

# Thankful For The Fish and Hot Bites

by Captain Dave Monti



I step on the dock and what boating and fishing brings to me turns on. I have tried to put my finger on it for years.

It's the fact that you are outdoors, in nature and can observe firsthand what nature brings. It's the exhilarating feeling of getting a bite and having your line start to peel off. And, it's the hunter instinct in us that is satisfied by bringing your catch home for you, family and friends to eat. But, most important to me, it is the joy that spending time with family and friends brings. The one-on-one time that fishing creates.

I once took a friend and his 16 year old son fishing. He thanked me the following week and said, "You know it wasn't about the fish that we caught, it was all about the quality time I got to spend with my son. We haven't spoken that much in a couple of years." These are the types of bonds that fishing builds.

So I am grateful for the fishing opportunity that this past year brought and look forward to this year working hard to catch fish, bring a fishing experience to others and do everything I can to put fish first for the future so their our plenty of the them in the water for our grandchildren and great grandchildren to catch and eat or release.

## Hot bites I am thankful for

### Strong tautog bite

Tautog fishing was a big surprise last year. Arguably, it was the best tautog fishing season in years, and by the way, last year was a good year too.



**Steve Brustein of West Warwick and Mike Weaver of Plymouth, NH with a few tautog they caught off Newport in October**

Tautog are a very slow-growing fish and can live for 35 to 40 years. So a couple of years ago when they were down as a fish stock it took a while for them to come back.

In 2019 there were quite a few large fish over 22" (legal size in RI and MA is 16"). The nice thing this year was that there were plenty of 16" to 22" fish too and many undersized fish below 16". This abundance is a good sign for the fishery, however, anglers will likely *overfish* in 2019 because they were so abundant and relatively easy to catch.

Tautog is a great eating fish. It's fairly white, somewhat



**Jamie Wong of Cambridge with a 25" tautog that he caught in November SE of Brenton Reef, Newport.**

dense meat is enjoyed by many who say it is the best eating fish commonly caught in our waters. They feed off the crustations and shellfish on the bottom and in between rocks, structure, docks, bulkheads, ledges and muscle beds. The season is open until December 31 with a five fish/person/day limit and a ten fish per boat limit.

### Holy mackerel

Another surprise this year were the mackerel. The Boston mackerel also called Norwegian mackerel, Scottish mackerel or just mackerel was here in greater abundance. Spanish mackerel and chub mackerel (named 'chub' because it is chubbier than most mackerel) all made an enhanced appearance in northeast waters off Massachusetts and Rhode Island.



Aquidneck Island angler **John Migliori** said, "The mackerel are back in town.

**Good fight and good to eat: Chub mackerel caught by Kevin Fetzer of East Greenwich off Beavertail Lightt, Jamestown.**

Some are large and some are small and there are even some herring mixed in with them."

We have had mackerel in our waters before, but in 2019 (and 2018) they appeared in greater abundance. Mackerel spends the warmer months close to shore and near the ocean surface, appearing along the coast in spring and they depart with the arrival of colder weather in the fall and winter months. However, many believe the abundance of mackerel in our area is due to climate change, and believe the mackerel are here in greater numbers because they seek our cooler water compared to states south of us.

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