

ALLEN BUSHNELL
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Fish Rap

The weather was fairly cooperative for inshore anglers this week, though offshore albacore fishing was difficult. Catch rates remain steady, including some species unusual for this area.

The good halibut bite continues from Natural Bridges to the Cement Ship area, with anglers taking advantage of the abundant sardine schools massing in our area. Despite the four big commercial purse seiners scooping tons of the baitfish in our area right now, enough schools are popping up randomly to ensure a steady supply for live bait fishing. Anglers typically use one nose hook for live bait, but these sardines are so big that an additional stinger hook is recommended. Deploy your leader from a three-way swivel, or use a sliding egg sinker to get your bait to the sandy bottom. With this big bait, it's sometimes helpful to feed the fish, let it chew on the bait for a while before attempting to set the hook.

Ed Burrell at Capitola Boat and Bait says the halibut bite has been steady in that area. Most of the fish he saw last week ranged from 8-20 pounds, though a few larger halibut were brought in, including a 47-inch, 42.5-pound hog caught near Pleasure Point. Burrell got himself into the act last week. He fished near the harbor on Monday and returned with an 18-pound flattie. He said the rental skiffs are also doing well with rock cod and the occasional lingcod, working the reefs near Capitola and Pleasure Point. There are plenty of

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sardines in the Capitola area right now, and a good number of striped bass are working the bait balls. Stripers were caught from those local beaches as well as from the Cement Ship and the Capitola Wharf last week.

Windy conditions along the coast kept many of our sport charter boats close to home last week. Captain Jimmy Charters fished in front of the harbor Sunday for good bags of rockfish and a bonus halibut. Stagnaro's Sportfishing spent the week fishing between Davenport and Santa Cruz.

"We had light loads and quality limits, mostly blacks, blues and yellow rockfish, with a few big reds in the mix. We hooked two threshers, but didn't land them," skipper Ken Stagnaro said. With the conditions offshore improving for albacore, Stagnaro said he will soon be running mid-week tuna trips. A few boats managed to sneak out to the tuna grounds late this week. According to tuna expert Mike Baxter, the boats are travelling 60 miles toward the Guide Seamount area and are averaging around 20 albacore per boat. About half these fish were caught on bait, and the remainder caught on the troll.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, we are "officially" in an El Nino weather pattern now. Warmer water along the Eastern Pacific tips us to this phenomenon, which can bring some exotic species to our local waters. Local kayak fisherman Darin Deluca got some first-hand experience last week when he pulled in a strange fish he later identified as a Mexican small scale trigger fish. Delucca took a photo and released the fish, whose usual range is in more tropical waters. Finally, though not a local catch, we must give Big Fish Honors this week to Robert Zaremba from Boulder Creek. While fishing Prince of Wales Island in southeast Alaska last week, Zaremba landed a 65-pound king salmon. The fish was nearly 50 inches long and had a girth of 32.75 inches. Our hats are off to you, Robert!

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 scrzfishing@yahoo.com.