The Inshore Fishing Manifesto

THREE Inshore Fishing Breakthroughs That Will Help You Catch More Redfish, Snook, and Big Trout Per Hour of Fishing

Luke Simonds
# Table Of Contents

Forward ................................................................. Page 3

The 3 “Secrets” To Catching Consistent Inshore Fish .......... Page 5


Why Am I Sharing These Inshore Fishing Secrets? .......... Page 7

The Reason Why Most “Weekend Warrior” Inshore Anglers Struggle … Page 8

Putting Inshore Fishing Into Perspective ......................... Page 10

The 3 Choices We All Have With Any Sport Or Hobby We Cherish … Page 12

What Does All Of This Have To Do With Inshore Fishing? ..... Page 13

The CARDINAL RULE Of Inshore Fishing ....................... Page 15

Breakthrough #1 .......................................................... Page 18

Unique Bottom Cover/Structure – Grassy Point ................ Page 21

Protected Deep Water Trout For Winter Inshore Fish .......... Page 23

Hidden Saltwater Lakes ............................................... Page 25

Breakthrough #2 .......................................................... Page 27

Simplify Your Tackle = You Catch More Fish ................ Page 29

How I Started Catching MONSTER Trout ..................... Page 30

Inshore Gear Tips ....................................................... Page 32

Breakthrough #3 .......................................................... Page 33

Conclusion ........................................................................ Page 36

Your 365-Day Risk-Free “Test Drive” ............................. Page 38
FORWARD

What your fellow anglers are saying about Luke Simonds, the author of the Inshore Fishing Manifesto, and co-founder of Salt Strong.

“Luke, just wanted to say a quick "thank-you" as some of the tips made so much darn sense and were easy to incorporate fishing with my 8 year old daughter today. We live in Jacksonville and don't have a boat or kayak at this time, so I will be relying on you in the near future to get a better handle on all my overall fishing tactics. We fished in area today very close to a boat ramp, yet ended up reeling in a half dozen fish whereby many others caught nothing. I just joined the Salt Strong family last night yet I know your online fishing courses will assist me not only in catching some "bigguns", yet more importantly teaching and creating lasting memories with my daughter.”

~ My best, Jon K

“Luke and the Salt Strong team, thank you so much for all of tremendous help in unraveling the mystery of fishing the flats.”

~ Frank R.

“I am about a year into my transition from freshwater fishing to saltwater fishing and this type of priceless content is going to be a huge help. Keep it coming. Thank you again.”

~ James from Florida

“You guys Rock! Been living down here in Tampa for the past 4 years. Struggling to improve my fishing game and learn from anyone I can (friends, co-workers, fishing clubs, You tube, etc.). Hands down, your site, content, and membership has been the best help I can find. Caught 2 snook and 1 redfish (in-slot) in the past two weeks from utilizing your tips. That’s a huge improvement, considering I’ve only caught 1 snook and 1 redfish in the 3 years prior. Thank you so much for sharing what took you so much trial and error to master. Really appreciate it!”

~ Alan S.

“You guys are awesome! I’m still in shock how my fishing results have changed so dramatically 1000% improvement. It’s no longer I hope I catch something now I’m wondering what I’m going to catch… By the way, they were tearing up the lure you recommended out on the flats.”
~ Ted C.

"Luke, I am somewhat new to this “redfishing” thing (just moved to JAX FL about 6 months ago from Australia – originally from Idaho), and I have been out on the water trying for redfish like crazy. I have caught a few in the last couple of months (maybe 10 or so and only 1 slot redfish ever). But after studying your Slammer course I went out today (after a cold front), I had 6 spots picked out, had my 3” new penny Gulp shrimp, and was mentally ready with all of the new information. Well, guess what – in the first 30 minutes I had a slot red! 10 minutes later another slot redfish. Overall, I had 5 redfish in 3 hours. Most fun since moving to Florida. Thank you."

~ Jason in Jacksonville, FL

“You guys really are awesome. A complete game-changer to my busy schedule. I can now plan a fishing day, 3 – 4 hours, kill it and go home.

Thank you!"

~ David Jones, Naples, Florida

“This has officially become the most impactful product I have ever purchased – a spot previously occupied by my iPhone. I started watching your videos about 3 weeks ago and became hooked. I couldn’t get enough. I finally made the leap and purchased the Inshore Slammer course three days ago. I figured I couldn’t lose because the free videos I had watched were already worth much more than the price of the entire course. So, I watched all of the videos in marathon sessions and couldn’t wait to get out on the water. Last night we finally had a break in the weather, so I decided to walk out onto the deck and throw a few casts. I caught 8 trout in the first 10 casts! I got so excited I decided to get up early this morning and take out the kayak. I had the most productive day of fishing ever. I caught so many trout (I lost count around 25), I caught my second and third redfish of all time, a good sized flounder, some mangrove snapper, and to top it off, the biggest snook I have ever caught. I cannot express how grateful I am. You guys are the best."

~ Trey in Florida
The 3 “Secrets” To Catching Consistent Inshore Fish

What you now hold in your hands is 15 years of on the water testing of inshore fishing...

It’s 15 years of me taking notes, journaling my trips, and studying the feeding patterns of redfish, snook, trout, and other inshore fish.

What I discovered through it all is that it’s entirely possible to predict where the feeding fish are once you understand their biology in combination with the three breakthroughs that I’m going to share with you today.

The best news is that I’ve boiled it all down into 39 pages.

Can 39 Pages Change The Way You Fish Forever?

Seems rather crazy doesn’t it...

That a mere 39 pages of text containing three inshore fishing breakthroughs could literally alter how many inshore fish you catch for the rest of your life.

But I am here to tell you that it’s entirely possible because I’m living proof that it can… and I wish I had my hands on these three secrets 15 years ago when I first starting inshore fishing.

You see, had you told me just 5 years ago that in the future I would be:

• Quitting my plush corporate job after 8 years of climbing the ladder
• Starting a Salt Water fishing company that has taught tens of thousands of anglers how to catch more fish
• Getting tens of millions of views on my Facebook and YouTube “How to…” articles/videos and fishing tips
• And catching more inshore fish using artificial lures than I ever previously could using live bait...

I would have told you that you are CRAZY!!!

But it’s all true...

I really did quit my corporate job to teach people just like you how to consistently catch more fish in less time.

And I really am catching more inshore fish using artificial lures than most live bait anglers in the same time period.
So you might be wondering…

**Who Is Luke Simonds?**

You might know me as:

- The guy who caught the snook from the 3rd floor balcony…
- Or the guy who helped make the FG Knot famous on YouTube (over 1.2 million views on that knot and growing daily)
- Or you might know me as the guy who teaches the online fishing courses…

Finally, you might even know me as the Chief Fishing Coach at Salt Strong where my daily job is coaching anglers how to become more consistent fishermen."

Yep.

I really do coach fishermen to become better anglers… and pretty much all of the coaching is done online.

And YES, online fishing coaching really does work.

I’ve been doing it full-time for the past 2.5 years (as of this writing), and I’ve been able to successfully impact thousands of inshore anglers who pay me to help them catch more fish.

Let me tell you, it has been the most rewarding thing in my life to see some of my students go from average weekend warriors to winning inshore fishing tournaments, having more fun out on the water than ever before, and even a couple of students who have been able to quit their “office jobs” and get paid to fish too.

But it wasn’t all inshore slams and high fives for me…

In fact, I was a **FRUSTRATED** inshore angler for many years because I was focused on the **wrong things** (I’ll reveal those mistakes in just a bit) that kept me inconsistent for longer than I care to mention.

In fact, I have an entire second room of bad memories, wasted money, and unused tackle that serves as a reminder to what does **NOT** help anglers like you and me catch more fish.

Bottom line, consistent inshore fishing all boils down to just three things.
Before we get into them, I’m guessing you might be wondering…

**Why Am I Sharing These Inshore Fishing “Secrets”?**

It’s pretty simple really.

Looking back, I wish someone had given me the same tips I am going to give you in this report.

It would have saved me TONS of time and TONS of money.

It would have saved me countless frustrating days on the water with nothing to show but a sunburn.

It would have saved me from hundreds of trips getting skunked and wondering why my handful of spots were so inconsistent.

And I’m betting that what I’m going to share with you will be as impactful to you as it was to me.

You see, I have personally seen a massive transformation in regards to how I approach inshore fishing over the past 5 years that has allowed me to consistently catch more *(and bigger)* redfish, snook, and trout than I ever thought possible for a weekend warrior…

Even to a point of consistently placing in tournaments against 30+ other avid fishermen (and a handful of professional guides).

Before this transformation, I was a typical inshore “weekend warrior” angler who could consistently catch at least a few fish that I was targeting, but I was only as good as the live bait I was able to catch *(or sometimes buy)*.

Worst of all, I sometimes even had days of only catching catfish… which I despise given their venomous barbs and nasty slime that gets all over everything it touches (the slime even coats your leader line).

But after the three breakthroughs (that I am about to share with you), my approach to inshore fishing significantly changed, and I’m now consistently catching more redfish, snook, and big trout per hour of fishing time than ever before.

And since teaching is another passion of mine, I felt compelled to write this Inshore Fishing Manifesto because I know it can help other passionate
Saltwater anglers become more efficient and consistent in their fish catching.

Would you like to hear my inshore fishing breakthroughs?

Just imagine how amazing it will feel when you can hit the water and know you can consistently hook up with feeding fish.

I’m telling you, there is some serious FREEDOM in knowing you can catch fish when your buddies are still struggling to find live bait and find schools of fish.

More importantly, I truly believe that what I’m about to share with you can help bring family and friends closer together.

Why?

Because the techniques discussed you are about to discover are all designed to empower you to catch more fish in less time, which will enable you to get out on the water more frequently and have more great memories on the water with your loved ones.

Long story short… I wish someone had passed this information on to me years ago, and I feel like it is my duty and calling to pass these tips on to you.

But before I reveal them to you, can I ask you a question?

The Reason Why Most Inshore “Weekend Warrior” Anglers Struggle

Are you catching solid redfish, snook, and trout consistently (as in catching at least one of them pretty much every time you wet a line)?

My guess is that if you are reading this, then the answer is probably a big “NO”.

Almost every time I get into conversations with frustrated weekend warrior anglers am struck by how many of them are approaching their fishing game the completely wrong way.

But don’t worry, I was in the same boat (pardon the pun) for years.

And I realized pretty quickly (once I discovered these breakthroughs) that it wasn’t my fault.
And it certainly isn’t your fault either.

We have been led to believe that we can just emulate the pros on TV (who have such an advantage over the weekend warriors by being on the water every single day that it isn’t funny), and we can simply catch consistent fish like they do by simply copying their tactics…

WRONG!

We have also been led astray by so many of the advertisements for the "newest and hottest sizzler of a lure" that seems to be popping up constantly in every magazine, TV show, and even YouTube ad that you see.

Ever notice how all of today’s fishing magazines are 70% ads for new fishing equipment and 30% actual real content?

No wonder so many anglers are fooled into believing that we need new tackle and new gear to get better.

We’re forced to believe that our catching will improve if only we had that magical lure or piece of fancy fishing equipment…

WRONG!

Of course, the negative side effects of this misinformation and misguidance are as follows:

• **Wasted MONEY** testing out all of these new lures (you don’t even want to know how much my brother and I have spent over the years testing out lures, reels, rods, hooks, line, etc.).

• **Wasted TIME** chasing around live bait, trying to find new spots, and hopping around aimlessly some days (and if you are a weekend warrior like me, time on the water is super limited, not to mention it is the one that we can’t get back or make up).

• And even worse, my fishing **“street credit”** was ebb and flow like the highest of tides and lowest of tides. I had no Consistency at all. And I am not too proud to admit this…but I absolutely HATE coming back to the boat ramp or marina after a day of blanking on the water. On the other hand, there is nothing that feels better than coming back and showing off pics (or a live well) of trophy fish, amazing fish stories, and high fives when you have one of these awesome days.
I you are anything like me, if I am wasting time, wasting money, and sometimes looking like a rookie in front of my friends and angler peers, then something has got to change!

And change fast!

**Putting Inshore Fishing Into Perspective**

Related to looking like a jack-wagon rookie on the water, let me tell you a true story that you golfers and tennis players can relate to really quickly…

I enjoy playing both golf and tennis, but I would say my favorite out of the two sports is tennis (but still doesn’t compare to fishing of course).

And a few years back I decided to finally join a men’s tennis league in Melbourne Beach, FL.

Let me tell you, I was pretty nervous my first time out on the court as I hadn’t played competitively in a while like many of the guys I was going be competing against.

To make matters worse, I certainly wasn’t used to playing with a few dozen people watching.

It wasn’t like hitting against a backboard or hitting with a ball machine where no one notices or sees framed shots (a framed shot is when you hit the tennis ball with the frame of your racket instead of your strings – it’s kind of like casting a spinning reel as hard as you can when you forget to open the bail… ask me how I know…).

So back to my first match… I’m about to go on the court, the crowd is there, and I’m really nervous that I’m about to look like a fool on the court.

Because if you mess up in a match like the one that I am playing in, everyone sees it! There’s just no way to hide… it’s just two of us out on the court.

It’s kind of like backing down a boat trailer for your VERY FIRST TIME at a super crowded boat ramp where everyone is watching and waiting for you to go… the pressure is on and every small mistake is exposed.

Well my first match should have been filmed and sent in to America’s Funniest Home Videos…
What’s sad is that I was playing against a guy who was way older than me and could hardly run.

Worst of all, his form was extremely erratic so he looked like a first time player when in fact he was actually a consistent hitter (whenever he could get to the ball).

Anyhow, my game was an absolute disaster…

I couldn’t get a first serve in to save my life and my backhand can only be compared to someone trying to use a spinning reel upside down.

All I could do was simply focus on hitting the ball back to the center of the court, where the old man was at his best.

It was the most inconsistent and embarrassing round of tennis that I can ever remember playing…

And did I mention that there was a group of onlookers taking in this entire thing???

After I shook hands with the old man who mopped me all over the court, I walked out of the gates with my head held as low as possible…

And I could just sense all of the people in small crowd staring at me to see how I would react to the embarrassing beat down…

I finally looked up to the crowd of onlookers that I knew were starting at me, smiled, and shook my head as if to let them know, that I know, my tennis game really stinks…

But deep down, all I could think about was going home to figure out a game plan so I would never look this bad in front of people again.

In fact, I was going make sure that I didn’t get on a court again until I got so much better that I would be the guy walking off the court with the smile on my face…

That I would be the guy who played with confidence and consistency…

That never again would I come home with my head held low…

That never again was I going to look like a rookie or a fool in front of all those people who took the game seriously…
So on my drive home that day, I started thinking about what I was going to do about this situation…

And as I saw it I had three choices…

**The 3 Choices We All Have With Any Sport Or Hobby We Cherish**

1. Quit altogether and find a new hobby
2. Not make any changes, pray things get better, continue making the same mistakes and getting frustrated, never accomplishing what I am capable of, remain inconsistent, never getting any respect, and wasting tons of time…
3. Find some shortcuts and learn breakthroughs to help me become a better player so I could enjoy the game more, earn respect, become consistent, have more FUN, and start kicking some butt out there!

What did I do?

When I arrived home I immediately did two things…

1. Since I didn’t have time to hire a private coach, I went online and actually purchased an online tennis course that not only promised to teach me the proper techniques, but even guaranteed that I’d benefit from his course or he would give me all of my money back without any hurdles. So I had nothing to lose!
2. After watching this guy’s online course, I went out and practiced like a possessed man every chance I had over the next couple of weeks… after work, on weekends, hitting against backboards, playing tennis with strangers… I didn’t care. I had to get better and I wasn’t going to look like an idiot ever again in a match.

Did it work?

Was an “online tennis coach” actually able to help me?

Fast-forward just a year from having embarrassing moment out on the tennis court…

- I went undefeated in my first season since starting the online training
- I have complete confidence when I show up at the courts
• I have never lost to another old man with bad form… no more humiliating defeats!

What does all of this have to do with inshore fishing?

Everything!

Let me explain…

This tennis analogy is the perfect analogy to being inconsistent with fishing (I know because I personally struggled at being consistent numerous times with both tennis and inshore fishing).

Think about it:

• The Inconsistent Tennis Player = the inconsistent inshore angler.
• The old man on the court = your fishing partners, friends, or neighbor with lesser gear and/or who don’t go quite as often, yet still catch better fish than you.
• The spectators = people on the docks, hanging out at the marina and boat ramp, or even family, friends, and coworkers who ask how your fishing trip went.

And just as I had three choices to make in regards to my tennis game, you have exact same three choices to make with your inshore fishing skills…

1. Give up, never fish again, and find a new hobby

2. Do nothing and pray you miraculously get better. Keep being inconsistent and never achieve what you are capable of doing out on the water, never getting the respect that you deserve, wasting tons of money and time "fishing" and testing, while little time actually catching.

3. Learn some shortcuts and learn breakthroughs to catch more fish in less time, having more FUN out on the water than ever before, become the angler everyone talks about, become the angler that everyone wants to fish with, and the one that has your friends wondering what magic fishing pill that you took…
Well the purpose of this Inshore Fishing Manifesto is to help you go down the path of option 3 above… catching more fish in less time.

And before you dig in to this “Manifesto,” please know that some of the strategies that I’ll address may be very different than what you’ve been taught so far, and some may even seem a bit controversial to some people… especially owners of fishing equipment companies.

But please know that these tips have proven to work for me, and countless others that I have shared them with, time and time again…

And not just in one area that has inshore fishing either…

These tips and breakthroughs have worked from Texas all the way up to North Carolina and everywhere in between that has inshore fishing…and I know they can help you too.

However, there is one thing I possessed during my transformation that I simply can’t pass down no matter how well I write today…

The burning desire to **JUST DO IT.**

Meaning, if you don’t have the drive to actually implement the tips and strategies discussed in this report, then you’ll undoubtedly not see the same results that myself and others have realized.

Now let’s get into it and have some fun.

And please kindly ignore grammar errors… I’m a fishing addict, not an English teacher or journalist.

Oh, and one last thing you must know before we get into the 3 breakthroughs…

Let’s go over the cardinal rule that I continue to see so many anglers’ break (which is costing them dearly in terms of missing out on trophy fish).

(see next page for Cardinal Rule)
The Cardinal Rule Of Inshore Fishing

What’s the cardinal rule of inshore fishing?

Here it is.

**The Cardinal Rule = Know Thy Target Fish**

You must first know this before you can fully grasp the 3 secrets revealed next.

*Knowing thy target fish* sounds pretty obvious, right?

But what I’ve seen from many anglers is a lack of thought about exactly what your target fish both **WANTS** and what it **FEARS**.

These of course are the dominating factors that determine where you’ll find them and how you’ll catch them.

**Because once you know these two factors, you can predict where fish will be at any given time.**

Yet most anglers don’t take the time to think about it.

Can I give you a quick example?

When I’m at a boat ramp or a dock or even a fishing pier, I always like to strike up a conversation with the anglers to see what’s biting.

The two main questions I always ask are:

1. Any luck? (usually I can get a pretty good gauge on their day by how they respond to this question)
2. What fish are you targeting?

The second question has been quite revealing.

Do you know one of the most popular responses to question #2 that I’ve received?

**“Anything that will bite...”**

I’m sorry, but that has to be the **ABSOLUTE WORST** fishing strategy I’ve ever heard in my life.
I know of 8-year old anglers who have a better strategy in place when they hit the water.

Listen, fish are predictable.

That’s the great news.

But you MUST have a strategy in place and you must know the feeding habits of your targeted species so you can predict EXACTLY where the EXACT fish you are going to target will be hanging out and feeding at any EXACT moment.

Back when I was fishing inshore tournaments, not only did my fishing partner and I have a specific plan, but we knew exactly what fish we were going to target in each spot, at each hour of the day, and with what bait.

Could you imagine paying money to enter a fishing tournament and telling folks, “I’m just going for anything that will bite…”

I can pretty much guarantee one of two things will happen to anglers who fish with this mentality:

1. They get skunked more often than not and end up frustrated as to why they can’t catch consistent fish
2. They catch more catfish, pufferfish, and ladyfish than anything else.

I don’t like either of those options.

Do you?

Here’s the deal, knowing the cardinal rule alone (before we even get into the three breakthroughs) will actually set you apart from a big chunk of saltwater anglers.

From my 15 years of experience in fishing the flats, it’s a safe bet that most people don’t consider what redfish, snook, and/or trout fear while deciding where to cast, how long to stay in a particular spot, or which spot to fish next.

For example, a top fear of redfish, snook, and trout is getting seen by a dolphin while away from protection…

Dolphin are incredibly fast and smart predators that actively feed on them, so even the sound of a dolphin breathing will often shut down the bite because the fish are immediately driven into self preservation mode.
So it’s typically best to leave to another spot if you see a dolphin working a shoreline that you’re about to fish… or at least give them 20 to 30 minutes to settle down.

Overall, the good news is that knowing thy target fish really isn’t difficult…

**Here are the two main things to remember:**

- An inshore fish’s #1 need and focus in life is to get its next meal
- And its primary fear is becoming a meal to something bigger (dolphin, bigger fish, shark, bird, or human).

Knowing this, it’s fairly easy to understand why redfish, snook, and trout often hold close to structure like docks, mangrove roots, oyster bars, etc.

Why?

Because all of these structures provide cover from their predators… while also providing ambush points for catching their next meal.

Also, it’s important to know that healthy grass flats provide redfish, snook, and trout with a tremendous amount of food given that so many shrimp and small baitfish seek cover in the grass.

Although there is not much protection from dolphin or birds on a flat, many redfish, snook, and trout roam grass flats for food and they often hang around schools of big mullet which act as spotters of predators.

The mullet schools also provide assistance in finding food given that they often scare shrimp and small fish from their hiding spots while rooting around in the grass.

So now that the basic “know thy fish” rule has been addressed, here’s breakthrough #1 which started my overall fish catching transformation.

Enjoy.

(see next page for Breakthrough #1)
Breakthrough #1

Discovering The Right Way To Use Aerial Maps

After years of watching fishing shows where the host would always seem to catch tons of big fish, I was forced to believe that consistently catching inshore fish was only possible for anglers that were out on the water all the time and could personally check out every inch of water in their areas for good fish.

In fact, I recall using that excuse (the fact that only guides and anglers who fish every day and know where the bait is can consistently catch fish), any time I had a "skunked" day.

And since I’ve always been a die-hard fishing fanatic (and all my friends and work associates know that it’s my favorite hobby), I vividly remember how embarrassed I was any time that I had to report that my weekend trip was a bust.

In fact, I still remember how humiliated I felt one day when one of my co-workers asked me how my weekend fishing trip went in a Monday morning team meeting (in front of the entire office).

Shortly after informing him (with the rest of the office listening) of the “slow bite” over the weekend, another person in my office was showing pictures to the team of some huge redfish he caught that very same day I was out on the water.

It seriously ruined my day.

Heck, I’m still talking about today and that happened years ago.

But you know what?

That humiliating moment was also the spark that got me serious about studying fish behaviors and biology so I could better predict where they would be.

Given my very competitive and studious nature, I made a pact with myself to never be embarrassed like that again.

I knew there had to be a secret to being more consistent and I was going to find it.
What did I do?

I started buying maps that showed fishing spots and fishing tips for the regions I like to fish (including guidance on specific areas to catch particular types of fish), and I studied the heck out of those maps prior to going out on the water to select the spots I’d visit.

These were the Top Spot maps and a few other knock-off ones from tackle stores.

The problem I found with this strategy was that the “Hot Spots” for catching fish were often very large, and it would take forever to effectively fish it with the live bait that I was accustomed to using.

I’d often spend an entire morning trying to assess a single area that was marked as productive, and often would end up with nothing to show for my time except a lousy catfish or a just some tiny trout.

Worst of all, I’d get back to the docks and see others cleaning really nice fish that I had previously told myself simply weren’t biting that day.

The other BIG PROBLEM with these physical maps is that they are just a bunch of static spots that are guaranteed not to change once you buy the map (and who knows how old the spots are).

Last time I checked, inshore fish move around EVERY SINGLE DAY (based on tides and seasons), so a static spot on a map isn't all that helpful when you think about it.

If it were, everyone owning a spot map would always catch fish (which we know isn’t the case).

So back to square one in my pursuit of inshore fishing mastery…

Next, I started analyzing aerial maps on the Internet (free maps on Google and Mapquest) to get a bird’s eye view of the fishing grounds that the other maps highlighted as being productive.

My theory was that it sure would be nice to see exactly what the bottom contours looked like without having to take my boat or kayak over every square inch of water.

This way, I could more efficiently find the actual spots that held fish inside the big areas that the maps highlighted.
And Holy Smokes!!!

After just a few months of using the aerial images, my results steadily improved.

As in I really did start catching considerably more inshore fish.

Best of all, I felt that I was finally in control of my results.

I even started making myself plan out a series of at least 3 spots that I’d fish based on the wind, tide, and target species for the next day as I was analyzing online satellite maps the night before trips.

And let me tell you, it just kept working.

I was getting more and more consistent every weekend.

This online map reading eventually allowed me to start finding trends on the exact types of spots that hold fish on given tides and weather conditions throughout the year.

Best of all, these trends have proven to be consistent over time and on both coasts of FL (I have lived in Melbourne Beach and Tampa over the past 8 years, not to mention I have fished countless regions from up in the panhandle to Islamorada).

Currently, I use free online aerial maps exclusively for scouting out new areas (no need buy any of the others), and I’m catching more and bigger fish than ever before.

Best of all, I’m now fully confident that I’ll catch my target fish on any given day out on the water as long as I have 20 minutes of internet time the night before... even if it’s in an area I’ve never fished and I’m only taking my three favorite lures with me.

For example, I moved to Tampa a couple of years ago and I had never fished the upper Bay (closest to downtown).

After referencing free Google and Mapquest online maps for ideas on where to go, my very first day on the water consisted of me catching:

- 4 redfish (1 in the slot, 1 over-slot, and 2 rats)
- 3 trout (a 23 incher and 2 small ones)
- All on artificial baits…
- And I was back at the boat ramp before 1:00 in the afternoon.
Needless to say, these results in a new area with only artificial baits is something I would never have dreamed happening to me just few years earlier.

So you’re probably wondering exactly how I was using these free maps to find productive spots.

Although it doesn’t do justice to teach online map reading in a book (I have a risk-free online fishing course called *The Inshore Slammer* that reveals all of my best online map-reading secrets for finding new feeding zones), I’ll do my best to give you some map-reading tips on here.

Let’s dig in to the types of things I look for in the online maps… here are some detailed examples:

**Unique Bottom Cover/Structure – Grassy Point**

This is an image from an island that caught my eye when scouting out new areas to fish prior to entering an inshore tournament series in Sebastian, FL.
The thick grass at the tip of the island with streaks made from the current seemed like an ideal place for redfish and trout to feed... and we ended up bringing in the biggest fish (7.61lb trout) of our first 40+ boat tournament from this spot... and we placed in many of the following tournaments, too.

**Things you look for when fishing a flat like this (the 3 B’s):**

- **Birds** – always good to see wading birds along the edges of the flat and/or diving birds diving on the flat
- **Bait** – back to “know thy target fish” rule... the next meal is what’s on their mind, and their main focus is on being near bait, so a flat without bait is likely a spot without your predator fish (I personally like to see schools of big mullet on a flat... redfish and big trout often hang out in those schools)
- **Boils** – when fishing shallow flats, I always look for fish to make sure that I’m in a productive area because typically, when a flat has one good fish, there are many others nearby. A key sign of good predator fish is a big plume of dirt on the bottom (aka “mud boil”) because predator fish most always are on the bottom in search of food and will leave that dust cloud when spooked... unlike big mullet, which cause a lot of commotion on the surface without disturbing the bottom.

Let’s talk about how to identify honey holes in the winter using online maps next.

(see next page for images)
During winter, the drastic cold snaps (yes, even in FL) from fronts can be hazardous for snook, trout, and redfish, so they often seek shelter from the cold in deeper pools that are protected from wind/waves (the calmer and deeper pools hold on to their warmer temperature much longer than shallow or wind-prone area).

Also, an important element for winter fishing after cold fronts is the fact that areas with darker bottoms (or darker water color) warm up faster than clear
water and/or light color bottoms… and a mud flat will maintain heat longer than sand.

As you'll see in the picture above, this particular spot is a textbook winter time fishery because it is a deep trough (5ft marked by the arrow) surrounded by islands and/or a shallow grass flat (0 ft to 1.5 ft depending on tide)... and the area to the right of the trough is a dark muddy bottom with patches of grass.

**Another important inshore fishing winter tip…**

The coldest snaps in Florida most often contain a strong/cold wind coming from the north, so the fact that the north (top) section in this location is protected by a mangrove line is a huge bonus.

Knowing that redfish, snook, and trout seek protected and deeper water with dark bottom after cold snaps makes an area like this an ideal place to catch fish on the ugliest of days… and this spot has proven it for me over the years.

In fact, my best day back there was right after a nasty cold front on a cold and dreary day with 15+ mph winds from the north.

*(see next page for more winter tips)*
Hidden Saltwater Lakes

My absolute favorite use of aerial maps is to find spots that require some creative exploration to get to.

I’m referring to the types of spots that require a kayak or paddleboard to access… and having to carry across land or follow narrow mangrove tunnels is an added bonus to the thrill of finding fish that are completely wild and have likely never seen a lure.

The pool shown above is an image of a spot that I was particularly proud of finding. It was shortly after my move to Tampa and I wanted to take my paddleboard out for some exercise and to scout out some new fishing grounds.

So I went online to check out the areas surrounding a park that I planned to launch from and noticed a lake that was tucked away back in the mangroves.

It appeared to be deep given the water color, but it didn’t have any large openings… just one very small channel to the left that is too overgrown even for a kayak to get through.

So I noted the part of that thin shot of land along the northern part of it and simply found a small opening in the mangroves and hiked back until I saw the lake.
Best of all, it’s fairly easy to carry a paddleboard/kayak into and it’s full of snook along with some redfish… and I’ve never seen anyone else back there.

If you take nothing else away from Breakthrough #1, let it be this:

When using online maps, you want to see at least 2 of the following things:

• Underwater structure (oysters, seagrass, man-made objects, etc.)
• Above water structure (docks, mangrove tree lines, etc.)
• Points
• Cuts where water is flowing (usually you can actually see where water movement has pushed sand and made a cut)
• Potholes (usually show up as white splotchy areas around seagrass)

Once you check out the area in person, focus on these three B’s:

1. Birds
2. Bait
3. Boils

Let’s dig into breakthrough #2 real quick before I give you another way to get more in-depth map reading tactics.
Breakthrough #2

Simplify Your Tackle

Now that I was finally finding good spots and having some better results with understanding how to effectively use free aerial maps to scout out fishing spots, I was pretty darn pumped.

There is just nothing like being able to find new honey holes every month.

Just imagine that feeling you had the first time you found your favorite fishing hole…

And then imagine finding another spot just like it over and over and over again.

But it wasn’t all honey holes and roses…

There were still some issues with my fishing game…

The problem was that even though I was finding good spots much quicker, I was still feeling held back by the time and energy required to get good live bait.

On some days, I’d spend the first couple hours loading up the livewell (you know the feeling I’m guessing)…

And I am a guy that likes my sleep, so that 5:00 am alarm clock going off was like someone punching me in the face…

But I had to do it just to make sure I had enough time to catch bait.

However, there were still some days where I just couldn’t find live bait, and by the time I was actually fishing, the sun was already shining bright… and I had completely missed the best bite.

Even worse, all that cast net throwing (I mostly use a 12-ft net) was tough on my back… not to mention it always got loads of grass, dirt, and small fish in every nook and cranny of the boat, requiring added scrub time when cleaning the boat after the trip.

So I knew that something had to change.
Any of these sound familiar?

- I was spending way too much time catching bait and frequently missing out on the best bite
- And since I was just your average weekend warrior that didn’t have a daily pulse on the best bait spots, I was waking up WAY too early for my taste…
- To make matters worse, my back hurt from that darn cast net and from having to bend over to scrub the boat once back home.

So what did I do?

I did what I had heard stories of other successful inshore anglers were doing…

I made the switch to artificial lures.

Sadly, I ended up realizing that most of the fishing shows out there were only pitching the type of bait that they are sponsored by, and the vast array of ideas I got from friends and peer anglers put a huge dent in my bank account.

Worst of all, I ended up with an overload of lures that I didn’t have much of a clue on how to work them properly, so my fish catching plummeted…

Note: I still have a spare bedroom that exists today that is full of old lures, line, hooks, and other flashy baits that I was suckered into buying to remind me of my mistakes.

However, I finally had a breakthrough with artificial lures… and it was not at all what I had expected.

My luck actually started turning around when I focused solely on one lure type (the thinking behind it was that it’s best to get really good with one lure than to be decent with a box full of them).

I chose a soft plastic jerk bait to be my lure to perfect because they were cheap, they casted well, and they could be used in really shallow areas as well as deeper potholes and ledges in the ~ 1 to 5 ft depth range, which was what I typically fish.

Over time, I started catching more and more quality redfish, snook, and trout as I began to learn how to most effectively work these jerk baits to entice strikes.
Most shockingly, I began realizing that I did my best when I simplified my approach in regards to color selection.

If you only take one thing away from this manifesto, let it be this…

**SIMPLIFY Your Tackle = You Catch More Fish**

Here is what I did to really get more consistent results (even in tournaments where I was winning money)…

I’d simply take a light color soft plastic and a dark color soft plastic out on the boat with just two sizes (3 inch and 5 inch)... just two colors and two sizes…

Nothing else.

And the catching got better and better.

After the first year of focusing on soft plastic jerk baits, I realized that the lighter color performed best during the summer, and the darker color (with a smaller body) did best during the winter… and spring and fall were a mix between the two.

I ended up choosing Zoom jerkbaits as my go-to brand after trying out tons of options, and these (shown below) were the styles that worked best for me during my first couple years of intense experimentation with artificial baits.

Picture above shows my favorite two lures during first couple years of intense experimentation. NOTE: I’ve now moved on to better options… see below for specifics.

Now that I was only using artificial lures, I thoroughly enjoyed the newfound freedom of no longer having to waste time with live bait, and I was able to spend more time actually fishing and less time prepping/cleaning.
Most importantly, I was able to cover/explore a whole lot more territory given that I could now fish non-stop while on the water (no wasted time catching/maintaining live bait).

I started seeing a ton more fish every trip and soon began to notice that the biggest trout were most often hanging out in the really shallow grass flats among the mullet schools... and that they were extremely finicky.

**How I started catching MONSTER Trout**

Now it was time to figure out how to cast further so I could get to those big trout before they spooked...

This is actually what finally prompted me to switch from my beloved mono to braided line (plus another line tip I’ll share in a second).

The switch from mono to braid immediately gave me an extra ~10 ft of casting distance given its smaller diameter and its lack of loop memory compared to the mono that I previously loved.

Not only was I casting further, but I also had a much better feel of the lure compared to mono given that braided line has almost zero stretch...

I could now even feel the really small pinfish that had the guts to attack a lure bigger than them.

The next line trick that had a big impact on the amount of strikes I received was going down to 10lb braid on pretty much ALL of my inshore reels.

**Note:** I do keep a 4000 series reel lined with 20lb braid for the times when I’m fishing serious structure for monster snook and reds, but all of my inshore reels are rigged with 10lb braid.

Growing up, I always fooled myself into believing that I needed 15 or even 20lb test line because I never wanted to miss out on landing that trophy fish.

Truth is, you can land MONSTER snook, redfish, and trout (not to mention you’ll get a TON more strikes) with 10lb braided line.

Not to mention, it also lets you cast a whole lot farther than with a heavier braid.

Around this same time, I also discovered the swim-bait style hooks that have a small weight attached to the shank of the hook (like this TwistLock hook).
Shortly after discovering the TwistLock hook, I came across Berkley Gulp jerk baits, and my ability to catch the really big trout (along with redfish and snook) skyrocketed.

This new hook style allows for your jerk bait to swim much better in the water because the weight on the shank makes the bait stay upright in the water (weight side down), while the previous style with the normal worm hook often gave the bait an unnatural spin when it wasn't perfectly rigged.

Also, the small weight allows for the jerk baits to be very effective in depths from 1 to 4 feet, while the non-weight style wasn’t able to cover the 3 to 4 foot depth range very effectively.

Further, the twist on feature allows for many more fish to be caught using a single bait (the old style worm hook would typically tear through the plastic at the head, which would then make the bait unusable).

Before these latest gear and lure modifications, I had only caught a few trout over 24 inches.

**After these breakthroughs, I was catching the 24+ inchers on a consistent basis all year long on the east coast of Florida.**

Best of all, my trips over to the Gulf side of Florida resulted in more 24+ inch trout as well (just not as often as in the Indian River).

Further, my slam catches (at least one snook, redfish, and trout in a single outing) dramatically increased on both coasts as well because of the increased territory that I now can cover in a day given that there’s no more wasted time from catching and maintaining live bait.
I was finally in the zone.

Can I share my best gear tips with you?

**Inshore Gear Tips**

Here’s a quick list of gear that I’ve found best results with for fishing the flats and/or backcountry with soft-plastics (in all parts of Florida):

- **Lures** – 3 to 5 inch soft plastic jerk baits (both split and paddle tail styles)
  - Just one light color (light green is my favorite) and one dark color (root beer with chartreuse tail or new penny)
- **Hooks** – [1 ft to 3 ft depth] – 3/0 size with 1/16th oz weight on shank
- **Jig Heads** – [3ft+ depth] – 1/8 oz or more depending on depth
- **Line (main)** – 10 lb braid
- **Line (leader)** – 20 lb fluorocarbon for reds/trout (30 lb for snook)
- **Rod** – 7'6" medium to medium-heavy fast-action spinning rod
- **Reel** – Go as small as possible (I use 3000 size or smaller Shimano spinning reels… no need to go bigger unless you’re fishing inlets with really strong currents… for example, I’ve caught multiple 40+ inch redfish and even an 80lb tarpon on the flats with a 3000 size reel with 10 line braid)

**Rod vs. Reel Tip** - My theory is that the rod is much more important than the reel given that your rod is your core tool for casting, retrieving, feeling bites, and hook setting… and all a reel essentially does is retrieve line and provide drag (once the rod first does its work).

For example, I can easily catch the same amount of inshore fish in a given day with a cheap reel on a nice rod, but I wouldn’t have a chance to compete if using a nice reel on a lousy rod.

All right, let’s move on to breakthrough #3.

**Breakthrough #3**
Fancy Flats Boats Aren’t Necessary

I used to believe that I had to be out in a nice boat to consistently catch good inshore fish.

I remember thinking… if only I could afford that nice boat with all that fancy equipment so I can finally catch fish like they do on the TV shows.

Wow, was I wrong!

I can say this with experience as I now have one of those “nice boats” that I craved growing up, yet I can catch just as many fish (and sometimes more) from simply going out on my beat up kayak…

And some of my very best inshore days have been on my paddleboard that isn’t even designed for fishing… no rod holders, storage bins, etc.

Best of all, there is a huge time savings benefit when fishing via paddle board, kayak, or wading because there’s no boat to clean afterwards (and no waiting in line at the boat launch either).

Once I figured out how to effectively find good spots that are accessible via paddling or wading (using online aerial maps), I began to be able to go on a lot more trips because I now could simply load up my kayak after work and have an hour+ of prime fishing time before dark during the summer…

I have even been known to drop the paddle board in during a lunch break…

Talk about FREEDOM!

Just imagine how amazing it would be to have the fish so dialed in using artificial baits that you can catch lunkers on your lunch break (or even in just 30-45 minutes on your way home from work).

I’m telling you, it’s entirely possible once you learn how to read online maps in conjunction with maximizing artificial lures.

Best of all, weekday fishing with no boat traffic sure is rewarding in the fact that it’s more relaxing and the fish feel less stressed and are more prone to strike.

Here are some tips for maximizing results from kayak and paddleboard fishing:
• It’s typically best to hop out and wade so you don’t get pulled over a school of fish once you find them, and so the wind doesn’t take you over the area too quickly - so make sure to bring wading boots.

• Bring a 5 to 8 foot thin rope so you can tie the kayak or paddle board to your waist, belt buckle, etc. (allowing for you to always have your tackle close by and so you don’t have to walk back across the flat to retrieve your vessel once finished).

• When paddling from one spot to another, always look for mud boils on the bottom because that’s a great sign that predator fish are in the area… this is a huge benefit of paddle-fishing.

Let’s go over what ideal spots for kayak and paddleboard fishing look like on the online maps.

**See next page for images of good paddle fishing areas**
Here’s an example of an awesome spot ideal for paddlers...

The blue arrow points to a public park with parking spots only 15 ft from a sandy riverbank and the red arrows show a range of healthy grass flats spanning an island where I caught a ton of good reds, snook, and really big trout while on short after-work excursions.

Just remember, the fancy boat will never help you catch more inshore fish.

It all boils down to predicting where the fish will be, simplifying your tackle and becoming an expert at one or two lures, and approaching the feeding zones with stealth.
Conclusion (PLUS Free Test Drive)

After years of going back and forth from live bait to artificial lures, I discovered that any weekend warrior angler who can only fish a couple days per month that…

YOU can consistently catch more quality fish per hour when YOU only go out with artificial lures than YOU can with live bait.

And what has been most surprising is that my best results came to fruition once I simplified everything and focused on just being really good at using one lure…

I truly believe it’s better to become really good at presenting one or two lures than it is to be decent at presenting a store-full of them.

So you’re likely wondering how in the world can my claim about artificial catching more than live bait possibly be true… “Everyone knows live bait catches more fish than artificial lures, right?”

And I completely agree that if a single redfish was under a mangrove limb, the odds of catching it are at least 5 times higher with a live bait compared to an artificial lure… even if the lure is presented perfectly right in front of its face.

However…

I’m 100% confident that I can overcome that setback simply by getting my lure in front of a lot more fish in a typical fishing trip compared to what I could do when fishing with live bait…

Which completely puts the artificial lure option in the winner’s circle.

For instance, I’d rather have a day of catching 20 out of 100 fish that saw my lure compared to 10 out of 10 fish that saw my live bait.

The reason it’s possible to get in front of so many more fish with artificial bait is because artificial lures allow you the luxury of immediately being able to fish the second you hit the water and they allow you to continually cover ground until you find the area(s) holding all of the feeding inshore fish.

Which means…

• No more wasting time catching and maintaining live bait
• No more having to wake up at 5am
• No more having to carry around and maintain your cast net
• And no more having to scrub weeds, mud, and tiny critters from all corners in the boat from the cast net throwing when you get back home after a trip.

However, there are a certainly a few scenarios where live bait is clearly the better option:

• If you’re brand spanking new to fishing – artificial lure fishing requires that you’re able to effectively cast a lure and confidently present it to your target fish. The proper cast and retrieve is of course something that can be quickly learned, but it won’t happen if you don’t get proper guidance or spend a lot of time on the water testing out your gear and presentation techniques.

• If you aren’t able to efficiently and quietly cover ground – the big benefit of artificial lure fishing is that you can move around quickly until you find where the most fish are located. But if you’re unable to move around due to not having a trolling motor or not having a paddle vessel, then you’ll be better off with live bait.

• If you’re out on the water all the time (like a full time guide or professional captain) and know exactly where the bait is and where your target fish are located – as you decrease the time it takes to get bait and to find your target fish, the live bait option of course gains ground. On multi-day trips, I always spend the first day with artificial, but then sometimes will go to live bait if I see that most of the good fish are concentrated in a single area on day 1.

Overall, I highly recommend giving artificial lure fishing a shot when pursuing redfish, snook, and/or big trout on the flats or in the backcountry.

It’s the ultimate form of FREEDOM, and you’ll certainly catch more fish per hour of fishing compared to live bait fishing.

It is such a great feeling to know that your success is not dependent on the quality of live bait you have in the live well.

It’s also nice to know you don’t always have to kill a “blacked out” livewell full of bait just to catch a few fish… that’s not exactly conservation minded…

Most importantly, the ability for you to catch more fish in less time will enable you to get out more often and enjoy the outdoors more days than you otherwise could… fish catching doesn’t have to be reserved only when an entire day is open.
I made my transformation in a few years while having to learn everything the hard way. This article alone would have saved me many trips of getting skunked with a feeling of no control over my ability to get better.

I hope you got something out of this, and if you made it this far, I’ve got a special gift for you to really take your inshore game up to a new level.

One final thing…

Your Risk-Free Test Drive

Earlier I told you about my struggle with tennis, and how an online tennis course with an over the top guarantee transformed my entire tennis game.

Well, it did.

Not only did the online tennis course work, but I jumped up an entire level in USTA from taking the course (which is a big deal).

Looking back, it was one of the best investments I made in myself, and the coolest part is that it continues to pay dividends.

I’d like to help you do the same thing (but with your fishing game of course).

I truly believe that I was put on this earth to teach people how to catch more fish…

So I want to “pay it forward” and give you the same kind of experience that this tennis guy did to me (but of course I am going to teach you how to catch more snook, redfish, and monster trout… not improve your tennis serve).

And I’m going to give you the BIGGEST, BOLDEST MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE ever offered on a fishing course.

A 365-day guarantee.

Yep, if you don’t think you are catching more inshore fish anytime in the first 365 days from taking my course, I’ll give you every penny back.

No questions.

No haggling.
Simply email me at fish@saltstrong.com and I'll give you a full refund.

I’m seriously that confident you will see value (and have a big transformation in your fishing game).

If you would be interested in an online fishing course that guarantees you’ll be catching more inshore slams in less time (using artificial lures) then go to www.SaltStrong.com/slam to test drive the Inshore Slammer online course.

The course only takes about 3 hours to go through, and it’s so dialed in that you will start seeing results fast (which is why we have such a bold guarantee).

Here are the three main things you will discover in the Inshore Slammer Online Fishing Course:

- How to quickly find the feeding zones so that you can start catching more inshore slams than ever before
- Exactly what artificial lures you need for every water depth (and which lures are a waste of money)
- How to properly use, rig, and retrieve your simplified artificial tackle so you get more strikes than ever before

You ready to start becoming the best inshore fisherman in your area?

YES! I’m ready to start catching more inshore slams and having more FREEDOM and more FUN than ever before.

Here is the link for your 365 day risk-free “Test Drive” of the Inshore Slammer:

www.SaltStrong.com/slam

See you in the course.

Fish on!

Luke Simonds
Inshore Fishing Coach

P.S. – If for some reason you aren’t into risk-free online fishing courses but still want to receive some of our best saltwater fishing tips, then sign up for our FREE email newsletter where you’ll receive at least one new saltwater fishing tip every week. Sign up now at www.saltstrong.com