



THE

Fisherman

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November 18, 1999 - November 25, 1999

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Long Branch Surf:
Late-Season Bass
Hot Spot

The Comeback Kid:
Codfishing Tips

The Water Wolf:
**How To Catch
Jersey's Northern Pike**



My jig just barely hit the bottom when all of a sudden I felt a heavy tug and I was soon reeling in a pair of codfish. In my Igloo cooler, I counted several other good-size fish and I've only been fishing for two hours. That particular day I brought home 26 cod up to 30 pounds. Not bad for a cold day in winter. Now I'm not old enough to have experienced the cod fishing that was around before the Russian trawlers moved in, and before U.S. commercials devastated the Grand Banks, but I can tell you that the codfish is doing just fine - in some areas.

and Captain Joe Huckemeyer knows those areas like his own backyard. There is a large area of rock piles located east of Chatham, Mass. that huge cod move in to spawn sometime in November. I have caught cod up to 50 pounds there and have seen fish as big as 65 pounds but come that time of year.

Stellwagen Bank is also a place that has a lot of fish but mainly from March through May. That area is accessible from the towns of Marshfield and Green Harbor. Most fishing is done in shallower water than the areas off Hyannis, which can go up to around 300 feet. At Stellwagen most fishing is done in

The Comeback Kid

COD FISHING ON THE RISE

by Carlos Bastos, Jr.

The codfish population has been steadily increasing for the last 10 years or so. Some places might not get them in as good as others but that has a lot to do with what they are feeding on. Take for instance Stellwagen Bank off the coast of Massachusetts. They had great runs of cod from 1989-1996 and then all of a sudden the fishermen out there were having a hard time coming up with a decent catch. The problem wasn't that there were no more fish; it was because all the bait that the cod usually feed on were not coming in as they usually did. Codfish are gluttons when it comes to eating. They basically follow food wherever it goes. The last two years Stellwagen Bank has been invaded with large amounts of sand eels and in return the fishing has been fantastic.

JERSEY COD

We do not get the same amount of codfish that Massachusetts gets but if you hit the right wreck at the right time, you can catch some nice fish. Cod fishing in New Jersey is strictly wreck fishing with bait. Most of my fishing is done anywhere from 20 to 50 miles offshore and in 100 to 150 feet of water.

I like concentrating my efforts during the winter months because during the Spring I find that a lot of the wrecks are loaded with dogfish. There are days that you might have to hit a few wrecks in order to put together a catch so don't waste too much time on one spot if you're not catching any fish. If cod are present you will know it immediately.

Because the cod have rebounded to a greater degree in New England waters, many bottom fishermen feel that Massachusetts is the best place to go. The fishing can be excellent in places like the Great South Channel and Nantucket Shoals, which are only a 4-hour boat ride from Hyannis. The head boat Helen-H does all her cod fishing there

90 feet on top of the bank. One word of advice on both locations, try to avoid planning any trip around the full moon. The currents up there are unbelievable! I have been on trips where 5 pounds of lead could not of held bottom.

BAITS AND RIGS

When I fish the wrecks off New Jersey, clam is the bait of choice. Once in a while some fresh squid or herring will produce but fresh clam usually gets the nod. When I travel north to Massachusetts most of my fishing is done by jigging. On rare occasions when there isn't much bait around clam is also used.

When using bait, I prefer a two-hook rig that consists of a 5-foot piece of 60-pound leader, two 10/0 E-Z Baiter hooks by Mustad and a 4/0 swivel to tie on to my main line. I then make a large loop for my sinker and I make a dropper loop about 5 or 6 inches above that. My second dropper loop is placed about 2 feet up from the first one and then finally I put the hooks on and I'm all set.

For jigging, the rig is very similar to the bait rig. The only differences are that a snap swivel is placed at the bottom of the rig for your jig and I like to use 7/0 baitholder hooks. They seem to keep the teasers from sliding down the hook. The kinds of teasers are not as important as their color. I stick with pink and purple teasers and my favorite kind are pink Salty Dogs, which resemble a large shrimp. I know guys who use jelly worms and they also do well. For my jigs, I use Crippled Herring jigs anywhere from 10 to 20 ounces.

RODS AND REELS

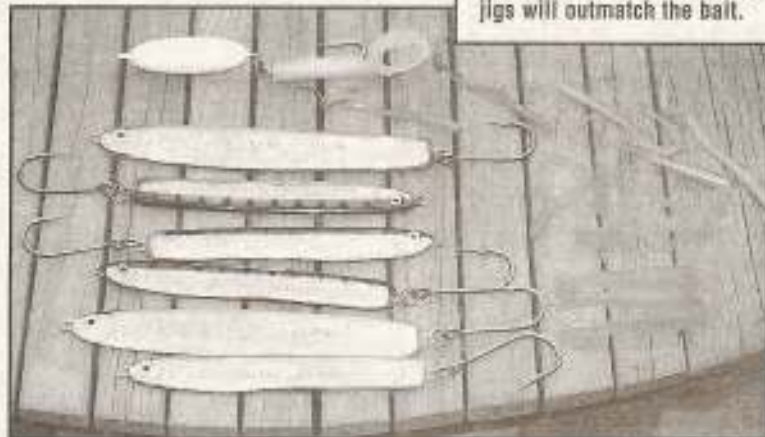
I have two rods that I use for cod. Both are custom made and are from 7 feet, 7 inches and 8 feet in length. They are both made from Kennedy Fisher blanks, which are very strong but light in weight. The reason for carrying both rods along is that one is made to handle weights and jigs up to 20 ounces and the other is made for when the current is really ripping and you need to go up as high as 40 ounces.

My reels are the Newell 400 and 500 series, and I stick with the ones with the lower gear ratio. The higher gear ratio models do not handle the use of heavy lead too well. I load one reel up with 60-pound Trilene and the other with 40-pound Spiderwire just in case we are fishing in very deep water and there is a strong tide.

TIPS AND TRICKS

I only use the braided lines if I really have to for a couple of reasons. On a head boat crowded with

Have a variety of jigs available and ready for action. On some days the jigs will outmatch the bait.





Jeff Smith with a double header of nice-size winter codfish.

people, you will not make many fans by using it. The tangles that involve braided line are an unbelievable sight. When the fishing is hot, the guy fishing beside is definitely thinking about throwing you overboard. Another thing that I have noticed is that because those lines have no stretch I was dropping a lot of fish as I was reeling them in. Cod do a lot of thrashing as they are being brought up from the bottom and I lost some really big fish that way.

One neat thing that I picked along the way is to open the eyes of your hooks before placing them on dropper loops and put a 2/0 barrel swivel on the eye and then close them with a pair of pliers. Codfish have a habit of spinning when they are being reeled in and in return your rigs become a kinked and tangled mess after just a few fish.

I just want to stress how important it is for us fishermen to protect and conserve our resources now so that our children will have codfish to catch in the future. I have already seen live codfish for sale at a local fish market and I think that fishing is supposed to be a time to relax and enjoy time out on the water with your friends and family and in the meantime catch some fresh fish for dinner.

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