



CAROLINA WRECK FISHING

The Crystal Coast of North Carolina holds plenty of salty maritime lore, after all, Blackbeard's shipwreck of the Queen Anne's Revenge was discovered here.

With myriad shipwrecks and hard glacial rock outcroppings lining the coast, there's plenty of habitat for opportunity targeting wreck beasts. I jumped on with Captain Stewart Merritt of Salt Air Ventures and Wayne Justice of the NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores this past week to ply some of the rocky ledges.

We were equipped with Shakespeare Tiger Stik rods and Penn 113 reels spooled with 65-pound Power Pro Braided line. Rigs were made of 130-pound test monofilament in a dropper style with a large 300-pound Barrel swivel to a dropper with 16-ounce bank sinker, then on the tag end was crimped a size 10/0 Gamakatsu Circle Hook.

Baits were of live pinfish, frozen sardines and Spanish mackerel heads. Fishing in 65 to 115 feet of water, the hits kept on coming. Punishing pounds on bottom brought us up some fine gag grouper in the 10 to 15-pound class, 30-pound Almaco jacks, Greater Amberjacks, black sea bass, and quality red snapper that had to be released but were nonetheless fun to fight. One drop Justice hauled in a massive Stingray from the depths, but it came with a surprise as two 8-pound class cobia followed it up. With a bit of quick thinking I grabbed a Spro bucktail tipped with A Band of Anglers Dartspin and cast right past the stingray. The flash of the Dartspin's tail blade was too much to resist for the cobia and the hook came tight with a spirited battle.

NC wreck beasts remind me of when doing battle with large blackfish, as after the hook is set, you need to quickly raise the rod and reel the fish up out of the wreck before he gets a chance to bulldog you back down into the structure which eventually leads to a cut or stuck line. High speed reels are most definitely preferred. By day's end on the Crystal Coast, we filled the fishbox with gags, sea bass, triggerfish and cobia. Anyone searching for logistics to a southern wreck fight should check out www.emeraldslerealty.com and www.crystalcoastnc.com. Please, only serious wreck fishermen apply!

