

# 2002 ALUMINUM BOAT BUYER'S GUIDE

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New Jersey,  
Delaware Bay Edition

# THE Fisherman

\$1.75

Where  
To:  
Back Bay  
Hot  
Spots

Raritan  
Bay  
Grand Slam

**HOW-TO:**  
• Wire Line  
Strategy  
• Aluminum  
Boat Tips

Photo: Bob Schmitt/Sea & Shore







*The author with a Raritan Bay grand slam - a strip and a blue, and a weakfish and a fluke. Fishing for grand slams is a fun way to add some challenge and excitement to your fishing day.*

# GRAND SLAM FISHING:

## RARITAN BAY STYLE

by Freddy Gamboa

**G**rand slam fishing in Raritan Bay? Catching a strip, bluefish, weakfish and a fluke, all in one day? Are you kidding? Well, after running my boat, *Andrea's Toy*, out of Keyport for the past three seasons, I can say, "Absolutely! Grand slam fishing is a great way to fish and have more fun."

The keys to achieving this feat include preparation, timing and having a solid game plan. Following these steps, you can achieve the challenging, yet rewarding goal of obtaining a grand slam in New Jersey waters.



## PREPARATION

Before I head out on any trip, I make sure I have all of the gear necessary to cover all the types of fishing I will attempt. Sometimes this may require numerous rods and reels, but my motto is, "Always be prepared."

My usual arsenal consists of two trolling rods; one outfitted with lead core line, and another with monofilament line for trolling Mann's stretch plugs. I also have two spin casting rods; one lighter version for casting metal lures, bucktails and swimming plugs, and another for big surface plugs and for snagging adult bunker. I also have two conventional, or baitcasting, outfits on board. One is for drifting bottom rigs and another is used for chunking.

## TIME OF YEAR AND LOCATION

Grand slams can be caught throughout the year, starting in May and continuing right up to the end of the fall run in October, depending on fisheries regulations and the timing of the closed season for fluke. My first grand slam was caught on May 1st, and my last in September.

The location of the big four changes throughout the season. At the end of April, the fish tend to congregate on the mud flats at the back end of Raritan Bay, because the shallow depth and mud allows this part of the bay to warm up quicker.

Towards the end of May, I notice these fish tend to move to deeper holes, like the "Keansburg Canyon." This location is a 30-foot hole surrounded by 10 feet of water, located a quarter-mile northeast of the Keansburg Fishing Pier. Shoals such as Romer and Flynn's Knoll adjacent to channel edges like Sandy Hook, Ambrose and Swash also tend to congregate fish throughout the summer months.

Late in the summer to the end of fall, the fish tend to congregate at the entrance of major rivers, anticipating the flow of baitfish on their seasonal migration pattern. I concentrate my efforts at the Raritan River underneath the Driscoll Bridge at the Garden State Parkway, in the Hudson River underneath the

*Continued on page 28*

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Grand Slam continued from page 25

Verrazano Narrows Bridge and just outside the Shrewsbury River near the Ammo Pier.

## GAME PLAN AND TECHNIQUES

Having a prepared game plan is key in obtaining a grand slam. Initially, I will concentrate my efforts where I will have the greatest concentration of the four species in the same area. Early in the season I will fish the mud flats in the back end of the bay. I will usually cast metal lures, poppers and swimming plugs to work the surface and mid-depths. Simultaneously, I will drift a three-way rig, but instead of using a sinker I will substitute a one to 3-ounce bucktail tipped with a spearing/squid combo and a sandworm on the main hook.

In the summer and fall, I will use these same tactics in fishing deeper holes, shoals and channel edges with some modifications. I tend to use a heavier bucktail of 3 to 5 ounces to maintain bottom contact, and I will use live bait, such as peanut bunker or a killie, on the main line, and a sandworm on the bucktail.

Usually, these techniques will produce a grand slam, but sometimes a striper or bluefish will remain elusive. When this happens, I then break out the trolling or chunking rods to accomplish my goal. Fishing in the locations I have mentioned allows me to work nearby channel edges or humps, which can be trolled with umbrella rigs, stretch plugs or spoons. Some of my best locations include the Raritan Reach buoys from 10 to 20, and Ambrose, Sandy Hook and Swash channels. My method of trolling is to watch my fish finder and work my lures about 5 feet off the bottom. By using lead core line, this task is easily accomplished by letting out one color, which gets me to my

desired depth.

I will also concentrate my efforts around Romer Shoal and Flynn's Knoll, which are effective areas to chunk with bunker or to fish clam baits. My method of chunking is to look for some mussel beds and concentrations of baitfish or game fish, then I anchor up. I lower a chum pot that contains clams or mussels to the bottom and then begin throwing chunks of bunker or clams into the current. I rig up my chunking rod with a fish finder rig and put on a juicy piece of clam or a fresh piece of bunker - I'm ready to fish.

**"Grand slam fishing is a great way to fish and have more fun."**

## GETTING STARTED

My very first grand slam was caught by drifting a three-way rig at the Keansburg Canyon, where I caught a weakfish and fluke. I then went to Buoy 10 in the Reach Channel and trolled up a bluefish and a striper, which was only one mile away. Total time to achieve the grand slam was one hour!

During the season, as the fish move from place to place, the fishing changes, but my preplanned strategy allows me to adapt to these fish's movements. As you can see, with proper planning and working the right locations for that specific time of year, you, too can achieve a Raritan Bay grand slam!

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