

School is in session!

Martha Moulton of Surfland on Plum Island told me that school striped bass are being caught both in the river and on the ocean side; the schoolies are hitting lead-headed jigs, clams and sea worms. While no keepers have yet been caught, a 29" "hold-over" bass was caught last week. Martha said there was lots of baitfish in the area.

Martha went on to say that there continued to be decent shad fishing, with up-river anglers each getting 2-6 fish on shad darts. One angler foul-hooked and released a four-foot sturgeon!

Paul Weiner of "Go Fish" in West Newbury had been out shad fishing last Friday and picked up a couple; he said that there were not too many fishermen or boats in the area. Paul said that young Dylan Chase had been out fishing for largemouth bass and came back excitedly with a 22" trophy, caught on a "Go Fish" shiner. Paul also mentioned that his customers were "killing the trout" at Round Pond in Haverhill, using giant mealworms and Power Bait. The "Go Fish" fly-fishing clinic is on for the 17th at Mill Pond Beach in West Newbury, you will need to call 978-363-1867 for reservations and then sign up at the shop.

Rene Vigneault of Bridge Bait and Tackle on Route 1 in Salisbury said that the fishing for stripers and shad is very slow, compared to last year – just a few fish here and there.

I had my 2003 inaugural trip last Friday on the Yellow Bird; I went on Captain Rick LaPierre's Marathon with two co-workers, Deb Cole and Jim Barton. After a 33 mile run, I quickly picked up a double-header of keeper codfish and thought that this was going to be quite a day. It slowed down after that, but I wound up catching five keeper cod, one cusk, and two redfish. We packed away ten meals in the freezer when I returned home, then having a Mothers' Day feast of baked cod with lemon caper sauce and a bottle of Riesling.

The fishing was not as fast as last year at this time, but the ocean was like glass and we all came home with fish. Deb caught three cod and one redfish; Jim caught one haddock and 8-9 redfish. The pool fish was a 17 lb. wolfish, caught by Tim Caswell.

A word about Captain Rick and party boat captains like him: Captain Rick and the mates really try hard for the customers. There was very little bait in the area (unlike last year), so he moved from spot to spot trying to find rocks or "structure" over which could be found fish on his Fish Finder display. There were times when he'd come to a spot, see no fish on the display, and then move on. I've seen many captains in the past that would just go to a spot and park, not making that extra effort. You may call 1-888-234-3531 for Yellow Bird reservations.

I spoke with Chris Charos of Captain's Parties on Plum Island. Chris reported that last week was "ok", with a 50/50 cod and haddock mix. They had a charter last Saturday and boated a 42 lb. cod, and they have caught a number of cod "in the twenties". The Captains Parties had a big wolfish day last week, boating quite a few up to 22 lbs. Please give Chris or George Charos a call at 1-800-427-1333 to make your reservations.

As always, I thank Kay and Martha Moulton, Paul and Mike Weiner, Rick Vigneault 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 altson@us.ibm.com. 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!