

# I'll Fish Manhattan



**A RIVER RUNS AROUND IT:** *All you need is a rod and reel, a couple of flies, and a subway token.*

**I**T WAS NOT exactly communion with nature, but it was reasonably close. "See that trash can at her feet?" Captain Shastay said. "Cast to about fifteen feet in front of it." The feet were enormous and green against the darkening New Jersey sky. They were those of the Statue of Liberty. A few false casts and a double haul that Lefty Kreh would denounce as an "underwear ripper" and I landed a fly. Nothing. "Closer," Shastay said. "If they're there, they're right up next to the wall."

Whether it was the failure of my double haul or, as I prefer to believe, the furious bucking of the boat—a nineteen-foot Mako—and the wind gusting from the direction of the Verrazano Narrows, I never did get a fly to the spot. But we did put a few swimming plugs directly to the trash can with the light spinning tackle Joe Shastay keeps on board for

the majority of customers who are not (yet) fly-fishermen. Still no fish. "They're not there," said Shastay, who, when he is not conducting fishing charters in New York Harbor (201-451-1988), is studying the habits of striped bass for an environmental consulting firm. "They always hit when they're there. Last week we caught forty fish a night."

The fish weren't at various places along Governors Island, where we took sightings off parking signs. They were not around the pilings of the naval slip. They were not in the deep trough between the Coast Guard cutter *Dallas* and the dock, where we bounced Clouser's minnows off the hull until one went through the anchor hole and into the ship. But then, as luck will, ours changed. We found fish.

At the spot, eerily lit by the huge Domino Sugar sign, we caught fish on every cast until it stopped feeling like

sport. We were down around the pilings of... well, let's just say that's Shastay's proprietary information. Call it Spot X. From there, with a live wild animal at the end of your line, you glance up at the massive peaks of the financial district, with the lights still burning in the offices of even less-fortunate slaves to industry, and wonder how it is you don't have Joe Shastay's job.

Most of the fish were relatively small—schoolies that hadn't yet built up the nerve to leave the Hudson for the Atlantic. And, for me, fishing from a boat is never as good as being up to your waist in surf. But it was striped bass, understand? No two-headed miscreants, either, but beautiful green-and-amber stripers on the line, in the hand, and then back into the water. *It was fish!* Only minutes from Wall Street. I love New York.

—PAUL SCHNEIDER