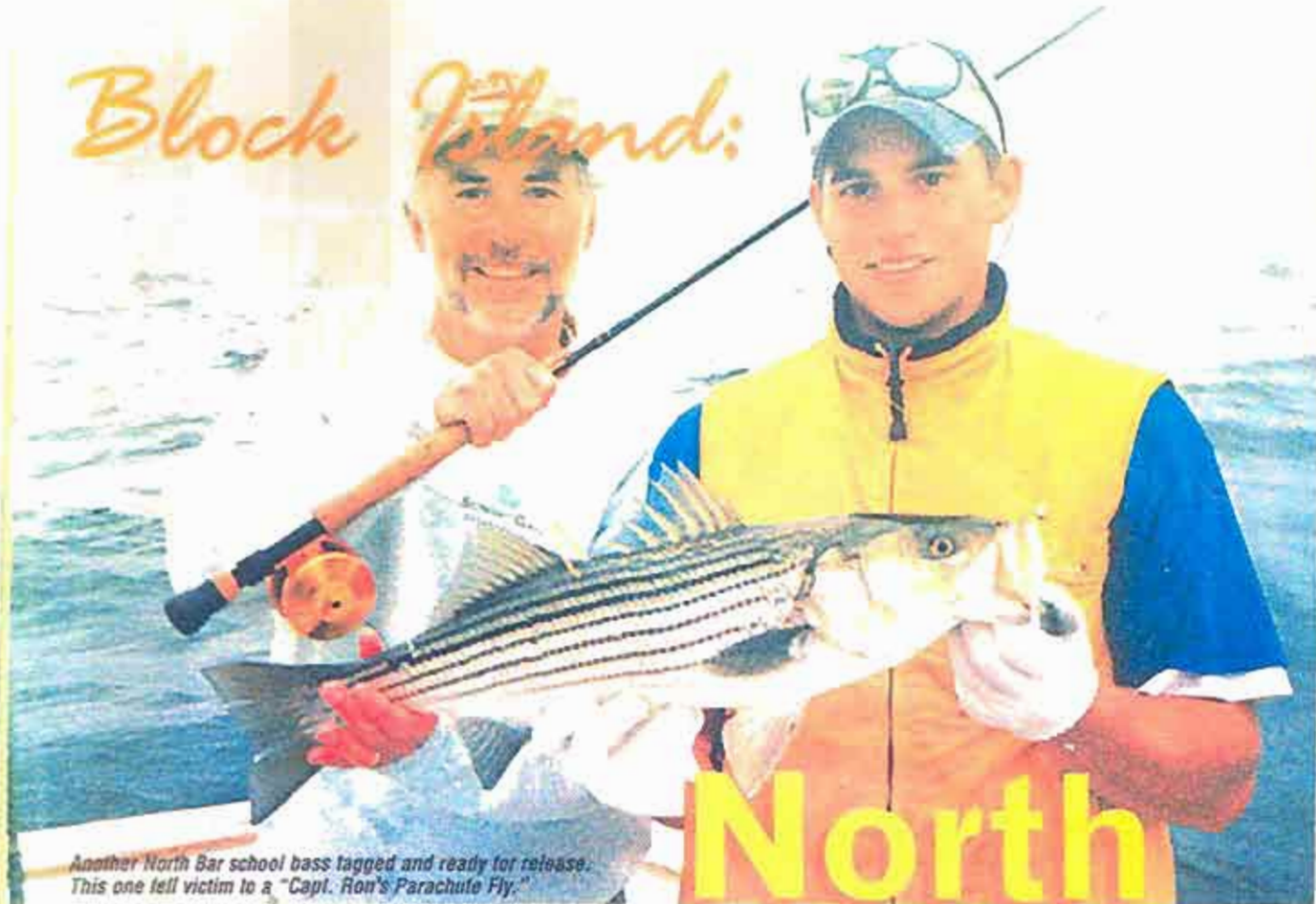


Block Island:



Another North Bar school bass tagged and ready for release. This one fell victim to a "Capt. Ron's Parachute Fly."

North Bar Fly Rod Strippers

by Capt. Al Anderson

While the Town of New Shoreham was preparing for their 4th of July fireworks celebration, a trickle of early evening flood tide began over Block Island's North Bar. The northwestern sky would shortly flush with sunset's golden rays, and soon after, a golden full moon would peek over the eastern horizon. In the meantime, I was stemming the tide just up-current of what I call "the break," while my anglers practiced their double hauls.

Up to this point in time our brief efforts went hitless, but with light intensity now diminishing, action would be imminent. Just then, out of the corner of my eye, I caught an arched rod and heard line and backing zip through rod guides. Coming out of gear we drifted down-current into the growing rip, and my chromo-scope marked fish deep on the down-tide side of the bar. It wouldn't be long before some would be nosing closer to the rip face. Closer into shallower water that promised strikes.

While we fast idled back up-tide a few minutes later, keeping away from those fish-holding stations, another

American Littoral Society tagged school striper splashed overboard. Back on the spot, each of my two anglers yelped as their 9Ws arched, their reels spooling out backing to fish surging away in the current.

If early evening consistent fly rod striper action with little or no competition interests you, check out the North Bar sometime soon.

TACTICS

There are three approaches to fishing this spot: (1) Anchor up ahead of the rip and cast parallel to it, allowing offerings to sweep down into the turbulence; (2) Stem the current and cast, again allowing the fly to sweep into the turbulence; or (3) troll the fly along the rip face. On a moon tide, I prefer the latter 'cause experience has shown bait will quickly move back and forth along the bar should hungry stripers appear. Once located, I can then stem up-tide of the action. At times I've anchored when concentrations of fish were high, making this effort worthwhile. However, there is no

better way to locate fish than to troll along the rip face, unless of course squadrons of *Sterna* (terns) or *Larus* (gulls) are taking watch for you.

Tidal strength will affect the numbers of fish holding station in a given spot. Several areas of the bar consistently hold fish regardless of tidal strength due to the bar's shape and current flow over it, while other spots hold them only temporarily. Learning all this has taken a few years to achieve and has been, if I might add, a truly pleasant experience.

NORTH BAR

Extending out from Block Island's Sandy Point into Block Island Sound is a near mile-long, gravel and cobble bar (check NOAA Chart 13215). The eastern side faces Rhode Island Sound, and an unprotected fetch extends to the Vineyard. NE, E, and SE winds create swells that can make inner bar conditions dangerous. On the other hand, prevailing winds out of the southwest, especially on an ebbing tide, create flat calm conditions.

North Bar or North Rip, as it's frequently called, is divided into a relatively shallow portion (inner bar), and a longer, deeper section extending out past the 1 BI buoy. Fly rod efforts are concentrated along the inner bar in depths ranging from 4-12 feet, usually up-tide of the rip, out to what is commonly called "The Break." There is a breach between the inner and outer bar, with the outer bar extending northward another 100 yards or so. From there, curving to the NE, the peak of the bar averages 50 to 60 feet below the surface. The "double hump" next to the buoy offers super fishing, but that's another story.

At times bait will concentrate in near slack waters at

Sandy Point, where depths push 20 feet, frequently with "feathers" over it. Early in an ebb tide this bait can be carried north and over the bar, out of reach of a surf caster, but within reach of a boater's fly cast. Be careful not to stray into shallow water chasing breaking fish, as an errant wave could fall into the boat.

TIDES AND CURRENTS

Many are confused about tidal info when consulting a Newport tide chart. Instead, check when the current turns at The Race, along with predicted current strength. Ebb over North Bar (inner) begins about an hour before The Race, while flood begins about 15 minutes prior. Flood current runs to the NNW (320 degrees magnetic), while ebb over the inner bar runs NNE (060 degrees magnetic). I carry a copy of Eldridge Tide and Pilot Book aboard, selling for \$11.95 in any major marina or tackle shop, and at home subscribe to www.tide-ware.com, which provides real time tide, current and coastal map data for all of New England through the year 2004 for \$19.95. Check it out.

PARACHUTE SQUID FLY

Several years back Capt. Ron Murphy, who runs the charter boat Stray Cat out of Falmouth, MA offered me one of his specialized flies for our efforts at North Bar rip. A simple fly, it's tied on a 4/0 stainless hook, dressed with Polar Bear Super Hair and Polar Flash, and carries 3/8" holographic eyes. It matches the action of a squid when stripped back, much like a worked parachute jig. Check out www.straycatfishing.com and click on "Tying Capt. Ron's Parachute Fly" for