

Surf Fishing in Kauai, Hawaii

By, Bill Varney, Jr.



When the winds of winter whip across the beach we sometimes dream of the warm invitation of tropical places. Every time I go surf fishing in the Hawaiian Islands I'm always amazed by how many new things I learn. Although the islands are surrounded with some of the best surf fishing shoreline in the world, they are rarely crowded. You won't find a more peaceful and beautiful place anywhere to spend the day fishing. Great areas for fishing from both the beach and the rocks surround the islands. The best surf fishing areas vary by the time of year and the size of the surf. During winter, the Hawaiian Islands receive most of their surf on the North and East facing beaches. In summer, the Islands experience surf from the South. That's one thing an island has to offer—if the surf or wind is too big just drive to the other side! I still have a great many miles of shore to explore in Hawaii but one of my favorite places to surf fish is along the East and Northern shore of Kauai. In late December our flight landed in Kauai and after a short walk to the rental car we were off the plane and on the road to Kapaa. Kapaa, on the East side of Kauai, is a small town perched upon a point and surrounded by long sandy beaches. This area is well known for the Wailua River which flows from the mountains and opens up to the sea here. We've always found this a great place to

stay as it is quiet, has every store you may need and is away from the vast hordes of tourists that inhabit the Island's South side.



Kapaa also offers great fishing and quiet relaxing beaches. For years, we have stayed at the Wialua Bay View Condos located adjacent to Wailua Beach. The accommodations, which included a 1 bedroom condo with full kitchen, bath and fold-out couch are perfect for a family of four and reasonably priced at less than \$175.00/ night. Just steps from the beach, this is a great home base where you can enjoy the beach or explore the island to find it's many surprises.

Our first day's adventure started on the beach just below our condo where we could fish both sand and rocky areas. On the open beach I like to use 6-8lb test and the Carolina Rig. Over the last few years I've tried many different baits including shrimp, grubs, squid, octopus and Berkley's Gulp!. They all seem to work well with many natural baits available right in the local grocery store.

Fishing "condo point" I like to use a very light-sliding sinker on my Carolina Rig so as not to get snagged in the rocks. Casting out along the edge of the rocks produced bites on both grubs and bait.

Just two of the many Wrasse that live in the Hawaiian Islands



After taking my time and enjoying the warm water splashing over my feet it was time to move up the beach (about ½ mile walk) and fish the edge of Lydgate Park's

wading pool. The wading pool was built on sacred Hawaiian grounds as a place to relax and swim with a wave-protected rock enclosed wading pool.

I first dove here years ago and discovered the enormous number of surf fish that inhabit the cracks and crevices of its walls. The park is just a moderate walk from the condo and gives you a chance to see the island, beach comb and fish along the way.

As the days of our trip extended into the next week we would venture up along the North coast of Kauai to see what new areas we could scout out. Our first stop was at Queen's Bath near the resort town of Princeville.

On Kauai, Princeville boasts some of the most expensive real estate in the world along with a beautiful volcanic coast that's perfect for fishing. That's one great thing about Hawaii. All beaches are public—so even in the most expensive neighborhoods everyone can have access to the ocean.

Once we reached the trailhead and parked it was time to gather up our belongings and make our way down one of Kauai's notoriously muddy trails. As we slipped and slid our way down the trail it was hard not to notice the lush jungle and beautiful flowers. As we rounded the turn, just above the shore, a churning waterfall poured water over moss covered rocks and it was easy to see why this is considered paradise.

On the rocky shore we began to move north and look for the bath of Hawaiian queens. Just around the corner we found the first of several natural rock pools. After a short dip it was on to fishing.



QUEEN'S BATH NORTH SHORE KAUAI

Using cut shrimp, octopus and Berkley's Gulp! I cast out into the rushing water that crashed between the pillars of rock. It wasn't long before my first fish was pulling line.



SPOTTED CORAL BLENNY

Before you knew it more and more fish jumped the line. Almost every cast a different variety of fish. I had to keep the I.D. book close at hand!



BLACK SPOT SERGEANT FISH

Over the next several days we fished many places on the island and discovered that we had just scratched the surface. I delighted in the realization that it would take many trips back to the islands to learn everything that just one local knows.

In Hawaii you have many different types of beaches to fish. You'll find sand, rock and volcanic shores. I've found it's a good idea to snorkel the area so you can pinpoint the areas to fish. Using light tackle is ok but size up your line and use fluorocarbon leader to reduce loss due to rock abrasion. Many fine baits can be found at the local supermarket so look there first.

Just like back on the mainland, the locals like to use the plastic grub to catch fish. But their presentation must be altered to avoid having every cast snagged. To reduce losing gear, locals use a sliding bobber that can be cast out and retrieved along the reef. This system suspends the bait just above the bottom and entices fish to leave the relative safety of the rocks and strike.

Having come to the end of another trip to the Islands it's sad to watch the last sunset sink into the sea. Each time I come here I learn something new—something that I can bring home and try.

One way of learning the tip's you'll need to be successful in Hawaii is by watching the locals fish the beach. Another way is to invest in a great DVD about fishing the islands called: Shore Fishing Hawaii by Brian Kimata. This video includes tips on all the techniques that work throughout the Hawaiian Islands. You'll find it at: www.shorefishinghawaii.com



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