

# **Fishing the Notch: If You Can't Beat 'Em Join 'Em!**

by DJ Muller

When the Army Corp of Engineers replenished our beaches a few years back, they may have saved the ocean front "cottages" but in doing so they destroyed some of the best habitat for striped bass and its forage base. The jetties which at one time jutted out into the Atlantic are now just stubby rock piles that are slowly being uncovered once again by the sea. Ask some veteran casters that have fished those jetties over the years and you will hear some real good stories of battles won and lost from those rock piles. The biggest defeat being beach replenishment, where all of our prime jetties were buried, pretty much right to their tips. Now if the beach replenishment wasn't bad enough for the jetty jocks, someone then thought it would be a good idea to notch the jetties in order to save the beach in some way by leaving the water move along the beach. I can't help to think that somewhere along the way a surfcaster must have done something to some engineer in the Corp to make them extremely angry and thus seeking revenge on the beach bound surf hound. Now we have no jetties, just stubs, and we have notches. I have always ascertained that as a surfcaster, flexibility is one of the greatest strengths. Well I have come to utilize the notches. At low tide I can wade out to the jetty to get onto it and I am back in business, but a high tide I am beach bound. But this isn't such a bad thing anymore. I have found that working the notch can be quite productive! This is my personal approach to working the notch.

There are several important variables that contribute to having success in the notch. I have had the most success with the old reliable, steel-lipped swimmer, or Danny. My personal favorite is the Big Don. Before fishing a notch, the first thing that you have to do is find a good one. It is important to find one with both water that is deep enough for bass and forage to move through, and a notch that has a fairly deep hole to one side. You need to figure out which way the water is moving, the best scenario being when the water moves or dumps into the deeper water or hole. Once you have chosen a notch, you want to start by casting as far out as you can to both sides of the jetty, and reeling your lure slowly, from the jetty edges into the rip, or water as it is rushing through the notch. Remember that when you are retrieving the lure, you want to retrieve it as slow as possible while still having it swim. Stay in constant contact with the plug, you want to feel every motion and pull. In the daylight hours you can keep a careful eye on it to make sure it maintains its tantalizing motion, but at night you will need to feel it swim all the way back to you. While casting you want to throw to a wide variety of positions. Starting with long cast, let the current carry your plug parallel to the beach, while maintaining "touch" with your plug, letting it run its course completely. As you continue to cast, make your cast shorter and shorter, but still allowing them to move, or be swept by the rip. The bass will come up and hit you at a wide variety of spots. Always be ready! The bass are holding in the rip waiting for bait to be flushed into their position. By changing your casting distances you will cover a lot of water, thus hitting the bass as it sits some somewhere in the rip waiting for its offering. Another productive retrieve is by going to the side of the notch from which the water is flowing and casting back across the notch

and reeling the lure back through the notch against the current. Bass will not hesitate to hit a struggling bait fish. Also do the opposite, go to the other side and cast across the notch and reel it in quickly with the current. The other thing that I need to emphasize is to retrieve you lure right up to or on to the sand. Don't ever give up on a retrieve and reel it in quickly right at the end. I have seen too many bass whack my lure right in the white water curl of the wave, just before you take it out of the wash. Another helpful variable is the presence of bait in the area. Although it is not an absolute necessity, it is very helpful in holding bass in the notch. As I have said here the wood swimmer is what does the trick for me, but before I snap on the wood, I will often times make long casts with shads to the tip area of the jetty in hopes of finding some bass lying in close to the rocks, or on the prow in the vicinity. The shads can cover a lot more distance than the swimmers, thus giving me coverage of more water.

Do your home work, find a couple good notches. Hit them at the right tide and you will be surprised by how many bass you will catch. Remember not to stay in one place too long and vary your distances and you will do just fine.

Don't let the fact that our jetty's are inaccessible stand in your way, use it as a golden opportunity to catch bass. Bass constantly adapt to their surroundings, why shouldn't we?