



SALTWATER FISHING IN NEW YORK CITY

By NYSDEC Region 2
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Surrounded by more than 500 miles of shoreline, the five boroughs of New York City abound with opportunity for recreational anglers. Knowing just a few fishing spots in New York City can lead to a wide variety of fishing adventures. Each borough is unique and offers a number of fishing environments. From quiet beaches to urban piers, every angler is sure to find enjoyment.

Although the type and quality of access varies between and within each borough, the number of public access sites in New York City is staggering. About half of the Bronx shoreline is on Long Island Sound and the other half split among the Hudson, Harlem and East rivers. Pelham Bay Park, on Long Island Sound, offers anglers a long expanse of shoreline to fish as well as beaches for swimming and trails for hiking and biking.

South of the Bronx, the borough of Queens has its share of excellent fishing opportunities. Historic Gantry Plaza State Park provides outstanding pier fishing on the East River

with stately views of the Manhattan skyline. Queens also boasts access to Jamaica Bay, including a portion of the Gateway National Recreation Area (GNRA) which includes many beaches and tidal flats. Like most of NYC's fishing, this beautiful area can be accessed via public transportation.

State



Striped Bass

Anglers in Brooklyn enjoy pier fishing from the popular Canarsie Pier or Pat Auletta Steeplechase Pier located just off the boardwalk on Coney Island.

Crossing the harbor to Manhattan's southern tip, one finds the famous Battery Park. This park offers great access to the famed Hudson River fishery. The Hudson River is one of the primary spawning rivers for the coveted striped bass.

To this already diverse list, Staten Island adds an array of saltwater angling opportunities that rivals that of Long Island. An excellent place to fish in Staten Island is Great Kills. This unique, man-made section of the GNRA offers outstanding beach and bulkhead fishing with magnificent views of the Atlantic Ocean.



Lalov

Blackfish



New York State is second to none in terms of its fishery resources and diversity of fishing opportunities available. Despite this, fishing participation has declined in many areas of the state. One potential explanation is that our population is becoming increasingly urban while our fisheries management emphasis is on rural resources. In addition, resources may be more available to those fortunate enough to live close to them or affluent enough to travel to them.

For these reasons, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources is implementing the I FISH NY initiative. I FISH NY is an outreach/urban-suburban fisheries management initiative of the Department. This initiative will work to provide better information on both how and where to fish throughout the state, with an emphasis on urban and suburban areas.

With the bulk of the state’s population residing in cities and suburbs, I FISH NY will also work to improve fishing opportunities “close to home” using appropriate fisheries management techniques, which may include regulation adjustment, habitat improvement or stocking.

The I FISH NY initiative will not only work to improve fishing opportunities in urban areas of the state, but will also work to educate the public on where to fish and provide top-notch information and programs on how to make best use of the resources available. Educational programming will include fishing clinics and festivals, as well as school-based, in-class instruction and a revised statewide angling education initiative.

This brochure was produced with these goals in mind and will help guide the novice as well as the seasoned angler in fishing the marine waters of New York City.



Contents	
I FISH NEW YORK.....	2
FISHING BASICS.....	3
SALTWATER FISH.....	5
SPECIES AVAILABILITY.....	9
FINDING A FISHING SITE.....	10
MAPS.....	11
CATCH AND RELEASE	31
TAKING CARE OF THE RESOURCE.....	32
FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORY	33

Setting Up a Saltwater Fishing Rod

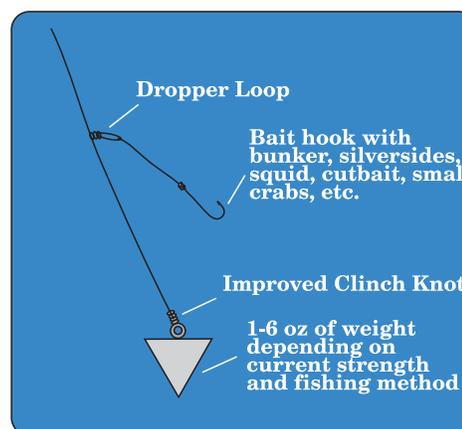
Rod Selection--There are four main types of rods: spinning, casting, boat or trolling and fly. These rods come in different lengths and degrees of stiffness or action. They usually range from small, 5-foot ultra-light (used for trout and panfish), to very large, 15-foot heavy action rods (for large saltwater species). A 7-foot, medium action rod is a good all-around saltwater rod for both bottom fishing and casting. If you will be primarily bottom fishing from a boat or pier, a boat rod is a good option.

Reels--The reel's primary function is to store line and assist in casting and retrieving. Like rods, reels come in different types and sizes. Their size is determined by the amount of line they hold. The main types of reels are spincasting, casting, spinning and fly. A good all-around reel is a spinning reel that holds 150 yards of 12 to 20 lb. test fishing line. Those preferring to bottom fish from a boat or pier may prefer an inexpensive casting reel.

Fishing Line--There are a wide variety of fishing lines being manufactured today. These lines are made out of increasingly specialized materials and can be purchased in a variety of colors. Monofilament line is the most popular and remains the best choice because of its strength and castability. A sturdy 15 to 30 lb. test line is appropriate when pursuing inshore saltwater fish.

Rigging Basics--There are countless ways a line can be rigged. The diagram below illustrates one common setup. This basic rig consists of a dropper loop, snelled hook and a weight. The simple design and versatility make it ideal for New York marine anglers. The design can be easily modified, making it an excellent choice for pursuing the many species found in New York waters.

It is also important to match the fishing gear to the targeted species. For example, the dropper loop can be tied near the sinker for bottom-dwelling species such as fluke and winter flounder, or higher up when seeking bluefish or striped bass. In addition, the weight can be adjusted depending on the type of bait, current strength and fishing method. Heavier weights can be used in stronger currents or when surf casting, and lighter weights can be used in weaker currents or when drift fishing. Using appropriately sized gear allows the angler to quickly play and land the fish, reducing the number of lost and stressed fish.



Common Fishing Knots

There are a number of knots useful to the angler. Instead of trying to learn them all, it is better to learn only a few and learn to tie them well. A well-tied knot can make all the difference between landing a big fish or losing it. The two common knots illustrated below are useful and easy to tie.

Improved Clinch Knot (Fisherman's Knot)

Pass the line through the eye of the hook, swivel, or lure. Double back and make five turns around the standing line.



Holding the coils in place, thread the tag end of the first loop above the eye, then through the big loop.



Hold the tag end and standing line while pulling up the coils. Moisten. Slide against the eye and clip the tag.



Dropper Loop

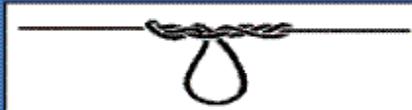
Form a loop in the line.



Take hold of one side of the loop, and make 6 or more turns around the line itself.



This is the tricky part- keep open the point where the turns are being made. Take hold of the other side of the loop, and pull it through the center opening, using your finger to maintain the loop.



Hold this loop. Moisten. Pull gently on both ends of the line, making the turns come together on either side of the loop.



SALTWATER FISH IDENTIFICATION



Striped Bass
Morone saxatilis

artwork: Duane Raver

As the name implies, striped bass are characterized by the presence of black stripes along the length of the fish. The Hudson River produces a local population of stripers, but most of the fish caught along the coast originate in the Chesapeake. Stripers are seasonal migrants, though some fish are found in city waters year-round. The preferred habitat is inshore near structures such as rocks and pilings, but these fish can be found in open water. Although striped bass can grow in excess of 40 pounds, most fish caught range from 3 to 30 pounds. Striped bass can be caught by casting artificial bait such as bucktail jigs and swimming plugs. Fishing the bottom with sandworms, menhaden (bunker), mackerel, or squid also works well.



Bluefish
Pomatomus saltatrix

artwork: Duane Raver

Bluefish are long, moderately stout fish, with distinctly forked tails and jaws filled with triangular, serrated teeth. It is these teeth that have earned the bluefish a reputation as a voracious and dangerous feeder. Their style of attacking prey makes bluefish a popular sport fish. Bluefish are coastal migrants that travel in schools into local waters in the spring, following schools of mackerel and bunker. Fish caught by anglers range in size from 9 inch (snappers) to 12 to 15 pound (brutes). Bluefish hit a variety of artificials, with shiny spoons and jigs most effective. Fishing chunk bait on the bottom will catch the larger blues. A wire leader should be used to prevent bite-offs.



Weakfish
Cynoscion regalis

artwork: Duane Raver

Weakfish are long, slender fish, characterized by dark spots on the back and sides. They are a colorful local species, with distinctive yellow pelvic and anal fins. Skin color may display pearly lavender, rose, blue, gold or copper overtones. Weakfish surge into local waters to spawn in the spring and spend the summers and early fall fattening up for travel south in October. They are schooling fish and prefer waters of estuaries, bays and tidal creeks, or along the open sandy beach. The name "weakfish" may come from the tendency of hooks to tear away from the mouth. Most weakfish caught range from 1 to 6 pounds. Weakfish will hit bottom rigs baited with spearing, squid, or whole sandworms. They will also take artificials such as bucktails and diamond jigs, worked near the bottom in areas with swift currents.

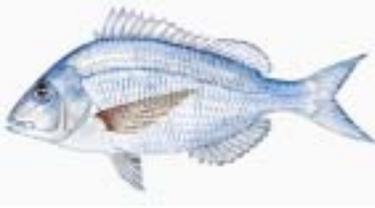


Tautog or Blackfish

Tautoga onitis

artwork: Duane Raver

Tautog (blackfish) are stout-bodied fish, somewhat flattened side-to-side, with blunt heads. They are characterized by their dark color, thick rubbery "lips" and continuous dorsal fin. Their small jaws are filled with stout conical teeth which are used to crush hard-shelled prey. Blackfish move into local waters in spring to spawn over rocks and artificial reefs. Following spawning, the fish spread out over rocky areas, grass beds, and shellfish beds to feed, mainly on invertebrates. While blackfish may reach nearly 25 pounds, fish over 14 pounds are uncommon and the average ranges from 1 to 4 pounds. Use bottom rigs baited with crab or clam.



Scup or Porgy

Stenotomus chrysops

artwork: Duane Raver

Scup, or porgies, are small, fairly flattened fish. They have a continuous dorsal fin with long sharp spines and a deeply concave tail fin with sharp corners. They are a dull silver to light brassy color with 12 to 15 faint stripes on the sides. An iridescent light blue stripe runs along the base of the dorsal fin and the sides are flecked with this color. Porgies are somewhat migratory, moving inshore and north in the spring, reversing that pattern in the fall. They are bottom feeders, eating a variety of invertebrates during daylight hours. They are a common catch on artificial reefs and rock piles. Porgies seldom exceed 4 pounds and the average fish caught is less than one pound. Fish bottom rigs baited with sea worm, clam or squid.

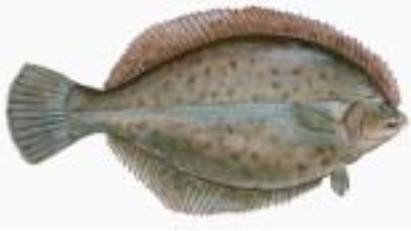


Black Sea Bass

Centropristis striata

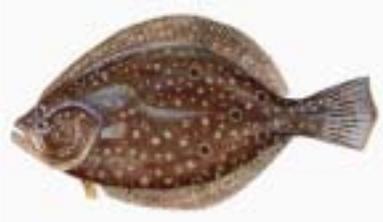
artwork: Duane Raver

Black sea bass are stout fish with large mouths filled with small, needle-like teeth. These fish are characterized by their dark coloration, continuous dorsal fin and rounded tail fin. Coloration ranges from bluish-black to smoky gray to dusky brown. Sea bass move inshore onto rocky bottoms and artificial reefs in the spring, then offshore and south in the fall. They are found in schools on wrecks, reefs and around jetties. They feed aggressively on invertebrates and fish. Although sea bass can reach 10 pounds most caught are less than 4 pounds. Fishing bottom with a hi-lo rig baited with squid or clam is popular.



Winter Flounder
Pseudopleuronectes
americanus
artwork: Duane Raver

Winter flounder are flatfish, having both eyes on one side of their head, swimming on their sides and having coloration only on the eyed-side. Flounder are right-eyed flatfish (when the fish is placed so that its eyes are above its mouth, the head of the fish points to the right) characterized by a very small mouth with thick fleshy "lips" and tiny teeth. Though they can change colors to match the substrate, they are generally dark on the eyed-side (muddy brown to dark olive to nearly black) and pure white on the blind side. They undergo limited seasonal movements in response to extremes in water temperature. They prefer a muddy sand bottom and can be found near shellfish beds and grassy patches. Flounder can reach 7 pounds, though most caught are in the range of 1 to 2 pounds. Fish on the bottom with clam strips.



Fluke or Summer Flounder
Paralichthys dentatus
artwork: Duane Raver

Summer flounder (fluke) are left-eyed flatfish (when the fish is placed so that its eyes are above its mouth, the head of the fish points to the left) characterized by large mouths with stout canine teeth. Like winter flounder, fluke can alter their coloring to match the substrate, from white sand to black mud. They are brownish with eye-spots arranged in a distinctive pattern and white blind sides. Fluke move inshore in the spring, reversing this pattern in the fall. They are active predators, spending most of their time on the bottom. While they seem to prefer sand or mud bottoms they often gather near some type of structure. Fluke can exceed 20 pounds, but fish larger than 15 pounds are rare and most fish caught are 1 to 3 pounds. Fluke will hit bottom rigs baited with spearing or squid and will also take a bucktail jig tipped with squid.



Striped Sea Robin
Prionotus evolans
artwork: Duane Raver

Sea robins are unusual-looking fish with large, fan-like, pectoral fins, the first three rays of which extend as fingerlike feelers. They have broad heads covered with bony plates edged with rearward-pointing spines, and slender bodies tapering toward the tail. Striped sea robins are distinguished by their light yellowish brown-to-orange coloration and two distinct long, thin stripes on each side. Sea robins are able to produce a variety of sounds, resembling grunts or croaks, by vibrating their swim bladders. They are usually found in the same areas as weakfish and fluke. They are aggressive feeders, taking bait rigs on the bottom or bucktail jigs tipped with a strip of squid. Sea robins migrate towards warmer waters from January to April. Both the striped and northern (*Prionotus carolinus*) sea robins are present in our area.



American Eel
Anguilla rostrata
artwork: Duane Raver

Eels are elongate, snake-like fish with small scales deeply embedded in the skin. The dorsal fin begins far behind the well-developed pectorals. The dorsal and anal fins are continuous with the tail fin and together appear as one long fin that wraps around the back end of the fish. Eels are born in saltwater, grow and mature in fresh water, and return to the sea to spawn. Eels are both predators and scavengers, feeding on living and dead material. They are prey for a number of fish species including striped bass. Adult females average 2 to 3 feet in size and are generally larger than males. Eels can be caught in many areas around NYC. They prefer quiet waters with mud or sand bottoms. Small hooks baited with nightcrawlers or seaworms, fished on the bottom, will work well. Eels tend to be nocturnal, so fishing for them at night can be more productive than during the day.



Little Skate
Leucaraja erinacea
artwork: Smithsonian Institution,
NMNH, Division of Fishes

Skates, like rays, have a very flat and expanded body form. The wide pelvic fins are attached to the head to form a “disk,” while the rest of the body forms a long, slender “tail.” All skates have rows of “thorns,” or “thornlets” on parts of their dorsal surface, including the tail. You should exercise caution when handling the fish. Skates feed mainly on benthic (bottom) invertebrates although free-swimming animals may also be consumed. Fertilization takes place internally and fertilized eggs are encapsulated in flattened, oblong pouches having four curved “horns”. These pouches are commonly referred to as “mermaid’s purses” and are frequently found on beaches after they have become dark in color. Little skates can grow to 18 inches in size. These relatives of the sharks can be caught with bait fished on a sandy bottom. Night fishing can be productive.



Spiny Dogfish
Squalus acanthias
artwork: Duane Raver

Spiny dogfish are the most abundant shark in the western North Atlantic. There is an active commercial fishery for them, and they are the preferred fish for the British staple, “fish and chips.” As indicated by their name, spiny dogfish have stout, sharp spines at the leading edge of both dorsal fins. They use these slightly venomous spines in defense, so must be handled carefully when caught. Dogfish are highly migratory and are generally in New York waters in spring and autumn when they consume large numbers of fish. They grow slowly and live long, swimming in large schools with others of similar age. Adults can grow to 5 feet. Young are born 8 to 12 inches in length. These seasonally abundant sharks will take bottom rigs baited with squid or cut fish. Surf casting the south shore beaches can bring good catches, especially in the fall.



GENERAL SPECIES AVAILABILITY

In general, fish move. Fish move for a variety of reasons. Most often, movement is driven by the need to find food, protection, or to reproduce. Anglers with a basic understanding of these movements are going to greatly improve their odds of being successful. With knowledge of the fish that they are likely to encounter at a particular time of year, an angler can eliminate some of the guesswork (At what height in the water column should my bait be? Should I use bait or a lure? How big should my bait be? etc.).

The following chart provides a basic outline of when certain species of gamefish are available to the inshore angler in New York. Keep in mind that most fish species can and will be caught outside of the outlined times. In addition, this outline does not take into account regulated open seasons. Make sure you fish for a particular species only during its current regulated open season as listed on the DEC website at www.dec.state.ny.us or call the regional office.

Fish Calendar

Species	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Striped Bass												
Bluefish												
Snapper blues												
Winter Flounder												
Fluke												
Weakfish												
Porgy												
Blackfish												
Black sea bass												

Fish Present	
Fishing Peak	

Crookes Point, Staten Island



Staff



FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORY

Fish are nutritious and good to eat. When properly prepared, fish provide a diet high in protein and low in saturated fats. Some fish, however, absorb contaminants from the water in which they live and from the food they eat. Over time, some of these contaminants accumulate in the fish, and likewise in the people who eat these fish. These contaminants can harm you, so it is important to keep your exposure as low as possible. Guidelines prepared by government agencies are not intended to discourage people from eating fish, but anglers should consider them when preparing and eating legal fish taken from New York waters.

The federal government sets standards for chemicals in food sold commercially, including fish. The DEC routinely monitors contaminant levels in fish. The NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH) issues advisories when sportfish contaminant levels exceed federal standards. These advisories should guide you in making wise decisions on the type and amount of fish to eat to minimize your exposure to contaminants. NYSDOH issues both

general and specific health advisories for eating fish from New York waters. The health advisory for consumption of fish from New York City's surrounding marine waters is to eat no more than one meal (1/2 pound) per month. NYC's surrounding marine waters include the Hudson River, Arthur Kill, Kill Van Kull, East River, Harlem River, and the Upper Bay of NY Harbor (north of the Verrazano Narrows Bridge). Infants, children under the age of 15, and women of childbearing age are advised to eat **no fish** from NYC's surrounding marine waters.

NYSDOH also issues specific health advisories for many of New York State's waters outside of the city.

For more information on specific consumption advisories, please contact NYSDOH Environmental Health Information:

1-800-458-1158 ext 27815

or

www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/fish/fish.htm



Striped Bass