

# ***THE BACKCAST***



THE BACKCOUNTRY FLY- FISHING ASSOCIATION OF  
BREVARD



Volume XXXVI Number IV

January 2026

**January 6th Meeting:  
at the Italian American Club  
1471 Cypress Ave  
Melbourne**

## **Captain Mark Benson**

An active U.S.C.G. Master Captain since 1999, Captain Mark Benson offers inshore light tackle and fly-fishing trips in the famed waters of the Indian River Lagoon system. He has also earned the Certified Casting Instructor (CCI) designation through the International Federation of Fly Fishers, a non-profit organization dedicated to the betterment of the sport of fly fishing through conservation, restoration and education. As a Certified Florida Master Naturalist from the University of Florida/IFAS, Mark enjoys sharing his knowledge and appreciation of the state's ecosystems. Mark's website is a true reflection of his interests and talent, from fishing to photography. Here is a link to his website-- [www.markbensonoutdoors.com](http://www.markbensonoutdoors.com). Marks' knowledge of the annual shad run that occurs on the St. Johns River is invaluable and a great way for us to start this year's meetings.

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## Ramblings and Such

### January

Here we go again with a new year upon us. We are looking forward to 2026 and will be starting out the first month with Capt. Mark Benson and a presentation on fishing the St. Johns for Shad. The timing of this program could not be better if the Shad cooperate, as late January and then all of February are typically prime times for the migration of Shad to start coming into the river south of State Road 46 and migrating even further south.

### Chico Fernandez—January 10<sup>th</sup>

On Saturday January 10<sup>th</sup> we will be having Chico Fernandez coming to the club for a day seminar. More information on cost and times of the event are addressed in the following pages.

### March Auction

We will be having our annual auction in March 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 upcoming program headed with Chico Fernandez. We need everyone to dig into their treasure trove of items that they no longer use and donate them to the club auction. Also, if you are planning to donate a high dollar item if you would send us an email or let us know about it well in advance of the auction that would be greatly appreciated.

## Chico Fernandez Jan. 10<sup>th</sup>



On January 10th the BFFA club has the privilege of having Chico Fernandez for a day seminar at the Italian-American club. This is a club member only event and you must have been a club member as of our last November meeting. Starting at about 8:00 a.m. or so, we will start setting up coffee and pastries. The presentation will begin at 9:00 and end at 3:00 p.m. There will be lunch provided as well. The cost for all of this is \$25.00 and you can pay at the event.

If you are planning to attend and have not notified us, please send an email back to me.  
Thanks

### Chico

“Chico Fernandez was born in Havana, Cuba and moved to South Florida at a young age. He had already begun saltwater fly fishing while living in Cuba and when he moved to Miami, quickly fell in with several other young fly anglers, Norman Duncan, Flip Pallot, and John Emery. With his friends, and also on his own, Chico experimented with flies, lines, rods and reels, and helped develop many of the saltwater fly fishing techniques in use today. Eventually, Chico left his corporate job to carve out a life that revolved around his passion for saltwater fly fishing.

He is an instructor, author and a highly sought after expert by rod and tackle companies, and has led groups and fished the world over from New Zealand, Spain, Costa Rica, the Caribbean, Yucatan Peninsula, and Alaska. The Seaducer, Bend-Back, Bonefish Special, and Snapping Shrimp are all flies developed by Chico that are still excellent patterns today.

His book, “Fly Fishing for Bonefish” is considered the definitive work on pursuing bonefish with a rod and flies, and will provide any angler, novice or experienced with an in-depth look at the tools, and skills necessary to pursue bonefish anywhere in the world. His forthcoming book, “Fly Fishing for Redfish” promises to be every bit as comprehensive. When you meet Chico, his passion for the sport, and lifelong enjoyment are evident and contagious.”

## BFFA January 2026 Events

### **Monthly Dinner Meeting:**

January 6th at 6:30  
Italian American Club—  
1471 Cypress Ave. Melbourne

### **Fly Tying:**

Melbourne Library—6:15 p.m.  
There will not be a fly-tying class in January  
due to the holiday on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the  
month. Classes will resume in February.

### **Outings:**

Nothing yet but once we  
hear reports of Shad we are  
planning to set up an outing  
to the St. Johns.

### **Board Meeting:**

January 13th 5:00 meet at Ron Winn's  
office 2103 Grant Place Melbourne All members  
are welcome to join. We typically eat at Megs  
first and then rejoin at Ron's office around 6:00



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