

## **Reporting Period: January 25 through March 25, 2013**

Note: Missing dates normally mean that the wind contributed to boats not going out to fish. After a hot, wet summer, the relative humidity finally broke and the temperatures dropped in early October and sea surface temperatures began to lower. I have a NEW email if you can send me any fishing news or pictures: [lyncurt0@gmail.com](mailto:lyncurt0@gmail.com)

I also have an interesting FYI that I found about the Sea of Cortez:

### **THE VERMILLION SEA (AKA "SEA OF CORTEZ")**

FYI: Hernan Cortez called what is now known as the Sea of Cortez or Gulf of California "The Vermillion Sea". The reason was due to the huge rafts of "Red Tide" he witnessed, and many of us have seen this year here and down at San Carlos. Vince Radice, an oceanographer based in San Carlos, confirmed that what we were seeing was actually a red dinoflagellate. When these red phytoplankton "bloom" in great numbers, they produce the so-called "red tide", seen at sea. Some are toxic and have been causing a lot of deaths in the manatee population in Florida this year.

**1/27** HANNAH RYAN and ROSIE caught limits of yellowtail and "goldies" fishing the north end of San Esteban, while NIGHTWINGS got a nice bunch of big goldies, salmon/whitefish, and sheephead off the southwest corner. On the return trip, we spotted large numbers of diving birds and changed course to drop iron on the spot for a couple of decent yellowtail. That area was to become a hot spot for the next month for yellowtail, along with huge schools of playful porpoise. They were caught either by persistent trolling or jigging in depths between 100 and 150 feet.

**2/05** SAND DOLLAR and REEL INN tried out 14 Mile for "sandies", triggerfish, and a couple of the elusive pinto bass. JAYHAWKER, RED ROVER, DAKOTA and 13-0-13 fished west of Esteban for limits of huge goldies and sheephead and one grouper.

**2/06** The southwest side of Esteban continued to produce good numbers of goldies, salmon, and sheephead for NIGHTWINGS, HILL BILLY YACHT, and DAKOTA, all while bait fishing deep. One yellowtail was jigged up under diving birds. The water off the northeast corner of Esteban was covered with thousands of jumping porpoise. I had never seen such high fliers, some leaping as high as the top of our boat as we cruised past. They were definitely attracted to anyone who came through the area, escorting boats through the area in huge numbers. A couple of whales were spotted just west of Turner, to finish a beautiful day on the water.

**2/07** Same story. SAND DOLLAR and DAKOTA fished the southwest corner of Esteban for big bottom fish, while ROSIE and WET WILLY trolled the water southeast of Esteban for nice yellowtail. The trolling was productive near diving birds, but you had to be persistent to get them. RED ROVER went to San Pedro for big yellowtail also.

**2/08** Willard produced some nice yellowtail and limits of bonita for trollers, but I'm afraid I lost track of who gave me this report.

**2/10** DAKOTA and RED ROVER fished the Willard to Queen's Rock area for bottom fish, but didn't see any sign of yellowtail or bonito (the different looking variety), and one 34 pound grouper at Queen's. 13-0-13, ROSIE, and NIGHTWINGS fished Esteban again, for bottom fish and yellowtail. The yellowtail were hitting trolled lures and jigs fished deep, but the trolling was more consistent.

**2/17** DAKOTA returned to Esteban for limits of bottom fish.

**2/18** DAKOTA, SAND DOLLAR and HANNAH RYAN fished Turner and Esteban for bottom fish including goldies, salmon, sheephead, a few "red snapper-like fish". "Nickletime" landed a 30-40 pound grouper.

**3/01 - 3/09** SAND DOLLAR fished Willard three times, hooking up with some good catches of the "bonito", rockies, goldies, and sheephead. TZIGINE also fished the Willard area, but on different days for bottom fish and at least one nice yellowtail. Although I did not get any other specific fishing news, it sounded like the yellowtail had gone into hiding for a while.

### **3/14 - 3/20 The "Fishing Tournament"**

Bill will have the "Official" places for all of the categories, so I will just include a more general overview of what fish were actually weighed and where they were caught.

### **HEAVIEST GAMEFISH:**

Seven grouper were actually weighed in and ranged from 13 to 41 pounds. Five, including the number one and two fish, were from San Pedro and two from San Esteban. The HILLBILLY YACHT and WET WILLY crews accounted for five of the seven with HANNAH RYAN and RED ROVER catching the balance.

### **SHEEPHEAD:**

Eleven sheephead were weighed and they ranged from 7 pounds to 12 pounds two oz. San Esteban continued to dominate the sheephead fishing, producing nine of the eleven and two were from San Pedro. All of the winners were from San Esteban. They were caught on board the DAKOTA, SAND DOLLAR, HILLBILLY YACHT, GATOR BAIT, and ROSIE boats.

### **"GOLDIES":**

Eleven goldies were weighed in and they ran from 4 pounds 6 oz to 6 pounds 7 oz. Eight of these were from San Esteban, including all of the winners and the rest were caught at Turner or San Pedro. GATOR BAIT accounted for five these while SAND DOLLAR, HILLBILLY YACHT, HORNED TOAD, FISH-FINDER and ROSY brought in the rest.

### **"ROCKIES":**

Seven "Rockies" were brought to the scale from 14 Mile and off the bay in the Kino Nuevo area. They weighed in between 1 pound 15 oz and 2 pounds 12 oz. All of the winners were from 14 Mile, but the two from the bay were pretty respectable being caught from an inflatable, the MONTANA FALCONITO. The PONY EXPRESS, SEA SHELL and FISH-FINDER caught the rest

### **TRIGGERFISH:**

Six triggers were recorded from 1 pound 10 oz to 5 pounds 4 oz. Four were landed at 14 Mile and two from Turner. FISH-FINDER and PONY EXPRESS brought all of the triggers that were weighed.

### **YELLOWTAIL:**

Although more yellowtail were caught during the tournament, only one was caught by a tourney fisher-person and that was at Willard by Judy Kidd on EL SUENO at 12 pounds 8 oz. PERRYDIZE non-tournament fishermen did get some yellowtail at Willard, San Esteban and San Pedro.

Since some really nice triggerfish or "cochi" have been caught this winter and they have always been a dependable and important species here in the Sea of Cortez, I thought I would finish up with a brief report on them.

The triggerfish are in the family Balistidae and are known for their unique defensive adaptations. Their common name comes from the three stout dorsal spines which are able to lock into an erect position. This allows them to wedge into crevices in the nearby rocks, making it difficult for predators to extract them. The spines can be released by pressing on the second spine. The four species on the west coast of Mexico all have very tough (thus "rhino-hide") skins and at least one species has thick armored scales, similar to the alligator gar fish. Another obvious trait is the fierce looking dentition of eight human-like incisor teeth. These are used on their primary food items, sea urchins, small crustaceans, and mollusks. Of course, they will readily chomp on any cut bait small fish or clumsy fishermen, as we all know.

Most triggers are found around islands, sea mounts and rocky shores, especially near mixes or rock and sand bottom. All triggerfish are known for their eating qualities and are cooked in a variety of ways or make excellent ceviche.

The most common trigger fish is the "finescale trigger", AKA blanco or cochi. They reach weights up to seven pounds and are easily caught on cut bait or lures near rocky areas.

"Blunthead triggerfish" AKA the "stone trigger" or cochita, are the largest species, reaching weights up to eleven pounds. and are found on the Pacific side of Baja north to Magdalena Bay, and into the southern half of the Sea of Cortez and south to Guatemala. They are very similar to the fine-scale trigger.

The "orange-side" or "fileskin" trigger, AKA "taxi" or "cochino" is similar to the others in body shape but has darker coloration with deep red-orange blotches along the lower side. The scales are much thicker with a rasp like shape, thus the name "fileskin". These are found in the southern half of the Sea of Cortez, and reach weights to three pounds. I caught a few of these near Punta Chivato on the Baja side a number of years ago and was impressed with their contrasting colors and armored hides.

The last "sport-fish trigger" is the "spotted oceanic" or "rough" triggerfish. I have never caught these but did see them on long range trips off southern Baja. They have dark blue sides with small white spots along a more elongated body. They are often found in deeper water than the other species, but usually near floating debris. They are not as common and have a more southern range. They can be pests to the sport fishing boats trying to focus on the larger dorado or yellowtail near sea weed "paddies". I believe I heard some deckhands refer to them as "rudder fish".

There are many other species of triggers, and some make great colorful aquarium fish, such as the Picasso and clown triggerfish. However, they quite fierce and predaceous on other fish if kept in "community" tanks.