

King Mackerel

Some hints on KM fishing, many of which we have used effectively.

First, you should only fish for KM where there are KM. If you don't get any hits, move. They like cool water and are more plentiful in the spring and fall as they migrate through following the bait and cooler water. When here, Kings oftentimes relate to structure such as reefs and wrecks, as well as to bait schools not associated with structure. Bait rolling on the surface and diving birds are all good signs. They can be a few hundred yards offshore or 50 miles out. This is real fishing, its not like going after Snapper.

Common methods for fishing KM include

Anchoring up on structure and fishing live or dead bait on the surface, mid-water, or on the bottom.

Drifting across structure or bait pods and fishing live or dead bait on the surface, mid-water.

Slow motor trolling of live bait on the surface, mid-water, or near the bottom

Fast motor trolling of lures (large spoons, large full-bodied lures) on the surface. It is a good idea to change up speeds to trigger a strike.

KM have very sharp teeth, are extremely aggressive, and oftentimes attack bait by biting the bait in half from the side. Kings hit the bait at a very high speed with the intent on killing it (possibly cutting it in half) and then circling back to eat it. They hit the bait at high

speeds which makes you setting the hook counterproductive, because you will often pull it out of their mouths.

In my opinion, because of their incredibly sharp teeth and speed with which they hit, you always need to use a wire leader. If you're using a non-wire protected sinker, don't be surprised if KM attack your sinker and cut your line from time to time. if you're trolling a spoon or plug, make sure you are additionally using a ball-bearing swivel to reduce line twist.

If you're using dead bait (frozen sardines) or live bait (blue runners), use KM rigs which are made of wire and have a trailer treble hook to be placed at the top of your bait half way between head and tail. If your using very large blue runners, use KM rigs which have two trailer treble hooks. These rigs are available at most bait stores. Most of your hookups will be on the trailer hook. The need for these stinger hooks is that the Kings often hit the bait in the center for their killing run, missing the hook forward on the bait and getting caught on the stinger.

A personal preference---Typical KM around here are 35-45 inches in length, and are lots of fun to fight on light spinning equipment (reels should have 300 yds of line). Of course, if you're trolling full bodied lures, you must match your rod/reel/line to the resistance of the lure.

Some experienced trollers feel that treble hooks can provide the fish the ability to use one imbedded treble for leverage to pull out another imbedded treble of the same hook. Consider replacing the treble hooks with the same size single hooks. Many of us have done this on most of our plugs (backwater and gulf) with no loss of hits, much less snags, safer hook removal and a better chance of fish survival.

Some like to use a long wire leader, with a wire-protected sinker on one of their rods to get the spoon off the surface. In this case the sequence would be spoon, 4 ft wire, swivel, 1 ft wire with sinkers, swivel, standing line on the spool of the reel. Important to use black swivels, no beads. Sinkers, silver swivels and beads can attract a hit, there by cutting your line. Troll at about 4-6 knots. Try varying speeds while trolling to get spoons to drop and come back up within the water column. Many hits occur as you accelerate back up to trolling speed.

When using live bait some anglers cut half the tail to slow the bait and create crippled appearance. This works on Cobia as well. When hooking through the head be sure not to go through the lower jaw and upper, in that prohibits them from breathing and greatly shortens the life of the bait.

There are some good general rules for King Fish fishing. Remember the rod holder can be you friend. Because

they hit so hard and fast they will hook themselves. Set the drag fairly loose so they can run with the bait, if they cut it in half it gives them a chance to come back and hit it again. Keep your finger away from the line, they will take out braid at such a high rate of speed that it will slice your finger badly. The name Smoker Kings comes from the cloud of water (It looks like smoke) that comes off your reel as they make a run. If hooked, you try to set the hook when they are running at 20 to 30 MPH does not work out well. We have all been there.

If legal and you decide to keep them, handle with care their teeth are impressive. If you are going to eat them, remember to bleed them and really ice them down as soon as you can. Cut them into steaks, lightly season and oil them and cook them on your grill. If grilled you are in for a great tasting treat.

Like Salmon, Kings have some oil in their flesh and do not take to frying. The natural oils in salmon and kings is why they smoke so well.

8/15/21

Ed V