

5TH ANNUAL GASKIN PARK FLATHEAD CATFISH TOURNAMENT
JUNE 26 & 27, 2009
GASKIN PARK LANDING
WEWAHITCHKA, FLORIDA

Jamie Lee, one of the well known regulars on the Apalachicola Flathead Catfish Tournament Trail, was very carefully hanging his various catfish over the sides of his boat to keep them alive until he could get them to the scales to weigh in.

Meanwhile.....cruising silently in the dark night, partly submerged in the swift river current, the eight foot alligator watched for his opportunity. Frantic splashing drew his attention. He could feel the vibrations through the water and knew his next meal was a short distance away. SPLASH!!! Another stringer adding to a very pleasing assortment of flathead catfish was back in the water.....and then it was..... GONE!!!!

Suddenly Sterling Phillips, in another boat not too far away, heard a lot of commotion and Jamie was hauling that array of fish back in his boat as fast as he could go trying to save his fish from an invisible predator.

Jamie estimates he lost 45 pounds of fish to that sneaky gator Friday night while fishing the 5th Annual Gaskin Park Flathead Tournament. Even so, he was able to weigh in 80.24 pounds at the scales.

The youngest registered fisherman in the tournament this year was Cody Robertson from Echola, Alabama, fishing with his great-great uncle KK Harless and his granddaddy Terry Harless. Cody might not have weighed in any fish of his own, but he had a good time on the river and carried his uncle's 2.86 pound catfish to the scales for weighing in. Granddaddy Terry weighed in a 10.41 pounder as well.

For those of you who remember the "Mutt and Jeff" comic strip (approximately 1907 to 1982), the tournament has its own version in Lindsay Simonson and fiancée Stevie Peak, both of Wewahitchka. Lindsay, being all of 4'11" tall weighed in an 18.01 pound catfish and Stevie at 6'4" weighed in his 17.68 pound catfish; no rivalry here, of course! Project Graduation photographer Karen Turner tried to get brother Casey Simonson to hold Lindsay's 3.84 pounder for the picture, but he laughingly declined that honor. Don Minchew, Tournament Chairman, told Stevie he needed to put a booster seat in the boat so people could see Lindsay and she could see out. The trio fish the tournaments as regularly as college and work schedules allow.

River levels were better for this tournament than for the Dogwood Blossom in March. Several anglers were plagued with garfish stealing bait and cutting lines.

A few said if this had been a gar tournament, they would have no trouble finding fish to win the pot even though flatheads are better eating.

For the 2009 Gaskin Park Flathead Tournament, 4th in the Apalachicola Flathead Tournament Trail Series, stats are as follows: 105 fisherpersons comprised of 17 women and 88 men in 57 boats. 26 men weighed in 80 fish for 998.61 pounds and 5 women weighed in 7 fish for 77.97 pounds. Winners were:

1 st	Sterling Phillips	Hosford, FL	34.12 pounds	\$1,000
2 nd	Timothy Ake	Wewa, FL	34.11 pounds	\$500
3 rd	Danny Earnest	Hosford, FL	28.78 pounds	\$400
4 th	Danny Earnest	Hosford, FL	28.72 pounds	\$300
5 th	James Cox Jr	Altha, FL	27.77 pounds	\$200

Roy Pickron of Blountstown, FL and Kenneth Bauman of Abbeville, AL won the most boat pounds at 98.53 for \$250.

Raffle winners were Tim Ake for an American Spirit rod with an Acuma Avenger reel and Linda Worthington of Bristol for \$88 from the 50/50 raffle.

At the behest of Florida Wildlife Commission, flathead catfish are not released back into the water as they are not native to Florida, but they sure are good eating. Visit the website for some tasty recipes. Several pounds of fish were also donated to Eastern Star and Project Graduation.

Gulf County Tourist Development Council and Employees Club of Wewa thank all participants, volunteers and sponsors for their support of the tournament. Proceeds this year will benefit Project Graduation 2010 for Wewahitchka High School graduating seniors.

Project Graduation also thanks area businesses for their donations of door prizes for the fishermen including Blue Water Outriggers, Half Hitch Tackle, Angler's Tackle, A-1 Oil & Muffler, Bayou Restaurnat, Provisions Restaurant, Buy Rite Pharmacy, Dollar General, Bill's Dollar Store, Coastal Design & Landscape and Peak's Unlimited.

The 5th tournament in the Trail series is Hosford Telogia Volunteer Fire Department on July 25 and 26. Contact Rudy Sumner at 850-566-0812. Applications are also available at Wewa City Hall and on-line at www.floridacatfishclassic.com.

The Trail will skip the scorching month of August this year and finish up with the Florida Catfish Classic on September 25 and 26. VFW Post 8285 of Wewa will also host a Catfish Festival at Lake Alice Park on September 26. Please visit the newly designed website by Bluewater iNet Group LLC and funded in part by Gulf County Tourist Development Council. www.floridacatfishclassic.com

