

Fishing With Children Child's Play in Buzzards Bay

by TOM RICHARDSON



Finding dependable summer fishing in Buzzards Bay can be a challenge for even the best angler, but when you're playing guide to a group of kids, the level of difficulty—and stress—reaches a new level. Children demand immediate and constant activity to hold their interest, but most five-year-olds aren't up for slinging poppers at false-dawn. In other words, you've got to keep it simple, fun and sometime after breakfast.

Happily, I've found the perfect formula, one that's guaranteed to provide you and your youngsters with fast action—and maybe even some dinner in the process!

SECURE THE SQUID

The first order of business is to obtain some frozen squid, preferably the local stuff (ask your local tackle-shop proprietor for his secret stash). Buy some extra and keep some in your freezer, so you'll be ready to roll when conditions are right.



Before you launch, cut the squid into at least three dozen, three-inch-long triangular strips and place them in bag or small container. Grab a sharp knife and a small cutting board, and throw both items and your pre-cut strips, plus some extra whole squid, in a five-gallon bucket, along with some ice.

Now round up some light spinning gear (freshwater stuff works fine), loaded with 15- to 20-pound-test line (braided line is best). Rig the rods thusly: Tie a three-way swivel to the end of the line. Next, tie three feet of 30- to 40-pound-test monofilament to a second eye of the swivel. On the end of that line, tie on a two- to four-ounce, white or chartreuse bucktail jig (you'll need the heavier jigs if wind is creating a fast drift).



Basic 3--way rig will take a variety of species

To the remaining eye of the three-way swivel, tie on two feet of 20-pound-test mono. On the end of this line, tie on a 1/0 or 2/0 octopus-style hook. While octopus hooks are usually tied to the line using a snell knot, a simple improved clinch knot will suffice. Again, do all of this rigging business before you leave the dock, mooring or driveway, as attempting to tie rigs on a boat while being mobbed by nagging, over-excited children is a special form of torture you'll want to avoid.

LIGHT THE WAY

Once on the water, make a beeline for the big lighthouse in the middle of Buzzards Bay—Cleveland Ledge Light. Choose an open section of water near the lighthouse and outside the shipping channel in 20 to 35 feet of water. I normally have good luck in the areas directly north and west of the lighthouse, on either side of the shipping channel, marked as "rocky" on the chart. However, other areas, such as the hard bottom in 20 to 30 feet of water off Scraggy Neck, also hold fish.

Ideally, the wind should be less than 10 knots, which, on a typical summer day means being "on station" by 11:00 a.m. at the latest. That will give you approximately two hours of fishing time before the southwest wind machine cranks up. Winds above 12 knots or so will make for choppy conditions and, possibly, a seasick crew.

In any breeze, the best scenario is for the wind and current to be moving in the same direction. Opposing wind and tide either make it impossible to cover ground or will sweep your lines under the boat as you drift, making it hard to fish. Check the tide charts and wind forecast before launching. And if you find yourself faced with a slack current and no wind, try power-drifting, where the engine is bumped in and out of gear to move around the area.



Dacey Richardson shows off a scup taken over rocky bottom

GO TIME!

Once you've set up your drift, break out the squid strips and place one on both the octopus hook and the jig hook of each rig. Now have everyone lower his or her rig slowly to the bottom and put the reel in gear. Make sure everyone fishes off the upwind/upcurrent side of the boat, so that the lines do not pass under the hull.



Fluke sometimes crash the party

As you drift along, have your anglers hold their rods parallel to the water and slowly lift the tip every few seconds. Teach them to feel the jig tapping bottom each time they lower their rod. This will require letting out more line every so often to get the jig back to the bottom. If the drift is very fast, you may have to tie on heavier jigs to hold bottom, so bring several sizes. Also, if you feel something grabbing or pecking at the bait, but fail to hook up, reel in and check to see if you still have squid on your hook. The area is rife with bait-stealers, and you need squid to score!

ANCHOR, MAN

Although I prefer to drift, it sometimes pays to anchor if you find an especially productive stretch of bottom. This will make it easier for everyone to fish, and you won't have to worry about running back upwind to repeat the drift.

(to page 41)