

## The Martha's Vineyard Times

# Gone Fishin'

### The first fish of the season is a welcome sight



Husband and wife Tristan Israel and Janet Messineo, members of the Martha's Vineyard Surfcasters Association, stand next to a newly installed fishing line box by the Eastville Beach jetty. The fishing group provides similar boxes at popular Island fishing spots in an effort to keep beaches free of discarded line.

By Nelson Sigelman - May 17, 2007

I was not surprised to see well-known Island fisherman Janet Messineo of Vineyard Haven with fishing rods on her car. Even a whiff of fish sends Janet to the beach.

On a late afternoon walk along Mink Meadows beach with my aging Lab, Tashmoo, I encountered Sandra Demel of Vineyard Haven and Sandy Broyard of Chilmark walking off the beach in waders holding fly rods. The women had not hooked a fish and said they had not expected to, but the good weather was enough of a reason to get out and limber up, they said.

Besides, fishermen are optimists and every fishing season is a reward.

By the first week in May, fishing rods on the tops of vehicles

I passed along the road indicated that for some people the fishing season was already underway.

Not for me.

My light eight-foot St. Croix spinning rod with a small Yozuri minnow rigged in anticipation of bonito I never caught last fall stood in a corner of my basement. My eight-weight Sage fly rod sat in a travel case. A white squid fly tied in anticipation of a big fall

striper looked untouched.

Bait rods and surf rods that did not merit the basement still sat in my shed. Hooks dangled perilously from rod tips.

My fishing gear was stowed last fall with all the best intentions. But the transition from fishing season to deer and duck hunting season happened overnight. The best of intentions to take care of my equipment faded. And then came the spring and rumors, soon confirmed, of fish.

A fisherman caught the first striped bass weeks ago at Wasque. It was not long before there were reports of bass caught at the new Norton Point cut.

On Friday I pulled the St. Croix rod from among a collection of boat rods and clipped off the Yozuri lure along with about of 12 feet of line.

A more prepared fisherman would have re-spoiled the reel with fresh fishing line. But it was late in the afternoon and I wanted to fish the sunset hour when spring fish are often active.

Cutting back the forward section of fishing line was the best way to eliminate the nicks and strains likely to cause a lost fish. It is poor strategy to skimp on line, particularly when big fish might be present, but that was not a concern.

I tied on a five-inch white Sluggo, a soft plastic lure that is irresistible to striped bass, and added a light conical lead weight to help provide added casting distance.

One of the pleasures of living on an Island with a fishing culture is the uncomplicated nature of going fishing. I know there are some people who fret over every detail, but I am not one of them. Planning is always last minute.

"Honey, I'm going to go fishing tonight," I said to my wife Norma. "Oh, you are, are you?" she replied. Not that she would object to having the house to herself, but our rituals are well established.

"I can stay home if you want and we can talk," I threatened.

"No, no, you go fishing," Norma said.

I called up my friend Tom Robinson. "Hey, want to go fishing?" I asked.

"Sure," said Tom. "Where do you want to go?"

It is the proverbial question for which we rarely have an answer. Katama along the south shore was an option. The fish were also in Sengekontacket Pond, I had heard.

Tom and I settled on a small cove in Sengekontacket. When we got to the shoreline I saw Rob Morrison and Dave Blackinton fishing up the beach.

It was a good sign. Both are experienced charter captains and good fishermen.

A goose sat on a clutch of big eggs. She stood anxiously as I walked by her nest. More ducks and geese honked and quacked along the shoreline, underscoring the springtime atmosphere of renewal.

The Sluggo proved as attractive to the bass as I had expected but it had one drawback. It was long and the fish kept hitting it in the tail, not the forward portion where the hook was embedded.

Dave handed me a small, pink and white curly plastic grub he said would be more effective. It was, but my reflexes had been dulled by months of inaction and I missed the first few strikes.

Following several missed opportunities, I felt a familiar tug on the end of the line. I brought my first striped bass of the fishing season to hand and released it.

The striper was not big, about 18 inches, but it was quite pretty with the fresh sheen of a fish fresh from the sea, the vanguard of more migratory fish to follow.

For me it was a welcome fish. It meant another Vineyard fishing season had arrived.

### **Advice from BoatUS**

BoatUS, a national recreational boating association, recently provided information about why boats sink in the springtime. The tips are worth considering.

The following tips are based on an analysis of BoatUS. marine insurance claim files for the most common causes of springtime sinkings.

**Hosesclamps:** Winterizing an engine in the fall often requires the removal of coolant hoses. But sometimes boaters are in a rush and the hoses aren't reattached and clamped properly.

**Hoses:** During the winter as the water inside them freezes, some hoses can lift off their attached seacock. However, with spring's warmer temperatures the water now returns to a liquid, and if the seacock was left open last fall, water can pour into the bilge.

**Spring rains:** Combine heavy rains with poorly caulked ports, deck hatches, fittings, chain plates and even scuppers clogged by leaves from last fall and you have a recipe for a sinking. Just 100 gallons of water weighs over 800 pounds so a boat with a low freeboard only needs to sink a few inches before cockpit scuppers submerge and water starts to enter the boat.

Sea strainer: For inboard/outboard and inboard powered boats, if not properly winterized the intake sea strainer can freeze over the winter, cracking or bending the inspection bowl. And if the seacock was left open the boat will sink as soon as ice in the strainer thaws or the boat is put in the water.

Stuffing Box: On powerboats or sailboats with inboard power, if the stuffing box's packing material that seals the prop shaft is not tight, a steady drip will slowly swamp a boat. No stuffing box should leak when the prop shaft is not moving. Stuffing boxes need to be inspected routinely, regardless of the season.

### **Library hosts author**

Author Michael Tougias will present a slide presentation at the Vineyard Haven Library at 7 pm, Thursday May 31st about a dramatic rescue attempt during the Blizzard of '78 when five men lost their lives trying to rescue a Coast Guard boat in trouble.

The event is the subject of his latest book, "Ten Hours Until Dawn, The True Story Of Heroism And Tragedy Aboard The Can Do."

I checked out some of the reviews on Amazon.com. They were very good. A reviewer named John Francis had this to say: "I recently heard Mr. Tougias speak about this book and he was really interesting. I for one did not realize the sea tragedy of the hurricane of '78 and Mr. Tougias brought it to me all too vividly. This is an excellent read of courage and determination, and shows what one man will do for his fellow man. To me it rates right up there with the "Perfect Storm."

### **Vineyard Teams enter 2007 Striper Cup**

The 2007 Striper Cup, a 5-month tournament sponsored by On The Water Magazine and TV, kicked off this month. Vineyard individuals and teams did very well in this tournament last year.

Team Dick's of Dick's Bait and Tackle in Oak Bluffs competed in the 2006 Striper Cup. Led by Lev Wlodyka of Chilmark, who took the Striper of the Year trophy with a 57.6-pound bass, the group weighed in 10 bass for a total of 459.7 pounds, but ultimately placed second to the Linesider Bass and Brew Team of Fall River, Massachusetts, which finished with 461.9 pounds.

The Martha's Vineyard Surfcasters Association, which finished in a respectable tenth place in 2006, has also returned to the hunt.

According to organizers, a multiplier of 1.3 will be applied to shore-caught fish to level the playing field between surfcasters and boat fishermen. The Island guys will have stiff competition.

Several heavy-hitting New Jersey surf clubs have formed an alliance under one banner and will field Team Jersey Shore for the 2007 Striper Cup. The 2007 Striper Cup, which features individual competition for boat, shore, and youth anglers in addition to the club competition, will culminate at StriperFest, a celebration to be held on September 30th at the Harpoon Brewery in Boston.

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