

KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly

Our bird migrations have halted for June since this is the month for egg-laying, hatching and feeding of fledglings. All the activity centers on and around the nest with exists only for food gathering. For Provincetowners who thought they could at last get some rest and, perhaps, some work done, the lure of the bass migration proves to be too much.

The long gray line you see is not West Point, but a shore-line full of fishermen (and some women) clad in waders or hip boots casting into a small corner of the Atlantic Ocean in the hope of catching not just a fish, but a

striped bass; not just a striped bass, but "a keeper"—a fish at least 30" long. You can catch this scene around every dawn and dusk and within two hours of the high tides. Actually, you'll see some representation just about any time of day.

Bass Fishing

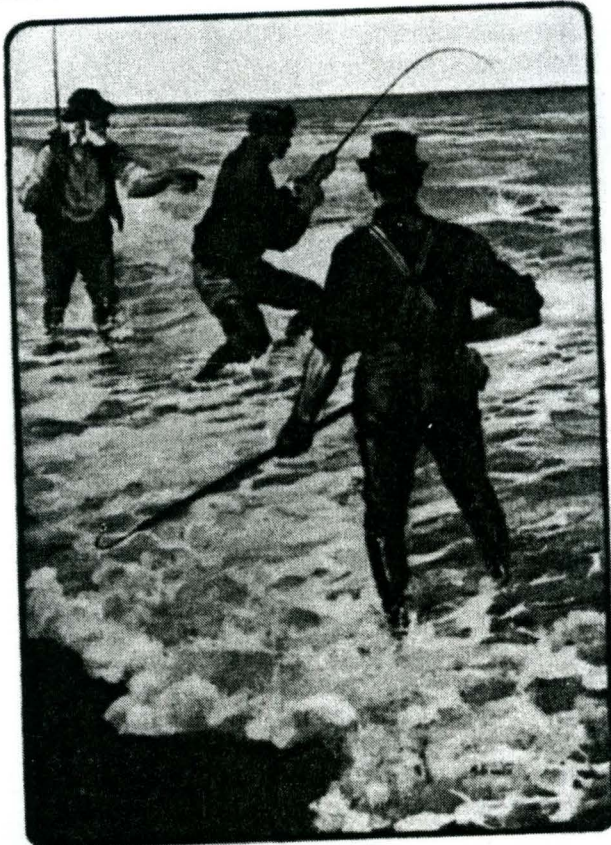


Bass fishing first became popular at the time of the Civil War. Fly-fishermen noted and followed the spawning bass out of the brackish estuaries where they were fly fishing

salmon. The striped bass lured them to the crashing surf and a new sport was

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born. They began by using strategic natural promontories and where these did not exist, they built stands into the surf. Drilled into the rocks, a fisherman could stand above the iron poles on a wooden platform where he could cast and fend for his life. Some even lashed themselves to these structures just as Odysseus had lashed himself to his mast to avoid being lured by the sirens. These avid casters could only be seen between waves in rough weather. They used flies and sometimes eelskins for bait. The trollers used metal lures. The poor folk of the area used "flannels"—strips of red or yellow flannel on a hook.

The elite were mostly prominent New Yorkers who kept in touch with their businesses by means of carrier pigeons. They built comfortable clubhouses with all the amenities...and bars. They also hired indoor staff as well as gaffers and chummers. Everybody fished in comfort, except for the equipment.

The rods varied in length and stiffness; the reels were large, cumbersome and usually doubled and called "knucklebusters." The line was made of linen soaked in fish oil to prevent deterioration. Waterproof clothing was purely in the realm of science fiction. Accidents were more threatening because of the remoteness of the locations. Imagine yourself awash on a small stand, busting your knuckles, wrestling with your equipment as you take on a 40-50 pound bass—are you having a good time yet? You bet!

Prior to 1900 you were. You see, that was the year the bass disappeared for 35 years. A fear and nightmare of all

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she fried bass and extolled how delicious it was as I was headed out to the beach. Frankly, I have never fried bass, never even thought of frying it, but based on my inquiries through-

The people who fish range in age from their twenties to their eighties and many travel long distances. They put up with the fatigue, the gas costs, the snack dining and whatever the weather, just to be there. Some sip coffee or beer even when undesired to fill in the gaps. There are fewer cigarettes each year... a cigar now and then, and you always swap brands.

out the day, I discovered many people had done so. Joe Pino of Centerville fries his bass steaks, coated with Progresso Italian-flavored bread crumbs, in a small amount of olive oil. He puts a heavy cover on the pan and steams it well.

Broiling and grilling prove popular because of bar-b-ques and instant beach dinners. 'Tis the season of outdoor cooking—Mexican sauces, French seasoning, poached, sushi, whole and baked stuffed with a wide variety of ingredients from chestnuts to oysters, mussels and crabmeat. We used to go to a restaurant when we caught an oversized bass. They would let you use their ovens...but everybody is so busy today.

So we pull the old Howard Mitcham trick. Cut the bass in half to fit into your oven and piece it together once it's all cooked. Oh yes, and take the eyeballs out before cooking and place them in a bowl of ice. Replace it—you only need one—just before you serve it at table. That's haute cuisine and a great startler too!

One of Mitcham's great recipes is Bass Almondine. Originally it was his haddock almondine, but he has adapted it to bass. I found it tastes so good I thought it would swim away. As a special treat, here is his recipe for

Bass Almondine

- 4 Bass steaks
- 1 1/2 Sticks of butter
- Juice of 2 lemons
- 1 cup Sliced natural almonds
- 1/2 cup Fresh sliced mushrooms

Sauté the bass steaks on both sides with 1/2 stick of butter until they are done. Place the steaks on hot serving plates and keep warm. Melt a stick of butter in the skillet and add the almonds, mushrooms and lemon juice. Raise the heat to high and cook until the almonds have turned golden (but not brown). Pour this sauce over the steaks and serve immediately. Delicious!