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## POMPANO: Ghost shrimp are food they like best

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than people fishing from boats."

The breaking wave action dislodges diminutive creatures living in the sand. Pompano eat various small crustaceans and other tidbits. Most of all, they relish ghost shrimp. These small transparent crustaceans more related to crabs than shrimp look like a cross between a crawfish and a shrimp. Ghost shrimp burrow into the sand at the water edge.

### Live in holes

"When people step into the surf right off the beach, they often see little holes and mounds," Young advised. "Ghost shrimp live in these holes. People won't see ghost shrimp during daylight hours because seabirds and everything else is looking to eat them. That's why flounder and pompano move up close to cruise the beaches at night. They are looking for ghost shrimp."

Bait shops seldom sell ghost shrimp so anglers usually catch their own. For many dedicated pompano fishermen, the day begins by walking along the beach looking for ghost shrimp holes. When they find some, sportsmen suck the little crustaceans out of their holes with specially made plunger-like sand pumps. Some people make their own pumps from PVC pipe.

When ghost shrimp spawn, their eggs turn bright orange. Pompano look for orange in the water. Therefore, many people use special "pompano rigs" with two or three hooks capped by red or orange beads to imitate ghost shrimp eggs. Some people also use Car-

olina rigs with light slip sinkers, swivels and leaders tipped with Number 1 or 1/0 hooks.

"I tie on a 2-ounce pyramid sinker and make a loop knot in the line above it," recommended Jerry Williams, an avid pompano fisherman from Orange Beach. "My main line is 15-pound monofilament with a 4-foot leader of 20-pound fluorocarbon, which sinks faster than mono. I rig up a ghost shrimp on a Number 1 Kahle hook. I start at the tail and thread it on the hook like a nightcrawler. I bring the hook out of the soft body and then stick the tip back into the head, the hardest part of the shrimp. When the pyramid sinker buries in the sand, I tighten my line to bring the bait just off the bottom."

### Sand fleas good, too

Sand fleas also make excellent pompano baits. Anglers can also use live shrimp, fresh dead shrimp and fiddler crabs. Many people pop the heads off brown or white shrimp and peel off the shells. The peeled shrimp imitate the look and feel of ghost shrimp.

Pompano typically prefer natural baits, but anglers occasionally catch the finicky fish on lures. Long-rodgers entice pompano with flies that mimic small crabs or shrimp. People can also catch pompano on tiny jigs with shrimp tail trailers. Other people tip orange jigheads with shrimp and work them along the bottom. The old double shad rig sweetened with shrimp can work for pompano. In deeper water, anglers might want to add a split-shot to the line above the shad rig.