

FISH! SOUTHEAST FLORIDA CANALS

ANGLER'S GUIDE TO GOLDEN GATE CANAL

COLLIER COUNTY



Exotic Fisheries Office
10216 Lee Road
Boynton Beach, Florida 33473

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DESCRIPTION – Golden Gate Canal is located in Collier County on the eastern outskirts of Naples. It drains westward from the community of Golden Gate to a non-navigable water control structure just west of I-75 and eventually drains into the Gulf of Mexico. Golden Gate Canal provides excellent freshwater fishing in more than 7 miles of boat accessible canals and Lake Sapphire, a 16 acre lake. The canals range from 65 to over 125 feet in width, average about 8 feet deep, and the lake area has depths averaging 10-12 feet deep.

From the boat ramp, it is 2.0 miles to the eastern water control structure and 1.4 miles to the western structure. The entrance to the main lateral canal system and Lake Sapphire is located about a half mile due east of the boat ramp on the north side of the main canal.

DIRECTIONS TO BOAT RAMP – The only public boat ramp is located in Golden Gate Community Park. To get to the boat ramp, exit I-75 in Naples (Exit 105) onto Golden Gate Parkway and go east one mile to Santa Barbara Boulevard. Turn right (south) on Santa Barbara Blvd. and go a half mile to Recreation Lane. Turn left (east) on Recreation Lane and go another half mile and turn left on a park road just past the baseball fields on the left (north) and this will take you straight to the boat ramp and parking lot. **BOAT RAMP GPS COORDINATES:** (N26.16869 W81.7128).

The Golden Gate Community Park boat ramp is open from sunrise to sundown, and is operated by the Collier County Department of Parks and Recreation. The two-lane ramp is paved and in excellent condition. The park features a vast sports complex that includes an aquatics facility, fitness center, numerous ball fields, basketball courts, paved fitness trail, playground, plenty of paved parking areas, and restrooms near the tennis courts.

GENERAL FISHING INFORMATION – Golden Gate Canal offers excellent freshwater fishing opportunities and several anglers have reported canal 'trifecta' or 'grand slam' catches of Largemouth Bass and Butterfly Peacock topped-off with a Snook. The Butterfly Peacock is a world renowned gamefish that was successfully introduced in the mid-1980s by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to eat undesirable exotic fishes, and to provide more sportfishing for anglers in the metropolitan Miami-Ft. Lauderdale area. However, Golden Gate Canal is outside of the area that Butterfly Peacock were stocked by FWC. They were most likely illegally introduced and have managed to maintain a fairly stable population since 2009. If water temperatures

fall below 60 degrees during a very cold winter, this population could be eliminated unless some of the fish can find a thermal refuge such as an underwater spring.

Fallen trees, canal intersections, sharp bends, and dead ends are generally productive areas for catching most species of fish. Sportfishes also congregate in the shade of bridges, culverts, and other structures. Shoreline vegetation, rip-rap, and even some residential seawalls (particularly in lateral canals) also provide good fishing opportunities. If there is a strong current in the main canal, spend more time fishing lateral canals, the small lake, and other areas that offer refuge from the current (e.g., cut-outs, bridge pilings, and the downstream side of spillways).

Golden Gate Canal supports an excellent population of Largemouth Bass and a fair number of Butterfly Peacock. The bag limit for Largemouth Bass is five fish per day, only one of which can be greater than 16 inches; two Butterfly Peacock can be kept, but only one of these can be greater than 17 inches.

Largemouth Bass fishing tends to be best during the winter when the water cools, and early in the morning, evenings, and even at night during the summer. Fishing for Butterfly Peacock is usually best from March through May, but they are caught consistently throughout the year. Butterfly Peacock feed only during daylight and normally close to shore, although schooling peacocks will sometimes feed aggressively in open water.

Livefish such as small Golden Shiners purchased at local tackle shops, are the best overall bait for both Largemouth Bass and Butterfly Peacock. They are an excellent choice of bait for younger anglers, as well as those just learning to bass fish. It is illegal to use Goldfish or any other non-native fish for bait. For those who enjoy fishing with artificial lures, rubber worms and spinner baits are a staple for catching Largemouth Bass. Just about any fast moving minnow imitating plug or fly can be used to entice a peacock strike.

Snook can be found throughout the canal system but tend to concentrate along vegetated shorelines and under bridges. For the current Snook regulations please see www.MyFWC.com/fishing.

The number and quality of native panfish (Bluegill and especially Redear Sunfish or 'Shellcracker') in Golden Gate Canal is considered excellent for area canals. Live worms and crickets are the choice baits for many panfish anglers, although fresh bread or bread dough works well, is readily available, and it costs less.

Shoreline anglers will need to do some exploring to find the best locations for shoreline fishing, and always be sure to park cars safely on public right of ways.

Golden Gate Canal anglers can also catch several exotic species including Oscar from South America, Spotted Tilapia from Africa, and Mayan Cichlid from Central America. These exotic fishes were illegally released and pose a threat to native species. Oscar, Spotted Tilapia, and Mayan Cichlid are all bream-shaped fishes. Oscar have a red or orange circle at the base of the tail, and have a thick layer of protective mucus on their bodies. Spotted Tilapia are golden with black vertical bars or spots, and some adults have red on them. Mayan Cichlid are colorful and are snapper-like in appearance with a turquoise ring around a black spot at the base of their tail. These exotic fishes are good to eat and you can keep every one you catch.

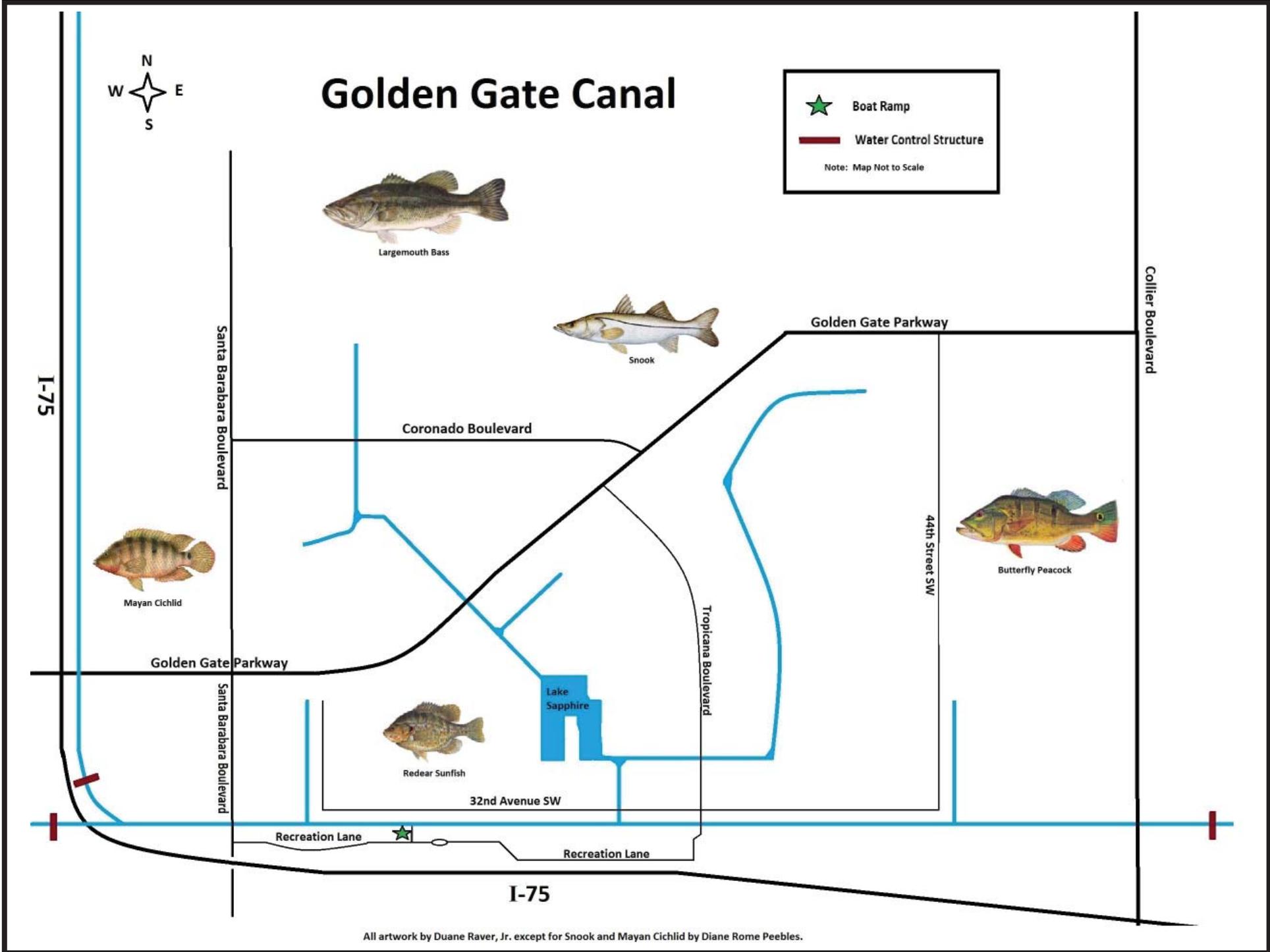
Golden Gate Canal and other area canals receive a great deal of fishing pressure so we encourage anglers to release most, if not all of the Largemouth Bass, Butterfly Peacock, and Snook they catch. If anglers don't release a majority of the sportfish they catch, these high quality fisheries will deteriorate rapidly.

Anglers, particularly those from outside the metropolitan Miami - West Palm Beach area, should be aware that vandalism occurs at some boat ramps. Therefore, care should be taken to secure your vehicle and keep valuables out of sight or take them with you when you leave the ramp.

For more Florida fishing information, please visit Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's web site at www.MyFWC.com/fishing.

This series of southeast Florida angler guides are available at www.bit.ly/AnglerGuide.





All artwork by Duane Raver, Jr. except for Snook and Mayan Cichlid by Diane Rome Peebles.