

# GONE FISHIN'

## For Derby fishermen the spell never ends

By Nelson Sigelman

The goose decoys are in the back of my Pathfinder and I have already put them to use in the season just begun; a light-spinning rod rigged for bonito and albies is in the rod rack, in anticipation of the Derby that begins Sunday; and I have started to think about where to hang deer stands. It is a wonderful time of the year.

In July and August, tourists flock to Martha's Vineyard. The beaches and restaurants are the principal attractions. But the fall is when the Vineyard is at her best and offers a natural bounty hard to surpass. Did I mention dip-netting for bay scallops in late October and November?

The months spread out in front of me like a sumptuous buffet in a luxury restaurant. I know I cannot possibly eat everything, so I try to choose wisely. In September, there is no question that the Derby is the main course.

The 65th Martha's Vineyard

Striped Bass and Bluefish Derby begins Sunday at 12:01 am. I have no doubt fishermen of all ages will have lines in the water at 12:02 am.

I have written a lot about the Derby. There have been funny stories, tragic stories, and good stories. I am fond of telling those stories to people I meet who are unfamiliar with the Vineyard.

On occasion, I will be deep into the retelling of some Derby tale and know that the person on the receiving end is not so interested in hearing about the time Hawkeye stripped down and jumped off Memorial Wharf in an effort to free an albie snagged on the bottom of a ferry docked alongside, much to the horror and puzzlement of a female crewmember.

And, I have been at cocktail parties where I described the return of legendary Dick Hathaway to the Derby throne at age 70, and his subsequent fall from grace the following year, and noticed that the drama is lost on the innocent person who probably intended to have a short, meaningless conversation as the shrimp got passed around.

The truth is that when I get talking about the Derby, my enthusiasm for the topic gets the better of me. Politics? Nah. The Derby? Roll out the anecdotes.

Often, during a party post-

mortem on the ride home, my wife will note that I talked too long about fishing and the Derby. "Couldn't you see that they weren't interested in fishing?" Norma will ask. "Yes," I will say, "but I couldn't help myself."

The uninitiated seldom understand the full grip of the Derby. For the casual observer, it is a fishing tournament. But we who will purchase a Derby button know it is much more.

It is nights spent under a canopy of stars waiting for a rod tip to bend under the weight of an unseen fish you hope will put you in first place, if just for that day. It is mornings watching the sky brighten and searching for the telltale splash of feeding bonito or false albacore. It is walking through a crowd of tourists and weatherbeaten fishermen and watching the numbers on the Derby weigh station scale.

The 65th Derby may begin Sunday, but the truth is that once you have experienced the Derby, it never really stops.

### Derby updates

The Derby has a comprehensive website (mvderby.com) that provides most of the information an inter-

### MASS. RECREATIONAL FISHING LIMITS - 2010

	Min. Size	Bag Limit
Black Sea Bass	12.5"	20 fish
Bluefish	none	10 fish
Cod	22"	10 fish
Fluke (season 5/22-9/6)	18.5"	5 fish
River Herring	Harvest & use prohibited	
Scup*	10.5"	10 fish
Striped Bass**	28"	2 fish
Tautog	16"	3 fish
Blue Crab	5"	25 crabs
		no egg bearers
Shellfish	Town license required	
Lobster	State license required	

\*Maximum of 50 fish per private vessel with six or more fishermen on board. May 24-Sept. 26, 2010.

\*\*Striped bass may be taken only by hook and line. The discard of dead, legal size striped bass is prohibited.

Saltwater Fishing Permit information: countyfish.noaa.gov 888-674-7411

DMF - 617-626-1520  
www.mass.gov/dfwe/dmf



FILE PHOTO BY L.A. BROWN

and free. Go to countyfish.noaa.gov or call 888-MRIP-411.

If you would like to help out with the Derby, there is always a need for people to help fillet fish that are later donated. No experience is necessary. Contact Matt Malowski at matt@mvfishing.com for more information on volunteering and an opening for a paid evening fillet master.

### Honoring vets

Many readers will remember that last year the Nixon Family of Chilmark and the Derby committee pitched in along with the Nixons. It was a wonderful and rewarding experience for all involved.

The Nixons and the Derby committee are working to bring a group of up to 15 veterans back to the Vineyard on Sept. 20 for a three-day stay. Activities will include fishing on charter boats, surf-fishing from the beach, and fly-fishing.

Volunteers are needed to help with transportation; and all gifts to help defray the cost, and souvenirs the vets can bring back with them are welcome. If you would like to assist with this wonderful effort give Maria Black, Beach Plum Inn assistant manager and coordinator for this effort, a call at 508-645-9454. ♦

The group traveled to the

Island at the generous invitation of Bob and Sarah Nixon, owners of the Home Port Restaurant, the Beach Plum Inn, and the Menemsha Inn in Chilmark, and their eighty-year-old son Jack, an avid fisherman, who conceived of the idea. The result was the creation of "The Beach Plum Inn American Heroes Saltwater Challenge."

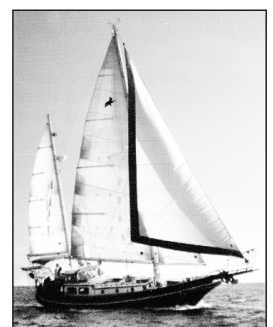
A host of volunteers that included Menemsha charter captains, Island businesses, and the Derby committee pitched in along with the Nixons. It was a wonderful and rewarding experience for all involved.

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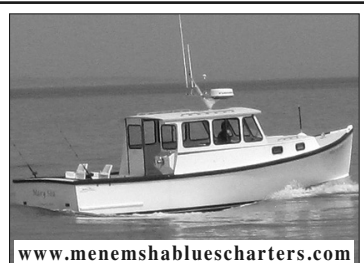


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## CATCH OF THE WEEK



PHOTO BY COOPER GILKES

From left to right: Hattie Smith of Union Springs, Alabama; Heather and Charles Klinck of West Tisbury and Union Springs, and Hunter Smith of Union Springs.

How do you determine which is the first fish you caught when there are two fish on the lure? That question posed itself to Heather Klinck, when two bluefish hit the same plug while Heather was fishing with charter captain Danny Gilkes last week. In addition, the day's catch included striped bass, bonito and a fluke. ♦