

VIMS Juvenile Fish Survey  
Net Notes  
February/March 2009

Generally, the month of March marks the return of certain seasonal inhabitants to Chesapeake Bay. Among those species making their annual spring migration into the Bay are Atlantic croaker and summer flounder. During March, the VIMS Juvenile Fish Survey collected both croaker and summer flounder from the York and James Rivers. While numerous summer flounder captured were fish returning from offshore, all croaker collected were juvenile fish that had overwintered locally. Although summer flounder were present in samples in February, survey scientists noted an increase in both numbers and size between the February and March surveys. The largest summer flounder this month (near 20") were caught in the James River from the Hampton Flats area with several nearly as large measured in the middle section of the York River close to Poropotank River. February sampling of the York and James River systems produced several large blue catfish and that trend seems to have continued into March. Survey scientists noted several large (> 24 inches) blue catfish in catches in the lower reaches of the Pamunkey River and in the James River near Deepwater Shoals Light. During March, white perch in the 10 to 12 inch range were noted in high quantities from Bell's Rock upstream to West Point in the York River and upstream as far as Sweet Hall Marsh in the Pamunkey River. A striped blenny, relatively uncommon on our survey in recent years, was identified from a sample taken southwest of Mulberry Island in the James River. Striped blennies are diminutive (rarely exceeding 3 inches) year round residents of Chesapeake Bay inhabiting reefs and flats during much of the year and retreating to the channels in winter. Though known to inhabit waters from New York to the Gulf of Mexico, striped blennies are rare north of Chesapeake Bay.

If interested in viewing a photograph of a striped blenny, reading previous installments of Net Notes or simply finding more information about this ongoing monthly survey please visit our website at

<http://www.fisheries.vims.edu/trawlseine/mainpage.htm>