

OUTDOORS



AGE 4D

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WEATHER FISH

ZACHARIAS
the Herald

ather of this s to make ing. ish are s weather ind cold and oving around a hould be holed nter pattern. ly true of the s. aches there rds of bluefish ressive in their the more es — spotted sheephead are nearly atch. I have , that in 30-40 here are far id some really ad been made Catch-22 is e wind and sh that far out at. is, a really d front has rst

g norther of the hope this does old, windy season. and his buddy Sudbury, I with me a weather was id the cold and s bad as were able to 30 feet of water remarkable most notable snapper. Other led some of the iggerfish I have red that close pawner an equally large it.

fished on the a slow ter moon tide successful. The o pick up, and o the bay and spectable out. shing is really on ery from the red ast two years; ourage anglers many as they ule of thumb is the trout you ; not seriously a catching u have a legal een gut hooked d, go ahead and ; they will not

n this week has e decent redfish, anish mackerel y flounder. g forward to the ook season, aforementioned probably put the early start to here near the are looking to do nook fishing, you ly head as far an to find er. The rivers and obably be your and good

HOGS AND DOGS



NICK WALTER/The Herald

Workers at a 20,000-acre ranch in East Manatee County load hogs onto a trailer to relocate on the ranch.

Gathering hogs at a 20,000-acre ranch made easier with cur dogs

EAST MANATEE — Perched atop a camouflaged Jeep, I'm bouncing through swamp land in East Manatee County.

On this vehicle, there is no cover, no roll bar. It's been modified so two seats — one on which I am seated — are elevated. So there's no shield to a prickly morning wind that begins to render my cheeks numb.

I look left and see a piece of the eastern sun poke above the horizon. A mist that begins at the ground and ends at the level of my head races around my face.

Driving below me is Jason McKendree, the owner of this 20,000-acre ranch. His friend Cason Britt is riding shotgun, munching on corn dogs and potato wedges. Five cur dogs, patient in their close-quarter cages, bring up the rear.

"What do I like most about it?" McKendree says. "The adrenaline rush of the dogs working. I love to see dogs working. Whether it's with cattle, hogs, birds, whatever, I like to see dogs work."

We cross Interstate 70. "It's pretty nice this early," McKendree says. "Think how



Nick Walter
Outdoors

much someone pays for this. You know, people pay \$500 to \$1,000 to go do this. This is a privilege for us."

Sure is a peaceful morning. The Jeep stops. About 70 yards ahead I see a black dot and a brown blotch, resting on a pasture of harvested sod. It's two sows.

Then, it's as if someone flicks on the action music — Britt hops out and releases two dogs, who bound away. McKendree jogs behind the dogs, and Britt takes the wheel. We're off.

I see the sows move — it's not a run, but a waddle — away from the sod farm. The dogs are darting. Soon they're a few strides behind the hogs before the chase vanishes into a wall of Myrtle trees.

As we pull up, a sow unleashes a series of piercing

grunts. "Put your notebook down," Britt said. "And follow me." Camera in hand, I leap off the Jeep, duck under the Myrtle trees and amble down a ditch, where a stream of water engulfs my foot. I ramble on, lowering my head under some branches before rising to the top of the ditch.

McKendree is pushing the dogs off the incensed black sow. The brown sow, which jumped the corner, and Frisco, one of McKendree's dogs, were not around. McKendree ties the sow's arms and legs together before dragging the sow from under the trees and tossing her onto the Jeep.

I'm a bit stunned. For McKendree, that's one less hog that will churn up his sod field. One less hog to obstruct a driver. The goal, he said, is to catch as many hogs as possible and relocate them.

Frisco came back about 30 minutes later, after two more hogs were loaded on the Jeep. Throughout the rest of the trip, they catch two more — one in a previously set trap.

Fortunately, the dogs — Frisco, Faucur, Johnson,

Stubby and Mickey Blue Eyes make it through the trip with no wounds.

Cur dogs, which originated in the southern United States, are working dogs. Their breeds date back to pioneer times. Sometimes, McKendree said, the scrappy dogs will run into large boar hogs who are capable of tossing the dogs around.

When we return, the hogs are unloaded into a long trailer. In doing so, McKendree and Co. make sure they're not bit by the hogs, whose teeth may have life-threatening bacteria. The men pick animal lice from their hair. They don't dust off.

Bed, Bath and Beyond this is not.

"Some people like to go out and spend \$100 getting drunk," McKendree said. "I spend maybe \$20 on fuel. Some people think this is cruel on the dogs, well, they could be in the pound, but we're here supporting them and giving them a good life. So I tell those people, 'Leave me alone and have a nice day.'"

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QUICK QUIZ

Which of the following is safe to eat in Florida red tides?

- A. Shrimp, crab, scallops and lobsters.
- B. Fish.
- C. Alligators.
- D. Squid.

— Answer below

CALENDAR

Ongoing — Boater's World at DeSoto Square holds a series of free seminars with local captains. Upcoming seminars: **Feb. 6** — Capt. Rick Gross on chasing the bite; **Feb. 20** — Capts. Jason Ramsey and T.J. Stewart on shallow water tactics; **Feb. 27** — Capts. Kim and Kathe on bay and back water fishing; **March 6** — Capt. Mel Field on snook in bays and on bars. All sessions are at 7 p.m. Information: 747-8339.

Wednesdays — Boater's World at 3904 Tamiami Trail in Sarasota holds a series of free seminars with local captains. All sessions are at 7 p.m.

Ongoing — The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation has Dove Club permits good for Saturday, half-day hunts, enabling the permit holder and a youth to each take a daily bag limit for birds. Permits cost \$150 and are sold on a first-come, first-served basis. Information: (888) 486-8356.

SOLUNAR TABLES

This table lists top fishing times and days for the coming weeks. For best results, begin fishing one hour before and continue one hour after the times given. Times apply to all time zones. (X indicates best days.)

Today	1:55a	2:20p
Monday	2:35a	2:55p
Tuesday	3:10a	3:30p
Wednesday	3:50a	4:10p
Thursday	4:30a	4:50p
Friday	5:15a	5:35p
XSaturday	6:00a	6:25p
XFeb. 11	6:50a	7:20p
Feb. 12	7:45a	8:15p
Feb. 13	8:40a	9:10p
Feb. 14	9:40a	10:05p
Feb. 15	10:35a	—
XFeb. 16	11:35a	12:00a
XFeb. 17	12:25p	12:55a
Feb. 18	1:20p	1:45a

Source: U.S. Naval Observatory

NOTEBOOK

For the third straight year, the world's top saltwater anglers will convene in Clearwater for The Oh Boy! Roberto Redfish Cup All Star Icebreaker. The event will run from Wednesday through Sunday. In one of the first fishing events

the best. The fishing action kicks off Friday when the anglers set out from Clearwater and head out to the Gulf of Mexico. After two days, the field will be trimmed to just the top five teams for a final day showdown on Feb. 11.

media, will feature several of the top teams as well as their custom-wrapped tournament boats, along with Redfish Cup giveaways and exclusive photo opportunities.

treatment likely will undergo surgery later this week to remove monofilament line that is embedded near the animal's tail.

Blood work also shows the dolphin is suffering from infection, and the whale also found to have

QUIZ ANSWER

A. These marine animals are safe to eat because they do not accumulate the red tide