



The Virginia Saltwater Review

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by

Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division

OVERVIEW

****PLEASE NOTE: This is the last issue of the Virginia Saltwater Review for 2010. The Review will be published again beginning in the spring of 2011. ****

We wish to thank all of our numerous fishing report contributors for their efforts this year. Whether by phone or email, whether a professional angler or bait and tackle shop owner, each of our contributors take time each week to provide us a snapshot of Virginia's diverse marine fishery from their own region and perspective. No two reports are alike, but together, they allow us to paint a complete picture of the week's fishery. You can thank them by taking the time to stop by their business or see them at a fishing seminar. Please be sure you tell them you saw their fishing report in the Virginia Saltwater Review, now finishing it's 24th year!

Reminder, the Marine Sportfish Collection Project continues to collect flounder, until this upcoming December, for the special research project by VIMS. ALSO, if you catch TAUTOG, please take the time to donate the fish carcass to the project, as our biological sampling program still needs additional samples for the 2010 fishing season (see pages 7 and 8).

Finally, during the past few months, we have frequently mentioned the National Saltwater Angler Registry for 2010 (see page 9) and the need for all anglers to register. As of January 2011, state law and VMRC regulations will require all non-licensed adult anglers to register with the state if they fish in Virginia's saltwaters, in federal waters off the state's coastline, or in state freshwater if they are fishing for anadromous species (which live in saltwater but spawn in freshwater), such as striped bass, shad and river herring. The VMRC will set up a toll-free number and an online registration to make registration easy, quick and free. The idea is to collect a "phone book" of contact information of all anglers age 16 and older, so Virginia will be exempt from the National Registry and Virginia anglers will not have to pay the annual federal registration fee that is to be implemented in 2011. That contact

information will be collected by VMRC when anglers buy their saltwater fishing licenses. Everyone age 16 and older who fishes legally without a license (such as unlicensed guests on boats licensed to cover everyone on board, anglers age 65 or older, and folks fishing from their property) will be required to register with the VMRC, either online or through the toll-free phone number.

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THE FISHING REPORT

Chincoteague

Gusty winds have kept fishing to a minimum around Chincoteague lately, according to Donna at Captain Bob's. A few keeper-flounder have come from the Inlet View and Tom's Cove piers. A few large red drum and dogfish were caught in the surf as well.

Wachapreague

According to staff at Don's Bait and Tackle, flounder fishing has been very slow. Bayside, anglers are landing speckled trout up to 6 pounds. Striped bass have been caught in the local creeks.

Cape Charles

At Chris' Bait and Tackle, anglers were catching small speckled trout in Bay-side creeks last week. A 7-pound flounder was brought in along with several 11-pound sheepshead before the weather turned bad.

Lower Bay/Bridge Tunnel

According to staff at Cobb's Marina, despite the poor weather, anglers caught tautog, flounder, sheepshead, and small striped bass last week. Most anglers had the best luck around the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel where black and red drum were also hooked.

Anglers reported a few striped bass catches last week, according to staff at Sunset Boating Center.

Kathy, at Back River Outfitters, reported speckled trout in Back River and at the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. Small striped bass were also hooked at the Bridge Tunnel. Citation red drum releases were reported near Back River Reef, York Spit, and the Eastern Shore. Citation-sized tautog were also brought in from the 3rd and 4th islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Staff at Carrollton Fishing and Hunting Supply reported striped bass and flounder catches around the James River Bridge. A few grey trout have also been found throughout the area. The best bait has been fresh menhaden.

At the York River Fishing Center, six sheepshead release citations were reported from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, and a 50-inch black drum was released from York Spit. In general, fishing this week was a mixed bag of a few spot, croaker, flounder, and speckled trout (small) in the Mobjack

Area.

Ken Neill, of the Peninsula Anglers Club and IGFA representative, contributed the following:

Speckled trout and puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are providing a lot of action inside the inlets, in the shallows of Poquoson Flats, and around Goodwin Island. The good news is there seem to be a lot of speckled trout around. They are almost all undersized, but they are providing a lot of action, and speck fishing is looking very good for the future. These fish grow very quickly. Large red drum are available along the oceanfront, but the latest hot bite has been in the surf at Ocracoke Island. Spot are providing good panfish action. Flounder fishing has been sporadic. Flatfish are being caught at the mouth of the Bay and around the coastal wrecks. The Brass Spike, Cape Henry Wreck, Tower Reef, and the Triangle Wrecks are all good places to catch flatfish. Tautog action is very good at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel where some sheepshead and triggerfish are still being caught. It is primetime to fish the coastal wrecks for a variety of species, but the sea bass season doesn't open until November 1st. Striped bass are receiving a lot of attention. Small stripers are being caught at all of the area bridges. This fishery will greatly improve when water temperatures fall to the 50s. Amberjack are still available at the Southern Towers. Offshore, action has not been great. A few really nice yellowfin tuna have been caught but no real consistent action. Bottom fishing is good for tilefish and other deep dwellers. There has been a good blackfin bite out of the Outer Banks along with a few wahoo and yellowfin. Large bluefish are available around the coastal wrecks like those at the Triangle Wrecks.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

With nice weather on the horizon, anglers should find some good prospects. The speckled trout bite is wide open; so many anglers will head to skinny water to get in on the action. Although most of the specks are still small, the numbers of keeper fish are rising each day. Anglers fishing within Rudee and Lynnhaven inlets, Back River, the Eastern Shore shallows, and the Poquoson flats are hooking dozens of juvenile fish with a few keepers mixed in. Fewer, but larger speckled trout are coming from the Elizabeth River, with some of these fish weighing up to five pounds. Nice puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are also keeping anglers content in the River, with top water lures working well for both species. Anglers are also finding a few puppy drum near the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel this week.

The inshore tautog bite is also picking up, with most anglers finding limits of fish around the tubes and structure of the Bay Bridge Tunnel. Most tog are ranging from 2 to 5 pounds, with both fiddler crabs and green crabs enticing bites. A few sheepshead are still taking baits, but the bite has slowed considerably.

Spot action is hit or miss, with some good runs of big fish pushing a pound thrilling surf and pier anglers in Rudee Inlet and along Sandbridge. Croaker are hanging around the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, with some fish pushing to over 2.5 pounds coming from near the 3rd island. A few hardheads are still available inside Lynnhaven Inlet, especially near the Lesner Bridge.

Flounder action is still slow, but a few flatfish are coming from channel edges and near the 1st and 3rd islands for those who work for them. The folks at Ocean's East 2 think the big

migration of fish into the lower Bay is still yet to come. Keeper flatfish are also available on offshore wrecks, along with big chopper bluefish. Sea bass will also take your bait on these same structures, but remember that the season is closed right now. Also look for possible bluefin tuna sightings soon in these same areas.

Big red drum are still a possibility along the oceanfront, along the Eastern Shore shoals, and near the 3rd island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Surf and pier anglers are putting in their time, but the bull red action slowed up this week. Scattered reds are coming from the Little Island Fishing Pier, Sandbridge Beach, and off Back Bay. Cut mullet and spot head the best baits. Some of these reds are measuring over 50 inches long.

Striped bass action is on and off, depending on whom you ask. Some anglers are finding school-sized fish and bluefish by casting top-water lures at the rocks of the artificial islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. But water temperatures are beginning to drop, so more and bigger fish should begin moving in soon.

Deep dropping is good when boats can get out. Good numbers of mostly blueline tilefish and blackbelly rosefish are filling coolers. In these deep waters, exotic fish are occasionally encountered, such as the new pending All Tackle World Record Darwin's Slimehead.

Offshore, it has been difficult to get out due to weather. When boats make it to the deep, scattered yellowfin tuna, bailer dolphin, and false albacore are the main catches.

Virginia Middle Bay

Johnny, with Jett's Hardware, reports striped bass are being caught in good numbers by people using small spot and top-water baits. The stripers are running in the 26- to 28-inch range. A few speckled trout have been reported from the marsh edges.

Dan, with Smith's Point Marina, reports most people are fishing for striped bass with good results. The jetties and lights are hotspots, with most fish falling within the slot limit and few larger-sized fish being caught.

Butch, with Garrett's Marina, reports there are some slot-sized stripers in the Rappahannock River. Good numbers of white perch have been reported as well. Staff also reports that the Rappahannock River Rockfish Open is this weekend.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

Water temps were near 65 degrees last week, and yellow-bellied spot were being caught in Butlers Hole, at the Spike, the Mudhole, and off of Gwynn's Island. Good-sized schools of grey trout continue to be found off Gwynn's Island and in the mouth of the Rappahannock. Medium-sized speckled trout have shown up in the Piankatank. Schooling striped bass are available on live or cut bait and on jigged soft plastic or Gulp baits on structure.

Virginia Beach

In the inlet, numerous speckled trout and spot, mixed with taylor bluefish and a few catch-and-release black sea bass were caught, according to staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center. Inshore, red drum, black drum, flounder, and striped bass were hooked, and offshore, grouper, tilefish, and wreckfish were caught by deep droppers. A few tuna and amberjack were reported as well. Staff is gearing up for the big striped bass season in December.

Virginia Piers

At the Ocean View Pier, numerous undersized speckled trout, small flounder, and a few spot were reported.

Fishing was slow at the Virginia Beach Pier this week, but staff did see some nice spot and a few keeper-sized speckled trout. A 30-inch striped bass was hooked along with a few large roundheads.

At the Lynnhaven Fishing Pier, anglers caught numerous undersized speckled trout and nice-sized spot last week.

Anglers were catching on-and-off spot, bluefish, speckled trout, and a few red drum at the Little Island Fishing Pier (at Sandbridge) last week.

Reasonably good-sized spot (but no yellow bellies yet) were reported from the Buckroe Fishing Pier. A few undersized flounder (with a few keepers mixed in), decent speckled trout, and bluefish were also reported. Fishing for speckled trout and bluefish was best at night. Several striped bass were reported since the season opened (about 20 to 26 inches). Anglers are still pulling up puffers as well.

Outer Banks, NC

Offshore fishing out of Oregon Inlet continues to shine with tunas leading the way. Yellowfin, blackfin, bigeye, bluefin, and skipjack were all reported during the course of the week. Scattered reports of dolphin, wahoo, and amberjack were circulating as well. Billfish still remain rare for the area. Bottom fishing saw triggerfish, sea bass, snapper, tilefish, and grouper in the mix. The artificial reefs produced sheepshead and tautog. Striped bass were running offshore 1 to 2 miles up to the Virginia line along with bluefish in the 8- to 10-pound range. Pier and shore fishermen were able to get in on the striped bass run as well and also hooked bluefish with some red drum mixed in. Spot, croaker, sea mullet, flounder, and black drum were in the surf. In the sounds and inlets, the flounder bite improved with good numbers of keepers. Large spot, sea mullet, and croaker were biting in the deeper waters of the sounds and inlets.

South of Oregon Inlet, large red drum were reported south of Avon. Sea mullet, pompano, and puffers were also reported in the Avon area. Bluefish were caught all along the beaches.

Offshore fishing out of Hatteras Inlet saw good catches of wahoo, blackfin tuna, and a few king mackerel. Bottom-fishermen had sea bass, triggerfish, and snappers in their creels. Inshore, several undersized red drum were caught.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's *THE SALTWATER REVIEW* as the source of the fishing information.











THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

***WANTS YOUR FISH....
TO MEASURE AND AGE.***

*You catch it, you fillet it,
but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,
please donate them to science.*



The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA	SHEEPSHEAD	RED DRUM	BLACK DRUM	TAUTOG
				
KING MACKEREL	SPANISH MACKEREL	TILEFISH (BLUELINE OR GOLDEN)	WRECKFISH, SNOWY GROUPEL, WARSAW GROUPEL	BLUEFISH (GREATER THAN 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)
				

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT, HAT, BOAT WHISTLE OR MEASURING TAPE FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH of the DONATION.

Please visit these merchants to participate:

- Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)
- Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)
- Back River Outfitters (Hampton)
- Buckroe Fishing Pier (Hampton)
- Virginia Beach Fishing Center (Virginia Beach)
- Rudee Inlet Station Marina (Virginia Beach)



Last Updated October 12, 2010

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission
And



The Virginia Institute of Marine Science
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TO MEASURE AND AGE.**



You catch it, you fillet it,
but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,
please donate them to science.

The Marine Sportfish Collection Project focuses on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. VMRC is working in cooperation with the VIMS to collect data on the harvest of recreational summer flounder. The goal of this project is to investigate the life history of male and female summer flounder within the recreational fishery along the Atlantic Coast.

Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legalized (18.5 inches and above) and fresh-caught summer flounder to the Marine Sportfish Collection Project.



In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT, HAT, BOAT WHISTLE OR MEASURING TAPE FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH of the DONATION.

Please visit these merchants to participate and look for FLOUNDER ONLY collection kits within each project freezer:

Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)

Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)

Back River Outfitters (Hampton)

Buckroe Fishing Pier (Hampton)

Virginia Beach Fishing Center (Virginia Beach)

Rudee Inlet Station Marina (Virginia Beach)



Updated October 12, 2010

National Saltwater Angler Registry



New Law In

2010

ATTENTION Virginia Saltwater Fishermen



**Before You Drop
Your Line in the
Water, Remember
the Basics:**

**Under a new Federal law,
most Virginia recreational
saltwater fisherman must
register with the National
Saltwater Angler Registry.**

Registration is an important tool that will help NOAA and anglers work together to conserve our oceans and preserve our nation's rich tradition of saltwater fishing. Registering is **quick, easy and FREE** in 2010.



To learn more or to register

www.countmyfish.noaa.gov

1-888-MRIP-411