

HARKERS ISLAND 2006

By Mike Buss

Boy it sure feels good to get home and find some fishable weather!! This year's Harkers Island trip was defined by windy and lousy weather. This was the first time that I can remember where we had so many windy and blowout days. Dannie, the Calico Jacks owner, said that this year the guides had lost about a third of their charters to bad weather conditions. That is little comfort, but at least we weren't the lone rangers. We did catch some fish, but certainly not in the numbers we have caught in the past.

The one overriding feature of this year's trip was the fantastic place we stayed at. It was a gorgeous three story home located right on the water. In fact, we could sit on the back porch that went all the way around the back side of the house on the second floor and watch with binoculars puppy drum tailing in the marsh right behind the house. In fact a couple of our members went out wading in the marsh and caught a few of them! I saw a couple of huge tails, but only caught a couple of small puppy drum. The wading was spotty with areas of hard bottom and oyster beds. The oyster beds were obviously the drawing card. A lot of us felt, we would have had better fishing luck fishing for the puppy drum in the marsh than we had for the False Albacore, but that was **NOT** what the trip was all about!

We arrived on Sat, November 4, and after some initial confusion, got settled into the house. Sunday broke bright and sunny and we were all set for a great day of fishing. Unfortunately, Joe Lupton's boat had other ideas! We got about a quarter of a mile out from Calico Jacks and discovered we had no steering! We were able to get back by all of us leaning to one side of the boat or the other and using the trim tabs to make small turning corrections! Luckily, we were able to limp back to the dock. Joe and Ernie Schwab volunteered to spend the day fixing the boat, so Aaron Johnson and I hopped on the Calico Jacks ferry and went out to the Spit for a day of wade fishing. It turned out to be one of the best days of the trip for seeing surfacing False Albacore.

There was constant False Albacore action at the point from about 10:30 AM to 1:00 PM and most of them were very good sized. Aaron had two on but they broke off. I was fishing a little further down the shore and didn't have as much action. There was one pair of guys from New Jersey who had the best spot on the point and had non-stop action right in front of them for about an hour. All they had to do was make about a 10 foot cast and they were right into the exploding bait ball, but they only hooked up a couple of times and promptly got broken off. A number of us watched them in amazement as they misfired on cast after cast. Unfortunately, they refused to yield their prime spot to anyone else until after the action died down. All told, there were 4 False Albacore landed on the beach that first Sunday, little did we know that would be one of the best days of the trip.

When we came in on the Calico Jacks ferry, we ran into a couple of club members, Greg and Brandon Olsen and made plans for the following day. Aaron went out with the Olsens and Ernie and I went out with Joe. We didn't have much luck in Joe's boat, but Brandon caught a couple of False Albacore and Aaron had a couple more on but they broke off.

The next day the wind started and really didn't stop except for a couple of days for the next two weeks! It was an unusual wind, in that it seemed like it would die down in the evening and then pick right back up again at daybreak! We did have a plan for the windy days and that was to fish in a protected creek off the Neuse River. It was called Cahoogie Creek and was a short drive away. We caught trout (2lbs to 5lbs), small puppy drum, flounder, largemouth bass, and chain pickerel. In fact, we developed what we called the Cahoogie slam-a trout, puppy drum, flounder, and pickerel. One of our members, Doug Erck, managed to accomplish the slam!

After those first few days of action, most of the False Albacore were caught on the eastern side of the shoals. The problem was to get through the shoals with the heavy wind and surf conditions. On those days that we could ride through and get over there, the False Albacore fishing was pretty good. I was able to get over there two days and hooked up and landed the only two False Albacore I caught on the trip, one of 7 pounds and another of 18 pounds. Don Jackson and Billy Whetstine both landed False Albacore on the day they were able to get through the shoals as was Kevin DuBois. Ed Owens hooked up, but didn't land one. All of these fish weighed double digits!

Believe me, it sure felt good to be back home and actually catching some fish instead of taking long boat rides!! This year seemed to be the pay back for all of the previous good years, so the law of averages should be working in our favor again next year. We did all have a great time and we are already looking forward to next year. I have already put in our request to reserve the same house for the same two weeks in November next year (second and third weeks in November). If you are interested in going with us next year, please see me and get your name on our fishing list.