

# Black Drum

By Jason Hearon, Senior Biologist

**B**lack drum (*Pogonias cromis*) are a valuable marine fish of sport, commercial and ecological importance throughout their range. This species can be found in U.S. waters primarily from Massachusetts to Florida along the East Coast and in the Gulf of Mexico, from the west coast of Florida along the northern Gulf of Texas. Their entire geographic range encompasses near-shore waters and estuaries from Argentina northward along the Gulf and Atlantic Coast to New England and as far north as the Bay of Fundy along the coast of Maine then extending into Canada between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Black drum is the largest member of the family Sciaenidae, which also includes weakfish, spot, Atlantic croaker and red drum. A distinguishing characteristic of this family of fish is the ability to produce croaking and drumming sounds by rapping a muscle against the air bladder – the reason for the common name drum. This ability is most developed in the black drum and is associated with spawn-

ing behavior. Drumming is used to locate and attract members of the opposite sex and can often be heard by anglers as schools pass near boats.

The black drum is a chunky, high backed fish with 10-14 chin barbles or whiskers under its lower jaw. Barbles are sensory structures used to detect prey such as clams, oysters, mussels and crabs that drum crush using powerful tooth plates in their throat, called pharyngeal teeth. The dorsal fins have 11 spines, 20 to 22 dorsal rays and 41 to 45 scales along the lateral line, which extends to the end of the tail. There are 14 to 16 gill rakers on the lower limb of the first arch. Young fish have four to five dark vertical bars on their sides (see photo) that gradually disappear with age. The bellies of

older fish are white, but coloration along the back and sides varies greatly. Fish from the gulf waters tend to be light gray or silver, while those living in bay waters have dark gray or bronze-colored back and sides. Black drum are long-lived fish capable of reaching 60 years, with the largest documented fish measuring 5 1/2 feet and weighing 146 pounds.

Sexual maturity can be reached as early as the end of the second year of life at a length of 11 to 14 inches. Males mature at a somewhat younger age and smaller size than females. There is no evidence of sex-specific differences in growth rates of black drum.

Black drum spawn in the Delaware Bay and coastal inlets of New Jersey between April and early June when water temperatures are ideal (57-68° F). Drum are free spawners – fish that release gametes into the water, where fertilization may occur, with out parental care – and are capable of spawning every three days (multiple spawns). Mature females can produce more than 30 million eggs.

Eggs of black drum are pelagic (free floating); eggs hatch less than 24 hours after fertilization. Larvae measure approximately 1.9 – 2.4 millimeters at hatching. After hatching, larvae rely upon tidal currents for transportation into estuaries and can be found in the surf and along bay shorelines. Juvenile drum prefer shallow, nutrient-rich and relatively muddy waters where they feed on marine worms, shrimp, crabs and small fish.

Adult black drum are predominately an estuarine species that are usually found over sand and mud bottoms in coastal waters with salinities ranging from 9 to 26 parts per thousand. For comparison, ocean water is typically 35 parts per thousand. The coastal stocks of black drum can undertake long-range migrations with a general pattern of movement to the north and inshore in the spring then south and offshore in the fall. These migrations are age-specific and influence fishing exploitation differently along the East Coast. Along the Atlantic Coast, fisheries for black drum tend to target small fish in the south and larger older fish in the north. A greater proportion of older fish



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*Heavy boat rods with plenty of backbone are needed.*


are found north of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. Chesapeake and Delaware Bay fisheries target black drum that are primarily old (typically 26 years of age and older) and large (over 43 inches and greater than 48 pounds).

The Delaware Bay is a black drum hot spot for International Game Fish Association records as is Cape Charles, Virginia. The "all tackle" category record of 113 pounds, 1 ounce was reported from Lewes, Delaware. The New Jersey state record black drum is 107 pounds, documented in 2006.

The prime fishing season to catch black drum is typically a six- to eight-week fishery from mid- to late-April on through early to mid-June and is usually concentrated on the lower Delaware Bay spawning grounds around the Pin Top and Tussy's Slough. The recreational fishery begins and ends a few weeks later than the commercial fishery. Recreational landings of black drum are significantly larger than commercial landings in all states within their range.

Black drum are typically caught on fresh surf clam in the Delaware Bay with a fish finder rig and a 9/0 hook attached to a 50-pound leader. Heavy boat rods with plenty of backbone are needed. Drum are powerful and will fight all the way to the boat, contrary to analogies that they are like catching a boot. Many lines and leaders have been broken trying to bring in these fish. Drum often "mouth" the bait for some time before swallowing it, so anglers must wait until they are sure the fish has the bait before setting the hook. If you wait too long, the fish may get a free meal. If you act too fast and strike too soon, the fish probably will not have taken the hook.

Instead of putting your fish on a stringer, kill it promptly and put it on ice in your cooler. The scales of drum are tough and not easily removed, so rather than scaling your fish, skin it. The flesh is solid white and full of flavor. A Cestode parasite known as the "spaghetti worm" is frequently found in the flesh of larger drum, sometimes making it appear unappetizing, though it presents no health hazard to humans.

Remember, a key difference between excellent or poor quality fish for the table is the way it was handled and prepared. Numerous coastal restaurants well-known for their fresh seafood frequently serve drum. Many people prefer properly cleaned and prepared drum to some fish considered "choice." For exciting tips on recreational fishing techniques for black drum, see *Delaware Bay Dangerfields* on page 6. 

## Motor Boat Title & Registration Requirement

All titled boats must be registered. Any boat, mechanically propelled, regardless of length, must be registered. Boats greater than 12 feet in length, regardless of propulsion means, must be titled and registered at a NJ Motor Vehicle Commission office.

Exceptions: ship's lifeboat, canoe, kayak, inflatable, surfboard, rowing scull, racing shell, tender/dinghy used for direct transportation between a vessel and shore for no other purposes.

For more information, visit the MVC Web site at [www.nj.gov](http://www.nj.gov) and go to the Motor Vehicle Commission link or stop by an MVC office or call (609) 292-6500.

## Motor Boat and Jet Ski Operator Requirements

A motorboat/jet ski operator license is required to operate these on fresh, non-tidal waters such as lakes, creeks and rivers for those 16 years or older. See the MVC Web site at [www.nj.gov](http://www.nj.gov) and go to the Motor Vehicle Commission link or call (888) 486-3339.

Boating safety courses: (800) 336-2628, BoatUS Foundation [www.BoatUS.com/courseline](http://www.BoatUS.com/courseline)  
New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, Boat Operators License: (888) 486-3339 toll free in NJ or (609) 292-6500 from out-of-state; [www.nj.gov/mvc/](http://www.nj.gov/mvc/)

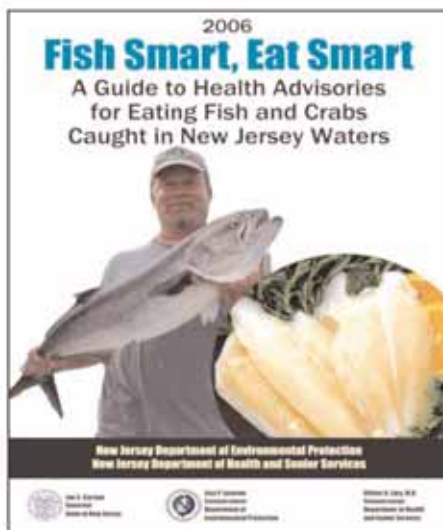
New Jersey State Police, Boating laws clarification (609) 882-2000, or visit their Marine Services Bureau online at: [www.nj.gov/lps/njsp/maritime/index.html](http://www.nj.gov/lps/njsp/maritime/index.html)

## State Police Marine Law Enforcement Stations

- Bivalve . . . . . (856) 785-1330
- North Wildwood . . . . . (609) 522-0393
- Atlantic City . . . . . (609) 441-3586
- Burlington . . . . . (609) 387-1221
- Ocean . . . . . (609) 296-5807
- Point Pleasant . . . . . (732) 899-5050
- Monmouth Station . . . . . (732) 842-5171
- Lake Hopatcong . . . . . (973) 663-3400
- Newark Bay . . . . . (973) 578-8173

## Health Advisories For Eating Fish And Crabs Caught In New Jersey Waters

### Fish Smart—Eat Smart



**F**ishing provides enjoyable and relaxing recreation. Fish are an excellent source of protein and other nutrients and play a role in maintaining a healthy, well-balanced diet. Many anglers enjoy cooking and eating their own catch. However, elevated levels of potentially harmful chemical contaminants, such as dioxin, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), pesticides and mercury have been found in certain fish and crabs in some New Jersey waters. Fish consumption advisories have been adopted to guide citizens on safe consumption practices.

The current list of fish consumption advisories consists of statewide, regional and water body-specific warnings for a variety of fish species and fish consumers. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Department of Health and Senior Services have prepared literature and a new Web site to help you make informed choices about which fish to eat and how to reduce your exposure to these harmful chemicals.

Check online for fish consumption advisories on the local water body in which you fish! Go to [www.FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org](http://www.FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org)

The new FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org is a user-friendly site designed to help you decide what fish are best for you to consume. The Fish Smart-Eat Smart Fish Advisory Web site includes a Geographic Information System (GIS) map linked to current fish consumption advisories statewide. For example, to see the latest mercury or PCB advisories for your area, just select the county by clicking on the map. The page shows the waterbody location, fish species and any advisories that apply. This feature makes it easy to find current fish consumption advisories for the specific waterbody in which you fish.

To reduce exposure to harmful chemical contaminants when preparing and eating

the fish species taken from the identified waters, it is essential to follow the guidelines provided. The DEP encourages you to consult the Fish Smart-Eat Smart Fish Advisory Guide or [www.FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org](http://www.FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org) when making decisions about eating recreationally caught fish and crabs.

The Fish Smart-Eat Smart Advisory Guide includes contaminant information, advisory charts, plus preparation and cooking methods to reduce contaminant levels, as well as specific guidelines and advice for people at high risk, such as children, pregnant women and women of child-bearing age. The Guide also includes Web site links to Pennsylvania, Delaware and New York for information about fish consumption advisories on shared waters.

The fish consumption advisories, Fish Smart-Eat Smart Web site and Advisory Guide are each updated periodically and are available in print or online through these agencies:

New Jersey Department  
of Environmental Protection  
Public Access Center (609) 777-DEP4  
or [www.nj.gov/dep](http://www.nj.gov/dep)

Division of Science,  
Research and Technology  
(609) 984-6070 or [www.nj.gov/dep/dsr](http://www.nj.gov/dep/dsr)

Division of Fish and Wildlife  
(609) 748-2020 or  
[www.NJFishandWildlife.com](http://www.NJFishandWildlife.com)

New Jersey Department of  
Health and Senior Services  
Consumer and Environmental Health  
(609) 588-3123 or (609) 777-3373  
[www.nj.gov/health/eoh/foodweb/fishguid.htm](http://www.nj.gov/health/eoh/foodweb/fishguid.htm)



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## New Jersey Skillful Angler Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Telephone Number (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

### Entry Category (check only one):

Adult  Junior (16 years and under)

Catch and Release (qualification based on length)

**Fish Species** (Angler must complete. Subject to verification by a state biologist.)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Weight** \_\_\_\_\_ lb.(s), \_\_\_\_\_ oz. **Length** \_\_\_\_\_ in. **Girth** \_\_\_\_\_ in.

**Date Caught\*** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ **Time** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location** \_\_\_\_\_

### Caught from (check only one):

Boat  Shore  Surf  Jetty

Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Line Test Used** \_\_\_\_\_ **Reel Type** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rod Type** \_\_\_\_\_ **Lure/Bait** \_\_\_\_\_

### Certification for Adult and Junior Categories

**Name of establishment where fish was measured and weighed**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone Number** \_\_\_\_\_

**Weighmaster's Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Weighmaster's Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**I certify:** 1.) this fish was caught in New Jersey waters in accordance with state laws and regulations; 2.) the entry was weighed on a certified scale (for Adult and Junior categories only).

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Applicant's Signature**

\* Application and photo must be submitted **within 30 days** of catching the fish. Applications for fish caught in December will be accepted only until January 31.

### Mail to:

NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife  
Skillful Angler Awards Program  
P.O. Box 400  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0400

# Skillful Angler Awards Program



The Skillful Angler Awards Program is designed to supplement the New Jersey Record Fish Program. It comprises three categories: Adult (for anglers age 16 and older), Junior (under age 16) and Catch and Release (based on length). A clear, side-view photo that allows accurate species identification must be included with each application. All photo entries become property of the Division of Fish and Wildlife and will not be returned.

The Skillful Angler Awards program acknowledges that many anglers catch freshwater and marine fish that are not record size but are still worthy of recognition because the size and weight of the fish sufficiently tested the angler's skill. The program is open to resident and non-resident anglers. All fish must be caught in New Jersey waters using a hook and line during legally open seasons.

Anglers qualifying for a Skillful Angler award receive a certificate and a bronze pin to adorn their fishing hat or jacket. Only one pin and certificate per species—regardless of category—will be awarded annually to each participant, but an angler may submit applications for larger fish caught even after receiving a pin.

At the end of the year, special recognition is given to anglers who catch the largest fish in each species category. The winner of each category receives a special commemorative gift recognizing his or her accomplishment as the best of New Jersey's Skillful Anglers.

Fish must be measured from the tip of the nose (with mouth closed) to the tip of the tail. For Adult/Junior categories, fish must be weighed and measured by fishing license agents, tackle shops or an authorized Fish and Wildlife fisheries biologist.

See online at [www.NJFishandWildlife.com/skflang.htm](http://www.NJFishandWildlife.com/skflang.htm).

## Minimum Entry Requirements

	Adult Weight (lbs., oz.)	Junior (lbs., oz.)	Catch and release (inches)
Black Sea Bass	4	3	20
Striped Bass	40	36	42
Black Drum	70	63	46
Bluefish	18	16	33
Cod	30	27	42
Dolphin	30	27	n/a
Winter Flounder	2	1 lb., 8 oz.	16
Fluke	8	7	27
Kingfish	1	8 oz.	13
Mako Shark	250	225	n/a
Blue Marlin	400	360	n/a
White Marlin	60	54	n/a
Pollock	25	22 lbs., 8 oz.	41
Tautog	8	7	22
Albacore Tuna	50	45	n/a
Big Eye Tuna	200	180	n/a
Bluefin Tuna	500	450	n/a
Yellowfin Tuna	120	108	n/a
Tuna (other)	250	225	n/a
Weakfish	10	9	30

Note: The New Jersey State Record Fish Program requires a separate application and is based on weight alone. Scale certification documentation and a weighmaster's signature are necessary. Other rules apply. Visit Fish and Wildlife's Web site at [www.NJFishandWildlife.com/recfish.htm](http://www.NJFishandWildlife.com/recfish.htm) for a complete list of current state records.

# New Jersey State Record Marine Sport Fish

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Record Fish Program honors anglers who catch the largest of select species of freshwater and saltwater fish. Record size is based on weight alone; there are no line classes.

In September 2006, revisions were made to the New Jersey State Record Fish Program for both freshwater and saltwater species. Currently there are 61 marine species eligible for entry into the program.

Anglers are reminded that the objective of the Record Fish Program is to increase awareness of fishing opportunities for species that are regularly sought and routinely found in or off the coast of New Jersey. The original list of 72 species was pared down with that objective in mind.

Eleven species are now retired from the list of program-eligible fish, but remain on a separate list posted on Fish and Wildlife's Web site. One historical catch is also retired and posted on the list. In addition, the historical record for northern kingfish was removed as the current entry surpassed it by 3 ounces.

Anglers should be aware that several procedural changes are now in effect for the Record Fish Program. First, separate applications are required for freshwater and saltwater species. Second, for saltwater entries, it is now mandatory that a marine biologist inspect any potential record fish, as identification solely by photo is not always accurate. Anglers must call Fish and Wildlife's Nacote Creek Research Station at (609) 748-2020 to make arrangements for inspection. In most instances, the fish must be transported to this office in Port Republic. However, in the case of extremely large fish (i.e., shark and tuna), a biologist will be available to travel for dock-side inspection. Note that all scale certification requirements still apply, including a valid Certificate of Inspection/Test Report and current Registration Certificate issued by the County Office of Weights and Measures.

Other changes include a new entry deadline - applications must now be submitted no later than one month after the date of catch - and the triggerfish category is now defined as gray triggerfish. All other program rules still apply.

For a complete list of state record fish or to print an application with complete program rules, visit the Division of Fish and Wildlife's Web site at [www.NJFishandWildlife.com/fishing.htm](http://www.NJFishandWildlife.com/fishing.htm).



Keith Karl with his 55 pound, 4 oz. New Jersey state record golden tilefish.

Species	Lbs.	Oz.	Year	Angler	Where Caught
Amberjack, greater	85	0	1993	Edwin Metzner	Off Cape May
Bass, black sea	8	2	1992	Tony Cunha	Inshore Wreck
	8	2	1994	John Geddes	Off Pt. Pleasant
Bluefish	27	1	1997	Roger Kastorsky	5 Fathom Bank
Bonito, Atlantic	13	8	1945	Frank Lykes, Jr.	Off Sandy Hook
Cobia	87	0	1999	John Shanchuk	Off Sea Bright
Cod	81	0	1967	Joseph Chesla	Off Brielle
Crab, blue	8 1/2" pt. to pt.		1995	William Dool	Manahawkin
	8 1/2" pt. to pt.		2006	Martin Winnicki	Brick
Croaker, Atlantic	5	8	1981	Frederick Brown	Delaware Bay
*Cunner	2	9	2006	Nick Honachefsky	Mud Hole
Dogfish, smooth	19	8	2000	Michael LaTorre	Pleasantville
Dogfish, spiny	15	12	1990	Jeff Pennick	Off Cape May
Dolphin	63	3	1974	Scott Smith, Jr.	Baltimore Canyon
Drum, black	107	0	2006	William Kinzy	Delaware Bay
Drum, red	55	0	1985	Daniel Yanino	Great Bay
Eel, American	9	13	1988	Warren Campbell	Atlantic City
Fluke	19	12	1953	Walter Lubin	Off Cape May
Flounder, winter	5	11	1993	Jimmy Swanson	Off Barnegat Light
Hake, white	41	7	1989	Wayne Eble	Off Barnegat Light
Kingfish, Northern	2	8	2004	Chester Urbanski	Barnegat Bay
Ling (red hake)	11	1	2002	Natalie Jones	Off Brielle
Lobster, American	15	3	2003	William Sharp	Almirante Wreck
Mackerel, Atlantic	4	1	1983	Abe Elkin	Manasquan Ridge
Mackerel, king	54	0	1998	Fernando Alfaiate	Off Cape May
*Mackerel, Spanish	9	12	1990	Donald Kohler	Off Cape May
Marlin, blue	1,046	0	1986	Phil Infantolino	Hudson Canyon
Marlin, white	137	8	1980	Mike Marchell	Hudson Canyon
Perch, white	2	12	1998	Michael King	Little Beach Creek
*Pollock	46	7	1975	John Holton	Off Brielle
Porgy	5	14	1976	Victor Rone	Delaware Bay
Sailfish	43	4	2006	Dr. John Tallia	Linden Kohl Canyon
Seatrout, spotted	11	2	1974	Bert Harper	Holgate Surf
Shad, American	7	0	1967	Rodger West	Great Bay
Shad, hickory				Vacant (Minimum Weight 2 lbs.)	
Shark, blue	366	0	1996	Albert Jewitt	Mud Hole
Shark, bull				Vacant (Minimum Weight 150 lbs.)	
Shark, dusky	530	0	1987	Brian Dunlevy	Off Great Egg Inlet
Shark, hammerhead	365	0	1985	Walter Thacara	Mud Hole
Shark, porbeagle				Vacant (Minimum Weight 100 lbs.)	
Shark, sandbar	168	8	1987	John Norton	Little Egg Inlet
Shark, s-fin mako	856	0	1994	Christopher Palmer	Wilmington Canyon
Shark, thresher	617	0	2004	Chris Chalmers	Off Cape May
Shark, tiger	880	0	1988	Billy DeJohn	Off Cape May
Sheepshead	17	3	2003	Paul Lowe	Manahawkin Bay
Spadefish	11	6	1998	Cliff Low	Delaware Bay
Spearfish, longbill	42	0	1989	George Algard	Poor Man's Canyon
	42	0	1997	Joseph Natoli	Hudson Canyon
Spot	0	13	2003	Robert Belsky, Jr.	Little Sheepshead Creek
*Striped Bass	78	8	1982	Al McReynolds	Atlantic City
Swordfish	530	0	1964	Edmund Levitt	Wilmington Canyon
*Tautog	25	0	1998	Anthony Monica	Off Ocean City
Tilefish, golden	55	4	2006	Keith Karl	Tom's Canyon
*Tilefish, gray	10	9	2001	Jim Zigarelli	Sea Girl Reef
Triggerfish, gray	5	11	2005	Lois Schuda	Cape May Reef
Tuna, albacore	77	15	1984	Dr. S. Scannapiego	Spencer Canyon
Tuna, big-eye	364	14	1984	George Krenick	Hudson Canyon
Tuna, bluefin	1,030	6	1981	Royal Parsons	Off Pt. Pleasant
Tuna, skipjack	13	4	1999	Craig Eberbach	Wilmington Canyon
Tuna, yellowfin	290	0	1980	Wayne Brinkerhoff	Hudson Canyon
Tunny, little	24	15	1977	Mark Niemczyk	Off Sea Bright
Wahoo	123	12	1992	Robert Carr	28-Mile Wreck
Weakfish	18	8	1986	Karl Jones	Delaware Bay
Whiting (silver hake)				Vacant (Minimum Weight 2.5 lbs.)	

\* Fish was previously certified by the IGFA as a world record  
 For information concerning the New Jersey State Record Fish or Skillful Angler programs, visit the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Web site at [www.NJFishandWildlife.com](http://www.NJFishandWildlife.com)

# GOVERNOR'S SURF FISHING TOURNAMENT

## A Favorite for Families and Friends

By Karen Leskie, Wildlife Technician



More than 1,000 anglers are expected to turn out for the 16th annual Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament, Sunday, Oct. 7, along the beaches of Island Beach State Park in Berkeley Township, Ocean County. Popular with families from New Jersey and neighboring states, the tournament aims to encourage youngsters and adults to learn more about surf fishing and raises much-needed funds for marine resource conservation and education.

Every year, eager anglers set out to net the coveted Governor's Cup by reel-

ing in the largest catch of the day. In 2006, South Amboy resident David Salvagno earned top honors with a 33 3/4-inch striped bass. As grand-prize winner, Salvagno had his name engraved on the Governor's Cup, which is on permanent display at Island Beach State Park. He also received a plaque and two rod-and-reel combinations.

Prizes also are awarded in other categories for children, teens and adults.

Since its inception, the tournament has generated more than \$100,000 for

various marine education and restoration efforts, construction of access ramps for disabled saltwater anglers, surf fishing instruction programs and equipment, and specialized wheelchairs that provide beach access to the disabled and elderly, among other purposes.

For more information about the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament and a registration form, visit [www.NJFishandWildlife.com/gsf.htm](http://www.NJFishandWildlife.com/gsf.htm) or call (609) 748-4347.

### New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Division of Parks and Forestry

(along with our co-sponsors: NJ Beach Buggy Association, NJ State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Jersey Coast Anglers Association and Ocean County Tourism) would like to thank the following organizations for contributing to the success of the 15th Annual Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament in 2006:

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It's a coalition of hunters, anglers, trappers, recreational shooters and others who have an interest in enjoying—and preserving—the great outdoor opportunities available in New Jersey.

It's an alliance that includes individual sportsmen, local fishing/hunting clubs, statewide groups and chapters of large, well-known sportsmen/conservation organizations.

The members of the Federation have an official say in all policies, recommendations and proposals that the Federation advances.

The members of the Federation have a direct impact on fish and wildlife policies of New Jersey. By LAW the Federation fills six of the 11 seats on the Fish and Game Council.

Visit us at [www.NJSFSC.org](http://www.NJSFSC.org)

The Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) in the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is the state agency charged with managing all fish, game and wildlife programs in the state. The NJ Fish and Game Council was created by law and empowered to adopt the Fish and Game Code and advise the DEP Commissioner and the DFW on the management of fish, wildlife and habitat. Sportsmen appointees enact wildlife-related law and influence wildlife policy. Each of the Fish and Game Council members selected by the Federation maintains close contact with us to keep us informed and to understand our positions on various issues.

**Involvement from interested sportsmen—JUST LIKE YOU—has made a real difference, and will continue to do so.**

### If you care about

- Wise management of fish and wildlife populations
- Protection and enhancement of our natural lands and water
- Preservation of our traditional outdoor sports



### If you want to

- Meet others who share similar interests
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## New Jersey's Accessible Fishing Sites for People With Disabilities

Visit [www.NJFishandWildlife.com/sites.htm](http://www.NJFishandWildlife.com/sites.htm)

An Accessible Fishing Sites list is available to assist anglers whose mobility is impaired.



All sites are wheelchair-accessible except for the Musconetcong River in Morris County, where vehicle access is to the shoreline.

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Maryellen Gordon, NJ Div. Fish and Wildlife

# How to Catch a Whopper

By Greg Kucharewski, JCAA Junior Anglers

## Kids and Fishing Clubs

Numerous fishing clubs have programs to help kids get started fishing. This is great for the sport, the future of fishing and the parents, but it's most important for the kids. Large and small fishing organizations share the gift of sportfishing with the next generation. Good information about fishing programs offered in your local area plus family-oriented outdoor events sponsored by New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife is available on the Internet. Some of the following Web sites will help you research family fishing events:

"Hooked On Fishing Not On Drugs"  
[www.futurefisherman.org](http://www.futurefisherman.org)

"Take Me Fishing"  
[www.takemefishing.org](http://www.takemefishing.org)

Absecon Saltwater Sportsmen  
[www.abseconsaltwatersportsmen.com](http://www.abseconsaltwatersportsmen.com)

Berkley Striper Club  
[www.berkeleystriperclub.org](http://www.berkeleystriperclub.org)

Hi-Mar Striper Club  
[www.hi-mar.com](http://www.hi-mar.com)

Hudson River Fishermen's Association  
[www.hrfanj.org/](http://www.hrfanj.org/)

Jersey Coast Anglers Association  
[www.jcaa.org](http://www.jcaa.org)

Kids All-American Fishing Program  
[www.kids-fishing.com](http://www.kids-fishing.com)

National Fishing and Boating Week  
[www.asafishing.org](http://www.asafishing.org)

New Jersey Beach Buggy Association [www.njbba.org](http://www.njbba.org)

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife  
[www.NJFishandWildlife.com](http://www.NJFishandWildlife.com)

New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs  
[www.njsfsc.org](http://www.njsfsc.org)

Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation  
[www.rbff.org](http://www.rbff.org)

Shark River Surf Anglers  
[www.sharkriversurfanglers.com](http://www.sharkriversurfanglers.com)

Many young anglers begin their fishing experience at a freshwater pond or lake close to home. Often a family member or friend gets them started sharing their collection of tips and tricks from outdoor excursions experienced over the years. When I was a child, my brother, sister and I would get up early on Saturday mornings and my dad would bring us to a local lake to fish for bluegills. My dad was the one that taught us how to fish and I can't thank him enough for giving me a lifelong hobby that I share with my family and others.

If you haven't yet tried saltwater fishing, read on for some great suggestions to help you catch a "whopper." No, not the big hamburger, but that fish of a lifetime. The fish you will never forget, and the story you'll share with others about the day you reeled in a whopper.

My definition of a whopper is a fish that tops the current state record or even one which meets the New Jersey Skillful Angler minimum size requirements. (See page 24 for details.) Saltwater fish can grow quite large. A 40-pound striped bass certainly could be considered a whopper.

Once you decide what type of saltwater fishing to pursue, you'll need to match the equipment to the fishing style. Will you be fishing from a jetty or miles off shore in a boat? One way to choose the type of fishing gear needed for hooking a huge fish is to see how already successful anglers got the job done. Scan through fishing magazines looking for clues in the photos or tips in the text. Find out the "who, what, when, where and how" information about others' success. Photos of anglers with their trophy fish may offer clues on the rod, reel type and lure, bait and/or sinker used to land that whopper. Remember to look at the size of the rod and reel. These will indicate if the fish was caught from a boat, surf, dock, pier or jetty. Most surf, jetty and pier rods are 8 to 12 feet long and have spinning reels. Boat rods are 5 to 7 feet in length and are used with bait-casting reels that have a revolving spool.

Local tackle dealers are experienced with recommending the proper equipment needed to get started. When purchasing a rod and reel, choose an outfit that is comfortable to hold. Saltwater tackle becomes weathered quickly; local tackle dealers can help keep your equipment in good working order. Be careful not to rest your reel in the sand; sand is an enemy that can destroy your fishing gear. Remember to rinse off your equipment with freshwater after every saltwater fishing trip. **S**


Most tackle dealers are willing to help children and novice anglers learn the basics of fishing and where to catch fish. Don't be shy; ask for help. Let them guide you on the proper line weight and hook size for the fish you plan to catch. It's important to match the hook size to your target species.

Since 1991, New Jersey has one protected game fish, the striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*). The Jersey Coast Anglers Association (JCAA) was instrumental in having legislation signed into law which effects striped bass conservation measures for future generations of saltwater anglers. In 2007, New Jersey anglers may keep two striped bass over twenty-eight inches. Those who apply to receive a special Striped Bass Bonus Program Permit may keep a third striped bass over 28 inches; be sure to attach and sign the bonus permit. (See Bonus Program information, page 13.)

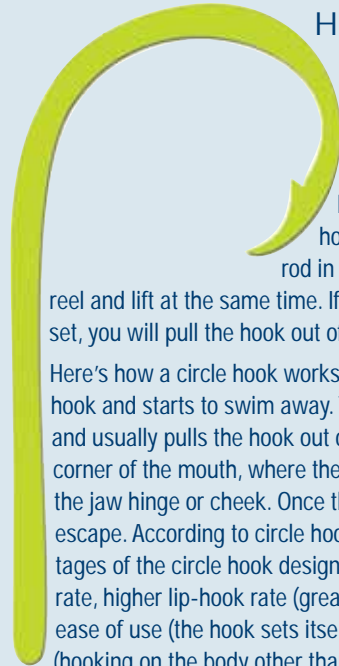
Striped bass is one of the most prized game fish in New Jersey. Currently, the New Jersey state record striped bass is 78 pounds, 8 ounces. Let's review some tips for how to catch a whopper striped bass. The months of May through June and September through November are the best times to target trophy striped bass. During the spring and fall migration, big bass feed most voraciously. The key is to use large baits. Large artificial plugs, 6 to 10 inches long, or fresh cut bait such as cut bunker and whole surf clams, are effective for catching whoppers. For early spring bait it's best to use fresh – not frozen – clams. Starting in September, it is best to match the bait in the surf, but fresh bunker heads are my favorite. Here, a fish-finder rig works the best with an 8/0 circle hook. (See sidebar.)

When using artificial lures, try using large wooden swimming plugs and a very slow retrieve. The longer your bait remains in the water, the better your chances for catching fish. Swimming plugs float on the surface of the water; it doesn't matter what color you use as long as the belly of the lure is white. Keeping your hooks sharp will increase your chances of hooking a fish on the slightest strike.

Striped bass may swirl on live or artificial bait by swimming fast in a circle to disorient their prey. Because of this trait, with very sharp hooks you might snag a striped bass by its tail. You're in luck if this happens; just hold on for the fight of your life. My arms ached for days after fighting a thirty-six inch tail-snagged striped bass. I release snagged fish; they deserved to fight another day.

It's good to practice catch and release fishing, keeping only what you can use. For those times, bring with you a disposable camera to document the fish you release. Some fishing publications will accept photographs of youngsters with their catch. If you plan to submit a photograph to a publication, follow these tips: submit your photograph as soon as possible, use a higher resolution camera setting which can produce a 300 dpi (dots per inch) photograph, and try look excited and happy while posing with your fish and gear. Big smiles increase the chance of having your photograph published. 

## How Does A Circle Hook Work?



The most effective way to hook a fish with a circle hook is to avoid raising the rod in a quick motion. Instead, reel and lift at the same time. If you do the typical hook set, you will pull the hook out of the fish's mouth.

Here's how a circle hook works. The fish grabs the baited hook and starts to swim away. The line tightens slowly and usually pulls the hook out of the throat and to the corner of the mouth, where the point rotates and pierces the jaw hinge or cheek. Once the fish is hooked, it cannot escape. According to circle hook manufacturers, advantages of the circle hook design include increased catch rate, higher lip-hook rate (greatly reducing mortality), ease of use (the hook sets itself) and less snagging (hooking on the body other than in the mouth) in certain bottom fishing applications.

*Remember to avoid the usual hook-setting practice when fishing with a circle hook.*

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