

Gone Fishin': Plenty of fish in the sea these days
by Mike Baxter

Summer is here, and most types of fishing are in full swing.

Still, crab and abalone season closed July 1. Dungeness crab season also has closed for sport and commercial fishermen and will reopen in November. Abalone season is closed for the month of July but will open back up for sport fishermen Aug. 1.

Meanwhile, there are many other fishing options during midsummer.

Inland temperatures soar this time of year, and most lakes and reservoirs can be crowded with water sports enthusiasts, like skiers and wake boarders. Fishermen need to pick lakes that are less popular and get up earlier in the morning. The deeper reservoirs continue to produce trout and kokanee for anglers with downriggers. The high-altitude lakes also retain cooler temperatures this time of year and keep coldwater fish biting. Bay Area reservoirs and shallow lakes have turned to a catfish-, sunfish- and bass-fishing affair with warm water temperatures.

Saltwater fishing remains a top bet, with a real smorgasbord to choose from. The beaches continue to kick out striped bass for anglers willing to get up early and comb the beach. Surf casting with pencil poppers and swim baits are producing stripers from 6 to 20 pounds. Further from shore, thresher sharks, halibut and rockfish are bending rods.

Thresher sharks were common catches last year, and this summer seems to be a repeat. Most anglers have been hooking the sharks in 60 to 100 feet of water, and if brought to the boat, most are released.

Halibut are a local favorite, and fish weighing as much as 38 pounds have been caught. Live bait and some patience is the trick for halibut while drifting the sandy spots from 30 to 60 feet of water.

Rockfish and lingcod have been steady for a summer catch. Rockfish have been caught from the Santa Cruz Lighthouse to Franklin Point. Lingcod fishing has been best further up the coast, as Franklin Point has been producing some monster lings.

The big news has been the albacore tuna that have decided to show up this year — it looks like it is going to be a good season. Boats have had some nice days fishing for albacore, with scores ranging from five to 25 fish per boat.

Capt. Jim Rubin aboard the “Becky Ann” reported, “We had a great trip on Sunday — we had eight albacore and the biggest fish was 30 pounds.” Rubin also added, “Cedar plugs and zucchini-colored jigs trolled at 7 knots was the best bet.”

The albacore were caught 40 to 60 miles out of Santa Cruz toward the Guide Seamount. The trick to tuna fishing is timing and weather and making sure the warm water is within reach.

Mike Baxter has fished in the Monterey Bay Area since he was a boy and has been a licensed charter boat captain for more than 15 years. Contact him at captmikebaxter@yahoo.com. He also hosts a fishing show on radio station KSCO (1080) from 7:06 to 8 p.m. Thursdays April through September.