



2009 Jacksonville Kayak Fishing Classic

Another Record Turnout!

IF you're not well aware of the increasing popularity of kayak fishing, brother you're missing the 'yak! Across the entire country more and more anglers are purchasing kayaks to fill their saltwater fix, and this was clearly evident at the record breaking sixth annual Jacksonville Kayak Fishing Classic. With 430 anglers targeting the fertile inshore watershed of Jacksonville in search of redfish, trout and flounder, this catch-photo-release charity event raised over \$43,000. With more than 100 sponsors and thousands of dollars in prizes and giveaways, this eco-friendly tournament not only attracted area residents but anglers from California, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Texas, and states all along the eastern seaboard.

Staff Report

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2009 Jacksonville Kayak Fishing Classic



Jacksonville, home to Florida's First Coast, has always been known for its outstanding inshore action. With over 400-miles of river, intracoastal waterways (ICW), creeks, and backwaters, Jacksonville has as diverse of an inshore fishery as any location in the state. Combine this unique fishery with numerous access points and pleasant weather year-round, and you have what's arguably the best kayak venue in the entire country. What makes this area so special is the wide gamut of tidal conditions, available species and unique waterways.

For tournament director Mike Kogan the idea of a kayak fishing tournament emerged from visitors to his website. "After launching www.jaxkayakfishing.com in 2004, members of the online community thought it would be a good idea to have a fishing tournament strictly limiting participation to kayak anglers. Our inaugural event was held in April 2005 and drew an impressive 100



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anglers. The second event was in October 2005, back when we were foolish enough to think we could have more than one event a year. The October tournament hosted 170 anglers and the now annual event has since been tagged *The worlds*

Without noisy motors, several anglers can effectively fish the same area without spooking each other's quarry.

largest kayak fishing tournament. The 2008 event had 340 participants and we thought that was it. We kept telling ourselves that it couldn't possibly get any bigger, and yet this year we had over 400 anglers! We were overwhelmed at the incredible turnout – even in these challenging economic times participation from anglers and sponsors points to continued strong growth for kayak fishing."

The 2009 Classic was led by the title sponsorship of Columbia Sportswear, whose focus on products that allow people to enjoy the outdoors more com-



Anglers of all ages and skill levels come together to compete in this charitable and eco-friendly event.

fortably was a perfect match for kayak fishing. According to Columbia Sportswear VP of Global Sales Mitch Fields, "Our high performance Blood & Guts line is ideal for kayak anglers who are on the water all day – they get UPF protection up to 50 with Omni Shade technology, venting for comfort and cooling, and a performance fabric which repels and releases stains."

Other industry leaders such as Hobie Kayaks, Malibu Kayaks, Wilderness Systems, Ocean Kayaks, Shimano, Pure Fishing, and Costa Del Mar joined Columbia in supporting the 2009 Classic. The family-oriented event also pulled together many of Northeast Florida's kayak and fishing retailers led by Strike-Zone Fishing, Black Creek Outfitters, Gander Mountain, All Wet Sports, West Marine, and Dick's Sporting Goods.

"The great efforts of our volunteers and the kayak fishing community, combined with the generosity of our terrific

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sponsors, made this event an unqualified success – and the fishing was sensational!" Continued Kogan.

The beauty of this event is that it allows participating anglers to choose where they want to fish, targeting any inshore waterway located in Duval, St. Johns, Nassau, Flagler, Camden and Glynn Counties. This includes the St. Johns River, ICW, and associated creeks, ponds, and backwaters. Anglers can utilize any form of natural or artificial offering and the environmental-

ly friendly event uses CPR (catch-photo-release) scoring and uniform measuring devices, as well as unique scoring tokens to verify catches.

In the 2008 event, Captain Roger Bump of Jacksonville, FL claimed the top prize in the redfish-trout-flounder slam division with his winning 65.5-inch slam. Bump's winning plan for 2008 involved pulling and re-launching his kayak three times and fishing the Buckman Bridge, Dunn's Creek and Clapboard Creek to win the slam. His efforts didn't go unnoticed, as his first place finish won him a fully rigged Hobie Mirage Pro Angler kayak.


This year, Captain Bump targeted his efforts solely in Mill Cove. Bump tells us that the trout are always key to racking up points in this tournament, as well as the toughest to entice. He targeted trout first thing in the morning and caught a healthy female on a Rapala topwater plug. "There were some serious trout caught today, and I really think it's a kayak thing. There was another tourna-



Emerging victorious, Sarah Carpenter proved kayak fishing isn't only a man's sport.

that was good for a Viking ProFish kayak. Luke Shaw topped the junior angler category and expecting mother Sarah Carpenter

was the top lady angler. Gus Bianchi took senior angler honors, and Russell Fissette was top fly angler. His red on fly also landed him fifth place in the redfish division.

It comes as no surprise that the Jacksonville Kayak Fishing Classic is as popular as it is. For a \$60 entry fee anglers get rights to fish in the event, raffle tickets, a captain's bag worth close to \$80, a catered meal at the captain's meeting and a BBQ at the check-in. In addition to all of the free food and good times, anglers get the chance to save some fuel, get some exercise and swap fish tales with fellow fishermen. As a kayak angler what else could you ask for? Proceeds from Jacksonville's premier eco-tourism event benefit children's programs for abused and neglected kids at Daniel Memorial, Florida's oldest children's services agency, and the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation. For complete results and information on how to participate in the 2010 event contact Mike Kogan by visiting www.jaxkayakfishing.com. 

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ment out there (motorized vessels) and they didn't produce numbers nearly as impressive as we did.” Bump continued.

Bump's winning trio consisted of a 27-inch redfish, a 26-inch trout and a 16.7-inch flounder, totaling a whopping 69.7-inches. It beat his previous record of 65.5-inches, and according to tournament director Mike Kogan, it's the first time in the event's history that anyone has won two slams, let alone back-to-back!

Bump was closely followed by Jacksonville's Robert Murray with 65.75-inches. Erick Bell, a member of *Team Wilderness*

Systems from Concord, NC, won the trout division with a personal best 27.65-inch stud gator trout. In an outstanding display of generosity and sportsmanship Mr. Bell donated his first place prize Ocean Kayak Trident to the Daniel Kids Foundation to raise more funds for Florida's oldest children's services organization.

Top redfish honors went to Jacksonville's John Chapman with a 30.2-inch red, earning him a well-deserved Malibu Stealth kayak. Leading the way in the flounder category was Chuck Ray of Neptune Beach, FL with a 21.6-inch doormat