

# Hudson River Striped Bass

## Cooperative Angler Newsletter

NYSDEC

Hudson River Fisheries Unit

February 2008

Greetings fellow anglers. The 2007 Hudson River striped bass angling season is now a memory...but soon you will be gearing up for 2008 season. I'm sure some of you have already started as I have recently received diaries from '07. I am sure they were found as tackle boxes were cleaned out for the new season.

Overall the Cooperative Angler Program is working well. Before I continue, I must say "Thank You!" to those of you who filled out and returned the diary or at least an excuse as to why you couldn't. It seems as though the most difficult aspect of this program is having fishermen fill out and return the diaries. I realize that unforeseen circumstances do happen, and that problems with the mail occur from time to time, but of the 131 diaries sent to 62 people, I only received 34 diaries back from 27 fishers.

Interestingly, one of the major gripes at the recent river herring meeting we held here in January, was that there was a lack of data. The CAP is a perfect way for the fishing public to help monitor their own resource. We know it takes time and can be a hassle, but the data generated is an invaluable tool used by fisheries managers trying to keep a fish stocks at a sustainable level (translation: keeps you out there fishing!). Please help us to recruit other volunteers for the CAP who

you think will follow through and return the diary when filled. The data you provide is used here at the DEC's HRFU- but it is also used beyond NY at the ASMFC to help manage the entire striped bass population along the coast. I also hope this newsletter provides you with some interesting information about your striper fishery on the Hudson.

### 2007 at a Glance

The weather during 2007 striper fishing season was another that was on par for a spring here in the Hudson Valley. There were no lengthy cold spells or heavy floods that would have significantly affected the annual spawning run of bass up the river. Most anglers were able to fish "as usual" since the proposed regulation changes for striped bass still have not yet been implemented. A good sign though is that there were a higher percentage of bait fishermen using circle hooks last season than in the '06 season. Remember, bait fishermen, it is estimated that **14%** of J-hook caught fish that are released end up dying, relative to **8%** of circle hook caught fish. Eventually it will be required that you use a circle hook when fishing with bait.

I'm sure some bait fishermen probably had to alter their routine a bit to comply with the baitfish transportation regulations imposed to hinder the spread of the fish disease

viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS). I have also heard from some of you that you think it is impossible to catch a bass in the Hudson without using herring as bait. Just so you know, there really are alternatives to herring! One highlight of the '07 season was that the record was broken for largest striper ever caught in the Hudson. It was a 55.6 lb, 49.1inch female caught in the Kingston area on a stickbait, while trolling.

The CAP had **27** fishermen record data on **335** fishing trips for a total of **749** anglers. Those anglers totaled **3,695** angler hours of fishing, and **3,616** of those hours targeted striped bass. The majority of the remaining hours (**61.5**) were spent fishing for herring, predominantly for use as striper bait, although some were brought home for pickling. A few fishermen spent some time (**17.5hrs**) fishing for catfish although I'm sure they wouldn't have minded if they picked up a nice bass by accident. Anglers recorded the catch of **1,113** stripers in their diaries. You also caught **512** herring (give or take a few) and bought **550**. That's a grand total of **1,062** herring used by only **27** cooperators and their friends or clients.

### Stripers

Of the **1,113** stripers recorded being caught, you measured **777** of them and weighed **508; 384** stripers were

recorded as sub-legal (<18") and **729** were legal (**Figure 1**). If the proposed regulations had been in effect and the minimum size limit had been raised to 28" then, **618** of the bass you measured would have been sub-legal and **159** legal. The most bass caught as well as the highest percent of legal bass caught were within river miles 82 to 90 (the Kingston reach) (**Figure 2**). This is also the area where the majority of the cooperators fished.

Striped bass catch effort works out to be **3.2** hours per bass and **4.9** hours per **legal** bass. Both of these numbers are lower than last year, which were **5.3** and **5.7** respectively. I do realize that everyone has a different idea of what they would consider "successful", but for the purposes of this newsletter I am going to consider a "successful" fishing trip as one in which at least one striped bass was caught. Also, keep in mind, trips ranged from a 1/2 hour to 17 hours in length. Using the above, of the **322** trips targeting bass, **240** (74.5%) were successful and **82** (25.4%) unsuccessful.

You harvested (kept) **165** stripers or **22.6%** of the 729 legal sized bass caught. **45%** of the harvested bass measured were greater than 28" long and the average size of a harvested bass was also **28"**. The largest bass, 47.5" weighing 48 lbs was caught while trolling, 6 miles south of Kingston, on May 22, and was released.

Lures were the terminal tackle of choice (**Figure 2**). Only lures were used on **167** or **57%** of the trips. **112** trips (**38%**) were by fishermen using bait. The most popular bait was herring, used on **85** trips followed by worms (**20** trips),

eels (**16** trips) and bunker (**4** trips). On 13 trips, anglers recorded trying both bait and lures (**Figure 3**). The vast majority (**299**) of the striped bass fishing trips were by boat although **6** were recorded as shore fishing trips. It would help if we had a few more shore fishermen join the CAP to get a better idea of how well they catch fish, in comparison to the boat fishers.

#### Miscellaneous Observations

*SHAD:* We had no shad fishing trips recorded this past season. However, two shad were reported caught while herring fishing in the Rondout Creek area. *SMELT:* The Hudson River is at the southern edge of the range for rainbow smelt. They prefer colder water and over the past few years they have mostly left our area; although each year we do get reports of a small smelt run up the Rondout Creek. 2007 was no different, with a report in mid-March of "Lots of smelt at the dam today". *CATS & EELS:* Bait fishermen usually catch lots of catfish and eels as bycatch. Fishermen have reported noting an increase in the channel catfish population and a decrease of white catfish. Eels (big ones) can be a pain when bait fishing but please try to release them as gently as possible. Their populations are declining (all around the world – not just here in the Hudson) and those big ones have a long trip to the Sargasso Sea in the southern Atlantic to spawn. *DRUM:* Freshwater drum are also being caught at a greater rate, an immigrant from the Mohawk River..

As I'm sure you can imagine, the remarks section in the diaries are the most

interesting for me to read. Here are a few that stuck out:

➤ **1.5 hours for lunch, unbelievable day fishing, 24 fish total**

➤ **All caught on blood worms, gas: \$3.18/gal, blood worms \$12 a dozen, \$8 ramp**

➤ **Found woman that jumped off the Kingston Rhinecliff bridge, called 911, last trip fishing on Hudson (What a way to end the season!)**

➤ **I cancelled 5 charters b/c of poor fishing this season. Hopefully next season will be better**

➤ **looked around for four hours, but couldn't find any fish**

➤ **minnows caught catfish, worms caught white perch**

➤ **starting to see lines on fish (fishing line?)**

➤ **Lots of fish banging into bottom of boat and motor**

➤ **I believe this was the same fish I caught on 5/12 with the tag, as the length was the same and it had the same irritated area, off center on the belly from the tag**

*TAGGED FISH:* That last comment mentioned a tag the fisherman found in a bass. Each year in May, the DEC, as well as a few other state agencies, tag and release as many bass as we can catch. Last season, we began a high reward study in which 20% (about 200) of the tags we put on bass were worth \$125 to the person reporting it to the USFWS through the phone # printed on the tag. Make sure to take a quick look at the left

(the driver's side) of the stomach of each bass you catch to see if there is a tag there. Twelve of the high reward tags we released here in the Hudson this past spring have been reported and the date and locations of recapture are shown in Table 1. Presently, forty-nine of our other tags released this spring have also been recaptured; one as far north as New Hampshire and another off Virginia Beach.

**Regulations, what's up...**

As I am sure most of you are aware of, the regulations for Hudson River striped bass fishing have been scheduled to change for some time now. These changes have been delayed until AFTER this coming 2008 season. Last year they were held up due to the implementation of the emergency VHS regs and this year the hold up is a variety of other issues including emergency regulations for American shad now in the works.

American shad stocks along the coast, as well as in the Hudson, are in decline and have been for some time now. To try to reverse this trend, new shad fishing regulations are slated to be in place this spring. These new regulations will affect both commercial and recreational shad fishermen. So stay tuned to the DEC website for updates: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/propregulations.html> We will also get information out via letters, newspapers and e-mails.

River herring regs were another topic that came up this winter, that I'm sure most of you are concerned about. DEC hosted an ASMFC public hearing here at the New Paltz office in January. This meeting was designed to both inform fishermen on what is happening in other coastal states and to get comments and ideas from NY herring fishermen about possible future fishing regulation changes. We are summarizing all of the data we have for hudson stocks and will have future meetings this

summer and fall. No changes are occurring for this coming season. However, changes may occur for next year.

So... Keep up the good work and feel free to contact me with questions or comments. Keep in mind my field season begins March 10<sup>th</sup> so it may take a bit for me to get back to you. I will be sending out the '08 diaries within the next few weeks.

Thanks  
Good Luck  
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**Figure 1: SIZE RANGE AND NUMBER KEPT OF STRIPED BASS CAUGHT BY COOPERATING ANGLERS**

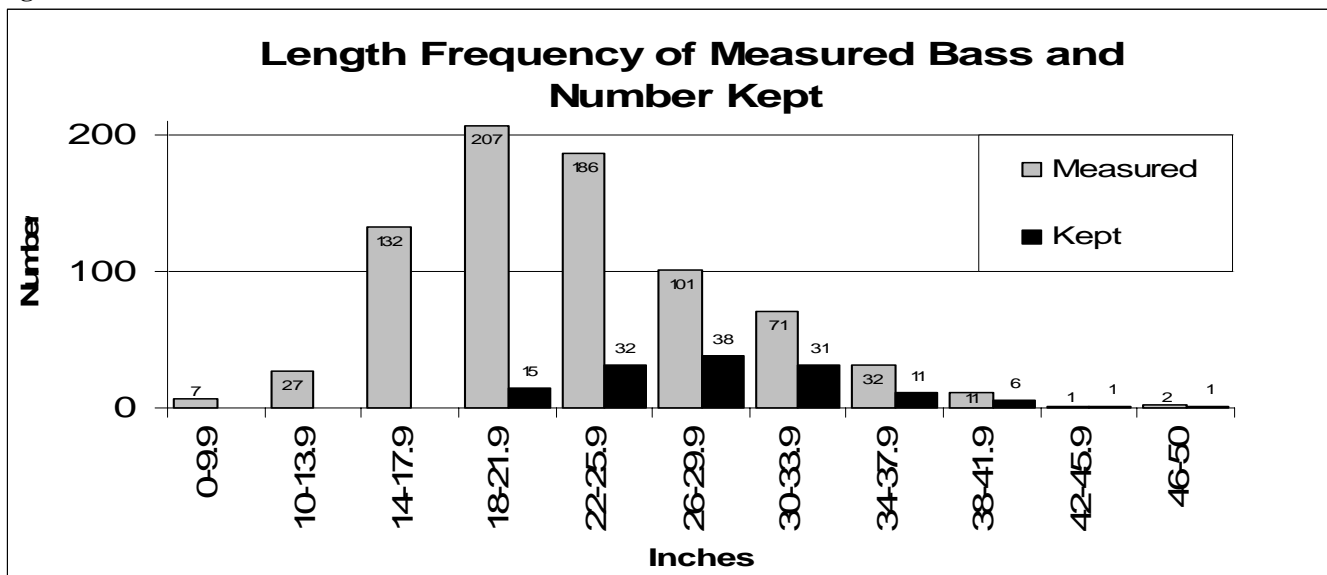


Figure 2: WHERE PEOPLE FISHED.

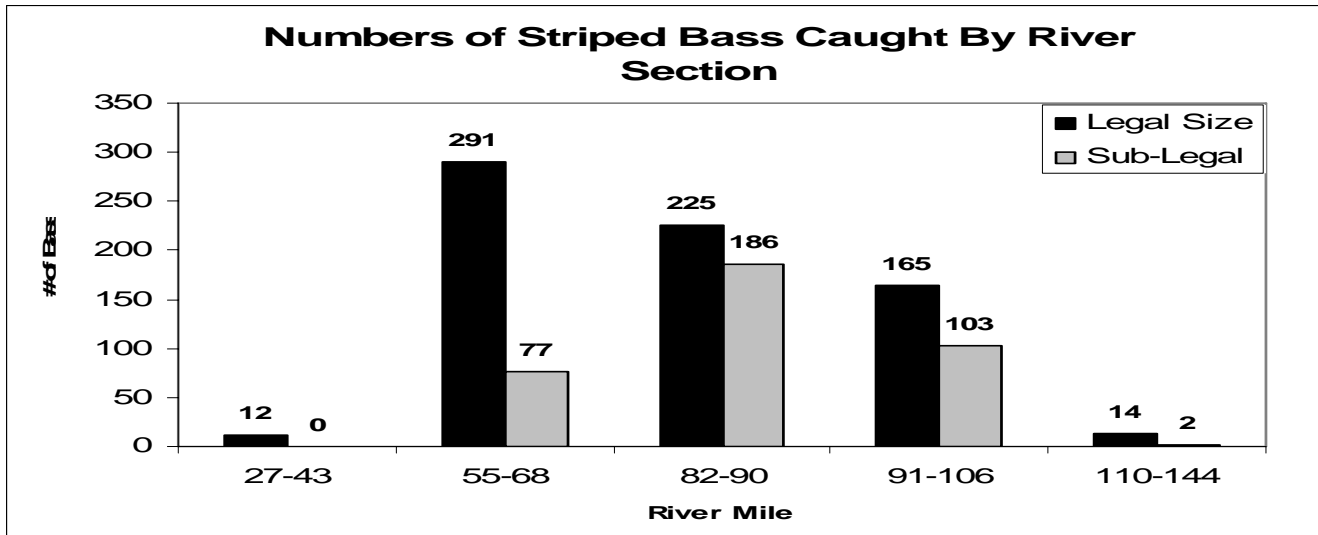


Figure 3: HOW PEOPLE FISHED.

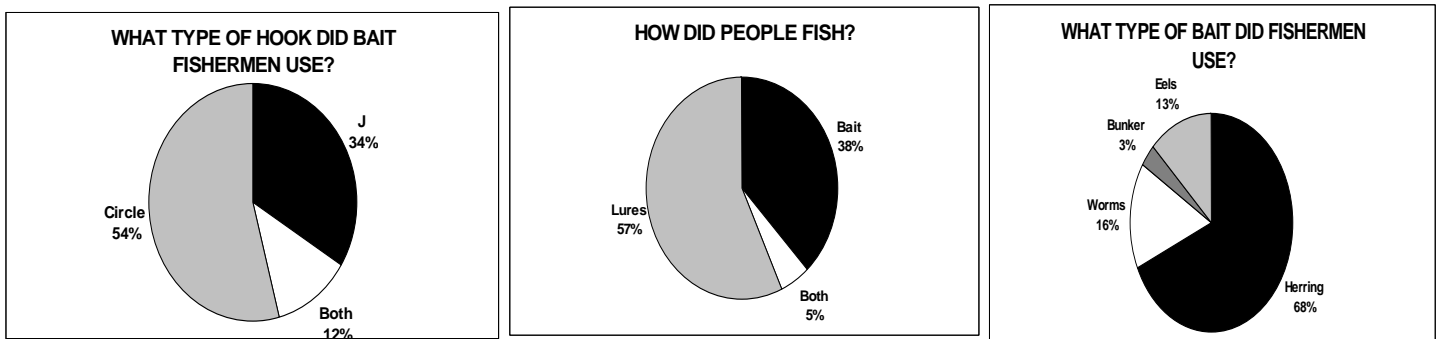


Table 1: 2007 HIGH REWARD TAG RECAPTURE INFORMATION

Tag Date	Recapture Date	State	Area
06-Jun-07	09-Sep-07	NY	MONTAUK PT
31-May-07	25-Jun-07	NY	L.I. SOUND
29-May-07	04-Nov-07	NY	NY HARBOR
17-May-07	08-Jun-07	NY	BRONX
08-May-07	12-Jul-07	MA	BUZZARDS BAY
07-May-07	02-Jun-07	NY	MONTAUK PT
07-May-07	21-May-07	NY	EAST RIVER
03-May-07	17-May-07	NY	KINGSTON
02-May-07	05-Aug-07	MA	BOSTON HARBOR
02-May-07	10-Jun-07	NJ	SANDY HOOK
01-May-07	16-Jun-07	MA	MONOMOY ISLAND
30-Apr-07	03-Jul-07	NY	CONEY ISLAND