

A Nose for Fish

Potcakes Daisy and Dusty use their sense of smell to help their owner find baitfish.

Capt. Andy LoCascio points the bow of his 28-foot Triton center console northwest and begins a slow run toward the middle of Manhasset Bay. As we push past a flotilla of moored sailboats, his two dogs, Daisy and Dusty, bound to the bow, spring to attention and stick their faces hard into the wind.

"Those dogs are hot on bunker already," says LoCascio, a Long Island, New York, charter skipper (www.lifishcharters.com) and cohost of the popular outdoors television show, *Northeast Angling*.

As we follow the noses of LoCascio's four-legged mates, they grow more excited. Daisy is on point, as if preparing to flush a pheasant, and Dusty whines in anxious anticipation. Sure enough, a faint ripple on the surface ahead betrays a school of silvery baitfish. LoCascio gets a castnet over the side, and within minutes we are powering out into Long Island Sound with a cargo of live bunker that will serve as striped bass and bluefish bait.

"It's simply amazing how keen these dogs are on fishing," laughs LoCascio proudly. "I've trained them to sniff out bunker mostly, but they can pick up bluefish nearly as well and get excited by a strong whiff of striped bass. It's like upland game hunting on the water."

Daisy and Dusty are potcakes. Descendents of the rottweilers once used to kill rats on trade ships, the breed thrives on the Turk and Caicos islands where they often run wild. Recently, U.S. anglers have discovered that these dogs can be trained to identify fish scents and respond to seagull and tern cries or even the single flip of a bunker tail. Now demand for them is growing.

If only they could swab the deck after a successful bluefish trip, they'd be perfect.

— Tom Schlichter



Daisy and Dusty in their favorite position, sniffing out fish from the bow of the boat.

