

# THE NORFOLK ANGLERS CLUB WIRELINE

APRIL 2020

## What's Inside

\*\*\*Regular Meeting for April is cancelled\*\*\* Everyone stay healthy and safe!

Fishing Tips: Deep Drop fishing for Tilefish, Captain Will Bransom

### Fishing Reports:

- Elizabeth River: Speckled Trout, Puppy Drum
- CBBT: Tautog
- Inshore/Tower Reef: Tautog, Black Sea Bass
- Rudee Inlet: Speckled Trout, Puppy Drum
- James River: Blue Catfish
- Lynnhaven: Speckled Trout
- Nottoway River: Shad
- Lake Smith: Black Crappie, Largemouth Bass

# Leadership Notes...

Fellow Norfolk Anglers,

We've decided to cancel the regular April meeting and the Community Center Clean Up events for this month. At times like this it's important to focus on what's most important and that's your health and welfare and that of your family.



Our Club has supported the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore for many years now. I'm sure many families are faced with uncertainty of how long it will take

for things to normalize. Now is a good time to consider helping out those who rely on the Foodbank for assistance with a small donation. For the time being they're not accepting donations of items at their Tidewater Dr location. Visit their website at <https://foodbankonline.org/> for more information and to make a monetary donation.

Many Thanks to all who made the Annual Awards Banquet the great success that it was. Congratulations to Capt Alex Perez, Sr. the Saltwater Angler of the Year and to Dr. James "Ike" Eisenhower and Steve Harding the Freshwater Anglers of the Year.

- Will



**On The Cover:** Captain Alex Perez and his Son "AJ" launching at Willoughby Public Boat Ramp with their new boat "Hook Shot." *Hook Shot* is a 23 foot Southern Cross built by Carolina Yachts of Beaufort, North Carolina. Powered with a single Suzuki DF200 rigged by Seaworthy Marine Services of Exmore, Virginia. Rumor has it there's a tower being added by Richard Buscher of All In Marine Fabrication in Melfa, Virginia.

## Meeting

The April meeting has been cancelled

**Important:  
April NAC Meeting has been  
cancelled!**

## Publishers NOTES

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Norfolk Anglers Club

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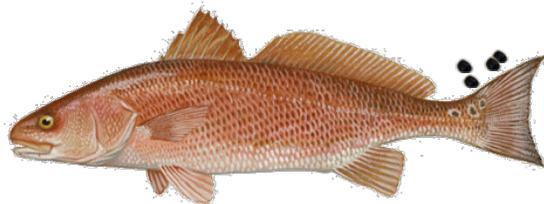
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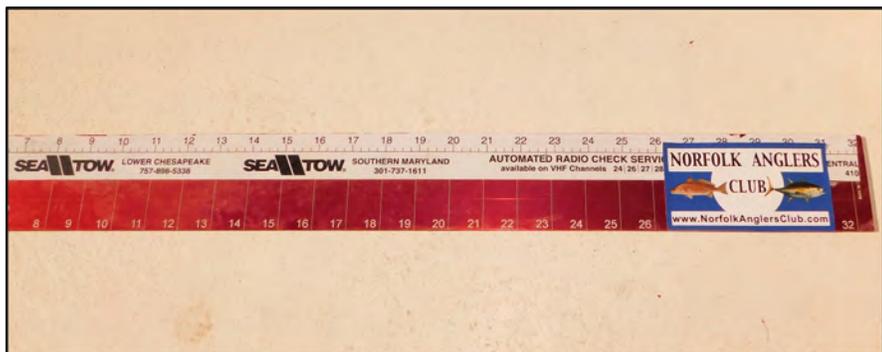
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## Norfolk Anglers Club - Redfish "Spots" Tournament

### Rules

- Must be a Norfolk Anglers Club Member
- Tournament for fish caught between March 1, 2020, and November 30, 2020
- Must have the Norfolk Anglers Club decal in the photo with the fish on a measuring board showing the total length of the fish. See NAC Prize Fish Contest Rules for measuring information.
- Red Drum/Redfish up to 26 inches in length only and caught in Virginia and North Carolina waters
- Awards determined by 1st: number of Spots, 2nd: Largest Fish up to 26 inches, 3rd: Date of Catch
- Entries submitted on the Club Prize Fish Entry Form with photo (can be sent electronically to [NorfolkAnglersClub@gmail.com](mailto:NorfolkAnglersClub@gmail.com))
- No entry fee except the cost of the decal (\$1.00)
- \$50.00 Gift Card to the 1st Place Angler, \$25.00 Gift Card for the 2nd Place Angler and presented at the Club Holiday Party in December 2020.



# Annual Awards Banquet

*Congratulations to all of our Norfolk Anglers for their angling awards.*

*Captain Alex Perez, Sr. - Saltwater Angler of the Year*

*Dr. James "Ike" Eisenhower and Steve Harding - Freshwater Anglers of the Year*

*Russel Willoughby - Expert Angler (Black Crappie)*

*Dr. James "Ike" Eisenhower - Expert Angler (Black Crappie and Speckled Trout)*



Freshwater Angler of the Year



Saltwater Angler of the Year



Expert Angler - Black Crappie



Expert Angler - Black Crappie/Specs



King Mackerel 15 lb 0 oz



Blueline Tilefish 13 lb 0 oz



Sheepshead 11 lb 0 oz



Spadefish 6 lb 8 oz



Black Crappie 15.5 inches



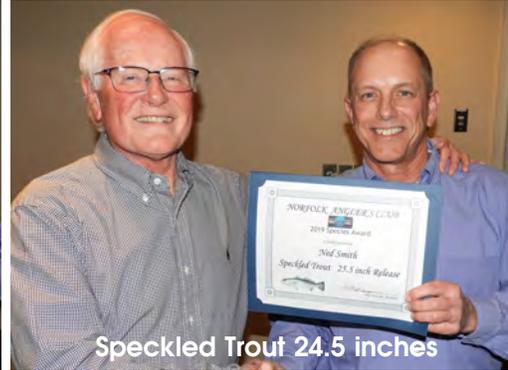
Black Sea Bass 4 lb 8 oz



White Marlin Release



Red Drum 50 inches



Speckled Trout 24.5 inches



Summer Flounder 5 lb 4 oz



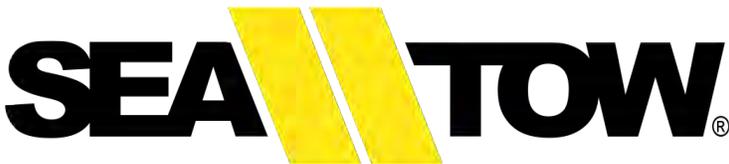


*Thank You* to all our supporters of the Annual Awards Banquet. This year's event was another spectacular evening with many Thanks to the Norfolk Yacht and Country Club for hosting us, Mike Hubert for organizing the event, Tom Hubert our Awards Chairman, and Michel & Ned Smith for organizing the raffle. Our banquet wouldn't be the same without sponsorship from our local businesses and individuals.



Tom Hubert  
 Mike Hubert  
 Angela Adams  
 Ben Capps  
 Steve Harding  
 Alex & AJ Perez

Wendy & Andy Potvin  
 Mary & Henry Troutner  
 Michel & Ned Smith  
 Karen & Ed Schrader  
 Wendy & Will Bransom



### Deep Drop Fishing for Tilefish with Captain Will Bransom

Coastal Virginia provides some fantastic fishing opportunities for vessels of all sizes. The Chesapeake Bay tributaries, the Chesapeake Bay, and Inshore areas provide a nearly endless list of species to target. From early spring to late fall it's an anglers choice for what to target. For those able to venture further offshore there's artificial reefs and great wreck fishing to be enjoyed. For those able and willing to make a long ride out toward the Norfolk Canyon an entirely different opportunity awaits.

"Able and willing"...is important to stress. Anglers need to have a vessel and equipment to make a long trip offshore and the experience to manage changing conditions. As Captain Ron said in the movie with the same name *"If anything is going to happen, it's going to happen out there."* No truer words for those not properly prepared for a trip offshore. Take stock of your experience level and that of your crew, the capabilities of your vessel for a 120nm-200nm journey *roundtrip*. Make a plan for the day, checking weather forecasts, and don't forget to provide a Float Plan with a trusted friend ashore. You can download the USCG Float Plan form at <https://www.uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/floating-plan.php>

What waits for the prepared is an opportunity to catch Blueline Tilefish and Golden Tilefish, as well as, other species in the deep water. The depth contour off the Virginia coast is a gentle sloping sand bottom. Around the Triangle Reef at 33nm offshore the depth is about 100 feet and a sandy bottom, when you're about 65nm offshore you'll find depths ranging 250-275 feet and broken shell, sandy/silt bottom.



Golden Tilefish



The photos (left) were taken on a bright sunny day at 275 feet in an area fished for Blueline Tilefish off Virginia. The bottom is hard sand, with broken shell and small rocks. Occasionally you can find small changes in the bottom contour or holes/rocks. Anytime you find changes in the bottom contour drop lines and give it a try. Likewise, it pays to prospect areas during every trip. If you see something on the chart or depth sounder that looks interesting, stop and give it a try. Be sure to mark a waypoint when you locate fish and soon you'll be building your own database of fishable tile locations.



Although I've caught Blueline tilefish off North Carolina in depths as shallow as 190 feet, off the Virginia coast 260 feet seems to be the minimum depth for me. I've also caught Blueline Tiles as deep as 400 feet but my target depth is 275-325 feet. At that depth just about any rod/reel combo will work for you. I describe Blueline Tile fishing much like fishing for Black Sea Bass, except without the snags and lost sinkers.

There's not much, if anything, to hang up on and if the drift speed isn't too fast, reel line capacity isn't a factor.

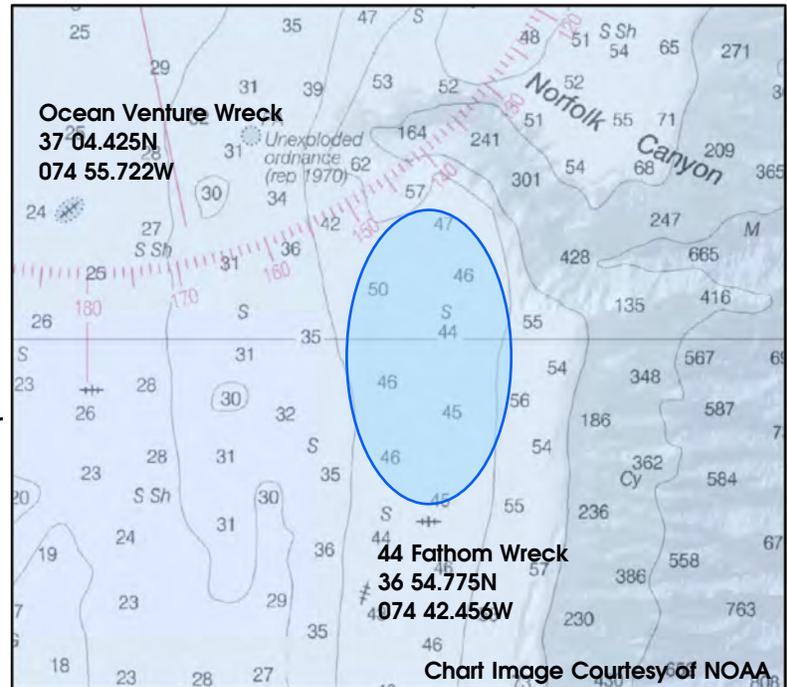


# Norfolk Anglers Club

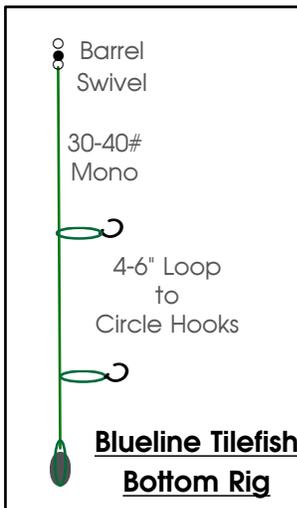
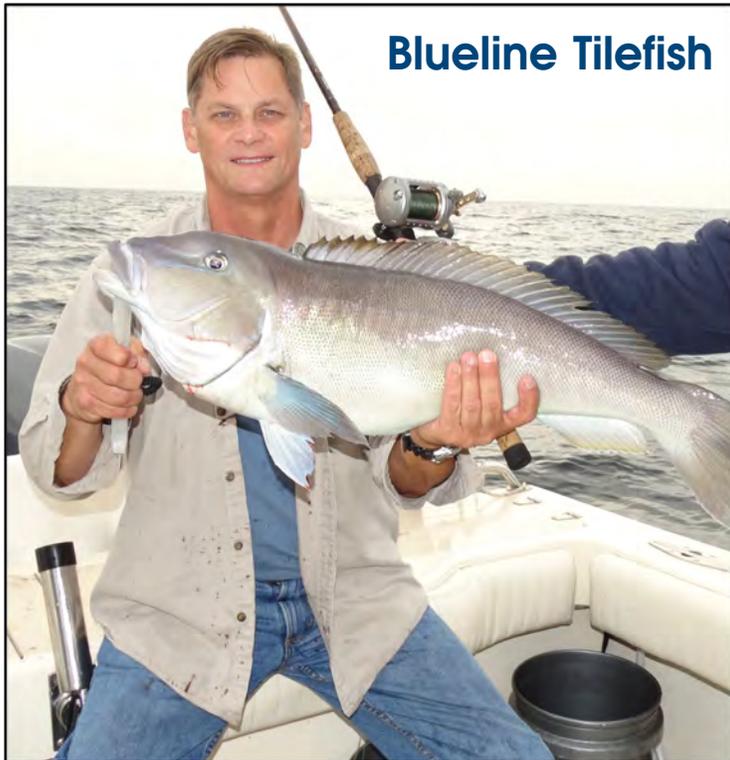
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# Fishing Tips...

Southwest of the Norfolk Canyon is a popular area to target Blueline Tiles in the 44-54 fathom (260-325 feet) depth range. I typically fish the same rigs I would for Sea Bass, which is a double dropper rig tied with 30-40# monofilament line. My choice for any deep drop fishing are circle hooks and braided mainline. Fish will hook themselves with circle hooks and the braided line lets you "feel" the bottom. Braid's thinner diameter helps keep your line from scoping out when there's a drift, and there's almost always a drift offshore. I use cut bait, mostly squid, for bottom fishing. Mackerel, Bluefish, and other oily fish also work extremely well. Fresh caught bait is exceptional and can be rigged to a bottom rig or jigs for Bluelines. Cut strips or chunks, it's your choice.



## Blueline Tilefish



The Blueline Bottom Rig is a simple bottom rig tied with 30-40# mono with a sinker loop at one end and a barrel swivel at the other. Tie one, two, or three loops in the rig and attach a 4/0 or 5/0 Gamakatsu In-Line Circle hook. Sinker weight depends on the drift and depth.



While Blueline Tilefish grounds can cover a size able area, fishing for the prized Golden Tilefish is more targeted. Bluelines seem to thrive in large areas of hard bottom with some contour change, Golden Tilefish prefer a much deeper depth and muddy bottom. I look for areas that are on the sloping edge of the Norfolk Canyon that hold a soft/sticky mud. Golden Tiles live in colonies and create burrows in the mud. When you've locate a colony be certain to mark the spot. I'll fish for Golden Tiles as shallow as 500 feet but a usual starting depth is 650-800 ft. The challenge is two-fold with Goldens; minimizing your drift speed and depth. The boat operator needs to hold the vessel's drift to a minimum to get on the bottom. Heavy weighting helps but drift speed will force anglers to let out more and more line to stay on the bottom. If you're not on the bottom, you're not fishing for tilefish! This is where a reel's line capacity becomes important. Your tackle will be upsized and reels with high line capacity are necessary. At times you may have 1,800 - 2,000 ft of line out to hold bottom in the deep water. Common for deep dropping are 2-speed reels and reels equipped with harness clips. On my boat I have Shimano Tiagra 30 wide reels (30WLRSA) spooled with 100# hollow braid. They carry more than enough line capacity even if a break off occurs, are 2-speed, and have harness clips. A comfortable fighting belt and harness is a welcome addition during a long day of deep dropping. I wouldn't recommend going lighter than 65# braid with Golden Tilefish. When hooked into a larger tilefish you can expect to put lots of pressure on the fish and I'm not sure lighter line will work out well. When you hook a



tilefish it's important to initially try and keep them from getting into their burrow. Sometimes they strike from their burrow and they've already got you at a disadvantage. They're known for bracing themselves in their mud burrows so tight you'll think you're hopelessly snagged on something. Your best tactic is to keep the pressure on them and with a braid mainline taught you'll feel their every move. After a while of tug-o-war (with the tilefish not giving you an inch), try relaxing the line tension. It's likely tired too and will shift when it thinks it's free, now is the time to hit back hard with a quick retrieve. You may catch the big tile away from its cover and once it's free there's still a lot of cranking to be done. You'll feel them fighting for a while off the bottom but after a few hundred feet the pressure change will begin to immobilize them. The important thing to remember is to not stop the retrieve. Keep it going even if you have to switch speeds. Dangling a prized golden tilefish while you take a break from cranking is just asking to get "sharked".

My preference for making up Golden Tilefish rigs is crimping and heavy monofilament leader material. Some like to tie 100# monofilament for rigs but I've found going heavier and crimping pays off. For me, crimping is a much stronger connection. If a rig is damaged or chafed up I've always got plenty of extra rigs available to swap it out and I'm not spending time retying rigs on a pitching boat. I also like to use chafe protection on the leader. Golden Tiles have sharp teeth and while the large circle hook is designed to set in the jaw, it doesn't always and sometimes the leader

gets pretty nicked up. Hook/Leader sleeves and chafe tubing will minimize the damage to your leader.

I start with 250# monofilament leader material and running the leader through the hook eye and wrapping it around the hook shank to form a Figure 8, then feeding it back through the eye from the opposite side and into the crimp. Making this figure 8 connection keeps the hook shank in line with the leader. I'll slide a rubber chafe sleeve over the connection to provide some protection from the tilefish teeth. I use the glow-in-the-dark sleeves, beads,

and chafe tubes on my rigs. Even at 250 feet there's little light and everything helps to bring attention to your rig. My hook choice are the Mustad Demon Perfect Circle Hooks (2x Strong) 10/0-12/0 size. I'll also attach the disposable deep drop lights with a rubber band

about 10 feet from the rig. For the leader drop I crimp a 250# swivel between two glow beads and use a single sleeve crimp to hold it in place. Golden Tilefish rigs are no more than two drops and only about 12-14 inches in length. Whatever length drop

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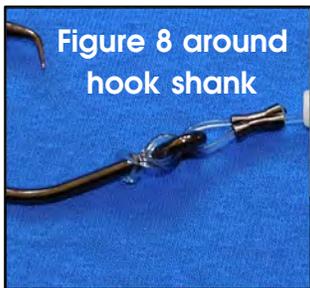
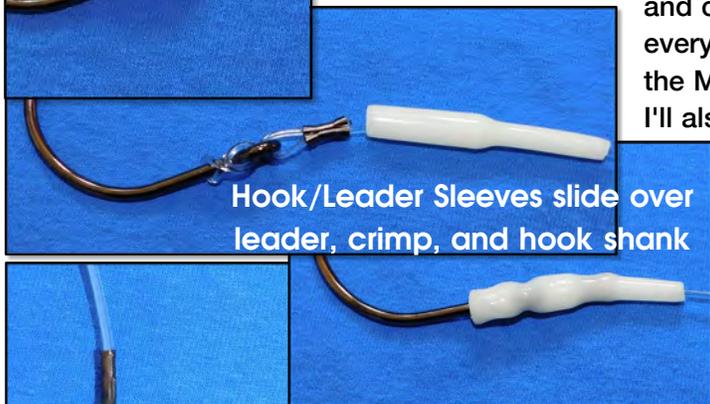
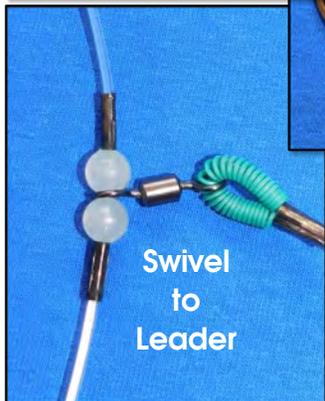


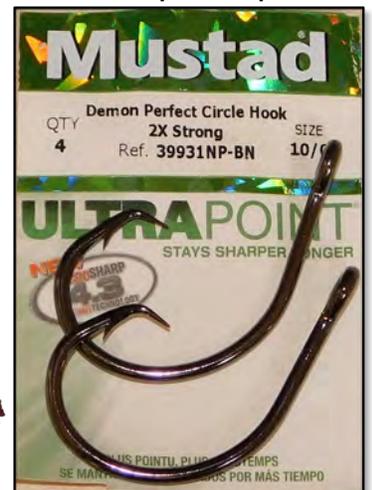
Figure 8 around hook shank



Hook/Leader Sleeves slide over leader, crimp, and hook shank



Swivel to Leader

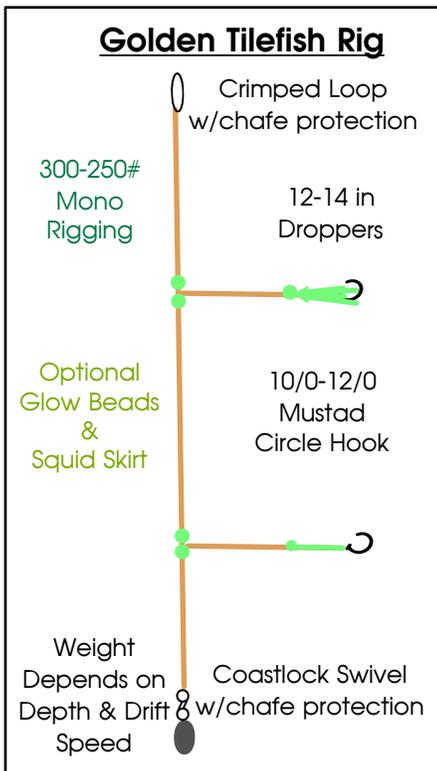


you decide to use remember that the multiple drops shouldn't interfere with each other once rigged with bait. If they're too long they can tangle during the long drop to the bottom. My preference is to rig one drop with a glow-in-the-dark squid head and a piece of 7-8 inch strip bait and use the squid head on the other drop that has only the chafe tubing and beads. I simply remove the squid body and use it for strip bait and attach the head with all the long tentacles to the large circle hook with plenty of hook exposed. When I first started out deep dropping a Commercial Fisherman friend of mine once told me "Big Hooks, Big Bait, Big Fish." On the next drop I rigged bait like I describe and as soon as it hit the bottom a 48 lb Golden Tilefish latched on to it. After a 45 minute tug-o-war and steady cranking I brought it aboard.



Look for Golden Tilefish in the sticky mud along the North and South edge of the Norfolk Canyon. I start prospecting in areas that are 600-1000 feet deep and have the soft sticky mud. Each time you head out towards to canyon it's worth the effort to try a few prospecting drops. Electric reels make prospecting tilefish easy. Just remember power assisted reels make you ineligible for Virginia Game Fish Tournament citations and State Records. The amount of weight sinker needed to hold the bottom may surprise you. It's not uncommon to start with 24 ounce sinkers and move up from

there. Be prepared with an assortment of heavier sinkers and reels with the line capacity to hold the bottom.



Black Belly Rose Fish

Tilefish aren't the only species you might encounter in the deep. The deeper wrecks, like the 44 Fathom and Ocean Venture, are known to hold some large Black Sea Bass. Occasionally I'll bring aboard a Sea Bass while fishing for Blueline Tiles, especially if there's any type of structure around like rocks.

Black Belly Rose Fish (pictured left) are bright orange with black mouths. They make excellent

table fare and can be found in the 700-800 foot depth range. If you're fishing around the canyon walls or undersea pinnacles you can expect to catch a few of these while fishing for Golden Tilefish.



You can expect to catch big fish out in the canyon and that includes big sharks. Remember the advice about keep cranking...getting "sharked" usually means a long fight and time spent away from other fishing. If you intend to shark fish, you'll need to acquire the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Highly Migratory Species (HMS) permit *with* a Shark Endorsement. Visit the NMFS website at <https://hmspermits.noaa.gov/> for additional information.



Black Sea Bass



Hammerhead Shark

## Handling and Releasing Fish

Not every species is going to be in season throughout the year. Regulation changes for tilefish and black sea bass have changed in the past few years. Blueline Tilefish are now only open from May 1st to October 31st and Sea Bass open for an early season in February and a regular season in late spring to December 31st. With overlapping season closures anglers are certainly going to catch out-of-season species. In shallow water successfully releasing fish generally isn't too challenging. Releasing fish caught from deep water can be a challenge. Often fish brought up from as shallow as 100 feet exhibit bulging eyes, a protruding stomach, or seem paralyzed. Those are all indications of barotrauma, which is an injury caused by changes in air or water pressure.

To understand a little about how changes in depth affect pressure, recall diving down into the deep end of a swimming pool. As you descended or surfaced you sometimes needed to clear your ears by holding your nose and blowing or by yawning. When you did this you were equalizing the pressure within your ear cavities. If the depth was deep or you weren't able to equalize the pressure injury could result, i.e. barotrauma.

Every 33 feet of depth change equals one atmosphere absolute (1 ATA) which is the average atmospheric pressure exerted at sea level, or 14.7 psi. So imagine bringing up the Sea Bass pictured below from the Ocean Venture wreck at 165 feet. That's five times the increase in pressure! Without properly venting the excess pressure or returning the fish at the depth it was pulled from, it's not likely to survive.

On my vessel we use the SeaQualizer descending device. After handling the fish with wet hands, or a wet rag, the SeaQualizer device jaws are closed on its lower jaw and the longline clip attached to your fishing line. The depth is pre-set on the device and when lower to that depth the SeaQualizer automatically opens and the fish is released at the depth.

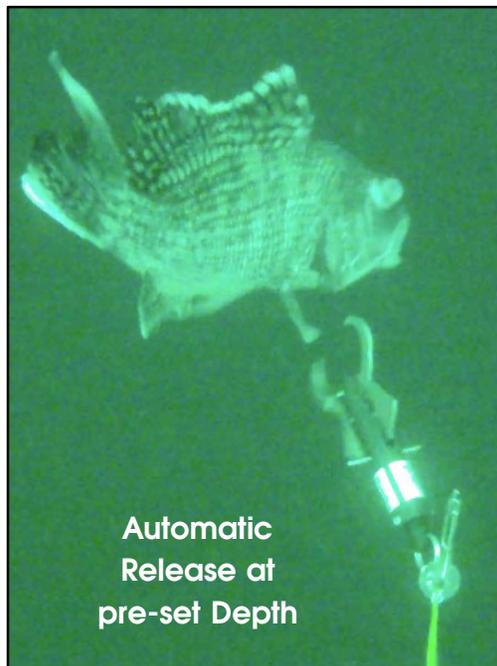


The depth is pre-set on the device and when lower to that depth the SeaQualizer automatically opens and the fish is released at the depth.

Releasing fish with the SeaQualizer descending device is quick, can descend on your next drop, and guarantees the best possible outcome for a successful release.



Descending with the SeaQualizer



Automatic Release at pre-set Depth



# Fishing Reports...



Tagged and released Tog.

4 March: I watched my bottom machine and hovered over a piece of structure that appeared to have a cloud of smaller fish over it. I was at the tower reef in 65 feet of water. Once my anchor was secured I started dropping frozen crab and fresh shrimp looking for Tautog.

Using a single 4/0 hook with five ounces of lead, I found the shrimp was getting eaten before I could put the reel back in gear. I began to use frozen crab quarters and shrimp together to have my bait last one or two bites longer and it seemed to pay off. I only caught two Tautog at 14 and 17 inches but ended up with over 20 Black Sea Bass up to 16.5 inches before running out of bait. *It was like the Sea Bass knew the season was closed!* All fish were tagged and released for the Virginia Game Fish Tagging Program. - Alex Perez



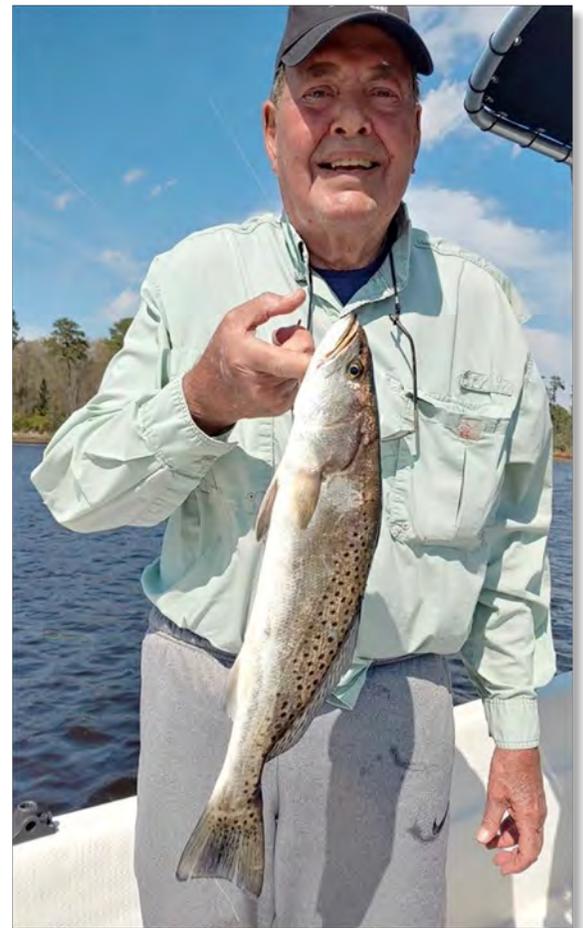
Tagged and released BSB.

20 March: I fished with Bert Sainz on the Elizabeth River going for speckled trout. Under windy conditions with gust up to 30mph we ended up catching 30 trout of which 8 we kept. Trout were caught on 52MR Mirrolures and Paul Brown lures. The water temperature was 64 degrees depth 4 to 10 feet. - Louis Glaser



Black Sea Bass and his "would have been" lunch (released unharmed).

*Louis Glaser is practicing social distancing by fishing... Nice work !!! Way to make a good thing out of an awful situation !!!*  
From Facebook



11 March: Mary and I took Evy (our dog) fishing for her first birthday. Since we had nice weather, we took our little skiff up to Surry to fish the James River for catfish.



We caught 10 including a 36" NAC Trophy Fish that Mary landed on our last drop. I did spend a little time casting for speckled trout but had no luck. The bait was cut frozen Bunker. All of the fish were released. - Henry Troutner



20 March: I fished Rudee on a nice morning with Ned Smith and Bert Sainz and found it real slow. We had 8 bites ending up with 2 trout and 2 throwback puppy drum. All fish were caught on MirrOlures. The water temperature was 58 degrees. - Louis Glaser

## Social Distancing When Boating

Only boat with those in your immediate household.

No beaching your boat right next to someone else.

Maintain your distance at the fuel dock – and remember to wash your hands.

No rafting up – keep your distance on the water.

**No guests on your boat!**  
This includes family members not in your immediate household or your closest boating buddies.

**Go right from your house to the boat and back –**  
no unnecessary contact with anyone.

**Enjoy your boat, the water and the fresh air; but enjoy it while boating responsibly.**

15 March: I heard the Shad bite was on in the Nottoway River. Mary, Troy and I gave it a shot on a Saturday morning and were not disappointed.



We caught our 30 fish limit but only kept 10 for roe and to freeze for bait. Fish were up to 20 inches and all caught on green/yellow shad darts. As usual Mary out fished us in number and size but I'm a crappie photographer and the photos were all blurred. - Henry Troutner



1 March: I left on a morning fishing with Douglas Wilburn on the Elizabeth River. The air temperature was 34 degrees and the water temperature was 47. We had a good bite in the morning but until 12:00 pm.

We ended up catching 10 speckled trout using 27MR MirrOlures and 1¼ oz. head (Zman) with saltwater Bass Assassins 5 inches.

- Louis Glaser





**SWIMMING  
EVY!**



20 March: With the wind blowing 20 knots, Mary, Evy (the fishing dog) and I got out for a couple hours of shad fishing on the well protected scenic Nottoway River. Aside from casting, this is a layback fishery with more action than most of us ever experience in a day. We fished for about 3 hours and caught at least 30 fish, with all being released. These fish range from 14 to 22 inches and using light spinning tackle are a blast to catch. A small boat, 2 split shots and a 1/8 ounce shad dart (we like green/yellow) with a steady retrieve is all you need. *The Hercules Ramp off Route 58 is good!*

- Henry Troutner

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11 March: Bert and I went to the Elizabeth River for some speckled trout fishing. We started after 9am when the outgoing tide began to move. The current was fast and the temperature was in the low 50s. We worked 4 of our favorite spots but only caught speckled trout, 2 of them. Seven of the 9 speckled trout we caught were 16" to 19" and all were released. Hot baits were 27MR, 52MR and bass assassins jerk baits.  
- Ned Smith

15 March: Bert and I put in at the Great Bridge locks area and worked the Elizabeth River for speckled trout and reds.



The bite was slow and wasn't running very fast. We picked up 9 speckled trout; all but 2 were small. We have had no luck catching reds. Once again we used 27MR and 52MR. The water temperature has been in the mid 50s and as long as the water temp stays in the 50s there should be speckled trout around for a few more weeks before they leave to spawn.  
- Ned Smith

11 March: This was a keeper, just barely!

- James Robinson



14 March: I got this little guy fishing the creek on the the tide Chang. 17 inches.  
- James Robinson



## SOCIAL DISTANCING IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

3 March: First cast, killer bait!

- James Robinson



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27 March: Mary, Troy Lane and I fished for the 1st time on the Elizabeth River for speckled trout. *Thanks to fellow NAC member Louis Glaser's information we had a successful day!* We caught 10 speckled trout and 1 drum. We kept 4 trout, they were all over 17" and one 18 1/2" drum. All the rest were released or got off at the boat because I forgot the net. MirrOlure and Electric Chicken paddle tail jigs were the lure of choice. *This sharing of info is what makes NAC the best club around!* – Henry Troutner



26 March: Mary, Kait, and I fished the Nottoway River for Shad. *This was Kait's first time shad fishing.* We had a great day catching and releasing about 20 fish. For bait 1/8 ounce green/Yellow shad darts were our choice although we saw plenty caught on white.

The fishing seemed to have slowed down since last week, I don't know if the run is ending or it was just all the rain we got the day before.

– Henry Troutner

17 March I got home from work and hooked up the boat. AJ and I headed to the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel (HRBT) to see if any speckled trout we're hanging around the bridge complex.

Using MirrOdines and curly tail grubs, we fished around the island and worked our way back towards the ramp, casting to the pilings. After two hours and no bites, we decided to call it quits.

27 March: I decided to try the HRBT again. This time the water temperature was two degrees warmer at 52, but the water looked a lot cloudier, perhaps from the rain we've recently had. Fishing the outgoing tide with my usual lure selection, I still wasn't able to find any fish. – Alex Perez



From the Editor:  
There were no fishing pictures of Alex and AJ with these two report, I found this picture on Alex Senior's Facebook from 2019, nice shot!



4 March: When crappie fishing with Russell Willoughby on the first half of the day on Lake Whitehurst we got skunked, so we moved to Lake Smith. There were minimum winds out of the southwest and it was 65 to 68 degrees. Things for slow at first but Russell got 2 big crappie for 12" club minimum releases.



He let me throw there and I caught the biggest largemouth bass I've ever caught. 22.5 inches, 6.3 lbs. It was safely released after weighing, photos and measuring.



It's a DGIF release prize fish. The third one I've hooked up on a crappie jig over the last month but the first two threw the hook when they went airborne. This one was hooked solid in the corner of its mouth. Medium sized shiner was the bait.  
- Dr. James W. Ike Eisenhower

Mar 19: Decided to dust off the Carolina Skiff and head over to the Great Bridge Lock Park. I fished the outgoing tide along the Southern Branch of the Elizabeth River and the channel heading into Deep Creek. Primarily used MirrOlure 52MR lures to catch a half dozen speckled trout ranging 18-19 inches. Also tried a jig with a rubber tail and smaller MirrOlures without any success. The Trout liked the lures near the bottom and slow moving.  
- Will Bransom





18 March: Louis invited me to go fishing in Lake Trant which is behind his nephew Kevin's house. It is a private lake so it's not a lake everyone is allowed to fish in, aka no a public lake so no Club Minimum can be entered from it. We launched into a 12-foot john boat in windy conditions which made it hard to paddle with canoe paddles to the middle of the lake but none the less we made it and I quickly caught a 12.5" and 12.3" crappie on shiners. But in the meantime, Louis started fishing with a Beetle Spin lure and started catching one fish after another, some on each cast. Pictured here is a 19" largemouth bass he hooked early on in the day. I switched to the Beetle Spin and started catching much better. We finished the day with our catching 10 basses, mostly small and 8 crappies 11-12 inches. It was a fine catching day!

We fished twice this week, once March 23, on Lake Smith and again on March 26, on Lake Smith. It was colder than the days before and we couldn't find any fish during the morning but did get a few. Russell had a 13 inch release club minimum black crappie but I forgot to take a picture of it before releasing it. We later caught several small bass and several small crappie, i.e. 10 inches but Russell's was the largest.

26 March: We headed for the Northwest River. The water was really low because of the NE winds that had been blowing for the last three days. The NW River has no current or tides but depth is determined by direction of the wind. We were looking for crappie and bowfins and yellow perch, the latter two being Virginia Beach Angler's Club Roulette fish for this year each paying out about \$145.00 for each of the largest of each species. We ended up with my catching a 12 inch club minimum crappie and several more 1 inch fish. Russell caught a 3.33 lbs. bowfin, 3 lbs. blue catfish and a couple of crappie. We fished with shiners, mostly medium sized. - Dr. James W. Ike Eisenhower



28 March: I launched at the Lynnhaven Boat Ramp and made my way to the third island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT). I anchored over the tubes in 36-38 feet of water. It was an incoming tide and I used quartered blue crabs. I immediately started getting bites and caught two tautog at 17 and 15.5 inches.



Pot Belly Tautog

I was happy to start my trip this way but just like that, someone turned the feeding time switch off. An hour went by with only one Oyster Toadfish to keep me company. Just as I was getting ready to move to another spot, the tautog bite turned back on. I ended up catching eight more tautogs from 11 to 16 inches.



Flat calm



Tagged and released



Previously damaged dorsal fin.

The two-legal fish at 16 inches were expecting mommas, so I decided to release them, happy and healthy. I invited the 17 inch tautog I started the trip with to dinner. The rest of the fish were tagged and released for the Virginia Game Fish Tagging Program. – Alex Perez

## TOG IN THE FOG

28, 29 March: The weather window turned out nicer than expected for the last weekend of March. I made plans to go toggin' with friends Robert and Mary aboard their boat. After loading up on some live blue crabs, we went out to the CBBT and set up with our wreck anchor.

The first day, one boat was on the fish heavy as we first pulled up. We set up about 100 foot away and were quickly rewarded with some nice togs. Mary had a fish in the boat before we had all our lines in the water. It was a beautiful fish that measured in at 19 inches. Robert quickly followed with a solid 17 inches and myself a 17.5 inches. There were numerous bites and misses along with hookups and lost fish. We were fishing half female blue crabs. They are still small right now so it was the best size bait to use. The current was difficult to deal with as it turned quickly. We found ourselves headed home with 3 nice togs.

Day two started with really thick fog. At times, visibility was down to 50 yards. Robert and I got there earlier so we could set up on the full current change. We had two bites early, but failed to hook either. The current did not slow as early as expected. The sun came out and lifted the fog as the tide slowed. The bites were picking up in the deeper holes on the back side of the rocks. I landed behind the face of a rock and was instantly met with heavy bites. I made contact with a tog that did not enjoy being pulled out. He was fighting hard to get back down and was pulling drag on the full setting of my lever-drag reel. I had to tighten the tensioner to control this fish. Moments later, a 22 inch tog came to the surface. This tog had a beautiful blue line across the top and bottom of the fish. We lost anchor shortly after and unfortunately never recovered. Bites were more scattered and we only boated one more fish. We lost a ton of fish after short battles and missed bites.

My tog weighed in at 6lbs. 14oz. I set some fishing goals for the season and have already met the first one by catching a big tog that I could be proud of. I also caught 4 oyster toads that each weighed between 2lbs. 7oz. and 3lbs. 4oz. All were full of water saturated eggs. They were brought home for a filet. You can get a filet off an oyster toad that is over 2 pounds. It's very similar tasting to a catfish.

Hoping to fish again soon. It was a fun weekend on the water!

- Kelly Hoggard



# Angler Interests

## Virginia Marine Resources Commission offices closed until further notice



March 16, 2020: the VMRC main office on Fort. Monroe and other agency field offices are closed until further notice per Governor Northam's closure of all State facilities in the Peninsula Health District as a result of a small cluster of COVID-19 cases on the Peninsula. Next week's Commission meeting scheduled for March 24, 2020, has been cancelled. The Commission's Marine Police Operations Center will remain open for emergency services only, and Marine Police Officers will remain in the field. Citizens are encouraged to use the Agency's toll free number, 800-541-4646, to report emergencies, boating accidents and marine resource violations. For additional information visit the Governor's COVID-19 web page at <https://www.virginia.gov/coronavirus-updates/>

## Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council April Meeting by Webinar



Tuesday, April 7 - Wednesday, April 8, 2020; Please Note: Due to public health concerns related to the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus), the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's April meeting will be conducted by webinar only. This webinar-based meeting replaces the in-person meeting previously scheduled to be held in Galloway, New Jersey. Because of the revised format, several non-essential agenda items have been postponed, and the meeting has been shortened to occur over two days (April 7-8).

### Agenda

#### Tuesday, April 7th

- 1:00 p.m.: Council Convenes
- 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.: 2020 Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystem Report Dr. Sarah Gaichas - NEFSC
- 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.: Climate Change Scenario Planning
  - Introduction to scenario planning and plan for potential East Coast/Mid-Atlantic scenario planning exercise
- 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.: Black Sea Bass Commercial State Allocation Amendment
  - Review scoping plan and document
- 4:30 p.m.: Council Adjourns

#### Wednesday, April 8th

- 9:00 a.m.: Council Convenes
- 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.: South Atlantic Electronic Reporting
  - Update on South Atlantic for-hire reporting requirements
- 9:30 - 10:30 a.m.: Blueline Tilefish 2021 Specifications
  - Review SSC, Advisory Panel, Monitoring Committee, and staff recommendations for 2021 specifications
  - Recommend changes to 2021 specifications if necessary
- 10:30 - 12:00 p.m.: Golden Tilefish 2021-2022 Specifications
  - Review SSC, Advisory Panel, Monitoring Committee, and staff recommendations for 2021 - 2022 specifications
  - Adopt 2021 - 2022 specifications



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