

THE REGION

Use of cracked corn to attract fish is criticized

BY LISA FURS
Riopuertorico.com

MARATHON — Middle Keys charter fishermen wait tourists and local recreational fishermen to stop feeding fish. Cracked corn, that is.

It has what apparently became common practice in waters of the Keys, fishermen are using the animal food as chum to attract and catch yellowtail snapper and other types of edible reef fish.

A group of charter fishing guides claim dried corn kernels are harmful to the ocean and digestive systems of fish — though they have no research to support it — and are asking marine officials to ban the practice used mostly at offshore reefs within Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

Cracked corn "is not a natural part of the ocean, and it's abnormal on the digestive systems of fish," said Mar-

Fishing guides claim dried corn kernels are harmful to the ocean and digestive systems of fish — though they have no research to support it. The marine sanctuary has agreed to publicize alternatives.

been known to use snacks and table scraps — most notably cans of cheese spread — to surround their prying customers with schools of fish.

Although the occasional use of human food has been criticized in local waters, some charter fishermen contend that fish — particularly delicate yellowtail snapper — are being routinely fed cracked corn, which is undigestible and causes fish stomachs to bloat and smelt upon opening.

Many bait and tackle shops also sell

cracked corn for chum, as well as rolled oats.

The sanctuary advisory council addressed the corn issue at its Feb. 20 meeting, where members said they weren't convinced that cracked corn is detrimental to wildlife.

Until research studies can be conducted — the National Marine Fisheries Service and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission may soon examine the issue — sanctuary officials have agreed to meet the charter fishermen halfway.

The sanctuary will soon distribute informational brochures to local fishing and marine businesses. The brochures list alternative chumming methods and explain the possible negative impacts of cracked corn to local waters.

Some fishermen say the pamphlets would make good fish wrap.

"I think cracked corn has about as

much effect on fish as a brain melon has on a human being," said Ron Collins, a former marine biologist who manages the Tackle Box in Marathon.

"Yellowtail eat sand, shells, just about anything, and you don't see them dropping dead."

While sanctuary officials are interested in taking a closer scientific look at the use of corn on the reef, the vegetable is currently viewed as a traditional chumming ingredient and is legal in the sanctuary except in 23 sanctuary preservation and no-take areas where fishing isn't allowed, said sanctuary spokeswoman Cheva Beck.

The use of cracked corn isn't necessarily something that is being encouraged, however.

"There are definitely concerns about it," said Beck. "It's probably not best to chum with anything that's not a part of a fish's normal, natural diet."



Share Davis of Pensacopa Coral Reef State Park drips water from a hose to keep a marlin calf with a damaged geyser close by until the Marlin Rescue Team could arrive Saturday. The crew attached a radio tracking beacon to the calf, but it had become detached by the time they returned Saturday. It was the fourth time an attempted rescue of the calf had failed. The Dolphin Research Center discourages people from using water hoses to attract marlins.

KEYS DRIFTS

KEY LARGO

MAI WHO DROWNS IN CANAL

GILFRIEND CAN'T SAVE

BIG COPPITT KEY

HOUSE ALLEGEDLY FIREBOMBED BECAUSE OF DRUG TRANSACTION

FLORIDA KEYS MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT OPENS A PUBLIC TV SHOW ON CHANNEL 5, 7:05 p.m. Wednesday

ILAMORADA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LUNCHEON 10:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday, Time Out Barbours, Dr. Charles Schaeffer and Charles Baldwin discuss wastewater project, \$12 per person. Reservations: 664-4503.

ILAMORADA VILLAGE COUNCIL, 6 p.m. Thursday, March 8, Founders Park, 62000 Overseas Hwy.

ILAMORADA PLANNING COMMISSION — Special Call Thursday, March 8, immediately after Village

The 17-year-old was found a short time later lying in the canal. Ehrbridge was later arrested at his home on Jolly Roger Drive. Aware that police were searching for him, Ehrbridge called the victim before his arrest, pleading with her to drop charges against him, police said.

The victim recovered all of her jewelry property beside a nearby canal, but it was damaged from being submerged in the water, Ehrbridge was charged with burglary, grand theft, witness tampering, and resisting arrest. His companion was charged with burglary and grand theft.

Both were booked into the Monroe County Detention Center on Stock Island.

A Key Largo man died late Saturday after he accidentally fell into a canal near his home and drowned.

According to police, Thomas Ladontrak, 46, of 58 West Avenue A, was walking along a canal when he lost his balance and fell into the water at approximately 9:30 p.m. Ladontrak attempted to grab a nearby fence to stop his fall, but it gave way.

Karen Michay, Ladontrak's girlfriend, jumped into the water after him but couldn't find him, police said. When deputies arrived at the scene, Michay was in the water screaming for help. Authorities pulled Michay out of the canal, and Ladontrak was found a short time later.

Emergency officials performed CPR on Ladontrak unsuccessfully.

TEEN BURGULARY SUSPECTS HUNTED, ARRESTED, BOOKED

Two men were arrested Friday for breaking into a Cadillac Key home and stealing \$1,000 worth of electronic equipment.

Seamus Ehrbridge, 19, of Cadillac Key, and a 17-year-old Key West, are accused of burglarizing a house on John Silver Lane. According to police, the victim came home during the break-in and chased the two suspects outside, where they jumped into

THE CALF THAT GOT AWAY

Ferry involved in fatality

Collision occurs near Fort Myers

Graham crusade hits FAMU

regrets this summer, replacing the statewide board with individual boards of trustees for each of the state's 10 state universities.

A statewide "wage" board of education, appointed by the governor would have oversight of all education, from prekindergarten through post-graduate university work, starting in 2003.

Graham said Monday that he doesn't think the plan is constitutional and believes it would be challenged in court. He also is working on a constitutional amendment for November 2002 to put the regions in the state constitution.

KEYS DRIFTS

KEY LARGO

MAI WHO DROWNS IN CANAL

GILFRIEND CAN'T SAVE

BIG COPPITT KEY

HOUSE ALLEGEDLY FIREBOMBED BECAUSE OF DRUG TRANSACTION

FLORIDA KEYS MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT OPENS A PUBLIC TV SHOW ON CHANNEL 5, 7:05 p.m. Wednesday

ILAMORADA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LUNCHEON 10:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday, Time Out Barbours, Dr. Charles Schaeffer and Charles Baldwin discuss wastewater project, \$12 per person. Reservations: 664-4503.

ILAMORADA VILLAGE COUNCIL, 6 p.m. Thursday, March 8, Founders Park, 62000 Overseas Hwy.

ILAMORADA PLANNING COMMISSION — Special Call Thursday, March 8, immediately after Village

cracked corn for chum, as well as rolled oats.

The sanctuary advisory council addressed the corn issue at its Feb. 20 meeting, where members said they weren't convinced that cracked corn is detrimental to wildlife.

Until research studies can be conducted — the National Marine Fisheries Service and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission may soon examine the issue — sanctuary officials have agreed to meet the charter fishermen halfway.

The sanctuary will soon distribute informational brochures to local fishing and marine businesses. The brochures list alternative chumming methods and explain the possible negative impacts of cracked corn to local waters.

Some fishermen say the pamphlets would make good fish wrap.

"I think cracked corn has about as

much effect on fish as a brain melon has on a human being," said Ron Collins, a former marine biologist who manages the Tackle Box in Marathon.

"Yellowtail eat sand, shells, just about anything, and you don't see them dropping dead."

While sanctuary officials are interested in taking a closer scientific look at the use of corn on the reef, the vegetable is currently viewed as a traditional chumming ingredient and is legal in the sanctuary except in 23 sanctuary preservation and no-take areas where fishing isn't allowed, said sanctuary spokeswoman Cheva Beck.

The use of cracked corn isn't necessarily something that is being encouraged, however.

"There are definitely concerns about it," said Beck. "It's probably not best to chum with anything that's not a part of a fish's normal, natural diet."

KEYS DRIFTS

KEY LARGO

MAI WHO DROWNS IN CANAL

GILFRIEND CAN'T SAVE

BIG COPPITT KEY

HOUSE ALLEGEDLY FIREBOMBED BECAUSE OF DRUG TRANSACTION

FLORIDA KEYS MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT OPENS A PUBLIC TV SHOW ON CHANNEL 5, 7:05 p.m. Wednesday

ILAMORADA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LUNCHEON 10:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday, Time Out Barbours, Dr. Charles Schaeffer and Charles Baldwin discuss wastewater project, \$12 per person. Reservations: 664-4503.

ILAMORADA VILLAGE COUNCIL, 6 p.m. Thursday, March 8, Founders Park, 62000 Overseas Hwy.

ILAMORADA PLANNING COMMISSION — Special Call Thursday, March 8, immediately after Village

regrets this summer, replacing the statewide board with individual boards of trustees for each of the state's 10 state universities.

A statewide "wage" board of education, appointed by the governor would have oversight of all education, from prekindergarten through post-graduate university work, starting in 2003.

Graham said Monday that he doesn't think the plan is constitutional and believes it would be challenged in court. He also is working on a constitutional amendment for November 2002 to put the regions in the state constitution.

KEYS DRIFTS

KEY LARGO

MAI WHO DROWNS IN CANAL

GILFRIEND CAN'T SAVE

BIG COPPITT KEY

HOUSE ALLEGEDLY FIREBOMBED BECAUSE OF DRUG TRANSACTION

FLORIDA KEYS MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT OPENS A PUBLIC TV SHOW ON CHANNEL 5, 7:05 p.m. Wednesday

ILAMORADA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LUNCHEON 10:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday, Time Out Barbours, Dr. Charles Schaeffer and Charles Baldwin discuss wastewater project, \$12 per person. Reservations: 664-4503.

ILAMORADA VILLAGE COUNCIL, 6 p.m. Thursday, March 8, Founders Park, 62000 Overseas Hwy.

ILAMORADA PLANNING COMMISSION — Special Call Thursday, March 8, immediately after Village

cracked corn for chum, as well as rolled oats.

The sanctuary advisory council addressed the corn issue at its Feb. 20 meeting, where members said they weren't convinced that cracked corn is detrimental to wildlife.

Until research studies can be conducted — the National Marine Fisheries Service and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission may soon examine the issue — sanctuary officials have agreed to meet the charter fishermen halfway.

The sanctuary will soon distribute informational brochures to local fishing and marine businesses. The brochures list alternative chumming methods and explain the possible negative impacts of cracked corn to local waters.

Some fishermen say the pamphlets would make good fish wrap.

"I think cracked corn has about as

much effect on fish as a brain melon has on a human being," said Ron Collins, a former marine biologist who manages the Tackle Box in Marathon.

"Yellowtail eat sand, shells, just about anything, and you don't see them dropping dead."

While sanctuary officials are interested in taking a closer scientific look at the use of corn on the reef, the vegetable is currently viewed as a traditional chumming ingredient and is legal in the sanctuary except in 23 sanctuary preservation and no-take areas where fishing isn't allowed, said sanctuary spokeswoman Cheva Beck.

The use of cracked corn isn't necessarily something that is being encouraged, however.

"There are definitely concerns about it," said Beck. "It's probably not best to chum with anything that's not a part of a fish's normal, natural diet."