

WHAT IS LIGHT-LINE SURF FISHING?

By, Bill Varney Jr.



Every week my mailbox is flooded with questions about surf fishing. Surprisingly, a good number of folks often ask me the difference between light-line and the old fashioned style of surf fishing we once practiced. So I've put together a few of the questions anglers have asked to hopefully answer a few of everyone's questions.

What is light-line surf fishing ?

Light-line surf fishing first hit the beach back in the early seventies when surfers, turned fishermen, tried lighter gear to catch surf fish. Traditional surf rods over twelve feet were replaced by eight foot rods built for trout and steelhead. Over the years, surf fishing has become much more refined as equipment manufacturers have put

some great rods and reels on the market. New lighter equipment along with a wide variety of live and artificial baits has helped make light-line surf fishing popular.

What equipment do you use ?

When talking about light-line surf fishing there are two types of rods. One rod is for the open beach and utilizes a spinning reel loaded with six-pound monofilament. The other surf rod is used exclusively for throwing lures like kastmasters, korcodiles and hard baits. This casting rod uses a conventional reel loaded with ten to twenty-pound monofilament (or braid with a topshot).

For my beach spinning rod I prefer a seven to nine foot rod with parabolic to medium action. Rods rated for four through sixteen-pound test line and a lure weight of one-half to one ounce all work well. Many rods in the “steelhead” category fit these specs.



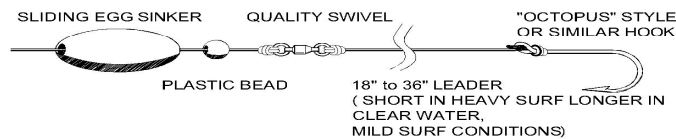
When it comes to a lure casting rod I prefer a seven to eight foot rod rated for ten to twenty-pound test monofilament. Medium to heavy action is required of this rod for casting and retrieving lures. The casting rod uses a small conventional reel and handles lure weights up to one ounce.

What is the best rig for the surf ?

Most of the time I just use one rig in the surf—the Carolina rig. It's very simple and effective way to present your bait. The Carolina is made up of a sliding egg sinker, a bead, a swivel, eighteen-inches of leader and a hook. You may vary the leader length and sinker size depending on the size of surf and the strength of the current. For days with big surf and strong currents

use a shorter leader and a heavier sinker, then you would on a calm day. Always keep in mind how important it is for your bait to always be in contact with the bottom—as this is where the fish feed!

CAROLINA RIG



A second common rig for the surf is designed especially for fishing the elusive corbina. This rig is a simple uni to uni knot that attaches thirty-inches of six-pound fluorocarbon leader to your main line. With this rig just pin on a sand crab and fly-line the bait into the surf. If you need a bit of weight use a pinch on weight like a water gremlin. Allow your bait to wash in and out with the surge of the waves and hold on—there's a corbina on its way!

What baits work best in the surf ?

I break surf baits down into two general categories: Live bait and lures. With lures you have many choices. For halibut hardbaits



such as BattleStar, Lucky Craft Flash Minnows, Rapalla, Sebile, Yo-zuri and several other "sitck baits" work exceptionally well. For other surf fish (like corbina, spotfin croaker *and* halibut) try three-fourths ounce Krocodiles and Kastmasters. Both of these lures work well in the surf and attract a wide

variety of surf fish. When fishing for perch and the occasional corbina a Carolina rigged Gulp! sandworm or a one and one-half inch plastic grub seems to work great too.

For natural live bait the list is almost endless but the most common choices would be: Sand crabs, lug and blood worms, ghost shrimp, sidewinder crabs, mussels and clams. Some of these baits can be purchased at your local tackle shop. Others must be collected at the beach or in nearby marine areas near harbors, jetties and estuaries. My suggestion is to call one of the many great tackle shops near the beach and ask them what bait they carry and where to use it. You may also pick up a copy of my book, which gives details about how to find, catch and keep bait alive.

How do I find fish at the beach ?

There are a great many places to find fish at the beach but here are a few of my favorites: When you first get to the beach find a high spot on the sand where you can see waves crashing on the beach. Look up and down the beach for off-colored, foaming and swirling water. This is where a rip current has formed. If you find this you will find fish. Approach the rip current from the side and fish it's edges where clean water meets turbid water.



Another place for fish to hide at the beach is in the long shore trough. When waves break, both an inside and outside troughs are formed. The inside trough is just a few feet from shore. You have seen it before (or even

experienced it) when you see a surfer walk out and then drop into neck deep water. Fishing is good here at high tide because forage is churned up in the trough and it is also a safe place for fish to hide.

Similar to the trough that forms near the beach, the outside trough forms beneath waves that break the farthest from shore and is a productive spot to fish at low tide.

My favorite place at the beach to fish during winter is around any rock structure. Looks for jetties, harbor entrances and rock outcroppings. This is where fish feed and hide during the winter months. When first approaching a jetty or rock structure pay special attention to the direction of the swell. Normally you will find that fishing on the opposite side of where the swell meets the rocks is most productive. Fish use the eddy current, which is produced on the opposite side by the swell, to help them find food, air and a safe place to live.

Where can I learn more about surf fishing ?

There are countless places on the internet to find surf fishing information. Start by looking at these sites: www.fishthesurf.com, Facebook groups (NorCal Surf Fishing, Your Saltwater Guide, California Surf Fishing, Santa Barbara Surf Fishing, West Coast Surf Fishing) also checkout surf fishing videos at www.youtube.com. Without question, one of the very best places to find information about surf fishing is from your local beach tackle shop. These shops speak with surf fishermen every day and know what bait, tackle and area have the best fishing.

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