

FROM THE HELM

THE **PGI FISHING CLUB** IS A PART OF THE
PUNTA GORDA ISLES CIVIC ASSOCIATION (PGICA)

JANUARY 2026



By **FRED DEMELLA**

Happy New Year! The days are getting longer and that means more time for fishing! The cooler water temperatures create unique fishing opportunities. Even if you are an experienced angler, joining the PGI Fishing Club will help you catch more by learning from local fishermen how to exploit these opportunities.

The variety of species available in this area means that no matter the season something is always biting! Learning the various methods of catching these species is why joining the PGI Fishing Club is a great option. Our membership includes fishermen who are experienced in catching all kinds of fish including inshore and offshore species. By joining, you not only gain access to the expertise of many anglers, but can enjoy the fun and camaraderie of fishing with other members. Don't have a boat? Many members have boats to get you there and the knowledge to help target species to make your angling experience great.

The Fishing Club's Ladder of Achievement is a great way to challenge yourself. The Ladder is a prescribed goal to catch the many different species available in the area along with points for notable size fish. It is a fun way to track your development towards the goal of Grand Master Angler and meet new friends.

When PGIFC members aren't fishing, preparing for fishing, or cleaning up from fishing, we enjoy a variety social activities. We have monthly meetings to explore various topics and fishing news. Fish of the month contest is a fun way to target species you may not have fished for before and prizes are awarded. There are friendly fishing contests with prizes for designated catches. We also have special events like Holiday parties, picnics, weekly happy hours and other fun gatherings. Some club members actually go on fishing trips outside the area. Trips planned this year include the Florida Keys, and Venice, Louisiana.

If any of this piques your interest, please join us. We meet the second Tuesday of the month (except January, July and December in 2026) at the PGI Civic Association at 18:00; all are welcome to attend a meeting. Another way to familiarize yourself with the Fishing Club is to attend our weekly happy hour, currently at The Elks Lodge Tiki on Wednesdays at 17:00 to hear about all the fishing stories and make plans to fish.

Coming Up: Holiday Party! Tuesday January 13 , 5:00 to 10:00 p.m. at the Punta Gorda Isles Yacht Club. Register Right Away!

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FISHING REPORT For DECEMBER

By: FRED DE MELLA

Offshore:

Despite the shorter light cycle, some of the fleet's offshore trips have been good. Red Grouper are cooperating and limits are common. Fish are eating both live Pinfish and "Squirrels" as well as cut bait and Squid. Most fish have been caught in the 120 foot depth. The Snapper bite seems to have cooled a bit. It is likely that they may have moved into shallower water. No Red Snapper was reported to our club recently, but Lane and Vermillion Snapper are available with some Mangrove showing sporadically. Remember Red Snapper is now closed.

Along with the grouper, some mixed bags including Barracuda, Shark and Amberjack have been reported.

Remember to have a descending plan for those fish that don't meet the minimum size limit for harvest. The best method is to actually descend the fish using one of the descending devices. By law, you must have this equipment on board and use it. Also note that Grouper are not the only fish that require descending, Red and Lane Snapper caught at depth will also experience barotrauma.

Inshore:

Tarpon were still hanging around through most of December. Fish have been caught in the pass as well as in the Harbor. A good bet is that the Tarpon are not likely to be around until the spring.

The short days and cooler weather has reduced the water temperature. Although Spotted Sea Trout can be caught year round here, the bite may have cooled a bit. The difficult thing about catching Trout is finding good grass beds. Find the grass, find the Trout. They may be a little harder to catch on artificial bait this time of year, but shrimp and cut bait under a popping cork should get 'em.

Snook are still being caught especially in the canals where the water is warmer. Live bait is most effective but lures worked slowly can also be productive. Target the structure for best chance to catch one. Snook is closed for harvest.

Looking forward in 2026 the fish that is least affected by cooler water is the Sheepshead. January's Fish of the Month is Sheep so hit the structure for a chance to win a gift card! Having a boat is NOT mandatory to target Sheepshead as they tend to hang near structure. Fishing from docks and bridges can be very productive. Most fish are caught using shrimp, but mollusks and crustaceans are also great bait. Actually even worms work! I like a #2 circle hook and remember, if you feel the bite, you missed him!

FISH of the MONTH

JANUARY: SHEEPSHEAD



FEBRUARY: GROUPER



MARCH: SPANISH MACKEREL



APRIL: SNOOK



MAY: COBIA



JUNE: JACK CREVALLE



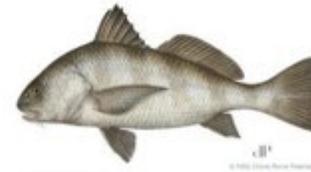
JULY: SHARK



AUGUST: TARPON



SEPTEMBER: BLACK DRUM



OCTOBER: REDFISH



NOVEMBER: MANGROVE SNAPPER



DECEMBER: SPOTTED SEA TROUT

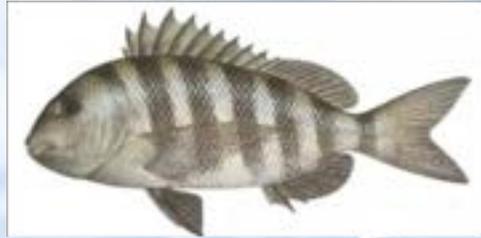


Fine Print: See "Fish of the Month Contest Rules" here: <http://pgifishingclub.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Fish-of-the-Month-Contest-Rules-Rev-7-021220.pdf>

Fish of the Month For DECEMBER

Location, Description, Tips, Tackle and Bait

SHEEPSHEAD



Identification:

- Sheepshead can be confused with smaller black drum. They both have white and black stripes.
- The biggest difference is their teeth; sheepshead have teeth that resemble molars. Sheepshead also have a continuous dorsal fin vs split with the black drum.
- Black drum also have “whiskers” on the bottom of their mouth as they feed on or off the bottom.

Locations:

- Any place where there are crustaceans; look for structure.
- Near shore reefs, any pilings with barnacles, reefs in the harbor, and mangroves.
- Interesting note (at least to me), I have seen nice size sheepshead following schools of mullet. Makes sense as sheepshead are feeding on crustaceans that come off the sandy bottom with mullet (like redfish do).

Technique:

- Need a sensitive rod to feel the nibbles. The bite is soft, keep the line tight, and a finger on the line helps too. Don't set the hook until you feel the fish has committed. They are known to strip your hook clean and it can be frustrating.
- Mangrove crabs, fiddler crabs, and small shrimp on a small strong hook will work. They have a small mouth.
- They bend the rod given their slim bodies and broad tail; nice fight given their size.

Misc:

- A very clean good eating white flaky fish.
- Are tough to fillet given the dense scales and slim body.
- Sheepshead use their “molar like” teeth to crush shells, barnacles, etc to get to the food inside. Don't underestimate the strength of the hook.

Club & Individual Fishing Statistics



REPORTED CATCHES as of 12/31/2025 and FISH OF THE MONTH (FOM) RESULTS

38 total fish turned in (2400 points) by 18 different anglers

FOM (SEATROUT)

Women

- 1st - Jan Holm- 16.5"
- 2nd - Donna Sullivan - 13.0"
- 3rd - None

Men

- 1st - Craig Setter - 19.0"
- 2nd - Bobby Bretts - 18.0"
- 3rd - Fred DeMella - 14.0"

Interesting Tidbits

Sheepshead, Red Grouper, Mangrove Snapper, and Seatrout were our most reported catches this month with Sheepshead and Grouper amounting to more points totals than last month. Between fronts some of our offshore anglers enjoyed great Red Grouper catches up to 31". We have one more month of such fishing in January before there is a closed season for Red Grouper in February and March of 2026. Gag Grouper remains closed until the end of August, 2026. While the typical smaller Mangrove Snapper were reported in the harbor, offshore catches produced true Gray Snapper in the 21.5" size. Sheepshead also did not disappoint with 12 reported catches up to an impressive 21.5". These striped bandits should be around for another couple of months and they make great table fare as well. The cold does not bother them in the least, so bundle up and go get 'em!

Achievement Categories

Club Hat

None

Silver Pin

TED FLANDERS, DAVID MORGAN

Snook Pin

GREG WIDNEY

Tarpon Pin

None

GMA Star

DONNA SULLIVAN, Star #3

Bronze Pin

None

Gold Pin

None

Redfish Pin

None

GMA

None

Isles trophy winners for 2025:

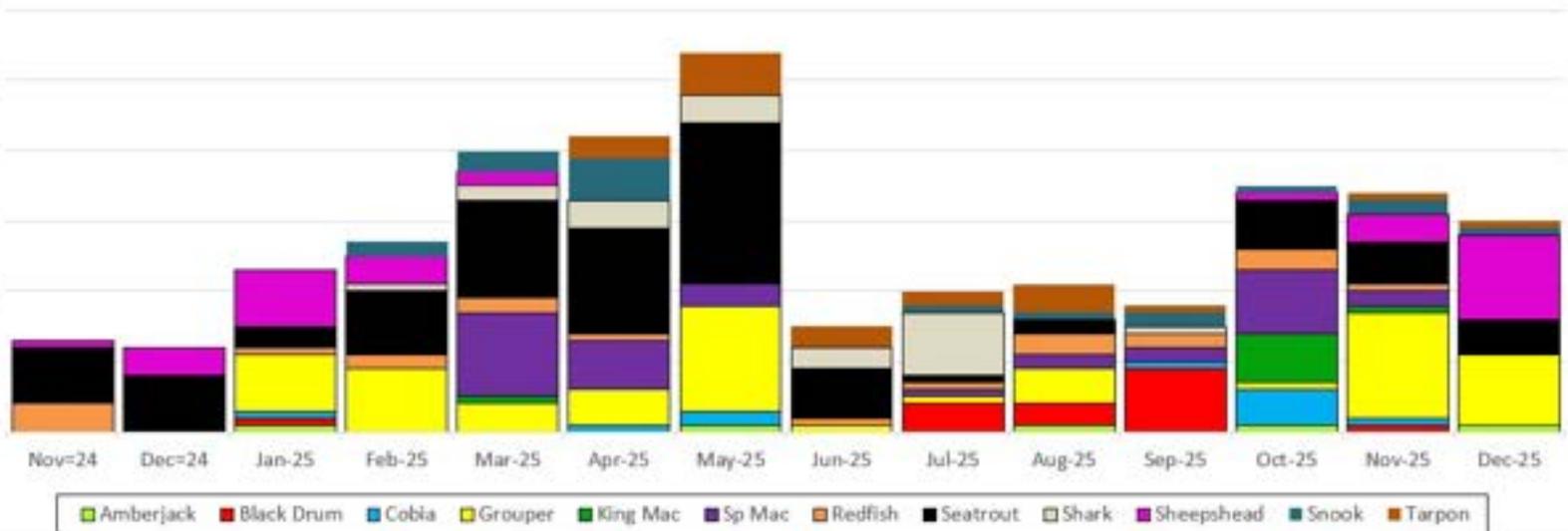
Men: **MIKE WHITE** with a 48.5" Black Drum, which was 94.2% of the old record

Women – Tie with **ELAINE BRETTS** and **DONNA SULLIVAN** both catching 24" Seatrout which was 90.6% of the old record

WHAT'S BITE'N



14 Month Catch History
(Number of Fish Recorded Each Month by Species)



Recorder's Data

Monthly Performance

	October	November	December	
Anglers	21	22	18	↓
LOA Awards	6	6	4	↓
Fish Recorded	42	57	38	↓
Points Recorded	3000	1,700	2,400	↑

TROPHY RACE (Men)

OVERALL CLUB RECORD	SPECIES NAME	MEMBER NAME	RECORD LENGTH in INCHES	DATE CAUGHT	MEMBER NAME	2025 LENGTH in INCHES	DATE CAUGHT	% OF RECORD
X	Amber Jack	Joe Udvari	53.5	2019	Mike White	37.0	5/19/25	69.2%
	Black Drum	Mike White	51.5	2019	Mike White	48.5	11/20/25	94.2%
X	Cobia	Rich Kale	66.0	2022	Mike White	47.0	10/30/25	71.2%
X	Grouper	Tom Hamilton	39.0	2003	Kevin Huey	34.0	3/25/25	87.2%
X	King Mackerel	John MacLeman	52.0	2012	Carl Cuocco	33.0	11/8/25	55.9%
X	Redfish	Mike White	47.0	2020	Randy Douet	29.0	9/27/25	61.7%
X	Seatrout	Rich Brennan	29.0	2009	Mike White	25.0	4/28/25	86.2%
		Aaron Wagner	29.0	2012				
X	Sheepshead	Mike White	26.0	2022	Ken Balkovic	21.5	12/19/25	82.7%
X	Snook	Mike White	49.0	2023	Allen Wade	34.5	3/18/25	70.4%
X	Spanish Mackerel	Carl Leicher	30.0	2012	Lenny Zimka	25.0	10/20/25	83.3%

This Year's Leaders in BLUE

XX Denotes New Club Record

New Entries This Month are in RED

TROPHY RACE (Women)

OVERALL CLUB RECORD	SPECIES NAME	MEMBER NAME	RECORD LENGTH in INCHES	DATE CAUGHT	MEMBER NAME	2025 LENGTH in INCHES	DATE CAUGHT	% OF RECORD
	Amberjack	Darlene Madsen	40.0	2017				0
X	Black Drum	Christine Fontaine White	52.0	2022	Cathy Hunt	42.5	8/11/25	81.7%
	Cobia	Joanne Landaker	50.0	2008	Dianne Bukowski	37.5	5/2/25	75.0%
		Marilyn McGregor	50.0	2013				
	Grouper	Dianne Bukowski	37.0	2018	Donna Sullivan	31.0	2/2/25	83.8%
	King Mackerel	Nancy Pearson	40.0	2022	Cathy Hunt	32.0	10/21/25	80.0%
	Redfish	Donnie Brennan	38.0	2008	Donna Sullivan	27.0	10/16/25	71.1%
		Missy Becker	38.0	2008				
	Seatrout	Joanne Landaker	26.5	2011	Donna Sullivan Elaine Bretts	24.0	4/17/25 6/20/25	90.6%
	Sheepshead	Dianne Bukowski	22.5	2021	Donna Sullivan	16.0	12/19/25	71.1%
	Snook	Missy Becker	42.0	2013	Donna Sullivan	36.0	2/22/25	85.7%
	Spanish Mackerel	Missy Becker	28.0	2007	Britt Saitta	21.0	4/15/25	75.0%
		Lynn Reeves	28.0	2019				

This Year's LEADER in BLUE

XX Denotes New Club Record

New Entries This Month are in RED

2009	Rich Brennan, Christine Jordan	2018	Joe Udvari, Dianne Bukowski
2010	Kel Krotzer, Margie Hofman	2019	Joe Udvari, Lynn Reeves
2011	Greg Chestnut, Joanne Landacre	2020	Mike White, Dianne Bukowski
2012	Jim Quorollo, Rose Ann McCaffrey	2021	Rich Kale / Tim Gibbons, Dianne Bukowski
2013	Steve Landacre, Missy Becker	2022	Rich Kale, Christine White
2014	Vinnie Madsen, Margie Hofman	2023	Mike White, Wanda Zimka
2015	Bob Mays, Karen Lodge	2024	Mike White, Cathy Hunt
2016	Gary Reeves, Rose Ann McCaffrey	2025	Mike White, Elaine Bretts, Donna Sullivan
2017	Rich Kale, Darlene Madsen		

BRONZE	SILVER	GOLD	LIFETIME LEVEL I SNOOK	LIFETIME LEVEL II REDFISH	LIFETIME LEVEL III TARPON	GRAND MASTER ANGLER	
						GMA	TOTAL STARS
Andy Athens	Jeff Bellairs	Gary Adams	Paula Arnold	Doug Arnold	Frank Barrett	Jeff Barnhart	★★★★★
Kathlene Avila	Joanna Boeckl	Jack Botbyl	Carl Cucco		Rick Brown	Ron Baxter	
Sherry Barrett	Marc Boeckl	Steve Fritz	Mark Cummins	Doug Du Fresne	Dick Conant	Fred Benson	
Trudi Baxter	Todd Brooks	Ken Garden	Mary Heins	Jenny Goodell	Mike Dougherty	Larry Benz	★
Tori Brown	Anne Careau	Dale Hall	Chuck Henry	Bill Guenther	Marv Dyrstad	Rich Brennan	★★★★★★★★★★
Bob Critchfield	Don Cummins	Bill Hess	Tom Hunt	Ken Hardesty	Theresa FitzGerald	Donnie Brennan	★
Colleen De Mella	Ron Deroche	Karen Lodge	Larry Kissner	Jack Howarth	Ed Girzi	Bob Bretts	★★★★★★★★★★
Tom desEnfants	Yvette Du Fresne	Joe Lombardi	Michael Knipe	Julie Kale	Bob Mays	Elaine Bretts	★★★★★★★★★★
Sharon Dyke	Kathy desEnfants	Sonia Nelson	Jim LaRocca	Jonathan Landon	Diana McKenna	Dianne Bukowski	★
Mike Endres	Tony Destefano	Cheryl Panetta	Marie LaRocca	Mark Lee	Nancy Pearson	Joe Bukowski	★★
Richard Farmer	Tamara Dillman	Glenn Ranfos	Tom Lodge	Marty McCaffrey	Lynn Reeves	Jim Crawley	★
Ted Flanders	Joanell Dyrstad	Steve Trego	Sherry Moerke	Rose Anne McCaffrey	Jack Spies	Fred De Mella	★★★★★
Chris Gibbons	Richard Embury	Greg Widney	William Neff	Dennis McKenna	Mark Storm	Mark Dillman	
Frank Grazier	Joe Esposito	Sheree Wolfinger	Gary Selzer	Gary Moerke	Gretchen Sunderland	Dick Doster	
Renee Gibbons	Ted Flanders	Wayn Nelson	John Simonieg	Chip Peterson	Karen Udvari	Randy Douet	★★★★★★
Bob Giffin	Gary Frost	Greg Widney	Ed Verminski	John Saitta	Allen Wade	Dave Dyke	
Sheryl Hatch	Tim Gibbons	Lenny Ziimka	Greg Widney	Craig Setter	Rich Willingmyre	John Fitzgerald	
David Hatch	Art Goodell		TWierzbanowski	Paul Whiting		Christine Fontaine	★
Tom Hay	Jim Gregory			Joseph Zurad		Bob Gariepy	★★
Scott Hutchins	Randy Hall		RED = Awards			John Gettinger	★★★
Raymond Iannucci	Roz Hickey		This Month			Mike Gilger	★★
Jack Jonaitis	Don Harter					Tom Hickey	★
Dennis Jones	Jack Hinnenthal		Club Hats			Jim Hoffman	★
Fran Krausman	Larry Hofmeister					Margie Hoffman	
Buddy Krauss	Dave Joe		None This Month			Jan Holm	
Jim Kunard	Shep Johnson					Cathy Hunt	★★★★★
Patti Kunard	Lisa Kellythorne					Bud Johnston	
Richard Larson	Mike Knipe					Cindi Johnston	
Tim Locke	Ron Kruse					Rich Kale	★★★★★
David Morgan	Denys LaChance					Dennis Krausman	★★★★★
Bob Mueller	Kevin LaPointe					Kel Krotzer	★★★
Patricia Nalipi	John McFarland					Carl Leicher	
Ann Northen	David Morgan					Joe Maillet	
Connie Nowicki	Mike Nalipi					Pete McGregor	★★
Tony Nowicki	Randy Page					Bill Muir	
Chuck Pearson	Kim Pflaum					Jude Panetta	★★★★
Bruce Peterson	Paul Robinson					Tom Parsons	★★
Chris Pflaum	Lyle Ross					Gary Reeves	
Chris Pollinger	Hezzie Samons					Rick Sarkisian	★★★★★★★★★★
Dan Roda	Mike Sandling					John Stockinger	★
Doug Salminen	Deb Sarkisian					Donna Sullivan	★★★
Mark Schruer	Tom Schmitt					Ron Topper	★★★★★★
Alan Schulman	Gary Skillicorn					Joe Udvari	★★★★★★★★★★
Jess Searle	Lynne Stockinger					Aaron Wagner	
Miriam Taylor	Don Taylor					Mike White	★★★★★★
Patti Topper	Mike Trost					Jeff Wilson	★
Beth Watkins	Roxie Trost					John Wolfinger	
Joanne Widney	Mike Wagner						
Wanda Zimka	Stella Wagner						
	Greg Widney						
	S Wierzbanowski						
	Tom Youngblood						
	Wanda Zimka						

(BOLD star = earned this year)

DECEMBER RESULTS

MASTER ANGLER

MASTER ANGLERS TOURNAMENT, 2025 FINAL STANDINGS

PLACE	AMBER JACK	BLACK DRUM	COBIA	GROUP-ER	KING MACK-EREL	RED-FISH	SEA-TROUT	SHEEPS-HEAD	SNOOK	SPANISH MACKEREL
1st	MIKE WHITE 37.0	MIKE WHITE 40.5	MIKE WHITE 47.0	KEVIN HALEY 34.0	CARL CUCCO 33.0	RANDY DOUET 29.0	MIKE WHITE 25.0	KEN BALKOVIC 21.5	DONNA SULLIVAN 36.0	DONNA SULLIVAN 25.0 LENNY ZINKA 25.0
2nd	FRED DE MELLA 36.0	CATHY HUNT 42.5	CRAIG SETTER 38.5	MIKE WHITE 33.5	CATHY HUNT 32.0	BOBBY BRETTIS 28.0 MARK DILLMAN 28.0	ELANE BRETTIS 24.0 DONNA SULLIVAN 24.0	JACK HIRNENTHAL 19.5	ALLEN VADE 34.5	BOBBY BRETTIS 27.0 JEFF WILSON 23.0 DAVE DYVE 23.0
3rd	KEN BALKOVIC 32.8	JEFF WILSON 29.0	JOHN SAITTA 38.0	JOHN SAITTA 33.0	GREG VIDNEY 30.0 LENNY ZINKA 30.0	DONNA SULLIVAN 27.0	CARL CUCCO 23.0	JIM GREGORY 19.0 CARL LEICHER 19.0 ALAN VADE 19.0	KEN BALKOVIC 33.5	FRED DEMELLA 22.0

New this month are shown in Red



SOCIAL COMMITTEE REPORT

JANUARY 2026

Winter Holiday Party

- REGISTER NOW -

Our Annual Party will be on **January 13, 2026**
at the Isles Yacht Club



Whoop Whoop!

Membership Report For December — 2025



Membership Report

We are gaining new members over the last several months. The snowbirds are returning. So if you are at a Fishing Club gathering and see a new face, please welcome the new folks and introduce them to the seasoned members. The member benefits from the club tournaments and Ladder of Achievement and fishing knowledge gained from the monthly technical meetings and social gatherings.

Remember it is time to renew your Fishing Club membership at \$30 per household.

We have brought the PGICA Club Express into the PGI Fishing Club so now you can renew membership with a credit card by logging into the PGICA website. You can reset your password if you have forgotten your previous one. Members can also renew by Check or cash at a Fishing Club meeting or by dropping off payment at the PGICA Club House at 2001 Shreeve.

If you owe payments to any PGICA club or event, then a red \$ will appear at login. Click the red \$ and pay the dues you



The membership report is per January 2, 2026 records. We are significantly ahead of January 2025 and 2024 membership renewals. The credit card payments seem to help.

The household cost is \$30 per year and membership has benefits, including: tournaments, Ladder of Achievement, fishing contests, great social activities and education at our general meetings
Questions or corrections? Contact the Fishing Club Membership Director: **Tim Locke**

Membership@pgifishingclub.org

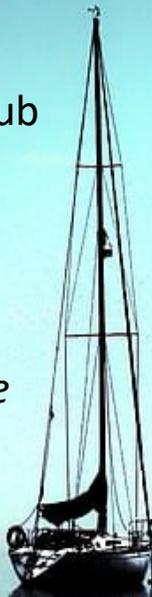
MEMBER WELFARE

THE PGI FISHING CLUB IS A CLUB OF THE PUNTA GORDA
ISLES CIVIC ASSOCIATION



We care! If you become aware of someone in the club that needs a reach-out for any reason, please let the Board know.

Your family of friends care about you.



CLUB LEADERSHIP



OFFICERS:

PRESIDENT	FRED DEMELLA	president@pgifishingclub.org
VICE PRESIDENT	<i>Vacant</i>	
TREASURER	LISA ROSS	treasurer@pgifishingclub.org
SECRETARY	PATTI KUNARD	pattijmk@comcast.net

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

ADVERTISING	<i>Vacant</i>	advertising@pgifishingclub.org
COASTAL CONSERVATION ASSN	BOB MAYES	cca.cmac@pgifishingclub.org
FISHING EVENTS	<i>Vacant</i>	fishingevents@pgifishingclub.org
GREETERS	<i>Vacant</i>	greeters@pgifishingclub.org
MEMBERSHIP	TIM LOCKE	membership@pgifishingclub.org
NEWSLETTER	JIM KUNARD	pattijmk@comcast.net
RECORD KEEPER	PAUL WHITING	recordkeeper@pgifishingclub.org
SOCIAL EVENTS	<i>Vacant</i>	socialdirector@pgifishingclub.org
WEBMASTER	RICHARD EMBURY	website@pgifishingclub.org

MEMBERS HELPING MEMBERS



Its fun to succeed! **One of the great things about our club are the members we have who are willing to take new members out for a day of fishing to help them learn our waters.** Below is a list of members that are willing to host you for a fishing trip in our local waters:

- **Gary Burgess (Harbor Only), g2873477@hotmail.com**
- **Gretchen Sunderland (Harbor Only, especially for beginner women), gretchensun2@gmail.com**
- **Fred De Mella (Inshore or Offshore) fdemella@gmail.com**



Contact them through email to arrange a trip.

Members, if you want to take another member out on your boat, please send your contact information to: editor@pgifishingclub.org

CLUB LINKS

THE PGI FISHING CLUB IS A CLUB OF THE PUNTA GORDA

ISLES CIVIC ASSOCIATION



CLUB WEBSITE: <http://pgifishingclub.org>

**CLUB FACEBOOK: <http://facebook.com>, then
search for pgi fishing club**

**FISHING CONTEST RULES: [http://
pgifishingclub.org/wordpress/?page_id=30](http://pgifishingclub.org/wordpress/?page_id=30)**

**GENERAL INFORMATION: [http://
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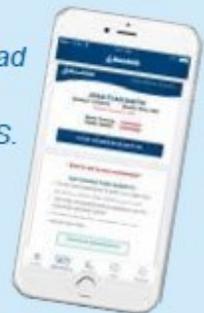
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THE ICEHOUSE PUB

408 Tamiami Trail North
Punta Gorda, FL 33950

AUTHENTIC ENGLISH PUB & RESTAURANT

(941) 575-0866

Home



Beer, Wine & Cocktails
The Bevvv Bible



Food Menu
Tradition meets Flavour



Darts
A Game of Skill & Beer

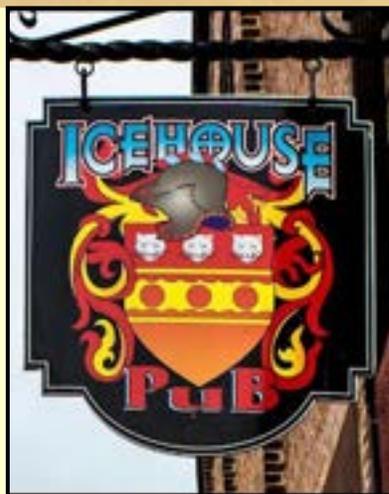


Shopping
Get Cool Pub Swag



About
The Icehouse

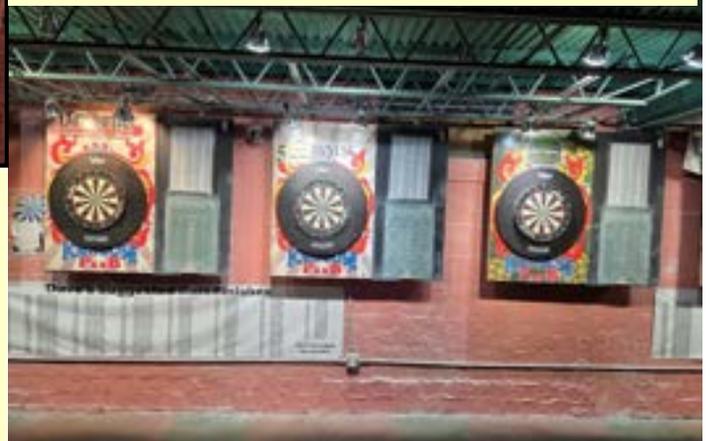
Built in the 1890s, the structure was used as an ice plant for the fishing industry. Hurricane Charley all but destroyed the building when it tore the roof off and the south wall collapsed, but the building's owner's refused to demolish this South Florida landmark pledging to rebuild it and-they-did.



If an English pub-style meal is what you crave, then the Ice House Pub should be your dining destination, with a full British themed menu of such staples as Fish 'n Chips, Cottage Pie, Bangers and Mash and the American favorites Cheese Burgers, Steak Sandwiches and Giant Salads.

"God made beer because he loves us and wants us to be happy"

Benjamin Franklin



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GREG WIDNEY



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