

# National Fisherman's 2012 Highliners & Lifetime Achievement Award Winner

Nowhere in the country is fishery management at a more critical intersection than on the East and Gulf coasts. Yes, that covers a lot of fishing ground, but these industry leaders — Kevin Wark of Barnegat Light, N.J., Dewey Hemilright of Kitty Hawk, N.C., and Wayne Werner of Alachua, Fla. — are making strides that have far-reaching consequences, well beyond the bounds of their fisheries.

I am also honored to present a lifetime achievement award to a man with a seemingly endless list of accomplishments, but you would never know it by talking to him. Lucky for us, those who have worked with Brian Rothschild understand the scope of his commitment to healthy and fairly managed fisheries. — *Jessica Hathaway*

## Dewey Hemilright Southern pride

By Susan West

Kitty Hawk, N.C., native Dewey Hemilright leans back in the captain's chair of the 42-foot Tar Baby and laughs hard before describing his first commercial fishing job.

"I was probably one of the greenest greenhorns ever. I was so sick I lost something like 15 pounds on that swordfishing trip," he says.

Despite a rough start, the experience struck a chord with the 21-year-old, and Hemilright knew fishing was a challenge that matched up to his youthful appreciation for adventure and his expectation of a life well-lived.

It's a warm, humid day in early September when Hemilright, now 45, shares this story. Hurricanes moving offshore are kicking up a huge swell just as the clock is running out on the blueline tilefish season, and the Tar Baby sits tied to the dock in Wanchese.

Built by Dare County boatbuilder and fisherman John Bayliss in Manns Harbor, the boat took its name from a gill-netter Bayliss had fondly christened the Tar Baby because it was much smaller than the Tar Heel, his charter-fishing boat.

On this September morning, Hemilright lays out his annual round of fishing: longlining for tunas and swords in the fall, gillnetting spiny dogs, targeting croaker and bluefish until April, and coming full circle to longline for dolphin and tilefish in the summer.

"It's kind of like the lugnuts on a tire. You have to have each of them to make it work," he says.

That's one reason he is not a catch share proponent and worries about the impact on small operations and on small coastal communities.

"It's hard for me to hear managers say a management action will have little economic impact. To the small boat coming in with 100 pounds of flounder, the value of those 100 pounds

*Hemilright, continued on page 26*

## Kevin Wark Union soldier

By Kirk Moore

East Coast gillnet fishermen tussle with so many challenges — saving harbor porpoises, whales, turtles and now Atlantic sturgeon — that the small boat fleet is lucky to be alive.

For that, a lot of credit goes to Kevin Wark, who got involved early when threats appeared, sharing his experience on the water and lending time and vessels to science research that gets straight information for managers.

"He's a really good fisherman... A first-class operation, and a first-class guy," says Rich Seagraves, senior scientist at the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council who has known Wark for years. They worked together on take-reduction teams, figuring out how to keep protected species out of nets.

"Kevin always looked at what's good for the resources, and good for the fisheries. He's been very effective that way," Seagraves says.

"I just wanted to make sure we did things right," says Wark, 49, who fishes out of Barnegat Light, N.J., a tiny port on the north tip of Long Beach Island long known for progressive, innovative fishermen.

"A lot of the time, it seems like bad information rules the day," Wark said as he and mate Mike Lohr packed out a day's catch of croaker, weakfish and bluefish from his 42-foot boat Dana Christine at the Viking Village docks. "You can live with new rules, if you feel like you got a fair deal."

Wark is a third-generation islander, who got started with his father Dave and grandfather Winston Newman. "My grandfather had a clam house. He was a lifelong bayman on Barnegat Bay," Wark says. At age 12 his father and grandfather helped him build his first boat.

"I knew I was going to go fishing, so as soon as I got out of high school I went down to Hatteras Island (N.C.) and got work haul seining and whatever else I could do," he says.

*Wark, continued on page 26*

## HIGHLINER Dewey Hemilright



SUSAN WEST

F/V Tar Baby

## HIGHLINER Kevin Wark



KIRK MOORE

F/V Dana Christine

## HIGHLINER Wayne Werner



HOYT CHILDERS

F/V Seaquest



COURTESY BRIAN ROTHSCHILD

## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Brian Rothschild

# Wayne Werner Road warrior

By Hoyt Childers

In 2001, Wayne Werner and other Gulf of Mexico fishermen worked the first nine days of each month as long as their red snapper quotas lasted. Supply to the market was inconsistent. Price plummeted. The derby openings pitted fishermen against each other and the weather, and disrupted family life. Werner's mother died on the first day of one of these derbies, his father on the second day of another.

"I missed 30 of my kids' birthdays," Werner says.

By this time, he had already been calling lawmakers' attention to these and other issues for several years.

Sen. John Breaux (D-La.) had invited Werner to testify at a December 1999 hearing. Werner spoke of unacceptable risks fishermen endured to make a living in round-the-clock derbies.

Then, early on April 2, 2001, the day after the opening, Debra Werner got one of the calls a fisherman's spouse dreads.

"The Coast Guard called me about 10 o'clock to see if I

*Werner, continued on page 26*

# Brian Rothschild Life scientist

By Linc Bedrosian

Brian J. Rothschild is not afraid of a full plate. At 78, an age when most people have at least considered retirement if not fully settled into a golf course community somewhere in the sunbelt, he continues to serve in the snowbelt as the Montgomery Charter Professor of Marine Science of the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, School for Marine Science and Technology.

Rothschild, who grew up outside of Newark, N.J., was hired to establish the UMass school, serving as its first dean from 1995 to 2006. But that's just scratching the surface of a career that has spanned many aspects of fishery science and management, beginning in 1953.

Rothschild was one of the first chairmen of the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. He played a leading role in organizing the Global Ocean Ecosystem Dynamics Program, serving as the first chairman of the

*Rothschild, continued on page 27*

**Hemilright**, continued from page 24 is pretty significant,” he explains.

Hemilright says the fishery he enjoyed most was the large coastal shark fishery.

“I’m what you might call a dock kicker and going to ports from Montauk (N.Y.) to Mayport (Fla.) gave me a chance to talk to lots of different people and build a perspective beyond what happens in my own backyard,” Hemilright explains.

He first waded into fisheries management in the mid-1990s when the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council was looking at severe restrictions or even a closure of the longline dolphin fishery.

“A group of us from Wanchese drove down to Charleston, and I spoke during the public comment period because my dander was up. I knew my subject, but didn’t have a clue about the process or the players,” he recalls.

In April, Hemilright was appointed to the Mid-Atlantic council. He also serves on the dolphin and wahoo advisory

**Hemilright and the Tar Baby don’t rest much, gillnetting and longlining when he’s not tied up with the council or the classroom.**

panel, the pelagic longline take reduction team, and the Dare County Commission for Working Watermen. He is a member of the North Carolina Fisheries Association and North Carolina Watermen United, the Blue Water Fishermen’s Association and works with spiny dogfish researchers.

Hemilright also works with Outer Banks Catch, a local seafood branding initiative, which has used his photograph on promotional material.

One project close to his heart is Provider Pals, a program that partners schools with professionals working with natural resources. In the seven years Hemilright has been with the program, he has visited classrooms in places from



SUSAN WEST

Montana to New York City to tell students about his job and show them shark jaws and glow sticks and other artifacts of the trade.

“Dewey’s dedication to working on many levels to support the industry couldn’t be more genuine. You won’t find a more unassuming or more honest spokesperson for fishermen,” says Ernie Foster, a North Carolina Watermen United board member from Hatteras. **NF**



KIRK MOORE

**Wark uses his 42-foot gillnetter Dana Christine for fishing and data gathering.**

an assistant professor and former fisherman who leads the Delaware team. “We’re the only sampling program that’s capturing these large adults in the marine environment, and that’s Kevin.”

Wark says the next mission starts in No-

**Wark**, continued from page 24

In 1986 Wark got Endeavor, a 39-foot BHM built in Blue Hill, Maine, to launch his gillnet career. The big species then were weakfish, shad and sturgeon.

“There’s more sturgeon out there now than when I was in the directed fishery,” Wark says. Since 2009 he’s worked with a team at Delaware State University, funded by NOAA’s Office of Protected Resources, gathering four years of spring survey data from sturgeon caught and released near Delaware Bay. The numbers they’ve caught exceed some estimates of the entire East Coast sturgeon population.

“Kevin is, hands down, one of the best I’ve been around,” says Dewayne Fox,

November, with tests of modified nets supported by NOAA. In 2011 a first run showed a 25 percent reduction in monkfish catch, but a 75 percent reduction in sturgeon contacts.

“We just need it to catch a little more monk, and make sure the gear doesn’t spin up in bad weather,” Wark says. For New Jersey fishermen, a danger is that

sturgeon management might push everyone farther offshore to already crowded waters during the spring migration.

If that happens, “all the gear’s going to be around the Mud Hole, and it will be a circus,” Wark says. He hopes the net modifications will work, “and keep the fleet spread out.”

Greg DiDomenico, the executive director of the Garden State Seafood Association where Wark is on the board of directors, says Wark’s trademark is putting the industry’s long-term interests out in front for everyone.

“These are consensus issues,” DiDomenico says. “It’s always a lot of work. But at the end of the day, we kept in business, and the agency (NOAA) got what it wanted in resource protection.”

“He’s helped drive me to do everything I can to help fishermen,” says Ernie Panacek, general manager at Viking Village. “His positive attitude has helped spirit everybody here.” **NF**

**Werner**, continued from page 25

had heard from the boat,” Debra said at the time. She had not.

The 47-foot Wayne’s Pain had taken on water and sunk in 7-foot seas off South Marsh Island, La., cause unknown. Werner was lucky; he and his

crew were rescued. He bought the 42-foot Seaquest from a friend and has been fishing ever since.

Eleven years later and nearly six years after the red snapper IFQ began, the fishing is very different.

“You pick your weather, you pick

your time,” Werner says. “Instead of getting \$1.50, we’re getting more than \$4.50.”

Werner, 55, is known as a straight shooter who knows his facts, says Margaret Bryan Curole, a Galliano, La., former shrimper who is herself well-known as an industry activist. In 1985, at the age of 28, Werner took Wayne’s Pain around the South Atlantic and into the Gulf looking for the best fishing. He found it off Louisiana and made Leeville in Lafourche Parish his home port. His home and family are still in Alachua, Fla., and Werner spends a lot of time on the road.

Curole knows Werner personally (their children went to school together), from Gulf council meetings and from advocacy work in Washington.

“He’s probably testified more than anybody,” says Curole, who is a Commercial Fishermen of America board member and a U.S. representative at the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers. “He’s always on point, always knows his points.

“When I think of Wayne, it is

**Werner says he picks his fishing days on the Seaquest now with snapper IFQs instead of derbies.**

straight-forward,” says Curole. “You know he’s going to be honest. If he believes it’s the right thing, he backs it up with everything he’s got. That to me is important.”

When Werner talks about efforts to turn around the red snapper fishery, he almost always says “we” and gives credit to Donny Waters, Russell Underwood, David Walker and others who worked to establish the IFQ.

“He was always there for his fishermen,” said Curole.

Werner is not timid in defending the red snapper IFQ, which passed two referenda by large majorities and has changed the lives of many fishermen.

“The reality is we make more money with half the fish,” he said.

Werner also enumerates developing management concerns, including the



WAYNE WERNER

consolidation of shares and ownership by non-fishermen.

“You’re not supposed to have more than 6 percent... people are afraid of sea lords” who accumulate and lease their shares and don’t actually fish a vessel, Werner says.

“There is a little bit of that going on,” involving probably 20 percent of shares by Werner’s estimate. “Send the boat out, at least.”

Werner would like to concentrate more on fishing, but a looming recreational-commercial allocation conflict is likely to thwart that.

“When this election’s over, I’ve got a feeling we’re going to be headed to Washington a bit,” he says. **NF**

**Rothschild**, continued from page 25  
Globec Scientific Committee.

He’s published 100 research papers, authored the book “Dynamics of Marine Fish Populations,” and edited five others.

He’s been a professor at the universities of Maryland and Washington and had faculty or visiting scientist affiliations with universities at home and abroad.

He’s been a senior policy adviser to the administrator of NOAA as well as director of the NMFS Office of Policy and Planning, the Southwest Fisheries Science Center and the Northwest and Alaska fisheries science centers. And he managed the implementation of the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976, establishing the framework for the regional council system.

Rothschild’s curriculum vitae speaks for itself — and loudly. Yet, for all those accomplishments, fishermen say, he doesn’t put on airs.

“He’s just Brian, you know?” says Jim Kendall, owner of New Bedford Seafood Consulting. “He’s one of the foremost authorities in his field in the world, but he doesn’t use it to overwhelm people.”

“He’s one of us, really,” says Rodney

Avila, a veteran New Bedford fisherman and former New England Fishery Management Council member. “He’s a very educated man... but he can talk to you on your level. That’s what makes him connect so well with the industry.”

Talks with fishermen led Rothschild and UMass Dartmouth professor Kevin Stokesbury to develop the system of counting scallops via underwater cameras that photographed their abundance in areas that had been closed to scalloping.

“The stock assessments didn’t make sense,” Rothschild says. “So we decided to get some boats, and look in the closed areas where people said there was a tremendous amount of scallops.” To get around restrictions on fishing in the closed areas, Rothschild and Stokesbury devised a way to provide video evidence of the scallop bounty. That work led to the industry’s revival.

Rothschild’s willingness to help fishermen was refreshing, Kendall says.

“We didn’t have much help from anyone,” Kendall says. But Rothschild and his wife, Susan, were quickly welcomed into the fishing community.

Avila, a 2008 *NF* Highliner, says

Rothschild works effectively with fishermen because he’s open-minded.

“If you can make your case,” Avila says, “you’ve got an ally.” Moreover, he says, Rothschild values fishermen’s opinions and understands the value of getting out on fishing boats to observe what fishermen see first hand.

Kendall says Rothschild’s work to develop SMAST will continue to benefit fishermen. SMAST faculty and staff “are people who are committed to the industry, and have strong affection for it.” Kendall says. “They’re building good bridges; they have a good understanding of what fishermen are.”

With so many successes to his name, Rothschild shows no signs of slowing. He’s working with Rep. Bill Keating (D-Mass.) to develop a task force to review stock assessments, and he wants to update “Dynamics of Marine Fish Populations.” Simply put, he enjoys his work.

“The satisfaction is multifaceted,” Rothschild says. “You’re discovering something nobody’s discovered before, and at the same time, you’re helping people. You’re walking where nobody’s walked before.” **NF**