

Happenings....

West Coast Albacore Are Coming!

By Vic Jedlicka

Angler Chair Diaries:

"Hookup!!!" into a *silver torpedo* and you'll know you've been in for a battle! Now is the time to get *prepared...* Angler buddies screaming at the top of their lungs is enough to send a jolt of adrenaline through even the most jaded been-there, done-that type of person. Merely hooking an albacore is guaranteed to test the strength of your heart, not to mention your upper body. These long-finned tuna are not only fast, they're plow-horse strong, and they're often aggressive biters.

When the albacore start their annual run here in late spring, you don't want to miss it! They are sometimes referred to as **chicken of the sea**, these white meat tuna generally run from 15 to 35 pounds apiece through most of their West Coast range. One of the reasons for the albies' popularity is their high quality as table fare. They are the only tuna that can be labeled as white meat. Fortunate anglers in central and northern California see slightly larger (20- to 40-pound) fish in most years.

During El Nino periods, it is not unusual to see 60- and even 70-pound albacore out of Morro Bay in late autumn. The heavy influx of migratory Albacore usually arrives sometime in mid-May, about 200 miles south of San Diego. The fish proceed north quickly, running parallel to the coast anywhere from 10 to 150 miles out. The bite off San Diego and in northern California can last into November.

Anglers venturing out to the albacore grounds may encounter numerous other kinds of offshore fish. Blue fin tuna are the most popular, and usually range from 20 to 70 pounds in California. Showings of blue fin, 75 to over 150 pounds, pop up with enough regularity that California anglers should keep an extra-heavy live bait rod rigged up at all times.

Along most of the West Coast, good albacore water generally starts along the 1,000-fathom curve at the edge of the continental shelf. High spots or sea mounts that rise up off the deep ocean floor create an upwelling that attracts bait fish. Ideal water temperatures are 60 to 64 degrees. Look for very clean, deep blue or purple water filled with lots of life, such as birds, porpoises, jellyfish and the like. A temperature break, where warmer and cooler currents come together, is a natural gathering place for bait fish. Let's get ready for these **Silver Torpedoes...Hookup!**

Tight lines to all!