

CONNECTICUT FISHING REPORT

by Bob Sampson Jr.

The biggest problem with October, besides some occasional nasty weather, is deciding what to do with my spare time. All my addictions and disorders, from striper fever and musky mania to pre-rut buck calling with a bow and arrow in hand, are all running full tilt at some time during this month. Unfortunately, fluke and winter flounder are both off the fishing menu due to closed seasons, but blackfish, scup, stripers, bluefish and hopefully, if weather and bait conditions have been right, tunoids are all running strong. This year, at least early unless heavy flooding rains and cool temps drive them out of the shallows, blue crabs should be spectacular, at least for the first couple of weeks of the month.

Fly rodders and light tackle anglers are in their glory if the false albacore have invaded the Sound in force. If it's another disappointing season like last year's, there will be the typical "Well, they were here yesterday", or last week, or last season excuses being brought to play for failed outings that target these fast-moving, often hard-to-catch members of the tuna clan. The only inkling I have as to how it might be roughly a month early is the fact that so far this season bonito showed late and provided sporadic moments of glory for some, but overall, they have been spotty as of early September. The bad news for false albacore fans is that as of the last week in August, there had been only one second-hand report of a false being caught somewhere off the south side of Fishers Island. Based on these omens, the prospect for a good run of false albi's during October is not very good. However, this entire season has had late starts with good to great middles and endings, so the possibility exists that between the writing and printing of these words false albacore and bonito have invaded.

Bottom fishermen can count on some sea bass still hanging around rock piles, wrecks and smaller reefs. Humpback porgies have provided great fishing this summer, so good that most shops have not been talking about scup catches because its pretty much been a "given" for anyone who has targeted them since the season opened during the summer. There may not be quite as many jumbos around this year as last season and the one before that, but there's enough scup out there, dinner plate-sized fish to satisfy those who are looking to catch a daily limit of 25 10.5 inchers.

Many of the guys who drift the beaches for fluke all summer make the switch to high-low rigs baited with crabs and start anchoring up to catch their four-fish limit of 14-inch or better blackfish (tautog). The increase to a 14-inch minimum length for this species really has helped build up its numbers in many areas. They are relatively slow-growing, so it took a couple of seasons for them to catch up to the regulatory changes, so to speak, but they have done this as planned. The 2006 season brought some great blackfish catches during October, and this year looks to be as good or better based on the fact that a fair number of fishermen took advantage of the split in the season

and targeted them prior to the May closure of the first third of this chopped-up season. A few resumed fishing in June and continued to report catches throughout the summer for the second or third year in a row, which is a good sign for the fall.

The outlook for some good to spectacular blackfish action during October is far better than the omens in place for tunoid fishing. Windy weather is the primary factor that simply will keep people off the water and make fishing difficult and miserable. Every indication is that this autumn's tautog fishing should be good to excellent for those



Bass in the 20 pound plus range, like this one caught in the eastern end of the Sound have been plentiful all season long. With bait super abundant throughout the region, this fall's fishing has the potential to be memorable for many anglers.

who target this hard-fighting, fine-eating, structure-oriented fish. They are my weakest species, primarily because I tend to be sitting in tree stands during the best time of the year to catch blackfish, which is right now. The key element to catching these fish successfully is finding some rugged structure and anchoring so that your lines are tight to that structure. Sometimes a matter of a few feet one way or the other can make all the difference between a good and a poor catch. For this reason, if you are in a good area and don't connect after a half an hour or so, pull up or let out scope in the anchor line, or raise the anchor, move one way or the other on the reef and reset. The effort will be worth it if you can get on some fish.

The best blackfish bait is fiddler crabs, but they are not always available, so most anglers use green crabs that are cut in half or used whole if they are small. This is a very finesse-style of bottom fishing because a crab on a hook is like fishing with a cocoa puff for bait, one crunch from a blackfish, which has teeth like a human that needs braces, and it's gone! This can be a major problem when the fish are small and simply missing the hooks and can be one reason for moving to a new spot. I've found that when blackfish are "ratta-tat-tatting" on the line, you almost need to anticipate when they are going to strike, tighten the line to the bait and complete the hookset when any weight

is felt. They are one of the most difficult-to-hook species I've dealt with, but that's one thing that makes them fun and challenging to catch. The second part of the equation is that they are excellent eating. Their meat is firm, so they make a great chowder.

I used to do a great deal of blackfish spearing before a back injury that causes severe leg cramps pretty much ended my ability to swim for long periods of time, especially in a strong current. When you can select the fish you want to shoot from a school, those big tide-runners should be filleted, with the thick fillets cut into medallions that can be broiled, baked or otherwise treated like a small swordfish or mako shark steak. Smaller blackfish fillets are excellent grilled whole over an open fire of any sort, especially one of charcoal. I found that using one of those basket-type hinged grills would help hold fillets together. Baste with butter, lemon and oregano for one of the tastiest treats our inshore waters can provide.

The fall migration of both bluefish and striper is really what most hard core marine anglers wait for all year, especially the dedicated anglers who fish from the surf (another thing I really can't do any more with a leg and back that can't be trusted on slippery rocks). This summer started off cool, and loads of bait were around to hold the stripers, blues and fluke in place. For this reason, until late August, stripers that often become pretty scarce in the eastern end of Long Island Sound and sometimes the southern Rhode Island beaches, were thinned out, but still fairly abundant. The fishing never really died out in these areas, though as always, the western end of Long Island Sound heated up to levels that move most of the stripers to the east and north, but invite hordes of big bluefish in to feed. Again, the outlook for some very good striper and bluefish action this month is excellent.

Bluefish came in as usual during May, but because there are a number of older year classes in the fishery, there were some very big blues, fish of 15 to 18 pounds, reported throughout the region at that time and on a regular basis throughout the summer. Add the fact that the eight- or nine-pounders then are all into double-digit sizes now, with swollen guts and big heads. Anyone looking to do battle with the bluefish of his or her life has a pretty good chance of accomplishing that goal this fall.

Look for big choppers to chase bunker up into rivers. The Thames River, lower Connecticut and Housatonic always attract schools of choppers during the late summer and fall, so these are the places to go, especially when it's blowing hard on the Sound. Find the bunker and you've probably found the big choppers along with some stripers. The school of 20-pound-plus stripers that came into the Thames behind the first influx of menhaden back in May was still there as of Labor Day. This year there were many 50-pound and a smat-

continued on page 74

High Tides For October 2007

Fire Island Democrat Point

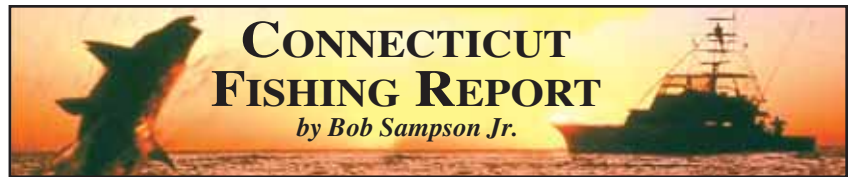
Oct 1	11:00 AM	-----	Oct 16	10:51 AM	11:25 PM
Oct 2	12:04 AM	12:25 PM	Oct 17	11:40 AM	-----
Oct 3	1:07 AM	1:28 PM	Oct 18	12:19 AM	12:35 PM
Oct 4	2:11 AM	2:32 PM	Oct 19	1:16 AM	1:33 PM
Oct 5	3:15 AM	3:35 PM	Oct 20	2:15 AM	2:34 PM
Oct 6	4:17 AM	4:36 PM	Oct 21	3:16 AM	3:35 PM
Oct 7	5:14 AM	5:29 PM	Oct 22	4:15 AM	4:35 PM
Oct 8	6:02 AM	6:14 PM	Oct 23	5:09 AM	5:31 PM
Oct 9	6:44 AM	6:55 PM	Oct 24	6:00 AM	6:23 PM
Oct 10	7:21 AM	7:33 PM	Oct 25	6:47 AM	7:13 PM
Oct 11	7:57 AM	8:09 PM	Oct 26	7:34 AM	8:02 PM
Oct 12	8:31 AM	8:44 PM	Oct 27	8:21 AM	8:53 PM
Oct 13	9:04 AM	9:20 PM	Oct 28	8:11 AM	8:48 PM
Oct 14	9:37 AM	9:57 PM	Oct 29	9:06 AM	9:48 PM
Oct 15	10:12 AM	10:37 PM	Oct 30	10:05 AM	10:51 PM
			Oct 31	11:08 AM	11:53 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

All times are approximate • Not responsible for errors.

Moon Phases



continued from page 73

tering of 60-pounders caught in the areas between Newport, Rhode Island, Block Island, Fishers Island and Norwalk, Connecticut where I call people for weekly reports. Those same schools of jumbo bass will be returning to their natal wintering areas some time between now and November.

You'll see that the largest stripers will be feeding on large baits such as adult menhaden, mackerel, herring, hickory shad and even scup when these soft-rayed fish are not available. Many anglers who use lures are turning to 10- and 12-inch Slug-Go's, Fin-S Fish, and Hoagies, a similar soft plastic with excellent results. Needlefish plugs, poppers and large swimmers also account for many of these bigger fish every season. The trick is to match in size and color whatever they are targeting as prey. Of course, any time of the year and any time of day, but especially after the sun sets, a live eel is a deadly big striped bait.

Crabbing has been excellent. I have a cut on the tip of my right pointer finger that began bleeding a few seconds ago as proof. The Thames River, where I've caught most of mine thus far in 2007, has a large number of crabs, but most were just barely keeper-size... five-inchers as of late August. However, with another molt under their shells now, those fives will be six inches, and anything that was truly big in August will be a giant of seven inches or more in early October providing they have molted another time. (Crabs increase their size by about 20% with every shedding of their shells.)

Weather is the primary factor in how well or poorly fishermen do every fall because it has a great deal to do with maintaining the integrity of bait schools and temperature tolerance range of both prey and predators. Winds can scatter both, sometimes for a day or so early in the fall, sometimes permanently if temperatures are borderline later in the fall.

Brokerage Section

AQUA MARINA

**55 Hudson Avenue
Freeport, NY
631-786-2536**



21' CONCEPT 1987, 225hp Johnson, hyd. steering, SS t-top, very fast, great for fishing\$10,000



22' VELOCITY 1987, 200hp Yamaha, hyd. steering, new gauges, runs perfect\$6,500



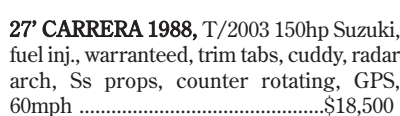
22' OCEANIC 1985, ready for power\$2,500



23' TSUNAMI 1985, T/150hp Yamahas ('91), hyd. steering, TT's, SS t-top, rock solid\$12,000



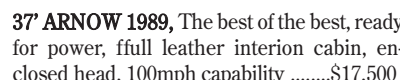
24' NORTH COAST, T/Mariners, loaded, new canvas, ready to go.....\$17,000



27' CARRERA 1988, T/2003 150hp Suzuki, fuel inj., warranteed, trim tabs, cuddy, radar arch, Ss props, counter rotating, GPS, 60mph\$18,500



27' CARRERA SS SPORT, T/ 350 Magnums EFI Bravos, new cockpit interior, new exhaust manifolds, excellent condition\$21,500



37' ARNOW 1989, The best of the best, ready for power, ffull leather interior cabin, enclosed head, 100mph capability\$17,500

PORT OF EGYPT

**Main Road
Southold, NY
516-765-2445
www.poemarine.com**



20' GRADY WHITE 208 ADVENTURE 2003, 150hp Yamaha HPDI, 88 hrs., swim ladder, bimini top w/curtains, cockpit shower, FF, VHF, Garmin GPS, portable head (never used)\$32,900



22' GRADY WHITE 222 FISHERMAN 2004, 225hp Yamaha 4-stroke O/B, warr. til 2/10, 290 hrs., t-top, rocket launchers, cockpit bolsters, swim ladder, portable head, bow pulpit, radar, GPS, VHF\$31,000



22' GRADY WHITE 228 SEAFARER 2005, 225hp Yamaha 4-stroke O/B, bow pulpit, bimini top w/full encl., portable head w/mac\$49,500



27' GRADY WHITE SAILFISH 1997, new 2005 T/225hp Yamaha 4-stk. O/Bs, full 3 year warranty, GPS/Map plotter, VHF, outriggers, anchor windlass, HT w/full encl., livewell, head w/mac\$85,000



30' GRADY WHITE MARLIN 2002, new T/225hp Yamaha O/B's, HT w/full enclosure, outriggers, elec. head, CD player, AC, radar, GPS, FF, AP \$134,000