

Our 39th Year

"The Magazine for West Coast Sportsmen!"

Eight-year-old Lands Hefty White Sturgeon on Broad Slough

PITTSBURG – White sturgeon are one of the most prized fish – and hardest to hook and land – in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. Some anglers spend years to catch their first sturgeon.

Others, like 8-year-old Abraham Najar of Vacaville, catch sturgeon on their first trip. Najar was fishing with his grandfather, father and uncle on Sunday, December 5, when he hooked and released a 54-inch sturgeon, the largest of the day, while fishing the West Delta with Zack Medinas of Gatecrasher Fishing Adventures.

In addition, his grandfather, Paul, caught a slot fish and his father, Trevor, and uncle, Gino, caught and released three undersize fish while fishing in Broad Slough.

"We fished the outgoing tide and the first part of the incoming tide because it was during the king tides," he stated. "The fish were caught on salmon roe and lamprey eel in 60 feet of water."

GONE FISHING
by
Dan Bacher



Abraham Najar of Vacaville caught and released this beautiful 54-inch white sturgeon while fishing with his dad, Trevor, and grandfather, Paul, with Captain Zack Medinas of Gatecrasher Fishing Adventures in the West Delta on December 5.
Photo courtesy of Gatecrasher Fishing Adventures.

On the day before, the four anglers fishing with Medinas landed a total of 8 sturgeon, including two oversized fish, two slot fish measuring 59 and 65 inches and 4 undersized fish, said Medinas. Those fish also hit

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Crab/Rockfish Combos Fill Sacks with Seafood

As we approach the tail end of the crab/rockfishing combo season, any breaks in the weather are a guaranteed shot at seafood dinners. I try to make several trips each winter before the rock-

The author hoists a twenty-pound lingcod onboard the Pacific Pearl on December 2. This fish slammed a P-Line Laser Minnow with a glow-in-the-dark squid skirt on the treble hook. These toothy leviathans offer casual rockfish anglers the chance to tie into drag-ripping monsters.
Photo Courtesy of Jack Naves

fishing season closes after December 31. The days are long, but well worth the rewards of steamed Dungeness crab and ocean fishing adventures.

This season started out with a twist, as crab traps were temporarily banned for recreational anglers due to the risk of whale entanglements. In resilient fashion, many of the boats quickly adapted to the legal hoop net style of crabbing. When a nice weather window opened up on Thursday December 2, I eagerly jumped onboard the Pacific Pearl out of the Fish Emeryville fleet.

On the dark winter's morning, the Pearl crept around the protective sea wall and then blasted west at full-throttle across the bay. San Francisco, Angel Island, Alcatraz, and finally the Golden Gate greeted us as the eastern glow intensified. The rocking motion of our old friend the Pacific Ocean had already announced its presence long before we got our first glimpse of the sun.



WHAT'S HOT
by
Jack Naves

Several hours later, we approached the South Farallon Islands. First Mate Alex Laidley and deckhand Clay deployed more than thirty crab hoop nets off the stern. It was the first time that I had seen hoop nets set out, and they did it in quite the organized fashion. After the last hoop was baited and dropped, we made a quick jump to the fishing grounds.

With rugged islands looming to the north, fishing lines plunged to the depths in search of the first fish of the day. I peered up the rail from my spot at the rear starboard corner. Somebody at the bow was already loaded up on a fish, and several seconds later, a nice canary rockfish came over the rail. I landed a yellow rockfish, but the fishing was slow and the Captain signaled us to reel up so we could move.

The next spot was also slow, but

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What We're Using

Ernie Marlan - fished the Central Coast beaches for surf perch and halibut. He was able to catch some quality surf perch on a 9ft Phenix Trifecta 6-12lb teamed up with a Van Stall reel spooled up with 20lb FINS Windtamer Braid and a 12lb GAMMA fluorocarbon leader. The lure of choice was a Calissa Jerkbait in sardine color.

Paul Kneeland - fished Lake Camanche with John Brassfield in the Fish Sniffer 21' Rogue Jet Coastal. They caught rainbow trout to 17 inches using a Lamiglas 7 ½ foot ultralight graphite rod with a Daiwa Lexa low profile line counter reel loaded with 6 lb test P-Line fluorocarbon line. They trolled Speedy Shiner and Tasmanian Devil spoons in red, black and white off the Big Jon Sideplaners and Canon Downriggers on the surface and 10 feet deep at 2.5 mph.

Dan Bacher - fished for rainbow trout at Collins Lake. He used a Berkley Ugly Stick GX2 6' 6" medium action spinning rod, teamed up with a Shakespeare GX235 spinning reel filled with 6 lb. test P-Line CX Premium Fluorocarbon Coated Line. He fished with rainbow glitter Berkley PowerBait and nightcrawlers on sliding sinker rigs with Size #4 and #6 Gamakatsu baitholder hooks.

WHAT'S HOT

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This nice limit of rockfish and lingcod was skillfully gutted and scaled by the crew members onboard the Pacific Pearl on December 2. Any fishmonger would be glad to get their hands on this fresh display of seafood. As passengers on sport fishing boats, the yield of seafood is a nice bonus on top of the fishing experience itself.

Photo Courtesy of Jack Naves

the third spot was the charm, as more fish started coming over the rails. When you fish a party boat and the passengers arrive rolling cases of beer on hand trucks, you figure that some of the folks will be spending the day taking it easy. When anglers show up carting loads of fishing gear and multiple rods per person, you know there will be some hard-core fishing going on!

Despite the tough fishing, the experienced anglers onboard were scratching out rockfish and lingcod using shrimp flies, bars, and swimbaits. At one point, I went three or four casts in a row where I couldn't get my rig down to the bottom. Rockfish were intercepting it on the way down. I was using a large white P-Line Laser Minnow jig with a glow hoochie on the treble hook. Twelve inches above this, I had a short 'teaser' leader with a glow hoochie baited with squid strips.

My go-to Farallon rig was getting bit on both the jig and the teaser, but several larger fish had popped off after a few head shakes. I still hadn't been able to hook a double, so when a small rockfish hit my rig on the way down, I left it down hoping for a second rockfish. I slowly raised and descended the rig up and down off the bottom in twenty-foot intervals. I could still feel the rockfish shaking on one of the hooks, but I was waiting for it to load up and get heavy to indicate that a second rockfish was on the line.

As I slowly raised my offering, the line loaded up hard and started pumping. I reeled quickly, but then line started burning off the reel. Initially, I thought that maybe the rockfish had swam into a crevice and I was snagged on the bottom. I looked up at the horizon and could tell that the boat was dropping down in the swell. However, my



First Mate Alex Laidley and deckhand Clay skillfully engaged the crab davit onboard the Pacific Pearl on December 2. The crab bin behind them was already teeming with lively Dungeness crabs. All passengers onboard went home with ten-crab limits.

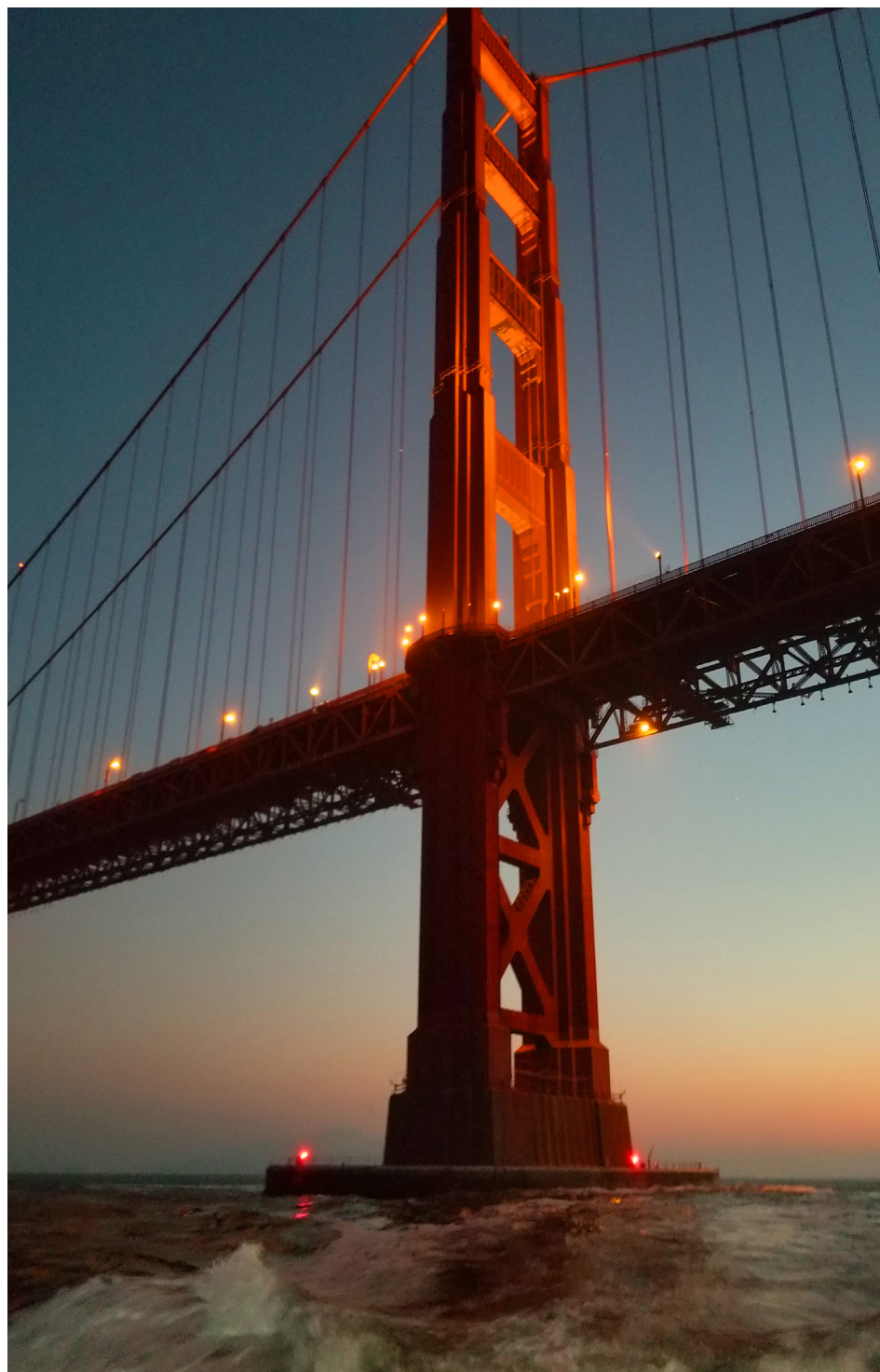
Photo Courtesy of Jack Naves

line was still peeling off the reel. This was a fish, and a big one at that!

Once the fish slowed, I cranked hard to keep it out of the rocks. "This is a ling" I relayed to deckhand Clay, who was now standing to my right. As Clay pulled out the gaff, the fish suddenly started burning line once again. Clay let out a "Whoa!" as the fish continued to strip line off the reel. I told Clay that I had never landed one that big, and it might be a 'hitchhiker'.

When a lingcod grabs a rockfish that is already on the line, they call it a hitchhiker. Often times they will continue to clamp onto the rockfish all the way to the surface. I flashed back to a huge hitchhiker lingcod that I lost years earlier onboard the California Dawn. Another time, I lost a huge lingcod on a big swimbait at the North Farallon Islands. I didn't want this fish to be a repeat performance.

As I carefully winched the fish



The Pacific Pearl cut through the waters under the historic Golden Gate Bridge long before the sun eclipsed the horizon on December 2. Picturesque views like this make for great memories to anglers venturing out San Francisco Bay.

Photo Courtesy of Jack Naves

towards the surface, fears of losing the behemoth intensified. "Slow and steady" I told myself, as I winded the reel at a measured pace. Finally, a flash appeared through the cool aquamarine waters. "Color!" I called, as the fish slowly spiraled towards the surface. As the fish came into view, I could see a small olive rockfish on the top leader. Below the rockfish, there was a huge brown mass clamped onto my jig – it was not a hitchhiker after all.

Just as Clay reached out with the gaff, I could see something veer off. Had it happened again? Did I lose yet another big lingcod to the Pacific? No...it was the rockfish! The freed rockfish turned and darted out of sight as Clay plunged the gaff into the big ling that was still hooked. Once the ling was over the rail, I breathed a sigh of relief knowing that I had finally landed a big one without losing it.

The toothy lingcod weighed about 20 pounds on my gripper/scale tool. It was my largest ling to date, and

had actually bent one of the hooks straight on the jig. About six other lingcod were landed onboard the Pacific Pearl that day, providing excitement for anglers all around the decks.

Once the boat had limited on rockfish, we pulled lines and motored east to the nearby crab buoys. A steady pick of Dungeness crabs yielded limits for all passengers onboard. We were headed to port with limits of crabs, rockfish, plus about seven nice lingcod.

Combo trips will only be available through December 31. I encourage anybody with a craving for crab or open-sea adventure to jump onboard one of these boats. Vessels all along the California coast will be offering these trips, and later switching to crab-only or crab/sanddab trips after the first of the year. The Pacific Pearl and the rest of the Fish Emeryville fleet can be booked online, or at 510-652-3403. The Pacific Ocean's bounty awaits those who travel.