



HARBOUR LIGHT

OFFICIAL VHFC NEWSLETTER September 2023

Editor: Ed Valitutto VHFC Website: <http://www.vhfishingclub.com>

***VHFC meets the second Friday of each month from
April through November***

Location: Manahawkin Community Center

775 East Bay Ave Manahawkin, NJ

Doors open at 7:30; Meeting begins at 7:45 PM

Next meeting: 8 September 2023

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello VHFC Members,

Happy Labor Day to you and your family as we celebrate the 'notional' end of summer! Labor Day is celebrated on the first Monday of September to honor workers and their achievements! Can you believe we are already getting into the 2023 'shoulder' or off peak season? However, September at the Jersey shore can be a wonderful time of year. The weather vacillates between near- perfect and hurry up and take cover from the hurricanes - Franklin earlier in the week and Idalia near the weekend. Usually though, it will continue to improve as we move into early fall - my favorite time at the shore. So venture out into the open air and experience all this area has to offer.

Fortunately, many things have started to reduce / lessen and thankfully so! Air temperatures are becoming more bearable along with the lesser humidity and traffic congestion is disappearing except for the 10+ year long work on Route 72 from Manahawkin over the bridge and into LBI. People visiting the area will start to taper off now that schools are reopening and

lastly, beach badges are no longer needed! Another reason to celebrate is that the ocean temperatures are almost equal to the air temperature - that's a great combination! Oh and I almost forgot, the fishing can be outstanding. There are three weeks left to enjoy fluke fishing until it closes on Wednesday September 27th. Blowfish are becoming more abundant along with blueclaw crabs in the bay and blackfish and seabass (reopens 1 October) should provide some fine catching based on the spring season. Stripers and bluefish (hopefully) should return to our waters in the coming months. This is also a great time to jump on a party boat for some fine catching of bottom species - ling, porgies and winter flounder. So make the most of the remaining days of summer and enjoy the great outdoors. Once again, I look forward to seeing everyone at our next meeting.

Lastly, be sure to take a photo of your catch for our FOM / FOY awards and submit a report of your success for others to enjoy.

Ed

UPCOMING NEAR TERM EVENTS

September 08 Friday - VHFC Club Meeting 7:45

October 03 Tuesday - Bottom Fishing on *Super Chic*

October 18 Wednesday - Club Dinner at *Kostas Grill*

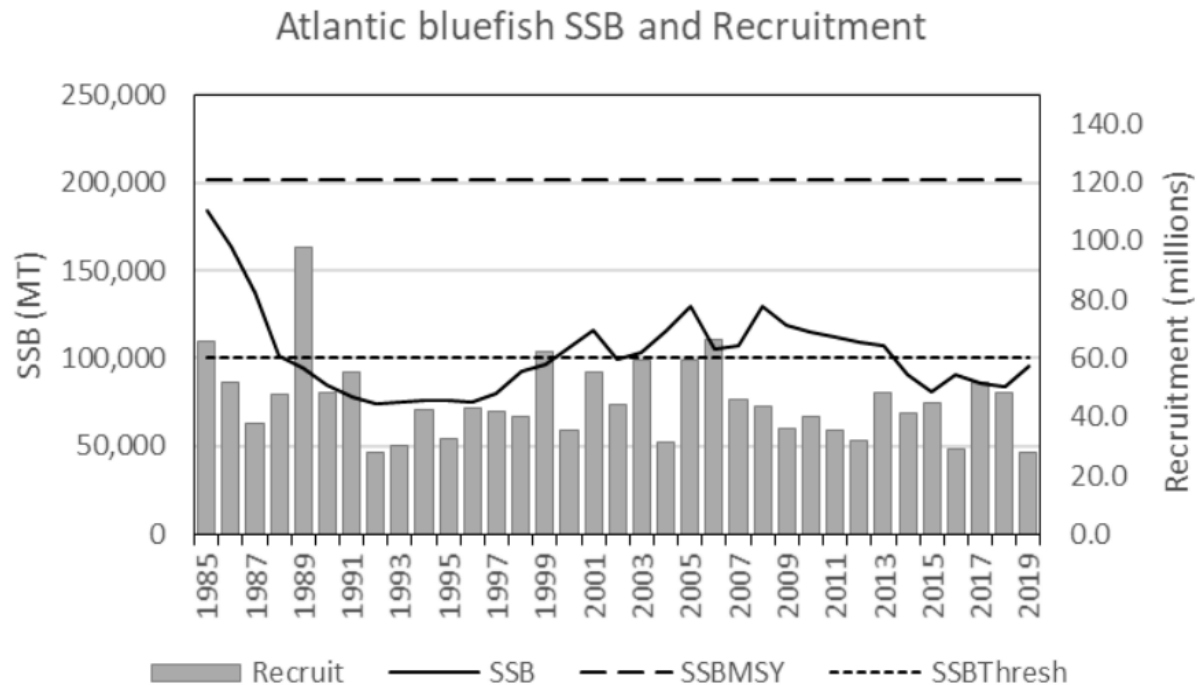
SEPTEMBER MEETING - Our guest speaker is John Kolias. John's topic is "*Striped Bass Fishing*". Captain John Kolias of Reel Fun Sportfishing out of the Twin Lights Marina in Atlantic Highlands, is one of the premier charter fishermen working the waters of Raritan Bay, Sandy Hook, and New York Harbor. Last visiting us via Zoom during COVID, John will be making his first in-person visit to VHFC. Focusing his charters primarily on stripers in the spring and fall, and fluke fishing from May to October, John will be getting us ready for the fall run of stripers in 2023 with proven tackle and strategy.

NEW JERSEY JCAA & FISHING REGULATIONS - Editor's Note: Since JCAA is off for the summer, Phil Simon has submitted an Opinion Piece on our Fishing Regulations. This is Phil's opinion and does not reflect the official position of VHFC. I personally agree with Phil. Read it and we can discuss it at our meeting next Friday.

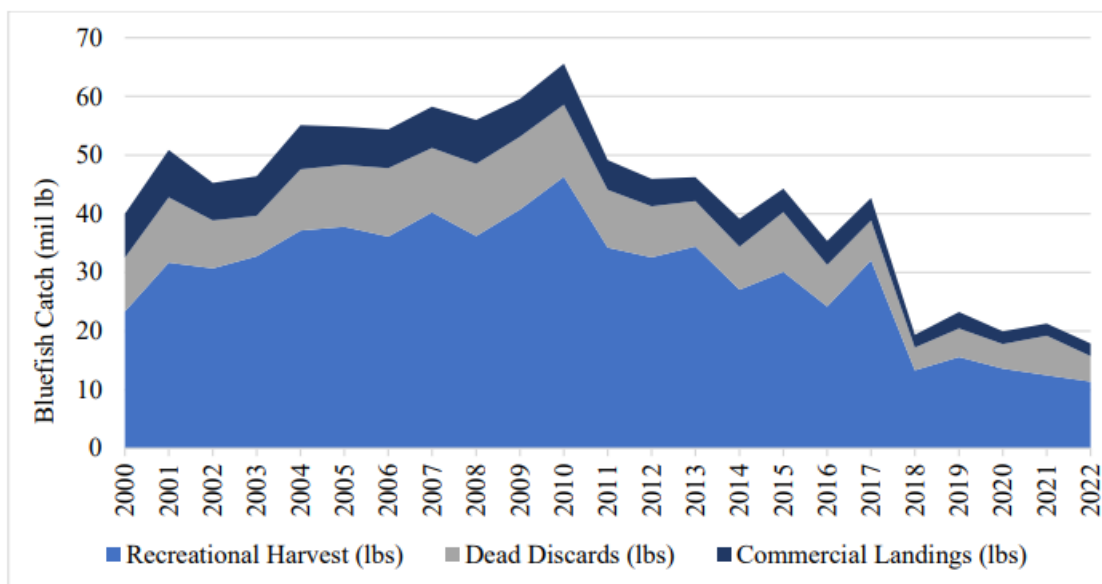
OPINION by Phil Simon - Bluefish Blues

Have you been puzzled about what happened in 2019 when the bag limits for bluefish crashed from 15 fish down to 3 fish? At that time NOAA declared that the bluefish stock was overfished. Under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, this required a rebuilding program for bluefish

to be initiated, hence the drastic cutback in our bag limit. But look at the graph below, which shows the data for the spawning stock biomass (SSB), which is the part of the stock capable of breeding, as well as recruitment estimates (new fish entering the stock) for bluefish since 1985:



The solid dark line is the estimate of the stock size based on fishery independent and dependent surveys (remember the talk by Doug Zemekis?). The short dotted line, labeled SSBThresh is the “do not cross” line that triggers the overfished declaration. The long dotted line, labeled SSBMSY for SSB Maximum Sustainable Yield, is the proposed target that the regulators would like to achieve to produce a balanced fishery (fish in = fish out). Really active fisheries management of bluefish started around 2008, after passage of the 2007 Magnuson-Stevens Act. By 2009 the regulators noted the apparent downward trend of the stock and started more aggressively reducing the catch. The next chart is the graph of recreational and commercial landings of bluefish from 2000 to 2022:



As you can see, they were quite successful in reducing landings of bluefish to historically low levels. But here are a few observations that I made looking at these two charts:

- After 1988, the bluefish spawning stock reached a steady state of around 100,000 million tons, going up or down around this level in a pattern often called a “random walk” (Solid line on the first graph)
- Landings appeared to have dropped significantly in 2018, before the implementation of the 3 fish recreational limit (second graph)
- I can detect little to no impact of the catch limits started in 2009 on the state of the stock, nor any major impact of the 3 fish limit on the actual size of the landings, despite an 85% reduction in catch limit. The landings were virtually the same from 2018 through 2022.

My overall conclusions are that in reality the stock was not overfished, and that whatever the regulators were doing to catch limits was not having much of an effect on stock size anyway. So, what precipitated the panic at NOAA that resulted in the 2019 limits and the rebuilding program? At about that time, the “new” estimates of recreational catch were being generated by the new MRIP methods for recreational catch estimation. These numbers seemed to indicate that the rate of fish removal by the recreational sector was much higher than previously estimated, and the NOAA scientists concluded that the stock would be in trouble if this was allowed to continue. If you read my column from last month, you know that I was highly suspicious of the methodology being used by MRIP for estimating fishing effort, the so-called Fishing Estimate Survey, FES. And if you follow the fishing news you also know that NOAA has in fact now determined that something is amiss with the FES, which they conclude

may be overestimating the recreational catch by 40%. They think the problem is with the survey questionnaire, which could certainly be the case, but I suspect that the problem is much broader, as I indicated last month.

In our local area we have been noting somewhat of a decline in the appearance of bluefish, but elsewhere they are quite abundant, and the folks north of us from NY to Maine are reporting record numbers and sizes. More likely the fish are following their food to cooler waters, and the stock size is just fine. But I think what we just witnessed with the panic reduction of our striped bass catch is a repeat of what we have seen with bluefish, and probably is true with summer flounder as well, which are due for another cut next year. Bad data on recreational catch is inducing bad decisions by the regulators. Standby for the fireworks to come.

UPCOMING CLUB EVENTS by Ed Valitutto - We have two more upcoming events for your enjoyment and participation.

Second Annual Bottom Fishing Trip - Phil Simon has put together another bottom fishing trip. The outing will be on the **Super Chic** like last year, on Tuesday October 3rd, departing at 6:30am from 18th St in Barnegat Light. This will be a Sea Bass trip, but you never know what lurks on the bottom. Cost details will depend on how many sign up but will likely be ~\$150 pp including tip. We will firm this up as we get closer to the date. VHFC will provide a \$50 FHQ award for the largest Sea Bass and another \$50 FHQ award for the largest 'other' species. No skates, sharks, rays or eels. Weighmaster Pat will be the final arbitrator. Winning fish will be determined by the ship's balance scale. Space is limited so let Phil know if you plan on attending. Phil's info: sciman2@gmail.com or call 908-656-4086.

Annual Dinner - Bill Dabney has coordinated our dinner event for Wednesday October 18th at Kostas Grill in Tuckerton. Kostas serves Greek cuisine - see [Kostas Menu](#) and is BYOB. Everyone will pay for their own selections off the menu. VHFC will provide sparkling wine for the occasion and appetizer platters. No space problems but let Bill know if you will attend so he can coordinate with Kostas Grill. Bill's info: dabney372@outlook.com or 609-709-5093.

Rod n' Reel Raffle - This is a quality outfit. A Fenwick 7' Medium Heavy Fast rod rated for 20 - 40 lb braid with a Penn Battle III 3000. Together, this is perfect for most species you will encounter here in NJ. Tickets are \$5 each and the raffle will be at the September meeting.



This combo lists at TackleDirect for \$119.99 for the rod and \$139.99 for the reel. That's a \$260 value!

NANTUCKET FISHING by Ed Valitutto - For the second consecutive year, a group of us made the trek to Yarmouth, MA for a two day charter on the ***Fish Hawk*** to fish the waters around Nantucket. This year's group had repeat anglers Bill Figley, Bill Dabney and Ed Valitutto joined by Nathan Figley, Ron Nachman and Bill Dabney Jr who flew in from Boulder, CO. Originally planned for a day of Haddock fishing on Wednesday, August 15 followed by Fluke & Seabass on Thursday, the captain suggested we change to Cod & Pollock since the Haddock were scarce and he had recent success with cod.

The ***Fish Hawk*** is an old ~35' lobster boat with virtually no creature comforts. Our 4:00 AM departure was made more palatable since the weather was near perfect for the entire trip. With a following sea and tail wind, the powerful diesel engines had us moving along at a brisk 12 kts making the three hour trip seem like a mere 180 minutes!

Fortunately, the cod were in shallow 120' water unlike their usual haunts that run from 250' to 325'. Unfortunately, the strong wind and tide required us to fish with 21 oz jigs!



Ed V with a double header cod (~ 10 - 15 lbs) and Bill Figley with a double cod /pollock



That's Nate Figley holding a beautiful cod with Bill looking on. Bill Dabney shows off a beautiful ~8 lb flounder taken on the second day.



Fortunately, the second day's flounder fishing on the Nantucket shoals was in water ~80 ' deep and only entailed a 2 1/2 hr ride. The tide and wind were a little less but we still needed 10 - 12 oz weights to hold bottom. When viewed on the sonar, the shoals look like a mountain range with peaks rising and falling abruptly - that's the reason the draggers haven't taken all the fish in this area.

Once again, the fishing was spectacular! Bill Figley and Bill Dabney Jr each had a 10+lb fish. I had two 9 lb fish and everyone else had several 6, 7 & 8's. And the Seabass fishing was outstanding as they readily took the fluke jigs. We probably kept 20 or more seabass and threw back twice as many with the minimum size for seabass at 16 1/2" in MA! Nate Figley absolutely murdered them. Some more pics are on the next pages.



That's Bill Dabney Jr on the left with a 10+ lb fluke and Ed V with a 9 lb fish.



Group photo showing us holding all the largest fluke. What a trip!

NANTUCKET DEEP WATER RIGS by Ed Valitutto - For the last two years, the rigs most of us used were purchased from **The Reel Seat** in Brielle for \$16.99 each. These rigs should also work equally well here in deeper water. The rig is basically a HI LO setup with a swivel for connecting to your main line, two three way rotating swivels, two ~1/2 oz jigs and a bottom loop for your sinker. All quality components: Heavy duty line, good hardware and large hook, long shank jigs with nice plastic skirts. But \$16.99 each! Shown below are a brand new rig on top and one I made from jigs I had from last year. I used 60 lb mono - you need stiff line and three way rotating swivels bought for \$2.99 per 10 pack at Tony's B&T. I tied three-turn improved clinch knots with the heavy mono line. All lengths are from knot to knot as follows:

Main line swivel to first three way - 10"

Top three way swivel to bottom three way swivel - 20 1/2" Three way swivels to jigs - 8 1/2"

Three way swivel to bottom of loop - 18"

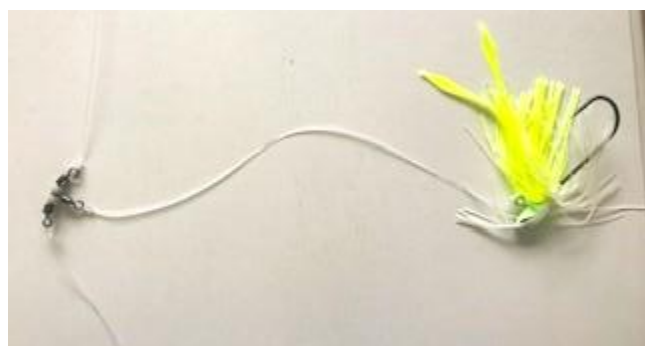
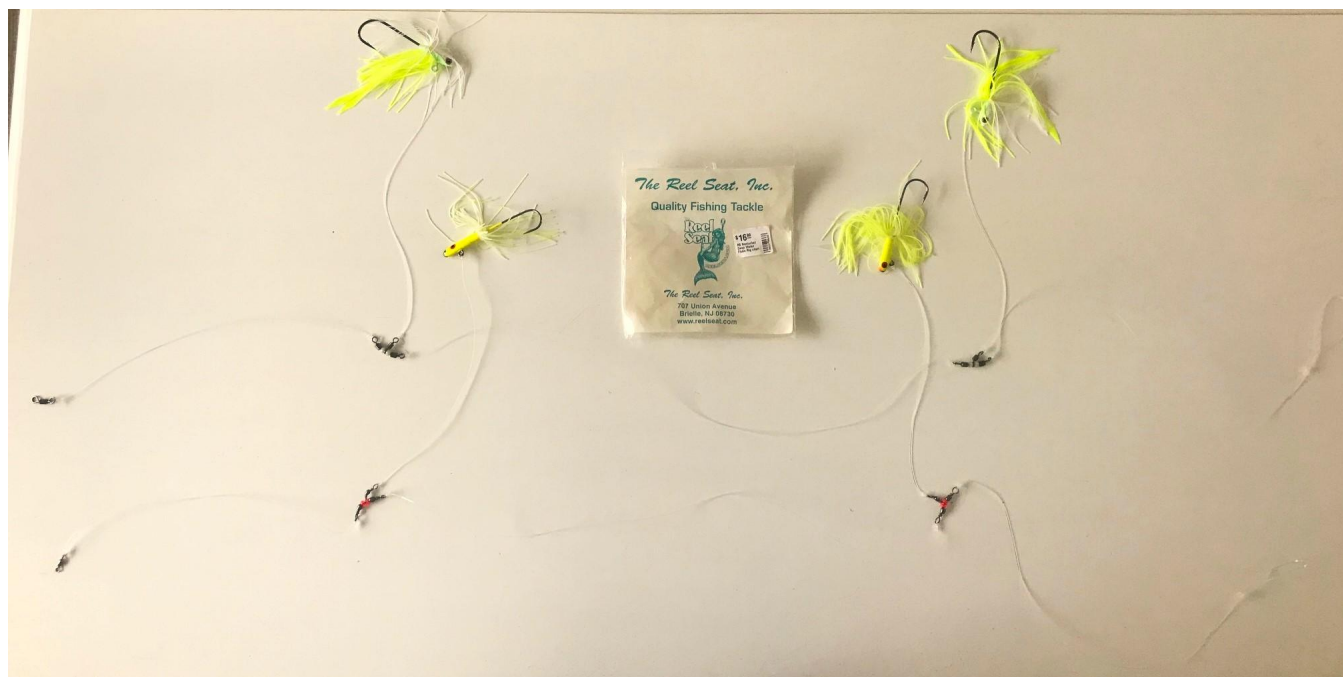


Photo shows from the three way swivel to the jig. Notice the long shank wide gap hook for attaching a 4 - 6" Gulp.

Make some up and give them a try or buy them for \$16.99 each!

SUGGESTIONS FOR VACUUM SEALING by Ed Valitutto - I finally bought a vacuum sealer several months ago after years of procrastination when it was on sale at Costco. It's a FoodSaver (~\$75) and I have used it several times with great results. Anyway, I came across this article in ***On The Water*** and thought I would share some of the more important points. You can read the whole story at [Vacuum Sealing the Right Way](#) . As always, I added my two cents!

Brine It - Giving your fish a quick brine before going into the freezer can make a big difference. Dissolve 1/4-cup kosher salt in 1 quart of cold water, and soak for five minutes.

Dry It - Make sure the fish is completely dry before you vacuum seal and freeze. Wrap each fillet in a layer of paper towels, and gently press on them until they're thoroughly dry.

Thaw It Properly - Cut a hole in the freezer bag after you take it out of the freezer to release the seal and allow it to thaw out while not under pressure. It is also good practice to thaw fish, or any meat, as slowly as possible. The refrigerator is a good place to defrost so leave yourself enough time. **Avoid thawing at room temperature, as this can promote bacterial growth.**

Label and Date - Trust me, weeks and months from now, you won't remember what it is or when you caught it. Using an inexpensive digital scale at WalMart, I weigh the bag. Also, I discovered that the Mode setting on my sealer should be set to **Moist** for everything other than dry items or non-foods. Too bad the manual didn't mention it, at least not in the English version. **Now catch 'em, freeze 'em and enjoy 'em!**



2023 FOM CONTESTS - Please see the following table for all FOM contests. There are presently 14 Open contests shaded in blue & Congratulations to this month's Winners (Alan Goracy for Fluke and Brian Leary for Seabass) shaded in green.

2023 Bill Figley Young Angler FOM Awards (4)

1	1 April - 30 September No Entry to Date	White Perch
2	1 June - 30 September Hunter Mayo Leads 9"	Blowfish
3	1 June - 30 September Mila Ellis Leads 13"	Kingfish
4	2 May - 27 September Braddock Cline Leads 18 3/4"	Fluke

2023 Regular FOM Awards (26)

1	15 March - 30 June Dave Puzak 37 3/4"	Striped Bass
2	15 March - 30 June (Surf Only) Pat Presutto 37 3/4"	Striped Bass
3	15 March - 30 September Brian Leary leads 26 3/4"	Bluefish
4	15 March - 30 September (Surf Only) Pat Presutto leads 31 1/2"	Bluefish
5	15 March - 30 June Dave Spendiff 14 1/4"	White Perch
6	1 April - 30 June Tyler Leary 27 1/4"	Weakfish
7	1 April - 31 October Caesar Pesarini leads 9 3/4"	Blowfish
8	1 April - 31 October Phil Kaplan leads 13 3/4"	Kingfish
9	1 April - 31 December Ron Nachmann leads 37 1/2"	Red or Black Drum
10	1 - 30 April & 1 Aug - 30 Sept Marty Friedrich leads 22 1/4"	Blackfish
11	2 May - 30 June John Barrett 24 1/2"	Fluke
12	2 May - 27 September (Surf Only) Cheri Hebert leads 22 1/2"	Fluke
13	17 May - 19 June Bill Figley 21 1/4"	Seabass
14	1 - 31 July Marty Friedrich 24 1/2"	Fluke
15	1 - 31 July Marty Friedrich 20 1/2"	Seabass
16	1 July - 31 October No Entry to Date	White Perch
17	1 July - 31 October Steve SCharaldi leads 19"	Weakfish
18	1 - 31 August Alan Goracy 24"	Fluke

19	1 - 31 August Brian Leary 18 1/4"	Seabass
20	1 - 27 September	Fluke
21	1 Oct – 31 Dec	Bluefish
22	1 Oct – 31 Dec (Surf Only)	Bluefish
23	1 Oct – 31 Dec	Striped Bass
24	1 Oct – 31 Dec (Surf Only)	Striped Bass
25	1 Oct – 31 Dec	Blackfish
26	7 Oct – 31 Dec (Closed 27 – 31 Oct)	Seabass

2023 FOM ENTRIES - Here's our list of recent 2023 entries to date since last month's Newsletter. Go to [VHFC Standings](#) for the complete list of entries.

08-03-23	Fluke	21"	Marty Friedrich	Little Egg Reef
08-06-23	Fluke	21"	Bill Dabney	Garden State North
08-06-23	Seabass	14"	Bill Dabney	Garden State North
08-11-23	Seabass	15 1/2"	Ed Valitutto	Wreck off Garden State South
08-12-23	Seabass	16"	Pat Presutto	Little Egg Reef
08-12-23	Fluke	21 3/4"	Marty Friedrich	Little Egg Reef
08-12-23	Kingfish	13"	Mila Ellis	Mordecai Island
08-12-23	Blowfish	9"	Hunter Mayo	Mordecai Island
08-19-23	Fluke	22 1/4"	Marty Friedrich	Little Egg Reef
08-20-23	Seabass	18 1/4"	Brian Leary	Wreck near the Tires
08-20-23	Fluke	23"	Cheri Hebert	Oyster Creek
08-21-23	Fluke	24"	Alan Goracy	Near the Horn Buoy by BI
08-24-23	Blowfish	9 3/4"	Caesar Pesarini	Mordecai Island
08-24-23	Kingfish	13 3/4"	Phil Kaplan	Mordecai Island

Be sure to check out the following photos!



Cheri Hebert caught this nice 23" Fluke in Oyster Creek in late August.



That's Brian Leary's August FOM winning 18 1/4" Seabass!



Phil Kaplan won't let his FOM leading 13 3/4 " Kingfish slip away with that 'death grip'!

MONTHLY RECIPE by Bill Dabney - Codfish Bake

Ingredients

- 2 lbs cod filets (or any other thicker filet that you have)**
- 1/4 cup (4 TBS) butter**
- 1/4 cup chopped onions**
- 1/4 cup diced celery**
- 1/2 tsp each salt, pepper & thyme**
- 2 cups fresh bread crumbs**
- 2 tomatoes chopped and drained**

Directions

- 1. Grease a baking dish and preheat the oven to 450 degrees**

2. Melt butter in a frying pan and saute onion and celery until tender. Add salt, pepper, thyme and bread crumbs and toss to mix.
3. Place half the fish in the baking dish and cover with half the crumb mixture,
4. Top with half the tomatoes.
5. Place a second layer of fish and cover with remaining dressing and tomatoes.
6. Melt some additional butter and pour over the top. Bake for 20 minutes or 10 minutes for each inch of thickness. Serves four. Enjoy!

FISHING REPORTS - Please go to the VHFC website at <http://www.vhfishingclub.com> to read fishing reports submitted by fellow club members. Please submit your reports using the simple form on the pull down menu. If you do not feel comfortable using the form, please email Ed Valitutto @ edvalitutto@gmail.com or call 609 994 1311 and provide me with the details so I can do a report for you. Please take a moment to provide a report for other members to enjoy and gain some valuable fishing insight. There were 6 reports since the August Newsletter.



VHFC members Alan Goracy, Caesar Pesarini and Ed Valitutto went out for a day of fluke fishing in Little Egg Inlet. The action wasn't great but they had a nice day and everyone had a keeper!



Jerry Nichols has had good results trolling off Island Beach State Park in 20' - 35' of water using Clark spoons. The photo shows Jerry (left) with his visiting brother and nephew.



Looks like they also had good luck with the fluke!



Wil Kresge had a nice 22" Fluke on Marty Friedrich's boat. Wil and pal Bob had another great time with Marty.



A nice catch of two slots, two overs and two sea bass for Ed Valitutto and John Steubing fishing down along the Beach north of the red tower.



That's Alan Goracy holding the August FOM winner - 24" caught near the horn buoy outside Barnegat Inlet. This was a heavy fish and went 6 lbs on my Boga!

VESSEL SAFETY CHECKS - By Jeff Orsoe Both the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the United States Power Squadrons have certified vessel examiners who will perform a free Vessel Safety Check ("VSC") at your boat, at a time of mutual convenience. There is no charge and no consequences if your boat doesn't pass. Our goal is simply to help make boating as safe as possible for you, your family and your friends. Personal pleasure craft, only.

I am available to perform a Vessel Safety exam on your vessel. As stated above, there is no charge for the exam and if you do not qualify for the sticker, the results will not be reported to any agency. Contact: Jeff Orsoe Cell / Text: 732-672-5530 or email: jorsoe786@gmail.com.

A fire extinguisher is one of the items that is required. Last year, a new law regarding them went into effect. The extinguisher now has a 12 year qualifying life cycle. If you look at the bottom, you will see the year it was made. Just add 12 years to that date to figure the expiration date.



VHFC Hats - Hats are khaki colored and feature a high definition VHFC patch on the front. They are high quality and available at club meetings for \$20. If you would like a hat,, please contact Dave Spendiff for details.

VHFC Shirts - VHFC T-Shirts are available for purchase but we need to order a 12 lot minimum. Sizes range from XS (Extra Small) to 6XL and are available in nine colors. Shirts have long sleeves and feature UPF 50 Sun Protection. Let us know



your size and color preference. These are quality shirts to be worn proudly. White is shown below with the ordering info. Sizes/Cost: XS, S, M, L & XL @ \$31, 2XL @ \$32, 3XL @ \$33 4XL @ \$34, 5XL @ \$35 & 6XL @ \$36. Colors: White, Pale Green, Sand, Pale Orange, Pale Yellow,

Pale Teal, Aqua, Lime & Medium Blue. For a slightly loose fit, order your normal

shirt size. For a tight fit, order one size smaller than your normal shirt size. Contact Dave Spendiff at dnspendiff@netscape.net for placing an order.

CLASSIFIED ADS BUY, SELL or TRADE

Classified ads may be placed free of charge by any club member for non-commercial fishing related items. Please contact Ed Valitutto via email at edvalitutto@gmail.com to place your ad.

FISHING WITH CLUB MEMBERS - Members may place free ads in this section if you wish to find someone to fish with. Maybe you need to find someone with a boat or you are interested in finding someone to share expenses on your boat. With gas prices reaching the sky, helping out with fuel costs is almost a necessity.

USEFUL INFORMATION LINKS

See the full list on our website [Links](#)

Wave Information (Height, Period, Direction and Water Temperature) from a Buoy 15 Miles Outside Barnegat Inlet Updated Every 30 minutes: [Buoy #44091](#)

Boat/US: <http://www.boatus.com/>

United States Coast Guard Auxiliary: <http://www.cgaux.org/>

Notice to Mariners (District 5):
<http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=InmDistrict®ion=5>

Fisherman's Headquarters: <http://www.fishermansheadquarters.com/>

The Boat Shop: <http://theboatshoponline.com/>

The Bass Barn: <http://www.thebassbarn.com>

Barnegat Fishing Hole: <http://www.barnegatfishinghole.com/ubbthreads/ubbthreads.php>

Animated Knots: <http://www.animatedknots.com/>

Long Beach Island Water Temperature & Winds:
<https://seatemperature.info/long-beach-island-water-temperature.html>

SPONSORS - The following sponsors offer a discount with the presentation of your current VHFC Membership Card. Discounts normally do not apply to items that are fair traded or items on sale.

BHW Marine Center 10% discount with VHFC card

857 Mill Creek Rd Manahawkin, NJ 08050
609-709-5424

Boat U.S.

Special membership price call Jeff Orsoe. Forms for members' use will be at VHFC meetings or call Jeff Orsoe 732-672-5530. Also, VHFC members only pay \$9.50 for a year of Boat U.S.

Creelside Outfitters 10% discount with VHFC card
403 Rt. 9 Waretown, NJ 08758
609-242-1812

D & S Marine Service 10% discount on parts with VHFC card
460 Dock Rd, West Creek NJ 08092
609-296-0309

Fisherman's Headquarters 10% discount with VHFC card
280 West 9th St, Ship Bottom, NJ 08008
609-494-5739

JB Awards 10% discount on engraving and trophies with VHFC card
609-290-5851

Jingles Bait & Tackle 10% discount with VHFC card
1214 N Bay Ave, Beach Haven, NJ 08008
609-492-2795

The Boat Shop 10% discount with VHFC card
756 E. Bay Ave, Manahawkin, NJ 08050
609-597-1271