

Over the years there have been major changes in fishing on Long Island and with them changes in the fishing industry. Party boats started out as converted yachts, ex-WW I subchasers and old wooden 45 and 50-footers. In the 70s, the drive was to bigger, faster and more creature-comfort, aluminum super-cruisers. Today we are seeing the older, smaller 65-footers beginning to make a comeback. The offshore boats are still the high-end craft, but if you notice, the local headboats are downsizing.

The biggest change that I see is in the 6-pack charter industry. Years ago the 6-packs were confined to trolling charters, like Ron Leper's *Kim*, the pioneer of bunker spoon trolling, bluefish and football tuna trolling or chumming sharks and tuna. The hardcore wreck fishing was still the domain of the headboat captains. With the advances in electronics, better boats and economic changes, the 6-pack captains have changed to being some of the best at wreck fishing for blackfish, cod, pollock and sea bass.

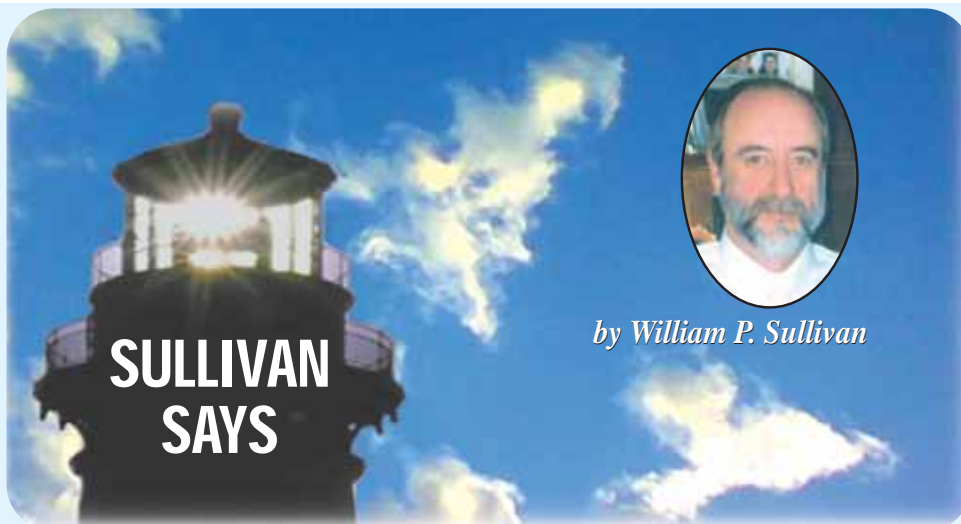
Once you would have expected your charter to be on a high-end flybridge sportfisherman with the entire microwave, air-conditioned fluff. Now Downeasters are the rule, rigged specifically for wreck fishing with a lot of investment in ground tackle, custom pulpits and pot haulers. From Staten Island to Montauk and Orient, you can find a 30-foot class charter boat that can put you on



Jason with a "Big M" bulldog

fish, from the local reefs to the deep water wrecks, any time of the year and keep you on them. So, when it comes to serious wreck fishing, if you aren't up to speed, get a group together and experience a slammer instead of a bust.

Everyone with a boat who intends to fish should have his or her rig in the water by mid-May. Wait until Memorial Day and you will



by William P. Sullivan

be on line waiting for your yard to get past the rush. Fishing opportunities specific to May that you should focus on are mackerel, squid, weakfish and fluke. Mackerel will pass by



*"Big M Express," Brooklyn
courtesy Capts. Steve & Mario*

anytime from the last week of April to the second week of May. Mother's Day used to be the high point of the western south shore run. If you intend to bag-up on mackerel for shark bait and chum, the broiler or the smoker, it's important either to have the boat shaken down and the tackle rigged or to keep your eye on

the party boat reports. Mackerel will come through fast and your window will be short

Squid show up at Greenport anywhere from May through June. Squid jigging is messy and strange to our ears, but it has been catching on big-time over the past few years. Squid have been the norm up north for years, but so has smelt fishing. Whatever! You can jig squid right off the docks at Greenport and for bait they are great, even better as stuffed calamari with some ricotta and marinara sauce. Like herring jigging, light spinning tackle is the way to go, but look for some squid jigs. Squid jigs don't have hooks. They are covered with protruding pins that the squid get hung on, and then they squirt ink on you when they come out of the water. Dress down for squid; use raingear and leave the designer jeans at home.

The post-spawn weakfish run at Ocean Beach kicks off in May, all things and seasons being equal. Sandworms, Berkeley Power sandworms, white or yellow bucktails in 1/4 and 1/2-ounce tipped with squid, jelly worms in Motor Oil, white and strawberry or plain squid strips are best

bets. The fleet will be drifting, so if you want to anchor and chum or cast, get out of the way and off to the edges. Go light for weakfish, bait-casters and spinners with 10-pound test being the heaviest. I'd stick with ultra-light and 6 or 8-pound. Party boats from Captree will be sailing evening trips for the weakfish, and you may see some day-boats too if the fluke regs are onerous.

The third week of May is when the jumbo fluke show up at Orient and Greenport. Rig big - use whole small squid, sea robin, mackerel or bergal fillets, jumbo spearing, smelts and tinker mackerel or finger herring. If you have frozen peanut bunker from last season, dig



*"Marilyn Jean," Brooklyn
courtesy Capt Tony Santella*

them out; they can be deadly. Places to try are the Ruins, Greenlawns, Horton's Point, the channel between Greenport and Shelter Island, or pretty much any hard, gravel or sticky bottom, not reefs or wrecks, but low-lying structure. Be prepared to sacrifice tackle and keep the line from your sinker to your three-way swivel lighter than your main-line. Better to lose the sinker than the fish.

The south shore west will have ling and the start of sea bass on the inshore bottom, stripers on clams and chum, and flounder in Raritan Bay, the Cedars, Romer Shoal, J-Bay and the Coney Island Flats. The docklines in Reynold's Channel should give up some flounder in late May as whatever is in the back heads for the inlet. Same with Jone's Inlet. The Big M, Coast Guard Station and Jone's Beach Pier pocket should have a few flounder.

Fire Island Inlet will offer the same with flounder at the Sore Thumb. Bluefish should start their charge into the bay, so be ready with tins. You may get some good-sized fluke around the inlet entrance, the inshore fingers or around the reef.



"Marilyn Jean" night tuna fishing

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