

Fishing – The Winds Prevail

By Richard Seale

As we recover from our five week trip to China and Korea, the “winds of March” still seemed to be blowing in May. There have been few days that venturing into the ocean, even near shore would be a fun ride. When the winds are just too much, it is time to stay in protected waters. Even the sound has had more whitecap filled days than not. I sure hope the real May gets here by the time this goes to press. So what is there to do?

I can report that the sound waters are warm enough to swim in and thus clam. I brought the granddaughters out last week and together with my son and daughter-in-law we landed almost a five gallon bucket of clams. Unless you get a very uneven catch of big or small clams, an almost full five gallon bucket counts out at around 100 clams, which is an individual daily limit. On a boat two daily limits, or 200 clams, are permitted. All big clams would have a lower count and all half shell sized clams would have a higher count.

The concern these days is that with the heavy rains we are getting there are many areas being temporarily closed due to run-off pollution issues. It is a good idea to look up on your computer the Division of Marine Fisheries Proclamation site to see the status of clamming waters. This can be done at : www.ncdmf.net. This gets you to the DMF home page. On the lower right side of the page is a list of “Quick Links.”

The second listed Quick Link gives you a listing of recreational size limits. For clams, way at the bottom, it shows that clams must be a minimum of 1 inch in thickness (most clam rakes have the gap between tines set at 1 inch for this reason) and the limits I mentioned above.

The fourth listed link gives you the on-going listing of proclamations. The ones that open and close clamming waters start with the letters “PA” which stands for “Polluted Areas.” There will be a date in the text and at the page bottom and the text will state whether the proclamation

is a closure or an opening. As I write this article we are at PA-43-2008, which is dated 5/12/2008 and closes portions of Bogue Sound and other areas.

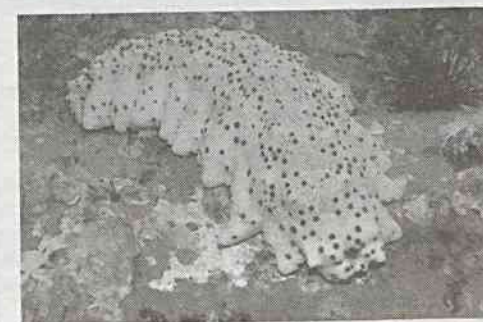
The last Quick Link takes you to the Map Page. Look near the bottom of this listing for the map of “Shellfish Closure Maps by County.” You can point to our area of Carteret County and then click to increase the size of the map. Our areas of concern run from E-1 to E-5, which covers Bogue Sound from Emerald Isle to behind Shackelford Banks. Even if you do not intend to clam, it is interesting to look at these maps as they show how much of our waters have been permanently closed due to pollution. You will see the

PKS canals and the area in front of the canals in the sound are marked as closed. The availability of these maps on line is new to the DMF site. You used to have to get paper maps from the DMF office. All the proclamations of closings and openings are geared to protect the public from polluted clams getting harvested by commercial operations or recreational efforts and being consumed and making people sick. Since public health issues are at stake, the penalties for harvesting clams in a closed area are severe so it is wise to take time to know the maps and proclamations should you plan a clamming trip.

or mud flat. Some burrow into sandy mud and are never seen.

These odd sea creatures are slow movers, getting around on rows of tiny tube feet, except for the sand-burrowing variety, which move by muscle contraction. All feed using sticky, slimy tentacles to snare microscopic plants and animals.

Sea cucumbers have a well-developed sense of touch, but are relatively insensitive to light. Their tough, leathery skin offers some protection against predators, such as fish and crabs, but some species have most unusual forms of self-defense. Warty glands on the surface exude tough, sticky, repellent threads. In many cases, the animal contracts and forces out its internal organs! The attacker dines on the organs and leaves the cucumber's empty, leathery body casing to regenerate a new inside. How weird is that! Sand burrowing cucumbers break into two or more pieces when roughly handled and regenerate the missing part - a cool survival technique!



Sea cucumbers have tough, leathery skin for protection and come in a variety of colors and textures. Photo by Jennifer Blaine

ASK THE AQUARIUM

Q. We found something on the beach that someone said was a sea cucumber. Is there such a thing?

A. Sometimes truth is stranger than fiction. Yes, there is such a thing as a sea cucumber. Actually, it's a relative of sea stars, sand dollars and sea urchins, even though it looks nothing like them. All are echinoderms and have a five-spoke pattern, which isn't obvious to the casual observer.

The sea cucumber you found was most likely reddish-brown and looked like a prickly sausage or golf ball. That's because these animals can take on most any shape. This flexibility enables them to squeeze under rocks and ledges and into crevices to escape predators or avoid strong waves and currents. When you find a sea cucumber on the beach, it has usually been tossed ashore by rough seas.

It's hard to tell which end is which on these animals. When they're stressed they withdraw the tentacles that ordinarily protrude from the front. They live in a variety of environments - sometimes submerged and attached to rocky surfaces by their tube feet, sometimes hanging onto rocks and ledges in crevices. Others live in shallow water or near low tide level, and still others inhabit deeper water and lie exposed on a rocky floor, sandy surface,

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