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May 2023



Justin Stallings, of Cedar Point, NC, with an Atlantic bonito that struck a Nomad Ripride. He was fishing near Swansboro with Capt. Brad Smith, of Gunny B Outdoors.



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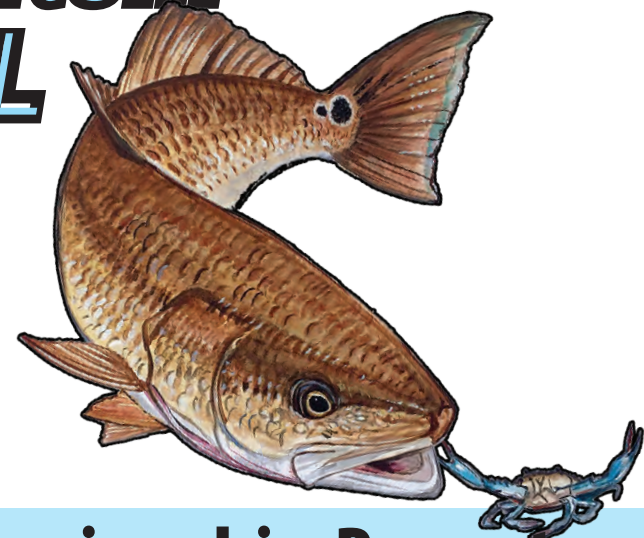
Fisherman's Post presents...

2023 INSHORE TRAIL

One Division: Red Drum (limited to 50 boats)

Entry Fee: \$400 per boat

Boats still must pay to enter each individual tournament.



2023 Trail Qualifying Events

Ocean Isle Inshore Challenge: May 19 - 20

one red drum leaderboard (trout TWT)
two red drum can qualify for Trail points
Trail payouts: \$1000, \$500, \$300

Topsail Inshore Challenge: June 23 - 24

two red drum leaderboard
two red drum can qualify for Trail points
Trail payouts: \$1000, \$500, \$300

Wrightsville Beach Challenge: July 21 - 22

one red drum leaderboard
two red drum can qualify for Trail points
Trail payouts: \$1000, \$500, \$300

Southport Inshore Challenge: Aug. 18 - 19

one flounder and one red drum leaderboard *
two red drum can qualify for Trail points
Trail payouts: \$1000, \$500, \$300

Carolina Beach Challenge: Sept. 8 - 9

one red drum and one flounder leaderboard *
two red drum can qualify for Trail points
Trail payouts: \$1000, \$500, \$300

* event structure may change depending on flounder closures

Championship Payouts

1st-\$5000

2nd-\$2500

3rd-\$1500

Trail Championship: Sept. 10

two red drum leaderboard, invite-only,
qualifying based on Team's heaviest
three red drum aggregate

Trail Payouts: \$18,000 (* based on 50 boats)
and Trail money is paid out through
individual event payouts (\$9,000)
and Trail Championship (\$9,000).

Trail Individual Event Payouts: 1st-\$1000, 2nd-\$500, 3rd-\$300

Teams win money on their way to qualifying.
Trail payouts in each of the five events
are in addition to the event's payouts

No Minimum Entry:

Don't have to fish all five events--fish as many as you
wish. Fishing all five events, though, gives a team the
possibility of weighing ten fish (dropping seven).

Trail Championship Qualifying:

Top 10 teams after Carolina Beach Inshore Challenge
(heaviest three red drum aggregate) qualify for
invite-only Championship. The top Trail team in each
individual Trail event also qualifies (maximum of 15
boats qualify for Trail Championship).

For more info and the complete 2023 Inshore Trail rules,
please visit FishermansPost.com,
click on "Tournaments," then "Inshore Trail."
Call (910) 452-6378. Email trail@fishermanspost.com.

FISHERMAN'S POST presents...

SPANISH MACKEREL OPEN



Intracoastal Angler
& Motts Channel Seafood
Wrightsville Beach, NC

June 9 - 11, 2023



S.M.O. QUICK FACTS

One Division: Spanish Mackerel

Entry Fee: \$100 per boat by May 30; \$125 per boat after May 30

Over \$5,000 in cash and prizes to be awarded

(based on 50 boats)

Primary Prizes based on heaviest weight of up to three spanish

Captain's Choice Format—pick your one day of fishing:

Saturday, June 10, or Sunday, June 11

No Checkouts & No Boundaries

Three Youth Angler Divisions: Junior (ages 0-8),

Pre-Teen (ages 9-12), and Teen (ages 13-17)

Youth Angler Prize Packs: Every youth angler that weighs in a fish receives an SMO medal and a Youth Angler Prize Pack.

Beneficiary: First Fruit Ministries

S.M.O. SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Pre-Registration: Pay in person at Intracoastal Angler
or Tex's Tackle

Pay over the phone: (910) 452-6378

Pay by mail: Fish Post, 1320 Audubon Blvd., Wilm, NC 28403

Pay online using PayPal or Stripe at www.FishermansPost.com

Registration: Friday, June 9, from 3:00-8:00 pm
at Intracoastal Angler

Captains' Meeting: Friday, June 9, at 6:00 pm

Captains' Party: Friday, June 9, from 4:00-8:00 pm

Fishing Times: Saturday, June 10, and Sunday, June 11,
from 6:30 am-2:00 pm

Weigh-In Times: Sat. and Sun. from 12:00 noon - 2:00 pm

Awards Dinner: Sunday, June 11 from 2:30-4:00 pm

S.M.O. PAYOUTS & TWTs

1st Place: \$1000

2nd Place: \$750

3rd Place: \$500

4th Place: \$350

5th Place: \$200

6th Place: \$150

7th Place: \$100

* Payouts based on 50 paid entries.

Three Spanish TWT (\$50)

1st—\$850; 2nd—\$510; 3rd—\$340

Single Spanish TWT (\$50)

1st—\$850; 2nd—\$510; 3rd—\$340

Bluefish TWT (\$50)

1st—\$850; 2nd—\$510; 3rd—\$340

* TWT's based on 40 paid entries in each TWT.

Youth Prize Packs

Every youth angler (in all three youth categories) that weighs in a fish will receive an SMO medal and a Youth Prize Pack!

SECONDARY PRIZES

Junior Angler
\$50

Teen Angler
\$50

Senior Angler
\$50

Pre-Teen Angler
\$50

Lady Angler
\$50

Sea Tow Prize!
\$100 (gift certificate)

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Send us your photos!
GET POSTED!



Jason Sellers, of Wilmington, with a 41" striper caught (and released). He was trout fishing in the Wrightsville Beach area.

If you've had a good catch, we'll try to get you in the next issue of Fisherman's Post!

1. Email photos: photos@fishermanspost.com
2. Text photos: (910) 452-6378
3. Message photos: on Facebook and/or Instagram
4. Call (910) 452-6378 for more details

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FISHERMAN'S POST STAFF

Publisher
Gary Hurley

Layout & Ad Copy
Evin Leek

Staff Writer
Rocky Damico

Social Media & Marketing
Ruth Ward

ADVERTISING SALES

Sales—Andrew Doss
(910) 442-7686
sales@fishermanspost.com

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We welcome all photos, but assume no responsibility for unsolicited material unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

By submitting your photo, you give Fisherman's Post permission to reprint the photo and/or include it on our website, social media, etc.

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Fisherman's Post Newspaper is published 10 times a year: monthly from March to December.

Subscriptions are \$30/year.

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The purpose of Fish Post Inc. is to create high quality mediums that provide timely, accurate, and comprehensive coverage of the saltwater fishing action along the Carolina coast; to promote and market the wide array of businesses, events, and organizations that depend upon a healthy fishing community; to host/sponsor events that get people excited about and participating in our saltwater fishery; and to encourage people in general to actively enjoy, preserve, and protect our saltwater fishery.

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Tidelines

By Gary Hurley

I believe I'm like most of you. I think it's harder than it should be to put a fish in the boat.

Most of the time you see a photo of me in the newspaper holding up fish that I caught when on a trip with a local captain or guide, but when I go fishing on my own boat (a 22' Seachaser), I can use all the help I can get. Thankfully, the Fisherman's Post Weekly Inshore Fishing Reports & Forecasts are here to help, me included.

We started the Weekly Inshore Fishing Reports & Forecasts last year, providing them in audio and video delivery behind a pay wall (\$10/month or \$100/year), and now every week you can login and access 10 or so local captains and guides each giving a 5-8 minute report, a span that includes everywhere from North Myrtle Beach to Oregon Inlet.

The week before I needed a Tidelines article, I listened to Capt. John Berquist, out of Hatteras, letting our members know about sight casting

to schools of big red drum and 30"+ bluefish just off the beach; Capt. Rob Koraly, out of Swansboro, talking about the big numbers of sea mullet and gray trout just inside the inlet and all along the Swansboro waterfront; and Capt. Tim Disano, out of Ocean Isle, telling everyone about the red hot black drum bite happening in area creeks.

However, since I'm located in Wilmington, it was Capt. Luke Moser, of Coastline Charters and reporting on Wrightsville Beach, that gave me a fishing plan for a potential Tidelines article.

The Weekly Reports & Forecasts are released every Thursday to help our members plan for the weekend ahead, and that's how it worked for me, too. I had the benefit of Luke Moser's intel in time for a Friday off work.

Luke reported on the scattered bonito still in the area that were mixed in with a strong spanish mackerel bite. The instructions he gave everyone were easy to follow—head out of Masonboro

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FISHERMAN'S POST WEEKLY INSHORE REPORTS & FORECASTS (VIDEO & AUDIO DELIVERY)

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Inlet to 30-50' of water, especially near any structure, troll Clarkspoons and/or deep divers, and keep your eye out for fish busting but don't be afraid to cast to areas you think are holding fish or drop down and jig areas where fish are showing on your machine.

The spanish and bonito not only made his report, but they were also part of his Weekender Best Play (each captain finishes his weekly report by offering up their best piece of advice for catching a fish in the upcoming weekend).

For Luke, his first suggestion was the improved sheepshead bite in the area, as he had seen a bunch of fish move in around area structure, such as bridges and docks closer to the inlets. While he led the Weekender Best Play with sheepshead, Luke was quick to follow with the logic that it was just so easy right now to catch keeper spanish that spanish fishing probably made the most sense "if you just want to catch fish."

JJ, my brother-in-law, met me at the dock on Howe Creek, and we were on our way shortly after 5:30 am, hoping to clear Masonboro Inlet by 6:00. The "No Wake" zone by the boat ramp had us a little behind schedule, but we still saw just the hint of light on the horizon as we headed out to the Liberty Ship.

It takes a near-daybreak arrival at the Liberty Ship during bonito season to see the area with less than 5 boats. Three boats were anchored, two were on the troll, and JJ and I made it an even split by putting a couple of deep divers out, one set back to a 10 count and the other a 15-20 count.

Luke's report was accurate. Almost as soon as we put out the deep divers, both spanish of the day, a couple of nearly two-pound fish. We had our casting rods at the ready, again following Luke's suggestion to have a mix of Stingsilvers and Gotcha plugs tied on, but we wanted to troll a little longer to see if there happened to be any bonito mixed in.

Spanish after spanish came to the boat, with the smallest measuring about 15" and

the largest probably going 3 lbs., and while some bluefish found the hooks, mostly when we turned the boat and the speed of our troll dropped a little, we also picked at a couple of bonito—the true target species.

We dropped our Stingsilvers down a couple of times, but jigging only produced more spanish.

The 5 boats turned into 45 boats or so before long, but we kept catching fish by trolling on the outskirts of the fleet, with better success to the south and east than we had to the north or west. The water was calm, making it easy to see surface activity for a long way, so we headed in the direction of Mason's Inlet thinking we might spot fish or birds or something to get us excited.

No fish. No birds. We headed in.

You would think that looking at the backside of the waves of Mason's Inlet would have been the tricky part of the run, but the shifting and filling in that happened inside the inlet was the hardest place to navigate (even with a relatively high tide, which doesn't bode well for the summer sandbar parties).

Yes, I'm using Tidelines to pitch our Weekly Inshore Fishing Reports & Forecasts. Whether it's fishing schools, fishing tournaments, a fishing newspaper, or now audio and video fishing reports, I like to think we do a good job with all of our offerings, and I ask you to give our weekly reports a try.

You can go to www.FishermansPost.com, click on Member Content, and then click on Premium Reports/Forecasts Registration. There you can get more information, check out highlight reels of all the recent reports, and/or register.

I'd like to end this article by telling you that this weekend I'm going to try out that sheepshead bite that Luke reported on, but chances are you'll see a photo of me in the next issue holding up fish (or two or three) that I caught when back on a captain or guide trip.

Or maybe I'll run a photo of a boat (or two or three) high and dry inside Mason's on a busy Saturday.



Gary Hurley and JJ Khoury with some of the spanish and bonito they caught trolling, casting, and jigging at the Liberty Ship. They were following information and direction provided by Capt. Luke Moser, of Coastline Charters, in the Fisherman's Post Weekly Inshore Fishing Reports & Forecasts, including the Weekender Best Play.



JJ Khoury, from Wilmington, with one of the bonito landed by trolling a deep diver at about 6 mph on the eastern outskirts of the Liberty Ship.

Fisherman's Post 10 Year FLASHBACK



May 2013: Tim Markey with a 17 lb., 9 oz. permit that he hooked while surf fishing in Avon. Weighed in at Frank and Fran's.

Fisherman's Post presents... WEEKLY INSHORE FISHING REPORTS & FORECASTS

FISHERMAN'S POST



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MORE INFO

SIGN UP

What?

Weekly inshore fishing reports and forecasts covering the entire North Carolina coast. The reports feature what's been happening, and the forecasts predict what's likely to happen.

Who?

The reports and forecasts are provided by some of the best inshore guides from up and down the North Carolina coast.

When?

Released every Thursday, the weekly fishing reports and forecasts begin in April and last through October. Bi-weekly reports and/or other premium content are released from November through March.

Where?

Each week we cover such areas as: NMB/Little River, Ocean Isle/Holden, Southport/Oak Island, Carolina Beach, Wrightsville Beach, Topsail/Sneads Ferry, Swansboro/Emerald Isle, Morehead/Atlantic Beach, Neuse/Pamlico, Hatteras Island, and the NOBX beaches.

How?

These weekly inshore fishing reports and forecasts are delivered in a similar style to our podcasts--you will be able to go to www.FishermansPost.com and watch videos or listen to audio files of reports and forecasts.

However, unlike our podcasts, you will need to register and be a member.

How Much?

Weekly fishing reports and forecasts are provided on a membership basis. Our membership rate for the weekly inshore fishing reports and forecasts is \$10/month or \$100/year.

How Do I Sign Up?

Go to www.FishermansPost.com, and then click on "Member Content." There you will be able to register and/or login (if you're already registered).

Sign Up Now to access Weekly Inshore Reports & Forecasts delivered in video/audio format!

Plus get access to last year's weekly fishing reports to even better plan for your 2023 fishing trips!

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N. MYRTLE / LITTLE RIVER

Buddy, of **Captain Smiley Fishing Charters**, reports that the nearshore action has been phenomenal. Anglers running out to the 3-5 mile range have been finding tons of spanish mackerel, bluefish, and Atlantic bonito.

Jiggging the structures in this range has also produced some nice-sized gray trout. Inshore anglers are starting to find good numbers of flounder in the creeks.

Speckled trout are staged up around creek mouths and banks, with the 5-8' range being the top water depth. Both Vudu shrimp and Gulp baits are getting strikes, but live shrimp is the top producing bait. The trout are also being found out at the jetties and along deeper ledges near the inlet, and no matter where you find them, they have been feeding best at times of moving water, either falling or rising.

Black drum are being caught by anglers fishing with live shrimp. The best action has come from those targeting deeper (10-15') areas with a bit of structure.

Red drum are mixed in the inshore action, though most seem to be holding back in the skinny water. Anglers can target holes during low tide or focus on creek mouths as the tide falls out.

Bob, of **Strange Magic Fishing Charters**, reports that flounder have started to show up, and these first fish seem to be preferring live baits over the

typical soft plastic offerings.

Red drum have mostly broken out into smaller groups and are moving up and down the creeks.

Speckled trout action has been pretty hit or miss, with the bite being a bit finicky with these recent water temperature fluctuations.

Black drum are feeding well around some of our inshore hard structures such as docks. Anglers are having success with both live and dead shrimp fished on heavier jig heads or Carolina rigs. It is best to not spend too long in one area but keep moving until you locate where these schools are staged up.

With warmer water, anglers are seeing more of the "trash species" (croakers and pinfish) around, and they also will pick at these bottom-rigged shrimp.

Nearshore runs have been finding bonita schooled up off the beachfronts.

Chris, of **Fine Catch Fishing Charters**, reports that anglers looking to avoid the crowds have been finding some good bottom fishing action out at the 15 mile ledges. Carolina or grouper rigs tipped with pogies or cut bait have been producing snapper, sea bass, and some grouper.

Nearshore structures (in the 3-mile range) are holding bluefish, gray trout, scattered flounder, and spanish mackerel. Live peanut pogies or spoons have been best for the spanish and blues. The flounder and trout are being caught with



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Bo Velahos, of New Jersey, caught (and released) this 28.5" speckled trout on fresh shrimp. He was fishing near Sunset Beach with Capt. Tripp Hooks, of Capt'n Hook Outdoors.



Fisher Dill, of Greenville, SC, caught this 26" red drum while floating a live shrimp. He was fishing with Capt. Chris Ossmann, of Fine Catch Fishing Charters.

white or chartreuse colored jigs worked along the bottom.

Anglers fishing the jetties are catching a mix of sheepshead, larger speckled trout, red drum, and spanish mackerel.

The reds, trout, and sheepshead have mostly been deep and tight to the rocks and feeding on live shrimp or fiddler crabs (for sheepshead).

The spanish mackerel are often just breezing by the rocks, so be rigged with some sort of glass minnow style jig to cast at these schools.

The backwater creeks are still holding some red drum and black drum in the deeper pockets and around oyster beds. When targeting both species, Carolina or jig head rigged shrimp, mud minnows, and cut bait have worked well.

Fishing live shrimp under slip corks has also put anglers into some speckled trout action, including both smaller and scattered large fish. This push of trout has also been out along the ICW and staged around shell bottoms and channels off docks.

Bevan, of **Chilly Water Fishing**, reports that offshore fishing is here now that water temperatures are finally reaching into the mid-70s offshore.

Bottom fishing anglers are seeing some of the jumbo black sea bass starting to move out, only to be replaced with good numbers of triggerfish and vermilion snapper in the 80-100' range.

Anglers have already been seeing some nice scamps and gags over live

bottoms and ledges in the 90-140' range.

Another sign of late spring fishing is the occasional mahi being spotted, and some offshore anglers have already been getting hooked into these early fish. Anglers anticipate the numbers only getting thicker moving into May.

King mackerel are still out in the 70' and deeper areas. With menhaden now on the beaches, it's only a matter of time before these kings move inshore to take advantage of all that bait.

Larry, of **Voyager Fishing Charters**, reports that the offshore bottom fishing trips have been just on fire for anglers looking to load up the boxes with meat. Recent runs out in the 40-mile range have been finding a mixed bag of big black bass, grunts, triggerfish, large porgies, almaco jacks, large amberjacks, and plenty of vermilion snapper.

Moving into May means grouper season. For anglers, this will mean also adding catches of gags, reds, and scamps.

The nearshore bottoms (inside 15 miles) are holding plenty of black sea bass and porgies.

Spanish mackerel have moved into the area and are schooled up in the three-mile range.

Norma, of **Apache Pier**, reports that anglers have started to find some casting action with spanish mackerel moving into the area.

Bottom fishing efforts are producing croakers, black drum, and some larger whiting.



BOWEN STRONG

Invitational

May 13, 2023

HOLDEN BEACH MARINA,
HOLDEN BEACH NC

Entry Fee: \$130 per boat by May 5; \$150 per boat after May 5

Over \$6,000 in cash and prizes to be awarded (based on 40 entries)

One Division: Red Drum Winners based on boat's single heaviest Red Drum

Black Pearl Prize: Winner based on boat's heaviest Black Drum

TWTs: Two Red Drum, Single Big Trout, and "Trash Fish" (oyster toad or lizardfish)

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FISHERMAN'S POST presents...

OCEAN ISLE INSHORE CHALLENGE

May 19 - 20, 2023
Ocean Isle
Fishing Center

QUICK FACTS

One Division: Red Drum (single heaviest red drum)

Entry Fee: \$125 per boat by May 8; \$150 per boat after May 8

Over \$15,000 in cash and prizes to be awarded (based on 100 entries)

Numerous Special Prizes: Junior, Lady, Senior, Mudpuppy, SeaTow, & more

TWTs: Single Big Red Drum, Two Red Drum, Single Big Speckled Trout, and Trash Fish (oyster toad or lizardfish)

One Day of Fishing & No Checkouts & No Boundaries

Fish with as many anglers on your boat as you like (no limitations)

Live Weigh-In encouraged but not required (no penalties)

Use live, dead, or artificial bait!

Complimentary Captains' Party (Friday) and **Awards Dinner** (Saturday)

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Registration: Friday, May 19, from 3:00-8:00 pm at the Ocean Isle Fishing Center

Captains' Meeting: Friday, May 19, at 6:00 pm at the Ocean Isle Fishing Center

Captains' Party: Friday, May 19, from 4:00-8:00 pm at the Ocean Isle Fishing Center

Fishing Time: Saturday, May 20, from 6:00 am-4:00 pm
(no lines in the water before 6:00 am)

Weigh-In: Saturday, May 20, from 1:00-4:00 pm (must be in line by 4:00 pm)
at Ocean Isle Fishing Center

Awards Party: Saturday, May 20, from 4:00-5:30 pm at the Ocean Isle Fishing Center

Awards Ceremony: Saturday, May 20, at 5:30 pm at the Ocean Isle Fishing Center

OCEAN ISLE PAYOUTS (based on 100 boats)

Red Drum

1st Place: \$2000	5th Place: \$800
2nd Place: \$1500	6th Place: \$600
3rd Place: \$1250	7th Place: \$450
4th Place: \$1000	8th Place: \$300

SECONDARY PAYOUTS

Junior Angler

1st Place: \$50

Lady Angler

1st Place: \$50

Senior Angler

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OCEAN ISLE / HOLDEN BEACH

Jeff, of **Ocean Isle Fishing Center**, reports that red drum action has been picking up, with anglers finding a good class of upper-slot fish (25-27") moving around with the warmer water temperatures. Of course, there are plenty of under-slot reds as well, but the good news is the cold weather schools have now broken up and are spread out along the ICW and docks. This requires anglers to move around from spot to spot after catching a fish or two, but then they are able to work back and have success at these same spots later in the day.

Black drum are staged up along the ICW, with deeper docks or oyster structure with deep water nearby being the top target areas.

Off the beach, anglers have found really good numbers of both spanish mackerel and Atlantic bonito.

Brant, of **Ocean Isle Fishing Center**, reports that anglers headed out to the Gulf Stream are finding chunky blackfin tuna, scattered yellowfin, wahoo, and dolphin. Targeting these species all together will be productive through May.

For grouper, anglers will do best targeting structures out in the 80-150' area. It's hard to beat a live bait, but there will be plenty of fish caught with a variety of vertical jigs.

Spanish mackerel have started to move in and will fill the void once the

bonito head out. The spanish mackerel bite in the area will stay strong well into June.

The schools of menhaden have started showing up along the beachfront. This helps increase nearshore activity from the spanish mackerel, but also king mackerel, cobia, and tarpon.

Tim, of **Tideline Charters**, reports that red drum has been the top target as they become more active with warmer waters. With dirty water around, cut baits with scent have been the best bet for producing strikes.

Speckled trout action has started to slow down as they spread out after moving out of their holes back in the creeks.

Black drum have been really cooperative for anglers targeting structures such as docks or oysters in the bigger creeks. Look for structure in that 5-8' depth range to be good starting points.

Out on the beaches, anglers have enjoyed the opportunity to sight cast at schools of Atlantic bonito. These schools have been out in the 2-3 mile range, but these fish move a bunch as they migrate through, and subsequently you can find them anywhere from the inlet out to 5 miles.

Tripp, of **Capt'n Hook Outdoors**, reports that inshore anglers have started to see the speckled trout action slowing down, but the quality of size has made



JP Lexa, Logan Lexa, Patrick Kranick, and Aidan Kranick, all of Holden Beach, with a wahoo caught on a ballyhoo. They were fishing at the Steeples.



Chris M., of Virginia, with a 25" red drum caught on a mud minnow while fishing a shell bank in the Sunset Beach area. He was fishing with Capt. Tim Disano of Tideline Charters.

up for it as many are 20"+, with citation fish mixed in. Anglers will start to find these trout in the bigger waterways such as the Shallotte River, the ICW, and around the Little River jetties. Floating a live shrimp will be the best setup for any of these areas.

Drum fishing has been solid for both black drum and red drum. Both species have been staged up under docks and feeding on shrimp and softshell crabs. The best docks to target are ones with deeper nearby oyster structure, and the rising tide cycles have seemed to out produce other times.

King mackerel are starting to bite better as they are now moving into the 65' depth range. For targeting kings, anglers will have better success trolling dead cigar minnows.

Todd, of **Rigged and Ready Charters**, reports that good-sized blackfin tuna and wahoo are making up most of the current action, but the mahi are just starting to arrive. Many anglers have their own favorites, but any variety of ballyhoo-rigged Sea Witches or Islanders, as well as deep diver plugs or cedar plugs, will entice strikes.

Spanish mackerel action is starting to heat up off the beach. The go-to setup will remain a Clarkspoon fished behind a #1 planer.

Inshore anglers will be focused on the speckled trout action in both the rivers and along the ICW. With water temperatures warming, Mirrolures, soft plastic paddle tails, and live shrimp will all produce action.

Anthony, of **Salt Fever Guide Ser-**

vice, reports that wahoo fishing has been really good.

Blackfin tuna, yellowfin tuna, and the occasional sailfish are all mixed in with the trolling action.

There are some early season mahi showing up, with some nice-sized fish (to 20+ lbs.) around.

Anglers looking to load up on some meat are finding the bottom fishing action to remain strong, with vermilion snapper, large black sea bass, and triggerfish all part of the mixed bag.

May also sees the opening of grouper season, which will offer a better variety of catches from these 80-220' bottom areas.

Stuart, of **Rod and Reel Shop**, reports that anglers fishing nearshore are enjoying some action from the bluefish and spanish mackerel that have moved into areas from the beachfront out to three miles. Both casting and trolling has been producing strikes.

Surf anglers are catching better numbers of whiting, with the more stable weather patterns allowing for more fish to settle in along the beaches.

In the backwaters, there have been some nice-sized red drum, though anglers are finding these fish being tough to get to bite.

Jerry, of **Ocean Isle Beach Fishing Pier**, reports that bottom fishing efforts are producing a few black drum and some good-sized whiting.

Anglers are finding their Gotcha plugs starting to get some good usage, with schools of bluefish and spanish mackerel being seen more often.

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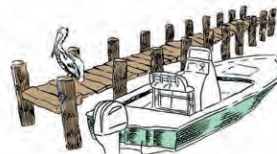
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Angie, of **Dutchman Creek Bait and Tackle**, reports that surf anglers have been catching plenty of bluefish with both bottom-rigged baits and, at times, casting jigs.

Nearshore anglers have seen the spanish mackerel starting to push in, with pretty good numbers around for this early in the season.

King mackerel are still holding in the deeper water out by Frying Pan Tower.

Josh, of **Oak Island Sporting Goods**, reports that there have been plenty of spanish mackerel showing up off the beaches in the 30'+ depth range. Most of these first schools have been your typical "cookie cutter" sized fish in the 15-17" range.

Anglers are also finding bluefish and false albacore mixed in with the spanish.

Surf anglers have been experiencing better numbers of whiting and bluefish being caught.

Inshore anglers are starting to see fish spread throughout the area now that water temperatures are warming. Targeting oyster structures has really been best for any mix of sheepshead, black drum, or red drum action.

Garrett, of **Mad KingZ Tackle**, reports that offshore anglers have been landing a bunch of good-sized wahoo and

blackfin tuna when favorable winds have allowed for the long run.

Anglers fishing nearshore (15-50' depth range) have been finding spanish mackerel and Atlantic bonito while trolling Clarkspoons behind #1 or #2 planers.

Anglers fishing from the surf have been catching whiting and bluefish with bottom-rigged baits. There are spanish mackerel now being caught on the local piers, so it's only a matter of time before they become more consistently within casting range of surf anglers.

Inshore action has been split between red drum and speckled trout. Both species have been mostly scattered, with the better trout action out towards Holden Beach.

Mark, of **Angry Pelican Charters**, reports that nearshore anglers have found spanish mackerel feeding on the beach alongside a healthy mix of Atlantic bonito. Both species have been holding around structure and bait balls from the beachfront out to the 60' depth range. The bite has changed a couple times over the past weeks, and anglers need to be flexible with lure color choice and speed based on water clarity and color. Clarkspoons and Bowed Up Lures drone spoons have generally outproduced everything else over



Harison Gill (age 10), of Greensboro, NC, caught this 2.9 lb. citation pompano using fresh shrimp. He was fishing off of Ocean Crest Pier in Oak Island.



Simion Edquist, of Southport, caught this spanish mackerel while trolling off of Oak Island in 30' of water.

this stretch.

Anglers really look forward to the king mackerel moving into the area with water temperatures warming up. The water temp change has already started to bring in more bait, and these hungry anglers won't be far behind.

Hunter, of **Dockside Fishing Charters**, reports that red drum have been feeding really well, especially with anglers now able to find some nice-sized peanut pogies to fish with. Docks have been the top target areas.

Speckled trout are mostly moved out into the waterway, and they're feeding best on live shrimp. There are still some trout in the creeks, but with the good red drum action also in the ICW, most anglers are focusing their efforts in the bigger water.

Nearshore runs in the 1-3 mile range are producing Atlantic bonito and good numbers of early spanish mackerel (14-18" range). Both trolling and casting tactics are working, with many anglers finding the larger fish while casting.

Kirk, of **Take Up The Slack Fishing Charters**, reports that red drum have been the top target for inshore anglers. The stable weather patterns have been warming up the water temperatures, and that's getting the reds to break out into smaller groups and start spreading throughout the area. With more bait arriving inshore, there will be red drum action found just about anywhere from the ICW, upriver, and out to the inlets.

Black drum fishing should remain strong, as long as water temperatures don't rise too much and push these fish deep.

Speckled trout action has been getting a little better, with many of these fish

moved out of the creeks and into the bigger waterways.

Ryan, of **Fugitive Charters**, reports that there is a good class of 2-3 lb. spanish mackerel moving onto the beaches, and scattered with them are some Atlantic bonito. Anglers are seeing the bite fluctuate day to day, with one day seeing a majority spanish, and then the next finding mostly bonito.

The majority of the king mackerel are out in the 25-30 mile range where the 70 degree water temperatures are, but there are already some of the smaller "schoolie" sized kings pushed nearshore.

Bottom fishing remains strong, and anglers look forward to the coming grouper season to only add to the great catches of pinkies, black sea bass, vermilion, and triggerfish. Target bottoms in the 100' range for the best shot at all these species.

Offshore anglers are also keeping an eye on the mahi, which are just starting to migrate into the area. The mahi will begin to be mixed in with the scattered tuna that are more prevalent out there now.

Troy, of **Ocean Crest Pier**, reports that casting action is picking up for anglers throwing Gotcha plugs to surface feeding schools of spanish mackerel and bluefish.

Some smaller bluefish are also being caught with bottom-rigged baits.

Most of the bottom fishing anglers are catching a few pompano, lots of croakers, and scattered, but large, whiting.

Cindy, of **Oak Island Pier**, reports that bottom fishing has been producing mostly smaller whiting and bluefish.

Anglers rigged with casting jigs are starting to bring in some spanish mackerel and bluefish.

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Andrew, of **Island Tackle and Hardware**, reports that surf anglers are starting to see some bluefish moving in as the beachfront water temperatures warm up.

Whiting have been a bit hit or miss, but anglers are finding that the ones being caught are a larger class.

The rest of the daily mixed bag from the surf has included black drum, croakers, pompano, and the occasional sheephead.

Nearshore fishing has been really good, with Atlantic bonito making an extended stay in our area.

Anglers out trolling and sight-casting at surface frenzies in that 1-3 mile range are also catching good-sized bluefish and spanish mackerel. This first wave of spanish mackerel have really varied in size from the smaller 1-2 lb. class right up to citation-sized fish.

King mackerel continue to hold further offshore in the 70-degree waters. Looking to areas to the south shows those fish pushing onto the beaches with the bait, and this has anglers anticipating a similar trend off Pleasure Island over the coming weeks.

Inshore anglers have really focused their efforts in the Cape Fear River, where red drum have broken up into smaller

groups and are staging up around structure to ambush the incoming schools of bait.

Christian, of **Seahawk Inshore Fishing Charters**, reports that red drum action is picking up now that these schools have started to spread out throughout the area. Anglers are finding plenty of smaller reds, with slot-sized fish mixed in. The best target areas have been the shell bottom banks, with lower tides being more productive for congregating these fish. Both dead shrimp and live mud minnows are enticing strikes.

A few black drum are also mixed in the action. This has mostly been a 15-17" class of fish, with some larger ones scattered in. The black drum are staged up in similar areas as the reds, with dead shrimp being the most productive bait. Targeting black drum has required a bit more patience with the croakers and pinfish now around to chip away at the bottom-rigged bait shrimp.

Luke, of **Spot On Charters**, reports that some speckled trout (to 24") have been caught by anglers out on the Cape Fear River in the early mornings. This spring didn't see great numbers of fish, but the quality of size has made up for it.

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Christian Rutherford, of Wilmington, holds a gray trout caught on a Gold Leader bait in the Carolina Beach area. He was fishing with Capt. Jamie Rushing of Seagate Charters.



Mike Larson, of Wilmington, with a black drum caught while using a Carolina rig baited with shrimp. He was fishing in the Carolina Beach area.

Red drum fishing downriver has been picking up a lot, especially now with pogies moving into the area. A Carolina-rigged menhaden is like candy for these hungry reds.

The nearshore bite has been really good with calm, clear conditions making it easier for anglers to spot action on the surface. A good number of Atlantic bonito made an extended stay this spring, and they are now being joined by good numbers of spanish mackerel. Running out to the 3-5 mile range has been the target area for anglers looking to cast Stingsilvers and similar jigs at these feeding frenzies.

Tommy, of **Mungo Fishing Charters**, reports that red drum fishing has remained hit or miss overall as we move closer to summer. These fish have just started moving into smaller groups, and as bait pours into the inlets, the reds will start to spread out more. Recent trips that experienced calmer conditions had a bunch of success sight-casting the flats with soft plastics rigged on Big Nic jig heads.

Anglers are seeing some speckled trout mixed in finally, which is a good sign this bite isn't slowing down yet as the waters warm.

Black drum action has been really good back in the creeks for anglers fishing Carolina-rigged dead shrimp around oyster or dock structures.

Mason, of **Grand Slam Fishing Charters**, reports that with water temperatures in the mid 60s, anglers are seeing good numbers of black drum. Shrimp has been the top producing bait, and live or dead shrimp hasn't seemed to make a

difference. Targeting hard bottoms such as rocks, oyster shells, and structure like docks has been best. The key is finding something that holds the barnacles or shellfish that these fish feed on. The black drum haven't been in very deep water, with the majority of the action coming anywhere from 2' to 12-14' depths.

Sheepshead are holding in many of these same areas. Anglers will find mud or fiddler crabs rigged on bottom sweeper jigs to provide the best chance of hookups.

The red drum are being found in better numbers back on grass flats in the Cape Fear River. Anglers are having success fishing soft plastic paddle tails on 3/8 or 1/4 oz. jig heads. With menhaden also showing up in the river, anglers can catch the reds using pogies on lightly weighed Carolina rigs or under Billy Bay corks.

Speckled trout have been pretty scattered, with live shrimp or topwater plugs providing most strikes. Target areas with current eddies around rocky bottoms in the 2-8' depths for the best chance of success.

Jeremiah, of **Kure Beach Pier**, reports that anglers getting out for some bottom fishing have been catching some nice-sized whiting and croaker while using cut shrimp or artificial bait strips in a variety of flavors.

The casting action has been picking up with the arrival of spanish mackerel now joining the scattered bluefish. The action for both species should only improve as warmer water temperatures push onto the beach (and hopefully bring in some of the larger spanish with it).

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Mack Lurie, of CA, hooked this 6 lb. redfish using shrimp on a Carolina rig while surf fishing from Lea Island.



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Lindsey Hurst, of Wilmington, landed (and released) this 31" red drum in the Wrightsville Beach area. She was fishing a bottom rig with shrimp.

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Blake Boyd, of Topsail Island, with a bonito caught while casting Big Nic jigs. He was fishing about one mile off of Topsail Beach.

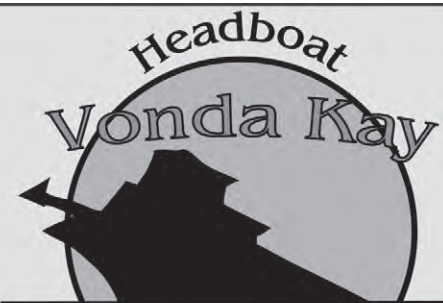


Capt. Bill Kane (left) and Mate Seth Wright (right), of Hot Ticket Fishing Charters, landed this hogfish while fishing 35 miles out of the Carolina Beach Inlet. They were using cigar minnows for bait.

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Tex, of **Tex's Tackle**, reports that Atlantic bonito, spanish mackerel, and bluefish have made a great showing both nearshore and around the area's piers. A variety of metal casting jigs have produced well, with nearshore anglers working a couple miles off the beach also having success while trolling.

Anglers trolling spoons or plugs out in the 3-5 mile range have also found some snake-sized king mackerel mixed in with these other species. The majority of the larger kings are still out over structure in the 18-20+ mile range.

Offshore trips have been catching some nice-sized blackfin tuna and a handful of wahoo.

Surf fishing has been slowly picking up. Anglers getting out on the beachfront will find any mix of whiting, bluefish, pompano, and the occasional black drum.

Campbell, of **Intracoastal Angler**, reports that the nearshore fishing has finally kicked off, with the Atlantic bonito and bluefish now joined by good numbers of spanish mackerel. Anglers are having success trolling with deep diver plugs or Clarkspoons, while also sight-casting spoons at surface-feeding frenzies.

Gray trout are staged up on the nearshore reefs, and they're hitting metal jigs and soft plastics.

King mackerel are still mostly out in the 20-25 mile range with the warmer waters. Anglers targeting kings are having success with spoons pulled behind

planers and a variety of dead bait rigs.

Offshore runs are seeing the blackfin tuna action getting better. Wahoo should be dwindling down with the warmer water moving in, but the fish being landed recently still have good size to them.

The first of the early season mahi have started to show up.

Billfishing has a little longer to go until it's consistent, but anglers offshore have already hooked into white marlin and seen a few blue marlin in the spreads.

Inshore fishing has been focused around the red drum action, with speckled trout being pretty slow. Anglers have been finding reds by targeting the area's docks with both artificials and natural live or cut baits.

Luke, of **Coastline Fishing Charters**, reports that spanish mackerel fishing has been really good out in the 2-3 mile range. There are some schools moving onto the beaches, but for now it has been more consistent a few miles out. Anglers are having a good time casting Stingsilvers and similar metal casting jigs at fish breaking the surface. Trolling Clarkspoons or deep diver plugs also works for anglers looking to put numbers into the boat.

The deep diver plugs and casting techniques have also landed some Atlantic bonito that have hung around, though this bite is tapering off with the fish moving on.

Inshore anglers have seen the speckled



Capt. Luke Moser, of Coastline Charters, hooked this spanish mackerel while throwing a Gotcha plug. He was fishing offshore of Wrightsville Beach.



Sarah Anderson, of Pine Level, NC, caught this upper-slot red drum while floating live shrimp under a cork in 4' of water. She was fishing in the Cape Fear River with Capt. Mason Porter of Grand Slam Fishing Charters.

trout start to slow down with water temperatures warming up, but anglers will still find some trout action here and there.

Sheepshead fishing is beginning to pick up, with fish moving in over some of the larger hard structures (bridges and jetties).

Red drum have broken up and are scattered around in their late spring pattern. With the reds being so spread out, bottom fishing with natural baits has been the top tactic.

Zane, of **Falling Tide Fishing Adventures**, reports that nearshore trips have been finding tons of spanish mackerel out in the 2-3 mile range.

Atlantic bonito are also mixed in out in this range, with better action being found on days with the more favorable conditions (low wind and sunny). It has also been helpful to target areas away from the main crowds and the more popular structures.

Inshore anglers have found the most action targeting red drum back in the shallower waters. These reds are starting to break out into smaller groups and will scatter out more throughout the ICW and marsh areas around the inlet.

Speckled trout remain mixed in the action, though they are mostly hit or miss in our area.

Rick, of **Living Waters Guide Service**, reports that offshore fishing has been really good, with anglers catching some of the largest blackfin tuna you'll see in the area all year.

Yellowfin tuna are mixed in, though this bite is a bit more hit or miss. If you find the yellowfins, there are plenty, and they are aggressively feeding. However, the next day, they might not be found at all.

Some billfish are starting to work their way into the area, with anglers seeing sailfish and some white marlin.

Offshore jigging trips are producing some nice-sized African pompano.

With grouper opening up May 1, it opens up the opportunity to target more species from the deeper (160-300') structured areas. Catches will include scamps, gags, and yellow-eye snapper.

Ben, of **Southern Run Fishing Charters**, reports that nearshore anglers have found the spanish mackerel moving in and joining up with Atlantic bonito in the area. Trolling Clarkspoons behind planers or vertical jigging around nearshore wrecks has produced strikes.

King mackerel have made a good showing further out where water temperatures are in the upper 60s and low 70s. These kings can be caught with Drone spoons or slow-trolled dead cigar minnows.

A few early season mahi have started to show up offshore.

Gulf Stream action has been good and steady, with anglers catching some nice blackfin tuna out near the 170 Rock and areas like the Steeples. Both the mahi and tuna can be caught with ballyhoo rigged on lighter color skirts.

Patrick, of **Johnnie Mercers Pier**, reports that there have been good numbers of bluefish being caught alongside spanish mackerel. Anglers should see better sizes of both species in the coming weeks as more schools migrate into the region.

Bottom fishing has been producing some really good-sized whiting (to 2 lbs.) and black drum when the waters are more stirred up from rougher weather.

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Xander Blake, of Chocowinity, NC, with a shad caught on a grub and spoon. He was fishing on the Roanoke River with Capt. Mitchell Blake of FishIBX.



Fisher Gilman (age 15), of Charlotte, NC, caught this sandbar shark while soaking bait on the Point in Hatteras.



George Garas, of Pine Knoll Shores, hooked this 25" redfish using mullet on a Carolina rig in the Beaufort area. He was fishing with Patrik Wood of Drum Crazy Kayak Fishing Charters.



Zain Erickson (age 13) fooled this striper using a chartreuse plug while fishing on the Cape Fear River in the downtown Wilmington area.



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TOPSAIL / SNEADS FERRY

Jerry, of **East Coast Sports**, reports that nearshore anglers are finding a bunch of spanish mackerel and bonita action a couple miles off the beach.

Offshore bottom fishing has stayed strong, with plenty of vermilion snapper and black sea bass being caught.

There hasn't been a lot of action for those making the long run offshore to troll, but anglers are finding some good-sized blackfin tuna and scattered mahi.

Surf and pier anglers are catching sheepshead and bluefish, with spanish mackerel also starting to join the action.

Mike, of **Native Son Guide Service**, reports that anglers have had a great time taking advantage of the Atlantic bonito bite while they were around. With the weather continuing to warm, any day now these schools will be moving on.

Spanish mackerel are filling in nearshore, and schools of menhaden are starting to show up (a great sign of fishing to come). Both casting diamond jigs and trolling spoons will be productive tactics in the weeks to come.

Inshore anglers have found a nice speckled trout bite after the last cold front, with better numbers of smaller spike-sized trout and a few bigger fish mixed in.

Black drum are mostly staged up in deeper holes with nearby struc-

ture, and they're feeding best on bottom-rigged shrimp.

Red drum are still a bit scattered as they transition out of their larger schools, but a good push of bait moving inshore should really kick off the bite.

Some flounder have been landed as by-catch while targeting the trout and drum.

Ray, of **Spring Tide Guide Service**, reports that a decent spanish mackerel bite has moved in. Trolling spoons is a go-to method for landing fish, but many anglers are having plenty of success casting Big Nic jigs at the surface-feeding schools.

Atlantic bonito continue to be a part of this nearshore action, but with warmer water moving in, it's only a matter of time before this bite slows down and pushes out. Anglers have stayed on this bite by trolling Yo-Zuri deep diver plugs and Clarkspoons, and by casting Big Nic jigs.

Inshore anglers have been mostly focused on red drum. These fish have broken out into smaller schools and are pretty scattered throughout the area. This has led to anglers doing a bunch of scouting to stay on the redfish bite.

Speckled trout fishing has generally been a bit slower.

Daniel, of **Surf City Charters**, reports that nearshore trips have been finding a bunch of spanish mackerel and



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Garret McCoy, of Wilmington, caught this bonito while casting a Blue Water Candy Thingama jig. He was fishing with Capt. Daniel Batts of Surf City Charters.



Craig Scalabrin, of North Topsail Beach, hooked this redfish using sand fleas while surf fishing from North Topsail Beach.

good numbers of Atlantic bonito.

King mackerel are beginning to become more active out in the 20-25 mile range as the warmer waters start moving closer to the beach.

Offshore, there are some really good-sized blackfin tuna and scattered wahoo around. Local anglers hope to see some yellowfins also mixed in, with yellowfins already in regions to the north and south.

Moving into May, anglers should see the first waves of mahi in the area.

Bottom fishing off the beach has remained strong, with anglers catching plenty of snapper and larger black sea bass on structure in the 70-90' range. With grouper season opening, anglers look forward to running trips targeting some of the variety of grouper species, especially tasty scamp grouper, which will be holding on deeper (120'+) bottoms.

Jim, of **Plan 9 Charters**, reports that spanish mackerel have showed up and are staging outside the inlets strong at the 50' mark. Anglers looking for good numbers are having success pulling 00-sized Clarkspoons with a pink or chartreuse flash color pattern behind #1 planers. There are also some fish on top, and they're striking at small metal casting jigs.

Mixed in this nearshore bite are Atlantic bonito and some nice-sized bluefish.

Bottom fishing has been decent over structure in the 70'+ depth range. Large black sea bass and vermilion snapper are both hitting cut baits, with jigs or bucktails producing some of the larger fish.

Robin, of **Jolly Roger Pier**, reports that casting action has really picked up for anglers throwing Gotcha plugs at surface-feeding schools of nice-sized spanish mackerel and bluefish.

Bottom fishing action is also getting better, with more species showing up along the beaches (along with the slowly warming water temperatures). Catches of sea mullet, trout, black drum, pompano, and a few puffers have all made their way over the rails for anglers fishing shrimp or bait strips.

Vinita, of **Surf City Pier**, reports that bottom fishing action is picking up, with catches of gray trout, spot, sea mullet, and some blowfish.

Drum action has been a welcome bonus to the fishing action, with catches of nice-sized reds (to 26") and black drum (to 7 lbs.) being landed.

Spanish mackerel fishing is just about to kick off. There have already been a few fish being caught, mostly on the nice weather days allowing these fish to push within casting range.

Tyler, of **Seaview Pier**, reports that bottom fishing efforts are producing a nice mix of jumbo sea mullet, croakers, spot, trout, sheepshead, and pufferfish.

Anglers have been weighing in some black drum (to 6+ lbs.) while fishing with fresh dead shrimp.

The casting action has yet to fire off, but bluefish are around, and with spanish mackerel just off the beaches, it could be any day that these schools move in close.

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SWANSBORO / EMERALD ISLE

Morgan, of **The Reel Outdoors**, reports that surf and pier anglers are seeing nice, steady bluefish action, with more schools moving onto the beach. Casting Gotcha plugs and other glass minnow style jigs are getting strikes.

Bottom fishing anglers are catching nice-sized sea mullet while using shrimp and Fishbites bait strips. The bottom rigs are also landing a mix of black drum and scattered pufferfish.

Anglers anticipate seeing the first few pompano showing up anytime now.

Inshore anglers are mostly finding speckled trout as their main catch. These trout are resident fish that are just now moving out of the creeks they held up in all winter.

Rob, of **Sandbar Safari Charters**, reports that schools of spanish mackerel and bonita are holding within a couple miles of the beach for anglers both trolling and casting spoons.

The reefs and wrecks in the area are also holding a decent number of gray trout and schools of bluefish.

Inshore anglers are doing well catching plenty of good-sized sea mullet and some gray trout along the Swansboro waterfront and around the mouth of the White Oak River. Dropping down a piece of cut shrimp on a bottom rig or spec rig is all it takes.

There are some speckled trout still up in the rivers, mostly feeding along

ledges in the early mornings.

Red drum action is getting better, with fish now spread across the ICW and back in the marshes behind the barrier islands. A Carolina rig with some sort of fresh natural bait tends to out fish artificial jigs in the spring.

Dale, of **Fish or Die Charters**, reports that red drum are still pretty schooled up, but they are starting to separate a little. Anglers are having success with a variety of soft plastics on light jig heads and topwater plugs.

Sea mullet and gray trout are feeding very well in the waterways and around the local bridges. Fishbites strips in clam flavor on bottom rigs work well for both species, with the gray trout also hitting 3/4 oz. Stingsilver jigs.

Black drum and sheepshead are staged around the bridges, and they're feeding on fresh shrimp.

Nearshore anglers have been locked in on the surface action, with catches of spanish mackerel, false albacore, Atlantic bonito, and bluefish. Casting Blue Water Candy Thingama jigs or Stingsilvers has been enticing these fish to strike.

Matt, of **Friendly City Fishing Charters**, reports that anglers fishing the ICW out front of the Swansboro waterfront and deeper channels around area bridges have been seeing some nice gray trout action. Smaller baits on bottom rigs will get bites, but the larger trout are



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Curtis Pritchett, of Danville, VA, hooked this 3 lb. black drum on a 1/4 oz. jig head and a white Gulp shrimp near the Cape Lookout rock jetty. He was fishing with Capt. Daniel Griffiee of On Deck Fishing Charters.

striking 1 oz. Stingsilvers.

There are a bunch of sea mullet being caught right alongside the gray trout.

Bluefish have also moved inshore in big numbers, being found anywhere from the inlets back up the ICW.

Red drum fishing has been a little hit or miss. The reds have just broken up into smaller groups and are scattered out in search of food. Anglers will be able to pinpoint the reds' location a little more consistently as the pogies move in and they start to stage up in areas to ambush the arriving bait.

Nearshore fishing has produced good numbers of spanish mackerel. Though early, these schools are just moving into the area and will only get better over the next month.

John, of **Early Riser Fishing Charters**, reports that nearshore anglers are finding excellent action on Atlantic bonito and spanish mackerel in the 1-3 mile range. The bonito, though, will start moving out of the area around the time water temperatures hit the upper-60s.

For all nearshore species (including the mixed bluefish), trolling Clarkspoons or deep diving Yo-Zuri plugs have produced the strikes. If you can find schools airing out and hitting baits on the surface, casting diamond jigs will also have plenty of success.

There are a bunch of king mackerel in the 15-20 mile range, and they should be making their push towards the beaches sometime in early May. Dead cigar minnows work great on these smaller springtime kings.

Tyler, of **Drumroll Charters**, reports that sheepshead are feeding really well around the area's bridges and deeper in-shore structure. Anglers fishing these hard structure areas will also find black drum feeding right alongside the sheepshead.

The redfish moving out into their smaller groups is making them show up more frequently in the shallower areas. The sandy flats and areas around oyster beds have been great locations to find these smaller pods.

Tony, of **Fin FinderZ**, reports that nearshore anglers have been glad to see the spanish mackerel and Atlantic bonito around in good numbers. You can target both of these species by trolling any variation of Clarkspoons, deep diver plugs, or mackerel trees. Jigging and sight-casting at the surface-feeding frenzies is another favorite tactic for anglers just cruising the beaches.

Gray trout and bluefish are being caught by anglers out jigging around the nearshore structures.

King mackerel are starting to bite a bit better in the offshore areas, where water temperatures hover around 70



Corey Compton (age 17), of Bogue, NC, caught this red drum on a fluke rig with fresh cut mullet. He was fishing behind Emerald Isle.

degrees. These fish will move in with warmer waters in the coming weeks.

Anglers making the run out to the Gulf Stream have been enjoying strong action, with catches of nice-sized blackfin tuna, wahoo, and the scattered early mahi.

There are some nice-sized black

drum (to 4+ lbs.) feeding on bottom-rigged shrimp.

Spanish mackerel are now arriving around the pier in better numbers. Anglers are having success casting Gotcha plugs around these schools as they pop up to feed along the surface.



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MOREHEAD / ATLANTIC BEACH

Rick, of **Chasin' Tails**, reports that surf anglers fishing out around Fort Macon have been catching a mixed bag of gray trout, sea mullet, bluefish, and scattered red drum.

Inshore anglers have been finding some good action on both sea mullet and gray trout in areas such as the Turning Basin, and schools of bluefish have started to push into the inlets and are being found in the deeper channels.

There are plenty of red drum around, as they have now broken into smaller groups and scattered throughout the area.

There are still a few bonito around, but the best action continues to be the good numbers of spanish mackerel (to 2+ lbs.) located anywhere from the beaches out to three miles.

There have been a few random catches of blackfin tuna close to the beach, but for a true blackfin tuna bite, head offshore where anglers have been finding plenty of the larger class tuna (20+ lbs.).

A few wahoo are mixed in the offshore bite, and over the coming weeks, anglers anticipate the arrival of mahi.

Joe, of **Carolina Traditions Guide Co.**, reports that Atlantic bonito, spanish mackerel, and bluefish are all schooled up in that 1-3 mile range off the beach. Anglers are doing best by targeting hard bottoms and reefs from the beach out to 60'. The less pressured areas are definitely seeing the better action.

Spanish mackerel fishing will only pick up as water temperatures warm up and clear water conditions start to show with more consistency.

The sea mullet and gray trout bite has been really good in the deeper inlet and port areas.

Inshore anglers have been focusing on bottom fishing around some of the hard structures for catches of black drum and sheepshead.

Red drum are just now starting to spread throughout the area. These reds will start to stay in more consistent areas as more bait moves in for them to ambush.

Daniel, of **On Deck Fishing Charters**, reports that nearshore action has seen the most changes, with spanish mackerel, Atlantic bonito, false albacore, and bluefish all being caught off the beach. Anglers have found success with the typical springtime tactics, from casting metals at breaking fish to trolling Clarkspoons or Yo-Zuri deep diver plugs.

The nearshore reefs are holding some nice gray trout for those doing some jigging.

Deeper holes both outside and inside the inlet are producing good-sized sea mullet for anglers fishing Sam's Gitter rigs tipped with Fishbites.

Inshore, the red drum have started to become more active as they feed on the incoming bait schools of menhaden and mullet. Both topwater plugs and popping cork setups with Gulp baits will entice some strikes.

Chris, of **Mount Maker Charters**, reports that inshore trips are seeing some nice slot-sized red drum action while fishing the flats with both spoons and natural baits.

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Hunter Penley, of Raleigh, NC, with an Atlantic bonito caught on a 2 oz. Stingsilver. He was fishing near Cape Lookout.

Anglers targeting the inshore bridges, jetties, and around the inlet are finding plenty of bottom fishing action with both jigs and smaller cut baits. A mixed bag of sea mullet, bluefish, and plenty of gray trout have made up the catches from these areas.

Nearshore trips are finding pretty good numbers of Atlantic bonito, spanish mackerel, and bluefish. Both trolling and sight-casting tactics are having success from the beachfronts out a couple miles.

The nearshore wrecks are holding schools of gray trout for anglers doing some jigging.

Bottom fishing further offshore has been a little hit or miss after the recent weather stirred up the water, but anglers can expect the action to pick right back up for triggerfish, vermilion snapper, grunts, and black sea bass.

Justin, of **Breakday Charters**, reports that nearshore action has been really good, with anglers now finding a mix of spanish mackerel, bluefish, false albacore, and Atlantic bonito. Both trolling and casting tactics are getting strikes depending on the day and water conditions.

There have been some of the smaller "schoolie" kings mixed in around the nearshore bait balls. Water temperatures still need to warm up some, though, before the bigger kings move in closer.

There are scattered mahi already moving into the area, and historically May has been when local anglers see the first good push.

Offshore bottom fishing has been going strong, with catches of black sea bass, big porgies, and vermilion snapper.

Inshore anglers are finding speckled trout, but there's better action on red drum.

The trout have mostly moved into some of the deeper areas. Red drum are breaking out into smaller groups and have spread out anywhere from the barrier islands back into the sounds and mainland river systems.

Byron, of **Going Bogue Outdoors**, reports that the influx of warmer water and eddies pushing up along the coast have brought a noticeable, and positive, change in the offshore fishing action. Both blackfin tuna and wahoo action has been really good, and there's even some yellowfin tuna sprinkled in.

Bottom fishing remains strong for black sea bass, vermilion snapper, and triggerfish (when you find the bottom areas without too much current).

Grouper opens in May, and with anglers already releasing gags in April, it looks to be a good season.

Cody, of **Reel Time Charters**, reports that offshore anglers have seen a lot of really good tuna action, especially on the blackfins. There are some nice-sized (to 40 lbs.) yellowfin also starting to mix in.

The billfish bite won't be far behind, with anglers already seeing some blue marlin in the spreads and landing some sailfish.

Mahi are showing up, and anglers headed out over the next month should find some of these nice-sized, early season fish.

Bottom fishing remains a great option for anglers looking to load up on black sea bass, vermilion snapper, triggerfish, and grouper.

Bri, of **Oceanana Pier**, reports that bottom fishing has been best. Recent catches have included black drum, sheepshead, sea mullet, and plenty of croakers.

Bluefish and spanish mackerel are also starting to mix in.

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Evan Calabria (age 17), of Raleigh, NC, with a great hammerhead shark caught while fishing near Cape Lookout.



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PAMLICO / NEUSE

Donald, of **Custom Marine Fabrication**, reports that speckled trout are still around in pretty good numbers, but with water temperatures rising, these fish are most likely going to be moving out of the creeks and down towards the sound.

Red drum are on the opposite path, moving in from the sound and staging up along the shorelines to feed on the arriving bait. Most of these slot-sized fish are hitting a variety of artificial baits, both soft plastics and plugs.

Schools of bluefish are moving into the river, and they are hanging out mostly in the deeper areas.

The resident striped bass action has been steady for anglers targeting their typical haunts of deeper structures up around New Bern.

Joe, of **Caps Fishing Charters**, reports that springtime anglers are still finding their core targets of red drum, speckled trout, and striped bass. With these fish on the move, anglers are having success working baits a bit quicker. Paddle tail baits (such as Z-Man MinnowZ or DieZel MinnowZ) are great options now that the quicker moving baits are getting strikes. Look for all three species both in the fronts of creeks and working their way out into the main river. Once in the river, target fish on breaks or points along the shoreline, as well as anywhere that creates a place to

concentrate the movement of bait.

There are a good number of bluefish starting to push into the river.

Brad, of **Gunny B Outdoors**, reports that both the speckled trout and red drum have been on the move. Using search baits (such as topwater plugs or soft plastic paddle tails) allows anglers to scout new areas quickly to locate the pockets of fish. Day to day weather changes are all it takes to swing these smaller groups into a completely different area, but overall the target areas should be anywhere from the creek mouths to out along points on the main river shorelines.

Moving into the later part of spring, anglers will find popping cork setups attracting strikes when rigged with either artificial or live baits.

Dana, of **Reel2Reel Fishing**, reports that anglers are still finding a lot of trout action, even with the water temperatures warming up. These trout are definitely starting to get on the move but haven't fully left the creeks just yet. Anglers should look to areas showing a bait presence as the number one reason to start their casting efforts.

The red drum are starting to show up from the sounds, with some slot-sized fish being caught. Most of the reds are down near the mouth of the rivers where they meet the sound, as these schools



Chandler Eberly, of Garner, NC, with a red drum caught in the Pamlico River on a swimbait.



Steve Lochbaum caught this 5 lb. sheephead on live shrimp along the ICW near Morehead City. He was fishing with Capt. Chris Kimrey of Mount Maker Charters.

are just now migrating into the area.

Striped bass are still mostly upriver finishing their spawn, though anglers fishing topwater plugs in the early mornings are finding scattered action.

Moving deeper into May, anglers will do best by fishing areas closer to the sound. Between the trout migrating out and the red drum moving in, this zone produces a good opportunity to target both species in their seasonal transitions.

Kent, of **East Side Bait and Tackle**, reports that speckled trout have really been on the move as they push out of their creeks and start heading towards the sound. Anglers have been targeting these fish from anywhere about mid-way back in a creek and out to the main river. Look for areas that will congregate the bait, such as points and heavy shoreline structure.

Red drum have been on basically the opposite pattern as they move into the river from the sounds. Down near the sound has been best, but anglers have landed some reds up around Washington while targeting the same shoreline points and structure, with the shallower (under 5') depths being most productive.

Anglers fishing down by Swan Quarter have already landed a few bull red drum. Though this bite is far from anything you can strictly target, it is still nice to see these fish mixed around.

There has been a huge influx of bluefish. These 20-24" class of blues are almost a nuisance, tearing up baits in the creeks and rivers.

Spanish mackerel are also being seen in the sound and down around Swan Quarter.

Mitchell, of **FishIBX**, reports that striped bass action on the Roanoke River remains red hot as anglers fish through the peak of the spring spawn bite. With warmer water temperatures have come more strikes at topwater plugs to add to the already great sub-surface action on paddle tails and a variety of hard baits.

Anglers fishing the Pamlico have seen the trout moving out of the creeks and heading towards the sound. With fish scattered out, the bite can be hit or miss.

Red drum are moving their way into the rivers, with better numbers to show up as more bait moves into the area. Anglers can find these slot-sized reds on the same shoreline areas they would for trout, targeting points or structure that will gather bait.

Hugh, of **Pungo Charters**, reports that speckled trout fishing has been going strong, with many of these fish now pushed out of the creeks and into open water. Anglers have had success fishing topwater plugs, and cloudy conditions allow this topwater bite to run further into the day. Eventually the sun pushes these fish down, and at this point, popping cork setups and soft plastic baits will entice most bites.

Grey, of **Hyde Guide**, reports that anglers have been finding great action while targeting gray trout over the sound-side wrecks. These fish are also mixed in with black drum and sheephead. Some bottom-rigged shrimp is all that's needed for fishing these 7-15' deep structured areas.

There has been a ton of nice-sized bluefish (3-5 lbs.) pushing into the sound.

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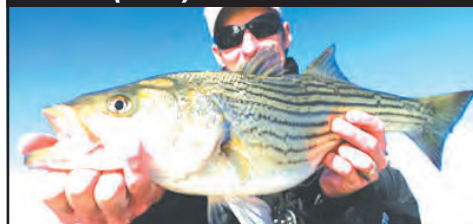
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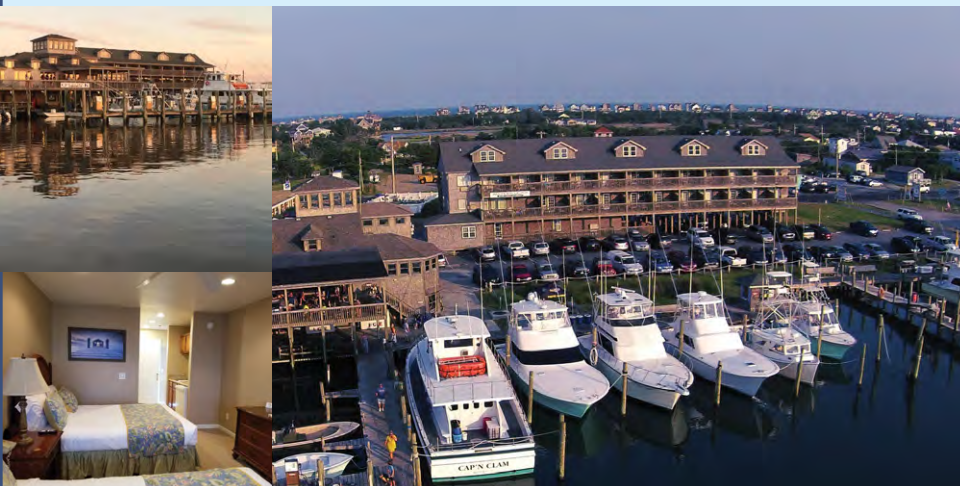
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HATTERAS / OCRACOKE

Kurt, of **Hatteras Jack**, reports that surf side anglers have seen a nice, steady red drum bite across the Rodanthe beaches and out on the pier. Cut mullet has been best for these yearling and upper-slot fish.

Bottom rigs tipped with sand fleas or shrimp have been producing catches of pufferfish and black drum.

Anglers in the sound are finding the action starting to pick up on both speckled trout and the yearling-sized red drum.

There hasn't been much for near-shore action on the north side of the Point, with most anglers only finding success by targeting the bottom fishing action for sheepshead at the local reefs.

Jim, of **Rodanthe Pier**, reports that there has been some really steady red drum action. Anglers are finding a good mix of both slot and over-slot (30" class) reds while fishing fresh cut baits.

Some good-sized black drum (20" range) are being caught with bottom-rigged shrimp.

There have been a bunch more species active with the warmer conditions. Catches of sea mullet, speckled trout, croaker, spot, and sheepshead are all a part of the action.

Heather, of **Frank and Fran's**, reports that Avon area surf anglers are enjoying good bottom fishing action, with fresh mullet, shrimp, and Fishbites strips to be the top producing baits. Recent catches have included sea mullet, small flounder, blowtoads, black drum, and bluefish.

There are red drum all along the beachfront on the northern side of the Point, from Avon way up into Rodanthe.

Anglers down in Buxton have been landing red drum, too, as well as some large sharks while bait fishing.

Bryan, of **Hatteras Style Custom Rods & Tackle**, reports that there has been some really good action along area beaches. Anglers rigged with shrimp and artificial bait strips are catching some good-sized sea mullet and blowtoads from areas around ramp 38 through ramp 49.

Puppy drum have been the main target of surf anglers, with the action being hot for a couple weeks now. Anglers out fishing fresh cut baits are having success targeting holes most everywhere along the island. Some over-slot drum are also mixed in the action for anglers fishing

out off ramp 44.

The cut baits intended for reds have also hooked into a variety of large sharks.

Victoria, of **Teach's Lair**, reports that offshore anglers have been seeing a really good blackfin tuna bite. The numbers have been good, but the size quality of these tuna has been even better. It's been a lot of close-to-citation class fish coming back to the docks.

There are some wahoo still mixed in the offshore trolling bite. With warmer waters moving in, the bite has been a bit spotty, though.

Some bailer-sized dolphin have been caught as these schools just start to move into the area, and the number of dolphin only gets better in May.

Anglers fishing out on the beaches and back in the inlet have been hooking a bunch of bull red drum.

Those targeting the sound have been finding scattered speckled trout and large sheepshead.

Joey, of **Fingeance Sportfishing**, reports that anglers headed out of the inlet are seeing some good trophy red drum fishing out along the beaches. Sight-casting 2-3 oz. bucktails at these schools is all it takes for a big strike.

Speckled trout and slot-sized red drum are starting to show up more inside the sound, as the warmer water temperatures get them more active. Sight-casting to red drum on the flats is a great option for late spring.

When weather on the beaches isn't cooperating, the inland striped bass fishing has been phenomenal. Anglers are seeing days with triple-digit catches in the mainland rivers on the western side of the sound. Z-Man soft plastics in brighter color patterns with heavier 1/2 oz. jig heads or live bait will get in on the striper action.

Jay, of **Bite Me Sportfishing**, reports that spring fishing has been kicking off, with the blackfin tuna showing in good numbers. As a bonus, anglers have found it's been a really nice class of fish.

There are wahoo still around, though they will be more scattered as warmer waters move in.

Some early season dolphin are also showing up offshore. Anglers look forward to this fishery only getting better as we move into May and more schools start pushing into the area.

Jeremy, of **Calypso Sportfishing**,



Paul Park and his son Rowan Park, of Greenville, NC, caught this 44" black drum fishing at the Point in Buxton. He was using a high-low rig with sand fleas.

reports that blackfin tuna action has been really good, with anglers glad to find not only good numbers but mostly larger fish.

Wahoo are still mixed in pretty good as we move into the later stretch of spring.

The first showing of gaffer-sized dolphin are here. Moving into May, this action only picks up as warmer offshore waters move into the area.

Kristen, of Tradewinds Tackle, reports that there have been a lot of really nice red drum being caught off the

beach. Fishing has been so good that anglers have found mostly over-slot (28"+) reds and a few citations (to 45") mixed in.

Mixed in the bottom fishing action have also been good-sized black drum, sea mullet, large bluefish (to 11 lbs.), and some speckled trout.

Offshore anglers are doing well targeting wahoo and a mix of yellowfin and blackfin tuna. Some bailer-sized dolphin are also starting to show up as they move into the area.

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NORTHERN BEACHES

Ward, of **TW's Bait and Tackle**, reports that for surf anglers, dogfish sharks and skates have been filling out most of the action for weeks now, but there are some scattered puppy drum starting to be caught with cut mullet setups, and anglers getting out early are finding some speckled trout in deeper holes, mostly during the low-light hours.

Sound side fishing is also picking up (along with the water temperatures). Both puppy drum and trout have been more active in areas down around the inlet, and some nice sheepshead are also staging up around the bridge structure.

Nearshore has been a bit slow, but anglers are gearing up for the cobia migration that should be coming to the area at some point during May.

Offshore anglers have been doing really well on the tuna, and they are just starting to see scattered mahi mixed in.

Aaron, of **Carolina Sunrise Charters**, reports that puppy drum are staged along the shallows on the sound side, and they're striking at soft plastics fished under popping corks.

Topwater plugs are starting to get better reactions from both the red drum and trout.

Anglers are also starting to see some sheepshead moving in over the inshore structure.

Ben, of **Salty Waters OBX**, reports that anglers have had plenty of recent success sight-casting to large schools of red drum up on the inshore flats.

Speckled trout are beginning to show up better in the area, as the fish are migrating in from across the sound and their back-of-creek wintering areas. Look for the trout to stage up on ledges and points in the marshes.

Bluefish are in abundance throughout the sound.

Sheepshead have moved in and are staging up around the local bridges, wrecks, and other hard structures.

Gerry, of **Fishing Unlimited**, reports that Little Bridge anglers have had some success catching trout, with early and late fishing times being the most productive. There are also some drum mixed in.

Speckled trout are feeding well further into the sound, such as down by the inlet and around Wanchese.

The northern beach surf anglers are seeing a good variety of trout, bluefish, blowtoads, and some sea mullet.

John, of **Drumbeat Charters**, reports that sight-casting anglers have been really focusing their efforts down south with the nearshore trophy red drum. These same tower boats are finding large black drum schools mixed in. As water temperatures



Ritchie Howell, from Wanchese, with a red drum caught in the Pamlico Sound on a spinnerbait. He was fishing with Capt. Grey Davis of Hyde Guides.

warm up off Oregon Inlet, the schools of drum should start to swing up around the shoals and push up off the northern beaches.

Inshore fishing is picking up as we get later into spring. Speckled trout and puppy drum have been staging on the flats and ledges inside the inlet. The best areas to target have been the points or ledges that have current sweeping past. Recently, all it takes are Gulp swimbait on lightly weighted jig heads to produce strikes from both species.

Jack, of **Afashionado Charters**, reports that with bluefin tuna finally headed out, the action has turned towards the push of yellowfin tuna moving into the region. Anglers running out of Oregon Inlet are finding most days to produce double-digit numbers of fish, along with scattered wahoo.

A few early season mahi have begun to trickle in, and moving into the later parts of next month, look for more consistent mahi action.

Offshore fishing in general should only get better as the Gulf Stream pushes out a cooler eddy of water that has been hanging just south of the area.

Andy, of **Oregon Inlet Fishing Center**, reports that the offshore fleet has been having some fantastic tuna fishing. Anglers are hitting their yellowfin tuna limit early, and they're also finding massive citation blackfin tuna and bigeye tuna (to 120+ lbs.).

Some mahi are also starting to mix in, and anglers look forward to more mahi showing up with water temperatures warming offshore.

The counts have also seen scattered wahoo, king mackerel, and sailfish releases.

Meredith, of **Pirate's Cove Marina**, reports that tuna fishing has been awesome. Yellowfin and large blackfin

tuna continue to make up the majority of the daily dock counts.

Anglers are starting to mix in some mahi, and the mahi numbers only get better as we move towards the summer months.

Wahoo and some blue marlin releases are also being reported.

Jim, of **Nags Head Pier**, reports that anglers have been catching some nice sea mullet and shad while bottom fishing.

Scattered speckled trout are also showing up.

Chrissie, of **Avalon Pier**, reports that some crystal-clear water that showed up was nice to look at, but it seemed to slow down the bite a little.

There have been some nice catches of red drum, sea mullet, and scattered bluefish, though.

Anglers overall have seen action starting to pick up in the area, with water temperatures on the beach steadily creeping up.

Paul, of **Bob's Bait and Tackle**, reports that surf fishing is finally starting to kick off up on the northern beaches, with water temperatures moving more action up from Hatteras Island. Anglers are starting to catch some nice puppy drum while fishing cut baits. These same bottom-rigged mullet will also attract strikes from the dogfish sharks that linger around.

Sea mullet are starting to show up in the action for anglers fishing bottom-rigged shrimp.

The bite throughout the sounds is also picking up. Red drum and speckled trout are being caught by anglers fishing holes and flats down closer to the inlet.

Good-sized sheepshead (to 10 lbs.) are also in that same area, as they are moving inshore and setting up on and around various hard structures.

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Ricky Poovey, of Durham, NC, with a 35" red drum caught while surf fishing in Frisco. He was soaking cut mullet on the bottom.

SURF

Tournament Report

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Pleasure Island Team Surf Challenge

A beautiful spring weekend welcomed 40 teams and totaling nearly 200 anglers to compete in the annual Pleasure Island Team Surf Fishing Challenge on April 14-16, hosted out of the Lazy Pirate in Carolina Beach. This tournament features a leaderboard based on a team's three-heaviest fish from each of four divisions (Bluefish, Red Drum, Sea Mullet, and Black Drum). The event also awards prizes to Single Big Fish, a Team Aggregate TWT (a team's single heaviest fish from all four species added together), and a Hall of Fame Award (the total weight of all fish weighed in in all four target species).

This year's Pleasure Island Team Surf Fishing Challenge also kicked off Fisherman Post's inaugural Surf Series Trail, a season-long points competition where surf tournament anglers are not only competing in the individual events but are also competing for additional prize money to see who can weigh in the heaviest five-fish aggregate weight over the season.

The weather overall cooperated this year, as a stormy front moved through on Friday night bringing wet weather and some lightning, but this left fair, mild weather for the rest of the weekend.

Team Gotcha, made up of Chris Oldham, Cory Weiser, and Bill Nance, were expecting the forecast to really dish up better fishing action. After spending a wet Friday afternoon checking out the north end of Carolina Beach, the team decided to change gears based on the action, or lack thereof.

The team's rods, setup with fresh shrimp on bottom rigs, were starting to "bump" with a little more consistency by mid-morning as the team started landing multiple sea mullet and four smaller bluefish. Team Gotcha culled their three largest sea mullet, and those mullet eventually won the team the top prize in the Sea Mullet Division with a total weight of 3.2 lbs.

Team Shore Thing, made up of Luke Arant, Melodye Arant, Mark Arant, and Andrew Arant, didn't expect to make much movement over the weekend

during their fishing efforts. The team did a little homework before the start of the tournament by zeroing in on an area south of Kure Beach that they had a feeling would produce.

The first night they found the current to be pretty stiff, requiring their bottom rigs to be setup with 3-4 oz. of weight just to hold. The water conditions were more stirred up than expected, and once fishing started, they were hoping for a drum bite knowing these are the conditions drum prefer.

That drum finally came, but it didn't come out of the water with a copper color. They brought in a 3.2 lb. black drum that gave the team the top spot in the Black Drum Division. Saturday brought more mellow conditions along the beach, allowing the team to switch to lighter weights on their setups. They stuck to their hole despite the slow fishing action that came with the more favorable conditions. After their one black drum, they only landed one other fish the entire weekend, a lonely sea mullet.

While this story could sound like a long weekend with a lack of production, turns out Team Shore Thing had picked just the right spot. That lonely sea mullet also ended up being the single largest of the tournament at 1.8 lbs. In addition, their two fish total also won the Team Aggregate TWT and the Hall of Fame award.

Team Sistas & Brothas, with David Johnson, Sheila Johnson, Freddie Patterson, and Vicki Patterson, thought they had only small bluefish to weigh in on Sunday, but turns out all teams thought they had small bluefish. Team Sistas & Brothas found out on Sunday that their bluefish held three of the top 10 largest blues weighed, giving them first place in the Bluefish Division with a three-fish aggregate weight of 4.1 lbs.

Anglers gathered on Sunday morning from 10:00 am-12:00 noon for weigh-in, followed by an Awards Dinner, an Awards Ceremony, and then a tournament raffle (stocked in large part by Island Tackle &

Hardware, the tournament's top sponsor).

The event also gives back to the community, donating all fish weighed in (and many fish donated by the teams) to First Fruit Ministries, a local food bank that provides thousands of meals annually to our community.

The complete leaderboard, along with all official weights and placings for divisions, can be found online at www.FishermansPost.com.

Fisherman's Post hosts their next surf fishing tournament in Topsail over the weekend of May 5-7, the Topsail Spring Surf & Pier Fishing Challenge, followed by the Hatteras Island Surf Fishing Challenge the weekend of September 29-October 1.

Surf anglers can also still join the Surf Series Trail, with more information on all Fisherman's Post events online at www.FishermansPost.com.

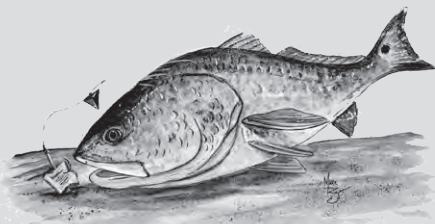


Team Shore Thing with the Pleasure Island Team Surf Fishing Challenge's single heaviest black drum and single heaviest sea mullet. Both fish were caught near Kure Beach, and the two fish earned Team Shore Thing the Black Drum Division title, the Team Aggregate TWT, and the Hall of Fame Award.



David Johnson, Sheila Johnson, Freddie Patterson, and Vicki Patterson, of Team Sistas and Brothas, took the top spot in the Pleasure Island Team Surf Fishing Challenge's Bluefish Division with a three-fish aggregate of 4.1 lbs.

Fisherman's Post SURF SERIES TRAIL



STANDINGS FOLLOWING PLEASURE ISLAND TEAM SURF (4 Events Left)

1. Luke Arant: 5.0 (2)
2. Buddy Hucks: 2.3 (2)
2. Jeff Palmer: 2.3 (2)
4. Britt Martin: 2.3 (2)
5. Dale Traxler: 2.1 (2)
6. Jerry Clontz: 2.0 (2)
6. Mark Clontz: 2.0 (2)
6. Jerrett Rayfield: 2.0 (2)
9. Andrew Butner: 1.9 (2)
9. Jason Rowell: 1.9 (2)
11. Dugan Frazier: 1.6 (2)
12. Danny Marks: 0.9 (2)
12. Randy Marks: 0.9 (2)
14. Michael Atkinson: 0.6 (1)
15. Stephen Edmonds: 0.6 (2)
15. Jeremiah Wood: 0.6 (2)
15. Rancey Wood: 0.6 (2)
18. Kevin Hern: 0.5 (1)
18. James Kolikas: 0.5 (1)
20. Michael Albertson: 0.4 (1)
21. Alicia Culberson: 0.1 (1)
21. Douglas Harris: 0.1 (1)
23. Gary Wall: 0.0 (0)
23. Christian Hughes: 0.0 (0)

SURF CASTING Tournament Report

sponsored by...

Ryan Lambert's US Record

On April 1, 2023, North Carolina native Ryan Lambert set the record for the longest fishing cast in United States history: 889 feet, 4 inches. Lambert is a frequent competitor in the sport of "surf casting," also known in Europe as "long distance casting of sea weights," in which participants

gather on a large, marked field with surf fishing tackle to see who can cast different sizes of large sinkers (3.5 to 8 ounces) the farthest.

Though the sport originated in the US, reportedly as far back as the 1890s, it has become more popular in Europe and South America in recent

decades. Only three surf casting clubs currently exist in the US today. They are SurfCast USA (SCUSA) based in Maryland, Surf Fishing & Casting Club International (SFCCI) on Texas' gulf coast, and Eastern NC's own Carolina Surf Casters Association (CSCA).

Lambert happens to be the vice president/secretary of the CSCA—an organization over ten years old whose participants include residents of North Carolina, South Carolina, Delaware, Virginia, Maryland, and even Texas. The club organizes four competitions per year in the spring and fall. These events are open to surf casters of all skill levels: beginners looking to improve their surf and pier fishing skills, on up to Lambert and his peers who have an eye towards international-level recognition.

Lambert, a sales representative for a large agricultural supplier, lives in Angier, NC, with his wife Blair and their two daughters. He's an experienced saltwater fisherman who, like most competitive casters, originally sought out and developed his long distance casting skills to improve his catch rate on piers and on the beach. He learned those skills under the tutelage of fellow North Carolinian and long-time US surf casting champion Tommy Farmer.

Tapping into his athleticism from playing baseball for NC State University in his college years, Lambert is able to generate huge amounts of power using what is called the "pendulum cast." This highly specialized casting technique involves swinging the sinker into an orbit around the tip of a long 12-14' surf rod, and at a precise moment, rotating the body and rod through a large arc, ending with a powerful punch-pull motion with the right and left arms.

"It's great that one of our own from North Carolina—someone from our club, no less—was able to set this new benchmark," says Matt Tuers, president of the CSCA. "One of the main objectives of this organization is to grow a community where US casters can develop and start taking back the international records. Casters like Ryan are in a position to do that, as well as inspire the next batch of elite American competitors."

The current world record longest cast is held by "Big Danny" Moe-skops, of Belgium, with a cast of 940 feet in the early 2000s. Here in the US, the previous record for the longest cast was held by Will Nash of Texas: 873 feet.



Ryan Lambert's breaking of casting records began last year in Texas at SFCCI's "Jerry Valentine Classic" tournament where he took the United States record for the longest cast in the 150 gram sinker category.

FISHERMAN'S POST presents...

TOPSAIL INSHORE CHALLENGE



June 23 - 24, 2023
East Coast Sports
& Sloop Point Marina

QUICK FACTS

- One Division:** Red Drum (heaviest two-fish aggregate)
- Entry Fee:** \$125 per boat by June 12; \$150 per boat after June 12
- Over \$15,000 in cash and prizes to be awarded** (based on 100 entries)
- TWTs:** Single Big Red Drum, Two Red Drum, and "Trash Fish" (oyster toad or lizardfish)
- Numerous Special Prizes:** Junior, Lady, Senior, SeaTow, Mudpuppy, & Live Fish Bonuses
- One Day of Fishing & No Checkouts & No Boundaries**
- Fish with as many anglers on your boat as you like (no limitations)**
- Live Weigh-In encouraged but not required (no penalties)
- Use live, dead, or artificial bait!**
- Complimentary Awards Party/Dinner** (hosted by Sloop Point Marina)

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- Registration:** Friday, June 23, from 4:00 - 8:00 pm at East Coast Sports
- Captains' Meeting:** Friday, June 23, at 6:00 pm at East Coast Sports (& Facebook Live)
- Fishing Time:** Saturday, June 24, from 6:00 am - 4:00 pm
(no lines in the water before 6:00 am)
- Weigh-In:** Saturday, June 24, from 1:00 - 4:00 pm (must be in line by 4:00 pm)
at Sloop Point Marina (Hampstead, NC) & on Facebook Live
- Awards Party/Dinner:** Saturday, June 24, from 4:00-5:30 pm at Sloop Point Marina
- Beneficiary:** Wilmington Elks #532

PRIMARY PAYOUTS (two red drum aggregate)

1st Place: \$2000 3rd Place: \$1250 6th Place: \$600
2nd Place: \$1500 4th Place: \$1000 7th Place: \$450
5th Place: \$800 8th Place: \$300

*Primary payouts based on 100 paid entries.

SECONDARY PAYOUTS

Junior Angler *Lady Angler* *Senior Angler* *SeaTow*
1st Place: \$50 1st Place: \$50 1st Place: \$50 1st Place: \$100
Bonus: Live Release payouts of \$10 per fish that make the leaderboard

TWTs (each based on 60 entries)

Single Red Drum TWT / Two Red Drum TWT / Trash Fish TWT
1st Place: \$1275 2nd Place: \$765 3rd Place: \$510

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www.FishermansPost.com

OFFSHORE Tournament Report

sponsored by...



Coach Bill Dooley Fishing Tournament

Anglers fishing in the Coach Bill Dooley Education Foundation Fishing Tournament over the weekend of April 21-23 were ready for a great weekend. The forecast was beautiful, with temperatures in the 70s and offshore seas and winds mild for what can at times be brutal in the springtime.

Based on entries, Tournament Director Kit Taylor reported it was scheduled to be an "intimate" field of 9 boats. In this event, prizes are awarded to the largest of each of three fish species—mahi, tuna, and wahoo—and then an extra award is given for billfish releases. With all those opportunities to win, plus a small field, anglers went into the weekend with a ton of confidence that they would be returning to the official weigh station at Bridgetender Marina to claim at least one of the spots on the leaderboard.

Ken Upton, on the "Gamekeeper" and in his second year with the tournament, had stacked his team with a group of youth anglers from around the neighborhood. He didn't leave the inlet with one target species in mind but rather an area he wanted to target. A nice eddy had spun off the Gulf Stream north of the Steeples, and the idea was to get in front of this current and work that break. The reality of that spot, though, was a lot of grass and the fishing was slow.

They abandoned their plan and steamed north with the intention to focus on the wahoo bite. Turns out the wahoo also weren't ready to cooperate. The boat, rigged with fresh electronics, only proved that they can't catch every fish that's marked if the fish don't want to chew.

Finally, they got a strike on a blue and white spreader bar put together by Captain B.C.

Angler Devon Mellville was up for the task and jumped on the rod. The chunky 20 lb. blackfin tuna that was landed was enough to earn the team a victory in the tuna division.

Tom Ronner, on "Quote Boat," and his team of Jeff "Doc" Thomas, Jennifer Hoy, Adam Brown, and Alex Derbyshire started their day with the inten-

tion of fishing the break for tuna. Like many others, they also quickly found nothing happening, so the team made the decision to run out deep and target billfish. They figured if the bites are going to be slow and far between, may as well make that one bite count. Unfortunately, the billfish plan turned out unsuccessful as well.

In the early afternoon and starting the run inside empty-handed, they spotted a piece bamboo sticking vertically out of the water in about 95 fathoms. Barely above the surface, they made a pass and saw bait stacked up below.

Angler Alex Derbyshire hooked up on one of their blue/crystal skirted baits, hand tied by Jake Griffin, and soon a 14 lb. wahoo put them in the game.

Angler Adam Brown followed up by putting a 9 lb. mahi in the boat. The team had to pull in baits just as quick as they put them out, knowing that was all the time they had in order to get back to the marina before cutoff.

Alan Murray, on the "J&B," was joined by a blend of family and friends. Based on recent reports, they planned on focusing their efforts on the more consistent wahoo bite. Like everyone else in the tournament, they also noticed that the great weather didn't exactly transfer over to great fishing successes. They made a few moves, scouting both deep and shallow water areas and marking fish all day, but only had four wahoo strikes and no fish in the boat.

Their luck finally turned when fishing an area out in the 400' depth range. Angler Jason Wardsworth hooked into a large sailfish. After making quick work of bringing in what was the largest sailfish they'd landed on this boat (approx. 80 lbs.), it was safely released. That one fish was enough to earn them the award for top billfish release.

The tournament weekend was a great success, serving as a benefit for the Bill Dooley Education Foundation, created in his honor to award scholarships to student-athletes for their academic achievements, personal conduct, and athletic prowess.



Mariner's Menu

www.marinersmenu.org

Bay Scallops on the Half Shell



INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/4 cups bay scallops
- 1/2 cup Panko crumbs
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoon Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, minced
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme, chopped
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper, freshly ground
- 4 tablespoons butter, melted
- rock salt
- 24 bay scallop shells

INSTRUCTIONS

Coarsely chop the scallops and set aside.

In a bowl, combine crumbs, garlic, parmesan, parsley, thyme, lemon juice, salt, pepper, and butter.

Place the scallop shells in a bed of rock salt on a sheet pan.

Fill each shell with chopped scallops and top with bread crumb mixture.

Heat oven to 450° F.

Bake until browned and scallops are done, about 10-12 minutes.

Contributed by Vanda Lewis.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Mariner's Menu from North Carolina Sea Grant, marinersmenu.org.

FISHERMAN'S POST presents . . .

SURF SERIES TRAIL

NC's PREMIERE SURF FISHING POINTS TRAIL



FIVE QUALIFYING EVENTS

FIVE FISH AGGREGATE

FIVE BIG WINNERS

QUICK FACTS

ONE DIVISION

Aggregate Division

NO MINIMUM ENTRY

Don't have to fish all five events--fish as many as you wish. Fishing more events, though, gives the angler the possibility of upgrading their five-fish aggregate weight.

SURF SERIES POINTS

Point system is based on weight of fish in tenths (ex. 1.2 lb. pompano equals 1.2 points).

AGGREGATE DIVISION

Winners are determined by totaling up an angler's weight of up to five fish weighed in over the course of the five qualifying events.

The "up to five fish" can be from any event's leader-board species (including TWT fish) weighed in during that event; however, no more than one of any one species in any one event can count towards Surf Series points.

QUALIFYING EVENTS

EVENT #1

Pleasure Island Team Surf Challenge
April 14 - 16, 2023

EVENT #2

Topsail Spring Surf & Pier Challenge
May 5 - 7, 2023

EVENT #3

Hatteras Island Surf Challenge
September 29 - October 1, 2023

EVENT #4

Pleasure Island Fall Surf Challenge
October 20 - 22, 2023

EVENT #5

Topsail Fall Surf & Pier Challenge
November 3 - 5, 2023

SURF SERIES TRAIL CHAMPIONS

Winners Determined After Event #5

TOTAL PAYOUTS

\$4,000 (based on 50 anglers)

1st Place - \$1500

2nd Place - \$1000

3rd Place - \$750

4th Place - \$500

5th Place - \$250

SURF SERIES ENTRY FEE

\$100 per angler

Anglers still need to pay to enter each individual Surf Fishing event

HOW DO I REGISTER?

1. Over the phone at (910) 452-6378 using a credit card.
2. Online by visiting FishermansPost.com
3. In-person at any of the qualifying events

CONTACT INFO

(910) 452-6378 • surf@fishermanspost.com • www.FishermansPost.com

Fish Releases

The N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries recently began renewing commercial fishing, seafood dealer, and for-hire licenses and permits.

The Division has mailed renewal packets to current license and permit holders that include an application and a self-addressed, postage paid envelope. Renewals may be completed by mail, drop-box, or in person by appointment.

Drop boxes and appointments are available at the following Division locations:

DMF Headquarters, 3441 Arendell St., Morehead City

Phone: 252-726-7021 or 800-682-2632

Manteo Field Office, 1021 Driftwood Dr., Manteo

Phone 252-473-5734 or 800-405-7774

Pamlico District Office, 943 Washington Square Mall, Highway 17, Washington

Phone: 252-946-6481 or 800-338-7804

Southern District Office, 127 Cardinal Drive Extension, Wilmington

Phone: 910-796-7215 or 800-248-4536

Those who have questions or wish to make an appointment should call their local license office at the number listed above or email License@ncdenr.gov. Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The license office in Elizabeth City is permanently closed and cannot accept renewal applications.

The 2023 commercial fishing, seafood dealer, and for-hire licenses and permits expire on June 30. The 2024 licenses and permits will become effective on July 1.

Coastal Recreational Fishing Licenses expire based on the date of purchase. Recreational fishing and hunting licenses can be purchased or renewed online at www.ncwildlife.org, by calling N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission at (888) 248-6834 during office hours, or at many outdoor shops (find a license agent in your area).

Celebrating its 66th year, the International Convention of Allied Sportfishing Trades—better known as ICAST—returns to Orlando, FL, and the Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) from July 11-14, for the planet's largest sportfishing trade show. Produced annually by the American Sportfishing Association (ASA), the show is the

largest, single event for the recreational fishing trade.

"ICAST is the cornerstone of the global sportfishing industry," said ASA President Glenn Hughes. "ICAST is where connections are made that create business opportunities for our industry. It's also where most new products make their debut into the fishing marketplace."

ICAST offers more than 12,000 attendees representing dozens of countries the opportunity to see and interact with thousands of products from hundreds of manufacturers displaying colorful lures, clothing, watercraft, glowing marine electronics, and multi-hued rods and reels. Tackle manufacturers, retailers, distributors, and a host of global media all mingle at this once-a-year event.

"We have more than 600 companies on the show floor," said Trade Show and Membership Vice President Blake Swango. "Many of them work year-round to develop and launch new products at the show to take advantage of the tremendous combination of buyers and media who converge in Orlando."

ICAST starts on Tuesday, July 11, as attendees and professional anglers converge on beautiful Lake Toho to compete in the ICAST Cup Bass Fishing Tournament.

With six new fly fishing categories and two new boating accessory categories, the ICAST New Product Showcase includes more exciting new products than ever. Credentialed media and dealers get their first in-person look at this expansive gallery featuring hundreds of fresh new tackle, apparel, and lifestyle products at the New Product Showcase Preview Reception on Tuesday. Buyers and media have the opportunity to vote on the ICAST Best of Show awards while entering their name into a drawing for a chance to win one of three \$500 cash prizes.

The New Product Showcase entries will be available for viewing on the ICAST app and on the ICAST website starting at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 11. Images, descriptions, and video of the tackle, apparel, and accessories debuting in 2023 are open for viewing by attendees and the general public.

On Wednesday evening, the results of dedicated design, research, and development teams come full circle at the Industry Awards Reception. An



Kim Kane, of Morehead City, caught (and released) this 22" red grouper offshore of Atlantic Beach. She was fishing with Capt. Byron Shults of Going Bogue Outdoors.

elevated aura of anticipation fills the OCCC's ballroom as voting results for the New Product Showcase awards are announced onstage. Surrounded by industry media and peers, this is the manufacturers' evening to shine as product category winners are announced, trophies are presented, and the stage is set for ICAST's most coveted prize.

Category winners move on to a special voting round where they are pitted against each other for the overall Best of Show award, announced at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday in the New Product Showcase.

Loaded with helpful features, the ICAST mobile app, sponsored by Bonnier Corporation, is a one-stop shop for maps, event schedules, booth locations, and exhibitor listings. Available on both Android and Apple devices, the app is a convenient digital companion to keep a busy week organized.

A new report was released from the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Commission and calls on Congress

to modernize laws, increase federal funding, and improve coordination at federal, state, local, and tribal levels to combat harmful aquatic invasive species. The report, which was informed by consultations with leading voices in natural resources policy, scientists, federal, state, tribal representatives, and recreational stakeholders, urges Congress to direct agencies to identify regulatory gaps and enhance public engagement.

The report calls for information sharing and the development of data-driven solutions to enable the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF) to better coordinate AIS prevention, early detection, and eradication. The report highlights emerging risks of AIS introduction, calling for the modernization of existing laws addressing AIS, such as the Lacey Act and Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act.

"From invasive carp to green crab to didymo, AIS are one of the leading threats to fisheries conservation and

the nation's \$148 billion recreational fishing industry," said ASA Inland Fisheries Policy Manager Connor Bevan. "Informed by leading biologists, fisheries managers, and policy experts, the AIS Commission's landmark report presents comprehensive recommendations to better control the spread of AIS across the country and prevent future introductions."

"Aquatic invasive species are a tremendous threat to our nation's waters, causing billions of dollars in economic harm and unquantifiable, often irreversible damage to ecosystems. I commend the outdoor industry for taking the threat of AIS seriously and for presenting a roadmap for effective policy," said Dr. Marc Gaden, member of the AIS commission,

The American public has a role to play in this fight, too. The report calls on natural resource managers to maintain and strengthen public engagement over AIS issues. Coordinated, science-based education on AIS prevention is key to effectively stopping the spread of AIS in our waters.

Founded by scientists, conservationists, anglers, boaters, business leaders, and policy experts, the AIS Commission has convened leading experts to identify federal policy solutions to prevent the introduction and control the spread for invasive species in our nation's waters, culminating in a detailed report.

Operation North State (ONS), its supporters, and volunteers are calling on North Carolina's People, Places, Products, and Pride (especially avid and premier anglers) to host Wounded Warriors/DVets to quality fishing on the

anglers' respective boats.

Now in its eleventh season and some 68 Fishin' Festivals later, Operation North State kicked off its 2023 Fishin' Festival Schedule on Thursday, April 20. This year, ONS will host ten Fishin' Festivals throughout the state, of which six take place this spring on the state's premier lakes. One of the most important elements of a Fishin' Festival is the Host Boaters (all types of anglers) to host the Wounded Warriors/DVets on the water. The Fishin' Festivals provide a great day of fishing and developing new and much-needed friendships.

According to Operation North State's founder/volunteer, Terry Snyder, "The Wounded Warriors and Disabled Veterans are excited to have the opportunity to go fishing with some of the state's premier/tournament fishermen. Likewise, our Host Boaters tell us how honored they are to be part of this event and giving back."

"Host Boaters are needed to provide their time, equipment, and expertise to create memories and smiles," Snyder continued. "It's been very difficult since COVID hit to secure Host Boaters."

Operation North State and its supporters don't want to leave any veterans on the bank. ONS is most fortunate to have well over a hundred quality Host Boaters lending a hand already, and they love their veterans. The current Host Boaters have been so good to ONS, but ONS needs more Host Boaters as our number of Fishin' Festivals continues to grow and to meet the requests of the Wounded Warriors/DVets.

Please consider helping spread the word in securing the needed Host Boaters. Contact Operation North State at mailbox@operationnorthstate.com or call (336) 406.3459 to offer your assistance.

If you have a press release or information that you would like to submit for our Releases section, then please email the material to info@fishermanspost.com.



Lad Hunter, of Conway, SC, caught this wahoo offshore of Little River. He was fishing with Capt. Bevan Hunter of Chilly Water Fishing Charters.

Send us your photos! GET POSTED!



Tony Celeste, of St. James Fishing Club, landed this 61" wahoo while trolling a silver-skirted ballyhoo in 120' of water. He was fishing near the Steeples with Capt. Craig Thompson aboard the "Blue Waters."

If you've had a good catch, we'll try to get you in the next issue of Fisherman's Post!

1. Email photos: photos@fishermanspost.com
2. Text photos: (910) 452-6378
3. Message photos: on Facebook and/or Instagram
4. Call (910) 452-6378 for more details

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 2 SIZES | 16 COLORS

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GULP!® SALTWATER RIPPLE MULLET