

Long range fleet on a great pace for cows

Royal Star tops the parade of big fish with 13-day run for 33 fish over 200, four of them over 300 pounds

SAN DIEGO — The long range fleet is setting a fine pace toward a new supercow record for the season.

"With the arrival of four more fish over 300 pounds aboard *Royal Star*, which arrived at Fisherman's landing Dec. 22, it looks like chances are pretty good that we'll see more than the 49 supercows weighed last year," said Bill Roecker, who is the long range fleet's official dock reporter. "We'll see how it all tallies out."

As Roecker reported, Capt. Tim Ekstrom docked his *Royal Star* with 33 cows, including 4 supercows. The trip was a 13-

day Accurate-Bart Ryder expedition with a flyback option for those who wanted to come home after 10 days of fishing. There were 13 anglers aboard, and each of them got at least one cow.

The trip's whopper was a 364 pounder caught by Rob McAdam of San Francisco, after a fight of an hour and a half. It bit on a chunk hiding a 9/0 Eagle Claw hook. He

LONG RANGE/18

THE RP's JACKPOTS were won by Neal Campbell of Fallbrook, who took first place for his 262-pound yellowfin, Ken Kuchi of Huntington Beach was second with his 240.3-pound tuna and Bob Ramirez, a *Royal Polaris* regular, who got three cows at 240.1, 213 and 201 pounds. Not eligible for the jackpot was George Iwata, far left, and his 291-pound yellowfin tuna.



January 1, 2010

Volume 58, Number 1

\$50,000 SLATED FOR TRI STATES

The total purse for the 2010 WON BASS Tri-States Team Championship has grown to over \$50,000 in cash, prizes and rewards/8



SALT SHAKINGS:

Lots of huge white seabass, mixed bag fishing offshore and the loss of some heavy hitters sums up 2009/13

"THE NATION'S BIGGEST WEEKLY FISHING AND HUNTING NEWSPAPER"

DOBYNS WINS U.S. OPEN, NASLUND NEW DIRECTOR

Great events, big changes mark WON BASS year

BY RICH HOLLAND
WON Staff Writer

SAN CLEMENTE — Across the nation it was a year of turmoil and change on the tournament bass fishing scene, but with a strong showing at the U.S. Open and a new director at the helm heading into 2010, WON BASS is poised to offer a great season of competitive bassin'.

With its pro circuit put into limbo early in 2009 by the economic disaster, all eyes turned to the 27th annual WON BASS U.S. Open of Bass Fishing at Lake Mead last September. With major declines in attendance at other big money tournaments, would the U.S. Open turn out the same?

Lured by the promise of \$50,000 first place cash, a Nitro Z-8 bass boat and Mercury Pro XS 225 outboard, a stellar lineup of national pros, past U.S. Open winners and fishermen from as far away as Japan and



GARY DOBYNS came oh so close many times before he finally broke through in 2009 to win his first WON BASS U.S. Open title.

Australia not only made the event a success, but the 112 boats in the field made the U.S. Open the only West Coast bass tournament to draw more

anglers in 2009 than it did the year before.

The big story of the U.S. Open wasn't the turnout, how

WON BASS CHANGES/8

Squid — from market size to Humboldts — give San Diego anglers winter options

■ Big yellows and even a few white seabass are in the mix in La Jolla's squid grounds

BY BRANDON HAYWARD
WON Staff Writer

SAN DIEGO — With the new year comes options galore — by winter standards — for San Diego anglers. Giant squid and rockfish have been leading the way for sportboats, while market squid and the stuff that eats it has been drawing throngs of private boaters and kayakers to La Jolla, where both yellowtail and white seabass have been drawn to the candy bait.

Still, the Humboldt squid have been the name of the game for sportboats. More specifically, Seaforth Sportfishing's *New Seaforth*.

SQUID FOR SAN DIEGO ANGLERS/22



OFF-SEASON 'TUNA' — Timothy McArroy of Bellflower nailed this 56-pound Humboldt squid aboard the *New Seaforth* on Sunday, Dec. 20. "I was fishing with my dad Nicholas," Timothy said. "We do this every time they show! I was using a Seeker Short Stroker 5-foot rod with 50-pound test Spiderwire Stealth superbraid line on a Daiwa Saltist STTLD big game reel.

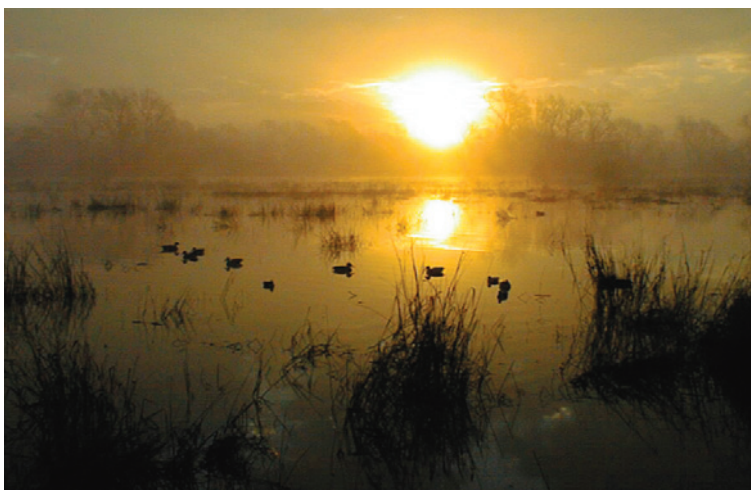
Decoy tactics and gear for ducks, geese

BY JIM NIEMIEC
WON Staff Writer

PRADO BASIN — Waterfowlers had to wait until Dec. 1 before they could use electronic or mechanically-operated spinning blade devices or spinning wing decoys in a spread when attempting to take waterfowl. This restriction was put in place a few seasons ago by the California Department of Fish and Game, when some hunters objected to the use of spinning wing/blade decoys, believing that they gave hunters who could afford to purchase one an advantage over just a spread of standard floating decoys. Through the end of the waterfowl season, and on into the special Imperial Valley White Goose season, the use of any kind of decoy is legal, except live decoys as listed in the waterfowl regulations.

The WindWhacker Decoy is one good choice to use and it has proved very effective when used in a spread, especially on windy days. This unique set of spinning blades can be used in several

DECOY TACTICS/27



A DUCK HUNTER'S DREAM POND — Sunrise at a duck club is the best part of being in the outdoors. This duck pond is ready for the morning lift-off as the spread of decoys should have attracted puddle and diving ducks during the off shoot days. Many duck hunters add life to a decoy spread with spinning wing or moving decoys. This photo was taken in Prado Basin on a very cold December morning.

WON PHOTO BY JIM NIEMIEC

INSIDE WON

INDEX

DEPARTMENT LISTINGS

Baja	23
Calendar	31
Classifieds	26-27
Editorial	4
Form Charts	28-29
Freshwater Whoppers	6
Private Boater's Spotlight	21
Saltwater Whoppers	20
Sound Off	4
Trout Plants	6

COLUMNS

Brandon Hayward/Tackle Room	22
Rich Holland/Saltwater	25
George Kramer/Bass Talk	7
Pat McDonnell/Editor's Notes	14
Brad Schweit/Schweitwater	6
Carrie Wilson/DFG Q&A	9
Gary Graham/Road Trekker	24

Solutions to the 100-pound problem

Last week's column was about flylining sardines for cows, and some of the problems that come with flylining with heavy gear. This week's column is going to be on a shaky subject — fishing short topshots of 100-pound fluorocarbon when the fishing is scratchy.

Most captains and long range crews like to see nothing less than 130-pound go in the water, for the simple fact that the heavy gear increases hook-to-land ratios. While fishing 130 is all well and good when the fish are biting, it can be tough to get a bite on 130-pound — even if it is fluorocarbon — and a flylined sardine.

There are times when dropping down to a short, 12- to 25-or-so foot section of 100-pound fluorocarbon will get you a bite. I don't know about you, but I'd rather get a bite on 100-pound and try to push it through than watch fish blow up in my face while guys rail away on fish hooked on the kite gear.

So when are those 100-pound times? Well, you have to choose your spots. You have to ask yourself, "Why?"

Here's a little exercise for the open minded that will help you in fishing (and I have figured this helps me with any problem/solution situation in life). After World War II, Toyota developed a problem solving technique called the Five Whys. The idea is to ask why five times to get to the root of any failure or problem. (I think it also works out for any problem you are facing, on or off the water.)

A lot of people find it easy to recognize problems. But they can't come up with solutions: methods of successfully dealing with a problem or difficulty. It could be in business, finances, relationships — or fishing.

Any time you are going to change tactics, in this case go from 130-pound to 100-pound, run through the whys.

Here's an example based on when I dropped down to a short piece 100-pound Seaguar Fluoro Premier to get the only flyline bite of the day one afternoon on my 16-day on the *Excel*.

Problem: There were cows blowing up around the boat and eating the kite baits, but nobody was getting bit on the flyline, sinker rigs and bobber balloons on 130-pound. Why? (Here's the question: why am I thinking about going to 100-pound?) Why #1: the fish will not bite the 130-pound. Why #2: Nobody has tried fishing 100-pound. Why #3: I think I can finesse up a bite on 100-pound and a smaller hook (5/0 Owner Gorilla) and a 50-plus-foot cast with a longer rod (Seeker 2x4) and a smaller reel (Accurate ATD 12). Why, why...

Solution: try dropping down 100-pound on the stealth rig.

(On the flip side, another set of whys can be



TACKLE ROOM By Brandon Hayward

'Touch' fishing cows



AT FIRST GLANCE, this picture looks like little more than the *Polaris Supreme* being partially hidden behind an oncoming swell. But it tells so much from the vantage point of a hooked-up angler, especially an angler fighting a fish with a short topshot up in the bow. A savvy angler is going to be thinking about how he is going to pull on the fish — especially if it's at color — when the boat comes off the swell.

WON PHOTO BY BRANDON HAYWARD

asked if you break a fish off on 100-pound on the stealth rig...)

Fishing short topshots of 100-pound test requires a dash of finesse. Tread lightly if there are fish over 250 around the boat. Tread *incredibly* lightly if you haven't bobbed with short topshots — or Spectra in general — much. Here are some parts of the puzzle that help overcome the "violence" that goes with fishing short topshots of 100-pound fluorocarbon.

LONGER RODS: Seven-foot rail rods excel at fishing short pieces of 100-pound fluorocarbon. The extra length helps absorb the shock, especially at color and gaff and when the fish is shaking its head. They also help you lay out some nice casts. A six-and-a-half-foot glass rod like a 6465 XXH also has a nice action to absorb some of the shock. A bonus of fishing longer rods that often goes overlooked: it's easier to get around other hooked up anglers with a slightly longer rod.

FLUOROCARBON STRETCH: It is said that fluorocarbon doesn't stretch. But it does — some more than others. But not all fluorocarbons are equal.

Just like mono, one company's fluorocarbons differ in diameter, stretch and breaking strength than others. Basil Pappas, the topshot maker who owns BHP Tackle, tested some major fluorocarbons recently, and his results were interesting. What Pappas' independent tests found is that Seaguar Fluoro Premier is the "stretchiest" of the fluorocarbons.

A 20-foot section of 100-pound Seaguar gives about three feet of stretch when all 20 feet are off the reel. I figured this out by hooking my line onto a trolling strap and walking backwards. (*Tip:* The same technique should be done to get your fluorocarbon all nice and straight so it lays flat in the water, and the bait has less resistance to drag around. Do a quick fluorocarbon stretch every morning.) Keep in mind that there is stretch — even a little in the Spectra — when there is a lot of line in the water, but stretch crashes into the land of diminishing returns the closer you get to gaff.

THE END GAME: This is where things start to get ugly. When the fish gets all settled in and starts circling around 100 feet below the boat, you need to reassess the situation. Ask yourself why you are doing what you are doing, and how you are going to react to different situations (like oncoming swells). With 200-pound mono on the kite gear, you have little to worry about. When it gets down to 100-pound fluorocarbon, there's plenty to worry about aside from just putting it in low and turning the handle.

Really keep the weather in mind. If it's choppy, you are really going to have to be on your game when the fish is getting close to having the gaffs come out. The snapping effect of coming off a swell — especially up in the bow on the anchor — can end the game right then and there.

If you are fishing the rail, fish the rail — don't just sit on the rod butt like a goon. When the fish is out to sea, sure, sit on the butt or do whatever, but when the fish is close, you should have the rod under an armpit so you can make quick adjustments.

Dedicated harness anglers might not agree, but there is a real art to fishing the rail. Be patient, and take what you can get, while also being able to recognize when you need to give a little. You know you are fishing the rail properly when you let the rod become an extension of your body and you let the fish lift you up off the balls of your feet when it's time to give. If they're on your trip, watch guys that know how to fish the rail. They are really fluid with their techniques when the fish are settled in.

Use your palm to palm the spool, use the rail to really get leverage, use the tip of the rod to guide you in your decisions. But all the while you have to realize that something has to give — especially when you are fishing a short section of 100-pound fluorocarbon. All lines break at some point.

ASSESS YOUR WEAKNESSES: Every angler has something they can work on. Really.

It could be working on your casting skills (there is always room for improvement, no matter how good you are), or whatever. Ask yourself things like: "Why am I not casting as far as the best caster on the boat?" "Why did I break that fish off?" "Why am I not getting bit?"

Let the whys guide you.

To see the results from Basil Pappas' fluorocarbon stretch/break tests, check out Brandon Hayward's blog at www.wonews.com.

Squid for San Diego anglers...

Continued from page 1

"It's been around 1000 feet to start, and then they get up to 50 to 100 feet when they get going," said Brian Castleton on the *New Seaforth* Sunday night on a call with WON. "Two nights so far they were floating. So far, most nights have been a good pick. We've moved north a few miles. We've been fishing the 210 Bank."

When WON talked to Castleton, there was some wind and current to deal with; getting the big, 20 to 50-plus-pound squid to stay on the squid jigs was tough at times. "We're drifting at about a knot. Most of the guys don't have heavy sinkers to put on the big squid jigs, so they aren't staying straight up and down."

If there were three tips to go with the incredibly easy squid fishing, they are these: bring a few heavy (think 16 ounce) sinkers, two big squid jigs (the Promar ones are popular) and heavy tackle (a two speed with 80-pound test or greater on a trolling rod).

Nights on the *New Seaforth* have ranged from wide-open, everyone gets as many as they want, to everyone getting a couple and having to work at it — and some trips fall somewhere in between. Monday was wide open when 146 squid hit the deck, while Friday was pickier when 60 squid were posted. Saturday was in between thanks to

100 squid coming over the rail.

While the big 25-plus-pound squid have been the big draw for sportboats fishing local, there have also been shots at yellowtail and white seabass off La Jolla for private boaters and kayakers.

"There's been squid (as in bait-size market squid) off the Half in around 19 Fathoms. There's been a sprinkling of yellows and seabass being caught at night, but most of it has been really early and just before dark," said Castleton. "Yo-yo jigs are working good. The glow in the dark has been the hot jig."

There hasn't been any big scores off La Jolla — it's been mostly a fish or two for skiffs or kayakers that get a shot — the lack of major volume combined with the early and late timetable has meant that sportboats have not got any of the action. (But when do they? La Jolla's winter yellow and seabass fishing has always been a deal for skiffs and kayaks.)

Rockfish have been the name of the game for sportboats, and rockfish are about to become something special for the ¾-day to overnight runs fishing from the Coronados to Colnett. There's always a shot at some exotics — especially yellows at Colnett — but it was a pair of seabass on Seaforth's

Voyager that filed in the exotic category on last weekend's trips.

Voyager owner/operator Jody Morgan told WON that they were fishing off Pescadero when the two seabass ate not squid, but sardines fished on dropper loops of rockfish. In addition to the biscuits, the overnight had limits of rockfish and 4 lingcod for its 13 passengers on Sunday. With the new year comes some new runs. Out of Seaforth that means that the *Legend* will be kicking off its weekend 1½-day trips Jan. 1. The runs are known for giving up great rockfish and lingcod action.

Fisherman's Landing will be offering 1½-day trips on the *Apollo* starting Jan. 1. Years past have had the yellows biting at Colnett on the first rounds of trips. H&M Landing has the *Indian* running its deep-water rockfish trips every Friday night. The trips have been coming back from the Finger bank with limits. The landing has 1½-day trips in the books for the *Top Gun 80* in addition to daily half and ¾-day trips. The *Malihini* has been the only ¾-day boat that has been running on a consistent basis, and the rockfishing has been consistently good. Saturday had 20 anglers land 5 bonito, 48 reds, 52 rockfish, 39 salmon grouper, 51 whitefish and 5 sheepshead.

Mark your calendars! It's San Diego Anglers Open Bay Bass Tournament time!

SAN DIEGO — The 15th annual San Diego Anglers Bay Bass Tournament is Saturday, Jan. 30. Club has just released its new link with the downloadable entry form.

The tourney is a great experience and is limited to 150 boats of two-man teams vying for prizes up to \$1500 with paydowns to 25 teams.

Teams weigh their 5 fish limit (combination of any 5 sand, bay or calico bass) after about six hours of fishing San Diego Bay. After the weigh-in, the club volunteers treat the teams and their family to an outstanding barbecue and large.

The club has just released its new link with the downloadable entry form at www.sandiegoanglers.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=65&Itemid=76 Entry forms are also available in San Diego tackle shops. Contact Dwayne at (619) 972-1503 or e-mail dwaynesda@juno.com.

Baja Beat

READERS: To have your reports included in the Baja report, send photos and e-mails to baja@woneews.com or to post on the Web site and have your reports picked up that way, go to www.woneews.com and click on "reader reports" so others can see your successes and photos. Those Web site reports will be used for the regular Baja roundup.

If you can get there, Gordo Banks the spot!

■ *Cabo-area bank still has cows and billfish; topped by an 800-pound marlin*

BY ROBIN WADE
WON Staff Writer

SAN JOSE DEL CABO — The beat goes on off San Jose Del Cabo, at a time when the bite is usually on the wane this time of year.

Catches this past week included a wide open striped marlin bite, many of which were caught off the Old Light House area. And surprisingly, there are still black and blue marlin hanging around this late in the year, like the 800 pounder caught last Wednesday off Gordo Banks.

"For anglers drift fishing for stripers with mackerel or throwing baits to feeders, it was common to account for double-digit numbers being caught and released," said Eric Bricton from Gordo Banks Pangas. "There were also black and blue marlin still; several in the 400- to 600-pound class were hooked on the Gordo Banks by anglers that were targeting the leader wary cow-sized yellowfin tuna. But the lighter fluorocarbon leader of 80 to 100 pounds, were not enough to keep the marlin from sawing through and breaking off after extended battles. Dan Magers from Montana landed an 800-pound blue marlin from the cruiser the *Blue Marlin* launching out of Cabo San Lucas," he said.

The highlight of 2009 for the Gordo Banks area was most defi-

nately the action for yellowfin tuna, with the best bite of the decade for cow-sized fish 200 pounds or more. There were also super cows over 300 pounds, including the 383-pound yellowfin that took the WON Tuna Jackpot.

"Never in recent history have there been so many of the larger-sized tuna consistently found on these fishing grounds. The fish are still schooling on both the Inner and Outer Bank. Yellowfin over 200 pounds were landed again this past week, though weather conditions are now becoming more of an issue. More wind produces greenish water, not a favorable scenario, but if the winds do not become too persistent there is a very good chance that these cows will stay in the region until after the New Year," he said.

The bait situation varied day to day, with sardina, mackerel, and caballito being available most days, though at times in limited amounts.

"Schools of mackerel are now holding several miles off the San Jose del Cabo Hotel Zone and actually, there was a good bite for yellowfin tuna to 25 pounds in this same spot for a few days earlier in the week before the skipjack moved in. Sardina were the preferred bait for targeting the yellowfin tuna that were found closer to shore, most of which were in the 10- to 25-pound class. The problem was obtaining enough bait to chum these yellowfin into a feeding mood," Bricton said.

The inshore sierra action was wide open for anglers. Using live sardina, hoochies, and Rapalas were all working well. Some jack crevalle and roosterfish rounded out this action along the shore line. "Dorado were found in small groups, from offshore to right along the beaches, catches ranged from 1 to 4 dodos per charter, with sizes between 10 to 25 pounds."

Wahoo became less active in the dirtier currents that moved into local waters, though there were days when charters targeting this species, accounted for one or more fish while trolling with a combination of mackerel, caballito, sardina, various skirted lead heads, and Rapalas. There were several wahoo in the 50-pound class and one 65-pound fish accounted for by the La Playita panga fleets.

The combined panga fleets launching out of La Playita and Puerto Los Cabos sent out 57 charters for the week, with anglers reporting a fish count of 15 striped marlin, 15 wahoo, 121 dorado, 194 yellowfin tuna, 7 amberjack, 216 sierra, 4 roosterfish, 28 bonito, 18 pargo, and 9 cabrilla.

In other Baja fishing action: — **BAHIA ASUNCION** (Just south of Guerrero Negro): The weather cooled off this week in Asuncion, as well as the water temperatures, which are now down in the high 60s. "Spear fishermen did see some stray tuna and speared some nice yellowtail in the 15- to 40-pound range. Barry from Laguna Beach was impressed at the



FOR THE SEASON - 95 AND COUNTING — With the five caught today (Sunday) Bill Erhardt of Loreto's Mag Bay count for the year is 95 wahoo. Here is a picture of his biggest for the year weighing in at 68 pounds. The wahoo bite here has been the best it's been in a decade.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BILL ERHARDT

variety of fish and water clarity here, which was perfect for underwater photography. They saw a big sailfish but only speared yellowtail that day," said Shari Bondy from Campo Sirena.

— **CABO SAN LUCAS:** While few details were available, Eric Bricton from Gordo Banks Pangas reported that last week an 800-pound blue marlin was caught by Dan Magers, from Montana from the cruiser the *Blue Marlin* launching out of Cabo San Lucas. Mager battled the monster blue for six hours on 50-pound tackle.

Reporting for the Gaviota Sportfishing and Fish Cabo fleets, Larry Edwards said that while the fishing and catching have been excellent, angler activity has been seriously slow for the Christmas week in Cabo San Lucas. "High boat for billfish was the *Fish Cabo*, releasing 7 stripers for a single fishing day, followed by the *Tuna Time*, releasing 10 stripers for two fishing days," Edwards said.

Both boats fished near the Cabo Falso drop-off, though overall, the Pacific side remained the place to be for all species. Overall fish counts for a combined total of 18 charters included 41 stripers with 39 released, 2 wahoo, both taken onboard the *Fish Cabo I*, 45 dorado, and 45 yellowfin tuna.

"I am really confused about the marlin fishing so far this season," said Capt. Landrum from Fly Hooker Sportfishing. "I know that it is an El Nino year, so the water is going to remain warmer longer, but I saw the blue marlin that weighed

in at just around 800 pounds hanging from the scales on Wednesday. I did not get over there in time to find out where the fish was caught or what it was caught on, but having blue marlin remain in our area this long, and be a fairly consistent catch, is very unusual for us," he said.

Normally it's striped marlin anglers are focusing on this time of year, and while the water has cooled to 72 degrees, it is still warm and the striped marlin bite has not yet turned on full time. "We are getting little spurts of action from time to time, and I am hearing good reports from the private boats that are willing to travel 80-plus miles up the coast on the pacific side, but these fish have not yet made it into our area. The striped marlin we are getting, have been found off the lighthouse on the pacific and up just offshore from Los Arcos, both areas were where bait was concentrated by the currents," he said.

"Another amazing thing is that there are still wahoo being caught. In fact, I myself was aboard a friend's boat when we hooked a wahoo around 30 pounds while fishing the inner Gorda Bank. The

fish have been scattered but reported on from almost all the high spots and along the points, no large numbers for the most part, but a decent pick for the boats that were rigged with lures for them," Landrum said.

Water temperatures were stable and there was excellent clarity. "Temperatures held right at 79 degrees from the Finger Bank on the pacific side, to Los Frailes on the Sea of Cortez side."

— **EAST CAPE:** Weather permitting, the winter fishing is as good here in the winter as it is any other time of year. Over the past week the fishing has been as good as it gets. "Striped marlin, sailfish, and dorado are all being caught daily," said Rancho Leonero's John Ireland. Very light fishing pressure is insuring limits for most anglers. "The bite is from two to four miles off the lighthouse, a 30 minutes boat ride from the hotel. All three species are mixed in that same area, and there are lots of tailers for entertainment," Ireland said.

Besides the billfish, limits of dorado have been available for all ranch anglers mixed in with the

BAJA/next page



SPEAR FISHING IN BAHIA ASUNCION — Quality yellowtail, like this 40 pounder Barry from Laguna Beach caught, are still there for the taking at Asuncion. The variety of fish here for the taking has been phenomenal this past year.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHARI BONDY FROM CAMPO SIRENA

GORDO BANKS PANGAS
800-408-1199
22' PANGAS • 23' & 26' SUPER PANGAS
28' & 30' CRUISERS
Eric Bricton
Fax/Phone: 011-52-624-14 2-11-47
Puerto Los Cabos Marina
www.gordobanks.com
email: ericgordobanks@yahoo.com

Martin Verdugo's BEACH RESORT
East Cape, Baja California

Super Cruiser Packages

- Hotel
- Sportfishing Fleet
- Restaurant & Bar
- On The Beach
- RV Parking
- Laundry

From **\$483** per person
Based on 4 people per boat.
Includes: 4 nights, 5 days,
2 days fishing on a 28ft.
fully equipped cruiser,
tackle, breakfast & lunch

(949) 226-7169 (888) 567-8552
martinverdugo@prodigy.net.mx
Direct from the U.S. 011-52-624-14-10054