



by Nick Honachefsky

The spring rush of stripers is actually ahead of schedule and is readily being welcomed by Jersey anglers. It's a beautiful thing, knowing that the fishing is about two to three weeks ahead of schedule at this time as compared to last year. As of early April, we have thousands of stripers along our coastline, inundating Raritan Bay and moving into the coastal estuarial backwaters, and by the time you see this, we could be into full-blown epic bass fishing. In other news, while attending an outdoor writer's meeting in April, we learned that NJ anglers are going to take a significant hit on the tautog fishery, with a proposed reduction of 28 per cent. By May, some options will be on the board and we will see just how bad the flavor of the medicine is that we are going to have to swallow. Also to note, the NJ winter flounder fishery closes on May 21 for the entire year, and the summer flounder opener gets started on May 26 running to September 10 with a 17-inch minimum and an 8-fish bag limit.

Raritan Bay

The floodgates have opened and the striper bite began in true early season form in R-Bay. As expected, the bay shore beaches of Cliffwood, Union, Pebble, Keansburg and Port Monmouth all held the early season attraction of spring linesiders. Reports in late March and the first

week of April had mainly short bass of 16 to 27 inches being taken, and lots of them, with sometimes a half dozen to a dozen bass caught on a tide out. It wasn't all shorts, though, as some quality keepers in the 9 to 20-pound caliber also made their way to the scales, with a mix of 29 to 32-inch bass also being weighed in by most tackle shops. Best baits were bloodworms as well as fresh clams cast out off the sod banks. Inside the bay, stripers had been on a tear off the Keyport flats region, and clambers were finding sometimes over 40 fish on a tide switch, all coming into the clam slick. Most of the fish were of sub-legal character, though a few eeked over the 28-inch minimum. As the bass season gets stronger, look for May to be the prime-time month for all heck to break loose in the bay because bunker schools will be getting pounded by bass in the 20 to 50-pound class day in and day out. Bunker schools should be stacked up inside the bay near Great Kills Harbor, and netcasters can be easily onto their share of live bait with one deftly placed cast. Reports already have bunker inside the bay, which is uncharacteristically early for the menhaden to make their move back inside, and that could mean an insane striper fishery may be in the near future. Overall, the flounder bite in the bay has been pretty slow with only a continual pick of the flatfish at spots such as Keyport flats and off Romer Shoal, though once May hits and remem-

bering NJ anglers only have until May 21 to fish for flounder, spots on the outside of the bay's waters, such as the Cedars and Romer Shoal, should be good to set up on to find the flatties as they make their exodus out of the bay waters.

North Jersey

The Sandy Hook beaches finally did give up a pretty pick of short stripers as fresh clams found fish up to 12 pounds during late March. Though as of April Fool's Day, bass fishing had yet to materialize off this section of the coast's beaches, it should be running with a good head of steam now. The big word came from Shark River during the flounder opener as a flotilla of small vessels littered the Shark River backwaters for the first few weeks of floundering, and while some anglers scored with their 10-fish bag limits, others only picked at the flatfish. The key to success seemed to be a hard-working clam, corn and mussel chum slick, with constant movement, and using small fresh mussel strips for bait. Yellow beads and yellow grubtails also added to a successful presentation. The area about 100 yards off the Fisherman's Den tackle shop seemed to be the best area with the most action for small-vessel boaters. Winter flounder fishermen also had some excellent luck in the Navesink River off the Oceanic Bridge where re-

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ports had some days with limits of blackbacks up to 4.25 pounds from the area. Mud Hole party boats report that there was a little bit of a slowdown in ling activity during mid-to-late March with catches averaging about 5 to 12 per man in the deeper 150 to 220-foot depths, but the fishery showed signs of a rebound in early April with catches back up to 10 to 30 per man. Smaller cod and pollock also had begun to move in on the mid-shore wrecks with some 10 to 12-pounders of both species taking home the pools on the ling trips.

Central Jersey

Flounder pounders found that the season opened up with decent merit in the Manasquan River region as party and private boaters hit up the river south of the Route 35 Bridge, off the Hospital beach, and inside upper Barnegat Bay off Dale's Point and Johnson Brothers Marina to find a pull of one to eight fish on a tide out. Afternoon trips seemed to have better productivity than morning trips as the sun's rays warmed up the waters and, most likely, sparked their feeding. Flounder folk had some excellent catches off the Oyster Creek outflow in Barnegat Bay as flatfish were taken in droves by heavily chumming anglers. The Island Heights bulkhead and Pelican Island Route 37 Bridge also had some flounder activity holding

strong, basically all reports adding up to a good pick of flatties inside Barnegat Bay. Even if you didn't have a boat to get to the flounder grounds, bulkhead fishermen were able to pull some quality catches of flatties from the Monument at Manasquan Inlet, from the Johnson Brothers dock, and off Lyman Avenue in Bay Head, where incidentally, I was able to pull in a most excellent 16-inch winter flounder for dinner one particular day. Reports also had some decent striper activity in the back by the Route 37 Bridge, with some keeper-sized bass taking clam baits and chasing plastic shads. Striper activity trickled in from the area by the High Bar inside Barnegat Inlet where a few shorts were taken on topwater poppers. Bass fishermen also maintained their pull of short and occasional keeper bass off the Route 9 Bridge on the east side of the bridge. Graveling Point was a flux of up- and-down striper fishing; it all depended on the day and your luck. Good days had four to eight fish a man, with occasional keepers, and bad days you got blanked. Some days the high water in the morning was key; other times the middle-of-the-day low tide worked well. It's been a day-to-day crapshoot. The Mullica River did hold some quality stripers up to and over the 20-pound class, signaling the beginning of the spring striper push into the back creeks. That fishery should explode by May.

Offshore

Anglers wondering just what the heck there is to fish for 50 to 80 miles out in May will be glad to know that a solid whale cod and pollack bite has been happening through April and should last until May. Humongous cod to 35 pounds and pollack to 35 pounds have both been scored on the mid-shore and offshore wrecks from 25 to 80 miles out. Late prime time spots have been the 28-mile Wreck, the Texas Tower and the Resor Wreck. Another solid offshore bet is to target golden tilefish on the flats of the continental shelf. Granted, you need to be fishing in the 400 to 600 foot depths, but there is some quality tilefishing to be had inside the Hudson Canyon. Most tiles have been reported in the 5 to 20-pound class, but make no mistake, there are lunker 50-pounders waiting to be caught in this often overlooked fishery. Just be sure to spool up with braided line and get the highest speed retrieve reels into play.

Things are swingin' for Jersey anglers since May is the true barometer and catalyst for the fishing year. If it doesn't happen in May, it ain't happenin', and as of April, all things look like they're pointing to a phenomenal time in May. Reports will be flying off the charts by next issue. Be sure you get out to add some of your own! If you have anything to tell me, feel free to email me at beachnut33@hotmail.com. I'd love to hear what you find on the end of your line!

High Tides For May 2007

Bridgeport, CT





May 1	11:35 AM	11:44 PM	May 16	11:25 AM	11:40 PM
May 2	-----	12:11 PM	May 17	-----	12:17 PM
May 3	12:18 AM	12:47 PM	May 18	12:32 AM	1:10 PM
May 4	12:54 AM	1:24 PM	May 19	1:25 AM	2:04 PM
May 5	1:30 AM	2:03 PM	May 20	2:19 AM	2:59 PM
May 6	2:10 AM	2:45 PM	May 21	3:16 AM	12:01 PM
May 7	2:54 AM	3:32 PM	May 22	4:14 AM	4:54 PM
May 8	3:43 AM	4:23 PM	May 23	5:15 AM	5:52 PM
May 9	4:38 AM	5:18 PM	May 24	6:15 AM	6:48 PM
May 10	5:38 AM	6:16 PM	May 25	7:14 AM	7:40 PM
May 11	6:40 AM	7:13 PM	May 26	8:08 AM	8:29 PM
May 12	7:41 AM	8:09 PM	May 27	8:57 AM	9:13 PM
May 13	8:40 AM	9:04 PM	May 28	9:43 AM	9:55 PM
May 14	9:37 AM	9:57 PM	May 29	10:25 AM	10:34 PM
May 15	10:32 AM	10:49 PM	May 30	11:05 AM	11:13 PM
			May 31	11:44 AM	11:51 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

			
May 02, 2007 Full	May 9, 2007 Last Quarter	May 17, 2007 New	May 24, 2007 First Quarter

High Tides For May 2007

Fire Island Democratic Point





May 1	7:24 AM	7:43 PM	May 16	7:24 AM	7:42 PM
May 2	8:01 AM	8:16 PM	May 17	8:16 AM	8:32 PM
May 3	8:37 AM	8:48 PM	May 18	9:09 AM	9:23 PM
May 4	9:13 AM	9:20 PM	May 19	10:05 AM	10:17 PM
May 5	9:51 AM	9:56 PM	May 20	11:03 AM	11:14 PM
May 6	10:33 AM	10:37 PM	May 21	-----	12:01 PM
May 7	11:21 AM	11:28 PM	May 22	12:10 AM	12:57 PM
May 8	-----	12:15 PM	May 23	1:04 AM	1:50 PM
May 9	12:24 AM	1:11 PM	May 24	1:55 AM	2:42 PM
May 10	1:23 AM	2:09 PM	May 25	2:47 AM	3:33 PM
May 11	2:25 AM	3:09 PM	May 26	3:40 AM	4:23 PM
May 12	3:28 AM	4:09 PM	May 27	4:34 AM	5:10 PM
May 13	4:33 AM	5:07 PM	May 28	5:25 AM	5:54 PM
May 14	5:34 AM	6:02 PM	May 29	6:12 AM	6:34 PM
May 15	6:31 AM	6:53 PM	May 30	6:55 AM	7:12 PM
			May 31	7:36 AM	7:48 PM

High Tides For Other Locations:

South Shore		North Shore	
Amityville	+ 2:59	Pt. Washington	+ 3:23
Bay Shore	+ 2:46	Oyster Bay	+ 3:32
E. Rockaway Inlet	+ 0:32	Pt. Jefferson	+ 3:29
Freeport	+ 1:16	Mattituck Inlet	+ 3:35
Jones Inlet	+ 0:19	Greenport	+ 2:45
Moriches Inlet	- 0:18	Sag Harbor	+ 2:35
Shinnecock Inlet	- 0:12	Montauk Point	+ 0:29

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