

Winter Striper Fishing

In The Net with Fish'n Dog Drew

By Drew Gidlog Photo by Doris Noriega

This is the first of a series of articles about fishing the vast waterways of the Delta by Drew Gidlog, owner of Fish'n Dog Drew Guide Service.

Halloween and All Saints Day mark the time to wind down your search for Salmon and begin your transition to winter Striper fishing in the 1,000 miles of waterway, better known as the Delta.

In the late fall and winter, Striper migrate to fresh water in the Delta and the other local rivers, Sacramento and San Joaquin. They bed down for the winter to feed while waiting for spring that causes them to move out to their annual spawning grounds. During this time of year a favorite place to fish for Striper is the area known as Frank's Tract. Frank's Tract is located between Bethel and Mandeville Islands; Webb and Holland Tracts, immediately off the San Joaquin River. Launch at the B&W Marina off Highway 12. After a short journey south from the launch enter an amazing area of the Delta.

Take advantage of the Striper's predator instincts when fishing for them. They eat shad, younger Stripers, and other smaller fish, so try to imitate the fish they hunt to survive. An effective technique this time of year is to slowly troll along the weed beds using the electrical motor on your boat. Travel along the weed beds in a parallel pattern. Throw a lead headed jig, also known as a Road Runner by some, with a white rubber worm attached to a single trail hook, just inside the weeds and rip the lure through the weeds to simulate a smaller bait fish. White, yellow, and red jigs are the most successful. Do not be afraid to try other colors on off-days of fishing.

If the weed beds are not as productive as you'd like, or slow down, switch over to fishing a soft segmented swim bait, or hard plastic rebel lure, that resembles a shad bait fish. Do not be afraid to try a crack back rebel as another lure of choice. Sometimes the action a crack back creates is the difference you need to catch the attention of a Striper.

Look for areas of underwater structure or openings in rip rap levee structure where water is quickly running through

it. Search for underwater areas that have ledges or drop offs. Stripers are known to school just below ledges in search of food or bait fish. Once you find an area, use the trolling motor to approach just outside the area. Cast above the ledge and retrieve your lure back. Alternating the speed, or generating momentary stops to imitate a wounded fish, are successful techniques to entice the interest of a Striper.

Since Stripers tend to travel in schools do not hesitate to keep

working an area you had success in a few times. You never know how many you will find with each pass.

With these fishing techniques, you are casting a lure many times during the day, so you want to have a rod and reel that you are comfortable with and that does not weigh a

lot. Look for a rod that has a solid stout butt, or lower half, and that is capable of generating the support you need when fighting a fish, while having enough flexibility in the tip to allow you accuracy while casting the lure. Typically, a nice setup is a 6 1/2 to 7 foot rod with 30 pound braid line. This setup rarely fails. As for reels, it comes down to your comfort level for casting. A bait caster, if you can handle

it, is highly recommended. Bait casters often have more retrieving power when reeling in a large catch. Make sure you adjust the reel correctly so you do not create a rat's nest during a cast. Another reel of choice is an open face spinner. Whichever reel you use, you need to adjust the line drag.

On a successful cast, the water explodes and you are in for a wonderful battle. Set the hook and enjoy the skirmish! Pound for pound, Stripers are an amazing fish to catch, creating great memories of a day on the water.

It is not uncommon to have a day when you catch and release 40 plus Stripers. Stripers are known for their strength and ability to survive after being released. Take your time removing the hooks, and to properly revive the fish by placing it back into the water.

In closing, "Remember to keep those fishing lines tight," and "take time to take a child fishing..."



Map: Bing.com

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