

CLUB PROFILE:

The Plum Island Surfcasters

BY ANDY DEAR

The September Beach Blast is an event that started with the club and is now a day-long event hosted by the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, the Plum Island Surfcasters, Mass Beach Buggy Association, Friends of the Parker River Wildlife Refuge and features an early morning tournament, casting demonstrations—World Casting Champion Ron Arra frequently comes to this event to provide tips on making the long cast—and a cookout.

regular meetings

The club meets the third Tuesday of every month at the Newbury Fire Hall. The membership fee also includes not only 12 monthly meetings, but also the kid's program each month, numerous fishing trips throughout the season including the September Beach Blast on the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge at which such speakers as Ron Arra present their skills to club members and the public, the annual awards dinner in November, tournaments and much more. Hope to see you there.

Since its inception, beach buggies have been a primary mode of transportation for members who travel over the beaches of the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge – which occupies three-fourths of Plum Island, an 8-mile long barrier beach that is bordered by the Merrimac River on the north and the Parker River on the southern end – in search of fish, as well as other beaches that the club has fished together over the years. During the early years, many of the members brought their families out onto the beaches with them, introducing kids to fishing and fun on the beach. Smith told us that his kids were pretty much raised on the beach, as they accompanied him on his fishing adventures out onto the sand. At that time, many of the vehicles were homemade rigs compared to the rigs one finds on the beaches today.

Fifty years after the club's inception, the Plum Island Surfcasters are going strong and still growing.

Nearly 50 years ago on Plum Island Massachusetts, 12 surf fishermen got together to form a fishing club called the Plum Island Surfcasters. Today, the club is still going strong with more than 200 members, comprised of paid members, lifetime members and honorary members. One of the most active areas of the club today is the kid's program run by Kevin Moore, who is also the club's new president for 2006.

FAMILY FOCUS

Founding member, Bob Smith, told us that the club has always been active for families. Today, this tradition continues as families participate in many different aspects of the club, which include separate meetings every month – open to all club members – and designed to teach children the ins-and-outs of angling. Each month, the kids are introduced to a different aspect of angling, mainly focused on saltwater fishing, which sometimes includes guest speakers to cover topics such as plug building. During the summer months, the kids go fishing rather than meet inside, applying the knowledge they gathered during the winter meetings. Trips include overnight ventures on the island and even a mackerel trip in early June for the kids and club members.

TOURNAMENTS

Another main aspect of the club is fishing tournaments. During the annual club dinner a little over a year ago, club members were treated to a slide show of beach buggies from the 1960s put on by Bob Smith. Smith's presentation included many tournament shots from assorted tournaments on Cape Cod and neighboring beaches. Tournaments were always a big event for the club and still are. During one tournament, three 50-pound fish were recorded for that tournament alone.

Tournament activities continue throughout the year for the club both internally and externally. There is a year-long big fish tournament – that features both catch-and-release tournament categories – as well as the occasional inter-club tournaments such as the Plum Island Invitational – a club tournament that takes place over the Memorial Day weekend, that features angling teams that range from Maine to Massachusetts and at times Rhode Island. The club also usually produces one or two teams for the Tri-State Tournaments of New England that take place in Massachusetts, Maine and Rhode Island respectively throughout the year. Trophies aside, prizes for these tournaments are really just bragging rights that help keep the events fun and friendly.

And while this club is called "The Surfcasters," close to a third or more of the membership currently are boat fishermen. According to Smith, in the 1960s, the ratio was split even amongst shore anglers and boating anglers. Many members are crossovers that fish both from boats and the shore.

Other events throughout the year include the annual awards night in November, where trophies for the year-long contest are handed out, and the spring fundraiser that takes place in late February. The fundraiser primarily raises funding for the kids program to help provide materials for the classes and other elements of the program. Frank Daignault has been a regular speaker, as has Barry Gibson and a number of other well known local experts including Steve Pappas from Gloucester.

SEMINAR COMING UP

For the 2006 show on Saturday, February 25, Tony Stetzko, one of Cape Cod's most famous surf fishermen, will be sharing his secrets with the audience on finding and catching striped bass from the surf using plugs, bait and fly. While many already know of his fishing exploits, Stetzko captured a 73-pound striper that obtained him the world record title for a time.

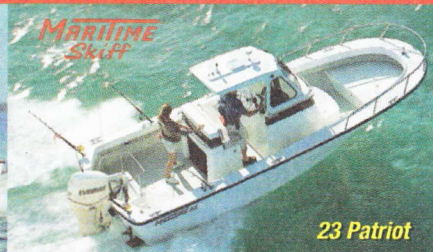
The fundraiser will be held at the Newbury Fire Hall off Route 1A at Morgan Avenue in Newbury, MA, behind the Newbury Town Hall.

Doors open at 8 a.m. For more information on this event, visit the Plum Island Surfcaster website at www.plumisland.surfcaster.com.



Every November the Plum Island Surfcasters holds the annual awards dinner in which prizes for the year-long tournament are awarded. This event also features a pot-luck dinner where the main entrees are cooked by the club's executive board.

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