

I'll begin booking 2013 in a couple of weeks, on September 1. I wanted to create this blog partly to alert all readers about the date, but I'd also like to remind everyone about December's potential. Though I've tried over the years to encourage more people to book the month which ushers in the winter, I'm never able to fill up the schedule as much as I'd like.

Deer, duck and dove seasons are partly to blame, I know. Some people like to hunt, and they are called into the forests and fields when the seasons are open. I understand their passion, having hunted quite a bit when I was younger. But for people who aren't "distracted" by the quest for Muy Grande, or the gravity of the marsh and blind, December can be one of the best months for targeting trophy speckled trout.

Because so many people are hunkered down in places where ducks, doves and deer can be seen, fewer are out on the main bays, in search of monster trout. Though I haven't done any real "data-gathering", my observations lead me to believe the crowds on the water in December are the lightest of the year. January's numbers are similar.

While the number of people I see on the water during the Christmas month are low, the numbers of bigger-than-average trout we catch are high. I've been keeping accurate records of my charter averages since 2007, and December stacks up nicely against the other top trophy-catching months.

I keep track of four things. First, I make note of the number of charters taken. Second, I log the number of trout we catch which measure 25 inches or longer. Third is the number of 27+ inchers, and last (most significantly) the number of fish weighing 7 pounds or more. I also make note of the fish I personally catch at or above 27 inches, with accurate records of 28s, 29s and 30s.

Then I take the numbers and "crunch" them to create named stats. Taking the number of charters and dividing by the number of 25+ inchers yields the "Power Index". December's PI is slightly above normal at 1.268, meaning we have better than a 1 to 1 chance of someone in the group catching a 25+ inch fish.

Performing a similar function with 27+ inchers yields the "Super Power Index". December's SPI is also above average (.5536) meaning there's better than a 50% chance of someone in the group catching a trout 27 inches or longer.

The most impressive stat December carries is the 7PI, obtained by dividing the number of trips into the number of 7 pound+ fish caught. At .3392, December's 7PI ranks 4th among all the months, slightly ahead of April, and only barely behind January and March. More fat fish are caught when it's cold, and much of the catching in December is done in cold water, boosting the month's 7PI over time.

We've caught three 30 inchers in December since '07, so the potential for catching a long, fat fish certainly exists in this "kick-off month", which signals the start of the trophy trout season in South Texas each year.

It's a great time to be on the water, combining relative solitude with a real shot at a wallhanger. Consequently, I encourage people to book trips this month, always with an eye to the lunar calendar. Weekdays close to either the full or new moon offer the greatest potential on paper. Of course, weather plays a role. Anyone booking December trips must be prepared to fish in nasty weather if doing so will give us a chance to make a great catch. Sometimes, December weather makes the catching better in the gloaming. Fishing from late-morning into the early-evening hours is therefore sometimes required to maximize potential.