

CONNECTICUT FISHING REPORT

by Bob Sampson Jr.

Early last November, during what has become an annual blackfishing trip, nice weather had brought out such large crowds of anglers of a similar mind set, that we couldn't even edge our way into the fleet that had set up over our two favorite reefs.

I was fishing in long time fishing buddy, Eric Covino's boat with his son, Jim and Rick Rinaldi, another part of our regular group of fishing friends. "Captain Eric", who is a retired school principal, has recently begun doing some charter fishing under the name "Playing Hookie Charters" 860-889-8686. At that time he was taking his Coast Guard Captains Course and didn't mind exploring different areas for use during future charter trips.

Anyone who has anchored up for blackfish knows that boat positioning is very important, a few feet either way can mean the difference between success and failure. We ran to a spot Captain Eric had fished successfully in the past and under his expert guidance, Rick set the boat back on the anchor line, while "the captain" watched the fish finder to guide the process. In a short while we swung in a small arch at the end of the anchor rope, just over the edge of a sharp drop off in the Millstone Point warm water discharge.

It was shallow, so the fishing was fairly easy, despite the strong current.

We began splitting green crabs and baiting up. Immediately, Eric caught a short "tog", then another, then a keeper with his son Jimmy landing a fish for each one his dad was hooking.

High five's and smiles all around in the stern of the boat, bored glances and long faces in the bow for Rick and myself.

It didn't take much to figure out what our problem was. Our lines were in the fast water on top of the hump, Eric and Jim's were in the calm water, right along the edge.

We'd had it after about a dozen or so "Got em!-s" and began to formulate an evil plan for revenge.

The next time one of the "high liners" landed a keeper, so they would both be pre-occupied with measuring, dehooking and gloating, I was to measure out the approximate distance of rope to the rear of the boat, while Rick eased it off the cleat and dropped our end of the boat back to the "erogenous zone".

It was instant and near total role reversals.

We went from being the "goats" to the "hero's" within a few minutes.

They continued to catch an occasional fish, ten feet or so further away from the edge of the drop off. But their catch rate was nothing close to what it had been minutes before. Rick and I were now the ones who were



Blackfish like this decent keeper will be abundant throughout the month of November around most inshore reefs, rock piles, jetties and piers. Simply send a crab down close to the structure and set the hook at the lightest tap.

hooking up about as fast as we could get our lines to the bottom.

We were giggling and smiling ear to ear every time we brought a fish into the boat, while the x-heros were shaking their heads and checking their baits.

After a little while the Captain looked at the depth finder and realized what we'd done, we all had a good laugh. But the "crew" mutinied, refusing to pull the line back up until we'd caught our share of keeper blackfish.

November is "blackfish season", the best of the years fishing will take place beginning in October and run well through Thanksgiving time, later in the western end of Long Island Sound. This time of year tautog move inshore for the cold months, where they concentrate around reefs, rock piles, jetties and other hard structure where they can be easily located and barring difficult weather conditions caught fairly readily.

Blackfish are a slow growing species. In Connecticut waters the minimum length was ratcheted up to 14 inches a season or so ago, which has improved the quality of the average Connecticut blackfish catch dramatically. Now, even the shorts are decent average sized fish that are fun to catch.

During 2006, anglers, particularly those in the eastern third of the state, reported catching good numbers of quality tautog until well into the mid summer fluke season.

This spring brought with it the best spring blackfish action in many years, which means the fall of 2006 should be equally productive, actually better because the fish will have a summer's worth of growth on their bones.

On the way back to the launch from this deceptive, but successful blackfish outing, we had fun playing with mixed schools of striped bass to about 26 inches and bluefish that topped off at eight pounds. However, most of the bluefish we caught were in the two to four pound range, with the action non stop, particularly in the mouth of the Thames River which was filled with hungry, surface blasting fish that had been drawn out with the dropping tide.

This is a typical early November scenario, start off with blackfish and end up with bass and some years tons of blues, with the possibility of encountering some late schools of false albi's if the temperatures have been mild.

Porgies are still around to catch at this time and there may even be a few, very few, winter flounder to play around with. Without a specific time tested winter flounder hole to fish, don't count on much success from this beleaguered species, despite a fair to good showing in the Niantic Bay area last spring.

Flatfish (winter flounder) constantly abuse me, though a couple of the people that reported catching flatfish last full found a smattering of them in the "dumping grounds" outside the mouth of the Thames River this summer. I'd also look for them in Niantic Bay, and around the Pleasure Beach to Harkness Park area, in Waterford.

This time of year, when schools of stripers and bluefish are located they likely to be huge and densely packed. But there is also a good deal of "empty water" between these pulses of often rapidly moving schools of fish. So the fishing typically runs hot and cold.

This is the time of year, particularly early in November, when migratory fish, including some jumbo striped bass from the north, are in this area. November is the time when hard core surf casters catch 50 even 60 pound stripers from the rocks, as well as boats positioned over the reefs around the southeastern and southwestern corners of Block Island, the tip of Montauk Point, Plum Gut, the Sluiceway, Fishers Island and the Race. Any and all of these areas, including the south shore beaches of Rhode Island and the Watch Hill Reef complex are likely to produce a giant striper but "The Block" is typically the most consistent spot for monsters.

The trick is being in the right place at the right time, something the average working and in my case, deer hunting outdoors man may have difficulty with. But the fish

It is now November with the winter chill tapping at the door. Many local "die hard" boaters indicated that they would extend the season for fishing or just personal



by Michael Kurnides

pleasure and have asked what to do to an outboard engine if left in the water. Considering

that the cooling water should drain from the head and lower unit when shut down, there should be no negative effects leaving an engine to the elements. Most marinas keep a work boat operating all winter for dock and piling work.

I have experienced only one damaged lower unit resulting from complete lack of maintenance. There must have been water in the lower gear case and extreme temperatures caused freezing and deterioration of the gears. It was spring when the owner asked me to inspect the vessel, but damage had already been done. Some of the newer outboards are equipped with "flushing plugs" which allow an easy fresh-water flush during the season and a possible non-toxic anti-freeze flush for the off-season, but as mentioned, storing the outboard vertically as intended should allow all water to drain from the unit.

Proper winterization calls for first flushing the cooling system with clean fresh water and washing any dirt, grease, etc. from the exterior of the engine. Smaller outboards can be put in a bucket or barrel. Secure the motor so it doesn't touch the sides or bottom of the bucket. "Ear muffs" can be used with the attachment of a garden hose. As mentioned before, some larger engines have a "flushing plug" which attaches to the garden hose. Run the engine for 5 to 10 minutes. Step two is to drain the fuel from the engine to purge the carburetor and prevent the build-up of deposits. While running, disconnect the fuel hose and allow the engine to run dry. Remove the spark plugs and use a fogging oil to coat the pistons and cylinder walls. With the plugs removed, the oil can be sprayed in and the crank turned to spread the oil. Change to lower unit gear oil and apply a water-resistant grease to the propeller shaft and threads. Coat the engine head with a protective oil spray and use a good wax on the exterior cowling.

Inboard engines, if fresh-water cooled, need to have the anti-freeze protection tested. The raw water cooling jacket and manifold require the application of anti-freeze usually by closing the intake sea cock, removing the hose and extending it to a bucket of antifreeze mixture. Run the engine until the mixture color (usually red, see note*) is seen from the exhaust and then fog the engine with an oil spray via the carburetor to shut down. * Note: The environment frowns on spilling toxic anti-freeze onto its waterfront. This product is green in color and can be use in automobiles, but for marine use the non-toxic anti-freeze is colored red or to some it is just pink. Prior to this action, warming the

engine to temperature and changing the lubricating oil is recommended. Removing the spark plugs and spraying fogging oil is also recommended and necessary for fuel-injected engines without carburetors. A complete exterior cleanup and inspection

of the raw water impeller should be on the schedule.

Diesel engines mostly are fresh-water cooled and need the same checks and flushing, except that no fogging is required due to the heavier oil-based nature of the fuel. In all cases an appropriate fuel stabilizer should be used for storage.

Stern drives need an inspection to remove any plant life or barnacles. The lower unit oil should be drained and checked for any excessive moisture in the oil. Grease all fittings and check the level of hydraulic fluid in the steering and lift arms. It is recommended that water pump impellers, as found in some lower units, be changed every two (2) seasons.

The fresh water system should be completely drained. Isolate the hot water heater by disconnecting the in and out lines and connect them together. This way when running some non-toxic antifreeze into the system, you won't be filling the whole water heater, which equates to 6, 10.5 12 or 20 gallons of liquid. Some anti-freeze should be added to the heater due to the lack of complete draining from the water hose connections. The bilge should be cleaned and dried, with the addition of a little anti-freeze there, too.

(Another note: Surveyors like clean bilges.)

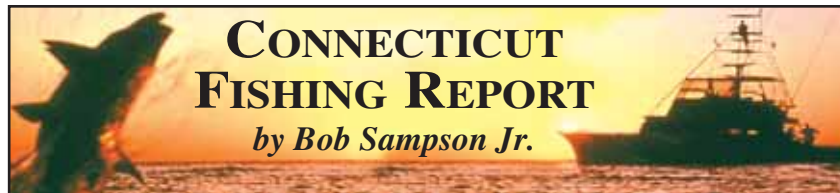
Pump out the holding tank and add fresh water, flushing several times and finally introducing antifreeze to the hoses, tank, "Y" valve and macerator. Batteries should be fully charged and stored in a dry place. As mentioned, over the years, because of low cost, most batteries are left aboard and our mild winters have not been shown to cause damage if the batteries are fully charged.

After taking care of the systems - or before - remove any valuables, electronics, loose items, etc. Open drawers, cabinets, refrigerator doors, etc. to allow for air circulation. This is important to prevent mildew. Likewise, the overall cover or shrink-wrap should offer free air circulation during the winter sleep.

By following the basic steps above, your yacht should be well protected for the off-season. Review owner's manuals for manufacturer's recommendations. If you don't feel confident in this attempt, don't hesitate to seek out professional help to do the job.

Time to enjoy the holidays. Hoping the winter isn't too harsh....

Fair Winds,
Michael Kurnides



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are going to be around at some point in time, how long they remain and whether it will be possible to get to them depends directly on the weather and late fall storm systems.

If we get a series of cold flooding rains or early snows that are followed by cold winds from the north, everything high tails it into the warmer waters off shore and to the south. If not, some years the fishing remains pretty good into early December.

The end of it all is typically marked by the appearance of gannets feeding on herring off the beaches. For the past few years, when this short lived event takes place, there have reportedly been some bluefin tuna, big ones, hundred pound and larger fish, observed feeding on the same bait sources as the gannets, blues and bass during late November

By December most years, there's still some good striper fishing and possibly action from those herring in the western end of Long Island Sound, but for all practical purposes its over, with the exception of the winter striped bass fishing in the Thames River and around a few of the larger power plants throughout the region.

The Thames is just revving up for the winter. Most years the best catches of the winter striper season take place between Christmas time and the end of January unless the river freezes solid.

Wind and weather is often so radical during this transition period between fall and winter, that even though I've tried to get out to toss a bait into these tuna when they are passing through like a bunch of race cars, on those rare days when I could invest the time, conditions were simply too nasty --- maybe this year!

High Tides For November 2006 Bridgeport, CT

Nov 1	7:00 AM	7:26 PM	Nov 16	7:48 AM	8:14 PM
Nov 2	7:54 AM	8:23 PM	Nov 17	8:30 AM	8:58 PM
Nov 3	8:45 AM	9:16 PM	Nov 18	9:10 AM	9:40 PM
Nov 4	9:35 AM	10:07 PM	Nov 19	9:48 AM	10:20 PM
Nov 5	10:23 AM	10:57 PM	Nov 20	10:26 AM	10:59 PM
Nov 6	11:11 AM	11:46 PM	Nov 21	11:03 AM	11:39 PM
Nov 7	11:59 AM	-----	Nov 22	11:42 AM	-----
Nov 8	12:37 AM	12:50 PM	Nov 23	12:20 AM	12:24 PM
Nov 9	1:28 AM	1:43 PM	Nov 24	1:03 AM	1:09 PM
Nov 10	2:22 AM	2:39 PM	Nov 25	1:51 AM	2:00 PM
Nov 11	3:18 AM	3:37 PM	Nov 26	2:43 AM	2:56 PM
Nov 12	4:16 AM	4:38 PM	Nov 27	3:39 AM	3:57 PM
Nov 13	5:15 AM	5:38 PM	Nov 28	4:38 AM	5:01 PM
Nov 14	6:10 AM	6:35 PM	Nov 29	5:37 AM	6:04 PM
Nov 15	7:01 AM	7:26 PM	Nov 30	6:34 AM	7:05 PM

High Tides For Other Locations:

City Island	+0:17	Stamford	+0:03	Madison	- 0:21
New Rochelle	- 0:04	S. Norwalk	+0:09	Essex	- 0:05
Mamaroneck	+0:12	Housatonic Rvr	+0:26	Saybrook Pt	- 0:31
Cos Cob	+0:05	Milford	- 0:08	New London	- 1:45

Times are approximate • Not responsible for errors

Moon Phases

