

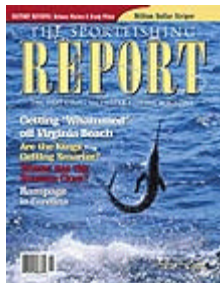


<a href="#">SUBSCRIBE</a>
<a href="#">ON-LINE ADVERTISING</a>
<a href="#">PRINT ADVERTISING</a>
<a href="#">VA BEACHES TIDEWATER</a>
<a href="#">OUTER BANKS</a>
<a href="#">CRYSTAL COAST</a>
<a href="#">CAPE FEAR</a>
<a href="#">SOUTH CAROLINA</a>
<a href="#">GEORGIA</a>
<a href="#">BOATS FOR SALE</a>
<a href="#">HOME</a>

[<Back](#)



..... *Continued*



In addition to the disruption in the ocean flow caused by Frying Pan Shoals, Cape Fear has several other unique geographical features that are positive attributes for the fishing. First and most obvious is the nearby Cape Fear River, which is only a few miles to the west. From its beginnings above Greensboro, the Cape Fear River grows into one of the largest river systems in the southeast and is the only large river in North Carolina that empties directly into the ocean.

About the same distance up the East Beach of Bald Head Island, Corncake Inlet empties from the fertile estuaries behind Bald Head Island and the Fort Fisher State Recreation Area. This is not a navigable inlet as it is very small and shallow, but its direct link to the nursery areas makes it a major fish attractor. The ebb and flow of small fish and shrimp through this inlet, is the beginning of a food chain that contains many levels. King mackerel, tarpon, sharks, red drum, and dolphin (mammal) are the top predators just offshore of Corncake Inlet.



*Building an artificial reef—Here workers on the R.V. Longbay lower another reef ball onto another one of the nearshore reefs in Long Bay. Note the beach in the right near background.*

A feature of Cape Fear that endears it to many fishermen is the fact that the coastline makes a 90 degree bend there and creates a lee from the predominant winds. The southern beach faces to the south, while the northern beach faces to the east. The predominant spring and summer wind is from the southwest and becomes predominantly northeast during the fall and winter. With the turn at the cape and good inlets close by on both sides, fishermen can find a near shore lee for comfortable fishing during most of the year.

As I said earlier, there are kings in the waters around Cape Fear all



Access to the ocean waters around Cape Fear is easily available. Approximately four miles to the west (south), the Cape Fear River includes the shipping channel for the North Carolina State Ports at Wilmington. There is also another well used, but unmarked channel, that is shown as the Western Bar Channel on most charts and is called the West Cut locally. It is heavily traveled but unmarked and following someone through is recommended, at least for the first time.

Another 15 miles to the west is Lockwood Folly Inlet. This is a typical North Carolina small inlet that can be rough at times but is heavily used. Lockwood Folly is well marked, but sometimes shoals quickly. Pay attention to the markers and the breaking waves and you should have no problem on any day that the sea conditions are comfortable enough to fish. Eight miles west of Lockwood Folly is Shallotte Inlet. This inlet, which is well marked, is subject to the same shoaling as Lockwood Folly, but was dredged during 2001 and is continuing to hold good depths at this time.

Roughly 14 miles to the north of Cape Fear is Carolina Beach Inlet. While it was dredged in early 2001, Carolina Beach Inlet may well be the trickiest of any of the marked inlets in the area. It is not uncommon to see buoys resting on their side in shallow water as you pass through Carolina Beach Inlet. The channel, which is deep enough for the local charter and commercial fleet, moves around a bit and requires frequent

year. Let's look at a typical year beginning in January. The tip of Frying Pan Shoals is close enough to the Gulf Stream that it tends to collect stray eddies during the winter and even create a few of its own. These fingers of warmer water will often settle around Frying Pan Light Tower and hold fish until the water blends with the cooler water and disappears. Usually by then, another finger or eddy is moving in with more fish.

While there isn't an abundance of recreational fishing during the winter, the fish are around for those who try. The kings generally aren't large, but there is a major winter commercial king fishery in the waters near Frying Pan Tower. If you ask nicely, many of these commercial fishermen will help you get on a winter king bite during one of those stretches of good weather that we often have. While it is a long ride, a limit of winter kings sure helps cure a dose of land sickness or cabin fever.

Sometime in late March or April, the winds get back to a more southerly flow and push some warmer water closer inshore. First, the kings show up at many of the wrecks in 100 feet of water and then slowly begin moving in. By early May they are usually at the Horseshoe and WR 4 and getting closer as the water warms. The winds become predominantly northeast and this trend reverses itself in November and December as the water cools and the kings move back offshore.

maintenance. Another eight miles to the north is Masonboro Inlet. Enclosed by rock jetties, deep, and well marked, this is the best inlet on the north side of the cape.

[<Back](#)

Page 2 of 3

---

