

# *Sanibel trip*

**Day 26 thru Day 32: June 17, 2017 thru June 24, 2017. Snook fishing trip to Sanibel Island. Temp: mid to high 90s \* Sunny; Wind: S to SW 10 to 20 knots with 3-6 foot surf from tropical storm in the Gulf of Mexico; Location: Sanibel Island: 0 Salters; 9 Rainbow; 0 LL Salmon; 2 Brooktrout; 1 Brown Trout; 87 Stripers-1keeper; 0 Bluefish; 0 Scup; 0 Sea Bass; 5 Sea Robin; 1 Large mouth Bass; 2 Sunfish; 2 Snook; Tides: Varied.**

My first trip Snook fishing from the beach started out with a 2 1/2 hour flight delay at Logan where the Jet Blue flight coming in from California experienced weather delays. Finally we boarded and 3 1/2 hours later we landed in Fort Myers. Thankfully all the baggage made it with all the fly rods. Stan, Dick, and I walked to the car rental and were told to pick any car, we chose a Jeep Patriot for all of its room, but when we went to check out we discovered the cars registration had lapsed !!!! How can a rental car company let the registration lapse we asked. So back to pick another similar car and, finally we headed to Sanibel Island after a brief stop to pick up groceries for the week. My friend Dick owns a condo on the island, so that is where we will be staying for the next week.

After settling in we decided to check out the beaches we were planning to fish, and what we found was not good. The tropical storm moving north thru the Gulf of Mexico was wreaking havoc with the SW facing beaches with surf and murky water conditions. This would of course make sight fishing for Snook impossible. After a long day we turned in early after having sandwiches for dinner.

We were up bright and early the next morning with great anticipation. Since Dick had been down here for the last couple of months, he became our guide, and took us to a beach nearby for our first day of "Snuke" fishing as described in Norm Zeiglers book. As we walked down the beach, the waves were beginning to crash in, creating marginal water clarity, making it impossible to see any fish running along the beach drop-off. Our only option was to blind cast in hopes of luring a fish to hit one of our flies.

As the morning progressed Dick was first to hookup with a Spanish Mackerel.



As we worked our way up the beach, I glanced up and saw my lucky rainbow to the NNW directly over my head as shown in the picture below.



It was shortly after this I hooked my first beach Snook of the trip, not large but big enough to make my day.



Over the next couple of morning hours, Dick hooked a couple more Snook, while Stan was the winner of the day with the largest fish of the as shown below. We estimated this fish at about 30" as measured on my rod. A real nice fish to start the week out for Stan.



We ended our morning with what became our daily routine of going to Bailey's to pick up our morning coffee and pastry, then going to Norm Zeiglers fly shop to sit on the comfortable couch he has there, to eat and drink and to report in on the happenings of the day. Norm is a real gentleman and opens his shop to all anglers who wish to visit.

During the course of the remaining week, wind and wave conditions worsened as the tropical storm moved further north into the Gulf, making beach fishing impossible. The exception was near Blind Pass where the surf and wind was lesser and which became our main Snook fishing destination for the week.



Below is a picture of Blind Pass where Dick managed this small Snook on the outside, while I managed to pickup my 2nd and last fish of the week which was a 20 " Snook inside the bridge, directly in the pass. which by the end of the week was the only fishable water.



One late evening, just outside of Blind Pass in one of the calmer spots we were able to find on the beach, my friend Stan hooked a huge fish of unknown identity, but believed to be the grand daddy of all Snook. This fish made several rolls and never jumped. It immediately headed for the outer sandbar taking all but about 50 yards of backing before Stan tightened the drag hard down and was still not able to stop this fish. When it hit the sandbar it made one thrash and the 30# fluorocarbon leader was neatly cut, and the fish was gone. Speculation was that this was a 40 to

50 inch fish, perhaps a tarpon, but more than likely a big Snook as it did not jump and the leader was very frayed the way a Snook would do it. Probably a fish of a lifetime, with no way of stopping it. Sorry Stan. The next evening we went back to the same spot with high hopes, but to no avail.

As the beaches became more and more unfishable due to the storm, we changed strategies to seek out baby tarpon.

In the early mornings the Ding Darling nature preserve became our fishing destination in search of baby Tarpon. We would arrive for the gate opening at 7 AM and drive along the road searching the openings to the water looking for rolling fish. You can only fish from the edge of the road where there are these openings, not only to protect the vegetation, but also to avoid the alligators which are known to frequent the shorelines. The mosquitos are brutal if there is no wind, with bug spray and a buff being necessary in order to not getting eaten alive.

The drill was to locate fish rolling and cast to them. Stan was the all time winner catching several small Tarpon while dressed in his upper body bug suit. Quite the sight as shown below.



I did manage to jump one Tarpon that appeared to be about 30" long, but as per what usually happens, on the first jump it shakes the hook. Was not happy, but that's the way it goes. Dick managed to hook a couple of Tarpon, but also lost them.

Our trip home became somewhat of a nightmare as our flight home was first delayed 30 minutes, then 1 hour and was finally cancelled completely due to A/C problems. Of course this left 150 pissed off people standing around trying to make other arrangements to get home. Jet Blue got my friend Dick on a 7 PM flight to Boston thru New York, but when he got to Logan he had no luggage. They delivered it the next day. Stan and I spent the night at the Marriott in Ft. Myers for flights the next day. His flight left at 11AM and my flight left at 3:30 PM making for a long day. I finally arrived home at 8:30 PM with my luggage.

Overall it was a great trip regardless of airline snafus, the unusually hot weather (95 to 100 degrees thank god for the wind), and the tropical storm residuals. Plans have already made for next year, but in July instead. I am still looking forward to sight fishing for Snook on the beach and with any luck, landing a baby Tarpon.

Mike Mathias

June 2017