

BY CAPT. TONY GATTO

The Fisherman's Offshore Report columnist looks back at some of the highlights of the 2018 offshore season.

2018 offshore season IN REVIEW

John Pickett, Steve Davis, Jeff Melworm, Dave Wissemann and Ray Azzato had the largest shark of the season, an 886-pound mako caught in the canyon on July 30 and weighed at Bergen Bay Docks.

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Thank you to all the marinas and tackle shops that take the time to record and report their customers' triumphs and tribulations. This weekly tabulation forms a solid base of information that assists our readers in forming a fishing game plan. The pictures, the stories, what's working, what's not, are all integral parts that keep us on the hunt for our quarry. The year 2018 was a solid but challenging season. Timely reports and weather windows where the keys to success. There were four consistent fisheries this summer. Keeping in mind plenty of other species were caught (tilefish, swordfish, yellowfin, white and blue marlin) but not with the consistency of seasons past.

BLUEFIN TUNA

The near shore bluefin bite from 20 to 40 fathoms kicked off in early June. Scott of Bergen Bay Docks in West Babylon said that 2018 opened with a bang, as a bunch of his customers got in on the early bluefin bite. Most fish were around the 100-pound mark. Two stand outs were Jimmy from Babylon with a 142-pounder, and a second boat with a 160-pound fish. Scott mentioned most fish fell to slow trolled ballyhoo. John Bauman of White Water Marine ran his boat out of Shinnecock with a crew of Kevin Schaefer, Kenny, Fireman Pete and John DeLettore. They boated a 66-inch bluefin early in the trip before working their way south to Toms Canyon in search of yellowfin and bigeyes. With no luck, they eventually wound up back near the Bacardi where they hooked up again. After a three-hour battle they stuck a harpoon in what turned out to be a 326-pound bluefin!

SHARKS

To the dismay of many anglers the 2018 season opened with an 83-inch minimum fork length imposed to help curtail overfishing of mako sharks. Despite the new regulation, shark fishing south of Long Island started on cue as water temperatures eased into the low 60-degree range. The highlight of the shark season was the 886-pound mako caught in the canyon on July 30 aboard *Stick 'Em Up* and weighed at Bergen Bay Docks.

Richie at Woodcleft Fishing Station in Freeport mentioned that the first shark of the season came to the scale in early June. The thresher was caught by Captain Mike Nagri, John Clifford and Frank Foster on the boat *Cliff Hanger*. It was caught south of Debs in 100 feet of water. On the tournament front, the Hudson Anglers Shark Tournament was a tremendous success. The *All American* won with a 329.6-pound thresher shark. Taking second place was *Grand Slam* captained by Kevin Jinks with a 293.8-pound mako. Rounding out the top three was the *Lana Ann* captained by Joseph Tuminski with a 290.6 mako.

John Murray, General Manager of Star Island Yacht Club and Marina reported on the official results of their 32nd Annual Shark Tournament. *Alexa Ann* won the top spot with 417-pound mako. Kevin Kallmeyer and crew boated their fish on day one. Fortunately for them it held with approximately 80 pounds to spare. Second place mako went to *Out Cast* with a nice 334-pound mako. The third place mako was caught aboard the *Stacey Jane* and weighed 296 pounds. The boat *Professional Cryer* took top thresher

honors with a 345-pound fish, followed by *Marie E* with a 336-pound whiptail. Third place thresher went to *Battle Axe* with a 290-pound fish. The blue shark category was won by *Contender Tournament* with a 275-pounder that netted over \$66,000 in prize money.

Courtney at Montauk Marine Basin in Montauk reported on the results of their shark tournament and noted that Giuseppe Suppa and crew placed for the 4th consecutive year, this time taking first place with a 350-pound thresher on day one aboard his *Moutaineer*. Also caught on day one was a 229-pound blue shark that took 2nd place. The shark was caught on *Sea Wife IV* captained by Pablo Bertau. Day two of the tournament was sporty to say the least. Mike Marro on the *Fish Pig* was rewarded for battling adverse conditions by catching a 225-pound mako that secured 3rd place.

Tosh from Oakland's in Shinnecock relayed that the Doug and Wally Oakland Shark Tournament was a huge success. First place went to *Reel Deal* and Brian Grunseich with a 369-pound thresher shark. Second place was a 226-pound thresher caught aboard *Ziggy* by Mike Anderson. Plenty of other sharks were tagged and released by various boats.

BIGEYE TUNA

The action started with a bang in late June as John at Trophy Tackle in Babylon reported that Teddy Prager III, along with Don Brown, and Kevin Cooper, went south to the Edge for a great mixed bag of bigeyes, yellows

The crew from *Pilar* with a 234-pound bigeye tuna weighed at Star Island Yacht Club in late June.



and marlin. Tosh from Oakland's in Shinnecock relayed word that *Reel E Buggin* skippered by Bobby Earl bagged five bigeyes at West Atlantis. Tosh also mentioned other boats that scored bigeyes, yellowfins and marlin. Brice from White Water Outfitters in Shinnecock mentioned a tuna bite had developed at Atlantis, with both bigeyes and yellowfins in the mix. The shop had

several customers make the run and score well. John Murray, General Manager of Star Island Yacht Club and Marina reported that the crew from *Pilar* landed a nice 234-pound bigeye. These catches encompassed the first solid action with bigeyes and yellowfins for the 2018 season.

When boats found them, they were rewarded with wolf packs of decent size fish. The only issue was you needed the range to get to south of Tom's Canyon, East Atlantis or the Tsunami Buoy. It was mid to late November when the bigeyes showed up again, this time at Hudson Canyon, where a few boats took advantage of the chunk bite and boated some fat, late season fish.

MAHI MAHI

Dolphin showed up in early July as water temperatures continued to warm. The first reports came from the tuna tournaments that included mahi categories. The Montauk Canyon Challenge saw the mahi category finish in a tie at 18.2 pounds for the crews of the *Rascal* and *Overtime*. I took my boat *Fox Sea Lady* to the Dip. The day troll was very slow for tuna, but we saved the trip with mid-teen mahi. Gaffers were all over the inshore pots. The larger fish were found in the canyons with good regularity. As we moved into August the high teen fish moved closer to home with big numbers of chicken mahi flooding inshore structure just a short ride from South shore inlets. Captain Kirk Fay from fishgaak.com ran mahi targeted charters towards the end of the summer and scored well with fish to 22 pounds. Most of his success



Capt. Kirk Fay and his wife Tina enjoyed a banner year with mahi and attributed their success to always having a good supply of live bait onboard.

resulted from fishing around free-floating debris and having a good supply of live peanut bunker in the baitwell.

Feel free to text or email me with your reports over the course of the season, along with any topics you would like to see me cover this year at 516-807-2746 or captony@foxsealady.com. I look forward to hearing from you.