

SALTWATER NEWS >>

# Martinez catch-and-release sturgeon derby draws over 200 anglers

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MARTINEZ—With an increase of around 30 anglers, the sec-

ond annual catch and release sturgeon derby out of the Martinez Marina proved once again that a release format is fine with anglers. A total of

210 anglers entered the event providing a first place prize of \$1,881, and cash awards out to seventh place.

"A total of 11 sturgeon

were caught, measured and released," said Captain Steve Talmadge of *Flash Fishing*, who brainstormed with Jordana "Jorje" Santiago to

come up with a workable release tournament structure.

"Our main goal is to educate anglers about the proper care of sturgeon when you want to catch and release, and to show that releasing the fish is a sound concept," said Talmadge. Secondary goals included encouraging anglers to behave in a sportsmanlike manner, with emphasis on launch ramp and radio etiquette.

Hosted by Martinez Bait and Tackle, the event offered a night-before seminar panel of expert sturgeon anglers, and catch and release dos and don'ts from DFG biologist Marty Gringas.

"He explained how the DFG biologists handle the fish when they have to," said Talmadge. "These fish have cartilage instead of bones, and can be easily injured. You do not want to hold these fish by the gill plates. When you work with them, you want to suspend them horizontally in the water."

Guidelines offered to the anglers included fast notification for the weighmasters. "We had 5 chase boats, 2 back up boats, and a back up number in case all the boats were

occupied," said Talmadge. "As it was, things went very smoothly. There were only a couple fish that had to be netted and held for the weighmaster." If the angler got the fish to boatside, he was to leave the fish in the water, suspended in a landing net. Weighmasters had brightly-colored staffs that showed slot size clearly; once the fish was determined legal, the fish was released.

The 11 successful anglers were entered into a drawing that chose at random, without regard to size, the seven cash winners of the event.

First place winner was Tom Fugate of Vallejo, who caught a 54 incher. In second, winning \$1,343.75, was Dan Villarruz of San Jose. Third place netted \$1,075 for Jeremy Kangas of Stickem Sportfishing, who caught a 51 incher. From fourth through seventh, the cash prize was \$268.75, and winners were Jake Conway of Concord with a 48 incher, Donavon Olech of Vallejo with a 49 incher, Jim Koza of Citrus Heights with a 65.5 incher and Aaron Youse of Concord with a 47 incher.

In addition to the derby and the seminar, anglers were treated to a raffle on Friday night. "We had tons of stuff at the raffle, which serves to build money to pay the weighmasters for their expenses," said Talmadge. Several sponsors donated product for the raffle, including Vic's Custom Rods, West Marine, Eagle Marine, Right Hook Sportfishing, Les Schwab Tires, Ace Hardware, Kragen Auto Parts and more. As for the entry fees, 100 percent was returned to the anglers as prizes.



**WINNING \$1,881**, first place finisher by random drawing at the Diamond Classic was Tom Fugate of Vallejo. His fish measured 54 inches and was quickly released after confirmation by a weighmaster in a chase boat. Second place was worth \$1,343.75 to Dan Villarruz of San Jose. Third place went to Jeremy Kangas of *Stickem* Sportfishing, the rising star on the Martinez sportfishing scene.

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