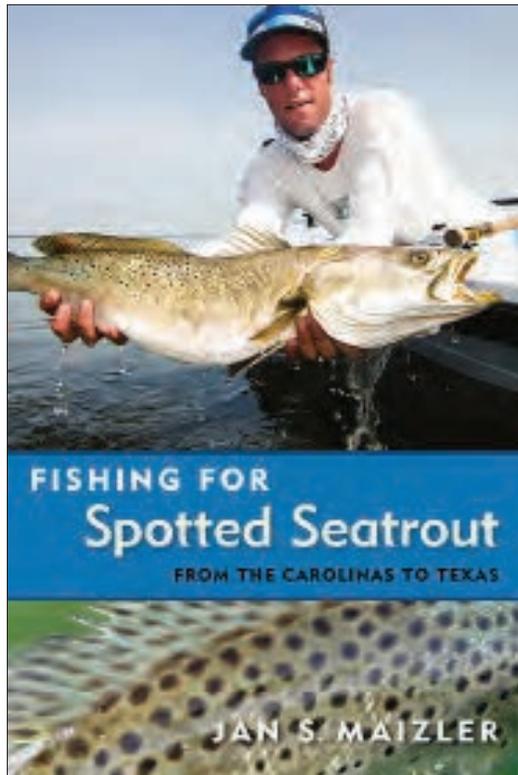


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“Beginners and experienced fishermen will find Jan Maizler’s in-depth assessment of spotted seatrout a valuable resource. From seatrout habit, to seatrout habitat, to state-by-state seatrout fishing techniques, Maizler covers everything anyone needs to know with regards to becoming a successful angler for this popular species.”

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FISHING FOR SPOTTED SEATROUT
From the Carolinas to Texas
JAN S. MAIZLER

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128 pp., 34 b/w illus.
UNIVERSITY PRESS OF FLORIDA - SEPTEMBER 2014



Author, therapist, and world traveler, **JAN MAIZLER** specializes in writing about human potential, exotic angling travel, and technical light-tackle fishing. Jan is a veteran psychotherapist and has been practicing in Miami for thirty years. He has written numerous articles on human behavior and is the author of *Griefwork Transformation*, *The Transformation Handbook*, and *The Relationship Handbook*. Jan has been fishing in saltwater since 1962. He is a past IGFA world record holder for bonefish on two-pound test line (8 pounds, 4 ounces) and permit on four-pound test line (23 pounds, 15 ounces). He has caught and released over two thousand bonefish and one thousand tarpon during his angling career.

In 1977 he published his first flats fishing book, *Flats Fishing*. Since then, he has written eight books, including *Flats Fishing II: A Shoalwater Handbook*, *Fishing Florida's Coast*, and *Fishing Tips, Tales, and Travels*. His previous book with the University Press of Florida is *Fishing Florida's Flats: A Guide to Bonefish, Tarpon, Permit, and Much More*.

Jan is the travel blogger for BassPro1Source.com. He writes and is a photo contributor for Sport Fishing Magazine and BassPro Outdoor Site Library and has written articles for many other fishing magazines. On Facebook, he produces and hosts two pages: Jan Maizler and Jan's Fishing Florida's Flats. He also sells scenic and angling photographs on Fine Art America and on his Web site, www.flatsfishingonline.com.

Jan is an active member of the Florida Outdoor Writer's Association (FOWA) and the Southeast Outdoor Press Association (SEOPA).

JAN S. MAIZLER
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Q & A with

JAN S. MAIZLER

author of

Fishing for Spotted Sea Trout

From the Carolinas to Texas

How did you first develop a love for fishing?

My father moved to Miami Beach during the 1950's hotel building boom. We settled on South Beach, only a few blocks from both the Atlantic Ocean and Biscayne Bay. By the time I was ten years old, I was catching snappers, ladyfish, jacks, and pompano from these waters and the rest is history.

You're a former International Game Fish Association world-record holder, and you've caught so many varieties of fish. Why did you decide to write a guide for specifically catching spotted seatrout? What made this fish stand out?

If you did a survey on inshore saltwater fish popularity from the Carolinas to Texas, it's quite possible the spotted seatrout would top that fishy totem. Since I'm a light tackle inshore angling and travel writer, this statistic convinced me to write a guidebook that would reach and teach the greatest numbers of present, and more importantly, future shallow water marine anglers in this wide swath of habitat.

How is your day structured when you write? What's your writing routine?

After I see my psychotherapy patients and my other obligations are fulfilled, I set my sights on writing. After having nine books and maybe a thousand articles published, I've found the quiet hours of the night the best time to reflect on ideas, theories, and sheer factual content and write about it. Interestingly, I've never had a dry or blocked period in my career.

From all of your fishing experience, what is your favorite fish to catch and where?

If you forgive the conundrum, I have many favorites. Because of my love of hunting for and sightcasting to shallow water game fish, I have a forty plus years romance with bonefish, tarpon, permit, snook, redfish, and of course, “laid-up” or tailing gator seatrout.

What’s your most exciting or awe-inspiring fishing story?

It is definitely the conquest of my IGFA world record permit: 23 pounds, 15 ounces on four-pound test line. This silvery gladiator fought a long and crafty battle over a vast field of coral-topped flats and rock strewn channels. The struggle lasted over an hour and my success was equally due to Captain Frank Garisto’s skillful boat handling in chasing down the permit and keeping my line as straight up and down as we could. Kudos to all!

What are you currently reading?

I continue to write far more than I read. At present, the latter consists of reviewing current events and world politics each day for about thirty minutes.

Who are your favorite authors, and how have they influenced or informed your own work?

My favorite author is Vladimir Nabokov for sheer genius of wordplay. And then, there would be Faulkner. But for the kind of didactic (fishing) or insight-based (psychotherapy) writing I do, my actual clinical experience is the well I draw from.

You’ve written several books as a fisherman and a few as a therapist. What are you working on next?

My plans call for writing a book exploring the notion that much of our behavior is governed by ideas, beliefs, and decisions we’ve made about life all the while being almost entirely unaware of these influences because of the sugar coating we apply to get through each day. I feel this is a far broader conception than Freud’s idea of repression of impulses and memories being “sent” to the unconscious mind. For now, these are just cobbled sketches stuffed in my muse’s pocket and subject to revision.

What’s the first piece of advice you would give to beginners hoping to catch a spotted seatrout?

Honestly, to read *Fishing for Spotted Seatrout*.



Fishing for Spotted Seatrout

From the Carolinas to Texas

JAN MAIZLER

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Drifting

The two basic ingredients of drifting are a decent breeze and a vessel with enough profile to catch that breeze, which would include walled paddlecraft, skiffs, and bay boats. The most appropriate application of this method is to explore wide expanses of big flats with no deliberate focus area. It is a form of exploration by breeze that allows fishing from both sides of a vessel.

Since the drift is by wind power, there is no need for the use of trout-spooking combustion or electric motors except to reposition the vessel. If your boat is drifting unevenly, a small sea anchor will do the trick to eliminate this.



Drifting for seatrout helped land this specimen and, as a method, can be quite productive.

If your drift takes you into fish, throw out a marker buoy attached to a line and sinker. This way you'll have an idea where the feeding trout are grouped. The problem with stopping the boat too soon with a mechanical or metal anchor is that even more fish may be lying downwind. It's far better to wait until the fish stop striking and then either paddle or motor at low rpm well around and upwind of your marked area and drift back into it.

One problem with drifting is the chance of your vessel going over the trout and spooking them with the large overhead shadow of the hull. If you are casting artificial baits basically downwind, you will have made presentations to the fish long before the pressure wave or hull shadow of your vessel reaches them.

But if you are using the “double-fish” method I employ—simultaneously fishing suspended baits on the windward side while throwing lures downwind—you may be fishing troutless water with bait if you've just drifted over it. There's a remedy for this. The way to adjust your windward drifting baits like popping corks, shrimp, and simple mullet or pin-fish strips is to fish the baits very far from the boat. If your presentations are one hundred feet away from the boat, the time span before your offering arrives may allow previously spooked trout to regroup or else be pulled back in by the sounds of the popping cork. With this long line presentation, it is essential to use a stiff graphite rod and braided line to pop a cork or set a hook so far from the boat.

If I'm fishing alone, I'll set the windward rod in one of the center console vertical rod holders while I cast downwind with a lure. If I'm using a bait like a mullet strip, I'll fish the bait rod with an open bail and wrap a very soft piece of copper wire to act as a finger that holds the line on the drift but releases it when a strike comes. When I use a popping cork

on the windward rod, I'll fish it with a closed bail (obviously), and after I retrieve my lure from the other rod, I'll pull the bait rod out of the holder, pop it twice, and replace it in its upright position.

When casting artificial baits in any direction from a drifting boat propelled by brisk winds, always be sure to factor in the wind, as it affects the retrieve style and speed of your presentation. Simply put, in high winds, if you cast a plastic jig downwind, retrieve it faster. If you cast it upwind, retrieve it more slowly. If you cast your jig across the wind, reel the belly out of your line right away or you will miss many trout strikes. Blind casting over shallow grassflats without any particular target can be very productive on some cloudy, breezy days.

Focused Casting from a Poled, Paddled, or Stopped Vessel

This technique involves using human propulsion, via push-pole or paddle, toward any sighted seatrout or trout-holding area, like a grassflat pothole, and then casting to it. Unlike nature-powered drifting across large flats, this method is based on targeted efforts toward areas which include holes in the flat, mini-cuts in the flats, drop-offs, oyster reefs, sizzling and dimpling bait schools, mullet muds (dealt with later), and individual gator trout spotted laid-up, cruising, or, rarely, breaking the surface.

Once you approach and cast to a specific area, you are no longer blind casting and have *some* target in mind. Perhaps it's a matter of semantics, but blind casting refers to random casting basically everywhere to "cover water." Focused casting can be more productive than blind casting. Casting to a target spot, not a fish, is best done in the fan cast manner, which means using incrementally around-the-clock angles



Casting with surface plugs over target spots is a mainstay technique in Florida.

of presentation until you reach 180 degrees of worked water. Targets like potholes lend themselves quite well to focused fan casting.

Spotting individual seatrout and casting to them is far less successful than focused casting to likely areas. But when you do spot a big seatrout in the shallows, adhere to the same casting rules for all flats fishing: make the presentation far enough in front of the fish to not spook it but close enough for the fish to see it. And remember, the shallower and calmer the water, the longer the lead should be.

Moving along and casting to targets is best done with lures and flies. The governing rules here are focusing on unspooked, less-pressured waters, searching out productive targets and fish, and then covering the entire water column

with lure and flies so you obtain the right holding and striking depth for the seatrout. Covering the water column is done by finding the right kind and weight of lure and, for flies, the right sink rate and kind of fly line.

If your target is baitfish schools, try to match the hatch and probe the water column on the periphery of the bait, not through them. Your flies should be convincing and enticing. I respond to depth change requirements around baitfish by using outfits featuring a floating line or a sink tip line. I also follow the bait by varying the sink rate of flies by choosing items either with or without weighted eyes.

If you are using lures like a weighted soft plastic jig, you can control the operating depth by choosing the right jighead design and weight; and you can control the kind of retrieve you are employing by varying the retrieve ratio of the reel, your hand speed, and the rod tip action. When you use plugs, your depth is more determined by plug type, be it the floating, suspension, or lipped swimming variety.

Focused casting means moving from target to target, making your presentation and then moving on. My personal approach is of course dictated by conditions. If the day is cloudy and somewhat breezy with bait schools, this will be my focus and I'll begin with small topwater plugs. If I do not get a strike, I'll change to a small soft plastic replica minnow bait and work the lure deeper. In bright, hot conditions with no bait, I'll target potholes and fish them deeply with soft plastic shrimp-colored jigs.

If you are focus fishing with a companion, each angler should cover new water, using different lures or flies at different depths and with different retrieves to maximize results.

It is theoretically possible to cast live or dead baits at specific targets. However, the repeated casting required in this technique beats up natural baits—especially live bait. And if

you are there for any length of time, you'll basically be still fishing from an anchored boat. This is a technique treated in another section of this chapter.

Poling and Casting to Sighted Fish with Teaser Tactics

Over the years, I developed another secret technique that had me catching and releasing more gator trout than I did fishing with lures or flies alone. Basically, I adapted the offshore method of bait-and-switch fishing by luring in a sailfish with a trolled bonito strip and replacing it with a cast fly. I reasoned that even in a non-trolling situation like casting to sighted seatrout, there was no reason that dragging a shapely pinfish strip or plug well in front of a gator wouldn't arouse it into a more striking mood. My choice of pinfish bait teaser comes from the knowledge that the big gators seem to prefer fish over shrimp in their diet.



Presentation of a pinfish teaser to a sighted gator may make it more likely to strike a fly or lure cast immediately after the teaser is withdrawn.