

THE BACKCAST



THE BACKCOUNTRY FLY- FISHING ASSOCIATION OF
BREVARD



Volume XXXVI Number V

February 2026

**February 3rd 6:30 Meeting:
Italian-American Club
1471 Cypress Ave
Melbourne**

Capt. Brandon Alexander



Our February speaker is Capt. Brandon Alexander who will be giving a presentation on fishing on the west coast of Florida near Tampa Bay and Aripeka.

Below is information about Capt. Alexander that was pulled from his website:
<http://bflycharters.com>.

"I have been fishing the inshore waters of the Nature Coast and Tampa Bay for 8 years, specializing in the area from Upper Tampa Bay to Aripeka, Florida. I mostly chase Redfish, Snook, Speckled Trout, and seasonal fish such as Tarpon and Cobia. I also guide the Middle Texas Coast in the late summer and early fall sight fishing for redfish and speckled trout. I've pursued fish with a fly rod for as long as I can remember. My grandpa used to give me his old 5 weight outfit with a popping bug and have me catch panfish he'd use for bait to catch catfish and bass in local farm ponds in North Carolina. I obsessed with catching fish completely through my childhood and would go fishing with my mom any chance I could get. I met a mentor in college in Southern Missouri who taught me how to trout fish and I spent my college years chasing Rainbow and Brown Trout any chance I could get.

When my wife and I got serious about getting married we quickly settled on moving to the coast. A spring break trip to see her family in St. Petersburg Florida caused us to fall in love with the Gulf Coast. We moved to New Port Richey, Florida shortly after graduation and have been here ever since. I purchased my skiff that fall and I've been obsessed with learning the area ever since. I started B-Fly Charter Company and began to focus on sight fishing with a fly rod quickly; choosing to specialize in that style of fishing due to my genuine love and excitement for hunting down gamefish and watching them eat. I love everything about the chase: observation of the animal, presentation of the fly/lure, and their change in body language when they decide to eat. I especially love chasing Migratory Tarpon in the summer and Redfish the rest of the year. I look forward to showing you the beauty of the places I guide while chasing some great gamefish with fly or light tackle!"



Jeff Ward's Fly of the Month

Fly Tying class is held on the 3rd Monday of the month
at the Melbourne Library at 6:16.

“Salt Skipper Fly”

Recipe:

Hook: FTD MS100 #1/0

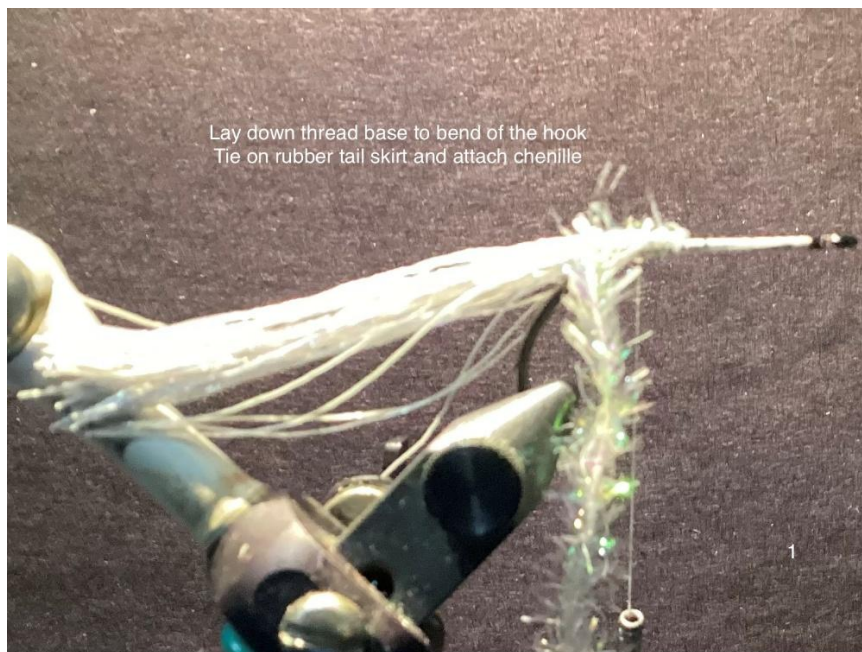
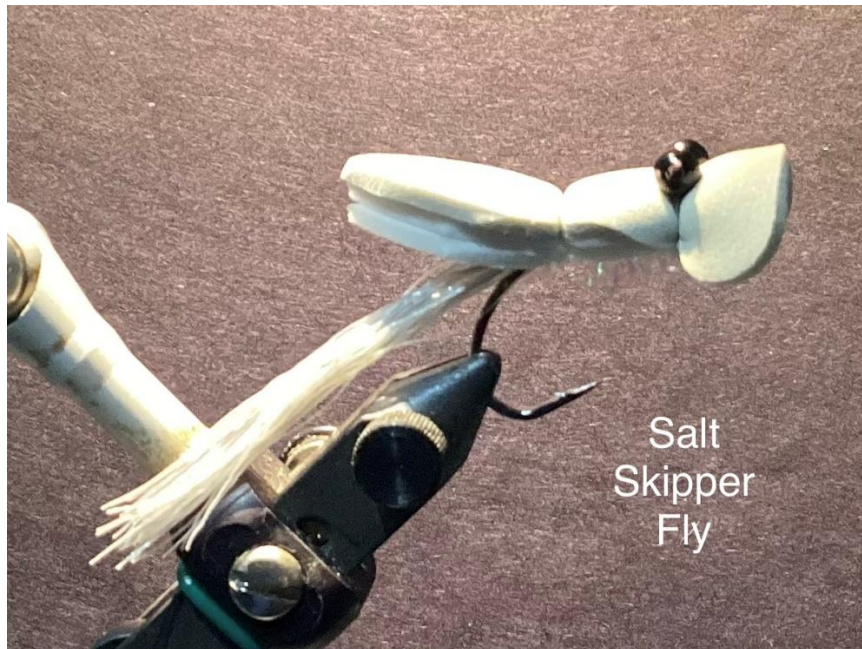
Thread: 210 White

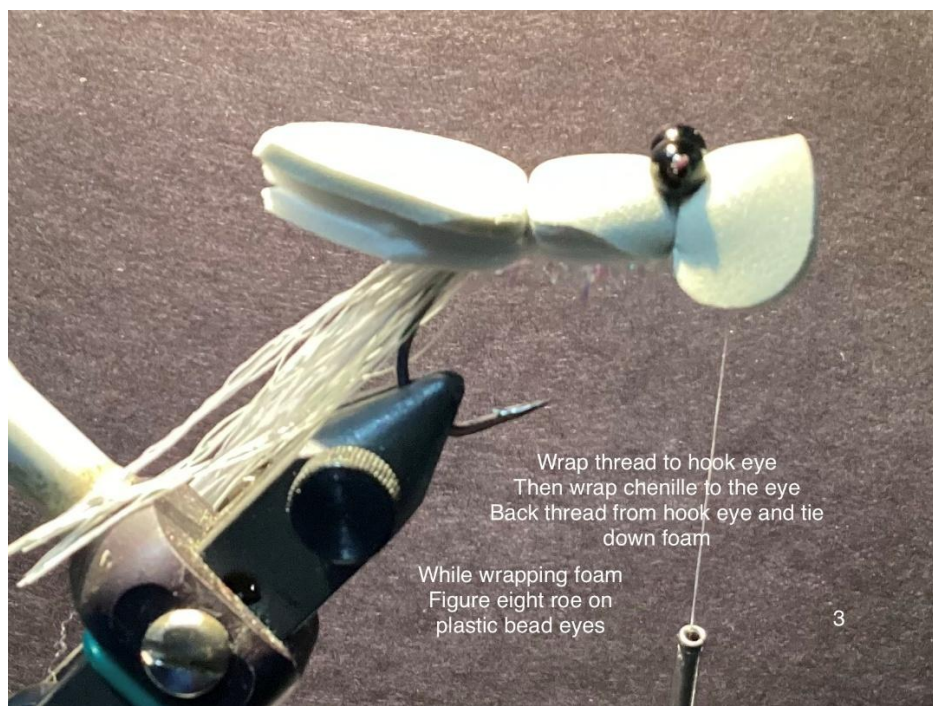
Tail: Rubber Bug Legs

Belly: 2mm Foam 8mm wide

Body: Medium Stealth Bomber 2mm

Eyes: Plastic Beadchain





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March 7th Auction

We will be having our annual auction on March 7th from 4:00-7:00 pm at Billy Kempfer's ranch. This is our one and only auction which raises the money we use to bring in our annual speakers, such as the recent program headed by Chico Fernandez. If you missed Chico's presentation, make sure to read Paul Bruun's article below which goes into great detail about Chico and the information he shared. So, we need everyone to dig into their treasure trove of items that they no longer use and donate them to the club auction. The premise will be the same as last year and there will be some items being put up for bid on the live auction and then other items being offered on the silent auctions going on. Remember that the items you bring should be new or gently used. We really need items this year and if you know what you will be bringing let us know. Scott Curtis thanks for donating the items you recently gave and getting them to the club ahead of time.

There are two articles in this month's newsletter that were contributed by Don Davis and Paul Bruun. Don writes about Flip Pallot, who recently passed away, and snook fishing with him and more. Paul's article is about the recent Chico presentation to our club and is a great insight into the legendary man who gave so freely of his fishing tactics and experiences. Thanks to each of you for your contributing articles.

Craig

Flip Pallot by Don Davis



A true icon of the outdoor world, and good friend to The Backcountry Fly Fishing Association of Brevard, Flip Pallot opened the door of salt water fly fishing to millions through his wildly popular show, The Walkers Cay Chronicles. Set on Walkers as home base, Flip traveled the world, fishing for species then unknown to most of us, and show us how to live life to the absolute fullest.

My friendship with Flip started over 40 years ago on a bowhunt at St Marks National Wildlife Refuge. He was hunting with a mutual friend, Dennis Hammond, and had recently filmed an episode of American Sportsman for ABC, I think. Our mutual love of the woods and traditional bowhunting allowed the friendship to simmer over the years and when he moved to Brevard County after Hurricane Andrew, we were able to squeeze in a few more hunts and shoots each year between gaps in his busy schedule.

Our friend was going strong at 83, having traveled to Wisconsin to smallmouth fish before he checked into the hospital on August 26 for a relatively routine surgery. I think during the surgery, God decided he was short a good fishing guide and called Flip up to the true big league. The details of Flip's passing scarcely matter. The details of his life do and there is so much more out there to tell that this is not possible at this time. Acclaimed outdoor writer, Tail Magazine editor in chief, T Edward Nickens, is wrapping up Flip's biography and I encourage all to read it to learn more about how Flip lived through the simplicity of Sticks, Strings and Sharp Feathered Things.

Don Davis-BFFA Past Chairman
Addendum: quick story-

Flip and I were snook fishing Stuart one night (and doing well I might add). Slack tide hit and I moved us to a spot that often holds tarpon snook that do not mind the slack. Flip was on the bow and made a nice cast which was quickly rewarded with a moonfish (lookdown). It just so happens that this is a favorite eating fish for Flip, and his pal Chico Fernandez. Many more were caught for the grille and Flip could not stand it. He had to tell Chico. After a quick pic, he pulled out his phone and called Chico. Aggravated by the lack of an answer at 1:00 AM, he texted him a pic, proudly holding not one of the many snook we caught, but one holding a plate sized "moonfish"

Chico Fernandez Article by Paul Bruun

Saving Chico's best fly and fishing tips

What is there to learn about fly fishing from an 85-year-old Cuban storyteller whose family was fortunate to escape the ruinous bearded dictator who so successfully wrecked the Caribbean's most productive country? I absorbed plenty last weekend from Jesus Manuel "Chico" Fernandez, who has been writing, photographing and presenting fly fishing clinics about the excellent fishing spots he's explored during the last 60 years. Chico isn't just about all the "newest stuff" being developed. He emphasizes "presentation ..." not only in his entertaining and self-deprecating talks but also how critical accuracy and proper fly behavior are in fly fishing. During his Saturday visit with 50 members of the Backcountry Fly Fishing Association in Melbourne, Florida, Chico elaborated about favorite flies, leader knots, plausible casting methods and his plentiful saltwater fishing experiences. He especially focused on details used for his favorite fly rod challenges, such as barracuda, permit and tasty reef species like yellowtail and grouper. Fooling a trophy-size barracuda, 25-plus pounds, with fly tackle requires a plan that starts with always having a 9- or 10-weight rod rigged for this potentially wary species. Chico suggests explaining beforehand or at least at the day's beginning, a specific barracuda, permit, tarpon or yellowtail goal. That allows a guide to match tides, winds and time of day with prevalent locations for such species. Arriving dockside with rigged fly tackle is important because surprise fishing opportunities can happen any time. Usually plenty of barracuda are prowling or sitting motionless on tropical saltwater flats or in adjoining channels. The really big 'cudas aren't easily fooled after having lots of bright tube lures, topwater plugs and casts in their directions. Extra-long casts — at least 70 to 80 feet — are a necessity. Clear, floating fly lines as well as longer leaders are in order. Despite ease of tying braided wire leader to flies, Chico favors a 6- to 7-inch length of single-strand stainless wire bite leader in 30- to 40-pound test. Wrap a haywire twist to the fly before adding the wire bite guard to a 10-foot monofilament — or better, a fluorocarbon tippet — using an Albright Special knot. If a fly is supposed to sink, Chico uses fluorocarbon tippet material. He no longer casts those popular long and slender 'cuda fly patterns that everyone else tries to hurl. Instead he has an easier-to-cast, bright orange, 7-inch feathered Deceiver-style streamer that's noticeable to even the visually challenged! A big barracuda's display of astounding vaults and skin-burning line speeds in shallow water are worth this extra effort. While on the subject of making longer casts to cautious fish, I enjoyed Chico's description of his "Long Ranger" outfit. This project begins by cutting off most of the running line from a floating, weight-forward fly line. Save the front 50 feet of floating fly line, which is plenty for normal casting. Replace the thick, floating running line with 20- or 30-pound "Amnesia" or other thin, mono shooting line. This becomes an easier to distance cast shooting head. A skinnier running line is easier when making repeated long casts with less false casting. Something I particularly appreciate about Chico's fly fishing experience is a willingness to elaborate on using sinking lines and fly strategies. Fast sinking, tungsten added fly lines are particularly effective and popular in Alaska, along the West Coast and Northeast for migrating fish runs in both fresh and saltwater. Such gear isn't as widely employed as much in the tropics where Chico thrives. Yet he's fond of casting a manufactured 400-grain, 30-foot fast-sinking combination fly line for reef fish as well as ocean speedsters like king mackerel, tuna and muscle-soreness-making big jacks. Tackling delicious but strong patch reef species such as yellowtail, snapper and grouper is best begun by chumming fish scraps. Chico uses his longtime signature Snapping Shrimp fly, originally designed for flats species, in the deeper water. Everything eats shrimp, and when the fast-sinking line is cast up current and allowed to sink and swing across the reef into the chum line, big bites happen! Sinking Chico's larger and weighted Snapping Shrimp flies on long fluorocarbon leaders and even intermediate-density or sink-tip lines produces plenty of deeper channel strikes. I'm no longer surprised at how many News&Guide readers include fishing in frequent travels. Carrying favorite tackle on airlines is no longer easy. Today it is safer fitting fly fishing gear such as multipiece rods, reels, pliers, flies and tools into checked baggage. I miss the ancient days of positive safety by hand carrying rods, reels and flies on international trips. Chico has a whimsical travel plan that he admits has been fun. "I always bring a toy," he chuckles, alluding to a 4- or 5-weight fly rod and poppers and streamers to target smaller freshwater or inshore inhabitants. "You'll be surprised at the excitement a light fly outfit can be in a jungle or backcountry stream." Another of Chico's favorite devices that I've, too, found enjoyable is what he terms the "Sawed-Off Shotgun" fly rod. "In tight spaces

like the mangrove Everglades and small tidal creeks, a 9-foot fly rod is awkward. It makes casting underneath overhanging branches and jumbled roots harder,” Chico admits. “A shorter, 7.5- to 7-foot, 11-inch, 7- to 9-weight rod is perfect.” The best example of this rod style, the Sage Bass Series (Bluegill, Smallmouth, Largemouth, Peacock, Pike/Musky), sadly was discontinued. Rod companies have struggled to sell any similar shorty rod series. Sage’s then-rod maker, Jerry Siem, designed taper and grain weight-specific lines for each of the four-piece rods mentioned above. Obtaining peak performance from shorter rods requires trial and error testing with exact lengths of compact line tapers and weights. Jerry and Diana Siem gifted the Bruuns a pair of Sage Bluegill rods for our 2009 wedding. We enjoy them regularly on the St. Johns and Okeechobee marshes when in Florida, as well as on the Snake River in Idaho and in Wisconsin for smallmouth. With their exact grain weight lines, casting our Bluegill and Largemouth models is magical. Every backcountry fly fisher has an opinion about using weed guards on their patterns. Many commercial bass-oriented flies have sturdy loops as monofilament weed guards. They fail in heavy lily pads and tough clumps of invasive aquatics like hydrilla. Many guides feel weed guards interfere with hookups. Chico defends weed guards mainly for use in southern Everglades conditions where floating grass snags flies before redfish, snook and baby tarpon can find the presentation. Chico’s single down-wire weed guard is made with number 3 or 4 stainless. Long ago Chico championed the Bendback, a slight downward bend in the hook shank that allows the hook point to ride facing upward. A sturdy bucktail wing hides the hook and may protect the fly from snagging floating grass. All by itself, Chico’s exquisite storytelling is truly entertaining. His insights do not go out of style. I smile with every strike on any signature Chico pattern, like the Snapping Shrimp, Bonefish Special, Seaducer and Bendback, which I am never without. Es bueno! The Seaducer comes in many shades and feather combinations. Always an easy fly to cast, allow it to meander gently about in shallow grassy redfish, snook and tarpon territory. An early Florida Everglades pattern that has been rejuvenated and popularized by Chico Fernandez, the Seaducer is truly enjoyable to fish.

At a recent Melbourne Backcountry Fly Fishing club gathering, Chico elaborated on necessary steps to fool one of the most explosive shallow water events provided by a BIG barracuda. These lurking giants like the one Brian O’Keefe is holding below, see plenty of lures, flies and baits tossed their way. Fooling them requires a detailed plan and long casts. But the reward of a super ‘cuda’s greyhounding vaults and sizzling line-burning speed can’t be duplicated by any other flat species.

Paul Bruun



BFFA February 2026 Events

Monthly Dinner Meeting:

**February 3rd 6:30
Italian American Club—
1471 Cypress Ave. Melbourne**

Board Meeting:

February 10th –We will meet at the Texas Roadhouse at 5:00 for a meeting/dinner. The address is 941 E. Eau Gallie Blvd, Melbourne , FL. 32937. All members are invited. RSVP

Outings:

**Nothing on the horizon.
Get out and go shad fishing.**

Fly Tying:

**Melbourne Library—6:15 p.m.
Classes are held on the 3rd Monday of the month. Bring your own fly tying tools and Jeff will have the material needed to tie the fly(s).**



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