

BIRD BRAINED: Using Birds to Find Fish

by TOM RICHARDSON



Every angler knows that a flock of birds wheeling and diving over baitfish are an obvious sign that game fish are on the feed; however, subtler forms of bird behavior can also offer clues to the presence of game fish.

OSPREY

A few back, I was fishing with a friend in Buzzards Bay, looking for big bass under schools of adult menhaden (bunker, pogies). The only problem was that we couldn't find either—until a friendly osprey came to our aid!



I noticed one circling above a small cove about a half-mile away. Knowing that these keen-eyed fish hawks often prey on pogies, we motored over to the area and discovered a big pod of bait being herded by cow bass.

After snagging a couple, we let them swim on a circle hook and were soon connected to bass in the 20-pound range.

Observing birds, and especially osprey, can be a great way to find fish. The great thing about osprey is that they often circle high in the air, allowing you to spot them from far away. Also, if you see an osprey returning to its nest with a menhaden in its talons, try to gauge the direction whence it was flying, or try to follow that bird if it heads off again. It may just put you on some big bass or bluefish.



TERNs

The same holds true for terns. If you notice a string of terns flying toward home with bait in their beaks, head in the direction they are flying from. You might just strike paydirt in the form of blitzing fish. In the early season, when the bass and blues are just beginning to show in the shallows, a single working tern dipping low over the water can lead you to some action.



GULLs

Gulls often provide clues that can lead you fish. If you see a bunch of gulls sitting on the water or resting on a nearby beach, it may indicate that a school of fish had recently been active in the area. Stick around and they may stage a repeat performance.



About the author....

Tom Richardson, a RISAA member and Massachusetts native, is passionate for the outdoors, including camping, hiking, boating and fishing. An award-winning writer, he was editor for *Salt Water Sportsman* for 15 years prior to becoming editor of the regional boating magazine *Offshore* in 2004. In 2009, he started the boating-lifestyle BoatingLocal.com, Three years later, BoatingLocal became **New England Boating**, a multimedia brand comprising the website, a glossy magazine, and a TV show, all edited and co-hosted by Richardson. In 2016, he launched *New England Fishing* magazine, website and TV show, which he also wrote and hosted.

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