



Ace Charter Fishing

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What will the 2020 striper season on the Hudson River bring this year to anxiously awaiting anglers? As is typically the case, mother nature will dictate just what kind of season it will be! Will it be as good as those in the past? As the old saying goes, "time will tell!"

There are a few things that we can control albeit, more like adjusting to what mother nature does dish out. One particular truism, that has held for the over 25 plus years that we have been fishing stripers, is this. When the river temperatures reach 48 degrees in Long Island Sound, 7-10 days later we will have fishable numbers of mature sea run striped bass in our stretch of the river from New Baltimore to Albany and parts north. There are a few nuances that go along with this Such was the case as evidenced the past two seasons of 2018 and 2019.

In 2018, the water temps hit that magical 48 degree mark and triggered the run of sea run stripers up river. But, low and behold, mother nature did her thing and hit us with a massive cold front three days later. This in effect, stalled the run and shut down the northern migration up river of the stripers. The river dropped some 4 degrees. Talking with some of my southern fellow charter captains in the Kingston area I learned that the mother load of adult stripers had stalled in Poughkeepsie. My Kingston buddies were running 15 miles south to cash in on the bonanza.

In 2019, last year, we were faced with similar circumstances. We were hit with another massive cold front just 4 days after that magical 48 degrees was reached, effectively staling the mother load of adult stripers in Kingston, NY. They had one of their best years for adult fish ever. Normally, they get shots at some of the adults as they swim on by, but last year the fish stayed there due to the big drop in river temperatures.

In our area, the fishing was still ok in terms of numbers. Its my belief that the schoolie stripers, those under the age of 3-5 years

old depending on sex, will leave our stretch of the river and migrate south to escape predation by the adult sea run stripers once they arrive. Stripers are picivorous , meaning they eat their own. We had good numbers of schoolies to catch on a lot of our trips in 2019. Double digits was the norm most days that we were able to fish. We also managed to capture and release several fish in the upper thirty inch range, but not in the numbers we are accustomed to.

Under the slot limit rules put into affect several years ago, fish that are 28-40 inches must be let go and returned to the river. Normally, most of our fish are in this range or "in the slot"! We also mangle to capture adult stripers over the 40 inch mark as well. Playing catch and release with adult stripers is still a lot of fun. Most of my clients understand the regulations and don't have a problem abiding by them. In a normal year, we usually find ourselves wishing for fish to be under 28 inches but larger than 18" so they can be kept for table fare. Stripers are quite good eating!

So what will 2020 bring for the Hudson River striper season this spring. Lets hope for the river to hit 48 degrees in Long Island Sound and stay there for at least 7-10 days in duration. Lets also hope for a dry spring without the heavy river muddying rains we received that last few years, too! As is always the case, mother nature will let us know what it will be like when the time comes. Until then, think Spring!

