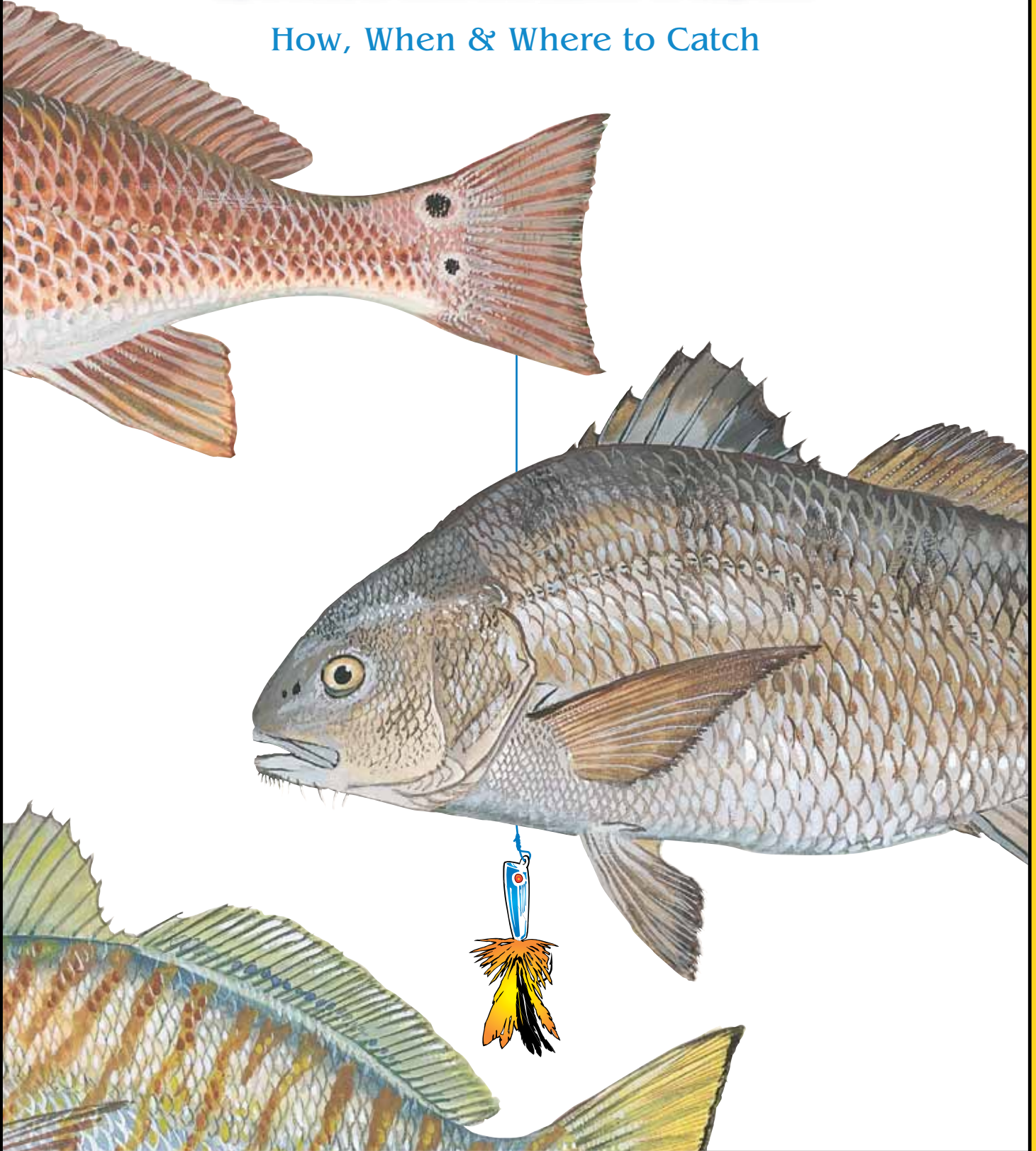


A GUIDE TO VIRGINIA'S SALTWATER FISH

How, When & Where to Catch



Virginia's Saltwater Fishing Calendar

X – Available
XX – Peak Season

Species	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Amberjack						X	XX	XX	XX	X		
Atlantic Mackerel		X	XX	X								
Black Drum				X	XX	XX	X	X	X			
Blue Marlin						X	XX	XX	XX	X		
Bluefin Tuna						XX	XX	XX	X	X	XX	X
Bluefish				X	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	X
Blueline Tilefish	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cobia					X	XX	XX	X	XX			
Croaker			X	X	X	XX	XX	XX	XX	X	X	
Dolphin					X	X	XX	XX	XX	X		
Flounder			X	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	X	
Gray Trout				X	XX	XX	XX	X	XX	XX	X	
King Mackerel						X	XX	XX	XX	XX		
Kingfish (Roundhead)					X	XX	XX	XX	XX	X		
Red Drum			X	X	XX	XX	X	XX	XX	XX	X	
Sea Bass	X	X	X	X	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
Sheepshead					X	XX	XX	XX	X	X		
Spadefish					X	XX	XX	XX	XX	X		
Spanish Mackerel						XX	XX	XX	XX	X		
Speckled Trout				X	XX	XX	X	XX	XX	XX	XX	X
Spot						X	XX	XX	XX	X		
Striped Bass	XX	X	X	X	XX	XX	X	X	XX	XX	XX	XX
Tarpon						X	XX	XX	X			
Tautog	XX	X	XX	XX	XX	XX	X	X	X	XX	XX	XX
Wahoo						X	X	XX	XX	XX		
White Marlin						X	XX	XX	XX	X		
Yellowfin Tuna					X	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	X	

Species	Bait or Lure	Method	Location	Seasons	Average Weights	State Record
Amber-jack	Live bait (spot, croaker, bluefish, menhaden, small fish); Artificial lures (spoons, surface plugs, diamond jigs, white bucktails, plastic squids)	Drifting and slow trolling live bait over and around obstructions (wrecks, reefs, towers, buoys); casting and trolling artificial lures over and around obstructions	Ocean waters over and around wrecks & underwater obstructions; Chesapeake Light Tower	June – October; peak July – middle September	30 – 60 pounds	118 pounds; caught at the Chesapeake Light Tower in 1986 by Mark J. Roberts
Black Sea Bass	Squid, crab, cut fish, clam, shrimp, diamond jigs, metal jigs	Bottomfishing, generally near and over underwater obstructions (wrecks, reefs, rocks and rough bottom areas)	Ocean waters; species less plentiful (especially large individuals) in lower Chesapeake Bay	April – December; species moves to waters offshore (20 fathoms and more) during winter, where they can be caught over wrecks and ledges	1 – 3-1/2 pounds	10 pounds, 4 ounces; caught over offshore wreck by Al Paschall in 2000
Bluefish (large)	Artificial lures (spoons, tube eels, metal squids, surface plugs), cut bait (fresh menhaden, mullet, herring, spot), whole balao or Boston mackerel	Trolling, casting or jigging to schools of fish with artificial lures; surfcasting with cut bait or lures; chumming while using cut bait; bluefish can be taken on streamer flies with a fly rod	Offshore and coastal waters; Chesapeake Bay; Eastern Shore barrier island surf	Middle April – July; October – December	8 – 16 pounds	25 pounds, 4 ounces; caught at Bluefish Rock in Chesapeake Bay in 1986 by Gayle E. Cozzens
Bluefish (small)	Artificial lures (small spoons, feather lures, metal squids, surface plugs) and cut bait	Trolling or casting to schools of fish with artificial lures; surfcasting and bottom fishing with cut bait; surfcasting with artificial lures	Chesapeake Bay, coastal ocean waters, ocean surf, inlets	May – October	1 – 5 pounds	
Blueline Tilefish	Squid, cut fish, metal jigs	Bottom fishing, generally over rough bottom in 300 feet of water or greater	Offshore ocean waters	January – December;	4 – 8 pounds	20 pounds, 4 ounces; caught at Norfolk Canyon by David Akridge, Jr in 2009
Cobia	Live bait (eels, spot, menhaden, mullet); artificial lures (large spoons, white bucktails, plastic eels, swimming plugs); cut bait (menhaden or spot)	Cast, drift or slow troll live baits around buoys, underwater obstructions and schools of fish swimming on the surface; anchor, chum and fish live baits, fresh dead baits and cut bait in chum slick and on bottom; cast and troll lures around buoys, obstructions and to schools of bullfish (rays) or schools, pods or individual cobia swimming on surface	Buoys in lower Chesapeake Bay, at the mouth of the Bay and along coastal beaches; CBBT; Bluefish Rock off Hampton, Cabbage Patch and Kiptopeake areas off Cape Charles, and York Spit area; coastal buoys and wrecks; Chesapeake Light Tower; Latimer Shoal; Inner Middle Ground Shoal; York Spit area	May – September; peak mid-June – mid - September	20 – 50 pounds	109 pounds, 8 ounces; caught at York Spit by Joseph F. Berberich, III in 2006
Croaker	Peeler crab, bloodworms, cut bait, squid, shrimp	Bottomfishing with bait, anchored or drifting from boats, and also caught from piers, docks, shore and surf	Chesapeake Bay, tributary rivers of the Bay, coastal ocean waters, inlets	March – November	1/2 – 2 pounds	8 pounds, 11 ounces; caught at Newport Light by Norman T. Jenkins in 2007
Dolphin	Artificial lures (offshore trolling lures), balao, squid, cut bait	Trolling with lures, balao and squid; casting to schools of dolphin around weedlines and floating debris with cut bait (fish or squid) and lures (bucktails, surface plugs, streamer flies)	Offshore ocean waters	May – October	2 – 20 pounds	71 pounds, 8 ounces; caught off VA Beach in 1991 by Don Dorey
Black Drum	Whole clam, peeler crab, whelk, peeler crab/clam "sandwich", bucktail and leadhead jigs	Bottomfishing with bait on "fishfinder" rig; running tides and late afternoons and evenings considered best; occasionally caught on bucktails or metal squids by casting or jigging to a school of fish	Chesapeake Bay along shallow portion of channel ledge running from Fisherman's Island to north of Cape Charles, especially off Kiptopeake, at Cabbage Patch and buoys C-10 & C-12; around middleground bars of Eastern Shore seaside inlets; 2nd & 3rd Islands of Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel	May – September; peak May – early June along Eastern Shore bayside and seaside inlets; peak late June – early August at 2nd & 3rd Islands of Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel	40 – 60 pounds	111 pounds; caught off Cape Charles in 1973 by Betty Hall
Flounder	Live bait (minnows and small fish), frozen minnows, fresh strip baits (bluefish, flounder and shark belly, squid), minnow/strip combination, artificial lures (bucktails); big strip baits and live spot or small mullet often used for big fish at Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel	Drift fishing with live or dead natural baits fished on the bottom; slow trolling natural baits on bottom; casting from beaches and piers; trolling small bucktails dressed with strip baits (especially for big fish along Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel); casting bucktails	Seaside inlets of the Eastern Shore; Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel area; lower Chesapeake Bay; Rudee Inlet; the Cell and eastern end of the "Cut" Channel in the middle Chesapeake Bay	March – November; peak May – July on Eastern Shore seaside; July – October in Chesapeake Bay	1 – 3 pounds	17 pounds, 8 ounces; caught at Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel in 1971 by C.E. Cross
Kingfish (Round-head, Whiting)	Bloodworms, shrimp, small pieces of cut bait, squid, sand fleas	Bottomfishing with bait	Surf zone of coastal waters from Sandbridge to Assateague Island; ocean piers; lower portion of the Chesapeake Bay, including lower bay piers	May – October	1/2 – 1-1/2 pounds	2 pounds, 13 ounces; caught off Sandbridge by Chip Waters in 2002
Mackerel, Atlantic (Boston Mackerel)	Small tube worms and jigs	Jigging to schools of suspended fish	Coastal and offshore ocean waters, from 5-35 miles offshore	Mid - February – mid April peak March – early April	1/2 – 3 pounds	None; 3 pound minimum for initial state record
Mackerel, King	Live bait (menhaden, mullet, spot, small bluefish); artificial lures (spoons, feather lures, nylon jigs); strip baits and small whole balao	Slow trolling, drifting or anchoring with live bait; trolling with artificial lures, strip bait and balao	Coastal and offshore ocean waters, particularly around wrecks, towers, obstructions, ledges, lumps and other "structure"; mouth of the Chesapeake Bay and off ocean inlets	June – October; peak September – middle October	5 – 20 pounds	63 pounds, 1 ounce; caught off Sandbridge by Susan Smith in 2007
Mackerel, Spanish	Small artificial lures (spoons, metal lures, feather and nylon lures), small live baits (menhaden, mullet)	Trolling; casting to schools of fish	Coastal ocean waters, particularly off inlets, along tidelines, and over coastal wrecks; lower Chesapeake Bay	June – October; peak June – September	1 – 3 pounds	9 pounds, 13 ounces; caught off Virginia Beach in 1993 by Everett Cameron
Blue Marlin	Whole dead fish (balao, mullets, spanish mackerel), squid, artificial lures (offshore trolling lures), and live baits (small dolphin, bonito and skipjack tuna	Trolling	Offshore ocean waters	June – October; peak middle June – September	150 – 400 pounds	1093 pounds, 12 ounces; caught off Virginia Beach in 1978 by Edward A. Givens

Species	Bait or Lure	Method	Location	Seasons	Average Weights	State Record
White Marlin	Whole dead fish (balao, mullet), squid, strip baits, eels, artificial lures (offshore trolling lures), live bait (pilchards, cigar minnows)	Trolling; occasionally casting live baits to marlin "balling" bait or swimming on surface	Offshore ocean waters	June – October; peak August – September	40 – 60 pounds	131 pounds, 10 ounces; caught off Virginia Beach in 1978 by Rudolph D. Van't Riet
Sailfish	Whole dead fish (balao, small mullet), strip baits, squid, artificial lures (small offshore trolling lures, live bait (small fish)	Trolling; also, sailfish seem to be attracted to slow trolled live baits fished in similar method as used to slow troll for king mackerel	Offshore ocean waters	June – October; peak July – September	20 – 40 pounds	68 pounds, 8 ounces; caught off Virginia Beach in 1977 by P.J. Murden
Sharks	Whole dead fish and cut fish; live bait (fish)	Anchor, chum and fish dead and live fish baits in chum slick and on bottom	Offshore and coastal ocean waters, particularly around and over obstructions (wrecks, reefs, towers), ledges and lumps; Eastern Shore seaside coastal waters and inlets	June – October	50 – 250 pounds	1099 pounds, 12 ounces; caught off Virginia Beach in 1981 by John Thurston
Sheepshead	Fiddler crabs, mole crabs (sand fleas), clams	Fishing bait near the bottom (suspended off the bottom) near submerged structures	Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel; wrecks in nearshore coastal waters and lower Chesapeake Bay	May – October	3 – 8 pounds	20 pounds, 12 ounces caught from the Seagull Fishing Pier (CBBT) by Arun Nhek in 2005
Spadefish	Pieces of fresh mussels and clams; pieces of jellyfish	Fish visible schools of fish around obstructions (buoys, towers, etc.) with small (#1 or #2) double strength hooks	Coastal ocean waters and the lower Chesapeake Bay; Fish consistently found at the Cell, Plantation Light, York Spit Light, Tiger wreck, 4A-buoy, Chesapeake Light Tower, and CBBT	May – September	3 – 8 pounds	14 pounds, 14 ounces; caught at the Cell by Roland E. Murphy in 2009
Spot	Bloodworms, peeler crab, clam	Bottomfishing with bait; anchored or drifting from boats, also caught from docks, piers, shore and surf; big runs of fish in the fall in lower Chesapeake Bay and in surf and piers of Virginia Beach	Chesapeake Bay and Bay tributary rivers, coastal ocean waters, inlets – all inshore coastal waters	June – October; peak July – September for Chesapeake Bay and tributary rivers; peak middle August - middle October in lower Bay and coastal ocean areas	8 – 12 ounces	2 lbs., 6 oz.; caught at the Egg Island Bar in Chesapeake Bay in 1980 by Nathan Dryden
Striped Bass	Artificial lures (spoons, plastic eels, bucktails, surface plugs, swimming plugs), peeler crab, bloodworms, eels, cut bait, live bait	Troll artificial lures around bridges, piers, Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, jetties or troll in vicinity of schools of fish (where quills diving and slicks on the water); cast bucktails and plugs around bridges, piers, jetties and CBBT; bottomfishing with bloodworms in deep holes, creeks and rivers that flow into Chesapeake Bay during winter months and in Assateague surf during late fall and early spring; peeler crab baits fished in tributary rivers and creeks near shore during summer	All coastal inshore and Chesapeake Bay waters (tidal waters, including Bay tributary rivers and Eastern Shore bayside creeks); best concentrations of fish in main portion of Chesapeake Bay and around Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel; large fish most often found along CBBT, main portion of Chesapeake Bay and off the Virginia Capes at the mouth of the Bay; Assateague surf in late fall and early spring	January – December; peak for large fish in November and December; peak fishing for school fish generally in spring and fall	5 – 25 pounds	73 pounds; caught near the 4A-Buoy by Frederick Barnes in 2008
Swordfish	Whole dead squid and fish	Fish at night from a drifting boat using natural baits with chemical lightsticks, with baits weighted to maintain specific depths	Offshore ocean waters	April – October; peak August – September		381 pounds, 8 ounces; caught at the Norfolk Canyon in 1978 by J.D. Alexander
Tarpon	Whole dead fish (spot, croaker, menhaden); live bait (spot, croaker, menhaden, mullet); whole squid; artificial lures (plugs and weighted streamer flies)	Anchor and fish live bait under floats, fish dead bait on the bottom and at various depths; cast artificial lures to rolling fish	Inlets, interior marsh areas, and ocean waters along the beaches of Eastern Shore seaside barrier islands; fish deep holes on low tides and shallow areas on high tides	Late June early September; peak July – August	40 – 80 pounds	130 pounds; caught on Eastern Shore seaside in 1975 by Barry Truitt
Tautog	Crab (blue, fiddler, green and mole crabs); clams; whelk	Bottomfishing with bait over underwater obstructions (wrecks, reefs, rocks)	Wrecks and reefs in ocean waters off the coast and in lower Chesapeake Bay; along Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel	January – December peak March – June and October – December	3 – 6 pounds	24 pounds; caught off Wachapreague in 1987 by Gregory R. Bell
Trout, Gray (Weakfish)	Artificial lures (bucktails, lead jigs with plastic tails, metal jigs), live bait (spot and small mullet), peeler crab, squid, cut bait	Jigging or casting artificial lures to schools of fish on bottom or suspended above the bottom; bottomfishing with live and natural baits from anchored or drifting boat; surf-casting with cut bait or squid	Large fish: Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, Chesapeake Bay over deepwater rocks, and along channel edges, and occasionally in Eastern Shore seaside inlets, Small fish: Coastal ocean waters and inlets of Eastern Shore seaside, Chesapeake Bay along channel edges and over deepwater rocks, Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (especially between 4th Island and High Level Bridge), Chesapeake Bay tributary rivers (especially James, York and Rappahannock)	May – November; peak at Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel May June and October; peak in Chesapeake Bay, Bay tributary rivers, and Eastern Shore seaside inlets June - September; peak in ocean waters off Eastern Shore from middle September -November	1 – 8 pounds	19 pounds; caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel in 1983 by Philip W. Halstead
Trout, Speckled	Artificial lures (mirro-sided plugs, bucktails, plastic tail jigs), peeler crab, live bait (small spot, mullet); live shrimp	Spring method: peeler crab baits fished near shore of marshy or grassy areas on flooding tides; Fall method: casting artificial lures; also some live bait fishing, trolling and jigging	Spring: Mobjack Bay area (North, Ware, East, Piankatank Rivers); submerged grass flats and marshes of northern Eastern Shore bayside, Rudee Inlet with lures. Fall: Lynnhaven Inlet, Rudee Inlet; Eastern Shore bayside creeks, Mobjack Bay area, Windmill Point and Gwynn's Island; Poquoson Flats	April – Middle December; peak May – middle June and September – November	2 – 4 pounds	16 pounds; caught at Mason's Beach on Eastern Shore bayside in 1977 by William Katko
Tuna, Bigeye	Whole dead fish (balao), squid, artificial lures (feather lures, cedar plugs, offshore trolling lures)	Trolling	Offshore ocean waters	June – October; peak late June – July	100 – 175 pounds	285 pounds, 12 ounces; caught at the Norfolk Canyon by Melvin Bray in 2003
Tuna, Bluefin	Artificial lures (cedar plugs, feather lures, spoons), squid, small fish	Trolling, chunking and chumming	Offshore ocean waters, especially the Southeast Lumps, the Fingers, 26 Mile Hill, 20 Fathom Finger; off Chicoteague	June – September; peak June – August; big fish occasionally found around Chesapeake Light Tower in late November and December	30 – 70 pounds	573 pounds; caught off Virginia Beach by Frederick "Bo" Haycox in 2007
Tuna, Yellowfin	Whole dead fish (balao), squid, artificial lures (feather lures, offshore trolling lures, cedar plugs)	Trolling, chunking and chumming	Offshore ocean waters	May – October; peak June – September	30 – 70 pounds	203 pounds, 12 ounces; caught at the Norfolk Canyon in 1981 by Bruce Gottwald, Jr.
Tunny, Little (False Albacore)	Artificial lures (small feather and nylon lures, spoons, cedar plugs), strip baits	Trolling, can cast small metal lures to schools of fish on surface	Offshore and coastal ocean waters; occasionally in lower Chesapeake Bay	May – November	6 – 14 pounds	25 pounds, 4 ounces; caught off Virginia Capes in 1964 by Jack Sparrow
Wahoo	Artificial lures (offshore trolling lures, feather lures, spoons, large plugs), small dead fish (balao)	Trolling	Offshore ocean waters	June – October	20 – 40 pounds	109 pounds; caught off Virginia Beach in 1994 by Delmo Dawson