

Dogged Dogfish and the Pollock Police

You gotta here this one, courtesy of Captain Rick LaPierre of the Yellow Bird: “Tough day with the dogs today. There were fish to catch, but the dogs made it almost impossible to get to them. All anglers did there best, but at times they were overwhelming. The real fun began when we got to the dock. Unknowing to us we had two undercover fishing agents onboard with us, and when we got to the dock there were 4 more people with badges waiting to check fish sizes. Now we probably punched 400 or more dogs today, not to mention the tangles that come with them, this would include of course the two agents, who were not very good at fishing, or should consider a job in acting. I think they could have shown us a little more respect and courtesy at the dock, instead of acting like they were filming an episode of COPS. The agents said that they are getting a lot of flak from the commercial fisherman about not being tough enough on the rec(reation) and charter boats, and also some mu shroom from Connecticut posted on some website that he was on our boat and witnessed anglers keeping short fish. I say, put an observer on every boat every day. I wonder how that will fly with the commercial fleet? When all was said and done, I am responsible for the possession of 1 undersized pollock, out of 33 anglers, for which I will be fined. I wonder if the fish stocks will ever rally from my devastation?” Please call 1-888-234-3531 for Yellow Bird reservations.

I really understand Captain Rick’s frustration. The party boat captains try their best to watch the fish coming over the railings to check for “shorts.” One undersized fish out of the entire catch for 33 fishermen is, as far as I’m concerned, a very good record. I really think, as Rick does, that the agents should change their focus.

George Charos of Captain’s Parties told me that fishing was “ok”. He said that the small fish were on the rebound offshore and there were many “throwbacks”. His boats were getting pool fish “the 20s” and a few large pollock; his anglers were able to “work around” the dogfish. As for his half-day striped bass trips – they were still getting fair striper action with a few keepers and with some large bluefish in the mix. Please call 1-800-427-1333 for reservations.

Two reports from Dr. Lloyd Fielder, fishing with Cape Ann’s “Cod Squad”: “Last two weeks my friends have been fishing in Gloucester harbor for all the schoolie stripers you could want, tons of fun on light tackle. They tried deeper water just inside the two-mile mark outside and nothing but doggies. They hit Tillies the past two weekends and had plenty of haddock to 7 pounds, fewer cod to 30lbs, several large pollock to 24lbs, large cusk to 10 pounds. Tons of bait and fair number of whales.” Second report: “Did an overnigher to Cashes on the Yankee (they are doing great right now), hit Gloucester harbor for 2 1/2 dozen tasty non existent flounder and even got out on Eastmans one day for a mostly boring (albeit productive with my largest cod of the season at around 25 lbs) day off NH during the spawn.”

Billy Drelick of Surfland on Plum Island told me about school stripers in the surf at Plum Island’s Lot #1 and small 4-5 lb. bluefish in the river. He again reiterated that you needed to work for the larger fish and suggested fishing Joppa Flats with live eels at night. Billy had heard that drifting for fluke and flounder was productive in Hampton Harbor and, generally, if you wanted flounder you should drift and not anchor.

Dave Provencher of Bridge Bait and Tackle in Salisbury said “tons of schoolies and a few keepers”; he said that he expected the larger stripers to return soon. Dave also mentioned sporadic bluefishing, some large fluke being caught drifting, and decent flounder fishing “outside.”

Bill Hickey tried just outside the South Jetty for stripers last week and had “keepers, keepers, keepers!” His son landed a 30-inch bass and was quite excited, I hear! Bill and son were using clams as bait.

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!