

SPECKLED TROUT

First of all, speckled trout are closely related to weakfish, redfish and croakers...and they are not a member of the trout family at all. This is important information any serious fishermen must be aware of when asking the questions, "Where do I find them?", and "What makes them bite?"

You'll find them in all inshore waters from the gulf coast of Mexico, over to Florida, and up the coast to Virginia. They hang out in grassy flats, estuaries, bayous and bays.

Their food sources include squid, mullet, crabs, and other small baitfish. Their favorite food? Shrimp.

Getting some ideas on how to catch them yet? I've only just begun.

You can catch them with any of the baits above, and there are some lures that work as well.

The next thing you need to know about the habits of a speckled trout is they spend their entire life in the same area. They do not migrate at all. Once you find them, as long as a spot is not overfished, you can catch them in the same spots through the years and decades.

Spawning time is from May to July, and this is when they are most active for feeding. They will also spawn multiple times during this range.

Here are some speckled trout fishing techniques that have proven to work well:

1. Drift Fishing

Drift your boat over sandy flats, oyster beds, rocky bottoms, and wrecks. I recommend using a double "jig rig". Use split-tail grubs, soft plastic minnows, or a combination of both.

2. Bottom Fishing

Bait a Kahle hook with live shrimp (you can also use baitfish like menhaden, pogies, or croakers). Use a Carolina Rig with a light weight to get the bait down, but allow it to swim as naturally as possible.

Use this rig in open water or inland bays.

3. Surf Fishing and Wading

These are very popular methods for fishing speckled trout, and they lend themselves to fly fishing as well.

You want to fish in the "guts" of the surf...the dips between the sandbars off the beaches...especially during high tides.

Do NOT wade into the guts. Stand atop the sandbars and cast INTO the guts. You don't want to disturb these areas.

If you see a flock of birds in the water, get ready.

Speckled trout and other predators are tearing through bait fish, and the birds are picking up the scraps. Get into position, and cast right into the fray.

If you're going to try some lures, try these: Johnson spoons, Zara Spooks, bucktail jigs, and Mirro Lures.

Finally, I highly recommend fishing for speckled trout in the winter. You'll find them in slightly deeper water in estuaries, bayous, inland marshes, bays, and canals. Live shrimp is best during this time. The bites will be lighter as well...so set your hook when you feel any resistance at all.

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