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Catch Me. The Great State of Maine Salt Water Fishing

Maine Department of Economic Development

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**Codfish** - The codfish is found along the entire length of the Maine coast and is the major species landed by the charter and head boat fishermen. The major abundance of cod taken by these fishermen weigh from two to five pounds; however, fish in the twenty pound class are reasonably common and larger fish are taken almost daily. Although considered to be a groundfish living offshore on hard bottom, cod are often caught inshore in estuaries or by fishing from rocky ledges. Some headboat captains report their best catches farther offshore. Apparently the coolness of the Maine offshore waters gives the cod a lively fighting spirit which they are not usually noted for—and makes the Maine cod a worthy gamefish.

In sport fishing most cod are caught on artificial lures, but major baits are cut herring, clams, mussels, and marine worms. However, so ravenous is the cod that he will feed on most things which are edible and some that are not.

**Pollock** - They range the entire coast of Maine; adults are noted for their fighting qualities. Juvenile pollock are called harbor pollock and are found close inshore and provide a large amount of the wharf, bridge, and float fishery. Adult pollock frequent the deeper offshore waters during winter and summer, but in spring and fall are found near shore in pursuit of bait schools. At this time they provide outstanding sport and are readily taken on artificial lures as well as fresh baits. Like the adult, the harbor pollock or juvenile is a voracious feeder and is readily taken on flies, lures, and baits.

**Haddock** - Haddock are normally taken on the offshore banks and ridges, and in most of the areas fished by head and charter boats along the Maine coast. There is a rapidly growing small boat sport fishery for this species in the eastern Hancock and Washington County waters. Haddock normally frequent hard bottom but not the areas of ledge and rock. They likewise do not normally frequent kelp and other areas of heavy marine growth. A voracious feeder except at spawning time the stomachs of haddock have been found to contain most of the known forms of marine life. The same baits used for cod are acceptable to haddock.

**Atlantic Salmon** - In all of the United States, Atlantic salmon are available to the fishermen only in Maine. Fishable populations of salmon are found in the Machias, East Machias, Narraguagus, Dennys, Sheepscot, Pleasant and Penobscot Rivers. Most salmon are taken near or above the head of tide, which would require an inland fishing license, but some are taken in the estuaries of these rivers. Salmon fishing is normally restricted to rod and reel and artificial flies. Early spring fishing normally results in catches of "black salmon" or those fish which winter in the parent stream. Fishing for "bright" or fresh run fish extends from May through mid-September.

**Tuna** - By far the largest quarry fished for or sought after by the marine sport fishermen is the blue fin tuna or horse mackerel. Although this species, which may weigh upwards of 700 pounds, is taken from small boats or dorays both by hook and line and harpoon, such activity is not recommended for the inexperienced fishermen. Normal hook and line equipment consists of heavy and expensive gear. There are available properly equipped charter boats with experienced captains—we recommend this as a better approach to enjoy this highly specialized sport fishing.

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**Mackerel** - This species is one of the most sought after fish in the Maine salt water sport fishery. Readily available from the shore, bridges, wharves and boats, it is likewise the subject of special evening trips by head boats. When actively feeding it does so close to the surface where its activities can be observed, also when feeding it can be easily caught with lures, flies, baits, and jigs. Although predominately a summer fishery in Maine, the mackerel rates very high on the popularity list because of its numbers and ready availability in restricted and protected waters.

**Winter Flounder** - Winter flounder or blackback flounder is an all season resident of the bays, estuaries and close inshore waters of Maine. They are susceptible to temperature changes and are more apt to be caught in shoal waters during cool periods and to migrate to deeper waters during the warmer months. Where shoals and deeps are closely associated these movements may occur almost daily and with tidal cycle regularity. Winter flounders accept such baits as clams, mussels, marine worms, and the like, and provide excellent sport on light tackle. This species is especially noted for its eating quality.

**Halibut** - Formerly taken only incidentally in the charter and head boat fishery, this species is now being actively sought by some fishing party skippers. Halibut taken by rod and reel and reaching sizes up to several hundred pounds are capable of providing a good battle and when caught provide much fine eating.

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**THIS VACATION PLANNER**

for the salt water sports fisherman speaks briefly about major game fish and advice related to fishing for them. It has been prepared to assist you in basic planning and to direct you to other sources of specific information.

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*One in a series of Vacation Planners programmed by the Maine Department of Economic Development, available: 78 Gateway Circle, Portland, Maine 04102. Prospective visitors to Maine are interested in the "facts", and these brochures are designed with this in mind. We would appreciate receiving your comments.*

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Please write: Maine Department of Economic Development State Office Building, Augusta, Maine 04330

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Appropriation Number 1230
OFF THE MAINE COAST
WHERE YOU FIND THE FISHING SHORE!

The state of Maine offers unexcelled opportunity to experience the thrills of saltwater fishing. In the cold clear waters off the magnificent coastline—in the countless bays and inlets—a great variety of gamefish display fighting qualities not usually found in the same species in more southerly areas. Cod, pollock, haddock, and mackerel are ready to take the angler’s lure. Striped bass offer a real challenge to the sport fisherman whether surf-casting or trolling a coastal river. Maine is the only state in the nation where you can catch the Atlantic salmon—one of the most famous and favored gamefish.

In Maine this sport can be enjoyed year round, and you need not be an experienced fisherman. Sailing from many Maine ports there are charter boats and head boats which furnish fishing equipment and instruction to the novice to favored gamefish. The state of Maine offers unexcelled opportunity to experience the thrills of saltwater fishing. In the cold clear waters off the Internat’l Bridge, the magnificent coastline—in the countless bays and inlets—one can catch the Atlantic salmon—one of the most famous and favored gamefish.

The following summary is too brief to be considered authoritative or complete, and is given only as an outline and subject to change. Copies of regulations affecting all saltwater fishing activities are available upon request from the Department of Sea and Shore Fisheries, or local wardens of that department.

1. Striped Bass - limited to rod and reel. Use of spear from sunrise to sunset only.
2. Smelts - generally taken by hook and line or dip net. (a) March 15 to June 14 there is a 4 quart limit. (b) Bangor County has a 4 quart limit thru March, April, May; hand dip nets only: bow of net not to exceed 10 inches diameter.
3. Soft Shelled Clams - contact Sea and Shore Fisheries warden, or town official for local regulations, and licenses where required.
4. Scallops - without a commercial license, possession limit of 2 bushels in shell, or 4 quarts shocked, per day, 3 inch minimum size. Closed season, from April 15 to October 31.
5. Marine Worms - license required to take, dig, or have in possession more than 125 worms.
6. Closed areas - for taking shellfish numerous areas are closed. Inquire as to location and extent of these areas from Department of Sea and Shore Fisheries, or wardens.
7. Fishing above tidal waters requires license from Department of Inland Fish and Game (available also from sporting goods stores, town clerks, sporting camps and hotels, or Maine Publicity Bureau).

CHARTER BOATS AND HEAD BOATS

At the various coastal ports listed below you will find boats and crews inspected and licensed by the U. S. Coast Guard to take people on coastal fishing cruises. The vessels are equipped with safety and communications devices, and many have electronic systems for depth recording and fish-finding. The crews are experienced and knowledgeable about locating fish, and their guidance will help you to have a good catch. A charter boat carries up to 6 persons and is hired at a fixed price per boat per day. A head boat carries more (the average capacity is about 30), and is hired at a fixed price per person per day or may be chartered for private groups. We recommend advance reservations for trips on either type of vessel. Inquire from local Chambers of Commerce for specific information or addresses of these boat owners.

PRIVATE BOAT OPERATORS

Although a large proportion of the salt-water sport fishing is done aboard the charter and head boats, there are many who own suitable watercraft or who choose to operate a rental vessel for their fishing adventures. We assume those who do are capable and knowledgeable of boat handling in the wind, wave, weather and tide of the ocean. (If not, be smart and ride with the captain of a charter boat. In the games the ocean plays there are no special condescensions nor “handicap rules” for the inexperienced or the uninformad). For the private boat operators: Maine Boating Guide and Laws from the Bureau of Watercraft Registration and Safety, State Office Building, Augusta, Maine 04330, and Maine Boat Facilities and Access Sites - Maine State Park & Recreation Commission, same address. See also the companion Vacation Planner, Boating and Sailing in Maine.

MAINE TACKLE-BUSTERS CLUB: an honorary association of salt-water sport fishermen who have landed the big ones. Applicants who qualify in any of the various categories receive a membership card and shoulder patch. Details and application blanks may be obtained from Maine Sea and Shore Fisheries wardens, from captains of charter boats or head boats, or from Maine Department of Economic Development.

THE GAME FISH

Striped Bass - Known to most fishermen as “stripers” they are one of Maine’s most popular salt water game fish. This species ranges the entire coast of Maine and are taken in most of the coastal rivers, estuaries, and in the surf. Migratory in nature, the striper arrives in Maine in May and normally departs for more southern climes by mid-October. Reports of winter caught striped bass are becoming more common. Stripers are taken from bridges, wharves, boats, by wading and in the surf. They appear to feed heavily periodically, and when found in a feeding period can readily be taken on most baits and lures. In recent years the development of flyrod techniques for taking stripers has further developed the high value of this fish as a sport species. Striped bass in Maine are predominantly “school fish” in the one to four pound category; however, fish in the fourteen to twenty pound class are not uncommon and fish up to sixty pounds are taken annually. The striped fishery is still a relatively new endeavor with new and productive fishing areas continually being reported.

Atlantic Smelt - Because of the minimal restrictions of seasons and creel limits on the marine species in Maine, a twelve-month recreational fishery is developing. Smelts, which are resident to most of the major bays and estuaries, are taken in the spring by net, in the summer and fall by red and red or hand line and in the winter through the ice by hook and line. Major baits are clams, small mummichogs, marine worms, and suckers. A picturesque Maine winter scene is a shanty colony, for taking smelts, on the ice of a river or bay. Some shanties are so refined they have heat, electric lights and even bunks. Some shanty colonies are complete with snack bars.

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