

Shrimp on a popping Cork

Fishing a shrimp on the shallow grass flats using a popping cork will not only produce trout but other species as well. A three-inch weighted popping cork is recommended – the green poppin' corks are weighted, the white ones are not – the weight helps the angler get casting distance which is critical in clear water conditions.

Hook the shrimp through the head and use a short shank hook such as a Kahle, size 2 to 2/0, depending on the size of the bait. The shrimp can also be hooked on the side of the head with the point passed under the horn so the hook runs side to side.

The third method is to hook the shrimp in the tail. Pass the hook through so the point comes out the top of the tail. When the cork is popped, the shrimp will jump as it naturally does. With any of these riggings, a small on-line weight can be used to settle the shrimp. While the size of hook can range from 2 to 2/0, the rule of thumb is the smaller the bait the smaller the hook.

Sliding sinker rig for shrimp

Because so many fish feed or live on or near the bottom, presenting a bait near the bottom increases an angler's chances for catching a variety of species. The preferred rigging is an egg sinker or bullet weight 1/4 to one ounce, a small red bead as shock absorber, and a barrel swivel. The leader, up to 30 pounds, is tied to the barrel swivel. An extra long shank, 2 to 2/0, depending on the size of the bait, is used. This technique relies heavily on the scent of the shrimp and is helped by the hooking method. The shrimp is threaded on the hook starting at the tail and the hook point comes out just below the head. An Eagle 66N hook is good for this baiting procedure.

Trolling a live shrimp

Trolling is a very good way to find fish, especially the predator species. It is well suited for canals and creeks as well as the harbor. One of the most effective trolling rigs for shrimp is a barrel swivel, monofilament or wire leader material, and a Trol Rite or tear drop jig head, size 1/0 to 4/0. Yellow is the most popular color. A shrimp is hooked like it was being freelined and if it is trolled very slowly, the bait will look like it is swimming naturally.

SOME OTHER LOCALLY POPULAR LIVE BAITS

Blue crabs

Small or silver dollar-size crabs can be trapped on the grass flats or purchased at any shop that caters to tarpon fishermen from April through July. Freelining or bottom fishing are the best methods for this bait.

Large blue crabs are used for black drum. The crab's top shell should be removed and the crab split in half. A sliding sinker rig will present the bait properly.

Cobia also are attracted to crabs, and when crabs shed, they are an outstanding bait for redfish. Here again, a sliding sinker rig with pieces of crab will attract redfish as well as other fish.

When fishing soft crabs, holding them on a hook is a problem. They can be attached to the hook, by a rubber band looped through the hook's eye and then around the bait and hook. A 5/0 hook works best.

Fiddler and rock crabs

Fiddler crabs can be caught at low tide with a cast net. They should be hooked through the rear portion from bottom through to the top. The size range of hook is 2 to 1/0.

Rock crab are found in canals and on banks during low tides. they are best caught by hand and when hooked the same way as fiddler's are a good bottom fishing bait. Both crabs appeal to a variety of fish.

Sand fleas

A popular bait for pompano and other surf species, sand fleas can be purchased or caught using a mesh shovel. as they burrow into the sand. They are scooped up and the sand falls through the shovel's mesh leaving the flea, which is actually a crustacean. They should be hooked in the front from the bottom through to the top.