



New Hampshire Fish and Game Department

Take Me Fishing!

Seashore



Fishing Guide



New Hampshire Fish and Game Department
Marine Fisheries Division • (603) 868-1095

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Salty and Sweet!

Want to experience sport fishing at its finest? Fish coastal New Hampshire, where the cold blue Atlantic Ocean meets the rocky shoreline, and the “big ones” are just waiting for a bite.

Striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*) have become one of the greatest success stories for marine fisheries management in recent years, and they are by far the most sought after saltwater fish in New Hampshire coastal waters. But stripers aren't the only game in town – cast a line and see if you can bring home a bluefish, flounder or mackerel.

Look inside for some coastal N.H. places to try shoreline fishing, plus tips for success.

- N.H. Saltwater Fish – Species and bait choices
- Hampton/Seabrook
- Rye/New Castle
- Piscataqua River
- Great Bay Estuary and Tributaries
- Chunk Bait Bottom Rig Setup
- Need-to-know Knots

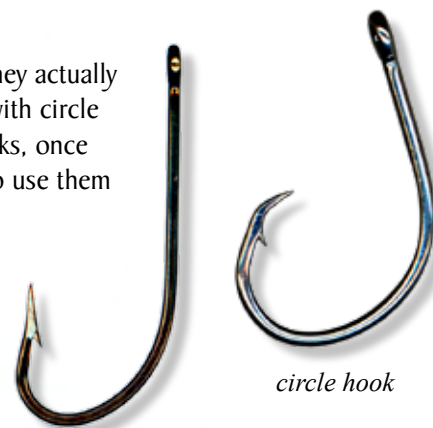


Use Circle Hooks

To conserve fisheries, many sport anglers now release the fish they catch. Using circle hooks instead of standard J-hooks can significantly reduce mortality. Experienced striped bass anglers find that baited circle hooks, because the point is turned inward, almost always hook fish in the lip or jaw. Points on J-hooks, in contrast, are more exposed and can lodge in the gills, throat or stomach – internal organs where injuries can be fatal.

Because of its design, you don't need to “set” a circle hook as you would a J-hook; simply let the fish “take” the bait and then start reeling to get a hook-up. Many longtime

anglers believe they actually catch more fish with circle hooks than J-hooks, once they've learned to use them properly.



standard “J” hook

circle hook



Fish of the Atlantic Ocean

Use this handy guide to choose the best baits and to see what kind of fish you've caught.

Baits to Use

Natural Baits

Clamworms



Cutbait

(herring, Atlantic mackerel, shrimp)



Clams



Live fish

(eels, Atlantic mackerel, pollock, Atlantic menhaden)



Artificial Baits

Poppers



Swimbait



Bucktail jigs



Diamond jigs



Trolling tubes



Fish Identification Chart

Striped Bass



Bluefish



Atlantic Cod



Atlantic Mackerel



Haddock



Pollock



Winter Flounder



Cusk



Match Your Bait to Your Catch

Fish Illustrations by Victor Young / Courtesy of the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game

Hampton/ Seabrook

Surf fishing is great along New Hampshire's sandy beaches and rocky coastline. Try one of these popular spots along Route 1A, just north of the Mass. border.

1. Seabrook Beach/Hampton Beach State Park — Along Route 1A on either side of the bridge between Hampton and Seabrook. Hampton Beach State Park provides ample parking (fee required) or park along Route 1A on the Seabrook side. Anglers target striped bass, bluefish and winter flounder in the inlet to Hampton Harbor from the beach or the jetty.

2. Blackwater River — On Route 286 in Seabrook, this tidal river is a great place to land schoolies (young striped bass) and the occasional keeper. Be sure to check the tide; the river is only fishable at mid to high tide. There is easy access from the bridge; work your way out along the marsh for better fishing. Try fly fishing or using smaller lures.

3. North Hampton State Beach — On Route 1A in North Hampton, this beach produces some of the largest striped bass caught from shore each year in New Hampshire. Fishing occurs almost exclusively in the evening and into early morning. With the use of a surfcaster, try casting a chunk of mackerel or herring just beyond the breaking surf with a fairly heavy sinker tied below the bait. Waves will pick the bait up with each swell, enticing the fish. Fishing action can be heavy when striped bass push schools of baitfish into the shallow surf for a feed.



Fishing from a rock jetty, like the one at Hampton Beach State Park, allows an angler to extend his reach another several yards into the ocean.

When fishing from a jetty, avoid black rocks; they are covered in slippery algae



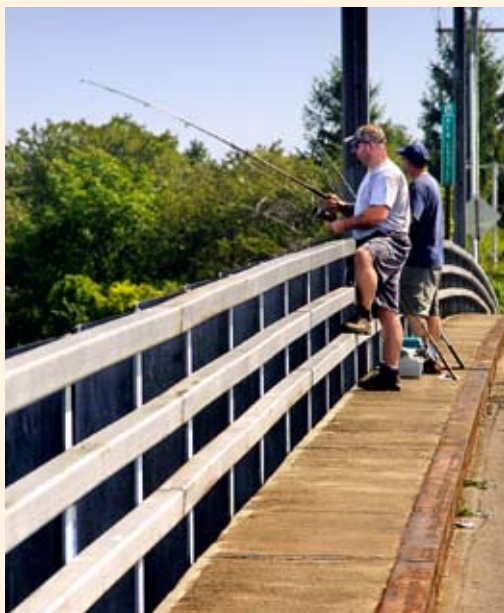
The N.H. record striped bass is 51 inches and 60 lbs.

Rye/New Castle

The narrow winding roads from North Hampton to New Castle provide great scenery and ample surf-fishing access. The beaches on Route 1A north of Hampton can be difficult to fish when there are crowds of beachgoers, but try any of the rocky outcroppings between North Hampton State Beach and Wallis Sands (indicated in red). Time your trip with low tide so you can move further out onto the rocks. Be flexible; let diving birds and breaking schools of baitfish tell you where to stop and cast your line.

- 1. Rye Harbor State Park** — In Rye, between Jenness State Beach and Wallis Sands Beach. Fishing from the jetties on either side gives you great access to winter flounder as well as schoolie stripers. Try fishing early morning incoming tides, when the currents bring bait into the harbor through the bottleneck created by the jetties.
- 2. Great Island Common** — From Route 1A in Rye, take Route 1B near Sagamore Creek toward New Castle. The park entrance is just past the town library. There is ample parking. The best fishing is off the concrete jetty and rocks at the far end of the park. Right at the mouth of Portsmouth Harbor, this is a great spot to catch a variety of fish, including Atlantic mackerel, striped bass and pollock.

The Goat Island Bridge is the gateway from Portsmouth to New Castle and a popular spot for targeting striped bass from shore. Peak fishing from bridges is often during the nighttime hours; which side depends on the tide's direction.



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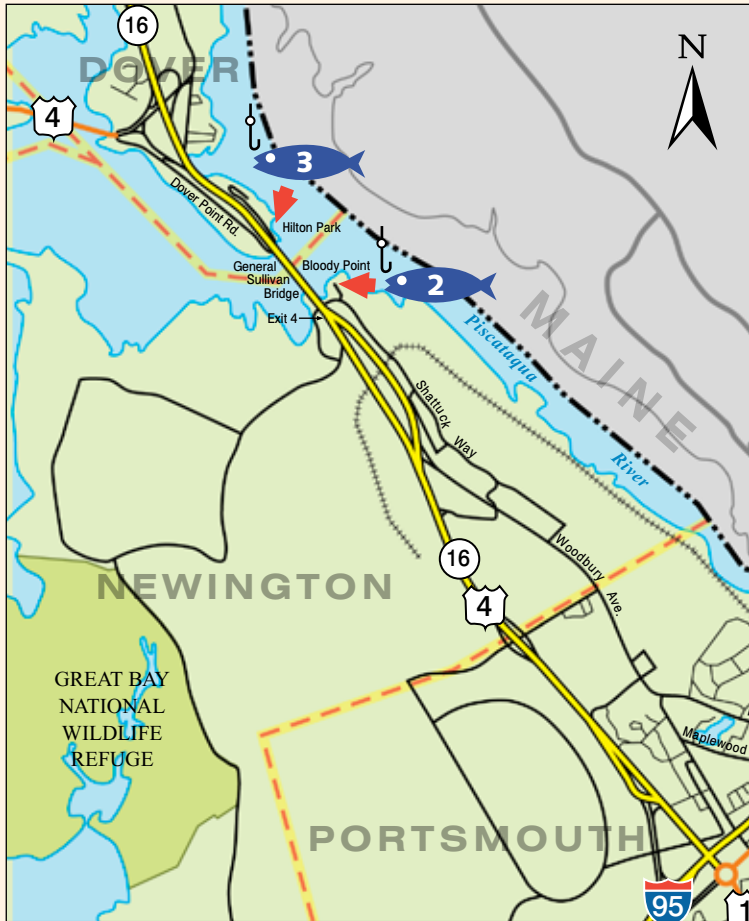


The first striped bass caught each year in N.H. are at the base of dams, where river herring congregate



Piscataqua River

The Piscataqua River is one of the fastest flowing navigable rivers in the world, and joins the Cocheco River, Salmon Falls River and Little Bay en route to the Atlantic Ocean. The river is a migratory highway for baitfish like river herring and shad.



2. Bloody Point — From Route 16 North, take Exit 4, making a left at the end of the exit. Just before rounding the corner to the left, turn onto Bloody Point Road, a small dead-end road on the right. There is a small parking area at the gate, and a short path will bring you to a rocky outcropping that allows access to the eddies created by this tidal rip area. Especially in the summer months, striped bass are lazy and will wait in the calm waters of the eddy for an unsuspecting baitfish to swim by.

3. Hilton Park at Dover Point — The Hilton Park access site is on the Dover side of the General Sullivan Bridge along both sides of Route 16. This is where the Piscataqua River meets Great Bay, and often holds large concentrations of bait. Most fishing is done from the pier on the river side of the park, but it's worth working your way along the rocks near the boat ramp and under the bridge to the Great Bay side. Big fish like to relax in the eddies behind the bridge pilings, so directing your effort in that area is often successful.

1. Goat Island Bridge — On Route 1B heading from New Castle towards Portsmouth, you will cross two bridges, the first of which connects the Great Island (New Castle) to Goat Island. Just before the bridge is a dirt parking area maintained by Fish and Game. The bridge is best fished during night tides, but taking the time to walk the shoreline on both sides at dawn or dusk while using lures or flies can also be very rewarding.



When the moon is full or new, a “Spring Tide” occurs, which is extremely high and extremely low



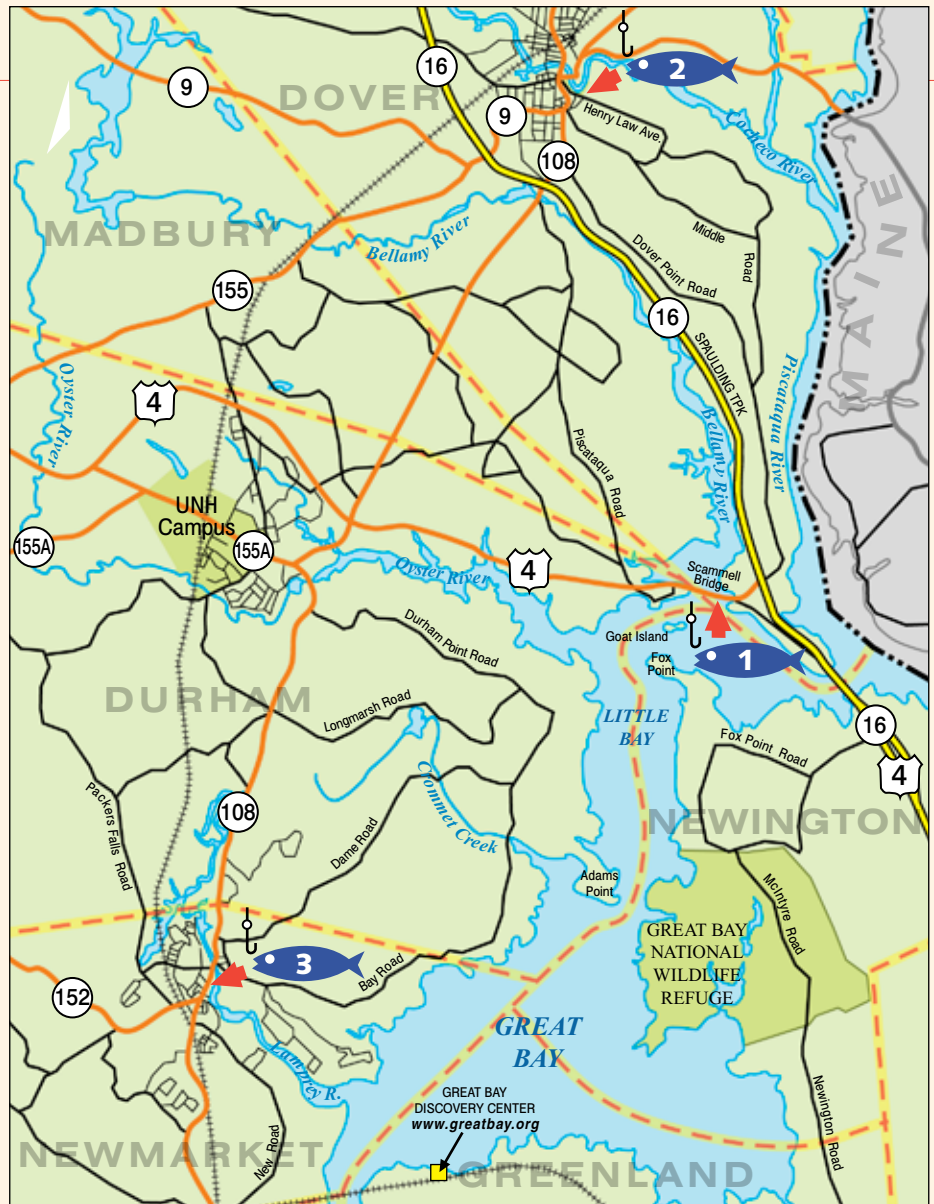
Great Bay Estuary and Tributaries

The tidal rivers of New Hampshire are where the salty seawater meets the warmer fresh water. These rivers are also the final destination of large migratory runs of river herring before they spawn and return to sea.

1. Scammell Bridge — On Route 4 between Dover and Durham, the bridge spans the junction of the Bellamy River and Little Bay. Much like our New Hampshire beaches, fishing at this site occurs primarily at night. This is a great spot to try in the midsummer months when the fishing gets a little tougher. An added benefit is the occasional presence of bluefish among the large schools of striped bass, which will put up an amazing fight. Fishing is best toward the center of the bridge; which side of the bridge depends on whether the tide is ebbing or flooding, but the method is primarily chunk bait. Fish and Game maintains parking lots at both ends of the bridge.

2. Henry Law Park — Downtown Dover. Traveling north on Route 108/Central Avenue, make a right turn onto Washington Street, then turn immediately onto Henry Law Avenue. The park provides access to the Cocheco River, where large runs of river herring end their spawning runs in May and June. A good rule of thumb is, where there are herring, stripers are not far behind. Chunk bait, swim baits or live herring are the best. During the spring months, take a short walk to the Central Avenue Bridge at Cocheco Falls; here, at Fish and Game's fish ladder, biologists sample migrating river herring, sea lamprey and the occasional Atlantic salmon.

3. Newmarket Town Landing — On Route 108 in downtown Newmarket, behind the mill buildings on the Lamprey River. Parking is limited, and like most coastal fishing in New Hampshire, the time of the tide is key. Large "cow" stripers gorge themselves on migrating river herring that pile up below the dam when tidal levels make it hard for them to access the fish ladders. As fly anglers say, "match the hatch": any bait that resembles a silver river herring swimming erratically or popping the surface should entice some action.



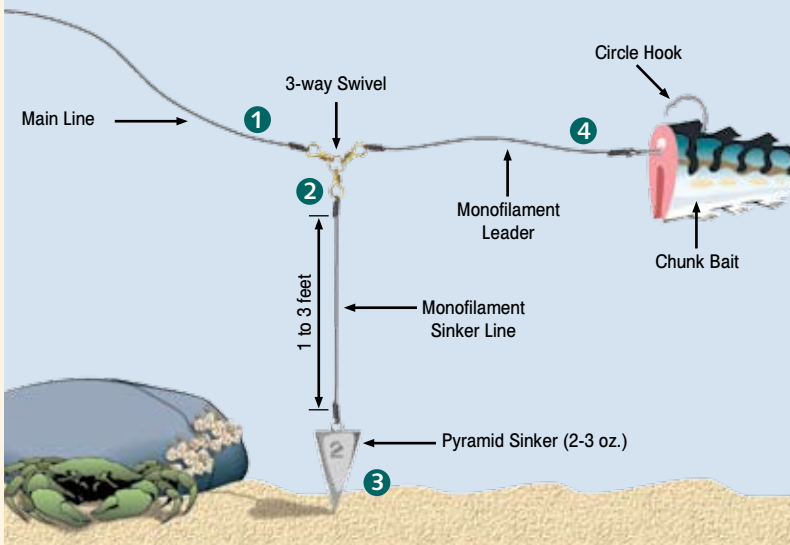
To find the feeding fish, follow the feeding birds



Winter flounder are close to shore in the spring and early summer



Chunk bait bottom rig setup



To create a setup that will allow you to present cut bait (herring, Atlantic mackerel, or clams) to predatory fish patrolling the surf:

1. Attach a 3-way swivel to the main line using a clinch knot
2. To the bottom-facing swivel ring, tie a stretch of monofilament (1 to 3 feet)
3. To the end of this line, tie a pyramid sinker
4. Tie your leader line and hook to the remaining swivel ring

This configuration will allow the bait to remain near the bottom where the pyramid sinker is resting, but the swells and current will pull the chunk bait a few feet up in the water column. By keeping the bait above the bottom, its movement imitates a swimming prey fish and helps to keep it out of reach of bottom-dwelling crabs and lobsters.

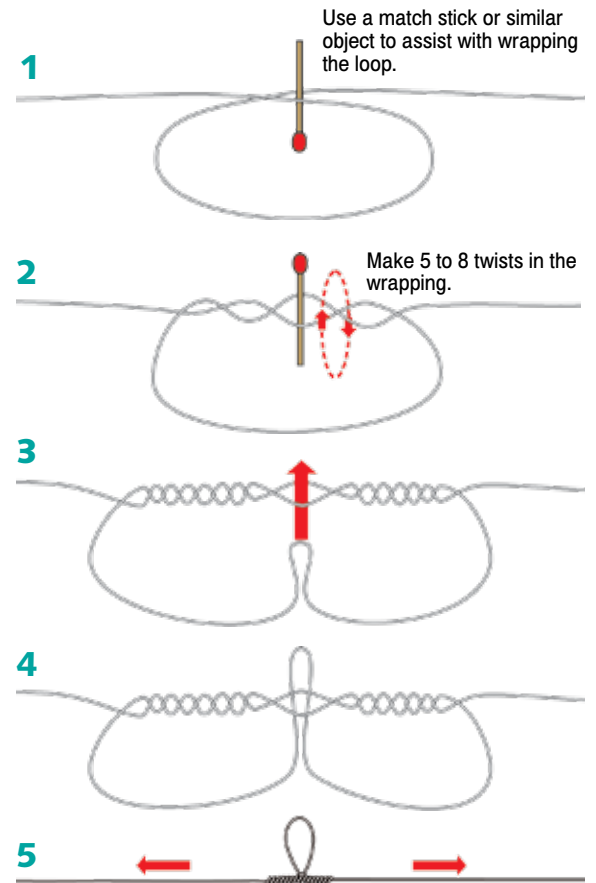
Hint: When fishing around rocky shorelines, use a lower lb. test monofilament than the main line and leader, so that in the event of a snag in a rock crevice, only the weight is lost and will need to be retied.

Alternative floating setup: Helps keep crabs at bay. Tie a circle hook on your line, using a clinch knot. Attach a bobber about 3 feet above it. Clamp a small weight on the line in between, about a foot above the hook. Bait the hook with a live fish hooked through the lip or the back just below dorsal fin.

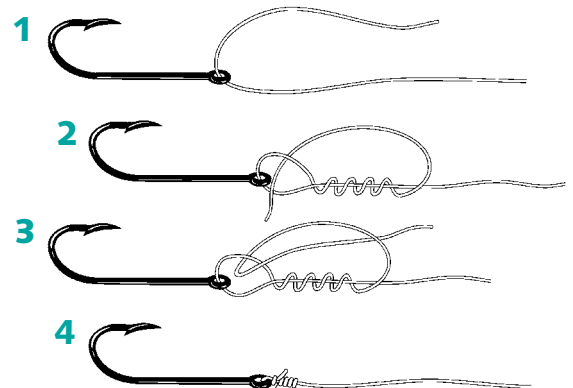
For more saltwater fishing tips and information, log onto www.fishnh.com/marine

Need-to-know knots

Dropper Loop Knot - used to attach a second hook



Clinch Knot



A fish reeled up from 100+ feet will have an expanded air bladder. To increase survival, lightly squeeze the belly before releasing

