



# Virginia Coastal Fly Anglers

**JUNE 2011**

**VISIT US AT VCFA.ORG**

**NEXT MEETING: June 16, Author Beau Beasley will be our guest speaker starting at 7:30**

**FLY: The Haystack. A fly developed by Florida Keys Guide Tim Borski. A good choice for Tarpon, Drum and Stripers. Tying sessions at 6:30. Casting help is also available outside at 6:30.**

**The new VCFA website is now online. You can reach the site at:**

**<http://www.vcfa.org>**

## **PRESIDENTS MESSAGE**

**T**hanks again to all of you who attended the May meeting. I was not able to attend as I was helping coach my grandson's little league team, but I understand a lot of you got an opportunity to cast some different rod and line combinations in addition to seeing how some of our members put their equipment together. This month we have invited noted author Beau Beasley to be our speaker. Most of you are familiar with his many articles in all the major fly fishing magazines. He is also director of the Virginia Fly Fishing Festival held every year on the banks of the South River in Waynesboro. He will be talking about his latest book, "Fly Fishing Virginia" and will have autographed copies of the book for sale. Remember, our meetings are open to the general public, so this would be a great time to invite any of your neighborhood fishing buddies to tag along and get some great information about fishing in Virginia. Great news! Thanks to a lot of hard work by Pat Hirsch, our redesigned web site is now up and operational and I would encourage all of you to go to [www.vcfa.org](http://www.vcfa.org) to check out all the many features. I spent over an hour just going through all the articles members have written in the past and checking out all the links to other fly fishing sites. We are always looking for pictures of your fishing trips to post on the site, so if you have any pictures or videos you would like to share, be sure to let us know. We also have our Facebook page for all the members to use to pass out current fishing info, trip invites, fishing reports, or just chat about

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**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** Mike Buss, President; Ed Owens, Vice-President; Kendall Osborne, Treasurer; Mike Lahorner, Secretary;

**MEMBERS AT LARGE:** Chris Burbage, Lawrence Clemens, Dave Dembicki, Spencer Hayes, Noel Horne, Scott Reppert, Ron Russell

**IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT;** Kevin Du Bois

## ABOUT OUR JUNE SPEAKER

Beau Beasley has fished the waters of the Old Dominion since early childhood. Beasley's first articles appeared in "Virginia Outdoor Weekly". Since then he has written for numerous fishing and outdoor publications including "American Angler", "Fish and Fly", "Mid-Atlantic Fly Fishing Guide", "Fly Rod and Reel", "Richmond Magazine", "Virginia Sportsman", "Virginia Wildlife:", and "Virginia Living". He is a contributing editor to "Fly Fish America" and Mid-Atlantic states field editor for "Eastern Fly Fishing". Beasley and his family live on the outskirts of Northern Virginia where he is a professional 22 year veteran of Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department. He currently serves as a truck lieutenant at Fire Station 25 in Reston. When he's not fighting fires, Beasley serves as the Director of the Virginia Fly Fishing Festival, the largest fly fishing event in the state, held each year on the banks of the South River in Waynesboro



### Menhaden on the Menu

## "Mission Blue" Crew Shoots Menhaden Scenes on Bay

Renowned oceanographer/underwater explorer/author Sylvia Earle brought her movie production crew to the Chesapeake Bay last week in search of the most important fish in the sea. For three days, the cinematographers tracked the Omega Protein menhaden fleet in boats, helicopters, and planes.

The images captured could become part of the movie "Mission Blue," a film chronicling threatened sea life. Earle and her award-winning team are traveling all over the world to capture at-risk species. Prominent producers here for the shoot included Bob Nixon ("Gorillas in the Mist") and Fisher Stevens ("The Cove").

Members of the Menhaden Coalition provided important logistical assistance to the project: Chesapeake Bay Foundation (Captain Charles Parks, Tanya, and Lauren), CCA Virginia (Jerry Benson), TidalFish/Lateral Lines Apparel (Brandon White), and The Public Project (Alison Fairbrother).

**PRESIDENTS MESSAGE (Continued from Page**

fly fishing. So just remember, we have the web site for general club info and the Facebook page to chat! The Bay water temperatures are warming and most of the fish we target with our fly fishing efforts have arrived in good numbers so now is the time to get out after them. I've heard good reports about large black and red drum being caught around the CBBT and Fisherman's Island on the Eastern Shore. Cobia are patrolling the Bay and Kendall got into some sight fishing in real shallow water off Fisherman's Island for large stripers just a few days ago. Trout and puppy drum are all over the inlets so now is definitely the time to plan a trip. And don't forget to post on the Facebook page when you are going if you want some company or someone to help share the gas costs! Just a reminder, there have been an unusually large number of boating mishaps already this year. It seems like there has been one every week for a number of weeks now. I know I'm "preaching to the choir" but please be sure to be safe on the water and take the necessary precautions. I hope to see you all at our meeting on June 16. Thanks again and tight lines to al

Mike Buss

If you have photos or videos of a fishing trip, or have an article that you would like to submit for the website (photo gallery, member articles, etc..) Please send them to the club email at **VirginiaCoastalFlyAnglers@gmail.com** or Contact Larry Clemens at **LawrenceClemens@gmail.com**. We will update the website with new material regularly as long as you help by submitting new information to include.

*Virginia Coastal Fly Anglers* **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Membership is \$30.00 annually and includes all family members. Please complete this form with a check made payable to VCFA. You can bring the completed form and check to the next meeting, or mail it to or club treasurer at VCFA, P.O. Box 2866, Virginia Beach, VA 23450-2866

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## Striper Techniques Part IV

### Stripers in the Rips

By Tom Richardson, Reel-Time contributing editor

Anyone the least bit familiar with striped bass knows about the creature's propensity for hanging out in rips. Not only do rips concentrate the bass, they also hold some of the biggest fish. To understand why stripers are attracted to rips it helps to know a little bit about how they are formed. Rips occur wherever current flows over bottom of rapidly changing depth. For example, rips can be created by shoals, ledges, reefs, boulders, seamounts, banks, bars, and wrecks -- anything that disrupts the contour of the surrounding bottom.

Many fishermen are familiar with shoal-water rips, which are formed over sandy bottom. Shoal rips are common off Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, where some huge rips can be found. Shoals are basically large sand bars that constrict the flow of water and therefore create a faster current. As the current flows over the upcurrent slope of the shoal it is directed towards the surface, in effect squeezing the entire water column through a narrower space. The force of all this water flowing over the top of the shoal and pushing against the surface creates a distinct line of choppy water called a "rip line," which runs the length of the shoal. As the current increases with the change in tide and more water flows over the shoal, the waves along the rip line get bigger, while during slack water the rip line disappears. In some open-ocean areas the current can form huge waves over the shoal during peak tidal stages, making them dangerous places for even large boats to fish.

Rocky ledges and pinnacles are other types of rip-forming structure, and are commonly found in places like the North Shore of Massachusetts, Buzzards Bay, and the waters between eastern Long Island, New York, and Watch Hill, Rhode Island. These rips are formed by current flowing over a raised section of rocky bottom, also called a reef by some fishermen. Careful boat-handling is often required around reefs and ledges, since many are studded with enormous, boat-eating boulders. As with a shoal rip, the shallower water of the ledge or reef creates a stronger current and a choppy rip line. Sometimes a big ledge will contain several rip lines formed by rocky sections that rise up higher than the surrounding ledge structure. It's these "high spots" that often offer the best fishing.

Smaller rips can also be formed by individual boulders, wrecks, and other large objects that lie below the surface and constrict the flow of water. For example, a friend of mine often catches big bass from a series of large storage containers that fell off a shipping barge years ago (although I'm not telling where).

Another place to find rips is over rocky or sandy points of land that extend underwater.

Again, use caution when fishing these areas, since the water is likely to be quite shallow, especially close to shore.

All this talk of how rips are formed is well and good, but why do rips hold striped bass? Simply because they provide a place where the fish can obtain food without having to spend a lot of energy. Here's how it works:

As the current flows over the shoal, ledge, wreck, etc., it creates a pocket of calm water on the downcurrent side of the structure. Stripers like to hold in this pocket, conserving energy, and wait for baitfish and other prey to be swept past by the current, which serves as a kind of food conveyor belt. When they see a tasty morsel heading their way, they dart into the current and grab it, then return to their lie.

Since the stripers (especially the biggest fish) usually prefer to hold in the dead-water zone close to the shoal, ledge, etc. and are reluctant to chase after anything that's passing by far above their heads, especially during the day or in a strong current, you can see why rips present a difficult situation for fly fishermen. It's simply hard to get a fly down to the fish's feeding zone. That's one reason wire line and deep-drifted baits work so well in rips.

Still, there are times when the fish will feed closer to the surface, allowing fly fishermen to get in on the action. The best time to fish a rip is at first light and at dusk in a moderate current, when stripers have the keenest advantage over their prey and are most likely to chase bait on the surface. By the same token, overcast days are generally more productive than bright, sunny ones because the low light will often keep the fish feeding on top longer. If you're really lucky, you'll hit that rare day when the fish stay up for hours.

Current obviously has a large affect on the feeding behavior of stripers, too. As mentioned, during periods of peak current (the middle three hours of the tide), stripers tend to hold close to the bottom and won't move very far to chase a fly. On the opposite side of the coin, during slack water the baitfish and bass often disperse, making it hard to find a concentration of fish that stays in one place for very long. Also, some stripers simply lay low during the slack and conserve energy, knowing that they'll have to work hard to chase down a meal. Given these factors, it makes sense to plan your rip trips around the first and last two hours of either tide. You should also note that fishing tends to be more difficult during full and new moon tides, when currents are at their peak, so try to fish the rips during the quarter- and half-moon phases if possible.

Rip fishing from a boat is a two-man operation. One person must constantly man the helm while the other casts. In fact, the helmsman usually deserves equal credit for each catch. The proper way to fish a rip is to angle towards it from the upcurrent side. As the boat nears the rip line, the helmsman should swing the bow upcurrent and stem the tide under power, holding the boat stationary in the current above the rip while the angler

casts perpendicular to the flow. The trick is to let the fly be swept downcurrent to where the bass are hopefully waiting along the edge of the shoal.

You often don't need to move the fly at all as it's drifting with the current, although giving it a twitch now and then may draw a strike. Always keep your rod tip pointed at the water in the direction of the line and be ready to make a long, firm strip-strike if you feel a bump. Remember, there will be a lot of belly in the fly line that you'll have to remove in order to come tight to the fish. If strikes aren't immediate and you know fish are in the area, experiment with different retrieves or fish your fly deeper by angling your casts farther upcurrent and letting the line sink longer. Also, try different flies, since the bass may be keyed on a specific type and/or size of bait.

Another tricky thing about rips is that the bass will move around in them as the tide changes, seeking out the areas of optimal current flow and where the baitfish are most abundant (and vulnerable). One minute the fish may be busting all around you, while the next they've mysteriously disappeared, only to pop up minutes later 50 yards down the rip. For this reason, a logbook becomes indispensable tool in rip fishing. Whenever you find a concentration of fish, jot down the exact spot on the rip, tide stage, weather conditions, time of day, fly pattern, and any other variables you can think of. The more you fish a particular rip, the more knowledge you'll accrue concerning the habits of the stripers that live in it. Eventually you'll be able to predict where the fish will be when a particular set of conditions occur, and you can follow the fish around as they move to different areas. Well, it's never that simple.

So, what do you do if you're new to a rip and there are no fish busting on the surface? Where do you begin? The presence of birds is usually a good indicator of feeding activity along a rip, since they prey on the baitfish driven to the surface by the fish. Even if the birds are just sitting in the water it's a good bet they saw something below that drew their interest. Or it could be that there was a blitz just moments before. If there are no birds or other signs of life, the only thing to do is work along the rip line until you find the fish. If you have a fishfinder, look for pockets of bait or the stripers themselves. Also, pay attention to sharp curves or pockets in the rip line, which often concentrate current flow and schools of baitfish.

A word about rip etiquette is in order. Rips can get pretty crowded at times, and often the best action is concentrated along a small portion of the rip line. Remember that others may be waiting to fish a particular section, so after making a few casts either circle around upcurrent to make another approach or slide along parallel to the rip line. Also, never run through the rip under power, since this is sure to put the fish down and piss off your fellow anglers. The only time you should pass through the rip is to fight a fish that you're unable to control from the upcurrent side.

The chance of hooking a keeper is certainly a big draw of rip fishing, but surprisingly few

are ever caught on fly gear. There are two reasons for this: One, the smaller, more aggressive bass usually beat the bigger fish to the fly, and two, the bigger fish tend to hold near the bottom, where they're hard to reach, even in a relatively light current. Therefore, the best way to target big bass is to fish a large fly, which may deter the smaller fish, and get it as deep as you can with a heavy, fast-sinking shooting head.

Another great thing about rips is that you stand the chance of catching several different species in a single outing. Rips not only attract striped bass, but also bluefish, false albacore, Spanish mackerel, and bonito, making them great places to try for a slam in Southern New England from August to October. By the way, if you're targeting other species and bluefish become a nuisance, try moving to a different part of the rip.

Because of the strong current, tackle for rip fishing should be on the heavy side. While eight- and nine-weight rods can be used in smaller rips during periods of light current, ten- to 12-weights are preferable for bigger water. You'll need the extra power to sling heavy shooting heads, full-sinking lines, and big flies, as well as to pressure the fish out of the current. And always have at least 150 yards of backing on your reel in case you happen to hook a bonito or false albacore.

Fly patterns depend on available forage. Early in the season, squid and mackerel patterns often produce well in the big rips. In summer, try sand eels and Clousers, especially around sandy shoals and inlets. Squid patterns (try different colors) produce well around the Outer Cape rips, Nantucket, and Martha's Vineyard throughout the summer. Later in the season you might switch to very large (up to 12") bunker (menhaden) and herring flies. If you fish rocky ledges covered by weeds and kelp, experiment with a long eel fly or big bunker pattern.

Up until this point we've mostly discussed large rips formed by shoals and ledges, but don't ignore the potential of smaller inshore rips, such as those found in bays and estuaries. As mentioned in the previous article on backwater fishing, always pay special attention to small sandbars, mussel beds, and rockpiles, all of which have the potential to hold fish. The stripers you find in these spots generally aren't as big as those that live in the big rips, but you never know.

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<http://www.reel-time.com/feature/richardson/rips/default.asp>