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Fishing Around: Scores of dead a big concern

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By **ROB CONERY**
July 23, 2009

First of all, when you see something in the newspaper that says "1,000 fish dead" it's not encouraging.

As reported earlier this week by the Times' redoubtable Patrick Cassidy, fisherman Ron Gramazio headed to Parker's River in West Yarmouth to go snorkeling last Sunday and instead found a lot of dead fish: everything from stripers to eels to "hundreds of 2-3 inch flounder."

A whole section of a fragile river "already described as "an ecosystem in an advanced state of deterioration" " was choked out by an algal bloom.

Gramazio noticed a lot of fish pooling to the left of the bridge, just north of Route 28. "And at first, I was scooping them up. I mean, 12-inch scup with just a bucket." But then Gramazio, who has fished Parker's for years, noticed something was off.

"Scup were swimming into this one area, and just turning around and running for it," he said. Many didn't make it. Fish were dying in front of his eyes. "It blew me away."

On Tuesday a lone scup was floating dead just north of the bridge.

What's to blame? Some say runoff from the June-uary monsoons. Some say leaching from septic systems in this built-up area of the Cape. Some say effluent from the nearby motels.

Now, I'm no biologist (I'm barely a journalist), but I believe this process is called eutrophication, when too much fertilizer runs off from those green, rolling lawns that are at the water's edge, and then clog up the water, halting photosynthesis, and choking the river from the bottom up.

Just a few weeks ago Hinkley's Pond in Harwich had an algal bloom so nasty the town closed the pond even to boaters. The water was so toxic that they didn't even want you floating above it. It only reopened this week. (Blooms like this one have killed at least one dog in recent years.)

We need to take better care of our waterways, which are important to us all, fishermen or not.

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Elsewhere, a Cape Cod Saltie was out fishing a semi-secret spot in Chatham when a few madras-and-knicker-clad heroes decided to practice their golf drives. On the beach. A few martinis over the line, this crew was hooting and hollering, smacking golf balls all over the public beach, even hitting a moored boat at one point. Morons.

And weâ€™re just nudging toward the early stages of funny fish season. A smattering of bonito were reported in warmer water south of the Vineyard. These are fast and finicky and a great thrill on light tackle.

Want to learn to stalk this exciting fish? Want to stuff your face with free pizza? Head to the Osterville Anglerâ€™s Club at 6 tonight, where captain Dave Peros will give a free funny fish seminar as the OAC kicks off their funny fish tournament season.

So, while slurping back oysters and littlenecks on a deck overlooking the sea, itâ€™s time to ask ...

Whatâ€™s going on?

1. Buzzards Bay/Cape Cod Canal â€™ The Canal is slow. The summer doldrums hit here first and fishing all but turned off in the ditch this week. Out in Buzzards there are some decent scup. And bigger fluke in the deeper waters.

2. Islands â€™ â€™Hotter water,â€™ as one Vineyard local put it, has made bass scarce. The fish have gone into the witness protection plan out here. What action there was, was mostly by the boat crowd trolling along the north shore. Night fishing from the beach on Chappy is middling.

Nantucket is still solid this week, though, with fish in the harbor, and filling the rips off Great Point. I fished from the sand there recently, and the seals almost took my buddyâ€™s popper.

Bass at night from Miacomet and Surfside. Just Do It Too was hooking monster blues this week; big, aggressive, bend-the-tail-to-fit-â€™em-in-the-cooler choppers, 15 pounds, easy.

3. Cape southside beaches and estuaries â€™ Bass River has some schoolies. Beaches pretty slow.

4. Nantucket Sound â€™ Better the farther east you go. Didnâ€™t hear much about fluke, or Middle Ground this week. Keeper bass around Monomoy. Handkerchief and Bearses were reported fishy.

5. The Great Backside Beach â€™ I was there Sunday and Monday and thereâ€™s too much mung in the water. A few schoolies were had from Nauset Light Beach on clams, but you really have to put in the time this week. Denver Jimmy came east for a little sea-habilitation and while he didnâ€™t catch any fish, he caught a few waves off Nauset.

6. Cape Cod Bay â€™ Tuna the story of the week here. The Fingers, and about a mile north of there, had some decent fish; 80- to 200-pounders were seen breaking. One (wildly successful) commercial guy, who shall remain nameless, was fishing the Race and spotted hundreds, literally hundreds, of bass under his boat. Thick.

He would drop jigs in there and they all but played ping-pong with them, batting them around, but they wouldnâ€™t eat anything. Trolling, butterfly jigging, bait, eels, forget it. Lockjaw. But Blackbeardâ€™s weighed in a 20-pound bass caught by a 10-year-old who was pretty psyched.

Freshwater â€™ Mystic Lake had a few largemouth this week, biting in the evenings on trolled baits. The bigger the better.

Catch â€™em up!

Information for this column was assembled from a variety of liars, exaggerators, misinformants, neâ€™er-dowells and roustabouts. In other words, from fishermen.

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