

Results of Seine the Bay Day September 10, 2017

On Sunday, September 10 from 10:00am to 3:30pm, the annual late summer edition of "Seine the Bay Day" event took place. Juvenile fish, baitfish, and shellfish were the stars of the show on several bay beaches along the southern shore of New York Harbor, downstream from New York City.

Since 2011, the all-volunteer Bayshore Watershed Council has been conducting a seining survey of Raritan Bay and Sandy Hook Bay in Monmouth County, NJ at the end of the summer season to find out what species live in these rich tidal waters. As in years past, surveys were conducted at four locations: Cliffwood Beach in Aberdeen Township, the fishing beach along Front Street in Union Beach, the beach in Port Monmouth near the mouth of Pews Creek, and the beach near the mouth of Many Mind Creek in Atlantic Highlands.

A 50-foot-long net with buoys on top and weights on the bottom was hauled by watershed volunteers through murky waters and pulled towards the shore. Caught in the net was anything swimming or walking along the shallow edge of the bay.

The catch of the day were huge schools of spearing or Atlantic silversides in many locations. This is an important forage fish for larger fish including striped bass and bluefish, as well as for wading birds. The other notable catch was several young-of-year (yoy) silver perch or sand perch found near the mouth of Many Mind Creek in Atlantic Highlands. This was the first time this species was encountered in any Seine the Bay Day event. The silver perch is a small drum with a silvery body and yellowish fins. It is commonly found in Chesapeake Bay, where it lives year-round, mostly in shallow waters from spring to autumn.

There is no doubt the more watershed members conduct these public seining events, the better picture people get of the bay. Seining is a method of taking the pulse of a local ecosystem. It's a way to gain an insight into the health of the near shore environment where many people swim and enjoy the water.

All fishes, crabs, and other aquatic creatures were identified, cataloged, and returned to the water. In addition to seining, water temperature, salinity, and turbidity information were documented by volunteers at each site.

The weather was mostly sunny with an air temperature reaching into the upper 60s. Winds were breezy out of the northwest 10 to 15 mph. There was light chop on the bay.

Thanks and special appreciation goes to Melanie, Jen, Marni, Kerry, Rosetta, Frank, Ron, and the Martin family; and other volunteers with the watershed council for all their wonderful help and time. No one person can ever successfully seine alone. It's truly a team effort.

10am - Aberdeen Township/Cliffwood Beach

High tide. Water temperature 70 degrees F.

Visibility was turbid at 1.5 feet.

Salinity = 20 ppt

1000+ Spearing or Atlantic Silversides

25 Shore Shrimp

10 Striped Killifish

11:30am - Union Beach/Conaskonck Point

Outgoing tide. Water temperature 68 degrees F.

Visibility was turbid at 1.8 feet.

Salinity = 19 ppt

100+ adult Spearing or Atlantic Silversides

30+ juvenile Striped Killifish

20+ Bay anchovies

10 Shore Shrimp

5 juvenile Kingfish

Many Salps

5-10 Comb jellies

1:00pm: Middletown Township/Port Monmouth - Pews Creek

Outgoing Tide. Water temperature 68 degrees F.

Visibility was turbid at 1.4 feet.

Salinity = 20 ppt

100+ Spearing or Atlantic Silversides

20+ Hermit Crabs

10 Comb jellies

5 juvenile White Mullet

1 juvenile Bluefish or snapper (approximately 7 inches long)

3 newly hatched fish (species ?)

2 amphipods

2:30pm: Atlantic Highlands/Mouth of Many Mind Creek

Outgoing tide. Water temperature 70 degrees F.

Visibility was turbid at around 1.2 feet

Salinity = 20 ppt

100+ Spearing or Atlantic Silversides

10+ Bay Anchovies

5 juvenile Striped Killifish

5 juvenile Kingfish

5 White Mullet

4 Pipefish

4 juvenile Silver perch (*first time this species was encountered during a Seine the Bay Day event*)

To view more pictures, video, or stories of wildlife around Sandy Hook Bay, Raritan Bay, and Lower New York Bay, please visit my nature blog, NY Harbor Nature at <http://www.nyharbornature.com>