

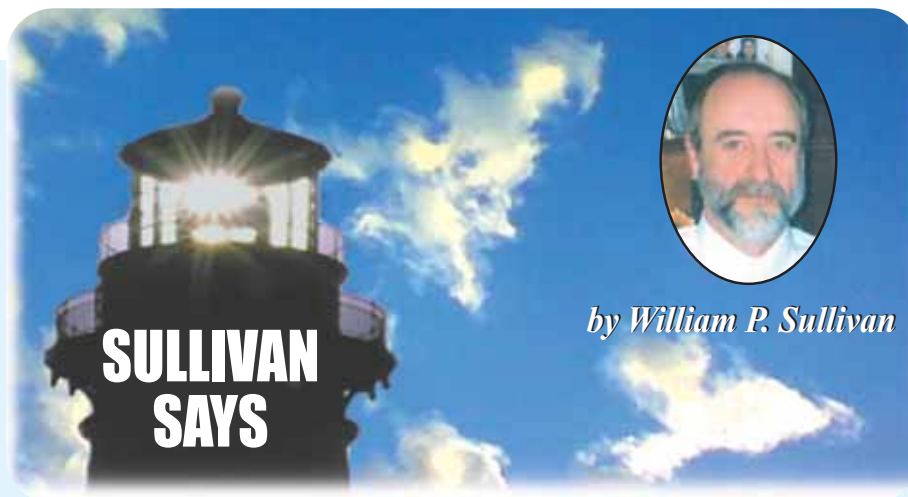
The end of summer is here and the weather is starting to change. Once upon a time when the first northerly blew in September, you ran into the beach near the Jones Beach Tower and the fluke would be stacked up in the shallows. Who knows, they may still do that and nobody is looking.

The fall migration is about to start and that's when everything breaks wide open. Fluke will begin to follow the bait and move to the inlets. Bluefish will turn back on with a vengeance. Stripers will be coming back down the beach from New England, following the bait run and the local resident fish will turn on again. The canyons and offshore wrecks are prime for tuna, and inshore it will be tuna, bonito, albacore and mahimahi. Mako shark and threshers will start to move back down the coast, snappers are putting on weight fast and crabbing is at a high. By late in the month, the boat traffic from the beach cruisers will be down and the fishermen take over once more.

The best part about fishing in September is the variety of species on the inshore pieces. Out on the East End, you will find bluefish, stripers, bonito and false albacore around Gardiners, in the Rips, the Race, the Gut and under the Light, and you can catch them on plugs, jigs, small tins for the bones or albies and even fly-fishing. With small boats, pick your weather windows and work under the birds. Sea bass, porgies and fluke will be banging away still on the usual spots with the standard tactics.

Anywhere that you fish on the island, this is the time of year to try for a jumbo fluke by drifting big baits over rocky areas and around the edges of wrecks. When you anchor over a wreck for bluefish or bottom fish, put a live bergal on an egg sinker rig just off the bottom, and either a fluke or bluefish will attack. Anywhere around Montauk and Orient will yield big fluke. To the west, the reefs near every inlet, Ambrose Channel, Scallop Ridge, Cholera, Angler Banks and Middle Ground are good bets. Don't forget to live-line snappers for fluke in the bay, especially around the bridge structure. Remember, there are catch limits on snappers, so don't try to pen a load of them. In the ocean, I went with live bergals or big dead baits. Baits for big fluke are Peruvian spearing, whole California squid, sea robin, mackerel and bunker strips, fluke fin ribbons from the white side (fluke are too expensive now to use fillet for bait) or bergal fillets. The rig is a tandem hook rig where the top hook is fixed and the stinger hook floats to adjust to the bait length. Large bucktails, bullets and teaser rigs also will work well.

Bass and bluefish will perk up along the beaches as bait begins to move and the water cools off. If the mullet run starts in late September, the near shore spots will be blitzed. Live eels will really start to take hold at night in the western south shore inlets later this month, too. Be prepared to give three eels to the bluefish for every bass bite you get. On the east end, and it's catching on in the west, striper fishing is



SULLIVAN SAYS

by William P. Sullivan

becoming popular using legal live-lined porgies. Just remember: legal and not-over-your-limit on porgies. They may seem like awfully big baits, but think about the size of bunker you live-lined in June and July and just what a 40-pound bass can swallow. Trolling shad rigs, umbrellas and bunker spoons is going to be hot. Surf fishing when the mullet run the beaches is best with blue-colored lures. Divers and swimmers with blue backs and white undersides will usually outfish other colors.

Bluefishing over structure can result in fish close to 20 pounds, if you target them. The big alligators are cruising off the bottom, picking off any sea bass, fluke or porgy that drops its guard. Take a live bergal and rig it on an egg sinker. Slowly drop it near to the bottom and put the rod in a holder while you fish for whatever else you like. Even chum the surface for the 5- to 8-pound bluefish while the bottom rigs cook for a while. It never fails that a beast will come up on that rig. To the west, diamond jigging from Sheepshead Bay is a blast. Working the Ambrose area down to 17 Fathoms is a mixed bag of blues, stripers, weakfish, bonito, albacore and tuna. Drone spoons, Johnson Sprites and Deadly Dicks work fine on light tackle; just stay small for the bonito and albacore. On the south shore, bait fishing for these torpedoes really is exciting as you watch your bait-caster get smoked. Just use a freshwater rod with something like an Ambassador 6500 and 10- or 15-pound test and a small tuna hook in size 1/0 or smaller. Find clear water near structure and chum with a very thin bunker mix and loads of spearing. Local spearing and large blocks of spearing were in short supply this year. Hopefully, the juveniles



The new super speedy "Express II," Captree State Park. Courtesy Capt "Speedy" Hubert

will have grown enough to be seined and give us a supply of chum spearing. Trolling small clones and feathers at 6 to 10 knots also will produce and can be a way to scout for fish before setting

up a slick.

Crabbing in the bays will hold up until October or November the way the fall water temps have been the past few years. Last shot to get out with the kids before school starts! For the tykes and toddlers on the docks, snappers are really big this time of year. If they can cast, small tins like Kastmasters and Sidewinders are deadly.

If they can cast a little better, Snapper Poppers are a blast. If they can't cast, floats and spearing on cane-poles and Snoopy



If you have never seen a mako jump. courtesy Capt Ed Perry, Sea Hunt Charters, Point Lookout

rods will really do some damage. Keep the fishing time around the last hour of the flood to the first hour of the ebb. That's prime time and you won't have bored the kids into kicking gravel or their little brother into the water. Improve your odds of catching by chumming if you are in a deeper canal. The back of your boat in its slip is a great spot to chum. Don't be surprised if you get needlefish, jacks, eels or some exotics. If you have a boat, anchor at one of the bay bridges and let the porgies and sea bass beat the kids up. They'll sleep a lot better after a few hours in the sun and fresh air. Cane-poling can't be beat for fun, but wading along the bay beaches with a Kastmaster on an ultra-light can't be beat either.

Offshore, the Canyons and deep-water wrecks will be at their peaks. Yellowfin, bluefin, bigeye and longfin tuna will be chunked at night and trolled during the day. Blue and white marlin also will pop up when you least expect them. At night in the deep, a rigged fresh squid fished deep will be the right setup for a swordfish. Places like Hudson, Atlantis, Block, Tom's and Chicken Canyons, the Dip, FishTails, Texas Tower, Bacardi, Ranger, Virginia, Suffolk and any other 150-plus deep wreck will produce. Trolling standards are spreader bars with squids or small Green Machines, daisy chains, single big Green Machines, Zuckers, clones, feathers and jet-heads, to mention just

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