

## Cheeca Lodge & Spa Announces Sixth Annual All American Backcountry Tournament Results

This tournament, inspired by 41st US President George Bush, honors war heroes and benefits Florida Keys fishing guides in need. In honor of Veteran's Day, Cheeca Lodge also hosted two war heroes who competed as a team.

All American anglers competed for trophies and prizes for releasing five different species of fish: snook, redfish, bonefish, tarpon and permit. Tackle divisions included fly, artificial and bait.

Taking home top honors of Grand Champion Angler and Fly Division Champion Angler was Doug Dragoo of Pagosa Springs, CO. He released four bonefish, ten snook and ten redfish on fly, guided by Richard Black of Tavernier.

Grand Champion Team honors went to Paul McCulliss of Littleton, CO, and his son Brian from Denver, guided by Eric Herstedt of Homestead,. The duo released 20 snook, 18 redfish, one bonefish and one tarpon. Paul McCulliss also eared General Division Champion Angler with nine snook, eight redfish, one tarpon and one bonefish.

Second Place Team honors went to US Army veteran Al Hunter, Sr., from Miami, FL, and Marine Corps veteran Eric Munoz of Homestead, FL, for releasing 12 snook and five redfish guided by Captain Mike Makowski of Key Largo,

Jim Bokar of Tavernier clinched

Champion Angler in the Artificial Division, releasing ten snook and ten redfish. Bokar was representing Robert-James Sales, a title sponsor of the tournament.

A 35-lb permit landed the Most Outstanding Catch and Best Photo Awards for Ken Biro of Hollywood, FL, guided by Steven Tejera of Homestead,.

Second-place Angler Division honors went to Fred Schwaibold of Charleston, SC, for releasing ten snook, ten redfish and three bonefish, guided by Dave Denkert of Islamorada, FL.

"We were honored to welcome talented anglers and guides back to experience some of the finest fishing in the Florida Keys" said General Manager Bob LaCasse. "It was rewarding to provide this opportunity to our veterans and raise funds for the Guides Trust Foundation at our newly refreshed resort."

Andy Mill, world-famous fly angler, former alpine ski racer and two-time Olympian, shared his expertise on fly fishing for tarpon at an evening reception. The tournament also featured appearances by fishing legends Stu Apte, a tournament competitor, and Sandy Moret.

Cheeca will also host the 29th Annual Cheeca Lodge Presidential Sailfish Tournament January 25-27, 2019, the third leg of the Florida Keys Gold Cup Sailfish Championship.



Veteran Angler Eric Munoz and redfish, fishing with Capt. Mike Makowski.



Angler Ken Biro (fishing with Capt. Steven Tejera) with permit.



Stu Apte & snook, fishing with Capt. Steve Thomas.

## Conch Characters



The Little Things performed at Jam Night at the American Legion.



Pirates Cove Watersports is at the Marriott Bay Beach Resort. See their ad on page 4.



Koty James and the Keybillies, photo by Sandy Singleton.



Congratulations to Tracy Petrusha from Tropical Realty for being awarded the Realtor® Rising Star Award at the Florida Keys Board of Realtors® annual installation event.



When boating with your pets - safety first!



Congratulations! Key Largo Conch House won 3 awards: 2 Best of Show and the Grand Prize at the 37th Annual Key Largo Cook-off.



Congratulations to Key Largo Chocolates and Ice Cream for winning 1st Place for Desserts in the Key Largo Cook-off with their Bourbon Caramel Apple Pie - Kristy Thomas and Dawn McKernan DeBrule.



Anisley Larrosa with Jack Hanna. Hanna and crew had lunch at the KL Conch House during a break while filming twin manatees being released.



Cheeca All-American Backcountry Tournament Grand Champion Award winner Doug Dragoo with guide Richard Black of Tavernier, and daughter.

**Did you know on the Canary Islands there is not one canary? And on the Virgin Isles? Same thing - not one canary there either!**

