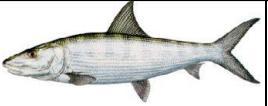
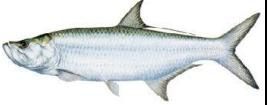
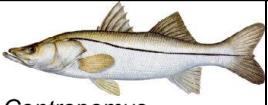


GAMEFISH	SEASON	LOCATION	BAIT/ LURES	FLY FISHING
 <i>Albula vulpes</i> Bonefish*	All year, best late March through September	Near shore, shallow seagrass and sand flats, mangroves <u>St. Croix</u> - East end and south shore beaches and bays. <u>St. Thomas</u> - All lagoons, Mandahl Pond. <u>St. John</u> - Mary's Creek, Annaberg Flat.	Live shrimp, small jigs often baited with shrimp or crab	Various small flies tied to imitate shrimp, crabs, and worms
 <i>Trachinotus falcatus</i> Permit	All year, best April through October	Shallow seagrass, sand flats and back reefs <u>St. Croix</u> - South shore beaches and back reef areas. <u>St. Thomas &amp; St. John</u> – All lagoons.	Small live crabs, pieces of crab, small sea urchins	Crab patterns
 <i>Megalops atlanticus</i> Tarpon*	All year, best March through October	Mangrove lagoons, bays, harbors, deeper water adjacent to shallow flats, around offshore cays <u>St. Croix</u> - Christiansted Harbor and Salt River. <u>St. Thomas</u> – East end lagoons, Mandahl Pond. <u>St. John</u> –Mary's Creek, Annaberg Flat.	Silver spoons, white jigs, live baitfish	Large streamers, Seaducers, various "tarpon" flies
 <i>Centropomus undecimalis</i> Snook	All year	Mangrove lagoons, bays, harbors, along beaches with sharp drop-offs and submerged structures <u>St. Croix</u> - South shore beaches <u>St. Thomas</u> – East end lagoons, Mandahl Pond. <u>St. John</u> –Mary's Creek, Annaberg Flat.	Live shrimp, small fish, baitfish imitation lures	Baitfish imitations
 <i>Sphyraena barracuda</i> Barracuda	All year	Around reefs, channels adjacent to shallow water, mangrove lagoons and bays <u>St. Croix</u> - inshore reef areas. <u>St. Thomas &amp; St. John</u> – entire island.	Live fish, baitfish imitations, silver spoons, feathers	Baitfish imitations, needlefish imitations
 Carangidae Jacks	All year	Around reefs, channels adjacent to shallow water, mangrove lagoons and bays, back reef flats. <u>St. Croix</u> - All shelf drop offs and Salt River Canyon. <u>St. Thomas &amp; St. John</u> – docks and along shoreline.	Squid, shrimp, cut bait, small spoons, spinners, jigs	Small streamers, clousers, shrimp imitations
 <i>Lutjanus mahogoni</i> Mahogany Snapper	All year	Around reefs, channels adjacent to shallow water. <u>St. Croix</u> - Inshore reefs <u>St. Thomas</u> – all along shoreline, and east end lagoons. <u>St. John</u> –Mary's Creek, Annaberg Flat.	Baitfish (squid, fry) or cut bait, squid	

\* Only Catch and Release Allowed

## HELPFUL HINTS FOR CATCH AND RELEASE FISHING

1. Use barbless hooks – barbless hooks reduce the time needed to handle a fish before releasing and may be easily removed if you should get hooked.
2. Use artificial lures – natural baits are more likely to be swallowed, causing extreme damage to the fish.
3. Reduce fight time – this allows fish to conserve its energy resources and recover faster.
4. Keep the fish in the water –remove the hook and release the fish without removing the fish from the water.
5. Use a 'dehooking device'
6. Be gentle –wet your hand first to minimize the amount of protective coating of 'slime' removed from the fish by handling.
7. Help the fish – when releasing a fish, hold the fish in the water in an upright (swimming) position. Hold the fish loosely by the base of the tail and under the stomach until it is strong enough to swim away.

### ETHICAL ANGLING

- Help fish stocks increase through catch and release.
- Limit your take, don't always take your limit.
- Observe regulations
- Report violations to the Division of Environmental Enforcement at (340)773-5774 in St. Croix or (340)774-3320 in St. Thomas.

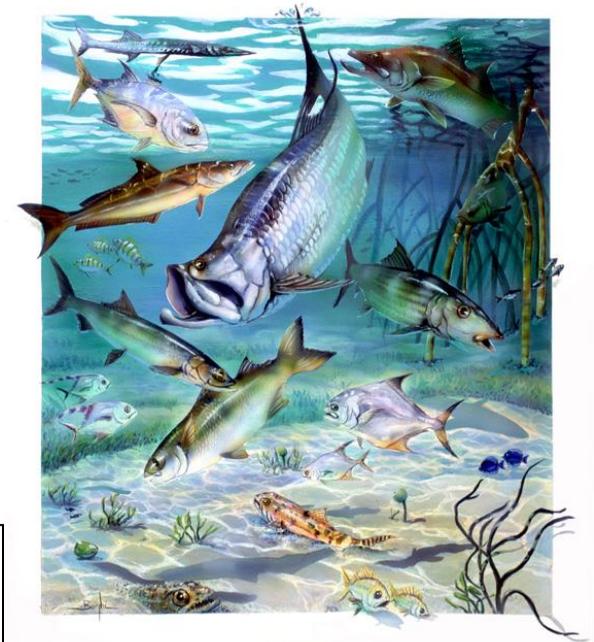
### REMEMBER:

Bring all garbage in, don't teach it to swim.  
Captain your boat, practice safety afloat.  
Share what you know to help your sport grow.

For more information on Recreational Sportfishing contact  
DPNR's Division of Fish and Wildlife at:  
[dprn.vi.gov/fish-and-wildlife/](http://dprn.vi.gov/fish-and-wildlife/)



## Shallow Water Game Fish RECREATIONAL FISHING



IN THE U.S VIRGIN ISLANDS  
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND  
NATURAL RESOURCES



Division of Fish and Wildlife  
45 Mars Hill  
Frederiksted  
St. Croix, V.I. 00840  
(340) 773-1082

6291 Estate Nazareth 101  
St. Thomas, V.I. 00802-1118  
(340) 775-6762

## GAME FISHING

Fishing has been defined as the act, occupation or sport of catching fish. Since the 1950's shallow water game fishers in the USVI primarily targeted bonefish, tarpon and permit. However, bonefish are not as abundant in the Virgin Islands as they once were. Permit and tarpon are now at the top of the list for shallow water gamefish enthusiasts in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Barracuda and jacks are the most common shallow water gamefish and can provide great sport. Snook are caught occasionally.

Shallow water game fish may only be caught in unrestricted areas. Information on the location of and regulations pertaining to marine reserves and closed areas in the US Virgin Islands can be found in the "Commercial & Recreational Fisher's Information Booklet" a copy can be found on the Division of Fish and Wildlife's website ([dpr.vi.gov/fish-and-wildlife/](http://dpr.vi.gov/fish-and-wildlife/)) or at the Division of Environmental Enforcement.

## FISHING THE FLATS

Two common fishing methods used in shallow areas are "sight-fishing" and chumming. The most popular method for pursuing shallow water gamefish is "sight-fishing". Unlike fishing around reefs or offshore no baits, lures or flies are cast until the fish is spotted. Once a fish is spotted the chosen bait, lure or fly is then presented to the fish. Accurate casting and correct presentation of the bait are essential. The fisher is truly stalking his catch.

Fish can also be attracted by chumming with pieces of fish, shrimp, squid, etc. Casting in "fishy" water may yield a tarpon, snook, barracuda or jack. Anglers can also troll for barracuda and jacks, and occasionally tarpon. Others may fish baits on the bottom for bonefish and permit, or near the surface for tarpon, snook, barracuda, and jacks.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

As bonefish and permit dig their mouths into the bottom rooting for food, their tails often come out of the water. Occasionally, bonefish and permit pass through water so shallow that their dorsal fins and backs are exposed. Trails of mud or other bottom sediments may indicate bonefish digging in the bottom in search of prey. Bonefish can be spotted in water just a few inches deep, while permit prefer water deeper than 16 inches.

Tarpon can be seen at the water surface gulping air; they are able to utilize oxygen from the air via a lung-like bladder. They can be spotted rolling on the surface as they feed on smaller fish. Tarpon occasionally swim just below the water surface with their dorsal fin exposed. An experienced angler with polarized sunglasses may be able to spot tarpon in the shade of mangrove branches during the middle of the day.

Snook can be seen swimming just below the water surface, often with their dorsal fin exposed. They spend a lot of time among the prop roots of the mangroves, waiting for prey to pass within striking distance. Their dark shapes can be spotted in the shadows of submerged structures such as rocks, coral or mangrove roots. Snook can often be found close to sandy shorelines that have a trough or deep area close to shore especially when the water is turbid.

Barracuda are often seen suspended motionless in the water, waiting for the chance to attack unsuspecting prey. Smaller fish can be found in water just a few inches deep. Larger fish can be found just about anywhere it is deep enough for them to pass.

Although large barracuda prefer the deeper waters around reefs and in lagoons, they can also be spotted cruising the flats in search of prey. A school of baitfish jumping

from the water as they flee a predator may indicate a feeding barracuda.

Jacks can be seen cruising the fore-reef and back reef in search of food. They also feed in lagoons, over seagrass beds, along beaches, and even on shallow seagrasses and sand flats. Small jacks may be seen in small groups while feeding. Larger jacks become more solitary. Jacks can be seen feeding on schooling baitfish at the surface when in deeper water. When on the flats, jacks often leave a wake as they pass through the shallow water in search of food, and can be seen splashing as they chase prey.

## MOON AND TIDES

In general, fishing the shallow water flats is best during the few days before and during the full moon. This is a period when the highest tides of the month allow the fish to access areas which are normally too shallow in search of food. The last half of the incoming tide, high tide, and the first of the outgoing tide are best. This is especially true for bonefish and permit. Even in deeper water, such as fore-reefs and lagoons, feeding activity appears to increase during this time of the month.

## CATCH AND RELEASE

Fishing the saltwater flats in the Caribbean provides a unique experience for both veteran and novice anglers. Because these fish are limited in numbers due to their dependence on a limited habitat, they are especially susceptible to overfishing. When practiced properly, catch and release fishing helps to provide a sustainable source of enjoyment for anglers.

Please do not release live lionfish back to the water, as part of the territories management strategy, any lionfish is removed from the water and either eaten or disposed.

## PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

These fish can often be found in extremely shallow areas near mangrove and seagrass habitats. These areas act as nursery grounds to juvenile fish species and can be easily damaged. Extra precautions must be taken within these areas so that seagrass beds and mangrove prop roots are not destroyed.

When fishing the shallow areas by boat watch for coral and shallow areas. Use a push-pole or paddles to move through the flats rather than the motor; prop damage can cause permanent destruction of seagrass beds and coral reefs.

## POTENTIAL HAZARDS WATCH YOUR STEP!

Stingrays often cruise the shallows looking for food (clams, crabs, shrimp, etc.) and often lie motionless on the bottom. Although they will swim away if they see you coming, if stepped on, they can inflict a very painful wound with the bony spine located at the base of their tail.

Sea urchins graze on the seagrass and algae found in the shallows, and their spines can cause painful injuries. This is especially true of the long-spined black sea urchin. This important herbivore died out in the early 1980's and is becoming more abundant in shallow areas.

Scorpion fish are able to camouflage themselves perfectly in almost any surroundings and often lie motionless on the rocks and coral. Their dorsal spine contains venom which can cause severe pain and swelling.

Lionfish are frequently found and caught in the USVI. While they are delicious they do have lots of long venomous spines, be very careful when handling lionfish. Please if you catch a lionfish do NOT release it, it is part of our management program to remove all lionfish, please kill them.