

How to The Incredible Diamond Jig

by TOM RICHARDSON



When it comes to lures, it doesn't get much more basic than the diamond jig. These shiny chunks of chrome-plated metal have been around for decades, yet still catch fish all kinds. I have taken almost every imaginable Northeast inshore species on diamond jigs, including sea bass, fluke, striped bass, false albacore, bonito, bluefish, scup, cod, and even tautog. When the surface action dies, I often send down a diamond and see what I can dredge up. More often than not, I manage to score something.

One summer I found myself trapped in a fog bank off Cuttyhunk Island, Massachusetts. Fortunately, the seas were calm and I was content to sit tight until the fog lifted. To kill some time, I decided to do a little jiggling over the rocky bottom below. In less than an hour I had jigged up 2 keeper fluke and a sea bass, along with an assortment of smaller fish, including scup, cunner and searobins. No a bad haul, and I even brought home dinner!

Diamond jigs are so effective partly because they imitate a variety of baitfish, from squid to herring. Their flashing sides catch the light and draw the attention of predators, which are also attracted to the lure's erratic wobbling action. You can find diamond jigs in different sizes and adorned with everything from bucktail to rubber tube tails. While the latter work well in certain situations, such as when small sand eels are prevalent, a plain jig rigged with a single hook usually does the job nicely.

Small 1/2- to 1-ounce diamonds work well in situations where peanut bunker, silversides and juvenile herring and butterfish are on the menu. Medium jigs in the 2- to 4-ounce range are great for targeting fluke and sea bass in moderate depths (15 to 30 feet) and current. Larger jigs in the 6- to 10-ounce range do a good job of imitating squid, bunker and herring, and are ideal for fishing in deep water (20 to 60 feet) and strong current. In some spots, like The Race off Long Island, 12- to 16-ounce diamond jigs are often needed to reach bottom in the swift current.

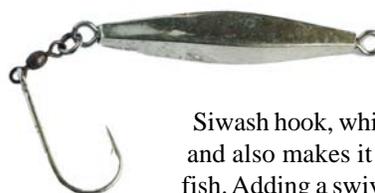
Diamond jigs really shine in the late fall, especially in spots such as Long Island Sound. Here, anglers often jig them over deep reefs and shoals in the middle of the Sound to catch big stripers and blues that are migrating south.

I usually fish medium jigs (4 to 6 ounces) on a conventional reel such as the Penn International 965, Penn Jigmaster or Shimano Calcutta 400TE. I match the reel with a 7-foot graphite jiggling rod rated for 30-pound line. The rod should have a stiff butt and midsection for muscling big fish off the bottom, and a relatively light tip for giving the jig more action. For my main line, I prefer 30- to 40-pound braid, which I connect to 5 feet of 50-pound-test fluorocarbon leader using a Spider-to-Bristol knot connection. You can also use a Bimini Twist in the main line

instead of a Spider Hitch. Either way, the connection allows you to reel the end of the long leader inside the rod tip when it comes to landing a fish.

If bluefish cut-offs are a problem, add a short, 6-inch length of wire to the end of the leader, or go with a very heavy mono leader. If you are not getting strikes and are marking fish on the sounder, try scaling down the size of your leader to 30- or even 20-pound test.

I attach the diamond jig to the leader with a non-slip mono loop knot, which gives the lure more freedom of movement.



Most diamond jigs come rigged with a treble hook. I remove the treble

and replace it with a single Siwash hook, which results in better hook-sets and also makes it easier to release undersized fish. Adding a swivel between the split ring and hook makes it more difficult for a thrashing fish

to "torque" the hook loose during the fight.

In recent years, some diamond-jiggers have found that adding an [Owner Dancing stinger hook](#) to the top eye of the jig has increased their hook-up ratio, as many fish attach the jig near its "head".

Fishing a diamond jig is pretty straightforward. While you can cast and retrieve them parallel to the surface when fish are feeding in the upper part of the water column, diamond jigs are



Stinger hooks are becoming popular among serious diamond-jiggers.
(Tom Richardson photo)

most effective when dropped to the bottom and jigged vertically.

There are several ways to vertical-jig a diamond, depending on the species you are targeting. For fluke, sea bass and other bottom fish, simply hop the jig over the bottom using short, sharp 6-inch lifts of the rod tip. Make sure the lure taps bottom on every drop by letting out more line as you drift along.

When jiggling for striped bass in a rip/reef situation, free-spool the jig to the bottom, engage the reel and take 5 to 10 quick cranks of the reel, then free-spool the jig back to the bottom. Be sure to keep your thumb on the spool as the jig flutters down, as many fish will hit it on the drop. If you feel a tap or a hesitation of the jig's descent, clamp your thumb down on the reel spool and lift sharply.

Another effective method is yo-yo jiggling. In this situation, raise the rod tip sharply above your head to make the jig rocket toward the surface, then slowly lower the tip to allow the jig to flutter back down. **(to page 27)**