

Croton Yacht Club History

by **Dennis Kooney**

The Croton Yacht Club is located at 6 Elliott Way in Croton on Hudson, New York. It was established in 1957 and incorporated as a not for profit organization on 1966.

The mission of the Croton Yacht Club is to encourage the sport

At the origin of the lease agreement with the village back in the 1950's, the Village Dock property was used as a satellite facility for an asphalt plant located to the north. There were no buildings and the grounds were in disrepair. When the club began back in the 1950's it was a fairly informal place to keep your boat on the river. Boat owners got together, went to the hills of Croton and cut down saplings to use as piles. Back then there was only one main dock with each boat backed in stern-to.

The original clubhouse was not built on land but was floated in on a barge, which also served as a breakwater. Over time, additional barges were purchased and lined up further out to expand the marina basin. The original clubhouse was destroyed by fire on New Year's Eve in 1963 and a replacement was built on another barge in 1976. In 1986, the barges serving as a breakwater were removed and replaced with a 400-foot seawall.

Circa 1996, the CYC moved ashore and the existing clubhouse was built. Like all major projects, this one truly was a team effort and was led by member Sam Giordano. The clubhouse

is actually three trailers zippered together and fastened to footings. The clubhouse, with its panoramic views of the river, is an inviting and elegant place for its members to escape everyday stress and relax over a cocktail or cup of coffee with panoramic views of the Hudson.

Around us, in the early 2000's, the road to Senasqua was opened. The picture tunnel under the railroad was closed to vehicular traffic and railroad crossing to the Yacht Club was eliminated. In 2006, the Croton Landing was opened and in 2009, it was expanded upon. Major enhancements have been made to the Yacht Club

property and surroundings recently including the replacement of the 400' breakwater wall, the 400' steel bulkhead surrounding the property and promenade around the clubhouse. Coupled with the recent Riverwalk extension, the area serves as beautiful and scenic connection to the river.

Since its inception, the yacht club has served as the hub of a sound riverfront development plan and remains as a valued asset to the community.

The secret to the Yacht Club's longevity and success has been its ability to attract dedicated and talented members who are willing to commit their time to accomplish necessary tasks associated with marina management. Coupled with sound financial management, a symbiotic relationship with the Village, and with extensive community outreach programs, the Yacht club has evolved into one of the most successful marinas on the Hudson.

For additional information about the club please visit our website at www.crotonyachtclub.org or Facebook at [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com).



of boating, to promote the science of seamanship and navigation and to provide and maintain suitable facilities and anchorage for the recreational and social use of its members. The club promotes respect of the Hudson River through education and policies that reflect its commitment to sound environmental practices.

The marina provides safe and comfortable in-water mooring, with full facilities, for 120 boats up to 35 foot in length. The marina also provides summer and winter storage options for boats, personal watercraft, canoes and kayaks.

The Yacht Club leases the property from the Village of Croton and its operation is managed and fully funded by its membership. All assets, exclusive of the property, are owned and maintained by the membership.

The Yacht Club provides general maintenance of the property, including access to areas surrounding the clubhouse where Croton residents are permitted and encouraged to fish, crab or simply enjoy the scenic Hudson.

HRFA 2020 Catfish Chaos 'A Weekend to Remember'

by **Dennis Kooney**

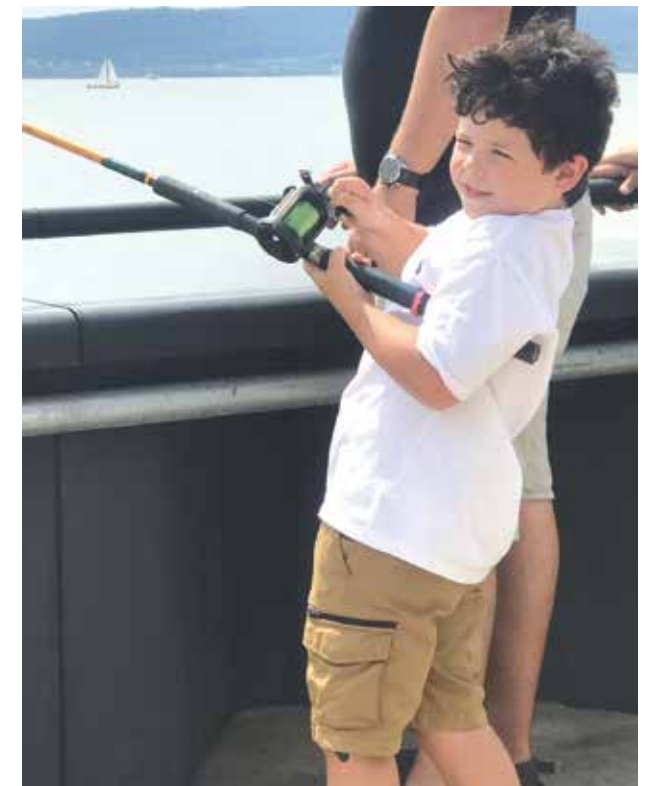
On Saturday, August 15th, the Hudson River Fishermen's Association held its fourth annual Catfish Chaos Derby on the Hudson River. The weather was perfect and the event provided a welcomed respite from the confinements and restrictions of the pandemic.

I thought it would be a good opportunity to get the entire family together for a fun day on the river where we would fish, crab and barbeque off of the bulkhead at the Croton Yacht Club. Three generations of the Kooney and Dinis families registered and participated in what would turn out to be an eventful and memorable weekend.

The weekend started Friday evening when my good friend John Anderson and I retrieved my bunker net set 200 yards off of the Yacht Club to catch bait for the contest the next day. I stationed myself at the bow of my 19' center console while John operated the boat. I hooked the lead buoy and began to pull in the net, which was full of bunker. John asked me where my scap-net was, used to pick up any fish which fall out of the net. I advised him that unfortunately, I forgot the net so any lost fish would be welcomed by the seagulls and crabs. Almost immediately, we some floating toward shore.

I continued the back breaking task of bending over the rail and untangling entrapped bunker from the net. My mind wandered back to the commercial fishing days when frozen hands wrestled thirty-pound striped bass and sturgeon up to 300 lbs. from the same fate. Those were hard men making a hard living.

My daydream was ended by John shouting "Holy #&*! - look at that". I turned abruptly to see a majestic mature bald eagle rising from the water's surface 25 yards from the boat. His stark white head and tail feathers were brilliant in contrast to his jet-black body. As he rose effortlessly, I could see one of our escaped bunkers clutched in his bright yellow talons. He flew across the railroad





tracks and 9A up into the hills where apparently it nested. Highly unusual to witness in mid-August. This was going to be a great weekend!

When we returned, I iced down the bunker and set two overnight crab nets off of the bulkhead. Hopefully, my grandsons would see their first crabs of the season tomorrow morning.

I returned home to set up some additional crab nets and fishing equipment for the next day for there would be seven adults and three children fishing in the derby. As I was setting up the rods, I remembered that last year a gigantic catfish was caught at the club on chicken livers, so I decided to add to my bait options by asking my very understanding wife, Kathy, to look for them while she was shopping for the food for the next day. She was successful and refrigerated the bait for tomorrow.

When I finished setting up the rods, I started to YouTube fishing techniques using chicken liver, as I never fished with them before. I found that one of the best ways of securing the soft bait onto the circle hook was by using elastic thread. This shouldn't be a problem as Kathy is an avid quilter, so I asked her if she had any in her inventory. Unfortunately, she advised me she did not but being the thoughtful wife that she is, she volunteered to travel to Peekskill to buy some. I was now set for tomorrow.

The plan for the day was that I would get to the Yacht Club early to set up and the family would join later mid-morning. I almost left the house without the secret weapon, chicken livers; or so I thought. When I retrieved the package from the refrigerator, I was disappointed to see chicken gizzards! Oh well!

When I got to the Yacht Club, my plan was to bait up a few rods and eight crab nets, then space out the remaining rods for the family. I cut up some bunker chunks and baited the first rod with a chicken gizzard, which held nicely on the hook without the need for elastic thread; something I wouldn't reveal to Kathy. Before I could bait up the next rod with bunker, I had landed my first catfish; a healthy bullhead. This was a good omen! I began to set up the crab nets and the other rod went off, this time a channel cat. Then another. After releasing around six fish, I hooked into something big! The fish kept digging for the bottom and only until he was next to the bulkhead did I realize that this was a possible contender. Netting a fish this size alone from the bulkhead is no easy task because of the supporting underwater structures. Luckily a long reach with my long-handled salmon net landed a beautiful 28" channel cat. I immediately put him in the live well tank which was on loan from fellow fisherman and good friend, Mark Sofranko. Where was the family?


They say "timing is everything". Logan, our youngest grandson, was first to arrive and I was greeted with a bear hug. Matteo, 8 rounded the corner with paternal Grandfather Tony Dinis, but he was too late, a rod went off and Logan was all over it. At 6 years old, Logan is an experienced fisherman rivaled by his brother Matteo who won the Youth Division last year with a 21" fish. With his brother's coaching, Logan brought a beautiful 25 1/2" channel cat to the net. At the very least, Logan would now have bragging rights with his larger fish. Into the tank! This day "timing" would be a double edge sword.

A short time later Matteo would land a nice 21 1/2" bullhead which joined the others in the tank. It was time to pull the crab nets. While I attended to baiting the rods, Matteo and Logan were joined by their father, Fernando, at the end of the bulkhead to attempt to pull up the overnight crab net. It is no easy task to get the large net up over the steel beam supporting the bulkhead. I watched as the three engineered a solution by using a long pole to support the line while lifting the net. Success! The net was full of blue claws. A few minutes later, Fernando learned how not to pick up a blue claw as he retreated to secure a band aid from our daughter Nicole. At the end of the day, three quarters of a bushel basket of blue claws would be collected for Sunday's "crab fest".




Around 10 AM, our grandson Jack, 13, arrived followed by his brother Colin, 16, cousin Lydia from Buffalo, our son Paul and wife Jennifer. Not long after, a rod went off and Jack was first to it. Jack proceeded to land a healthy 23 1/2" white cat which was added to the live well. Soon after Lydia would land a fat 23" bullhead. It, too, was added to the live well.

Nearing lunchtime, I checked the condition of the fish in the live well and found some in distress despite proper aeration and temperature control. It was apparent that the fish needed to be transported to the weigh station in Ossining soon, as fish needed to arrive live in order to receive full credit. I began readying a cooler for transport and advised Logan, Matteo, Jack and Lydia they needed to accompany me to the weigh-in. Meanwhile, lunch had already been served by Kathy and close friend Vicki Anderson and Logan was working on his second hot dog; a hot dog that would later cost him first place in the Youth Division. Unknowingly, Logan's fish had tied for first place, but because we arrived at the weigh station 20 minutes after another fish of the same size was weighed in, he was awarded second place. Another example that timing is indeed everything.

Logan, Jack and Matteo would place 1st, 2nd and 3rd for the port prize and all received fishing rod and reel combinations. My fish would place 4th and Lydia's 14th overall in the adult



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division. Although none of Colin's fish placed, he was ever present throughout the afternoon mentoring his cousins and maintaining the rods. It was a good day, but the best reward was yet to come.

We returned to the club and enjoyed each other's company for the remainder of the afternoon. While we were cleaning up, my son Paul approached me and thanked me for a great day and confessed the importance of "slowing down and enjoying the river and each other's company more often." That admission was priceless to me.

The weekend continued on Sunday, when we all got together again for a "crab fest" at our daughter Nicole's and son-in-law Fernando's house. We sat around a large extended table, talking, eating crab and enjoying each other's company for hours; an opportunity created by one common denominator, the river. The river has spawned many great personal memories and thankfully, I have lived to see it work its magic on all of my family.

My wife Kathy has a favorite saying that "everything happens for a reason". The decision by the Hudson River Fishermen's Association to hold its annual "Catfish Chaos Derby" derby in spite of the pandemic challenges created an unforgettable and memorable event for my family and I would like to thank them personally. I would especially like to thank Scott Havner and his family who organize, manage and work tirelessly to make this river wide event successful. \$2,800 in cash and prizes were awarded to some of the 134 fishermen who participated in the contest. However, no prize can compare to the value of the memories forever etched into the hearts and minds of my family.