

Fish Rap: Thresher sharks surfacing on county tables
By Allen Bushnell - Sentinel Correspondent
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Despite high winds, last week was very productive for local anglers, both from the beach and on the boats. As a high-pressure system strengthens over our area, offshore winds will be heavy. The inshore should be very fishable especially in the mornings.

Last week featured plenty of action, even for some of the more exotic species we see in Monterey Bay. Ed Burrell at Capitola Boat and Bait said white sea bass are still being caught along the kelp beds near Pleasure Point. The warm water, plus plentiful baitfish, have attracted an influx of thresher sharks to the area. Both Burrell and Todd Fraser at Bayside Marine received numerous reports of threshers from the West Cliff area down to the Cement Ship below Capitola.

Burrell weighed in a whopper caught by Kurtis Williams, a commercial hook-and-line fisherman from Capitola who flylined a live sardine for his big fish. Thought to be the tastiest shark for table fare, Kurtis' thresher weighed in at 103 pounds. Fraser says plenty of threshers have been caught in the area in the 50- to 70-pound range.

Jim Rubin from Captain Jimmy Charters cashed in on the thresher bite last Saturday. Using sardines they jigged up themselves, Rubin's clients caught two threshers weighing up to 35 pounds, as well as a smaller halibut. They were fishing near the Cement Ship in 20 feet of water, which made for quite an exciting fight, according to Rubin.

Warm water has brought in schools of sardines, mackerel and jacksmelt.

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Jigging up a few lively baitfish is the best recipe for success in the coming weeks. Or, if you want to get fishing for the big ones more quickly, Boccie Boy Bait has sardines in its receiver right now, at the end of "S" dock at the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor. Boccie will be busy this weekend, however, as savvy anglers gear up to chase the offshore albacore. Yes, the warm water is getting closer to Santa Cruz and, more importantly, the temperature breaks are getting better defined in the offshore tuna grounds.

"These are some of the best breaks I've ever seen," said Rubin, who plans on running albacore trips as soon as the weather permits. Local boats have been travelling the 35-45 miles offshore for the past two weeks, and returning with up to 20 fish per boat. The scores should increase with the improving conditions offshore.

The current conditions benefit surfcasters as well. Halibut fishing is in full swing on the sandy beaches and coves in our area, and the striper bite is getting better and better. Surfcasting sensei Ron Martin reported more than a dozen striped bass were caught from the beaches south of Capitola on Wednesday. Martin's striper was in

the 20-pound class, and was released successfully. He said the hot bait for the day was hard-shell sandcrabs, though at least one was caught by an angler using a surface Popper lure.

Bushnell can also be heard on The Let's Go Fishing Radio Show every Thursday night from 7-8 p.m. on KSCO AM-1080. Send tips to him at scrufishing@yahoo.com.