

A Trip to Chesapeake Beach for Rocktober

(Bedford County Sportsman, Harry Guyer Jr.), November 2018

While here in Pennsylvania last month was October, in Maryland on the Chesapeake it had another name: Rocktober, the month for rockfish, or stripers as we call them. In October, these bass become active, and the cooler weather and waters make for interesting fishing.

Last week I joined three other members of the Mason-Dixon Outdoor Writers Association for a two-day fishing trip for linesides. We met Tuesday afternoon at the Chesapeake Beach Resort and Spa, and then enjoyed a crab feast at Abner's seafood restaurant before turning in.

Wednesday morning found us on the deck of the Big Worm, a 52-foot launch powered by a 900 horsepower turbo diesel engine, capable of 20 knots. Out of the Rod 'N' Reel Dock in Chesapeake Beach, the Big Worm has state-of-the-art electronics, including a GPS with a bird mode to reveal flocks of feeding gulls, a sure sign of rockfish activity. [Webmaster Note: it's the boat's radar that can be interpreted to show flocks of birds.]

Captain Drew "Worm" Payne has fished the mid-Chesapeake for most of his life. He has been a charter boat captain since 1998. Incidentally, he got his nickname as well as his boat's monicker from running a worm farm in his early years. Drew was assisted on our voyage by mate Jake Askin.

We cruised north along the Calvert Cliffs, heading for a favorite spot. Jake put out a number of lines, some dragging umbrella rigs and others hula rigs. I wondered

why he didn't launch planer boards, and Jake's response was that we wouldn't need them.



It wasn't long until our first hookup, a throwback under the legal 19-inch minimum. Then the action came hot and heavy. At one time, all four of us were fighting fish, and Mate Jake skillfully kept any major entanglements from occurring. In under 4 hours, we had boated over 60 rockfish, about half of them keepers. We were choosy enough to have limited out on mainly 22+ inchers, with the biggest a 28 landed by yours truly.

We all agreed that without a doubt it was our best day ever on the Chesapeake for numbers of fish. I remarked that the fishing was so good, I thought it was yesterday!

Captain Drew Payne will continue the fall rockfish season through mid-December and then begin the ocean rock season that runs through early February.

The spring trophy season starts in late April and lasts until mid-May when the regular season begins. He also schedules trips for drum, bluefish, sea trout, and mackerel.

His rates are reasonable and the Big Worm can accommodate a large number of anglers. For more information, visit the website at www.wormcharters.com .

Wednesday evening we enjoyed a great meal at the Rod 'N' Reel restaurant. I highly recommend their broiled mariner's platter with fish, scallops, shrimp, crab, and oysters.

We got up early and headed for our next fishing trip near Solomons to the south. Here we met Captain Robbie Robinson of the Miss Regina II. I had fished with Robbie and his mate Wally in the past.

At 40 feet, the Miss Regina II is not as large as our previous launch, but there was plenty of room for us to fish comfortably.

We would be hitting the mouth of the Patuxent River, one of central Maryland's three river drainages into the Bay. The Patuxent is 115 miles long, beginning in the hills of the Maryland piedmont and forming a 52-mile tidal estuary before entering the Chesapeake.

We motored under the Governor Thomas Johnson Bridge, and Wally began putting out lines. He did employ planer boards to stretch our spread. Umbrella, T-rigs, and hula rigs were the order of the day.

Immediately we boated a throwback, then trolled for an hour with no further strikes. We then moved to another spot downstream from the bridge, where another throwback hit. Action was slow, and when my turn came I landed a keeper. More shorties followed.

Now for the fish story of the trip. I got a hookup on a side rod and immediately knew it as a bigger fish. I finally cranked it up to the stern of the boat, where the mate and my

friends got a look at it. Wally called for a bigger net, but with a final flop my fish was gone.

Wally estimated it at 20 pounds or better. Not my personal best, but the biggest of the trip. As Wally apologized, I told him it was okay, stuff happens, and I didn't have a big enough frying pan for it anyway.

Captain Robbie and Wally worked hard to get us into fish, but at the end of the day, we had boated only one keeper and 8 or 9 throwbacks. But that's fishing.

To book a trip on the Miss Regina II, call 301-672-0383 or go to Captain Robbie's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/pages/Lets-Go-Fishing-on-Miss-Regina-II-Captain-Robbie-Robinson/307484799408144 .

Chesapeake Beach is about 3 1/2 hours from Bedford County, with Solomons another half hour. Make plans to visit some time. You won't regret it.