



## Martha's Vineyard Surfcasters Association

P.O. Box 3053 Edgartown, MA 02539

[www.mvsurfcasters.org](http://www.mvsurfcasters.org)

*"...to encourage the sport of surfcasting; to gather for entertainment and good fellowship; to promote and uphold sound conservation practices and laws, and to see that these laws are properly carried out by members; to further good sportsmanship; and to seek and protect public access to fishing areas on Martha's Vineyard." A. Spofford, 1989*

### MVSA Club News

**New Members**-President Scarpone opened the December 7th meeting by introducing Mark & Lisa Leonard who recently moved permanently to the Vineyard and want to learn more about our favorite pastime. Welcome!

**Raffle Winners** – Chantale Duguay won the dealers sample Bob “Hawkeye” Jacobs 12 slot lure bag and a dozen others in attendance won lures donated by Peter Johnson (Roberts) and Ron McKee (Striper Maniac).

**Cuttyhunk Trip** – President Scarpone provided more information about the proposed two night fishing trip to Cuttyhunk. A mid week trip is tentatively planned for late May or early June and the approximate costs for lodging is \$75 per person, per night. Additional individual expenses would also include food, drinks and round trip transportation from the Vineyard. Contact Don Scarpone [donaldscarpone@yahoo.com](mailto:donaldscarpone@yahoo.com)

**Used Tackle Sale**- The Memorial Day used tackle sale the proceeds of which will be used to help fund a second college scholarship was also discussed and the “Prez” again made a request for donations of saleable tackle from members. Items may be brought to the January 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting at the Rod & Gun Club or the Awards Ceremony on January 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Awards Ceremony**-Collection of raffle and auction prizes has begun and plans are moving forward for the January 28 Awards Ceremony. As in the past, MVSA members have generously donated items to be raffled and we welcome donations to this year’s event. In order to allow Kathi Pogoda time to organize everything, she has requested that member donations be brought to the next MVSA meeting on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. Please be sure to give us your name and contact information so proper recognition can be given. [katspog@aol.com](mailto:katspog@aol.com)

**Angler of the Year** – Starting in 2017, a new award will be added to our In House Derby. Based on the monthly points, (5 points for each first place pin, 3 for every second place and 1 for every third) accumulated during the year, the angler who at the end of the fishing season has accumulated the most points will receive a special MVSA Angler of the Year plaque. In addition, the winner will have their name engraved on a separate movable plaque that will held for a year then travel to the next annual winner.

Had the award been given this year, Cosmo Creanga would have been the winner with 19 points. (3 firsts, 1 second, and 1 third).

**Fishing with eels (Dead or Alive)** – If you missed the December meeting, you missed an informative talk by Cosmo Creanga. (And who can argue with his success)?

Cosmo said that unlike a lot of anglers, he likes to fish at low tide and does not discriminate between alive or dead eels but likes to retrieve dead ones at a faster speed and impart action similar to the use of a Sluggo or Hogy. Also, unlike many of us who fish with live eels and hold their rods pointed up then bowing toward the fish when a pick-up occurs, Cosmo prefers to hold the rod off to one side and almost parallel to the water. When a pick-up occurs he sweeps the rod toward the water until it's almost at right angle to the beach before he sets the 7/0 hook he uses. Finally, he said he likes to cover a lot of ground when he fishes and moves often.

**Next Meeting (What's In Your Surf Bag?)** At our next meeting on January 3rd, Ralph Peckham, Don Scarpone and Ron Domurat will discuss what they carry in their surf bag for a night of striped bass fishing. It should be another good meeting.

**Military Care Package**-Because of our late notice, donations were on the light side for the package we hoped to send out for the holidays so we thought it would be a good idea to do it again at the January meeting.

This year our recipient is Sergeant Major Kevin Devine. Kevin was born and raised on the Vineyard and is a graduate of MVRHS. He is also a lifelong member of the Aquinnah Wampanoag Tribe and currently serving his 6<sup>th</sup> deployment. He is stationed in Afghanistan.

Please help by bring an item or items to the January 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting at the Rod & Gun Club.

Thru his mother Sgt Major Devine has indicated he **would particularly like clothing items like t-shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies, (size XL) hats with a reference to Martha's Vineyard. Pajama bottoms (XXL) would be much appreciated as would magazines. His Mom said he also enjoys Spearmint Life Savers, pumpkin seeds, beef jerky, Cranberry Raisins (Craisins), almonds and protein bars. In addition, items like lip balm, aspirin, toiletries, medicated ointment, oatmeal, razors, packaged nuts, candy, packaged noodles** are always appreciated.

If you can't make the meeting but would like to help, items may be sent to: SGM Kevin M. Devine, HHC 1-187 TF Leader, Bagram AF, APO AE 09354

**OOPS**-When we did our annual member Derby recap in the November newsletter we mistakenly omitted the results for Patrick Paquette who had a terrific Derby. Patrick scored an extremely hard to get flyrod boat Grand Slam, won a weekly award, three daily pins and the Roberto Germani Catch & Release Award for flyrod boat bonito. Sorry for the omission Pat, nice work!

**Terry Tessein**-The MVSA and the angling community in general lost a good friend and fisheries advocate when off-island member Terry Tessein recently passed away at the age of 81. Terry lived on the Cape and was known to many in the recreational fishing community as an outdoor writer who wrote for The Fisherman, On the Water, Saltwater Sportsman, and had a weekly column in the Barnstable Register. He authored the book "Fly Fishing Boston."

Terry was also an ardent conservationist and saltwater fisheries advocate. He was responsible for the formation of the New England Chapters of the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) and for many years was the regional editor for Tide Magazine, the national publication of CCA. He was also an active member of several fishing clubs including the Cape Cod Salties. *RIP Terry.*

**Menhaden**-If you haven't already seen it, please take a few minutes out of a busy holiday season to read Mark Lovewell's terrific article. When you finish, please take a few more minutes to comment on the proposed ASMFC Menhaden Management Plan.

**The Fish You Seldom See** *Mark Alan Lovewell (An abbreviated version of this story appeared in the 12/16/2016 edition of The Vineyard Gazette. This article appears courtesy of the Gazette).*

At the height of boating activity last summer in Edgartown Harbor, there was a pleasant surprise. Two dolphins spent three days swimming around Edgartown Harbor.

This wasn't a quick visit. They were observed meandering amid the piers, the boats and the moorings. These dolphins weren't lost or here on vacation and they weren't here to draw a community of watching spectators, though lots of folks saw them. They weren't participants in some impromptu aquarium show. You don't need to be a fisheries biologist to know dolphins sauntering in the harbor were here for a meal. They were here because there was food, and we hope plenty of it.

For the first time in at least two decades, this year Edgartown harbor was filled with forage fish. Small appetizing little bait fish were swirling in the middle of the harbor beneath the forest of aluminum masts and beautiful sailboats. You could watch the activity from the dock, a deck or from a dinghy.

The fish these dolphins were feeding on had to be what we locally call bunker, or more widely known as menhaden. For the town's young anglers, the arrival of menhaden was a pleasant unexpected gift. For menhaden are a choice bait fish for those who would hunt sport fish like striped bass and bluefish. During the derby this past fall, competitors were out in Edgartown harbor in small skiffs with throw nets, or with rods and treble hooks trying to snag them. In years past, if you wanted bunker, you had to buy it in a tackle shop. Bunker is candy to all striped bass.

Twenty and thirty-year-old anglers had never seen anything like so many little fish swimming in the harbor. It seemed like an isolated event. For those of us with a few more years under our caps, we remember when menhaden ruled the waters and were part of the harbor story. In those years there was drama at and below the surface, as these bait fish were chased about by bigger fish, false albacore and the once abundant squeteague, known also as sea trout or weakfish.

Menhaden swam and swarmed like underwater bees in all the Vineyard harbors and in and around all the coastal ponds like Menemsha, Sengekontacket and Lagoon Ponds.

But mysteriously they disappeared. We still believe that not far offshore they were vacuumed up by large fishing boats from afar.

Menhaden are as precious as oysters. They eat the same stuff. Menhaden feed on phytoplankton and zooplankton. No one gets bitten by a menhaden. They don't bite and they aren't attracted to any baited hook. They swim with their mouths open and ingest microscopic creatures. They are filter feeders and play a huge part in cleaning up our waterways of what other fish try and avoid.

While there has been plenty of welcome attention in recent years about how oysters are key to restoring our cloudy nutrient rich algae ridden saltwater ponds, menhaden do an even sweeter job.

A century ago, menhaden and oysters ruled the harbors, coastal inlets from Maine to Florida. They were essential like anadromous fish, river herring, shad and even salmon.

Why is it you've never heard about menhaden in the fish market or the restaurant? Nobody eats menhaden. You may eat oysters, but you don't eat menhaden. But every fish in the ocean loves to eat menhaden, from little snapper bluefish close to shore to the whales that swim in the open ocean. Swordfish eat menhaden. Seals and dolphins eat menhaden. The only other top favorite meal of choice is squid, but there is not time for talking about squid here.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is looking for input and scheduled a number of public hearings on the issue from Maine to Florida. Unfortunately, none were held on the Vineyard but they seek opinions on steps they've taken and are about to take. They want to hear from the stakeholders. The commission's fisheries managers are taking a new look in response to growing clamor that menhaden needs to be better managed as all of us look at a wider and a more holistic oversight of the ocean and its many resources.

This is different management than what the popular commercial and recreational fish on our dinner table get. This is not about quotas that will be delivered to fish markets or restaurants here or nearby. The harvest is used for fish meal and shipped overseas to fish farms. This is a resource that was predominantly used as fertilizer. This is a fish caught by the ton and rendered into oil and inedible products used thousands of miles away. This is a local product shipped afar. There is nothing quaint about the catching of these fish. The steel fishing boats that work with nets as big as a football fields are as big or almost as big as our local Steamship Authority ferries. And these fishing boats, often working in pairs often operate within a couple of miles from shore. It is a mechanized fishery with a small crew. You don't know anyone from here who works on these boats.

Menhaden's gift to the world is a more precious to the health of our ocean, than rendered as a product that feeds an economic engine ashore.

New initiatives have arisen along coastal towns as more fisheries scientists and recreational and even commercial fishermen rise to recognize that menhaden have been overfished for too long. That disregard for the fish, because it is inedible to humans, has to stop.

The subject has a far reaching impact on the health of Martha's Vineyard and its coastal waters. This may be one of the most important environmental impact issues that affects our Island waters that we've not talked about. There is a community of commercial fishermen afar who want to catch more menhaden. They are aching to have the liberties they had before. They will tell everyone in the room that the fish are not being overfished, that there are tons more out there in the ocean.

But if you are from Martha's Vineyard, if you are from Maine, if you are from Buzzards Bay or Narragansett Bay, you will likely disagree because you already know menhaden are the lifeblood of an ecosystem that is right now suffering in backyard waterways, nearby estuaries and most coastal ponds. You will say we all miss this essential fish.

Ten years ago, at the start of the lobster problems in Southeastern Massachusetts, lobster fishermen complained to me that one of the key reasons lobsters were in trouble was that striped bass were eating the juvenile lobsters. It appeared true. Many harvested striped bass were found to have their stomachs full of evidence. The lobstermen wanted us to catch more striped bass.

For us, the issue wasn't that there were too many striped bass, as the lobsterman complained. The issue was that these lean striped bass are hungry and there is not enough forage fish in our waters. The depletion of forage fish in Buzzards Bay, in Vineyard Sound and in many other places was having a hurting impact on other creatures.

Striped bass don't come to these waters to eat lobsters, they come for their meal of choice. Again, you don't need a PhD to know that if you were any fish in the ocean, you'd be starving before you'd want to eat a live lobster. Lobsters are fighters. They have claws and shell and a terrible disposition. They hide under or near rocks. When abundant, menhaden are easier to eat.

The menhaden scarcity has another impact on other species. Last summer, we heard from angry fishermen who claim that seals are eating all the striped bass. In the last decade seals are back. They are hungry and they have to eat. My angry fishermen friend told me that the only answer was to shoot to kill the seals, so they don't eat the striped bass and other fish of choice. That is not a healthy answer. Seals love to eat menhaden too. Without their food of choice, what are they going to eat?

It is pretty clear in management. that ruling the ocean by eliminating or diminishing certain species is harmful. We want the ocean to be restored to its fullness. We want diversity and abundance so that we humans can hand pick what we want to eat. We want a meal that as a resource is sustainable and comes from a healthy place.

Striped bass, bluefish, cod, lobsters, dolphins and seals go where there is food. They don't have an opinion. To them food is survival. We might think that way too, but we have the greater advantage and responsibility to manage the whole.

Public comment will be accepted until 5 p.m. on January 4, 2017 and should be forwarded to Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at [comments@asmfc.org](mailto:comments@asmfc.org) (Subject line: Menhaden PID). The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is <http://www.asmfc.org/>.

**Summary-**As Mark's states in his timely piece, this year there were large schools of adult bunker swimming in Martha's Vineyard waters for the first time in almost twenty years. Consequently, when those schools were located, as in Edgartown Harbor, anglers who snagged and live-lined bunker for striped bass and bluefish had great success, especially during the Derby. It was reminiscent of the old days and a glimpse at how good it could be again. We've all heard stories about the infamous Columbus Day Blitz.

Now the bad news! Up until 2012 and for almost 100 years prior, the commercial fishery for menhaden (bunker) had been largely unregulated, but based on a 2010 alarming assessment of the size of the fishery, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) imposed a 20% quota **reduction** on the commercial harvest, specifically Omega Protein. Judging by what we saw this year, that reduction resulted in an abundance of bunker, not only in our waters but along the east coast.

Unfortunately, since that initial reduction, the ASMFC subsequently increased the commercial quota by 10% in 2015-2016 and has scheduled another increase of 6.5% for 2017.

We can help stop this increase from happening. There are a number of options being considered but it appears as though Option D which calls for the best available science being applied which would leave 75% of the unfished biomass (total weight of the entire stock) in the ocean and not letting it drop below 40%, is the best option and the one we should support.

The ASMFC scheduled a number of hearings on the subject from Maine to Florida. Although none were held on the Vineyard, we can still weigh in on the subject by sending your comments to [comments@asmfc.org](mailto:comments@asmfc.org) Subject line Menhaden PID. **Comments must be received no later than 5:00 PM, January 4, 2017.**

The entire Public Information Document can be found on the ASMFC web-site: <http://www.asmfc.org/>

**Please help- this is the only opportunity the public will have to comment before the ASMFC makes their decision. Numbers are very important!! -**

**Sample comment-**“In reference to Menhaden Management. Menhaden are too valuable as having a benefit to the total ocean environment than to manage it strictly for commercial use. I support managing the menhaden fishery for its value to the ecosystem rather than almost solely for harvest by large scale commercial reduction vessels. I support Option D which would keep most of the biomass in the ocean and not letting it get below 40% until specific reference points are developed.”

**They like us, they really like us!!!** – Our terrific web- meister Dave Balon sent along the following information.

In November the site had 230 new users who had never been on the site before and of those 230, 180 returned to the site a second time. An outstanding 78.3 return rate.

There were 411 total sessions, 30 from desktops, 83 from mobile devices and 19 from tablets. Of those sessions, there were 423 page views.

82% of the new users found the site by a simple search meaning the MVSA site ranks high and still in the top 2 or 3 when anglers are searching “Martha’s Vineyard Fishing”. Not bad for a small fishing club.

Dave also noted the amount of users and new users doubled on November 28<sup>th</sup> (Cyber Monday) and attributed it to people looking for deals or bored with shopping and still thinking about fishing.

Finally, he said there were more than 10 different browser types used which may indicate the need to revamp our web-site to support them all.

*Merry Christmas Everyone and Best Wishes for Good Fishes in the New Year!*

## **MVSA Calendar**

**January 3, 2017-7:00 PM, MV Rod & Gun Club, Pizza, “What’s in Your Surf Bag?’ Ron Domurat, Don Scarpone, Ralph Peckham**

**January 28, 2017-1:00 PM Annual Awards Ceremony, Old Whaling Church**