

Priceless

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COASTAL FISHERMAN

VOLUME 48 • • • IS • • • MAY 3, 2023



Angler Christina Puglisi has had an epic spring! She went surf fishing in early April at the 3 R's in the Delaware Seashore State Park and tricked this 34" and 28 lb. black drum with sand fleas. It is our current Heaviest black drum for DE to date!



The crew of the Ocean City based charter boat "Boss Hogg" spent some time in Costa Rica in early March and got onto some great fish! Here Ted Riche shows off a beautiful roosterfish he caught with Glenn Orr and Howard Berger. They were fishing out of the Los Sueños Resort and Marina in Escazu', Costa Rica.



UPCOMING TOURNAMENT!

14th ANNUAL FRANKY PETTOLINA MEMORIAL DAY TOURNAMENT
 To benefit the Catherine & Charles Kratz Memorial Foundation and Scholarship Fund
 Registration: May 26, 6:30 - 8:00pm
 Fishing Days: (1 of 2) May 27 & 28
 Weigh-Ins: May 27 & 28 4:30-7:00pm at Sunset Marina

TOURNAMENT SERIES

2023 SCHEDULE

** You do NOT have to be a Member to Participate in this Tournament*

<p>44th ANNUAL SMALL BOAT TOURNAMENT Registration: June 23, 6:30-8:00pm Fishing Days: (1 of 2) June 24 & 25 Weigh-Ins: June 24 & 25, 3:00-6:30pm at Sunset Marina</p>	<p>41st ANNUAL CANYON KICK OFF * Registration: June 29, 6:30-8:00pm FREE TO PAID OCMC BOAT MEMBERS Fishing Days: (2 of 3) June 30, July 1 & 2 Weigh-Ins: June 30, July 1 & 2, 5:00-7:30pm at Sunset Marina</p>	<p>19th ANNUAL KID'S CLASSIC * To benefit the Wish-A-Fish Foundation Registration: July 21, 6:00-8:00pm Fishing Days: (1 or 2 of 2) July 22 & 23 Weigh-Ins: July 22, 3:00-6:30pm and July 23, 3:00-6:00pm at Sunset Marina</p>
<p>15th ANNUAL OCMC LADIES' TOURNAMENT "HEELS & REELS"* To benefit the Marlin Club Crew of OC Scholarship Fund Registration: August 3, 6:00-8:00pm Fishing Days: (1 of 2) August 4 & 5 Weigh-Ins: August 4 & 5 5:30-7:30pm at Atlantic Tackle</p>	<p>65th ANNUAL LABOR DAY WHITE MARLIN TOURNAMENT * Registration: August 30, 6:30-8:00pm Fishing Days: (2 of 3) September 1, 2, & 3 Weigh-Ins: September 1, 2, & 3 6:00-8:00pm at Sunset Marina</p>	<p>8th ANNUAL OCMC vs OCLTC SHOOT-OUT TBD</p> <p>45th ANNUAL CHARLES KRATZ & SCOTT SMITH CHALLENGE CUP Registration: Sept. 13, 6:00-8:00pm Fishing Days: (2 or 3) Sept. 14, 15 & 16 No Weigh-Ins</p>

Check for Updates on our **WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA**

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Jason Allport and Steve Maddox ripped up the surf off of Virginia's Assateague Island shoreline in early April. On this outing they had a busy day landing 22 black drum and this 46" striper. The biggest drum tipped the scales at 45 lbs. Their rig of choice was 7/0 circle hooks on both single and top/bottom rigs.



The flounder were active this year in April! 7 year old Callie LeCates of Ocean View, DE got in on the action landing this 17½" flatfish in the bay behind Ocean City. Not sure if the pretzel rods are for bait or snacks or both!

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Upcoming Tournaments

- Old Inlet Bait & Tackle hosts the **Delaware Seashore Spring Surf Fishing Tournament** on May 6th. This event offers over \$2,000 in cash and prizes. Visit OldInlet.com for more.
- The **Lewes Harbour Marina** will hold the Joe Morris Memorial Canal Flounder Tournament on May 19th. This event raised awareness for the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network. For more info check Facebook or call (302) 645-6227.

Welcome to our readers for another season of the Coastal Fisherman, our 48th year of sharing where the fish are and what you are catching! It looks like we have so far benefited from the mild winter and warm spring. The nearshore and bay fishing is already hopping with a strong run of black drum and big stripers being caught off the beaches of Assateague with sand fleas. Our first summer flounder of the season was also reported in late April, and it has been followed by many nice catches. Most from the Eastern Shore of Virginia, as well as the Ocean City bays. A surprising number of keeper rockfish are also being found near the Rt. 50 Bridge. You can find lots of details in our regional DE, MD and VA fishing reports!

Canyon fishing offshore this time of year is usually slow, and this year is no exception. Most captains spent March & early April getting final boat preparations completed as well as setting up the tackle. It's good to see the marinas starting to fill up as the yard crews splash boat

after boat, it is really something to see each spring. We are also getting word from the crews that spend the winters in warmer southern climates on plans for returning north. Based on our conversations with a few captains, we expect to see some charters heading out for some tile fishing, weather permitting, with the bulk of the fleet waiting for the sea bass season to open on May 15th. Always a crazy day, this year's opener is on a Monday.

So, in preparation, or anticipation of some offshore action we look to sea temperature reports and to what is being caught in the Outer Banks of NC. The good news is that we are seeing reports of some eddies with warmish 60° water just outside the Wilmington and Poor Man's Canyons, about 80 some miles. Even warmer water in the upper 60°s is

being seen about 120 miles out, east of the Norfolk Canyon. The image here is from April 25th before the last storm came through, so hopefully it has moved even closer since then. Reports from the Outer Banks are also strong with solid yellowfin tuna catches and several bigeyes as well. The mahi action is also good even though there is not much seagrass or flotsam yet. We take this as another promising sign for a good start to the season! Hopefully the chance of getting another 4 day Nor'easter like we had last Mother's Day is low!

Either way, the Coastal Fisherman will keep you in the know on what is being caught and where.

On a final note ... the Annual Ocean City Reef Foundation Dinner will resume after a several year absence due to the pandemic. This year's will be held at Hooper's Crab House on May 7th from 2-5PM. This is one of the primary fundraisers for the OCRF and offers lots of items for auction. Details are on Facebook, please let them know if you plan to participate so they can plan accordingly! §

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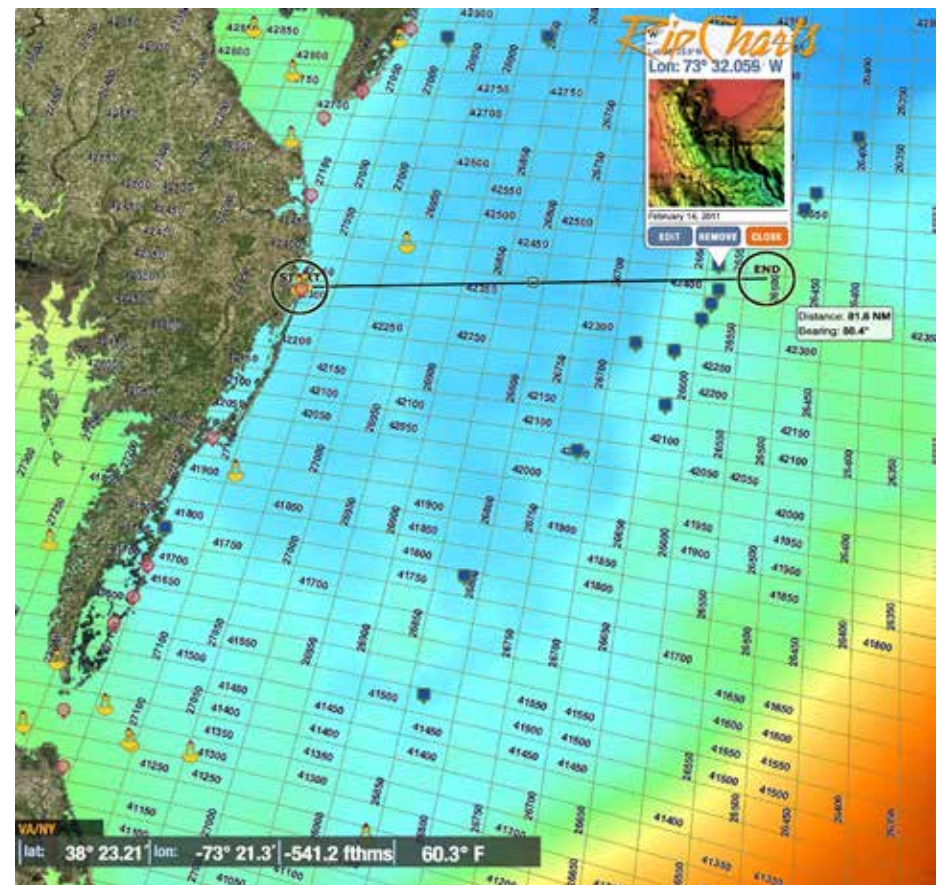
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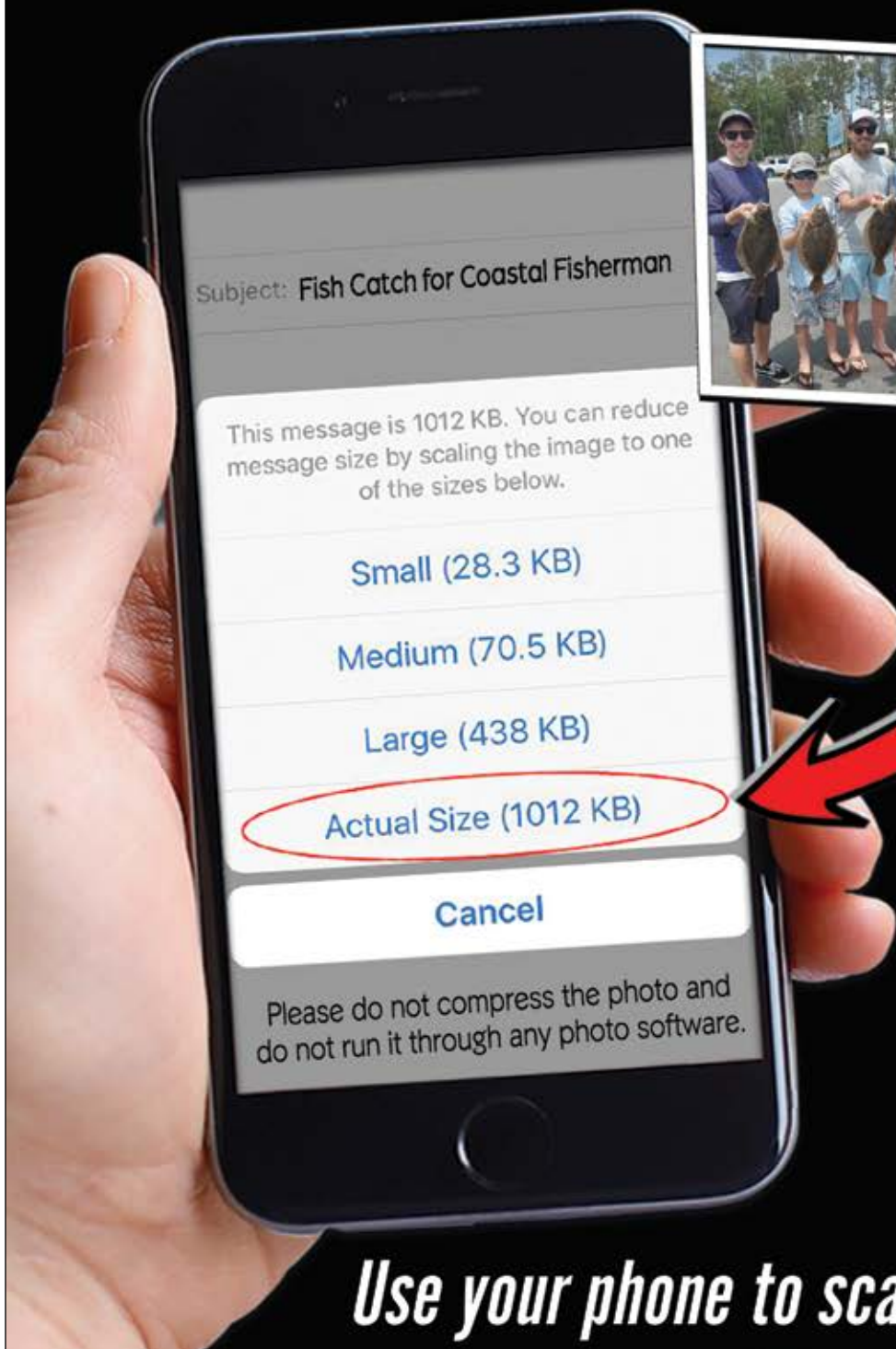
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Share Your CATCH WITH US!

The 2023 fishing season is here and we are excited to capture the moments in the COASTAL FISHERMAN! Whether it's surf fishing, a private boat or charter service, send us your catch for us to review.



ALWAYS send your fish catch photos at **ACTUAL SIZE**

INCLUDE IN THE EMAIL:

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- Names & towns of others in photo
- Weight and/or length of fish
- Bait & Lure used
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Renee Johnson had a good day fishing from her tricked out wave runner! She fooled this 20" flounder using a Roy Rig under the Rt. 90 Bridge in mid April. She also managed to tangle with a couple of horse shoe crabs that snagged her gear!

OC local Amy Bear Burbage had a great week fishing the wrecks off of Key West, FL this winter. On this trip with Dave Allen and Capt. Tyler Nonn with Tidewater Charters of Cape Charles, VA, she connected with this beautiful & difficult to catch permit fish. The crew also hooked up with some tarpon.

2023 DELAWARE REGULATIONS

STATE WATERS ONLY

 <p>BLACK SEA BASS 13" minimum / 15 per person/day May 15 - December 11</p>	 <p>BLUEFISH No minimum size 3 per day / 5 per day Charter</p>	 <p>BLACK DRUM 16" minimum 3 per person/day</p>	 <p>COBIA 37" Minimum • 1 per person or vessel</p>
 <p>CROAKER 8" Minimum • No Limit</p>	 <p>RED DRUM 20-27" minimum 5 per person/day</p>	 <p>SHEEPSHEAD No limit</p>	 <p>SPECKLED TROUT 12" minimum No creel limit</p>
 <p>STRIPED BASS 28-35" except 20-25" only from 7/1 - 8/31 in DE Bay 1 per person/day Catch & Release only from 4/1 - 5/31 on Spawning Grounds</p>	 <p>SUMMER FLOUNDER 16" minimum 4 per person/day</p>	 <p>TAUTOG 16" minimum 4 per person/day 1/1 - 5/15 4 per person/day 7/1 - 12/31</p>	 <p>WEAKFISH 13" minimum 1 per person/day</p>

eregulations.com



The smile on Ryan Kleban's face is contagious as he shows off this 2 lb. 4oz. white perch he caught on April 13th. He was fishing in Pot Nets Bayside and used a jig to land this jumbo, earning a Delaware Citation!



Anglers on the Delaware beaches in April were targeting drum and rockfish, however a few of them landed some fun little fish! Gina Menaquale-Borkowski was one and shared this happy little pufferfish.

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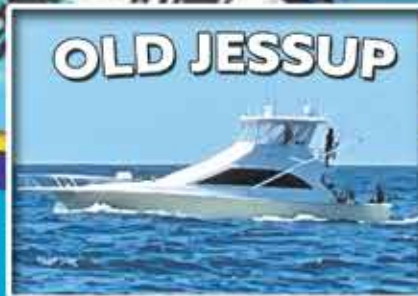
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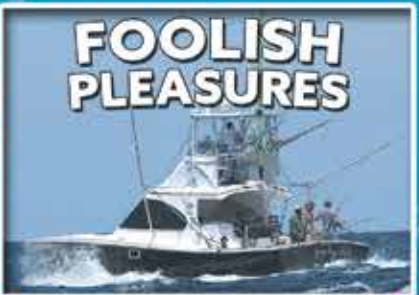
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Capt. Nick Skidmore 717-615-0644



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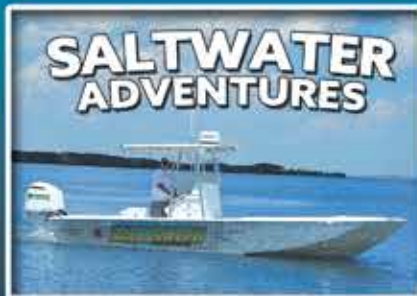
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Several crews from our area headed down to Los Suenos Resort and Marina in late March for Leg 3 of the Signature Triple Crown Billfish Tournament. This crew on the "D.A. Sea" participated in both the Ladies Only event and the Signature series. The ladies released 7 sailfish in their 1 day event placing in 6th Place. During the 3 Signature day event the crew released 13 sails and 3 marlins to earn 2,800 points. Pictured are Capt. Anthony Pino, Chris Pino, Riner Rodrigues, Mark Stephens, Ed Dunn, Capt. Clemico Rodrigues, Rod Taylor, Pam Taylor, Valerie Dunn, Michelle Jenkins and Kelly Stephens.

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Parker Pastorius was one serious angler when he showed up at Rick's Bait & Tackle in Long Neck, DE to get this tog weighted! He had been fishing at Site 11 when he connected with this 8.2 lb. blackfish, heavy enough to earn a Delaware Adult Citation recognition.



Our resident fish-a-holics Big Bird Cropper & Shaun Flaherty did not waste any time getting on the water this season. This trip to the Rt. 50 Bridge in early April saw all the schoolie rockfish they wanted to catch and Shaun even caught a shad. The lure of choice was of course Big Bird's Roy Rig.

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OCEAN CITY FISHING REPORT

by Capt. BJ Pietryak



Spring has sprung and the water and weather are warming very quickly. On the southern side at Assateague Island, drum have shown up early with several over slot stripers thrown in for good measure. On the near shore wrecks, tog are plentiful and in larger size. The back bays are really showing a good start to flounder and we are even seeing a few weakfish thrown in.

Black Drum & Rockfish

As you would guess, when the water warms and the sun gets warmer, surf fishermen start hitting the beaches of Assateague Island and target both stripers as well as big black drum. David Edwards was out on his first time looking for black drum on Assateague and went 2 for 2 for the day. Not a bad start on a fish that is not easy to catch! David Moore also fished the island along with Morgan Mericle and

landed 8 blacks, all of the larger size. Sand fleas and Fishbites are the go to bait this spring with fresh clam being a close second. Gary Harmison caught a big black drum on sand fleas and clams. It was a banner day for Steve Maddox and crew on the 7th of April when they beached a total of 12 black drum and a beautiful rockfish. The drum were in the 30-50 lb. range with the striper looking to be around 40". Joseph Perzanowski went 3 for 4 on drum on the 10th of April. He caught all them using salted clams topped with Fishbites. Joseph reports he had very little activity until the tide started coming in and that was when the bite turned on. The largest fish was 40 lbs., with the smallest one around 20 lbs. Joe mentioned he was about 3 miles from the Virginia line. David Moore also fished near the VA line and was rewarded with a nice overslot rockfish. Bill

Bannon fished this area and got a nice black on clam and sand fleas. Gary Harmison got in on the early bite while surf fishing the island and caught a few perfect eating size drum on sand fleas and Fishbites. Chase Ruhi fished the early morning low tide and lost a big fish while fishing fresh clam, however he did manage a nice drum on sand fleas and Fishbites. Chase, usually an inshore guy, said he just had to try the surf with all the reports of big fish being caught up and down the coast. Chris Siperko also dragged a nice black drum onto the beach with his late afternoon bite. Most anglers are stating that the best bite is early in the morning or late in the afternoon with the best tide being incoming just after a low tide. Many anglers only use clams for drum in the spring, however, given the vast amount of fish being caught on sand fleas and Fishbites, I think it would

behoove anglers to try the sand flea method even if you have never fished for drum this way before. Most anglers are putting a piece of Fishbites on their 6/0-8/0 circle hook and then spearing 3-4 sand fleas above that. Fishbites make a variety of clam, shrimp, and sand flea flavors in their EZ Bites. Dave Forester and his wife got a nice black drum to bring home for dinner this past week. Drum should get even better over the next couple of weeks so now is the time to get out and catch some of the trophy fish. As a last note for Assateague Island, the bluefish are beginning to show up with some nice slammers coming in on the gear fished for drum and rockfish as well as mullet rigs. David Moore reported a nice 38" blue off the surf on bunker.

Flounder & Tog

The back bays are alive with nice catches of flounder being reported every day. The odd catch of the past week was a weakfish caught off the OC jetty. Very early for this fish... hopefully that's a sign of a good season to come. "Get Sum Charters" returned to the dock with some nice flounder this past

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www.coastalfisherman.net week. John Foreman reported the Thorofare is hot but don't count out dog and bitch island. John fished using pink Gulp as well as strip baits. Renee Johnson fished a Roy Rig under the Rt.90 Bridge and caught a nice 20" fluke. Luke Wrye struck out for tog at Martha's Landing but when he switched to flounder he got 2 nice keepers in the Thorofare. Thomas Cline reported his first keeper flounder of the year but reported only 2 bites all day. Patrick Butler was near the airport using a tandem rig with Gulp and 1 oz. sinker and did manage one fish which was an inch short unfortunately. Also, the back bays are showing signs of life with blues and small rockfish along the bridges and rock walls.

Craig "Big Bird" Cropper was at it as usual catching blues, shad, and rockfish on his famous Roy Rigs. Shaun even managed a keeper rockfish on April 17 while fishing with Big Bird. Luke Wrye got a bunch of small stripers as well as a few bluefish off the Rt. 50 Bridge.

As we look to the near shore wrecks the tog bite has been very productive. "Double Trouble Charters" said his clients had to fish hard but were rewarded with some nice fish up to 17 lbs. All of the double digit fish were released. Way to go guys, protecting the future of our fishery releasing the breeders. Not an easy thing to do when you're holding such a nice tasty fish. Tommy Clendaniel caught a 9.9 and a 8.7 lb. blackfish on ocean structure. He also caught a limit on another outing. Bill Marshal fished Site Ten just over the DE line and caught a big 13.5 lb. 28" tog on sand fleas. Billy Mister got a nice fish while out fishing on the 23rd of April. "Fish Bound Charters" was their usual fish catching experts this past week releasing over 25 double digit fish. 4 out of 5 trips saw a boat rule of 3 fish per person limits. They reported that the fish didn't come easy but all had a great time. The biggest fish was a beautiful 18 pounder that was released unharmed. Ted Proseus tossed back 14 keeper tog and kept 4 for the table. His keeper fish were up to 6 lbs.

Until next week...
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The striper action has been hot up and down the coast. Night owls Morgan Mericle and Willie Hussman tried their luck off the Rt. 50 Bridge in mid April and were rewarded with some nice fish. Morgan caught a 29" keeper striper and Willie (pictured) caught a 40" rock, a personal best for him. Both were tricked with swimbaits.

2023 MARYLAND REGULATIONS

STATE WATERS ONLY

 <p>BLACK SEA BASS 13" minimum / 15 per person/day May 15 - December 11</p>	 <p>BLUEFISH 8" minimum 3 per person/day or 5 per person/day Charter</p>	 <p>BLACK DRUM 16" minimum 1 per person/day up to 6 per boat/day</p>	 <p>COBIA 40" minimum 1 per person/day 6/15 - 9/15 Boat limit 2 for up to 2 anglers</p>
 <p>CROAKER 9" minimum 25 per person/day</p>	 <p>RED DRUM 18-27" minimum 1 per person/day</p>	 <p>SHEEPSHEAD 4 per person/day</p>	 <p>SPECKLED TROUT 14" minimum 4 per person/day</p>
 <p>STRIPED BASS 28-35" Less than 3 miles from shore 1 per person/day</p>	 <p>SUMMER FLOUNDER 16" minimum 4 per person/day</p>	 <p>TAUTOG 16" minimum 4 per person/day 1/1 - 5/15 2 per person/day 7/1 - 10/31 4 per person/day 11/1 - 12/31</p>	 <p>WEAKFISH 13" minimum 1 per person/day</p>

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Lots of local crews this winter participated in the Signature Triple Crown Billfish Tournament based out of the Los Sueños Resort and Marina on the west coast of Costa Rica. In late March this group participated in Leg 3 of the Triple Crown in both the Ladies Only & Signature events. The crew reeled in 3 sailfish during the Ladies 1 day event, and 5 sails and 2 marlin during the 3 day Signature Tournament. Pictured are mate Luis, Susan McCart, Scott Yates, Jill Yates, the future Mr & Mrs Ronnie Fields, James Breen, Capt. Sean Gallagher, Kyle O'Connor and mate Brandon. The anglers were Susan, Scott, Jill, Ronnie & Jackie.

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FISHING CHARTERS



What does a charter boat crew do when their boat is on the 'hard' for the winter in Maryland? They go south! The crew from the charter boat "Boss Hogg" spent some time in early March at the Los Sueños Resort & Marina in Escazu', Costa Rica and really got on the fish, especially mahi. Here Glenn Orr and Ted Riche share a couple of the bull dolphins they caught. Rounding out the crew was "Boss Hogg" owner Howard Berger.

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FISHING CHARTERS



Warm weather and clear water in mid April made favorable conditions for anglers. Andy Amrhein and his son Andrew from Pasadena, MD worked the outgoing tide in the south Ocean City Bay using Otter Tails and minnows to fool these 8 keeper flounders. They were fishing with Capt. Jason Mumford and mate Ethan Nock on the charter boat "Lucky Break"



Capt. Kane Bounds of the charter boat "Fish Bound" has been having an amazing spring tog season. So many trips with lots of fish and many in the double digits over 20 lbs. Jim Proferes boated this 16 lb. blackfish in early April at an Ocean Structure. All double digit togs were released on the "Fish Bound".

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FISHING CHARTERS



This group from Cabela's in Hamburg, PA had a *busman's holiday* and went fishing with Capt. Dave Caffrey on the charter boat "On the Run". They caught 4 keeper tog off of Martha's Landing just south of the Rt. 50 Bridge using green crabs. Pictured at Bahia Marina.



Angler Michael Ardente from Limerick, PA and mate Ethan Nock share their catch of 5 keeper flounder. They were fishing the outgoing tide with Capt. Jason Mumford on the "Lucky Break" and fooled the flatfish with minnows and Otter Tails on some old school jigs. Biggest fish was 19".

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FISHING CHARTERS



This is one of the first tog caught for 2023! Capt. Monty Hawkins on the headboat "Morning Star" took advantage of the nice weather the first week of January to get his crew on the meat (keeping male togs only!).

The headboat "Judith M" went out for a shakedown cruise with the crew and some friends despite iffy weather. They stayed within a couple miles of the beach and managed to catch 15 undersized togs and this keeper caught by Collin Hammond using only sand fleas. Colin's dad Capt. Walt Hammond was at the wheel.

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FISHING CHARTERS



This group was definitely too cool for school and instead went fishing with Capt. Dave Caffrey on the charter boat "On The Run". Vermont anglers Lesha, Luc & Emeri Rasco with Tyler Ritchie, Edie Curtain and Kristi Tatro caught 5 keeper flounder in the Thorofare using Gulp. Pictured at Bahia Marina.



Anglers on the "Fish Bound" saw all day action on this trip in mid April. Capt. Kane Bounds and mate Kevin Twilly put the crew onto 10 double digit togs with the largest at 14 lbs. The 6 man crew returned with their limit of 24 despite releasing all of the fish over 10 lbs!

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FISHING CHARTERS




The spring tog run had many epic catches and this was one of them. Hailey was fishing with Capt. Chase Eberle on the charter boat "Chasin' Tides" in late March when she landed this 32.35" and 19 lb. blackfish at an Ocean Structure. The weather was warm and look at that flat water!



Vince Panarello made the right choice last month when he chartered the "Katydid" based at Lewes Harbour Marina. He and his crew of 7 had an awesome weather day and hit their limit of 24 tog by 12:30.

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"That's why they call it fishing and not catching."

Gosh I hate to hear that term! Not that there's anything wrong with it, in fact, when someone makes that statement it usually means that they have a pretty good attitude about fishing. "You can't get them all the time - that's fishing!"

The reason I'm not so keen on hearing the term is because when I do it's usually at the end of an unsuccessful fishing trip and one of my charter clients is trying to be nice in response to my apologies for not catching fish that day. So it's not so much the statement as it is the situation that promotes it to be proclaimed in the first place. No matter how good the fishing has been or how good you are at doing it, there are always uncertainties, no guarantees, and there will always be days when... well - you know.

This whole "uncertainty" thing popped into my head the other day as I was returning home from what turned out to be a rather uneventful day of fishing. "Yes" we managed to catch a few fish, but we were hoping for a trip like the day before when we had awesome action from start to finish. Yet despite what seemed to be identical

conditions of wind, tide, and weather as the day before, things just didn't click and when it was all over we were left scratching our heads wondering what the heck happened overnight that either sent the fish scurrying off to some other corner of the planet or gave them all lockjaw. But "that's fishing". Right?

As I pondered what I should write about in the first issue of the Coastal Fisherman of 2023, I thought back to those two days and knowing that for the next few months I'll be spending a lot of effort trying to explain how to catch a fish. It struck me that maybe I should start the season off by highlighting a sampling of reasons why we sometimes might "not" catch fish. As a matter of fact, the more I thought about it, the more I realized that just from my own experiences I've got a lot to say about "not catching fish"! Being that I'm always looking for new topics to write about each week, I'm thinking too that throughout this season I might just pitch out more than a couple columns that might help steer anglers away from some of the goof-ups I've made over the years, and therefore, minimize the times that they don't catch fish.

To kick this series off, I thought it was best to have a short

discussion on a facet of fishing that a lot of anglers have in common, and that would be "bait". Certainly not all anglers use bait all the time, but at some point in their fishing career pretty much every fisherman will need to acquire and properly use some form of bait, and if bait is what you need to catch fish that day you really- really want to make sure you have good bait. Sure sometimes a fish will bite anything you throw in the water, but just as you'd probably prefer the fresh steak just coming off the grill rather than the leftover one that's been in the fridge for a few days, most fish are discretionary. When someone is having a slow day of fishing it very well could be that the fish they hope to catch just aren't into what they're serving up.

Fresh bait that's very recently caught and has never been frozen is almost always best. Of course a lot, if not most, bait is simply not available fresh unless you're in a position to catch it yourself. When it comes to fresh bait most tackle shops around here only sell "live" bait such as minnows, crabs, eels, and maybe spot. Other than that, their selection is going to be frozen (the next best thing to fresh) which is okay as long as it was properly caught, handled, packaged, quickly

frozen, hasn't been thawed and refrozen or been sitting in a freezer too long.

Ok, so let's start by having you walk into a top-notch tackle shop, grab a pack of bait from the freezer, pay for it and head out to your favorite fishing hole. It came from a reputable store so it should be good bait. Right? Wellll... not necessarily. Don't get me wrong I'm not suggesting that good shops would deliberately try and sell bad bait, but just like produce in a grocery store, mixed in with the good apples there's going to be some bad, or sometimes the whole shipment of apples are bad but somehow they still made it to the store shelves.

Anyway, regardless of whether it's a box of squid, a bag of shiners, a flat of butterfish, or a pack of ballyhoo, if you're going to spend your money on it, and bet the success or failure of your long awaited fishing trip on it, you better make sure it's the best it can be. Just like choosing food for your own consumption, when buying fresh or frozen bait you want to give it a thorough inspection before plunking down by the register. You wouldn't (or shouldn't) buy seafood for your own consumption that's all freezer burnt, stinky, and nasty looking. So why expect that a fish will take a bait that's anything but the best it can be? All kinds of packaging is used for bait and it's good to know what to look for to determine the quality of the bait inside.

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If the bait is vacuum packed - well sealed with no air so that the plastic is snug around the contents, look for a life-like color, clear eyes that aren't sunken-in and baits that aren't busted up or have a lot of broken fins or missing scales. Bait that comes in boxes such as squid, shiners, butterfish, mackerel, or whatever should be thoroughly inspected as boxes are never air tight. Always open the box and look at the bait. It shouldn't look dried out, shriveled up or covered with thick ice crystals. Learn to recognize the light colored, dried-out signs of something that is freezer burnt, it's a telltale indication that the bait is worthless.

So unless you're totally happy with spending your day "fishing" instead of "catching" it always pays to start your day with the best bait you can buy, catch or steal. Oh yeah, and remember too that the wonderfully fresh bait you started out with in the morning needs to stay that way right up to your last cast of the day. Maybe some discussions about that later... §



Our resident 'snake handler' Dick Wetzel has been back to his singular crusade to ride the rivers of the lower Eastern Shore of the invasive snakehead. He caught his 1st one for 2023 on March 30th at just under 10 lbs., and this 32½" and 11½ lb. beast a few weeks later. All on 3½" swim baits.

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Fish of the Year

(AS REPORTED TO THE COASTAL FISHERMAN - MUST BE OF LEGAL LIMIT AND REPORTED WITH PHOTO)

Species	2023	2022	Species	2023	2022
 New	April 19 Dave Moore Assateague Island	April 26 Morgan Mericle South OC Jetty			May 20 Mike Eid "HotLine" Fingers
 New	April 3 Jeremy Zinn 145th Street, OC	March 29 Jay Phillips Assateague Island			June 12 Richie Widmayer "HotLine" Baltimore Canyon
		June 11 Numen Bilal Fenwick Island Beach			May 17 Andrew Dietz "Take Em" SE Poor Man's
 New	March 27 Dakota Bittner Thorofare	April 3 Scott Lenox Thorofare			June 5 Chad Tingle "Sea Bear" Wilmington Canyon
		May 15 Jeremy Michalski Jack Spot			May 17 James Haren "Take Em" SE Poor Man's
		June 4 Blake Gunther OC Inlet			May 29 Adam Davidson "HotLine" East of Poor Man's
 New	April 15 Shaun Flaherty Rt. 50 Bridge	April 20 Shaun Flaherty Rt. 50 Bridge			June 4 The Crew "Espadon" Poor Man's Canyon
		March 27 Michael Guigley Stinky Beach			June 13 The Crew "Rhonda's Osprey" Poor Man's Canyon
		June 30 Tim McCartney "Chasin Tides" Hot Dog			June 6 Kevin Gibb "WRECKER" Baltimore Canyon

To report your catch, call the Coastal Fisherman at 410-213-2200 or email to coastalfisherman@comcast.net



The first catch of a keeper fish is always exciting news and one of the most anticipated is flounder. This year it was the one and only Dakota Bittner that took the honor. He caught this 16¾" flattie in only 7' of chilly 51° water in the Thorofare using live minnows on a top & bottom rig. He owes thanks to his fiancé Brittany Purnell for pushing to go out that day!



We think Jeremy Zinn was as surprised as this black drum when he caught it off of 145th Street in Ocean City. The catch on April 3rd makes this the first keeper black drum caught for 2023. Usually we see the first drum from Assateague. He and his kids dug up sand fleas for bait and tipped them with Fishbites from Fenwick Tackle.

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Capt. Shawn Crone and fellow anglers Larry Lee and Jason Whaley took their Contender to an Ocean Structure and got on some fish! For the day they had 9 tog in the 5 to 8 lb. range and a ling cod that tipped the scale at 5 lbs. All caught using sand fleas and green crab.



Black drum were running heavy off the beach in the first half of April. Jim Steele stopped by Old Inlet Bait and Tackle just north of the Indian River Bridge to weigh in this 12¼ lb. drum. He caught this blackie off the beach in Fenwick using sand fleas.

2023 FEDERAL SIZE & CREEL LIMITS

3-200 Miles



BLUE MARLIN
99" Lower Jaw Fork Length
No Retention Limit



WHITE MARLIN
66" Lower Jaw Fork Length
No Retention Limit

NOTE: Blue Marlin, White Marlin and Roundscale Marlin combined 250 Limit



DOLPHIN
No minimum Length
Boat Limit 54
Charter Limit Daily 10 per angler



YELLOWFIN TUNA
27" Curved Fork Length
3 per person/day



BLUEFIN TUNA
27" to <47" curved fork length
2 per vessel/day or trip
47" to <73" curved fork length
1 per vessel/day or trip
27" to <47" curved fork length
3 per Charter/day or trip
27" to <47" curved fork length
6 per Headboat/day or trip
47" to <73" curved fork length
2 per Headboat/day or trip



BIGEYE TUNA
27" Curved Fork Length
No Retention Limit



SWORDFISH
47" Lower Jaw Fork Length
1 per person / 4 per vessel (Rec)
1 per person / 6 per vessel (Charter)
1 per person / 15 per Headboat



SAILFISH
Minimum Length 63" • No Retention Limit



GOLDEN TILEFISH
No minimum • 8 per person/day



BLUELINE TILEFISH
5/1 - 10/31
3 per person (Recreational)
5 per person Uninspected (Charter)
7 per person Inspected (Charter)



WAHOO
No Minimum Length • 2 per person/day

SHARKS AUTHORIZED SPECIES

No Minimum Fork Length
Atlantic Sharpnose, Bonnethead
54" Minimum Fork Length
Atlantic Blacktip, Bull, Lemon, Nurse,
Spinner, Tiger, Blue, Common Thresher,
Oceanic Whitetip, Porbeagle, Finetooth,
Atlantic Blacknose
78" Minimum Fork Length
Great Hammerhead, Scalloped
Hammerhead, Smooth Hammerhead

NOTE: Only 1 shark from the lists above may be retained per vessel per trip. In addition, 1 Atlantic Sharpnose, 1 Bonnethead and 1 Oceanic Whitetip may be retained per person per trip. If a hammerhead shark is retained, no tunas, billfish or swordfish may be retained.

PROHIBITED SHARKS

Atlantic Angel, Basking, Bigeye Sand Tiger, Bigeye Sixgill, Bigeye Thresher, Bignose, Caribbean Reef, Caribbean Sharpnose, Dusky, Galapagos, Longfin Mako, Narrowtooth, Night, Sandbar, Sand Tiger, Sevengill, **Shortfin Mako**, Silky, Sixgill, Smalltail, Whale, White

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DELAWARE FISHING REPORT

by Capt. BJ Pietryak



Another winter fades into the past as a new season of summer arrives. The past winter was a very mild one and spring came early. Everything seems to be ahead of schedule compared to past years. Tog are being caught on most wrecks with tons of out of season sea bass as a by catch. On the beaches, as well as Delaware Bay, black drum are showing up in large numbers. Flounder are showing up in the back bays as well as canals and rockfish are making an early appearance.

Black Drum & Rockfish

The surf beaches have been alive early this year with big black drum. Surf clams are the normal bait for this time of the year, however this year sand fleas tipped with Fish Bites is making the difference between catching in the surf and going home empty. The first fish reported to the magazine was on the 4th of April and caught by Jeremy Zimm who was fishing the surf right at the Delaware and Ocean City line. The crew dug up their own sand fleas and some Fish Bites they had bought from Fenwick Tackle. The fish was a medium size drum caught on an incoming tide. This is rather early for these big boys to show up. Not to be outdone, on April 6 Kris brought a nice sized drum to the beach again on sand fleas and Fishbites. After the 6th it seemed like every day more fish were being brought in from our Delaware beaches. Christina checked in with Delaware-Surf-Fishing.com

with a nice 34" black. She reported that the new DelDot rulers are too short. Christina, believe me, that's a great problem to have! Chase Haugh reported he caught a few small drum, but that the only big fish he caught was a 40" rockfish. Jim Steele checked in at Old Inlet Bait & Tackle with a nice 28" drum caught on sand fleas off the surf at Fenwick. Christina Puglisi was fishing sand fleas and landed a great eating black drum weighing 28 lbs. Bob Pleasonton had great success with Fishbites EZ clam along with sand fleas while fishing the beach in Fenwick. Bob landed a beautiful 14.5 lb. black which he invited to dinner, along with a few he released. Kelly Matthew Poper got lucky on Fenwick Beach, fishing an outgoing tide using sand fleas, caught a nice 34" drum. Kelly reports the medium cast was the ticket as the fish were closer to shore than expected and realized he was casting over the fish on his first few casts. This is a great point to remember. Many anglers new to surf fishing assume they have to cast out as far as possible to get a nice fish. Many large fish are cruising right along the beach catching crabs and sand fleas churned up in the breaking surf. Along the surf many anglers were searching for drum, however, they were rewarded with nice size rockfish. Dylan Patrick was fishing for drum with sand fleas and landed a beautiful 40" rockfish instead. Although not a keeper, Dylan said it's the biggest rockfish

he ever caught on the beach. Brad checked into Henlopen Bait & Tackle and said he needed some bunker to catch a striper. That is what he got and exactly what he did, catching a nice 35" rockfish off the northern beach. It really seems like the beach is showing some nice signs of life early this year. The Delaware Bay has started to see some of the big breeders showing up, however it still looks like the water needs a few more degrees before the big girls arrive. A few big stripers have also shown up in the bay with Mark Gilch catching a 33.25" as well as a 44" rockfish. The past fall was one of the best rockfish seasons we have seen in years with big schools of fish breaking on the surface in December and January. I fished several trips where we got tired of catching over slot fish. All the members of my crew fished slow pitch jigs in the 200 gram size and hooked fish after fish. As a bonus on every trip (5 total) we did manage a limit of keeper fish within the slot. As many of you know, we don't see many fish within the slot here in the ocean. Most of the fish we see are over slot. Hopefully in the next couple of weeks more fish will move in as the spawn and migration continues. For those wishing to try their hand at slow pitch jigging this is a great fish to target as most fish are in less than 60 feet of water.

Flounder & Tog

Flounder fishing was a little slow

to start in the back bays of Indian River, but as the water warmed the flounder did not disappoint. Alex Neiss was fishing the VFW slough and landed an impressive 4 keepers on April 12. Catching one fish this early in the year is good, but to catch 4 is outstanding! Alex did not stop there and went to Massey's Landing on the 16th. He and his crew returned to the dock with 9 keepers. Definitely seems like Alex has the fluke dialed in. Great work, and I hope you enjoy all your new friends that want to go fishing with you!

Horace Hockenstien also caught some nice flatties at Indian River inlet this past month. The bite was reported to be an early bite before turning off around noon. David Palencar fished the inlet and was rewarded with small drum and a nice size shad. Small tog and drum are being caught off the rocks at the inlet on sand fleas and crab. Jim Osborne was out with his son Alex and Bruce Carlton. They ended up with two nice 4.5 lb. fish. They were caught on green crab and shrimp. Bruce said there were no small fish caught, all were keepers. John Coffie checked in at Hook'em & Cook'em Tackle at Indian River Marina with a 5 man limit of tog. The biggest were 12, 10 and 8 lbs respectively. A last note... Brian Craig Watt received a citation for his 21" 4.1 lb trout caught at Rittenhouse Park on a trout magnet. Brian is 9 years old and reportedly hooked and landed the fish all by himself. I have a feeling this young angler is going to be one to watch in the future!

Until next week...

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HEAVIEST

Fish of the Year

2023



(AS REPORTED TO THE COASTAL FISHERMAN - TIES GO TO FIRST FISH REPORTED. HOOK & LINE ONLY)

Species	OCEAN CITY	DELAWARE	Species	OCEAN CITY	DELAWARE
Bluefish 			Thresher Shark 		
Black Drum 	 April 4 Tom Berry Assateague 19 lbs.	 April 6 Laura Foster 3R's 28 lbs.	Bigeye Tuna 		
Cobia 			Bluefin Tuna 		
Summer Flounder 	 April 4 Danny Cox Thorofare 5 lbs.		Longfin Tuna 		
Sea Bass 			Yellowfin Tuna 		
Sheepshead 			Dolphin 		
Striped Bass 			Swordfish 		
Tautog 			Blue Marlin 		
Wahoo 			White Marlin 		

To report your catch, call the Coastal Fisherman at 410-213-2200 or email to coastalfisherman@comcast.net



Gary Harmison and Gene Brite had a great couple of days in the surf of Assateague Island. They caught several nice drum and stripers including this monster. All were tricked with sand fleas tipped with orange crab Fishbites. Congrats to Gene who will be turning 80 on May 7th!

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THE GALLEY

by Chef Christine



Shirley's Original Cream of Crab Soup

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. lump crab meat
- 1 lb. jumbo lump crab meat
- 4 qt. half & half
- 4 oz. butter
- 1 c. parsley
- 4 tsp. seafood seasoning



Directions:

Melt butter into half & half over low heat.

Add other ingredients and simply heat to warm throughout.

Blackened Fish Sandwich

Ingredients:

For the Spice Rub:

- 2¼ teaspoons paprika
- 2¼ teaspoons garlic powder
- 2¼ teaspoons onion powder
- 2¼ teaspoons dried thyme, crushed
- ¾ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¾ teaspoon cayenne pepper

For the Fish Sandwich:

- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons orange marmalade
- 2½ teaspoons fresh lime juice, divided
- 2 avocados, pits removed, flesh scooped out (about 1 cup)
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste



- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 4 brioche rolls, halved
- Four 4-ounce flounder fillets, skins removed
- 4 teaspoons canola oil, divided

- 1 large beefsteak tomato, cut into 4 slices
- 1 head lettuce or ½ romaine heart, leaves separated

Directions:

Make the spice rub: In a small bowl, combine all of the ingredients and set aside.

Make the fish sandwich: In a separate small bowl, stir together the mayonnaise, marmalade and ½ teaspoon of the lime juice, and set aside.

In a medium bowl, mash the avocado with the remaining 2 teaspoons of lime juice, as well as the olive oil and salt. Taste and adjust the salt as needed.

Place a large cast-iron skillet over medium heat and melt 1 tablespoon of the butter. As soon as the butter begins to melt, add the brioche bun bottoms, cut-sides down, and toast until golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Repeat with the remaining butter and brioche tops. Wipe the skillet clean.

Season the flounder fillets with salt and the spice rub. Return the skillet to medium-high heat and add 2 teaspoons of canola oil. When the oil is hot, add the fish fillets and cook, pressing down on fish with the back of a fish spatula, until the bottom is blackened and the sides begin to turn opaque, about 2 minutes. Flip the fillets and sear until cooked through,

Lay 1 piece of fish on the bottom of each brioche roll and spoon a generous amount of the avocado on top. Season the lettuce leaves and tomato slices with salt and stack on top of the avocado. Add

a spoonful of aioli and top with the remaining sandwich halves. Serve.

Hot Shrimp Dip

Ingredients:

- 8 ounces cream cheese softened
- 1/3 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 1 1/4 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 1/4 cup shredded Pepper Jack cheese
- 1/2 tablespoon Old Bay seasoning
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire Sauce
- 3-4 dashes hot sauce
- 16 ounces shrimp cooked and coarsely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- 3 green onions thinly sliced



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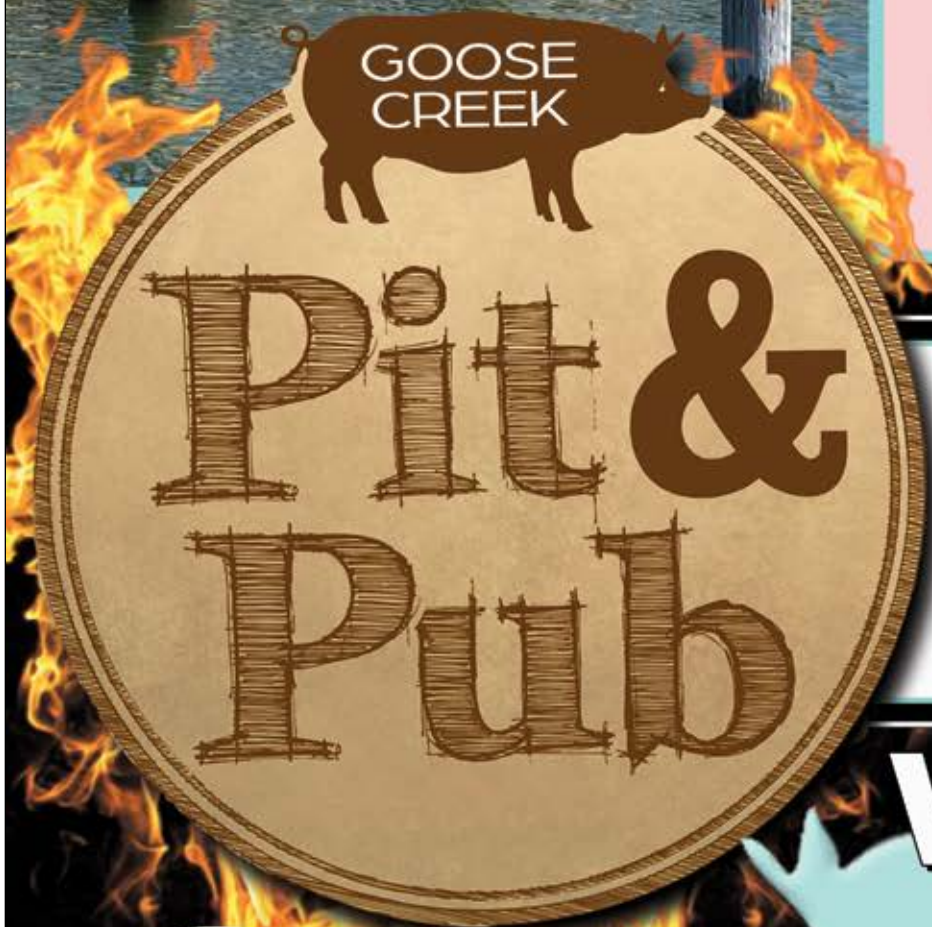
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Directions:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Using a hand-held mixer, beat cream cheese, mayonnaise, sour cream, 3/4 cup cheddar cheese, 3/4 cup pepper jack cheese, Old Bay seasoning, Worcestershire sauce, and hot sauce until smooth. Stir in shrimp, garlic, and green onions.

Spoon into a baking dish and top with remaining cheddar and Pepper Jack. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until the cheese is melted and the dish is bubbly and heated through.

Notes:

Do you like everything with a little kick? Swap out the Old Bay Seasoning (which is rather mild and smoky) and replace it with cajun seasoning. You could also add a little finely minced jalapeno.

This dip can be prepped up to 24 hours in advance, covered with plastic wrap, and stored in the fridge. Remove from the refrigerator 30 minutes prior to baking to bring the casserole closer to room temperature.

I like the medium to large shrimp for this recipe simply because they stay moister when cooked and

then baked.

Don't overbake this dip. Just bake long enough to melt the cheese and brown the edges.

For your low-carb friends, serve with cucumber rounds and celery sticks.

Store leftovers in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 days. Reheat at reduced power in the microwave.

Air-Fried Crumbed Fish

Ingredients:

1 cup dry bread crumbs

¼ cup vegetable oil

4 flounder fillets

1 egg, beaten

1 lemon, sliced

Directions:



Preheat an air fryer to 350°

Place bread crumbs and oil into a shallow bowl; stir until mixture becomes loose and crumbly.

Dip fish fillets into egg; shake off any excess. Dip fillets into bread crumb mixture; coat evenly and fully.

Lay coated fillets gently in the air fryer basket; cook in the preheated air fryer until fish flakes easily with a fork, about 12 minutes.

Garnish with lemon slices & serve.

Note:

Use any variety of fish you prefer.

Parmesan Crusted Tautog with Herbed Lemon Sauce

Ingredients:

1 lb. tautog or other white fish fillet

Smoked paprika

Olive oil for baking plus 1/4 cup for the sauce

Shredded parmesan cheese

Even amounts of each, all chopped: mint, basil, chives, parsley, rosemary.

Juice of 1 lemon

Zest of 1 lemon

1 tbsp. butter



Directions:

Preheat the oven to 475.

On a baking sheet, grease it with a little olive oil and arrange fillets. Sprinkle each fillet with parmesan cheese then sprinkle a little bit of paprika on each. Bake for 8 minutes or until fish is cooked through.

In a saucepan, heat 1/4 cup olive oil, butter and lemon juice for 5 minutes. Add the zest and herbs then stir to combine. Let that simmer for 5 minutes while the fish cooks.

Using a strainer, pour the sauce through and discard of the herbs (or leave them if you want).

Drizzle each fillet with the sauce then enjoy!

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Smokey Citrus Butter Baked Redfish

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs. redfish (Red Drum) fillets, rinsed and patted dry
- 1 tsp. salt
- Dash cayenne pepper
- 2 tsp. smoked sweet paprika
- Juice of one small lemon
- 3 tbsp. finely chopped onion
- 1/4 cup melted butter



Directions:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees and position a rack in the center. Sprinkle both sides of the fish with the salt, cayenne and smoked

sweet paprika. Place the fillets with the side that once contained the skin facing up. In a bowl, combine the lemon juice, onion and butter. Pour over fish filets. Bake until the fish is cooked through, opaque and flakes easily with a fork, about 15 minutes.

Traditional Fish Stock

Ingredients:

- Makes about 2 quarts
- 4 pounds fish frames (bones) from sole, flounder or halibut, cut into 2-inch pieces and rinsed clean of any blood
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- About 2 quarts water
- 2 medium onions, very thinly sliced
- 4 stalks celery, very thinly sliced
- 2 medium carrots, very thinly sliced
- 2 dried bay leaves
- 1/4 cup roughly chopped fresh Italian parsley leaves and stems
- 6 to 8 sprigs fresh thyme
- 2 tablespoons black peppercorns
- Kosher or sea salt



In a 7- to 8-quart stockpot, combine the fish bones, white wine, and just enough water to cover (you won't need the full 2 quarts of water here). Bring to a boil, skimming off the white foam from the top of the stock as it approaches boiling, then reduce the heat so the stock simmers. (Using a ladle and a circular motion, push the foam from the center to the outside of the pot, where it is easy to remove.) Add the onions, celery, carrots, bay leaves, parsley, thyme, and peppercorns and stir them into the liquid. If the ingredients are not covered by the liquid, add a little

more water. Allow the stock to simmer gently for 20 minutes. Remove the stock from the stove, stir it again, and allow it to steep for 10 minutes. Strain through a fine-mesh strainer and season lightly with salt. If you are not going to be using the stock within the hour, chill it as quickly as possible. Cover the stock after it has completely cooled and keep refrigerated for up to 3 days, or freeze for up to 2 months. For equipment, you will need a 7- to 8-quart stockpot, a ladle and a fine mesh strainer. §

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Young Owen Reed of Snow Hill, MD had a good day in the suds with his grandfather George Sauer also from Snow Hill. On this trip to the Virginia side of Assateague Island, they caught 3 black drum using sand fleas including this 30 pounder. Two of the three were released.



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STEVE'S MARINE SERVICE
by Steve Katz



Two Seasons

Welcome to the 2023 Coastal Fisherman season. Unlike the traditional year with four distinct seasons, it seems that the fishing year has only two seasons, fishing or not-fishing. For fishing boat owners, the non-fishing season is often marked as a time reserved for boat maintenance, upgrades, and re-fits. For tournament sportfishing boats, this off-season may be only a few weeks of time and for boats remaining in winter climates, this off-season could be 4-6 months.

Whichever group you belong to, the maintenance season is just as important to the success of the fishing season as are rods, reels, and bait. As part of my job, I witness behind-the-scenes efforts by boat owners and crews maintaining their boats in their off season or boatyard time.

This necessary work often goes unnoticed by guests and anglers. I often jokingly ask the DIY boat owner, while on their back in the



gravel on a cold day in March, painting the bottom of the boat - "where are all those anglers I saw last summer hanging out on your boat". In all honesty, it takes a diligent owner or Captain to keep track of the off-season tasks, priorities, and schedules to prepare for the fishing boat to re-enter service on time and on

budget. This doesn't just apply to a large sportfish in a boatyard, the same holds true for a center console on a trailer.

Priorities

The off-season or boatyard time is a precious break in the fishing calendar and this time needs to be managed properly to be effective.

There is often a daily cost associated with the boat's off-season storage and often a deadline to get the boat out of storage without additional costs. In our area, most marinas haul larger boats off the water for the winter season, they nest them as tight as possible to maximize storage space, but this usually means a strict first-out, last-in schedule. If your boat isn't ready to go back into the water on the marina's schedule, it needs to be relocated for the marina to get to

www.coastalfisherman.net all tasks throughout a project. It also helps in keeping track of the progress, or lack thereof, of the overall project. The biggest mistake I often see is that priorities aren't always made for the tasks that must be accomplished while the boat is out of the water versus projects that could be completed once the boat is back in the water. In the Mid Atlantic area, the weather doesn't always cooperate with planned boat work schedules, so some flexibility and back-up plans need to be prepared to help keep your boat on schedule to go back into the water.

Ask for Help Sooner than Later

The other factor affecting schedules is the availability of parts and service labor for tasks you hire out. The marine service industry is still backlogged, with some providers months out to schedule new work.

Not all the suppliers have caught up from shortages of years past, so getting that part or component can delay your schedule or



the other boats "behind" yours. This relocation and associated additional daily storage cost is significant and can cut into your budgeted costs.

While you don't need to go back to school to manage your boat, understanding project management and using a tool such as a Program Evaluation Review Technique (PERT) Chart or similar could be helpful in allowing you to stay on target for your launch date. In project management, PERT chart is used to identify the time it takes to finish a particular task or activity. It is a system that helps in the proper scheduling and coordination of

could cost more than you have budgeted.

The complexities of a boat-mechanical, electrical, and structural can be overwhelming at times, especially when there is a problem. When an issue arises, it's not always easy to determine if you have a big problem or small problem. If you are not sure if it's a DIY project or requires outside help, it's best to consult with a professional as soon as possible - to determine the best path to get your boat back into shape.

Just recently I worked with a boat owner, who had owned a used boat for a few years and had been battling strange electrical



problems ever since, where all his electronics and accessories would suddenly shut off (or wouldn't turn on) due to low voltage. The owner had been working on solving this himself, replaced batteries, battery chargers, had the alternators checked, replaced battery switches etc. He finally "gave up" and called me, I was able to locate the problem rather quickly, finding a single main fuse that had broken (not burned out) and was sometimes loose inside the fuse case, causing an intermittent connection and or low voltage. This wasn't readily

visible or apparent to the owner and since it was intermittent, every time he checked the fuse - it tested good. He was relieved it was not an expensive fix and wished he had asked for help sooner.

Taking the time during the offseason to tackle the critical items or projects will allow you to have a more reliable and safer fishing season. While this offseason work isn't all doom and gloom, with proper planning most boats get their work completed and get back into the fishing season on time. §



Bluewater Advisors CEO Mark Debinski got to spend some time in south Florida this winter. On this trip to Juniper he connected with this beautiful crevalle jack.

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VIRGINIA FISHING REPORT

by Capt. Matt Abell



The birds are singing, the turkeys are gobbling, and the fish are eating ... or being eaten (depending on the current sequence of events). In short, spring has sprung on the Eastern Shore and it's time to get back to doing the things we all love!

The bays around the VA barrier islands have provided us with some pretty good flounder action to help stretch out our lines. There have been a good number of fish clearing the 16 inch minimum size limit with a few scrappy shorts to keep things interesting. The prime time to take part in this early season sport is during the ebb tide as the warm water

is flushed out of shallow bays into drains where our compressed quarry awaits. We have been targeting 3-12 foot depths with Sea Hawk flounder rigs with gulp and or scented Rumble fish grubs tipped with minnows and silversides in an array of colors like white, chartreuse, pink and orange. Don't forget to renew your VA FIP number and make sure that you have the current Accomack boat ramp parking permit to insure great fine free memories.

The Chesapeake side of the ESVA has been the scene of fairly fast fishing with a quick tempo driven by the beat of the Eastern

Shore drum. Both black and reds have made their presence known in the shallows of the Pocomoke and Tangier sounds. While most fish have preferred an offering of crab served on a fish finder rig, a few springtime spot tails have crashed topwater spooks in an explosion of water and adrenaline that will have drags screaming in your dreams. Some rock have had their chance to bend a rod intended for drum. However, they get to keep their stripes until the middle of May when the VA rock season commences. Those illusive specs are starting to stalk the shallows with anglers casting paddletails and plugs as well as bait to

lure tasty trophies across the gunwale.

Sand, surf, sun and fun have been the description of our serene seaside beaches. A good number of black drum with a few reds mixed in have produced smiles as grand as an Eastern Shore sunrise. Modified fish finder rigs baited with clam, sand fleas, or peelers have been the weapons of choice to make these bellowing brawlers storm the beaches of anxious anglers. Don't forget to use a little elastic thread to secure soft baits to their hooks..., a shiny hook will never get a look!

The time is now and the fish are here! Get out and take time to remember why we are blessed and not stressed, grab your family and friends, and enjoy this wonderful place we call home! §



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You would think this picture was from mid-summer, not early April! These two anglers got in on the hot action on the Eastern Shore of Virginia last month. Most anglers were finding flounder on the high tide using a Gulp and silverside combo presented on chartreuse or pink Sea Hawk Flounder rigs. Clear water and depths of 4 to 15 ft were key.



Tom "blue fish" Berry is one we watch for catching the first black drum of the season! He caught this 19 lb. and 30" drum in the Assateague Island surf using a combo of Fishbites and live sand fleas on April 4th. Unfortunately he missed being the first by 1 day!

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Veteran angler Danny Cox kicked off his 2023 season with a bang! He landed this 24" and 5 lb. fattie in the Thorofare in early April using a minnow & Gulp combo. This is the Heaviest reported to us this season!



Jen Bowden Thorton braved some chilly April air to fish the surf at Fenwick Island. She was working with salted shrimp and put some hurt on the puffer fish population!

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Paul Durkin of South Bethany, DE hit the south side of the Indian River Inlet in April on a warm weather day. He tossed out some cut bunker and connected with 2 nice dogfish!



Local Capt. Zach Brunner of "HotLine" Sportfishing hit it big on a trip to Los Sueños Resort and Marina in Costa Rica in February. He and the crew were only 35 miles offshore when he landed this enormous bull dolphin. Look at that color! They also boated several yellowfin tuna.

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Dave Moore had an awesome April working the surf at Assateague Island. On this trip he caught 6 black drum using sand fleas on a custom hi/lo rig with 7/0 circle hooks. They hit about 1 every hour and ranged from 24" to 38".



Joe Ricco and his buddy Jon Little, both from Clayton, DE headed south to Wachapreague, VA in late March. They snagged a couple of keeper flounder up to 19.5" using minnows on a top & bottom rig.

OCEAN CITY INLET TIDES & MOON PHASES

WED. MAY 3	High 06:55 am High 07:22 pm	Low 12:49 am Low 12:53 pm
THUR. MAY 4	High 07:35 am High 08:03 pm	Low 01:32 am Low 01:28 pm
FRI. MAY 5 Full Moon	High 08:16 am High 08:46 pm	Low 02:14 am Low 02:04 pm
SAT. MAY 6	High 08:58 am High 09:30 pm	Low 02:57 am Low 02:43 pm
SUN. MAY 7	High 09:42 am High 10:16 pm	Low 03:42 am Low 03:26 pm
MON. MAY 8	High 10:28 am High 11:05 pm	Low 04:30 am Low 04:14 pm
TUE. MAY 9	High 11:17 am High 11:59 pm	Low 05:23 am Low 05:07 am
WED. MAY 10	High ----- High 12:13 pm	Low 06:22 am Low 06:07 pm

source: usharbors.com

Add 1.5 hours for bay tides at the Rt. 50 Bridge.
 Indian River Inlet - add 25 minutes to high tide
 Delaware Bay Entrance - subtract 1 hour 25 minutes to high tide
 - subtract 45 minutes to low tide
 Wachapreague, VA - add 4 minutes for high tide - 21 minutes for low tide
 Quinby Inlet, VA - subtract 6 minutes for high tide

These tides are only meant to be a guide, as tides can be affected by storms and weather fronts.

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Local angler Shaun Flaherty is no stranger to winning awards from the Atlantic Coast Sportfishing Association (ACSA), but for 2022 he was recognized as *both* the Angler of the Year for Ocean and Bay! He started 2023 strong as well, catching the first keeper striper for the season at 30" by the Rt. 50 Bridge using a Roy Rig.



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Joe Morris Memorial Canal Flounder Tournament

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Cast for a Cure Team Surf Fishing Tournament

May 20 • Old Inlet Bait & Tackle • 302-227-7974

14th Annual Franky Pettonlina Memorial Day Tournament

May 27-28 • Ocean City Marlin Club • 410-213-1613

JUNE

2nd Annual Blues for D.U.

June 2-4 • Bahia Marina • 410-289-7438

3rd Annual Tuna & Tiaras Ladies Tuna Tournament

June 16-17 • Ocean City, MD • 410-212-7159

School's Out Tuna Tournament

June 21 - 25 • Cape May, NJ • 609-884-2400

8th Annual Indian River Kids Catch-All Tournament

June 24-25 • Indian River Marina • 302-227-3071

44th Annual OCMC Small Boat Tournament

June 24-25 • Ocean City Marlin Club • 410-213-1613

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JULY

41st Annual Canyon Kick Off

June 30 - July 2 • Ocean City Marlin Club • 410-213-1613

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July 4 • Cape May, NJ • 609-884-0177

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For complete tournament coverage results, pick up the Coastal Fisherman every week from May through September or go to our website at

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Chris Tilghman boated this 19½" flounder from the Thorofare on March 26th, the second summer flounder of the season! While he did not claim the title of the first, his fish was bigger!

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The Shustrick family from Hollsopple, PA were all smiles on this trip to the Maryland side of Assateague Island on April 23th. The boys, Pete and Wes, dug up the sand fleas that their dad Zach used to hook this 46" rockfish from the suds. The beast was released to spawn another day!

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The black drum were beating for anglers Morgan Mericle and Dave Moore! They were fishing the surf at Assateague Island and landed 8 drum overall including this 28 incher that Morgan pulled in.

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 Giant - Ocean View
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Jeff Weeks of Ocean City has a big smile after pulling 2 big flounder out of the Thorofare in late April! He was fishing on the "Turn Me Loose" and was using minnows for bait on the outgoing tide. Nice catch!



The Eastern Shore of Virginia was an early hot spot for action in the suds. George Sauer from Snowhill, MD headed down to Chincoteague, VA in early April and caught this nice black drum using sand fleas. It was one of the earliest of the season.

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Joel McLeod
772-834-8549



Steve Hedrick
717-586-9841



Dave Shockley
561-262-6726



Erik Anderson
850-974-5600



Charley Pereira
252-216-6291



John Caselli
954-290-8866



Colton Cunningham
561-718-4182

Featured Boat of the Week



DRIFTWOOD - 2017 28' Harrison Boatworks Call Jeff James



HADLOCK - 2002 61' Viking Convertible Call Ronnie Fields



CLICKBAIT - 2003 58' TITAN Call Jeff James



BARRATUNA - 2008 53' Sculley Call Steve Hedrick



1997 50' Alex Willis Custom Convertible Call Joel McLeod



1985 47' Hines-Farley Call Ronnie Fields



POUND FOR POUND - 2000 42' Custom Carolina - Call Jeff James



CALLIE MAY - 2011 40' Cabo Call Chris Workman



CONSTELLATION - 1984 37' Sunny Briggs Call Ronnie Fields



1998 45' Ocean Yacht Call Chris Workman



DARK HORSE - 34' Glen Bradley Call Jeff James



LADY B - 33' 2006 Custom Carolina Call Jeff James



2017 27' Cobia Call Colton Cunningham



1986 28' Ocean Master Call Glenn Cameron



1982 31' Bertram Call Ronnie Fields



2003 38' Fountain Call Terry Layton



FOWL HOOKED - 1979 35' Custom Carolina Sportfish - Call Jeff James



2003 28' Albemarle Express Call Terry Layton



2020 18' Key West Call Jimmy Fields

Ocean City, MD • Palm Beach, FL • Outer Banks, NC

