

## **PUPPY DRUM**

**By Mike Buss**

April has arrived and with it some warmer weather and that has had a positive affect on the waters in our sloughs and back waters. And once the waters start to warm, the inshore species we all like to go after can't be far behind! One of those species is the Red Drum, the smaller in shore version of which we call the Puppy Drum. The big brutes also show, but normally don't venture into the back waters. If you want to catch 40 and 50 pounders and up, you need to be fishing the ocean side of Eastern Shore.

The best times to fish for puppy drum are from mid April to mid June and then again in the fall from September through October. Puppy drum will stay in the inlets and backwaters throughout the winter and can be caught almost year round if the water temperature is not too cold.

Look for sloughs, holes, deep water breaks, marsh bars, channels, cuts, and oyster beds. The puppy drum will chase bait up into the grass on a rising tide and then fall back into holes on an outgoing tide. Explore the area you want to try when there is a low tide and it will help you read the cuts and holes, then fish the incoming tide while you are there, and then the outgoing tide the next trip.

Some of the more popular areas to fish include: Lynnhaven Inlet, Rudee Inlet, Owls Creek, Peninsula creeks and inlets, Poquoson Flats, Eastern Shore creeks both bayside and seaside, Elizabeth River, Mobjack Bay, and the Hot Ditch in the winter. They can also be found around the piers at the ocean front and Sandbridge when there is a north east wind in the fall and along the surf from Sandbridge to False Cape.

As for tackle recommendations, I would recommend a 9-10 foot fly rod capable of handling a 6-9 weight line. You want to be using weight forward lines and I personally like an intermediate sinking line. You will normally be fishing in shallow water and that type of line will let you fish all the way from the top to the bottom. Another advantage for the intermediate line is it will sink beneath the surface and will not be affected by wave action and your fly at the end of the line won't be either! Sometimes you will be fishing heavy tide flows and then you might want to go to a sinking line like a 250, 350, or 450 sinking line. The reel should be matched to the rod and capable of holding the fly line and 150 to 250 yards of backing. It should have a good disc type drag system. Leaders come in all shapes and sizes, but you can get by with a 3 to 8 foot section of 10 pound test leader line. You can also purchase tapered leaders or make your own. If you are interested in making your own, be sure to attend the Fly Fishing school we hold at our monthly meeting in June.

There are numerous flies that can be used to catch puppy drum and you will want to experiment with them until you find the pattern that is working that day. I know the following ones work: Decievers in sizes 4, 2, 1 and 1/0 and colors of red/white, black, chartreuse, chartreuse/white, red/yellow, black/pink/white, black/orange and blue/pink/white. Bend Backs in sizes 2, 1, and 1/0 and colors of red/white, chartreuse, yellow, black, pink/chartreuse, and black/orange. Clousers in sizes 4, 2, 1, and 1/0 and colors of red/white, chartreuse/white, chartreuse/yellow, brown/yellow, black, black/white, tan/white, and black/orange.

The "Golden Gladiator" with the black spot is invading our waters. It is time for all good men and women to take up rods and do battle! Time is short! Tight lines to all!