



The anglers search the sea for any signs of activity. The day has gotten off to a slow start, but suddenly one of the lines is knocked out of its outrigger. What had been a tranquil scene is suddenly transformed into one of furious activity. An angler stations himself in the fighting chair and prepares for the battle to come. Tense seconds pass. Then the big fish decides to pick up the bait and the reel begins to whine as the fish strips off line. This scene is being repeated more and

more often off the coast of South Carolina as interest in big game fishing continues to grow. This increased interest and participation is not just limited to offshore trolling, however, but includes all aspects of our marine sport fisheries in South Carolina.

South Carolinians are fortunate in that they have access to a wide variety of marine habitats, each providing a different type of fishing experience. Some 2,876 miles of tidal shorelines, 500,000 acres of tidal marshlands, and 10,000 square miles of continental shelf area provide an almost infinite number of saltwater fishing opportunities.

Generally, saltwater sport fishing in South Carolina can be broken down into the following categories — shore fishing, pier and bridge fishing, inshore fishing, offshore trolling, and offshore bottom fishing. We will examine each of these and determine their relative importance and contribution to our overall sport fisheries.

The two most common types of shore fishing are surf and bank fishing. Species commonly taken by surf anglers include king whittings, trout, pompano, flounder, spot and what is probably the most important species in this fishery — the channel bass. This type of fishing is particularly important in the Grand Strand area and on some of the sea islands off the central and southern portions of South Carolina. Bank fishing generally occurs near the mouths of inlets and along the banks of accessible tidal rivers and creeks. The species composition of the catch of bank anglers is essentially that of the surf

fisherman with the exception of pompano. This type of fishing also includes angling from private docks and piers of which there are an estimated 5,000 in South Carolina. Shore fishing is a very popular type of fishing in which an estimated 45,000 persons participated last year in this state.

There are fourteen ocean fishing piers along the coast of South Carolina; the majority of which are located in the Grand Strand area. These piers are popular with summer tourists and vacationers, and they are also utilized heavily in the fall when the spot begin to run.

Last year more than 200,000 angler days were spent on ocean fishing piers in South Carolina. In addition to the fishing fees generated (approximately a dollar per trip), the piers also sell bait, tackle, food, ice and gifts. It is obvious that pier fishing is an important segment of our sport fishery from an economic as well as a recreational point of view. The most common fish taken by pier fishermen include king whiting, spot, flounder, croaker, drum, trout, bluefish, pompano, channel bass and sheepshead.

Many bridges, some of which have fishing catwalks, provide excellent fishing for saltwater anglers in the coastal areas of South Carolina. Bridge fishing is especially popular in the southern part of the state where anglers pursue cobia from the Broad River and Checkessee River bridges. Many large drum are also taken by bridge fishermen in this area.

Inshore fishing involves the use of small private or rental boats. The most sought after species of inshore fish include winter



## Marine Sport Fisheries

By  
David Cupka

trout, channel bass, flounder, cobia (in the southern part of the state), and striped bass. Other species commonly taken include sheepshead, spot, drum, whiting, croaker, bluefish and silver perch. In terms of number of participants, small boat angling is the most popular form of saltwater fishing in our state. An estimated 130,000 residents engaged in this type of fishing last year. This figure does not include the large numbers of out-of-state small boat anglers who fished South Carolina waters during this period.

The productive continental shelf area off South Carolina provides some of the best offshore fishing along the Atlantic coast. Offshore trolling is best during April through November, and this type of fishing generally produces excellent catches of dolphin, wahoo, tuna and king mackerel. In addition, blue marlin, sailfish and white marlin are being caught offshore with increasing frequency each year. Billfishing is relatively new to South Carolina with the first blue marlin being caught off our coast just 10 years ago by Mr. and Mrs. L. K. Fitzgerald of Spartanburg. As the number of big game anglers increases, and with local anglers gaining more experience each year, we can expect to see more of these big fish caught in the future. Closer inshore, anglers catch large numbers of Spanish mackerel, king mackerel and bluefish each year while trolling.

During 1973, an estimated 2,800 private boats participated in offshore trolling. Some 28,000 residents engaged in offshore trolling this period, both from private boats and charter boats.

There are approximately twenty-five charter boats operating in South Carolina at present. These boats specialize in offshore fishing for large gamefish. They usually carry six passengers and fish from 10 to 70 miles offshore, depending on the type fish that is sought. The charter boat fishery operates mainly out of Little River, Murrells Inlet, Georgetown, Charleston, Myrtle Beach and Hilton Head Island.

Offshore bottom fishing is another popular form of saltwater angling in our state. At present there are twenty-two "head" boats fishing off South Carolina. In addition, a large number of private boat anglers engage in this type of fishing. There are two main types of "head" boats — the half day boats which generally fish the "Blackfish Banks" and



the all day or "Gulf Stream" boats. Species caught by bottom fishermen include black sea bass, groupers, snappers, grunts and porgies. The major "head" boat ports are located at Little River, Murrells Inlet and Charleston. An estimated 22,000 state residents participated in offshore bottom fishing last year. The estimated total expenditures by resident and visiting anglers in our state during 1973 exceeded two and one half million dollars.

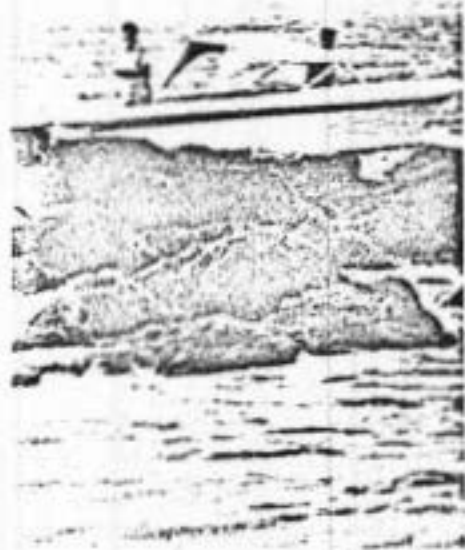
Last year an estimated 188,000 South Carolinians were substantial participants (fished more than three days a year) in saltwater sport fishing. Based on various federal and state surveys, it has been determined that the average annual expenditure by saltwater anglers is on the order of \$125 per angler. This figure includes expenditures on tackle, motors, bait, fuel, fishing fees, lodging and special fishing clothes as well as other associated expenditures. Applying this figure to the number of resident anglers, an estimate of 23 million dollars is generated as the economic value of saltwater sport fishing in South Carolina. However, this figure is only a minimum estimate since it does not take into account the numerous out-of-state anglers who fish in South Carolina each year.

The total value of sport fisheries should not be based entirely on economic considerations however. There is another important side to saltwater angling, and that is its recreational value. How can a price tag be applied to the intangible benefits — the pleasure of landing a big fish or the opportunity to "get away from it all", to name only a couple. People fish for a wide

variety of reasons and many aspects of the fishing experience cannot be defined quantitatively. In our modern technological society this recreational aspect may be far more important than any economic benefits.

Despite the presence of a large population of saltwater game fish in our waters and off our coast, there are still many problems inherent in the development and expansion of sport fishing in South Carolina. Many people in

*(Continued on Page 84)*



(Gun Control Continued)

Crime Information Center) in Washington.

NCIC keeps a running list of stolen items, autos, guns, boats, or anything that has a number or identifying description. We are called occasionally by NCIC in reference to a gun we may have sold. We look up the transaction and give them the full description of the individual as well as the gun sold. Most calls have been in reference to stolen guns which have turned up in crimes in other cities.

(Fisheries — Continued from Page 51)

South Carolina and elsewhere are not aware of the wonderful fishing opportunities to be found in the Palmetto State. The solution to this problem lies partly in educating people to what is available.

Access is getting to be a problem. Many stretches of beach front and coastline are in the hands of private developers and individuals. The amount of beach available to the surf fishermen is being reduced each year. This sort of problem will continue to grow unless some solutions are found and access to beaches and islands for recreational purposes can be improved.

There is a definite need for the improvement and expansion of facilities for boats, especially the larger offshore fishing boats. Some people have expressed difficulty in being able to secure a boat slip. This is a definite deterrent to a person considering the purchase of a large non-trailerable boat.

The alteration and destruction of coastal wetlands is yet another problem. With more than 70 per cent of our saltwater sport fish being dependent on the marshes during at least some stage in their life cycle, it is imperative that these lands be preserved and protected for the benefit of our fisheries.

These are just a few of the many problems which must be dealt with in order for our saltwater sport fisheries to develop significantly.

In spite of all these problems, there is a lot of potential for the future development of recreational fisheries. Saltwater sport fishing is an important part of the tourism and recreational industry of South Carolina. It is a non-polluting industry which is significant both in terms of its economic and its recreational benefits. It is also an industry which in large part is based on renewable resources which, if protected, will continue to provide fishing experiences for generations of South Carolinians and visitors to come. ★★★



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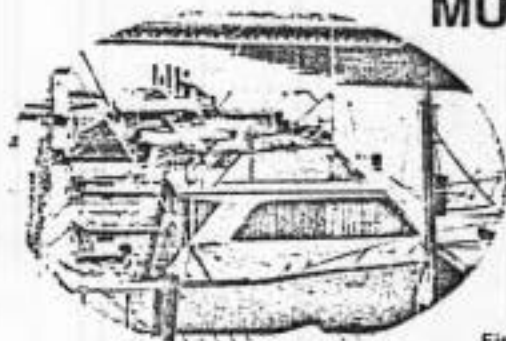
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