

Part 6

Chasing Tailers at High Tide

Location 'X' | Field Notes

by Peter Lami | February 20, 2022

Where does one begin in search of a wadable flat for Redfish? How do you reconnoiter a new flat for the first time? Search Google satellite maps for the answer? Meh.

My good friend John Holbrook says in his 'Chasing Tail' presentation, *"I have seen tailing redfish from my vehicle as I drove home from work.....Pay attention and you will be surprised by what you see!"* So that's how you find a wadable flat? Driving around in a car or truck?

I'd discount that if it weren't one of the Lowcountry's best fly fishermen saying it. He's the guy who came in **2nd Place** in the **The Savannah Fly Invitation Redfish Tournament** in 2021.

I've never seen a Redfish driving my vintage Toyota Land Cruiser from the road or crossing a bridge. So when I challenged myself to find a new Redfish high tide flat on February 13, 2022, I knew I had a lot to learn ahead of actually lacing up my wading boots and stepping into the saltwater marsh.

Step One

I am a distracted driver behind the wheel as I look askance every time there's water on both sides of the highway. My eyes are drawn away from the road ahead and off to the side. This is what I am looking for — any small hammock island surrounded by bushes and wrack (decaying cordgrass), short black needlerush grass in the **High Marsh**, tall spartina (sometimes called cordgrass) in the **Low Marsh**, and feeder creeks (sometimes called cuts or rivulets) that I know lead into deeper tidal creeks. So yeah, I guess I have to agree with John. **Step 1** to finding a high tide flat to wade for Redfish starts with an informed reconnaissance. Drive safe.

Step Two

There's a spot a half mile long I've seen from the road a thousand times that's bone dry almost all the time. I can clearly see it has a hard bottom standing from the roadside, but I'm not so sure it check all the boxes. Not a single feeder creek or deep tidal creek anywhere in sight. My initial feet-on-the-ground assessment is negative — no creeks, no Redfish.

Upon returning home, I pulled up a Google satellite map seen on the next page.

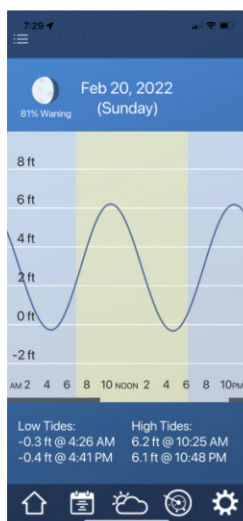


Source: Google Maps

I think we got a winner. I could not see any of this from the car. This is classic high tide flat that checks all the boxes.

Step Three — Download Apps

Sunday, February 20, 2022 — **High Tide 10:25 AM**. It's a Medium tide, OK, but not great.



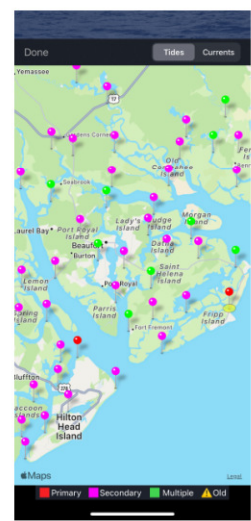
Tides by 7th Gear

Time	Day	Tide (ft)
3:40	Dec 3	5.4 ft
-0.7 ft	Dec 4	9.4 ft
-0.7 ft	Dec 5	9.4 ft
-0.7 ft	Dec 6	9.2 ft
-0.5 ft	Dec 7	8.9 ft
-0.2 ft	Dec 8	8.5 ft
0.3 ft	Dec 9	8.0 ft
0.7 ft	Dec 10	7.6 ft
1.0 ft	Dec 11	7.2 ft
1.0 ft	Dec 12	7.0 ft
1.0 ft	Dec 13	7.0 ft
1.0 ft	Dec 14	7.1 ft
1.0 ft	Dec 15	7.3 ft
0.9 ft	Dec 16	7.4 ft

Table by day, wk, yr



Tide Graph Pro



Show on Map

Step Four — Best High Tide Range

I asked two experts what goes into their ‘Go’ or ‘No Go’ decision when planning a high tide wading trip on any given day of the week?

I’ll let David Bankston go first. He was the winner of the **3rd Annual Sea Island Fly Fishers (SIFF) Redfish Blue Tail Tournament Winner** in October 2019.

David takes a very straightforward approach to planning a wading trip. Since he knows the exact location where he wants to go fishing, he easily searches for the nearest tide station using his favorite app called ‘Tides Near Me’. Simple Rule — if the tide is > 6 ½ feet the water will be too deep at high tide and time fishing cut short.

David is an expert fly fisherman who specializes in wading for Redfish on high tide flats. He patiently explained to me that *“tides over 6 ½ feet result in too much water on the flat. The fish have too great an area to swim and forage for food thus making them exceedingly difficult to pattern. Too low of a tide and there is simply not enough water for the fish to get up onto the flat. In other words, I am looking for water level that is between shin and knee deep”*.

Best High Tide

+7.5 feet to +8.3 feet

Savannah River Entrance

—JOHN HOLBROOK

John Holbrook tackles this question with a different approach. Rather than check the high tide tables for a specific location or local tide station, he looks up tide station at the **Savannah River Entrance** at Ft. Pulaski. This is his Rule. If the high tide is +7 ½ to 8 ⅓ feet, then wading conditions are good no matter where he goes wading, from Hilton Head Island to the ACE Basin.

Savannah River Entrance — Ft. Pulaski

Sunday, February 20, 2022.

Low Tide	High Tide
4:32am (0.33 ft)	10:21 am (6.99 ft)
4:46 pm (-0.38 ft)	10:46 pm (6.97 ft)

So this is how I try to explain John’s methodology. This is my logic. A sufficient condition, if met, guarantees another event with no exceptions. In this example, the high tides in Savannah on Sunday, February 20 do not meet the ‘Rule’ and therefore there’s no guarantee the high tide at **Location ‘X’** will not be high enough to flood the flat.

Forecasting tides is a tricky business. Let's take the logic a step further. Let's go back to where we started — a sufficient condition, if met, guarantees another event with no exceptions. But a sufficient condition is not necessary for that event to happen, since there could be many other conditions that are also sufficient for the resulting event to happen.



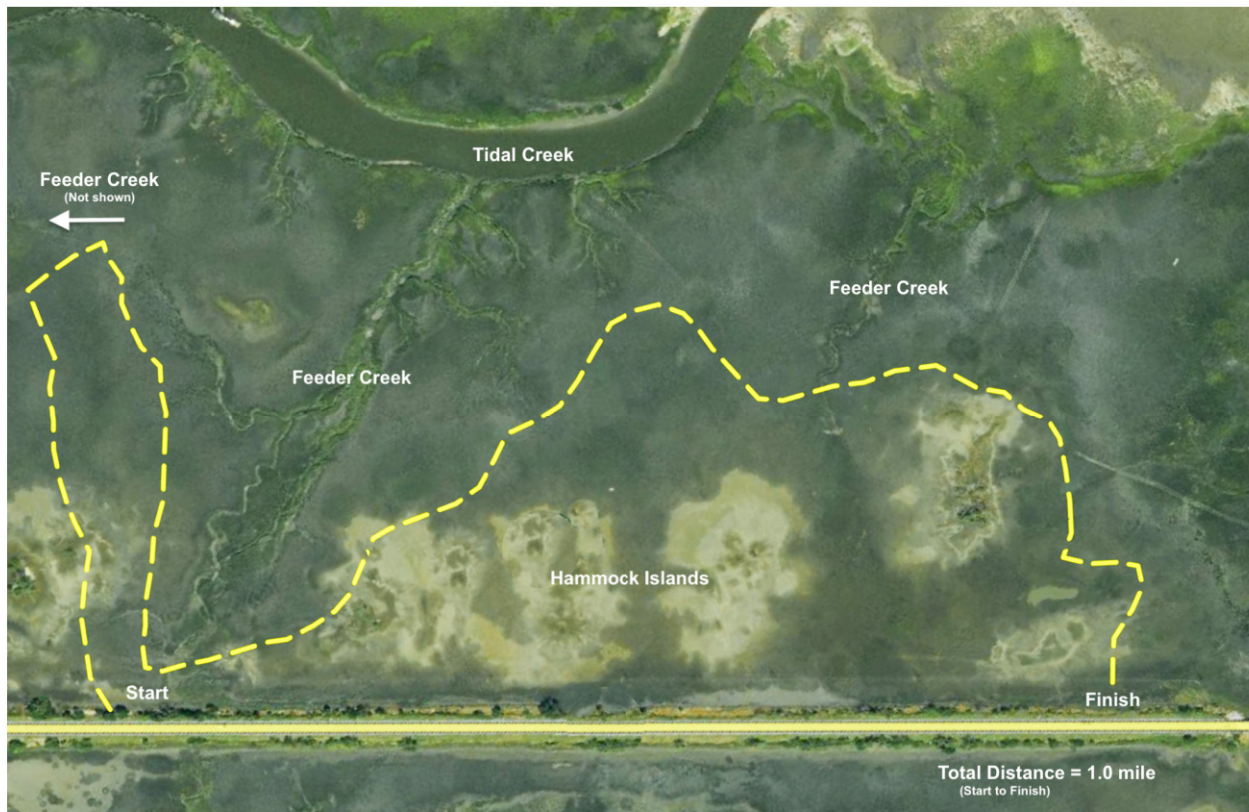
PETER LAMI | HIGH TIDE AT LOCATION 'X' | STRONG WINDS

Sufficiently confused? Other conditions? I will be plainspoken now. There was no guarantee high tide at **Location 'X'** would be high enough to flood the flat. But that's not what happened. The picture above shows me wading on the flat with the water level up to my knees at 10:25 AM at high tide on Sunday. Perfect wading condition made possible by 15-20 mph winds pushing water up onto the flat.

In summary, if the tides are right at the Savannah River Entrance, that guarantees conditions will be right on any flat you want to give wading for Redfish a try. Trust me. It works. Although I will say this. You should load some apps on your smart phone that predict the wind.

Location 'X' at High Tide

We waded exactly 1.0 mile from Start to Finish as shown in picture below. The water temperature was 50° degrees, so there never was any expectation we would see tailing Redfish in February. The size and scale of **Location 'X'** blew me away. This flat is huge with multiple feeder creeks.



Source: onX Backcountry Maps

We meet at 9:15 A.M. Follow along as we begin our reconnaissance of **Location 'X'** on a cold and windy Sunday.







LOCATION 'X'

I can't wait for warmer Spring temperatures. I can guarantee you I will be "Chasing Tailers' at High Tide" at **Location 'X'** this spring.