

YAKIMA BAIT KNOW-HOW REPORT

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FREE TAKE ONE!

CATCHING REDFISH FROM TOP-TO-BOTTOM

When it comes to angling for inshore saltwater species, redfish are hard to beat. They can be caught so many ways, even under the worst conditions. Through severe winter fronts to dog days of summer, redfish always seem to have an appetite.

Reds, or red drum as they're sometimes called, can be found throughout the Gulf of Mexico and along much of the Atlantic Seaboard. They're equally comfortable in salt, brackish, and even freshwater.

Redfish are extremely opportunistic—they'll feed on just about anything they can get in their mouths. And that's probably why they're America's most sought after species of saltwater gamefish.

Whether you're a beginner or seasoned pro, redfish provide some of the most consistent year-round action available. And because their diet is so diverse, they can be caught using a variety of lures and techniques.

SKINNY WATER REDS

My favorite time to fish for reds is when they're shallow—I mean super shallow—like when their backs are out of the water. When they get that skinny, fooling them becomes more of a challenge. There's something about stalking fish visually that brings added reward.

With decent water clarity, seeing them in the shallows usually isn't a problem, unless of course the skies are low and the wind is gusting—that can make sight-fishing nearly impossible. But if it's clear and there's not a lot of wind, redfish are generally easy to spot.

Depending on the water color and type of bottom they're on, redfish can glow like a shiny new penny, or they can appear completely bleached out. When they take on their signature copper color, they contrast well against just about any bottom composition. It's when they become pale that they're able to slip by undetected. And that's part of the challenge—learning to spot them under varying light levels and water conditions.

Movement can help. Redfish displace considerable amounts of water as they swim through the shallows, especially in schools. So watching for "pushes" or wakes can really pay off. As singles or small groups push across a flat, intercepting them at the right angle, with the right bait, almost guarantees success.

When they "tail" or root along the bottom in the shallows, they're vulnerable to a number of lures and techniques. Topwaters, spoons, jigs, spinnerbaits, small plugs, and flies can score here. But more important



There are lots of effective techniques for catching redfish ranging from bait to lures but spinnerbaits, like Hildebrandt's Drum Roller are tough to beat.

than lure selection is a stealthy presentation. Delivering the lure quietly from a safe distance will increase your odds significantly.

Not every situation will be the same. When it's flat calm, a jighead-grub combo or a fly are frequently the best choices. Simply get the lure to them without them knowing it and hang on! They'll usually find and take the bait without reservation.

If it's windy and you're unsure of the fish's exact location, that's when a spinnerbait or spoon will shine. Try fan-casting the general area, but make sure your delivery is subtle and quiet. During the retrieve, keep the rod tip up and gradually lower it as the lure approaches. Bring the lure through the strike zone at varying speeds, at least until the fish react positively. They'll usually let you know their preference.

When redfish are aggressive, they'll respond to just about any rate of retrieve. When they're sluggish, however, a slower retrieve may be required.

Either scenario is perfect for the new redfish spinnerbait made by Hildebrandt®, the Drum Roller™. Because its head is molded with pure tin, it's lighter by volume than lead—which means this lure can be kept high in the water column at ultra-slow speeds, without having to reduce its overall size or profile. That's a huge plus when you're fishing less than two feet of water.



Hildebrandt's Drum Roller spinnerbait is an ideal choice for shallow water redfish.

Redfish cruising over oyster bars or through flooded spartina grass are ideal for the Drum Roller, or even a small buzzbait like the 1/4-ounce HeadBanger™ (yes, redfish love buzzbaits and they rarely see them, which can make them all the more effective).

REDS ON THE RUN

When redfish spook and scatter from the boat, they can still be caught. It just takes the right lure and presentation to make them bite. Many of my best catches have come after blowing out a school. Either redfish have extremely short memories or their desire to feed is so overpowering they'll bite even on the run.

What works best for me is to plan my cast so that the lure, once pre-



If water levels are on the fall redfish often retreat to deeper water haunts.

sented, can be retrieved slightly ahead of the fish in the direction it's traveling, as if it were leading the fish. The idea is to let them find the lure as it's moving away, like prey attempting to escape.

Obviously, the ideal casting angle won't always present itself, but when it does, try this presentation. I've made it work on just about every shallow water species I've sight-fished for.

In situations where I spook a really large school, the fish will usually break up into smaller groups. That's when I try to single out those that can be intercepted with the right casting angle. Remember, a stealthy presentation with the right movements of the lure, and you'll increase your odds tremendously. Just make sure the fish finds the bait.

DEEPWATER TACTICS

When redfish retreat to deeper water—say four feet or more—it's usually due to falling water levels, harsh weather conditions, or excessive boat traffic. Depending on the reason, catching them can be easy or extremely difficult.

A variety of lures could potentially work, like small crankbaits, jerkbaits, and jighead-grubs. It's also when I like to slow-roll the Drum Roller through the water column.

The first few casts will tell me a lot. If the fish are suspended, they'll usually eat the lure as it falls, or as it travels laterally through mid-range depths. If the fish are holding on the bottom, then I make sure to reach them with my presentation, regardless of lure selection. The colder or more stained the water, the slower I fish.

When redfish retreat into holes in tidal creeks, canals, and channels, finding them could reveal a mother lode. Reds are highly social and their schools can number in the hundreds. Offshore anglers sometimes spot giant schools of mature reds traveling on the surface well away from the coastline. Their numbers are so great the water will take on a shimmering, brassy-red appearance. Find one of these giant, nomadic schools and you're in for an angling experience of a lifetime.



Remember, topwaters, jerkbaits, spoons, and jighead-grubs can all fool a redfish. But don't forget a spinnerbait like the Drum Roller. They're easy to fish and they cover tremendous amounts of water quickly and efficiently—plus they have the ability to draw fish from a distance.

TACKLE SELECTION

When skies are bright and the fish are happy, try the Drum Roller in variations of gold and silver. When light levels are low, go with copper or black-nickel. Hildebrandt's color-coordinated selection offers a spectrum of options to accommodate every angling situation.

Whether you prefer spinning or baitcasting equipment, I recommend throwing the Drum Roller on a 6 1/2' to 7' medium-heavy rod with 14 to 17-pound mono or fluorocarbon, or braid in excess of 20-pounds. Spinnerbait fishing is power fishing, so forget about light line and wimpy rods.

Nowadays, most knowledgeable anglers prefer braid when throwing spinnerbaits for redfish. Why? Several reasons: Braid is stronger and it doesn't coil from memory like most clear lines. It also casts well. Yeah, braid isn't cheap. But when you consider the fact that one spool can last an entire season, perhaps it's actually a better value.

Regardless of your line preference, be sure your equipment is balanced and stout enough to handle the rigors of saltwater fishing. Redfish, especially bull-size reds, can push your tackle to its limits. So don't compromise.

Wherever you find them, redfish are a great source of angling pleasure. They're abundant and rewarding to catch. So tie on a Drum Roller and follow these tips. I'm confident you'll be slaying the reds in no time.



Bernie Schultz – An accomplished bass pro with a long history fishing B.A.S.S. and FLW events, Bernie has qualified for the Bassmasters Classic 8 times and 5 FLW Championships. He's also equally adept in saltwater having fished several light tackle saltwater events and the Redbone Series for Cystic Fibrosis. Bernie works closely with Hildebrandt as a lure designer and pro-staff member.

Be sure to adjust the Drum Roller color you're using to mimic the feed, water and weather conditions.



For more Yakima Bait Know-How please visit yakimabait.com
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