

New Jersey Marine Digest

May 2022

**The Big 5:
Popular Species**
page 6

**Size and
Possession
Limits**
page 21



A Summary of Recreational Regulations and
Marine Fish and Shellfish Management Information

NJFishandWildlife.com



GS Outdoors

Check out our new Hunting Department on the 2ND floor of the GARDEN STATE MARINE STORE!
We have all the equipment and clothing you'll need for the upcoming season. Come on upstairs and check us out!



Garden State Yacht Sales

Garden State Yacht Sales is also your go-to resource for Boat Winterization and Storage in NJ. Our experts will make sure your boat is completely prepared for the fall and winter so it runs like new in the spring!

Visit NJ's Largest Independent Marine Store for all your boating supplies and parts. We have a large assortment of the latest fishing apparel, cool fishing gear, parts, and supplies. We stock a huge amount of Yamaha replacement parts.

In addition to selling vessels, we offer a relaxed and scenic atmosphere where anglers and recreational boaters alike can browse marine accessories, shop for beach day must-haves, store boats year-round in a secure setting, and receive expert boat maintenance. We are open 7 days a week!



AUTHORIZED DEALER OF THESE BRANDS



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Hotlines

New Jersey DEP Fish and Wildlife

Report Marine, Shellfish and Finfish Violations

(609) 748-2050 or call the 24-hour DEP Hotline: 877-WARNDEP

Violators of the Marine Fisheries laws are subject to a \$30-\$100 per fish or \$300 to \$3,000 fine.

Federal Marine Fisheries Contacts

NOAA Fisheries

Enforcement Hotline

24-hour non-emergency tipline
(800) 853-1964

NOAA Fisheries Office of Law

Enforcement — Northeast

Enforcement Division HQ
(978) 281-9249

Federal Fisheries Law

Enforcement Field Offices

Wall: (732) 280-6490
Northfield: (609) 415-2941

On the cover: photo by Tom SanFilippo



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Assistant Commissioner's Message

DAVE GOLDEN



Great saltwater fishing opportunities always await anyone lucky enough to visit coastal New Jersey. Whether you fish the surf, back-bays or open ocean, the Garden State boasts one of the most active and productive recreational fisheries on the Atlantic Coast!

Of all the species in our marine waters, most anglers will fish for the "Big Five". These include bluefish, striped bass, summer flounder, black sea bass and tautog. If these are the species you're targeting, check out "The Big Five" article in this edition of the Marine Digest, where you will find details on current research, best fishing methods and some fun facts. For instance, did you know that in 1878, striped bass collected from the Navesink River were transported by rail and successfully introduced to the waters of California? *See page 6 for more.*


The fun fact shows that the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Fish and Wildlife staff has been managing the State's wildlife resources for a long time. In fact, this year marks the 130th anniversary of our agency, when in 1892 the Board of Fish and Game Commissioners hired the first salaried "Fish and Game Protector" to enforce the fishing and game laws within the state. Since that time, our Law Enforcement bureau has expanded to include 56 highly trained Conservation Police Officers who patrol the marine and inland environments of New Jersey. They do their part to protect *your* natural resources and keep the public safe, so please do your part — understand and follow the marine regulations and properly handle fish being released.

As I'm writing this message, COVID cases are down, and life is slowly resembling pre-pandemic conditions. Fish and Wildlife's Marine Fisheries staff are back out in the field. They conduct surveys and collect information vital to sustainable management of our state's unique and important marine resources. All of this is very exciting! Our biologists like being on the water as much as you do, and prior to the pandemic I would have said there was nothing that would stop them from getting out there to carry out their sampling. When COVID hit, however, most of the agency's marine fisheries sampling programs came to a halt. The health and safety of the public and our employees always comes first, and during the pandemic the logistics of sampling in close quarters on small vessels resulted in many of our surveys being pared back or fully cancelled for two full sampling seasons in 2020 and 2021.

Successful fisheries management depends on up-to-date and reliable data on stock condition, removals and fishing effort. While the agency's Marine Fisheries staff were not able to get out on the water, New Jersey anglers remained active throughout the pandemic. Our staff's "pause" on sampling provided a chance for us to re-think data collection in a digital age and resulted in the expansion of opportunities for anglers and other stakeholders to participate in the fisheries management process. As such, we developed additional platforms to report recreational fishing through the volunteer angler survey: www.nj.gov/dep/marineanglersurvey and for reporting endangered and protected marine species: www.nj.gov/dep/njmarinewildlife. The striped bass bonus program application process also went to a 100% online format: www.njfishandwildlife.org/bonusbas.htm.

Meetings of the Marine Fisheries Council and Shellfisheries Councils were also shifted to virtual platforms to allow continued public participation. This ability to pivot quickly to a virtual platform allowed the public to stay engaged and participate in marine fisheries management.

I urge you all to continue to participate in the management process and to attend an upcoming Marine Fisheries Council meeting. Information about upcoming meetings is posted on our website at NJFishandWildlife.com.

It's time to get out there — be safe on the water, enjoy your time outdoors, and catch some fish! 

Dave Golden is the Assistant Commissioner of New Jersey DEP Fish and Wildlife.



Williamstown, MA | Birmingham, AL

About This Guide

This high-quality guide is offered to you by New Jersey Fish and Wildlife through its unique partnership with J.F. Griffin Publishing, LLC.

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This guide is also available online at eRegulations.com

Your Dollars Make a Difference!

State and Federal partnership improves NJ's fishing opportunities



When you purchase fishing equipment, motors, sonar and motorboat fuel in New Jersey, excise tax dollars – paid by manufacturers of that equipment – come back to New Jersey to support marine fisheries! This is the federal **Sport Fish Restoration Program**.

Your fees and federal Sport Fish Restoration dollars produce the following benefits:

- Management of public waters
- Artificial reef development
- Marine sport fish research
- Development and management of public fishing areas
- Creation of aquatic education programs
- Development and maintenance of boating-associated access facilities throughout the state



Anglers and boaters purchase fishing equipment and motor boat fuels.

Manufacturers pay federal excise taxes on fishing equipment, electric motors, and sonar; and boaters pay fuel taxes.

Revenue from these federal excise taxes is distributed to state fish and wildlife agencies.

State fish and wildlife agencies receive federal funds to implement programs and projects.

Better fishing and boating-associated recreation and aquatic education increase the public's understanding of water resources and aquatic life.



Mark Your Calendar for the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament!

May 15, 2022

Island Beach State Park, Seaside Park, NJ

Enjoy a great day of surf fishing with family and friends at the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament.

The individual who catches the overall largest fish wins the "Governor's Award" and will have their name engraved on the Governor's Cup, which is permanently displayed at Island Beach State Park. Prizes are awarded to winners in a variety of age group and fish species categories.

All funds raised by the tournament go toward improving beach access, surf fishing instruction programs and equipment plus marine education and restoration projects.

The tournament is sponsored by NJDEP's Fish and Wildlife and Parks and Forestry, New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Jersey Coast Anglers Association and New Jersey Beach Buggy Association.

For more information visit:

NJFishandWildlife.com/gsft.htm or call 609-748-4347.



Courtesy Venuti/NJ Fish and Wildlife

Tyler Bender of Milford won the 2021 tournament by catching a 21.5-inch bluefish at 6:39 a.m.!

Operation Game Thief

Report Abuse of our Outdoor Heritage!

1-855-OGT-TIPS

24 Hours a Day, Seven Days a Week

The person who poaches, pollutes habitat and abuses public land tarnishes the image of sportsmen and robs us of our fish and wildlife as well as tax and license dollars. You can make a difference.

Call OGT to report:

- Negligent use of firearms
- Over the limits for game and fish
- Commercial exploitation of fish and wildlife
- Pollution of habitat, dumping on state land
- Destruction of signs and state property
- Illegal killing, taking or possession of any wildlife



It's Free. It's Confidential.

You May Be Eligible for a Reward.

Funded by the New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs.

Designed to encourage sportsmen to report poaching and wildlife crimes.

New Jersey Marine Digest

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New Jersey DEP Fish and Wildlife is a professional, environmental organization dedicated to the protection, management and wise use of the state's fish and wildlife resources.

The *Digest* is available at coastal license agents, bait and tackle shops and Fish and Wildlife offices. Information may be reprinted with permission. Subscriptions are not available.

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Cover photo: Ready to go fishing.

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To contact any member of the Marine Fisheries Council, please email MarineFisheriesCouncil@dep.nj.gov

Where to Write Us

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Fish and Wildlife

MC 501-03 • P.O. Box 420 • Trenton, NJ 08625-0420 • NJFishandWildlife.com

New Jersey DEP Fish and Wildlife Our Mission

To protect and manage the state's fish and wildlife to maximize their long-term biological, recreational and economic value for all New Jerseyans.

Our Goals

- To maintain New Jersey's rich variety of fish and wildlife species at stable, healthy levels and to protect and enhance the many habitats on which they depend.
- To educate New Jerseyans on the values and needs of our fish and wildlife and to foster a positive human/wildlife co-existence.
- To maximize the recreational and commercial use of New Jersey's fish and wildlife for both present and future generations.

Striped Bass Bonus Program

The Striped Bass Bonus Program will continue in 2022, where anglers possessing a Bonus permit may keep a striper at 24 inches or less than 28 inches. The open season for this program is May 15 through December 31. Check website for updates at NJFishandWildlife.com/bonusbas.htm.

The current allocation from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is 215,912 pounds. Should New Jersey exceed this quota, any overage would be subtracted from the following year's quota.

Application Process: Striped Bass Bonus Program permits are issued via mail only. Go to NJFishandWildlife.com/bonusbas.htm to apply and for regulation or program updates. The permit is non-transferable and valid for the current calendar year. Only one fish can be harvested per permit. Fishing logs must be kept and harvest reporting is mandatory.

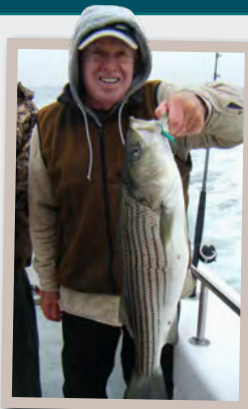
Striped Bass Bonus Permit Harvest Reporting: The Striped Bass Bonus Permit must be securely attached to the fish through the mouth and gill immediately upon capture and prior to transportation. **Harvest reporting is mandatory and must be reported online or by leaving a message at (609) 748-2074.**

Fishing Logs: A log of striped bass fishing activity must be kept and submitted by January 15, 2023 in order to remain eligible for 2023.

Striped Bass Bonus Program Harvest 1996–2021

Harvest Year	# Fish Harvested	Weight Harvested (lbs)	Mean Length (inches)	Mean Weight (lbs)	% of Quota
1996	233	4,050	35.7	17.4	1.8
1997	344	7,678	36.8	22.3	3.4
1998	473	11,149	37.2	23.6	5.0
1999	574	13,174	36.2	23.1	5.9
2000	2,488	42,794	33.7	17.2	19.0
2001	4,583	79,774	33.5	17.4	35.5
2002	4,855	82,050	33.0	16.9	36.5
2003	6,101	121,410	35.0	20.0	37.7
2004	4,602	81,870	32.8	17.8	25.4
2005	2,047	29,866	31.7	14.6	9.3
2006	1,127	23,656	34.9	21.0	7.4
2007*	708	13,615	34.0	19.2	4.2
2008	367	7,345	34.3	20.0	2.3
2009	526	10,330	34.2	19.3	3.2
2010	728	12,833	34.5	17.6	4.0
2011	916	16,332	34.0	17.8	5.1
2012*	325	6,285	34.3	19.3	2.0
2013	404	6,096	33.4	15.1	1.9
2014	178	3,653	35.0	20.5	1.1
2015*	3,301	21,479	25.8	6.5	9.9
2016	3,686	24,963	25.9	6.8	11.6
2017	2,161	14,602	25.9	6.8	6.8
2018	1,101	6,786	25.3	6.2	3.1
2019	5,558	32,000	26.0	5.8	14.9
2020*	5,746	36,865	25.5	6.4	17.1
2021	6,457	41,867	25.7	6.5	19.4

* Significant administrative or regulatory changes to the SBBP took place.



Striper caught from the Susan Hudson off Barnegat Light.

Using Circle Hooks

When Fishing with Bait for Striped Bass

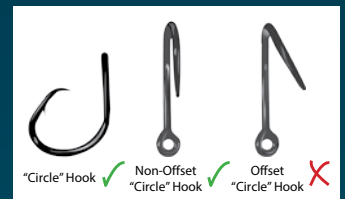
Striped bass caught on the Susan Hudson of Barnegat Light, NJ.

A new regulation requires using inline (non-offset) circle hooks when fishing for striped bass with bait. Bait is defined as any marine or aquatic organism live or dead, whole or parts thereof. This does not apply to artificial lures with bait attached. Striped bass caught using an unapproved method of take must be returned to the water immediately, without unnecessary injury. (See striped bass regulations, page 16.)

Using non-offset circle hooks significantly increases survival of released fish. In 2020, more striped bass were estimated to have died from catch and release than were harvested — 2.76 million fish and 1.71 million fish, respectively.

What is a Circle Hook?

A circle hook is defined as a non-offset hook where the point curves back perpendicularly towards the shank. The term *non-offset* means the point and barb are in the same plane as the shank. When the hook is laying on a flat surface, the entire hook and barb should lay flat.



Non-offset (inline) circle hooks must be used when fishing for striped bass with bait.

How Do Circle Hooks Increase Survival of Released Striped Bass?

Using circle hooks reduce occurrences of gut-hooking which can cause injuries to internal organs of the fish. If a striped bass swallows the bait, the circle hook is designed to slide out from its throat and catch on the corner of its jaw. When a fish is hooked in the corner of its jaw, this also leads to shorter de-hooking times and less overall stress on the fish.

Tips for Using Circle Hooks

When a fish takes your bait, do not sweep the rod upward to set the hook. The circle hook sets itself when the fish tries to swim away. Simply let the line come tight, then fight the fish.

Added Tips for the Survival of Released Fish

Tackle Recommendations

- Use barbless hooks or bend barbs down.
- Use non-stainless steel hooks. If gut-hooked, leave the hook in the fish and cut the line as close to the hook as possible. The hook will rust away.
- Replace treble hooks on artificial lures with single hooks.
- Use appropriate tackle suited to the size of the fish; don't fight the fish to exhaustion.

Fish Handling Best Practices

- Keep the fish in the water when de-hooking.
- If you must take the fish out of the water, use a rubber or soft-mesh landing net.
- Avoid handling fish with dry hands.
- Avoid dragging fish across dry sand or rocks.
- Hold fish horizontal with support.
- Avoid touching the fish's gills or eyes.