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Flash-back in action

MARTINEZ — After a couple months off and a complete overhaul, Captain Steve Talmadge announced he'll be "splashing" an all-new *Flash Fishing* just in time to focus on January's sturgeon action.

The boat's rejuvenation included installing a new engine, a little fiberglass work, and a "major clean up." Monday was to be the first day in the water, then Talmadge was planning to head up to Martinez to get back in the fishing action.

"I started the engine for the Air Board supervisor, and it sounded great," said Talmadge. "I'm all signed off. The Cummins technician will be there for the test run and sea trial. If all is good, I should be moving the boat to Martinez on Tuesday." No word on when the like-new boat will be running the first sturgeon trip, but it should be soon.

Striped bass action best for Martinez anglers

MARTINEZ — While striped bass have been the main success stories for anglers fishing locally around Martinez, the Martinez charter boats have been scoring some good keeper sturgeon. These reports coming despite the cold water temperatures.

"Striper fishing has been best," said Nicole Zachary at Martinez Bait and Tackle. "Gary Love caught a 16.8-pound striper off the pier on bullheads, and Richard Mayers caught a 9.5 pounder, again on bullheads."

Captain Jeremy Kangas of Stickem Sportfishing reported steady action while fishing Suisun Bay, but most of the bites were from small striped bass. "We finally got a 49-inch sturgeon to the boat, but it was foul-hooked. The customers were real sportsmen and knew we had to release it."

Captain Jay Lopes on *Right Hook* had better action on sturgeon, reporting 3 keeper sturgeon and one 78-inch oversized fish. "They also had 5 shakers." Saturday's weather forced a cancellation, but on Sunday, his 4 anglers caught a shaker and an oversized fish measuring 67.5 inches.



INSIDE SALTWATER

By Bud Neville

Squid-frenzy

Saltwater anglers would be hard pressed to find anything good about the blanket restrictions on our fishing, particularly in the winter months. Still, always tending to be positive, I'm the first to admit that canceling winter bottomfishing led to the discovery of a previously ignored fishery, that targeting the giant squid.

A rather mysterious creature found from South America all the way north at least to California (reports of dead squid washed up on Oregon and Washington beaches tend to prove they range up the coast quite a ways), giant Humboldt squid have become a prized target for Northern California anglers. Ranging in size from 10 to 15 pounds all the way up into the 60-pound range, these normally deep dwelling cephalopods can be enticed to the surface of the ocean where they literally go into a feeding frenzy around the boat.

While tempting them up is not always a given, this relatively new fishery is being refined somewhat by the sportfishing boats targeting them. Often the first drop of the big squid "clubs" is in over 800 feet of water. Once some squid are hooked, the rest of the school sometimes follow the hooked ones up. There definitely seems to be an advantage in numbers; party boats with 20 or more anglers who hook into 10 or so squid have a good chance of drawing up the school.

If that happens, it usually starts with anglers dropping jigs back down and hooking up half way to the bottom. Then the next drop might see hookups at 100 feet. Finally, in a real squid frenzy, the squid are like albacore chasing chummed bait, breezing by the boat and willing to whack a jig right at the surface of the sea. While those initial drops require a big squid jig like the Ahi 20-inch giant squid jig. These jigs have the weight to reach those depths of 800 to 1,000 feet.

It's hard to imagine a giant squid angler who would bring three outfits on the boat like a tuna angler might, but those who are really into the sport of chasing big squid do just that. In fact, the smart ones don't bring just three, they bring four; two would be two-speed outfits with spectra line rigged with the 20-inch giant squid jigs. There are just too many things that can go wrong when you're fishing 1,000 feet down, and if your first outfit goes down, you have a backup. When the squid get within a

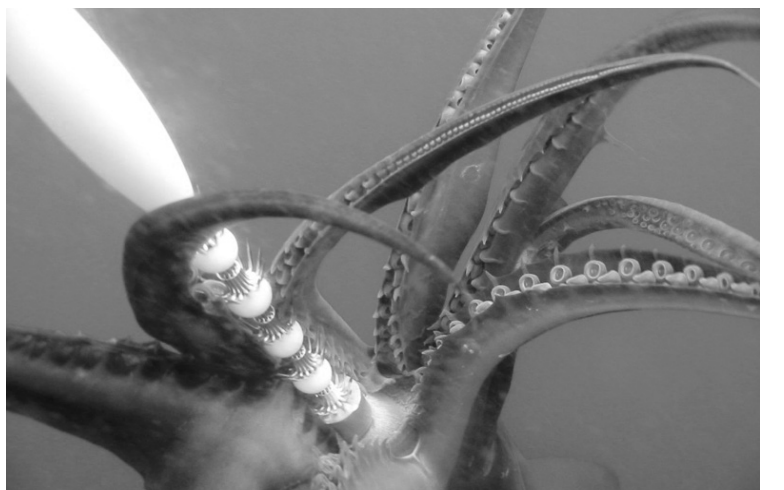
couple hundred feet of the boat, a smaller weighted squid jig like the SJ-175-3Hare perfect. When the squid are on top, flylining smaller jigs is the way to do it. Ahi SJ-175 or SJ-160 series are the top choice when the squid are breezing around the boat. Squid are attracted to light, so the luminous models are natural choices. No need to use a heavy duty two-speed on a shallow drop like this. A high-speed retrieve reel is a good choice, but be sure it has enough muscle to handle a 40- to 60-pound squid.

As for the rod, your deep water outfit should be short and stout. A shorter rod will give you better leverage, and enable you to get the squid up faster with less effort. That makes the mid-range and shallow action come that much quicker, plus you'll be in better shape to enjoy it. Think of those deep water hookups as a jig strike when tuna fishing; that particular moment in fishing is more about the catching than the fight. You can have fun with the lighter gear when the squid are right at the boat.

Ironically, most wide-open squid trips are also the short lived ones. You can spend the whole day prying jumbos out of the deep, but when you get in on a frenzy, anglers on the boat will quickly load it with slack, slimy squid bodies. Before you know it, the captain will be calling it a day to give the poor deckhands time to clean the squid on the way home. It doesn't hurt to set a personal limit of four or five squid, unless you know you can use more. While some people eat the squid they catch, some just can't stand it. You'll have to decide for yourself. In any case, wasting any fish is a sin. Know that squid makes great bait, so even if you find the Humboldt squid unpalatable, you can still freeze the squid meat for catching crabs, and many other game fish in season.

Comments to *Inside Saltwater* can be sent to bud@wonews.com.

SQUID ARE ATTRACTED to light, and these lights offered by Pro-Mar hook onto the end of the squid jig, enticing an attack.



AHI'S GIANT HUMBOLDT SQUID KILLER is a 20-inch jig that makes fishing the excessive depths required on the initial squid drop much easier. Once the squid are nearer the surface, a smaller jig is easier to drop and retrieve.

Giant squid ready for Monterey boats

MONTEREY — There was very little activity on the party boats, but the focus of private boats on giant squid has Captain Brian Cutting on the *Chubasco* ready to try that action.

"Private boats got into the squid just 6 miles from the harbor," said Cutting. "We'll run if we get enough interest, but so far, we haven't been able to get a trip together."

Other options in the area are sand dabs and mackerel, with recent trips scoring up to 70 mackerel per angler. It's not uncommon for the sand dab counts to reach 40 to 50 per angler when conditions are prime.

Night and Day trips for sturgeon and bass!

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