

StriperFest 2016: A New Generation Learns About Native Fish

A little boy with a fishing pole stands next to a blue kiddie wading pool, fishing pole in hand; when the magnet at the end of his line catches a fish, he pulls it high up in the air with glee, and someone shows him how to know what kind of fish it is.

A little girl studies the anatomy of a Striped bass, as a local biologist dissects it.

A youngster with a little turtle painted on her cheek concentrates as she looks through a microscope.

A volunteer spreads out colorful gyotaku fish paintings on a table to dry.

A circle of children sits in a circle, mesmerized by a storyteller.

Children and volunteers alike are wearing funny paper hats they've decorated with fish.

The room is filled with color and pipe cleaners and paints and crayons and construction paper and busy children—and lots and lots of fish. Not cartoon fish, but realistically rendered American shad, and Atlantic sturgeon, and the Striped bass for which the festival is named.

It's Community Education Day, where, every January, for three hours in the middle of StriperFest, children and their families are immersed in fish-related games, art and science. It's a part of the two-day StriperFest event held annually by Cape Fear River Watch, as its biggest event of the year.

"The event is a way for us to bring community awareness and support to the restoration of the Cape Fear River Fishery, one of this region's most impor-

tant economic and environmental resources," explains Kay Lynn Plummer-Hernandez, Education Coordinator for Cape Fear River Watch. "Each year people of all ages learn about the river, the species that live there and how each of us can help create and maintain a healthy environment."

It's educational, and it's fun. Exhibitors are all asked to provide an activity for children with an environmental theme...preferably "fishy" in nature.

"I encourage all of my students and their families to attend StriperFest because it is one of Wilmington's most educational and fun events!" says teacher Michelle Lawson. "The Community Education Day is not only free, it provides wonderful hands-on activities that can be tailored to each child's age and attention span, and it is staffed by fascinating locals with a wealth of knowledge to share. Geared toward ages 2-99, there is truly something for everyone. My only wish is that it lasted longer!"

Visit the Cape Fear River Watch website to learn all the ways you and your family can enjoy StriperFest and its sister event, LakeFest, held at Greenfield Lake in May. www.CapeFearRiverWatch.org.



photo by Kay Lynn Plummer-Hernandez

New for StriperFest 2016: a puppet show! Shown here during rehearsal, from left: Lill Van Order with "Shadow" the American shad, Jessica Stitt with "Jumper" the endangered Atlantic sturgeon, Andrea Belletti with "Striper" the Striped bass, and John Belletti with "Trooper" the American shad.

An invitation from Cape Fear River Watch:

Join us as we celebrate the resurgence of the migratory fish of the Cape Fear with our biggest event of the year—StriperFest! Our Auction and Banquet is Friday night (January 15)—be there to bid on great items and be a part of the live action! All of the proceeds go to the Cape Fear River. Join in on the fun Saturday (January 16) as we watch the boats take off at 8:30a.m. for our one-of-a-kind Tag and Release Striped Bass Fishing Tournament! Hang around for an informative fisheries forum (10a.m.), fishing seminar(12p.m.) and our fabulously fun free Community Education Day! (11a.m.–2p.m.) Bring the kids and enjoy art projects, fisheries biology, face painting, casting lessons, boat trips up the Cape Fear and MUCH MORE! For more information about StriperFest 2016 please visit www.CapeFearRiverWatch.org.



Cape Fear River Watch brings you two family festivals:

StriperFest 2016
 January 15 & 16, 2016
 Coastline Convention Center
 Auction & Banquet
 Striped Bass Tag & Release Tournament
 Fisheries Forum, Fishing Seminar & Community Education Day

Lakefest 2016
 May 7, 2016 • 10am–2pm
 Fun, free outdoor celebration of Greenfield Lake. Live animals, face painting, waterfowl identification, discounted eco tours, arts and crafts, kayak races and MUCH MORE!

