

Outdoors Delmarva: The Quest For Black Drum

It's a trip our WBOC crew has made many times out of Lewes Harbor Marina, on a spring mission to find black drum in the Delaware Bay. Just the thought of being able to haul in what could possibly be a 40-year-old fish, weighing close to 100 pounds, is enough to get your heart pumping with anticipation. Anyone who has had the privilege of winning a battle with a black drum knows that you will be thanking your heart for hanging on for what can seem like an endless battle.

Captain Brian Wazlavek of the Li'l Angler 2 is taking us a little farther out in the bay than we're used to. Instead of sitting off the shoreline of Slaughter Beach, we're in New Jersey.

"We're in an area called Bayshore Channel, about a mile and a half from the Cape May-Lewes Ferry terminal, and we're going to soak some clams and see if we can't get some big drum. It seems like they bite more over here as opposed to the Delaware side," said Captain Wazlavek.

As usual, clams are the go-to bait for drum, and circle hooks are the best way to keep them at the end of your line. Captain Brian said the fish usually bite right before the sun goes down.

With little time to spare, everyone unofficially stakes a claim on a rod and then waits for a hit. Light fog has started to roll in, and soon after, Don Baltrush of Milton feels something tugging on his line. It ends up being the first catch of the day, a dogfish.

As everyone is reeling their lines out of the water, we snag another fish, a 20-pound black drum! Since no one claims it, Dustin, who is helping out with mate duties, decides to keep it—he'll get several dinners from the fish.

The next rod to go down is Don's, and this time he is hopeful. He says, "I think I got a drum, hope it's a black one!" But the line snaps just as the big fish gets within reach of the net. This time the drum wins the battle.

"I don't know, but we got it up to the boat and he got off. This is the story of my life," said Don, as he chuckled. "It was a lot of fun and heartbreaking at the same

time. I'll get the next one."

The next one, however, went to me (yes, TV hosts can still catch fish). After about a 15-minute battle, our second drum is in the boat, a nice 42 pounder.

As the fog continues to roll in, Dustin has a theory. "For whatever reason, in the Delaware Bay, when it gets foggy, overcast and a little chilly, it's perfect for fishing."

Dustin must know what he's talking about. Another fish is on one of our lines, and this time Outdoors Delmarva Producer Chuck Regner is reeling in the bounty. After a lengthy 25-minute battle, Chuck brings in the biggest catch of the day so far, maxing out the 50-pound scale.

"Man, that was a tough fish to haul in. That was a thrill and was really awesome," said Regner.

The excitement on board is palpable as Don, who already lost one black drum, is ready to win the second battle and redeem himself. Don snags a fairly vocal drum in the boat, which loudly voices its displeasure at being caught with the signature call of a black drum. Once unhooked, Don decides to release it back in the bay.

Throughout the evening everyone gets a chance to battle a drum, and a couple more will max out the 50-pound scale.

"This was awesome, the best night of drum fishing I've had in a while," said Don.

With nine fish caught and a boat full of sore arms, this was a day on board the Li'l Angler 2 that none of us will soon forget. Black drum fishing in the Delaware Bay is something you just can't beat.