HELP Striped Bass SURVIVE Catch & Release



Despite our best intentions, stripers experience stress and physical injury during capture and handling and, depending on the degree of these impacts, may not survive.

The mortality rate of striped bass following release is not trivial. Fishery scientists assume a 9% mortality rate for striped bass caught and released by recreational anglers.

By using best catch-and-release practices, anglers can ensure greater chances of survival of released fish and increase their contributions to conservation of this important recreational species.

Choose Tackle Wisely

- Always use appropriate tackle that allows stripers to be brought in quickly.
- When fishing with plugs and lures, consider removing one or two sets of treble hooks or replacing them with single hooks.
- Use single, barbless hooks whenever possible to ease hook removal and reduce tissue damage and handling stress.
- When fishing with natural or live bait, use non-offset circle hooks to minimize gut hooking.
- When using "snag and drop" techniques to snag live bait on treble hooks, transfer and swim baits on a single circle-hook rig.

Minimize the Fight

- When you feel a strike, set the hook quickly to prevent the fish from taking the hook deep where it may cause organ damage and be difficult to remove.
- Once a fish is hooked, land it quickly rather than playing it to exhaustion.

Handle with Care

- Ideally, keep the fish in the water to reduce stress and the potential for injury.
- If a fish must be removed from the water, handle it as little as possible, and release it quickly.
- When using a landing net, use a net with small mesh made of rubber, knotless nylon, or other soft, non-abrasive material.
- If you need to lift a striped bass, hold it horizontally by gripping the lower jaw and supporting its weight under the belly.
- Once a striper is landed, keep it from thrashing around and injuring itself.
- When unhooking a striped bass, handle it using wet hands or wet cotton gloves to minimize removal of the fish's protective mucous.
- Avoid touching the eyes and gills.
- If a fish is hooked deep, cut the leader as close as you can to the hook and leave it in the fish.

Release it Right

- Fish should be quickly and gently returned to the water in an upright, horizontal position.
- Revive fish by holding them headfirst into the current. Place one hand around the fish's tail and the other under its belly or grasp its jaw between your thumb and forefinger.
- Gently move fish in a figure-8 pattern to get water flowing through the mouth and over the gills. Always keep the fish moving forward, never backward.
- Do not let the fish go until it is able to swim strongly and freely out of your grasp.

Reference: Tiedemann, J. and A. Danylchuk. 2012. *Assessing Impacts of Catch and Release Practices on Striped Bass.*

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