

Sunday, September 11, 2016

Life was on the move in the murky waters of Raritan Bay and Sandy Hook Bay, located along the southern shore of New York Harbor. Small fish found along the edge of the bay were swimming fast and foraging for food before the rush to move out of the estuary before winter starts to arrive.

Seine the Bay Day is a free one-day public event conducted twice a year by volunteers with the Bayshore Regional Watershed Council during the start and end of the summer season. Volunteers at multiple sites along Raritan Bay and Sandy Hook Bay use a 50-foot seine net to catch fish and show people the diversity of slimy, slippery, and interesting sea creatures usually swimming along the water's edge.

Over 50 people showed up today to see who was home in the bay today. Despite sunny skies, a persistent northwest winds gusting up to 15 miles per hour made the 50-foot net at times unwieldy as a sail in a storm. Air temperatures were in the lower to mid 80s and the estuary was warm for early September with water temperature readings in the mid to upper 70s. Salinity was around 24 parts per thousand, which is about normal, but turbidity was awful. At many places the water was so cloudy you couldn't see your feet just standing along the water's edge.

As in past years, surveys were conducted at four locations along Raritan Bay and Sandy Hook Bay: 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.

Seine nets have been used for ages to catch fish and other creatures Raritan Bay and Sandy Hook Bay and their tributary rivers.

Picture

The catch this time was anything swimming or walking along the shallow edge of the bay including several baitfish, such as Atlantic Silversides or Spearing. Many were young-of-the-year fish (species born or emerged from eggs this past spring or summer). Our seine net was also dominated by lots of young menhaden, bay anchovies, and little blue-claw crabs. Interesting finds were a young Burr fish, a relative of the puffer fish, in Cliffwood Beach, a needle-nose fish near Pews Creek in Port Monmouth and a large beautiful American eel near the mouth of Many Mind Creek in Atlantic Highlands.

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 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.

Below is a complete list of aquatic species found at each site. Thanks to everyone for your wonderful help and time.

Seine the Bay Day

Sunday, September 11, 2016

Weather: Partly Cloudy. Air temperatures into the mid 80s. Northwest winds 5-15 mph.

Moon Cycle: The first quarter was on Saturday, September 10th. Neap tide conditions.

10am - Aberdeen Township/Cliffwood Beach

Low tide.

Water temperature 75 degrees F.

Visibility was zero.

Salinity = 25 ppt

Over 1,000 Sparring or Atlantic Silversides, many were YOY (young of the year fish that were spawned this summer).

3 Northern pipefish

2 juvenile Atlantic menhaden

2 Spider crabs

1 juvenile Striped Burrfish

1 juvenile soft-shell black-tipped mud crab

1 juvenile blackfish

11:30am - Union Beach/Conaskonck Point

Incoming tide.

Water temperature 78 degrees F.

Visibility was zero.

Salinity = 23 ppt

1,000+ Salps

100+ Atlantic menhaden

10+ Shore shrimp

10+ hermit crabs

10+ juvenile Blue-claw crabs

3 juvenile Atlantic silversides

1 juvenile Bluefish

1 Lady Crab

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

Incoming tide.

Water temperature 79 degrees F.
Visibility was partially turbid at 1.5 feet.
Salinity = 25 ppt

1000+ Atlantic Silversides
100+ Salps
30+ Bay Anchovies
5+ juvenile Atlantic Menhaden
5+ Hermit Crabs
5 juvenile Weakfish
1 adult male Lady Crab with no claws
1 Bluefish (snapper)
1 Atlantic Needlefish

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

Incoming tide.
Water temperature 78 degrees F.
Visibility was zero.
Salinity = 24 ppt

50+ Atlantic Silversides or Spearing
20+ Shore Shrimp
10+ juvenile Atlantic Menhaden
10+ Killifish
10+ hermit crabs
10+ juvenile Blue-claw crabs
10+ juvenile Weakfish
10 Killifish
5 juvenile Atlantic pipefish
1 adult Atlantic Menhaden
1 juvenile Kingfish
1 adult American Eel
1 juvenile Blackfish

Thanks to Budget Dumpster for supporting Seine the Bay Day 2016 along Raritan Bay and Sandy Hook Bay in New Jersey. Please check out their website at <http://www.budgetdumpster.com/jersey-city-nj-dumpster-rental-new-jersey.php>