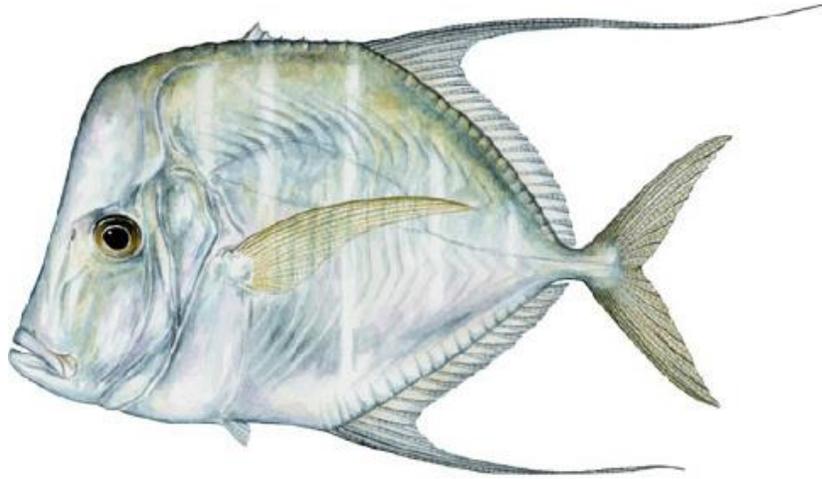


**MAY'S BEST BET
SEBASTIAN INLET STATE PARK**



LOOKDOWN
(*Selene vomer*)

DESCRIPTION: Members of the jack family, lookdowns inhabit both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The Atlantic lookdown (*Selene vomer*) inhabits both the eastern and western coasts of the Atlantic Ocean. Here on the western coast it is known to range from Maine to Uruguay, including Bermuda. The two species that frequent the Pacific Ocean are found only on its eastern coast. Lookdowns have deeply compressed, silvery bodies with a head almost 1 1/2 times as deep as long. The dorsal and anal fin lobes are elongated and streamerlike. A similar species, called moonfish, lacks these elongated fins and possesses a less steep head profile. Little is known of the life histories of lookdowns. These fish commonly grow to 10-12 inches and their flesh is considered excellent. The all tackle record lookdown was caught in Galveston, Texas and weighed 3lb. 11oz.

HEIGHT OF SEASON: Lookdowns tend to be most prevalent in the inlet area during the summer months, especially May and June.

RULES AND REGULATIONS: There are currently no laws regulating the size, seasons, and bag limits for lookdowns in the state of Florida. Take only what you can use. Keep up to date on changing rules and regulations. You will need a saltwater fishing license.

TIMES AND TIDES: Lookdowns can be caught throughout the day at Sebastian Inlet, including dark hours. They seem to prefer the cleaner ocean water over the darker river water, so tides that are influenced this way (incoming tides and the first half or so of the outgoing tides) are probably best.

BAITS: Probably most influential in productive lookdown fishing, over all else, is proper choice of bait. Lookdowns are a predatory fish that prefer small, live baits. Choice summertime baits for lookdowns include live pilchards, threadfin herring, and glass minnows. These all can usually be caught locally with use of a castnet. Live shrimp also make a good bait and can be easier to acquire through your tackle shop for those not so adept at net throwing. Small artificials work quite well for lookdowns at times, especially the small jig types. Try jigs used for freshwater crappie fishing to catch lookdowns.

TACKLE: Due to their small size, just about any type of tackle can be used to catch lookdowns. "Ultralight" gear certainly is all that is necessary, also making the quest more sporting. Lookdowns will not cut mono leaders and have fairly small mouths so rigs and hooks can be matched accordingly. I prefer a mono-filament sliding sinker rig with an ought or 1\0 hook. Long shank hooks can be beneficial when unhooking these odd shaped fish. Egg sinkers from 1\4 to 1 oz. should be matched with current speeds to keep your bait drifting midwater. Don't "anchor" your baits to the bottom with too much lead.

METHOD: When fishing for lookdowns keep your live baits and rigs looking as natural as possible--simple is better. The single most productive area for catching lookdowns is the north jetty of the park, with the south jetty and the L-dock areas being close seconds. At nighttime, the lighted areas near the A.I.A. bridge can produce decent lookdown fishing, especially when there is an abundance of small baits in the water.

PREPARATION: The odd shape of the lookdown may seem to pose some difficulty to an angler who has never cleaned one. Lookdowns can be filleted and skinned as other fish are done, just follow the contours of the fish with your knife. Not much meat is acquired from a single lookdown due to their extreme thinness, but what is there is very tasty. Lookdowns can also be cleaned and cooked whole much the same way freshwater panfish are prepared. Traditionally deep fried or lightly broiled lookdown is hard to beat!

ALSO THIS MONTH: This is the last month to keep snook before the summer closure begins in June. Fishing for them usually improves as the water warms and summer sets in--good luck. Also look for a move to the summertime species as mangrove snapper, Spanish mackerel, and sand perch move into the area.

Good Luck,

Ranger Ed Perry