

OTB Footwear "Tide" Water Shoe

OTB FOOTWEAR, LLC
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SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE:
\$89.95



Being a long-time fisherman, boater and beach camper, I've tried just about every type and brand of water shoe that has come on the market. From the original neoprene Nike Aqua Socks to Teva-style sandals to the more modern sneaker-style models, my hall closet is full of every generation of the next, newest and best styles. Almost all of them seemed great for their intended purpose when I bought them, but each one had some drawbacks.

The Aqua Sock style was great for protecting your feet from rocky bottoms when wading out to sandbar or to a boat moored off the beach. However, once back on land or in the boat, they provided little or no support and tended to stay wet. The same could be said for the sandal style: although it provided slightly better support, the straps stayed wet and trapped sand. The sneaker style was a nice step up, providing good support and more protection for wading cobble beaches or standing in the cockpit of a fishing boat. Unfortunately, none that I tried would dry on my feet, especially the foot bed, in a reasonable amount of time.

Enter OTB Footwear! OTB (Over the Beach) is comprised of a group of footwear professionals who were asked to design boots and water shoes for the Navy Seals. I bought their "Tide" model shoe, a sneaker-style water shoe designed for all-day comfort in and out of the water. At first glance, the Tide looks like just another sneaker, but upon closer inspection you'll find all the features that make it the best water shoe I've ever tried. All the material used on the Tide either will not absorb water or is treated with DWR (durable water repellent). The insole is made of a molded material that not only drains the shoe but stays dry itself. The outsole is lugged and razor siped, non-skid, non-marking, and resists holding sand and small stones. Ballistic mesh is used on all drain panels to drain water quickly and to prevent sand and other debris from entering. Even the foam used for padding does not trap or absorb water.

The Tide is the first water shoe I've used that allows me to walk down the beach, wade out to the boat, and fish for a few hours without my feet feeling wet and clammy – all while having the support and protection of a full upper and the very grippy feel of a deck-shoe sole. One of the Tide's advantages is that its outsole does not hold sand and stones, which otherwise could end up scratching the gelcoat on your boat deck. Another really nice feature is that if the shoe does get sand in it, a quick dip in the water solves the problem.

Overall, I highly recommend the OTB Tide to anyone who needs a warm weather wading shoe or a combination boat/ beach shoe. If there is any drawback at all, it may be that the feel of the molded insole, while comfortable, takes a little getting used to. If you are in the market for a comfortable, supportive, good-looking water shoe, then the Tide just might be for you.

Mike's Custom Plugs: Spring Squid

MIKE'S CUSTOM PLUGS
31 HIGHLAND VIEW ST.
WESTFIELD, MA 01085
(413)563-4604 • www.mikescustomplugs.com
RETAIL PRICE: \$19.99 PLUS S/H

When Mike Di Santo of Mike's Custom Plugs stopped by the On The Water booth at the Springfield Sportsman's Show to show me his new Spring Squid plug, I was immediately intrigued by its unique and lifelike paint scheme, its craftsmanship and its excellent aerodynamics. Perhaps the most appealing and realistic visual feature of the Spring Squid plug is its flukes, which set it apart from other squid-imitating fast-retrieve surface plugs. Hackle "tentacles" and splashes of glitter provide the finishing touches on what is a visually attractive package both to fishermen and to fish.

The annual infiltration of spawning squid into Vineyard Sound has been one of my favorite fishing events since I moved to Massachusetts, as it represents not only a harbinger of spring but also a great opportunity for daytime topwater fishing. I fish from the beach almost exclusively during the month of May, using surface plugs that allow long casts that cover as much water as possible. I used the Spring Squid plug extensively on all my trips to South Cape Beach this past spring, and it out-performed all of my traditional plastic plugs. The Spring Squid plug was deadly on bluefish, and I also caught a good number of decent-sized stripers when other plugs did not. Whether its success rate had to do with the way it swims in the water or its near perfect imitation of a live squid, it just worked great. It is an impressive lure that I will fish each spring when the squid arrive on the scene.



Local Hooker rods

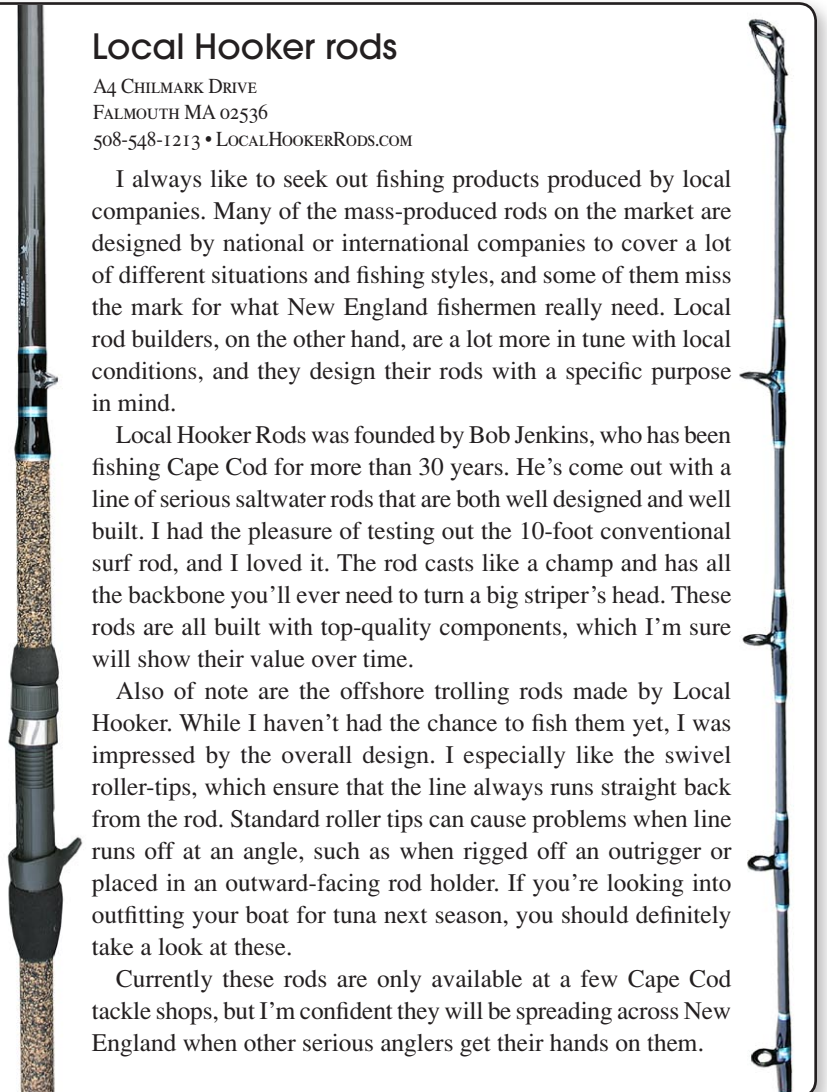
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I always like to seek out fishing products produced by local companies. Many of the mass-produced rods on the market are designed by national or international companies to cover a lot of different situations and fishing styles, and some of them miss the mark for what New England fishermen really need. Local rod builders, on the other hand, are a lot more in tune with local conditions, and they design their rods with a specific purpose in mind.

Local Hooker Rods was founded by Bob Jenkins, who has been fishing Cape Cod for more than 30 years. He's come out with a line of serious saltwater rods that are both well designed and well built. I had the pleasure of testing out the 10-foot conventional surf rod, and I loved it. The rod casts like a champ and has all the backbone you'll ever need to turn a big striper's head. These rods are all built with top-quality components, which I'm sure will show their value over time.

Also of note are the offshore trolling rods made by Local Hooker. While I haven't had the chance to fish them yet, I was impressed by the overall design. I especially like the swivel roller-tips, which ensure that the line always runs straight back from the rod. Standard roller tips can cause problems when line runs off at an angle, such as when rigged off an outrigger or placed in an outward-facing rod holder. If you're looking into outfitting your boat for tuna next season, you should definitely take a look at these.

Currently these rods are only available at a few Cape Cod tackle shops, but I'm confident they will be spreading across New England when other serious anglers get their hands on them.



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