

Fishing & Hunting

By Richard Seale



Water temperatures, both in the sounds and in the ocean, are now 62+ degrees. Why this is so important, I do not know, but it sure starts the fishing season. George Brown started swimming in the sound this week, which also seems important! The Spanish mackerel and bluefish are back. Bluefish can be caught off the Beaufort Inlet point of Shackleford Banks in the tidal rip and are hitting silver spoons and white gulp threaded on lead-head lures like ½ ounce Mann's sting Ray Grub heads. Casting into the

rip as you drift through is a fun way to catch these early blues. Spanish are hitting small spoons (Clark 00 sized) trolled at about six knots and are just off the beaches. Torpedo weights of differing weights can be run until you find the depth where the fish are. Don't get too excited since we are talking fish in the 12-inch range. The size limit for Spanish is a minimum of 12 inches fork length and a creel limit of 15 fish. Bluefish have no minimum size but do have a creel limit of 15 fish per person.

Sea mullet and blowfish (puffers) can be caught surf casting and in the turning basin with squid pieces on a two-hook bottom rig set with number three- to five-sized hooks and a three-ounce sinker. The larger blowfish will be females with roe. I have found that the roe is delicious rolled in Italian breadcrumbs and pan or deep-fat fried. Cleaning a blowfish is not that easy, but slicing the belly head to tail, working your fingers between skin and meat, around the ribs and over the back, so you can hold the back and pull the skin can work well. Wearing gloves can save your skin from the fish's sandpaper skin. The white meat is known as "sea squab" and is very mild and tasty. It too can be rolled in Italian breadcrumbs and fried.

I am again waiting for the Atlantic bonito and cobia to show up. They should be here by the time you get to read this. Cobia has a minimum size limit of 33 inches and a creel limit of two per day per person.

In the sound, some nice flounders have shown up. I have landed two 16-inch fish from my dock! Strips of squid four or five inches long seem acceptable to these fish for now. Of course, live minnows are always good bait for these predatory fish and can be rigged on a flounder rig, which uses a small float to lift the bait off the bottom. Remember the new legal limit for flounder is 15 inches with a limit of six fish.

The blue crab run that started last month has continued nicely. Although not usually an issue, there actually is a minimum size limit of 5 inches, point of shell to point of shell. Sook crabs (mated females) have a maximum of 6 3/4 inch point-to-point limit. There is a creel limit of 50 crabs per person with a boat limit of 100 per day.

The water is warm enough to bring the clams up higher in the sand column, and the relatively cool water, still clean from the stillness of winter, makes early clamming a healthier time to harvest these critters. There is a 100-clam limit per person or 200 per boat.

Looking at the Easter visitor volume in McNeill Park and hearing the laughter as children pulled in five-inch pinfish brought to mind the concerns about fishhooks. When taking young people fishing, or really most folks, I still think it wise to consider using pliers to mash down the barbs on the hooks. Extracting a barbless hook is many times easier and less painful than dealing with a barbed hook in a hand, finger, or arm. Oh, you might lose a pinfish or two, but that really does not matter. There is a hook extraction technique using a string and applying pressure to the shaft of the embedded hook and a quick jerk of the string that will do a good job of hook removal even on barbed hooks up to about size 4/0. Tom Tempel is our resident expert on this technique. It is a good technique to learn, and you can practice it on a banana!

New District 27 Power Squadron Commander

By J.B. Bagby

Pine Knoll Shores residents attended the installation of Harold O'Briant as commander of District 27 of the United States Power Squadrons® in a Change of Watch Ceremony at the Hilton Riverside in New Bern on March 24. Harold was commander of the Raleigh squadron before moving to Pine Knoll Shores with his wife, Bobbie Hill. Joining in the celebration were Barbara Bagby, past president of the Women's Club, and her husband "JB" Bagby, past commander of the Fort Macon squadron, which has eleven local residents as members. Former Pine Knoll Shores resident Captain Anthony Popiel of the United States Coast Guard was Commander O'Briant's special guest at the ceremony.

The United States Power Squadrons (USPS) headquartered in Raleigh has nearly 40,000 members organized into over 400 squadrons across the country, Japan, and in some U. S. territories. USPS is America's largest non-profit boating organization and has been honored by three U. S. presidents for its civic contributions.

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Harold O'Briant JN is given the oath of office as Commander of District 27 by Rear Commander Bob Palmer SN United States Power Squadrons

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