

## Trout transition is here



**John E. Phillips**

Trout are in transition this month, but once you figure out the daily key you can boat some nice fish.

John E. Phillips - April 10, 2014

“When the wind doesn’t blow, we’ve gotta go,” Tom Marzoni of Gotta Geaux Charters said.

Marzoni is a proponent of knowing where speckled trout go every day, which is tricky during March and early April — a transition period for the fish. They’re leaving their deep water haunts and the brackish river water feeding the marshes and heading for the Gulf of Mexico.

To find these tricky trout, keep an eye on temperature and water salinity. Trout, much like freshwater bass, won’t move to the areas where they’ll spawn until conditions are perfect.

Marzoni, who has been fishing the Mississippi Gulf Coast for 40 years and has guided since 2008, explains the annual migration.

“All winter long, the speckled trout hold in low-salinity waters,” he said. “As the spawn approaches, they move out of the marshes and rivers to salty water, following the shrimp.”

The speckled trout make their first stop on the outer edges of the marshes and passes. Marzoni names Nine Mile Pass, Three Mile Pass, Elephant Pass, Creole Gap, Brown Pass and all the major passes in the Biloxi marsh as favorites to fish in April.

Marzoni said trout will be holding on islands and any shoreline with a hard bottom, underwater bars, points and oyster-shell bottoms, which warm up quicker than mud bottoms and thereby appeal to the spawn-ready trout.

A MirrOdine and a Zara Spook are Marzoni’s baits of choice when he’s searching for schooling trout.

“I like a bone-colored Zara Spook and a black-backed, green-sided MirrOdine to locate a school of trout early in the morning,” Marzoni said.

Once he’s found a school, he switches over to soft-plastics and fishes very shallow under a popping cork.

“The April fishing really depends on the weather in March,” Marzoni said.

He fishes every windless day in March to try to keep up with the trout. Then when April rolls around, he'll know exactly where to fish.

"In early March, the trout will be holding on what I call the intermediary marsh — the little grass islands and banks just outside the thick marsh," Marzoni said. "They're more likely to hang up there for a few weeks after a real cold winter to let the water temperature in the passes and on the oyster reefs heat up."

If specks hang up for a couple of weeks due to cold water, he'll stay in the marsh with them for about two weeks. The trout migration to the Gulf of Mexico usually starts in March and finishes the second or third week of April, depending on the weather.

"I've caught some of the biggest trout of my life during April," Marzoni said. "Those big sow trout have been holding and feeding in the rivers and marshes all winter long, fattening up for the spawn, which will occur as soon as the water temperature reaches 60 degrees."

"Twenty years ago, I caught a 7-pound trout in 3 feet of water in April on an island in the intermediary area of the marsh."

Combine 60-degree water and salinity of 12 to 15 parts per thousand, and you're looking at great trout conditions that will produce a limit with three to four trout that will weigh 3 to 4 pounds. The rest of the trout will weigh from 1 to 2 pounds.

The closer you get to the spawn, the more likely you'll be to catch a limit of 2- to 3-pound trout. The best time to fish for trout is five days before and after a full moon.

Once Marzoni locates a school of trout, he fishes with a jig and grub.

"I like the Matrix grubs with a paddle tail in opening night and avocado," he said. "After a dark night, I'll use the avocado with a red-flake jig. If I'm fishing on a clear day with no clouds, I'll fish an opening night grub."

Marzoni's line of choice is 30-pound PowerPro weighted line, with 30-pound-test Berkley Big Game monofilament leader. If he's using a popping cork, he prefers a 2-foot leader. When he's throwing surface lures, he attaches 4 feet of monofilament line to his braided main line with an Albright knot so he can reel the knots through the guides of his rod.

## **Redfish**

Along with trout, Marzoni and his customers also will catch plenty of redfish.

"I have a few customers who just want to catch redfish, so I take them into the ponds and marshes, where there'll be thousands of slot reds," Marzoni said. "We catch our redfish on the same lures on which we catch our trout."

## **April flounder**

“Fish the mouth of the Rigolets, the main passes feeding Lake Pontchartrain,” Marzoni said about targeting flounder.

He puts in at Bayou Caddy and fishes both Mississippi and Louisiana waters. From there, Rigolets Pass is only about a 20-minute drive. This distance makes for an easy fishing day.

And if you catch your limit of specks and reds in the morning, you still have time to run to the Rigolets and take flounder.

“We’ve caught some huge 5- to 8-pound flounders at the Rigolets,” Marzoni said. “When I’m fishing for flounder, I swim a Berkley Gulp! shrimp on a jighead just off the bottom.”

When he’s fishing for flounder, he’s still using 30-pound PowerPro line with a 30-pound monofilament leader.

And there could be another option this month.

“If April’s a hot month, we may see a few tripletails, but May is really the month when we spot large numbers of tripletail,” Marzoni said. “The water temperature has to be about 80 degrees before the tripletails will start coming in from offshore.”

You can call Marzoni at 601-270-2187 or follow him at [www.facebook.com/gottageauxcharters](http://www.facebook.com/gottageauxcharters).