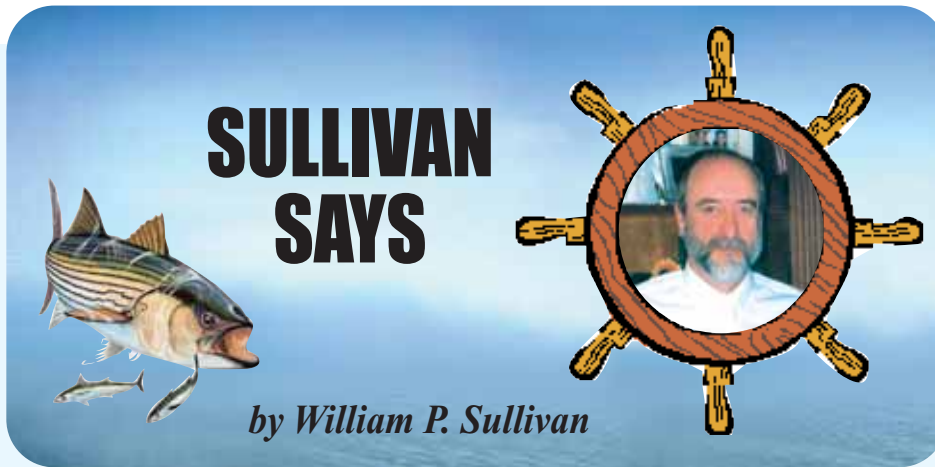


This may be the year that decides the future of some of the small fishing businesses on Long Island. Sadly, over the winter tackle shops have closed in Long Beach, East Rockaway and Queens that I know of. Two courageous operators did open tackle shops, one in Huntington and the other in Islip. Taking into account the regulations as they are, the saltwater fishing license coming this fall, the fight over the gas barge in the Sound and the gas island off Long Beach, and the talk of MPA's (marine no-fish zones), our recreational fishing activities are experiencing shrinkage. This won't be like small-town Long Island when the local Main Street shopping districts were killed off by the malls. There won't be a big-box store or a mall store to sell you bait & chum. What this means is no bait, no slips, no marine supply stores. It's over. Tackle, you will get that over the internet, fishing will be with artificials or on whatever partyboats make it through the fishing industry's very own depression. Keep your money local, forget the 'net, take care of your friends who make a living supplying you with everything you need for boating and fishing.

Okay, it's June, let's have at it. If you want to catch some jumbo sea bass, to the west the next few weeks will be the end of the best fishing for them. Another month and the party or charter boats will have picked the easy pieces clean and fall back on their secret lairs. The reefs will still continue to hold small fish and some keepers but, the fish over 3-pounds will soon be gone until next year. When you hit the local spots and see that the quality is off, start searching for small hangs and snags or try running deeper for pieces that haven't yet been pounded. Pray that the hounds aren't hanging around. To the east, the sea bass run will be in the early part of full swing, they will get another month or better out of the good stuff.

This is prime time for the stripers on clams and chum in the bays, inlets and bars on the south shore spots. This fishing will last well into summer but, the heat of August will shut it down. Out east, the bucktail drifting in the rips is going strong and trolling parachutes will be kicking off, if it hasn't already started. The June moon cycle is for the Full on the 8th and the New Moon on the 22nd. Bay and inlet striper



bait and it's a blast getting poppers slammed. Just watch the moon tides, you don't want your boat in the grass, just the poppers.

Weakfishing in the Peconics is a good bet and as a side-bar to fluke fishing. From Greenport on in, you should be able to get them on jigs, bucktails and assorted rubber. Sandworms or squid strips on 3X3 and hi-lo rigs

will work as long as the porgies haven't invaded. You should still have tiderunners at Fire Island in the usual spots like Ocean Beach. Later in summer they will show in Hempstead Bay and State Channel. Remember, pink is the hottest weakfish color for bucktails, teasers and rubber. Preferred baits are sandworms, squid strips and live lined peanut bunker. Rig ultra-light to light and use very little motion when fishing jelly worms.

Fluke are prime now around the entire island but, you only have until the 15th before the mid-season shut down. Orient should be seeing the tail end of the squid run and the jumbo fluke will be fading but, there will still be double-digit fluke caught everywhere. Stick to the big baits for fluke outside and bucktail inside.

When fluke fishing the inlets, keep an eye on the recorder for slopes and drop-offs that you will striper fish with eels in the fall. Similarly, when drifting for fluke in on the beach, keep your eye out for any little hangs that can be bunker chunked for stripers. Shifting sand will occasionally uncover old pieces of wrecks, boilers, real small bits. It doesn't take much to attract bass in less than 30-feet of water. Some partyboats have bid at auction for research fluke set-asides and can legally fish through the shut-down. Check the ads to see who is eligible to fluke fish between June 16th and July 3rd. Limit is two per person over 21-inches.

Bluefish will be the "go-to" now that the fluke regs have hit us hard. Expect to see more party boats running for them day and night. They can be chummed, plugged, jigged and trolled. The small fish are great on the bar-beque or live-lined under a float for makos and threshers. The mid-sized to alligators should be bled and iced immediately for the table or smoker. Since no one has really targeted bluefish for years, the art of chumming has been forgotten by most. For a private boater, I wouldn't sail for anything without a can of ground bunker and some butterfish. Bluefish will bail out a slow fluke or sea bass trip. If you are bluefishing for the day, you need three cans or more depending on how hard you fish. Nowadays, most chummers use a chum bag with the can of bunker in it. To me, this is poor chumming, there is more science to it than that. To chum bluefish properly, buy your chum the night before. One can stays out to thaw, while the others are boxed on ice. I would leave the dock by 6:00 so I could be anchored over structure with



Here is a great catch of spring stripers at Orient Point. Courtesy Capt. Bill Russo, "Orient Star", Orient Point.

fishing in June is best on a screaming ebb tide, early morning with clams and ground chum or bellies in a pot. Squeezing bellies with a roaring tide or a moon tide won't get the chum down in deeper water. You can belly the flats and back-bay but, near the inlets work the bottom. Use clams on fishfinder rigs in the pre-dawn hours on the anchor in the inlets and bars. Just stay out of the channels. A chumpot on the bottom and a few sleeves of frozen ground clam is all you need for chum. A frozen chumlog will last



This is what a fluke limit will look like in 2009. Courtesy Capt. Desi O'Sullivan, "Celtic Quest", Port Jefferson.

about 45-minutes in these water temperatures. Fresh/salted clams can be bought by the pound for hook bait. Use circle hooks to avoid injuring fish. In the surf, clam baits will outfish anything else but, fresh bunker and bucktails take plenty of early season bass. Bunker will be in the Harbor and Jamaica Bay. If you don't have a supply of bunker snags, get them now. When the bunker move out of the Harbor and run the south shore beaches, there will also be a run on snags and the tackle shops will be out of stock quickly. Don't forget to try surface poppers in the back bays along the meadows especially if you have a small boat. The bass will be right in the grass at the top of the tide chasing

Continued on page 54

Continued from page 51

my slick going before the bottomfish boats arrive. The tools you need are a tunafish can screwed onto a short handle for a ladle and a 5-gallon bucket. The mixture is one can of chum to about two gallons of water, mix it once, any more mixing and stirring will break down the meat. Throw a ladle of chum and as it disappears, toss the next and keep it going. Bait with butterfish cut top to bottom in 3/4-inch wide pieces. If you have fresh bunker or peanuts, use them. In June to early July, large spearing make excellent bluefish baits. Start the hook under the chin, pull it through and double back into the body. Since this is private boat fishing, set aside the heavy tackle and go with 15- or -20 pound mono on bait casting tackle. Hooks can also run small. Use 4/0's with 4-inches of wire and don't wire a swivel. Tie your swivel in 3-feet above the hook. Add a split shot and mix up the sizes and number of shot until you pattern the fish. A tip when the fish are wire shy, which they often are early on, is to snell your hook with 4-inches of 40-pound mono instead of wire, just change hooks often. 4/0 long-shanked Carlisles with mono work well when the fish are finicky. And you are always either drifting your baits back or reeling them in to restart. 99% of your bluefish on the top rigs will be caught less than 75-feet from the boat. Don't let the rods all sit in rod holders. And, always fish one stick deep with an egg sinker in a rod holder, add some spearing to your chumstick and catch some bergals to live-line deep and on the surface.

June is the also the start of the offshore season beginning with sharks. The normal pattern for finding sharks in June is to head way down south, and maybe a little east or west. The late spring and colder water temps may back this season up a week or two. Keep your ears open for info from the Jersey and Delaware shark tournaments. They are good indicators of the state of shark migrations. The consistent producers have been the 50-mile wrecks like The Schooner, Rockpiles and the Glory Hole. Expect threshers and makos to be the residents of your chumstick, blue sharks will show later



These nice weakfish are the rewards for being patient at night, . Courtesy Capt. Nick, "Island Princess", Captree State Park Capt Amanda Cash, "Osprey III", Port Jefferson.

SULLIVAN SAYS



by William P. Sullivan



There is no better way to get kids hooked than to go blue fishing. Courtesy Capt. Amanda Cash, "Osprey III", Port Jefferson.

as the water warms. The preferred bait is live bluefish or fresh bluefish filets. You will definitely need a flying gaff, tail rope, gloves and some seasoned sharkers to be safe and successful. Taking into consideration the fact that you may not find bluefish offshore to catch as bait, better bring some frozen. Standards are a flat of mackerel for hook bait and a flat for chunking in the chumstick. Three cans of frozen bunker chum and a chum bag is all you need for a slick. There are different ideas about baiting sharks. The norm is to set a pattern of baits at different depths and distances from the boat. Another is to sight-fish, keeping the rigged baits on ice until you see a fish. Both have pros & cons. The set pattern will catch any shark with an appetite but that also means dogfish and bluefish ruining rigged baits that took a lot of time and care to prepare. It also doesn't discriminate in species or size so you contend with the pups and blue sharks. Sight fishing means you watch the slick for life and can pick and choose your adversary. I can see the benefit of sight for tourneys and the pattern for the average crew out for fun.

Either way, on the ride out one person cuts chunks for the slick while number two rigs mackerel and number three gets the deck ready. Everyone works! Mackerel baits should be rigged with a rigging needle and thread, not just hooked and tossed over. Colored skirts, floats, egg sinkers and an assortment of wire, swivels, wire cutters and pliers are needed. Use your ocean and sea temp charts to find some bottom structure and temperature breaks to drift. Plan your drift by calculating wind and tide effects to get your boat over as much structure as possible. You may choose some contour fingers, a series of

wrecks or the offshore rockpiles. Shark fishing is not blind drifting. For the pattern, set your lines at different depths and distances from the boat using the floats and egg sinkers. Depending on your depth, set one deep, two staggered mid-depth and one up shallow. Deep rigs are set near the boat and shallow rigs farther out. The reason being, a shark will come to the surface out in a slick and go deeper as he

approaches. Also, put a downrigger clip on the bow and run one bait from that, on the edge of the slick. Some people prefer to set the reverse, choice is yours. Also have one rod rigged and baited, ready to throw to a shark that does sneak in close. More baits should be rigged and placed on ice because you will be changing often if bluefish show up and tear up the shark baits. Make sure you know your shark regulations! Many boats make the mistake of either bringing in short fish or more than the possession limit due to the tournament excitement. And, you have to know how to identify different sharks, Right now, other than blue sharks, for our local species, you are allowed one per boat, over 54-inches fork to nose length and some species are fully protected like whites, sand tigers and I believe duskies. If you read the state regulations, you may be confused. Some states allow two sharks and smaller but, that's if you are fishing within 3-miles of the beach in state waters. I haven't seen anyone shark fishing that close so, make sure you know hat you are doing before you sail. Sharks are covered by the Feds under Codes of Federal



Here is an action shot of blue fishing on the "Osprey IV", Port Jefferson. Courtesy Capt. Amanda Cash, "Osprey IV".

Regulations - Title 50 CFR, Part 635.

When you do go offshore early in the season, don't forget to work the bottom for cod and pollock at the Bacardi, Virginia, Texas Tower and any deep wreck, Suffolk, Ranger, Coxes....the list goes on.

Ling still in 17 Fathoms and the Mudhole, good live bait too. Flounder are closed until next April. Blackfish, closed until October.

Make sure you get a sheet of the regulations from your local tackle shop since you have by now become a regular customer and have a good relationship.

