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NOVEMBER 2025
ISSUE 34, VOLUME 53

The Fisherman

New Jersey, Delaware Bay Edition

TheFisherman.com

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contents

NOVEMBER 2025



6G **STRIPER TAG #1**
AN EARLY '25 RETURN
By Jim Hutchinson, Jr.
Five striper 'sat tags' have been deployed so far this season, one has just been found.

10G **NO BAIT, NO PROBLEM:**
NOVEMBER JIGGING POTPOURRI
By Capt. John N. Raguso
November can be a jigging angler's paradise, from inshore to the edge!

17G **ON THE RUN:**
NOVEMBER STRIPERS BY REGION
Compiled by Dave Anderson
A staff rundown along the Striper Surf with tips on how, where and when.

22G **THE FISHERMAN'S ROD BUILDING SERIES:**
ULTRALIGHT TROUT ROD
By Matt Broderick
We're back at the rod bench this month for a custom approach to your next trout rod.

26G **RULES OF THE ROAD:**
TROLLING MOTOR ETIQUETTE
By Capt. Brett Taylor
New technologies also require a new level of sportsmanship, etiquette and fair play.


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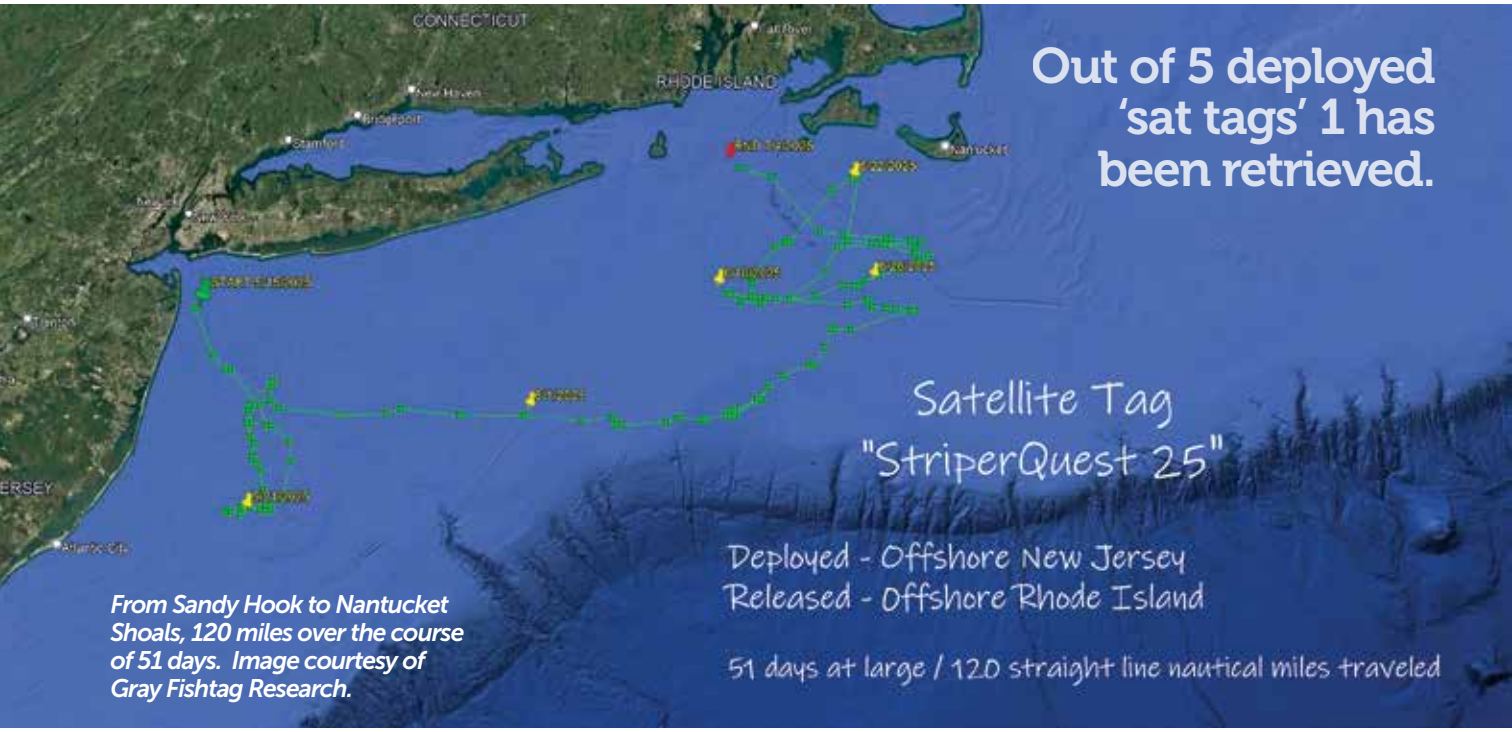
STRIPER TAG #1

BY JIM HUTCHINSON, JR.

AN EARLY '25 RETURN



Out of 5 deployed 'sat tags' 1 has been retrieved.

From Sandy Hook to Nantucket Shoals, 120 miles over the course of 51 days. Image courtesy of Gray Fishtag Research.

We got one! In the October edition of *The Fisherman*, we spotlighted our StriperQuest '25 event this past May (*Striped Bass: Assessments, Addendums & Angler Engagement)* and the five high-tech tracking devices deployed in striped bass this spring. As Roxanne Willmer from Gray Fishtag Research noted in an email to our Northeast Striped Bass Study team over the summer about the event, "with record-breaking numbers, this year's StriperQuest was our largest expedition yet."

"There were 25 teams and 125 anglers, captains, and mates coming together in the name of science," Willmer said of the May 14th event, adding "Together, we tagged and released over 300 striped bass and deployed five satellite tags, a new benchmark for our study."

In addition to four MiniPAT units deployed in larger 40-inch and over class fish, this year the Northeast Striped Bass Study team - lead by the experts at Gray Fishtag Research - also introduced the MicroPAT satellite tag from Wildlife Computers, a state-of-the-art tracking device is designed to study smaller class fish. "Unlike previous years where we tagged larger class fish, this new technology will allow us to study our 29-inch striped bass candidate to compare migration patterns to our past larger class fish," Willmer noted, while adding "Our tags are programmed for five months, and we can't wait to see where these fish travel."

Five months of course would put us squarely at the print date of this November edition of *The Fisherman Magazine* on Sunday night, October 19th. That being said, we do have some news to report from our satellite tag recovery team. One MiniPAT in particular deployed

aboard Chuck Many's *Tyman* back in May released prematurely offshore of Rhode Island after just 6 weeks. "I just received a call that the physical tag was located," Willmer texted me back in August, adding that upon initial review, "The migration track followed the similar route as many in the past making its way to the Nantucket Shoals."

LAND OF THE GIANTS

While we didn't get the full 5 months of depth, light and temperature data as we hoped, the 6 weeks was just enough to show how yet another jumbo 40-inch and over striped bass, tagged off Sandy Hook in May, ostensibly a post-spawn fish leaving from the Hudson, Delaware or Chesapeake spawning estuaries, headed mostly in an easterly direction from the Jersey Shore through the federal Exclusive Economic Zone (the EEZ or "forbidden zone" for striper anglers) before ultimately settling in for the summer along the Nantucket Shoals.

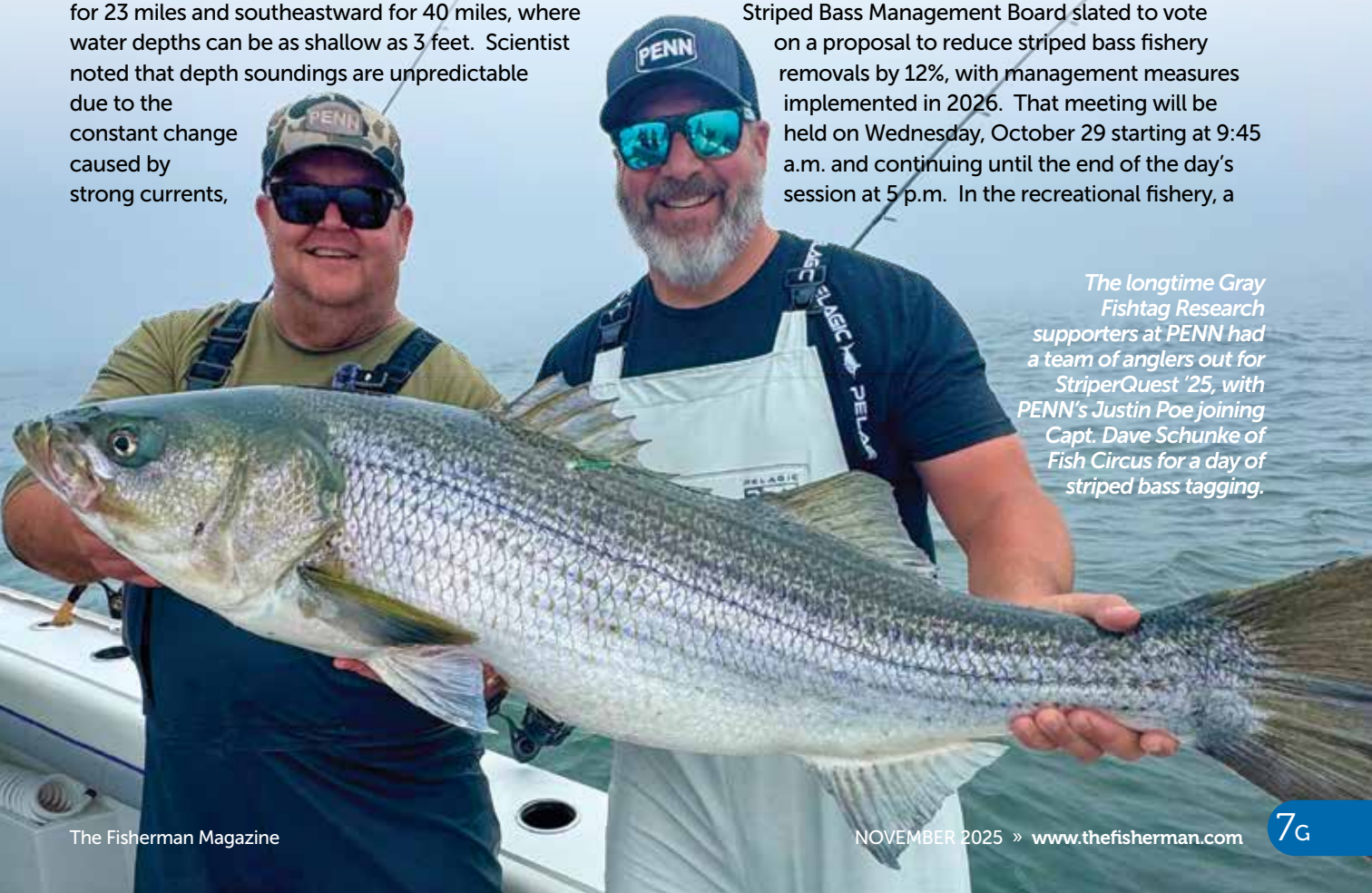
Over the past decade or more, the Nantucket Shoals have become the place to be during the summer months to catch true doormat fluke of 10 pounds or better. As *The Fisherman's* Mike Hachey wrote in *Dinosaur Doormats: Planning A Trip To Nantucket Shoals* for the July edition, "the area of the Shoals itself is nearly the same size as the state of Rhode Island." As described in numerous science journals, Nantucket Shoals is an area of "dangerously shallow water" in the Atlantic Ocean that extends from Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, eastward for 23 miles and southeastward for 40 miles, where water depths can be as shallow as 3 feet. Scientist noted that depth soundings are unpredictable due to the constant change caused by strong currents, "which are rotary rather than reversing."

And what makes this area of ocean water located offshore of Nantucket, MA so productive for big fluke and summer-over stripers, may perhaps be what also makes it a crucial feeding ground for the North Atlantic right whale which feeds on zooplankton aggregations at the Shoals, particularly during the peak season from March through July. As noted in a 2024 report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, the hydrography of the Nantucket Shoals region is primarily influenced by the cooler and fresher source waters north of the region, and the warmer and saltier waters sourced offshore from the Gulf Stream.

Some of the feature areas of the Nantucket Shoals include Middle Rip (32 NM from Nantucket at 40° 57.775' N / 69° 22.323' W), Fishing Rip (28 NM from Nantucket at 41° 01.278' N / 69° 27.678' W) and Davis Shoal (17 NM from Nantucket at 40° 58.072' N / 69° 54.563' W). Certainly there are quite a few captains fishing the unsettled and nutrient rich waters of the Shoals inside the line every summer, but it's hard to fathom how many of those enormous spawning class stripers might remain just outside in the EEZ throughout New England's summer season.

IN THE NAME OF SCIENCE

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) will be meeting in Dewey Beach, DE from October 27 through October 30 with the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board slated to vote on a proposal to reduce striped bass fishery removals by 12%, with management measures implemented in 2026. That meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 29 starting at 9:45 a.m. and continuing until the end of the day's session at 5 p.m. In the recreational fishery, a



The longtime Gray Fishtag Research supporters at PENN had a team of anglers out for StriperQuest '25, with PENN's Justin Poe joining Capt. Dave Schunke of Fish Circus for a day of striped bass tagging.

12% reduction would mean some semblance of seasonal closure totaling a month or more in the Atlantic Coast striper fishery beginning next year.

Also coming in 2026 is a new benchmark stock assessment on striped bass which will ultimately be peer-review and analyzed in 2027 to provide a full analysis and review of the condition of the striped bass stock through consideration of new data sources and newer or improved assessment models. ASMFC has been openly soliciting data sources that will contribute to the goals of the assessment, including "data on landings and discards, catch per unit effort, biological samples (length or age frequency), and life history information (growth, maturity, fecundity, natural mortality)."

That said, while our partnership with Gray Fishtag Research since 2019 through the Northeast Striped Bass Study has tagging data available from 15 high-tech tracking devices and about 300 returns from over 8,000 green streamer tags deployed along the Atlantic Coast, until we're able to get researchers interested in analyzing all of this available data there's not a lot of interest for stock assessment professionals either.

The good news is that Dr. Adam Aguiar, an Associate Professor at Stockton University in South Jersey and frequent contributor to *The Fisherman* joined us for StriperQuest '25 and is looking forward to helping get a better handle on the Gray Fishtag Research striper data. Dr. Aguiar, by the way, was also onboard *Tyman* on May 14 and was the angler who caught our first tag retrieval of this year's study.

"The use of satellite tags on various species has been established in the literature as useful in gaining insight into a population's health and migration," said Dr. Aguiar of the ongoing Gray Fishtag Research tagging efforts along the Striper Coast, noting how there have only been a few satellite studies published on striped bass.

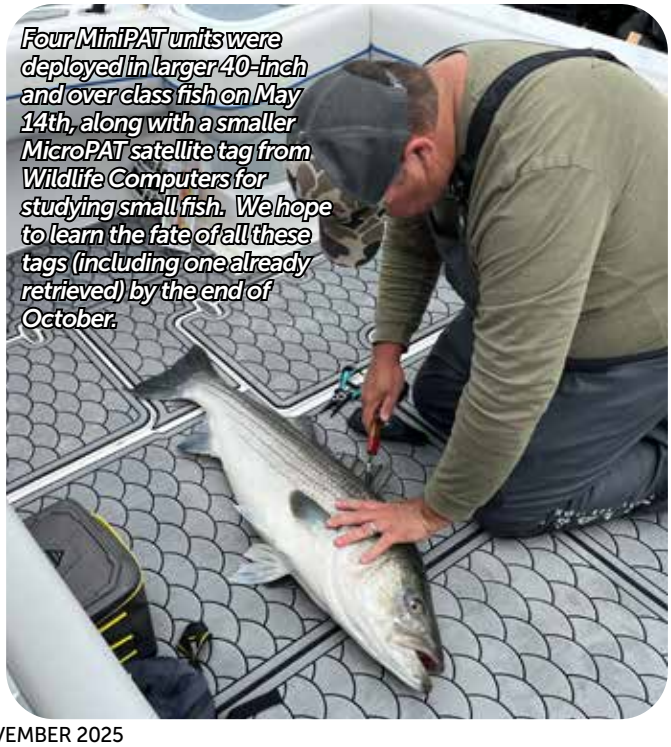
"These, however, have been done on stripers of small, non-spawning size in specific spawning locals, and not on our mixed-migratory stock seen in spring and fall off the coast of New Jersey into New England," noted Dr. Aguiar, adding "There have been a few studies (however sparse) that have been done on our mixed migratory stock, though none yet by satellite tagging measures to my knowledge."

TAGGED BASS AT NANTUCKET

Be sure to check out Nantucket Shoals: Whales, Doormats & Jumbo Stripers by Jim Hutchinson, Jr. from the November, 2022 edition of The Fisherman for more on the Nantucket Shoals connection to the Northeast Striped Bass Study since 2019 (point your cellphone's camera at the QR code to open the article. To learn more about The Fisherman's work with Gray Fishtag Research since 2019 go to TheFisherman.com and look for Striped Bass Study under the Topics bar at the top of the page.

NEXT STEPS?

While it is generally accepted by the research community that striped bass migrate 'offshore' beyond the three-mile-line, to what degree and how that may be changing with the recognized uptick in water temperatures is not defined with much certainty. "Even the few studies that used non-satellite tactics in monitoring their movements in the ocean do not give clear delineators for mileage 'offshore', let alone the literature having established a common consensus for how far is even considered 'offshore' or if those distances should be categorized into segmented ranges for better future data assessment," Dr. Aguiar said, adding "this Gray Fishtag study may enable us to more accurately define boundaries and distances from shore for which the stripers frequent."

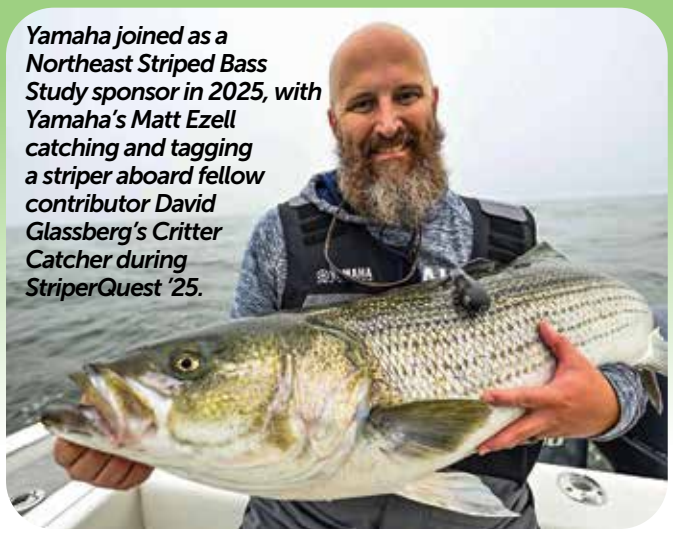


Four MiniPAT units were deployed in larger 40-inch and over class fish on May 14th, along with a smaller MicroPAT satellite tag from Wildlife Computers for studying small fish. We hope to learn the fate of all these tags (including one already retrieved) by the end of October.

Dr. Aguiar and his team from Stockton University plan to look more closely into the Northeast Striped Bass Study data in hopes of helping connect the research community with "citizen scientists" which NOAA Fisheries describes as "a volunteer who participates in one or more aspects of the scientific process, such as data collection."

In a June 2, 2025 bulletin released by NOAA Fisheries (*How Does Citizen Science*

Support Fisheries Stock Assessments?) the federal fisheries service spotlighted the potential to expand the use of citizen science data in stock assessments. "Citizen scientists have a long history of important contributions to marine science," the bulletin noted, adding how anglers for example collect information on water quality, marine mammal sightings, and fish size and health, all of which contributes to effective marine resource management.



Yamaha joined as a Northeast Striped Bass Study sponsor in 2025, with Yamaha's Matt Ezell catching and tagging a striper aboard fellow contributor David Glassberg's Critter Catcher during StriperQuest '25.

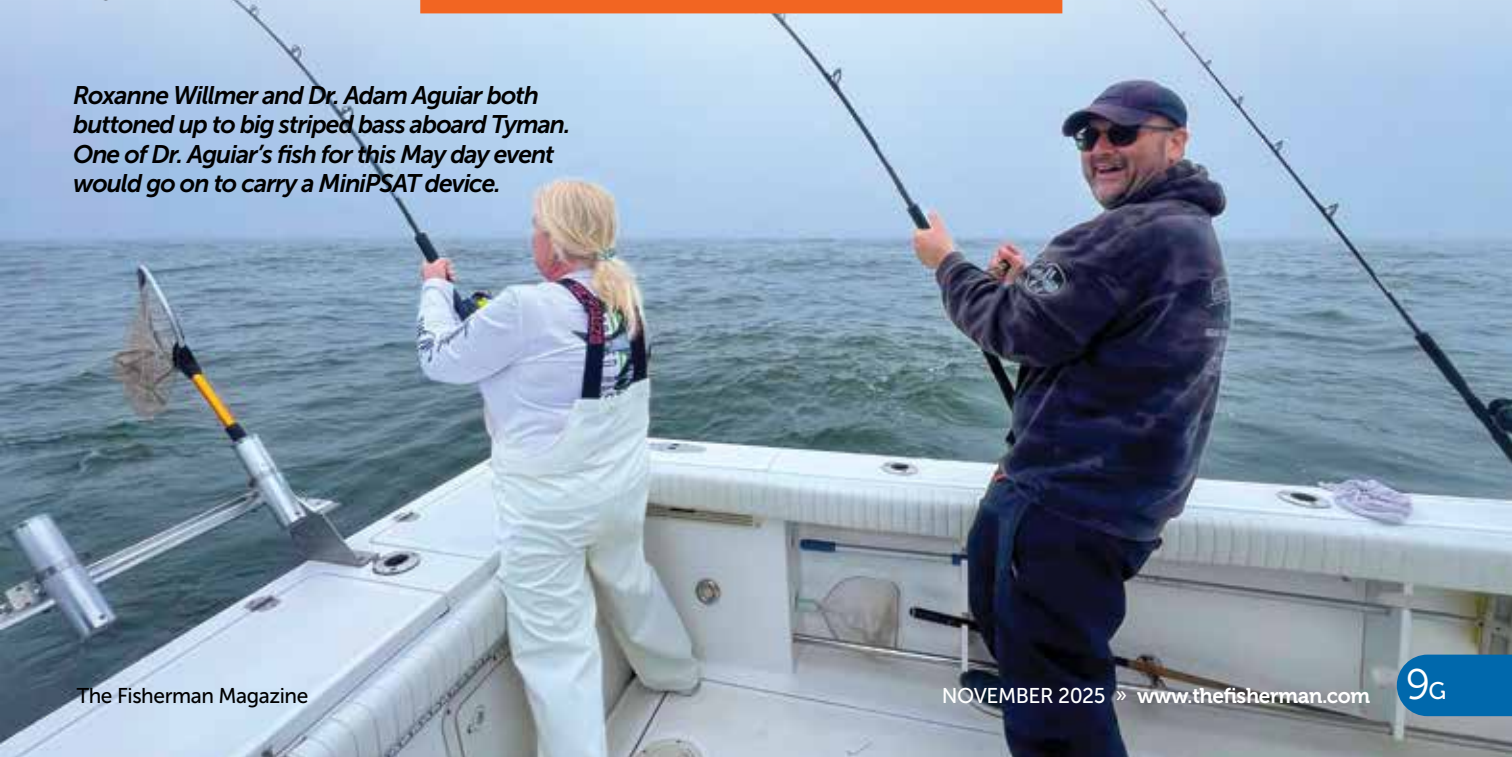
From 2019 through the fall of 2024, Gray Fishtag Research and *The Fisherman*, thanks to the generous support of our Northeast Striped Bass Study partners, has deployed a total of 32 satellite tracking devices in 32 different striped bass from Virginia to the east end of New York, 15 of which were found and returned to Gray Fishtag Research. A simultaneous tagging effort with partners in the angling community has resulted in nearly 8,000 green streamer tags deployed along the Atlantic Coast, with hundreds of returns already registered.

While it's still too soon to see this data incorporated into the next benchmark stock assessment on striped bass coming in 2026/2027, the authors of the recent "citizen science" research coordinated by NOAA Fisheries found that data collected through fish tagging programs had the broadest utility for stock assessments, adding "These data help to define stock boundaries, estimate growth, and document fish habitat preferences." For active supporters of the Northeast Striped Bass Study, that should offer a glimmer of hope for the continued tagging efforts along the Atlantic Coast. "It is a big misconception that we know all about striped bass behavior, especially under constantly changing environmental conditions," said Dr. Aguiar while adding "Seeking understanding to novel unanswered questions about the migration of the Northeast's mixed-migratory stock, specifically, has more unrecognized value to anglers, conservationists, researchers, and even policy-makers then most even realize."

LEARN MORE & SUPPORT

A huge thanks to our continuing sponsors of the Gray Fishtag Research and the Northeast Striped Bass Study, including American Fishing Wire (AFW/HI-SEAS), Berkeley Striper Club, Fisheries Conservation Trust and the Manhattan Cup, Hudson River Fishermen's Association, Penn, Seaguar, Yamaha, Yo-Zuri, and the Many, Glassberg and Nova families.

To learn more about the 501c3 nonprofit work at Gray Fishtag Research and how you too could help sponsor the Northeast Striped Bass Study, go to grayfishtagresearch.org.



Roxanne Willmer and Dr. Adam Aguiar both buttoned up to big striped bass aboard Tyman. One of Dr. Aguiar's fish for this May day event would go on to carry a MiniPSAT device.

NO BAIT, NO PROBLEM:

NOVEMBER JIGGING potpourri

BY CAPT. JOHN N. RAGUSO

As many of you might have surmised from reading my past articles, I am a dedicated jigging junkie and my love for this style of saltwater angling goes back 50+ years. The NLBN (No Live Bait Needed) lure company's namesake has been my personal motto for the better part of the past three decades, no matter what type of fish are on the menu. And that goes for dead bait as well.

Whether slinging a bucktail, heavy metal, epoxy or aluminum jig, the feeling that you get when suddenly "coming tight" is second to none and is one of the most exhilarating, adrenaline fueled rushes in sport fishing. The knowledge that you, the angler made this happen with your personal retrieve speed, rod tip action, arm arc motions and jigging style gives you an innate satisfaction that is not achieved when trolling or bait fishing where

November can be a jigging angler's paradise, from inshore to the edge!



When the bite gets hot in December, jumbo sea bass doubles are a very real possibility while jigging with a teaser in addition to a jig.

something else often determines if you win or lose. You control the action and the game is to get as many hookups as possible.

I will frequently face off with my charter customers when bottom fishing in the late fall months and we'll play the simple game of who can bring more fish to boatside, the bait folks or the jiggers. Historically, my experience has indicated that the competent jiggers will win this game more often than not, typically catching more and larger fish.

The November calendar of events includes a number of migrating coastal species that will all respond to your favorite jigs and jigging techniques.

STRIPED BASS

The striped bass migration is in full swing by this time of the year and whether you call home port somewhere in New England coastal waters, Long Island Sound, the south shore of Long Island, the Jersey Shore or the down along the Delmarva Peninsula, you are likely to find swarms of bass swimming near you at some point. Stripers, especially 18- to 30-inch fish, will typically move in massive schools that can include thousands of individuals, lighting up your echo sounder screen from top to bottom. Jigs can cover this action throughout the water table, get you down fast into the action zone and will get plenty of hits along the way. Slow sweeps up from the bottom (Yo-Yoing) and/or a slow squidding retrieve will both work. A sweep-and-drop steady retrieve will also elicit strikes, especially with lighter swimming jigs like sand eel or epoxy types.

Another telltale for finding the bass this time of year is to look for flocks of diving sea birds like gannets, shearwaters and gulls, which will let you know from a distance when a hot bite is in full swing. One of my secret weapons for consistently hooking stripers when the bunker are thick is the Tsunami Pro Flutter Spoon. This spoon/jig is yo-yoed at a specific depth where the fish are holding and can get an unbelievable amount of strikes when conditions are right.



Striped bass are a prime November jigging target in ocean waters.



An assortment of jigs of all colors, weights & shapes is essential for success.

BLACK SEA BASS

As I have demonstrated firsthand to hundreds of my charter fishing customers, sea bass are suckers for a well-placed jig in the strike zone. Bucktails, diamond jigs, other metal sand eel imitations, and soft plastic leadheads all will work at a given moment, relevant to water depth, wave action and current flow conditions. In the month of November, the majority of black sea bass are migrating out of inshore coastal areas and can usually be found on wrecks situated in 120- to 180-foot depths as they trek offshore to the continental shelf for their winter layover. At this time, precise positioning over these wrecks is not essential and I've found that being "in the neighborhood" anywhere from 50 to 100 feet away from the structure will get you a decent amount of action.

The problem with this strategy is that dogfish typically will make their presence known at this time of the year and will be a total nuisance, jumping on jigs that are resting on the bottom for more than a few seconds. Getting closer to the wreck will often solve the doggie problem, but will also increase the chance of you snagging some real estate and losing expensive jigs as you work the drift. This is where an electric trolling motor



These Tog Treat from Tsunami are perfect for fall tog jigging.

can be a total game changer and can really impact both the quantity and quality of your catch, holding you over precise areas of the bottom that are stacked with fish. I've had my best action snap-jigging, employing slow repetitive yo-yo lifts with drop-backs, and/or doing a slow squidding retrieve from five to ten cranks off the bottom, repeating this until there's too much scope in the line, where the jig is retrieved to the surface and the process started over again.

FOOTBALL TUNAS

Both little tunny (aka false albacore) and Atlantic bonito will respond to jigs during the fall months in coastal waters ranging from 50 to 90 feet, where they are usually lurking and looking to ambush some migrating schools of baitfish. If they are moving fast and causing a ruckus on the surface, epoxy jigs like the Hogy san eel, Deadly Dicks, Acme Needlefish and others of that ilk will get those albies to strike and rip line off your reel like few others. This fishery is typically found in the top layer of the water column, from the surface and down to 15 feet.

The technique is to cast into or just beyond the school, reel as fast as possible like your life depended on it and hold on for that sudden strike. Both albies and bonito will also respond to medium and rapid retrieves up from the bottom. Looking at your echo sounder screen will identify what level of the water column these fish are frequenting at the moment to better target the focus of your casts. Small and large school tuna have been known to enter inshore waters in the weeks of November chasing forage, so don't be shocked if these fish announce their presence by totally spooling one of your lightweight jigging reels.

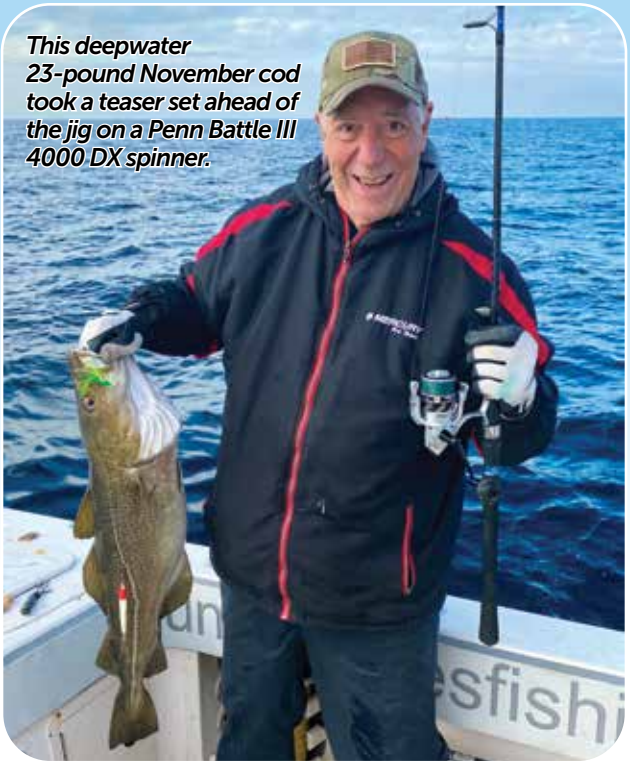
The author caught this jumbo deepwater black sea bass using the snap-jigging technique during a fall wreck trip.

Some additional migrating species that might attack your jigs during November depending on your location include porgies, Spanish mackerel, weakfish, bluefish, cod, pollock, red hake (ling), summer flounder and a variety of sharks. One of the biggest trends in the blackfish fishery over the past several years is the use of lima bean shaped jigs that are sweetened with a chunk of crab and sent to the bottom. I jumped on this bandwagon a few years back and have had some decent success working shallow 15- to 40-foot depths employing this method.

Be on the lookout for the usual signs of life and don't be shocked if any of these other critters finds your jig tasty.

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

All four of my current go-to revolving spool reels are lever drag models. Why? Because they work for me and my jigging style and allow me to fine-tune the drag for every scenario as well and transitioning in and out of free-spool quickly for the constant drop-backs that active jig fishing requires. My basic setups are both Avet (made in USA) reels that I hand-picked from my local tackle shop. The smallest of these is the SXJ with a 5.3:1 gear ratio, which holds about 350 yards of 20-pound braid, with a 15- to 20-foot topshot of 40-pound mono (usually Berkley ProSpec). This is attached to a 6-foot



This deepwater 23-pound November cod took a teaser set ahead of the jig on a Penn Battle III 4000 DX spinner.

long Shimano medium/heavy action TTJC60MH Talavera Type-J slow-pitch jigging rod that's rated for up to 250-gram jigs and 50-pound PowerPro.

The bigger brother in my basic jigging setup is the





A trio of the author's fall inshore outfits – Penn Battle III 4000 & 5000 DX and the Avet SX lever drag conventional setup.

with 400 yards of 40-pound mono and equipped with a game-changing two-speed gearbox. Speedmasters are half the cost of their more expensive Talica and offer many of the same features at a more affordable price. Matched to a Trevala 40- to 80-pound TVC60HB fast action 6-foot jigging rod, this combo is more adept at heavy lifting for big bass, cod, alligator blues or whatever. When a tuna or shark presents itself in the jigging mix, the next-step-up Speedmaster 12II takes care of business, spooled with 300-plus yards of 65-pound braid with a 60-pound mono topshot and matched to a Shimano Grappler Type J GRPJC58XXH rod.

SPINNING SELECTIONS

For November spin jigging duties, I keep it very simple and affordable. My two go-to outfits are the Penn Battle III DX (dealer exclusive) silver spinners in the 4000 and 5000 sizes. Be advised that Penn introduced new upgraded Battle IV models last season, but I am still getting great mileage out of my original Battle IIIs that were purchase the year before. The Penn Battle spinners meet my criteria for being bulletproof, reliable and affordable. They are perfect for casting jigs to swarms of stripers, blues, or albies that are crashing bait under the birds. I prefer the silver DX (dealer exclusive) models on all my Penn Battle III/IV and Slammer IV spinners due to their upgraded CNC gear sets and extra shaft bearings, which allow them to stand up to the relentless stress of higher drag settings required to battle larger gamefish.

Rigged with 300 yards of 15-pound braid with a 15-foot, 30-pound mono topshot, the handy Battle III 4000 DX spinner is my go-to snap-jigging outfit when drifting near wrecks or reefs and presenting 1- to 2-ounce bucktails or metal jigs on the bottom in deep water. It's also an ideal outfit for casting and fast-retrieving epoxy jigs and Deadly Dicks for falsies, Spanish mackerel and Atlantic bonito when they are feeding under swarms of sea birds. Max drag on the Penn Battle III/IV 4000 series DX reels is 15 pounds. I mate this to a 6-foot, 3-inch Tsunami Sapphire XT Pro rod and it's a great tool to handle this combo's multi-mission task set.

My heavier Slammer III 5000 series reel is one step up from the aforementioned spin combo and has tamed a number of inshore gamefish for me ranging from big stripers and blues, heavyweight false albacore, inshore sharks and the occasional schoolie bluefin that venture inshore in the waning months of the season crashing the remnants of the migrating bunker and mullet schools. This

Avet SX lever drag reel (also 5.3:1 gear ratio), spooled with 400 yards of 30-pound braid, with a similar 15- to 20-foot topshot of 40-poundProSpec. The rod I favor for this rig is Ugly Stick's Tiger Elite model 6-foot, 6-inch USTEJG50100C631 that's rated to sling 4- to 7-ounce jigs (112 to 200 grams). Both these rods, the Shimano Talavera and the Ugly Stick Tiger Elite, are under 6-1/2 feet in length and are absolutely perfect for use on my 228 EdgeWater CC that features an extended T-Top with overhead four-rod rocket launcher and two antennas, plus a leaning post with a six-rod rocket launcher. The incessant sweep up of the rod tip when jigging these somewhat shorter rods minimizes any fatal collisions or conflicts with these immovable impediments.

When it's time to step up in jigging class due to the size, weight and nature of the quarry, the Shimano Speedmaster 8II is a smooth-as-silk lever drag reel loaded



The author's travel box of jigs.

5000 series Battle III/IV offers a significant upgrade in drag power compared to her little sister, rated at 25 pounds max due to the larger spool and drag stack. She'll hold 300 yards of 30-pound test and will do everything that her sibling can do, but with a wider range of capability when targeting larger fish. I'll finish it off with a 20-foot topshot of 40-pound Berkley ProSpec mono and then attach this reel to an Ugly Stick Tiger Elite model USTEJG50100S661 rod. This stick measures 6-1/2 feet in length and is rated for 50- to 100-pound braid. This combo can stand up to just about anything I throw its way, easily tossing jigs in excess of 6 ounces without overloading the tip, and has what it takes to survive multiple big game battles.

The few constants of November are that it's cold, dark, with a low sun angle and typically gray, overcast skies. It can definitely be very unfriendly if you are unprepared. Dressing for the occasion is the first step to enjoying your jigging adventure and it's easier to take off layers of clothing if you get too warm than it is to add outerwear that you don't have if you're cold, so be sure to have more than less when you head out for your November sorties. Adding a lightweight, water resistant windbreaker over your outer hoodie is always a plus, along with gloves that allow you a good amount a "feel" with your line, rod and reel while doing their job.

Footwear is important too and I normally replace my standard ankle-high XtraTuf with the commercial grade fleece-lined boots of the same profile. Add some thermal or thick wool blend socks, a hat on top (one that won't blow off) and some polarized sunglasses and you're ready for the elements. Choose your days wisely, factor in limited drive time during daylight hours and be safe out there.

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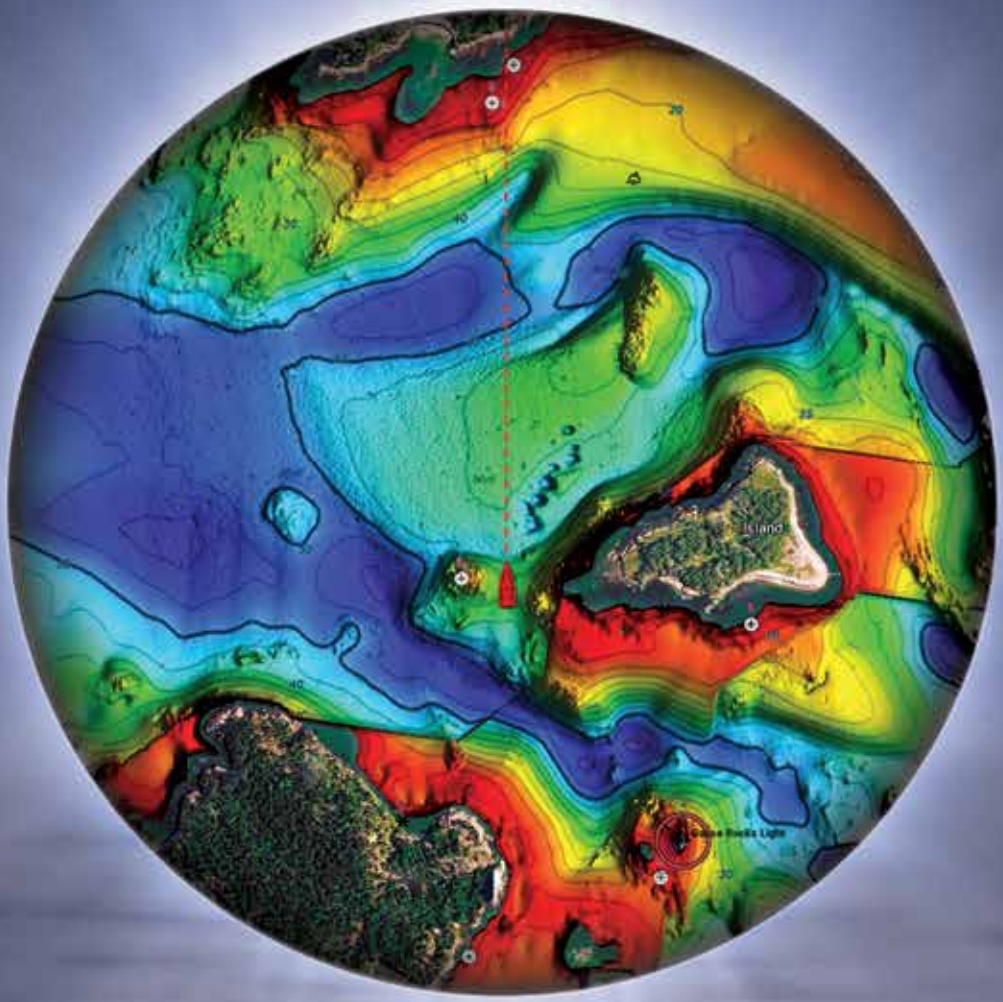



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ON THE RUN:

COMPILED BY DAVE ANDERSON

NOVEMBER STRIPERS by region

No matter where you fish, there's a collective understanding of what November means for the striped bass addicted: it means the end is near. That end could be weeks away if you fish in New England or a good two months away if you fish in New Jersey, but that chill in the air, those short days, that thin, filtered sunlight... it all adds up to eventually giving in to winter and saying 'goodbye' to another striped bass season. But, that certainly doesn't mean that we're giving up.

In fact, some of the most exciting fishing of the year happens up-and-down the Striper Coast during the eleventh month and the ways to score vary by region. While anglers in New England might be pushing themselves back "out there" with the hope of cheating the season past Thanksgiving, stealing another good tide from the clutches of Old Man Winter.

New Jersey surfcasters are licking their chops as they blow out the candles in their jack-o-lanterns for the last time, and the heart and soul of the Jersey fall run ramps up through November and continues into December. Long Island sees a little of both, with east end action typically winding down by the end of the month, while the area from Fire Island to the New York Bight typically catches fire at this time and hangs on well past Black Friday.

Whether you take the 'have rod, will travel' approach and chase good bites all over the Northeast, or if you're more of a home-body that strives to catch every bite as the late innings wear on, we've got you covered with expert advice to put you 'on the meat' through November and beyond.



The view from the dunes at Ortley Beach along the Jersey Shore on November 28, 2022 as migrating stripers move south.

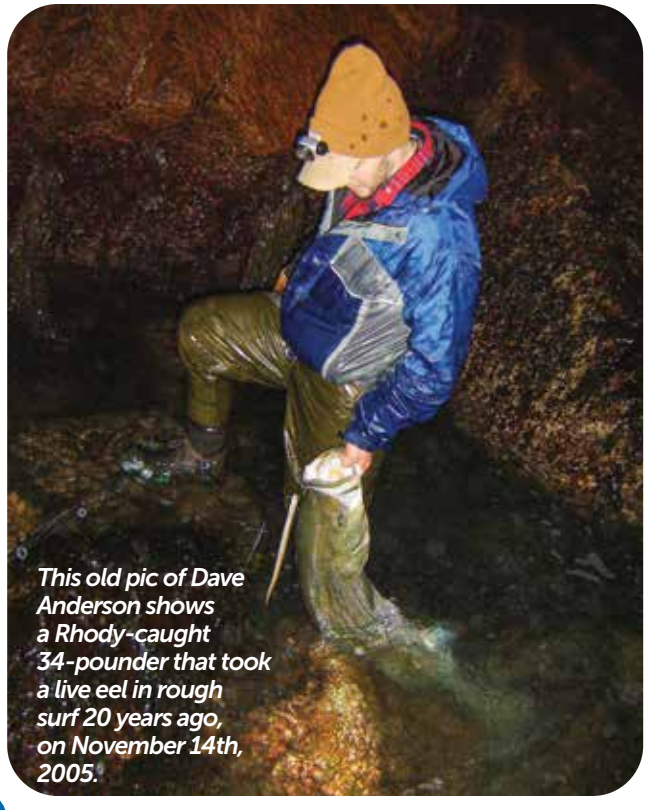
NEW ENGLAND – MA TO CT

By Dave Anderson

Up here in New England, the end of the season is dictated more by the doubt that creeps into anglers' heads, rather than any true confirmation that the last striper has actually swum past. After an intense spring run, a full and fishy summer and a fall run that has already demanded long, hard effort through September and October, many anglers here switch to chasing antlers or vegging out in front of the football game come November, but that is a mistake!

While earlier fall exploits are often hard to pattern, as new pushes of stripers come and go with waves of bait, moons and changes in the weather, the late-running stripers in this region relate to one of two things; bait or warmer water. As the ocean temps dip into the low 50s, straggler stripers tend to migrate with more purpose, almost like they're late for work. But creature comforts take precedence, as the fish stream along the coast, if they encounter a good school of peanuts, sea herring or sand eels, they're going stay with it and feed. Or, if they find themselves in a plume of warmer water, they will typically follow that cloud of warmth to its source.

This is why the most successful November anglers in the region use a 'two-factor authentication' method when choosing where and when to go. Spending some time out during the day can pay off big, whether you're hitting the lots in your truck or speeding around in a boat. Finding pods of active fish that are visibly feeding on bait might lead to an epic daytime blitz, or it might give you the starting point you need to inform your plans for later that night. The other thing you may look for is baitfish balling up inside an inlet or salt pond, as if the school is preparing to run out of the inlet on the next dropping tide. Whether you find bait on the beach, bass, both or a teeming backwater preparing to let loose it's payload of baitfish, you'll have a big leg up on other anglers going in blind.



This old pic of Dave Anderson shows a Rhody-caught 34-pounder that took a live eel in rough surf 20 years ago, on November 14th, 2005.

Typically, I don't expect to catch a ton of fish on a November trip, but I have had some banner nights for numbers and caught some impressive fish as well. The typical "after dark" November striper trip can be summed up as 'grinding it out' but most of the time, I feel like I can connect with 2 to 4 fish and sometimes crazy things happen. And those crazy nights usually happen when some kind of large bait draws in a pile of bigger bass. I've seen some wild nights fueled by mullet, sea herring and peanuts in November.

The quintessential image of November stripers in New England would be a surfcaster fishing the South County beaches of Rhode Island and that's because it's a great place to fish at this time of year. It's also a place that's famous for electric daytime fishing. With gannets pushing herring schools offshore and some late-running 'corncob' mullet leaving the breachways, the bite can be insane. The breachway ponds pump sun-warmed water into the scene every dropping tide and the action can 'go red' anytime, day or night. The typical daytime arsenal includes spooks of various sizes ranging from 5 to 9 inches, pencil poppers, poppers, bucktails, epoxy jigs and paddletails. After dark, darters, bottle plugs, plastic swimmers, large needlefish, paddletails and bucktails fill the bag. Another killer method for tempting a November cow is drifting eels out into a dropping tide from the mouth of a breachway. (HINT: these methods work around any inlet, they don't have be officially listed as a breachway).

Another great trick is fishing around the entrances to areas where striped bass are known to holdover for the winter. There are countless rivers, bays and ponds that hold wintering populations of stripers in the Northeast, but it often seems like anglers forget that those fish have to swim into these places before the winter starts and much of that movement happens at the end of the run. Without blowing up anyone's favorite spots, a little research will reveal the locations of some of the most popular holdover waters and – trust me – those inlets produce some serious fish when you hit them right. In a similar vein, when the seas get ugly out front, many of our tidal rivers – from Cape Cod to Connecticut – will see an influx of stripers that will feed heavily while they wait for the weather to change again.

I've often said that I love to fish in November, because I feel like every fish I land, especially toward the end of the month, is one I stole from the winter. And those fish count for double when you need to call upon memories to get you through the cold darkness of a New England Nor'easter.

LONG ISLAND/METRO

By Matt Broderick

When November sets in across Long Island, the days get shorter, the winds colder, and the crowds thinner. Many anglers call it quits after Halloween, convinced the run is over. But the sharpies know better – November is a month of surprises. As long as the bait holds and the water stays in the low 50s, stripers remain in play, and the South Shore often becomes the final stage for the season.

If there's one pattern that can stretch the run late, it's the jig bite off the South Shore. When sand eels show up in force, stripers stack tight to the bottom along the 30 to 50-foot depths, and the action can be lights out. Party and charter boats out of Jones, Debs, Fire Island, and Shinnecock will often line up on these schools, with diamond jigs, AVAs, and slim-profile soft plastics doing the heavy lifting.

It's not always about size – many of the fish are schoolies to slot bass – but when you hit the right pile, the numbers can be impressive. Double headers are common, and there's always the chance of a bigger fish mixed in. For anglers who think the bite is slowing down, a South Shore jigging trip in mid to late November can prove the season still has juice.

The same bait that fuels the boat bite also shapes the surfcasting scene. When sand eels carpet the troughs and nearshore bars, the beaches come alive with smaller stripers that feed aggressively through day and night tides. November surf action may not produce the same cows as October, but it's one of the most consistent months for action. Slim-profile lures – needlefish, soft plastics, bucktails, and teasers – mimic sand eels perfectly. Often, anglers find themselves into dozens of fish in a tide, most in the 20 to 26-inch range, but still enough to keep rods bent well after many assume the run is done.

From Jones to Rockaway, the western end of the Island is a hotspot in November. Outgoing tides carry the last schools of peanuts through the cuts, and stripers pile in to take advantage. Boaters drifting live eels or bouncing bucktails score fish at night, while surfcasters on the jetties work darters and bucktails through the rips. The beaches around Breezy Point, Coney Island, and Long Beach often hold smaller bass chasing rain bait and sand eels, and under the right conditions blitzes can erupt, turning a quiet November morning into a classic fall memory.



Long Island editor Matt Broderick holds up a late-season striper caught on the west end of the island.

While the oceanfront gets the headlines, the bays and tidal rivers quietly carry plenty of November opportunity. Jamaica Bay, Great South Bay, and North Shore harbors hold schools of smaller stripers that remain active deeper into the month. Light-tackle anglers casting soft plastics, small swimmers, and even flies can rack up numbers when the main run outside slows down. These backwater bites thrive on peanuts staging near creek mouths and channels. In some years, they provide steady action right up until Thanksgiving, outlasting the oceanfront run.

Fishing in November isn't about comfort. Cold winds, rough seas, and unpredictable weather windows make every outing a challenge. Most trips won't produce a truckload of fish, but every striper caught feels earned. A handful of jigged bass on a South Shore wreck, a couple of surf rats pulled from a Breezy jetty, or a pile of schoolies in the back bays – each one is a victory against the oncoming winter. And every once in a while, the grind pays off with a special tide. A bunker push at Jones, a sand eel blitz on Fire Island, or an unexpected pile of fish under gannets can turn an ordinary November trip into the highlight of the season.

By the time Thanksgiving rolls around, it feels like we're fishing on borrowed time. Every fish landed in November is one more memory stolen from the winter. And those are the fish that stick with you – the jig bite that wouldn't quit, the blitz that erupted out of nowhere, or that surprise week when schoolies climbed all over sand eel imitations tide after tide.

For those willing to stay the course, Long Island stripers don't just vanish after October. They linger, they feed, and they reward the anglers who don't give up. November may not be about glory shots, but it's about tradition, perseverance, and the satisfaction of knowing you fished the run until the very end.

NEW JERSEY, DELAWARE BAY

By Jim Hutchinson, Jr.

Twenty years ago if you were to ask, "where's the best place to catch a 50-pound plus striped bass in New Jersey in November," I likely would've responded emphatically "the Delaware Bay." In the early 2000s the Cape May Rips and the lumps and sloughs inside the Delaware - Tussey's Shoal or the 20 Foot Slough for example - were the perennial hot spots around Veteran's Day for folks chunking bunker out of Cape May or

Fortescue. Over the past 20 years however, that jumbo striper bite in November has kind of fizzled out. Personally, I think there's a direct correlation to New Jersey legislative ban on menhaden reduction fishing in 2002. Think about the adage we as anglers often live by, "don't leave fish to find fish."

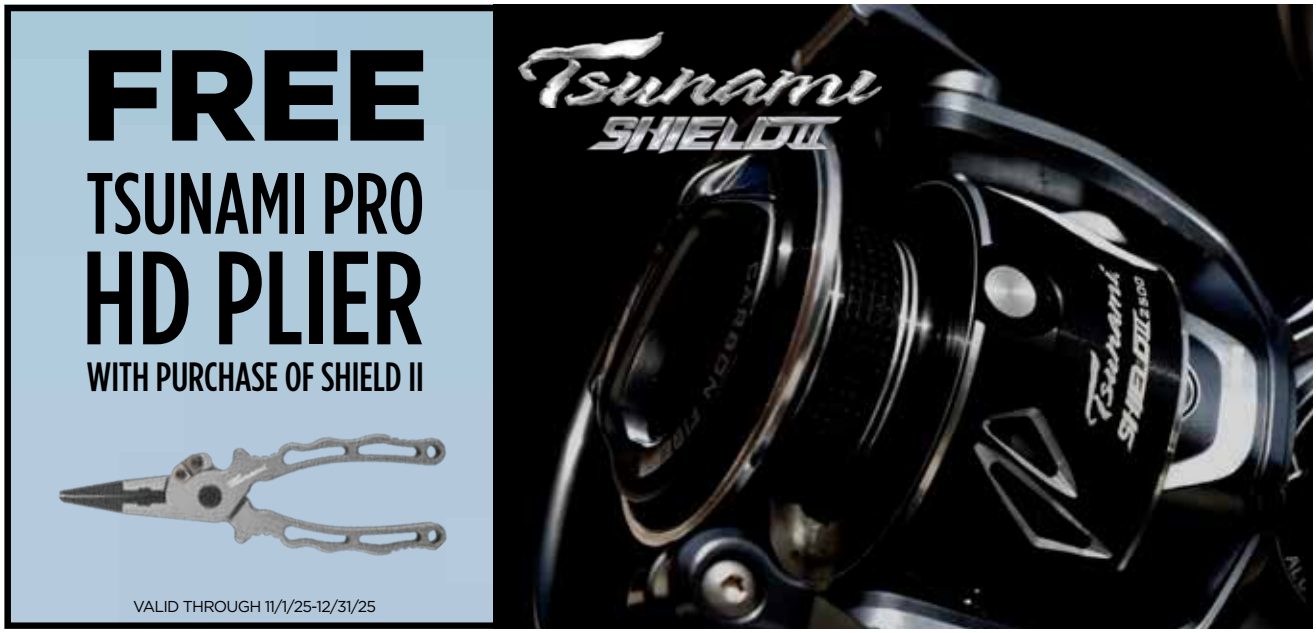
So, with a lot of bunker out along coastal waters from inside the line across to federal waters, migrating striped bass have plenty to eat in ocean waters and thus are not so inclined perhaps to go rooting around the Punk Grounds in hopes of finding a meal. Just a theory, bolstered in part perhaps the amazing November striper action at the Jersey Shore during the past several years. As peanut bunker dump out of the Raritan Bay on every tidal cycle, stripers in tight to the beaches of Monmouth County can often be found stacked on the bait through the early part of this month. Later in November the fish will slide down the beaches creating a spread of amazing striper action, by beach and by boat, from the tip of Sandy Hook all the way down to Island Beach State Park in Ocean County. Mixed in with all of that young-of-the-year menhaden are mid-size "cupcakes" and adults, requiring an ample selection of varied size plugs.



Pat Jolly shows off a November striper from the North/Central Jersey surf during the height of the November run under blues skies with light winds and plenty of action.

That said, there are couple of things that all New Englanders and Long Islanders don't understand about our amazing fall striper run at the Jersey Shore. First, it's not the entire state that's enjoying blitz action. The Garden State Parkway exits are denoted in mileage, with the Sandy Hook exit being 117, and Cape May to the south representing 00 (yeah, I know, that's part of the "yo Jersey, what exit?" joke we hear so often). The beaches of Long Beach Island for example are at mile marker 63, which essentially gives you the two halves of feast or famine. Thus if you're looking for the best surf action of November, the northern half of the state provides the best opportunity, whereas Atlantic and Cape May counties in particular may not see the larger bodies of striped bass until December.

Another thing to keep in mind is that from New Jersey and Delaware south, our Atlantic Coast beaches face east, so an offshore wind is one which blows from the west. When those mixed year classes of bunker are on the move, they'll often nose up against the offshore westerlies putting the bait, and thus the striped bass, directly at your feet. For surfcasters, a November plug bag should have surface lures (spooks, pencils, Polaris style poppers), swim shads of varied sizes, bucktails,



metal-lips, and those hard bodied plastics like the SP Minnow. But, you will also need those sand eel imitations as well, like ava jigs and teasers, Tsunami sand eels, Needlefish and the like. For castability when the stripers are just a little bit outside, I also like to make sure there's at least one Hopkins Shortie in my bag at all times.

Boat anglers may turn to livelining this month, others dragging mojos, Maja spoons or Bomber CD style trolling plugs. There's always stopping on a pile of marks to drop a flutter spoon down into the melee, and that same surfcasting tool kit is a must as well in the center console in November when stripers are on top. Then as the waters cool and bunker thin out, the hope is that a sand eel bite will materialize (trolling umbrella rigs, or jigging).

New Jersey is most assuredly a tale of two states, something that's become dramatically clearer over the past 20-plus years. That said, a lot of folks feel like there's been lower numbers of adult bunker in our Northeast and Mid-Atlantic waters in 2025. If that's the case, and accordingly there are fewer juvenile bunker in the mix in late October into early November, those migrating striped bass arriving at the Jersey Shore may in fact be more scattered in 2025 in search of bait. In which case, perhaps those lower 60 miles of New Jersey coast see a much different, perhaps vastly improved fall run than in recent years.

In no way am I saying that banning of the menhaden reduction boats in coastal waters was a bad thing; but bait and water temps are a key to finding the best possible striper bite down the Jersey Shore and into the Delaware region in November and December. In the past few years, the northern half of the Garden State has been epic through Thanksgiving, but it's still important to adapt to any changing conditions while also improvising on location specifics.

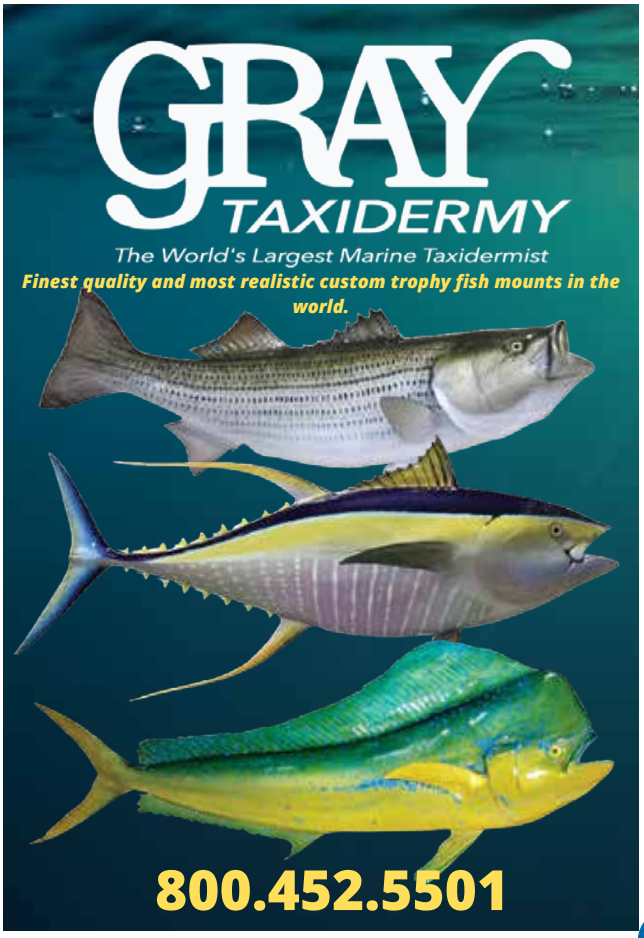
One other tip for surfcasters - even as stripers are piling on bunker this month, don't let that dissuade you from tossing a sand eel imitation; I find a Tsunami sand eel gets as many, if not more takes, than menhaden match alone. It's all about the bait, and we should have plenty of it moving down through the New Jersey, Delaware Bay region through the end of this year.



Kim Mosey enjoyed the topwater striper action by boat outside while fishing with family just outside of Manasquan Inlet at the Jersey Shore last December.

LEAVING IT ALL ON THE FIELD

No matter where you fish, or how many miles you log to get your fix of migratory stripers this month, one of the only ways a hardcore striper guy can end the season feeling satisfied is going 'all in' right up to the end. Trust me, you will regret it later, if you let a warm bed, a big game or even just the fatigue of an ordinary workday make your decisions for you. It's one thing to skip a night in June with months of season ahead, but if you have fishy conditions in November, you have to take advantage. And I know from personal experience, that you won't be happier if you give in to anything other than fishy temptations through the end of the season, leave it all on the field... that warm bed will be there all winter long.

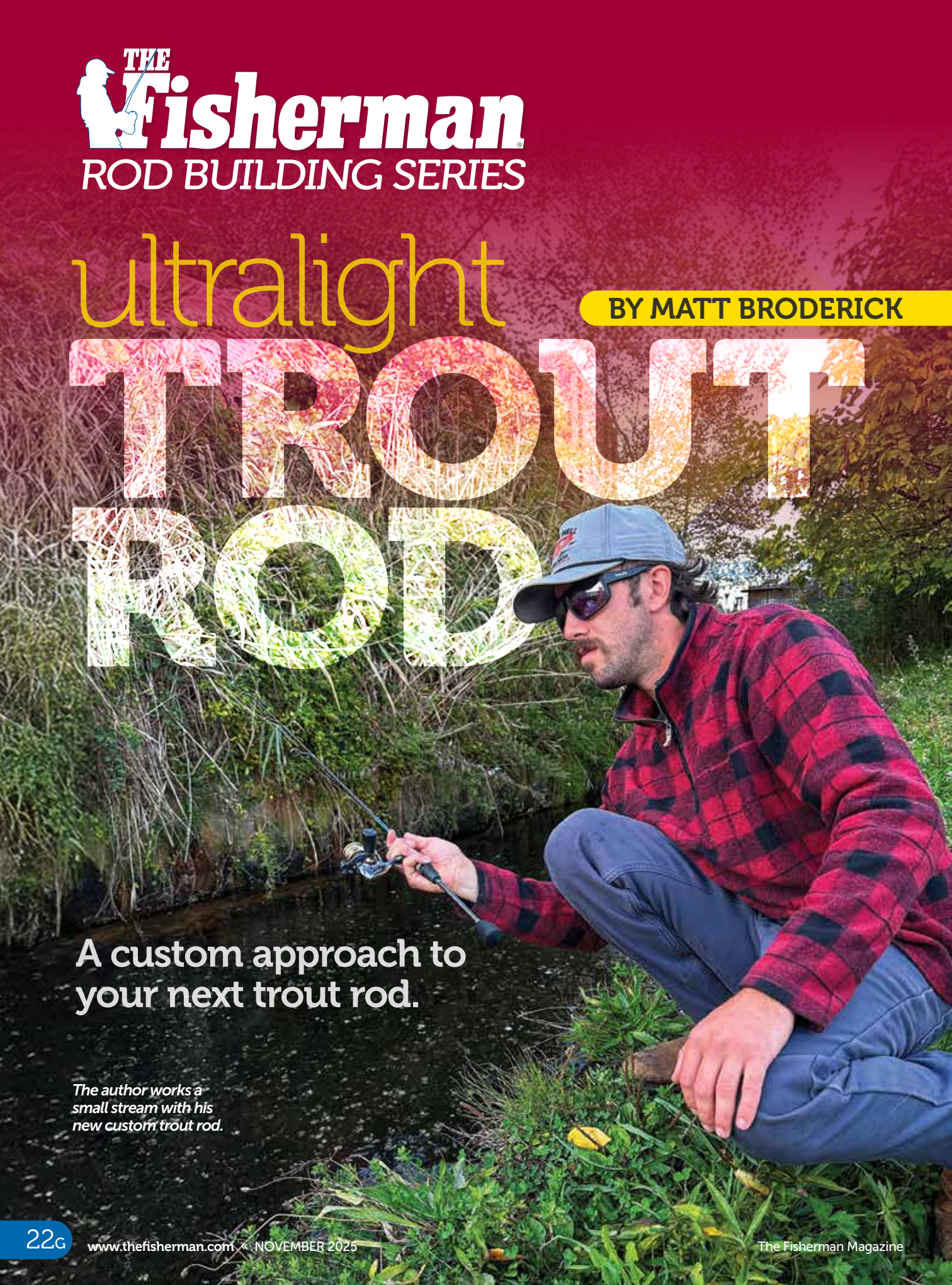


THE Fisherman

ROD BUILDING SERIES

ultralight TROUT ROD

BY MATT BRODERICK



A custom approach to your next trout rod.

The author works a small stream with his new custom trout rod.

For many anglers, trout fishing is about finesse, light line, and a direct connection to the fish. That same philosophy carries into rod building. Crafting a trout rod to your exact preferences doesn't just give you a tool for the stream — it gives you a piece of gear that feels like an extension of your hand.

While factory rods certainly get the job done, there's something deeply satisfying about taking the time to wrap and finish a rod yourself. Each step — from picking the blank to laying thread on the guides — makes the finished piece feel more personal. When you finally hook a trout on your own build, the sense of pride is unlike anything else in fishing.

FOUNDATION OF THE BUILD

Every rod starts with the blank, and this is where personal fishing style dictates the choice. For small-stream fishing where accuracy matters, I went with a Rod Geeks MXPN54ULFR blank, measuring 5 feet, 4 inches ultralight in fast action. The length keeps the rod nimble in tight quarters, while the action helps protect light leaders and drive small hooks home.

The blank sets the tone for the entire rod. A fast-action blank excels at distance casting spoons or small jigs across pools or rivers and it can also be used for tossing small pieces of bait with the addition of a tiny split shot Your choice of blank determines not only how the rod casts but also how it feels in hand after hours on the water.

COMFORT MEETS FUNCTION

Comfort is crucial when you're making hundreds of casts or working spinners through pocket water. For the grip, I chose extremely subtle trim pieces and an EVA butt end in a split grip fashion. I wanted to give this rod a modern grip feel so instead of traditional cork I went with the BGKSE EVA butt and carbon fiber foam cored trim pieced below and above the reel seat. With this rod being as light as it is, keeping the weight down with these minimalistic pieces was essential to this build for me.

The reel seat is an uplocking DPSSD16CC which not only locks the reel securely but also balances perfectly with the blank because of its smaller size — perfect for those 500 to 1000- sized reels. An uplocking seat also keeps everything streamlined and clean. Getting this section right makes the rod comfortable and responsive in your hands. The DPSSD is one of the more popular and standard styles used on rod builds for years now and it's comfortable in my hands so I stuck with it. I also know this tiny seat will fit small trout reels without any issues at all.

CONTROLLING THE LINE

Trout fishing often means light line (2 to 4-pound test), so smooth line management is critical. I selected the Fuji AT Single-Foot Spinning Guides for this build in sizes 16, 10 and 8 and then finished off with 4 Fuji K-Series KT Single-Foot Running Guides in a ring size 6. The rod was ended off with a Fuji KG Arowana in a size 4 tube and 6 ring. A lighter guide train keeps the rod responsive and improves casting accuracy, which is especially important when dropping a lure into tight seams. All guides used in this guide train were Titanium frames with Torzite rings, keeping the build weight to an absolute minimum, matching the theme of as light as possible.

FIND YOUR BLANK

When it comes to custom rod building, the blank is the foundation. One popular choice among builders is Rod Geeks, known for offering high-quality blanks at prices that won't break the bank. Backed by St. Croix's engineering, Rod Geeks produces blanks with consistent tapers, precise actions, and a wide selection of lengths and powers to match almost any style of fishing. To start your next build visit rodgeeks.com.



Remember, your hands will be on the reel seat during most of your fishing time. Finding the right one plays a big role in your comfort.



Make sure to get plenty of glue in your butt cap to make sure it stays put.



Be sure to use a generous amount of glue when putting the seat in place. You can always clean up the excess.



Fuji thread lays even over guides, packs tight and takes epoxy well.

After spinning the blank, I spaced the guides carefully, using a slightly modified New Guide Concept layout that places more guides closer together for consistent line flow. My initial layout looked a little off with a size 16 starting the train so with the addition of one extra running guide and some shifting I came up with one that worked out well. You can find my guide spacing at the end of this article. This setup helps prevent line slap against the blank and allows light fluorocarbon, braid mono to shoot cleanly through the guides. The end result is longer, smoother casts and better control over delicate presentations.

COMPONENT LIST

- MXPN54ULFR X 1
- TATSG16S X 1
- TATSG10S X 1
- TATSG8S X 1
- TKTSG6S X 4
- TKGST6S(4) X 1
- DPSSD16CC X 1
- BGKSE X 1
- CDPS16-01 X 1
- CBC16-01 X 1

THREAD WORK & AESTHETIC TOUCHES

Wrapping the guides gives you a chance to add personality. For this build, I went with Fuji Ultra Poly in Blue Dun accented with silver, which gives the rod a clean and classic look in my opinion Thread choices are where rod building shifts from pure function into art. Also I should note that using A-sized thread is recommended with a light build like this to keep the weight down. I did not color preserve the wraps either. I find that going without the CP gives the wraps a more translucent look and from a durability standpoint no CP allows the finish epoxy to soak into the threads a little bit more.

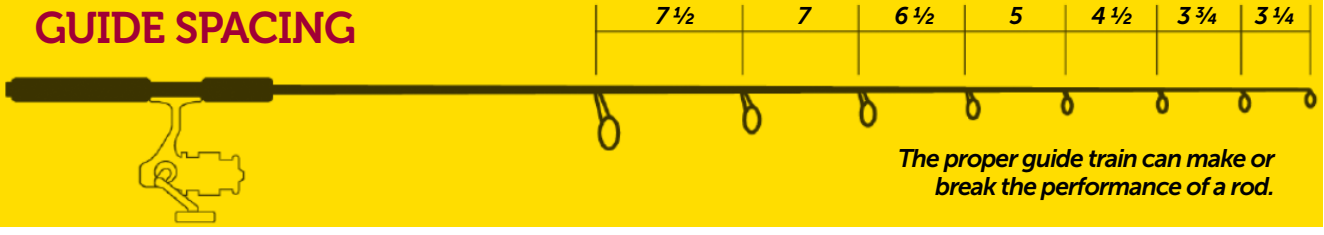
I added a hook holder above the top trim piece of the reel seat for holding those small jigs and lures. A neat little trick for an ultralight hook holder is using a small single foot fly guide. Also, being that this was a split grip, trim bands should be wrapped on the bottom end of the reel seat and the top of the butt cap to seal everything in. It also looks much better as well.

EPOXY & DETAILS

The final step is sealing the wraps with epoxy. I applied thin, even coats of Flex Coat to avoid bubbles and keep the finish clear. It's tempting to glob it on, but patience pays off — a smooth, glossy finish not only looks professional but also protects the thread for years of fishing. Try to go as thin as possible to a build like this, making sure not to add any additional weight. Be sure to soak the bottle in some hot water before you mix to really thin out the epoxy. Two light coats got the job done for me.

As the rod turns slowly under the dryer, the transformation is dramatic. All the careful prep work comes together in this stage, and by the time the epoxy sets, the rod looks like something you'd be proud to pull off a store rack — except you built it yourself. Hit the epoxy with a torch for a fraction of a second to pop any air bubbles forming and be sure to repeat until no longer necessary.

GUIDE SPACING



The proper guide train can make or break the performance of a rod.



The true reward came when I brought the rod to a local creek by me. Casting a small marabou jig (1/32 ounce) the sensitivity was immediately noticeable — I could feel every tick of the lure which is usually tough with such a light presentation. The rod's balance and guide spacing made for effortless casts, dropping the lure exactly where I wanted it.

Rod building isn't just about saving money or creating something unique — it's about tailoring your gear to match your fishing style and waters. The process connects you to your equipment in a way a store-bought rod never can. Whether you're drifting bait in the River, flicking spinners into pools, or fishing the yearly trout stocking, building your own rod like this one gives you a deeper connection to the fish you chase.

And there's nothing quite like catching your first trout on a rod you built with your own two hands. That moment is when all the late nights wrapping guides and carefully applying epoxy pay off.

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contents

NOVEMBER 2025 NEW JERSEY, DELAWARE BAY EDITION



Chris Pereira caught and released his personal best tautog, a 15-1/2-pounder taping out at 28 inches, during a December '24 trip aboard Capt. Tom Daffin's Fishin Fever. For tackle tips on getting your own double-digit tautog this season, check out Frank Mihalic's article called Tackling Tautog: Gearing Up For A Personal Best on page 28.

departments

Editor's Log	3
News Briefs	6
Calendar of Events	8
Product Spotlight	9
Tide Tables	36
Report Section	37
Classifieds	62
Hot Spot	66
Tale End	67

12 THE NOVEMBER RUN:
PREPPING FOR STRIPER PANDEMONIUM
By Dr. Adam Aguiar
Reflection on the past can improve an angler's tactical toolbox for November madness.

16 ON THE MOVE:
LITTLE BOAT, BIG FLEET
By Capt. Khoa Nguyen
Taking your show on the road and chasing stripers from a 15-foot skiff.

24 LOCK AND LOAD:
NJ FALL/WINTER SEA BASS
By Nick Honachefsky
As winter's chill knocks on the door, the high seas come alive with bottom brawling.

28 TACKLING TAUTOG:
GEARING UP FOR A PERSONAL BEST
By Frank Mihalic
Your tackle gives you a mechanical advantage over fall and winter blackfish.

32 STOCK UPDATE:
NEW JERSEY'S AUTUMN RAINBOWS
By Tom Pagliaroli
A rundown of the top fall trout waters in the Garden State.

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Striper Decision '25

By Jim Hutchinson, Jr.

On October 29th, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) meets in Delaware where their Striped Bass Management Board (Board) will vote on a potential month-long-or-so harvest closure for striped bass. The highly debated 12% mortality reduction proposal is aimed at increasing likelihood of meeting a 2029 deadline for rebuilding spawning stock biomass (SSB) to the 247-million-pound mark. For reference, SSB currently stands at approximately 200 million pounds.

I couldn't make the Delaware meeting, which I'm told was only sparsely attended, but I did attend both the New Jersey and Pennsylvania public hearings. ASMFC's Emilie Franke gave the official presentation and capably answered public questions, after which the majority of those 90 anglers in attendance in Manahawkin supported status quo (one fishing club and one individual spoke in support of the 12% reduction), same with the 70 attendees in Bristol, PA (one individual openly spoke in favor of the 12% reduction).

I don't know what the official tally looks like in terms of actual written state-by-state public comments - they'll be posted at *ASMFC.org* prior to the October 29th meeting - but there's clearly ample and overwhelming support in the New Jersey, Delaware Bay region for retaining the one fish at 28- to 31-inch slot limit on striped bass as opposed to a seasonal harvest closure over the 2026 Thanksgiving weekend (as per regulatory examples cited in the ASMFC presentation).

Despite what you may have seen posted in private internet groups by philanthropically funded attorney/activists with axes to grind, I haven't taken a personal/professional position on the ASMFC's striper proposal, nor has *The Fisherman Magazine*, in any official capacity. Instead, we've tried presenting a balance of relevant data without bogging things down with ancillary noise from angry extremes. I've been doing this long enough to know that what starts as a laundry list of options ultimately leads to a couple of stark selections, which is basically how we've arrived where we are today and what I've reported along the way.

Striped bass management is highly emotional, and the editorial decisions on what to leave in and what to leave out have put me in the crosshairs. It's probably why legacy media has shifted their news reporting, left or right, pandering to one market demo's ideologies while ignoring and infuriating the other. I figure if I'm ticking off both sides when presenting the facts, I must be doing my job. But at this point it all comes down to a choice of the best available data, one which calls for a 12% reduction, the other is the best available data supporting status quo until the next full-scale striped bass stock assessment in 2027.

Science shows a recruitment problem in the Chesapeake where most of our coastal stripers are born. If that science is accurate – and there's ample reason to believe that it is – expect some lean years ahead with fewer school size to nearly mature (28") stripers in the fishery. Whether it's due to warming waters, industrial runoff, blue catfish predation, localized menhaden depletion or something else, it's clear that there's a problem. That said, shutting down 34 days of the striped bass fishery does nothing to address it.

The reason for the 12% reduction proposal is simply to ensure a 50% chance of reaching the 247-million-pound SSB target by 2029. No, SSB is not collapsing, quite the opposite if you saw page 6 of the ASMFC addendum showing SSB on an upward rebuilding trajectory. In fact, if the Board voted "status quo" the ASMFC Technical Committee believes the SSB target will still be reached by 2032, just 3 years after the 2029 deadline.

I'll share more thoughts on the "noise" generated in the fall meetings in our final three digital weeklies of the year, with a full write-up of decision '25 in our December edition of *The Fisherman* going to print on November 16th.



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MD SEES SLIGHT "YOY" IMPROVEMENT, BUT STRIPER SPAWN STILL BELOW AVERAGE

On October 15, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) released their annual juvenile striped bass survey for 2025, recording a young-of-year index of 4.0. "This is an improvement over recent years, but still well below the long-term survey average of 11," noted DNR in the official release marking the seventh consecutive year of low striped bass spawning success in Maryland's Chesapeake survey.

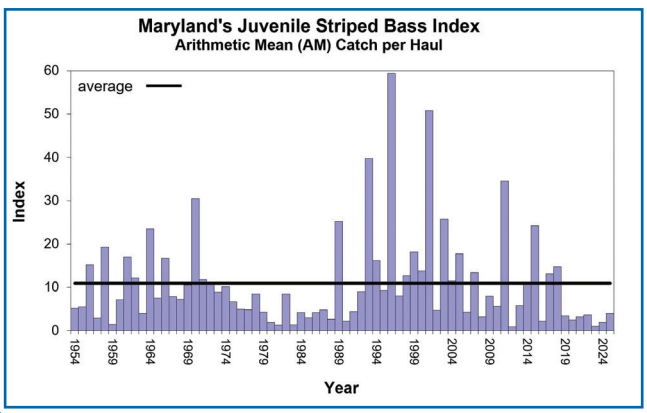
The annual survey tracks reproductive success of striped bass by sampling 22 sites with a 100-foot beach seine net in four major striped bass spawning areas including the Choptank, Nanticoke, and Potomac rivers, and the upper Chesapeake Bay. The index represents the average number of 3-inch or less juvenile striped bass caught in each sweep of the net.

Similar fish surveys were also conducted in the Patapsco, Magothy, Severn, Rhode, West, and Tred Avon rivers, and St. Clements and Breton bays. According to the DNR bulletin, those surveys found even fewer young-of-year striped bass. The Virginia Institute of Marine Science conducts a similar survey in the southern portion of Chesapeake Bay, while New Jersey and New York also conduct young-of-year (YOY) surveys on both the Delaware and Hudson rivers respectively.

"Management actions taken over the last decade have resulted in a healthy population of spawning-age striped bass," said Maryland DNR Fishing and Boating Services Director Lynn Fegley. "However, continued low numbers of striped bass entering the population is a threat to this progress as there are fewer juveniles growing into spawning adults," she added.

Maryland's DNR report explained how recent population estimates indicate healthy adult populations of striped bass, despite the downturn in juvenile spawning rates. "Droughts and warm conditions in winter continue to negatively impact the survival of striped bass eggs and larvae, which are very sensitive to water conditions and food availability in the first several weeks after hatching," DNR added.

In a social media post just prior to Maryland's announcement, Martin Gary with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation noted five variables that could impact striped bass reproduction including flow rates of key tributaries, water temperature profile with a focus on the 12- to 16-degree (Celsius) window, timing of the spawn based on temperature, zooplankton hatch/timing, and blue catfish predation impacts.



NEW JERSEY'S MANDATORY PFD RULE IN EFFECT ON NOVEMBER 1

Don't forget, as of November 1, no owner or operator of a recreational vessel less than 26 feet shall permit its operation between November 1 and May 1 unless each person onboard is wearing a securely fastened United States Coast Guard (USCG) approved wearable personal flotation device of an appropriate size while such vessel is underway. A person inside the cabin of a cabin vessel shall be exempt from this requirement. Implemented during the 2023-2024 season, the new regulation also includes rowboats, canoes, kayaks, and stand-up paddleboards. In short, a USCG approved life jacket is required to be worn at all times, outside of a cabin on a boat under 26 feet during the cold-water months, while in motion or underway.

The goal of this new regulation is to prevent hypothermia deaths and to decrease the risks placed upon first responders during winter search and rescue operations on the waters of New Jersey. In almost every instance of a vessel related drowning, the victim was not wearing a life vest. According to the New Jersey State Police, this PFD regulation is in the best interest of the safety of operators and passengers on all New Jersey's waterways.

JCSA STRIPER FEVER "CATCH & RELEASE" TOURNEY KICKS OFF NOVEMBER 1

The Jersey Coast Shark Anglers (JCSA) will once again be hosting their annual "Catch & Release" Striper Fever contest from Saturday, November 1 through Saturday, November 8. It's captains' choice, fish one day or multiple days with paid entries for each.

The entry fee is $175 per boat per day fishing (up to six anglers), with Junior Anglers 17 and under fishing free with paid registered adult angler. Prizes are based on the number of tournament entries, with 40% to first place, 20% to second place and 10% to third. There are also winner take all calcuttas, with $100 entry for the longest striper and $100 for the three longest.

A mandatory captain's meeting will be held on Friday, October 31 at 6:30 p.m. with door prizes and refreshments. Prizes following the weeklong event will be awarded on Tuesday, November 11. Both the captains meeting and the awards celebration will be held at the JCSA clubhouse located at 385 Herbertsville Road in Brick.

For Striper Fever Tournament details call tournament director Rick Carroll at 732-773-3409 or email him at *makohunter1@*

comcast.net. You can also contact co-chair Frank Ross at 732-856-2576 or *fjr470878@gmail.com*. To register and submit your tournament application online go to *jcsa.org*.

RAHWAY'S FALL FISHING FLEA MARKET ON NOVEMBER 22

On Saturday, November 22, the Rahway Fall Fishing Flea Market celebrates its 29th year in fond memory of George Rovnak. Held at St. Thomas Church Hall at 1400 St. Georges Avenue in Rahway, there will be a wide variety of salt and fresh water fishing tackle on display for anglers looking for great buys.

New, used, antique, custom fishing and boating items will be available to all, with door prizes awarded every half-hour which include-rods, reels, tackle and much more. St. Thomas Holy Name Society will offer food and refreshments. Show hours are from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and the admission price is $5 for adults; children 12 and under are admitted free. For show or vendor information call 718-702-5838 or go to *fishingfleamarkets.com*.

NJ RESEARCHER TABBED AS KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT AFS MEETING IN DELAWARE

The Mid-Atlantic Chapter (MAC) of the American Fisheries Society (AFS) will meet from November 19-21 at the Hyatt Place in Dewey Beach, DE. One of six geographic chapters within the Northeastern Division of the AFS, the mission of the chapter is to fulfill the parent society's objectives within the Mid-Atlantic Region:

- Promote the conservation, development, and wise use of the fisheries
- Promote and evaluate the development and advancement of fisheries science and practice
- Gather and disseminate scientific, technical, and other information about fisheries science and practice
- Encourage the teaching of fisheries science and practice in regional colleges and universities and the continuing education and development of fisheries professionals.

Dr. Dana Christensen, a researcher from Stockton University in New Jersey will be speaking at the meeting this year and has been asked to serve as the keynote speaker, "since the theme is about strengthening the relationships between researchers, management, and industry stakeholder groups," she noted.

"The annual AFS meeting is a unique collaboration event," Dr. Christensen noted, while adding "I will be presenting at the event (about the Saltwater Angler Survey) along with many other fisheries related researchers."

The event is free for stakeholders, until slots filled, and this year's theme - "From Research to Reels: Enhancing Collaboration in Fisheries Management" -highlights the critical roles that cooperation and trust play in bridging gaps and uniting diverse voices.

Dr. Christensen's research focuses on analyzing large-scale datasets to address complex problems in biology, ecology, and marine science. She has a strong interest in developing and expanding long-term environmental monitoring datasets and citizen science initiatives to support sustainability. At the 2023 and 2024 MAC-AFS Annual Meetings, Dr. Christensen presented her progress on her saltwater angler survey research.

At this year's Mid-Atlantic Chapter meeting, Dr. Christensen will provide another update on what she has learned about anglers' perceptions, knowledge, trust, and preferences through the lens of collaboration. This angler survey research inspired the theme of this year's meeting. For more information about the event go to *mid-atlantic.fisheries.org.*

CHARLIE'S HOSTS 14th ANNUAL SURF TURKEY TOURNAMENT NOVEMBER 26-29

Celebrate the Thanksgiving weekend in the Central Jersey surf with the 14th Annual Surf Turkey Tournament from November 26-29. Presented by Charlie's Bait and Tackle in Normandy Beach, this year's tournament is catch and release, and the cash prizes are for first and second longest striped bass and a five fish stringer.

The Surf Turkey tournament will kick off at 5 a.m. on the Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving and runs through Saturday, November 29 at 5 p.m. The fishing boundaries are from the south jetty of the Manasquan Inlet to the north jetty of Barnegat Inlet. Tournament entry fee is $45 with $2,000 grand prize being offered.

For more information visit Charlie's Bait and Tackle at 485 Route 35 North in Normandy Beach in Normandy Beach or call Pete at the shop at 732-793-1144.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

To see your event listed here, email jhutchinson@thefisherman.com

Through November 30. The Fisherman Dream Boat Fishing Challenge. Subscribe to *The Fisherman*, catch and weigh-in qualifying fish from eight eligible species and you could win the Grand Prize of a '25 Steiger Craft. Go to *TheFisherman.com*.

Through November 30. The Fisherman's Coastal Kayak Clash. Subscribers only contest for kayak anglers, catch and weigh-in qualifying fish by kayak and you could win a Hobie Mirage Lynx fully outfitted by YakAttack. Details at *TheFisherman.com*.

Through November 30. 71st Annual LBI Surf Fishing Classic. AKA, "The Derby" kicks off earlier in '25 for striped bass, bluefish, kingfish, redfish, tautog and now fluke prizes for surfcasters. Stop by a participating LBI tackle shop or visit *lbisfc.com*.

Through December 14. Riptide Fall Striped Bass Derby. Surf tournament on the beaches of Brigantine with prizes for striped bass, bluefish, kingfish, tautog and black drum. Get details at Riptide Bait and Tackle in Brigantine; call 609-264-0440.

Through November 23. Atlantic County Surf Fishing Derby. The annual Pat Erdman Memorial Tournament for stripers, bluefish, tautog, kingfish and sheepshead from Brigantine to Longport. Register at Ray Scott's Dock in Margate. Email *ed@steelfinangling.com*.

November 1-8. JCSA Catch & Release Striper Fever. Presented by the Jersey Coast Shark Anglers with captains meeting at club headquarters located at 385 Herbertsville Road in Brick Township. A "pick your day" tournament; for details go to *jcsa.org*.

November 6. NJ Marine Fisheries Council Meeting. Scheduled for 5 p.m. at the Galloway Twp. Branch of the Atlantic Co. Library, 306 East Jimmie Leeds Road in Galloway. For details call 609-292-7794.

November 8. JCAA Sportsperson of the Year Dinner. Annual dinner presented by Jersey Coast Anglers Association at the Captain's Inn, 304 E. Lacey Road in Forked River. Tickets are $100 per person, $900 for a table of 10. Contact John Toth at 732-656-0139 or visit *JCAA.org*.

November 16. NJ Tautog Limit Increase. From November 16 through December 31 the blackfish limit in New Jersey will increase to five fish at a size limit of 15 inches. Starting January 1 and through February 28 the bag limit drops to four fish.

November 22. 29th Annual Rahway Fall Fishing Flea Market. From 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at St Thomas Church Hall at 1400 St Georges Ave, Rahway, NJ. Admission is $5 (children 12 and under are free). For details visit *fishingfleamarkets.com* or call 718-702-5838.

November 26-29. 14th Annual Surf Turkey Tournament. Presented by Charlie's Bait and Tackle at 485 Route 35 North in Normandy Beach with $2,000 prize for first place. For details visit the shop or call 732-793-1144.

November 26-30. 15th Annual Ponytail Mike Malek/Tom Grumpy Hansen Memorial Striped Bass C&R Tournament. Presented by Berkeley Striper Club, to benefit BSC Fisheries Defense Fund and the St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital. Go to *berkeleystriperclub.org*.

January 9-11. Wildwood Fishing & Boating Expo. From 1-7 on Friday, 9-6 on Saturday and 9-2 on Sunday at the Wildwood Convention Center. Go to *fishingexpowildwood.com*.

January 9-11. Philadelphia Fishing Show. A 100% fishing show at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks, PA featuring seminars presented by *The Fisherman Magazine*. Call 732-330-5674 or visit *phillyfishingshow.com*.

January 10. NJBBA Fishing Flea Market. Presented by the New Jersey Beach Buggy Association at the Toms River Elks from 8-2. Admission is $5 for adults, free for children 15 and under with adult admission. Contact Paul Novello at 609-203-4812 or *Njstripernut@yahoo.com*.



Tsunami Shield II Spinning Reel

BY DAVE ANDERSON

tsunamifishing.com



Tsunami is at it again, bringing you a top quality spinning reel at a reasonable price. Something not everyone knows about the Tsunami crew, is that it's a small company that employs a salty team of hardcore anglers. This cuts through the fluff and ensures that these reels get all the stuff they need to perform, and none of the fluff they don't need that would otherwise cost you extra money. I happen to know several of their top guys personally and I can vouch for their passion for fishing and for bringing you the best products at the best prices possible.

The Shield II builds on the concepts and successes of the original Shield reel and bolsters some of the most important parts of the design with new technology. The entire lineup features all-metal body design and 12 internal seals to keep water out, all the time. Sizes 2500 through 4000 feature graphite rotors and their A-Drive aluminum gearing for a super lightweight and tough product, sizes 5000 to 8000 come with aluminum rotors and B-Drive brass gearing for added rigidity under the strain of a big fish. Regardless of drive, all gearing is digitally-optimized for tight, reliable torque at all times. Another great feature is that the CF3 drag system is also sealed and watertight. And the guts are finished off with 5+1 sealed stainless steel ball bearings.

The Shield II features a manually operated bail system, which offers the angler complete control and eliminates those surprise bail closures on the cast, that usually result in a snapped line and a pricey lure headed for Davey Jones' locker. The machined handle and non-slip power knob are made well and comfortable. And the spool comes 'braid ready' meaning you don't need backing, you can tie your braid right to the spool. I think the most striking thing about this reel is the smoothness. When you pick one up, you can feel how precisely the gearing was designed and you can feel that buttery, almost perpetual motion, smoothness of the reel as you crank the handle. The sealed drag is smooth and 'snag free' as well, with drag outputs ranging from 12 to 50 pounds, depending on size.

The bottom line is this, if you're looking for a reliable reel that can cover many species, the Tsunami Shield II can get you there. The 2500 would be a great freshwater reel covering everything from finesse largemouth bass to steelhead. The 4000 would cover, tog jigs, albies and backwater stripers, the 6000 would be a great surf reel and the 8000 could cover the Canal or even jig and pop tuna. The prices range from $160 to $210... how can you go wrong?

Eagle Claw Trokar Bait Saver Circle Hook

BY MATT BRODERICK

eagleclaw.com



Every striper angler knows the frustration—your bait slips, fouls, or dies before the fish even arrive. That's wasted time, wasted effort, and missed opportunities during short feeding windows. The Trokar Bait Saver Circle Hook was designed to solve exactly that problem, keeping your bait alive and in place so you can focus on hooking up with striped bass.

This hook isn't just another piece of terminal tackle. Developed with input from Captain Rick Murphy and Captain Jot Owens, the Bait Saver Circle Hook incorporates a monofilament loop along the shank that holds live or cut bait firmly without damaging delicate gills. That design means an eel will swim naturally through a rip, a bunker will stay lively in current, and chunks won't spin or slide down after a cast. Healthier bait translates directly to more strikes—and fewer headaches.

Built on the proven TK5 Trokar Circle Hook platform, the Bait Saver combines brute strength with precision engineering. It's available in 7/0, 8/0, and 9/0, covering the sweet spot for striper fishing whether you're drifting eels, bunker, or soaking clams in the wash. The surgically sharpened triangular point is Trokar's trademark, driving home quickly with minimal pressure. Paired with the circle design, you get reliable corner-of-the-jaw hookups that are both secure and conservation-friendly—an important factor in today's striped bass fishery.

Durability is another big advantage. Striped bass are notorious for crushing power, and few things are more frustrating than straightened wire after a big fish. The TK5 backbone is built for trophy-class bass, holding strong under heavy drag and long fights. Combined with the bait-saving loop, you've got a hook that gives you maximum time in the strike zone without constantly rebaiting.

For serious striper anglers, the Trokar Bait Saver Circle Hook is more than just gear—it's peace of mind. Fish with confidence knowing your bait stays alive, your presentation stays natural, and your hook is ready for the strike of a lifetime.

STANDINGS AS OF 10/17/2025

DREAM BOAT
2025 FISHING CHALLENGE

TOP 3 RANKING

1. **Thomas Luciano** — 20 POINTS
2. **Rashawn Williams** — 16 POINTS
3. **Gregory Brennan** — 15 POINTS

	WEAKFISH Fish Of The Month - May	SEA ROBIN Fish Of The Month - June	FLUKE (SUMMER FLOUNDER) Fish Of The Month - July
	Thomas Luciano 7.98lbs. 06/05 LIF	Vince Zorskas 3.40lbs. 05/04 LIF	Rashawn Williams 13.06lbs. 06/11 LIF
	Sean Brownyard 6.8lbs. 05/13 LIF	Louis Tlockowski 3.3lbs. 05/12 LIF	Bruce Behr 11.88lbs. 07/26 LIF
	Richard Turcotte 6.40lbs. 09/11 NEF	Gregory Schachtel 3.00lbs. 05/16 LIF	Richard Pombriant 11.2lbs. 07/28 NEF
	Jeffery Harrison 6.05lbs. 06/03 NEF	Fred Ledermann 2.9lbs. 05/23 LIF	Ross Nasierowski 10.88lbs. 09/22 LIF
	Garrett Krause 6.00lbs. 05/30 LIF	Thomas Luciano 2.76lbs. 06/04 LIF	Jeffery Harrison 9.65lbs. 06/19 NEF
	Fernando Lage 5.52lbs. 05/28 NEF	Paul Albarano 2.69lbs. 06/29 LIF	John Ciullo 8.82lbs. 06/24 LIF
	Gregory Brennan 5.42lbs. 10/07 NEF	Robert Dipierro 2.68lbs. 08/24 LIF	Sam Doughty 8.6lbs. 08/17 LIF
	Frank Peritore 5.18lbs. 06/08 LIF	Patrick Lapersonerie 2.58lbs. 07/23 LIF	Vince Zorskas 8.55lbs. 09/27 LIF
	Minimum Weight *5 lbs*	Marc Zaluski 2.4lbs. 09/01 LIF	Scott MacDonald 8.5lbs. 07/16 NJF
	Minimum Weight *5 lbs*	Daniel Solomon 2.2lbs. 05/17 LIF	Richard Turcotte 8.16lbs. 08/28 NEF
	Minimum Weight *5 lbs*	Minimum Weight *2 lbs*	Minimum Weight *7 lbs*

	BLACK SEA BASS Fish Of The Month - August	PORGY/SCUP Fish Of The Month - September	BLUEFISH Fish Of The Month - October	BLACKFISH Fish Of The Month - November
1.	Michael Zullo 4.43lbs. 07/21 LIF	Ahmed Soliman 4.6lbs. 09/28 LIF	Amir Rajpaul 16.5lbs. 10/07 NJF	Gregory Brennan 7.59lbs. 10/10 NEF
2.	Minimum Weight *4 lbs*	John Rotondi 3.0lbs. 07/05 LIF	Norman Bouchard 16.1lbs. 09/25 NEF	Minimum Weight *7 lbs*
3.	Minimum Weight *4 lbs*	Dean Paolella 3.0lbs. 09/09 NJF	Minimum Weight *15 lbs*	Minimum Weight *7 lbs*
4.	Minimum Weight *4 lbs*	Scott Waterman 2.78lbs. 05/03 NEF	Minimum Weight *15 lbs*	Minimum Weight *7 lbs*
5.	Minimum Weight *4 lbs*	Rashawn Williams 2.76lbs. 09/22 LIF	Minimum Weight *15 lbs*	Minimum Weight *7 lbs*
6.	Minimum Weight *4 lbs*	Tom Kelly 2.70lbs. 05/03 LIF	Minimum Weight *15 lbs*	Minimum Weight *7 lbs*
7.	Minimum Weight *4 lbs*	Thomas Luciano 2.43lbs. 09/14 LIF	Minimum Weight *15 lbs*	Minimum Weight *7 lbs*
8.	Minimum Weight *4 lbs*	Matt Kelly 2.4lbs. 05/12 NEF	Minimum Weight *15 lbs*	Minimum Weight *7 lbs*
9.	Minimum Weight *4 lbs*	Thomas Lucas 2.4lbs. 06/21 LIF	Minimum Weight *15 lbs*	Minimum Weight *7 lbs*
10.	Minimum Weight *4 lbs*	Gregory Brennan 2.36lbs. 05/26 NEF	Minimum Weight *15 lbs*	Minimum Weight *7 lbs*
	Minimum Weight *4 lbs*	Minimum Weight *2 lbs*	Minimum Weight *15 lbs*	Minimum Weight *7 lbs*

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Bayonne	Bayonne Bait and Tackle	201-339-2628
Beach Haven	Jingle's Bait & Tackle	609-492-2795
Belmar	Fisherman's Den	732-681-5005
Brick	Gabriel's Tackle Co.	732-714-6609
Brick	Jersey Hooker Outfitters	732-903-6904
Brielle	The Reel Seat	732-223-5353
Brigantine	Riptide B&T	609-264-0440
Cape May	South Jersey Marina	609-884-2400
Cape May	Hands Too Bait & Tackle	609-884-2248
West Cape	Cape May Bait & Tackle	609 898-6001
Chadwick Beach	Gabriel's Tackle Co.	732-250-1026
Fortescue	Higbee's Marina	856-447-4157
Hazlet	Tackle Box	732-264-7711
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Highlands	Twin Lights Marina	732-872-7200
Keyport	Up Front B&T	732-497-0919
Laurence Harbor	Raritan Marina	732-566-5961
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New Greta	Allen's Dock	609-296-5660
Normandy Beach	Charlie's B&T	732-793-1144
Ocean City	Fin-Atics Marine Supply	609-398-2248
Ocean View	Boulevard Bait & Tackle	609-519-0030
Point Pleasant	Clarks Landing Marina	732-899-5559
Port Republic	Chestnut Neck Boat Yard	609-652-1119
Sea Isle City	Sea Isle Bait & Tackle	609-263-6540
Seaside	Grumpys Tackle	732-830-1900
Seaside Heights	The Dock Outfitters	732-830-8171
Seaside Park	Betty and Nick's B&T	732-793-2708
Sewaren	Dockside Bait & Tackle	732-261-3996
Ship Bottom	Fisherman's Headquarters	609-494-5739
Sicklerville	Bait N Hook	856-513-2232
Toms River	Hook House	732-270-3856
Tuckerton	Tuckerton Bait & Tackle	267-229-1485
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Fish Of The Month

- TSUNAMI SHIELD II SPINNING REEL
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THE NOVEMBER RUN:

Reflection on the past can improve an angler's tactical toolbox for November madness.

prepping for STRIPER PANDEMONIUM

BY DR. ADAM AGUIAR

Because Central Jersey has had stellar-to-epic fall striped bass runs for the last 3 to 4 years, I am always hesitant writing autumn prep pieces in fears of jinxing the upcoming bliss. The 2024 run started out slow (through all of October), suggesting a revocation to New Jersey's recent 'fall mecca' title. Thank god the main biomass arrived, albeit late, at the start of November.

It's necessary to reflect on the conditions and approaches that led to some anglers doing alright versus arms-dead great across these past years.

No two seasons are ever exactly the same, and fish arrival-time is a note-worthy difference. However, anglers can prepare themselves as best possible by reflecting on other pertinent contrasts and similarities across the recent seasons. A commonality across previous fall runs was weather and wind direction in October. Preceding the armies of bass was a nor'easter (short to a week's duration), followed by consistent westerlies. Last October was a slight outlier, but the following month kicked off the same as years immediately preceding it.



Evan Priovolos with a healthy hog hooked a on a big pencil during the '24 run in the northern half of New Jersey.

Another difference across these recent falls was the baitfish; not exactly the amounts, but the percentage of type. The species of baitfish is critical because it dictates which optimal artificials to cast and if/how weather changes will affect the baits' movements. Fall 2022 had hordes of peanut bunker, and in 2023 tons of peanuts returned, however, a good percentage of the overall bait was also adult bunker. This difference produced a larger range in size of bass landed from the fall 2023 blitzes.

Fast forward to the fall of 2024 where the same two characters arrived but with more company. This third bait joining the party, sand eels, were found in good abundance from Sea Girt to Seaside Heights. The mixed bag of abundant bait species allowed for a diverse array of angling strategies. Targeting bass around groups of peanut bunker vs adult bunker vs sand eels requires different tools and tactics. So to best prepare for what this fall may bring, let's consider what's best to do and to throw around each of these bass-candy baitfish!

STRIPER SMORGASBORD

Many species of baitfish are predominant along the Jersey Shore during the fall migration. These include mullet which typically run through from mid-September to the middle of October, followed by the appearance of Atlantic herring which tends to happen late, often starting in December. These two types of baitfish have not had massive turnouts any of the last 5 years, certainly not when compared to the primary baits of the fall run.

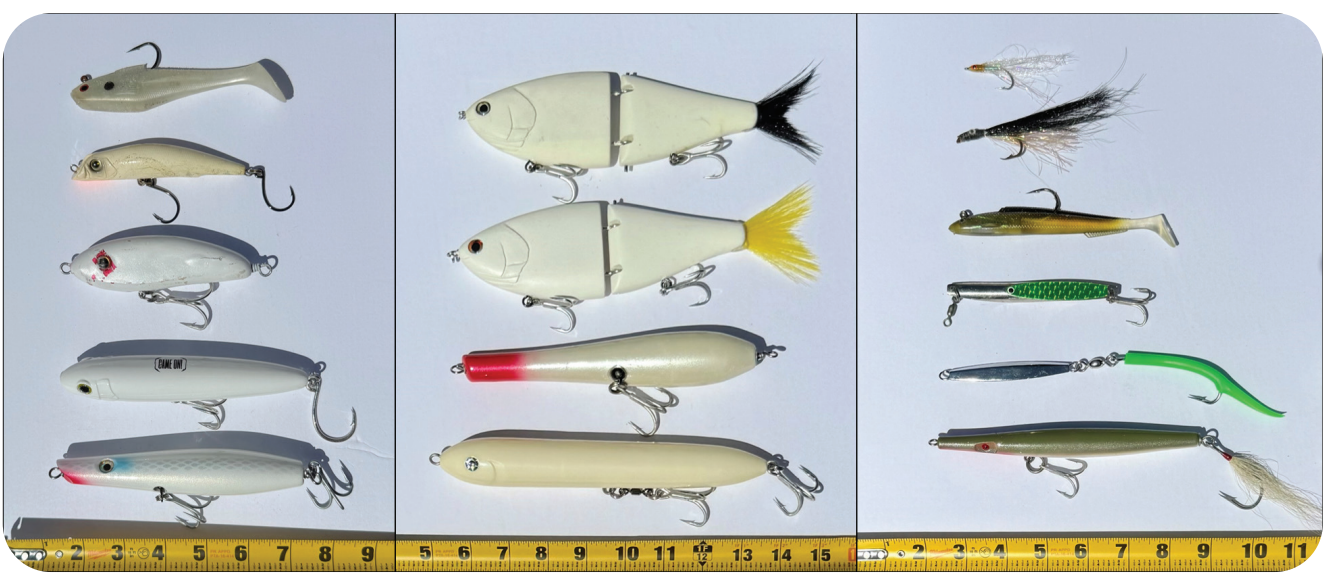
Bunker come in different sizes, which we usually categorize into two groups, peanuts and adults. Same species of course, but just like humans they vary in age and size and show differences in their behavior and thus should be approached as separate types of baitfish for angling purposes. For example, there are nuances in how peanuts vs adults cluster together (and usually separately), how they travel, the extent to which they are affected by wind, and how they are preyed upon by bass. These distinctions are helpful to a surfcaster trying to decide upon their bass-hunting strategy.

Some anglers coined the term 'cupcake' for medium-sized menhaden. Somewhere in between juveniles and adults, these cupcake-sized bunker predominantly act more like adult bunker. They are usually fewer in amount compared to the other two sizes, possibly due to rapid growth into becoming adults. Peanut and adult bunker schools predominantly travel into the wind, though I'd argue adults do so to a greater extent. Such knowledge can help anglers anticipate their movements with weather changes.

Because of bunker color, white artificials are usually best, especially in daytime. This applies to all size-class bunker. Optimal lure type, though, varies when faced with fishing a peanut bunker vs adult menhaden scenario. When mimicking peanut bunker, go small and white with your offering. What further dictates the type of artificial is where the bass maybe around the bait pod and in the water column, and how finicky or active they may be feeding. Small white Tsunami storm shads were the MVP of the '22 season, and working one slowly under and on the outskirts of bait pods will draw strikes when the bass are low and less active.

When striped bass are more active and higher in the water column, few things beat a small white Mag Darter. When casting at stripers in heavy piles of bait, switch out your trebles for inline singles and cast beyond the bait school. Such an approach prevents snagging any of the peanuts onto your plug.

Sometimes the bass are out far beyond the peanut cluster, maybe waiting for the baitfish to wash over the sandbar or simply traversing the waterways on their migration hoping for an opportunistic snack. In such cases, distance is the key. This may require either a small white glider (if fish are feeding mid-water column) or a small white pencil popper or spook (when fish are on the feed in the upper column). Having these five lures will help you squeeze any peanut bunker situation for all its worth!



Good peanut bunker matches (left) include the 5-inch Tsunami storm shad, 4-1/2-inch Mag darter, a 5-inch solid C80 glider, 6-inch X-Walk Spook, and 2-ounce Guppy Round Bottom Pencil. For adults (middle) think 9-inch Stridebait Jointed Gliders, 8-inch C80 Pencil Popper, or a 9-inch JW Spook. For sand eels (right) don't forget the teasers along with some Tsunami sand eels, Deadly Dick, Ava jigs, and a 7-inch Needlefish.

SIZE DOES MATTER

When mimicking adult menhaden, the same white color also applies, but prepare to go larger on the artificials to match their profile. When the bass are at a distance use a large white pencil popper or spook for fish higher in the water column, a larger white glider when fish are feeding down lower. If range is not an issue, and the stripers are not at an arms-breaking distance out, there is absolutely nothing better than a larger white jointed glider! I started using the Stridebait jointed gliders over a year ago, before jointed gliders became popular in the surfcasting community. Last fall I had five or six scenarios where I was the only one catching on the beach and guys were buzzing up like flies to see and ask what I was throwing.

My student from Stockton University, Grant Johnson (the one who put me onto these lures), had the same experience within the fall crowds. He reported that the jointed glider allowed him smash the most and largest bass within the crowds of people too. It works most optimally in slack-to-slow current, but it's only true weakness is casting distance. However, when worked slowly the jointed glider's oscillations will entice stripers up from even deep areas of the water column. If bass and adult bunker are both around, I will be bold enough to say that there is nothing that even compares to this lure!

Sand eels are a completely different monster. Behaviorally they are less transient and more stable to an area longer. Their presence is therefore more reliable across days. This is because they dig into sandbars to reside for certain periods of time. Last fall, while I was chasing bunker schools down the beach, I'd receive texts from Jim Hutchison gloating that he had already smashed stripers at sunrise on sand eel imitations. His consistent, reliable bites went on for well over a week at the same southern Monmouth County beach.

Unlike bunker, sand eels possess a long, thin body shape. This prescribes an angler's use of different artificials. Because of their burrowing behavior, lures that access the lower water column are usually best. If the sand eels and bass are in close, the Tsunami sand eel is hard to rival. Make sure to check the hooks, though, as the parts within the plastic tend to rust between seasonal uses. If the fish are farther out, Avas, Deadly Dicks, and Needlefish are what to throw. Teasers tied up above where the lure sits will produce too. In fact, in decent sand eel raids, teaser additions commonly lead to double-headers. They can be anchored to the leader with a simple dropper loop knot.

NORTHERN CROWDS

The fall action in New Jersey has been concentrated to the beaches of Monmouth and Ocean counties, from Sandy Hook to southern LBI. The bunker blitzes, specifically, even seem to taper off at the 'invisible fence' of Barnegat Inlet. Because most of the blitz action is concentrated to these two counties, so too are the surfcasters.

During the 2011 sand eel raids, Tom Lynch (*angryfishgallery.com*) captured an iconic image of the Thanksgiving weekend crowds at Island Beach State Park. Up until recent years, that picture served as the standard for ultimate crowding. The 2024 season however set a new standard. November had weeks on end with anglers shoulder to shoulder, on the surf and sandbars, from Manasquan to Island Beach. Crowding can be a downer, but let's think about how to best approach this reality.

Crowd-induced pessimism and frustration can erode anglers' restraint from behaving like the respectable humans we strive to be. These negative mindsets, of which we can all be guilty, reduce the enjoyment of the fishing excursion and even distract away from catching fish. Instead, try to



If you're heading north this month into the teeth of the November madness, prepare to make friends as you lay into bass after bass in the fall surf.

be positive in such situations. Find any silver linings, like witnessing how a plug or technique being used by another angler out-produces. Learn from this and incorporate the changes into your own arsenal.

Another perk that comes from cooperation with others is that it may lead to friendships and a growing information network for the blitzes. Even an anti-social hermit like this author has awesome friends that decrease his response time to blitzes by exchanging bite alerts. So denounce the combat mindset and adopt the cooperation mentality whenever it's possible.

I should add that blitzes are not and should not be confused with spatial spots that require secrecy and reservation. Blitzes are moving fish, all of which are seen by passing crowds and anglers watching the surf cams anyway. For surfcasters in Atlantic and Cape May counties wondering "what about us," if you're not traveling above the line to partake in this fall fiesta in the upper half of the Garden State, you'll have to rely more on traditional structure scouting. Occasional blitzes, however, may come later into December, possibly even January given water temperature and bait.

Sometimes, if our patience is running low from the other stressors of life, it's can get a little tougher to play nice in the Ocean and Monmouth County crowds of November. Proper realization of this requires self-reflection, but in these instances there is no shame in cowering from crowds. It can boost the enjoyment of the outing, and may even help with fishing productivity when finding a vacant sandbar to exploit away from the masses. As these bass inevitably migrate past on their trek south, your lure being one of a few (versus one of many) greatly helps the chances of a fish attacking your offering. This can feel far more rewarding as well.

So resist any FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) drawing you into the crowd, and be optimistic with catching in seclusion. Whichever sands on which we all find ourselves casting, let's pray this fall is another banger!



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ON THE MOVE:

Taking the show on the road and chasing stripers from a 15-foot skiff.

little boat, BIG FLEET

BY CAPT. KHOA NGUYEN



With a November striper fishery that's this good, expect to fish with a few friends around you, from small skiffs and center consoles to multi-passenger head boats.

Every time we're out on the water, tucked between a fleet of 32-foot Regulators, Sailfish, Sea Hunts, and Grady-Whites, alongside big New Jersey party boats the *Gambler*, *Big Mohawk*, and *Golden Eagle,* we get the same look: Who's the crazy guy running around in that little boat?

Our rig is a 15-foot Hobie Power Skiff, built back in 1986 by a small California company that's now better known for kayaks. Funny enough, if you call Hobie today and ask about it, they'll tell you it never existed though plenty of diehard skiff owners would argue otherwise.

So why fish from something so small? For me, it comes down to three things a full day on the water burns less than 10 gallons of gas, I can launch wherever the bite is happening, and finally I can squeeze into places the big boats can't even dream of.

Sure, we take a few wakes on the chin and deck space is limited, but when you're battling fish pushing 50 pounds, the little boat holds its own against the giants. While most of my spring and summer charters run out of Cape May County, there's a good reason I trailer north in the fall. Long before I even knew what a striper looked like, the old-timers told stories of the legendary fall run in South Jersey, how on any given day you could head to the Rips and tangle with giant bass. These days, South Jersey still sees flashes of that action, especially over the last 3 to 4 years as the migration has pushed as far south as Atlantic City and Sea Isle. But those bites are scattered compared to the consistent chaos further north.

The northern half of the Garden State simply has the structure and depth to hold migrating fish, which is why I make the haul every fall. If you keep your boat in the water from late November through January down south, you might get a crack at those schools but you'll have to put in the hours and brave the cold that old man winter throws at you

PROPER PLANNING

Like any trip on the water, safety comes first especially in a 15-foot skiff. Before the drain plugs even go in, we've already run through every worst-case scenario in our heads. Slim-fit PFDs stay on (as required by state law from November until May for recreational vessels less than 26 feet), the radio and Garmin InReach are fully charged, and the kill switch is clipped before the motor turns over.

Space is at a premium, so instead of piling on a dozen rods like the bigger boats, we carry two or three each. Every rod has a purpose snagging bunker, dropping jigs, or working plugs. The plug bag always feels like we've packed the entire refrigerator, but stripers can be fickle, and you never know what they'll chew that day. A big landing net stays within arm's reach, whether it's for safely handling fish we're tagging with Gray Fishtag Research or releasing them boatside.

Our tackle is streamlined but deadly. Most of the time we're fishing Century Inshore models from the Weapon series versatile sticks that can throw anything from a half-ounce jig to a 3.5-ounce Doc Spook when the topwater bite lights up. Reels in the 4000 to 6000 class give us the stopping power to turn big fish and bring them in fast for a healthy release.

We spool with 20- to 30-pound braid, tie on at least 40-pound leaders, and carry a tight spread of lures: soft plastics, metals, metal lips, spooks, bunker spoons, and a few oddballs to tempt picky bass. It's a lean loadout, but it transforms a small skiff into a serious fishing platform.

NORTH OR SOUTH?

The first decision of every striper trip comes before the throttle ever goes down. As the backwaters funnel toward open water, my mate and I trade the same look we've exchanged a hundred times before. The question is always the same, but never easy, "Which way do we go?"

Shark River Inlet makes the choice simple in theory but weighty in practice. Run north, and we'll slide past Asbury, Deal, and Sea Bright before reaching Sandy Hook, just 16 to 18 nautical miles away. Head south, and it's a longer run 27 to 30 miles past Mantoloking, Lavallette, Ortley, and Seaside before we reach the storied waters of Island Beach State Park. Once you commit, there's no turning back. By the time the sun clears the horizon, the decision has already written the script for the day.



The author trailers north every fall for the best of New Jersey's striped bass action.

We start by piecing together the puzzle. Where were the fish yesterday? What bait was moving? Which way would a migrating striper travel if it wanted a full belly? It's part science, part instinct, and part luck. Some captains joke about flipping a coin, but anyone who's made the wrong call knows it feels more like flipping tails when everyone else flipped heads.

You can fish live bait or deploy the trolling gear, but a solid selection of artificials – from surface lures to deep swimmers and jigs – is often the preferred arsenal when running and gunning.



"Heavier tackle is essential here," the author writes of the November fishery for jumbo stripers, adding "The faster you put a fish in the net, the less chance it has to cross lines." Also, a quicker battle is better for the released fish.



If we point the bow north, the strategy is simple: cruise at 12 to 15 knots, eyes scanning the water, Humminbird lit up. This time of year, success comes down to the "Three B's": bait, birds, and boats.

Find a bunker school and the adrenaline kicks in. We ease in cautiously, watching how the bait behaves. Nervous? Circling? Balled tight? If they're under attack, the scene is unmistakable stripers detonating through the school, bait spraying skyward. That's when rods fly from holders.

But not every school is lit up. Sometimes the surface is calm while the action happens below. That's when we snag a bunker, rig it on a circle hook, and send it down. Few moments in of fishing with the anticipation of that thump, the line tightens, and you know a bass just made a mistake.

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BIRDS & BOATS

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And sometimes, it's the blind cast into "empty" water that comes tight. More often than not, that's a bigger, wiser fish, hanging back to mop up the stragglers.

The third option, and usually our last resort, is chasing the fleet. Binoculars help spot the armada clusters of boats, bent rods, a mate with a net, or a slick of scales on the water. The problem isn't finding fish, it's navigating the chaos. Too many boats in too small a space can turn a blitz into bedlam. Add a few inattentive captains, and you've got the recipe for disaster.



The use of a trolling motor is helpful for quietly working over schools of striped bass piling on bunker sliding down the beach.

When we do slide in, it's always on the outside edge, watching first. If the bite is hot and rods are bending all around, sometimes you can't resist. But when we're in the pack, I rarely touch a rod myself. My eyes are on every boat nearby, anticipating moves and avoiding tangles.

Heavier tackle is essential here. The faster you put a fish in the net, the less chance it has to cross lines. It's not about brute force, it's about control, safety, and respect.

At the end of the day, whether we choose north, south, or the fleet, the lesson stays the same: striper fishing isn't just about catching. It's about making the right call, respecting the bait, the birds, and especially the other boats.

Fall striper fishing is electric, the runs, the feeds, the chaos of it all. It's the kind of high that keeps us coming back, season after season. But it always starts with that one, simple question at the inlet: Which way do we go?

The Fisherman 2025 COASTAL KAYAK CLASH

TOP 3 RANKING

Rotha Nong	NEF 6 pts.
Dustin Stevens	NEF 6 pts.
Bob Wagner	NEF 5 pts.

FINAL STANDINGS as of 10/15/2025

	WEAKFISH	BLUEFISH	FLUKE (SUMMER FLOUNDER)	BLACK SEA BASS
1.	FRANK CECI NEF 24.75" 9/27/25	LARRY NEWMAN NJF 34.75" 5/05/25	EDDIE ROMAN NJF 30" 8/30/25	DAVID DO NEF 21.5" 6/04/25
2.	MIKE TRIPPTREE LIF 24.5" 9/28/25	DUSTIN STEVENS NEF 34.5" 7/15/25	DUSTIN STEVENS NEF 27" 6/30/25	BOB WAGNER NJF 20" 9/13/25
3.	EDDIE ROMAN NJF 23.5" 5/29/25	BOB STEUBER LIF 34" 5/08/25	DAVID KIM NJF 26" 7/18/25	ALFRED GREEN NEF 19.75" 5/26/25
	PORGY	**STRIPED BASS**	**HARDTAILS**	**BLACKFISH**
1.	TODD TREONZE NEF 17.25" 7/13/25	ROTHA NONG NEF 49.75" 7/27/25	BOB WAGNER LIF 28" 9/28/25	ROTHA NONG NEF 24.25" 8/29/25
2.	MIKE TRIPPTREE LIF 17" 6/19/25	TOM HOUDE NEF 48.75" 6/19/25	MIKE RADZISZEWSKI NEF 26.5" 10/04/25	TOM HOUDE NEF 23.75" 10/03/25
3.	DUSTIN STEVENS NEF 16.5" 7/02/25	MARIO SANTOS NEF 48.5" 6/13/25	DUSTIN STEVENS NEF 26.25" 9/06/25	JUSTIN OSER NEF 21" 5/14/25

MAY 1 – NOVEMBER 30, 2025

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2025 COASTAL KAYAK CLASH

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LOCK AND LOAD:

As winter's chill knocks on the door, the high seas come alive with bottom brawling.

NJ FALL/WINTER sea bass

BY NICK HONACHEFSKY



Whether on a head boat, a charter boat or you own boat, November is prime time for black sea bass.

November and December bring out legions of black sea bass anglers to load coolers with tasty treats as the limits relax at a 15 fish bag limit and 12-1/2-inch minimum size and make it worthwhile to head out and spend the time and energy to score the sea biscuits.

Most activity resides further offshore, past the inshore reefs, out to the mid-range 40- to 60-mile wrecks and even further to the 60- to 80-mile mark, so trips are a commitment. Thus, head boats running out of ports along the Raritan all the way down to Cape May make a super option this month, but the rewards are more than satisfying.

Here's one top captain's tips on loading up with black sea bass, a name recognizable to *The Fisherman* readers over the years, former managing editor Chris Lido, now a captain of the party boat *Gambler* out of Point Pleasant.

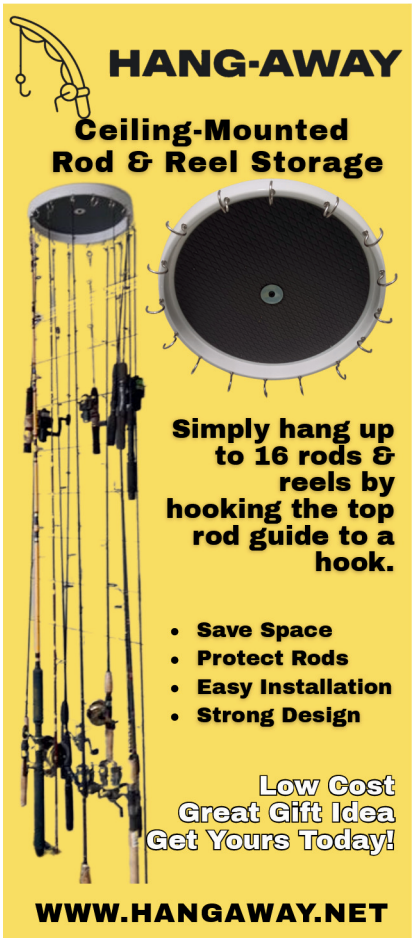
GROUNDS TO POUND

Capt. Lido and the *Gambler* crew run 18-hour trips offshore to the 40- to 60-mile range wrecks to find their fare this time of year. Like many captains running multi-passenger trips along the Jersey Shore, water temps are key to finding the best bite. "We're usually heading south of Manasquan Inlet, looking for wrecks in 200 to 225 feet and water temps in the low 50s into the 40s as sea bass will feed aggressively through the colder temps," said Lido, adding "Deeper depths are better served to use braided line with a top shot of 30- to 40-pound fluorocarbon leader attached to cut through the water faster and feel the nuances of sea bass strikes at deeper depths."

Most structure that the *Gambler* finds are rock piles and shipwrecks offshore and they will generally only set out one anchor so they can swing a bit on the



Bait rigs consists of a two-hook dropper rig on 40-pound mono with two 3- to 4-inch droppers fixed with size 4/0 Mustad #92641 Baitholder hooks spaced 16 inches apart with 6 inches at the end for a dropper loop for adding a sinker.







As a subscriber to The Fisherman, don't forget the Dream Boat Fishing Challenge where a humpback of just 4 pounds or better weighed in at a Dream Boat weigh station could put you in the winner's circle.

structure to cover more area in a scope span. "Party boats have a great advantage during the winter as we can deal with the unpredictable larger wintertime seas and have a heated cabin for comfort for the long ride," Capt. Lido noted.

Most offshore sea bass are unlike smaller 1- to 3-pounders found inshore and are of larger caliber, meaning 3- to 8-pound fish, and both rods and reels should be equipped. A medium to heavy 7-foot conventional rod matched with a Shimano Torium or Okuma 16 or 20 class spooled with 50-pound braid should suffice when sending down baits. For jigging, Lido will scale down just a bit with a 7-foot stout spinning rod with a 6000 class Shimano Stradic or Daiwa Saltiga type reel spooled with 30-pound Power Pro braid and a 5 foot, 30-pound fluorocarbon top shot to which a jig is tied.

Bait rigs consists of a two-hook dropper rig on 40-pound monofilament leader with two 3- to 4-inch droppers fixed with size 4/0 Mustad #92641 Baitholder hooks spaced 16 inches apart with 6 inches left at the end for a dropper loop to affix an 8- to 10-ounce bank sinker on. One specific trick on a rig Lido swears by is a bit of blue/red Mylar flash like on Sabiki rigs above the hook. Then lance on a thin clam strip. Jigs will be hammered diamond jigs or slo-pitch metal jigs with a teaser tied 30 inches above where Lido loves sand eel imitations like the Berkley Gulp! Sand eel on a 4/0 Baitholder hook.

THE CHEW

"Sea bass feed all over the water column," stated Lido, adding "Most times as soon as we set anchor and blow the horn, the first drop is lights out, with double headers coming up on nearly every line." The captain went on to explain how sea bass are frenzy feeders and as soon as one feeds, they

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all seem to turn on fast. "There are very few sub legal fish out there, but if we do reel them in, the mates immediately vent the fish so they can get back to the depths unharmed," he added.

To start, most anglers drop right to the bottom where sea bass generally lay down, but anglers should always ask the mates what the fishfinder is reading as they will feed throughout the water column. "We'll tell people to drop down to the bottom, then reel up 10 to 15 cranks and hold the rig there where the sea bass might be stacking," Capt. Lido noted, while adding "I've even witnessed sea bass feeding on the surface chasing sand eels all around the boat, so you never know exactly where they are at, but the captain and mates will direct you where to put the baits and jigs."

When baits get bit, many anglers leave the one fish on and wait for the immediate strike from another two or three fish before reeling up a brace of fish instead of a single fish. Jigs are usually tap-bounced along the bottom, raising and lowering the jig only a foot off the bottom, but sometimes sea bass like it better 5 to 10 feet above the ground in slow swooping sweeps, hitting on the fall.

Jigs generally tend to attract the true knobheads over the 5-pound mark, so if you are looking for a true trophy, go with the jig. You may not get as many small hits, but the ones you get tend to be the right ones.

PREP TIME

When fishing the head boats this season for black sea bass, I recommend bringing a large 128-quart cooler with you as fish will be flying over the rails and you need to keep them iced down for the long run. Don't worry about bringing fillet knives as mates will do a heck of a job filleting your catch and bagging them to insure proper preservation for the long ride home.

Offshore sea bass trips in the winter are not like summertime chilling, so be sure to dress accordingly for the cold weather with insulated tops and bottoms and hoodies and sock hats, waterproof boots and an insulated windbreaker to keep the winter chill and any rain off of you. Nothing is worse than being wet offshore. A pair of Grunden's bibs keep you dry and keeps the mess of clam and squid bait juice off of you. Heated handwarmers and fleece gloves are also saviors offshore.

Though most party boats will have a cooking galley firing up pork roll, eggs, bacon and such, it's always good to have some sandwiches and beverages in a separate carry on cooler to keep the sea bass juice away from getting on your foodstuffs.

Any time you fish offshore wrecks for sea bass there's always the opportunity to find other species on the structure such as pollock, cod, jumbo porgies and even weakfish and bluefish way offshore, so bring your favorite appropriate lures and jigs to target them if you achieve your sea bass limit quickly.

Nothing beats offshore sea bass fishing in November and December, and it's usually lock and load type of action. Be sure to dial up the party boat packet and enjoy the fruits of the bounty leaving the hard work to the captain and the mates!

'25 SEA BASS REGS

In 2026 anglers can expect new and improved regulations for black sea bass, but for the rest of this year here's what you'll be fishing on in the tristate region.

***NEW JERSEY:** 12-1/2-inch minimum size, open October 1 through October 31 (10 fish bag), and November 1 through December 31 (15 fish bag).*

***DELAWARE:** 13-inch minimum size, open from October 10 through December 31 (15 fish bag).*

***NEW YORK:** 16-1/2-inch minimum size, open September 1 through Dec 31. (6 fish bag).*



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TACKLING TAUTOG:

gearing up for a PERSONAL BEST

BY FRANK MIHALIC

Your tackle gives you a mechanical advantage over huge blackfish.



The author is a dedicated trophy tautog hunter.

Your fishing rod, reel, line and rigging becomes a unique system. When assembled and in the hands of a skilled angler, these choices give you an advantage, or not.

Perhaps it's very sensitive rod tip that allows excellent bite detection, but is this same tip strong enough to toss a whole whitelegger and a 10-ounce sinker all day long? A tip that does not collapse and is not too soft, but also has the perfect amount of power to help set the hook and quickly move a large fish in your direction, that is perfection! To be perfect, however, is asking a lot from anyone or anything.

While no one manufacturer of fishing tackle is perfect for every fisherman in a certain situation, everything becomes a compromise, with certain rods and reels excellent for certain situations. While this may be my personal preference, I'm quick to admit that my way is certainly not the only way. There's a lot of good tackle out there, and there is some that I prefer more than other. I'll be glad to share my opinions that I hope you will consider when thinking about buying or building a new blackfish rod.

Whether it's your rig rod or your jig rod, either will be severely tested by a good-sized tautog in ways you may not have never thought. Over many years of product testing and development, I've had rods blow up, reel seat hoods ripped off, the seats ripped from the frame, handles stripped and fallen off, and the gears of reels stripped. So for hardcore winter togging, let's look at some of the best gear on the market today, and look at what differentiates it from its competitors.

BLANK BASICS

Modern rod blanks and components are good to very good in quality and performance. Truly top tier cutting edge components do cost premium money, but that's not saying that you must spend huge dollars to get a very good outfit. All things being equal, one of the most critical appointments to any outfit is that it performs its task exceedingly well.

As you spend more and more time at the rail, your skillset will improve. It's then that you're realize that you still have a lot to learn! What happens when you set the hook and fight a very large blackfish? A big tautog can stop you dead during the fight. This is where your rod, when used correctly, will prevent the fish from getting back into the wreck. Then he makes a turn and you get a couple cranks on him. This is where that long powerful rod is worth its weight in gold. These are skills vital to your consistently getting the bite, hooking and actually landing big fish.

When you know how to fish a slack line, you will quickly learn just how important a properly balanced outfit is. Perfectly balancing an 8-foot rod that weighs 9 ounces can be a neat trick. How is the rod handle set up? Is the reel close enough to the rod butt so as to help you gain some cranks on a crazy big fish? Does the foregrip help you get the most power from the blank? While different anglers have different priorities, my goal is a simple one; to help you land your biggest blackfish ever! No excuses or distractions, simply putting a rod in your hands that will not let you down, but will actually help you to land oversized blackfish consistently.

A rod that is built in a factory overseas may do the job, but is it as good as can be? In many instances yes, but remember the adage, "you get what you pay for." On the other hand, there are quite a few smaller "Cottage Rod Companies" that offer this experience and care that might be overlooked by price point rods you might find at a big box store. For me, Century ProTogger, Jigging World Black Demon and MagicTails are excellent examples high end blackfish rig rods. My favorite jig rod is a Century full-carbon Weapon 7-1/2 in either conventional or spinning. These are companies that produce an excellent rod that you can buy off of the rack that will perform exceedingly well.

Just remember when shopping around for a rod for trophy tautog, don't just settle for the cheapest price if you expect the very best rod for big fish.

A REEL DRAG

Reels are also an integral part of your outfit. It's very easy to spend twice the cash for the very smoothest reel for



Good line cutters are an important tool for toggers, as are line clippers, and hook removers.


There are a variety of rigs and bait prep methods that a togger can employ, but sometimes a whole whitelegger on a two-hook rig (v-rig) can entice a late fall monster.

this purpose, but is it worth it to you? If the reel holds up well, year after year, and doesn't let you down under any conditions, that's where you have to make your choice. Daiwa, Shimano and Penn are tried and true players in the revolving spool game, but don't forget Okuma, Accurate and Maxel as their reels have performed admirably for many years. My favorite surprise of a spinning reel is a Tsunami SaltX 4000. This reel is an absolute beast with bullet proof frame, huge handle knob and drag and a manual bail arm.

TAUTOG REGULATIONS

NEW JERSEY: *Open January 1 to February 28 (four fish bag), April 1 to April 30 (four fish bag), August 1 to November 15 (one fish bag) and November 16 to December 31 (five fish bag) with a 15-inch minimum size.*

DELAWARE: *Open from January 1 to May 15, and from July 1 to December 31 with a four fish bag limit and 16-inch minimum size.*

NEW YORK: *The New York Bight the season is open from April 1 to April 30 (two fish bag) and from October 15 to December 22 (four fish bag) with a 16-inch minimum size. On the Long Island Sound tautog is open from April 1 to April 30 (two fish bag) and from October 11 to December 9 (three fish bag) with a 16-inch minimum size.*

The ability to get a conventional reel in the size that you want in several different gear ratios, left or right-hand retrieve, there are a lot of options on the table! To find the reel that will give you the mechanical advantage, stay away from reels that have a gear ratio much over 6 to 1. You need a reel with the proper balance of speed and power. Too much speed, and you lose needed power. Gear ratio does not have any effect on drag power, but the diameter of the spool does affect gear ratio and the drag. The drag on a half full spool will increase as its diameter lessens. The gear ratio remains the same, but the amount of line put on the spool decreases as the diameter lessens as well. This smaller diameter makes a taller gear ratio less damaging to your effective gear ratio giving you more lifting power.

Just remember that if you have two reels with the exact gear ratio, a wider, smaller diameter spool will gain less line per revolution than a tall narrow spool. The gear ratio will create more loss of power on the larger diameter spool reel.

Braided line has probably been the greatest change in fishing tackle in my lifetime. Smaller reels hold adequate amount of line; reel seats and rod tips can be made a bit differently as this line with zero stretch takes some getting used to. An eight-carrier line is much smoother when tying a knot or while passing through the guides while fighting a fish. My blackfish rods are rigged with Daiwa J-Braid 8 in either 30-, 50- or 65-pound test. My ANDE Pink mono top shot is around 20 feet in length and may be 60- or 80-pound test depending if I'm fishing nearshore waters, or if we are on a trophy hunt.

I use an FG knot to smooth out this connection. Thirty Fathoms makes a superior quality knot puller tool that has made my FG knot seat perfectly without cutting my hands (even when using heavy braid and mono). During a test, I have broken 50-pound braid while using these line pullers. It's amazing how the correct pressure will properly seat an FG Knot. I have not had an FG knot fail since I've begun using this tool.

Good line cutters are also a necessary tool for our rigging. AnglerCo makes some nice fishing tools to help you on deck. Line clippers, hook removers and fish venting tools are all helpful to us staying up to code on some of the best gear innovations available to us.

When considering new equipment or gear, don't ask the fluke fisherman that works at the tackle shop. Ask a friend who catches some really big tog for their opinions if you are considering buying some gear that they own. When sharing a deck, most fellow anglers will gladly let you use their rod for a bit. If you really want to try a rod, use it while fishing. Feel the bottom, get the bite and set the hook!

Watching skilled toggers will often reveal what they do that enables them to catch these big fish.



A big tautog can stop you dead during the fight, which is why the right rod used correctly can prevent a fish from getting back down into the wreck.

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Hats off to New Jersey's Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries for their fall trout stocking efforts.

STOCK UPDATE:

New Jersey's AUTUMN RAINBOWS

BY TOM PAGLIAROLI

A fresh batch of trout seemingly take flight as they're transferred from the state stocking truck into one of the many New Jersey waters seeing new deposits this fall.

A rundown of fall trout stocking in the Garden State.

A bonus on several counts during New Jersey's November freshwater fishing scene. In this context, it has to do with the 17 select Garden State lakes and ponds spread over 10 counties (eight north, three central, and six south) that will be graced with 4,480 2-year-old rainbows in the 14- to 16-inch class and weighing upwards of 1-1/2 to 2 pounds on Monday, November 24 and Tuesday, November 25. And this is on top of the Pequest Trout Hatchery truck rolling out of the 20,440 'bows stocked in October in a combination of 35 rivers, streams, ponds and lakes spread throughout 20 counties.

This year, the "Thanksgiving Week" stocking as it's become known over the decades - always considered a "bonus" in the trout stocking/fishing scheme of things – was scheduled for one week prior. Due to water levels being significantly down, the stocking dates were moved back to the holiday week.

The stocking of lakes and ponds was purposeful since the program's inception and implementation by retired Bureau of Freshwater principal fisheries biologist Bob Papson, but it has been tweaked over time. "Originally, it was meant to provide trout fishing in waters where ice fishing was allowed if they froze over. And the fish were standard size rainbows."

Papson noted that that it was a given that some would hold over to spring and add to the opening day bounty. "Over the years and after reviews, a few changes were made expanding the program to include some south Jersey waters where trout fishing was popular in the spring," shared Papson during our once to thrice annual conversations as former Bureau of Freshwater compadres.

The stocking time frame was pushed back a month to November, specifically the Monday and Tuesday of Thanksgiving Week, offering families the chance to enjoy freshwater fishing, especially during the holiday weekend. Several new swims were added. A huge bump to the November releases (and participation) was the change to hefty 2-year old rainbows in 2006 in lieu of the standard 9-1/2- to 10-inch stockies. "That was a big one," smiled Papson, his tone enjoying the pun.

The venues are a mix of suburban to country, the common denominator (with an exception or two, of course) is that they are easy to reach and offer plenty of shoreline access. Pequest Hatchery superintendent Ed Conley said he is looking forward to the November stocking in that the 'bows are rambunctious and are in great shape. "Let's go," he enthused.



Assistant fisheries biologist and trout stocking coordinator Kyle Civalier is equally pumped. "The November stocking tops off what's a great trout stocking program and adds to our reputation that New Jersey is a year-round trout fishing state," Civalier said.

Both energies were palpable.

The drag nipping opportunities in the November stocked waters besides the buster 'bows includes a "two-fer" or sometimes "three-fer" scenario that adds to the fall trout fishing experience in New Jersey. It's an all systems go scenario on the November trout stocked venues, and what put 'bows on the stringer during the spring and, where applicable, October, will certainly result in bent rods.

Baits? Preserved, live, grocery, or lab borne are limit makers.

Hardware? Jigs, plastics, spinners, miniature plugs, spoons all attract trout attention and violent reaction.

'Bows by fly? Oh, yeah! Our favorite time to strip streamers or slow twitch weighted nymphs. When lack of wind conditions allow, and there is enough area for a decent back cast like a beach or mowed bank, doors open to some prime long rod encounters with recently released and cruising meaty, broad shouldered rainbows.

Yet another selling factor of this year's stocking is the timing. Sure, there will be those out as the rainbows are being tossed, and a fair percentage will be caught those first few hours, but on the overall, there will be appreciable loads still available when the youngsters (and fortuitous adults) are freed by the Wednesday of Thanksgiving week and into the weekend. The release a week earlier will give the trout a chance to acclimate to the new environment and by then the feedbags will need to be filled.

While the rainbow trout will bite during open water leading into the freeze, this stocking is a precursor of some hot winter ice action where ice fishing is legal. It's incumbent upon the angler to check with the governing authority as to whether it's okay to drill.

Remember the daily limit is four trout at the statewide minimum 9 inches. Fishing is allowed even as the rainbows are being released.

HOT SPOTS

Be versatile knowing the options, whether it's because the rare times the rainbows prove recalcitrant or, like us, you want to make the most of a road trip. Packing a medium or medium/heavy action is recommended as per an alternative to the rainbow bluster.

Some of our favorite November waters include the following.



A beautifully colored rainbow trout amidst the fall foliage.

- **OXFORD FURNACE LAKE:** Keith Kurpicki at Hi-Way Sport Shop says the trout will hit PowerBait nuggets and paste in orange, yellow, and pink, and assail gold Phoebe spinners. Muskies like large live shiners, big stick baits, and ChatterBaits w/fatso trailers. For channel cats, it's live shiners and gob 'o 'crawlers.
- **PONDERLODGE POND:** Big Nick from Hands Too Bait & Tackle says the hot pink and black/green Trout Magnet (gold head a hottie), the pink and sherbet PowerBait paste, Rooster Tail spinners, and the Yo-Zuri Pins Minnow are the Ponderlodge Trout pounders. For the big bass, it's lipless crankbaits. The channel cats are all over 'crawlers.
- **AMWELL LAKE:** "Rooster Tail spinners and any garlic flavor Power Bait when it comes to the trout," relayed John from Old School Outdoors. Joe's Flies also account for good catches. Bass? Spinnerbaits and Senkos.
- **SPRING LAKE/TOPENUMUS LAKE:** "Size 1 Blue Fox spinner with a chrome blade for trout in both lakes," shared Fishermen's Supply's Jason the Sensation. The bass inhale Senkos and creature baits, and whack spinnerbaits, the ace big bassers have significant results with the KVD Chad Shad.
- **AEROFLEX LAKE:** Cliff from Skylands Sport Shop insists the pink and the orange PowerBait nuggets and pastes are limit are effective on the lake's recently stocked rainbows, as are Panther Martin and Mepps spinners. Did someone say "salmon"? Another load measuring 15-16 inches and weighing to 1.5-plus pounds is scheduled for stocking the first week in November, adding to the copious population. Trolling and/or casting blue/silver Phoebe spoons is a lock for lox.
- **LAKE OCQUITTUNK:** "Hot pink and meal worm Trout Magnets on a gold head under a float, salmon eggs, garden worms, and meal worms under a bobber, and garlic flavor Power Bait, any color, is killer," instructs Brian from the Stokes Forest Sport Shop when asked what fills a stringer with trout during November into December season. The horse shoe shaped configured impoundment is a channel catfish hot spot. Whiskers to 15 pounds have been stocked and caught. Says Brian, "We can't keep the Magic Bait Catfish Bait on the shelf."
- **SHAWS MILL POND/SOUTH VINELAND PARK POND:** "Lots of November fishing going on down here, and the trout are popular," says Jeff from Blackwater Sports Center. Trout are crazed for the pink/white Berkley Mouse Tails, yellow garlic PowerBait paste, and Mepps and Rooster Tail spinners. Bass, even in November, whack the Whopper Plopper and the Easy Shiner Kitech paddletail.
- **BIRCH GROVE PARK POND:** Hiding in plain sight is the pond/canal structure off GSP exit 36 that offers high return trout fishing during the spring and November stocking. Capt. Dave "The Rave" Showell at Absecon Bay Sportsman Center says the Mepps spinners and Power Bait paste and nuggets keep the "local trouters" happy here and also at the nearby Heritage Park Pond.

DEPOSIT DATES

The November stocking schedule is as follows, including county (trout numbers in parenthesis).

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 24: *Sussex County- Silver Lake (300), Lake Aeroflex (370), Lake Ocquittunk (250), Little Swartswood Lake (350); Warren County- Oxford Furnace Lake (360); Passaic County- Green Turtle Pond (330); Hunterdon County- Amwell Lake (260); Monmouth County- Spring Lake and Topenumus Lake (320 each).*

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25: *Morris County- Mt. Hope Pond (280); Passaic County- Barbour Pond (270); Camden County- Haddon Lake (210), Rowands Pond (100); Cumberland County- South Vineland Park Pond (190), Shaws Mill Pond (210); Atlantic County- Birch Grove Park Ponds (first two-190); Cape May County- Ponderlodge Pond (170).*

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TIDE TABLES
NOVEMBER 2025

MOON PHASES



Full 11/5 | Last Qtr 11/12 | New 11/20 | First Qtr 11/28

SUNRISE / SUNSET

DAY	DATE	RISE	SET
MONDAY	11/03	6:29	4:51
	11/10	6:37	4:43
	11/17	6:45	4:37
	11/24	6:53	4:32

		NEW YORK		SANDY HOOK		BREAKWATER HBR.		REEDY POINT		PHILADELPHIA		BALTIMORE	
DATE	DAY	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
11/01	SATURDAY	4:59	5:16	4:29	4:49	5:27	5:47	7:57	8:19	10:34	10:54	3:57	4:26
11/02	SUNDAY	4:52	5:13	4:26	4:48	5:18	5:39	7:50	8:13	10:25	10:46	3:57	4:23
11/03	MONDAY	5:41	6:04	5:17	5:41	6:07	6:30	8:40	9:05	11:13	11:37	4:54	5:18
11/04	TUESDAY	6:27	6:53	6:06	6:31	6:55	7:21	9:28	9:55	---	12:00	5:48	6:09
11/05	WEDNESDAY	7:12	7:41	6:53	7:21	7:44	8:12	10:15	10:45	12:27	12:48	6:39	7:00
11/06	THURSDAY	7:59	8:33	7:41	8:12	8:34	9:04	11:03	11:36	1:17	1:36	7:30	7:52
11/07	FRIDAY	8:50	9:30	8:31	9:07	9:25	9:57	11:53	---	2:09	2:26	8:25	8:47
11/08	SATURDAY	9:47	10:33	9:26	10:06	10:19	10:54	12:29	12:46	3:02	3:19	9:26	9:47
11/09	SUNDAY	10:49	11:39	10:25	11:10	11:16	11:54	1:25	1:43	3:58	4:16	10:29	10:49
11/10	MONDAY	11:56	---	11:28	---	---	12:16	2:25	2:44	4:56	5:16	11:31	11:51
11/11	TUESDAY	12:43	12:59	12:13	12:29	12:58	1:19	3:27	3:48	4:56	5:16	---	12:31
11/12	WEDNESDAY	1:43	1:57	1:13	1:27	2:05	2:26	4:30	4:53	5:57	6:18	12:50	1:25
11/13	THURSDAY	2:40	2:55	2:09	2:23	3:14	3:32	5:33	5:55	6:58	7:20	1:47	2:16
11/14	FRIDAY	3:37	3:53	3:05	3:19	4:16	4:32	6:32	6:52	7:59	8:20	2:40	3:05
11/15	SATURDAY	4:31	4:48	3:59	4:14	5:07	5:22	7:26	7:45	8:57	9:47	3:33	3:53
11/16	SUNDAY	5:19	5:36	4:48	5:04	5:51	6:06	8:15	8:33	9:50	10:09	4:24	4:41
11/17	MONDAY	6:01	6:19	5:32	5:48	6:31	6:47	9:01	9:18	10:40	10:58	5:13	5:27
11/18	TUESDAY	6:39	6:58	6:11	6:29	7:09	7:26	9:42	10:01	11:26	11:45	5:58	6:11
11/19	WEDNESDAY	7:14	7:35	6:47	7:07	7:45	8:08	10:21	10:42	---	12:08	6:41	6:52
11/20	THURSDAY	7:48	8:12	7:22	7:45	8:20	8:41	10:58	11:21	12:29	12:49	7:21	7:32
11/21	FRIDAY	8:21	8:50	7:57	8:22	8:56	9:18	11:32	---	1:13	1:28	7:58	8:08
11/22	SATURDAY	8:54	9:29	8:31	9:00	9:33	9:56	12:00	12:05	1:55	2:05	8:32	8:41
11/23	SUNDAY	9:27	10:11	9:06	9:41	10:12	10:36	12:37	12:38	2:36	2:42	8:55	9:04
11/24	MONDAY	10:04	10:58	9:44	10:26	10:53	11:20	1:14	1:14	3:17	3:19	9:07	9:27
11/25	TUESDAY	10:49	11:50	10:29	11:18	11:37	---	1:53	1:55	3:58	3:58	9:41	10:08
11/26	WEDNESDAY	11:43	---	11:22	---	12:06	12:24	2:37	2:43	4:40	4:40	10:29	11:03
11/27	THURSDAY	12:40	12:39	12:11	12:18	12:57	1:14	2:26	3:38	5:25	5:29	11:30	---
11/28	FRIDAY	1:29	1:35	1:03	1:13	1:55	2:10	4:21	4:39	6:15	6:24	12:10	12:38
11/29	SATURDAY	2:20	2:33	1:56	2:11	2:52	3:10	5:20	5:42	7:08	7:23	1:19	1:44
11/30	SUNDAY	3:16	3:37	2:51	3:13	3:52	4:11	6:18	6:44	8:03	8:23	2:23	12:47
										8:58	9:21		

ON NEW YORK

Governors Island	-0 07
Jersey City RR Ferry	+0 11
Hoboken, Castle Point	+0 21
Weehawkin, Days Point	+0 28
George Washington Bridge	+0 50
Spuyten Duyvil	+1 02
Ossining	+1 57
Peekskill	+2 28
West Point	+3 16

ON SANDY HOOK

Tottenville	+0 02
Perth Amboy	+0 12
Norton Point	-0 01
Great Kills Harbor	+0 06
Princess Bay	0 00
South Amboy	+0 04
Keyport	+0 07
Keansburg	-0 04
Port Monmouth	-0 03
Atlantic Highlands	-0 01
Highlands	+0 34
Red Bank, Navesink River	+1 47
Sea Bright Bridge	+ 1 15
Sea Bright Beach	-0 35
Long Branch Pier	-0 28
Asbury Park	-0 35
Shark River Inlet	-0 19
Sea Girt	-0 35
Manasquan Inlet	-0 13
Manasquan RR Bridge	+0 19
Seaside ParK	-0 34
Mantoloking	+5 33
Toms River	+4 36
Waretown	+2 32
Oyster Creek	+2 15
Barnegat Inlet	-0 21
Harvey Cedars	+3 14
Manahawkin Bridge	+2 32
Tuckerton Creek Ent	+1 39
Beach Haven	+1 46
Holgate	+1 10
Little Egg Inlet	-0 02
Graveling Point	+0 38
Mullica Riv Chestnut Neck	+1 23
Brigantine Channel	0 00
Absecon Creek	+1 03
Absecon Channel	+0 11
Shelter Island	+0 38
Longport	+0 04
Great Egg Harbor Inlet	+0 11
Ocean City 9th St. Bridge	+0 23
Great Egg Harbor Bay	+0 43
Scull Landing	+1 42
Mays Landing	+2 25
Corson Inlet	+0 08
Townsends Sound	+0 40
Townsend Inlet	+0 05
Great Sound	+1 02
Stone Harbor	+0 41
Hereford Inlet	+0 01
Wildwood	-0 16
Grassy Sound Bridge	+0 44
Cape May Harbor	-0 03
Rehoboth Beach	-0 07
INDIAN RIVER	
Inlet Bridge	+0 34
Oak Orchard	+2 44
Fenwick Island Light	-0 13
Ocean City Outer Coast	-0 28
O.C. Isl of Wight Bay	-0 14
Chincoteague Point	+0 05
Chincoteague Inlet	+0 38

ON BALTIMORE

LITTLE CHOPTANK RIVER	
Taylor's Island	-3 09
CHOPTANK RIVER	
Choptank River Island	-3 17
Kent Island Narrows	-1 44
Bloody Point Bar Light	- 2 46
Charlestown NE River	+3 38
SUSQUEHANNA RIVER	
Harve de Grace	+3 10
Port Deposit	+4 00
Pooles Island	+0 51
Battery Point Gunpowder R	+1 00
Rocky Point, Back River	+0 42
Edgewater, South River	-2 05
Galesville, West River	-1 52
Chesapeake Beach	-2 56
Solomons Island	-4 46
Hills Bridge	-1 11
Cedar Point	- 4 58
Point Lookout	-5 30

ON BREAKWATER HARBOR

Cape May Point	-0 15
Five Fathom Bank	-0 48
McCrie Shoal	-0 27
Bidwell Creek Ent.	+0 15
E. Point, Maurice Riv Cove	+0 48
Port Norris	+1 09
Dividing Creek (Entrance)	+0 29
Dividing Creek (Town)	+3 07
Egg Island Point	+0 28
Brandywine Shoal Light	0 00
Fourteen Foot Bank Light	+0 13
Miah Maull	+0 23
Elbow of Cross Edge Light	+0 35
Cape Henlopen	-0 10
Roosevelt Inlet	+0 04
Mispillion River Ent.	+0 23
St. Jones River entrance	+0 57
Leipsic River entrance	+1 18
Leipsic, Leipsic River	+3 42

ON REEDY POINT

Fortescue	-2 05
Cohansey River Ent.	-1 30
Bridgeton	+0 27
Ship John Shoal Light	-1 32
Reedy Island	-0 16
Salem River/Sinnickson	+0 04
Deepwater Point	+0 46
C&D CANAL	
Biddle Point DE	-0 05
Summit Bridge DE	-0 34
Chesapeake City MD	-0 30
New Castle DE	+0 30
Christina River ent. DE	+0 51

ON PHILADELPHIA

Delaware Riv Phil. Muni Pier	0 00
Schuylkill Riv (Girad Point)	-0 20
Schuylkill Riv Fairmont Br.	-0 01
Rancocas Cr., Bridgeboro	+1 19
Rancocas Cr., Hainesport	+2 53
Trenton	+1 52

HOW TO USE THESE TABLES: To compute the high tide for the area you wish to fish, find the closest area on the conversion table. Add or subtract the hours and minutes as indicated from the station below. Example: Asbury Park....-0.35 is listed under "On Sandy Hook" -0.35 means you subtract 35 minutes from the time given for the SANDY HOOK for the day you are going fishing. For the low tide add 6-1/2 hours to this figure. NOTE: Do not rely solely on these tide reports. Always consult a secondary tide source heading out on the water.

NJ'S FALL STRIPER RUN HAS BEGUN!



On Saturday, October 4, Joseph Raiola was fishing the outgoing tide along Raritan Bay with his trusty Century Weapon, Jr. and Visser #2 Reel (10-pound test) when caught and released this 46-1/2-inch striped bass that he estimated at 36 pounds. One of the first of the reported cows coming home for the fall run hit a 5-inch Z-Man DeiZel MinnowZ on a 1-ounce jighead from Tog Candy Jigs.

» Action Heats Up After Nor'easter

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STRIPER TAGS

The very first of five "satellite tags" deployed in 2025 during Northeast Striped Bass Study has been found as reported on page 6G in Striper Tag #1 An Early '25 Return. As we await the final tag returns, take a deep dive into our satellite-tagging project along the Striper Coast with our friends from Gray Fishtag Research.



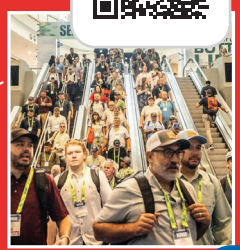
C&R BLUEFIN TIPS

The recreational bluefin closure in 2025 has been devastating to the angling community. Hopefully there are brighter days ahead in 2026 in the bluefin fishery. That said, NOAA Fisheries allows a catch and release bluefin fishery, so long as bluefin are "released in a manner that will ensure maximum probability of survival."



TIS' THE SEASON!

As we turn the calendar page to the month of November, it's time to start thinking about gifts for the holiday season. Next month The Fisherman will publish our annual Holiday Gift Guide for '25, but you can get a sneak peek at what's new in the world of fishing tackle in our twice-a-week video spotlights on our homepage.



NORTH JERSEY COAST REPORT

HUDSON RIVER TO BELMAR



by J.B. Kasper
(215) 295-1502
JB.Kasper@verizon.net

It's Sunday, October 19th as we're putting on the finishing touches of this month's report for the November edition, and as one tackle shop person told me the verdict is in on the effects of the mid-October nor'easter; just like the past several years this storm jump-started the fall striper run along the North Jersey coast. It also scattered the baitfish populations and caused action to be both hot and cold, with some stripers reported as far out as the three-mile-line. Most boat captains I spoke with said if November is to be a good month for striped bass, both baitfish and stripers will have to move closer to the beaches and more bass will have to come down Long Island Sound and into Raritan Bay via the East River, as well as pushing from the east off of Long Island. On the bottom fishing front the better sea bass fishing more than likely will stay in the deeper water as water cools down in November. We also got word of the first winter flounder being caught in Shark River with more fish are on the move there. On the flip side of the coin there were still some sheepshead being caught around the Verrazano Bride in mid-October, and it will be interesting to see if they are still there in November. As per usual all the things I just mentioned will need some favorable weather to happen. So, let's hope the weather gods take a different route to the rest of the year and smile on us for a change.

BAYONNE

"The storm kept the bass in the back bay," said an excited Chris over at **Bayonne Bait and Tackle**, explaining how anglers started catching the bass as soon as things started to calm down. Chris said the fishing has been outstanding with mixed size stripers to 52 inches, big blues and some nice size weakfish keeping rods bent. Chris said while whole and cut bunker and eels have been the baits of choice, top water plugs swimmers and jig-plasticbait combinations have been scoring fish. When they get turned on it doesn't matter what you put in front of them they will hit according to Chris, the only problem being that most of the fish are overs and have to be recycled, with Chris reminding anglers to be careful how they handle the fish before putting them back in the water. In addition there is some very good tog fishing off bulkheads, wrecks and bridge pilings in the backwaters on green crabs and here to there is a one fish limit and plenty of catch and release fishing going on. "Now is the time to get in on the fishing, especially if you are looking for that trophy fish to catch, photograph and release and it looks like November is going to be a banner month for the bass," Chris said.



On March 22, Jake Rebel sent this photo of his first spring striper of the season in the Delaware in South Jersey.

BELLEVILLE

The fall run of striped bass shifted into high gear once things started to settle down after the nor'easter. In fact Nick over at **Bullet Hole Annex** said it looks like the storm actually helped the fishing! The buzz with anglers stopping for striper tackle has been good fishing in the bay and outside Sandy Hook. Pictures of big stripers, blues and weakfish have been lighting up the internet, not mention the videos we seen, and hopefully the fishing will go right into November and beyond.

PINE BROOK

"Well the verdict is in on the effects of the recent storm on the striped bass fishing," said Joe over at **Fairfield Fishing Tackle**. Needless to say it's a thumb up as the fishing rebounded even stronger than before the storm. Joe said we have been seeing this happen for the past several years where it takes a nor'easter to jump start the fall striper run, and it looks like November will be a banner month as long as the weather doesn't mess it up. He ended his report by saying bottom fishing also bounced back nicely with good numbers of sea bass, one fish limits of tog and triggerfish supplying some good fishing which should also continue to be good into November.

ROCHELLE PARK

Good news on the striped bass action was also told to us by Rick over at **Tackle World**. He said a mid-October start to the striped bass action usually means a good November which could go into December. Sea bass fishing along with porgies and a few triggerfish was also good after the storm, but the fishing was in deeper water. Look for the bottom fishing to remain good in November and with all the tog that are around we should have some good blackfishing as well, especially when the bag limit goes up

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on November 16. Lastly Rick said the tuna fishing in October was good when boats were able to sail and with some good weather in November we should continue to see some good catches of yellowfin.

SUCCASUNNA

The word from Don over at Ramsey Outdoors in Succasunna was also positive on the bass fishing front. He told us the store got good reports on the striped bass fishing in Raritan Bay in the week following the October nor'easter, and most anglers also said some bluefish and weakfish were mixing in with the bass. He also said bottom fishing was a good mix of sea bass, tog and some triggers once things settled down from the storm. It looks like a good start to November is in store as long as the weather cooperates. Over at the Ramsey store Andrew echoed the reports we have been getting on the striped bass explosion. He too said the fishing has started frenzy for striped bass gear at his place. "It would be nice if the fishing stays good through November and into December," Andrew said.

SOUTH AMBOY

Capt. Phil Bouchard of the Misty Morn said October was a bust for him. Since the boat is only fishing on weekends and the weather on weekends has been dismal, sailing time has been limited. Phil said he will continue to try and sail weekends for stripers in November and hopefully the weather will be a little more cooperative.



George Glandz caught this big striper on the Toms River back in April, but many are wondering at what point this fall those bigger stripers will return to the back waters.

SEWAREN

I checked with Ken over at Dockside Bait and Tackle and he was another person that told us good reports started to come into the store right after the storm passed, and it looks like we are going to have bass and bluefish into November and beyond if

KEYPORT



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we don't have any adverse effects from another storm. He said it looks like the storm also pushed a lot of peanut bunker and other baitfish into the backwaters of the bay as well, another positive for the fishing in November.

KEYPORT

"It's been bass all over since things settled down from the blow," said Steve Haas over at Up Front Bait and Tackle. Steve took a cautious approach to this fall's bass run. He said whether or not we have a good November will depend on the bait supply we have in local waters and that is not good. When the big bunker boats were allowed to suck up all the bunker in the spring they set the stage for problems in the fall. "This year we have had problems getting bunker, clams, bloodworms, killies and spearing, and now that the fall run is on those problems are cropping up again," Steve said. The bass fishing is red how right now, however how long the fishing will last is the question? He ended his report by saying as crazy as it might seem there are still some sheepshead being caught around the Verrazano Bridge.

"The third weekend in October was the best weekend of the fall," said Mike over at Wagner's Marina. Well, best so far! And while a lot of boats sailed for stripers in the second half of the month most reported the fishing as being spotty. There was a serious lack of baitfish this October and hopefully this will improve in November. The marina will be open until Thanksgiving, and then the crew will pull the docks out for the season. Wagner's will be open through the winter for boat pairs and upgrades, we were told.

A lot of boats were fishing since the things cleared up from the mid-month storm according to sources over at the Keyport Marine Basin. They said the common report to come into the basin was of hot and cold fishing. Most fishermen said they read a lot of bass but the fish were tough to catch.

"Striped bass fishing has been up and down; some days have been good while others have been slow," said Capt. Victor Hartley of the Keyport Princess. The trick has been to find the baitfish and this fall is seeing a lack of baitfish. Victor said the boat will continue to fish daily for striped bass and will be fishing magic hour striper fishing on Wednesday through Sunday.

HAZLET

"We have striped bass all over the bay and outside," said Phil over at the Tackle Box. It looks like we are going into the month of November with plenty of bass around, however the question is how long will they stay in northern waters? Bunker, sand eels and other forage are scarce and hopefully some schools of bunker or sand eels will move into our local waters. Phil also mentioned good bottom fishing with plenty of sea bass and tog in northern waters which should provide good fishing in November, especially when the bag limit goes up on tog on November 16.

ATLANTIC HIGHLANDS

I spoke with Steve over at Julian's Bait & Tackle who had just gotten back from a trip to the West Coast and he said he was surprised to see that the bass fishing had finally broken open. He told us the shop was selling eels like they were hot cakes. He said it will be interesting to see how the fishing goes in November with the limited amounts

of forage fish that are in the bay and local waters. He added the best case would be for big schools of sand eels or bunker move into the area.

"Well, we weathered the storm nicely and the striped bass fishing started back quickly, now all we need is some good weather in November," said Lou Fligor over at the Atlantic Highlands Municipal Harbor. Lou told me boats coming back to the harbor said the fishing was very picky. Hopefully some cooler water will serve up some good fishing, both in the bay and outside.

"It looks like the winds scattered the stripers and the first few days we fished after the storm the action was picky," stated Capt. Bob Henn of the Ebbtide Too. Bob said that the fishing got better as the days passed and the numbers built back up. There are still plenty of fish to come down from the north and November should see those fish serve up some good fishing. The boat will be sailing daily for stripers leaving the dock at 7:30 a.m. and returning at 2:30 p.m. On Friday and Saturday the boat will also be sailing evenings leaving the dock at 2:30 p.m. and returning at 8:30 p.m.

"We got in a pair of trips, one with the Troller Electric charter who found slow striped bass fishing in the lower Hudson River and the other with the Hooked on Fishing Not Drugs group who caught plenty of sea bass but only a few keepers," said Capt. Mike Scardingo of the charter boat Mi Jo. Mike was another boat captain that told us the winds were a big problem in October and hopefully November will see some better conditions.

HIGHLANDS

Reports coming from boats fishing out of the Twin Lights Marina are telling of hot and cold striped bass fishing. Wayne said fishing was very good after the blow but the stripers spread out so most boats were trolling. He said November should see more bass coming down from northern waters and we will just have to wait and see what effects the weather will have on the fishing.

"They are here and in very good numbers since things settled down from the mid-month storm," said Tim over at Bahrs Landing Marina. Needless to say the storm must have pushed a lot more bass the bay since then. Bottom fishermen also saw a nice uptick in the fishing with sea bass, one fish limits of tog and triggerfish supplying the fishing. The marina also got some

ATLANTIC HIGHLANDS

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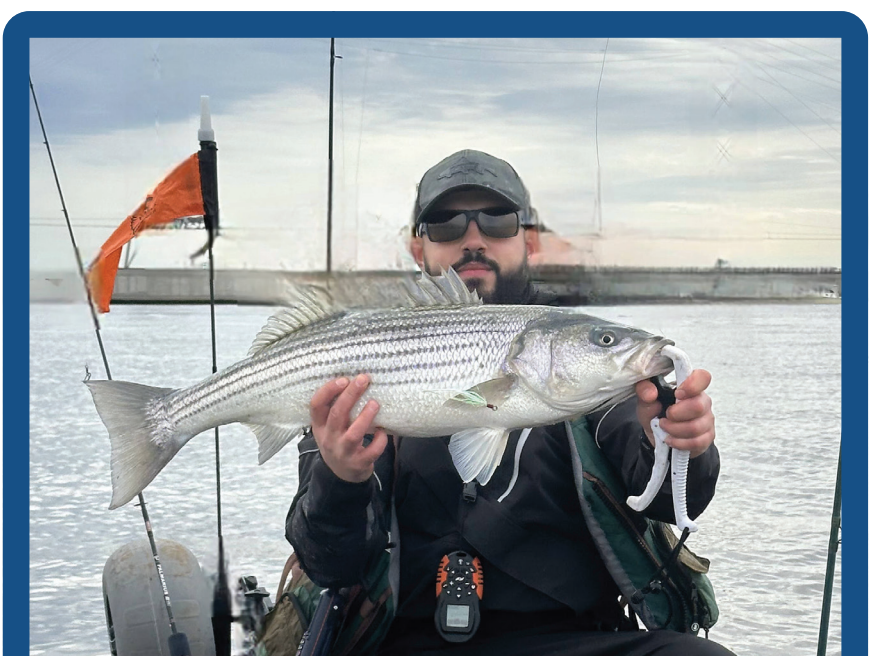

Mario J Cortes from East Newark with a beautiful 31-inch striper caught while trolling plugs aboard his kayak along the Raritan.



Andrew Kraycirik enjoyed some winter trout action along the Musconetcong River in Holland Township with rainbows from 16 to 18 inches on Berkeley, bubble gum, worm and salmon eggs.

reports of decent catches of yellowfin being seen by boats that got offshore, we were told.

"It was decent striped bass fishing right after the blow, but the fishing got pickier as the week progressed," cited Capt. Fletcher Chayes of Two Rivers Charters. "In fact we moved outside later in the week and found the stripers a couple miles off the Hook," he added. As to November's fishing with schools of baitfish being so scattered, it's anyone's guess where we will find the bass. Let's hope some better numbers of sand eels, bunker or other forage show up to keep the fish here, he said.

Once the striper fishing broke open the storm seems to have scattered the bass and baitfish. "As a result fishing was hot one day slow the next," said Capt. Pete Wagner of the charter boat Hyper Striper, adding "Most the fish were in the 40- to 48-inch class which we had to release." Pete said the winds were a major problem in October and hopefully we will see some better conditions in November.

BELMAR

"We started seeing some winter flounder move into the inlet and river the third week of October," said Marty over at the Fisherman's Den. Likewise stripers bass started showing up also in the surf and in the evenings in the inlet while blackfishing off the jetties was very good all month. All three of those fisheries should get better in November as waters cool down. When it comes to the party and charter boat fishing in Belmar bottom fishing boats should see good catches of sea bass continue in November along with one fish limits of tog until the bag limit goes up to five fish in the middle of the month. Lastly he said striper fishing started producing fish in the ocean and local surf and that fishing traditionally get better in November

"We got in a mix of sea bass and striped bass fishing after the waters settled down from the storm," said Greg Hueth of the Big Mohawk III. Greg said the bass we are seeing now are only the beginning to run and his sources told him there are big schools of stripers to the north and they are on the move. He said the best fishing is going to come around the approaching new moon and the full moon in November. "The one thing that we need and are not seeing is sizable schools of baitfish," he said.

"We only managed a pair of trips this past week," said Capt. Steve Spinelli of the charter boat Skylarker. Steve said a trip with the Versitex charter picked away at the sea bass amid tough conditions, while a Saturday trip with the Ron's Landscaping group caught a mix of sea bass, porgies and a few blowfish. Steve said hopefully November will see some good sea bass and tog fishing with no interference from the weather.

"Please don't let us have a gap in the striped bass," was the lament from Capt. Rich Falcone of the Golden Eagle. Rich said the striped bass run got a good start prior to the storm and then the storm scattered both the stripers and baitfish. Rich said there are plenty of bass to the north and we should see some good bass fishing right through Thanksgiving. He also mentioned that as of November 1 the boat will be leaving the dock at 6 a.m.

The most recent trip for the Ol' Salty II was a sea bass trip which accounted for a good bite of knuckleheads along with some porgies and tog for the Troller Electric party. Capt. Nick Caruso was another boat captain that had no kind words for the recent windy weather we had in October. He said the boat will continue bottom fishing, and will be doing some deep water offshore bottom trips. "Hopefully we will also be able to get out on a few tuna trips, weather permitting," Nick said.

The Miss Belmar Princess and SS Miss Belmar did not get out until the Friday after the storm reported Capt. Al Shinn. Al told me boat boats had double figure catches of Stripers all overs that had to be recycled. He said there are plenty of bass around but you really have to work for the fish. He too said the one thing that is lacking are schools of baitfish and hopefully some schools of bunker or sand eels will show up in November to help keep the fish in our local waters.

CENTRAL JERSEY REPORT



by Ashley Viola
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As of this report on Sunday, October 19, the current fishing landscape offers non-stop action across all sectors, driven by bay water temperatures stabilizing at the key 60-degree threshold. The blackfish bite has aggressively ignited, producing outstanding catches on green crabs and sand fleas, especially around the jetties and lighthouse structure, though keepers still require some

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Vincent Martella with a May days striper on the Raritan Bay, a 39-1/2-incher that he caught and released.

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effort. Simultaneously, the striped bass presence is building, with resident fish feeding on topwater at dawn and dusk, and early migratory schoolies hitting eels and spot baits. Word from a couple of private boaters heading out of Manasquan on Saturday the 18th was that stripers were piling all over schools of sand eels. Offshore, while tuna reports are sluggish, the wreck fishing is phenomenal, yielding quick limits of sea bass and porgies for vessels willing to steam further out. With better weather ahead, captains anticipate a major rebound in productivity in the final days of October and heading into November.

BRIELLE

Matt at the Reel Seat reports the sea bass bite is excellent, yielding fish of decent size. The water across most inshore grounds, holding at a favorable 61 degrees this past weekend, is certainly contributing to the hot action. Striped bass have arrived in droves, aggressively feeding on sand eels in deeper water. Bunker pods are visible along the beach, and anglers are anticipating that stiff west winds will push those bass onto the bait. The blackfish action is kicking into gear, and surprisingly, a few bonito are still around despite the cooling temperatures. Small blues are available both off the surf and when fishing near structure. Offshore, there is a strong abundance of bluefin up and down the coast, blanketing the midshore and inshore grounds in depths ranging from 90 to 180 feet (currently catch-and-release). While the yellowfin bite has slackened, the canyons are producing stunning swordfish!

Capt. Joe aboard the Jamaica II reported an overall strong weekend of sea bass and porgy fishing. Although the bite tapered off in the afternoon, the aggressive morning action ensured a highly successful trip, with the vast majority of anglers securing full limits of both species well before the close of the day.



Nick Rowe with some Delaware Bay "spring veal" during the full moon off Cape May during the '25 drum run, when dogwoods were blooming and drum were booming.

Tony at Paramount Deep Sea Fishing reported a sluggish start to the weekend on Friday the 17th. However, Saturday brought a noticeable improvement over the previous day, with the crew steadily picking away at a haul dominated by plump porgies. The day's mixed bag also included a welcome number of quality sea bass to round out the coolers.

POINT PLEASANT

Chris at Fishermen's Supply reports that striped bass are arriving in solid numbers, gorging themselves on plentiful sand eels. Anglers are finding great success targeting these fish from all vantage points: in the back bay, off the surf, and from offshore boats. Crucially, the migration is gaining momentum and improving daily! The tautog action remains strong offshore, with excellent catches also coming from the canal and inlet structures. Meanwhile, the offshore tuna bite is slowing down slightly; while fish are still being picked off, the action isn't as intense. There are still some bluefin around, though they remain strictly catch-and-release.

Capt. Tom aboard the Norma K III reported a tough grind on Saturday. After aggressively scouting several areas, the crew managed to find only scattered sea bass, with the overall action proving minimal. With their sea bass trips ending, the *Norma K III* is now shifting focus entirely: the crew will be targeting striped bass exclusively this coming week, eagerly anticipating the change of seasons!

In addition to sea bass, Capt. Bob and crew aboard the Gambler have been scheduling fall trips to the tuna grounds. Keep on eye on our weekly reports posted on The Fisherman's website for details on these offshore overnighters heading into November.

Capt. Alan of Mushin Sportfishing reports that the sea bass are absolutely overflowing! One perfectly placed stop on a deep wreck immediately delivered non-stop, drop-and-reel action on huge knot-head sea bass, along with plump porgies, aggressive blues, and even some surprise bonito. This bite is too hot to miss! Be sure to reach out now to secure your spot for upcoming prime bottom fishing and explosive striped bass trips through October, November, and December!

Capt. Anthony of Sligo Sportfishing reports that the striped bass bite has just begun and is poised to explode, promising consistent action over the next month. In the meantime, the sea bass and porgy fishing remains very good. Demand is high, as the charter currently has only a few remaining dates for the rest of 2025, so anglers interested in booking should reach out immediately!

Capt. John Zema aboard the Yankee Rose confirms: the striped bass have officially arrived! The crew is already connecting with very large fish, using jigs as the primary and highly effective method. They anticipate running open boat striper trips frequently throughout the season. Be sure to check their Facebook page for schedule details and to secure your spot!

BRICK

Frank at Gabriel Tackle reports that sea bass continue to offer decent action on the local wrecks and reefs. Crucially, the fall migration is heating up: anglers who headed north to the Shrewsbury Rocks were hooking into stripers by drifting eels, confirming the main run is now making its way down the coast. This momentum extends to the surf, with excellent reports of stripers coming from South Amboy down to Keansburg, making the trip up north absolutely worthwhile. Closer to home, the Point Pleasant Canal is highly productive, yielding blackfish that include a healthy mix of shorts and keepers, primarily on green crabs. The striper and bluefish bite remains strong in the canal, with live eels proving effective for the bass and soft plastics and hard baits triggering the blues.

Andrew at Jersey Hooker Outfitters reports that the canal is delivering quality action on both bass and blues. While the bluefish bite is slowing, the striped bass are getting bigger and much chunkier, with anglers securing plenty of quality fish within the legal slot. The blackfish action in the canal remains highly productive, especially when using live sand fleas and green crabs. Though the surf fishing hasn't quite kicked off yet, Andrew predicts a strong start in the coming week or two.

NORMANDY BEACH

Pete at Charlie's Bait & Tackle notes that waters further out are showing promise, with birds working visible bait schools, though anglers are still struggling to connect with fish. The real action is concentrated in the backwaters: the canal is absolutely loaded with big tautog on green crabs, with one dedicated angler securing a keeper daily. The

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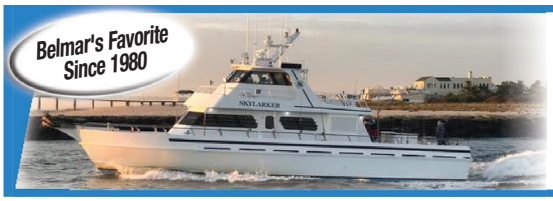

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Barnegat Inlet is also producing decent-sized tog. Meanwhile, striped bass are beginning to move out of the back bays, with reports of smaller, around 21-inch, stripers caught fly fishing at night in the Toms River. Boats fishing out of Asbury marked a significant amount of bait, boosting anticipation that the migrating fish will follow the feed south very soon!

SEASIDE HEIGHTS

Dean at The Dock Outfitters reports that striped bass are starting to bite consistently in the bay and off the surf, with anglers connecting primarily on clams, small bunker, and mullet. Looking ahead, Dean anticipates that eels will become the dominant bait



Capt. Jeff Evans took 16-year-old son Will Evans and Cheryl Siminink out for a successful day of fluke on the last Saturday in June.

next month as the bass move out of the river systems. Meanwhile, the blackfish action remains excellent in the Barnegat Inlet for those using green crabs. Bottom line: there is truly something for every angler to hook into right now!

SEASIDE PARK

Scott at Grumpy's Bait & Tackle is predicting a major shift: if this fall holds to recent trends, the striper bite should absolutely fire up right on the heels of last week's strong storm. In anticipation of the fall push, the shop has already stocked their walls with pencil poppers. But don't wait for the blitzes! Scott urges anglers to go catch some blackfish right now as he's hearing of excellent action holding tight in the inlets and the canal. Grab your green crabs and get out there!

John at Betty & Nick's reports that while the recent storm kept general activity quiet, the blackfish bite has fired up dramatically! Anglers are finding excellent post-storm action coming right out of the inlet.

TOMS RIVER

Francine at Hook House Bait & Tackle didn't have much to report in the weekend following the nor'easter, but the Hook House crew expects a flurry of activity before the month is out as word gets out on the migrating stripers hitting the local beaches.

FORKED RIVER

Capt. Ray Lopez of Miss Liane Charters reports a successful charter focusing on bottom fishing, easily putting anglers onto sea bass and porgies. While the offshore tuna bite has turned sluggish, the wreck fishing remains phenomenal. Ray notes the trips have been incredibly productive, with the boat consistently maxing out catches over the last two weeks. If you're interested in trying to join in on the action, be sure to contact them immediately!

WARETOWN

Jordan at Creekside Outfitters reports striped bass are active right outside the inlet, feeding on a mix



Shawn Smith had a fantastic day "near a church in Monmouth County" on the first ocean fluke trip aboard his father's new center console, Fishin Fool II. "In total we landed 10 keeper fluke, six triggerfish, and three sea bass," Shawn reported.

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of bunker and sand eels. For bottom fishermen, green crabs remain the hot ticket for tautog at the rocky structure. Offshore, anglers are absolutely crushing the sea bass in deeper water; multiple boats secured full limits on Saturday fishing 80- to 100-foot depths. In the bay, there is decent striper action despite the water being churned up from the storm. While the fish aren't huge, small schoolies are readily available, hitting on both eels and spot.

BARNEGAT LIGHT

Vince at Bobbie's Boats reports a terrific tog bite, with fish actively feeding on both green crabs and sand fleas near the lighthouse and bayside structures. While securing a legal keeper is proving challenging, the action on smaller fish is non-stop. The striped bass being encountered are mostly resident fish, hitting topwater lures at dusk and dawn, and being caught by anglers drifting live spot in the inlet. The sea bass bite is strong, but finding the larger keepers requires steaming further offshore. Vince also confirms that migratory stripers are beginning to stage up north.

If you're looking to do some fall tuna fishing, Capt. Len aboard the Miss Barnegat Light said they're adding November 3, 6 and 8 to the offshore tuna schedule. The boat leaves for a 30-hour trip at 6:30 a.m. each day, everyone gets a bunk and anglers get a three-yellowfin limit. If you need gear they also rent rods. Starting on November 14 the boat will begin targeting striped bass.

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Capt. Sam Rescigno of the Mary M IV reports an "okay" sea bass weekend, noting the action wasn't quite as strong as it was prior to the storm. However, with better weather on the way, the crew is eagerly anticipating a strong rebound and excellent fishing over the coming week.

SURF CITY

Tom at Surf City Bait and Tackle reports a few striped bass were landed on the surf Saturday, but the tautog fishing stole the show. The bite was extremely hot at times on Saturday, highlighted by Alex D.'s impressive 5.7-pound., 21-inch blackfish entered into the LBI Surf Fishing Classic that afternoon. This success confirms the tautog action has been very good recently! The weekend wrapped up with Geoffrey stopping in for frozen sand fleas early Sunday, later reporting a nice catch secured by Taylor.

SHIP BOTTOM

Our friends at Fisherman's Headquarters confirm that with bay water temperatures settling into the golden 60-degree mark, the tautog bite has officially ignited. They fully expect these fish to be crushing crabs aggressively for the next several weeks. Proof came immediately: on Wednesday, Max and Matt hit the north end and reported a "savage bite" between 4 and 6 p.m.. Max noted, "We each caught about 20 tog and a handful of keepers on green crabs." Even more impressive, Bruce from Illinois was fishing nearby and landed a giant, a 22-inch, 5-plus-pound monster, a true trophy by land-based tautog standards!

LONG BEACH ISLAND

Steve from Jingle's Bait and Tackle was out in Minnesota for the Eagles-Vikings game while we were compiling this report, but word back at home along the beaches of LBI was

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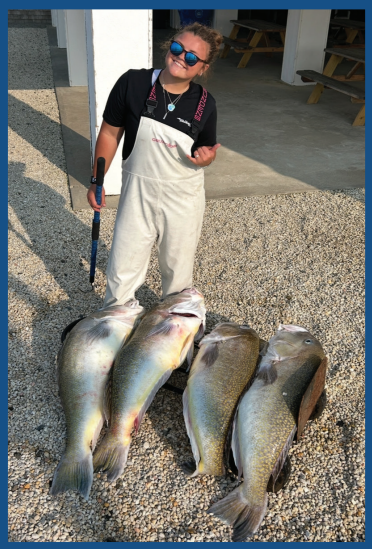
Clifton's Al DiMartino Jr. shows off a 39-inch striper he caught and released during a foggy evening earlier this season.

that "Classic" tournament weigh-ins were beginning to heat up after the nor'easter. That said, folks looking to hit the southernmost tip of LBI should take note that due to the storm's impact on Holgate beaches, Nelson Avenue & Washington Avenue were currently the only vehicle-accessible beach entrances until further notice.

BEACH HAVEN

After weathering a very nasty and extended northeaster, the captains of the Beach Haven Charter Fishing Association are back and ready to go. Prior to the arrival of the storm, the captains spent time preparing their boats for the effects of the wind and tides. Most of the Association boats were still in the water, so that meant checking and double checking all dock lines. It was important to have all lines long enough to accommodate the rise of the waters. Bilge pumps were checked, batteries were charged, and anything that could suffer effects from the winds were carefully stowed away. Fortunately, the preparations worked, and no serious damage from the storm for the BHCFA boats has been reported. Captain Gary Dugan of the *Irish Jig* reports he has a reading on some hot action for black sea bass. In addition, he will be working the back waters for stripers. Captain Dave Wittenborn on the *Benita J* was waiting for ocean swells to settle down before he heads back offshore to continue some of the hot tuna action he was enjoying until right before the winds arrived. Meanwhile up at the north end of the island, Captain Brett Taylor of *Reel Reaction Sportfishing* is planning to get into the black sea bass along with some blackfish from Barnegat Inlet.



Ellie May White was board the Nora Angela, a 46 Valhalla out of Beach Haven, when she and crew of John Ludwigson, Matt Compitello, Keith Colandra, and Eugene White hit the jackpot on tilefish. "My largest fish were caught jigging with a jigpara 500," Ellie May said.

SOUTH JERSEY/ DELAWARE BAY REPORT



by Anthony J Califano
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Anthonycalifano2@gmail.com

As of this report on Sunday, October 19, the heavy northeast winds and flooding had pushed lots of bait back up the inlets and into our rivers according to this week's reports. Back bay water temperatures also dropped several degrees, really turning on the striper bite for those fishing the shallows, flooded sods, creeks and ICW. Late in the week anglers were able to get to the offshore wrecks and reefs and found plenty of keeper sea bass and larger tog. The tog action inshore, from the jetties, bridges and back bay rip rap has also been very good since the drop in water temperature.

TUCKERTON

Mike at Tuckerton Bait and Tackle tells us that customer participation was on the slow side this week after the big nor'easter. Anglers that did get on the water later in the week found some good crabbing locally as well as tog and spot in the bay. No reports from the wrecks and reefs as many anglers are waiting for the water to settle. There were some reports of more bait moving around in the inlet with porpoise chasing schools of bunker, which should attract stripers as well.

Customers at Dockside Cafe and Marina report that the bay waters cleaned up rather quickly after last weekend's crazy weather. Anglers got back to catching blowfish, spot and even some kingfish on bloodworms, clams and Fishbites. Tog were also very active in the bay as the water temperatures dropped a few degrees since last weekend. Sand fleas were the to bait fished on a tog jig and produced fish to 4 pounds.

BASS RIVER TOWNSHIP

There are "tons of stripers" in the river and bay right now according to Justin with Allen's Dock. The bite really turned on this week with the winds pushing bait up into the bay and up the river. Most of the fish are falling into the schoolie to slot size, with an outlier this week taping out at 33 inches. Customers are scoring most of their fish with live eels while some sharpies are throwing artificials like the 3-inch NLBN paddle tails and simply bailing fish. Friday and Saturday were basically the first fishable days for offshore anglers

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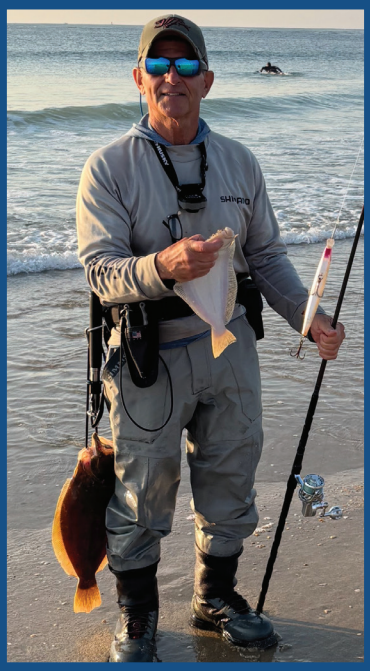
Eleven-year-old Zayne Laudermilch was fishing with his dad and Jared Morgan over the summer, and hand-cranked this 23-pound golden tile by himself, the biggest of the five-man limit on the day.

targeting sea bass on the deeper water wrecks. Reports from these customers fish between 15 and 20 miles offshore are that the wrecks are loaded with fish and limits came quick and easy.

PORT REPUBLIC

Chestnut Neck Boat Yard reports that this week really saw an uptick in the striper bite throughout the Mullica River. Fish from shorts to "overs" were being caught on live eels, live spot, umbrella rigs and by trolling hard plastic deep divers. The river also produced plenty of white perch for anglers fishing the deeper cuts and coves in the main river and in the feeder creeks. Along the bay, tog action was good from the deeper sod banks on green crabs while scattered throughout the bay anglers found some blowfish and spot.



Steve Biserta hit the Monmouth County beaches at sunrise back on the Fourth of July and plugged up a 21-inch fluke on an SP Minnow.

EGG HARBOR CITY

Jersey Devil Marina reports a good striper bite from the river this week as the storm last week pushed lots of bait up the river. Many more fish in the bonus tag and slot size range were reported. Live eels were the top producer followed by anglers trolling mojos. White perch action was really hot, especially earlier in the week when anglers found refuge in the feeder creeks away from the strong winds.

ABSECON

"The stripers are here," according to Capt. Dave with Absecon Bay Sportsman Center. This was the first week he personally got out on the water and was also able to put his clients on a decent bite. The fish have moved into Absecon Creek and there has been a nice mix of short and bonus tag size fish. Fishing 4-inch soft plastics like Gulp Paddle Tails put multiple fish on the boat each trip this week. Plenty of bait in the water, water is still mild so Capt. Dave believes that the action has just begun.

BRIGANTINE

As soon as last weekend's storm cleared out, anglers were back on the bass behind Brigantine according to Capt. Andy with Riptide Bait and Tackle. Fish were being found along the docks, bridges and sod banks and along the shallow water creeks. Fish ranged from shorts in the low 20-inch range to over that stretched to 36 inches. Live spot were a top bait but some anglers were throwing artificials like SP Minnows or Gulp Nemesis and also scoring plenty of fish. Back bays were also seeing a good tog bite, but for keepers, anglers were fishing the nearshore wrecks and reefs where the keepers, to 5 pounds, were plentiful.

ATLANTIC CITY

Noel at One Stop Bait and Tackle tells us that Atlantic City is being renamed "Tog City" due to the incredible tog population. Every rocky crevice from the boardwalk to the inlet sea wall has been holding tog this week. On average, anglers are picking up over a dozen fish per trip with keeper ratios increasing each week. Green crabs and sand fleas were working equally well whether fished on traditional tog hooks or tog jigs. At night, the jetties are seeing an improvement in the striper bite with more baitfish being pushed into the jetty pockets. Fish are being caught on soft plastics like Zoom Super Flukes,Kettle Creeks and paddleshads.

MARGATE

Scott's Dock reports that there have been limits of sea bass on the reefs this week with fish to 16 inches. The quality of the fish over the last few days has been the best so far this season. In the back bays, anglers have been split between tog fishing and striper fishing. Both have improved greatly since the water temps dropped this week. Tog are being found along the bridges, sod banks and riprap. Fish to 16 inches were falling for green or Asian crabs and the amount of short fish.

CURRENT FISHING REGULATIONS

NEW JERSEY

BLACK DRUM 16-inch minimum, 3 fish, open all year.

BLACK SEA BASS 12.5-inch minimum size, open 5/17-6/19 (10 fish bag), 7/1-8/31 (1 fish bag), 10/1-10/31 (10 fish bag), and 11/1-12/31 (15 fish bag).

BLACKFISH/TAUTOG 15-inch minimum size, open 1/1—2/28 (4 fish), 4/1—4/30 (4 fish), 8/1—11/15 (1 fish), and from 11/16—12/31 (5 fish).

BLUEFISH No closed season or size limit, 3 fish bag for private anglers, 5 fish bag for anglers aboard for-hire boats.

BLUE CRAB From point to point, 3 inches for peeler or shedder, 3-1/2 inches for soft shell, 4-1/2 inches for hard, with one bushel recreational limit.

COBIA 43-inch minimum, 2 per vessel.

COD 5 fish per bag. 23-inch minimum, open 1/1 to 5/31 and 9/1 to 12/31.

HADDOCK 18-inch minimum, no limit, open all year.

POLLOCK 19-inch minimum, no limit, open all year.

PORGY/SCUP 10-inch minimum, 30 fish, open season from 1/1 to 6/30, and 9/1 to 12/31.

RED DRUM Slot fish between 18 and 27 inches, 1 fish, open all year.

STRIPED BASS One fish from 28 inches to 31 inches. No closed season 0-3 miles from shore; Delaware River from Trenton to Salem River open 3/1-3/31 and from 6/1-12/31; all other marine waters open 3/1-12/31. Circle hook required when fishing with natural bait (all waters).

SUMMER FLOUNDER/FLUKE Open 5/4 to 9/25 with an 18-inch minimum size and three fish bag. Special NJ management zone regs include 17-inch minimum and three fish bag west of COLREGS on Delaware Bay; 16-inch minimum and two per angler at IBSP.

WEAKFISH 13-inch minimum, 1 fish, no closed season.

WINTER FLOUNDER 12-inch minimum, 2 fish, 3/1-12/31.

Register to fish NJ marine waters at SaltwaterRegistry.nj.gov

DELAWARE

BLACK DRUM 16-inch minimum, 3 fish, open all year.

BLACK SEA BASS 13-inch minimum size and 15 fish bag, open from 5/15-9/30 and 10/10-12/31.

BLUEFISH No closed season or size limit, 3 fish bag for private anglers, 5 fish bag for anglers aboard for-hire boats.

COBIA 43-inch minimum, 2 fish per angler, 2 per vessel (no closed season).

CROAKER 8-inch minimum, no bag, open all year.

PORGY/SCUP 9-inch minimum, 30 fish, open all year.

RED DRUM Slot fish between 20 and 27 inches, 5 fish, open all year.

SPANISH MACKEREL 14 inches, 15 fish, open all year.

SPOTTED SEATROUT 12 inches, no bag, open all year.

STRIPED BASS One fish, 28 to 31 inches, except in Delaware Bay, River and its tributaries from 7/1-8/31 during which time angler limit is one fish from 20 to 24 inches during 'summer slot' season. No harvest permitted from spawning grounds from 4/1-5/31.

SUMMER FLOUNDER 16 inches, 4 fish bag limit from 1/1-5/31, with the size limit increasing to 17.5 inches from 6/1-12/31.

TAUTOG 16-inch minimum, 4 fish from 1/1-5/15 & 7/1-12/31.

WEAKFISH 13-inch minimum, 1 fish, no closed season.

WHITE PERCH 8-inch minimum, no bag, no closed season.

NEW YORK

BLACKFISH 16-inch size limit. All Waters: April 1 to 30; 2 per day. L.I. Sound: Oct. 11 to Dec. 9; 3 per day. NY Bight: Oct. 15 to Dec. 22; 4 per day.

BLACK SEA BASS 16.5" minimum size; 3/angler, June 23 — Aug 31; 6/angler, Sept 1 — Dec 31.

BLUEFISH No minimum size, 3 fish bag limit for recreational / 5 fish for anglers on f or-hire boats, no closed season.

COD 23 inch minimum, Open September 1 - May 31, 5 fish per day

FLUKE 3/angler 19" minimum size, May 4 - August 1 19.5" minimum size, August 2 - October 15

FLOUNDER Open April 1 - May 30; two fish; 12 inch minimum size.

POLLOCK 19-inch minimum size limit.

PORGY/SCUP 11" minimum size for vessel-based anglers and 9.5" for shore anglers. Open May 1 — December 31, 30/recreation angler, charter and open boat bag limit expands to 40/angler from September 1 — October 31.

SEA BASS June 23 — Aug. 31; 3 fish bag: Sept. 1 — Dec. 31; 6 fish bag: 16.5 -inch minimum size.

STRIPED BASS Marine: 28 to 31 inch slot, 1 fish per person, April 15 - December 15. Hudson River north of George Washington Bridge: 1 fish per person 23 to 28 inches. April 1 - November 30. Circle hook required when fishing with natural bait (all waters).

WEAKFISH 16-inch minimum size, one fish per day.

All measurements are total length. For Saltwater Registry go to: www.dec.ny.gov/ or call 1-866-933-2257 Regulations are subject to change. For updates, call NYDEC at 631-444-0435.

OCEAN CITY

Tog, sea bass and triggerfish were all on the menu this week for anglers fishing the Ocean City Reef Site according to Bill at Fin-Atics. Action was steady with fish on almost every drop but the keeper ratio was very low. Still, there are so many fish stacked up that anglers were able to put together some decent catches even if some boaters were not able to limit out. Tog and triggerfish have been bonuses that top off the fish boxes.

SICKLERVILLE

Nothing but good reports from the reef sites from Garden State North to Cape May according to customers at Bait N' Hook in Sicklerville. Anglers reported limits and near limits of sea bass this week, along with tog and triggerfish. Back bays are seeing an uptick in striped bass action with more fish in the keeper and bonus tag size range. Behind the barrier islands from Avalon to Ocean City, the stripers have been feeding mostly at night along the lighted docks and bridges. Anglers have been using a mix of tactics to get these fish to bite including livelinning peanut bunker or spot, or throwing 4-inch Tsunami and Storm shads.

SEA ISLE

Cam with Boulevard Bait and Tackle tells us that anglers are picking up sea bass from the TI Ree Site. There have been tons of throwbacks, but just enough keepers to get many anglers close to their limits. Along the inlet, anglers reported some striper action on slot size fish on hard plastic plugs and soft plastics fished on jig heads. This week saw the first surf bass of the season caught, a monster measuring 47 inches. Hopefully this is just the first of many fish to be cruising the South Jersey surf this fall.

WILDWOOD

Anglers fishing out of Pier 47 Marina didn't have to go very far to find good tog action this week. Cold Spring Jetty has been loaded with fish, and since last week's storm, there are many more keepers in the mix. Boaters reported not only getting limits of fish to 5 pounds, but also releasing many more "keeper size" fish. Other anglers made combo sea bass and tog trips to the Wildwood and Cape May Reefs. Here, anglers did find plenty of sea bass, with some reporting limits of keepers. Dropping a crab on the Wildwood Site resulted in decent size tog to 6 pounds. There are also some triggerfish left on the reefs and anglers have been finding a few fish to 4 pounds per trip as a by catch. The water behind the barrier islands has dropped since the last storm and has gotten the stripers actively chasing bait along the sod



Retirement has its advantages, and apparently so does a trip to the grocery store. Richard Koeppen caught this big channel cat in a Toms River lake while fishing with a piece of hot dog. Guess cats actually do love dogs!

banks. Fish from shorts to bonus tag size are crushing poppers and Zoom Flukes in less than 3 feet of water along the shallow flats.

CAPE MAY

Taking the long boat rides this week to the deeper water wrecks and reefs (like Reef Site 11) paid off in limits of sea bass for customers according to Hand's Bait and Tackle. Customers reported picking up a boat limit of fish in just a few hours. Once the fish box was filled with sea bass, anglers topped off the box with their one keeper tog using green crabs. Action on the nearshore wrecks and reef sites (Wildwood and Cape May) was good, but not great. Anglers reported lots of fish, but it was a chore picking through the short fish in order to find a dozen or so keeper size fish. Tog are being caught in really good numbers from Cold Springs jetty and also from the bridges along the ICW. With the recent drop in water temperatures, there have been many more keeper size fish on all the inshore structures.



A 40-year-old Bob Hahn metal lip got it done for Robert Fort during the spring run in Monmouth County.

FORTESCUE

It took several days for the Delaware Bay to clean up after last weekend's storm according to reports out of Higbee's Bait and Tackle. Once the water cleaned up, anglers hit up the lighthouses for both tog and sheepshead, and Reef Site 11 for some monster tog and sea bass. Along the lighthouses, anglers were scoring tog to 4 pounds and sheepshead to 6 pounds on green crabs, sand fleas and Asian crabs. At Reef Site 11, there were reports of tog to just over 10 pounds and quick limits of sea bass to 3 pounds.

DELAWARE COAST REPORT



by Eric Burnley
eburnle@aol.com

It was another week of bad weather and if not for Saturday, there would be little to report. Saturday the wind and seas laid down and boats could reach the sea bass grounds and limits were the order of the day. Let's hope for improved weather and fishing as we head into the month of November.

ODESSA

Patty at Captain Bone's told us the weather did not encourage anglers to seek their favorite quarry, but the few that did found white perch and catfish in the tidal creeks and rivers. Bloodworms and nightcrawlers for the perch with shrimp and cut bunker for the catfish. Snakeheads have been caught at the headwaters of the same tidal creeks and rivers on lures such as Chatterbaits and frogs and baits such as large minnows.

LEIPSIC

At Smith Bait Steve said the weather kept most fishermen off the water, but

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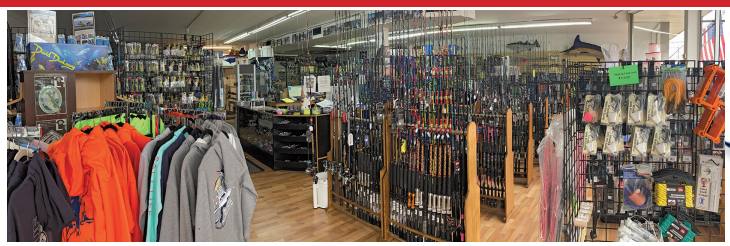
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Ryan Jacob was fishing a knife jig just off Sandy Hook this summer and was surprised to find this pollock on the other end of the line.

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a few did catch some white perch and small stripers from the tidal creeks and rivers on bloodworms and shrimp.

BROADKILL BEACH

At Dan's Tackle, Dan did not answer the phone. That is an indication of the fishing at Broadkill Beach. On my trips to Milton, I have not seen anyone fishing the pier at the head of the Broadkill River.

LEWES

The *Katydid* and the *Jay Sea II* both reported boat limits of sea bass on Saturday the 18th, and several private boats had the same success. Other private boats fished the Outer Wall and the Ice Breakers that Saturday and

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Jack Byrne caught his very first ever striper in North Wildwood this season while fishing with clam. Photo courtesy of Vincent Voiro.



Charlotte Granieri shows off her 21-inch fluke caught aboard the family boat the Summer Wind out of Cape May over the summer. Photo courtesy of proud grandad Steve Granieri.

caught tog and sheepshead on sand fleas and green crab.

Dave at Lighthouse View Tackle on the fishing pier at Cape Henlopen State Park said Saturday the 18th was a banner day for kids who caught lots of spot on bloodworms. During the rest of the week, it was a slow pick of spot and small flounder.

INDIAN RIVER INLET

Hook 'em and Cook 'em said the Captain Bob had an excellent catch of sea bass on Saturday. Other boats caught lots of sea bass and a few flounder.

Old Inlet Bait and Tackle was the only reporting station that had something to report all week. There were tog and sheepshead on most days caught from the rocks on sand fleas and green crabs. A very few stripers were caught at night on drifted eels and sand fleas. The occasional bluefish came by and hit metal lures. On those rare days when the surf was fishable, blues were caught on mullet. Saturday saw lots of people catching lots of tog with a few keepers.

FRESHWATER REPORT

by J.B. Kasper
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JB.Kasper@verizon.net



The middle of October saw some good news and some bad news when it comes to freshwater fishing throughout the region. On the downside while the coast got some high winds and heavy rains, inland sure did not get the rains that were predicted to be 2 inches or more from this last storm. Once again the weatherman blew it. As a result the northern trout streams were in very poor shape water wise for the start of the fall stocking. On the upside the cool weather we had combined with the winds from the coastal storm and pushed water temps in most waters into the High 50s and in some cases into the low 50s. This was good enough to force waters into the fall turn over, which jump-started the fall fishing for bass, crappies, walleyes and other fish, as well as start the migration of fish from the main river in larger rivers into the tributary streams and backwater areas and this too produces some good fishing. With the right weather and conditions the month of November should provide some very good fishing. The reason I said should is this year so far has been anything but predictable, and has produced some of the worst conditions of any year in the last ten or more. Reports in the second half of October showed a nice upturn in the sweetwater fishing and the stage is set for a good eleventh month of fishing, so let's pray the weather gods behave themselves in the coming month.

DELAWARE RIVER

Fishing on the tidal river from Linden Avenue south is slow on the main river. Backwater areas are seeing bass, crappies, catfish and panfish migrate off the main river and into the backwater areas to feed for the coming coldwater season. Fishing has been good around docks, pilings and other structures on jigged Gulp and minnows and should continue into November.

Fishing from Linden Avenue to Trenton is also slow on the main

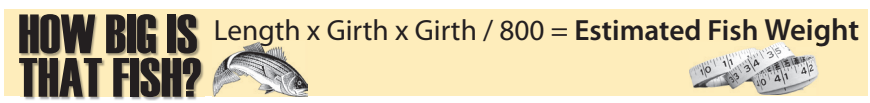
SEASIDE PARK





FORKED RIVER





TOMS RIVER



river; except for the Trenton area where a few walleyes are being caught in the evening. Backwater areas and coves are seeing some good action for bass, crappies, catfish and panfish on jigs dressed with minnows or Gulp on the top of the incoming tide. In the non-tidal river from Trenton north smallmouth bass fishing continues to be good on live lined or jig minnows. Water levels are very low and wading and canoe or kayak fishing is producing best. Look for the fishing to continue into November until the water temps drop into the 40s on a regular basis.

The word from John Bullock over at Old School Outdoors in Ewing was continued good smallmouth fishing in the Delaware on livelined and jigged minnows. Walleye reports have been spotty because of the low water, and a few muskies have been caught in the D and R Canal from Washington Crossing north. Local lakes and ponds continue to produce a mix of bass, crappies and perch. Eels have been selling like hot cakes to anglers fishing northern waters for stripers. Overall, John said November is looking good as long as the weather cooperates.

A call to Sue over at the Stokes Sports Shop in Branchville got us word of continued low water conditions on the upper river. Smallies and a few walleye in the evenings are the main action we were told. She also mentioned some good trout fishing in Flat Brook which was stocked in the stream's deeper holes.

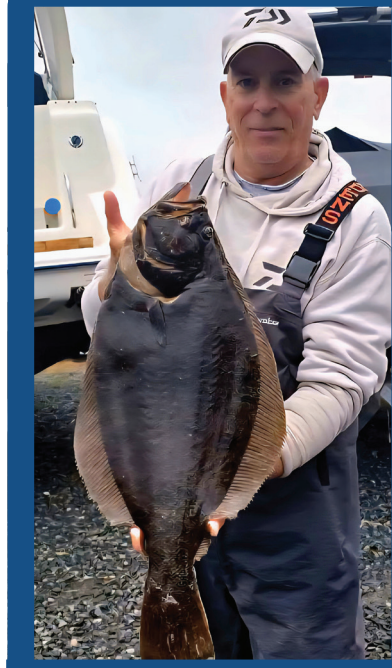
As of the third week in October water temps in the tidal river were in the low to mid 60s on the incoming water and upper 50s to on the outgoing water. On the non-tidal river water temps were in the mid-50. As of November 1 mandatory wearing of life jackets is in effect until next April 30 for boats launched from the Pennsylvania side of the river.

LAKE HOPATCONG

I gave Laurie Murphy over at Dow's Boat Rentals a call and she said fishing on the big lake is on the upswing now that water temps have dropped into the low 60s. She said the big problem is still the water levels and it looks like we are going to take the low water conditions right



Ahh, memories (and nightmares). Ed Plichta got into the bluefin this summer aboard his Tuna Kahuna out of Barnegat Inlet, prior to the controversial closure of the angling category season.



Daiwa's Rich Bizzari with a 7-pound Father's Day fluke. With the 2025 season now done and all eyes on 2026 regulatory news, it will be interested to see what the "MRIP" data shows about this year's angling catch.

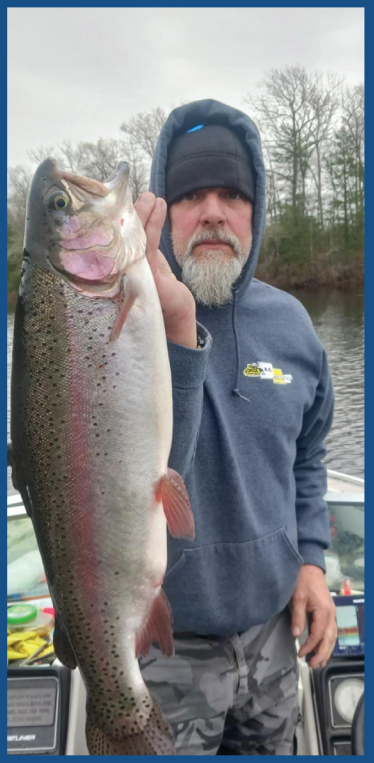
into November. The water levels in the lake are fast approaching the draw down level which means they won't release any more water this fall for dock repairs. On the fishing front largemouth and smallmouth fishing has been decent with most of the better fishing being around the decaying vegetation on livelined shiners and swimbaits. Walleye fishing is on the upswing in the lake, especially in the evenings and there in still some good hybrid fishing to be had. The crappie bite is also picking up and white perch fishing is red hot. Anglers have tangled with a few muskies on the troll as well. She told us November should be a good month, but some extra water would make it even better.

ROUND VALLEY

"Cooler water temps are having an effect on the fishing in Round Valley," said Mike Roman of the Round Valley Trout Association. The browns have started to hit with fish to 27 inches being caught by boat fishermen. Rainbows are also hitting. The thermocline is starting to break up and the fish are scattered from the surface down to 60 feet being caught on trolled spoons and swimming plugs, as well as suspended shiners on the drift. Still no trout being caught from the shoreline by the boat launch, however the work on the new docks could be keeping the trout away from the area, he said. Shoreline fishing has been bass, catfish, rock bass and panfish. Fishing for smallies and largemouth is starting to slow down on the rip rap close to shoreline. Lastly Mike said water temps are in the mid to upper 50s and the reservoir is holding at around 90% capacity.

NORTH JERSEY

Joe over at **Fairfield Fishing Tackle** told me the first reports on the fall trout stocking were of good fishing if you could find where they stocked the fish. Streams remain low even with the recent rains and most of the trout are going into lakes and ponds. The store did get good reports on the bass and crappie fishing in local lakes and some good walleye and smallmouth fishing in Monksville, Greenwood and Lake Hopatcong.



How was your opening day of trout season? Bj Nemeth didn't let the obligatory opening day rains keep him from chasing rainbows, big ones at that!

I spoke with Rick over at **Tackle World** and he told us the fall stocking program is under way despite the low water conditions in most streams. Most of the trout were put in the deeper holes in the streams or stocked in nearby lakes or ponds. The better trout fishing has been in Round Valley and other reservoirs for lakers and rainbows.

Over at Ramsey Outdoors in Succasunna Don told us he got very little word on the fall trout stocking. He said with the streams not getting the rain we were supposed to get from the nor'easter and the water levels in the northern streams are very low. He was told most of the trout went into lakes and ponds and what deep holes that could be found in the streams. As a result very few anglers came into the store with reports on the trout fishing. On the upside he got some good reports

WARETOWN



BARNEGAT LIGHT







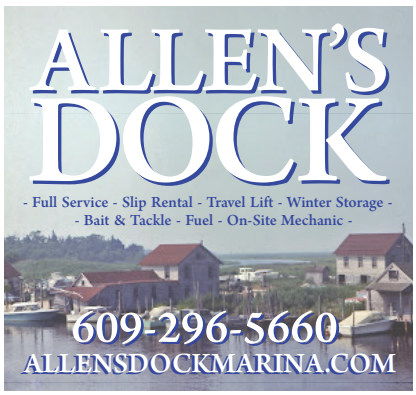
on the bass and crappie fishing in the lakes and ponds, and some news of decent walleye fishing in Hopatcong and Greenwood lakes. Over at the Ramsey store Andrew told us the best reports he got on the trout stocking came from the Ramapo. Most other streams were only stocked in the deeper holes and those trout will be pulled out quickly. As for the trout fishing in November most of the better trout fishing will be in the lakes and ponds that were stocked, we were told.

With water temps in the lakes and reservoirs in the low 60s most waters have turned over and are in a full fall mode according to Nick over at Bullet Hole Annex. The store got good reports on the bass fishing in Pompton Lake, Spruce Run, Round Valley, Greenwood Lake, Monksville and Lake Hopatcong as October winds down. Nick said this is setting the stage for good fishing in November as long as the weather cooperates. Nick said he also got reports of good walleye fishing in Greenwood Lake, Lake Hopatcong, Swartswood Lake and Monksville Reservoir which also bid well for November. Lastly he said the store got the first reports of trout being caught from the Pequest, Ramapo and lower Musconetcong.

CENTRAL JERSEY

Water temps in the lakes and ponds along the coast have finally dropped into the low 60s and the bass bite is on in places like Lake Carasaljo, Manasquan Reservoir, Lake Riviera and Lake of the Lilies, stated Amanda over at Jersey Hooker Outfitters. In addition she said pickerel fishing is red hot in the cedar waters on livelined killies in the bogs and ponds to the west of the store. Crappie fishing has also picked up on jigs tipped with plastics, Gulp

BASS RIVER TOWNSHIP



LONG BEACH ISLAND



or small killies. She told us she also heard of some decent trout fishing in the three rivers, with the Metedeconk producing best. "Overall it looks like we are in for a good November barring any interference from the weather," she said.

Pickerel fishing continued to be at the top of the list over at **Hook House Bait and Tackle**. Dennis told us livelining killies continue to take good numbers of chainsides from the bogs and ponds to the west of the store off Route 70. Here too we were told of some good live lining for bass in Manasquan Reservoir and some good jigging for crappies in the trees there. Carasaljo, Manetta, Riviera and other local ponds and lakes are producing a mix of bass and crappies, and the lower Toms is seeing some good perch fishing. On the trout fishing front he said the Toms, Manasquan and Metedeconk are fishing well on Gulp and Powerbaits which are the prime baits being picked up over at Go Fish the Hook House's sister store.

Over at **Creekside Outfitters** Tom P told me the nor'easter put a decent amount of water in the Manasquan, Toms and Metedeconk rivers and a good amount of anglers stopped by the shop to pick up Powerbaits to fish there. Looks like November will serve up some good trout fishing in the three rivers. On the lake front Fawn Lake, Waretown and Ocean Acres saw the bass and pickerel fishing break open after the bow and



A dead eel turned out to be a good deal for Ryan Sumption on a night session along the Atlantic City jetty rocks earlier this year with this jumbo catch and release striper.



Brad Weil (@bradweil) with a 49-inch striper caught on June 10 at the Shrewsbury Rocks, and safely released it just after the photo was taken.

they should be some of the top spots in the eleventh month. Tom ended his report by saying pickerel fishing has been red hot in the cedar waters and November is a prime month for the chainsides.

SOUTH JERSEY

Our first call to the lower part of the state went to Justin over at **Allen's Dock**. He was another person that had a good report on the pickerel fishing. However he said easterly winds pushed a lot of salt water up into the tidal streams and it took several days before the salt line moved back down a ways. He said it will be interesting to see what fishing we will have in November, which usually produces some very good white perch fishing.

The word from the folks over at **Hands Too Bait and Tackle** in Cape May was the catfish and largemouth bite is producing some good catches in Ponderlodge Lake and other smaller ponds and lakes in the lower part of the state. He said the catfishing traditionally goes well into November in Ponderlodge and the largemouth

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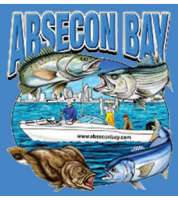

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fishes well in November on livelined killies. Lastly he was another person that told us the pickerel fishing is on fire in the local cedar waters on live lined minnows and shiners.

"It's beginning to look like November is going to be the month to fish for pickerel and largemouth," said Steve over at the Blackwater Sport Center. The pickerel fishing has been on fire in the cedar waters since September and the bass fishing has been hot and cold, but is starting to wake up now that the water temps are cooling down. Steve said



Evan Cowen shows off a hefty snakehead caught somewhere off the Delaware River in midsummer.

most seasoned fishermen in his area are looking at those two fisheries and saying November is going to see some good fishing barring any weather problems.

PENNSYLVANIA

Water conditions in the eastern Pennsylvania region are also serving up some low water problems. A low water Schuylkill River is a mix of smallies, catfish and panfish from Valley Forge north to Reading. The Lehigh River, also seeing low water conditions is also fishing well for smallies, fallfish, catfish and perch. Both Leaser and Mauch Chunk are giving up bass, crappies and pickerel.



Alber Lluis (@HogHeaven) caught and released this 36-inch striper in Cape May earlier this year while throwing a lime-colored 5-inch NLBN paddletail on the f irst hour of outgoing tide.

The only reports we got from the Poconos were of bass, crappies and pickerel in both lakes at Promised Land State Park; Pecks Pond is giving up pickerel, perch, and some reports of crappies and trout being caught in Minsi Lake. In Bucks County we got reports of bass and crappie being caught in Lake Galena, Towhee and Nockamixon.

Fishing in Lake Wallenpaupack continues to be good for smallies, crappies and hybrids, reports Capt. Pete Wagner of **Hyper Striper Charters**. Pete said November traditionally produces some good walleye fishing.

Dave's Sporting Goods in Doylestown Debbie said she continues to get decent reports on the smallmouth fishing in the Delaware by waders and kayakers. She also told us some bass and crappies are being caught at Lake Galena and looks like November will provide some good fishing there and at Lake Nockamixon.

DELAWARE

A call to Steve over at **Smith Bait and Tackle** in Leipsic told us bass fishing in Noxentown, Garrisons, Massey Mill and Silver Lake are all fishing well for bass on live bait, and crappie fishing is also picking up in those waters. Steve said water temps are finally in the upper 60s and it looks like November will be a decent month for bass and crappies. Lastly he told us perch fishing is very good and this too should fish well into the late fall.

Our last report comes from Patty over at Captain Bones in Odessa. She said Garrisons Lake, Silver Lake, Massey Mill, and other lakes in the Diamond State have finally turned over and bass and crappie fishing is taking on a fall look. She said live bait is now the top fish getter and bass and crappie fishing are on the upswing as the largemouth fatten up for the coming coldwater season. She told us the snakehead fishing will die out in November and how good the month will be for bass and crappies will depend on the weather.

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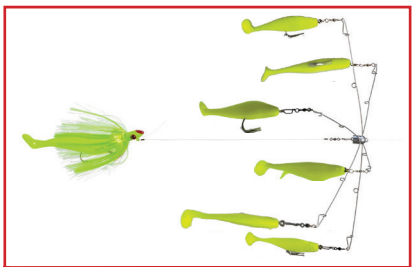

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BEACH TALK



by Nick Honachefsky
nickymagnum@hotmail.com

The first waves of October striped bass were just outside of casting range over the third weekend in October as boaters tied into loads of 30- to 45-inch fish. And just like every October, I expect they'll push into the surf during the week of the new moon on October 21, fingers crossed. As we button up the surf reports at the Jersey Shore on Sunday, October 19 for the November edition, blackfishing has been super-hot off the inlets and jetties tip to tip of the state, but the fall run of striped bass should be officially underway as you're reading this.

Dan from the Tackle Box in Hazlet said there are bass already hitting chunks and NLBN shads on the Keansburg Pier as of mid-October, while anglers fishing the riverbanks have been pulling stripers on the new Rigatoni shads. A few stripers were reported at the tip of Sandy Hook and Parking Lot C while the bayside of Sandy Hook gave up some action on metal lipped swimmers.

Kyle at Fishermen's Supply in Point Pleasant said tautog fishing has been really solid at the Manasquan Inlet and canal system as green crabs on tog jigs are getting the job done. There were reports of bass crashing outside of the Squan Inlet on Saturday the 18th but no reports of them close enough for surfcasters.

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Frank over at **Gabriel Tackle** in Brick said seas were still settling down from the nor'easter when we spoke, and he said there wasn't much to report from the surfside, only that the inlet has had a bunch of tog snapping on green crabs. The river system bulkheads have had small stripers hitting soft baits at night.

Philly Billy of **Charlie's Bait and Tackle** in Normandy Beach said the surf was still a little stained from the previous week's nor'easter heading into the third weekend of October, with slim striper reports coming, but he expected things to pick up around the new moon. The tog bite in the canal and the inlet is going strong. You can always toss mullet out to find smaller blues which should rebound this week.

I stopped in at **Grumpy's Tackle** in Seaside Park and Sean reported stripers were crashing outside but only within eyesight of surfcasters. Everybody is waiting for the fish to move in close which many think will happen on October's new moon. The shop now has live eels in stock, so be sure to grab a few and liveline back to the bass in the surf and off the north jetty.

John of **Betty and Nicks** in Seaside Park said reports came in of bass blowing up bait schools in the area but did not come in close enough yet to cast to from shore. Everybody is running the beaches watching for the schools to come in close enough to launch poppers or Ava jigs to, and it's only a matter of time at this point. Tog fishermen have been in their glory as the north jetty is super hot with green crabs getting the job done.

At the **Hook House** in Toms River, everybody is waiting for the northern wave of bass to move into the Island Beach State Park area and now that it's driveable again look for stripers to hit hard during the night hours. Bayside crabs are still clawing away at bunker baits along with spot and croaker on Fishbites.

Greg of **Fisherman's Headquarters** in Ship Bottom said the tog bite at the Barnegat Inlet south jetty is lights out and some quality tog pushing 5 pounds are there to gobble up green crabs. Stripers should be on the feed now along LBI at the north and south ends near the inlets so start tossing plugs on the night shift. Don't forget, you have until the end of November to register in the 71st Annual LBI Surf Fishing Classic, the old "Derby" is still running strong for LBI surfcasters. In addition to striped bass and bluefish, there are also cash prizes for tautog during this annual island-wide surf classic.



Eryk Lewandowski found a solid striper bite at Indian River Inlet back on April 19, managing a total of 73 stripers from 18 to 27 inches while fishing bucktails along the jetty rocks.



Paul Marrandino and his son Drew herded a couple of sheep in the Brigantine area over the summer.

Andy at **Riptide Bait and Tackle** in Brigantine said the Brigantine jetty is loaded with blackfish and he has all the crabs you need to get the job done. Stripers are still whacking in the backwaters and may spill out front with the new moon tides this week. Start plugging or tossing live eels and chunk baits out.

At **Fin-Atics** in Ocean City, Brady mentioned some small bluefish are still patrolling around, while stripers are sticking around the bridges at night, especially at Corson's, Longport Bridge and the 9th Street bridge where they are pouncing on 4- to 5-inch paddletails or hard bait SP Minnows. Togging is still nice off the Longport Pier while there have been some rumors of some weakfish and kingfish off the surf post storm swell.

Down in Cape May at **Hands Too Bait and Tackle**, Nick said some stripers have been moving around near the inlet areas and off the back

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NEWS BRIEF - NJ MARINE FISHERIES COUNCIL MEETS NOV. 6

By Jim Hutchinson, Jr.

The bimonthly meeting of the New Jersey Marine Fisheries Council (Council) will be held on Thursday, November 6 starting at 5 p.m. at the Galloway Township Branch of the Atlantic County Library located at 306 East Jimmie Leeds Road in Galloway.

The council consists of eleven members appointed by the Governor, with the consent of the Senate. The makeup of the council is set by statute and is composed of four sports fishermen, two active commercial fin fishermen, one active fish processor, two members of the general public, and the chairman of the two sections of the Shellfisheries Council. The following membership of the Council are not paid:

Dr. Patrick Donnelly, Chairman (Sportfish)
Dr. Eleanor Ann Bochenek (Public)
Richard N. Herb (Sportfish)
Warren Hollinger (Del. Bay Shellfish Council)
Greg Hueth (Sportfish)
Walter L. Johnson, III (Atl. Coast Shellfish Council)
Jeff Kaelin (Processor)
Joe Rizzo (Commercial)
Robert R. Rush, Jr. (Sportfish)
John Tiedemann (Public)
Kevin Wark (Commercial)

As per state statute, the Council is responsible for contributing to the preparation and revision of

bay sod banks hitting on Storm shads and Mag Darters. A few bluefish are running around the beaches with some blackfish gobbling up greenies on the rockpiles at the Coast Guard Jetty. There's definitely been a few weakfish around but guys are keeping it *hush hush* as to where and on what. When things get that quiet, you can expect that there are probably a few speckled trout in the mix as well by this point of the season.

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fisheries management plans and advising the commissioner the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP on policies of the department and in the planning, development, and implementation of all departmental programs related to marine and shellfish. The Council is also empowered to disapprove, within 60 days of the proposal, any rule or regulation or any amendment thereto proposed by the commissioner. The board also submits to the commissioner any recommendations for new rules and regulations or revision to existing rules and regulations which it deems necessary for the proper operation of an effective marine fisheries program.

The Marine Fisheries Council assembles Council Advisory Committees to discuss issues for a particular species, group of species, gear type, or other fishery management topics. These Committees consist of three to five Council members and several citizen advisors. Prospective advisors must apply for appointment by completing an Advisory Committee Application that will provide the applicant's background, experience, and reason for interest in being an advisor.

For more information and details on the November 6th meeting contact the NJDEP's Division of Fish & Wildlife at 609-748-4344.

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Kurtis Walrath with a 6.3-pound bluefish he caught putting him in first place for Nick Honachefsky's Barrier Island Beach Brawl tournament.

Keyport Fishing Pier

BY WALTER JOHNG

Located in northern Monmouth County, Keyport is a town rich with a connection to the water. Founded in the 1700s, Keyport was once a crucial port for fishing, oystering, and ship manufacturing. Although the town's oystering and ship manufacturing has gone, the town has now become a bayside paradise, still maintaining a strong fishing industry with charter boats such as the *Keyport Princess* docked nearby.

The Keyport Fishing Pier has year after year been one of the most consistent spots along Raritan Bay. Stretching 300 feet into the water, the fishing pier allows access for fishermen to reach deeper hard to reach pockets loaded with fish. With stripers, blues, fluke, weakfish, spots, and croaker, the pier is an ideal location for beginner, avid, and experienced fishermen alike.

Stripers swarm the pier in both the spring and fall on their annual migrations with blues usually tailing close behind. Spots, croaker, weakfish, and fluke call the bay home in the summer into early fall. No matter what you are after you will catch fish and have a good time.

Directly behind the fishing pier, there is a large, expansive parking lot with benches and trash cans available for comfort. Depending on where and how far you park, you will only be a few steps away from the pier. Multiple establishments are nearby, including the Keyport Fishery for fresh food, along with several shops, and bait stores. Because the pier is in the heart of lower Keyport, almost everything you might need is a short walk away.

For bait, tackle, gear, or just a report on fishing conditions, Up Front Bait and Tackle is a great place to stop by. They always have everything that you need, no matter what species you are chasing. Capt. Steve Haasz, owner of Upfront Bait and Tackle, has been fishing Keyport and its surrounding area for over 50 years, four of which were spent chartering. "Keyport Pier is an excellent place to fish, especially for kids or beginners looking to experience fishing for the first time," Haasz told me, adding how spring brings in stripers, followed closely by blues, with spots, snappers, and fluke arriving with the warm summer water, with stripers of course returning again in the fall.

For Raritan Bayshore bait, Capt. Steve swears by bloodworms. "They are the best bait all around, everything eats them," he added. When bloodworms are expensive, sandworms and lugworms work well. "Snappers and blues hit spearing and bunker, while stripers will take bunker or bloodworms," he noted, adding fluke baits during the summer include killies, spearing, or bunker, while weakfish prefer sandworms and peanut bunker, especially live. "The live peanut bunker always works the best," he added.

In terms of fishing the pier, Haasz advised the best times of day to go are 3 hours before and after high tide when the fish are most active. During the summer season giant crabs have also been caught, with one measuring an impressive 8-1/4 the largest on record. For fish and crabs, the Keyport Pier is a great location for family fishing. "One of the best parts about the pier is when a kid catches their first fish, the smiles on their faces never get old," Haasz added.

The pier is public so you will not have to worry about admission although it is heavily monitored by New Jersey's Fish and Wildlife conservation officers; they are always measuring and checking fish in compliance with the state's fishing regulations. If you don't already have it make sure to get your free saltwater fishing registry at *saltwaterregistry.nj.gov*.

The Keyport Fishing Pier remains one of Monmouth County's best fishing destinations for anglers and families alike. From small snapper blues and spot to large stripers, blues, and even giant blue claw crabs, there is truly something for everyone. The pier is not only a fishing establishment, it is also an area for people to relax and enjoy the view of the Raritan Bay.

If hitting the pier this fall, gear up at Up Front Bait and Tackle at 229 W. Front Street in Keyport, NJ (732-497-0919).



The Keyport Fishing Pier extends out onto the Raritan Bay from 1 American Legion Drive in Keyport, NJ.

Monsters At Che Fa Rip

BY RAY LITTLEFORD



Sometimes a hunch turns into a moment that stays with you forever.

Our Nantucket crew included old "lure maker" Bruce, George "thickset outdoorsman", "nimble" Janski, and me "tenacious plugger". A sparse group, but full of surf fishing skill wandering the water's edge. Fishing hard with little reward for two days, the ever-changing weather had suddenly turned cruel. As a roaring nor'easter settled over the island, we decided to take a break with a decent dinner after sunset. Leaving the beach, wet sand was driven sideways by the incessant 35-knot winds, with the forecast for more of the same.

Dinner was an affair where friends become great friends, sharing in moments you could never plan that just happened. We spoke of huge striped bass, certainly ladies, but mostly we laughed; gut-busting ridicule towards each other, with a gusto only trusted friends could understand. Solemn conversation followed as to where our next efforts would begin. My thoughts turned to the east side of the island and a narrow spit, Coskata-Coatue Wildlife Refuge, with its Great Point. It was named "Che fa Rip" evolving from the Italian version of, *what are you doing at the rip*? With the tides and wind at a peculiar polarity, great plumes of saltwater could be seen spraying 40 feet high, and the crew insulted me for even mentioning this spot during a nor'easter. But I knew it was perfect for the cup-shaped pocket at the tip point of the island.

After a few hours of sleep, I tried waking the crew around 3 a.m., greeted by obscenities, and death threats. But with the help of strong coffee, we headed off towards the "Rip." The storm lengthened our bumpy ride to the point, approaching from the back side at close to 5 a.m. in a cranking nor'easter. Most seasoned surf anglers drove in the dark or used amber colored fog lights mounted close to the ground, and as we neared the point we noticed a few Rhode Islanders we met the year before fishing the backside, wind at their backs, casting huge plugs with no one hooked up.

We pulled around the pocket but could barely make out a black and white surf boiling with 30-mile per hour madness. A steep sloping wash made plugging look not only foolish but treacherous. I left the truck first, but it would be 20 minutes before I saw first light. With stiff winds in my face, it was difficult to tell if my plug even made it past the first wave. Ten minutes later, George was plugging beside me. We could barely keep our eyes open with the wind-driven salt spray and rain. As first light finally broke, I began sneaking closer to the pounding wash. Plugging with stout Gibbs lures, I squinted through the turbulence and finally began to focus, seeing two enormous black and silver serpents rolling 25 feet in front of me. I edged closer and barely made out four more directly behind. There were no formed waves, only crashing walls of angry saltwater. Fixed on the striped mirages, I was nearly vacuumed into the froth by leg-dragging backwash.

First light is a mystical moment on the beach. Shadows become forms, forms become veiled items, and dawn proudly announces these items as sharp images. "George there are monster stripers rolling in the wash," I shouted over the thundering surf, "just keep your plug in the water!" He returned a nonchalant look as I smiled back and walked to the right, then hearing his screaming reel drag not three steps away. Looking over my shoulder, George was now staring back in wide-eyed disbelief. As if awakened from the dead, Janski and Bruce finally emerged. Light enough to survey the boiling surf, everyone knew it was a special time. Just as the greyish dawn arrived, seven men were in paradise.

George finally coaxed his fish into the wash. I'm not exactly sure, but I think Janski gaffed the enormous linesider. We all knew it was a 50-pounder and vigorously began plugging with visions of the huge fish. "Fish on," rang out for two hours. The driven rain slackened, but the wind cranked on. A huge tumbling surf caught an old goateed Rhode Islander in the dangerous backwash as he was trying to land a freight train of a fish. He disappeared for a second and I glanced up seeing Janski grabbing his gaff, thinking the worst. Facing up the slope on his knees, the wave's backwash receded, his arms and legs whirling like a desperate sand crab. He scooted up the slope snatching his half-buried rod. Knowing he was safe, everyone kept right on plugging.

The total count may not be correct, around 13 as I recall. George had two, a 51- and 42-pounder; Bruce a 40 and 35; Janski lost two huge fish; and I landed a 38-pounder that morning. Spirits renewed, our crew did have a scare when Bruce started having chest pains on the drive back. Stopping at the Wauwinet Gatehouse to air-up our tires, he downed a nitrate drug with a massive slug of Blackberry Brandy, and 10 minutes later he seemed fine and ready for breakfast. We bypassed the Cottage Hospital. It was the perfect morning, except that my son was not with me.

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RULES OF THE ROAD:

New technology will also require a new level of sportsmanship, etiquette and fair play.

TROLLING MOTOR etiquette

BY CAPT. BRETT TAYLOR



A view from the helm as the author plots a course using his 8- to 12-mile radar to find a suitable, quiet location for spot-locking.

It was a hot, late-July morning when I brought my charter to one of the fluke wrecks which had produced good numbers of fish on my past few trips. We started the morning doing a bunch of drifts on the four-person charter, using our Minn Kota trolling motor to orient ourselves, keeping the boat perpendicular to the drift line which helped to minimize tangles. Unfortunately the wreck where we started was relatively dead only producing two keeper fluke and was not enough action for my liking.

With the slower bite, I decided to hit another larger, broken-up wreck about a mile south. As we came upon the wreck, there was a vessel electronically anchored in position also known as "spot-locking". The two anglers aboard the spot-locked vessel were jigging vertically for fluke, but were on the far, northeastern part of the wreck. In effort to stay out of their way, we motored and drifted the southwestern end of the structure keeping a 40- to 50-yard distance from the other vessel.

After repeated hook-ups and netting one or two keepers on each of the first half-dozen drifts, the crew on the other vessel must have noticed our action and motored directly into the middle of our drift lines, anchoring in place where we netted fish and essentially cutting us out of our drift. As I approached on my next drift reset, I slowed down and politely asked if they were spot-locking in that spot. The angler replied that he was and pointed out "you don't own the wreck".

At this point, I tried to let them know that it was fine for them to be drifting the area, and even to drift our same drift lines, telling them how my guys picked up six keepers. But I only asked if they'd consider not "anchoring" there in our drift paths. A barrage of obscenities followed with the ignorant angler claiming he didn't care, and quote, "I can fish however I want". I let him know that we would still drift the area, but that I would work around him.

We continued to work our drift lines moving past the vessel, keeping a 15-foot or more distance on either side. After two subsequent drifts, he asked if I was a charter and I replied "yes I was". He then called me "unprofessional" and promptly left the area.

The Atlantic sandbox is pretty big, but there are a limited number of wrecks and reef sites depending on the area you fish, so a level of etiquette and respect should be used so we can all play fairly.

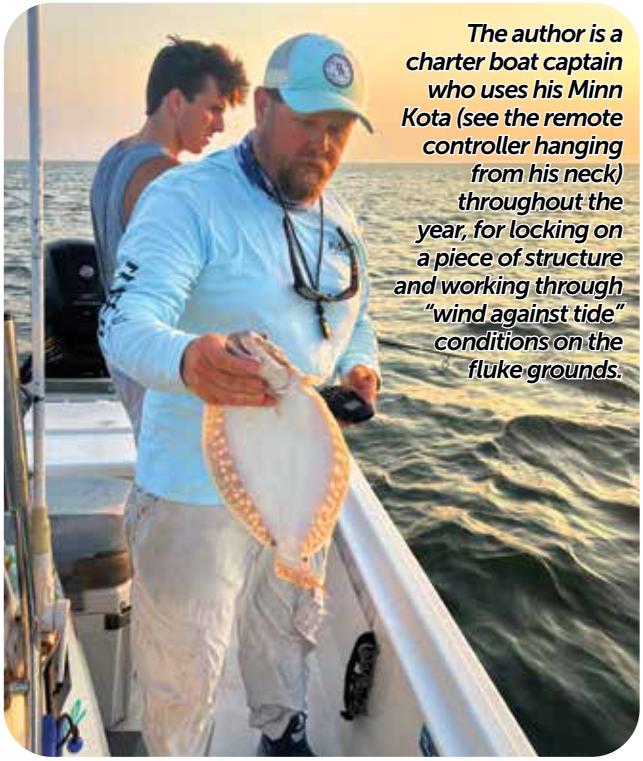
RISE OF THE MACHINES

More and more vessels are employing the new technologies of GPS-based trolling motors with a host of companies in the market for saltwater anglers. The trolling motor revolution has hit the Northeast by storm and for good reason as the technology provides increased fishing opportunities to anglers via boat orientation, lure presentation and e-anchoring over wrecks, etc. But as with any new technology, a level of sportsmanship, etiquette and playing fair must be practiced so experiences or conflicts like the above-mentioned one doesn't happen.

Trolling motors have been around for almost a century, with the first one developed for use in 1934 by O.G. Schmidt. He fashioned an old Ford Model "A" starter with a flexible shaft and a propeller for quiet operation of vessels on lakes. Fast forward to today and you'll find electric motors carrying 36 volts of power to motor or keep vessels up to 30-feet in length on specific GPS locations by the push of a button.

The newer motors have shaft lengths from 48 to 120 inches with some even employing auto-stow and deploy technologies. The saltwater trolling motor revolution started in the southern states – Florida in particular – with a host of professional charter captains and guides employing the technologies. Within the past 10 years, the surge has traveled up the East coast to Maine with anglers using the motors for a variety of fisheries from wreck-based to drift-based... and everything in between.

Suffice to say, the saltwater electric trolling motor has been a true game-changer. But with any new technology, a host of issues can arise, making anglers more effective while leading to arguments over prime real estate on the fishing grounds.



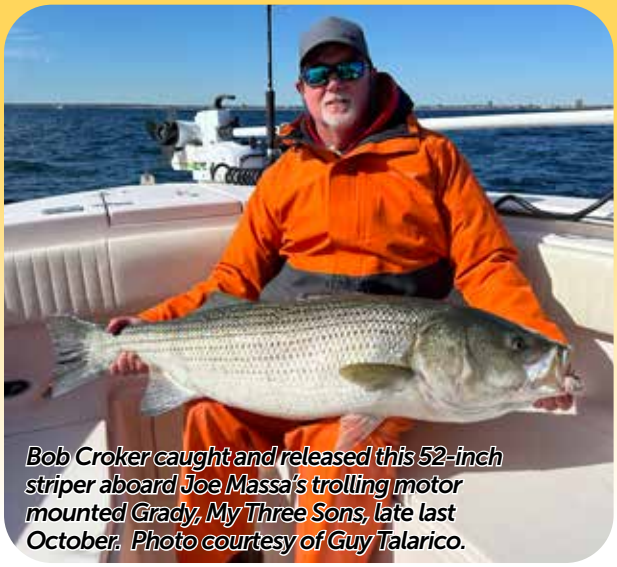
The author is a charter boat captain who uses his Minn Kota (see the remote controller hanging from his neck) throughout the year, for locking on a piece of structure and working through "wind against tide" conditions on the fluke grounds.

ON THE HOOK

Currently, the United States Coast Guard (USCG) does not have specific rules, guidelines, and language dedicated for trolling motor-based "spot lock" technologies. The USCG does recognize this "new technology" and advises operators to follow general rules of the road. After researching and consulting with the USCG, they advise to treat "spot-locked" vessels as anchored vessels.

So what does this mean? Essentially, it means that vessels should

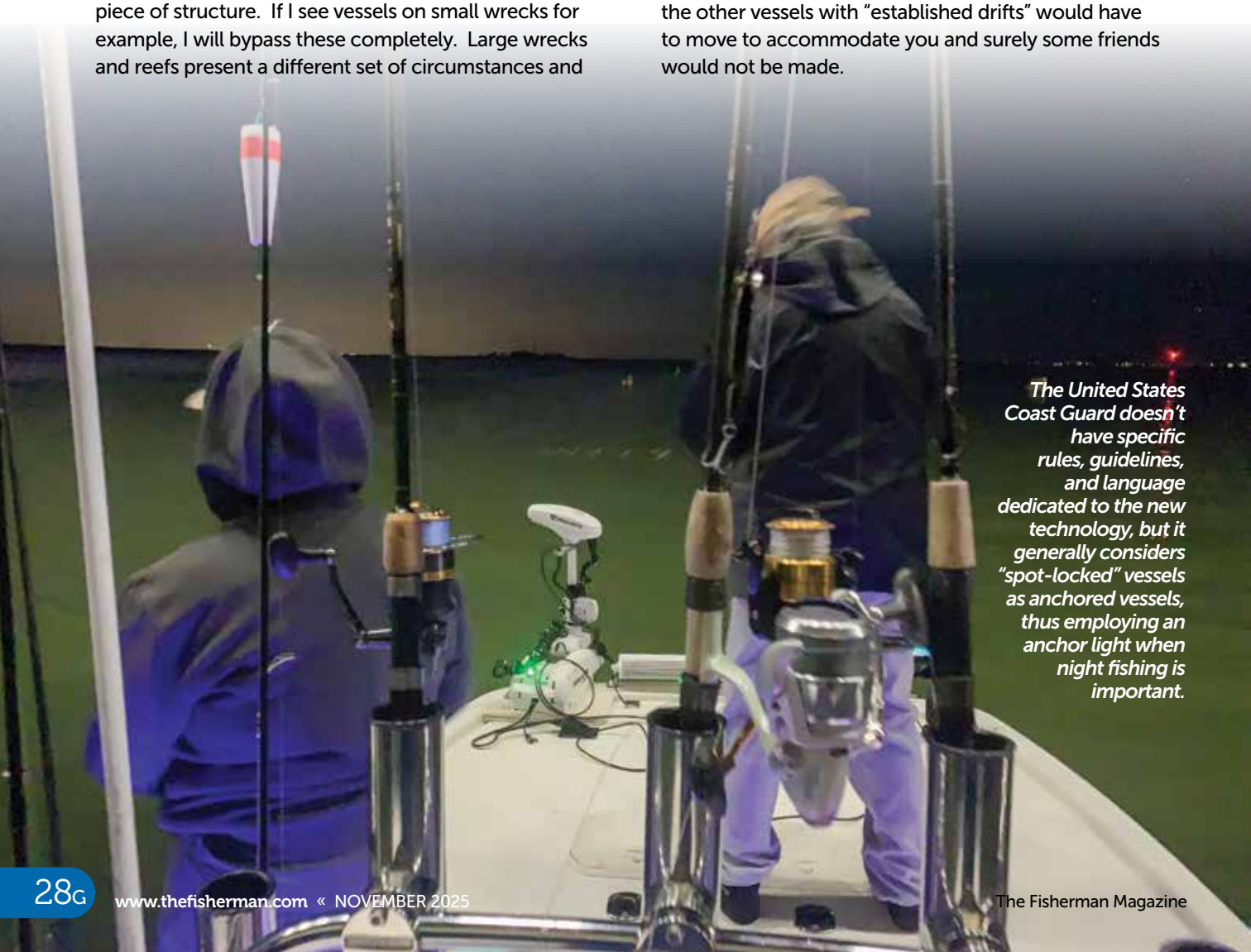
give way to the spot-locked vessel and treat as a vessel which has dropped the hook by maintaining a safe distance. But they also advise boaters to give precedence to fishing vessels or any boats that have already established a position or drifts in the specific area. In the above case at the start of the article, the vessel drifting was in the right and the vessel trying to spot-lock in the middle of the established drift paths was in the wrong. Unfortunately, there are no referees on the water and anglers have to try adhere to unspoken rules of courtesy and sportsmanship.



Bob Croker caught and released this 52-inch striper aboard Joe Massa's trolling motor mounted Grady, My Three Sons, late last October. Photo courtesy of Guy Talarico.

An "unwritten" nautical and angling rule is to be "considerate" and not to squeeze onto someone's established fishing spot, especially if that vessel is already anchored. When wreck anchoring, I will often run the 8- to 12-mile radar as I'm heading out to desired piece of structure. If I see vessels on small wrecks for example, I will bypass these completely. Large wrecks and reefs present a different set of circumstances and anglers will have to be considerate as some wrecks can accommodate three to four smaller vessels. If you see a larger head-boat on the wreck, I would recommend staying away as these vessels providing access to their patrons have limited spots to fish due to their size. Dive boats are an absolute "no-no", so if you see the dive flag, find a new piece.

Drifting on the other hand usually doesn't present as much of a conflict, as long as the captains will keep a good distance between vessels. The use of the main engine or trolling motor allows anglers to work around each other and not impede the other parties' drift paths. Again, the USCG advises vessels to give precedence to anglers with already established drifts. It would be very inconsiderate to drop a trolling motor and slow down your drift, so now of all the other vessels with "established drifts" would have to move to accommodate you and surely some friends would not be made.



The United States Coast Guard doesn't have specific rules, guidelines, and language dedicated to the new technology, but it generally considers "spot-locked" vessels as anchored vessels, thus employing an anchor light when night fishing is important.

KNOW YOUR BOAT

In addition to the issues which can arise from an angler's inconsiderate use of technology, knowing how one's boat behaves also factors into "playing nice" out there. All boats are not created equal, especially ones with keels, which will drift slower being more effected by the current than the winds. Higher profile, keel-less vessels will tend to drift faster, especially when the winds pick up. Whether working wrecks, reef sites or bays, these types of vessels should wait and give ample time and space to other vessels when working similar areas.

Even if the fishing is red hot or a major blitz is going on, the last thing you want to do is drift into another boat, so keep distances spread apart the best you can. Trolling motors can help; if the wind picks up during the drift and your vessel starts getting on top of another, simply spot lock to allow the other vessel to gain space before proceeding with the drift.

The ocean is wide open and no one owns any particular spot or location, but when spots are occupied, working together via communication is the key. One of our charters this past summer was a perfect example on how communication works. When drifting a medium-sized wreck with my fluke charter, a 25-foot center console approached us with three anglers aboard. The operator asked us if we minded if he worked the same wreck, saying he would use his trolling motor to work around us and not mess us up. Communication went a long way and we ended up working together on the wreck, catching fish, and even exchanging fishing information out there. It's best to have an open mind and remember, we are all out there to enjoy the waters and catch fish.

Ultimately technology does not stop, and it will only continue to emerge in the world of fishing, aiming to make life easier and fishing easier, (or more effective in terms of catching). Some "aged salts" may complain of the ease and unfairness of the newer trolling motors as anglers can simply anchor on a wreck or spot with the push of a button. Of course, sending two hooks out to place a vessel dead-on a wreck takes knowledge, skill and a lot of practice, so kudos to those skippers. But none of us are going back to using parallel plotters, dead-reckoning, and sextants either! GPS allows us to plot a course or find a spot with a push of a button. Technology has pushed our fishing to the most efficiencies.

Consider the fact that many commercial vessels have full-on desktop computers with software that allows captains to plot their sets, drags, or hi-fliers with deadly accuracy increasing their yields tremendously. It's our responsibility as anglers to practice appropriate sportsmanship and stewardship.

A final word of advice to the trolling motor nation - if you see a head-boat or vessel double anchoring, avoid the potential conflict, go past and find another piece of structure. There are plenty of spots in the Atlantic sandbox to play nice.



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