





Fishermen beach their boats on the bank of a Big Cypress canal to bring their catch to the weigh-in Dec. 29 at the Big Cypress First Baptist Church fishing tournament.

BIG CYPRESS — Big Cypress Reservation's canals and ponds were crowded Dec. 29 with competitive fishermen, women and children vying to haul in the biggest catch during the Big Cypress First Baptist Church's adult and youth fishing tournament.

About 30 adults and 30 youth participated in the catch-and-release tournament, and plenty of fish took their bait. Adults were limited to artificial lures and a catch of five bass, while youth could use minnows, worms and lures to catch five of any fish to qualify for the weigh-in.

Pastor Salaw Hummingbird manned the scale, and Josh Jumper tallied the results at the end of the day.

"Our church is a brotherhood of fishermen," Pastor Hummingbird said. "The main thing is to get together and just have a good time. We will feed them and share the gospel at the end of the day."

Blevyns Jumper, who fished with his father, Josh Jumper, reeled in 14.43 pounds of fish. As he released his catch, he made sure the fish survived the ordeal. He took each one by the mouth and gently moved it through the water to ensure the gills were saturated enough for the fish to breathe underwater.

Maleah Smith, who loves to fish with her grandfather Chucky Osceola, brought in two bass.

"When she's not in school, she's fishing," Osceola said. "I tell her she needs to get a boat and go out more."

After all the fish were weighed and released, the group enjoyed dinner, prayer and prizes.

The adult winner was Josh Jumper with a total weight of 14.43 pounds; the youth winner was Thanoke Billie with a catch of 5.09 pounds.

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