

RECOMMENDED FISHING METHODS

The following recommendations are intended to provide information on basic fishing techniques for some common sport fish found in Georgia's coastal waters.

SPOTTED SEATROUT: The most commonly used method for seatrout is drift fishing a standard deep floating terminal rig baited with live shrimp. When fishing with a float rig, most anglers use bait casting reels with rods eight feet or longer. Seatrout are typically mid-water striking feeders. Live bait such as shrimp, finger-size mullet, mud minnows, and menhaden (pogies) are recommended. From mid-November through March when water temperatures cool, artificial lures such as plastic tail grubs work just as well and oftentimes better. Seatrout are basically schooling fish in areas with large quantities of dead oyster shell, or near live oyster beds. They prefer fringe areas adjacent to banks, points, jetties and bars, but are also taken in deeper channels during cold water winter periods, or along open waters of the beaches during spring and summer.

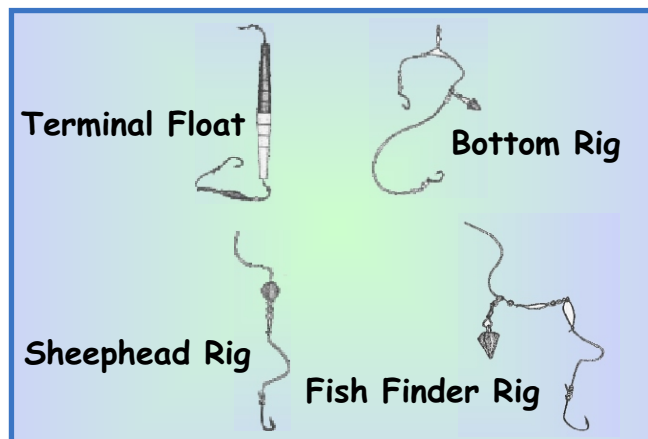
RED DRUM: (Spottail Bass): The most commonly used method for red drum fishing is a standard deep floating terminal rig baited with live or dead shrimp or small crabs. Although school-size red drum can be caught year-round in inshore estuarine waters, young-of-the-year red drum typically show up in June-August. However, fall is the best time to catch small school-size drum. Fishing for young red drum (<15 lb) employs the same basic tactics, gear, and areas used to catch spotted seatrout. In addition to shrimp and fiddler crabs, many anglers often use live finger-size mullet or mud minnows to target medium-size red drum (5 - 15 lb) found on open mud flats adjacent to large expanses of salt marsh grass. Angling for large red drum is strictly a surf fishing proposition. Surf fishing requires a long surf rod for long distance casting. Most anglers use 30 pound test monofilament line and terminal rigs consisting of 4 to 8 oz. pyramid or egg sinkers or 3 to 4 oz. storm sinkers rigged as a fish-finder rig with 7/0 to 9/0 standard hooks. However, with recent size regulations requiring the release of the large-size drum, 12/0 to 14/0 circle hooks are highly recommended. Circle hooks are self-setting which generally results in more hook-ups and the circle hook generally hooks in the mouth region thus greatly reducing "gut-caught" drum. The most popular bait is fresh-cut mullet and blue crabs for targeting large (>20 lb) red drum. Fish for large drum in the spring and fall in heavy surf near inlets.

BLACK DRUM, CROAKER and SPOT: These bottom feeders are some of the most numerous and easily caught fish and are usually taken with a "fish finder" or "bottom rig" baited with shrimp or fiddler crab. They are primarily estuarine fish, abundant in Georgia's inshore waters from April to October. Concentrations of black drum are often found near piers, docks, jetties, bridges and areas of naturally occurring oyster shell mounds. Croakers prefer sandy hard bottom while spot prefer firm mud and clay bottom.










SHEEPSHEAD: Usually found around docks, piers, jetties, and other structures encrusted with barnacles and oysters, the sheepshead is notorious for its ability to steal bait from the novice angler. The recommended sheepshead rig consists of a ½ oz. egg sinker, 8 to 10 inch leader, and 1/0 or 2/0 hook baited with a fiddler crab. Hook the fiddler by inserting the barb of the hook between the walking legs leaving the barb inside the crab. Fiddler crabs may easily be obtained by hand from marsh sand flats located along island causeways. After lowering the baited hook to the bottom next to a piling or encrusted structure, immediately take the slack out of the line and very slowly raise and lower the baited hook. The least amount of resistance or rod tip vibration should be considered a bite. After reeling in the line and only the shell of the fiddler crab remains on the hook, the angler will readily appreciate the skill of this king of bait stealers. The angler should never give up; only patience and time will provide the necessary skills to catch the elusive sheepshead.

FLOUNDER: Usually found in the more open flat bottom areas where spotted seatrout and red drum concentrate, flounder are generally caught incidentally with seatrout and red drum on standard float rigs with live shrimp. Anglers specifically targeting flounder also use bottom rigs, mud minnows, or finger-size mullet.

Guide to Coastal Georgia Fishing



COASTAL GEORGIA FISHING

SPORTFISH	HABITAT	PREFERRED RIG	PREFERRED BAIT	PEAK SEASON
 Spotted Seatrout	Oyster beds in creeks, rivers	Float rig Jigs/lures	Live shrimp	October-December
 Red Drum	Oyster beds in creeks, rivers	Float rig Bottom rig	Fiddler crabs Live or dead shrimp	October-December
 Flounder	Hard mud/shell or sand bottoms	Float rig Sheepshead rig	Live shrimp Finger mullet Live mud minnows	May-December
 Sheepshead	Barnacle encrusted pilings or similar structures	Sheepshead rig	Live fiddler crabs	All Year
 Spot	Hard clay or mud bottom in deep water	Bottom rig Sheepshead rig	Dead shrimp	March-June
 Croaker	Sandy bottom in deep water	Bottom rig Sheepshead rig	Dead shrimp	August-November
 Whiting	Sandy/dead shell bottoms in deep water	Bottom rig Sheepshead rig	Dead shrimp	April-June
 Summer Trout (Weakfish)	Sandy bottom in deep water	Sheepshead rig Bottom rig or jigs	Dead shrimp	March-September
 Black Drum	Oyster beds, pilings, submerged structures	Bottom or float rig Sheepshead rig	Live or dead shrimp Fiddler crabs	April-October