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I FISH NY Newsletter

Fall 2007

## Striped Bass Cooperative Angler Program

By Julia Socrates, NYSDEC Marine Biologist

Striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*) are anadromous fish, living mostly in saltwater and returning to the freshwater river where they were born to spawn. They can live for over 20 years, reach lengths of over 4 feet, and weigh over 50 pounds. As a result, striped bass have been a favorite fish to catch and eat by both fresh and saltwater anglers for centuries. Since 1985, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) has been enlisting the help of anglers to assess the health of the striped bass population in our waters through the Striped Bass Cooperative Angler (SBCA) Program.

Volunteer anglers are provided with logbooks, scale envelopes, and instructions on how to collect data properly. The data, which includes number of fishing trips, number of hours spent fishing, fish lengths, weights, abundance, and fish scale samples, is utilized in several ways. NYSDEC obtains age information from the scale samples, which is then used to help develop length-at-age keys necessary for the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (the governmental

body that coordinates fisheries management for all U.S. Atlantic Coast states) striped bass management plan. Once NYSDEC marine biologists have analyzed all of the other data, they compare it with previous years' information to assess population trends, as well as to characterize recreational catch and harvest. By participating in the SBCA program, recreational anglers directly contribute information vital to the management of striped bass, and get a chance to understand how fish species are managed on both a state and coastal level.

If you would like to participate in the SBCA program, or would like more information, please contact Julia Socrates at 631-444-0473, [jbsocrat@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:jbsocrat@gw.dec.state.ny.us), Striped Bass Cooperative Angler Program, 205 N Belle Mead Road STE1, East Setauket, NY 11733.



Photo courtesy of NYSDEC staff

The author displays a striped bass caught off Oyster Bay in the Long Island Sound.

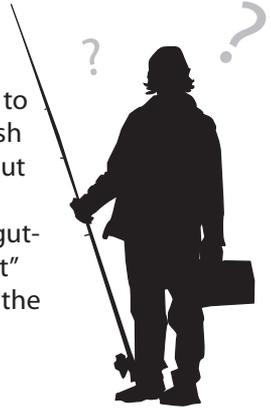


## ASK KATIE ? Q: What is a circle hook and is it “safer” for fish than a regular hook?

A: Circle hooks are shaped like “c”s with the tips turned perpendicularly back towards the shank. They are designed to only hook on exposed surfaces, such as a fish’s mouth. If a fish swallows your circle hook, as you reel in, the hook will pull out (versus a regular hook, which would get caught in the gut). Catching fish in the corner of their mouths results in fewer gut-hooked fish. When using a circle hook, you don’t want to “set” or abruptly lift the rod to hook the fish. By simply reeling in, the hook’s design will do the work for you.

Much evidence supports the claim that circle hooks are “safer” for fish because they reduce mortality rates by gut-hooking fewer fish. However, other studies show that for certain species or if used incorrectly--reeling in vs. setting the hook--circle hooks may not reduce fish mortalities and in some cases even increase fish mortality over regular hooks. Moreover, the hook must be non-offset in order to reduce gut-hooking. If a circle hook is offset, it is just as likely to produce gut-hooked fish as a regular hook.

In my opinion, if you can master the circle hook technique, why not use them? Buyer beware! Some hooks may look like circle hooks, but are not. Eagle Claw 2004, Mustad 39951B1N, and Gamakatsu Octopus are a few good options.



## FISHING HOTSPOTS

### Long Island: Massapequa Reservoir

**Type:** Freshwater, 20 acres, 1-6’ deep.

**Where:** Off Sunrise Highway (Route 27) between Lake Shore Drive and Parkside Boulevard in Massapequa, small parking lot just south of railroad tracks; LIRR to Massapequa station, walk east 0.2 miles to the lake.

#### **Access:**

*Boat Launch:* No

*Handicap Access Fishing Pier:* No

*Shoreline:* Yes, public

**Species:** Largemouth bass, trout, carp, sunfish, black crappie, brown bullhead, white perch.

**History:** Massapequa Reservoir is called a reservoir because it was originally constructed in the late 19th century to be part of the Brooklyn Water Works, built to supply drinking water to Brooklyn.



Photo courtesy of NYSDEC staff

For the complete list of freshwater regulations: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7917.html>

NYSDEC stocks site with brown trout in the fall; 600 fish by October 20th and another 700 fish by November 11th.

For a contour map and more information about Massapequa Reservoir go to: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/24182.html>



## NYC: Swindler Cove, Manhattan

**Type:** Saltwater, Harlem River, public garden and by pedestrian/bike path.

**Where:** There are several fishing spots at this location. One is on a small promenade accessible through Swindler Cove Garden at the intersection of Harlem River Drive, Dyckman/200th Street and 10th Avenue. Because this area is shallow, it is only fishable around high tide. Another spot is a short distance south. Walk south on the bike path and fish anywhere off the esplanade. By subway, #1 or A train to Dyckman Street. Walk east to Harlem River Drive/Tenth Ave. Follow road behind school (PS 5) to garden site. If traveling by car, park on street following city regulations.

**Access:**

*Boat Launch:* No

*Handicap Access Fishing Pier:* Yes, approximately 6' x 15'

*Shoreline:* No



Photo courtesy of NYSDEC staff

**Species:** Blue crab, white perch, striped bass, oyster toadfish.

For the complete list of marine regulations: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7894.html>

## FACT OR FISHIN' seafood health advice



In July 2007, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) reported that New Yorkers have higher blood mercury levels than the national average, in particular women and people in the top income group. For example, NYC women 20-49 years old had blood mercury levels 3 times the national average for the same sub-population. These elevated levels were highly correlated to fish consumption. Mercury at high enough levels may decrease cognitive development for fetuses and children under 15 years of age. If you are a fish consumer who wants to lower your exposure to mercury through seafood consumption go to the DHMH's website at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/epi/mercury.shtml> for a free pamphlet.

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I FISH NY is a collaborative program between the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and New York Sea Grant.



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

I FISH NY provides all tackle and bait.

## **Long Island: Last Event of the Season!**

### **Saturday, October 20th**

Fall Fishing and Children's Festival  
Hempstead Lake State Park  
10am-4pm

Come out and enjoy a day of fishing with the entire family! Headlining the event is a children's "Casting for Pumpkins" contest. In addition, over 1,000 trout will be stocked prior to the event.



To get more information,  
log on to <http://www.ifishnewyork.org>.  
To ask questions or register,  
call 718.482.4940 (NYC) or 631.444.0283 (LI).



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