provides good angling for a variety of “bream” or panfish species.

**Directions:** The canal system is accessible primarily by boat, and the only public boat ramp is located in Antonio Maceo Park. The park is open from dawn to dusk, and there is a launch fee on weekends. To get to the park, take the Turnpike Extension or I-95 to Hwy 836 (Dolphin Expressway). Take Hwy 836 east from the Turnpike or west from I-95 to Red Road (NW 57th Avenue). Go south on Red Road about 0.5 miles to NW 7th Street, east (left) 0.6 miles to NW 51st Avenue, and Antonio Maceo Park is on the left side just before NW 51st Avenue.

**For further information:** A larger version of the map above and more detailed flyer are available by writing to: FWC Non-Native Fish Research Lab, Attn. Canal Maps, 801 NW 40th Street, Boca Raton, FL 33431.

## A Florida fly box

Many Florida anglers have discovered the joy and challenge of fly fishing. If you've never take up the "long rod" but are ready to try something new, check the fly fishing primer in Issue 8 (available via the contact information on the back of this newsletter). This article focuses on flies proven effective in Florida. An enormous variety of different flies are available, imitating everything from the tiniest of insects to swimming mice! Listed here are the basic types, along with some comments relating to their intended targets. Advanced fly anglers may eventually wish to tie their own flies, allowing them to develop custom fly patterns of their own design. However, a few basic patterns are all that are needed to start catching fish.



**Popping bug:** Although this might not be the first artificial that comes to mind when most anglers think of fly fishing, the popping bug is one of the most popular fly rod lures in Florida. Many

warmwater anglers insist that this topwater is more fun to use than any other fly. Popping bugs come in two general size classes: smaller sizes will attract sunfish ("bream"), while the larger sizes are (unquestionably!) one of the most exciting ways to catch bass. Popping bugs, whether for bass or bream, are worked similarly to many traditional topwater lures: cast, rest, twitch, rest, repeat. It takes time to cover water with a fly rod popper, but aficionados insist the excitement of topwater strikes makes it worthwhile. The primary disadvantage of the popping bug (particularly in the larger sizes intended for bass) is its larger wind resistance and weight, making it more difficult to cast than any other fly. These flies aren't usually classified by pattern or style, but Betts is the best known manufacturer.

**Wet fly:** While "dry fly purists" may shun it, the wet fly was the first fly type invented. Most modern wet patterns imitate an emerging aquatic insect. Since nearly all fish eat insects at some point in their life cycle, wets perform quite well in Florida's lakes and

canals. A retrieve performed by stripping in short jerks of line works well and might yield almost any local fish species, including fish that are usually considered bait such as golden shiners or Seminole killifish. Since you usually can't see your fly, keep a sharp watch on the end of your fly line where it meets the leader—a twitch means you've got a customer. The **Black Gnat** is a popular all-around wet fly. While you can actually buy special fly sinking solutions, getting wet flies to sink isn't usually a challenge. Saliva actually works well as a sinking agent, too (if your fishing buddy doesn't object).



**Nymph:** Nymphs are designed to mimic the aquatic, larval stage of a number of small insects. A small tan or brown nymph is my personal "secret weapon" when fly fishing for panfish,

and in my experience is also more effective at attracting the attentions of passing bass than dries or wets. I've also been surprised by the size of bass willing to go after such a small morsel. I work nymphs identically to wets, with small jerks and stops. The **Hare's Ear nymph** is a time-honored, all-purpose pattern that will produce fish under practically any conditions. However, a wide range of patterns including bead head versions are available, and nearly all will work well.



**Streamer:** This fly imitates a minnow. Streamers are (obviously) standard fare for bass anglers, and have the advantage over popping bugs as far as casting ease is concerned because they

don't present as much wind resistance. A rapid, jerky retrieve with long line strips usually produces the most strikes. Because of the speed of the retrieve, streamers will cover more water faster than any other fly. However, you'll be doing a lot of casting to accomplish that since most anglers (including

me) can't cast as far with a fly rod as they can with spinning or casting gear. The **Muddler Minnow**, which floats until retrieved and thus acts as the fly rod version of a floater-diver minnow, is one of the more popular streamer patterns.



**Woolly worm or Woolly bugger:**

These flies are sometimes lumped together with streamers or wets, but are intended to imitate longer-profile aquatic insects such as hellgrammites. Anglers

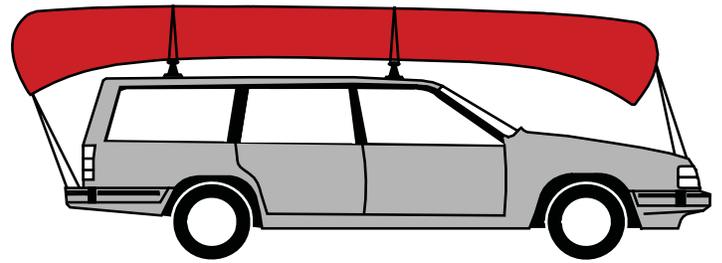
can argue about whether they really manage to do that or not, but these bizarre-looking creations do manage to catch bass. While the occasional panfish will also gulp one, these are primarily used as a bass lure. They can be worked quickly like a streamer, or a bit more slowly like a wet fly or nymph, making them quite versatile. Dark colors, especially black or brown, seem to work best.



**Dry fly:** Although this fly is probably the best-known lure of the modern fly angler, it sees only limited use here in south Florida. A dry fly imitates a winged insect (such as a hatched

mayfly) resting on the water's surface. Dries are not nearly as important for warmwater species like bass or sunfish as they are for trout, but they can still provide some exciting topwater action. While bass will hit dries (in fact, my very first bass was a little five-incher that nailed a dry fly), in the Sunshine State this will really be primarily a sunfish lure. Missed strikes, however, cause many anglers to stick with wet flies or nymphs for much of their panfishing. Although the traditional way to fish a dry on a lake is to cast to rising trout and let it rest, twitching your rod tip or stripping in a bit of line to provide some "action" does better at attracting the attentions of our humbler southern fish. The **Adams** is an all-purpose dry fly, and sizes 10 or 12 do well for most sunfish. If you are going to fish dries, invest in some dry fly floatant to keep your flies from sinking.

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## Rack 'em! Vehicle racks for anglers

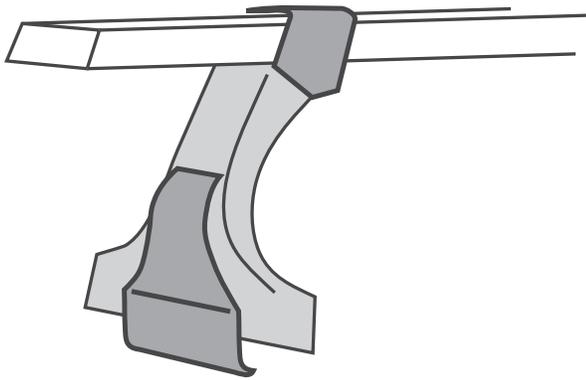
Last issue took a look at portable boats, which we defined as boats that can be launched by hand and either stowed in a trunk or car-topped. This includes float tubes, inflatables, kayaks, canoes, and johnboats. The majority of these fall into the car-top category, and this will be our topic of discussion for this issue. No matter what you're driving, you can rack your vehicle to comfortably and safely transport your portable watercraft wherever you want to go.



### The crossbars

Your truck, van, or sport-utility vehicle may have come with factory racks. Be advised that, with rare exception, these won't handle boats. Thankfully, you have some good options available, and none of them will put an overly large dent in your wallet. There are two major rack manufacturers, Thule ([www.thule.com](http://www.thule.com)) and Yakima ([www.yakima.com](http://www.yakima.com)), which have established themselves as the industry standards over the years. Both offer a variety of racks and accessories that will meet nearly any angler or boater's needs. Thule has a bit more variety in available crossbars (or "load bars"), and I actually like their cheaper square-cross-section rack design a bit better because it provides a flat (although narrow) surface for my boat and accessories to rest on. However, round or oval cross-section crossbars offered by both Thule

and Yakima are more aerodynamic and quieter and, from an engineer's perspective, just as strong. Various crossbar widths are available, and one thing to keep in mind when making this choice is that you not only want to fit your boat, but also have a little space left for accessories like oars, paddles, or push-poles. However, avoid selecting crossbars that extend well beyond the sides of your vehicle—I guarantee you'll hit your head on one really good, at least once. Expect to pay between \$80-\$130 for your crossbars, depending on width and style.



### **The tower**

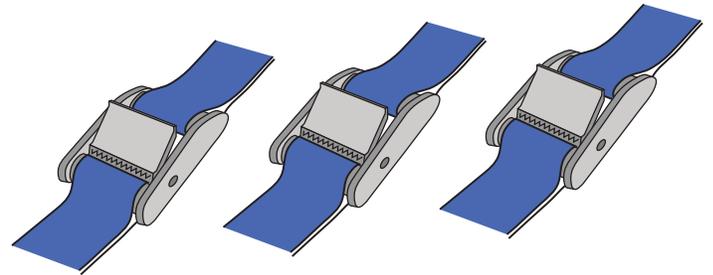
With a crossbar choice in mind, the next task is to select “feet,” or more properly a “tower,” that will mate that rack to your particular vehicle. Even if you're “fishin' car” happens to be a Volkswagen Bug, you'll almost certainly be able to find a mounting solution. The most common connector styles will anchor to a vehicle's rain gutters or hook inside the doorway tops, but other styles may use a vehicle's factory rail system or other anchoring point. Pickup trucks provide a challenge because of their limited roof space. Your two choices are a smaller rack that will install on the roof only—suitable for smaller kayaks but nothing larger—or another rack placed somewhere in the pickup bed for heavier craft like canoes and johnboats.

Most of the various towers are lockable, although locks may have to be purchased as an option or accessory. This will not only prevent your rack from being stolen, but will also keep ne'er-do-wells from partially disassembling your rack to get at what you have chained to it. Note—keep the keys in

your car, in case you need to remove the rack or accessories unexpectedly. Including a locking mechanism, the fit kit or tower will cost around \$100-\$200, depending on your vehicle and the type of tower you choose.

### **Accessorize!**

With your new rack in place on your car or truck, you're ready to load up! If you're hauling a johnboat or canoe, it will sit flat when upside down and you're ready to tie up. For kayaks, however, form-fitting mounting cradles are available that will hold these curve-bottomed craft securely. Mounts are also available for holding kayaks on their sides, so you can squeeze up to four in place for that whole-family outing. Most boat cradles will run \$100-\$150. Other accessories to look for include paddle or oar holders, and devices to help in loading and unloading your boat. A streamlined fairing for the front rack will reduce wind resistance, noise, and gas use on long trips. Again, where locks are available on any of these accessories, get them.



### **Learning the ropes**

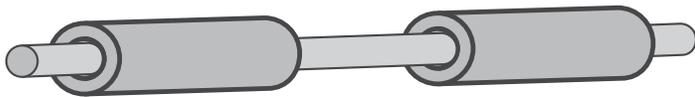
A fishing trip to Lake Okeechobee taught me the value of secure tie-downs when cartopping. The speed limit was 65. I was headed toward the lake, and dozens of trucks with extra-tall sugar cane trailers and full loads were headed away from it. And every time we passed, my car and johnboat were hit with what felt like the equivalent of a 130-mph gust. I sure was glad I'd ponied up for the heavy-duty straps and plenty of them, because otherwise my boat would have been taking flying lessons. It's hard to be too well strapped down when hauling a boat on your roof!

The various rack vendors sell tie-

down straps, but I've done pretty well over the years with heavy-duty nylon tie-downs found at the local Home Depot or Lowes. I'm particularly fond of the style that you can cinch with a firm pull and release with a press on the latch, because they're so easy to tighten or remove. However, these can slip a little under constant strain so go with the heavier-duty versions and check for tightness occasionally during your trip—especially with new straps that you haven't tested yet. I also will tie down the free end of the strap to minimize slippage at the buckle. Following these tips, I've rarely had trouble with this style strap. For weightier loads or extreme winds, the heavy-duty ratchet-style straps are without equal. These can easily be cranked down nice and tight and, best of all, won't slip an inch. Their only downside is that they are not as quick to install or remove.

Both of these strap types usually have metal hooks on the ends. If you can find a set with loops instead, these are ideal for slipping over the exposed ends of the roof racks. Otherwise, the hooks themselves might fit around the crossbars, or you can use a larger S-hook or "quick link" chain connector to hook onto.

The aforementioned straps are usually used to anchor the boat to the crossbars. Where johnboat or canoe gunnels rest against the crossbars, I like to place foam padding. This not only protects both rack and boat, but also provides some resistance to tighten the straps against. Hollow swimming pool "noodles" cut into six-inch sections work well; so does pipe insulation, though it is not as durable.



**Foam padding will protect your boat and help secure it on the rack.**

I always use two additional pairs of straps to anchor the boat front and back. Johnboat handles are perfect tie-down points,

and I'll usually anchor them on the vehicle bumper or—better yet—undercarriage hooks if present. Canoes and kayaks often have some kind of anchor point at the bow and stern that can provide the same function. Heavy nylon ropes and steel snaps can also be used, though nylon rope tends to stretch a bit more than strapping does.

Although I frequently see everything from canoes to mattresses "secured" to vehicles with elastic bungee cords, these are simply not up to the task of holding a hull in place. Bungee cords are quite popular, but their safe use is limited to securing paddles or rods to your racks, at best. Solid rubber bungee cords are stronger, but will crack over time—especially when exposed to Florida's heat and sun—and, if used at all, should be inspected carefully and regularly.

The last thing to be said about tie-downs is to check your straps regularly during a trip. Keep an eye on your boat if you can see it while driving, to make sure it isn't shifting on the rack. Check and re-tighten your straps when stopping for gas or breakfast. If over-nighting somewhere, make sure you re-tighten everything before starting off again the next morning; your straps will have slackened during the night.

### **On the cheap**

Depending on your boat, there may be some cheaper alternatives to standard roof racks. If your budget is really strapped, a foam block canoe carrying kit works adequately and can be used for light johnboats as well. Removable, strap-down roof racks are another option. However, neither are as secure as fixed roof racks and you should exercise that much more caution when cartopping with such equipment. And everything said about securing your load still applies, and moreso—tie-downs are *not* the place to try to save a few dollars.

### **Double duty**

Once your roof racks are in place, there are plenty of other handy uses for them besides

carrying boats. In addition to hauling yard sale furniture finds (current record: a full sized dining room table and eight chairs), roof racks have all kinds of handy uses for the outdoors enthusiast. Bicycle racks are near the top of this list, especially if you've tried strap-on trunk carriers—roof carriers are much more solid and stable. Rod rack stowage and luggage transportation are other handy uses when not taking the boat on a fishing trip. So “rack ‘em up” on your way to more convenient outdoor adventuring!

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## **Fishing and hunting excise taxes provide a major return to outdoorsmen**

*“Dear Sir or Madam,*

*I am writing to you because I am sure that you would be interested in our unique investment opportunity. Return on your outlay will be between 1,000 and 2,000 percent!”*

When you receive an e-mail that starts like that, you immediately reach for the “Delete” key. Something that sounds too good to be true always is . . . or is it?

A recent study by Southwick Associates and Andrew Loftus Consulting determined that federal excise taxes collected on the sale of fishing and hunting gear provide a remarkable annual return on investment for manufacturers of outdoor equipment. These excise taxes are paid up front by the outdoor recreation industry (such as fishing tackle and boating manufacturers).

Although these costs are of course passed on to anglers and hunters, the share paid by the individual consumer is minor. However, the accumulated return to outdoors enthusiasts and the outdoors industry as a group are dramatic. For example, the study determined that for excise taxes paid on hunting equipment such as firearms and ammunition, the return on investment *averaged 1,100 percent over 36 years* (1970-2006). For those paid on fishing equipment like rods, reels, and lures, the return on investment was even more significant, *an average of 2,100 percent over 51 years* (1955-2006). In plain English, for every \$1 paid by the sporting goods industry in federal excise taxes that support hunting and fishing programs, those industries made between \$11 and \$21 back in hunting and fishing equipment sales. In Florida specifically, FWC receives over \$11 million in SFR funds annually, which helps to support fisheries that provide \$7.5 billion in economic benefit to the State—as well as providing 46 million days of outdoor recreation enjoyment annually.

“How many tax models in our country today can show an \$11 to \$21 return to the company on every dollar spent,” asks Congressional Sportsmen’s Caucus Co-Chair Jeff Miller (U.S. Congressman, R-Fla). “This is one of the most impressive examples of how an American industry can profit and bolster the economy while restoring and improving our nation’s cherished natural resources.”

**For every \$1 paid by the sporting goods industry in federal excise taxes that support hunting and fishing programs, those industries made between \$11 and \$21 back in hunting and fishing equipment sales.**

The study, [The Benefits to Business from Hunting and Fishing Excise Taxes](#), compared the amount of excise taxes collected each year to the dollar value of related purchases made by outdoorsmen during the same time frame. For hunting sports the industry paid an average of \$251

million in excise taxes each year, but made back \$3.1 billion in revenue annually. For fishing, the annual average was \$110 million paid but 2.3 billion earned.



These excise taxes are collected under the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (also called the Pittman-Robertson Act) and Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act (also known as Wallop-Breaux). Both Acts were created and passed at the behest of outdoor enthusiasts and the outdoors industry, who realized that the long-term sustainability of their sport—and businesses—were best served by supporting state fish and wildlife programs. By law, these moneys can only be used to sustain fish and wildlife populations, provide public access to natural resources, and otherwise support programs benefitting fishing, hunting, and other outdoor recreation. One of the most unique facets of the program is that it works on the “user-pays, user-benefits” principle, with all funds collected benefitting the user groups that contribute them. Angling-related examples include habitat enhancement, fish stocking, boat ramps, fishing piers, fish attractors, outreach programs for youth, and communications programs—of which this City Fisher newsletter is a specific example.

The full Benefits to Business from Hunting and Fishing Excise Taxes report is available online at:

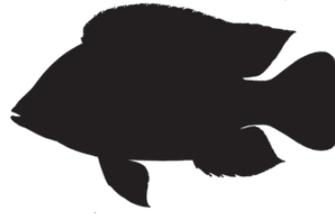
[www.southwickassociates.com/excisetaxROI](http://www.southwickassociates.com/excisetaxROI)

For a more detailed discussion of the Sport Fish Restoration program, see The City Fisher Issue 37 at:

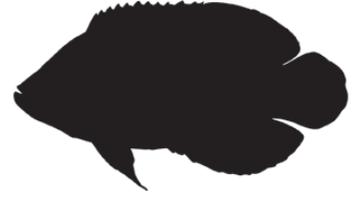
[MyFWC.com/media/392854/CITFISH\\_37.pdf](http://MyFWC.com/media/392854/CITFISH_37.pdf)

## Quick quiz: Exotic fishes

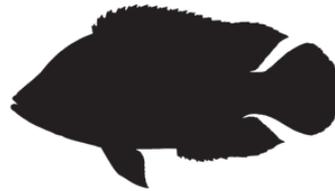
Think you know your exotic fish species? See if you can identify the examples below only by their silhouettes. Several of these are admittedly hard! (Answers at bottom.)



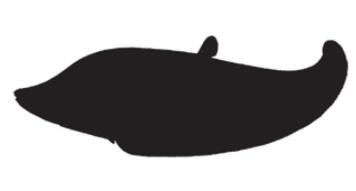
1. \_\_\_\_\_



2. \_\_\_\_\_



3. \_\_\_\_\_



4. \_\_\_\_\_



5. \_\_\_\_\_



6. \_\_\_\_\_

1. Blue tilapia (spotted tilapia okay), 2. Oscar, 3. Mayan cichlid, 4. Clown knife-fish, 5. Butterfly peacock (peacock bass), 6. Sailfin or suckermouth catfish.

This newsletter is a publication of the **South Region Fisheries Management Section** of the **Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)**, and is paid for in part by **Sport Fish Restoration** funds. To contact **The City Fisher**, e-mail [john.cimbaro@myfwc.com](mailto:john.cimbaro@myfwc.com) or phone John Cimbaro at 561-625-5122. You can also write to: John Cimbaro; Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; 8535 Northlake Boulevard; West Palm Beach, FL 33412. Back issues are available. You can visit us at [MyFWC.com](http://MyFWC.com).



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