

One bluefish, two bluefish...

Yankee Homecoming had its Wine Tasting and Silent Auction fundraiser back in June. At that time, Oscar Boreth offered a full-day charter on his boat to the highest bidder. Tom Flanagan was the highest bidder and the date on which he elected to go fishing on Oscar's boat was last Saturday. Oscar wanted to know if I'd help out as "First Mate" – how could I refuse?

Tom Flanagan and his son Peter met Oscar and myself at the marina at 8:00 Am last Saturday. The forecast was for 1-2 foot seas and 80 degrees, not bad for a September day. We first tried a troll around the MR Buoy and Peter quickly pulled in a 5-pound bluefish on a spiffy new orange surface plug which Oscar had just purchased at Surfland. After a few more passes on the buoy, we tried a troll along the Plum Island beaches. We saw a fisherman pull in a bluefish on the Captain George (the Captain's Parties half-day boat) so we tried there with no luck. Because several years ago we had had some luck with giant bluefish off of Halibut Point, we set sail for that area.

The area off Halibut Point is covered with lobster pots and has a bottom which rises up from 90 feet to 40 feet very quickly. We anchored between the pots in 60 feet of water and were quickly visited by and boarded by the Environmental Police who checked Oscar's boat registration and looked around for illegal lobsters - of course we had none. I continued chumming and thought to myself "self, this is going to look like a pretty dumb idea if the bluefish don't show..." The bluefish did show, first as fleeting blips on the fish-finder screen then as a solid smash on Peter's rod. Peter pulled in a 10-pound bluefish and was all smiles. Tom had a solid hit on his rod, then lost the fish.

Regrettably, those two bluefish, caught early in the day, represented our total catch. We tried trolling and drifting at the mouth of the Parker River. We tried trolling by the Captain George and drifting off the Plum Island beach. We tried trolling at the MR Buoy and at the mouth of the Merrimack. Oscar's fish-finder had more fish blips than we could possibly count, but we had no "takers". Now comes the "coulda shoulda" – had we stayed in the area by the Captain George and chummed all day, we would have loaded up on bluefish because, in speaking with George Charos of Captain's Parties, he said that the Captain George loaded up with bluefish on both trips that day and that his anglers were actually throwing back 7-8 pound bluefish. Oh well!

George Charos of Captain's Parties told me that his bluefishing trips were "excellent." George plans trips for the blues on Wednesday and Friday mornings, also on Sunday afternoon. As it related to the offshore trips, George said that fishing was "decent" with pool fish "in the 20s" and a good mixture of cusk, haddock, big pollock and codfish. Please call 1-800-427-1333 for reservations.

Captain Rick La Pierre of the Yellow Bird is becoming a man of a few words. Rick's report from his September 8th Marathon was simply "BIG POLLOCK." Please call 1-888-234-3531 for Yellow Bird reservations.

I spoke with Billy Drelick of Surfland on Plum Island. Billy was excited about a striper blitz along the Plum Island beaches last Saturday morning. Billy said that the striped bass were hitting poppers and were up to 35 inches in length. Last Thursday and Friday, according to Billy, the blues were all along the beaches. Maybe we're in for a nice fall run?

Leo Levesque of Bridge Bait and Tackle in Salisbury suggested using herring or plugs in the river for bluefish. He had also heard of football tuna being caught off of Thatcher's Island.

Good news: Tim Roland-Anderson is back at work in Tim's Bait and Tackle in Salisbury. While they reported fishing as "slow", it's great to see him back after his stroke.

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!