Beginner’s Surf Fishing Guide

Spring 2009

Common Surf Fish from Virginia to South Carolina and How to Catch Them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virginia</th>
<th>North Carolina</th>
<th>South Carolina</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keeper Size</strong></td>
<td><strong>Possession Limit</strong></td>
<td><strong>Keeper Size</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Atlantic Croaker</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bluesfish</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flounder</strong></td>
<td>19”</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kingfish/Whiting</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pompano</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Red (Puppy) Drum</strong></td>
<td>18” - 26” Only</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spanish Mackerel</strong></td>
<td>14”</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speckled Trout</strong></td>
<td>14”</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spot</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Striped Bass</strong></td>
<td>28”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weakfish/Gray Trout</strong></td>
<td>12”</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Keeper Size**

**None**

**Possession Limit**

| None | None | **None** | None | None | None |

**Striped Bass** numbers are Ocean Coast only; numerous special restrictions apply to other areas.
Gear, Rigs, Lures, Rigging Bait, & Reading the Surf

- **Fireball Rig**
  - Gear, Rigs, Lures, Rigging Bait, & Reading the Surf
  - **MirroLures** - Speckled Trout, Red Drum, Weakfish, Striped Bass
    - Cast, let it sit for a couple seconds, to sink a couple feet, then retrieve very slowly with a twitch every few seconds.

- **Gotchas** - Spanish Mackerel, Bluefish, Speckled Trout, Weakfish
  - Retrieve quickly using short, sharp jerks of the rod.

- **Swimming Plugs** - Striped Bass, Weakfish, Bluefish
  - Dark colors at night, light colors during the day. For Stripers, use at night w/slow retrieve and tip it with eel skins. Retrieve at varying speeds, usually slowly.

- **Top Water Plugs**
  - Use when fish are feeding on the surface. Cast, let it sit for a couple seconds. Retrieve quickly, popping the rod tip to create commotion.

- **Hopkins & StingSilvers** - Blues w/wire leader, Spanish Mackerel w/o leader or heavy mono leader, Striped Bass
  - Cast & retrieve at varying speeds. E.g. Fast for Blues/SpanMacks, Slow for Stripers

- **Bucktails** - Weakfish, Speckled Trout, Striped Bass, Flounder
  - Sweeten w/piece of squid, shrimp, or mullet. Cast and allow to sink a bit. Jerk the rod tip every 3rd crank of the reel as retrieving.

- **Lead Head Jigs** - Speckled Trout, Weakfish, Red Drum, Flounder
  - Cast and allow to sink to the bottom or close to it. Retrieve slowly w/erratic, up and down jigging motion. Use mono leader or tie right to line.

Low Tide - Walk the beach, notice the terrain, look for sloughs and sandbars, look for anything unusual that will give you an idea of what will be beneath the water at High Tide

- **Soft Structures** – Sloughs, Rips, Points, Bowls
  - **Sloughs** – Between the sandbar and the beach or between two sandbars
  - **Rips** – Break in the bar where water rushes back out. Look for fast moving, rippling, discolored water, or foam moving out to sea.

- **Points** – Where the beach is sculpted to a point by winds and current, fish the deeper side of the point

- **Bowls** – A rip where there are 2 sandbars and therefore 2 sloughs; larger volume of water from 2 sloughs funneling into a small space; often hear waves clapping or water coming up much further on the beach

Hard Structures - Piers, jetties, bridges, inlets

- **Edges** – Edges/ends of sandbars (shoulders), High & Low tides, Sunrise/Sunset, water depth, currents, weather fronts, rough to calm water, etc.

- **Feeding** – Watch for birds diving, oil on top of the water, or baitfish jumping

Other – Anything different, water coloration, foam, shells on the beach, sand flea colonies, rocks, wood, underwater structures, beach formations, seaweed, etc.

1. If most of the water is calm, fish where it isn’t.
2. If most of the water is rough, fish where it is not.
3. Always keep a bait at the transition from calm to rough.
4. Always keep a bait up close.