



I FISH NY Newsletter

Fall 2008

Brown Tide affects Long Island's Marine Ecosystem

By Chris Gobler

Brown tide is the name given to describe the discoloration of New York bay waters which occurs due to the over growth of the microalgae, *Aureococcus anophagefferens*. Although brown tide has an effect on the organisms within the ecosystem, it has no affect on humans.

Brown tides first began occurring in NY in 1985 and were responsible for the collapse of the scallop fishery on eastern Long Island, a mass loss of eelgrass, which is a critical marine habitat, and the decline of hard clams in Great South Bay. While brown tide blooms have occurred sporadically since the 1980s, massive blooms were found in Moriches and Shinnecock Bay from May through November of 2007. In 2008 an unprecedented bloom occurred through all of Great South Bay and much of Moriches and Shinnecock Bays. Monitoring by Suffolk County and Stony Brook University found that the 2008 bloom began earlier than usual this year (April) in the western extent of Great South Bay and spread east throughout all of Great South Bay into western Moriches Bay during May. A second bloom in Quantuck Bay spread east into Shinnecock Bay and west into Moriches Bay during late May and June of 2008.

Brown algae cell densities exceeded two million cells per milliliter of seawater, which is the densest bloom ever recorded using modern methods. The bloom was most intense in the vicinity of the Robert Moses Bridge in Great South Bay which is troubling, as this region had recently begun to experience increases in scallop population and eelgrass meadows. Mass die-offs of eelgrass were reported in Great South Bay, and scallop landings in the Bay are likely to be poor this year as well. Additional impacts associated with this year's bloom included fish kills in tributaries along western Moriches Bay. Other observations on Great South Bay associated with this year's brown tide included a reduction in seabird populations (seagulls, ducks), an absence of crabs, an absence of horseshoe crabs, and poor fishing.

Although observations seem bleak, the Bay has improved in both water clarity and color since mid-August. This trend should continue throughout the fall and with it, hopes of species survival and better fishing.

Contributors

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I FISH NY is a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation education program. On Long Island and in New York City, the program has partnered with New York Sea Grant.



ASK KATIE Q: What size hook do I use to target largemouth bass?

A: There isn't one specific size that applies to this situation. Let's start with some background information about hook sizes: Hooks range in size from small to large, starting at #32 to 20/0 (pronounced twenty-"ott"). The numbering of hooks is distinctive, from #32 to #1, the size of the hook increases as the number decreases. After #1, hooks begin to be measured by "otts". Now, from 1/0 to 20/0, the size of the hook increases as the number increases. The most commonly used hook sizes are #10 to 7/0. The specific size of hook is chosen by the species targeted and size of the bait or lure. Smaller hooks are generally used with smaller bait/lures and conversely, larger hooks for larger bait/lures.

For largemouth bass, the common hook size is #4 to #1 for natural baits, and 1/0 to 4/0 for artificials such as soft plastics. I suggest taking a trip to a local bait and tackle store to become more familiar with hook sizes. When purchasing hooks, think about the fish, remember to buy non-offset circle hooks and/or barbless hooks. Good luck!



FISH POLICE

stories from law enforcement

by r1 captain tim huss



It was a busy summer for the Environmental Conservation Officers (ECOs) assigned to Region 1. With just 30 officers and investigators to cover both Nassau and Suffolk Counties that include a busy marine district and hundreds of miles of freshwater shoreline one can well imagine why.

In patrolling local waters, whether freshwater or marine, the ECOs routinely check for compliance of the law with regard to licensing, size limits, creel limits, and seasons. While most fishermen do respect the law, there are always a few who will disregard it. One of the most asked questions is the cost of the fines for fisheries violations. While most recreational violations are \$0 to \$250 dollars, fines can go as high as \$100 per fish. Commercial violations range from \$500 to tens of thousands of dollars for felony level crimes.

Sometimes, ECOs will work undercover to watch for illegal activity. In one operation this summer, officers posed as fishermen on a north shore party boat. During this particular trip the officers observed the mates filleting short fish and discarding the carcasses or racks overboard. The captain and crew had several significant violations to deal with when they returned to shore to meet the uniformed backup team. That matter is now pending in county district court.

In addition to enforcement, ECOs regularly participate in public outreach programs that promote fishing such as those organized by I FISH NY. There is no better reward for an officer than to introduce a child to the joys of landing that first fish. An ECO's participation in these programs enhances the DEC's visibility with regard to fishery management, and helps the public to associate law enforcement and fishing in a positive manner. This summer the Region's ECOs assisted with several such outreach programs throughout Long Island.

As fall approaches, ECOs will continue to patrol local waters for fisheries enforcement. A newly acquired 21-foot Justice Whaler will be an added asset to the Region's small fleet of patrol boats. The region is also preparing for the arrival of four new officers who will graduate from the ECO Basic Academy in Fulton, NY on September 25. After the rigorous 26 week training program, these young police officers will be anxious to hit the road or the water as the case may be. Their arrival will be added boost to the efforts of the law enforcement program in Region 1.



FISHING HOTSPOTS

Long Island: West Sayville Dock, Sayville

Type: Saltwater

Where: Great South Bay; Sayville, Suffolk County; located at the south end of West Avenue off Montauk Highway in West Sayville.

Access: The pier is wheelchair accessible.

Boat Launch: No

Fishing Pier: Yes; 80' x 20'

Shoreline: No

Species: Weakfish, bluefish (snapper), northern kingfish, blue crab

Specific Rules for West Sayville Dock: The fishing pier is owned by the Town of Islip. A resident recreation card is required by the Town. Please call (631) 224-5648 for more information.

Other:

• For general rules about marine fishing: http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/fish_marine_pdf/fishlimits.pdf

• For general information about saltwater fishing on Long Island: <http://www.seagrant.sunysb.edu/ifishny/pdfs/general-info-new.pdf>

Tips: Right now snapper fishing is good down on the South Shore. Rig your rod up with a snapper hook (long shanked hook) and bobber. Silversides or spearing is best to use for bait. The bottom around the dock is mostly, if not all, sand so getting snagged shouldn't be an issue. Have fun!



Photo courtesy of Malynda Nichol

Northern kingfish pulled from West Sayville Dock.

NYC: Governor's Island

Type: Saltwater

Where: Governor's Island is an island in Upper New York Bay across from Manhattan.

Public Transportation: The only way to get to Governor's Island is by ferry. Free ferries leave Battery Maritime Building in lower Manhattan every thirty minutes on the hour and on the half hour. To get to the ferry by subway, take the #1 train to South Ferry, R or W train to Whitehall Street/South Ferry, or the #4 or the #5 train to Bowling Green. When you get off the subway head towards the East River and follow signs to Staten Island Ferry Terminal. The Governor's Island Ferry leaves from the Battery Maritime Building, which is the building east of the Staten Island Ferry Terminal. After a seven-minute ferry ride to the island, exit the ferry, turn right and walk along the water for 0.8 miles.

Access: The Island is open to the public May 31st through Oct. 12th, Friday 10am to 5pm, Sat. 10am to 7pm, and Sun. 10am to 7pm. Railing height could preclude fishing from a wheelchair.

Boat Launch: No

Fishing Pier: No

Shoreline: Yes; railed sea wall; 300' long

Species: Striped bass, bluefish, summer flounder (fluke), oyster toadfish

Specific Rules for Governor's Island: All species are catch-and-release only.

Other:

• For other NYC marine fishing locations: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/8377.html>

• For general rules about marine fishing: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7755.html>

• For information on ferry times and events held at Governors Island: www.govisland.com

Tips: This area has a lot of underwater structure which can often lead to loss of tackle. However, the structure provides cover for baitfish, which attracts predatory species such as striped bass and bluefish. Tide is important here; time your fishing two hours before high tide and two hours after high tide. When fishing with bait or lures, cast to the far end of the area and retrieve quickly to avoid getting stuck.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

I FISH NY provides all bait and tackle. Just call and reserve your spot today!

Long Island:

Sat. Oct. 4th

Children's Saltwater Fishing Clinic
Captree State Park
11am-2pm

Sat. Oct. 18th

Fall Family Festival
Hempstead Lake State Park
10am-4pm

NYC:

Look for more events starting in April 2009!



To get more information,
log on to <http://www.ifishnewyork.org>.
To ask questions or register,
call 631.444.0283 (LI) or 718.482.4022 (NYC).



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