

A few tips for catching summertime striped bass

BY PHILLIP GENTRY
FOR THE JOURNAL

Fishing for striped bass on our area lakes can be just as hot as the weather by paying attention to a few details. But before you begin thinking that striper fishing is a cakewalk, striped bass fishing guide Mike Gault said a lot of behind-the-scenes preparation and an understanding of the summer habits of the fish comes into play.

In fact, Gault has a list of tips that he relies on to help him catch fish this time of year.

TIME ON THE WATER

Striped bass are notorious wanderers. Gault said it's not unheard of for a school he fished the day before to move three to five miles overnight. In order to stay abreast of both the habits and whereabouts of these fish, you have to spend a lot of time on the water.

The other version of time on the water is time of day. During the heat of summer, it's not unusual for Gault to begin his charters an hour or more before sunrise and conclude the trip by 10 a.m.

"I know it's early, but bright sun and boat traffic really makes it hard to keep these fish grouped up," he said. "It's best to get you're fishing done before the sun and the recreation crowd gets up."

KNOW YOUR ELECTRONICS

Gault said it isn't necessary to have the top-of-the-line electronics, but knowing how to read and how to use the units you have is all important.

"A guy who's got a decent system and has it adjusted correctly where he can mark fish and mark bait and know exactly where he's at on



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Striped bass are not too difficult to catch during the heat of summer if you pay attention to a few details when fishing for them.

the lake will out-fish a guy with better electronics that can't read them," he said.

KEEP YOUR BAIT HEALTHY

The guide made a distinction between fishing with live bait and fishing with lively bait. Like most striped bass anglers, his bait of choice is fresh blueback herring, which he buys from local bait shops the morning before the trip.

"This time of year, the surface temps are hot —

USE LIGHTER TACKLE

August is probably not the time to be chasing trophy striped bass, but it is a good time to catch numbers of decent fish. For this reason, Gault suggests dropping your line class down to 12-pound mono. He fishes vertically in the water column using Carolina-rigged down rods to fish live herring. His main line is 12-pound test, but he also uses smaller leaders.

"I'll run 10-pound fluorocarbon leaders, and I also match the hook size to the bait," Gault said. "The lighter line and hooks will let that bait act more natural, and I've seen that catch fish five to one to anglers

upper 80s," Gault said. "I make it a point to get that bait from my bait tank to the hook and free falling into deep water in under 10 seconds. It's a matter of practice. I see too many people not accustomed to handling bait fumble getting it out of the tank, fumble getting it on the hook, maybe even drop it on the floor and then let it sit in hot surface water for several seconds while they get situated. Once the bait gets down to the fish, it might still be alive, but it won't be lively. Lively is what catches fish."

using 20-pound test and 3/0 and 4/0 hooks."

Finally, Gault said it's hard to release striped bass caught from deep water this time of year, so it's best to come equipped with a pre-iced cooler and drop your catch straight into the ice.

"Then it's time to head for Lake Crisco," he said.

PHILLIP GENTRY is a freelance outdoor writer and the host of PG & Boatgirl Outdoors. Download the podcast on Apple, Google Play, Spotify or at pgandboatgirl.com.