REDFISH: Bad weather can make for good fishing

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Powerful winds and tides can muddy the water. However, mud doesn’t bother redfish either. Dark muddy water might retain a bit more heat on a cold day. Locating prey primarily by smell and sound vibrations in the water, redfish can locate prey during the murkiest conditions. Lures that give off vibrations, such as rattling crankbaits, bladed jigs and spinnerbaits, make it easier for redfish to find.

“When it’s windy, I focus on places with hard-shell bottoms,” Abruscato recommended. “By the winter, there’s very little bait left in the marshes. The redfish are living on mussels or whatever kind of marine life is living on those shells, like little crabs and worms.”

Shells and other hard objects absorb solar energy and radiate that slight warmth into the water. On a frosty day, a 1- or 2-degree temperature difference could mean everything to a cold-blooded fish. Rock holds more heat than concrete. Concrete holds more heat than soggy wood. Steel also absorbs and radiates solar heat.

In the winter, redfish gather in huge numbers next to hard structures like jetties, oyster reefs, bridge pilings and petroleum structures. When fishing such structures, work baits much slower and deeper in the winter than during the summer.

In frigid conditions, color and bait type rarely matters as much as placement. Cold redfish often hunker down in the mud and won’t chase anything very far. With bait scarce, though, reds might grab anything that tickles their noses if they can snatch it without expending too much energy.

“Sometimes, it gets so cold that redfish get really slow,” Abruscato observed. “When we catch them, they have little worms attached to their bellies and sides. The only way those worms can get on redfish is if the fish get down into the mud. That’s when they are the least active, but we can still catch them.”

For bottom-dwelling reds, fish soft-plastics, Gulp! or natural baits on jigheads. Sweeten a jighead with a small piece of shrimp to add flavor and aroma to artificials. Toss baits into shoreline pockets or near structure edges and drag the jigheads slowly over the bottom out to the deepest water. The jighead creates a mud trail that simulates a crab scurrying along the bottom. Fish might hold tight to cover or sit in the deeper water.

When redfish simply refuse to strike lures, hook a succulent live minnow to a jighead. Drag it slowly along the bottom, pausing periodically. Don’t create any extra action. Just the wiggling baitfish will provide enough enticement.

Remember the old saying, “A bad day fishing still beats a good day working!”