

Fishing & Hunting

By Richard Seale



Working for a return to normal

This is a combination article for the October and November issues of *The Shoreline*.

To finish up on a loose end, I am truly happy to report the NC Estuarium in Washington now has possession of the young osprey body from the B-S McNeill nesting platform. Director Tom Stroud is working with taxidermist David Gossett to come up with the pose for the bird. It is to be displayed as part of the Estuarium's lobby sculpture, which dominates the entry hall. Linda and I, along with many others, would rather have seen the young bird leave the nest lively and mature, but since this was not to be, this Estuarium option gives the bird a place to be appreciated far into the future.

Prior to Hurricane Florence, the hot, dry, calm spell of two weeks gave farmers a break from the summer-long rains, allowing successful harvests of the tobacco and corn crops. The lack of rain allowed estuary waters to increase in salinity which improved crabbing and inland trout, drum, flounder and shrimp fishing. Some nice-sized Spanish mackerel traveled the waters of Bogue Sound for several weeks. There were many schools of nice-sized Spanish and blues not far out from the ocean beaches from western Bogue Banks to Cape Lookout. White and chartreuse, or white and pink, 1/2-ounce spec rigs, Tricky Dicks, and small silver spoons cast into these schools provided good action on light tackle. Live baiting finger mullet or smallish menhaden attracted some near-citation-sized Spanish to the hooks. The old standby of trolling Clark-type spoons at 5 to 6.5 mph also put nice specs in the cooler. We did some ocean bottom fishing as well. Near Big10 we ran into several five- and six-foot barracuda, which made life very interesting.

As the weeks go by, the individual fish in Spanish mackerel and bluefish schools will increase in size and the schools will grow larger as well. Casting lures into these frenzy gatherings can really be a fun day of fishing. If you are so inclined,



Six pounds of 30-count shrimp (after deheading).

—Photo by Richard Seale

fly fishing can add an additional dimension to sport fishing. A short piece of fly line multi-strand wire leader can save some flies. Some king mackerel are near the last three buoy sets of the Beaufort Inlet shipping channel. Bump and go live baiting for them has been fairly successful. Nice sheepshead catches have been experienced along the port walls when no ships are in and around various bridge pilings. I have not heard about sheepshead being around the new bridge pilings. Post Florence, after the huge inflow of rainwater into the estuaries and sounds, I am not sure things will be the same—and reports are sparse. It took me 10 days to recreate my pier enough just to reach the boats. I have not had time yet to go out fishing.

In early October the Green Tail Shrimp visited our Bogue Sound waters in good numbers. I managed to have several days of cast netting and landing several pounds of 30-count (heads off) of these delicacies from shore. There are a few nice Jimmy crabs available, but not a normal run at all.

Hunting wise, I totally missed deer archery, and as I write this, am hoping to get in a day or two of muzzle loader before that season ends on October 12. Deer gun season opened on October 13 and runs until January 1, 2019. If you go hiking in the Croatan National Forest, I would advise wearing ample hunter orange outer clothing since deer hunters will be in those woods. In general, I wear a hunter's orange cap from now until the end of hunting seasons. Moving in the woods when it is dark, I usually carry a light, normally a red lighted headlamp. I have never seen a deer or a bear with a flashlight. I believe there are *very few* hunting accidents. Most incidents are acts of carelessness or pure failure to obey the cardinal rule that you never point your gun at something without being sure of the target. Wearing orange or flashing around a flashlight at dusk or dawn are effective defensive safety precautions.

As of this writing in early October, the Bogue Sound waters remained closed to water contact recreation. Florence was a bad one.

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