



# Is the social media revolution good for fishing?

by Nick Sannicandro



In the last two decades we have seen the explosion of a concept known as social media. Originally websites like Myspace controlled the market, later giving way to Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

At first, mostly a young man's game, the social media world is now one of the single most influential tools businesses have. But in recent years, social media has been used as a tool on a personal level for self promotion, and to share your life with others. This practice brings with it a wide range of emotions from people that think it is great, to others that despise the whole idea of it.

In the past few years, the fishing world has been hit by the social media bug. One search of YouTube of "RI Saltwater Fishing" will get you hundreds of individuals that promote their fishing via personal video cameras. A look on Facebook will net you hundreds of fishing groups where people post catches, locations, what bait is in, gear for sale, etc.

There are two schools of thought when dealing with both of these media platforms.

One shared by most of the old time fisherman is that this concept is ruining fishing. Sharing locations and what fish are biting only causes people to rush to that location and try to get one for themselves. Anyone who has been to the West Wall during albie season will know what the herd of buffalo running after each breaking fish looks like. One post on a Facebook group can be seen by tens of thousands both within your state and out of state.

There are no more secrets in fishing due to this; no more secret spots, or hush-hush the albies are in. As soon as one person makes a catch, they need to feel validation to post on social media, and that validation of "Likes" also turns into hordes of people flocking to the same spot.

Furthermore, **how many times have you seen anglers taking "selfies" with school sized stripers**, holding them by the mouth (improper way to hold a fish unless your keeping it). Online social media competitions like the "Striper Cup" promote such activity and also fuel the social media spot burning we have seen.



A lot of these internet heroes are calling themselves "Social Media Influencers" which by definition is someone who uses their platform to influence others on products. We live in a world where children get paid millions to open up toys on camera, and fisherman use YouTube videos to get free lures, rods, reels and other gear. The trouble with this trend is that

many of these people really don't know what the heck they are doing, giving bad advice or plugging products that don't work just because they got them for free, thus influencing people who watch the videos to purchase.

Many people actually make a living off of posting videos daily of their fishing adventures from shore, using inflammatory alliteration such as "HUGE INSANE Striper Blitz in Jamestown!!!" Only once you watch the video, they caught only two 12" schoolies. We live in a world where your click is worth money in someone else's pocket whether your realize it or not.

The other train of thought is that social media is GOOD for fishing. The idea that we see so many people catching fish on Facebook, how many people has it gotten into the sport that support local bait shops (hopefully?) How many people have gotten their children into fishing because their child saw people catching big fish online, or watched episodes of "Wicked Tuna"?

Is it a bad thing that we are getting more people into fishing? I subscribe to the concept that knowledge is wasted if it is kept to oneself. If we have the knowledge of what to do, and how to do it, but keep it to ourselves what good is that? I would not be the fisherman I am today, or the activist in fishing I am today if not for the older generation of fisherman from local bait shops that took me under their wing and showed me what to do.

The fact is Social Media is here to stay, and it's a major influence on society today, both in and outside of fishing.

There are no statistics on this, but it is quite guaranteed that social media influenced many Americans under quarantine to pick up a rod and reel and use their isolation time productively instead of binge-watching *Game of Thrones* ten times.

As for me, I am in-between on the love/hate scale of social media.

I myself do not use any platforms and have no plans to. I do think that anything that brings new faces into local shops is a good thing, however after seeing the destruction left behind at the local jetties this year by many of these new faces, I question how good it really is to get more people into the sport.



**Trash continues to be a problem**

Anyone who has fished with me knows I love the West Wall. It was always my first stop to fish. This year however it feels wiped out.

The lack of enforcement on overfishing, out of season and undersized keeps, the trash problem and allowing commercial fishing in such close proximity the area seems completely wiped out. **(to page 22)**