

changing fishing conditions, and no one lure is right all the time. So I want at least two of them to have cross-applications. It's important to note that the premise of this story does mean the exclusion of a particular lure in practice. In other words, these are my "top three," but you can be sure there will be others in my car when I head to the rocks.

Durability is a major factor when picking a lure for Rhode Island's fall run. The waters of Rhode Island are notoriously hard on tackle. Lures that crack when accidentally cast against a rock or when dropped did not make my short list. My three lures have finishes that will hold up and hooks that do not straighten, and they do not have plastic components.

First up is the 2-ounce neon blue/chrome Acme Kastmaster. Several years ago I spent an extended fall vacation on Block Island, the result of a strong front with accompanying easterly winds that forced cancellation of ferry service off the island. On the third day, the wind swung into the south and blew hard enough to clean the weed out of the water on the island's southwest side over the course of a couple of tides.

The next morning I made my way to the shore. It was clear and the sea was still up from the effects of the storm, and it felt like a big fish day. I snapped on a Kastmaster and made a booming cast with the aid of a quartering wind and braided line. About 70 yards out, a bass broke on the back side of an incoming wave but missed my lure. It's not often that a bass looks huge at 200 feet, but this one did; I can only speculate how heavy that fish was. Suffice to say it was the biggest striper I have ever seen.

While I missed Ms. Big, I landed two fish of about 25 pounds each that morning on that Kastmaster, along with a handful of both just-legal and sublegal stripers. It was a classic, big-water fall morning and I'll never forget it. Most of the fish regurgitated small menhaden, a common Rhode Island fall baitfish and one that the neon blue/chrome Kastmaster mimics well. By the end of the day, that lure caught a couple hundred pounds of fish and still looked new. Since then, I have never stepped out for a fall morning of fishing without a Kastmaster. Kastmasters are my daytime go-to lure.

Made in Rhode Island, the Kastmaster is well suited for the Rhode Island fall run due to its castability and ability to mimic common baitfish. But what I really like is that it has only a single bucktail hook. The solid chrome-over-brass body and single bucktail hook allow the angler to put a lot of pressure on big fish with less chance of the hook straightening than you would have with the light wire hooks found on lesser lures and with no chance of the body failing.

Surface swimmers have been favorite Rhode Island surf-casting lures for decades, and what have become known as Danny-style plugs are the most popular. Patterned after the original, designed and manufactured by Danny Pichney, this lure leaves a V-wake and has a slow wobble that big stripers find hard to resist. Although they take a bit of practice to learn how to use correctly, their effectiveness when fished by an experienced angler is well known. The presence of mature menhaden along the shore this season also factored heavily in my selection of the Danny.

I have used several brands over the years, but I am particularly fond of the Tattoo Danny-style swimmer for its action and durability, and its ability to entice strikes on a super-slow retrieve. The first question from a potential Danny-plug purchaser is usually, "How is the action?" This is the most important question in my opinion, and the action of a Tattoo swimmer is superb. The action, a wide wobble, allows more of the lure's finish to flash below the waterline and helps to create a wake even at the slowest speeds that results in more follows and strikes than any other Danny I have used.

Is it through-wired? That is usually the second question from a striper fan looking for a Danny swimming lure to take on an expedition along the striper coast. Anglers who plan on fishing Rhode

Island waters during the prime tides of autumn will often insist that their lures be through-wired. Why the big emphasis on through-wiring? A big striper hooked with the first treble will often flex its armor-plated head and flanks while trying to get leverage to pull out the lure. If that doesn't work, it will sound and try to leverage the lure free by using a rock, lobster pots or whatever else it can find. A lure can have great action and elicit strike after strike, but if a good fish cracks your lure and you only have two left in your bag, you will find yourself in a world of very limited choices.

Savvy anglers also look for top-quality hooks, and Tattoo's Dannies are rigged with 4X VMC trebles noted for their durability. Hooks are the most likely component of a plug to fail. Even

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