February 6, 2023

Underwater Sweethearts

Did you know that red hake like to snuggle with sea scallops? No joke. It’s a total big spoon - little spoon situation down there. If you look at the bottom of the shelling house tray after a few tows, you’ll see dozens of baby red hake, still alive, discarded from the scallops after the meats are cut out. I used to think the scallops were preying on the young fish, but scallops are filter feeders. It’s actually quite the opposite. They’re protecting the young hake in a seemingly sentimental relationship that has been observed for decades. When juvenile hake sense danger, they’ll swim inside the scallop. The scallop closes its shell around the hake to protect both of them. When the coast is clear, the scallop opens, and little fish swims out. “Inquiline” is a term that describes an animal that exploits the living space of another. But scallops and red hake seem to be a little more connected than just sharing a living space. The scallop actively protects the hake until it’s big enough to fend for itself, and even after that the hake is still observed laying on the bottom next to the scallop.

Mind blown yet? Fresh water mussels have a similar relationship with alewives. Alewives are a species of herring that live in salt water and spawn in fresh water each spring. Mussel seed in the ponds will attach itself to the gills or fins of an adult alewife while it’s visiting the pond. The mussel stays attached for an entire year as the fish makes its journey out to the ocean and then back again in the spring. The mussel sheds itself from the alewife when it returns to the pond and completes its life cycle in fresh water. Pretty wild right?

(Photo by Chris Austin)

Do you have a question about our fisheries? Send it to info@coastalfisheries.org or call 207.367.2708.

Prices to Harvesters

Lobsters: $6.60-$7.60/lb
Scallops: $13.00/lb
Diesel: $4.85/gal

(Prices in Stonington on 2/6/23)

Oceanographic Buoy I-01

44°6’10”N 68°6’44”W - Frenchboro
Water Temperature (50 meters): 43.5°F (Ave: 39.69°F)

Source: www.neracoos.org