

# Squid in the

> JOHN L. FIELD



**T**HE SCENE OF JUMPING SQUID AND STRIPED BASS RECURS IN MY IMAGINATION WHEN I'M OFF THE WATER, AND HAS KEPT ME RETURNING TO THE RIPS OF NEW ENGLAND EVERY SPRING FOR THE PAST 12 YEARS.

Not only is the squid run exciting to experience from a naturalist's viewpoint, there's a probability you'll encounter a big bass on the fly. "We routinely catch bass in the 40- to 50-pound range when fishing rips with squid as the primary bait," Captain Shawn Bristow of Nantucket told me. Captain Bellefleur [Stonington, Connecticut] and I are satisfied with the numbers of fish from 20 to 40 pounds we've boated or lost in the Fishers Island Sound area over the years. The reason these rips produce is no longer a secret.

# RIPS

**Longfin  
squid are  
calamari  
for 20- to  
40-pound  
stripers**



The squid move to the shallower rips from adjacent water averaging 60 feet deep, and the stripers are waiting. It's easier for stripers to ambush forage like squid in shallower water where they can drive them to the surface, and there's nowhere else to go. Stripers conserve energy in the slower flows near bottom and in front of, or just behind structure, almost like

trout in a river. Stripers are so strong they will even hold near the surface in the fast current for long periods if they anticipate the passage of more food.

### **Squid Background**

I've had the privilege of speaking with Dr. Roger Hanlon of the Marine Biology Laboratory in Woods Hole for background on squid

behavior. (See squid video [mbl.edu/mrc/banton/video.html](http://mbl.edu/mrc/banton/video.html)) His input blew me away, because it corrects popular misconceptions I'd heard for years about longfin squid. [Find more about longfin squid at [flyfisherman.com/2012/03/07/longfinsquid](http://flyfisherman.com/2012/03/07/longfinsquid). THE EDITOR.]

Dr. William Macy and Dr. Jon Brodziak published a landmark study in



▶ **The Humboldt Squid** designed by Martha's Vineyard Captain Thomas J. Rapone measures 12 inches. The 11-12 Tibor reel (included to show the scale of these flies) has a 5-inch diameter.

about one third mantle and two thirds tentacles. The mantle and fin of a real longfin comprise about two thirds of the squid's body length, and the arms about the last third. According to Lou, "Stripers are headhunters and blues cut!" He placed the glue-on eye on the bend of the hook to increase the odds of hooking stripers. His fly was originally tied on #1/0 to #3/0 hooks, and the longest measured 7 inches.

Next, Skok made a revision of the Glow Squid using his Mega Mushy flash called the Mega-Mushy Squid or

MM Squid. Next, he and his friend Captain Jaime Boyle of nearby Edgartown created a new fly named the Red Can Squid, or RCS. The RCS is a close relative to the Mega-Mushy Squid but uses Mega Mushy flash blended with Slinky Fibre. It measures 6 inches long.

The next fly to evolve from this family was the Humboldt Squid by Captain Thomas J. Rapone, also of Edgartown, who fishes Martha's Vineyard. His version replaces the Slinky Fiber tail with Big Fly Fiber, making a 12-inch-long fly, compared to the

6-inch RCS. Tom says all black or red are his favorite fly colors on the sand reefs of the Vineyard.

"The 3-D eyes on all three of these flies are placed at the bend of the hook to prevent fouling and a to add a target," says Skok. "I like pale orange and pale pink when fishing sand rips and purple, red, and ginger over rock reefs."

Bob Popovics of Seaside, New Jersey, is the father of dozens of innovative, effective fly patterns. These are his thoughts on how he'd imitate

- ▶ **When squid** are moving through the rips, striped bass and bluefish sometimes hover near the surface to feed. To catch them, use the boat to stem the tide, cast 90 degrees to the current, and swing your squid imitation down into the rip.



# Squid in the Rips

really big longfin. “My favorite squid would be a bucktail deceiver with saddles tied in Semper Fleye style. Some even bigger ones tied with HOLLOW collars. Length alone is not as important as three-dimensional size. Long can also be just skinny to some people. I want a truer imitation with all characteristics of a squid—large eyes where they belong, action, and real size.”

Bob’s 9-inch Shady Lady Squid and 12-inch Bob’s Big Squid use a mono extension and a long-shank hook to help create their realistic proportions.

## New Designs

Most captains who’ve been at the squid game for a while agree that when the stripers are all fired up on squid, they aren’t fussy. Many captains tie simple impressionistic flies, while

others make them look more real.

The most realistic ones I’ve seen are tied by Jonny King, of New York City. He ties his Emergent Sparkle Squid on a long-shank hook with flash inside a hollow-tied mantle of yak or Kinky Fiber. This gives it translucence. The ingenious part is the extension. The hackle tentacles are rolled onto an adhesive strip of Sili Skin or Goopy Body to form the head and arm assembly, then attached to the mantle from the rear, and secured with Plasti-dip. [See *Jonny King’s Emergent Sparkle Squid at flyfisherman.com/2012/03/07/longfin squid*. THE EDITOR.]

Steve Farrar’s Squid Fly is his style of tying another realistic squid, and is fairly translucent, with a lot of subtle sparkle. Farrar’s squid has an extended body of pearl E-Z Body and uses ostrich herl for arms that make his fly

look and move just like a small squid. His favorite color is orange.

Dave Skok’s Red Can Squid and Mega-Mushy Squid are still great mid-sized squid imitations. But the most productive fly I’ve seen to imitate big longfin is the previously mentioned Humboldt Squid. Its large size discourages small fish, and draws vicious strikes from big ones. On the rock reefs of Connecticut and Rhode Island, hot pink or purple Humboldts have worked best for me.

## “Swinging” a Fly

The most productive way to present a squid fly on a rip is from a boat stemming the tide. This means the boat is powered both in and out of gear, with the bow into the tide to maintain position above the rip.

If you see a fish or squid break along the reef, the operator can steer into the tide and adjust boat thrust, sliding sideways without moving away from the rip. Once the boat is in position to make a swing, the angler makes the cast as long as possible—90 degrees across, or slightly uptide if you want the fly to sink more—and lets the fly swing over the rip. This swing puts a large belly in the line, and stripers can hit at any time. After the line straightens, start long erratic strips. I prefer to use both hands with the rod butt tucked under my arm.

I recommend using 12-weight outfits and lines with 400- to 500-grain sinking heads for these big flies. You can use integrated heads, but I recommend a 130-foot shooting head attached to a running line.

The two intermediate running lines I recommend are the Airflo 30-pound-test Aqua Blue Ridge Running Line, and the RIO Powercore 30-pound-test Clear Running Line. I favor the Ridge because it has a Kevlar core and lower stretch. It also has texture for a good grip, and is less tiring to double-haul than the more slippery RIO Powercore. They both shoot very well. Connect this to the right head and you’re ready.

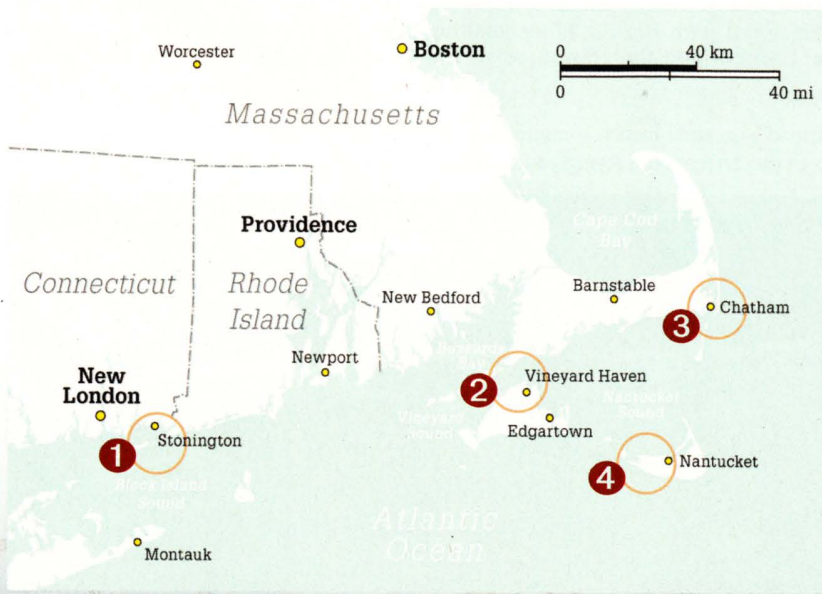
Scientific Anglers has a 30-foot tapered head (no loops) called Deep Water Express from 400 to 850 grains, and level Express Shooting line in 250-foot bulk spools. RIO’s T-14 and the new T-17 level heads come in 30-foot looped heads, and in bulk.

When you cut your own head, or find a dealer with a spool, you’ll need to nail-knot a loop, or add a braided loop. Connecting loops are significant liabilities, and must be replaced when you see signs of fatigue.

If you prefer integrated heads over shooting heads, I recommend the

## NEW ENGLAND HOT SPOTS

- 1. The Fishers Island Sound and Block Island Sound** areas usually have big pre-spawn bass and squid around the third week of May through June.
- 2. Martha’s Vineyard** experiences good squid runs going to and from spawning grounds. Expect bass the first week of June on rips off the southeast end, and in Vineyard Sound.
- 3. Chatham’s Monomoy Shoal** is a series of sandbars and rips with squid in May and bass by June. Deep channels, like Pollock Rip Channel, hold bass all summer.
- 4. Nantucket** fishing has been best in recent years on the east side of the island from June through August. The squid appear here in March, and the bass arrive two months later.





► **Atlantic longfin** squid can rapidly change colors, produce patterns, and adjust iridescent reflective cells to match their surroundings. They also use ink to evade predators.

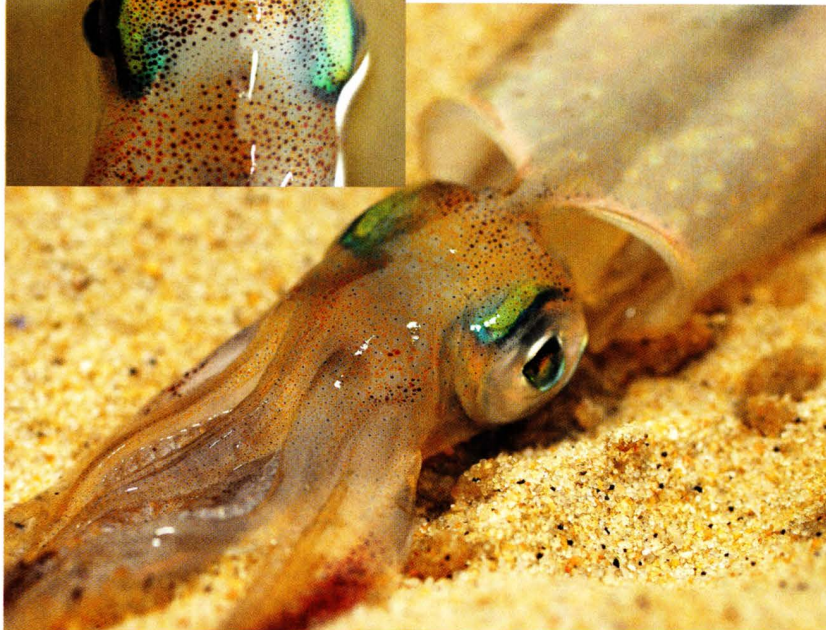


Photo | Dave Skok

Teeny TS lines with 30-foot 450- or 500-grain heads, or the XD500, which has a 35-foot 500-grain head. Scientific Anglers offers the Mastery Series Streamer Express 30-foot integrated line with a 450-grain head and floating running line.

When using flies imitating juvenile squid, clear intermediate lines on 9- or 10-weight outfits are more practical because juveniles usually form schools near the surface. Cortland's Precision Striper clear intermediate line or Airflo's Sniper intermediate clear blue line should fit the bill.


## Other Tackle

I use G.Loomis CrossCurrent rods for stripers because they have stiff, fast-taper blanks made of high-modulus graphite, and are equipped with REC Recoil titanium wire guides. This stiffness and design handles the heavy flies and big fish and casts well at any distance.

Maybe half the time, big stripers over 25 pounds make a big first run up to 100 yards. The backing type isn't critical, so use 100 yards or more of 30-pound Dacron or 80-pound-test PowerPro. The most important reel requirement is retrieve speed. A tight line prevents thrown hooks. I

use reels intended for 12-weight lines because they have enough diameter to retrieve in a hurry.

Large stripers have abrasive mouths, so your leader should have either a clear nylon or fluorocarbon bite tippet. I start with a 4-foot 20-pound fluorocarbon butt section with a double loop on one end. (I use a Bimini twist and then double it to tie a loop with a double surgeon's knot.) To the other end, tie on 2 feet of 40-pound fluorocarbon bited tippet with a double nail knot. I tie the flies onto the leader using a Lefty's Loop Knot.

When needed, I also use a 14-inch length of single-strand coffee-colored #9 wire for big flies, or 6 inches of #6 wire for flies like Gurglers. I use a wire leader twister tool to make a perfect five-twist eyelet in the #9 wire and I just tie a uni knot to the leader. For the #6 wire, I tie an Albright knot to join the leader to the steel tippet. I attach the wire to the flies with a hay-wire twist. 

John Field has volunteered as president of the New York City Chapter of Trout Unlimited and is now president of the American Casting Association. He is deeply involved in teaching young people how to fly fish.

# Logistics

## Block Island Sound

(Stonington, Connecticut area)

### Captain Steve Bellefleur

(860) 535-4856

### Captain Steve Burnett

(860) 572-9896

[fishwatchhill.com](http://fishwatchhill.com)

## LODGING & DINING

### Seabreeze Inn

(860) 535-2843

[seabreezeinn.us](http://seabreezeinn.us)

### Mystic Comfort Inn

(860) 572-8531

[comfortinn.com](http://comfortinn.com)

### Dog Watch Café

[dogwatchcafe.com](http://dogwatchcafe.com)

## Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts

### Boylermaker Charters

Captain Jaime Boyle

(508) 922-1749

[boylermaker.com](http://boylermaker.com)

### Captain Tom Rapone

(508) 922-1754

[highlymigratoryfishing.com](http://highlymigratoryfishing.com)

## Nantucket

### Squaretail Outfitters

Capt. Shawn Bristow

(603) 498-9518

[captshawn@mac.com](mailto:captshawn@mac.com)

### Striped Tease Charters

Captain Jeff Walther

(508) 237-5997

## FLIES & TACKLE

### Coop's Bait and Tackle

(508) 627-3909

[coopsbaitandtackle.com](http://coopsbaitandtackle.com)

### Larry's Tackle Shop

[larrystackle.com](http://larrystackle.com)

(508) 627-5088

### Saltwaterflies.com

(413) 274-6143