

CENTRAL JERSEY'S HOT FALL TROUT

October 31, 2002 • No. 44
New Jersey,
Delaware Bay Edition

THE Fisherman

\$1.75

**Small
Boat
Tog**

**Here's
How:
NY Bight
Bass**

**Lead Core
Stripers**

**Going Solo In
Delaware Bay**



NEW YORK BIGHT'S



This fat and sassy 25-pounder was released after checking the weight on a hand scale.



The author with a pair of stripers caught in Sandy Hook's famous triangle area.

STRIPED BASS BONANZA

by Freddy Gamboa

As the water and air temperature to drop in the fall, you can expect striped bass action to heat up. It's as predictable as shorter days and leaves turning colors. Instinctively, the baitfish in the bay and rivers sense this and begin their annual migration to vacate our waters. As they leave there will be scores of bass ready to greet them before they make their run south along the coastline.

One of the best and most predictable areas where bait and stripers tend to concentrate is the imaginary triangle which consists of the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, the Earle Naval Ammunition Pier and the tip of Sandy Hook. Year after year, this famous triangle gives up plenty of striped bass from jumbos to schoolies.

I fish this area a lot and use five deadly methods to catch striped bass in this productive triangle.

SEARCH ON THE TROLL

Trolling is a very productive method, but it's not just simply putting out lures and dragging them behind the boat. The key in the fall is to "match the hatch" with your lures. The primary forage in the fall is peanut bunker, mullet and sand eels. An umbrella rig fits the bill here.

I use 6-inch shad tails in white or blue/white to match a peanut bunker, gray/white to match a mullet, and red, green, or yellow surgical tubes to match the sand eels. My fishing rig is a Penn 113H spooled with 200 yards of 45-pound test

lead core line, matched to a 7-foot Shakespeare Ugly Stik trolling rod with a soft tip.

In the fall, I tend to focus most of my attention on the channel edges along Swash, Chapel Hill, Sandy Hook, Terminal and Ambrose Channels. If that doesn't work I will work the mussel beds around Flynn's Knoll, and the shoals east of Romer Shoal light. The key to trolling this strong tidal area is to keep your eye on the fishfinder and keep your baits no more than 5 feet off the bottom.

TOSSING CHUNKS

Chunking can be done in the same general area. The first key is to keep a mental note of any schools of baitfish you might have marked on your fishfinder while you were trolling. The second key is to find mussel beds or ledges that coincide with your fish sightings. If you have both of those elements, drop anchor up-tide of this area and begin chumming.

Clam and bunker will both work. Because of the strong tides, the chunks will drift away from the boat rapidly. To help get the scent in the water, lower a clam pot filled with your chum straight down to keep the fish close to your boat.

If all else fails and you haven't marked any bait, your ace in the hole is to chum up-tide of some very well-marked structure at places like West Bank Light, Romer Light and 7s range marker on Flynn's Knoll.

My rig for chunking is a Shimano Calcutta 400 spooled

with 15-pound test mono, matched to a 6-foot light-action rod. My terminal rig consists of a fish finder rig, with 4 feet of 30-pound fluorocarbon leader snelled to a Gamakatsu circle hook.

EELING WITH FEELING

This is a very popular method of fishing in the fall, especially when you have the famous Sandy Hook Rips only a short run away. However, an overlooked spot for drifting an eel are the shoals east of Romer Shoal Light. The pressure here tends to be lighter than the rips, but still holds quality bass. This is the shallowest area in the triangle, but it's productive due to the proliferation of clam and mussel beds. The key to fishing this area is to work a quick drift, which will carry your eel through numerous shelves and ledges around the clam and mussel beds.

My rig here consists of a Calcutta 400 spooled with 15-pound test line and a light-action, 6-foot rod. My terminal rig is a 2 to 4-ounce egg sinker on my main line. A 50-pound test Sampo barrel swivel is tied to the end of the line so the sinker won't slide all the way down the leader. I usually use a 4-foot leader of fluorocarbon leader snelled to a Gamakatsu circle hook.

FUN WITH BUCKTAILS

This is one of the easiest techniques, but effective nonetheless. The key in bucktailing is to present your lure so that it mimics a wounded baitfish. Do this by either vertical jigging or casting and sweeping your lure back to the boat in long, deliberate rod sweeps. Finding feeding birds is a surefire way to catch a bass bucktailing, but if there is no suicide bite happening concentrate on channel edges which are holding bait. Once you have marked bait, drive up-tide and drift back over the bait and jig in the manner described above.

My bucktailing outfit consists of a Shimano Stradic 2000 spinning reel matched with a 7-foot light-action rod. The reel is spooled with 12-pound mono. I add a 30-pound fluorocarbon leader by first tying a Bimini twist at the end of the fishing line and then tying the fluorocarbon leader to the Bimini with a surgeons knot. A small snap swivel allows me to switch my bucktails quickly.

The bucktails I use are usually between 1 to 4 ounces, but I always dress the lures with a 4-inch shad tail to give them added flutter, action and color.

SURFACE PLUGGING

This is my absolute favorite method of catching fall stripers. The most consistent plugging action can be obtained by concentrating on rocky outcroppings or structure which allow bass to hide and ambush the plug. My favorite areas are Romer Shoal Light, Old Orchard Shoal Light, West Bank Light, and Swinburn and Hoffman Islands.

The key is to motor uptide and drift parallel with the rocks, casting your popper close to the rocks. Aggressive popping of your plug should generate explosive strikes, which will make your knees wobble.

My plugging outfit is a Stradic 4000 spinning reel spooled with 15-pound test mono. The reel is matched to stiff, 7-foot rod with a fast-action tip. My terminal rig is a 50-pound test barrel swivel, tied to a 3-foot section of 50-pound fluorocarbon line with a dropper loop halfway down my leader where I attach a teaser fly. At the end, I attach a medium snap swivel to change plugs quickly.

Last fall, striped bass fishing was fast and furious. I had a couple of memorable outings where I caught striped bass by all five methods in one day! Hopefully, this fall will be a repeat of last year and you can choose one of the methods described to land a striper of a lifetime!

NEW JERSEY'S BOATING

SUPERSTORE

MAXUM

SPORT CRUISERS

2400 SCR • 2500 SCR • 2700 SCR
2900 SCR • 3100 SCR • 3300 SCR

PRO-LINE

SPORTS
BEYOND FISHING

17' - 33'



SEA FOX™

17' - 25'



Luhrs®

29' - 50'



CLARKS LANDING

BOAT & YACHT SALES
www.clarkslanding.com
PT. PLEASANT, NJ
732/899-5559