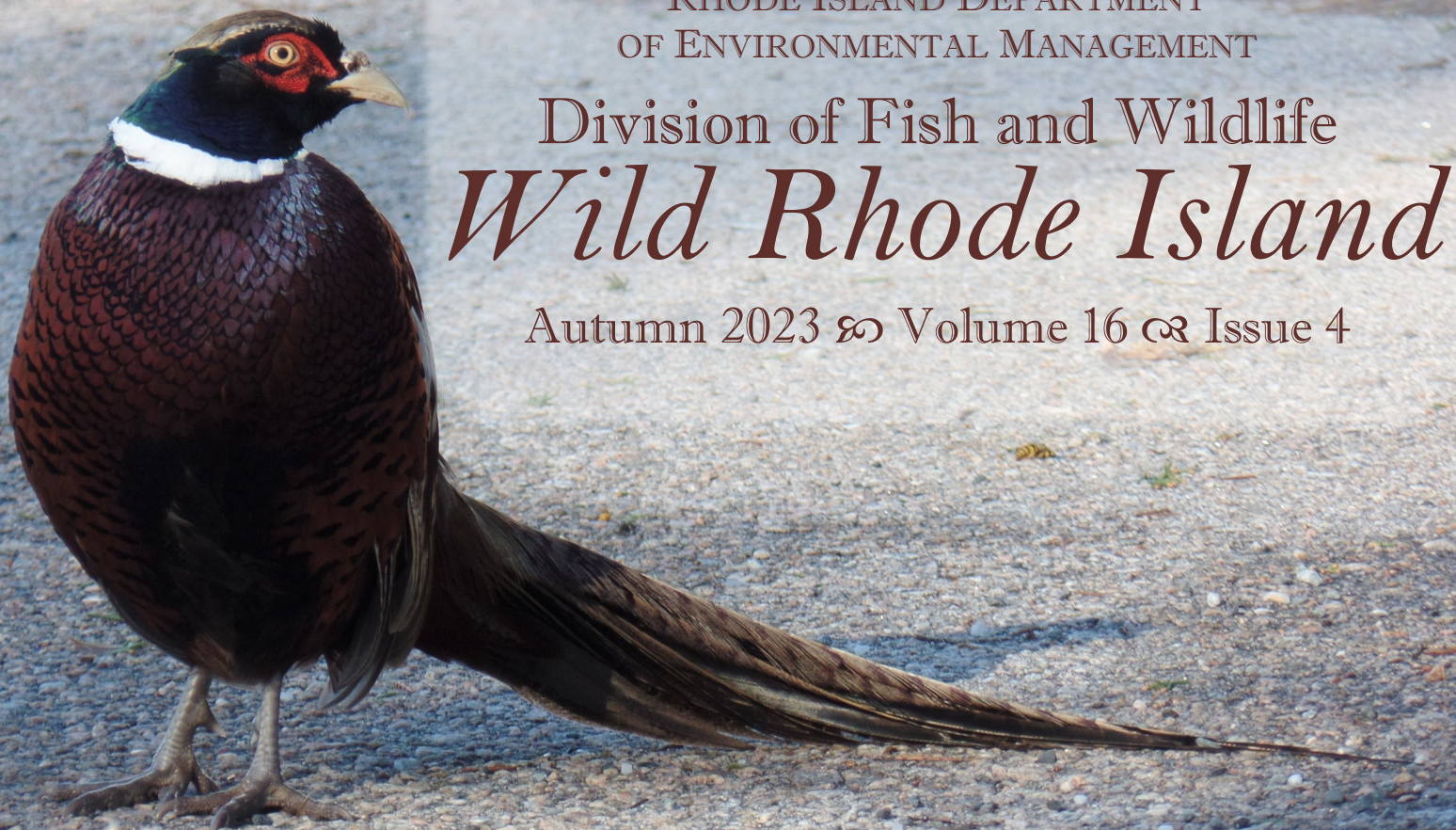
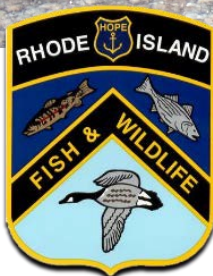


Division of Fish and Wildlife
Wild Rhode Island

Autumn 2023 ∞ Volume 16 ∞ Issue 4



Ring-necked pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) Photo: G. DeMeillon



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Pheasant Stocking Season 2023

By: Dr. Lizzi Bonczek, Upland Gamebird Biologist, DFW

The ring-necked pheasant is native to Asia and was first brought over to the United States in 1881. Since then, pheasant releases occurred throughout the United States and wild populations became established in suitable habitats. In Rhode Island, pheasants became well established in the early 1900's from historic releases. At this time Rhode Island's landscape was dominated by open farmland, pastureland, and grassland. Pheasants could be found statewide, but the largest populations were in southern Rhode Island (e.g., Washington, Bristol, and Newport counties). State sponsored pheasant stocking began in the 1950's to supplement declining wild populations and to provide additional opportunity for upland bird hunters on state land. At present, the only pheasants occurring on mainland Rhode Island are stocked by the

Photo left: Great Swamp WMA. M. Curry

Continued on page 4



THE DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to ensure that the freshwater, wildlife, and marine resources of the state of Rhode Island will be conserved and managed for equitable and sustainable use.



Great Swamp Management Area, West Kingston, R.I. Photo: M. Curry



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2023 PHEASANT STOCKING PROGRAM.....1



THIS FALL DFW WILL ONCE AGAIN BE STOCKING SELECT MANAGEMENT AREAS WITH RING-NECKED PHEASANT FOR THE HUNTING SEASON.

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LEARN ABOUT THE ONGOING RESEARCH AND DISEASE SURVEILLANCE THAT DFW IS CONDUCTING ON LBV THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. .

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PELAGIC FISHING PROVIDES AN EXCITING AND CHALLENGING OPPORTUNITY IN RI WATERS FROM SPRING THROUGH FALL.




**CHECK OUT THE LATEST ISSUE OF
*WILD RHODE ISLAND EXPLORER!***

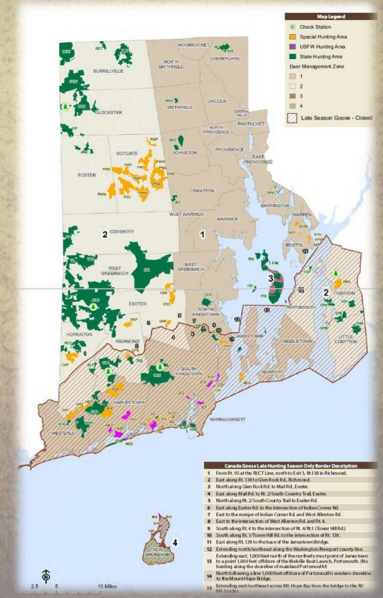
Access RIDEM Maps of State Land for More Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

> RIDEM Outdoor Recreation Area Maps

(<https://dem.ri.gov/online-services/data-maps>)

> Use the layer list  to select outdoor opportunities

- > State Land
- > Recreation - Trails/Trail Heads
- > Special Hunting Areas
- > Other Public Park & Recreation Areas



BLAZE ORANGE REQUIREMENTS

All users of State Management Areas and designated undeveloped State Parks, including but not limited to: hikers, bikers, and horseback riders are required to wear solid daylight fluorescent orange from the second Saturday in September to the last day of February and the third Saturday in April to the last day in May.

DEM.RI.GOV/ORANGE

BLAZE ORANGE REQUIREMENTS BY MONTH:

- SEP: ORANGE REQUIRED STARTING ON THE SECOND SATURDAY
- OCT: 200 SQ. IN. OF ORANGE REQUIRED
- NOV: 200 SQ. IN. OF ORANGE REQUIRED
- DEC: 500 SQ. IN. OF ORANGE REQUIRED
- JAN: 200 SQ. IN. OF ORANGE REQUIRED
- FEB: 200 SQ. IN. OF ORANGE REQUIRED
- MAR: ORANGE NOT REQUIRED
- APR: ORANGE REQUIRED STARTING ON THE THIRD SATURDAY
- MAY: 200 SQ. IN. OF ORANGE REQUIRED
- JUN: ORANGE NOT REQUIRED
- JUL: ORANGE NOT REQUIRED
- AUG: ORANGE NOT REQUIRED

* Block Island (Zone 4) 500 sq. in. required November to March



2023 Pheasant Stocking Program continued from page 1

RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife or private hunting clubs. The loss of mainland wild pheasant populations in Rhode Island primarily occurred due to landscape changes, with most farmland, pastureland, and grasslands being converted to housing developments and mature forests. This loss of early successional habitat and pheasant nesting



Photo: M. Stultz

cover has similarly caused declines for other species that rely on early successional habitats, including New England cottontail, northern bobwhite, American woodcock, bobolink, prairie warbler, and savannah sparrow. The only remaining wild pheasant population is on Block Island (New Shoreham).

More information on pheasant stocking:

<https://dem.ri.gov/natural-resources-bureau/fish-wildlife/wildlife-hunting/pheasant>

Pheasant stocking location maps:

<https://dem.ri.gov/natural-resources-bureau/fish-wildlife/wildlife-hunting/pheasant>

For more information contact Lizzi Bonczek • Elizabeth.Bonczek.ctr@dem.ri.gov • (401)284-3536

Saturday, November 4, 2023: Arcadia, Black Hut, Big River, Buck Hill, Carolina, Great Swamp, Nicholas Farm, Sapowet Marsh, Simmons Mill, and Eight Rod Farm

Wednesday, November 8, 2023: Arcadia, Black Hut, Big River, Buck Hill, Carolina, Great Swamp, and Nicholas Farm

Saturday, November 11, 2023: Arcadia, Black Hut, Big River, Buck Hill, Carolina, Great Swamp, Nicholas Farm, Sapowet Marsh, Simmons Mill, and Eight Rod Farm

Tuesday, November 14, 2023: Arcadia, Black Hut, Big River, Buck Hill, Carolina, Durfee Hill, Great Swamp, and Nicholas Farm

Saturday, November 18, 2023: Arcadia, Black Hut, Big River, Buck Hill, Carolina, Great Swamp, Nicholas Farm, Sapowet Marsh, Simmons Mill, and Eight Rod Farm

Thursday, November 23, 2023: Arcadia, Black Hut, Big River, Buck Hill, Carolina, Great Swamp, Nicholas Farm, Sapowet Marsh, Simmons Mill, and Eight Rod Farm

Saturday, November 25, 2023: Arcadia, Black Hut, Big River, Buck Hill, Carolina, Great Swamp, Nicholas Farm, Sapowet Marsh, Simmons Mill, and Eight Rod Farm

Wednesday, November 29, 2023: Arcadia, Black Hut, Big River, Buck Hill, Carolina, Great Swamp, and Nicholas Farm

Saturday, December 2, 2023: ** Arcadia, Black Hut, Big River, Buck Hill, Carolina, Great Swamp, Nicholas Farm, Sapowet Marsh, Simmons Mill, and Eight Rod Farm

Saturday, December 8, 2023: ** Arcadia, Black Hut, Big River, Buck Hill, Carolina, Great Swamp, Nicholas Farm, Sapowet Marsh, Simmons Mill, and Eight Rod Farm

Saturday, December 16, 2023: ** Arcadia, Black Hut, Big River, Buck Hill, Carolina, Great Swamp, Nicholas Farm, Sapowet Marsh, Simmons Mill, and Eight Rod Farm

Saturday, December 23, 2023: ** Arcadia, Black Hut, Big River, Buck Hill, Carolina, Great Swamp, Nicholas Farm, Sapowet Marsh, Simmons Mill, and Eight Rod Farm

Saturday, December 30, 2023: ** Arcadia, Black Hut, Big River, Buck Hill, Carolina, Great Swamp, Nicholas Farm, Sapowet Marsh, Simmons Mill, and Eight Rod Farm

Explore this [interactive map](#) that includes most lands scheduled for pheasant stocking. View stocking maps listed at the bottom of this webpage. Data is updated each fall as the season approaches.

Largemouth Bass Virus (LMBV): Ongoing Research in Rhode Island

RIDEM, in collaboration with the US Environmental Protection Agency and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, first began testing bass from Rhode Island lakes and ponds in 2006 for Largemouth Bass Virus (LMBV). To date, only three sites in Rhode Island have tested positive for LMBV: Olney Pond in Lincoln Woods State Park (2011), Echo Lake in Pascoag (2014), and Watchaug in Charlestown Pond (2016).

While LMBV has only proven fatal to largemouth bass, the virus has been found in some sunfish species such as bluegill and pumpkinseed. Common symptoms of the virus include hyper-buoyancy, spiral swimming and lethargy, which are attributed to damage to the swim bladder. Infected fish may not exhibit any signs of the virus until it is activated by stressful environmental conditions such as high water temperatures, low oxygen levels, droughts, secondary injuries, or bacterial infections. These are conditions that could trigger LMBV and potentially cause fish kills. While fish health biologists have indicated that LMBV is a naturally-occurring fish virus that does not pose

a human health risk for people who eat or handle infected fish, all freshwater fish should be thoroughly cooked before being consumed.

DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife advises anglers to minimize the spread of LMBV by not transplanting any fish from one water body to another; draining, cleaning and drying boats, motors and fishing gear between each use; not releasing bait fish into any water body; minimizing the stress to bass caught and released as much as possible during periods of high water temperatures; and reporting all fish kills to the Department at (401) 222-3070.



RIDEM DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE WELCOMES NEW STAFF!

JIM TAPPERO - HUNTER EDUCATION COORDINATOR



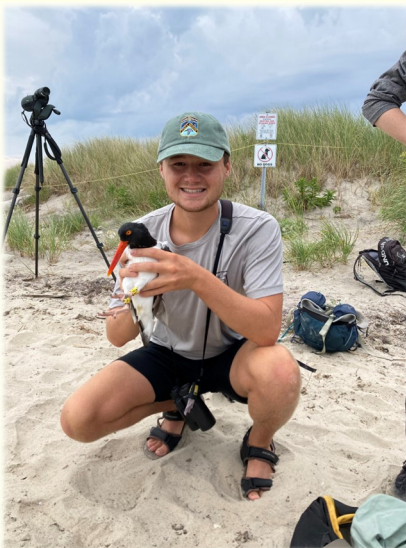
Jim demonstrates using a call during a Hunter Education program. Photo: Bill D.

Please join us in welcoming Jim Tappero to the team as our new State Hunter Safety Education Coordinator. Over the past 10 years, Jim has been an active volunteer within the Division's wildlife conservation and hunter education programs as a volunteer instructor, co-facilitator of advanced hunting workshops and mentored hunts, and has assisted on a variety of conservation research projects related to adult mute swan management, the collection of Atlantic brant for avian influenza sampling, winter waterfowl capture and banding, nuisance beaver trapping on state lands, and resident Canada goose capture and banding.

In addition to Jim's work with the Division, he has over 10 years of experience leading a successful Ducks Unlimited chapter, over 20 years managing his own business and staff, and a lifetime of hunting, fishing, and trapping experience. As the chairman for the South Shore Chapter of Rhode Island Ducks Unlimited, he oversaw large committees tasked with running multiple fundraising events annually for hundreds of attendees. These events allowed Jim opportunities to supervise, organize, and plan large-scale events for the public.

Jim's college degree in Zoology with a minor in Wildlife Management, his foundation in wildlife conservation, and his experience and passion for teaching others, both in a classroom and in the field, about hunting, fishing, and trapping will be an asset to our Division and the Hunter Education program.

SAM MILLER - NON-GAME BIRD BIOLOGIST



Please join us in welcoming Sam Miller to DFW as our new non-game bird biologist! Sam worked for the RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife as a wildlife biotechnician for the Non-game Program in 2022.

Sam received his B.S. from URI in 2022 where he was instrumental in data collection for the recently published Breeding Bird Atlas second edition. In his free time Sam has done some great work studying unique aspects of fall avian migration. He also enjoys nature photography, hiking, and exploring all the unique habitats Rhode Island has to offer.

Sam with a banded American Oystercatcher at Napatree Point Photo: J. Herbert

RIDEM DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE WELCOMES NEW STAFF!

MELISSA CURRY - ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

We are very pleased to welcome Melissa Curry as the Division of Fish & Wildlife's Administrative Assistant here at the Great Swamp Field Headquarters! Melissa first joined DFW in 2020 as a Seasonal Technical Support Intern, and was essential to helping the Division run during the height of the pandemic. She returned for another seasonal position in 2023 and was then hired on to provide technical and clerical assistance to the public and our staff. Her background in Anthropology, with a focus on Environmental Justice and over 10 years of experience in customer service and office management, brings experience, knowledge and skilled professionalism to her new position with us, and we are excited to have her aboard!



Melissa exploring the Great Swamp Management Area Photo: M. Curry

ABBY CLARK - WILDLIFE OUTREACH & VOLUNTEER TECHNICAL ASSISTANT



Welcome Abby Clark, our new Wildlife Outreach & Volunteer Technical Assistant to assist our Outreach and Education Team with DFW classes, programming, events, trainings and more.

Abby's most recent experience as an Interpretation Specialist with the Roger Williams Park Zoo, as well as her time as a Park Ranger with the US Army Corps of Engineers Cape Cod Canal Field Office will no doubt be an asset to our team and wildlife outreach and volunteer programming. Abby brings with her a wealth of experience working with and supporting volunteers, as well as experience facilitating outreach and interpretive programming, including working closely with the Girl Scouts groups.

Abby assisting with an Outdoor Education program. Photo: M. Gannon

Fishing For Pelagic Species

By: JA Macfarlan, Principle Marine Biologist, Division of Marine Fisheries

They provide spirited fights, high speed runs, and many can be easily targeted by inshore anglers. As a group, they are in our region from mid-spring to around Thanksgiving.



In the past few years a group of colorful and athletic pelagic fish have captured the attention of Rhode Island's coastal anglers. These animals are predators that migrate up and down the east coast and across the continental shelf in pursuit of forage and spawning opportunities. They provide spirited fights, high-speed runs, and many can be easily targeted by inshore anglers. As a group, they are in our region from mid-spring to around Thanksgiving. Last year, hungry schools of chub mackerel showed up early in the season, followed by bonito and false albacore, an explosion of small dolphinfish in late summer, and an exciting fall visit of giant bluefin tuna off the south shore beaches. However, in between the arrivals of those better-known species are a number of others that are just as fun to target.

The ten pelagic fish profiled here belong to three main families: Scombridae (tuna and mackerel), Coryphaenidae (dolphinfishes), and Carangidae (jacks and trevally). These groups have few or very small scales and obvious countershading (dark on the top or dorsal surface and light beneath on the ventral surface) that results in effective watery camouflage. Favoring a diet of other schooling organisms such as small crustaceans, fish, and squid, the species described here can typically be found under flocks of diving birds or by spotting surface disturbances. All are evolved for speed, are streamlined, and most can be targeted with light to medium duty rods and reels, with obvious exception to some of the larger species on the list.

Depending on your personal tastes all of these fish are edible with a variety of flavor profiles from mild to gamey. When keeping any fish for consumption they should be humanely stunned, bled, and iced down to ensure the highest quality meat. Eating any fish that has not been properly chilled and is then consumed can result in "Scombroid" poisoning. Symptoms can occur within minutes, last up to two days, and include headache, blurred vision, cramps, diarrhea, facial flushing, and irregular heart rate.

The following fish descriptions are ordered by their proximity to the coast, with "1" being most accessible via shore or kayak, versus "10" most likely to be caught offshore by boat. If you do not have a boat, but you would like to target offshore species please refer to the [RI Saltwater Fishing Regulations Guide](#) and the section on "party charter" vessels that specialize in trips to the outer continental shelf waters.

Banded Rudder Fish - *Seriola zonata*: The banded rudder fish is a highly predictable visitor to our waters during the warmer months of the year. At smaller sizes their dark vertical bands are prominent but fade with maturity. These typically small and feisty animals congregate around lobster floats, channel markers, and



flotsam from areas far offshore up to the Providence River. Banded Rudder fish are a close relative of Amberjacks and share similar attributes such as delicious meat and an incredible fight. Though rarely targeted by anglers in RI, they are fun to catch on light tackle. If the bass bite is slow and the kids are getting bored, finding a school of these fish can help turn around a frustrating day. **Tackle/Strategy:** Locate floating or submerged structure and use light resin jigs, or small chunks of bait paired to small weightless hooks.

Chub Mackerel - aka “Chubs” or “Tinker Mackerel”- *Scomber colias*:

In the past several years numerous schools of this scombrid have shown up in April and persisted until Fall. They are easily spotted on the surface by their thick, boiling, fast-moving pods that feed on small baitfish and large zooplankton. **Tackle/Strategy:** Casting 0.50-1.5-ounce resin or metal jigs with a single treble hook, color varies day to day however, bone, pink, and green/yellow have all worked in past years, find a school and stay ahead of their movements.



Bonito – aka “Bones”- *Sarda sarda*:

Pods of bonito have been reported as early as April, but typically are associated with summer fishing and persist through the fall. Bonito have large eyes, a mouth studded with small sharp teeth, and bright bluish-black stripes along their back with a white belly. **Tackle/Strategy:** Sight casting for these fish on surface feeds with jigs, spoons and small plugs, trolling with small to medium sized swim baits at ~5+ knots over ledges, drop-offs and near other structure.



False Albacore – aka “Albies”, “Little Tunny” – *Euthynnus*

alletteratus: Although not the fastest fish on our list, but capable of blistering 40 mph runs that elicit “run and gun” chases by anglers along the beaches and bays throughout RI. Similar in overall shape to a bonito but with a deeper, rounder body, Albies have several dark blotches and worm-like greenish blue camouflage patterns on their backs. **Tackle/Strategy:** Locate birds circling over fast-moving small pods that include fish jumping out of the water, use a range of small soft and hard baits to tease out a bite.



Atlantic Mackerel -“Boston Mackerel” or “Common Mackerel”-

Scomber scombrus: A distinctly spindle-shaped body is marked by



bars along their iridescent blue-green dorsal surface which gives way to a white belly. Large schools were typical in years past, however recently landings have declined substantially. Similar to a few other species on our list, Atlantic Mackerel are very fun to catch when fishing with kids particularly when getting multiple fish per cast. **Tackle/Strategy:** Sabiki rigs are the most popular, however red devils and small swimming lures also work well, watch for surface finning, or cast and jig a sabiki rig methodically to find a school's location.

Spanish Mackerel –“Spotted Mackerel” or “Bay Mackerel”-

Scomberomorus maculatus: Spanish Mackerel are toothy schooling scombrids that prefer warmer water temps and will show up in August and peak in abundance in September. They are distinctive looking with a prominent under-bite jaw, a sickle shaped tail, dark blotches along their sides, and a blueish-green dorsal surface. In our area they typically school with other mackerels and at times small bluefish. **Tackle/Strategy:** Find surface feeding fish and cast shiny spoons, soft plastics, and swim baits.



Dolphin and Pompano Dolphin - “Dorado”, “Mahi-Mahi”, or

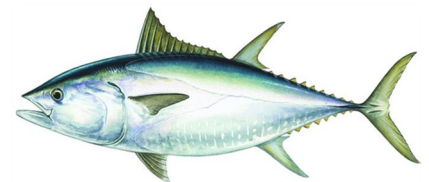
“Dolphinfish”- *Coryphaena equiselis*, *C. hippurus*: These animals have thin bodies, with a large foldable tale that exhibits coloration from whitish gray to bright blues, yellows, greens and turquoise flecks throughout. The two species co-occur in our area and are typically referred to by their market name “mahi mahi”.

Dolphinfish are the most colorful on our list, and they also exhibit sexual dimorphism in which the males tend to have a large square head compared to the smaller rounded head of females. They are likely the fastest growing and maturing species in our list, rarely living more than 5 years, and reaching sexual maturity within the first few months of life. **Tackle/Strategy:** Casting jigs, dropping cut bait on circle hooks, and trolling around weed lines, buoys, and other structure works well, commonly found with banded rudder fish.



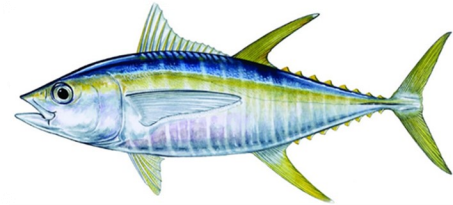
Bluefin Tuna -*Thunnus thynnus*: The largest scombrid on our list can grow to 1500 lbs and 10 feet

in length. Bluefin tuna have a deeply rounded body with a large powerful sickle-shaped tail. Their dorsal surface is bluish black above and silvery below with bluish yellow second dorsal and anal fins. In the past several years we have seen a “giant” fishery within state waters and regular sightings of pods of smaller “school-size” bluefin along the ocean-front within striking distance of kayaks and small boats. **Tackle/Strategy:** Live-lining bluefish, bonito, or mackerels and chumming menhaden and other oily species for larger fish. Smaller bluefin can be trolled, jigged, popped, and baited with a variety of



presentations. Highly Migratory Species (HMS) permit required.

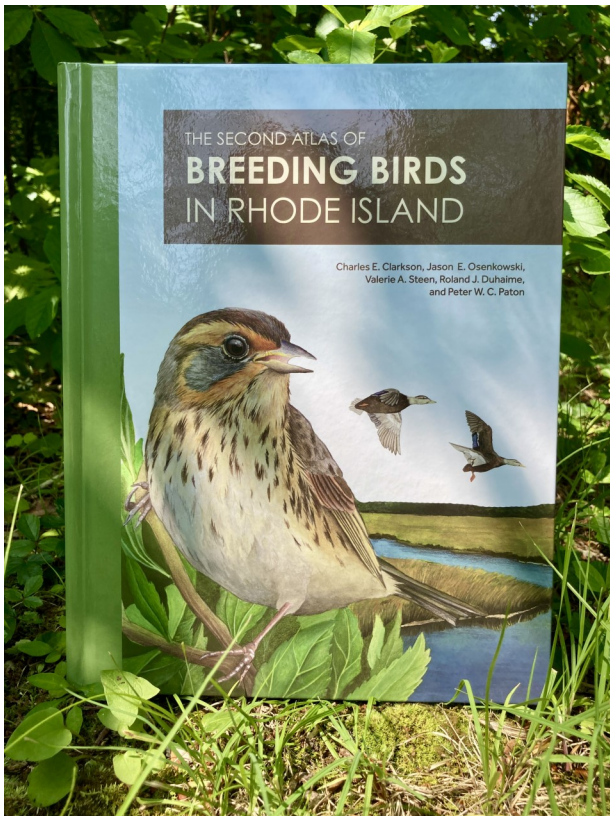
Yellowfin Tuna -“Ahi” - *Thunnus albacares*: Yellowfin tuna are at times confused with bluefin tuna which both can have yellowish fins and finlets. A dark bluish black dorsal surface is bordered by a yellowish lateral line and fins that are brighter yellow than a bluefin tuna. Yellowfin also have a torpedo shaped body and longer second dorsal and anal fins that are also bright yellow. **Tackle/Strategy:** Typically, a warm water visitor, these fish can be found just south of Block Island and further east on Coxes Ledge during the summer and early fall, popping, jigging, or trolling spreads of various lures all work well. HMS Permit Required.



Wahoo - *Acanthocybium soladri*: This elongated and spindle-shaped mackerel has 20-30 dark lateral bars along both sides and a bluish-black dorsal surface with a mouth full of razor-sharp teeth. The fastest fish in our list, it has been reliably clocked at speeds of upwards of 60 mph. These non-schooling pelagic torpedoes are capable of overheating drags and quickly stripping 100s of yards of line from reels. **Tackle/Strategy:** Locate sargassum weed patches, or areas near wrecks and other deep structure in clear blue water toward the shelf break, can be jigged, commonly trolled using heavily weighted swimming and feathered trolling lures at speeds of up to 16 knots .



	Common Name	Size (in/ft)	Time of Year	State Record
1	Banded Rudder Fish	6-18 in	Spring - Fall	None
2	Chub Mackerel	10-20 in	Spring - Fall	1.52 lbs, 14.75 in
3	Bonito	8-30 in	Summer - Fall	13 lbs
4	False Albacore	16-30 in	Late Summer - Fall	16.2 lbs
5	Atlantic Mackerel	6-14 in	Spring and Fall	1.6 lbs, 14 in
6	Spanish Mackerel	12-30 in	Late Summer - Fall	None
7	Dolphinfishes	14 in - 5 ft	Summer - Fall	32 lbs
8	Bluefin Tuna	27 in - 8 ft	Late Summer - Fall	1142 lbs
9	Yellowfin Tuna	20-48 in	Late Summer - Fall	265 lbs, 6ft
10	Wahoo	24 in - 6ft	Late Summer - Fall	80 lbs



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\$45.00 each or 5+ of any combination of DFW publications for 30% off!

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Inland Fishes of Rhode Island
Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Rhode Island
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Photo: Dean Birch

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