



HARDLINES

Northern Neck Anglers Club Monthly Newsletter

What's inside this Issue:
Club News, Tournament Updates,
Fishing Reports, Boating Safety
Tips and more

Member Spotlight:
Ivor van Heerden

NEXT TOURNAMENT:
SPRING ROCKFISH
April 2021

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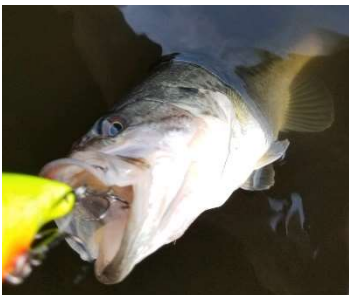
Greetings NNAC Members,

Welcome to spring 2021, falling Virginia Covid numbers, open restaurants, higher fuel prices, low fishing tackle supplies, NO new boat dealer inventory, and the resurgence of crab pots throughout the Chesapeake Bay!



But let us be thankful for a resurgence of life on the Northern Neck and other places you may call home. At least some of the uncertainty we faced last year this time seems diminished and in general, life is getting back to a more welcome normal. That doesn't mean that we do not necessarily have several factors pulling at our chosen loves of fishing and boating, but the trend is up, and we are thankful for that.

April has brought the normal high winds, temperature fluctuations, a preponderance of rainy days, but also some wonderful sunshine and warming temperatures. About the time I thought it was perhaps productive to get back on the water, the temperatures would dip to almost freezing for several nights in a row and completely stopped potential fishing activity. That is not to say there aren't some possibilities of catfish biting, some perch, crappie, shad, largemouth bass, etc., and some crabs moving slowly now out of their muddy winter home.



Member Spotlight

IVOR VAN HEERDEN

Joined NNAC: 2018

Occupation: Retired

Born: Johannesburg, South Africa

Rivah Home: Reedville on Warehouse Creek

Author: The Storm: What Went Wrong and Why During Hurricane Katrina

Cover Picture: Ivor with his 58lb. Cobia

Cover Story – Ivor van Heerden, Ph.D. grew up in South Africa where from the age of 5 he started river and pond fishing with his dad and younger brother. Once he completed SA Army (sapper) service and started undergraduate school his focus became surf and rock shore fishing off the east coast of South Africa with occasional deep sea fishing trips. During these years he tagged many fish from small blues to large tuna for scientific research. He completed his graduate degrees at Louisiana State University as a Marine Scientist enjoying the richness of Louisiana estuary fishing.

He returned to South Africa and then in 1989 sailed a 32 ft boat from Cape Town to New Orleans, enjoying good fishing along the way. He then took a full-time position at LSU and mostly did research on hurricanes and was very much involved in the Hurricane Katrina preparation and response.

He arrived in the Northern Neck on a newer sailboat in September 2012 and fell in love with the lifestyle. He now lives with his dog on the Great Wicomico and fishes, sails, and kayaks the various waters that surround us and considers himself blessed!

African American Leadership Project, Morris F.X. Jeff Jr. Community Service Award, 2015.

So, we are getting there but the fishing potential is still a bit slow. As I write this looking out on the creek I live on, I just do not see much bait activity. The ospreys are putting in overtime flight hours during their searches for food, and I don't see fish ducks like mergansers looking for bait like they generally do when the creeks are full of small fish. But the trend is up so hang on!

Club News

Upcoming "Ask the Pro's Days":

Saturday, April 24, 2021 will bring our first ever "Ask the Pro's Day" at the outdoor pavilion of the Reedville Fishermen's Museum on Main Street in Reedville. The event runs from 1 PM until 3 PM and will provide an excellent opportunity for you to move at your own speed from table to table visiting with various experts on specific species of saltwater fish found on and around the Northern Neck. The selected fisherman "Pro" at each table will have examples of their favorite tackle, rods and reels, their gadgets of choice, and a wealth of knowledge for you. Some will have maps, submerged aquatic vegetation info and location suggestions. This is your chance to speak one on one to super knowledgeable fishermen from our area who are here to help you catch more and bigger fish this summer. The event is free, and you may bring guests. If you have not yet renewed your club membership for 2021, this will be the place to do it.

Current Virginia Department of health guidelines allow outdoor functions of up to 100 people, so we are in good shape for this event. We hope next year we will be allowed to do a full day indoor fishing seminar as we have had in the past but for now, Covid dictates our plans as we are looking forward to this fun event. Even if you have had both vaccines as many of us have, please note that we will require masks for everyone so that we may all be respectful of other members who have not had a chance to receive vaccines yet. See you on 4/24!

NNAC Member John Elkin is downsizing and relocating. He is having an estate sale April 16 – 18. He has lots of fishing tackle and gear to sell. For details you can contact John at 703-851-2495.

Ben Ames has scheduled a charter with Captain Ryan on the Midnight Sun for May 4th and needs 5 anglers who would like to come along. The cost is \$120 per person (includes tip or mate). If you are interested, please inquire by sending an email to the club email address.

Tournament Updates

Next month is the club's Spring Rockfish tournament, the 1st of 8 tournaments in 2021. The target is rockfish. The 1st two weekends will be hosted in the club's northern zones of Maryland waters of the bay and the Potomac River. Zones in Virginia will be added during the 3rd weekend since rockfish season does not open in Virginia until May 16.

Regulations News/Updates

Virginia

Striper season opens May 16 and closed Jun 16.

1 fish 20"-28" allowed.

Anglers must use non-offset, corrodible, non-stainless steel circle hooks when fishing with bait, live or chunk.

Maryland

1 fish 35" minimum allowed until May 15. After May 15th, 1 fish 19" or greater allowed.

Striper season will be closed July 16 through July 31. Targeting Stripers is prohibited during this time.

Anglers must use non-offset circle hooks when live-lining or chumming; Anglers must use non-

offset circle hooks when using fish, crabs or worms as bait and targeting striped bass, or when using processed baits and targeting striped bass.

Potomac River

1 fish 35" minimum allowed. After May 15th, 2 fish 20" or greater allowed.

Striper season is closed July 7 through August 20. Targeting stripers is prohibited during this time.

Live eels are prohibited May 1 through May 15 in the Potomac River.

Non-offset circle hooks are required and no more than 2 hooks.

Fishing/Boating Safety

Many of us are well familiar with an ACR as they built excellent safety products. ACR make a variety of EPIRB's and PLP transmitters for boaters and fishermen. I have an ACR EPIRB I move from boat to boat and also wear a PLB no matter what boat I'm using fishing waters of the Bay.

As most of you know, federal law will be requiring boating kill switches, either a physical connection or an electronic kill switch for boaters. The US Coast guard will be enforcing this new requirement, depending on the length and age of your boat. After the tragic loss of our NNAC member Leroy Bussells in the Chesapeake two years ago, many of us have added the electronic kill switch to our boats.

<https://chesapeakebaymagazine.com/uscg-to-enforce-new-boating-cutoff-switch-law/>

Fishing Reports



Reports of good populations of White Perch being caught using small jigs bounced on the bottom, live grass shrimp or as Jan shows here crankbaits. Occasionally you may find some Yellow Perch mixed in.

Trophy-sized Rockfish were reported to be caught during the Catch & Release season in the Middle Bay. Trollers boated fish in the 35 - 45-inch range.

Sturgeon Make a Comeback:

And now, here is a great positive success story about the return of the sturgeon to many of the waters of Virginia. I had a chance to catch one in Idaho a few years ago and it was a blast. The sturgeon is such a historic fish which was prevalent in the Bay and associated tidal rivers of Virginia for eons. Captain John Smith's party netted a few for food while mapping the Chesapeake for the English. [Click here to read the full article](#) or you can visit the club website under fishing Links to find the article.

Tackle Box



Most of us have caught fish on topwater baits for years. A big largemouth bass, northern pike, a musky and the like nailing a Zara spook or a devil's horse is something to remember. But it seems there is a growing interest

in topwater saltwater fishing and we are lucky on the Bay since rockfish, speckled trout, and some others will have their way with these topwater bait at times. And the manufacturers have fully embraced the saltwater applications and are offering bigger lures with saltwater hooks. Heddon, Mirrolure and Rapala all offer great offerings from 3-5" to 7".



All NNAC anglers ought to have a couple different sizes and colors in their tackle boxes for use in low light conditions. Rapala makes the Skitterwalk series, Mirrolure calls theirs Top Dog, and Heddon has the venerable Zara Spook.



If you have not mastered how to "walk the dog", there are a plethora of YouTube videos which will get you up to speed quickly.

As has been well documented last year during the Covid stay at home situation, the fishing lure companies had a heyday. But they are still struggling to fill orders currently. It is hard to find some of the popular baits. Here is a good article on that fishing tackle supply and demand situation:



https://thebrunswicknews.com/news/local_news/fishing-tackle-hard-to-find-during-the-pandemic/article_b741cb51-ae20-5d0a-bb55-143f6d1fea20.html

Fisheries Research at VIMS:

One of the benefits of living on the Northern Neck means that we are fairly close to William and Mary's VIMS research facility at Gloucester.

We have had research scientists visit our club and we will again in May. But this is a fun new program they are offering, and it may prove interesting for our membership. Especially the young anglers who are totally app fluent and enjoy another (positive) reason to bury their heads in their phones.

<https://www.vims.edu/newsandevents/topstories/2021/recfish.php>

That's it for April 2021. Don't forget about the great event at the Reedville Fishermen's Museum on Saturday, April 24. It will be great to have the club back together again and to kick off the 2021 club season. And don't forget, the first rockfish tournament of the year starts on May 1 for 3 weekends. Even though the first two weekends will have to take place in the waters of the Potomac and Maryland, the Virginia waters are in play for the third weekend in May. See you on April 24!

Fish on!!



Ben Ames
President
NNAC

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If you would like to contribute content or photos to be included in the newsletter or on the club website, please forward it to the club's email address at: fishNNAC@gmail.com and we would be more than happy to publish it.

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