

Allen Bushnell, Fish Rap: Stellar fishing ahead, but beware of waves this weekend

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Allen Bushnell

Fish Rap

We are at the height of our summer fishing season, and Monterey Bay area anglers are enjoying fantastic fishing right now. The past few weeks have been very productive for a variety of species, including some exotics. With the amount of bait in the bay, we are pretty well assured of continuing at this level for the next few weeks at least.

Top on the list of good fishing has to be albacore. After a few years of dismal tuna counts for Santa Cruz, the stars have aligned and the warm water currents offshore set up correctly this year to give us a shot. Right now the favorable temperature breaks are still out around 50-70 miles. In years past, we have seen those breaks move closer as the season progresses. Hopefully that will occur again this year, bringing the tuna grounds closer to Santa Cruz, making fishing them accessible for more anglers.

A number of anglers made it out for tuna last week, averaging eight to 25 fish per boat. Captain Jimmy Charters took four clients out nearly 70 miles and returned with 11 fish weighing up to 28 pounds each. Boccie Boy Bait fished the tuna commercially last week, and brought home 25 fish caught on the troll after an overnight trip. Stagnaro's Sportfishing plans a long-range charter next week for tuna on the Velocity.

Unfortunately, this weekend does not look good weather-wise for offshore fishing. Winds are forecast for 25 knots, and we will have a 9-foot northwest swell with 9 seconds between the peaks, mixed with a strong 4-foot south swell. Conditions like this are virtually unfishable, not to mention unsafe. Because Santa Cruz faces south, the strong south swell could hit us hard. Be careful this weekend if fishing shallow.

Inshore fishing remains very strong. Rockfish limits are not uncommon for those working the reefs near Capitola. We are seeing a good mix of browns, blues and yellowtail rockfish and an increasing number of the larger black rockfish schooling. There is also an increase in the number of lingcod being caught from our local reefs. Halibut are still on the bite, making this one of the best halibut years ever. Flatties were caught from both the Capitola and Santa Cruz wharves this week, and boaters are nailing the halibut from Natural Bridges to the Cement Ship.

Sizes still range from barely legal to nearly 30 pounds. Quite a few striped bass and at least one thresher shark were reported caught in the Capitola area last week, and a good number of white sea bass were reported caught.

All these fish are feeding on the abundant bait schooling close to shore. Carl Azevedo, who operates Boccie Boy Bait at the Santa Cruz harbor, reported the jumbo sardines are still prevalent, though he is seeing more small jack mackerel in the mix. He is also happy to report a good number of anchovies beginning to show up. His receivers are full for this weekend.

Big fish honors this week go to Ed Burrell [again] for his beautiful 24-pound white sea bass caught from the kelp somewhere near Pleasure Point.

Allen 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 scruzfishing@yahoo.com.