



THE

Fisherman

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Atlantic City In-Water Power Boat Show



SMALL BOAT TIPS:

- **ON THE TROLL**
- **FALL BOTTOM FISHING**



The fall season is a great time to get some action with plump inshore blackfish like this pair caught on a near-shore wreck.



SMALL-BOAT HOW-TO: Fall Bottom Fishing

by Carlos Bastos Jr.

I get the strangest looks when I am unloading my fish box at the yard where I keep my 17-foot ProLine center console because my fish box is usually pretty packed with bottom fish. The size of the boat only matters when it comes down to how far you can go out on a particular day. Weather permitting, I do most of my bottom fishing roughly five to 10 miles from Sandy Hook. I hope the following will help those fishermen who want to catch a few more of some of the tastiest fish on the Jersey coast.

Although my prime fishing locations are along the north coast, the methods I use work just as well off wrecks and reefs off Cape May, Sea Isle, Long beach Island or Manasquan, as they do off Sandy Hook.

LOCATION IS EVERYTHING

It is important to have your boat anchored or drifting over the right spot. With all the different conditions encountered out there, sometimes it can be very frustrating. I am now getting used to anchoring up on a piece of bottom and bailing fish for 15 minutes and then watching the boat just slide right off the spot. That happens more than I would like it to. You have to be ready for all types of conditions.

I fish from the Scotland Grounds to Sea Bright and down south off of Long Branch and Deal. The key factor in making some big catches is to locate small pieces of broken bot-

tom. They are harder to locate and much harder to anchor on but it will be worth the effort. There are two reasons that I think smaller structure produces more. The first reason is that the big head boats shy away from that kind of structure because they need to cover the whole boat.

The second reason smaller structure produces is that the fish will be more concentrated around that structure instead of being spread out along a 200-foot long wreck. I fish a spot off Sea Bright that is half the size of my boat and every time I fish there, we usually load the fish box up with nice sea bass and often get a limit of blackfish. I have seen that kind of action on a lot of occasions.

ANCHORING TIPS

On my 17 footer, I carry two anchors in a Rubbermaid container. I tie up the container to the cleat on the bow with some dock rope so it doesn't move around while heading out. Both anchors have 6 feet of chain and 200 feet of anchor rope. I will usually try to get away with using only one anchor, but sometimes the second is needed.

When I am approaching my loran numbers, I get my buoy marker ready while at the same time checking my color scope. When the spot first appears on my screen, I toss the buoy overboard. Then I will circle around until I see exactly where I want to lay on that particular piece. I'll then swing

uptide of my buoy and drop the anchor. One important thing to remember is that sometimes you don't see what you expect to see on your fishfinder. That means that I will sometimes drop the buoy right on the numbers instead of what I see on my color scope.

TIDES AND WIND

It is also very important to know the tide and wind direction for the day. That can influence where you will fish on that particular day. It is a lot easier when the tide and wind are coming out of the same direction. There are times of the year when I like to fish the Scotland Grounds. That area has a lot of tidal movement because it is located at the end of all the channels. If I know that I am going to have the wind against the tide, I will not fish there until both come out of the same direction. Believe me, you will never be able to fish right on the spot you want. Not even with two anchors. I have had days there when in 70 feet of water the tide is running out of the north from the surface to 35 feet down and running out of the south from 35 feet to the bottom. Can someone explain this to me because I have yet to figure it out?

Another important factor to know is how a particular piece of bottom or a wreck actually lays on the bottom. Let's say the wreck you want to fish lays east to west but the wind is blowing out of the north at 20 knots. You will have a hard time covering the entire wreck so you would probably be better off trying a different spot preferably one that lays north to south. When I fish a rockpile, I like to position the boat so that it sits a little down current from the spot. The fish will usually be concentrated on that side of the piece waiting for their lunch to come floating by.

ELECTRONICS HELP

Your electronics are a big factor in bottom fishing. I have a Sitex CVS 106 on my boat and when I have it in zoom mode, I can pick up the smallest piece of structure down there. I'm always adjusting the gain depending on the depth of the water. I usually use enough gain to see a lot of clutter on the screen and then I back off just enough to get rid of it. A second echo is also a good thing to have when adjusting your fish finder.

When I am searching an area for structure, I look for a deep red band coming across my screen and that usually indicates that I am over hard bot-

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Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)

1999 Regional Meetings

The U.S. ICCAT Advisory Committee will hold five regional meetings this fall regarding international and domestic management of highly migratory species, such as tunas, swordfish and billfish. The meetings will include a brief presentation on the ICCAT process, the status of highly migratory species, and current management recommendations. Time will be provided for public comment. Your input is essential to the development of the U.S. position for this year's annual ICCAT meeting, so please make every effort to attend.

Thursday, September 23
7-10pm - Nags Head, NC. Nags Head
Town Board Room, 5401 S. Croatan Hwy.

Wednesday, September 29
7-10pm - Barnegat Light, NJ. Barnegat
Light Fire Department, West 10th Street.

Thursday, September 30
7-10pm - Hyaannis, MA. Sheraton
Hyaannis Resort, West End Circle.

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tom. A lot of fishermen overlook those areas because they are looking for that big ledge or for some peak sticking up from the bottom. I can tell you that I have had some of my best days by just anchoring on flat hard bottom. Just put

SOME GOOD LOCATIONS

The Fisherman Library's *Saltwater Fishing Guide* lists nearly 2000 Loran and Lat/Lon (GPS) fishing locations, about half of which are located in New Jersey waters. Get a copy at your local tackle shop or mail a check for \$19.95 plus \$3.50 shipping to 1622 Beaver dam Road, Pt Pleasant, NJ 08742, or call 1.732.295.8600.

The following locations have been some of my favorites:

SANDY HOOK REEF 26943/43650
Loaded with structure - every 20 yards there's something.

SCOTLAND GROUNDS 26945/43696
Search a little for broken bottom - it can be good fishing.

MUD BUOY

Known for bluefish, the rubble on the bottom holds sea bass and blackfish.

These wrecks are also good locations:

E.C. BABCOCK 26941.7/43645.3
DUMP SCOW 26948.4/43696.5
B WRECK 26924.0/43725.5
STEAMSHIP 26932.4/43707.0
SUBCHASER 26935.4/43649.2

your gain up a little and keep your eyes on your monitor. I have accumulated a lot of Loran numbers by doing just that.

RIGS AND BAITS

I fish primarily with two types of rigs. For sea bass, I make my rigs out of 30-pound leader. I start by cutting a 35-inch piece and tying a 2/0 barrel swivel at one end and making a loop for my sinker at the other end. A small dropper loop is made about 2 inches up from the sinker and a bigger loop is made about 14 inches up from that smaller loop. For my hooks, I like a 3/0 Owner or Gamakatsu hook. I snell the hooks for the bottom loop also using 30-pound leader and I attach the hooks directly to the top loop. By doing it this way, both hooks

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usually don't get tangled with each other.

I fish with a hook always on the bottom because it not only catches sea bass but also ling and blackfish. The top hook catches mostly the sea bass and sometimes a stray cod or two.

If I'm fishing just for blackfish, I like to use only one hook on the bottom. I'll take a 12 or 13-inch snelled hook and attach that to a dropper loop just above the sinker on my main line. When I'm blackfishing, I like to concentrate on one hook and one bait plus I am able to pull out of the structure more often with just one hook. For blackfish, I like to use a 5/0 sproat hook instead of the usual Virginia style hook. My catches increased for me after switching hooks. Use whatever hook works best for you.

My crew and I stick with the usual clam strips and squid. Once in a while we'll break out some conch but usually we don't have to. Those baits work well for sea bass and ling but crabs get the nod for blackfish. I like green crabs better than fiddlers because the bergalls can wipe out a couple of dozen fiddlers in short order. I cut my crabs in half and I like to experiment with some people fishing with the crab legs on and some fish with them off. Believe it or not, there are some days when blackfish will show a preference for one or the other.

KEEP A WEATHER EYE OPEN

Before a trip out to sea, I am constantly monitoring the weather. When Thursday and Friday roll around you can usually hear my wife in the background telling me to lower the volume on my weather radio. One thing that I have learned about the weather is that it is very unpredictable. A lot of times the forecast is for light winds and then when you arrive at the dock it is blowing a gale. There is nothing you can do about that. I have found it easier just to go back home than to try to be brave and get your butt kicked.

If the winds are coming out of a westerly direction, I can usually venture out to the ocean in winds up to 20 knots. I won't be able to fish a wreck 10 miles offshore but I can fish inshore up to two or three miles out. I have the worst luck when it comes to an east wind. Every time they predict an east wind at 10 knots it is usually blowing 20 or 30. The rule on my boat is that if an east wind is forecasted we do not sail. Remember that my boat is only 17 feet in length. A good friend of mine Capt. Willie Eggeter once told me this saying, "West is Best and East is Least" and that's what I go by.

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