

Fishing & Hunting



By Richard Seale

By the time you receive this *Shoreline*, the season for hand harvest of oysters will be closed. The official date is March 31. Hopefully, by that time water temperatures will have moderated so that clams will migrate closer to the surface where they can be gathered in place of oysters. Gathering clams in the mid-winter is a really deep subject, meaning clams dig down in the sand column to stay further away from the freezing water temperatures. This means it is a lot more work to rake them up. Recreational clamming has a one-inch thickness limit and a creel limit of 100 clams per person per day, or 200 clams per vessel per day. You also need to be aware of "closed waters" due to pollution concerns. The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) has maps to show you this on their website. For Pine Knoll Shores, the sound waters between the canal outlets into the sound and out 100 yards, including 100 yards east and west of the mouths, are "closed waters."

We all are aware that the first few days of March presented us with temperatures that climbed to 70 degrees and crashed to the twenties, all within a few hours. I certainly hope this winter weather roller coaster ends this month. Under the hope it does, it is time to consider what fish can be caught and kept. As I reported last month, speckled trout harvest has been closed until June 15 due to winter cold stunning.

Sea mullet, also known as northern kingfish or whiting, should have shown up in the turning basin in March or at latest, early April. These are very good eating fish. They are bottom feeders with pretty small mouths and are best caught with bottom rigs, smallish hooks and baits of squid, Gulp bloodworms or shrimp. They are fun to catch since they are a pretty good fighting fish as well as good tasting.

Also moving into our surf and sound waters will be northern puffers, or blowfish. These are also known as sea squab (sea pigeons). The meat in their tail and on their back is firm white meat and mild in taste with a pleasingly firm texture, much like that of the sea mullet. They are seldom larger than a foot in length. Cleaning them is not easy. Their skin is tough and like coarse sandpaper. I try to slit the belly open and work my fingers around the sides and over the back but under the skin. I then can use one hand to pull the skin in one direction while the other hand pulls the body in the other direction. This usually pulls the skin clear of the body between the back of the head and the tail. I then cut the head and the tail free, making it easy to finish eviscerating the body. The backbone can be left in since it is easier to remove after the meat is cooked. The rib bones can be cut off where the back meat gets thick. You actually can wear your skin off cleaning a bunch of puffers, so wearing a tough rubber glove is a good idea. Somehow the reputation of these fish has gotten caught up in the deadly Japanese fugu puffer concern. Our northern puffers are not of any such concern. Catch some and enjoy them. They are a passing treat.

At this time, both of these fish are free of size or creel limits. Both can be caught in pretty large numbers and, fortunately, both freeze nicely. Freezing them individually but tightly wrapped in cling wrap and then put up in a good zip lock bag with the air carefully squeezed out of it as you finish zipping works well. You can open the zip lock bag and remove however many fish you want to serve and leave the rest frozen for later use. If you plan on freezing them for months, it is best to freeze them in milk. Of course, you then have to defrost all the fish in the bag when you wish to serve them.

It really feels good starting to have some concerns about fishing; maybe this crazy winter might actually end! Remember the rock season is in. The size limit is more than 18", none in possession between 22" and 27", and only one can be over 27". The daily creel limit remains two.

Book Sale Benefits Library

By Sue Warren

Friends of the Bogue Banks Library will host a gently used book sale on Saturday, April 5, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Shepherd of the Sea Lutheran Church at 201 E. Fort Macon Road in Atlantic Beach, with a special preview sale for Friends members on Friday, April 4, at 7 p.m.

Most books will sell for \$1 or less, with 2013-14 editions going for \$5. Paperbacks as well as children's books and puzzles will be available. Proceeds from the sale will benefit the library by funding new book purchases and supporting community programs sponsored by the library.

The Bogue Banks Public Library serves residents of Atlantic Beach, Emerald Isle and Pine Knoll Shores and is supported by Friends of the Library yearly membership fees. Membership applications are available at our used book sales, as well as at the library. Yearly memberships are \$15 for a family and \$10 for an individual.

PKA NEWS

By Gail Halada

The old saying, "April showers bring May flowers," is playing on my mind. I do hope the azaleas are showing off their colors in April in competition with all of Mother Nature's floral surprises. Our PKA neighborhood is fortunate to have a variety of natural trees and bushes, plus flowers of all colors. In April we celebrate all of life, as spring has sprung and put a jump into our steps. Just look at all the events on the calendar: Palm Sunday is on April 13; April 15 is the first day of Passover; Good Friday is on April 18; our Easter egg hunt is just before Easter, which falls on April 20; and Earth Day is on April 22.

April is also a good time to reread your PKA homeowners covenant to refresh your memory. Here is one example which might be forgotten: Article V, section 4, states: "No sign or billboard of any kind shall be erected or allowed on any lot other than one 'For Sale' or 'For Rent,' not larger than three square feet. 'For Sale' or 'For Rent' signs must be free standing and not attached to a dwelling or a tree. Small signs, not exceeding three square feet, displaying the owner's name or the property name are also permitted."

I wish each of you a very special Passover or happy Easter. Take time out to smell the flowers.

Pine Knoll Shores

VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

Our **vision** is to provide a quality environment in which our citizens are safe and secure, where individual talents flourish, and everyone enjoys the natural resources of our area.

It is the **mission** of the town of Pine Knoll Shores to provide concerted and friendly means of promoting health, safety and social well-being; develop and implement plans for the continuous improvement of the town; and encourage the participation of residents in service to the town and community.