

Kayak Cobia Fishing



By Kayak Kevin Whitley

The saying goes, "that's cobia fishing." Long boring hours sitting in a chum slick, smelling like menhaden with baits being constantly nipped by blues and the occasional ray or shark to break the boredom, then once in long while, a shot at a cobia. I have never caught one over 40 inches; not even close I have been cobia fishing many times, but never got a big one. If any one of us catches one, the fishing trip is a success. That's cobia fishing.

Four years ago Ric Burnley, Chad Hover and I where anchored off Sandbridge VA, around the Yellow B Buoy. With chum slicks flowing and baits in the water. I would scan the clear ocean water between naps. I saw something a few yards off of my bow. I rubbed my eyes and the dude in the brown shirt swam up and looked right at me. My eyes bugged out and my heart thumped hard. I whispered loudly to Chad just 20 yards away, "Cobia, cobia!" pointing to the water. I reeled in one of my lines to pitch it, but the cobia took off when I moved. Chad dropped his anchor rope and paddled

over to the buoy. He saw one and dropped his eel and hooked up. After two hours and a mile and a half fight he landed the 50lb cobia. Since that day I carry a pitch rod ready to site one.

Ric and I were set up on Latimer Shoal. Near the end of the day and chum, Ric's line moved past him up current and he reeled it tight to a cobia. Ric fought entirely on anchor as the fish circled his kayak. When the fish was within site Ric yelled, "She's got one with her!"

I reeled in my lines and paddled over to him with my pitch eel ready. While I was taking pictures of the fight, Ric yelled, "There's the little one, pitch right there," pointing behind his fish. I pitched my free lined eel right there and the small tag along cobia followed. I tightened down and the hooked little cobia went air-borne. I yelled "Now that's the way we do it!" as I got pulled away.

Cobia are naturally curious fish, always checking out boat and kayaks. I have had four look at me and have seen two while paddling on the bay. In the summer, there's a chance to see one just about anywhere. I always take a buck-tail, storm or crank-bait ready to sight one.

Cobia fishing is probably the most boring type of fishing there is. It's basically sitting with a chum bag and baits in the water. After setting up it's a waiting game. I find it tough to stay



Ric Burnley

awake in the warm early summer sun. That's what the reel clickers are for. I pass the time by working on putting as much chum in the water as I can. I try to catch live bait with a bottom rig and fishbites. I constantly shake the chum bag and shred fresh menhaden with my scissors, and routinely change washed out baits.

Cobia will eat just about anything. With a phenomenal growth rate, 15 pounds in one year, they have to eat. Although they can sometimes be finicky eaters and other times eating like a big catfish. Live spot, croaker, eels, and blue fish are great baits; anything you can catch and put out on a hook. Fresh cut bait like menhaden, spot and croaker can also work.

I was at a fish cleaning station when a cobia was being cleaned. It had a half eaten piece of fried chicken that the angler tossed overboard. I have even read that a hunk of spam worked when all other baits where gone.

When it comes to bait placement, I try to cover the water column within the chum slick. You never know where a cobia will swim up in your chum slick. Using floats or adjusting the

weights to suspend the baits in the current are some ways, and always have bait near your chum bag.

Cobia are notorious for destroying boats and human leg bones when landed to green. Ric and Chad fought their cobia until it gave up. Neal Cho landed a 50 pounder after subduing it with one well placed hammer strike. Fishing partner, Lee Williams has been entertaining the thought of using a small flying gaff with 50 foot of rope. My main worry is the row of sharp spikes on their back. A rolling cobia in a kayak cockpit could require more than a few stitches.

The cobia hot spots seem to shift from year to year. Last year, it was Sandbridge. The other kayakable cobia spots are Grandveiw and Backriver off Hampton, and Latimer shoals south of Kiptopeke on the Eastern Shore. Kayak cobia fishing may not be for everybody. It's a waiting game. That's cobia fishing. Keep your chum flowing and fresh baits out and you might GET ON'EM

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