

SW FLORIDA FISHING

'Baby, it's cold outside'

■ BY CAPT. SANDY MELVIN

"Baby it's cold outside" was the theme for fishing leading up to Christmas Day last week, making our local fishing a little tough.

Fortunately, we saw a steady warming trend after that massive cold front and the fishing has begun to pick up. Especially in the afternoons.

It didn't take long for our backcountry fish to realize we have left the fall fishing patterns behind. They have quickly shifted their focus to winter habits, away from chasing baitfish around to grubbing along the bottom. Consider using shrimp or cut ladyfish as the better bait choice the next few weeks.

Redfish, trout and sheepshead have been your best bet around the flats. You'll likely find snook in the deeper waters with these cooler water temperatures, mainly the protected canals, creeks and rivers.

Last week on trips with the Shaw gang we were fortunate enough to run into a good bunch of redfish and sheepshead in the backcountry and all the kids earned their redfish pins.

The offshore fishing reports were slim last week with the cold and winds, but as things settle down, the Gulf fishing should pick right back up.

Enjoy our great fishing!



■ The Shaw gang, brothers Jono (above) with boys William and Harris and Goeff (below) with daughters Maddie and Hannah and brother Colton, shows off all the redfish they caught and released. Above has Capt. Sandy and the boys with a sheepshead.



Capt. Sandy Melvin is a local fishing guide and is the proprietor of Gasparilla Outfitters. He can be reached at 941-964-0907, or on the web at 4tarpon.com

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