

5/15/09

Fish Report

The first week of rockfish season was a little slow, according to some. Cool water, lack of baitfish, some high winds and a groundswell all served to keep the fish counts lower than we hoped. Diligent anglers managed to find limits here and there, but the fishing was by no means "wide open." Since then conditions seem to be improving, and the bite is definitely coming on. This next weekend could be excellent for fishing near Santa Cruz and other areas of Monterey Bay.

Most important perhaps, is the bait situation. The ocean water is slowly warming, and the sardines are returning inshore from wherever it is they went a few weeks ago. Carl Azevedo from Bocci Boy Bait had full receivers a month ago before the sardines disappeared. Now they are coming back in, as evidenced by the diving pelicans and cormorants feeding just offshore. Bocci Boy should have live bait at the end of S Dock at the Santa Cruz Harbor for this weekend's fishing.

Ed Burrell at Capitola Boat and Bait has managed to jig up some sardines and even net a good number to use as live bait on the Capitola Wharf. "The bait situation has gotten dramatically better in the last two days. Today as we we're seeing monster sardines up to 12 inches - a meal in themselves - plus some smaller ones down towards the cement ship in the five to six inch range." Burrell has counted a good number of bigger fish come in as well. "Guys were doing pretty good on halibut, fishing the outside edge of Capitola Reef this week." On Wednesday, Burrell counted five halibut brought in at the Wharf, all caught along the kelp beds near Capitola and Pleasure Point. The rental skiffs are getting good counts of rockfish and the occasional lingcod. Though we have received no direct reports, there are rumors of White Sea Bass being caught in the kelp beds near Pleasure Point.

Ken Stagnaro fished the 150-foot deep reefs off Davenport last weekend and managed to find limits for his 24 clients aboard the Velocity. Despite rather inclement wind conditions, Stagnaro stuck it out until all the client bags were full. "It's been a while since I had to hold the boat into 35-knot winds," Stagnaro quipped. The final count was 240 rockfish, mostly bolinas, copper rockfish and vermilion for the Velocity. Captain Jimmy Charters stayed a little closer to home last weekend, fishing near Natural Bridges. The Becky Ann returned with half-limits of quality rockfish and full limits of big Dungeness crab for their efforts. Further south, Chris Sport Fishing out of Monterey reports limits on every trip, according to owner Sonny Arcoleo. "We've been fishing inside the Bay, near Carmel and Pt. Joe when the winds are up, and heading to Big Sur when we can for the bigger fish."

This weekend's forecast is for a small ocean swell, and light winds in the order of five to ten knots, so conditions will be prime for fishing in our area. With the warming water, the reappearance of baitfish, and daily improving fish reports, we have hopes that the season will break wide open on Saturday and Sunday.

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