

Summer doldrums?

It might be the tides, it might be the winds, but fishing has slowed down a bit. Yours truly (The Optimist) sees this as a temporary lull.

George Charos of Captain's Parties that the offshore fishing was "still ok", with no really big fish – codfish "to the 20s." The mackerel were off an on with a good report one day off of the Isle of Shoals. Large pollock are still in the offshore mix, along with a smattering of the dogfish. George said that his striper fishing trips had been less productive than a week ago. Please call 1-800-427-1333 for reservations.

Captain Rick LaPierre had a slow day on the 29th: "Pretty sour on the fishing today, there were a couple spurts of haddock on a couple of stops, but nothing that lasted very long. I didn't see much, and we didn't catch much. I'm guessing we probably had about 80 fish for the trip. The biggest was an 18 lb cod caught by John Ouellette." You may call 1-888-234-3531 for Yellow Bird reservations.

Tim Roland-Anderson of Tim's Bait and Tackle in Salisbury feels that a new wave of larger striped bass is showing up on the fishing scene, with more keepers in the mix than before. Tim suggested fishing the mouth of the Merrimack with herring, mackerel, or clams as bait; he suggested fishing two hours on either side of low tide.

Rene Vigneault of Bridge Bait and Tackle in Salisbury was down at Cashman Park the other day, watching the fishermen. Rene said that a schoolie striper was being caught "every 5 seconds!" "Tons and tons" of small fish (12 inches to 24 inches), said Rene. He said that they would hit anything: clams, mackerel, or herring.

Kay Moulton of Surfland told me a kayak adventure: A fisherman from "Western Massachusetts" was fishing live eels between 3:30 AM and 4:30 AM off Joppa Flats and, from his kayak, landed stripers of 17, 19, and 23 pounds! Kay has weighed in a few other large fish - to 18 pounds – from the surf.

How do you put this all together? My take is that there are large striped bass around but that you need to work for them using tried and true methods: live eels, deep water, etc. If you want action with schoolies – no problem!

As always, I thank Kay and Martha Moulton, Rene Vigneault, Tim Roland-Anderson, and the local sport-fishing captains for their forecasts and news. If you have your own stories, please call me, John Altson, at 978-499-9972 with your news, recipes, and stories. Better yet; send them by e-mail to jaltson@comcast.net. I'd love to hear from you. This column is available, along with other good fishing reports, on www.surfcaster.com.

Have a great weekend!