

# Big Apple Stripers

## HOT ACTION ALONG THE PIERS OF MANHATTAN

Written by Donald A. Ecker

Sounds of a hot Limbata drifted on the frigid night air. Inside the nearby waterside night spot where the sounds were coming from, throngs of dancers churned and twisted to the Latin beat. Outside, in the cloudy waters surrounding a lower New York City pier, hordes of ravenous striped bass churned and twisted with equal vigor, attacking schools of herring.

Striped bass in the heart of the Big Apple? It's not so surprising when you consider that the mighty Hudson River, which flows right past Manhattan

Island's skyscrapers, is one of the major striped-bass breeding areas on the East coast. Several productive fishing areas can be found below the Verrazano Bridge in the saltwaters of the New York Bight, but the most

fascinating places to catch stripers are along the docks, piers, and other structures of the city itself and the nearby Brooklyn waterfront.

On this particular mid-November night, my wife, Barbara, and I had agreed to a fishing rendezvous with Don Bingler, lure designer and striped catcher supreme. Bingler had enthusiastically touted the striped fishing along the watery edges of Manhattan.

"The action really comes on when the tide is moving," he'd told us. "You'll see fish busting bait all over the place—right on top. Nothing real big, few if any keepers, mostly 1- to 5-pounders, but the fly-rod action is terrific. It may be cold, and you'll lose some sleep, but you have to see it."

We spent a Saturday afternoon getting ready. Nine-foot, 8-weight rods, matching reels, a few saltwater streamers and poppers and some 20-pound leader material and line clippers were all the tackle we would need. Clothing was another matter.

The weather report called for near-freezing temperatures, light winds and clear skies. Thermal long johns, a flannel shirt, fleece insulating layer, outer windbreaker, warm hat and several pairs of socks should do the job. Neoprene Glacier Gloves would be a big help, too. You might have thought we were getting ready for the Iditarod.

The meeting was set for midnight, but we arrived early to get the lay of the land. We figured a cappuccino or three would get the excursion off to a warm start. The bill came to \$14 for what was, after all, just three cups of coffee with a bit of frothy milk. That reminded us, as if we'd needed reminding, that we were still in the Big Apple.

Groups of Latin dance fans were heading for the music as we walked around looking for Bingler. He was right on time, carrying a 7-weight outfit and a pocketful of terrific-looking streamer patterns that closely resembled silvery baitfish.

"Have they started feeding?" he asked.

I told him we'd been too busy with our \$14 worth of frothy coffee to look. So he answered his own question by making a few casts and hooking a striper.

The tide was just beginning to run and the fast-starting action soon got even faster. Bingler's streamer pattern was working well and Barbara persuaded him to let her try one. After she took a couple of bass I sensed it would be tough to get her to relinquish the pattern. Fortunately, Bingler had brought several.

I had started with a small yellow popper, but soon switched to a multi-layered streamer, dark on top and lighter in the belly. Long casts were not necessary, but



Winter-clothed angler befts Big Apple striper.