

# FISHING SALTON SEA

the best fishing

In California

by Bill Korr

State Water Resources Control Board  
Hearing Name IID Transfer - Phase 2  
Exhibit: 10  
For Ident: \_\_\_\_\_ In Evidence: \_\_\_\_\_

# NORTH SHORE BEACH & YACHT CLUB

TRY THE

NORTH SHORE BEACH AND YACHT CLUB  
WITH ALL SUPPLIES FOR  
BOATING AND CAMPING

PHONE: (619) 393-3600 OR 393-3891



We Are Mercury Motor Distributors  
With A  
Factory-Trained Mechanic



Gasoline ★ Boat Storage ★ Fishing License  
★ Bait ★ Launching Ramp ★  
Restaurant With Dining Room And Dancing  
★ Cocktail Lounge And Coffee Shop ★  
Modern 48-Unit Seaside Motel  
★ With Spacious Pool Area ★  
And Picturesque Views Of The Salton Sea

FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION

PHONE: (619) 393-3071

WRITE: P.O. Box 5003  
North Shore, California 92254



NORTH SHORE BEACH IS IDEALLY LOCATED JUST SOUTH OF MECCA  
ON HIGHWAY 111, ONE MILE NORTH OF SALTON SEA STATE PARK.

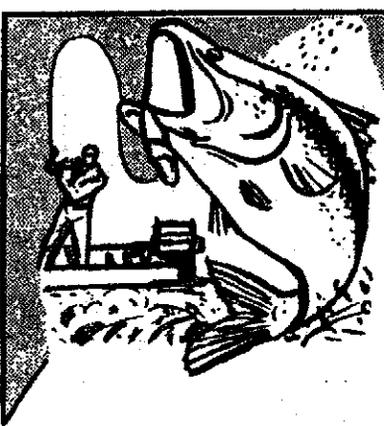
## FISHING SALTON SEA

"The best fishing  
in California"

by Bill Karr

Everything You Need To Know  
About Fishing California's  
Famous Inland Sea

- ✓ Where to fish for each species
- ✓ The best season for each type of fish
- ✓ Detailed map of the sea and its well-known fishing locations
- ✓ Best baits and lures
- ✓ Fishing methods and techniques used for filling the freezer or catching a trophy
- ✓ Tips from the experts - "Lucky" Pugh, "Sunshine" George, "Bushbuck" and winter fishing expert Ernie Gow
- ✓ History of fish in Salton Sea
- ✓ Identification chart for fishes of the sea
- ✓ Cooking tips for the fish you catch
- ✓ Where to launch your boat, park your camper, or pitch your tent
- ✓ Full-length story on catching winter corvina, reprinted from **WESTERN OUTDOORS**



# **POOR RICHARDS INC.**

**BY THE SALTON SEA  
NORTH SIDE**

**OPEN 365 DAYS 24 HRS.**

**FISHING & HUNTING LICENSES**

**Complete Line of Camping Supplies Available**

## **FISHING BAITs**

- Live & Frozen
- Mudsuckers
- Night Crawlers
- Mackerel

## **FISHING TACKLE**

- Rods
- Reels
- Hooks
- Lines

**396-2157**

**396-2180**



**93-243 HWY. 111, MECCA**

Published by  
**KARR ENTERPRISES**

P.O. Box 3062  
North Shore, California 92254

Printed by

**DESERT PRINTING CO., INC.**  
81-600 Industrial Place  
Indio, California 92201

COPYRIGHT APPLIED FOR  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED - FIRST PRINTING  
1985

☐ PHOTOGRAPHS BY BILL AND MARILYN KARR

**CAST IT, JIG  
IT, TROLL IT,  
DRIFT IT,  
SWIM IT-----  
you can't do any-  
thing wrong with**



**SHAD**

**Kalin Co.**

P.O. Box 1234 (619) 344-2550 Brawley, CA 92227

## CONTENTS

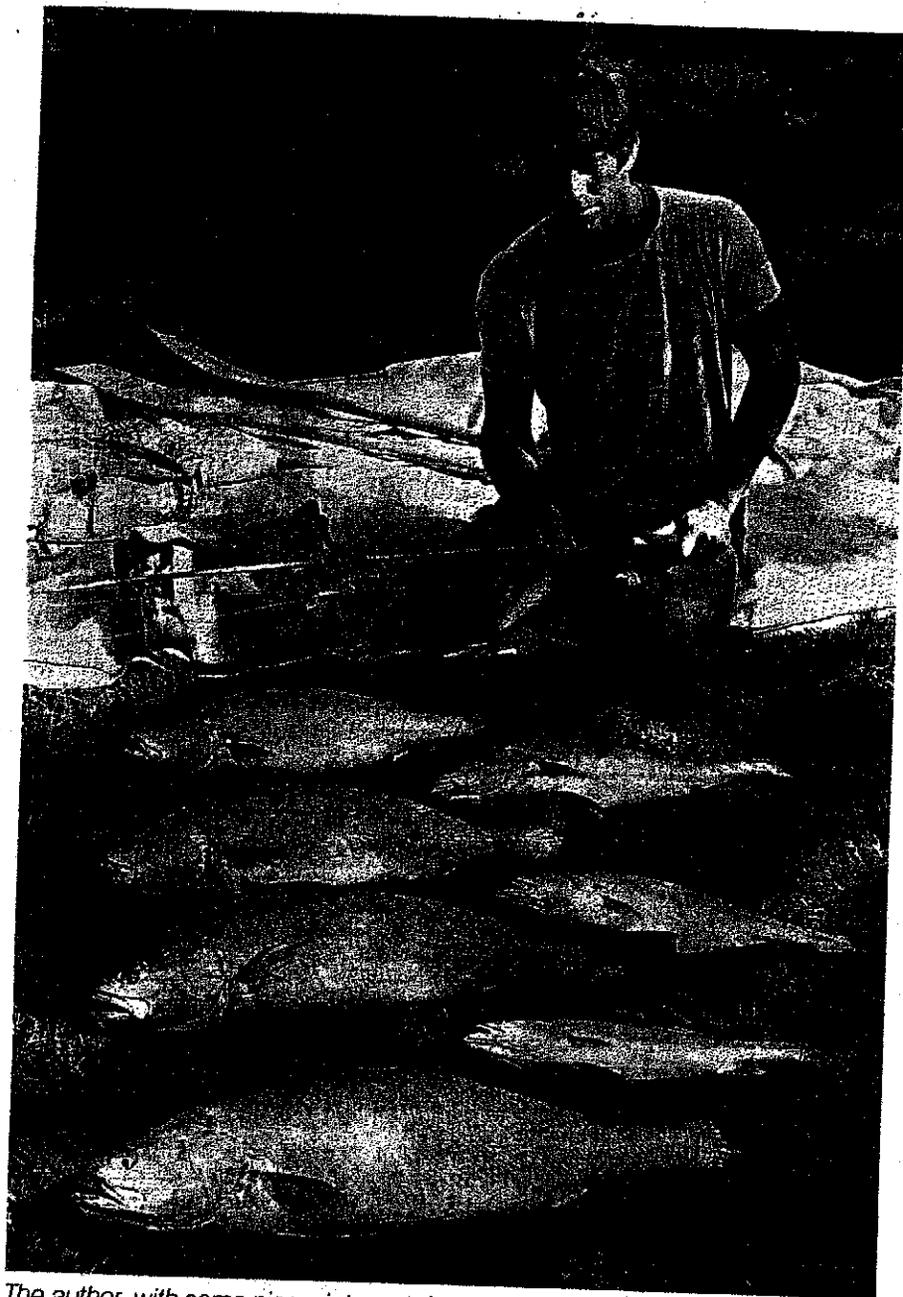
<input type="checkbox"/> Cover .....	i
<input type="checkbox"/> Author .....	ii
<input type="checkbox"/> Dedication .....	iii
<input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledgements .....	iv
<input type="checkbox"/> History of Fish in Salton Sea .....	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Present Fish in Salton Sea .....	9
★ <i>Orangemouth Corvina</i> .....	9
★ <i>Gulf Croaker</i> .....	9
★ <i>Sargo</i> .....	10
★ <i>Tilapia</i> .....	10
<input type="checkbox"/> CHAPTER 1 – CORVINA – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW .....	12
★ <i>Trolling</i> .....	15
★ <i>Casting</i> .....	16
★ <i>Jigging</i> .....	16
★ <i>Live Bait</i> .....	21
★ <i>Cooking Note</i> .....	22
<input type="checkbox"/> CHAPTER 2 – CROAKER – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW .....	24
★ <i>Cooking Note</i> .....	24
<input type="checkbox"/> CHAPTER 3 – SARGO – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW .....	26
★ <i>Cooking Note</i> .....	26
<input type="checkbox"/> CHAPTER 4 – TILAPIA – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW .....	28
★ <i>Cooking Note</i> .....	31
<input type="checkbox"/> CHAPTER 5 – TO CATCH A FISH – <u>ANY</u> FISH .....	32
<input type="checkbox"/> CHAPTER 6 – TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS .....	36
★ <i>Captain "Lucky" Pugh</i> .....	36
★ <i>Ernie Gow</i> (winter corvina) .....	38
★ <i>Ken "Bushbuck" Frederick</i> .....	40
★ <i>"Sunshine" George</i> .....	40
<input type="checkbox"/> SPECIAL REPORT – <i>A full-length story by Bill Karr</i> .....	42
"IN SEARCH OF SALTON SEA CORVINA"	
<input type="checkbox"/> CHAPTER 7 – WHERE TO LAUNCH, CAMP, BUY BAIT AND TACKLE, ETC. ....	48
<input type="checkbox"/> Fish Identification Table .....	6
<input type="checkbox"/> Map of Salton Sea .....	CENTER SPREAD

**C**OVER. The cover is a sunset photo taken from the top of Red Hill in the south end of Salton Sea. This is the beginning of each year's fishing at Salton Sea, and the first corvina of each season are taken in the Red Hill area. This was a little-known secret until the author wrote a story entitled "In Search of Salton Sea Corvina" for **WESTERN OUTDOORS** magazine in August of 1983. In that story, long-time Salton Sea angler Ernie Gow of Calipatria first made public the fact that corvina *could*, indeed, be caught in the winter months.

**INSET. TOP RIGHT** - Captain "Lucky" Pugh with the author's son, Zach, after a successful day's angling out of the "keys" on the West side. It was during this trip that "Lucky" showed the author that fish could be caught under even the most adverse conditions.

**INSET. CENTER LEFT** - Sargo, Sargo, Sargo. Excellent-eating fish, these fish are available to even the laziest angler, and in quantities that can fill a freezer. J.M. "Tex" Ritter, Chief Ranger at Salton Sea State Park for many years, showed the author the secret to these barred beauties.

**INSET. BOTTOM RIGHT** - Tom Asaro of Palm Springs lands a winter corvina that weighed in at just under 19 pounds. The fish fell to a cast thinfish in the shallow backbays around Red Hill. The author's son, Zach, watches on.



The author, with some nice winter corvina, caught in the bay at Red Hill Marina. He was fishing alone from a rubber raft in the late afternoon, and the fish were all taken on a small shad Thinfish lure. Silence was the key, and paddling the rubber raft allowed the author to get within easy casting distance of the foraging schools of big fish.

# Joe's Salton Sea Service



## CHARTER BOATS

☆FISH THE SALTON SEA WITH REBEL JOB☆

Reasonable • Individual  
Group & Family Rates  
Tackle & Lures Furnished

Live Bait Available

10% DISCOUNT WITH THIS AD ON YOUR FIRST TRIP

(619) 395-5806

498 Scott Drive • Desert Shores

# HOPKINS®

## STAINLESS STEEL CORVINA JIGS



Acclaimed an outstanding lure for Largemouth and Stripers, the 3/4 oz. SHORTY® 75 is a deadly jig for Corvina too. Mrs. Terri Ordonez caught this trophy sized 32 lb. 4 oz. fish jigging the 75 in the Salton Sea off Desert Shores. The lure is available in polished stainless (75) or gold plated stainless steel (75G). Other Hopkins® Lures from 1/8 oz. to 6 oz.



ASK YOUR DEALER  
FREE COLOR CATALOG

1130 Bolssevain Ave.,  
Norfolk, VA 23507



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**B**ill Karr first came to my attention in late 1982 when a manuscript reached my office "over the transom" from an unknown author. Of course, magazine editors are bombarded with unsolicited articles from new writers. Nearly all are unreadable, and most hardly rate the cost of postage for their return.

This story, though, caught my interest immediately. The writer had captured a spirit of adventure, a sense of "being there," that thrust the reader into the narrative from beginning to end. The author obviously possessed the kind of talent every editor dreams of discovering – a mastery of a subject and an ability to communicate action and excitement in words. I had to learn more about this person, Bill Karr.

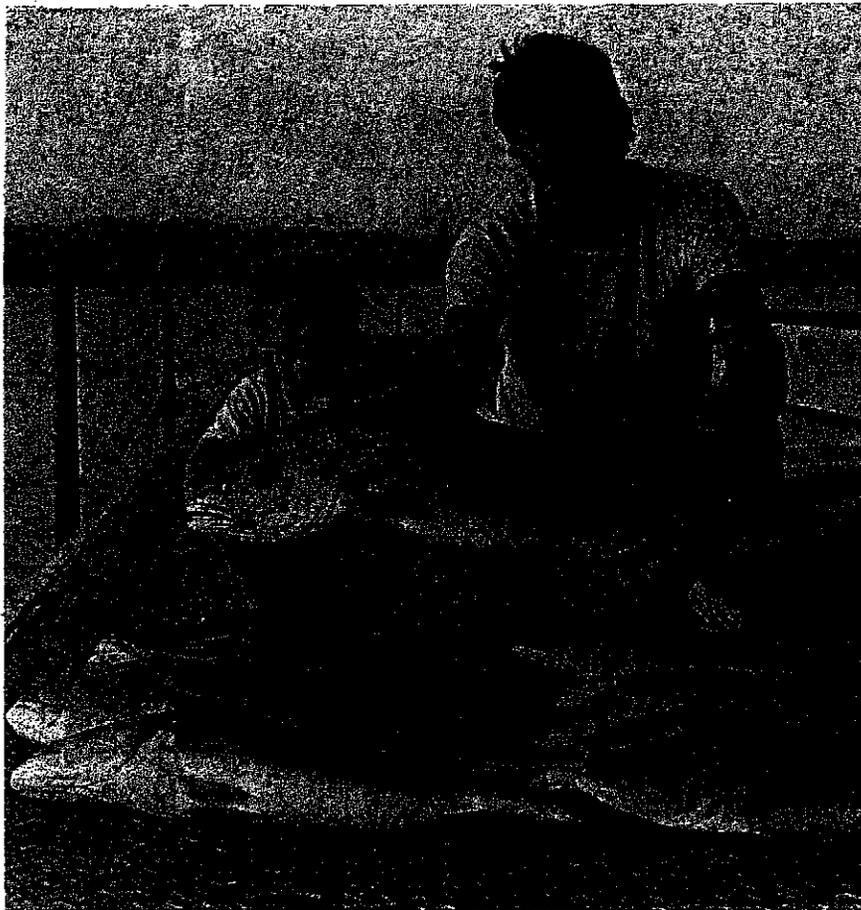
At the time, Bill and his wife, Marilyn, were managing a marina in Flaming Gorge Reservoir, on the Utah/Wyoming border. Through letters and telephone calls, Bill and Marilyn and I became closely acquainted, then friends. Subsequently, his story appeared in the February 1983 issue of **WESTERN OUTDOORS** magazine under the title, "Flaming Gorge: Are the Monster Browns Returning?" The title, however, did little justice to the excitement Bill generated in his narration of the capture of a new Wyoming state record German Brown trout.

Bill and his family, including son Zach, soon returned to his first fishing love, the Salton Sea, near where he grew up in Palm Springs. As it turned out, he actually was not an unknown talent, having already published articles and photos in other magazines, the **SALT LAKE TRIBUNE** (he was correspondent for Daggett County, Utah), and outdoors columns in the Vernal, Utah **EXPRESS** and Indio, California **DAILY NEWS**. Still I believed Bill was a true **WESTERN OUTDOORS** discovery, and in 1983 alone we presented three of his major articles – including "In Search of Salton Sea Corvina".

Since then, Bill Karr's byline has been featured in **WESTERN OUTDOORS** and its sister publication, **WESTERN OUTDOOR NEWS**. Those we turn down we regret, because they are grabbed by competitive outdoors magazines such as **OUTDOOR LIFE**. In our estimation, Bill is an adventuresome sportsman/writer with a rare ability to communicate in words with fellow sportsmen.

The Karr family now lives in a spacious home with a panoramic view of the Sea that Bill loves and knows so well. From there, he has written this book about the Sea and its fishes, the corvina, croaker, tilapia, and sargo, that draw numbers of anglers to California's vast and often beautiful inland "ocean." That same spirit of adventure and excitement which first attracted us to the writings of Bill Karr are within its pages. May you find it, also.

Jack Brown, Managing Editor  
**WESTERN OUTDOORS** magazine



*The author and son Zach with some fine winter corvina taken in the Red Hill area under the guidance of winter fishing expert Ernie Gow. This photo was taken at the Red Hill Marina boat ramp. Many smaller fish were taken, but Ernie doesn't like to keep anything under ten pounds, so the rest were released unharmed.*

## **Dedication**

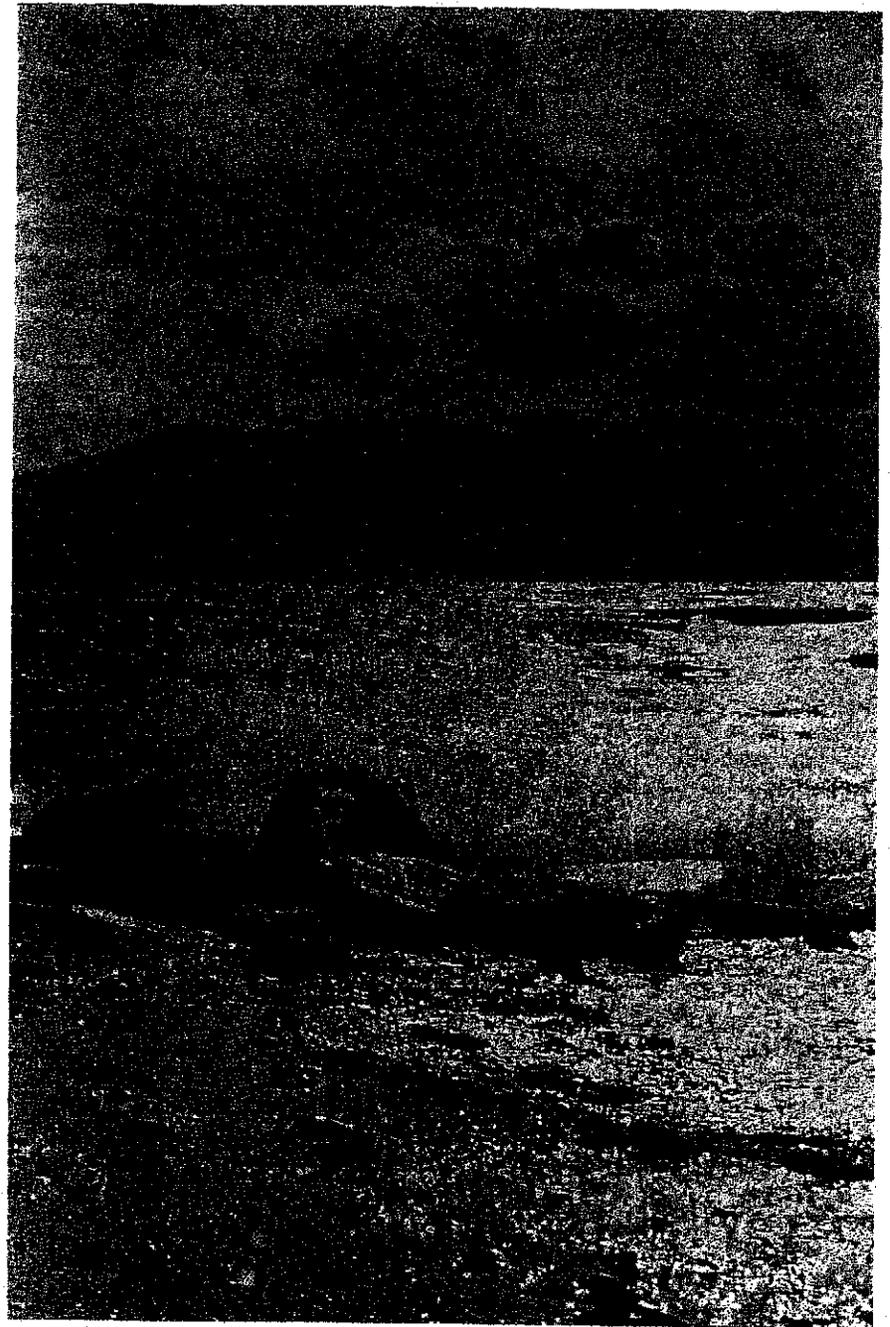
**T**his book is dedicated to the memory of my Grandfathers: The Reverend Lester P. Sund and Harrison M. Karr. They both loved the desert and Salton Sea... and their memories live on in each of us who knew them.

## acknowledgements

**T**HANKS TO ALL WHO ASSISTED in this book, including those fishermen who shared their secrets of the sea, along with the Department of Fish and Game Biologists, especially Glenn Black.

But especially thanks to my wife, Marilyn, and son Zach, who had to put up with me while putting the finishing touches on the book.

And a special thanks to my Mother and Father, Norman and Geneva Karr, for their backing in this first official "Karr Enterprise" production.



*Salton Sea experiencing one of it's moods as a storm front moves across the valley. Waves crash on the shoreline and rock jetties, and wise fishermen have long since headed for shore.*

# HISTORY OF FISH in SALTON SEA

During the past few million years Salton Sink has been flooded with fresh water, salt water and water much more saline than the ocean... but there have always been fish.

Originally, when the sink was a portion of the Sea of Cortez, there were corvina; totuava, yellowtail and other warm water species of the Baja, including the giant Finback whale of the Midriff.

Back then the course of the mighty Colorado River changed frequently as sediment settled in some areas while banks were eaten away in others, allowing the course of the river to change. After many hundreds of thousands of years of flowing into the Sea of Cortez the Colorado River sediment eventually built up a land bridge between what is now known as Salton Sea and the town of San Felipe in Mexico.

The Colorado River continued flowing into the basin created by the land bridge, filling Salton Sink and introducing freshwater species of fish such as suckers, mullet, catfish, crappie, bluegill and even trout. The water area reached 40 feet above the level of the world's oceans and covered many thousands of square miles, sparkling and glittering in a humid, hazy environment.

Then the Colorado River changed courses once again and began flowing into the Sea of Cortez. The body of water left behind was the ancient Lake Cahuilla.

Fish survived in the huge body of water throughout most of the next few hundred years, but without input by the Colorado River the water began evaporating, and eventually almost the entire lake dried up in the hot desert sun,

leaving only a few small bodies of water. Fish still survived in the form of the hardy but now endangered desert pupfish.

Lake Cahuilla was so large it was affected by tides, and Indians of the region trapped fish by means of forming rock enclosures during low tide. When the tide came back up, fish would enter the basin in search of food, and as the tide receded the fish couldn't escape over the lip of the basin, and they were left high and dry, ready to be picked up by the Indians camped nearby. These "fish-traps" can still be found around the Imperial and Coachella Valley foothills, primarily along the southern edge.

As civilization approached and the need for water increased, the Colorado River was channeled and directed so that its seasonal wanderings were more contained. But then, in 1904, one of the retaining dikes broke through, and waters of the Colorado once again flowed into the valley.

Some people have erroneously referred to Salton Sea as a man-made "lake" when in actuality the reflooding was simply a reoccurrence of what had been going on for thousands of years.

For more than two years the flood waters poured back into the Salton Sink, once again refilling the sea bed of the once immense Lake Cahuilla, but to a smaller extent. The depth of the new lake reached 85-feet before the waters were redirected into another channel that led the waters to the Baja, leaving the lake behind. It is now known as Salton Sea.

Salton Sea lies in a sink that is 278 feet below sea level, and the present body of water has 110 miles of shoreline. The length is 36 miles, while the width varies from nine miles to 14 miles.



*Far from being a "dead and dying" sea, more than three hundred species of birds, including some rare and endangered species, make their home around Salton Sea. Here, one tree indicates the productivity and attractiveness of Salton Sea, with Great Blue Herons sitting on nests while black Cormorants fill in all remaining available branches.*

The flood waters once again introduced fresh water species of fish, but by 1929 the salinity of the sea had increased so that only the razorback sucker and striped mullet remained. The mullet provided a limited sport fishery and some were taken commercially. Mullet Island was the base for one of the commercial mullet canneries, and the foundations of the cannery can be seen to this day.

The commercial mullet fishery disappeared, but as recently as 20 years ago mullet were still in the sea. I remember hanging over the railing of the New River bridge, watching the spectacular sight of thousands of huge mullet jumping out of the water while heading up the New River. And sometimes, while hunting ducks in the shal-

lows around Benson's landing, large fish would run into my legs, almost tripping me. To this day I'm not certain whether they were mullet or large corvina.

It is believed the mullet never actually reproduced in the sea, and that they entered continually from the Colorado River via the irrigation canals. Unfortunately, when Morales dam was built it effectively blocked the entry of mullet into the Imperial Valley and Salton Sea, and none have been seen for years.

Between the years of 1951 and 1956 35 different species of fish were planted in the sea, but only three were able to survive; the sargo, croaker and corvina. Interestingly enough, no fish have been purposely planted since



*Salton Sea is not only the best fishing in California, it is also one of the best places to kick back and relax, away from the smog and city life – complete with beautiful sunrises and sunsets. And even more, there is ample space for scuffling your feet in the sand and stretching your arms without hitting someone. And it's only three hours from downtown Los Angeles.*

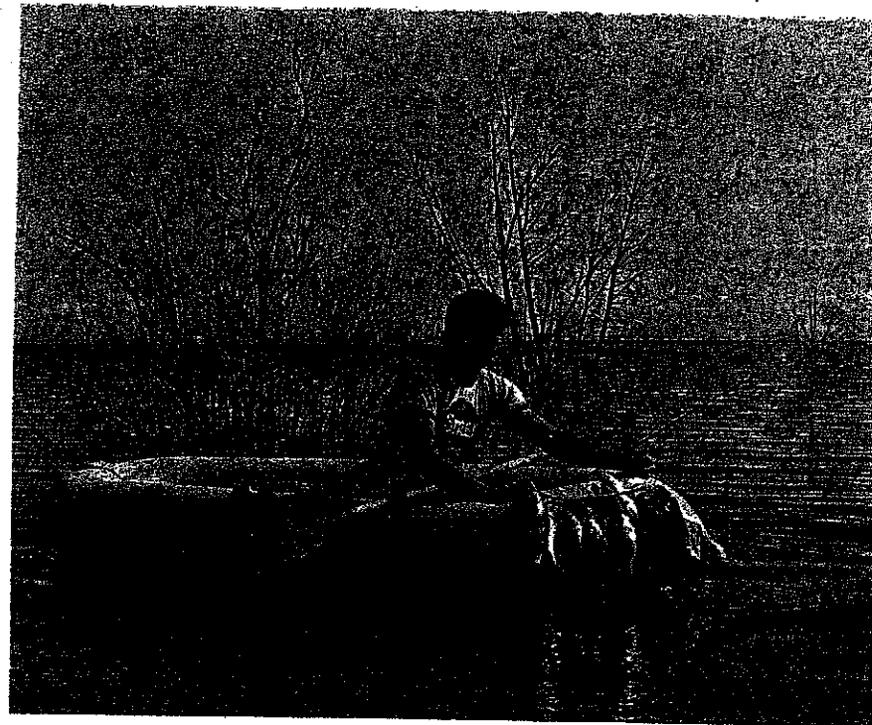
1956, and the millions of fish in the sea are descendants of the initial planting of only 65 sargo, 67 croaker and fewer than 200 corvina. And, of course, the African Intruder, the tilapia.

Results from the initial plant were not immediate, and many biologists and observers believed the transplant had been a failure, but by 1957 some corvina were being caught by anglers, and not many years later everyone was catching fish. The once barren waters began to thrive.

Pile worms and barnacles were introduced from the pontoons of Navy sea planes, and the warm waters proved a perfect home for all the transplanted species of sea life. Reproduction was rampant.

The sea is more saline than the ocean and all species of fish could not adapt. Even so, the orangemouth corvina, gulf croaker and sargo proved themselves not only able to survive, but to thrive. These species have provided anglers with unsurpassed sport for many years, and corvina continue to grow larger. Presently, corvina fishing is better than any time in the past, and improving.

The next, and most recent, fish to gain a foothold in the sea was by accident. The African tilapia (meaning "fish") was introduced to irrigation ditches and canals to control algae and aquatic growth, as 70% of their diet consists of vegetation. Surprisingly enough, the tilapia had a tremendous



*You don't necessarily need a power boat to catch fish at Salton Sea. A rubber raft served the author quite well while fishing off Mecca Street at the Sunken Motel near North Shore. These tilapia and sargo and croaker were all caught around the trees using corn and chunks of nightcrawlers.*

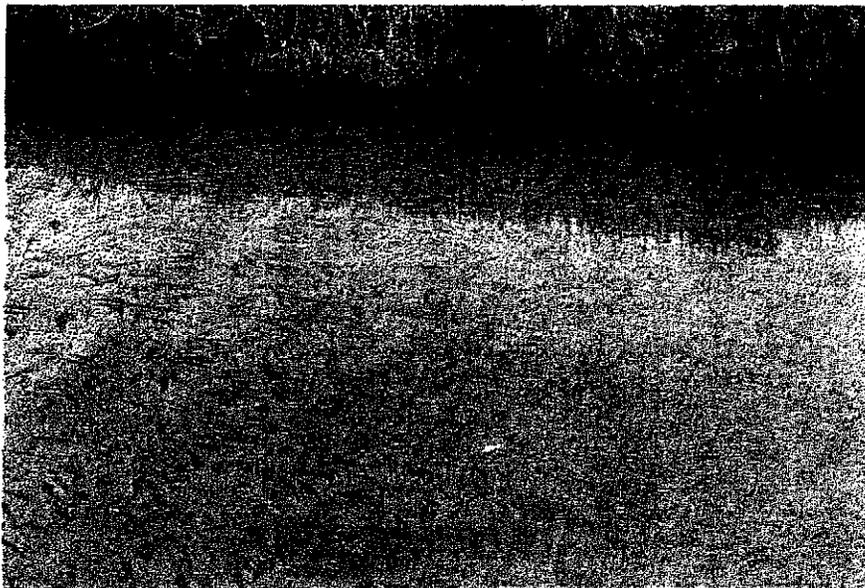
adaptability, and it wasn't long before they worked their way into the drains around the sea, and then into the sea itself.

The tilapia is now believed to be the most abundant sportfish in the sea.

Many people feared the tilapia would feed on other fish and eggs and affect the population of the established species, but over the years the other species have held their own. There has been no noticeable affect at all on the sargo or croaker populations, and the affect on corvina has been favorable. Big corvina are even more common than in years past, and a limit of nine corvina will probably have at least one fish over ten pounds and many limits have a total weight of more than 100

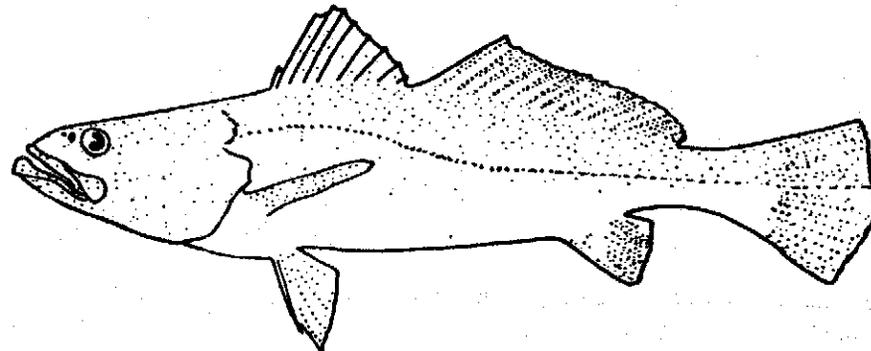
pounds.

In a 1983 survey of fishermen by the California Department of Fish and Game, Salton Sea was found to have the best fishing in the State of California, with an average of more fish per angler than any other body of water in the state. To establish the total number of fish in the sea would be impossible, but anglers catch between three- and six-million fish per year. □

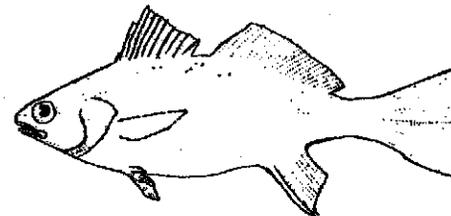


Thousands and thousands of tilapia Zillii live in the ditches that enter the sea. The water is brackish, but less saline than the sea itself and tilapia live and breed freely. Many anglers fill buckets with these fine eating fish.

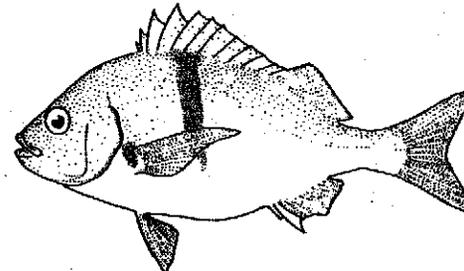
## ORANGEMOUTH CORVINA



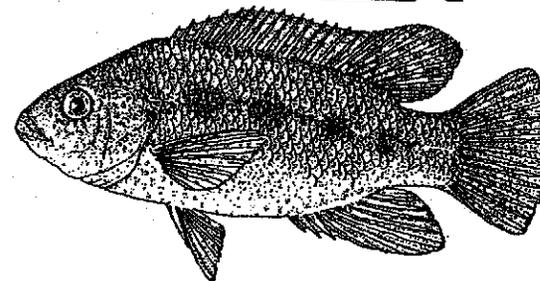
## GULF CROAKER



## SARGO

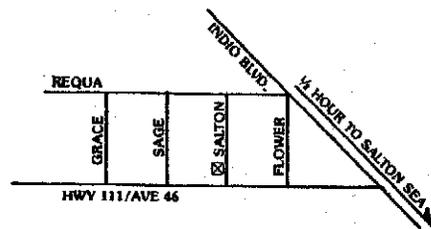


## TILAPIA MOZAMBIQUE



# C·B· VALLEY Communications

Sales & Service



45-861 Salton Street • Indio, CA  
(619) 347-7747

**AUTO ☆ MARINE**

Alarms • CBs • Stereo & VHF Radio & Tapes

• Custom Installations •

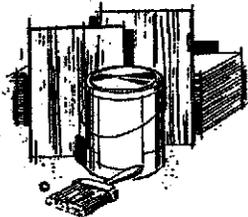
Warranted Sales • Warranted Service

**"SOUNDS TO SATISFY"**

# Bud & Jean Hefferon

## BUILDING MATERIALS

CARPET  
LUMBER  
PAINT



150 Scott Drive, Desert Shores, California 92274

Phone (619) 395-5774

## SKIP'S

Gas...Propane  
Liquor...Beer...Wine  
Groceries...Ice  
Fishing License...Bait  
OPEN MON. THRU FRI.  
6:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.

## GOOD SERVICE

Original Owner  
**FRANK & SHERRY**

98775 Hwy. 111, North Shore

SALTON SEA BEACH

## Helen's Beach House

The Fun Spot of the Salton Sea



FINE FOOD  
Cocktails

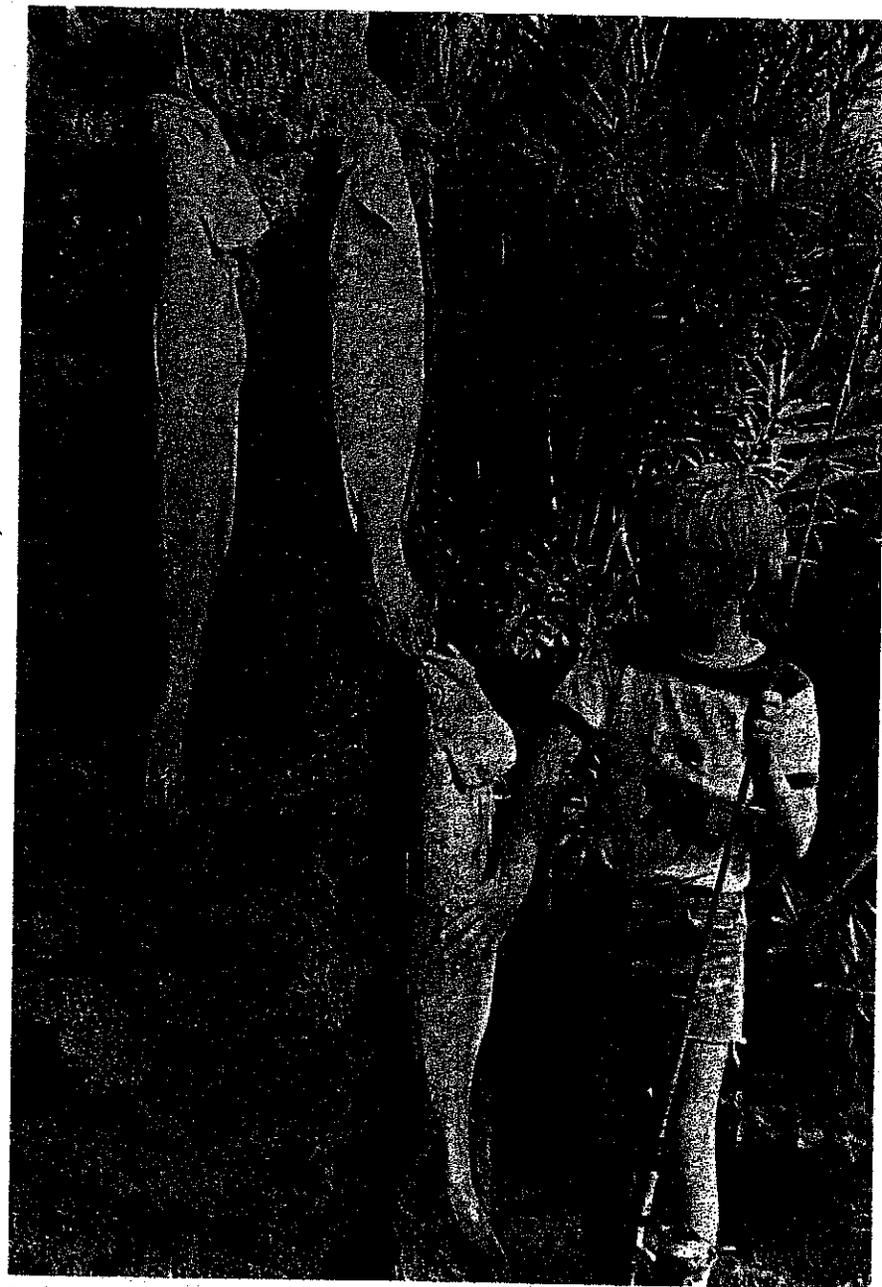
Open 10 a.m. - 2 a.m.

Helen Burns

221 Brawley Ave.  
Salton Sea Beach,  
California 92274



PHONE (619) 395-5638



Even the young can experience fine fishing at Salton Sea. Here the author's son, Zachary, admires his own catch, including an 18-pounder. Not many kids can boast having caught a good fighting sportfish at that young age. In fact, many a mature adult cannot say he or she has caught a fish more than ten pounds. Salton Sea can rectify that, however.

# Present Fish OF SALTON SEA

There are four species of fish in Salton Sea of interest to the angler, and all four are excellent-eating. The corvina is the largest of the gamefish and has a limit of nine per day, while the croaker, sargo and tilapia have no limits.

Corvina and croaker are both bullet-shaped fish, while sargo and tilapia are shaped like pan fish.

There are no seasons set by law at the sea, but certain times of the year are better for one species or another, and the weather can sometimes stimulate a bite from a species that is seldom caught during that time of year. In other words, the Salton Sea is every bit as hard to figure out as any other body of water and the fish that live within it are every bit as difficult to catch as any other species, but there is *always* good fishing somewhere around the sea for one species or another, regardless of the time of year. And when an angler gets into the fish, he can load the boat.

**ORANGEMOUTH CORVINA** – Orangemouth corvina are the largest fish in the sea, and the only fish with a limit – nine per day. There is no size limit on corvina, but most fishermen return any fish under three pounds, and many return any fish under 10 pounds. If handled carefully, the chance of survival for a released fish is good.

The average size of corvina caught at the sea is four pounds, according to Fish and Game angler interviews, but many limits weigh more than 100 pounds, and most fishermen who have fished the sea very often have caught a fish over 15 pounds. Hundreds of fish over 20 pounds are caught every year, and almost yearly

one or two over 30 pounds are weighed in. The current record corvina is 36½ pounds.

As the name implies, corvina have an orange mouth, and the tail area is heavily tinged with yellow. Larger corvina have a yellow tinge around their gill plates, sometimes even extending below their belly.

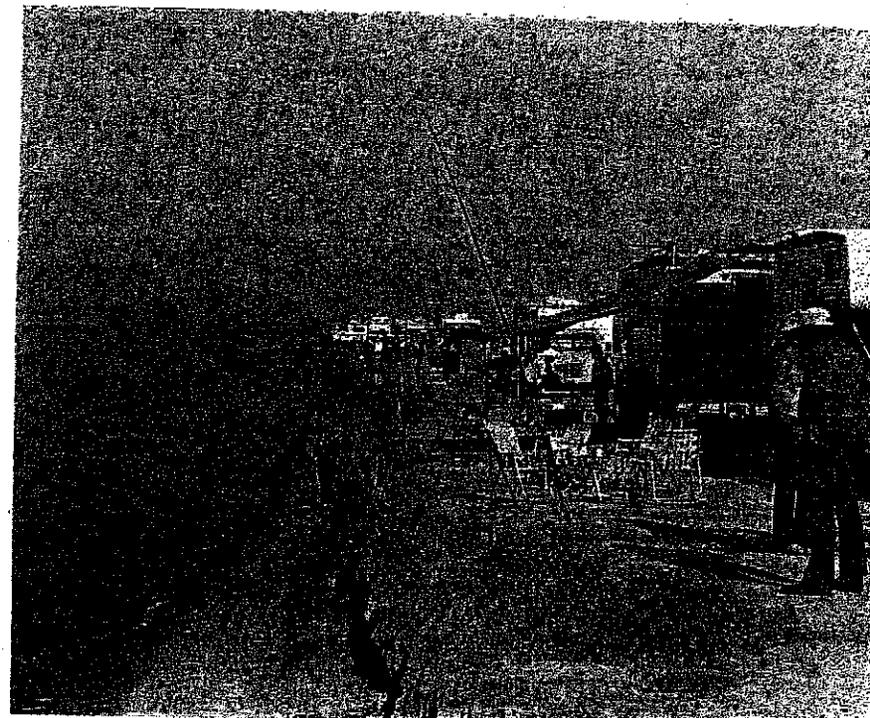
Corvina have a mouth armed with vicious, needle-sharp teeth, and they feed voraciously on croaker and tilapia. They are a prime gamefish and a close cousin to the white sea bass.

**GULF CROAKER** – (*Bairdiella*) Originally this small fish was the primary food source of the corvina, but now the rapidly expanding tilapia population has provided an equally important part of their diet.

The shape, fin structure, and color of the croaker is similar to the corvina, although it is a much smaller fish, seldom extending 15 inches in length and averaging ½ pound. One means of telling the two apart is by the needle-like front teeth in small corvina that are not present in croaker.

Croaker are very prevalent during the summer months, providing unending action for the angler. Strangely enough, during winter months anglers rarely see a croaker, and catching one during the colder months is an unlikely event.

As huge schools of croaker move through the sea they feed on almost anything, and can be caught on small lures, live bait, spoons, jigs, worms, shrimp, cut bait and sometimes even corn.



*Part of the fun – and part of the problem. Some of these anglers were probably fishing two hundred feet further out the previous year, but rising water at Salton Sea has caused some problems. Rapidly dropping water will also cause some problems, including the possible death of all fish. Increased public awareness is demanding action to save Salton Sea – the best fishing in California. This picture is taken at Corvina Beach, a popular camping spot for weekend fishermen.*

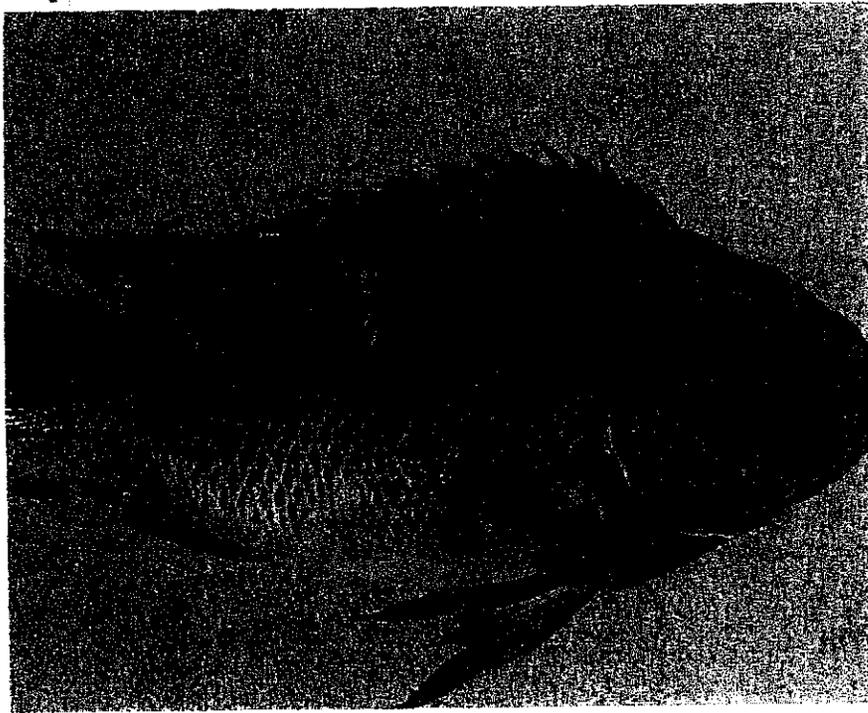
**SARGO** – This fish is of pan fish shape and ranges from ½ to 2½ pounds with an average weight of ¾ of a pound. These are very scrappy fish, and an angler armed with an ultralight rod and reel can have loads of fun when he finds a sargo hangout.

Sargo live primarily around underwater structures such as sunken buildings, trees or jetties, and they feed mostly on barnacles. The best bait for sargo is canned corn.

Sargo are easily recognizable by the strong spines on their dorsal and anal fins and by the black bar extending down the middle of their body. They rarely exceed 15 inches in length.

**TILAPIA** – This pan fish came from Africa and can survive in both fresh and salt water. It's primary enemies are temperature fluctuations and as with other species in the sea, lack of oxygen in the water. There are so many tilapia in the sea currently, and they are so susceptible to cold water temperatures, that when there is a die-off, many thousands of tilapia die before the other species of fish are affected.

"Tilapia" means "fish" in Mozambique, and there are two species introduced to the Coachella Valley that eventually found their way into Salton Sea. The tilapia Zillii (redbelly tilapia) and the tilapia Mozambique were those two



*Tilapia Mozambique. These fish have tall dorsal fins that extend well down their back, and the long lower fins are a characteristic of tropical fish species. The tilapia is, in fact, a tropical fish typically found in aquariums. They were originally imported from Africa for the control of algae in irrigation ditches and canals.*

species. The Zillii has not been found in the sea itself for the past three or four years, and they survive primarily in the irrigation ditches along the sea. The primary difference between the two is that the Mozambique is a mouth breeder and the Zillii is a nest breeder.

The most visible difference is in the Mozambique male, which attains bright red colors in its fins, gill plates and lower jaw during the mating season. The Mozambique also has a large undershot jaw that is used for carrying eggs.

Tilapia can mate at the age of 60 days and every 30 days thereafter in ideal conditions, hence, they are a very prolific fish.

It is now believed that several species of tilapia have interbred and

the present fish being caught are not clearly recognizable as any one species.

Due to the breeding rate of the tilapia it may have overtaken the gulf croaker in abundance at the sea, and it is now believed to be the most prolific fish in the sea.

Tilapia average one pound apiece, and fish over two pounds are very common. The tilapia is still gaining in size, and they have been caught up to four pounds. □

## CHAPTER ONE

# CORVINA

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The king of the sea, corvina, are tremendous fighters and attain weights in excess of 20 pounds, frequently – and 30 pounds, occasionally. The sea record is now 36½ pounds, and a few fish over 30 pounds are caught every year.

Corvina are a schooling fish and they feed primarily on live bait fish. In Salton Sea, the mainstay of the corvina's diet is made up of gulf croaker and tilapia. It will serve the corvina fisherman well to keep those two fish, and their shapes in mind when fishing for corvina.

Artificial lures have always been the primary weapon in the Salton Sea anglers arsenal for corvina, and they hold a tried-and-true place for catching corvina. As strange as it may seem, there are certain times of the year when live bait won't catch a fish, but a trolled Thinfins or jigged Hopkins spoon will result in limits. This usually occurs in the early spring and the late fall when fish are scattered or in deep water due to cooler water temperatures.

Lures that belong in your Salton Sea box are sinking Thinfins in small, medium and large sizes, Hopkins spoons, Kastmaster spoons and Luncker Lures or other rubber-bodied lead-head jigs. Other lures such as silver-colored Rapalas and Rebels, diving rattler lures, Spoonplugs and various spoons are productive. But the heavy silver or gold jigging spoon, Thinfins and Luncker Lures are the most commonly used lures and have been proven effective over the years.

During hot summer months the shore angler has almost the same opportunities for catching corvina as a boat

fisherman, but he should be ready to pick up and leave a spot if the fishing is not productive.

For example, it may be that Corvina Beach has proper water color and is producing fast limits of corvina while just down the shore at Mecca Beach there may be an algae bloom that has shut the bite off. A prime rule at the sea, no matter what you are fishing for, is **don't spend too long with one unproductive bait or area.** Far too many people come to the sea, set up camp, cast out their line and stay right there for the whole weekend, whether they catch anything or not.

Summer months mean the corvina can be at any depth of water and anywhere around the sea. Many corvina are caught in water as shallow as three feet, so fishing the shallow shoreline and flooded brush can be productive. An angler should cast a spoon or sinking lure almost parallel to shore and work the casts in a half-circle until almost parallel to the shore on his opposite side. He should vary the speed of retrieve and the depth of the lure's return. The lure should be changed every forty-five minutes or so until a fish is caught, then he should stick with the productive one.

Many corvina fall to bait fishermen during summer months, and the best bait by far is a live bait fish. Live mud-suckers are the most readily available live bait, and they can be purchased at most bait stores in and around the sea. I use a dip net to catch small tilapia from the drains along the edge of the sea, and these are great bait. Other times I catch small croaker and then re-hook

them with a heavier rig for corvina.

Each of the guides and old-timers that fish the sea have their own methods, techniques and preferences, but anyone who has fished here for long will agree that mudsuckers, tilapia and croaker are excellent bait for corvina.

Things can change from hour-to-hour and day-to-day, so talking to fellow campers, motel managers or locals about current conditions can put an angler on to fish.

For those with a boat, trolling is the way to begin fishing. One angler should use a  $\frac{3}{8}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce Lunker Lure and other anglers should try different color Thinfins. The trolling speed should be varied, and anglers should give action to the lure by pulling the rod forward and then letting it back at different speeds. This action imparts lifelike movement to the lure, but even more, it varies the lure speed in case the corvina want a faster or slower moving "bait". This means of

trolling was covered in a story I did for **OUTDOOR LIFE** entitled "Triggering the Strike Reaction", and the concept of erratic movement in lures does help catch fish.

When there is a hook-up while trolling, **don't leave the area!** Too many people troll until they find the fish and then troll away from them. Once the first fish is netted, turn the boat around and try the same pattern in the same area. If that doesn't work, try casting lures in the area. If there is live bait available, try drifting minnows with a light sliding sinker.

Jigging with a  $\frac{3}{8}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$  or  $\frac{3}{4}$  ounce Hopkins spoon can sometimes have excellent results on corvina. There have been times on Salton Sea when I have anchored in one spot and caught every species of fish on the Hopkins. First I would hook up a big tilapia or sargo, then maybe a croaker, and mixed in here and there I'd bring in a corvina. Hopkins spoon is the only lure I have



Tom Asaro of Palm Springs, one of the author's fishing partners, helped Zachary out with a fish that weighed close to 19 pounds. The author, son Zach, and Tom, all caught numerous fish over ten pounds that day.

## "SunShine" GEORGE

Salton Sea

Fishing Charter  
ALL TACKLE FURNISHED

Private Parties  
Half-Day and

Full-Day Charters  
Fishing for Corvina,  
Tilapia, Sargo, Croaker

CALL CAROL FOR RATES

(619) 734-FISH



"SunShine" George, right, shows off nice corvina caught by client Lance Clairmont of Redlands.

ever used in the sea that could catch every species of fish available.

During warmer months the jig will probably be struck almost continuously by croaker rather than corvina, but don't be discouraged, croaker are an indicator that corvina are close behind.

One long-time Salton Sea fisherman and guide, Ernie Gow, replaces the treble hook on his jigging spoons with a larger treble hook, then, when a croaker gets hooked he puts the fish on a separate live bait rig. The freshly hooked croaker is panicked, and lunging back and forth he puts out frantic vibrations in the water. Large predatory corvina then close in on the underwater vibrations and engulf the croaker. I use this method of fishing every time there are croaker around, and most of the corvina I catch in this manner weigh more

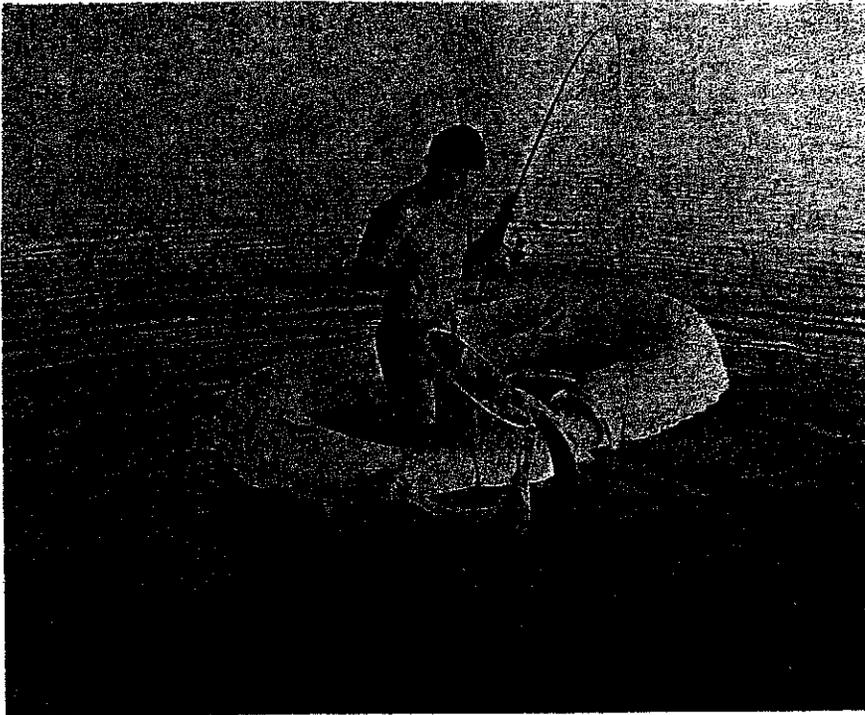
than 12 pounds.

Some of the "bait" croaker weigh more than a pound and run 12 or 14 inches long, so "the bigger the bait, the bigger the fish" is applicable when using croaker for bait for corvina.

If an angler fishes half a day with no results, you can bet he's in the wrong area for existing conditions. If his boat is a car-topper, he should pack it up and head down the shoreline for another area - if he has a high-powered boat, he should head for another spot.

Many anglers head for other boats that are visible in the sea. Rather than dropping anchor and joining them, though, many a seasoned angler will start trolling in the outskirts of the boats. The school may have moved on, as is often the case at the sea.

An angler that keeps trolling



*The author, netting a large corvina. Rubber rafts can be a key to catching big fish in the shallow bays at the south end of Salton Sea. They are certainly quiet and as long as the raft is not taken too far from the shore, they can be safe. Care must be taken around sunken trees – and they are not safe in high winds.*

Thinfin or Lunger Lures, jigging spoons or drifting live bait will eventually find the fish, and then the real fun begins.

The limit on corvina is nine, and an angler may regret having kept smaller fish in the two- to five-pound range when he gets into a school of really big fish later on.

**TROLLING FOR CORVINA** – Many fishermen devote their full fishing experiences at Salton Sea to trolling, and a good percentage of all corvina caught are attributed to this method.

Most anglers at the sea troll Thinfin, and the sinking variety is preferred over the floating model. The average depth of the sea is 13 feet, and sinking Thinfin troll well at that depth.

The productive color of lure varies greatly, and at times a grey lure will outperform all others, while other times the lure must have red, or spots, or silver. It's best to maintain a wide variety of colors in your tackle box.

While trolling, use different colored lures at different distances from the boat. Always long-line one lure, preferably over 100 yards from the boat. In shallow water, under six feet deep, corvina will scatter from a boat motor and return to the area only after the noise has subsided. This is directly contrary to deeper water corvina fishing where it is widely believed running motors, splashing water, and even stomping on the bottom of the boat, actually attracts corvina.

I remember one cold winter day a few years back when Jimmy "Tex"

Ritter, then Chief Ranger at the Salton Sea State Park, and I were fishing at the five-mile hole out of Bombay Beach. I was doing research on winter corvina fishing at that time, and we were jigging in about 30 feet of water. The late Willard Woolen, "Ol' Jigstick" by handle, had gone along with us in his boat – Willard believed in making noise to attract corvina, and he would always leave the motor running and stomp up and down on the boat while jigging. The only fish we got that day was a small one-pounder, and Willard blamed it all on the fact that we weren't noisy enough. It's rumored that "Jigstick" stomped the bottom out of three boats in his day, and I don't doubt it.

While in shallow water though, the noise level in the boat must be kept down, and the trolling lures should be a long distance from the boat. It's also beneficial to maintain a weaving course so that the lures intersect water not disrupted by the boat motor. This is especially important while trolling in shallow bays for winter corvina.

Vary the boat speed between very slow and very fast, maintaining one speed for at least 15 minutes before changing. When the right speed is found, maintain it.

Productive trolling speed in winter will normally prove to be very slow, while in the summer months some anglers troll fast to very fast.

It is always a good idea to give action to the lure by pulling the rod forward and letting it back, this makes the lure spurt forward – and then slow – as real bait fish do. Thinfin, Lunger Lures, Rebels, Rapalas, Spoonplugs, Hopkins and Krocodiles are all frequently used while trolling Salton Sea.

**CASTING FOR CORVINA** – Drifting or electric trolling a boat along brushlines and shore is a preferred fishing method for those casting ar-

tificials. These anglers use bass rods or fairly whippy spinning rods, and line test will go from 8 pound test to 20 pound test. Lures used are primarily Lunger Lures, Thinfin or spoons. Heavier lures will cast further.

Once again, while fishing winter waters, maintain a slow retrieve. A Thinfin should be cast and allowed to settle for only a moment before a slow, jerky retrieve is started. Lunger Lures should be allowed to hit bottom, then lifted up off the bottom, retrieved a few feet, and allowed to settle. Winter corvina often hit softly, and sometimes there will be two distinct strikes felt in rapid succession. When that occurs, an angler *must* wait for the second strike that comes a split second after the first.

Drifting and casting is the best method for winter corvina fishing after fish have been located, since it cuts down on unnecessary noise.

**JIGGING FOR CORVINA** – The only time jigging doesn't work very well is when an angler is fishing in water shallower than five feet, mainly because lures are constantly being pulled out of the water and back into the faces of those doing the jigging.

Otherwise, jigging has probably accounted for more corvina taken from Salton Sea than any other method. It's not always the best fishing bet, but once the fish have been located, and if they are feeding heavily, jigging can't be beat.

The most commonly used lure for jigging is the Hopkins spoon, and the best weight is the ¾ ounce Shorty. Silver has been the only color available, but a new gold finish spoon will probably outperform the silver, since gold reflects light while silver reflects whatever color water it's in. Logically, in murky water the gold finish would work better.

Most anglers know that jigging requires letting the lure down to the



Croaker are the best bait available for catching really BIG corvina. The problem is in keeping them alive and active – they must be either kept in a live bait tank or transferred to another fishing rig, and they must be very active in order to entice a hungry corvina – but, put an active croaker in front of a hungry corvina and its "FISH ON".

bottom, jerking it up and letting it settle back down to the bottom. There are, though, many variations in manipulating the lure on and around the bottom.

A more effective means of jigging is with a shorter lift of the pole, and many times a "double-strike" action rather than one longer pole sweep is preferred. The reason being that corvina sometimes hit on the downward movement of the jig, and with lots of slack line out the angler won't feel the hit. Many fish that are caught while jigging have actually hooked themselves when they hit the lure while it is settling, and were still on the line when the angler began his next upsweep. The "double-strike" sweep entails a much shorter settle time, then another short jerk is given to the lure before it's allowed to settle all the

way back to the bottom. Many times an angler will hookup on the second jigging motion.

Another way to improve on hook-ups while jigging is to let the rod tip back down more slowly after the upsweep, so there is less slack between the pole and the lure in the event a fish hits on the way down.

Some anglers sweep their rod up as high as possible when jigging, but in almost every case this is an unnecessary action that results in fewer fish than using the "double-strike" method closer to the bottom. It stands to reason that if there is less slack between the rod and the lure, there is less opportunity for a fish to spit the lure before the hook is set.

Besides the Hopkins spoon, some anglers jig with hula-skirted jigs, Lunger

**NOTICE: Salton Sea can be hazardous. High winds can come up rapidly and there are numerous sunken hazards throughout the Sea. Take extreme care while on Salton Sea waters.**

**KEY: C-CORVINA CR-CROAKER S-SARGO T-TILAPIA**

1. Cleveland Street	C/CR	26. National Wildlife Refuge	C/CR/S/T
2. North Shore Marina	C/CR/S/T	CLOSED TO BOATS BUOY line	
3. Sunken Motel	C/CR/S/T	27. Old Ranch (TOPLESS PALM TREE)	C/CR
4. Sneaker Beach	C/CR/T	28. Black-Rock	C/CR/S/T
5. Salton Sea State Recreation Area (MARINA)	C/CR/S/T	29. Steam Well	C/CR/S/T
6. Mecca Beach	C/CR/S/T	30. New River Bay	C/CR/T
7. Corvina Beach	C/CR/S/T	31. New River (SHALLOW)	C/CR/T
8. Salt Creek	C/CR/T	32. Sunken Barge	C/CR/S/T
9. Bob's Playa Riviera (MARINA)	C/CR/S/T	33. Benson's Landing (SUNKEN)	C/CR/S/T
10. Al 'n' Chris RV Park (MARINA)	C/CR/S/T	34. Bessie's Post (5-MILE POST)	C/CR
11. Freeloader Beach	C/CR/S/T	35. Navy Base (CLOSED)	C/CR/S/T
12. Mesquite Beach	C/CR	HAZARDOUS Sunken Structures	
13. Short Hole	C/CR	36. Target	C/CR/S
14. Three Mile Hole	C/CR	37. Blockhouse HAZARDOUS Sunken Posts	C/CR/S/T
15. Bombay Beach (MARINA)	C/CR/S/T	38. Sandy Point HAZARDOUS (SHALLOW)	C/CR/T
16. Brush Line	C/CR	39. The Keys	C/CR/S/T
17. Niland Marina (CLOSED)	C/CR/S/T	40. Yacht Club (CLOSED)	C/CR/S/T
18. Warm Water Fish Hatchery	C/CR	41. Salton City (MARINA)	C/CR/S/T
19. Hog Pens	C/CR	42. The Dome	C/CR/S/T
20. Basketball Court	C/CR	43. Lido Palms	C/CR/S/T
21. Mullet Island	C/CR/S/T	44. Salton Sea Beach (MARINA)	C/CR/S/T
22. Duck Blinds	C/CR/T	45. Desert Shores (MARINA)	C/CR/S/T
23. Alamo River	C/CR/T	46. Rose Garden (AVENUES)	C/CR/T
24. Old Red Hill Marina Jetty	C/CR/S/T	47. The Snag (AVENUES)	C/CR/T
HAZARDOUS Sunken Rocks		48. The Pole Line	C/CR/T
25. Red Hill (MARINA)	C/CR/S/T	49. Whitewater River	C/CR/T
		HAZARDOUS Sunken Rocks	
		50. Johnson Street	C/CR/T



Lures, Sassy Shad, Crocodiles and Kastmaster spoons.

**LIVE BAIT FOR CORVINA** – Bits of plastic and hammered metal catch a good percentage of the Salton Sea's corvina, but in many cases there is nothing like the real thing. And in Salton Sea the real thing is either a mud-sucker, tilapia or croaker.

Mudsuckers are the only live bait available in bait shops around the sea, but tilapia and croaker are available with a little effort.

Most drains entering the sea have schools of small tilapia that can be caught with a hand-held dip net. These tilapia can be kept alive indefinitely in an aerated live bait tank or in a bait bucket with occasional water changes. The Johnson Street drain, between Mecca and Poor Richards on Highway 111 side, is a good place for netting tilapia (*throw nets and gill nets are illegal*).

Croaker must be caught by hook and line, and some anglers use one rig to catch a croaker and then they transfer the bait to another rig for corvina. But the best way to use croaker for bait was shown to me by Ernie Gow of Calipatria (featured in **WESTERN OUTDOORS** magazine, August 1983, "In search of Salton Sea Corvina").

Ernie jigs until he hooks a croaker, at which time he transfers the fish to another rig with a live bait hook and light weight. He then lets the croaker have a little line, keeping just enough pressure on the croaker to keep track of it. The croaker puts out frantic vibrations, attracting corvina. Most corvina caught in this manner go more than 10 pounds and many will be 18 pounds or better. See the chapter "Tips from the Experts" for more information on Ernie's techniques.

The most common set up for live bait fishing is a sliding sinker, split shot and a single live-bait hook. The size of weight will depend on the wind and speed of drift if you are in a boat, as the bait should be kept next to the bottom. The faster the drift, the larger the weight needed.

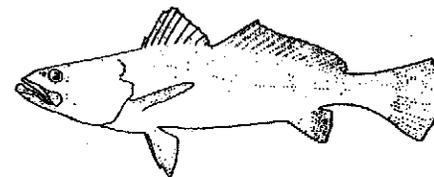
Hook size should vary with the size of bait, and #4 hook is a good hook size for small tilapia and mud-suckers, while a step up to #2's is good for medium sized bait. For larger bait fish, like croaker, a number 2/0 or even as large as 5/0 will be needed. (*Some croaker used for bait weigh in at more than one pound.*) A hook frequently used at Salton Sea – that works wonders when drifting live bait – is the Kahle Horizontal hook from Belle Plaine, Minnesota. Long-time sea fisherman Ken Fredericks, "Bushbuck" by handle, says "I didn't lose more than two fish off the Kahle hook in an entire season of fishing, and that was a lot of fish."

Live bait should be let out until it's a distance from the boat, but still near the bottom, and the boat should be allowed to drift freely. Then close the bail, set the drag for medium and bounce the bait along behind the boat. From shore, the best you can do is cast it out and wait. If you're fishing on a jetty, such as the State Park on the north shore, you may want to try casting out live bait with no weight at all, or with a bobber – once fish are found, the same drift should be repeated.

Mudsuckers are the best when hooked through the lips, while tilapia should be hooked through the lips or just under the forward part of the dorsal fin. Croaker should be hooked through the lips or under the dorsal fin. □

## CORVINA COOKING NOTE

Due to their large size, corvina are generally filleted. The white meat is of excellent texture, with large, white flakes of meat when cooked. The filet's are well-suited to baking – with or without sauces; pan frying; batter frying; or barbecuing while basting with seasoned, melted butter.



# CURT'S

## TRAILER SERVICES INC.

### PARTS & SUPPLIES

CAMPERS - RECREATIONAL VEHICLES

HITCHES INSTALLED -  
TRAILER WIRING  
• INSURANCE ESTIMATES •

- ★ BOAT TRAILER SUPPLIES & REPAIRING ★
- ★ PROPANE ★ FIBERGLASS REPAIR
- ★ BUDDY BEARINGS, HUBS & AXLES ★

MON-FRI 8-5:30 (FRI TILL 4)  
SUNDAY 8-12 (CLOSED SAT)

SINCE  
1972



# 347-6060

45831 SALTON

INDIO



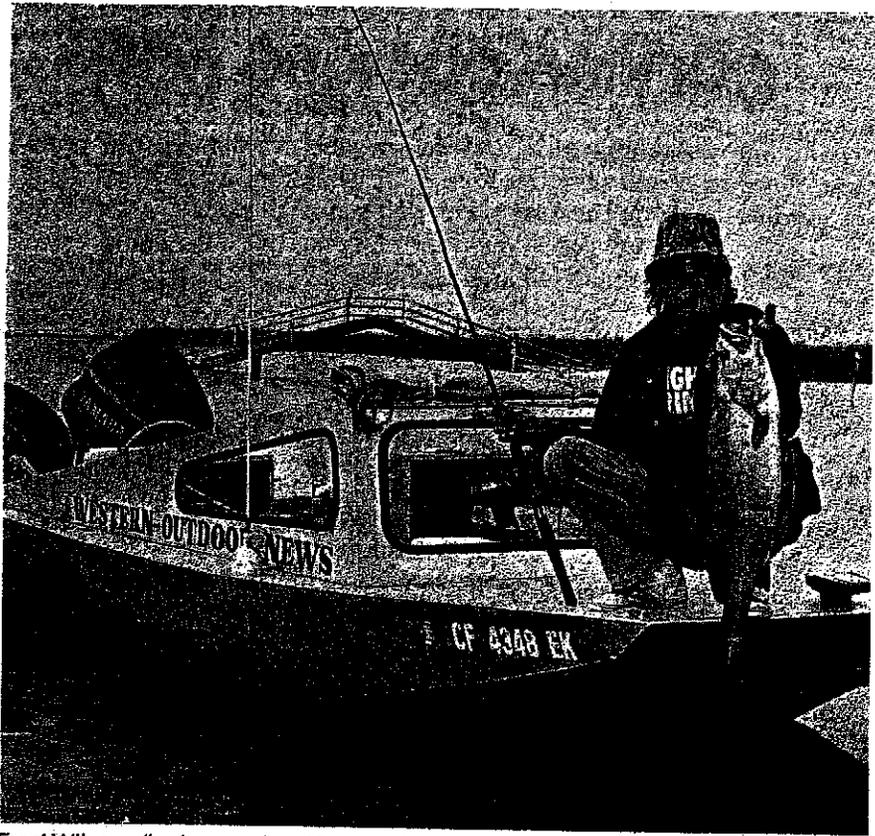
TRAVEL TRAILER



CLASS A MOTOR HOME



MINI-MOTOR HOME



Fred Wilson displays a nice 12 pound corvina caught near the old marina at Red Hill. The bridge and gas pump from the old marina, visible in the background, flooded out a number of years ago. The boat is "Gunrunner," belonging to the author who is a field reporter for **WESTERN OUTDOOR NEWS**.

## CHAPTER TWO

# Croaker

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**A**lso known as Bairdiella, the croaker looks like a miniature corvina, averaging about 10 inches in length and about ½ pound in weight. They travel in large schools throughout the sea.

For sheer numbers of fish, an angler can creel more croaker than any other species of fish in the sea... and probably faster, too.

Croaker feed primarily on live minnows, but when feeding they hit anything that moves and fits into their mouth. Anglers have caught croaker on corn, cut bait, worms, minnows, spoons, spinners, flies, plugs and even bare hooks. The best bait, though, is a live minnow, followed closely by cut bait (*cut up mackerel, anchovies, etc.*) and then worms or nightcrawlers.

A #4 hook is good for croaker, and many anglers use a bottom weight with two or three snelled hooks attached above the weight, so more than one fish can be caught at a time. If there are sargo in the area it's a good idea to use

corn on the bottom hook and worms or cut bait on the other two hooks. This gives the angler a shot at sargo, croaker and tilapia. Corvina, also, can be caught on worms occasionally. Artificial lures will also catch croaker, and a small spoon, jig or spinner will save the trouble of baiting hooks.

Croaker can be caught at all depths. They will sometimes be on the bottom while other times on top, and some schools are so thick it's a mass of croaker from the surface to the bottom. I've seen warm summer evenings where the surface of the sea was still as glass except for the ripple created by thousands of croaker moving along, just under the surface.

These fish can be caught readily almost anywhere around Salton Sea during warm weather, but when winter months arrive and waters cool, the croaker seem to disappear. Seldom, if ever, does anyone catch a croaker in the winter.

There is no limit on croaker. □



## CROAKER COOKING NOTE

Croaker are good-eating, although some people find the number of bones more than they want to contend with for the amount of meat. Croaker can be filleted or gutted and scaled in a normal manner. If cleaning, scale the fish well and cut out the dorsal fins to help eliminate some of the bones. The small fillets make excellent battered fish strips for fish and chips.

# L&N Sporting Goods & Liquor Store

"Sportsmen's Hours"  
7 Days a Week

HUNTING and FISHING      SPORTSWEAR  
GUNS & AMMO              SPORTS LICENSES  
BAIT & TACKLE            HOT & COLD SANDWICHES  
  
ICE COLD BEER

8101 Highway 111, Niland, Calif.

PHONE (619) 348-0674

**El Morocco**  
MOTOR HOTEL

FINE ROOMS  
SUPERB DINING  
COCKTAILS  
Entertainment Nitely

For Reservations Call

El Morocco  
Motor Hotel  
82645 Miles Ave. • Indio, California  
347-2306

## Desert Shores Marina

### CHARTERS

- Tackle
- Gas & Oil
- Tie Ups
- Welding
- Beer
- Soft Drinks
- Snacks

CEMENT LAUNCH RAMP  
Open 6:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

(619) 395-5700

Desert Shores, CA 92274    David Urbanoski

## CHAPTER THREE

# SARGO

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**S**ARGO have a flat, pan fish shape and they hang around underwater structures where they feed on barnacles. They tend to congregate together in suitable habitat areas, although they are not known as a schooling fish.

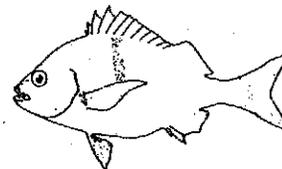
Sargo are tremendous fighters, and an angler armed with an ultralight outfit can have loads of fun catching these excellent-eating fish.

Corn is the most productive bait used for sargo. In years past, it was common practice to chum an area heavily with canned corn to attract the sargo to the area, but recently it was determined that chumming with processed foods (including canned corn) was as illegal in Salton Sea as any other inland body of water. Some anglers have taken to chumming with dried corn, which is not "processed," hence; legal. But whether that helps or not has yet to be proven.

Canned corn remains the best bait for sargo, and a #4 hook is well-suited to this fish. A bottom weight with two snelled #4's attached to the line works well, and corn should be threaded on the bottom hook with worm or cut bait or both on the upper hooks..A half hour's fishing will tell you if you're into sargo, croaker, tilapia or a combination of those fish, and you can adjust your bait to the species you want.

Sargo, as with the croaker and corvina, make a loud croaking noise when brought out of the water. Some fishermen feel the fish should not be kept outside the boat on a stringer or in a wire-mesh basket because the croaking warns other sargo away. On the other hand, some anglers believe the croaking attracts other fish to the area. Try it both ways and go with the method that works best.

There is no limit on sargo.    □



## SARGO COOKING NOTE

Sargo are an excellent-eating fish and they can be either filleted or cleaned. The firm, white fillets make very good fish and chips or batter-fried fillets. These fillets are also very good in ceviche (a Mexican dish where the meat is "cooked" only with lime juice.)

# LCR<sup>TM</sup>

• LIQUID • CRYSTAL • RECORDER •

**Bridges the gap between flashers and charts.**

**FEATURES:**

- Total Automation
- Microcomputer with Total Screen Update
- Zoom with Total Screen Update
- Superior Resolution and Definition
- Automatic Sensitivity Control
- Stop Action
- 4 Depth Ranges with Total Screen Update and Automatic Depth Control
- Forward and Reverse
- Sensory Feedback
- Liquid Crystal Display
- Night Light
- Waterproof, Rugged Design
- Swivel Mount
- Streamlined Dimensions
- High-Speed Operation
- Sensitivity Time Control (STC)
- Automatic Noise Rejection
- Lifetime Guaranteed Service Policy

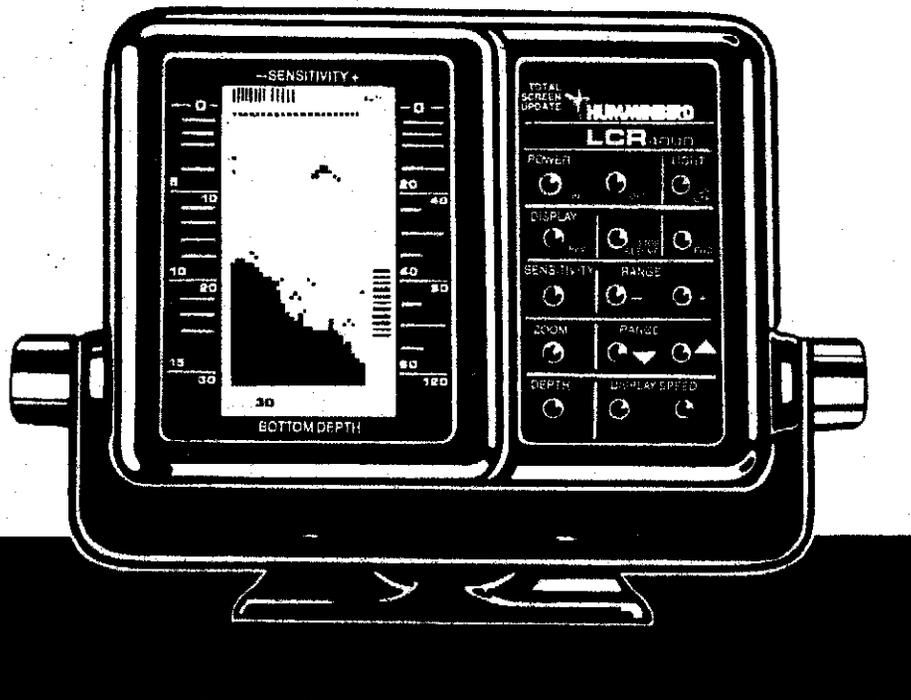
THE ULTIMATE IN FISH-FINDING TECHNOLOGY...

PRICED LIKE A FLASHER!

MADE IN EUFALA, ALABAMA



One Humminbird Lane  
Lake Eufaula - Alabama - 36027  
(205) 687-6613



## CHAPTER FOUR

# Tilapia

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Tilapia are a flat-sided pan fish, and their basic shape is similar to that of the sargo, although their coloration is completely different. The huge mouth of the tilapia, in addition to the darker coloration sets it apart.

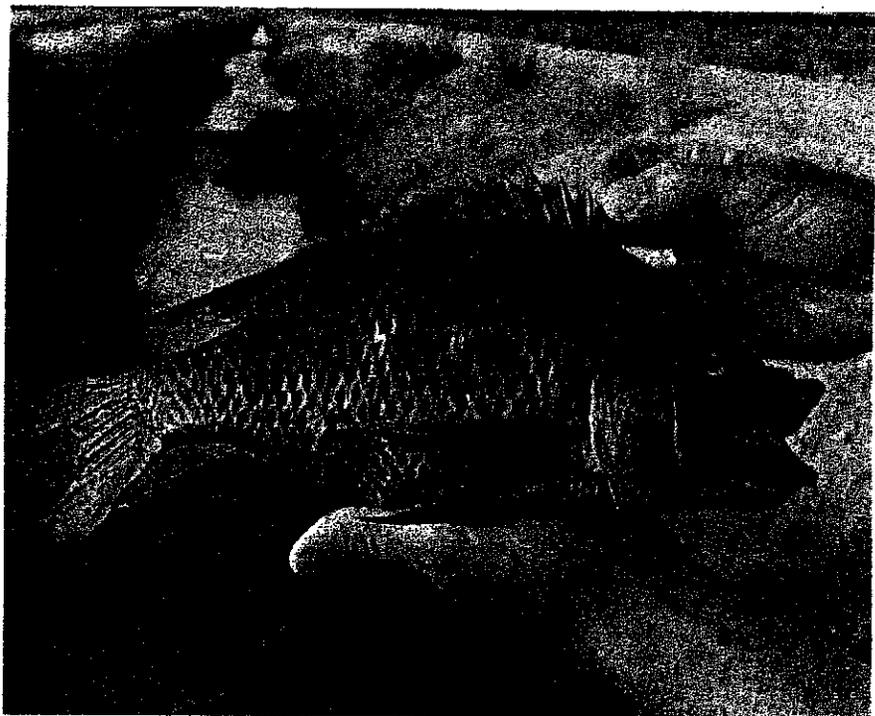
Tilapia feed on about 70% plant matter and 30% animal life, and worms or nightcrawler chunks have been proven to be the best bait for them. Even

so, tilapia have been caught on almost everything ever used in Salton Sea, and catching them on Hopkins spoons or trolled Thinfin's white fishing for corvina is not uncommon.

The most common method of fishing for tilapia is with a bottom weight and two snelled hooks above the weight. Number 4 or 6 worm hooks are good, and a chunk of nightcrawler two



During certain times of the year hordes of fishermen line the drains when they fill with tilapia. The tilapia *Zillii* sometimes are so thick they seem to boil the water, and fishermen come from hundreds of miles around. Unfortunately, cleanliness is not always one of the priorities, and these fishing areas may be closed to public access if fishermen don't pack out what they pack in. It really doesn't take that much more effort.



**Tilapia!!!** This large-mouthed fish was caught in the Johnson Street drain just above Poor Richards on Highway 111 side of the sea. At times of the year an angler can land fifty or more of these a day, providing some fine-eating. They can become skittish though, and an angler will do better if he uses no weight with just the hook and worm – and if he fishes an area of the ditch that is not populated by people – these fish also, are adversely affected by too much noise.

inches long threaded on the hook will catch any size tilapia.

These fish tend to congregate together in any water that is of a suitable temperature, so you may catch one three inches long, or three pounds, the size of the fish can vary with every cast.

Once you locate an area with tilapia the action is constant. They're a good fighting fish in water that is warm enough to keep their metabolism moving, and they'll even put up a fair fight in cold water. During the summer, many an angler has thought he was hooked up with a big corvina, only to find out a big Mozambique male, with bright red fins, has latched on to his lure.

When the water temperature

reaches the upper 70's and tilapia are spawning, the males attain red fins and jaws, and the remainder of their body color is a dark green. Obviously, they are particularly violent at this time. The tilapia can first reproduce at 90 days of age in ideal conditions, and every 60 days thereafter. With that kind of reproduction, it's little wonder there are winter die-offs of hundreds-of-thousands of fish from cold-water temperatures, and yet still plenty of fish remaining for good action the next year.

Tilapia sometimes prefer a moving bait – not a constantly moving lure, necessarily – but in many instances tilapia won't go after a worm until it jiggles, or moves just a bit. Many times I

have been fishing next to 10 or 15 other boats, and the only ones who were catching fish were the ones that were just barely moving their bait.

Sometimes the proper water temperature for the fish is just up off the bottom – or maybe in a stratified layer two or three feet up from the bottom – in which case it's necessary to lift the bait up off the bottom and move it slowly up and down or sideways. If you have too much weight when the tilapia are looking for a suspended, or moving bait, they will spit it out immediately. In many instances the only way you can catch them consistently is with a small split-shot as weight, or none at all. No weight is sometimes the way to go because the bait covers all depth levels. It is moving slowly as it descends, and the fish feels no resistance when it hits the worm or 'crawler.

The same applies when fishing for tilapia Zillii in the irrigation ditches that drain into the sea, such as Johnson Street drain and Lincoln Street (*White-water River*.) It always seems an angler catches more fish when he uses little or no weight in the drains. Plus there is always the added possibility of catching a huge flathead catfish, some of which exceed 40 pounds.

All in all, the tilapia has added a new dimension to fishing Salton Sea, and it hasn't seemed to hurt the existing fish populations at all.

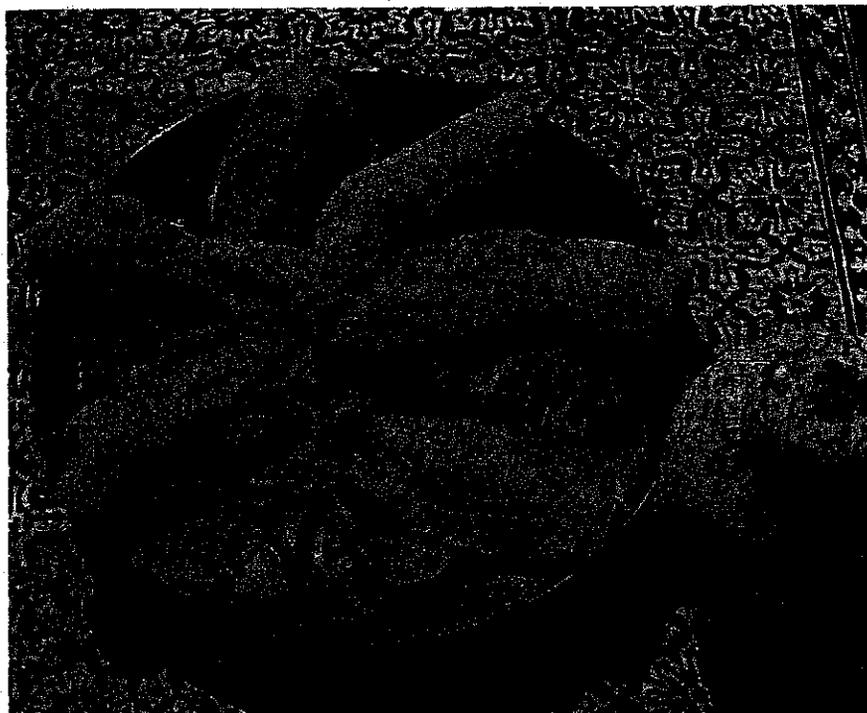
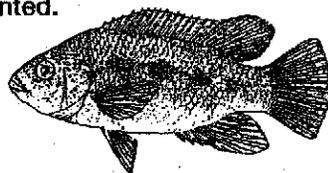
With no limit, the tilapia has provided fishermen with a fish that is easy to catch, prolific in numbers and excellent-eating. Just what the doctor ordered to keep the entire family happy, including the disgruntled corvina angler if he was in the wrong spot at the wrong time. □



Tilapia and sargo make up the majority of this hefty stringer of fish, representing just a few hour's fishing out of Salton Sea State Recreation Area on the North Shore. Crystal and Carla Loe, with some help from Zach Karr, show off the fine stringer.

## TILAPIA COOKING NOTE

Tilapia are an excellent-eating fish, provided you **DO NOT CUT INTO THEIR STOMACH AND GET THE CONTENTS ON THE MEAT.** Personally, I never even think of gutting a tilapia, and the only way I clean them is by filleting. Even then I take extra precautions to ensure I don't cut into their stomach. The contents of a tilapia stomach is what it eats, 70% vegetable matter and 30% animal matter, and the combination makes a black, smelly mess in their stomach. The meat, on the other hand, is a very fine texture and flavor, similar to scallops and well suited to any type of fish cookery ever invented.



*Tilapia fillets. These fine textured fillets have a faintly scallop flavor when cooked, and they are one of the least "fishy" tasting fish I have ever eaten. They are excellent in most any fish recipe you can think of.*

## CHAPTER FIVE

# TO CATCH A FISH ANY FISH

**F**or the angler who just wants to have action and put some meat in the freezer—this chapter is for you.

There are two specific seasons at Salton Sea... winter and summer. We're going to cover those two seasons, but remember that one season can extend into another, and one "summer" technique may work during a mild winter, or vice versa for the summer.

Summer fishing months are those with temperatures of 80 degrees and above, consistently. Summer fishing can begin earlier in the year, but it can also shut off just as fast. When you first get to the sea during summer months, ask the locals, park attendants and bait store owners what fishing is best.

If they say sargo, buy one can of canned corn per angler per day. If it's tilapia, get one dozen nightcrawlers per angler per day, but if it's good tilapia fishing, you'll need two dozen per person. Keep them cool or they'll all die on you. If croaker is the main bill of fare, buy cut bait such as anchovies or mackerel. Nightcrawlers also work. If the report is for corvina, the possibility for all other fish varieties exists, and it's a good idea to get some nightcrawlers and corn along with lures or live bait.

If you're fishing from shore, try corn on a #4 or #6 hook with a bottom weight and cast it out from shore, leaving it still for about a half hour. If no action, you'll want to try a chunk of nightcrawler or cut bait. If you use two hooks above the bottom weight, try corn on the bottom and nightcrawler or cut bait on the second hook. If still no hook-up within a half hour, try casting lures in the area for awhile, and see if there

are any corvina actively working the area. If still no action, try a chunk of nightcrawler below a bobber with no weight at all. This might pick up a tilapia if they're feeding cautiously. If the worm doesn't get it just sitting there, try jiggling the bobber and bait, or pulling it in closer to shore — that sometimes stimulates a tilapia or croaker to hit the bait. If still no action after an hour or two of trying all these possibilities, it's time to move on to another spot (*miles away, not feet*) or cast your bait out, sit back and try to wait them out.

Sometimes during winter months the tilapia begin feeding well around 2:00 or 3:00 in the afternoon, and any other time will only result in occasional hook-ups. The winter corvina fishing around Red Hill is best from 3:00 p.m. until dark when it first gets started, and any other time you're on the water it's pretty slow.

When you get to another section of the sea, try the same techniques. It may be best to give a call to the other areas first, to see if they're doing very well. Many times though, when the report is bad it's only because there isn't anyone fishing, not because there aren't any fish being caught.

If you're fishing from a boat, the same fishing techniques apply, but forget the bobber and simply let the bait down to different depths. Keep the necessary weight to a minimum so fish won't feel resistance.

If you are going to Salton Sea for a weekend of "fill the freezer" type fishing, call Salton Sea State Recreation Area, Bombay Beach, Desert Shores and one or two of the bait shops to see where



**FISH, FISH, FISH.** The end of the jetty at Salton Sea State Recreation Area has always been a favorite fishing spot. During the summer, when corvina, sargo, croaker and tilapia are all feeding well, anglers on all sides will be pulling in fish of all types. Here, the primary fish was sargo, but the bite went from tilapia to sargo to croaker to tilapia, then to corvina. That's why it's best to have all types of bait when at Salton Sea.

the action is - then head for the best fishing available, and make preparations for each type of fishing that could be available.

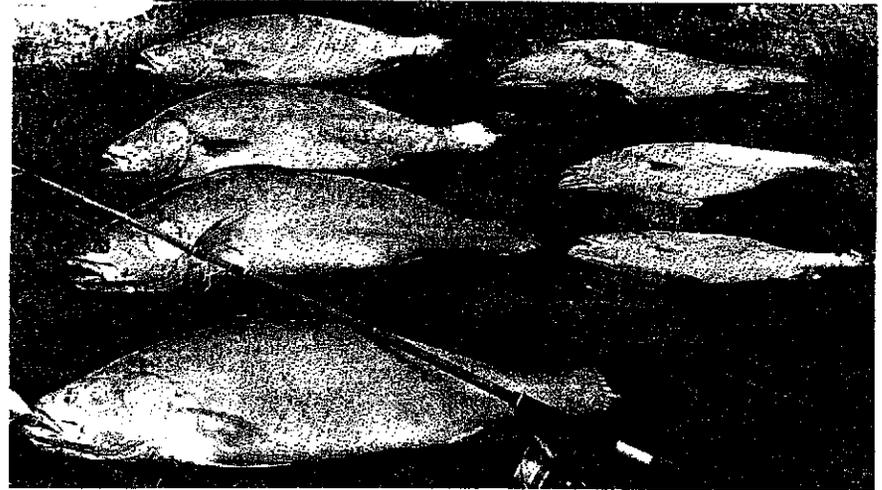
Bring a number of plastic baggies for wrapping the fillets, and if you want to be completely prepared, bring freezer paper and tape for double packaging your fillets to last six months or longer after freezing.

Don't forget while fishing, **DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME ON A NON-PRODUCTIVE METHOD OR PLACE.** If nobody is doing any good where you're fishing, and there isn't one specific time of day that has been good, try either a different bait, a different method, or leave the area.

FOR ADDITIONAL  
COPIES OF

**"FISHING  
SALTON  
SEA"**

Send \$3.95  
Plus \$1.00 Postage and  
Handling to:  
**BILL KARR**  
P.O. Box 3062  
North Shore, CA 92254



*These fish were caught in mid-winter at the south end of Salton Sea, an unheard of accomplishment for most corvina fishermen until the author wrote "In Search of Salton Sea Corvina" for WESTERN OUTDOORS magazine. Thanks to Ernie Gow of Calipatria, hundreds of fishermen now begin their corvina fishing months earlier than previously. Unfortunately, many of them violate the first rule of winter corvina fishing, which is KEEP QUIET. This results in a much lower percentage rate of success than would be possible if boats kept the noise to a minimum in shallow water.*

# Captain Lucky Pugh CORVINA FISHING CHARTERS

SALTON SEA  
CHARTER BOAT

FISHING TACKLE  
FURNISHED

619-395-5558

# SILVER SANDS RV AND CAMP RESORT

Salton Sea Beach  
HWY. #86



Swim Pool  
Pool Table  
Rock Hounding  
Leisure Games  
No Smog or Fog  
FULL HOOKUPS



Great Fishing  
Complete Laundry  
MANAGERS:  
Lyle and Betty  
Merica  
TEL: 619-395-5437

MAIL: R#3 Box 610 Thermal, CA 92274

**WELCOME**  
RV'ERS • MOBILE HOME'RS • CAMPERS

# Bombay Marina

Hwy 111 Salton Sea  
California

(619) 348-1694



Boat Rental  
RVSP Hook-up  
Ice  
Restroom  
Ramp-Tie up  
Bait Store  
Cold Drinks  
Shaded Camp  
Air Conditioned Campers

## CHAPTER SIX

# TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS

**F**ishing Salton Sea, as with any body of water, becomes easier and more productive the more you fish it. The person who lives at the Sea, or fishes it consistently, is bound to be better acquainted with both the Sea and the fishing than a person who only goes there once or twice a year. Consequently, the people who fish the Sea the most, should know the Sea and it's fishing, the best. Within this chapter we will cover the people who know Salton Sea best. These people have challenged the fish for years... and won.

**CAPTAIN "LUCKY" PUGH** – A legend within his own time, Captain "Lucky Dog" has been around Salton Sea for 20 years, and he has fished every corner of this immense body of water. He has fished it in the best weather and the worst, and he has guided thousands of people to good fishing on the Sea. The few times I have been fishing in "Lucky's" boat with him, I have always caught fish, even when I didn't think we would even go fishing, let alone catch fish. He does know the sea, and probably better than any one man fishing Salton Sea presently.

"Lucky" feels the main thing to reckon with at Salton Sea is the water that is suitable for fish.

Water color at Salton Sea varies constantly, changing from a clear blue or green to a darkish brown color. When there is an algae bloom the water can turn reddish brown overnight, and the water becomes a hotbed of growth. Actually, it is this

prolific growth that takes up all the oxygen in one certain section of Salton Sea, killing all fish within that area for lack of oxygen. But at the same time, that growth creates the perfect habitat for fish to live in. The death comes with clearer water, of blue or green tint. That's when nothing at all can live... and the area is normally devoid of life. But when it's still dark brown, that's where the fish are.

As the boat moves through the water you can even see the algae growth from the back of the boat, parting as you pass through. It appears as though there is a film over the water, and as the boat moves through the water that film parts, showing a different color of water. That's when you know you're in fish water.

*"If you want to catch fish at Salton Sea, you have to find water the fish can live in... and that's brown water. You may catch fish in an in-between color water, but brown's the best. You can identify it because you can't see through it at all,"* Lucky says. *"Of course, you already know the approximate area of the Sea the fish are in, because you fish there every day, but when you head out the next morning, you just look for the right water."*

*"There really isn't any secret, other than going fishing when the fishing is good, and then finding the right place to fish. Anybody can catch lots of fish at Salton Sea, but the person that can't devote the necessary time to locating the fish, finding what they're hitting and then*



Ernie Gow, (foreground) of Calipatria, and George Wallet, of Westmoreland, show off big corvina taken in midwinter out of Redhill. Ernie was the first person I could find that knew of catching corvina consistently in midwinter, but George Wallet obviously was also aware of the well-kept secret.

getting there at the right time... that's where the guides come in. We know where they're at and how to catch them."

And that's the truth, proven time and time again... even though Salton Sea is the best fishing in California, an angler who wants to catch corvina can experience the best fishing with a guide.

### **Ernie Gow - Winter Corvina -**

Ernie Gow lives in Calipatria at the south end of Salton Sea, and he is a special kind of person. He's quiet, unlike many fishermen.

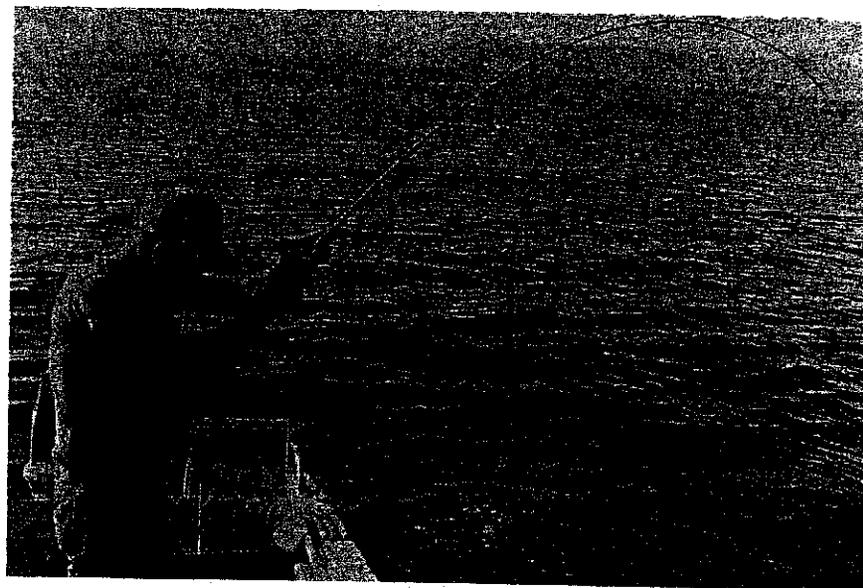
A number of years back I wanted to do a story on winter corvina fishing, and I began a long search for someone who could take me out and prove with some consistency that corvina could be caught in the winter. I knew darned well that twenty pound fish didn't go into hibernation during the winter, but it took me over a year to find someone who said "Sure, I catch corvina in the

winter." It took me another two months to talk him into taking me fishing with him.

That first trip was memorable. The first cast Ernie made, he hooked up with a 12 pound corvina. Not that a 12 pound corvina was that big of a deal in warm weather, but Ernie had not only shown me corvina could be caught in winter, but he was catching them in water three feet deep.

It was about two years prior to the writing of this book that Ernie first showed me the secret to winter corvina fishing - and I have written about that secret time and time again. I have shared the secrets with other fishermen, and put it into print and yet people still ignore the primary rule of shallow water corvina fishing.

Anglers must maintain silence, both in the boat, and with motor use while in shallow back bays during winter fishing. The corvina are skittish, and when a boat with a 24 inch motor shaft



Ernie Gow in action, fighting a nice corvina in the eight pound range that he later released. These are great fighting fish, and many anglers go after them with light outfits. Some, including the author's wife, Marilyn, only use ultra-light spinning rigs.

# SALTON SEA CORVINA

ThinFin "Silver Shad" is a fisherman's "classic" favorite for catching many different species of fish. The ThinFin has claimed state records throughout the nation for fish such as Walleye, Northern Pike, Rainbow Trout and White Bass. The ThinFin is now available in a vast assortment of newer fish-catching colors. Let its natural bait-fish profile and its true-to-life swimming action help you to take the big ones...by Storm!

STORM  
MANUFACTURING CO.  
Box 285 • Norman, OK 73070

Please write for a free catalog

roaring through water that's only a few feet deep, it can have a disruptive effect on corvina. They scatter from the area, only to re-group much later, and in a different area. Even a trolling boat creates enough disturbance to scatter corvina, keeping them out of casting range. This fact was brought home to me one winter day a year or so back when I was paddling a rubber raft around Red Hill, casting Thinfins for corvina. I couldn't locate the fish by paddling along the shore, saw the disturbance on the surface of the water caused by a large fish jumping off in fright. When I first saw the disturbance I would slow my paddling to a crawl, and the disturbed water was only 30 feet behind me instead of 50, and then I would cast. Even with the silence provided by a rubber raft, I would sometimes keep the fish disturbed enough so they could hardly reach them with the lures. The fish are always in schools, it's just a matter of when you find a disturb-

ance you will know there are other fish around.

Ernie, at that time, always used silver shad Thinfins. He would, at times, use large ones, but at other times the smaller sizes were all that worked. But he always motored the boat to the general area he intended to fish, then he would cut it back to a bare idle until he saw the swirl of a fish. He would then cut it back and let it drift, casting as far away from the boat as possible. Every time I ever fished with Ernie I caught fish... and always **big** fish.

During warmer months, when croaker are prevalent, Ernie always uses croaker for bait because he likes **big** corvina and a big croaker bait will catch a **big** corvina. He uses one rod to hook a croaker, then he transfers it immediately to another outfit. He then lets it back out and only keeps enough pressure on it to ensure that it keeps moving. As with all fish, a hooked croaker emits

frantic vibrations that attract predatory fish. It's a great system, and it usually results in mighty big fish. All in all, Ernie's about the best big fisherman around the sea.

**"DUSHBUCK"** – Ken Fredericks was given the handle "Bushbuck" after one of his excursions to Africa where he did a lot of hunting. His favorite hunting, though, has always been for corvina at Salton Sea. He never wanted to guide, "It would take too much time away from my fishing", Ken would say.

Ken's favorite method of corvina fishing is a combination of whatever he finds to be working, but he never keeps the boat in one place for long – he always drifts while using live bait or jigging – or he's trolling.

*"When you can take a cold shower at Salton Sea," Ken Fredericks says, "that's when you're going to catch corvina." "Another thing," adds Ken, "I never touch the lure or bait with a bare hand... these fish are very sensitive about scent." "I always wear gloves or keep aniseet in the boat to kill odors." "One of my friends", Ken says, "keeps garlic in the boat and rubs his hands in it before putting on a bait or lure."*

Whatever it is, "Bushbuck" will always be found where the fish are. He's a firm advocate of morning fishing, mainly because he doesn't want to be caught out on the water in the hot summer afternoons.

*"I figure you have to find the fish and then keep changing lures or bait until you find what they're hitting... that's all there is to it", says Ken.*

And that's always been the way it was when we've fished on "Bushbuck's" boat, we would change areas and baits until we found fish. And we **always** found fish.

**"SUNSHINE" GEORGE** – Although only guiding professionally for three years, "Sunshine" George has been fishing Salton Sea for 23 years. Over those years he has come to understand the habits of corvina, and the areas where they will most likely be found under certain circumstances and during certain times of the year. *"But the most important thing in fishing Salton Sea," George says, "is to fish continually and systematically, EVERY day – to know where the fish are and what they are feeding on." "Tendencies of the fish change from day-to-day, as does their location," according to George, "and you have to stay on top of the fish day-after-day to go out any one particular day and expect to catch fish."*

That point was brought home to me one day in early spring when I was fishing out of Red Hill around the "Duckblinds". This area is shallow, averaging less than three feet deep, and too much surface activity from boats will run the fish out of the bay, or send them on a game of hide-and-seek around the bay. This day there were more than seventy boats already there, and a fishing derby was to begin in an hour. People were catching fish, but nobody was coming close to George and his clients. I followed his drift, changed lures, drifted slow and fast, changed to live tilapia, then began casting Thinfins. But I couldn't tempt the fish. Later on, George filled me in on what was going on.

The boat activity had, indeed, spooked the fish, but they had not left the bay. They simply hit the bottom, and stayed there. While I was drifting live bait with no weight, and casting Thinfins, the lures and baits were going over the tops of the fish. George, on the other hand, had his clients rigged with a medium weight and a live mudsucker, and he was drifting his bait right past their noses. The corvina couldn't resist it.

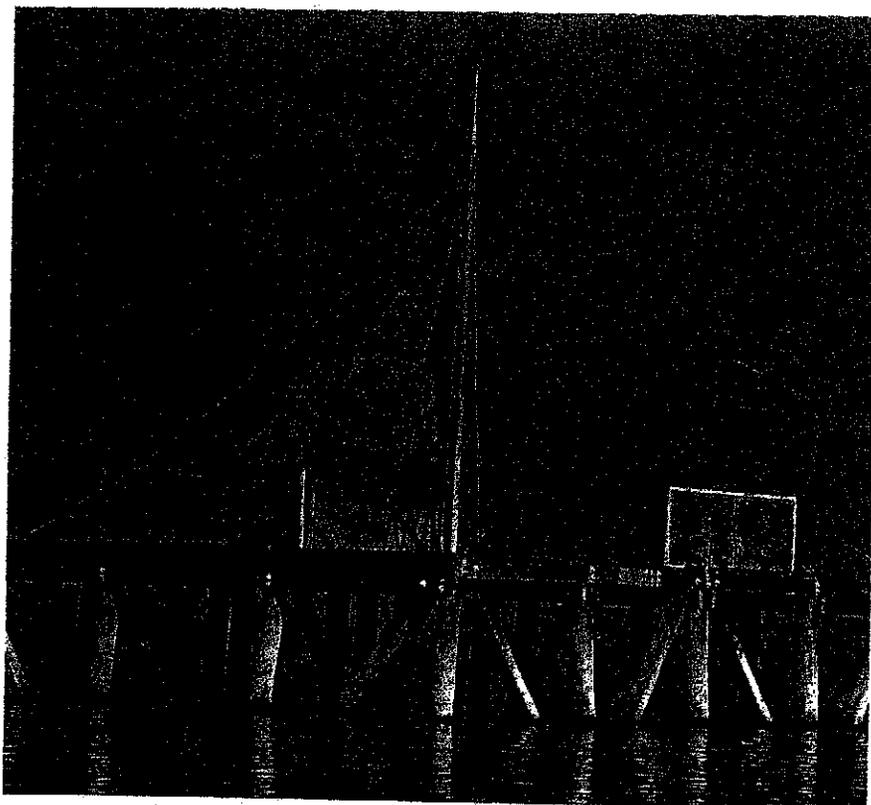
"Sunshine" George had some

other valuable information – for those who use plastic or rubber lure bodies on weighted hooks – put a little crazy glue or super glue on the head so that the plastic body will adhere to the hook, then, when fish hit the lure, the body isn't quite so easy to rip off the hook. That's good money-saving advice.

Another tip he has, is when you're feeling bites – but not hooking the fish – use a split ring and put a small treble hook on the eye of the Lunker Lure or Hopkins spoon you're using. In many cases the fish are hitting at the "head" of

the bait and don't hook themselves. This extra treble hook will increase your percentage of fish-per-hits considerably.

"Sunshine" George was the owner of a manufacturing concern, and three years ago he sold the business to do what he loves best... fish. And he has three different boats, including a pontoon boat, to suit the different clients and different conditions at Salton Sea. "Sunshine" George has this to say about Salton Sea: "I have looked all over the U.S. for better fishing than Salton Sea... and there is none better." □



**The Target.** Long known as a prime deep-water fishing spot at the Salton Sea, it is only accessible by boat, and best by those that are somewhat seaworthy. The target is about two miles offshore from the Navy base, and at least five miles from the nearest marina. It is quite a sight though, and at times it sits in water the same color as the sky, melding into a floating platform of history and destination of sportsmen.

REPRINTED FROM

# WESTERN OUTDOORS

FALL PREVIEW '83

IN SEARCH OF

## SALTON SEA CORVINA

*Angler Ernie Gow Unravels the Secret Of  
How To Catch These Golden Battlers  
In Late Fall and Winter*

by Bill Karr

**T**WISTED GROTESQUE SHAPES OF LONG-DEAD TREES REACHED their branches out of the water, and a row of official "National Wildlife Refuge" signs stretched across the shallow bay. The sound of gunshots had mingled with the cries of Canada geese not long before, and the snow cover was still at the 4000-foot level of the Santa Rosa Mountains around the Salton Sea.

A lone boat was drifting along the row of signs, and the angler standing in the bow cast his lure. The Thinfin sailed through the air, hit one of the signs and bounced into the water.

Ernie Gow of nearby Calipatria raised his rod tip and began a medium-slow, jerky retrieve. Suddenly a small St. Helens erupted, sending geysers of spray over the boat. Ernie leaned back into the rod as a two-foot length of yellow-gold dynamite exploded from the water and tail-walked toward the boat. The line slacked for one instant, and the lure flew from the fish's mouth. A "V" wake marked the escape route as its tail waved a farewell.

"I always lose the first corvina of the year," Ernie said.

Sure, Ernie, but in the middle of winter? It was early February, the in-between time, when guns have been cleaned and stored and fishing rods have yet to be dusted off. By all the rules in the book it was *not* the time to be catching corvina. But Ernie had never read the book, and he was catching

corvina. He catches them every winter. Even more surprising, he catches them on lures, and he catches them in water less than four feet deep.

Ernie's secret for catching year-round corvina? Here it is:

When other fishermen can't find corvina in their accustomed summer hangouts, they hang up their rods with the customary phrase, "Sometimes you can't catch corvina." The only difference between those fishermen and Ernie is, when he hung his rod up for the first time a few years back and said, "Sometimes you just don't catch corvina," he asked a question, "Why not?" And he looked for an answer.

He knew that as water temperatures cool, the metabolism rate of cold-blooded fish slows and they feed less, but how much less? Do they actually stop feeding? Ernie didn't think so.

He experimented with different types of fishing outfits, different fishing techniques and different lures. He experimented with different lure speeds, fishing depths and at different times of the day. He experimented in the winter, when the only other boats were those of duck hunters.

Finally, one warm January afternoon in 1980 Ernie noticed a huge boil in the shallow water ahead of his boat as he neared the boat ramp at Red Hill Marina. It was from a large fish, much larger than the sargo one would expect in that area. He was on his way home after having spent the entire day in water 10 to 12 feet deep jigging and trolling unsuccessfully.

He stuck his hand in the water and was surprised to find it warm. It was as warm as summer water temperatures, but only in the shallow, protected bay where the wind could not mix the water and the currents created by the Alamo and New rivers could not reach. There had been three still, bright days with air temperatures in the low 70s, much warmer than it had been the week before.

Ernie set his trolling rod aside and picked up his seven-foot spinning outfit. He reached for a Thinfin BT3-S Silver Shad, tied it to the line and lobbed it toward the boil.

The splash from the landing of the lure was still mixing with the ripples from the boil when the strike came. It was not the strike of a mad, active corvina in the summer. It was the strike of a mad, active, hungry corvina in winter-warmed shallow water near shore. The first unnerving strike, followed by the aerial acrobatics of a 10-pound corvina, converted Ernie. He had guessed that corvina fed all year around, and now he knew where. Shallow water. But he was to keep it a secret for another two years.

He let two people know about the secret. And to keep it secret, he insisted on them fighting any fish with the rod tip held under the water when other anglers passed by. At that time he didn't know whether this one area, actually within the bay at Red Hill Marina, was the only spot where this could be done, or whether it occurred all over the sea. So he experimented, and searched, and tried for another two years.

When I called him this past winter, after a long search for someone who could catch year-round corvina, he had made some findings. One of them was that shallow water corvina were a permanent part of the Salton Sea. It had not been a fluke that one day, and it was not that one place. It was everywhere near the southern side of the sea, but only after certain weather

conditions prevailed.

So Ernie decided to share his findings.

It takes three days of calm, still weather in the desert, with temperatures in the 70s for at least a part of each day. When those criteria are met, you will catch corvina in water less than four feet deep in areas not affected by the currents from the Alamo, New and Whitewater rivers. The fishing begins in the southeastern end of the Salton Sea, and since Red Hill Marina is the most noticeable landmark in that area, it is mentioned first.

Actually, the fishing starts in all the protected backwater bays where the water is warm enough to activate the corvina, and fully active they become... rapidly. They are hungry and they are in search of young sargo, tilapia and croaker.

The lure that most resembles these forage fish is the 3½-inch Thinfin Silver Shad, with grey-scale silver finish, sinking variety. Ernie ties the lure directly to the line without a swivel.

Heavy line is a must in this shallow water fishing because of the sunken trees, bushes, signs and fence lines scattered throughout the bays. To make matters worse, everything underwater is covered with sharp barnacles, and one touch can sever a thin line. Besides, Ernie has caught corvina upwards of 20 pounds in these shallow bays, and lost fish much larger. He wants to be prepared when that new state record, the one over 37 pounds, spots his lure. He uses 20-pound-test mono.

This type of fishing breaks many of the old stand-by rules, one of which is noise.

Most oldtimers leave their motors running when they are jigging over corvina hot spots, believing the noise attracts schools of corvina to the area. That's quite possible, and enough corvina have been taken in this manner to support the theory. When fishing one winter with the late Willard Woolen, old "Jig-Stick" from Bombay Beach, he even stomped up and down on the boat to add to the racket. If you didn't catch anything, he figured everybody had been too quiet.

With Ernie's technique it is different. He circles the area he wants to fish, cuts the motor and lets the boat drift, casting Thinfin to cover the surrounding water. The slightest noise will send these shallow water corvina running, so he keeps talking and unnecessary noise to a minimum.

The retrieve is a bit different, also. Ernie casts the sinking Thinfin out and immediately begins his retrieve. He holds the rod tip high, reeling a couple of times and then jerking the rod two or three times, keeping tension on the lure to feel any hits, then he reels again. It's a medium/slow retrieve, and very erratic.

Corvina are a schooling fish, but when they come into shallow water they tend to split up and spread over a much larger area than they would in deeper water, probably because the bait fish become spread out once the corvina go on the prowl.

When a fish strikes, the hit is always double. It goes "tap-tap" at almost the same speed as if you said it in a normal speaking voice. Trying to set the hook on the first tap will always leave you reeling back an empty lure, so give yourself another split second after the first tap. These hungry corvina

will try to swallow the whole lure, so don't have too itchy a trigger finger when responding to a hit.

Shallow water corvina fishing can shut off as rapidly as it begins, faster in fact. The bays take three days of warm, still weather to reach a comfortable temperature for corvina, but that can change in a matter of hours. Strong winds will "mix" the shallow bay waters, lowering water temperatures and shutting off corvina activity. They will still be there, and you can see their movements as the boat approaches, but they will not feed as readily as in warmer water. After a wind or extended cold spell, the winter shallow water corvina angler will have to wait until the arrival of another three days of still weather in the 70-degree range.

Ernie's discovery of how to catch corvina in shallow water year-round will simply add to the astounding numbers of fish that are being caught annually at the Salton Sea.

But summer is the best time. It's the time of year when the corvina are fully active and feeding constantly. It's the time when many corvina fishermen don't keep any fish under 15 pounds. It's the time when your arms get tired from catching fish.

When the air temperature is sometimes in the 100s and the water temperature reaches as high as the 90s, it is necessary to fish deeper water, because the shallow bays become too warm and there is a lack of oxygen in the water. It's this time of year when many corvina fishermen head out into the 20-foot depths, but not Ernie. He will go deeper too, but he very seldom fishes water more than 12 feet deep. His Thinfins are set aside now, only taken out of his tackle box when he runs into a school of corvina feeding on the surface.

His favorite fishing technique this time of year is live bait. Not if he wants to simply catch fish, but when he wants to catch big fish. Live croaker have proven to be the most productive big fish catcher available.

Ernie motors his boat to the general area he wants to cover, cuts the motor and drifts his boat. The croaker is hooked through the back dorsal fin and allowed to free-swim, with no weight. The bigger the fish you want, the bigger the bait you need. And Ernie tends to stick with croaker in the seven-inch range. He wants the new state record, one over 36 pounds, 8 ounces.

The other method for summer corvina is jigging. Many anglers will drift their boat, casting jigs or spoons until they connect with a corvina, then they will anchor and either keep using a jig or switch over to live bait. Another method of jigging, for those without a boat, is wading into the shallow sea up to the armpits and casting either a lure or live bait from shore. Both these methods have accounted for untold numbers of summer corvina.

Corvina are without a doubt the king of the Salton Sea, and they reign over the dinner table. They exceed all other Salton Sea gamesters in size, and some anglers will say they exceed them in eating, too. They do have huge flakes of white meat, tender and tasty.

But don't discount the other denizens of the sea, both oldtimers and new. Croaker have been prevalent since the corvina were introduced. Indeed, they were planted at the same time and have increased in population proportionately to the corvina. Croaker have always been the corvina's

primary food source, and they probably still are. It's hard to tell, since all the facts aren't in on the African tilapia that is having such a heyday in its exploitation of this large inland sea. J.M. "Tex" Ritter, chief ranger of the Salton Sea State Recreation Area, says that since the introduction of the tilapia he would not be surprised if more than 8 million fish were caught last year!

Other than corvina, when fishing the Salton Sea people don't ask, "How many you got?" They ask, "How many buckets-full you got?" It's not, "Do you have a limit?" since the only limit applies to corvina, it's, "Are you tired of catching fish, yet?"

Who knows? The Salton Sea many go from being the best fishing in California to being the best fishing in the United States. It may very well be that now, since the introduction of the tilapia.

There is simply no way around the fact that if you like to fish, you will have fun at the Salton Sea. No matter what tackle, technique or type of fishing you prefer, and now, no matter what time of year you prefer, the Salton Sea is the best fishing in California.

W

*Outdoors writer Bill Karr often fishes the Salton Sea that sprawls near his home at Indio, California.*

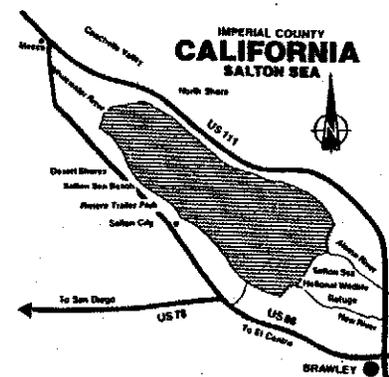
**HOW TO GET THERE:** Go east from Los Angeles on Interstate 10 to Highway 111, then to the Salton Sea State Recreation Area on the northeastern shore. Turn off on Highway 86 at Coachella for the southwestern shore. From Prescott, Ariz., head west on I-8.

**WHERE TO STAY:** On the southwestern side, Desert Shores has three campgrounds/trailer courts with full hookups and the Saltana Hotel. Salton Sea Beach has one campground/trailer court and the Palms Hotel. Salton City has two campground/trailer courts, and each area has small stores and cafes. The Salton Sea State Recreation Area Campground has a boat ramp and 50 developed campsites with solar-heated showers. Mecca Beach has 140 developed sites and solar-heated showers.

**BEST SEASONS:** Corvina are primarily caught during the summer, although certain areas and conditions will produce big fish in the late fall and winter.

**WHOM TO CONTACT:** For current information on camping and fishing contact the state recreations area at (619) 393-3052; Poor Richard's on the north shore, (619) 396-2180; or Mike's Tackle Box on the south shore, (619) 395-5114. □

## Salton Sea Trip Facts



# Longtin Bait & Tackle Co.

WHOLESALE DISTRIBUTORS

BIG BEAR LAKE ☆ COLORADO RIVER  
☆ SALTON SEA ☆ INLAND WATERS ☆

(619) 926-3491

Post Office Box 2146  
Homeland, California 92348

## Rebik's Half-Pint Liquors

Rebik  
Rebik  
Rebik  
Rebik



STEVE & MARY REBIK

302 East Main Street • Box 168  
Calipatria, California 92233  
BUS: 348-5024 RES: 344-0413

## CHAPTER seven

# Where TO LAUNCH, CAMP, BUY BAIT & TACKLE, ETC.

### Bait ☆ Tackle ☆ Licenses

#### NORTH SHORES Highway 111 Side

DILUCCHIO'S ONE STOP SHOPPE (INDIO) .....	619-347-3023
GEMCO (INDIO) .....	619-347-4081
K-MART (INDIO) .....	619-342-2199
MUDSUCKER BAIT SHOP (INDIO) .....	619-347-1691
NORTH SHORE YACHT CLUB & MARINA (NORTH SHORE) .....	619-393-3891
POOR RICHARD'S (MECCA) .....	619-396-2180
SKIP'S LIQUOR (NORTH SHORE) .....	619-393-3661
VICTORY SPORTING GOODS & LIQUOR (COACHELLA) .....	619-398-8500
YELLOW MART (INDIO) .....	619-347-1107

#### WEST SHORES Highway 86 Side

DESERT SHORES MARINA (DESERT SHORES) .....	619-395-5700
JOE'S SALTON SEA SERVICE (DESERT SHORES) .....	619-395-5806
MIKE'S TACKLE BOX (DESERT SHORES) .....	619-395-5114
SALTON SEA BEACH MARINA (SALTON SEA BEACH) .....	619-395-5212

#### SOUTHERN END

BOMBAY BEACH MARINA (BOMBAY BEACH) .....	619-348-1694
GRANDMA'S BAIT & TACKLE (RED HILL) .....	619-348-2310
L & N SPORTING GOODS (INLAND) .....	619-348-0674
REBIK'S 1/2 PINT LIQUOR (CALIPATRIA) .....	619-348-5024

## Marina ☆ Launching

### NORTH SHORES Highway 111 Side

AL 'N CHRIS RV PARK (NORTH SHORE).....	619-348-1272
BOB'S PLAYA RIVIERA (NORTH SHORE).....	619-348-1835
BOMBAY BEACH MARINA (BOMBAY BEACH).....	619-348-1694
NORTH SHORE YACHT CLUB & MARINA (NORTH SHORE).....	619-393-3891
SALTON SEA STATE RECREATION AREA (NORTH SHORE).....	619-393-3059

### WEST SHORES Highway 86 Side

DESERT SHORES MARINA (DESERT SHORES).....	619-395-5700
SALTON SEA BEACH MARINA (SALTON SEA BEACH).....	619-395-5212
WEST SHORES LAUNCH RAMP (SALTON CITY).....	South Marina Drive

### SOUTHERN END

RED HILL MARINA (RED HILL).....	Off Hwy. 111 between Niland and Calipatria
---------------------------------	--

## Repairs ☆ Services

### NORTH SHORES Highway 111 Side

CB VALLEY COMMUNICATIONS (INDIO).....	619-347-7747
CURT'S TRAILER SERVICES, INC. (INDIO).....	619-347-6060

### WEST SHORES Highway 86 Side

BIFF'S TOWING (DESERT SHORES).....	619-395-5113
BUD & JEAN HEFFERON (DESERT SHORES).....	619-395-5774
BUILDING MATERIALS	
JOE'S SALTON SEA SERVICE (DESERT SHORES).....	619-395-5806

### SOUTHERN END

MILLHOUSE MARINE (BOMBAY BEACH).....	619-348-1231
--------------------------------------	--------------

## Groceries ☆ Supplies

### NORTH SHORES Highway 111 Side

POOR RICHARD'S (MECCA).....	619-396-2180
SKIP'S LIQUOR (NORTH SHORE).....	619-393-3661

### WEST SHORES Highway 86 Side

DESERT SHORES MERCANTILE (DESERT SHORES).....	619-395-5221
JOE'S SALTON SEA SERVICE (DESERT SHORES).....	619-395-5806
L & Q MINI MART (SALTON CITY).....	619-394-4330
SALTON CITY MARKET (SALTON CITY).....	619-394-4403

### SOUTHERN END

GRANDMA'S BAIT & TACKLE (RED HILL MARINA).....	619-348-2310
L & N SPORTING GOODS (NILAND).....	619-348-0674
NEW BOMBAY MARKET (BOMBAY BEACH).....	619-348-1304
REBIK'S 1/2 PINT LIQUOR (CALIPATRIA).....	619-348-5024

## Restaurants ☆ Bars

### NORTH SHORES Highway 111 Side

THE ANCHOR (NORTH SHORE).....	619-393-3822
NORTH SHORE YACHT CLUB (NORTH SHORE).....	619-393-3891
SKIP'S ( <i>Swampcooler</i> ) (NORTH SHORE).....	619-393-3661

### WEST SHORES Highway 86 Side

HELEN'S BEACH HOUSE (SALTON SEA BEACH).....	619-395-5638
MIKE'S TACKLE BOX (DESERT SHORES).....	619-395-5114
ROWBOAT CLUB (SALTON CITY).....	619-394-4464
THE TIKI (SALTON SEA BEACH).....	619-395-5172

### SOUTHERN END

GASTON'S CAFE (NILAND).....	619-348-0616
PASTIME CAFE & BAR (NILAND).....	619-348-0561

## RV Parks ☆ Campgrounds ☆ Motels

### NORTH SHORES

Highway 111 Side

AL 'N CHRIS RV PARK (NORTH SHORE) .....	619-348-1272
BOB'S PLAYA RIVIERA (NORTH SHORE) .....	619-348-1835
EL RANCHO DEL SOL (NORTH SHORE) .....	619-393-3931
NORTH SHORE YACHT CLUB & MARINA (NORTH SHORE) .....	619-393-3891
SALTON SEA STATE RECREATION AREA (NORTH SHORE) .....	619-393-3059

### WEST SHORES

Highway 86 Side

MARINA MOBILE ESTATES & RV PARK (DESERT SHORES) .....	619-395-5227
RIVIERA TRAILER PARK (SALTON CITY) .....	619-394-4406
SALTANA MOTEL (DESERT SHORES) .....	619-395-9294
SALTON CITY SPA & RV PARK (SALTON CITY) .....	619-394-4333
SALTON SEA STATE RECREATION AREA (NORTH SHORE) .....	619-393-3059
SILVER SANDS RV RESORT (THERMAL) .....	619-395-5437
Hwy. 111 east of Desert Shores	
WEST SHORES RV PARK (SALTON CITY) .....	619-394-4755

### SOUTHERN END

BOMBAY BEACH MARINA (BOMBAY BEACH) .....	619-348-1694
BASHFORD'S HOT MINERAL SPA (NILAND) .....	619-348-1315
FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH SPA (NILAND) .....	619-348-1340
IMPERIAL SEA VIEW SPA (NILAND) .....	619-348-1204
OASIS MOBILE HOME VILLAGE (NILAND) .....	619-348-0411
RED HILL MARINA (RED HILL) .....	off Hwy. 111 between Niland and Calipatria

**TO EVERYONE  
WHO LOVES TO HEAR  
OUR ENGINES ROAR  
THIS BUD'S FOR YOU**

HEIMARK DISTRIBUTORS  
INDIO

ALFORD DISTRIBUTORS  
EL CENTRO

© 1997 BUDWEISER, ANHEUSER-BUSCH, INC., ST. LOUIS, MO