

Fishing Florida Keys & Cape Cod 2010-2011

Sport fishing the Florida Keys and the Cape 2010-2011: From the Catch to the Table

Sport fish the Cape opened its 2010 season sport fishing the Florida Keys. The change of scenery –not to mention the bite - proved to be great move to the hot, sunny weather. Every day we hooked into a medley of fish: tarpon, grouper, snapper, amberjack, king fish and sailfish. To weigh in tarpons close to 100 pounds is every fisherman's dream and we caught plenty of them. We took our daily catch to the Lazy Day restaurant in Islamorada and feasted on grilled, blackened and pan-sautéed fresh fish. The spread was sensational and it brought to the table the thrill of the day's catch all over again. There's no doubt about it - doing offshore and back country fishing just fired us up for the 2011 season fishing the Cape.

Our Cape season opened fast - the 2nd week of June – for striped bass and blues. We averaged 25 to 30 bass a trip, the largest catch up to 43 pounds. The fish migrated closer in shore in search of warmer water. We mixed it up (both casting and trolling) off the Monomoy Ripps and caught lots of fish – some keepers, others catch and release - in the 40 inch range. Good captains always need a good game plan. With a leg up from my sightings in Florida, I knew to look at the concentration of bait moving up the Gulf stream and now across the Nantucket Sound. The bait in the front of Chatham shifted north to Provincetown. The tides and current movements made it possible to pinpoint the best time of day to catch particular fish. Some of our biggest tuna caught took place early in the morning and late in the afternoon. Two new anglers – a 12 and 14-year old – made our vessel and their parents proud as they landed their first blue-fin tuna between 160-180 pounds.

An unbelievable set of events occurred during the 2nd week of June. On the back side of Nantucket with 6 anglers, my first mate and I spotted a stretch of what appeared to be seaweed floating on the top of the water. A flock of seagulls were diving down into the water and feeding on bait fish. It was a sight to see 500 seagulls in such a feeding frenzy. I navigated the boat right in the Southeast direction as I had a hunch there were big fish to catch. As I moved closer in, I spotted a huge migration of striped bass and bluefish feeding right on the top of the ocean's surface. In all my years as a Captain, you rarely see that many fish together enjoying nature's food chain. We dropped our lines, rigged up the umbrella rigs and started to cast and troll. Within minutes, the 6 anglers – two standing on the boat's bow - had limited out the number of fish we could catch. We caught and released over 100 fish that day. The boat's rod belts that got strapped around every angler for support were in full use. I was later told that even with the support, everyone couldn't wait to get off their feet and get a real good night's sleep.

In July and August, the bite moved to the front of Chatham thanks to the many sand eels and small bunker in the water. It didn't take long for the predator fish (striped bass and blues) and for some large whales to arrive. And when that occurred, the large schools of tuna and some great white sharks headed toward the 80 feet of warm water we were in. In late August, the tuna bite dropped so we headed south to the Canyons to catch marlin, yellow-fin tuna, mahi mahi and wahoo. I always like fishing the Canyons because the water is warm and the fish landings are similar to what you would catch in the Keys and the Islands. On one of our trips out, three blue-marlin hit our custom made Black Bart lures at the same time. The fish action on these lures is just incredible – in the water, they look like injured fish swimming. They produce every time I use them.

Reel Attitude found the good fishing spots – on one trip out to the Canyons, I navigated the vessel close to deep water lobster traps. Using fresh dead bait (baby bunker and herring) we threw large chunks out in the water. As the bait slowly drifted down, we could Mahi Mahi swimming upwards to grab the bait. My anglers were ready – rod and reel in hand, they tossed their baited hooks out into the frey and landed Mahi Mahi from 8 pounds up to 23 pounds. These fish (along with Marlin) love to go airborne when they get hooked. As they jumped out of the water, their performance was like a kaleidoscope of colors. To add to the fishing mix, there were days some of our anglers were catching 40 to 50 mahi mahi at a time. We landed Mako Sharks, wahoo, and white marlin. What a Canyon season!

In September and October, we chased giant blue-fin tuna out to George's Bank – 153 miles off of Chatham close to the Canadian territorial waters. A bite took place on George's Bank that I'm still talking about and one that I haven't seen in my thirty years of tuna fishing. A group of fish – averaging between 300 to 900 pounds - had migrated down from Nova Scotia. This produced some incredible fish action – anglers were catching between 2 to 3 giant blue fin tuna a day as they chummed with herring and mackerel. As they threw the chum off the boat, giant blue-fin would surround the vessel to

feed on the chum. We heard stories of anglers hand-feeding bait to the blue-fin tuna as they came up to the boat.

We had a banner trophy year for both young and seasoned anglers. The number of fish caught was impressive: we averaged 60 stripers and blue fish a day and 40-50 Mahi Mahi daily on our Canyon runs. Tuna caught for the season was close to 300 fish. Our angler's ended up with Mako's Blue's and threshers. Some of the fish was cut into fillets and placed in everyone's coolers to take home. I even handed out recipes all season long on how to cook the fish from my wife, Ms. Chef On Deck.

Our season ended on a high note when we caught a 400 pound tuna east of George's Bank. But, as always, it's time to shift our thoughts to the 2011 season. And it's my hunch, the off-shore fishing season will produce an earlier bite. With my area satellite charts in hand, I continue to watch the warmer water moving from the Gulf Stream right up to the backside of Nantucket. As the pieces of the warmer water break off, this brings in more bait fish and increases our odds to land more fish. This captain's prediction: another great fishing year on the vessel "Reel Attitude".

Hope to see you in 2011 sport fishing the Cape!