

A Striper Season to Remember



We here in the Hudson Valley are spoiled every May with the arrival of Morone Saxatilis, the Atlantic Striped Bass. In 1792 when J.J. Walbaum named Morone Saxatilis he may not have known what joy the big fish would bring to thousands of anglers over the coming centuries, including those who ply the waters of the Hudson River every year from mid-April to June. The Striped Bass is an anadromous species, meaning that it travels from its salt water home into the fresh water of the Hudson River and other fresh and brackish waters along the East Coast to spawn. Thus, each year from mid - April through early June fisherman from Manhattan to Troy enjoy catching, and frequently releasing the "Striper". Striper feed on a large variety of foods, depending on where you are fishing for them. In the Hudson River we find that fisherman in the southern reaches find chunk herring or bunker effective, while in upper reaches live herring seem to be the trick and in the middle sections of the river, eels, blood worms and sand worms seem to be the ticket, all of which we had in ample supply thanks to Ceeley's Bait Bucket in Cornwall.



While this season saw many large fish caught in every town up and down the river, this story focuses on a much smaller area that is essentially within 20 miles North or South of Marlboro, N.Y., from West Shore Marina to be exact. Since 1986 Luke and Alex at West Shore have been accommodating Striped Bass Fisherman from various parts of the State and many from N.J. and Pennsylvania. Striper fisherman come from all walks to make their Striper dreams come true in the central reaches of the Hudson River. 2019 has been a special year however for many reasons, particularly for the Striper Fleet at West Shore Marina. Every year West Shore sees some new boats arrive because they have heard that West Shore has many dedicated Striper Fisherman but this year saw the gathering of some of the best and most well-known Striper Boats on the Hudson River. The 2019 Season saw boats with names like Veronica Rose (Captained by the Famous Doc Z), Wingnut, Jayliner, POW, Restless, Century One, PaddyKake, and my own Lighthouse Express, as well as several others.



Lady's Day

Then there is one of the Greatest Striped Bass Fishing Stories ever! On June 1, on a sunny Saturday, I was down in NY Harbor fishing in The Armed Forces Invitational Striped Bass Tournament when I received a call from my Wife Linda. She intended to take the Lighthouse Express out fishing for Striped Bass, by herself, for the first time ever. Of course, she had never taken the boat off the dock by herself before, nor had she docked solo before, nor had she baited the hooks, set the rods, and netted a fish solo before, but she was doing this, and of course I encouraged her to do so. It was not long after she set her baits on just two rods, with a bloodworm on each,



not far from a few of the other boats mentioned in this article, when she hooked, fought and landed a 40" pre-spawn female Striped Bass. Needless to say, she had quite the battle and experienced all the heart pumping thrill of a big fish, especially when trying to net the fish alone with one hand on the rod and one with the net. But it does get better because you see, while she is netting the fish and excited 15 lb. male swims alongside the female and into the same net as she lands the female. You guessed it, one worm, and 50 lbs. of Striped Bass in the net! Thankfully, Doc Z and his indefatigable Mate Rachel was nearby to assist in the safe release of both fish, and to provide an excellent photo. In spite of my two 25 lb. East River Striper caught during my Tournament, I was out-fished by my wife in just 40 minutes! Some call it beginner's luck, Linda will say otherwise, and I say that it was the icing on the cake of one fantastic Striped Bass Season on the Hudson River!

Of course, Striped Bass Fishing didn't end there. There are always a few of us that will not give up and fish right until the fish finder screen is empty or the white perch and catfish take over the bite, which is what Doc, Joe K., Doc's ever-present Fishing Partner, and I did through the 9th. Granted, there were some fish to be caught between the interlopers, by Doc at least, who added 8 fish up to 39" to his Season count. All of the Fleet from West Shore will be proud to say they were part of such a great season and proud to know that they spent so many wonderful hours on the River, and with friends, and catching the amazing Morone Saxatilis, and most of all that between the 4,096 Striper caught by the West Shore Fleet in 2019, that over 4,000 of them were successfully released to fight another day!

BY THE NUMBERS

What makes 2019 so special? The West Shore Fleet landed a recorded 4,096 Striped Bass over a six-week time period including several Bass over 40 lbs. with the largest just over 49 lbs.! But it's not just the total number of the sizes that stand out, it's also the individual successes that took place on these boats and the amazing dedication to the sport that was exhibited by some of the Fleet Members. Joe on the Jayliner fished every single day except one from Mid-April to the end of May with a boat total of an amazing 1,507 Striper caught. Doc Z and the Team fishing the Veronica Rose, fishing both day and night, boated an incredible 1,272 Striper to 44 lbs. But there are so many other stories. There is POW's newly-wed Daughter-in-law's 20 lb. plus first Striper ever, Restless's first Striper Season ever boating over 70 Bass, Wingnut's average of 22 Striper per trip, Century One's 40 lb. solo Bass, G. Appler's day with his son and Striper of 40, 42, 44, and 49", and PaddyKake's 423 fish Season, and my own meager 139 fish total, which pales in comparison.

