

false albacore



Kory Kapaloski



Fishing's Great in NEW YORK...CITY?

By James MacDonald

It's early morning in the fall. Waves are gently washing over the jetty where you are precariously perched. You've been catching fish for some time now, releasing several medium-sized blues and a 27-inch striper just shy of the limit. A few blues sit in the creel for later. It's been a good morning; not great, but you know that at any moment a 50-inch behemoth will inhale your bucktail, since this is a world-class spot for striper fishing. As the tide gets higher, you knock off for breakfast, listen to the terns cry, and watch the sun rise over Staten Island... "Wait! Back up—Staten Island?" you ask? That's right! You're not in Montauk or the Chesapeake; you're in New York City!

Long disdained as a bastion of crowds and bad manners, NYC is coming into its own as a fishing destination. Cleaner and more accessible than ever before, the city offers fishing experiences that can go toe-to-toe with anywhere in the region. Stripers, blues, fluke, sea bass, false albacore, and many others can be easily caught along the miles and miles of shoreline, much of it publicly accessible. If freshwater is more your speed, many NYC parks have lakes that teem with quality largemouth bass, perch and crappie. It's all here—jetty, pier, beach, lake, flyrod, bait, offshore charter—basically every conceivable angling experience except for ice fishing, and all within walking distance of midtown. If, as the saying goes, diversity is strength, then NYC is the Hercules of angling spots.

What really sets NYC fishing apart, however, is that all these diverse opportunities are unbelievably

convenient. John Waldman, a professor of biology at Queens College, puts it this way: "I and others can



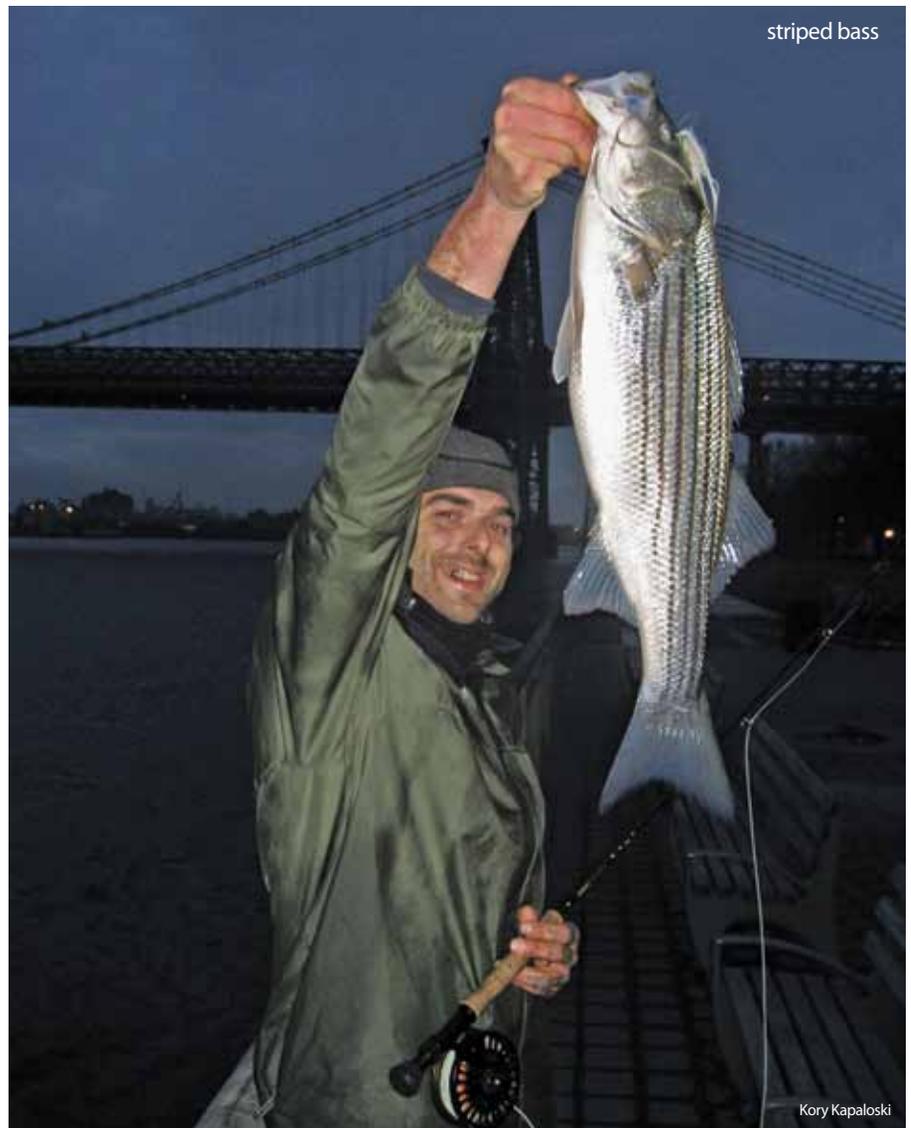
courtesy of Fish NY

visit a local bay or the surf for a few hours before or after work and have a chance to tangle with major inshore gamefish like striped bass, bluefish and weakfish. I don't have to drive all the way to Montauk to catch the same species." And if the fish aren't biting, you're within walking distance (or a quick bus or subway ride) of all the joys and temptations of the city.

"When you are out on the water, it feels like you are in another world, and then you can be back in the city and have an amazing meal, or listen to some killer music or whatever...best of both worlds!" says Kory Kapaloski, an avid local angler who has spent more time in the water world than most of us. These worlds run together at several of the Hudson River piers in Manhattan, where the perfect fishing day can end at the Pier I Café, right on the 68th street pier, or with swing dancing in Hudson River Park.

All this proximity comes with its own unique moments. Waldman recounted landing a striper and then taking a bow for a passing Circle Line tour boat full of applauding tourists, and more than one angler has unhooked a largemouth bass while a nervous would-be groom popped the question in the background on Central Park's bow bridge. Unique views abound as well, since there's nothing quite like battling a blue in the shadow of the skyscrapers. At Gantry Plaza State Park in Queens, you can try your luck for stripers and sea bass while brushing up on foreign relations. The U.N. is directly across the river from the pier, and the views of the Manhattan skyline are not to be missed.

It may seem hard to believe, but solitude is easy to find in every borough. The beaches of Ft. Tilden offer spectacular views over the Atlantic Ocean with nary a soul to be seen. There are also plenty of wooded nooks on



eel-shaped Prospect Park Lake (and many other parks) where your inner Thoreau can fish for carp, bass or immense crappie in peace.

Another great thing about having such excellent fishing in proximity to the bustling city is the restorative effect the water provides to nature-deprived urban residents. Whether or not you actually catch anything, there's nothing like a day on the water to make you forget your harried urban life. "When we went fishing, I felt so relaxed sitting on a chair and feeling the breeze," said Adam, a 4th grader from P.S. 3, describing a fishing trip his class took. Although Adam didn't

catch anything, the class was quite successful as a whole, and Adam's words perfectly express a sentiment that many of us share.

Capitalizing on the shoreline as an asset to connect urbanites to nature, several organizations offer fishing programs and advice to anglers of all levels. For instance, DEC's I Fish New York program offers fishing events to urban school children and runs several fishing clinics in both salt and freshwater each year. Would-be anglers should check out their brochure, *I FISH NY-Saltwater Fishing Guide for New York City Area* (available online at www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/8377.html) for a wealth

of information about seasons, species, and fishing spots in every borough. For more information on the program, call 718-482-4922.

New York City is crowded, it's true, but it is able to function because most people follow the rules, and with that in mind there are a few unique regulations that apply to fishing. All fishing in city park lakes is catch-and-release, and as is the case for all New York freshwaters, anglers must have a recreational freshwater fishing license to fish there (see www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6091.html for details). Governor's Island is a great place to fish and offers spectacular views of the Statue of Liberty, but this is also catch-and-release only. Other saltwater in the city follows the standard New York State recreational saltwater fishing regulations, available at www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7894.html. Most city parks are closed after dark, so for night fishing please obey all posted hours.

If you choose to eat your catch, please be aware that some fish contain chemicals that may be harmful to your health. There are health advisories regarding fish caught in New York waters; some are specific to NYC and New York Bay. In general, children and women of childbearing age are advised to avoid eating any fish caught in the city, and everyone else should limit their intake. For details, please check with the New York State Department of Health at www.health.state.ny.us/environmental/outdoors/fish/down_state_advisories.htm.

With so many fishing spots to choose from, more anglers than ever are discovering how great New York City fishing can be. In 2010, a local angler's group, the Brooklyn Urban Anglers Association, sponsored a catch-and-release tournament along the Brooklyn waterfront. Scores of anglers participated, and the top honor went to an angler who caught a 44-inch striper.

In addition, an angler achievement award was issued to a Pennsylvania resident who pulled a monstrous 22-inch largemouth out of Harlem Meer, a small, shallow lake at the north end of Central Park. That's a fish to be proud of, no matter where you caught it!

So save your gas and hop the F train instead (although it's probably best if you wait to put your waders on until after you get off). You don't need money, you don't need fame, you don't even need a lot of time to ride this fish train (my apologies to Huey Lewis); when it comes to angling, NYC is back on the map. Whether you want to go mano a mano with a leviathan, take your kids after sunnies, or merely squeeze in a cast or two after work, this is the place to be. And if the fish aren't biting, you can always drop your rod off and party till dawn, when you can try your luck on the water again!

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