

## MicroSpots203 Description and Suggestions for Use

The gps data file and associated spreadsheets included in this MicroSpots203 product document the precise locations of fishing spots in Nueces Bay, Corpus Christi Bay, The Upper Laguna Madre, Baffin Bay and Alazan Bay. All these places have produced many and/or exceptionally large speckled trout over long periods of time.

The user of this product should think of the microspots as targets for casts, not as anchor-sites. Therefore, studying the areas surrounding their locations and considering the best ways to approach them by wading will enhance potential benefits. The best available source for studying these bays is Google Earth. Using the *Historical Imagery* feature, found in the *View* menu, will allow the user to better understand the placement of many of the spots and of the best ways to access them. (In many sections, the 2014 image provides the best clarity. Comparing it to the current one is enlightening.)

The information in this packet provides no aids to navigation, either in the form of labeled obstructions, track lines, or routes. Anyone attempting to use it should rely on other resources in order to safely navigate the areas which include these many spots. Some portions of all these bays contain serious hazards to safe navigation, and no currently available gps map reveals them all.

Most of the spots documented in the gps file lie within close range of other places known to produce good fishing for speckled trout. Hence, the fact some feature lying near one of the spots isn't designated as a microspot does not necessarily indicate anything negative about it. I've documented these specific 203 spots because of their diminutive size; they're all small spaces with recognizable defining features.

Some areas produce excellent fishing without containing easily identifiable microspots. Take the Tide Gauge Bar in Baffin Bay, for instance. Several miles long, with repetitive, similar features, it provides ripe potential for catching speckled trout in many situations. Finding sweet spots or microspots on a long sand bar with relatively homogeneous defining features is difficult or impossible, so I haven't provided coordinates for any.

The same can be said for the large grass flat (which I call "The Badlands Crown") lying south of the long line of cabins in the North Badlands, on which I've identified just two microspots. Certainly, other portions of this giant flat provide plenty of opportunity at times, but specifying the precise locations of sweet spots in such a homogeneous expanse of grass simply isn't possible, since the sources for most microspots emerge from anomalies on the bottom, either structural or cover elements.

Accordingly, I've created spreadsheets documenting the names (all of which start with the letter M, followed by a number) and placed the source of each in the first column to the right of the name. By source, I mean either the structural or cover element which essentially provides the genesis for the spot. Structural elements include points on adjacent shorelines, sand and grass bars, depth contours and rock formations. Cover elements include grass beds and oyster reefs.

Because of their ephemeral nature, cover elements generate less permanent, reliable locations for microspots. Grass beds proliferate and recede over time, as do the potholes creating anomalies within them. Oyster beds are living colonies too, and humans occasionally harvest from them, changing their physical attributes. Consequently, any microspot denoted within these files with a cover element listed as its source should be considered a bit less dependable in its precise location when compared with those sourced from structural elements.

Serpulid rocks and shoreline features don't move, at least not at a speed discernible by an individual human being. So, these types of microspots prove most reliable in their exact location over time. When using the data in these files, one can easily see exactly where a rock-sourced microspot lies and return to it repeatedly. On the other hand, when one attempts to locate a grass-sourced spot, consideration of the exact layout of the grass beds and adjacent bare-bottom areas might be necessary in order to recognize the sweet spot at a given moment, and its location might change slightly as the grass beds evolve.

Using the information in the next column to the right on the spreadsheet, labeled as "details", should help the user understand how best to identify the precise nature and location of each spot. The next column, labeled "best conditions/timing" lists aspects of the angling situation which enhance the potential productivity of each spot, to include primarily weather and seasonal elements, tide cycle and

level. *Note:* This web address links to the TCOON buoy system, specifically at the Baffin Buoy. Use it for assessing the tide level in the Baffin area: <https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/stationhome.html?id=8776604> Use the Packery Channel and Bird Island Buoys to get values for northern parts of the ULM. I consider a reading lower than .1 to be a *low tide*, those between .1 and .4 to be *medium*, those from .4 to .6 to be *medium-high* and anything higher than .6 to be *high*.

In the conditions column, I've referenced wind speeds with the terms *light*, *moderate* and *strong*. For me, wind speeds under 10 knots rank as *light*, those from 10-15 knots as *moderate*, and those above 15 knots as *strong*. The last column beside each spot indicates elements which negatively impact productivity at each spot to a significant degree.

The numbering system used to name the spots starts in Nueces Bay, moves to Corpus Christi Bay, then moves down the Upper Laguna Madre from the Boat Hole to Baffin Bay. In Baffin, the numbers move from the North Badlands to the South Badlands, then back north, swinging west to Cathead, then along the North Shoreline to Starvation Point, then jumping to the South Shoreline at Black Bluff before moving east along the shoreline to Penascal Point.

Back in the ULM, the numbers proceed upward from the spoil adjacent to Penascal Point into the southern portions of Yarbrough, then over to Summer House and back up to Rocky Slough. From there, the numbering starts up again on the north side of Starvation Point, in Alazan Bay. I've arranged the comments below in the same basic order, creating a section for each of the associated spreadsheets contained in the packet.

#### **Nueces Bay (M1-M14)**

For me, catching trout in this riverine estuary has always been easiest when water temperatures lie in the moderate range, salinity levels meet or exceed the 20 ppt threshold, wind speeds range from light to moderate, and the tide moves either in or out. The specific comments in the best conditions/timing column clarify these comments further, in relation to each of the spots included. Most of the microspots indicated in this bay system have reefs as their source, so they can change slightly over time. Users should be aware that this body of water contains numerous, treacherous hazards to navigation, including uncharted reefs, pipes and other man-made junk.

#### **Corpus Christi Bay (M15-M25)**

Most of the spots listed in this section lie in East Flats and Shamrock Cove. For me, fishing there produces best in the spring, when strong SE winds muck up other areas significantly. Sand bars and grass beds provide the sources for most of them, so they change slightly over time. Like Nueces Bay, Shamrock Cove contains lots of abandoned oil-field junk, and captains unfamiliar with it should proceed with caution.

#### **ULM-Boat Hole to Bird Island (M26-M59)**

This section contains spots in the Boat Hole, in the Crash Channels, along the King Ranch Shoreline, on spoils along the ICW and in NightHawk Bay. In general, the water in this area runs exceptionally clear, and when it does, low-light conditions offer the best potential for productivity. With any of the spots where fishing pre-dawn or post-dusk hours appears in the best conditions/timing column, fishing through the night also provides prime potential. Wading around the spoils on either side of the ICW, where channels run out of the main ditch and end beside spoil islands, can prove dangerous. The bottoms of some of these old channels has the consistency of vanilla pudding, providing a real hazard to safety. Users should consider this fact when planning a way to access all those spots on foot.

#### **ULM-Bird Island to Baffin (M60-M91)**

With regard to the clear water/need for low light conditions, this section of the ULM resembles the one to its north, though the water doesn't run quite as clear on average. In general, the spots listed on the King Ranch in this section produce better from late-winter through the spring into summer, rather than in the dead of winter. This might relate to the distance from the swag (water too deep for grass to grow on bottom) to the west shoreline. Closer to the JFK, the deepest part of the lagoon lies closer to

the west shoreline, facilitating a better late-afternoon bite on the shoreline soon after a bitter cold snap compared to areas in this section, where the swag lies further from the west bank on average. Once the weather moderates by the end of February or so, these spots tend to produce better than in the coldest weeks and months.

#### **Baffin Bay (M92-M142)**

This portion of the product provides spots with the greatest variability in terms of sources and in the best potential conditions and times for fishing them. As such, it generates a high requirement for study, to increase the potential for enhancement of fishing outcomes. Additionally, the areas on this part of the map are the among the most treacherous in the state, containing many unforgiving hazards, mostly in the form of rocks. On the other hand, some of those rocks are the sources of the microspots listed. These areas have produced many big trout for me and my customers; three of my top five trout of all time came from this part of the map, as did the two biggest trout caught by customers to date.

#### **ULM-Baffin to the Land Cut (M143-M184)**

In general, I like fishing this area in hot weather and/or when strong onshore winds blow, depending on the specific spots. Certainly, the spoil banks lying east of the ICW in this section provide rich opportunity for catching lots of trout and a few big ones in summer. Summer House and Rocky Slough offer great insulation from strong onshore winds and tremendous catching potential any time of year. The entire Kenedy Shoreline from Rocky Slough to Penascal has treacherous rocks lying close to shore. Wading among these rocks isn't as easy as wading the serpulid rocks in the Badlands, Penascal Point, Cathead or East Kleberg. Waders should stay shallow and proceed carefully around all these rocks, ideally in water clear enough to see them easily. Fishing this shoreline with east in the wind makes doing these things difficult indeed.

#### **Alazan Bay (M185-M203)**

I find the fishing in this shallow, silty satellite bay best when tides run at least medium-high to high, wind speeds run low and air and water temperatures stand in the moderate range. When conditions meet these criteria, this bay provides potential for catching monster trout at the highest level. My heaviest trout to date came from this bay.