

"They that go down to the sea in ships that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep." Psalm 107

File this under I like being right. I've spoken every year about continuing your shark fishing in the fall when the brutes make their second pass. Capt. Larry Festa on the *Kristen* from the Freeport Tuna Club did it again with Mike Sullivan on the rod (no relation, an old friend) for a thresher of 339-pounds on November 12th 20-miles southeast of Jones Inlet, Matt Errett, wireman and George Sincero, helmsman. *Sláinte duine a ól* to Larry and crew.

Time is running short to be in the water. All the sanding, painting, compounding and waxing should be done mid-month so you can beat the rush and drop her in. If you expect to be ready for sea bass, fluke and stripers next month, you need to get your shakedown done and load your gear by the end of the month.

Now is the time to buy frozen bait in bulk at you local tackle shops and save a couple of bucks to put to fuel. You can order spearing and squid by the case and stock a small freezer. If you didn't do as I said last fall, and load up on sinkers, be ready for sticker shock. A 10-ounce sinker may cost anywhere from \$2.50 to \$3.00. Woe to the Orient Point fishermen who lose 20-ouncers in the Gut and Fisher's Island!

If you are in and ready, out east I would give the blackfish, codfish and ling a shot and get the tail end of that fishing in. Mackerel will show or whiz by in the last week of the month. You will need to be rigged, fueled and ready when the reports come in because it will be one fast week before they are gone.

When you get wet this month, use your local flounder fishing, seal watching and general cruising to shake out the problems and get them fixed before things get into full swing. Nobody should be out in the ocean before running some inside shakedown.

So here are some other options for April fishing.

Flounder for the next month will be confined to Raritan Bay, Quogue and Shinnecock Canal, Hecksher Flats, Silver Hole in J-Bay, State Channel and the canals on the north side of the bays like Parsonage, Milburn, Bellmore Creeks and the river outlets from Islip to Bellport. Watch the water temps, tides and moon, and you should be able to outsmart a few. Best bets for bait...sandworms and mussels early. Clams will work better later as the water warms some. Look for warm water close to

SULLIVAN SAYS



by William P. Sullivan



town to start with, that is where the fish that wintered over will be concentrated. After the



Flounder, for those that remember what they look like. Courtesy Capt. Harvey Smith, "Soaker," Montauk.

first week or two, the South Shore fish in the canals will spread out into the bays and you will have to hunt for a few. On the ebb tide, the warm water is running off the edges into the channels, so expect to fish the deeper sides of those edges. On the flood, on a sunny day, the fish will move up onto the flats and take

advantage of the few degree increase that the sun gives. Heavy chum, lots of moves and some kind of bead or grub in yellow, pink or glow will improve your chances. So will yellow sinkers, you can dip your own. Rigs should be experimented with. The normal Sea

Bright tandem tied an inch above the sinker works 99% of the time. I have seen days where fishfinder rigs were the better choice. Rapid bouncing to stir the mud is normal, but dead-sticking has its days too. The answer is having your crew rig different and fish differently until you figure the fish out. Chumming is a must with crushed mussel and/or ground clam. Stirring the bottom is also not to be overlooked. Clam rakes, sash weights, plungers, you name it....flounder fishermen have used it. Pound the bottom around the boat, repeated often and set the chumpot up-tide. If you anchor bow and stern, cross-tide, you may have to fish up-tide, under the boat. Don't get stuck in a rut...experiment. As I said, flounder in Shinnecock Canal, Quogue Canal and the channel running through Moriches Bay are targets. Hecksher and the flats off Sayville, Middle Bay, Hole in the Bay, Parsonage and Milburn Creeks,

Squaw Island or Massapequa Cove hopefully will produce. If you are near Massapequa, also try Florence Beach. The 3rd Wantagh bridge, Coast Guard Station, Jones Beach Piers, the Cedars off Raritan, Coney Island Flats, Lake Montauk and Sore Thumb will light up later on as the small body of migrating flounder move to the ocean.

With the prices of fuel going through the roof, if you run from Jones or Debs, don't make the Raritan run until you hear decent reports from Jersey and Sheepshead Bay. 2007 it wasn't worth the run most days.

In general, the South Shore reefs and in-shore wrecks will hold some blackfish, ling and a few codfish. Codfish have to be 22-inches and there is no creel limit in state waters, if you are in Fed waters, it's 10 fish per man. There was a decent run of codfish in late January through mid-February from Shinnecock to 17 Fathoms with fish as close as 40-feet of water. Lot's of shorts, but cod to 12 pounds. The blackfish are still really in the deep until the water warms again so don't expect a slammer inshore. The 90- to 120-foot wrecks will also be slim pickins' and I would expect a lot of dogfish. Best bet is west, 17 Fathoms down into the Mudhole for blackfish and ling. Leftover herring may be found close to the inlets. It was a lousy winter for herring so, don't expect much.

Montauk will be the best bet for codfish and some major ling bites. Party and charter-boats will be running local and extended trips.



Capt Barbara Fusco of Luv2Fish Charters, Mount Sinai with a Moriches bass from the "Aquaholic." Courtesy Capt Gil Hubbs, Aquaholic Charters.

Even if you have the right boat and it's docked Out East, save yourself the headaches and cost and go with a pro. This fishing, this time of year, is fairly specialized and your chances are far better letting a truly knowledgeable captain put you on the fish. Over the past few years, the spring action between Block Island and even Coxes Ledge has been very good to great. Not the mondo-sized cod of yore but, enough 3's to 5's with a couple

up to the 30's. And the ling sometimes go to 5 pounds. Be prepared for either jig or baitfishing on the codfish Out East. They swing back and forth depending on the natural feed. If the finger-whiting, sand eels or herring show, and the cold temperatures in December bode well for that bait to move south, the cod will be chasing them and want jigs. If natural feed is in short supply, they will be grubbing around the bottom for crabs and whatever, so clam

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