

Summertime and the fishing is easy, or something like that. June is the real start of the prime fishing season on Long Island.

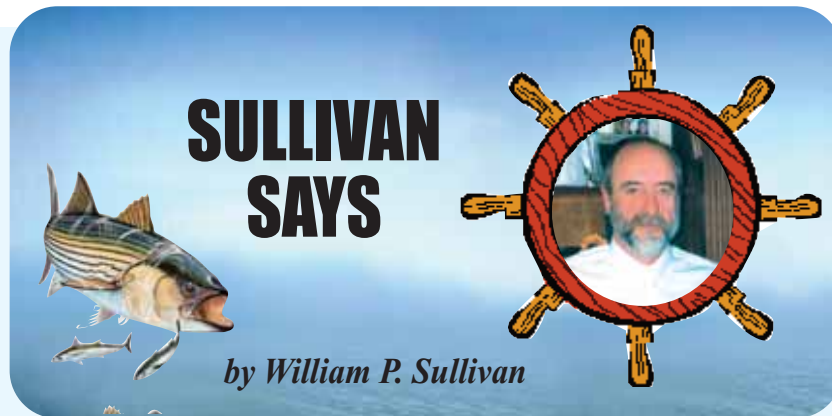
More good news for recreational anglers. First, a new boat arrived at Shinnecock, the *Hampton Lady*. Captains Jim Foley and Shawn Pobiner are sailing from Soleau's Marina, easy striking distance to the Peconics, Shinnecock Bay and the ocean. Next up, the former *Speedy Express* has moved to Greenport to make a faster run to the porgies and is now sailing as the *Peconic Star Express*. It will be nice to have offshore capability at Greenport and ease up on that drive to Montauk. Lastly, by now you should already have this down; pushing back against the regulators has paid off. Both fluke and sea bass seasons have been extended.

This month we will get the mako and thresher shark migration, sea bass get into high gear, as do fluke, the bass fishing heats up on bait, bucktails and rubber and bluefishing improves day by day. There will still be ling for the taking on hard bottom and a few codfish will be pulled both inshore and offshore.

Starting with the stripers, along the beaches and at the bridges, bucktails tipped with porkrind or grubs and fished on the bottom will take quite a few fish. In the surf, the bucktail is cast and retrieved so it is hugging the bottom with a sweeping motion from the current. The trick is reading the beach and knowing the bottom structure where you are presenting the lure. When fishing the bridges from a boat, the bucktail is cast cross tide so it sweeps along the bottom in front of the poles and bridge stanchions. Boaters that anchor on the channel edges at the bridges or along the edges in the inlets will be able to chum stripers with pots of ground clam on the bottom, using shucked, salted clams for hook bait. This and bellying will also work in the grassy channels in the back bays.

All of these techniques will work best on the warmer ebb tide. Drifting with clam baits, rubber shads or bucktails will also work. Plugs and swimmers will take some fish in the back of all the bays in the warmer water. Out east, charterboats will be drifting the rips with bucktails on 3X3rigs, and I expect Montauk to be using fresh or live bunker on the headboats. Bunker showed in late March, early April on the west end, so I expect an early shot at bunker snagging and cast netting. Depending on the May moon and all the variables, the large Hudson River fish that run the beach could be late and show up off the Long Beach jetties in the first week of this month. June was, once upon a time, the month to super slow troll (so slow you could troll a fluke rig at the same time) jumbo bass with surgical tubes off the Golf Balls at Sandy Hook. Many 30's and 40's were taken in the shallows right off the beach. I guess either another lost art or fad fade.

Sea bass and fluking can be done in combination by drifting the edges of structure



or over low-lying rocky and broken bottom. Anchoring kills a lot of fishing time, so if drift conditions are slow, stick to drifting through the reefs and working each bit of rubble and wreckage. Sea bass will take fluke bait just as well as clams. A bucktail on the bottom with a teaser above baited with spearing or fish strips will be fine.

To target sea bass, you need to anchor over a piece of hard bottom that shows some life on the depth recorder. Proper anchoring means setting the anchor or anchors in such a manner as to settle just uptide of where you expect the baits to fish. Anchoring directly over a piece and having the tide carry the baits into a featureless piece of sand won't help you catch. Practice is necessary to become an effective bottom fisherman who can repeat success.

Porgies may also be on the menu. Over the past couple of years, the porgies showed early along the south shore reefs and in the Peconics. If regs stay the same as last year, recreational, private boaters get a shot first before the partyboats and charterboats can take them. Same technique as sea bass, just go smaller on hook size. The trick to porgies is that they are skittish to noise and bluefish. Be quiet, meaning don't charge a wreck or reef at full throttle and get out early before the uneducated traffic starts to spook them. Wrecks and reefs will still hold a cod or two, some ling, blackfish that have to be thrown back and a bunch of blackback flounder that also have to be tossed.

If fluke is the target, look for squid readings on the bottom this month. Squid should move close inshore all around the island in May and hang around in certain spots through the early summer. Once you mark bait on the bottom, go back up-drift and set up. Make sure you watch your machine. If you drift over the bait marks and don't catch, move. If you missed the bait, find them again and adjust your drift. Bear in mind that the fluke you are targeting are feeding on whole squid, so "match-the-hatch" by offering them big baits and don't skimp on the size of bucktails.

Six-ounce bucktails fit very nicely in a fluke's mouth. If you have a very

fast drift, adjust your bucktail rig by using a three-way swivel to a heavy enough sinker and put out your bucktail and a three-foot leader. When using a sinker/bucktail rig, you can reduce the bucktail size down to an ounce or even tie a 1/4-or-1/2 ounce bucktail in the midpoint of your leader. Double bucktail rigs can be very productive and keep the baits near the bottom on a fast drift. Other kinds of artificials for fluke are

any type of rubber in squids, grubs, shads and so on in a variety of colors. I have taken many fluke on diamond jigs, from the 1/4-ounce fixed hook weakfish jigs up to 4-ounce AVAs. Just work the jig hard on the bottom. The record fluke taken, I believe, was by Doc Grell at Fire Island Reef years back and was caught on a hollow rubber squid with a diamond jig stuck inside it. Experiment.

Weakfishing over the past few years has been getting poorer. Weakfish are highly cyclical and have disappeared before, so I don't see this as overfishing. Some will still be caught by the usual jelly worms, bucktails, sandworms, squid strips and a lot of pink-colored lures. Hit the normal producers like the Peconics, Ocean Beach in spring and the

back bays later in summer.

Bluefish can be caught on light and ultra-light tackle in the bays and inlets by casting tins. This is real fun-fishing and can go on for as long as a tide runs. Outside, trolling should start to work, as will jigging. Early shark hunters will see them offshore in the chumslicks. In spring, if the fish are in the chumslick but shy, go to a 4/0 Carlisle with a big spearing for bait and no wire or tie small bluefish hooks with 50-lb mono instead of wire. Either way, change hooks and re-rig often, due to chafing.

Sharks will be the big ticket item this month. The tournaments kicked off mid to late May and there will be plenty of boats scouting around for life. Shark boats will be searching the 20 to 50 mile curves, wrecks and rocks, looking for life and setting up test slicks to see where the threshers and makos are beginning to show. When the tournaments kick off, it will be three cans of ground bunker or mackerel, a flat of mackerel for chunks and some better quality mackerel, fresh bunker and/or squid for hook baits. The preferred bait will be live chopper-sized bluefish and fresh bluefish filets. The rigging can be as simple as a long wire leader with a 9/0 or 10/0 hook and 200-pound swivel. Wind on rigs of 400-pound test mono attached to a short wire or cable leader will also be used. Skirts of different colors act both to attract sharks and help stop the baits from spinning.

Shark baits should be rigged on the way out using rigging needles, floss and some clips or wire pins. Search the Internet for instructions on how to rig baits. Once rigged, and many rigged baits, should be kept on ice. Bluefish will tear up a lot of baits, so be prepared to



This young gent has a right to be smiling with a cow bass like this one.

Courtesy Capt. Desi O'Sullivan, "Celtic Quest", Port Jefferson.



Now this is a brace of once in a lifetime fluke, unless you fish out east. Courtesy Capt. Desi O'Sullivan, Port Jefferson.

Continued on page 58