

Jetty Jumper Strategies

By DJ Muller

New Jersey is known for its jetties. Jetties are good for fishing. Jetties hold life. Life means bait. Bait brings stripers and friends. Stripers and friends equal productive surfcasting!

Equipment. When hitting a jetty always remember to respect the elements that are involved with jetty fishing. The elements would include, rock, water, weed, slime, and plethora of other goodies. When you mix all these elements together, you have a recipe for disaster. Wear boots, wear studded cleats (not sneakers), wear appropriate foul weather gear when necessary. Wear a wader belt! Don't fool around and get hurt, I know some great casters that have given up rock piles because of serious falls. If you are going to hit the jetties hit them correctly and utilize the opportunity to its fullest. Fish the tip. You can with the right equipment. The other piece of equipment that will make your jetty jumping experience better is a long handled gaff. What good would it be for you to whack a 15 pound bass or blue and then have to cut it off or risk your life to get it up. I don't want to hear you say, 'well I haven't caught a fish off a jetty yet so it isn't really a big concern.' If this statement sounds like something you would say, re-think your approach. First off you have the wrong attitude going in. If you go out on a jetty with the mindset of not hooking up, stay home and watch ESPN Outdoors, you get more accomplished. The second thing that is wrong with that is that you do not completely understand the fish holding ability of a jetty. The third thing wrong with that statement is that you must be fishing the pile at the wrong time of day. Early and late in the day are essential. A good caster knows this.

Strategy. The first thing that you as a caster needs to do before you hit a jetty, is to find a good one. What I often do is go out when I get a chance and do some jetty recon. I find several jetties that have deep water to the sides, good visible rips off the tips or side, and a jetty that looks fairly safe and comfortable. I write down a couple names of streets that have good jetties. That way if I come back early in the morning or late at night, I don't have to scramble to find another good jetty if the one I preferred is occupied.

The first thing I do when I get on the jetty is to find a good place to stick my gaff so that I can grab it quickly and without having to move away from the jetty's edge. The next thing I do once I find the spot where I am going to fish is I look around for a good spot to land a fish. A flat rock or safe rock near water level. The one other thing I plan is what I will do with a bigger fish should one come calling. A big fish you want to work to the beach and land there, if possible. When alone you don't want to take the chance missing a big bass by letting pressure off your line for an instant or missing on the gaff hit, causing the big fish to panic and run again wreaking havoc to your cause. Plan your landing.

I then begin casting. If you think all the fish are all out around the tip, you've made an error. Bass love the white water. A wave rises, crest, and the crashes down, leaving behind it a billow of white water that lasts about 7-10 seconds. Another wave follows. It is in this white water behind each wave that bass finding their hunting fruitful. The power and crash of the waves throws bait around, disorienting them, bass seize this golden opportunity for easy pickings. Target your cast into the white water.

Target the area parallel to the jetty. Bass prowl here looking for crabs, eels, and other bait fish hiding in the rocks. One night on a full moon me and a buddy were fishing in November. The water was crystal clear and you could see down to the bottom in the moon light. At one point my buddy said "Look!," pointing down into the water right below us. We saw the shadows of three cow bass cruising the edge of the jetty so close that you could have spit on them.

Target swirling water. Every jetty is different. Look for rocks or boulders that stick out further than the rest. When a wave or swell hits it, it causes a whirlpool effect. In these swirl, again bait gets caught and thrown, making easy meals for waiting bass. Target these area that are right beside the jetty. They are great fish holds.

The rips. Every jetty has rips. Some run perpendicular to the tip, some run diagonally to the jetty and it's tip, some run parallel to the jetty. These rips also hold fish. The rips sweep around the jetty tips bringing gifts that the gamefish love. The bass or blues usually face into the rip, so once you find the rips, try to present your offering in a way, similar to the movement patterns of the approaching bait.

The tip is the reason you fish jetties. You as a landlubber are restricted to skinny water and sand. The jetty gives you access to fat water, or deep water. It can give you another hundred feet or more of water to cover. Many of Jersey's jetties are old and broken down from being ravaged by northeasters over the years. The

submerged rocks at the end hold fish, lots of fish, ask any diver that does jetty tips. It is an ideal place for bass or blues to hold in the rips and await bait to be brought to their dinner table.

Use the jetty to your advantage. There is a lot to learn and fish for the taking. Be sure that you never leave any garbage when you leave and always side with caution when you have tough judgements to make. As fall approaches maximize your efforts, by using these rock pile strategies.