Fishing or Catching?
Tips for Redbreast Sunfish
by Mark Williams, Satilla Outdoors

The Satilla River is a Southeast Georgia icon. As it winds its way 260 miles through a dozen counties, it leaves a trail of unsurpassed beauty. The blackwater river draws thousands of visitors each year to partake in the recreation it provides.

The excellent fishing, of course, is its biggest draw. Whether the angler is pursuing sporty largemouth bass, tasty channel catfish, or big bull bluegill, the Satilla rarely disappoints. But there is one fish that stands out as King of the Satilla: the colorful and feisty redbreast.

Usually beginning in March and continuing into the Fall of each year, the red-bellied sunfish is a highly sought after prize. Ounce for ounce, the big mature males, aka “roosters,” are possibly the toughest fighters in the river.

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redbreast is with topwater baits like popping bugs and Swamp Spiders. Whip one of these baits in the right spot with a fiberglass buggling pole or fly rod and then wiggle it with a little life. When the Big Boy is there, he’ll hit hard! The pull will test your equipment and the fight is a blast.

During the summer months, dry conditions can cause the river level to get so low that motorboats can have difficulty navigating the shallow and narrow waterway. This is a great time to go after the fish in a kayak. These small shallow-draft crafts are often a perfect way to get on plenty of fishing action as they are stealthy and can go where larger boats cannot.

Speaking of good action, on a good day of fishing, I may catch 50 fish but will usually only bring home a dozen or so. There’s no need to feel obligated to keep each redbreast you catch. My practice is to keep what I need for a good meal and return the rest to grow and breed. We have a great resource in our spectacular Satilla River. We should all do our part to keep it that way so that our kids and grandkids can have the same enjoyment of the river that we are now blessed with.

Mark Williams is an outdoor enthusiast, Satilla Riverkeeper member, and founder of Satilla Outdoors, a Facebook group that celebrates and promotes outdoor recreation. Members share experiences and ask questions concerning hunting, fishing, camping, and all things outdoors in Southeast Georgia.

Team Stumpknockers took home the Redbreast Stringer prize in the Satilla Riverkeeper’s 2018 “King of the River” Fishing Tournament, for a 3-fish stringer weighing in at 1.82 pounds.
(Pictured: the late Glen Solomon and Mark Williams.)

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<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
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<td>2018</td>
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<td>2017</td>
<td>0.70 lbs</td>
<td>2019</td>
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“King of the River” Satilla Tournament Largest Redbreast