

Shoreline Striper Hot Spots

Abundant and accessible, striped bass are by far the most sought-after saltwater species in New Hampshire's coastal waters. You can find the fish by driving Route 1A through Rye, Hampton and Seabrook, looking for frenzied flocks of terns and gulls and boiling masses of baitfish. Get as close as you can to the action by climbing out on the rocky tidal zone and cast into the school. On days when the action is less pronounced, it pays to know a few historical hot spots:

- **Blackwater River** – On Route 286 in Seabrook, this tidal river is a great place to land “schoolies” and the occasional keeper. Note that the river is really only fishable at mid- to high tide. There is easy access from the bridge, but fishing is better if you work your way out along the marsh and away from the crowd. Try fly-fishing or using small Rapala-style lures and soft plastics.

- **Hampton and Seabrook beaches and jetty** – Hampton State Park has plenty of access, with the jetty at the mouth of Hampton Harbor, as well as the shoreline and beaches along the inlet to the harbor. Fishing is often best in the early morning and the evening, when striped bass feed most aggressively. From the beach, fly fishing works great to land schoolies, but the bigger fish are more often caught on chunk mackerel or cut clams fished on the bottom.

- **North Hampton Beach** – On Route 1A in North Hampton, this beach produces some of the largest striped bass caught from shore each year. Fishing is almost exclusively in the evening and into early morning. Use a surfcaster to cast a chunk of mackerel or herring, with a fairly heavy sinker below the bait, just beyond the breaking surf. The



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Seth Alie caught this big striper near Newington. Striped bass tend to be less active during warm summer days, but at night they pursue American eels and sand eels like mad. Wait until dark, cast a live eel, and see what happens!

waves will pick the bait up with each swell. Striped bass will push shoals of baitfish into the shallow surf to feed on them, so action can be heavy at times.

- **New Castle Coast Guard Station** – Follow Route 1B into the center of New Castle. This is a limited access site, but one of my favorites. Walk through the fort and out onto the rock outcropping on the water's edge. The current really rips through this area, and the stripers sit in the current and gorge on Atlantic silverside and pollock schools as they make their way around the point. The strong current can make bait fishing tough, but top waters and shallow diving lures cast into the eddies and worked through are very effective.

- **Dover Point/Hilton Park** – On the Dover side of the General Sullivan Bridge on

Route 16. This is where the Piscataqua River meets Great Bay, and often holds large concentrations of baitfish. Most fishing is done from the pier on the river side, but try working your way along the rocks near the boat ramp and under the bridge to the Great Bay side. Big, lazy fish like to hide in the eddies behind the bridge pilings. The current is strong, so even a schoolie will seem like a world-record fight!

- **Scammell Bridge** – On Route 4 at the entrance to the Bellamy River, which divides Durham and Dover. Try this spot in mid-summer, when the fishing gets tougher. Fishing occurs almost primarily at night, and is best toward the center of the bridge. Which side is dictated by the tide, but the method is primarily chunk bait. An added benefit is the presence of bluefish that put up an amazing fight – if you can keep your line intact!

