

Ladies

ON
THE

Coast

Texas boasts a rich history of successful female anglers. Here are profiles of some of today's best.

Story by Danno Wise



PHOTO CREDIT STUART WEB

Texas native Meredith McCord has traveled the world to fish and caught this Giant Trevally in Seychelles.



PHOTO BY DANNO WISE

Capt. Sally Black admires another Baffin Bay redfish she caught.



PHOTO CREDIT SAM ROOT

Left: Houstonian Cindy Nguyen shows off a nice tarpon she caught on light tackle.



PHOTO BY DANNO WISE

Right: Port Isabel native, Capt. Ruby Delgado shows off a slot-sized Lower Laguna Madre redfish.

Saltwater angling has become increasingly popular among women in recent years. Texas actually has a lengthy history of notable women anglers. Many of the early women on Texas fishing scene – lady anglers such as Judy Wong and Kathy Magers – were on the freshwater side. Others, like recently retired, long-time Coastal Bend guide Capt. Petra Schulz, plied their trade on the coast. So, it should come as no surprise that the impact of the recent surge in women anglers has been felt in the Lone Star State.

Most fishing industry observers would agree that today's professional female fishermen essentially break down into two groups – the social media “click bait chicks” and the legitimate professionals. Texas is lucky enough to be home to some of the leading members of the latter group. Here are just a few of the top flight female professional saltwater anglers, personalities and guides that call Texas home.

The Angler — Cindy Nguyen

Odds are you've seen Cindy Nguyen, even though you may not have realized it. As one of the faces of Columbia's PFG clothing line, Nguyen's likeness is seen nation-wide in advertisements and promotional materials. And, while she does travel the globe fishing for fun and promotional shoots, this lifelong Houstonian is all about Texas saltwater fishing as well. But despite being one of the most recognizable women anglers in the country, Nguyen's career in the fishing industry was almost accidental.

“This was not something I ever planned on or could even dream about,” said Nguyen. “Some days I still have to wonder if it's real.”

“Fishing, however, has always been part of my life. I first got interested when I was a kid. My parents always took us to the beach or the park or the jetties. They always presented it to us (her and her siblings) as how much better it was for us to fish instead of sitting around watching television. They told us watching TV would fry our brains. So, I guess I was

really born into fishing.”

Nguyen explains that while she was a lifelong fisherman, she was always just a recreational angler. Little did she know that posting photos of her fishing escapades would eventually turn into a career in the fishing industry.

Her social media posts caught the eye of many, including renown photographer Sam Root. It was root her first took photos of Nguyen fishing for bonefish in Columbia gear. Although those photos never made it into Columbia's catalog, Nguyen remained on the clothing company's radar as she began making rounds to fishing shows and continued posting fishing photos on social media. After returning from a trip to the Miami Boat Show, she said she was quite stunned to receive a contract to represent the Columbia Women's PFG clothing line.

“That's when I was really like, ‘wow, this could be a career,’” said Nguyen. “It was never a dream for me or even a thought in my brain to be sponsored. I am so grateful for Columbia. And, I am



PHOTO BY SAM ROOT

Cindy Nguyen fights a permit over some grass beds in super clear water activity.

majority of her youth outdoors.

“Dad believed in raising us outside,” said McCord. “He started fishing with all three us – me, my brother and sister – before we could even walk. All of us loved it, but for me it was like striking the right cord on the piano. I just couldn’t get enough of it. We

these trips that turned her passion into a career.

“I had a unique opportunity on a trip to Bolivia,” said McCord. “Within about 3 hours of arriving we found out there had been an accident the day before and one of the chiefs had drowned on a fishing boat. Over the next week, we got flooded in and couldn’t get out. I spent a lot of time with the people from the village during that time and found out most of them couldn’t swim. I got home from that trip and decided I wanted to combine mission work and fishing.

“I was a competitive swimmer and offered to give swim lessons plus survival skills to the natives as way to trade off my trip. So, I went back to Bolivia to do that. It was a little more difficult than I imagined. They did not want to get in water because of superstitions, but we eventually taught them to swim. Since then, I have led fly fishing trips and done missionary work all over the world.”

McCord is also an avid competitive angler – having fished numerous top-flight fly fishing tournaments and owning numerous IGFA records (87 fly rod records, 55 line class records and 37 species records to date). But, she is quick to point out the beauty of fishing is the opportunity to continue learning about the sport.

“I say thank you to every guide who has taken me and taught me about fly fishing,” said McCord. “I have been very

would spend our summers in Lake of the Woods, Canada – in fact, our family still goes to same location each year – and I would fish all day, every day.”

Though she is a native Texan, McCord spent a good deal of her formative years outside of the Lone Star State – first at boarding school on the East Coast, then at Vanderbilt University. McCord, who owns and operates The Mad Potter chain of paint-your-own-pottery studios, says it was at Vanderbilt that her angling life took a turn.

“When I was in college, I was exposed to *A River Runs Through It*,” said McCord. “I know it sounds cliché, but the movie spoke to me. Fly fishing is an art form. As an artist, I appreciated the art of it. I was studying art at Vanderbilt at the time and art is another lifelong passion of mine.”

Early in life, McCord says art was an expressive way to overcome her dyslexia. Once she began fly fishing, she felt it had the same affect on her angling life. After college she began taking once-a-year fly fishing excursions abroad with her father and a group of his buddies. Her father eventually quit making the outings, but Meredith continued to take trips with the group. It was one of

extremely grateful to Sam Root, who has been a mentor and is really responsible for most of this.

“It has been a dream to be able to travel and fish. I am grateful for all these exotic species I get to go target, but really taking somebody fishing and getting them to get as excited about it as I am about it is really more thrilling and rewarding to me. I took my sister tarpon fishing last summer and she literally came to tears fighting this fish. I almost feel a little guilty taking these trips without my family because they have been such a big part of my life. They kind of live the trips through my pictures.

“For me, it’s still all about my love of fishing. I mean, I see bodies of water from airplane when I’m flying or from the car when I’m driving and start wondering what is in there. If it has water for two weeks it has to have life and I want to fish it. I think it’s pretty cool to be able to pull up to a body of water and, if you do your homework, you can catch a fish. When I was a kid at the beach, I would use a Coke can with mono and catch whiting, speckled trout and even shark. I could catch a shark with a coke can!

“Sometimes it’s not about the actual fishing, but when you’re out there and absorbing everything it’s special. It is really what do you enjoy about fishing. For me, it’s really just about being out there.”

The Explorer — Meredith McCord

Another native Texan, Meredith McCord, knows how big the world is – largely because she has traveled most of it fishing for exotic species and doing missionary work. Born in Houston and raised in Navasota, McCord spent the



PHOTO COURTESY OF MEREDITH MCCORD

Meredith McCord with massive bull red she caught on a fly.

lucky with guides I've fished with. I believe the best anglers are open to being molded and shaped and I am always looking to learn. Two well-known names that have encouraged me are Andy Mills, who encouraged me and pushed me to do well competitively, and Lefty Kreh, who has taught me so much and always keeps me grounded."

The Guides

Capt. Sally Black

Widely considered the senior member of the unofficial fraternity of female guides on the Texas Coast, Capt. Sally (Moffit) Black has been putting anglers on fish for nearly two decades. Black is considered a pioneer among Texas guides in many ways beyond her gender. She was the first full-time guide to offer kayak trips on the coast and among the earliest full-time fly fishing guides, having been a protégé of the late, legendary Capt. Chuck Scates.

Originally from Michigan, Black grew up learning to hunt and fish from her father

"I was my dad's only son," laughed Black when asked how she got into fishing. "Really, that's what it felt like sometimes. We did everything together – fished, hunted. I loved spending time outdoors with my dad. And, really, that got me hooked on it."

She moved to Houston and eventually Rockport in the 1980s, working as a



PHOTO BY DANNO WISE

Capt. Ruby Delgado fights another solid redfish in her home waters of the Lower Laguna Madre.

paralegal during those years. Although she had a hand in several major cases, she wasn't satisfied working in the legal world and knew fishing was calling her name. So eventually she bought a boat, got a captain's license, quit her job and started guiding. She has been full time guide since 1998. Although she was a successful guide in Rockport, once she married Baffin

Bay guide Capt. Aubrey Black, she relocated to Baffin Bay, where the couple now guide and run their hunting and fishing lodge, Baffin Bay Rod and Gun.

Capt. Ruby Delgado

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Capt. Ruby Delgado is just beginning her career as a full-time guide. But, she didn't just start fishing.

"I grew up on Pompano Street in Port Isabel, so the bay was literally our backyard," said Delgado. "As a kid, I was always fishing -

whether out on a boat with my dad or off the dock behind the house."

After college, Delgado moved to San Antonio and only came back to help dad with his business (Manny's Boat Repair). She didn't intend for the move to be permanent.

"Of course, once I was back down here it was a lot easier to fish more often," Delgado reflected. "Still, I never really thought about making it a career. After I'd been back awhile, I kept getting more and more people asking me to go fishing with them or take them fishing. So, I got my captain's license and started guiding. It has been great. I'm also very lucky to have several sponsors. My dream would be to travel around fishing for and learning about different species, but I can never get enough fishing, wherever I am."

For more information on these professional guides visit their websites or call: Cindy Nguyen, www.cindynguyenfishing.com; Meredith McCord, www.meredithmccord.com; Capt. Sally Black www.baffinbayrodandgun.com, (361) 433-0828 and Capt. Ruby Delgado, Southern Salty Girl, (956) 443-7796. **T&J**



PHOTO BY DANNO WISE

As a veteran professional angler, Capt. Sally Black is also very conservation minded. Here she practices what she regularly preaches by releasing this Baffin Bay redfish.