

## Where to Fish During High and Low Tides

Everyday, 365 days a year, the water levels of Charlotte Harbor estuary are constantly changing. This phenomenon is due to the tidal flow that is caused by the gravitational forces of the sun and moon. Since these changing water depths greatly influence the location and movement of fish, **our greatest opportunity for finding fish will depend on these tidal movements.**

First you must understand **how changing water levels influence the movement of fish.** During low tide periods when the **water is shallow**, fish feel vulnerable and move into deeper water for safety and comfort. This movement will tend to concentrate the fish in deeper water that occur in potholes, channel cuts, and the edges of flats and sandbars.

During periods of **high water**, the fish tend to be more scattered and are present in areas where the water depths offer them safety. During this period, fish also tend to **orient more to structure and the availability of food.**

Tidal movements not only affect the movement of fish but also influence the availability and location of their food. Baitfish have no permanent home. They are here today and gone tomorrow. They are swept along by tidal flows. Predator fish know this and set up feeding stations where they can pick off the baitfish as they are moved by the tidal currents.

Since fish location and activity are also affected by other factors such as temperature, water clarity, salinity, and time of year, the following are general "rules of thumb" that the successful angler follows when fishing at low and high tides.

- Concentrate your efforts during the periods of changing tides since fish activity lessens at dead low and high tides.
- During low tide periods fish areas of deeper water where fish tend to be concentrated.
- During high tide periods fish areas that contain structure such as mangrove roots, docks, piers, and bridge abutments.
- Find areas where tidal flows are the strongest. These areas will tend to concentrate food and contain greater fish activity. Tidal flows increase where the path of the water is restricted by either man made or natural structures.

**If you are going to maximize your time on the water, you must apply your understanding of how tidal flow affects the location of fish and their feeding activity. Good fishermen never leave home without consulting their tide tables.**