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Fishing Forecast

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"Unbelievable."

"Incredible."

"The run of a lifetime."

These are among the descriptions of a puppy drum blitz presently taking place in the surf at the southern tip of Hatteras Island on the Outer Banks.

"They're crushing the beach," John Mortensen said from Teach's Lair Marina at Hatteras Village. "It's on fire!"

Added the marina's Dave Hissey: "I think we've got every puppy drum on the East Coast congregated from Frisco Pier to where fishermen drive across the dunes to the beach at Ramp 55 near here. Fish tagged in Virginia have been caught this week.

"I have a friend visiting here from Delaware to fish who said he has 'been waiting 30 years for a run like this.'"

Some anglers have caught up to 25 of the drum per day while casting into the surf for the fish also known as reds and spottails. Practically all the puppy drum have been released because the limit is one fish per day measuring 18 to 27 inches.

The pups, ranging from 4 to 15 pounds, are being taken mainly on spoons and artificial grubs in dark and/or green-white color patterns. They're also hitting live eels, which are in high demand.

Most anglers are using light tackle.

Speckled trout, mixed in with the puppy drum, also are starting to strike after their bite has been slowed by a sustained cold spell. The frigid weather caused the trout to become lethargic.

"With the weather forecast to warm up through the weekend, it's likely the action is going to get even better, if that's possible," long-time angler and tackle shop operator Frank Folb said from Avon.

Lake Norman: Striped bass near the McGuire Nuclear Station and Marshall Plant hot holes, or discharge canals, on trout, shad and shiners. Catfish in the 10-pound range on fresh cut baits slow-trolled on planer boards and Carolina rigs.

Lake Wylie: Catfish, largemouth bass and scattered crappie in and near the Allen Plant hot hole.

Mountain Island Lake: Some crappie, largemouth and white bass at the Riverbend hot hole.

Lakes Badin, Tillery, Blewett Falls: Scattered crappie on minnows. Blue catfish in the Pee Dee River below the Blewett Falls Dam.

High Rock Lake: Scattered crappie and a few stripers.

Lakes Hickory, Rhodhiss: Little activity.

Lake James: Smallmouth bass on shiners. Walleye on spoons jigged 70 feet deep.

Fontana Lake: Smallmouth 15-20 feet down off the shoreline on jerk baits, Andrew Minnow lures and small brown dollflies. Walleye on ice jigs 50-70 feet deep off points.

Lake Wateree: Catfish along the river channel on cut gizzard shad and white perch worked 5-25 feet down.

Lake Murray: Stripers from mid-lake up to the Big and Little Saluda Rivers by anglers fishing near where gulls are feeding. The fish, working forage species under the birds, are hitting both artificial lures and free-lined live baits. Bream and shellcrackers just off the shoreline in 12 feet of water on crawlers, earthworms. Largemouth around docks on artificial worms.

Santee-Cooper Reservoir: Bream 25 feet deep around brush piles on crawlers, crickets. Some guides report their parties are boating up to 100 bream per day. Catfish 50-60 feet down on cut baits.

Lake Hartwell: Scattered stripers, hybrids on free-lined gizzard shad and herring in the Seneca and Tugaloo River arms.

Lake Jocassee: Fair numbers of trout on minnows and spoons trolled from the surface down to 50 feet deep.

Lake Keowee: Largemouth and spotted bass at the lower end of the reservoir on artificial worms worked 20-25 feet deep.

Outer Banks: Striped bass about 2 miles off the beach in the Kitty Hawk area. No trips further offshore reported.

Southeastern N.C. Coast: Little activity reported.

S.C. Coast: Little River area: Reds on the very shallow flats by anglers sight-casting to them. Sheepshead at the jetties; Grand Strand area: Little activity reported; **Charleston area:** Reds in schools on the mud flats at low tide on Gulp! lures and crab imitation lures scented with

"Jack's Juice." Sheepshead deep around heavy structure on clam strips, oysters and mussels; **Beaufort area:** Spottails during low tide periods on flies and other artificial lures sight cast to tailing fish. Trout around points on DOA shrimp and spoons.

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