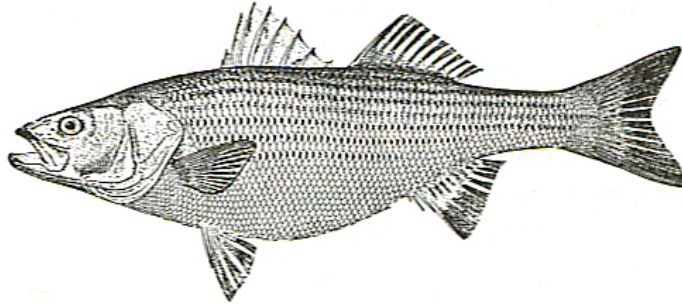


# PATCHOGUE FISHING CLUB

P.O BOX 808 PATCHOGUE, NY 11729

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FEBUARY 2005  
CONSERVATION REPORT

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**WEAKFISH SURVEY LOOKING FOR ANSWERS**

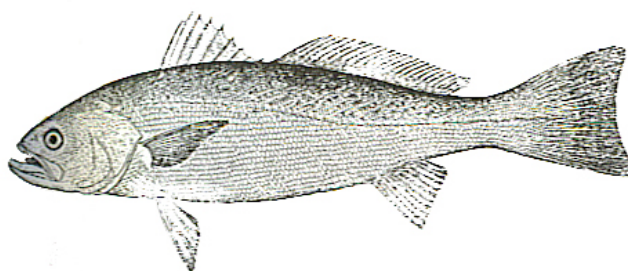
**BLUEFIN TUNA SEASON IN DOUBT**

**SPINY DOGFISH IN THE NEWS AGAIN**

**A DIFFERENT SLANT TO THE MARINE FISHING  
LICENSESSE**

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COMPILED BY JAMES F. SMITH



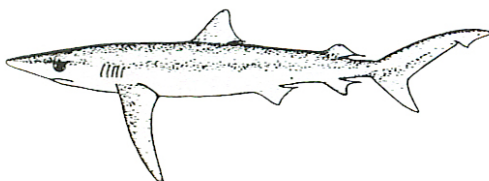
## **2005 WEAKFISH SURVEY LOOKS FOR ANSWERS**

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An extensive survey was performed on the local weakfish population for the last three years. Its intention was to ascertain the condition of the local weakfish stock and try to pin point any threats to the same. As most of us know the weakfish is a very hard fish to track, it is what is known as a cyclic fishery. The weakfish population rises and falls during a 7-year cycle. There maybe a few a years where there are little to no weakfish caught. The fish will start to show up slowly, small at first. Slowly each year the size and quantity of weakfish will increase each year up until the seventh year when the largest of species are caught. The very next season the weakfish population will seem to vanish for a few years again. They are also very temperature sensitive. A few degrees of temperature drop can send the weakfish heading south for warmers waters. Taking all of this into consideration, the weakfish population is an extremely tough fish to track.

On the whole it seems that the local population is down and really large fish have been few and far between. There does seem to be a need for some changes in the regulations for the species. I would not look for a change in those regulations until all of data in this report has been studied, possibly this may take place by the spring of 2006.

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## **Spiny Dog Fish in the News Again**

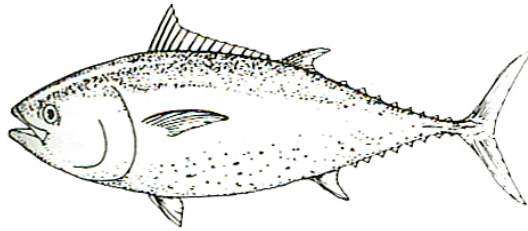
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The spiny dogfish is back in the news again; the adult egg barring female percentage is down to 3 or 4% of the

biomass. The Juvenal and adult male numbers seem to be all right at the moment. There has been a strict plan in effect for the last 12 years; it has limited the commercial catch of these fish to only 40,000 pounds yearly. This is a drastic drop from the numbers we had just a few short years ago. A yearly harvest of 50,000,000 was taken in the year 2000.

We as recreational fishermen find them a pest but in the same instance they are a natural resource and need to be protected. If the stocks fall much lower than the present levels the spiny dogfish could go onto the same list as the sturgeon. This would be disastrous. This status would mean that no one could catch or cause harm to come a spiny dogfish for next ten or twelve years. The population would probably skyrocket. Making them an even bigger pest than they were before and they could quite possibly become a real detriment to other ground fish stocks. Eating all of the available food sources until there is nothing left for the other species, which inhabit the same habitat.

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**Waiting to see if the NMFS is going close this years Blue fin season**

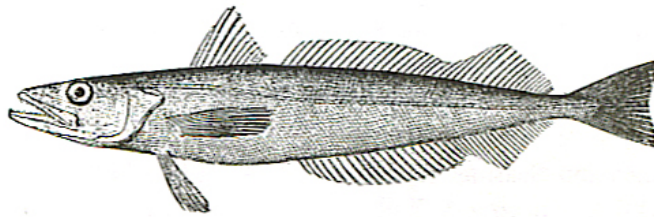
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The blue fin tuna season is in jeopardy again, yet, still. The NMFS is still going about collecting blue fin tuna landings in a very backwards manner. This is causing the catch numbers for blue fin tuna to be overly high, and the NMFS to claim that they are being over fished. We have discussed this practice of catch recording before in previous reports, but I feel it is important enough to be gone over once again.

The National Marine Fisheries Service is charged with the implementing of both commercial and recreational regulations in regards to Tunas. It has been law for some time now that all anglers that seek to catch Blue fin tuna must obtain a "Highly Pelagic Species License". This license also is now required for shark and billfish anglers also. Every blue fin tuna that is kept must be reported

with in 24hours of capture and the information must be sent to the NMFS. This seems to be a very quick and accurate way of keeping tabs of the recreational Blue fin harvest. Not for the NMFS, they still use a survey, in which the people who conduct the survey are only paid if for reports that contain fish being caught. The survey originally was taken differently, where as the auditors were paid for each boat surveyed not only for ones, which had caught fish. Since the people at the NMFS thought the numbers from the old style surveys were too low they started this new trend. The number of fish reported caught went through the roof.

As of now we are in a holding pattern, to see what exactly is going to happen in regards to the 2005 blue fin tuna season. As long as the commission uses this flawed catch recording system we will continue to have problems with the blue fin catch numbers.



## Salt Water License in the News Again

In an article published by the Long Island Fishermen, a different view was put forth. One from a pro-license standpoint. All issues have several different sides to them. We should take a look at all of the issues involved in this highly contested issue, before making our finale judgment.

According to the article the monies generated from the marine recreational license program would go into the state's conservation fund not in to the general fund.

This money is to be used to hire more DEC enforcement officers, for fish population studies, and for programs to help alleviate the pressures being brought down our local fish stocks. When I had talked to Pat Augustine of the MAMFC, he had reiterated this point and added one of his own.

He said, at the moment there is no other way to generate more funds for marine fish management, the only way to increase funding would be through the revenues generated by a marine fishing license.

The article in the fishermen also made the claim that the license would enable the DEC to get an accurate count of actually how many recreational anglers there are in our area. This could improve some the ratios between recreational and commercial fishing quotas. I am not sure of how much of all this is true or not but it does bear taking another look at this issue.

The bill is being redrafted as this is being written, and should be on the floor for a vote sometime in the fall. I will continue to pursue this issue and pass along any other information as it becomes available.