



Whoosh!

A Spearfishing Primer

By Craig Tomlin, Fisheries Biologist

The weather is perfect for early June with a slight land breeze, high 70s air temp, mid 60s water temp, rising tide and no swell. You and your buddy double-check the gear while planning for the day's adventures. Your heart begins racing as time draws near but you tell yourself to calm down, breath slow, relax.

When you gently slide into the water, your instincts and training take over. You have entered the beautiful and alien ocean world. Your eyes take a moment to adjust as your ears hear the rhythmic clicks and pops of sealife. Descending into the nutrient-rich green abyss, you begin to see soft coral, sea stars, mussels and crabs. It's hard to believe there is so much life! Tautog, seabass and lobster come into view. Out of the corner of your mask you catch movement, then a puff of mud and it's gone! A huge flounder, the biggest you have ever seen, has disappeared. That's the way it goes when spearfishing in New Jersey. You don't always get dinner, but you always make a memory.

The New Jersey coastline, along with its many wrecks and reefs, is a diver's paradise. Yes, New Jersey. While we do not have the tropical blue water of the Bahamas, the Garden State offers many great opportunities in your back yard.



A nice stringer of flounder and triggerfish were speared by Jason Hearon on the Wildwood Reef.

Craig Tomlin/NJ Div. Fish and Wildlife

New Jersey's vast artificial reef system (see reef article, page 6), the many natural undersea formations plus the large number of shipwrecks all create terrific habitat for fish as well as for diving. The best part: to access these fish meccas there is no need to hop on a plane bound for the tropics. Numerous exciting dive spots are accessible either from shore, private boat or by chartering a dive boat. In many cases the dive opportunities are close enough to go after work and be home in time for a late dinner. Hopefully, dinner will include fresh seafood.

This spearfishing overview can put you well on your way to bringing home great memories and tasty table fare from New Jersey's marine domain.

Training

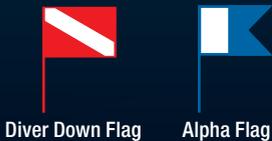
There are two approaches for exploring the underwater world: freediving and scuba diving. Whichever you choose, training is paramount and cultivates safe and responsible spearfishing practices. Freediving classes are now readily available. These not only increase your level of safety, they increase the amount of time you can safely stay underwater. A freedive class is taught by a certified instructor in a controlled environment.

Scuba classes are available at any local dive shop. Also taught by certified instructors in a controlled environment, a scuba course will teach you how to safely use the equipment and certify you to become a scuba diver. No matter which path you choose make sure you get trained by a reputable agency.

Basic Diving Gear

Acquiring equipment follows training. Diving with a dive charter or through your dive shop allows you to rent most of the equipment, a great way to decide what equipment works best prior to buying your own. Whether you decide to free dive or scuba dive the first piece of essential equipment is a well-fitted mask to keep out water so you can see the underwater world. A snorkel (yes, it's also needed for scuba diving) and fins are additional essential pieces of gear. A snorkel allows you to breathe on the surface while the mask is still under water. Fins are needed for mobility with their wide surface area propelling a diver through the water.

Additional gear includes a wetsuit for warmth and protection and either a dive knife or dive scissors. Last but not least, get a "diver down" flag. All dive vessels must fly a diver down flag alpha when divers are in the water to alert other boats to go slow and stay clear of the area. Even when diving from shore you must use a dive flag.



Diver Down Flag Alpha Flag

Spearfishing Gear

When it comes to spearfishing equipment, it's best to keep it simple. The less complicated your equipment the less likely to fail and the easier to use. A pole spear is a great way to start; they are inexpensive and can last a long time. While not as flashy-looking as a wood gun, the pole spear is probably the ideal weapon for hunting summer flounder and around rocks.

For those wanting to start with a speargun, several companies make relatively inexpensive, higher-quality models. The main advantage of a speargun over a pole spear is the shooting distance. Remember this advantage is lost when the water gets cloudy and when the gun is not agile enough to make the quick shot on that huge flounder buried in the sand.

Once you've chosen your speargun you will need a way to store your catch until you return to the boat or shore. A hoop stringer works well as would a catch bag or a line stringer. Again keep it simple; whatever works for you is your best choice. Also recommended is a spike or a pointed dive knife to quickly dispatch the harvested fish. Practice with your equipment and become proficient before you begin diving.

Know Before You Go

As with most sports there are regulations. Recreational fishing regulations and size limits always apply but there are several special regulations that relate only to spearfishing. These special regulations preclude certain fish from harvest with a spear and set forth the manner in which you may spearfish.

Spearfishing Ethics

Even those new to the sport are responsible to maintain the standards practiced by spearfishing enthusiasts worldwide. Unlike anglers using rod and reel, there is no catch and release. You must only shoot what you can eat—no more. This allows our sport to be one of the most environmentally friendly forms of fishing by creating no bycatch. Take only clean ethical shots and follow all season, size and limit regulations. As visitors to the underwater world, we must respect the habitat and the creatures that live there by leaving behind only bubbles.

Safety! Safety! Safety!

Safety is everybody's responsibility. Whether on—or in—the water, be cautious of people around you. Diver down and alpha flags must be respected by everyone.

Remember to check your gear—and your buddy's gear—thoroughly. When scuba diving, always monitor your air and bottom time as well as that of your dive buddy. When free diving, strictly adhere to the one diver up-one diver down approach. Remember all safety tips from your diver training and always dive within your limits.

Remember, a dive buddy is essential for safety and can add to the fun. By working together, both will be safer, more efficient hunters and have someone with whom to share stories at the day's end.

Be Aware: Spearfishing Requires Extra Precautions!

- ♦ Never load a speargun out of the water.
- ♦ Never point a spear at anything unless you intend to harvest it.
- ♦ Treat every gun as if it were loaded
- ♦ Know your target and what's beyond.

Being a safe and responsible spearfisher can bring years of enjoyment. New Jersey offers many opportunities for spearfishing along our coast. Get out and enjoy this great marine resource close to home.

Be sure to check out Fish and Wildlife's Record Fish Program (<http://NJFishandWildlife.com/reefish-salt.htm>) with a new spearfishing category which includes many species that frequent New Jersey wrecks and reefs!

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Skillful Angler Recognition Program

2015 REGULATIONS

The Skillful Angler Program is designed both to supplement the New Jersey Record Fish Program and to acknowledge that many anglers catch freshwater and marine fish that are not record size but are still worthy of recognition because the size and weight of the fish sufficiently tested the angler's skill. Open to resident and non-resident anglers. All fish must be caught in New Jersey waters using a hook and line during legally open seasons.



Cody Griglak, 10, of Great Meadows, caught this nice fluke from the Mi-Jo party boat during a fundraising trip with the Warren County Federation of Sportsmen. The boat had launched from the Atlantic Highlands.

Saltwater species taken from a boat must have been caught from a boat that left from, and returned to, a New Jersey port during the same trip.

The Program has three main divisions: Adult (for anglers age 16 and older), Junior (under age 16) and Catch and Release (based on length). A clear, side-view photo that allows accurate species identification must be included with each application.

Anglers qualifying for a Skillful Angler award receive a certificate with an artistic rendering of the fish species they caught as a testament to their achievement.

The new Skillful Angler Program now recognizes different levels of fishing expertise. An angler who submits five applications of qualifying size for the same species will receive a Specialist Certificate. An angler who submits five applications of qualifying fish of different species will receive a Master Certificate. Catch 10 or more qualifying species of fish within the year, and the angler will earn an Elite Angler Certificate. The Program also now recognizes the first fish caught no matter the age of the angler. Qualified anglers will receive a First Fish certificate.

Also new this year, the program is introducing four marine "Slam" categories — an Inshore Slam 1, Inshore Slam 2, Offshore Pelagics Slam and Marlin Slam. For the Inshore Slam 1, an angler must submit qualifying applications for a Striped Bass, Bluefish and Fluke. For the Inshore Slam 2, an angler must submit qualifying applications for Black Sea Bass, Tautog, and Weakfish. The Offshore Pelagics Slam will be obtained if an angler

submits qualifying applications for Bluefin Tuna, Bigeye Tuna, Yellowfin Tuna and Dolphin. For the Marlin Slam, an angler must submit qualifying applications for a White Marlin and a Blue Marlin.

Each month, the leaders of each category and species will be posted on our Skillful Angler Leader Board web page. At the end of the year, special recognition is given to anglers who catch the largest fish in each species category. The winner of each category is sent a special certificate recognizing his/her accomplishment as the best of New Jersey's Skillful Anglers.

Fish must be measured from the tip of the nose (with mouth closed) to the tip of the tail. For catch and release categories, the fish must be measured and photographed alongside a ruler. For Adult/Junior division, fish must be weighed and measured by fishing license agents, tackle shops or authorized Fish and Wildlife fisheries biologists.

Anglers must submit two photographs of the fish caught, one at the site of the catch and one with the fish alongside a ruler for clear identification and measurement verification. Take time to compose good quality (and high resolution) photos to submit with your application. The best photo may be selected for publication in this Digest next year! Include your e-mail address on back of the photo so we may contact you for a digital copy of your print. 

Apply online at:

NJFishandWildlife.com/pdf/sklflang-appform.pdf

Ocean Fun Day

Never surf fished before?

Join New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife educators at Ocean Fun Days to learn how!

May 16, 2015 from 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. at Island Beach State Park.

- Learn proper surf fishing techniques and tricks.
- All equipment and supplies will be provided. Ages 12 and up.

Participants may join in the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament (see page 9 for Tournament details) the next day using provided equipment. Tournament registration fees will apply.



Minimum Entry Requirements:

Species	Adult Weight (lbs., oz.)	Junior Weight (lbs., oz.)	Catch & Release (inches)
Black Sea Bass	4	3	20
Striped Bass	40	36	42
Black Drum	70	63	46
Bluefish	18	16	33
Cod	30	27	42
Dolphin	30	27	n/a
Winter Flounder	2	1 lb., 8 oz.	16
Fluke	8	7	27
Kingfish	1	8 oz.	13
Mako Shark	250	225	n/a
Blue Marlin	400	360	n/a
White Marlin	60	54	n/a
Pollock	25	22 lbs., 8 oz.	41
Tautog	8	7	22
Albacore Tuna	50	45	n/a
Big Eye Tuna	200	180	n/a
Bluefin Tuna	500	450	n/a
Yellowfin Tuna	120	108	n/a
Tuna (other)	250	225	n/a
Weakfish	10	9	30

The New Jersey State Record Fish Program requires a separate application and is based on weight alone. Scale certification documentation and a weighmaster's signature are necessary. Other rules apply. Visit Fish and Wildlife's Web site at NJFishandWildlife.com for a complete list of current state records. See also page 24.

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State Record Marine Sport Fish

2015 REGULATIONS



On an October fishing trip, this sheephead was caught by William Catino. The fish weighed 19 pounds, 3 ounces and measured 29 inches long with a 27 inch girth. Catino caught this monster while casting from a dock in Longport.

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Record Fish Program honors anglers who catch the largest of select species of freshwater and saltwater fish. Record size is based on weight alone; there are no line classes. Currently there are 76 marine species eligible for entry into the program which includes a new spearfishing category with 17 additional species. See *A Spearfishing Primer*, page 20.

Anglers are reminded that the objective of the Record Fish Program is to increase awareness of fishing opportunities for species that are regularly sought and routinely found on or off the coast of New Jersey. The original list of 72 species was pared down with that objective in mind.

Twelve species are now retired from the list of program-eligible fish, but remain on a separate list posted on Fish and Wildlife's Web site. One historical catch is also retired and posted on the list.

Anglers should be aware of the procedure in effect for entering the Record Fish Program. First, separate applications are required for freshwater and

saltwater species. Second, for saltwater entries, it is now mandatory that a marine biologist inspect any potential record fish, as identification solely by photo is not always accurate. Anglers must call Fish and Wildlife's Nacote Creek Research Station at (609) 748-2020 to make arrangements for inspection. In most instances, the fish must be transported to this office in Port Republic. However, in the case of extremely large fish (i.e., shark and tuna), a biologist should be available to travel for dockside inspection. Note that all scale certification requirements still apply, including a valid Certificate of Inspection/Test Report and current Registration Certificate issued by the County Office of Weights and Measures.

The entry deadline is now no later than one month after the date of catch. Note that the triggerfish category is now defined as gray triggerfish.

For a complete list of state record fish or to print an application with complete program rules, visit the Division of Fish and Wildlife's Web site at NJFishandWildlife.com/fishing.htm. 

New Jersey State Record Marine Fish

Species	Lbs.	Oz.	Year	Angler	Where Caught
Amberjack, greater	85	0	1993	Edwin Metzner	Off Cape May
Bass, black sea	8	4.5	2010	Andrew A. Merendino	Off Cape May
Bluefish	27	1	1997	Roger Kastorsky	5 Fathom Bank
Bonito, Atlantic	13	8	1945	Frank Lykes, Jr.	Off Sandy Hook
Cobia	87	0	1999	John Shanchuk	Off Sea Bright
Cod	81	0	1967	Joseph Chesla	Off Brielle
Crab, blue	8¾ pt. to pt.		2009	Raymond Ponik	Bayonne
Croaker, Atlantic	5	8	1981	Frederick Brown	Delaware Bay
*Cunner	3	0.5	2012	Raul de la Prida	Off Pt. Pleasant
Dogfish, smooth	19	11.2	2013	Michael J. LaTorre, Jr.	Sculls Bay
Dogfish, spiny	15	12	1990	Jeff Pennick	Off Cape May
Dolphin	63	3	1974	Scott Smith, Jr.	Baltimore Canyon
Drum, black	109	0	2008	Nick Henry	Delaware Bay
Drum, red	55	0	1985	Daniel Yanino	Great Bay
Eel, American	9	13	1988	Warren Campbell	Atlantic City
Fluke	19	12	1953	Walter Lubin	Off Cape May
Flounder, winter	5	11	1993	Jimmy Swanson	Off Barnegat Light
Hake, white	41	7	1989	Wayne Eble	Off Barnegat Light
Kingfish, Northern	2	8	2004	Chester Urbanski	Barnegat Bay
Ling (red hake)	12	13	2010	Billy Watson	Off Manasquan
Mackerel, Atlantic	4	1	1983	Abe Elkin	Manasquan Ridge
Mackerel, king	54	0	1998	Fernando Alfaiate	Off Cape May
*Mackerel, Spanish	9	12	1990	Donald Kohler	Off Cape May
Marlin, blue	1,046	0	1986	Phil Infantolino	Hudson Canyon
Marlin, white	137	8	1980	Mike Marchell	Hudson Canyon
Perch, white	2	12	1998	Michael King	Little Beach Creek
*Pollock	46	7	1975	John Holton	Off Brielle
Porgy	5	14	1976	Victor Rone	Delaware Bay
Sailfish	43	4	2006	Dr. John Tallia	Linden Kohl Canyon
Seatrout, spotted	11	2	1974	Bert Harper	Holgate Surf
Shad, American	7	0	1967	Rodger West	Great Bay

Species	Lbs.	Oz.	Year	Angler	Where Caught
Shad, hickory	2	13	2011	Robert Macejka	Mantoloking
Shark, blue	366	0	1996	William Young, Jr.	Mud Hole
Shark, bull				Vacant (Minimum Weight 150 lbs.)	
Shark, dusky	530	0	1987	Brian Dunlevy	Off Great Egg Inlet
Shark, hammerhead	365	0	1985	Walter Thacara	Mud Hole
Shark, porbeagle				Vacant (Minimum Weight 100 lbs.)	
Shark, s-fin mako	856	0	1994	Christopher Palmer	Wilmington Canyon
Shark, thresher	683	0	2009	Bennett Fogelberg	Fingers
Shark, tiger	880	0	1988	Billy DeJohn	Off Cape May
Sheepshead	19	1	2014	William Catino	Longport
Spadefish	11	6	1998	Cliff Low	Delaware Bay
Spearfish, longbill	42	0	1989	George Algard	Poor Man's Canyon
	42	0	1997	Joseph Natoli	Hudson Canyon
Spot	0	13	2003	Robert Belsky, Jr.	Little Sheepshead Creek
*Striped bass	78	8	1982	Al McReynolds	Atlantic City
Swordfish	530	0	1964	Edmund Levitt	Wilmington Canyon
*Tautog	25	0	1998	Anthony Monica	Off Ocean City
Tilefish, golden	63	8	2009	Dennis Muhlenforth	Linden Kohl Canyon
Tilefish, gray	23	14	2013	Cheol Min Park	Wilmington Canyon
Triggerfish, gray	5	12	2008	Ronald Pires	High Bar Harbor
Tuna, albacore	77	15	1984	Dr. S. Scannapiego	Spencer Canyon
Tuna, big-eye	364	14	1984	George Krenick	Hudson Canyon
Tuna, bluefin	1,030	6	1981	Royal Parsons	Off Pt. Pleasant
Tuna, skipjack	13	4	1999	Craig Eberbach	Wilmington Canyon
Tuna, yellowfin	290	0	1980	Wayne Brinkerhoff	Hudson Canyon
Tunny, little	24	15	1977	Mark Niemczyk	Off Sea Bright
Wahoo	123	12	1992	Robert Carr	28-Mile Wreck
Weakfish	18	8	1986	Karl Jones	Delaware Bay
Whiting (silver hake)				Vacant (Minimum Weight 2.5 lbs.)	

* Fish was previously certified by the IGFA as a world record.

For information concerning the New Jersey State Record Fish or Skillful Angler programs, visit the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Web site at NJFishandWildlife.com.

Spearfishing Category

In 2014, the NJ Record Fish Program expanded with the addition of a Spearfishing category for saltwater. Seventeen (17) species commonly sought after by spearfishers are part of the Program. Spearfishers now have a unique opportunity to be recognized in New Jersey's Record Fish Program. Anglers are reminded that the objective of the Record Fish Program is to increase the awareness of fishing opportunities for species that are regularly sought after and routinely found in or off the coast of New Jersey.

Species	Lbs.	Oz.	Year	Angler	Where Caught
Amberjack, greater	Min. Wt. 60 pounds			VACANT	
Bass, black sea	Min. Wt. 5 pounds			VACANT	
Bluefish	Min. Wt. 18 pounds			VACANT	
Cobia	Min. Wt. 60 pounds			VACANT	
Cod	Min. Wt. 50 pounds			VACANT	
Dolphin	Min. Wt. 40 pounds			VACANT	
*Fluke	15	5	2014	Robert A. Davis	Off Barnegat Lighthouse
Flounder, winter	Min. Wt. 3 pounds			VACANT	
Hake, red (ling)	Min. Wt. 9 pounds			VACANT	
Pollock	Min. Wt. 30 pounds			VACANT	
Porgy	Min. Wt. 4 pounds			VACANT	
Sheepshead	Min. Wt. 12 pounds			VACANT	
Spadefish	Min. Wt. 9 pounds			VACANT	
Striped bass	Min. Wt. 55 pounds			VACANT	
*Tautog	23	14	2007	Luke Dylan Hickey	Off Cape May
Triggerfish, gray	Min. Wt. 3.5 pounds			VACANT	
Weakfish	Min. Wt. 14 pounds			VACANT	

* Fish was recognized by the International Underwater Spearfishing Association as a world record.

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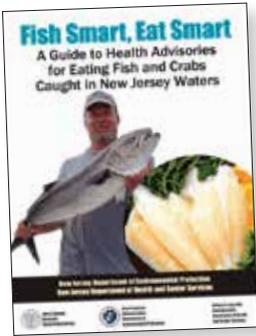


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Eating Fish And Crabs Caught In New Jersey Waters



Fishing provides enjoyable and relaxing recreation. Fish are an excellent source of protein and other nutrients and play a role in maintaining a healthy, well-balanced diet. Many anglers enjoy cooking and eating their own catch. However, elevated levels of potentially harmful chemical contaminants such as dioxin, polychlorinated

biphenyls (PCBs), pesticides and mercury have been found in certain fish and crabs in some New Jersey waters. Fish consumption advisories have been adopted to guide citizens on safe consumption practices.

To reduce exposure to harmful chemical contaminants when preparing and eating the fish species taken from the identified waters, it is essential to follow the guidelines provided. The DEP encourages you to consult the Fish Smart-Eat Smart Fish Advisory Guide or www.FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org when making decisions about eating recreationally caught fish and crabs.

The current list of fish consumption advisories consists of statewide, regional and water body-specific warnings for a variety of fish species and fish consumers. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Department of Health and Senior Services have prepared new "how to" electronic pamphlets on cleaning and cooking your catch to reduce your exposure to these harmful chemicals. These e-pamphlets are downloadable in multiple languages.

For a complete list of state and federal marine fish consumption advisories visit: www.FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org.

The fish consumption advisories and Fish Smart-Eat Smart website are updated periodically and are available online or from the Office of Science at (609) 984-6070 and through the Division of Health and Senior Services at (609) 826-4935.

Check online for fish consumption advisories on the local water body in which you fish! Go to www.FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org 



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Shore-based Fishing Opportunity at Island Beach State Park Boasted Unique Regulations Last Year

By **Maryellen Gordon**, Senior Fisheries Biologist | **Lauren "Maggie" Sager**, Seasonal Fisheries Technician
Bryan Carter, Seasonal Fisheries Technician | **Jonathan Klotz**, Seasonal Fisheries Technician
Erin Mulvenna, Seasonal Fisheries Technician



Program Overview

Marine Fisheries Angler Program: Shore-based Enhanced Fishing Opportunity Program

Species: Summer flounder

Where: Island Beach State Park

When: June 14, 2014 through September 27, 2014

Regulations: A two fish bag limit; ≥ 16 inches; shore fishing only

Goal: To estimate the additional landings of the reduced size limit to determine if it affects NJ's overall recreational harvest target.

Last year's Shore-based Enhanced Fishing Opportunity Program at Island Beach State Park (IBSP) allowed anglers to keep smaller fish while collecting recreational harvest data. The bag limit was reduced to two fish from IBSP shorelines, but the size limit was also reduced to a 16-inch minimum total length. Summer flounder caught between 16 and less than 18 inches were required to be brought to a check station to receive a tag, confirming that the fish was legally taken from IBSP waters. Anglers that caught two 16-inch or greater summer flounder at IBSP could still attempt to fill a New Jersey daily bag limit of five fish, but the other three summer flounder had to be taken outside of IBSP at 18 inches or greater.

At the check station, fish were measured, weighed then tagged to confirm legal harvest within the park. A creel survey ran concurrently with the Program, with agency staff interviewing anglers providing valuable demographic information, catch and effort data as well as biological data for all species caught at the park during the Program season. Data collection included species name, length, weight, disposition and number of fish caught.

During this Program, 176 summer flounder between 16 and less than 18 inches were tagged and 271 creel surveys were conducted. A total of 337 fish were caught amongst those anglers, 155 of which were summer flounder; 48 were available catch with the other 289 fish released.

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- Over the limits for game and fish
- Commercial exploitation of fish and wildlife
- Pollution of habitat, dumping on state land
- Destruction of signs and state property
- Illegal killing, taking or possession of any wildlife

It's Free. It's Confidential.

You May Be Eligible for a Reward.

Funded by the New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs.

Designed to encourage sportsmen to report poaching and wildlife crimes.

