

# Kayak Striper Fishing

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there. The ships became kayak striper central until the water temperature dropped below 42 degrees. Every crew that went caught 40 inch stripers and at least one would land a 44 inch release.

Getting up close and remaining tight on the structure is the key. It's possible in a boat if you don't mind the damage from banging into the concrete. The only way to thoroughly fish the ships is in a kayak. I set up in the alleyways between the bow and stern of the ships. The fish use these passage ways to search the structure for snacks, like eels. If the bite is hot, I only use one rod. I drop the eel down to the bottom with an egg sinker, and crank it up two to three times. I want the eel suspended just above any rocks and debris it will slip under. I leave the reel in free spool with the clicker on and I adjust the clutch to keep the weight and the struggling eel off the bottom. I hold my position close to the ships by sitting on the rod butt and paddle to stay steady in the ally. I have even hooked stripers with a free lined eel pitched along the side of the ship as the eel swam down.

The strikes are different along the structure of the ships compared to Buoy 18. In the open water the stripers grab the eel and run down fast. Around the ships they tend to eat and slowly move away. I watch the line and listen for the slow but steady clicking. There's no need to let them eat; as soon as it's moving, they've got it and I slam the hook into them. This will lower the chances of a gut hook.

They will run at the ships and break off. Stout rods are a must. You can land them with light tackle in the open water of Buoy 18, at the ships you need as much power as you can get to attempt to turn them from the alleys. "Catching with Capt Reese Show" producer Damion Hall hooked one that immediately ran into the alley and broke off. The next day a 44 inch-er was caught with Damion's hook, leader and line hanging from its mouth. My largest striper pulled me at full speed toward the alley. At the last moment I was able to steer him with

my rod like the reins on a horse. He came to a dead stop at the foot of the ship and I slammed bow first into the wall. The head on collision jolted me forward into my foot wells.

Landing big stripers is the easiest out of the bay's larger fish. Just remember leg- leader- lip and lift. With the fish along side of my kayak, I put my leg over into the water. I leader the fish toward me and the boat and slide the fish over my leg. I aggressively grab his lower lip like I'm trying to push my fingers through his jaw. I lift with my leg, the grip on his lip and the leader, and I slide the fish into the kayak. It's the striper scoop.

## WINTER GEAR

Big stripers show up in the winter. I am the biggest wimp when it comes to the cold. I use to pile on the thick layers. I ended up looking like the kid in the 'Christmas Story'. I have learned how to layer appropriately with the right gear, and less layers. The key is no cotton, no long johns or sweat-pants and definitely no cotton socks. The first layer is called the 'wicking' layer. The bad thing about cotton is that it absorbs water. When you sweat the wicking layer pulls the moisture away from your skin, keeping you dry, which keeps you warm. A fleece layer is second. This thicker layer will keep your body heat in and the moisture away. The outer, water proof layer is chest waders. I like the simple footie style. I wear a pair of large sandals as the foot gear so I can release the straps when needed, to increase blood flow to my feet. The ultimate upper body top layer is the Aquaskinz Nor'Easter full zip up jacket. This new three layer breathable, waterproof and windproof outerwear jacket is the top of the top layers. It will keep you dry when the stripers soak you at the side of your kayak.

The water is deadly cold, and the air is even colder. With the right gear, kayak striper fishing is the most fun you'll have with or without a motor. Always fish with a buddy during the winter chill. Besides, who's going to take the pictures of those giant kayak-caught stripers? GET ON'EM.

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