



Weekly Sportfishing Rundown

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Mother's Day Report

Now that winter seems like a mere distant memory, the spring saltwater fishing scene is exploding everywhere.

The most watched species of the season will certainly be cobia. And with sightings of these controversial fish within Virginia and Bay waters, the official start of the season on June 1st seems like an eternity for cobia hunters. For now, any incidental by-catches must be released. For the cobia season this year, year can keep up to three fish over 40-inches, and one of the three fish can be over 50-inches, as long as you have three anglers onboard. All crew members, including the captain, must obtain a free cobia permit, and report all cobia activity, good or bad. No cobia can be gaffed, so take along a big net, as cobia are known for their unruly conduct once they are removed from the water. The cobia permits can be obtained via the VMRC website at mrc.virginia.gov, or at any local [MRC Licensing Agent](#). The official cobia season spans from June 1st to September 15th this year.

The big drum bite continues to draw anglers to the Eastern Shore, where boats are reporting good catches of nice red drum off the Eastern Shore barrier islands, especially with the recent full moon. Both red drum and some black drum are available among the shoals off Fisherman's Island, Nautilus Shoal and the 9-Foot Shoal areas in anywhere from 10 to 25-feet of water. Many of the blacks are small, but a few fish are pushing to over 49-inches recently.

Flounder action is still picking up, but there is room for improvement in the lower Bay. Folks are catching fish, but many flatties are falling short of the new 17-inch minimum size limit for this year. On the Eastern Shore, the flounder action out of Oyster is still good, with strips of squid and Gulp baits working best.

Bluefish are out in force, which is common for this time of year. Snapper and chopper-sized bluefish are hitting within the lower Bay inlets and along the CBBT area. Many of the bluefish within Rudee and Lynnhaven Inlets are pushing to well

over 12-pounds. Surf anglers are also getting in on the bluefish action along the surf lines, particularly off the oceanfront. Striped bass are biting in the Bay, with scattered catches of rockfish to over 36-inches coming from the HRBT and the islands of the CBBT. Croaker also continue to delight surf and pier anglers as small to medium-sized hardheads take squid and bloodworms along the oceanfront, Ocean View, Willoughby and Buckroe areas. Some big sea mullet are also in the mix. These fish will bite almost exclusively on bloodworms. A few grey trout are also still lurking around the HRBT, but remember you can only keep one fish per person.

Anglers working Rudee Inlet and the Lynnhaven River and basin areas are scoring with some speckled trout, along with nice puppy drum, and croaker. School-sized striped bass are also biting in these same locations.

Spadefish are showing around the islands and pilings of the CBBT and the Chesapeake Light Tower, but the water needs to warm up a bit before the fish will respond. Sheepshead are here, with a few nice fish already boated, especially by those targeting drum.

With the re-opening of black seabass season on the 15th, more boats will make the run to deeper water in search of these popular wreck dwellers. The Triangle wreck area and the Chesapeake Light Tower Reef areas are good spots to try. Anglers can keep up to fifteen fish per person at 12.5-inches long. Tautog are also caught in many of these same locations, but you cannot keep them, since tog season is now closed.

Deep dropping is still a good bet, with blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, blackbellied rosefish, wreck fish, and a variety of grouper still on the menu along the edges of the Norfolk Canyon. With black seabass season open, anticipate an increase in deep dropping interest.

On the offshore scene, tuna are now within range of the Virginia fleet, with a few boats returning with limits of fat 30-pound class yellowfin tuna this week. Hopefully, this trend will continue to improve over the next few weeks.

For more information, go to www.drjball.com