

On the Move

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The Hits Just Keep on Coming

By DAVE BOROWSKI
Special to The Washington Post

THE last time I went charter fishing on the Chesapeake Bay I caught two rockfish, both about 19 inches long. They were the largest fish I had ever caught and they put up an honorable fight to avoid the fillet knife. They lost that

Field Trips

fight, however, and I took my catch home, where my family and I dined on rockfish that evening and froze the remainder to enjoy over the following weeks. That trip was for fun and food. I went charter fishing last month, but this time it was for fun, food and prizes.

Maryland Chesapeake Bay rockfish season runs until Dec. 15. Trophy season is the period from April 20 through May 15, when the fish are the biggest. During trophy season there's a limit of one fish per person, per day and a minimum size of 28 inches. Those 28 inches get you a certificate, and if you're lucky enough to catch one 40 inches or longer, you get an embroidered patch, both courtesy of the state of Maryland.

But now through the end of the season, the keeper size drops to 18 inches. If you catch a rockfish 28 inches or longer, you still get a certificate or patch, but the fish are generally smaller during the summer so it'll be a greater challenge.

In April I went with the Greg Prothero and Larry Hurley party, 13 family members and co-workers from the Frederick area who have fished together for about seven years. Each year they charter with Jim Brincefield of Deale, Md. This was my second trip with "Captain Jim," who's been a waterman since he was 9, a first mate since 1969 and a captain for 10 years.

When you charter a boat and captain, they provide the supplies need-

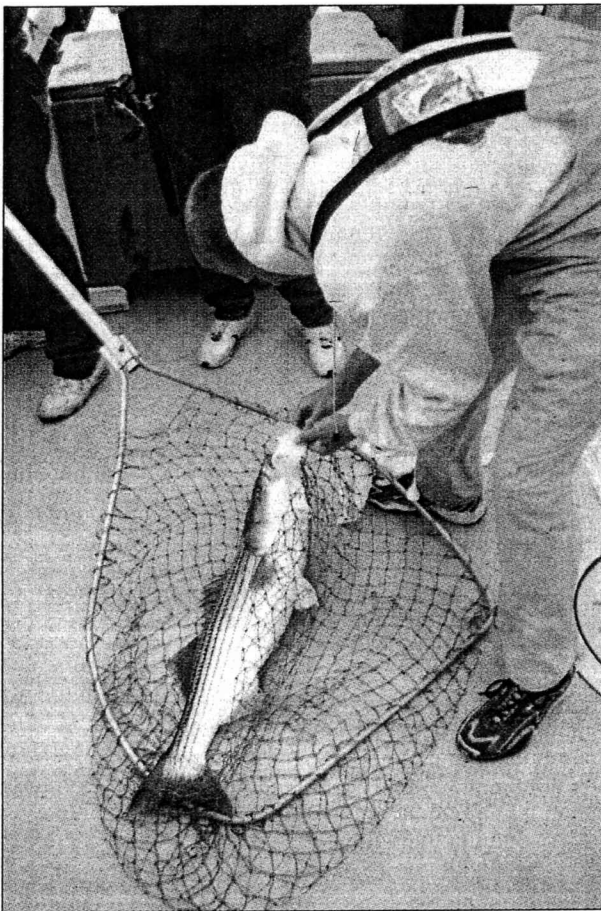
ed to catch fish: licenses, rods and reels, bait, etc. You bring food, drink, sunscreen, tennis or deck shoes, motion-sickness medicine and anything else needed to make the trip comfortable. Remember that fishing is a lot of standing around and waiting, so comfort is important. The captain sets the time limit, but be prepared to be on the water from sunrise until the boat catches the limit or everyone cries uncle.

Bay fishing requires an early start. Brincefield and his boat, the *Jil Carrie*, departed at 5:30 a.m. from Happy Harbor in Deale, about 40 miles east of the District. It took us about 1½ hours to get to our fishing spot, between Parker's Creek and the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant. This early morning was chilly, with temperatures in the low 50s and winds whipping up five-foot waves.

Just before arriving at our fishing location, first mate Stuart Burgoon of Glen Burnie prepared the tackle by attaching the lures, called an "umbrella rig with two parachutes," which looked remarkably like a baby's crib mobile. Burgoon then placed the fishing poles in the holders around the back and top of the boat. Brincefield began the slow circling of the area, known as open-water trolling. The captain carefully watches the boat's fish-finder device and when he sees the telltale blip he adjusts speed and direction accordingly.

With trophy fishing you don't stand around with the pole in your hands waiting for fish to bite. The poles stand at attention, watched by crew and anglers, and when a fish grabs the lure cries of "fish on" are heard, a bell rings and someone who hasn't caught a fish yet grabs the pole.

"Fish on!" yelled the first mate at around 8 as he rang the bell and encouraged our first fisherman to take the pole. Prothero stepped up and



BY DAVE BOROWSKI

First mate Stuart Burgoon checks out a catch on the *Jil Carrie*. Cleaning and filleting are generally included in charter rates.

began landing his fish. He cranked the reel as the captain and others yelled encouragement. You couldn't see the fish that Prothero was battling, but you could see the strain in his face and the tip of his pole pointing at the water.

After a few minutes the silver rockfish was visible, and as Prothero got it closer to the boat, people shouted, "It's a keeper." (Fishermen are very optimistic.) Burgoon scooped the prize up with a net and laid it on the deck to remove the hook. He immediately gave it to Prothero who hoisted it proudly in front of himself so friends and family

could take pictures. Burgoon laid the fish alongside a ruler fastened to the top of the fish cooler, finally proclaiming, "Thirty-four inches. It's a keeper." The fish was thrown in the ice chest and everyone went back to waiting for a turn.

A second hit followed, with Steve Evans of Germantown grabbing the pole and fighting to land his trophy. Like Prothero, Evans worked hard to reel in the fish, and when landed and measured, it bested Prothero's by 4½ inches.

Those two quick hits were followed by 45 minutes of no action, a not uncommon occurrence when

fishing. When the bell finally rang, Stephanie Lucas of Frederick leapt into action to meet the challenge: woman vs. fish. This was Lucas' first time fishing, but she was ready. She struggled with her fish, occasionally getting help from sympathetic friends, and eventually landed the monster. Burgoon announced the size as 40½ inches, which was good enough for a patch. Lucas was in the lead, but there were a lot of potential winners left.

There was more waiting around until the skipper spotted a new school under the boat and shouted for everyone to get ready. The fish came fast. Over the next seven hours the remaining anglers caught their trophies or waited patiently.

By about 1, everyone had a fish except me. I was the only one standing between Lucas and the boat. The rain was picking up and gusts of wind sprayed the boat with a cool mist; people huddled in the cabin listening to Brincefield's fishing jokes—anything to get out of the weather. Just when I was about to cry uncle, someone yelled, "fish on and I was up."

It was like trying to land a tit Grimacing and biting my lower lip kept reeling until the fish was in the boat. The first mate snagged the fish with a net and dumped it unceremoniously on the deck. We measured it was 38 inches long, just short of a patch and Lucas's record but still a trophy and an unforgettable experience.

The rain started in earnest as Burgoon pulled up the rods for the third back. People were cold and tired and happy to be getting back to land. At the dock the captain and first mate letted our catch and I packed mine in my cooler, hopped in my car and headed home to enjoy a fish dinner and show off my certificate.

FISHING CHARTERS — Group charter rates average about \$45 per person, depending on the size of the group. Generally, the price of the trip includes free cleaning and filleting of your fish. If you're interested in fishing with Jim Brincefield contact him at 410/867-4944 or visit his Web page at www.azinet.com/captjim. The Maryland Office of Tourism Development's Web site, www.mdifun.org, can help you find other charter boats as can the Web site www.azinet.com/azinet/fishlinks.htm and www.thechesapeakebay.com

Fish Lines

By GARY DIAMOND
Special to The Washington Post

What's the Catch?

Washington & Vicinity

also found at the C&O Canal Aqueduct and the humps just south of the railroad bridge. Muddy water moved into the area last Thursday, but smallmouth bass were still available from Long Bridge foundations, the Kennedy Center drop-off and riprap at Pentagon Lagoon. Mizmo tubes or Case Majic Sticks both were productive. Good largemouth bass catches were made by anglers casting tube lures in the back of the Washington Channel, from docks at marinas and from the drop-off and rocks adjacent to the Fort McNair wall. In the Woodrow Wilson Bridge area, look for largemouth bass in deeper water, particularly

creeks produced arm-jolting strikes.

Maryland

DEEP CREEK LAKE — Those big bluegills arrived in the shallows and several were checked in at a local tackle shop that exceeded 10 inches in length. Bottom-fished night crawlers produced the best results; however, some of the largest fish were taken on small, live minnows intended for smallmouth bass.

LOCH RAVEN RESERVOIR — Small, inline spinners trimmed with a morsel of night crawler and trolled 3 to

Shallow-running crankbaits lured chain pickerel up to inches and an occasional largemouth bass from the shallow edges of the grasses.

LIBERTY RESERVOIR — Anglers continue to catch good numbers of crappie from Nicodemus Bridge while dunking live minnows and tiny shad darts beneath the structure. Downlake near the end of Oakland Mills Road, troopers caught a couple of keeper striped bass and fair numbers of crappie. The crappie hit tiny shad darts trimmed with a 1-inch, white twister, while the rockfish seemed to prefer a large, deep-diving crankbait.