



by Nick Honachefsky

April comes in with the word that Jersey anglers have been waiting on all winter long. The new fluke regs are out, and though they're not pretty, they're not as bad as they could have been. The summer flounder regulations for 2007 are as follows – an eight-fish bag limit and a 17-inch minimum size, with a season that runs from May 26 to September 10. There. It's done and we have to live with it. It's unfortunate that we will not be able to fish the late-season fluke bite, which occurs big time in Raritan Bay in September and October, and it stinks that early season backbay flukers have to wait until late May to start pulling on fish. In essence, we have a three-month season. Striped bass fishing in the backwaters opened up again on March 1, and by the time you read this, we should have a good gauge on how the 60-day winter flounder season is going to be.: three months for fluke, just 60 days for winter flounder. When will the madness and ramrodding end for the recreational angler?

North Jersey

Alright, bass season is open and April means some intense bank fishing in Raritan Bay. The hot spots to hit will be Cliffwood Beach, Union Beach and Pebble Beach, as sod bank fishermen will be driving metal sand spikes into the sedges to

cast out fresh bunker chunks, clams and mackerel strips into the underwater labyrinth of sod banks. Fishfinder rigs work very well here, with bank sinkers the best-designed weights to use to avoid hang-ups. Stripers should be pinning bunker schools close to shore, and even pluggers will be able to get in on the action, tossing big-lipped swimmers into the fracas to pull on some quality 15-to 30-pound linesiders. The bank fishing here really turns on in April and will last well into May. Those who have their boats in the water already will be happy to know that the Keyport Flats usually offers up the first real shot at catching dozens of stripers because the flatwaters hold the linesiders there to warm up and feed.

With the 60-day season in place, winter flounder fishermen had better maximize their time out on the water, and in Raritan Bay flounder-pounders should be concentrating on the backwater areas of the Morgan Creek flats, Keyport flats, and any small, shal-



Nice ling on the left tips the scales on its schoolmate.

low waters that run from 6 to 12 feet, since the blackbacks will be sunning themselves in the shallows to warm up. Right now, the waters are as warm as they were for the 2001-2002 season, and that year saw some excellent activity with the flounder already on the move and aggressively feeding in March. Let's hope for the same situation. Flounder-pounders will also want to target the Navesink and Shrewsbury rivers for the flatfish will be stacking up inside the rivers as they wait to exit the bay. Once again, depending on how warm the water is, they could stick inside the rivers late, or you may find them already out of the rivers by the start of the season. Go with what you find and adapt accordingly.

For bottom fishermen, the months of February and March ended up as excellent and though there was a little lull in activity on ling when the arctic temps ran through in mid-Febru-

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