

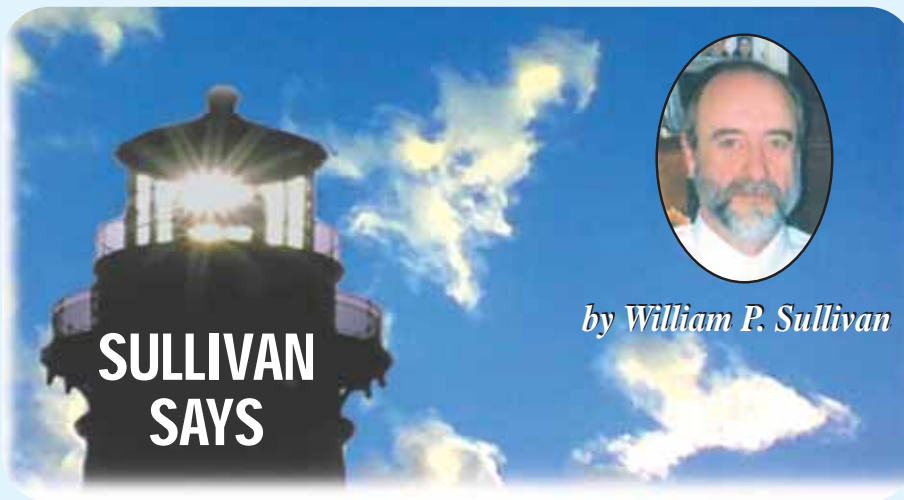
Let's get through the local inshore fishing quickly. I want to spend more time on off-shore this month. Striped bass in the bays will move to a dawn and night bite. Ebb tide in the inlets to the west will still be very good with clams until the sun breaks the horizon. My barometer when fishing the red side of Jones Inlet was to quit when the sun hit the tree tops on Meadowbrook Parkway. In the evening at the last of the flood through the first two hours of the ebb, popping and plugging the grassy banks and riffles in Woodmere, Middle Bay, Hempstead Bay, State Channel and up into the north side of Great South Bay will produce bass to the low 20's and bluefish from cocktails to alligators. Standards are Bombers in Chicken Scratch or black, Yozuri Mag Poppers and Darters in the bunker-looking colors, Atoms and Crystal Minnows. Shads work well too, but there is nothing like having a bass come out of the water for a surface popper. Also to the west, bunker will run along the beaches, so snag and swim is the rule. Moriches and Shinnecock don't get the traffic and pressure, so your chances of bass are better. Here you can snag bunker outside and bring them back into the inlets and cuts for some size strippers or drift the inlets with clams.

At Montauk and Orient, everything works either day or night. Problem here is finding the fish, not feeding them. With so much structure for bass to choose and so much current and bait, they can be anywhere. Standards are under the light, The Race and The Gut, but any small wreck will work with chunks and wire line on the anchor. Bucktails on 3X3 rigs with pork rind is productive but not too sporty for my taste. I'd rather bait them out east and pop or plug them to the west. Hooks and terminal tackle are subjective to the angler. Best bet - check with the locals and tackle shops for rigs and spots to hit.

Fluke - all over. It will be tough to find keepers over 19.5 inches and more work than usual. Work the ocean, around the reefs, fingers and hard bottom. Scan for bait, squid or sand eels, or work the bridges in the bays. Again, go with big baits for keepers and standard set-ups for action on shorts; learn to use bucktails and artificials to cut mortality on shorts.

Inshore reefs and wrecks - porgies are open and sea bass are at a peak early in July and will be pounded to death by the end. Fluking being so tough, many recreational anglers as well as traditional fluke party-boats have swung to sea bass, so your competition is steep.

Bluefish - everywhere, inside and outside. Troll umbrella rigs (yuck), jig or plug when you see birds working. Keep a spinner set up



by William P. Sullivan

with a small tin when fluking in the bay to be ready for blitz. Bait and chum will work on the drift, or anchor anywhere you have structure. You can try the reefs, Cholera, Middle, and Angler Banks. The Three Sisters area, 17 Fathoms, the Mud Buoy and Patchogue Grounds will all produce. If the water heats up the last week of the month, you may get a shot at false albacore, bonita and chicken mahi on the inshore spots.

Now, let's go offshore. The local shark tournaments will start the last week in June and everyone is itching to get into the deep. Starting with sharks, in the last week of June, big makos and threshers migrate along the coast chasing the bluefish schools. So bluefish, live, is your prime bait. You will need to carry a couple of flats of mackerel and three cans of ground bunker or mackerel chum in case of not finding bluefish. It's also a good idea to have some big trolling squid on board. A combo bait of a squid with a bluefish filet or a rigged mackerel may make the difference.

Some boats start early and fish for bluefish on the way out, trolling or chumming. Others opt for setting up a shark drift and expect bluefish to come into the chum first. Either way a 3-pound live bluefish with his tail snipped and/or filets from larger fish are your target baits. If you get mauled by bluefish, take enough for bait and move. Too many bluefish can mean no predators or it also could mean a good live chum-slick. Choice is yours.

Find some structure to drift. That means planning a trip by studying your charts and sea surface temp charts and

watching the weather. Use a yellow hi-lighter to trace the bottom contours and another color to mark your wrecks to make recognizing structure easier. Wreck clusters spread over a few miles; fingers and contours, rock piles and ledges are all good choices for long drifts. Short drifting repeatedly over a large wreck is another option. This early in the season, stay deeper than 100 feet, preferably 120 to 180 feet. Glory Hole, Schooner Wreck, Rock Piles,

Virginia and the like are early spots. Watch your surface temp and water color. Tinted water will have more bluefish, but maybe no makos or threshers. One year we kept moving south and had stain all the way past the Yankee and Compass Rose. Fishing temperature breaks and eddies of warm water can be all you need. Frequenting the sea temp charts on-line in the days before a trip can point to temperature breaks that line up with the desired structure. Set your baits in the pattern I have described many times before - deep rigs weighted on floats farther from the boat with successive float rigs set shallower as they

get loser. Or reverse it and use close baits 30 feet from the boat and the far baits 150 feet away.

Have one flat line set just out of sight. I prefer to have one rig run through a clothespin or outrigger clip attached to the bow rail, a second bait clipped to the front quarter-bit and the remaining four in the cockpit. Make use of the overhead rod holders as well as the gunnel mounts. That set-up spreads your baits out in a better pattern. Your last baited rig is in a cooler, with line coiled ready to throw at the shark that sneaks in past all the set baits. To handle the boredom, rotate bluefishing or deep-water fluke fishing. Lastly, watch your slick. The chum may drift in one direction and your baits in another. Straighten your drift with a rigged sea anchor of 5-gallon buckets.

Don't cut another boat's slick and don't go alongside to ask how he is doing. People put a lot of time, money and effort into this kind of fishing, so respect the other boat and give at least a mile clearance and pass on the windward side to miss his chum slick. Everyone say a prayer that the dogfish aren't lurking in the shadows.

Early tuna fishing starts to the east around Atlantis and Veatch Canyons or south at Lindenkohl and Wilmington Canyons. Hudson seems to consistently produce later. First the bluefins will make an appearance and then later in the month, the yellowfin usually show up at the Fishtails and The Dip. Boats making short trips may find fish early at the Dip and Tails, but it's hard to predict.

Early tuna fishing is on the troll, not chunking, since the fish are scattered and



225-pound tournament mako caught on the charter boat "Codfather," Freeport.

Courtesy Capt. Mike Barnett



214-pound thresher weighed at Bay Park Fishing Station, Oceanside caught by Capt. Pete. courtesy Bay Park F.S.

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