Chesapeake bay fishing report may 2019

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Lower Chesapeake Bay Fishing Report, May 31 Update: With June 1 about to arrive, of course, there are countless Lower Bay anglers getting ready to set their sights on cobia. They've been spotted as far north as Wolf Trap already, and with surface temps above the mid-70s (York Spit is showing 76-degrees and Stingray Point 77-degrees), there's every bit of a possibility of hanging into one in virtually any VA waters this weekend and potentially in MD waters very soon. That said, if history is any indication the best bite will initially be farther down near the Bay's mouth; see the Way South report for more info, but be forewarned that we don't have a ton of cobia intel to share yet since they haven't really been targeted to date, and next week we should have a much better handle on where the fish are. After asking The Tackle Box what parts of the lower bay have been the best recently, they said that anglers trolling between Piney Point and St. Georges Island in the Potomac have had great success. They added that trolling the Western Shore side closer to Calvert Cliffs, the anglers have enjoyed a better class of fish. The stripers are mostly in the upper part of the water column. Many trollers have begun mixing six-inch tandem rigs in with some larger tandems and umbrellas, to keep the action steady but still have a shot at larger fish. White, chartreuse, and purple have been the best post-rain colors. Conditions have been a bit muddy here and there as a result from this weeks' storms, and when trolling areas where visibility is low, pulling the purples or other dark colors is the best bet. Richard Bell holds up a nice catfish, an exceedingly dominant species in virtually all the Western Shore tribs these days. Chumming hasn't been as popular an option in Lower Bay waters, however, that's possibly because of the large numbers of catfish in the area. They've proven problematic for anglers who are focused on striper fishing, and are stealing a lot of baits. Still, chumming the shelf in 20 to 30 feet of water in the St George's/Tall Timbers area has been producing some keeper stripers in the low to mid 20s. Anglers looking to target the cats should consider heading to the St. Mary's or Potomac rivers in Maryland, or the tidal Rappahannock and James rivers in Wirginia, where in all cases thanks to lowered salinity from all the rain they seem to be in really rather amazing numbers. Mud shad, bunker, and chicken breast are top baits but truth be told they'll slurp up just about any bait angler's offerings. A chunk of menhaden or chicken on a fishfinder rig should do the trick for them. Anglers fishing off docks for white perch should drop bloodworms on a bottom rig, and expect cats as well. They've been showing up regularly off the Solomons pier, at the St. George's Island bridge, and even at the Point Lookout's pier and causeway. Outside of the tribs in the open Bay, plenty of slot stripers are being caught in the upper areas of Virginia's waters with 20-somethings hitting trolled six-inch shad in white and chartreuse and umbrella rigs in the waters off Reedville down to Deltaville. Chummers can catch fish, too, but as with points north catfish become part of the mix even sometimes in the open Bay. Options for other species are also expanding farther down in the Lower Bay, though at a rather slow pace. A few blues have popped up this week for trollers as far north as the MD/VA line, but not in numbers or concentrations large enough to effectively target them. Bottom fishing is a slightly better story, with a few croaker being caught in the Rap and a few more in the mouth of the York, but their numbers remain relatively low north of the James (where catches into the dozens have been possible recently). Bloodworms are the top bait pick for bottom fishermen, and some (small) spot are in the mix, too. Crabbing report: Crabbing is better in the Lower Bay than up north, and though it's still not really in high gear, working for a while results in a mostly full bushel basket for most crabbers. Eight feet has been mentioned as a good depth. Lower Chesapeake Bay Fishing Report, May 24 Update: Many stripers being caught the past week have been between 19 and 28 inches, and have moved into the Western Shore rivers of the Lower Bay zone where Maryland and Virginia meet. Casting around the piers as well. Skirted jigheads with plastics in chartreuse and white have been doing the trick for the rock; grass shrimp and blood worms or Beetle-Spins are tempting the perch. FishTalk Contributor and intrepid angler Eric Packard strikes again with a nice schoolie striper, one of over a dozen caught on a jigging trip earlier this week. Reports for the Potomac are focused more on chumming and trolling, but both tactics are taking good numbers of fish in the low to upper 20's, with the best bite coming off St. George's Island, Tall Timbers, and off Herring Creek. The 20- to 25-foot depth range seems to be best. The Tackle Box says trolling has been the most effective method and staying tight to channel edges has been producing the highest grade of fish both in the river and out on the open Bay. They recommend using a mixed spread of soft plastics and bucktails. They also mentioned CP buoy south to the 68 buoy has been hot. Light tackle jigging have been productive, although fish caught jigging have on the whole been smaller than those picked up by the trollers and chummers. Heading down the western side the striper bite, mostly for fish in the WA slot - is also happening in all of the tribs to one degree or another. From the sound of things the James has the best bite, where all three bridges have been productive. Jiggers report decent catches on soft plastics in white and chartreuse and kayak anglers trolling crankbaits have had success as well. Anglers fishing the tributaries throughout the Potomac and the James this week, but there's no doubt the Rap will produce plenty of them too. The other good news for Lower Bay anglers is that croaker are in town and have now been caught in both eastern and western shore haunts. The area near the Route 3 bridge in the Rappahannock has produced a few, but just a few, and there's a much better bite down to the south in the mouth of the James and the York. A few have also been caught as far up as the Potomac, but most have been small and the numbers haven't been great. Bloodworms on bottom rigs are the ticket. In the not-so-good-news column, the rays have also showed up throughout the area. Any sort of bait fishing now runs the risk of being interrupted by a drag-ripping ray. Another item that's remained hot in this zone is the snakehead fishery. Yes, we know that's really a freshwater fish (sort of). But a lot of anglers are reporting a serious addiction to and some success with the snakes in the creeks off the Potomac and also in the Rap from Leedstown up. Frogs have been the hot lure. Lower Chesapeake Bay Fishing Report, May 16 Update: Hi anglers, and welcome to the "new" Lower Bay report. In an effort to better reflect the Bay's geography, area overlap, and where the anglers who fish in the Bay's different zones tend to focus, we're shifting our coverage a bit in this report. Moving forward we'll attempt to incorporate more of the waters historically considered as part of the Lower Bay regardless of state boundaries and landmarks. This may cause more overlap in some of the reports, but we hope it will serve area anglers better. As trophy season tapers off, many Maryland anglers' focus will be shifting to targeting schoolie sized rock. Good news - they're throughout the Lower Bay in good numbers. The Tackle Box reported that both trollers and casters have been bringing in schoolies while targeting trophies for the past week or so. The mouth of the Patuxent has been productive around the structure and wrecks. Swimming plugs have been in use, and are also successful. Point Patience has also been a good area, and the Calvert Cliffs Warm Water Discharge has been doing well. Fish in the mid-20-inch range are being caught, and there have been reports of fish hovering around the 30 inch mark there. Trollers putting out the full spread for trophy-sized fish are still catching, too, with a better shot at a fish or three than most other areas of the Bay. Eric Packard found the schoolie striper bite on a Lower Bay tributary. Catfish are heavy even throughout this part of the region and are eager to take fresh cut bait. Menhaden, chicken breast, and clam snouts have been popular. Anglers are catching plenty of them in all the major tribs including the Potomac, Rappahannock, and James, often clear out to where the rivers meet the main-stem Chesapeake. If you plan to chum for stripers in the lower Potomac, be sure to carry plenty of extra bait in order to weed through all the whiskers. While bottom fishing for perch remains productive, a few spot and croaker are now starting to make their presence known. The mouth of the Rappahannock up to the bridge has held some action for bottom fishermen using bloodworm on top-and-bottom. rigs, though most of the reports indicate the bulk of the fish are small. North of the Rap all the bottom fishing reports remain related to white perch and cats, though the other panfish species should be showing up throughout the area in the coming days. While some reds and specks have shown up on the Eastern side of the Bay none were reported to us this week from the Western side, but everyone's fingers are crossed as they wait and hope for an appearance of those fish and - dare we hope it - a decent Lower Bay cobia run again this year. Lower Chesapeake Bay Fishing Report, May 10 Update: The lower Chesapeake has held the best fishing this trophy season, that trend continued this week, and we saw a more regular flow of fish coming out of the water. Point Lookout, Cove Point, and Smith Point have been hotspots for trollers. Fishing off Solomons has also been good, as well as the area from the Gas Docks to Hooper's Island Lighthouse, according to the Tackle Box. Most guys have been trolling, pulling umbrellas, tandems, large bucktails, or parachutes. White and chartreuse have been the best colors by far. Most boats have been getting zero to one keeper plus two to five throwbacks but this week we heard of a number of triples, guads, and a couple boats with more. The early bite is best and several boats report getting strikes while they're still setting the spread. Josh Lowery sent in this pic during a successful day of trolling aboard the Wound Tight. Schoolie stripers have been hanging around the mouths of the tribs, and are willing to bite if you take some time to locate them on the depth finder. Once found, they've been providing some great action for anglers using light tackle. The Tackle Box also reported that spot have shown up in the pound nets around Cornfield Harbor, and are late showing up due to low salinity levels. Lower salinity levels Bay-wide have also made for excellent just about everywhere and especially in and around the Potomac, Lower Chesapeake Bay Fishing Report, May 3 Update: Today's overall catch was up significantly, judging from reports coming in, our experience on the Ebb Tide this morning, and the chatter back at the dock. Fishing has not magically become red-hot, but many boats cranked a keeper or two plus some throw-backs. The best action came from Calvert Cliffs south, and from the sound of things, the farther south you ran the better. White and chartreuse umbrellas run from board lines did the catching. Lower Chesapeake Bay Fishing Report, May 2019: Overall the past week the Lower Bay has been the best bet for trolling up striper trophies in the Chesapeake. Although catches are becoming more frequent, the fishing has still been relatively slow. Most boats are reporting zero to three fish, a few have had as many as five or six keepers, and most are encountering multiple throwbacks as well (even on nine-inch shad). The Tackle Box reported that large fish are being caught every day, and they also noted that the bite is about the same in both the Potomac and the Bay. Trollers are using the usual mix of tandems, parachutes, mojos, and umbrella rigs in a rainbow of colors. Piney Point and Smith Point have been hotspots as well. With fishing being so slow, success has seemed to come to those who are patient and willing to wait for fish to bite. Along with the trophy bite, The Tackle Box mentioned that anglers traveling to the islands of the Tangier Sound have found plenty of throwback rockfish in the cuts, holes, and structures. These stripers have been in the 14 to 28-inch category, but provide a fun day out on the water. Schoolie stripers have been in the 14 to 28-inch category, but provide a fun day out on the water. - Aaron Claxton landed this gorgeous fish on a nine-inch shad. Aside from the striper catch, catfish are the stars of the Bay right now. Both blue and channel cats are packed throughout the Chesapeake and its waters and will gulp up cut baits. Anglers fishing inside the Potomac are also encountering all they can handle. They can be accessed by boat or from shore, and perch are occasionally in their mix for anglers casting bottom rigs with bloodworm. Many anglers are still using minnow under a bobber (or a bow and arrow) to get 'em.

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