

Striped Bass



Morone saxatilis

(Photograph reprinted with permission from John Waldman.)

The Facts

Striped bass makes an excellent sport fish and it possibly is the most prized species in the recreational fisheries in New York's marine district. These fish prefer coastal areas, and you will find them close to shore (up to 1 mile) when they are not moving between landmasses. They generally like any area where there is moving current and baitfish, for them to feed on. They like the surf and they also inhabit rocky shoals and the upper tidal reaches of rivers. Striped bass is known by many names locally, including: "bass", "linesiders", "stripers" and "rockfish". Local names are also used to distinguish the different sizes: "rats" (very small fish), "schoolies" (small-medium sized schooling fish) and "cows" (large fish, often females).

Migration

This species spans the full range of the Atlantic coast. They are schooling fish and adults spend most of their life in coastal estuaries and rivers, and also the ocean. Seasonal migration occurs during the spring and fall, for feeding. Adults travel to the lower portions of rivers and associated tributaries to spawn. Long Island benefits from migrating populations originating in the Chesapeake Bay and Hudson River. Estimated life expectancy is at least 30 years, and these fish can grow to over 4 ft. It takes between 5-8 years for females to reach sexual maturity, and females tend to grow to a much larger size than males.



Bringing Science to the Shore

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Fishing Season

They travel in schools comprised of similar sized fish (cohorts). The schools start to arrive from as early as April each season, and usually include fish that originate from the Hudson River. Fish from the Chesapeake Bay arrive around mid-May each year. The peak fishing season occurs in June, followed by a gradual tapering off. The fall migration starts in mid-September and the best fishing for this second run is in October or November. There are many good fishing sites with public access and you should ask your local bait & tackle store for recommendations about where to go. Conservation measures are being implemented for this fish and you should contact New York State Department of Environmental Conservation or call 1-800-REGS-DEC for update information on fishing regulations.

Angling

The best time to fish is after dark (late evenings), early morning (dawn to sunrise), or during full and new moon periods. This is a top predator and using live bait (eels, mackerel, and bunker) is always a good option to increase fishing success. Some anglers prefer to use prepared bait cut from squid, bunker and mackerel fillets, herring and crabs. Good fishing is experienced from shoreline areas, but look for places with a drop-off, sandbar, or burrow, which creates strong wave currents and turbulence.

There are many techniques used to catch striped bass, but many anglers choose to use live bait and casting techniques. You can use light (6-12 lb test) to medium (20 lb test) line on a spinning rod when fishing for striped bass. When using live bait, the rig of choice consists of a pyramid sinker attached as a fish-finder, and a long leader with a float attached close to the hook. The float is important because it keeps the bait away from bottom-dwelling crabs and skates.

Contact your local bait & tackle store for advice about fishing with artificial lures.

Visit our website at www.seagrantsunysb.edu/Fishery/ResourceCenter.htm for additional information.



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This information sheet was prepared by the Fishery Resource Center to address the needs in angling and charter boat communities.