

Pennsylvania **ANGLER & BOATER**



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The Keystone State's
Official Fishing &
Boating Magazine

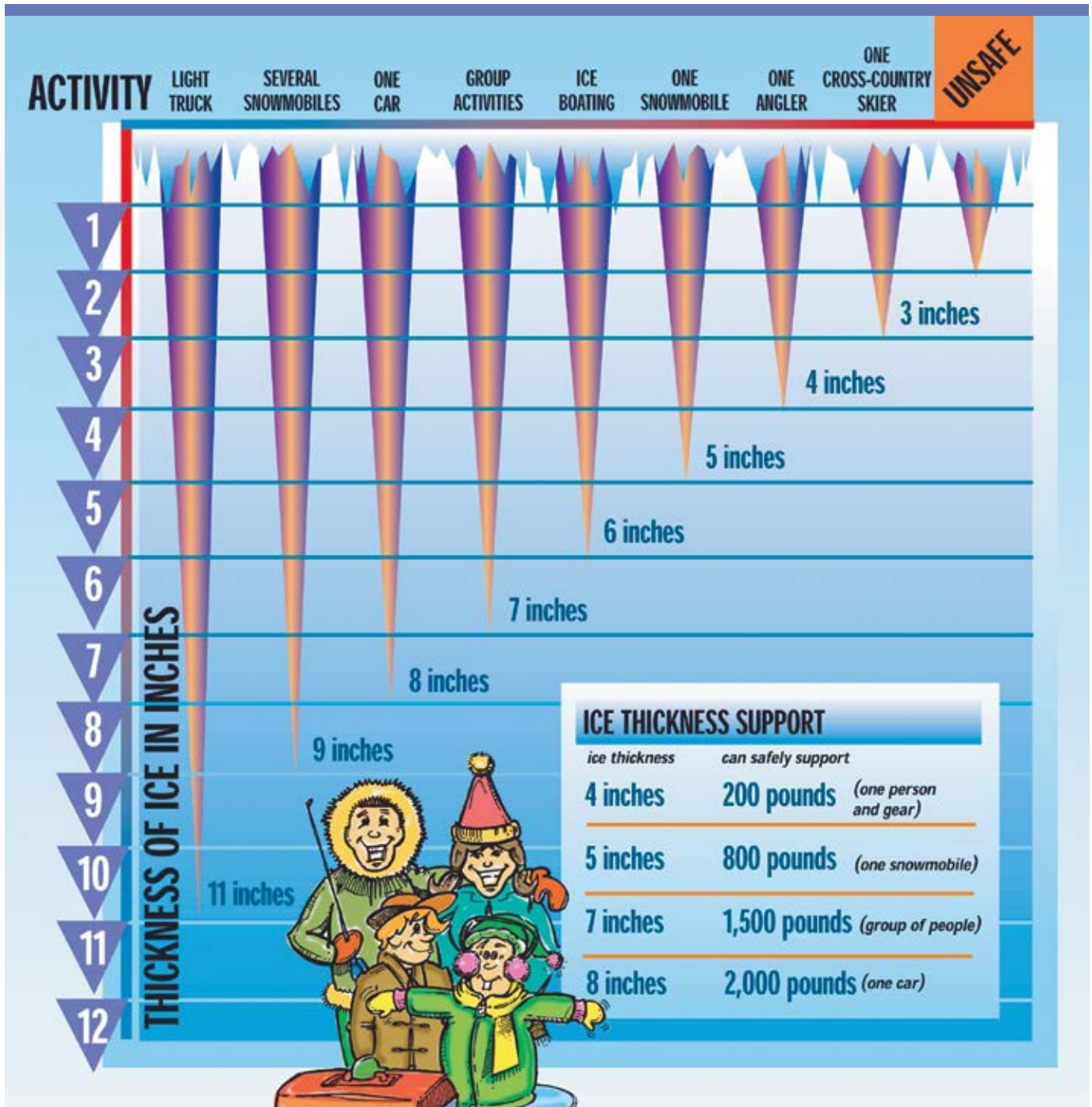
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Ice Safety Thickness

For ice anglers this winter, be safe on the ice and know the proper thickness.



There are many factors that influence ice strength including water chemistry, wind, and sunlight. Please note that these are general ice thickness guidelines and carefully check ice conditions before venturing onto the ice.



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On the cover

Patrick Freer, Lebanon, caught and released this Rainbow Trout in the Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only Section of Quittapahilla Creek, Lebanon County, which is part of the Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters program. *Photo by Tyler Frantz.*



The PFBC social media and mobile app:
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Thank You for Fishing in 2020

by *Timothy D. Schaeffer*
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Our agency and the Pennsylvania Game Commission are proud members of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). AFWA represents state fish and wildlife agencies in Washington, D.C., to advance sound, science-based management and conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats in the public interest. They provide members like us with coordination services on interdisciplinary and species-based programs that range from fisheries policy and fish habitat to wildlife action plans to the human dimensions of fish and wildlife conservation.

Each fall, AFWA's annual meeting offers state agencies the opportunity to share experiences, ideas, successes, and challenges and the chance to hear from government, non-profit, and industry partners about the latest trends and findings related to natural resource management and participation in outdoor recreation.

Like other similar events, the 2020 annual meeting was held virtually rather than in person. One of the highlights of the event was a presentation by staff from Brandt Information Services that described trends among the wave of people who headed outdoors during 2020 while COVID-19 raged across the country and impacted life for everyone.

In Pennsylvania, anglers flocked to the water in numbers we have not seen in 25 years. In fact, the nearly 980,000 licensed anglers in 2020 surpassed every other licensing year since 1996. While states across the country saw an increase in license sales, the 20% jump in the Commonwealth eclipsed the national average. Over one-fourth of the people who purchased a Pennsylvania fishing license in 2020 did so for the first time.

Brandt Information Services surveyed customers nationwide who purchased their first fishing or hunting license in 2020 or who returned to the sports last year after letting their license lapse. They asked who those people were, what motivated them to fish or hunt, and what types of information would be helpful to getting outdoors more often and having a better time when they do so.

Three interesting groups of participants stood out in the findings. New Gatekeepers were new customers who were more likely to be female and non-white than those who purchased a license pre-COVID. Group Adventurers included families, students, and others who were looking to experience the outdoors together with others. Ethical Tourists comprised a category of outdoor enthusiasts with a strong conservation ethic.



photos: PFBC archives

When asked about why they took to the waters and woods during 2020, the number one reason was (not surprisingly given the year we all had) stress relief, followed closely by a desire to get outdoors and to spend time with family.

The number one piece of information cited as being helpful to improve the outdoor experience was where to go. The Fish Boat PA mobile app is the perfect tool to meet that need, so please be sure to use it and recommend it to everyone you know who takes to the water in 2021.

What stands out about these responses is that the people who discovered or rediscovered the joys of fishing in 2020 were seeking an experience just as much as they were hoping to catch a fish. Hearing these results, the first thing that came to mind was the evening I spent with my twin sons wading in the Yellow Breeches Creek the day after trout season opened last spring.

I took them to a stretch of the creek I had not fished since I was their age. We had boated there together, but they had never experienced it with a rod in their hand and the anticipation of a trout at the end of the line.

We bushwhacked through the brush, scaled down and along the streambank, and smiled and laughed as we each caught fish as the cool limestone water started to make us shiver in our waders after a few hours in the water. The thing I remember most is walking down the path back to our car as daylight faded. To use that newly coined term, we were Group Adventurers who were happy to be together as a family. The world seemed to be falling apart, but for a moment now etched in time, we were enjoying a gorgeous Pennsylvania April evening not worrying about what was happening away from the creek.

Interestingly, Brandt Information Services found that putting food on the table ranked low on the list of reasons to fish or hunt among the new participants. But doing so certainly added to the fun for us that evening. The boys and I each kept one trout for dinner and fried them up in a cast iron skillet for the most memorable meal of the year.

No one knows what 2021 will bring, but one thing is certain—Pennsylvania's streams, rivers, and lakes will be waiting for everyone to find solace with a fishing rod in hand, connect with nature, and have fun making memories.

College License Offers Out-of-state Student Anglers a Great Opportunity



by Jeff Woleslagle

photos by the author

This year a special license will be available for the first time for out-of-state college students attending a school in Pennsylvania. After January 15, 2021, non-resident students enrolled in Pennsylvania schools of higher education during the school year are eligible to purchase the newly created Non-Resident PA Student (Annual) fishing license at all sales locations and online. The cost of a Non-Resident PA Student (Annual) fishing license will be the current cost of a Resident (Annual) fishing license plus issuing agent and transaction fees. See page 32. Licensees are required to possess the required permits to fish for certain species or in certain bodies of water. A Non-Resident PA Student (Annual) fishing license will remain valid for the year for which it is issued. Student identification or other

means of proof of student enrollment must be provided upon request by Waterways Conservation Officers. Pennsylvania joins several states that now offer similar licenses to non-resident students to make fishing more accessible and affordable.

Research shows that there are more than 160 four-year colleges in Pennsylvania, and no matter where students choose to pursue higher education, they are never far away from great fishing in Pennsylvania. From bass to steelhead to catfish and even American Shad, there are many great fishing destinations for students to take advantage of.

In this age of COVID-19, fishing provides college students with abundant opportunities for socially distanced outdoor recreation that promotes good physical and mental health. At a time when sports and many other extracurricular activities have been suspended or curtailed, fishing can provide a great outlet for those looking to balance the rigors of studies and testing with time outdoors.

By region

Northwest Region (Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango, Warren)

Fishing opportunities abound in the northwest. For those attending schools such as Penn State-Behrend, Gannon University, Edinboro University, Grove City College, Slippery Rock University, Theil College, and others, this region boasts tremendous and varied places to hit the water. Lake Erie, Erie County, is well known for its phenomenal bass fishing as well as great opportunities for Walleyes and perch. Great fishing can be found at Presque Isle State Park, and it was during my own college days that I discovered the fantastic shore fishing many locations in this park provide anglers. In the fall and over winter break, students can take advantage of some of the best steelhead fishing in the country. Elk Creek and Walnut Creek are popular destinations and have many locations that provide public access.

The nearby Allegheny National Forest boasts plenty of water teeming with native wild Brook Trout and some stocked waters as well. Kinzua Dam, Warren County, is another location worth exploring. Of course, Pymatuning Reservoir, Crawford County, also makes the list of fantastic fishing destinations in this region. Not only is it one of the state's top Walleye waters, it is also a great lake to pursue crappies and other panfish in the spring. Not as well known, but a great little lake that is worth exploration in the northwest is Justus Lake, Venango County. I have seen it give up some truly stunning Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass.

Northcentral Region (Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Jefferson, Lycoming, McKean, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Tioga, Union)

Fishing in northcentral Pennsylvania can be exceptional and students looking to take advantage of it will find plenty of great destinations waiting for them. Students of Penn State's main campus, Mansfield University, Bucknell University, and other schools in this part of the state will have no trouble finding locations to ease the strain of college pressures. Lakes like Foster Joseph Sayers Reservoir, Centre



Mansfield University student Aaron Morder with a gorgeous Brown Trout caught in the Northcentral Region.

County, provide great bass fishing as well as shore fishing for Channel Catfish and panfish. Although a lesser-known and targeted species, Common Carp fishing can be a blast on this lake, and I enjoyed it immensely during my own college days.

Any mention of fishing in the northcentral region must include the famed trout waters near State College that include Spring Creek and Penns Creek. I cut my own fly fishing teeth on them while attending Penn State. While they can be humbling at times, they also teach an observant angler much about reading water and hatches. Both streams have abundant public access points. Bald Eagle Creek is another great stream in Centre County that should not be overlooked.

Northeast Region (Bradford, Carbon, Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Wayne, Wyoming)

For students whose academic pursuits land them at Wilkes University, Johnson College, Keystone College, Lackawanna College, King's College, Marywood University, and other schools in this region, fantastic fishing is never far away.

Lake Wallenpaupack, Pike and Wayne counties, is a large and diverse fishery that is worth a visit. It is truly a multi-species lake that has great fishing for Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass. The biggest Yellow Perch I have ever caught came during a trip to this lake while I was in college. Beltzville Lake, Carbon County, is also a good destination to pursue not only bass and panfish, but it offers fishing opportunities for Striped Bass as well.

This region of the state is also home to some first-class trout fishing. Streams here like the Aquashicola Creek, Buckwha Creek, Mahoning Creek, and Pohopoco Creek all provide opportunities for both stocked and wild trout.



A college angler with a nice steelhead caught in Elk Creek, Erie County.

Southwest Region (Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington, Westmoreland)

Those seeking higher education at the University of Pittsburgh, Seton Hill University, Saint Vincent College, and other schools in this part of the state will find amazing opportunities here as well. The Allegheny River, Monongahela River, and Ohio River all offer fishing opportunities for Smallmouth Bass and other species, within sight of the city of Pittsburgh.

The nearby Forbes State Forest has streams that offer excellent fishing for both stocked and wild trout. In fact, the entire Laurel Highlands is known for the great trout fishing. Jones Mills Run Dam in Laurel Hill State Park can be well worth the hike in, not only for the trout fishing but the incredible scenery.

Southcentral Region (Adams, Bedford, Blair, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry, York)

Students attending York College, Penn State-Harrisburg, Juniata College, and Lebanon Valley College, as well as the other fine schools of this region will find themselves close to some great fishing locations. The fabled waters of the Susquehanna and Juniata rivers are there to be sampled. Anglers here will find tremendous Smallmouth Bass fishing opportunities as well as opportunities for Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, Muskellunge, and Walleyes. There are many public access points to be found along both rivers and many stretches are well suited to drifting in a kayak or canoe as well as fishing from shore.

Raystown Lake, Huntingdon County, is one I was fortunate enough to spend significant time on during my own time in school. It is a dynamic multi-species fishery where anglers can try for both Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass as well as Striped Bass that reach enormous proportions.

Southeast Region (Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lancaster, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia, Schuylkill)

For those attending the University of Pennsylvania, West Chester University, Delaware Valley University, Elizabethtown College, Franklin & Marshall College, Albright College, Widener University, Lehigh University, Millersville University, and the other great learning institutions in this part of the state, there is no need to venture far to wet a line. The Delaware and Schuylkill rivers have diverse fisheries that will appeal to any out-of-state angler. Trout can be found in the upper reaches, and Smallmouth Bass and Walleyes can be caught in the lower stretches. The Delaware River has a shad run each spring that can be a unique fishing opportunity for students in the southeast. The Little Schuylkill River, Schuylkill County, has seen a resurgence over the years and now boasts excellent fishing for stocked trout in the spring.

The Lehigh River offers Smallmouth Bass fishing in this region and Speedwell Forge Lake, Lancaster County, can be a great place to target Largemouth Bass.

College students coming to Pennsylvania should not leave their fishing gear behind. To discover the tremendous waters

and fishing opportunities available in addition to the ones already mentioned, as well as to find out where the hot bite is located, incoming students should visit the Region Reports on the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's web page at www.fishandboat.com and also the interactive map for Best Fishing Waters. ☐



College angler Reese Kyler with a healthy Smallmouth Bass caught in the Southcentral Region's Juniata River.



College angler Thomas Cullen with a nice Brook Trout.



Resolutions of the Rod and Reel

by Marshall Nych

photos by the author

The first day of the calendar is one of celebratory reflection when, after a concert of noise makers and *Auld Lang Syne*, we share hopes of health for loved ones and declarations of self-betterment. Such commonly created lofty standards are coined New Year's resolutions. These pledges from our personal lives can be applied to facets of our fishing. Rod and reel resolutions can pertain to fishing goals, statistics, or trying new things. I invite you to sort through the following tackle box of resolutions. I also encourage tying a few on for 2021.

First time fishing

Share the passion for fishing by introducing someone new to fishing this year. Most assume mentor-apprentice relationships must involve children. Although a child is a wonderful person to take to the water, anglers can recruit anyone to try fishing. The new fishing buddy can be a



Share the passion for fishing by introducing someone new to fishing this year.

friend, relative, co-worker, veteran, or neighbor. Find an individual in your many social circles who may be receptive to fishing. Someone somewhere along the line took the time to show you how to fish. This year is the year to return the favor.

A new angle

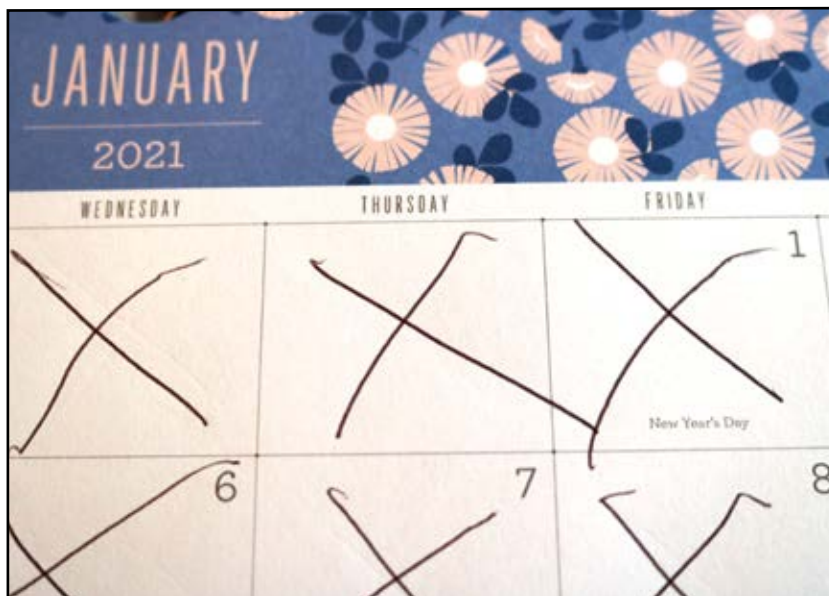
Try a new fishing technique. Maybe, this spring you will finally open the fly rod box in the corner of your garage that has collected dust for years. Perhaps, the idea of becoming proficient with a baitcasting reel is alluring. Possibilities are endless—ice fish for the first time, experiment with planer boards, or use lead core line while trolling. Learn how to tie flies or use a fish finder. Innovative technology has inundated the fishing world. One benefit to this constant change is the window of opportunity to try something new is always open.

Bucket list

Come 2021, avoid becoming stagnant. If we only pursue the same fish, we are missing out on many wonderful species and beautiful examples of wildlife. There are scores of gamefish finning the waters of Pennsylvania. Bring a new one to the net this year. The associated learning process and adventure will be reward enough. Holding a never-before-caught species is icing on the cake. Many have not hooked a Bowfin or experienced Delaware River shad fishing.

Hook into the community

In the next 365 days, make it a point to join a like-minded organization. Sportsmen clubs, conservation groups, and other fishing groups are waiting for dedicated personnel. Kindred spirits abound if you are willing to look for them. You may find you have a lot to offer. For starters, a reservoir of fishing knowledge.



Use a calendar to ensure scheduling a trip each season or, better yet, each month. The time is now to book the adventure you have been putting off.

Fish fresh waters

Try a new spot, expanding the hook, line, and sinker horizons to put an X on the treasure map. Pennsylvania is comprised of 67 counties. How many have you fished? Each one hosts unique fishing experiences. Pennsylvania boasts more than 2,500 lakes and 86,000 miles of rivers, streams, and creeks. That brightly-colored fishing license you proudly purchased grants the privilege to fish anywhere in Pennsylvania, not just a nearby pond or local park.

Jitterbugs, not litterbugs

Most New Year's resolutions emphasize good habits while eliminating bad ones. No better outdoor example exists than litter. Not only should ethical anglers avoid littering, they should pick up discarded or windblown refuse. Leaving nature as we found it is not good enough. We should strive towards leaving it better.

Gone fishin'

I have never heard an angler complain that they want to fish less. Fish more in 2021. There are time tools and resources at our fingertips. Use a calendar to ensure scheduling a trip each season or, better yet, each month. The time is now to book the adventure you have been putting off.

Fish on, write on

A dedicated minority of anglers keep detailed, accurate records logged across decades of fishing seasons. The majority of anglers confine collections of blank fishing journals to junk drawers. Often, it is the minority who enjoy fishing success while the majority does not experience the same success. Let 2021 mark the first chapter of the fishing journal you have always tucked away in the recesses of your mind. Likely, there are a pile of journals family and friends have bought for birthday or Christmas gifts. Put pen to paper to start recognizing trends, water data, patterns, and other crucial fishing data.

All aboard

Get a boat or use the vessel you have more frequently. Do you realize the astronomical number of anglers fishing from the banks dreaming about having a boat to fish the open water and cover more area? There are no excuses. Hook up the hitch next time you get that fishing itch.

Maybe, we as people, and as anglers, are at our best the first day of the year with no mistakes, no regrets, no worries. The lone day when yesterday was last year. Let us hope 2021 is one filled with good fishing and even better memories. ☐



Favorite Smallmouth Bass Waters of Northwestern Pennsylvania

by Darl Black

photos by the author

I have been chasing Smallmouth Bass across northwestern Pennsylvania for 50 years. This seems like it is a good time to reflect on those adventures and share my favorite Smallmouth Bass waters of northwestern Pennsylvania.

I am only addressing inland waters and excluding Lake Erie. Lake Erie is a massive fishery that deserves a review of its own.

Conneaut Lake, Crawford County

Stats: 928 acres; 72 feet maximum depth; natural lake; unlimited horsepower

I started fishing Conneaut Lake in the late 1970s and quickly discovered it supported a strong population of Smallmouth Bass in addition to an array of other popular

species. This lake produced some large Smallmouth Bass in the 80s and 90s, with at least one over 8 pounds, according to the local Waterways Conservation Officer at the time. My best Smallmouth Bass so far has been 7 pounds. Unfortunately, whether it was intensive fishing pressure, changes in the lake environment, shift in forage, or other factors, the Smallmouth Bass population has declined in the past 20 years. However, I still catch (and release) my largest inland waters Smallmouth Bass each season from Conneaut Lake, just not as many as in days gone by. To fish Conneaut Lake for Smallmouth Bass, be prepared with an arsenal of baits to address weedbeds interspersed with gravel areas on the flats, hard bottom points, and rock-capped, mid-lake humps, as well as suspended Smallmouth Bass during mid to late summer. Include topwater baits, swimbaits, spinnerbaits, jerkbaits, dropshot rigs, shaky worms, finesse jig-and-craw, blade baits, and hair jigs in your box.



This Conneaut Lake Smallmouth Bass, held by Marilyn Black, was my first Smallmouth Bass of 2020. It was caught on a tube jig in 19 feet of water on my second cast.

Allegheny River, from Warren to Foxburg

Stats: 107 miles; depth varies from extreme shallows to 25 feet in dredge pools

In my early years, I occasionally visited the Allegheny River to fish from shore until one October day in 1990 when I hopped in a friend's boat for an impromptu trip. What a day! Constant action with 2- to 3-pound Smallmouth Bass. Not long afterwards, I acquired a jetboat and started enjoying Smallmouth Bass river adventures. Allegheny River bass seem to reach peak growth of about 18- to 19-inches, with a 20-inch, 4-pound Smallmouth Bass being an exceptional fish. However, current-loving Smallmouth Bass are dynamite on the end of the line. For more information, visit www.oilregion.org.

French Creek, from Union City to Franklin

Stats: 78 miles; shallow stream suited for paddlecraft and wading

If you are a kayaker or wade angler, French Creek is the perfect destination stream for you. From the mid-70s to the late-90s, my wife and I routinely floated sections of French Creek. This stream is not known for big bass, but it is home to many acrobatic 8- to 14-inch bass.



I joined my friend Pete Cartwright for a short wading trip on French Creek to sample a different section of the creek.

One April day, I was standing on a sand spit near the head of a pool casting a 4-inch curly tail grub to a current seam, and I caught 27 Smallmouth Bass (each about 14 inches) on 27 casts before finally losing a fish. If you like throwing small baits on light tackle (spinners, small floating minnow plugs, tube jigs, and grubs), then you will enjoy French Creek. When planning a trip, contact Crawford County Convention and Visitor's Bureau at www.visitcrawford.org.

Woodcock Creek Lake, Crawford County

Stats: 500 acres; 10 horsepower limit; United States Army Corps of Engineers Flood Control Impoundment

Marilyn and I started fishing Woodcock Creek Lake in 1976. The newly impounded lake exploded with Largemouth Bass and Muskellunge. Apparently, the annual severe winter drawdown and lack of desired aquatic vegetation did the Largemouth Bass population in. However, lack of Largemouth Bass-favored weeds along with ample rock and gravel bottom allowed Smallmouth Bass to fill the void. I do not believe there is a high population of Smallmouth Bass in Woodcock Creek Lake, but there are some nice specimens in the 3- to 5-pound range. During periods of clear water, we like to fish it early and late in the day with topwater baits. If storm water is held back and the lake level creeps into the shoreline brush and grass, it is swim jig time. However, if water gets a thick algae stain during late summer, we avoid the lake.

Pymatuning Reservoir, Crawford County

Stats: 13,000 acres; 20 horsepower limit; Pennsylvania State Park Lake

Pymatuning Reservoir is where my Dad taught me to fish in the late 1950s. Smallmouth Bass were as 'rare as hen's teeth' in those days. Twenty years later, Marilyn and I began fishing Pymatuning Reservoir regularly for Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass. It was rare to catch a Smallmouth Bass over 2 pounds. Roughly 15 years would pass before I caught a Pymatuning Smallmouth Bass over 3 pounds. Then around 2005, tournament anglers were suddenly catching numbers of Smallmouth Bass in the 2½- to 5-pound range. Pack shallow



During a mid-summer outing on Pymatuning Reservoir, Marilyn caught this Smallmouth Bass in 15 feet of water.

crankbaits, jerkbaits, chatter baits, spinnerbaits, jig-and-craw, and Ned rigs.

Shenango River Lake, Mercer County

Stats: 3,560 acres; unlimited horsepower; United States Army Corps of Engineers Flood Control Impoundment

Shenango River Lake is roughly 25 miles downstream of Pymatuning Reservoir, yet the character of the two lakes could not be more different. Sharp drop-offs, extremely dingy water, and rapidly rising and falling water levels are traits of Shenango River Lake. Impounded in the mid-1960s, the rising waters of Shenango River Lake covered the spot I caught my first Smallmouth Bass from the Shenango River. There has been a population of Smallmouth Bass in Shenango River Lake since the creation of the lake. Like Pymatuning Reservoir, it was uncommon to catch a big Smallmouth Bass until roughly 10 years ago. Something changed at Shenango River Lake just as it did at Pymatuning Reservoir, resulting in a growth spurt for Smallmouth Bass. Now, anglers can catch 4-pound and larger Smallmouth Bass. Fishing acquaintance Randy Hedderick has caught several 6-pound Smallmouth Bass in the past 5 years, and he landed one that was 24 inches long weighing 7.2 pounds in 2019.

I sincerely hope that Smallmouth Bass fishing excites you as much as it excites me. Here's to some of the best Smallmouth Bass waters in northwest Pennsylvania. ☐

Tying the Hot Head Nymph

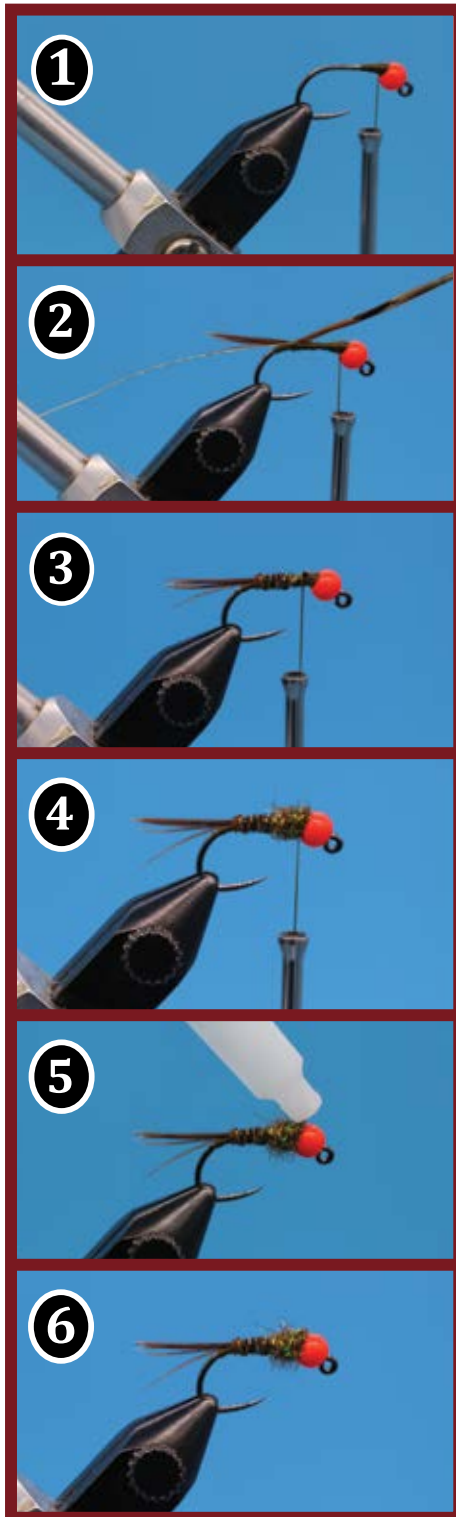


by Carl Haensel

photos by the author

When I find myself on the water in the depths of the coldest time of the year, it is for both fishing and to spend time outside. I want to take the time to connect with nature at its most intense and relish the austere beauty of the season. For fly anglers out in the cold looking to make the most of their time on the water as they search for trout and steelhead, a good fly to try is the Hot Head Nymph. Named for the bright bead located just behind the hook, it is a strong contender every time I open my fly box in the winter. When tying the Hot Head Nymph, whip up a few variants of the key bead colors. I use orange most often, but pink can also motivate fish. If there are still a few colorful fall leaves in the water, a chartreuse bead may quickly attract a fish to the fly. While the standard pattern uses pheasant tail fibers, it is possible to effectively use a similarly colored dubbing. When choosing your materials, use tungsten beads. The significant weight will get your fly down quickly, which is often needed when trout and steelhead are hunkered in the bottom of a deep run or pool in the winter. If you are snagging and losing flies regularly, try using jugged fly fishing hooks. Hooks with a 60-degree offset in the angle of the eye of the hook allow it to ride “point up” and avoid hooking the stream bottom.

Fishing the Hot Head Nymph is similar to other winter nymph patterns. Use an indicator rig along with one or two nymphs and add enough weight to sink your fly to near the bottom. I try to keep any splitshot I use at least 10 inches from the fly. In deep pools, it is often effective to suspend the fly just above the bottom, and work the water with a long, slow dead drift. When steelhead fishing in the



winter, I often use this type of fly as the bottom fly of a tandem rig. The hook angle makes for easy hook sets in deep water. Wintertime trout hold similarly, though on warmer days you may fish swifter water and find active fish willing to move to take the fly. Slowly swing it out and lift at the end of your cast. An aggressive fish may rush over and attack the Hot Head Nymph. ☐

Tying the Hot Head Nymph Materials

Hook: Size 8 or 10 Firehole 516 jig hook or similar

Thread: Olive flat waxed

Bead: 5/32-inch orange tungsten bead

Tail: Natural pheasant tail

Wire: Fine small French tinsel

Thorax: Olive brown or peacock E' Ice Dubbing

Abdomen: Natural pheasant tail

- 1 Begin your fly by placing the bead on the hook. Place the hook and bead in the vise and attach your thread. Form a thread mound behind the bead to keep it in place.
- 2 Wrap the thread down the shank of the hook to cover it. Tie in the tail fibers, followed by the wire.
- 3 Wrap the pheasant fibers forward to form the abdomen of the nymph and tie off. Follow by wrapping the wire forward and tying it off behind the bead.
- 4 Add dubbing to the thread and wrap behind the bead to form the thorax of the fly. The thorax dubbing should slightly exceed the size of the bead.
- 5 Whip finish the fly just behind the bead, and add a drop of cyanoacrylate glue to secure the wraps.
- 6 Your fly is finished and ready to fish.



NOTES *from the Streams*

“Is she driving the speed limit?”

After arresting an individual for boating under the influence, he was taken to Pennsylvania State Police barracks for processing. After going through the processing, myself, the trooper, and the arrested individual were sitting in the patrol room of the barracks, waiting for the man's girlfriend to arrive to take him home. We were all talking, and it seemed to take a long time for the man's girlfriend to arrive. The man said, “What is she doing, driving the speed limit?” I looked at the trooper and said, “I hope so.” The trooper said, “The last thing you need tonight is for your girlfriend to get a ticket on the way to pick you up.” —WCO Tyler A. Soety, Eastern Erie County.

Fishing for phones

While on patrol with Deputy Waterways Conservation Officer (DWCO) Smith at Merli-Sarnoski Park, Lackawanna County, we saw a father fishing on the fishing pier with his two

young daughters. As we approached, the man stood up to greet us. He had his new cell phone on his lap. We heard a splash, followed by, “Oh no, my wife is going to kill me. I just got the phone two days ago.” His daughters tried unsuccessfully to hook the phone with their lines. The lake is about 6- to 8-feet deep at this spot. Then, he tried to swim down to see if he could recover it. DWCO Smith and I stood by in case he needed any assistance. He dived down a few times but was unable to locate the phone. He decided to cut his losses and continue fishing. As we were leaving, his older daughter said she was going to call their mom to let her know what happened. We figured it was our time to leave to save him from more embarrassment. —WCO Alec S. DeLong, Lackawanna, Wayne, and Susquehanna counties.

That 1%

Most of the time, my job as a Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) is routine. For example, I know that when the weather is nice, I will see lots of people engaged in various activities along our waterways.

Many of these people will have fishing equipment with them. Now, one would think that at this point my job should not be complicated. Either the individual is fishing, or he or she is not fishing. If the individual is fishing, the angler either has a license, or the angler does not have a license. Pretty cut and dry, right? Well, 99% of the time it is cut and dry. But, let's talk about the other 1%. In early spring, I observed two young males standing side by side along Dunlap Creek Lake, Fayette County, casting and retrieving repeatedly. I approached the two men and asked to see their licenses. They informed me that they did not have licenses and did not need them, because they were not fishing. It turns out, they had no hooks, just a heavy sinker on the end of each line. They were having a competition to see who could cast the greatest distance. Several weeks later, at Dunlap Creek Lake, I observed two males and a female fishing from one of the docks. I watched long enough to see each of them cast and retrieve several times. I watched two of the people remove what I assumed to be small fish from their lines and throw the fish into a bucket. I introduced myself and asked to see their licenses. They looked confused and said they did not know that they needed licenses. One of them reeled in their line to reveal that instead of a hook, there was a magnet at the end of the line. I checked the bucket, and there were miscellaneous pieces of metal in it.

Recently, I caught a glimpse of a fishing rod in a man's hand as he walked through thick brush near a wild trout stream. By the time I caught up to the man, I walked through spider webs and brushed many spiders off of me. I never saw the man fish. He did not need a license, because there was no reel or string on the rod. The man was out scouting for the upcoming archery season and was using this old fishing rod to knock the spider webs down

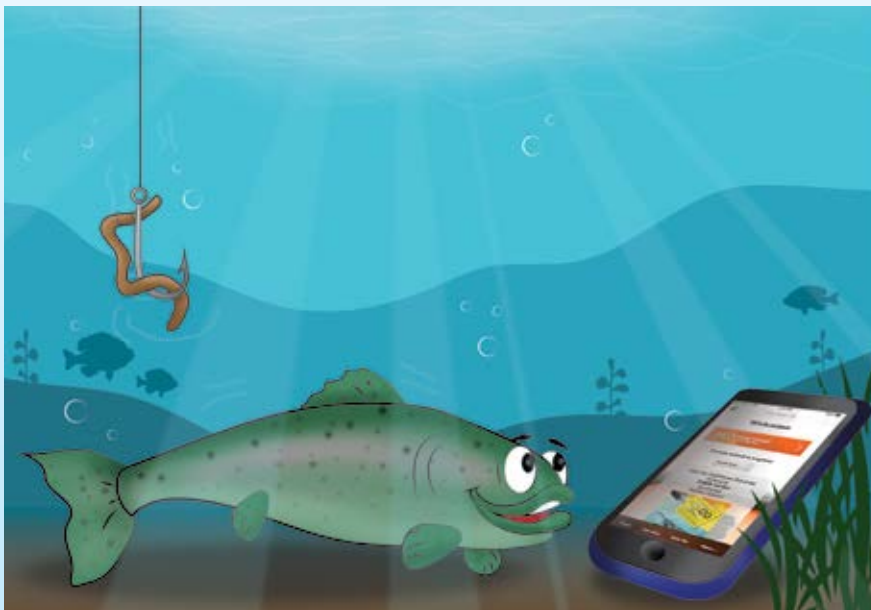


illustration-Andrea Feeney

so he did not get spiders all over him. That was the nicest spider stick I have ever seen.—WCO Scott D. Opfer, Fayette County.

Rolling tackle shop

Patrolling Lake Nockamixon, Bucks County, I talk to a lot of anglers. One angler impressed me more than most. When this angler opened his trunk to retrieve his fishing license, I could have sworn I just walked into a tackle shop. There was tackle hanging down the sides and bags and boxes of assorted lures, hooks, and baits. The angler asked me if I have ever seen a musky fly. He proceeded to pull out the biggest fly I have ever seen that he made to look like a mouse. As impressed as I was with the fly, I was skeptical that something like that would ever work. I told him when he catches that monster, I hope I am the first person he finds to share the story. I am eagerly waiting to cross paths with this angler again.—WCO Peter N. Labosh, Northern Bucks County.

The mystery make-believe nail salon

I was patrolling along a wild trout stream just outside of Clearfield, Clearfield County, when I noticed a bag of trash discarded close to the road. I pulled over, put on gloves, and looked through the bag to see if the responsible party left behind identifying information. I found two sheets of notebook paper, one containing a telephone number and address. The other page said, "Nail salon open, come on in." Both were written neatly in fluorescent pink highlighter.

I spent the next hour searching the internet for information relating to a local nail salon, and maybe one that was run out of someone's residence. My attempts at locating any local salon that could be a potential match fell short. When I called the number, someone would answer, but I would only hear dead air. With options running low, I visited the address and found no indication of a nail salon. Also, the apartment building's tenants did not recognize the number nor did they believe the other tenant had any

connection to a nail salon. As a last resort, I left a card and requested that the other tenant give me a call.

I received a call back from the other tenant, and sure enough the number matched the one found in the bag of trash. The woman on the other end of the phone explained that she and her daughter were playing "nail salon" together and that this was her trash. I laughed when I realized I spent a whole hour trying to locate a make-believe nail salon. I discovered that the trash was taken by a friend due to having perishables, and the trash was not scheduled to be picked up until the following week. The woman informed me that her friend claimed that a bear took the trash more than a mile away from his house to the site where I discovered it. She added, "But I do not believe him." "That makes two of us," I said. After a short conversation with her friend, it was admitted that the bear was as real as the nail salon.—WCO Justin L. Schillaci, Clearfield County.

Follow the rules

This past summer, DWCO Walter Gutzan and I were patrolling Lake Wallenpaupack in our marked patrol boat. We observed a boat with an expired Kansas registration. The occupants (2 juveniles and 1 adult male) were fishing close to the Wayne County shoreline. We observed the occupants for a few minutes before conducting a boarding of their vessel. At the onset of the boarding, I asked the boat operator and owner for the vessel's current registration. The registration expired in 2018. The gentleman said, "I thought boat registrations were extended because of COVID-19?" He then said that he follows all the rules and never breaks any laws. As we continued through the boarding process, I asked to see life jackets for everyone onboard. He could only produce one. I then asked to see his throwable device since his boat was greater than 16 feet. Unfortunately, he was missing that as well. He was able to produce the required fire extinguisher, but it was not serviceable. Finally, I asked to see his fishing license. His head slumped downward as he said, "I

do not have one."—Sergeant Walter A. Buckman, Northeast Region.

Teaching an old dog new tricks

I was patrolling Sheppard-Meyers Reservoir, York County, when I observed an older gentleman fishing and was unable to see his fishing license. I approached the angler and asked if he was having any luck. The man told me he caught a White Perch. I asked if he had a fishing license, and he showed me his license. I noticed a stringer holding only a small Bluegill. I told the man that the fish was a Bluegill, not a White Perch. He asked me if he was allowed to keep Bluegills, and I told him he was allowed to keep it, but a single lonely fish was not going to fill him up for dinner. He told me that he was there for a few hours and was having no luck. I asked what kind of bait he was using. He replied, "worms" as he pulled his line out of the water. I asked what he was fishing for and he told me panfish. I told the older man that fishing on the bottom for panfish is not the best way, and he should try a bobber. "I have never used a bobber, and I do not know what they do," said the angler. After looking through his tackle box, he found a bobber. I showed him how to put the bobber on his line. His first attempt at casting the line was not the best, as he attributed it to me making him nervous. He insisted I back up, because he was left-handed. I did as he asked and his second cast was a long, straight one. I told him that when the bobber was fully under the water, to jerk the line and reel. Just as he turned his head to ask me another question, I saw the bobber go under. I yelled, "You got one!" With excitement, he jerked the rod and began to reel in a fish. He turned to me and said, "You were right!" As he continued laughing, he pulled in a nice Bluegill. He told me he should not have doubted me and thanked me for taking the time to help him. I wished him luck with the rest of his fishing and walked away. As I walked back to my vehicle, I could hear the man giggling as he caught another fish using the bobber. WCO Rachael L. Thurner-Diaz, Adams and Western York counties.

Fly Casting Basics



photo-Derek Isles

by Tyler Frantz

In the November/December 2020 issue of the *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* magazine, I wrote an article called “Getting Started in Fly Fishing.” There is a thrill that comes with catching a fish on a fly rod, but there is also a learning curve when it comes to getting that fly neatly to the water.

One of the biggest hurdles to successful fly fishing is not fully understanding how to properly cast. Many times, I have witnessed novice fly anglers slapping the water with excessive line, or worse yet, snapping their leader on a false backcast that extends into the bushes.

Do not worry—I have been there myself, but thanks to a host of experienced anglers patiently showing me the ropes through the years, I have learned how to competently present a fly on most occasions. There is hope for you too, if you follow these important tips.

Thumbs up

A good cast begins with a good grip. Since casting a fly rod relies on the weight of the fly line being transferred back and forth, it is important to maintain control of this momentum with an appropriate grip.

Hold the rod above the reel with your thumb extended vertically along the back of the handle. Lock your wrist, and try to avoid letting your hand flop loosely from

your forearm. Try to maintain a steady grip, keeping your thumb up and perfectly in line with the rest of your forearm. Pivot from your elbow without rolling your wrist.



photo-Tyler Frantz

Always grip your fly rod with your thumb extended vertically along the back of the rod, as you will use it to load pressure on the line during the transfer from a backcast to forward pitch.

“10 and 2 rule”

While observing the late, great Lefty Kreh do what he did best, teaching a fly casting seminar, he repeatedly stressed the importance of remembering the “10 and 2 rule.” To feed and cast line, an angler must repeatedly transfer the load, meaning the weight of the line, in a back and forth motion. If you think of an analog clock, with 12 being straight at the top, you want the angle of your forearm, and thus also your thumb, to rotate back and forth between where 10 and 2 would be located on that same clock.

Again, keep your wrist locked, but rotate from your elbow, back and forth between the 2 o'clock and 10 o'clock marks. Your rod tip should follow your thumb tip and forearm as the line flows forward and backward trailing the rod tip.

Take out some slack from the reel and feed more line as needed. Pausing the motion of your arm at these two angle points should cause the load of the line to continue on in the direction your rod tip just moved. Be careful not to overfeed and kill the momentum.

Feel the pressure

When following the “10 and 2 rule,” it is important to feel the full back pressure and front pressure of the load before continuing on in the opposite direction. As you false cast backwards, halting your arm at the appropriate angle, pause momentarily until you feel pressure indicating the line is fully extended.

Then, apply a bit of thumb pressure and move your arm forward to the appropriate angle, again halting abruptly and pausing until you feel the full pressure of the line before rotating backwards.



photos: Tyler Frantz

Remember the “10 and 2 rule” when practicing a false backcast, as it helps train consistency in casting form.

Aim and shoot

Upon feeding out the desired amount of line, prepare for your final pitch by positioning the angle of your false backcast directly opposite of where you would like your fly to land. This may require a slight pivot in your feet to line up, and a check to ensure your casting window is clear.

Load just like you did before, only this time, acquire your target as if it had a hula hoop around it—aim, point, and shoot forward (without flopping your thumb or wrist). Stop at your normal mark, let the loaded line fully extend forward, keeping it just high enough not to slap the water. When it reaches its full extension, allow the fly to gently dance down to the water.

Mend the line

The final thing to keep in mind after the cast is to present the fly in a drag-free drift. Keep your rod hand high to prevent excess line from hitting the water. If line does sit on the water, it will have a tendency to pull the fly faster or slower than the current seam it is based on in surrounding currents. To combat this tendency, gently lift the fly line off the water and flip it upstream without disturbing the leader or fly.

Fly casting takes practice, but you will get the hang of it the more you do it. Apply the basics, feel the pressure, and keep that wrist locked. Remember, thumbs up, and you will be on your way to better casting. ☑



It is imperative that fly anglers mend their lines often to present a drag free drift.

Winter Fishing *for Walleyes*



by Nathan Woleslagle

photos by the author

Walleyes can be an elusive fish to catch, even in Pennsylvania waters where fish are prevalent. Fishing in the winter, however, may increase your success rate. The fishing pressure is often lighter than during the summer and fall months, the Walleyes are still active, and fish can be caught through both the ice and open water.

When the weather turns cold, rig up for Walleyes, and you may be rewarded.

The first task to accomplish before heading out for winter Walleyes is to locate a suitable body of water to fish. Pennsylvania has a plethora of locations to target these fish. Some notable fisheries include Lake Erie, Raystown Lake, the Susquehanna River, and many rivers in western Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission has information on their website on additional locations where Walleyes can be caught.

Once you have narrowed down a body of water, locating where Walleyes reside is crucial. Walleyes are



Targeting deeper holes and moving water can be effective for midday fishing outings.

sensitive to light and typically wait until dawn and dusk to feed in shallow water. Targeting deeper holes and moving water can be effective for midday fishing outings. I like to fish for Walleyes midday, as I often find fish schooled up tighter when staging in deeper holes.

When fishing a river in the winter for Walleyes, safety is of the utmost importance. Always wear a life jacket in a boat, notify family or friends of your fishing location, and fish with a partner. Falling into cold water can prove fatal and is not worth the risk. Fishing from shore is an effective and safer option, but similar precautions should be taken.

Effective river lures include jigs, deep diving crankbaits, flat sided crankbaits, and weighted swimbaits. Live bait drifted in the current can also work tremendously well. Live minnows, leeches, whole nightcrawlers, and crayfish tails can produce bites.

Fishing lakes and reservoirs in the winter, when the water is open and unfrozen, can be a prime opportunity to catch Walleyes. A fish finder can come in handy to locate schools of Walleyes chasing baitfish or holding locations. If there are islands, check the shoals, as Walleyes can occasionally be found moving along these shallow areas to find food.

Jig heads tipped with leeches, minnows, or curly tail grubs are an excellent presentation to try. A drop-shot rig with a minnow or leech soft plastic can also work well too. This is typically a bass presentation, but Walleyes feed in a similar manner and prefer to rise to eat a bait rather than swimming towards the bottom.

If the lakes and reservoirs in your area freeze solid, ice fishing for Walleyes can be as fun as it gets. A tactic

used by many ice anglers is to drill holes across a body of water. Then, check the holes with an ice flasher or fish finder. Finding deep holes, transition areas from shoals to deep water, and rock piles are all prime Walleye spots through the ice. Jiggging spoons tipped with minnow heads, leeches, or nightcrawlers can draw bites after locating a school of fish.

Another tried and true tactic is to place tip-ups across an area of a frozen lake. Live minnows or suspending nightcrawlers above the bottom will catch the attention of moving schools of Walleyes. Key areas to place tip-ups are the same as previously mentioned, and seeing a flag pop up is a great ordeal of excitement.

Winter fishing for Walleyes can be an overlooked opportunity during the winter months. While the bite is not always consistent or plentiful, the challenge of finding Walleyes adds to the experience when you finally have a productive outing. There is a learning curve to locating schools of Walleyes consistently, but you are in for fun times when you narrow down these areas.

Walleyes caught during the winter are excellent table fare as well. Check the bag limit and size regulations for the water you are fishing before keeping Walleyes. The meat is white, flaky, and firm. My personal favorite recipes include a traditional fish fry, grilling, and cooking in a "shore lunch" fashion with diced potatoes. If your interest has not peaked to give winter Walleye fishing a try, I am not sure what else to say. While it can be a challenge, the reward is great, and it beats staying inside during the colder months of the year. ☐

Winter Fly Fishing Tactics *for Trout*

by Nick DelVecchio

There are few experiences quite like standing in a favorite trout stream fighting a fish as snow gently falls. The stillness of the air is only broken by the clicking of the reel. While many anglers opt for the relative comfort of spring and summer fly fishing, the winter months may offer anglers some of the best action of the entire season and with limited competition from others. Trout do not stop feeding just because it is winter, and anglers who brave the elements may be rewarded with great days on the water that will not soon be forgotten.

Probably the biggest adjustment to make in regards to winter fly fishing is the size of the flies. Gone are the days where size 10 Green Drakes are prevalent, and hopper season is nothing but a distant memory. Midges (and perhaps small mayflies, depending on the stream) dominate this time of the year and that should be reflected in the fly selection of anglers. Black, silver, brown, and green imitations in sizes #20 to #24 are normal. These flies can be fished in tandem or even on a three-nymph rig when practical. While there will be instances of larger bugs hatching, it is safe to assume



A wintertime wild Rainbow Trout.

photos-Stephanie DelVecchio

the bugs will be small during these months. Using flies to imitate small insects will create a realistic scenario in which our offerings match up with the diet of a trout and result in more fish caught.

During January and February, many trout streams start to accumulate ice and lock up. This can present a serious challenge to wintertime fly anglers but also a tremendous opportunity. The fish will congregate in deeper pools and fast runs that will not freeze at all or will not freeze the whole way to the bottom. Such an area of refuge may hold multiple trout, many more than during other times of the year, and create a honey hole of sorts that anglers may methodically work for quite some time. The ideal scenario is to look for a deep, fast run that empties into a larger pool that has limited ice. A situation like this will

create everything a trout needs in winter with cover, oxygen, and food coming into a spot where trout do not have to work as hard against the current. The conservation of calories is of the utmost importance during winter, and trout will likely hold in any open water where fish do not have to work too hard to stay put.

Another tactic to employ may seem like a contradiction to the last, but it follows along a similar line of thinking. While fall may be well-known as “streamer season,” trout (especially large trout) will still feed on these baitfish imitations throughout winter. During this caloric intake versus output struggle, any meal that provides a punch of protein will be well received, and anglers should be armed with their streamer boxes during these cold months. Since trout may be less willing to move several feet to take the fly, consider dead drifting a Woolly Bugger or crayfish pattern through likely spots and detect hits either with an indicator or tightlining. This is an especially productive tactic in deeper runs against log jams or undercut banks where large trout are known to reside.



The spoils of winter fly fishing for those who adjust their tactics.

Sleeping in is not usually something fly anglers are well-accustomed to, especially during the summer and fall seasons when the window of opportunity for feeding trout is usually in the early mornings and late evenings. That changes with winter, as fish will feed heavily during the warmest part of the day when the sun peeks out and water temperature rises a few degrees. This may trigger an insect hatch. Anglers are going to want to be out on the stream during this time. The hours between 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. may be especially good. As an added bonus, the slight bump in temperature may make things a little more tolerable for anglers.

Winter is a wondrous time to be on the trout streams of Pennsylvania. With less competition from other anglers and hungry trout, there are some great days to be had for anglers willing to brave the cold. It is important to understand and adjust to the changing habits of trout.

These tactics are a great start for anglers who want to make trout season something that never ends in Pennsylvania. ☐



The beauty of winter is apparent to those who get out and enjoy it.



photos: Josh Ditzler

Ice Fishing Gear

by Deborah Weisberg

Although ice anglers need little more than a rod, reel, auger, and bait, today's ice fishing gear can make ice fishing more fun.

"Equipment has really changed over the years," said Jerry Van Tassel of Van Tassel's Timberland Bait, Crawford County. "You do not have to struggle to catch fish or suffer in the cold. There is so much out there to make the experience more enjoyable."

Light, portable shanties and high-tech electronics allow anglers to be more mobile and efficient.

"Fish finders may be the biggest advance," said Van Tassel, whose annual ice fishing tournament on Canadohta Lake, Crawford County, and Conneaut Lake,

Crawford County—northwestern Pennsylvania's two largest natural fisheries—are always a big draw.

"If you are a die-hard angler, fishing without sonar would be like going deer hunting with a stick. Without it, you are shooting in the dark," said Van Tassel.

"Sonar tells you where fish are located and at what depth. You can see if fish are on the bottom or suspended. You can even see fish nibbling at your jigs."

The technology comes in two basic types—flasher and liquid-crystal display (LCD). Each is available in a range of price points depending on whether the units are stand-alone, have chart-plotting capability, or include an underwater camera, which can be a real perk.

"Sonar uses a transducer positioned just below the surface of the water to emit sound waves until it strikes a fish or



Don Kelly, a fishing skills instructor for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, displays a Bluegill he caught through the ice on Hills Creek Lake, Tioga County.

other matter. Flashers process the information and depict it in various colors depending on target location,” said Matt Waldron, a Minnesota-based professional ice angler and service technician for Vexilar, one of several companies that manufacture flasher sonar.

“Red, for example, is the strongest signal and indicates that a fish is in the center of your sonar cone and at about the same depth as your bait. You can watch the interaction in real time. Green is weaker, which means the fish is further from your lure.”

LCD sonar shows objects on a screen and requires less interpretation than flasher models.

Although both technologies have enthusiasts, flasher outsells LCD, according to James Eastman, customer service supervisor at Erie-based FishUSA, who notes that units using lithium-ion batteries are especially popular, because these batteries are ultra-light and can work for hours on a charge.

Underwater cameras with infrared LED for low light and dirty-water conditions are an alternative to sonar. Underwater cameras are typically simpler and less expensive but more limited in what they can show.

Augers have also come a long way in recent years, with those powered by 20-volt lithium-ion batteries or propane gaining fans. Unlike gas augers, these augers do not produce fumes, and propane augers can double as a means of fueling cook stoves.

“It has gotten so much quieter on the ice, because anglers have gone to electric or propane,” said Eastman, who notes that electric has a slight edge in sales because today’s

batteries are so efficient. “If you warm up the battery for a second or two before plunging it into the ice, you will get more life out of it.”

While state-of-the-art equipment may give anglers an edge, nothing matters more than dressing for conditions, beginning with base layers—or long johns with a modern twist.

“They are warmer and lighter, so you are not putting on too many layers,” said Don Kelly, who, with wife Renee, is a fishing skills instructor for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Their shop, Tackle Shack, Wellsboro, Tioga County, is near some of the first ice fishing of the season on Hamilton Lake, Hills Creek Lake, and Lake Nessmuk.

Ultra-fine merino wool is currently a popular fabric, because it is soft enough to wear next to the skin yet breathable and has great capacity for wicking away sweat, according to the American Wool Council, which works to promote performance wool for wear in the great outdoors.

Engineered alternatives made from nylon or polyester also are available along with merino wool-synthetic blends.

“A warm hat is important too, since you lose most of your heat through your head,” said Kelly, “and so are quality insulated boots.”

The most important item an ice angler can invest in is a float suit. “My big thing is safety, plain and simple, and a float suit can save your life if you break through the ice. The prices are not bad. A bib and a jacket with buoyancy technology start at a few hundred dollars each and they are worth every penny,” said Eastman.

Even the best-dressed angler will want respite from the elements during a day on the ice, so a quality shanty is another must. Many of today’s pop-ups weigh less than 30 pounds and can be folded into a carrying bag, while others are built onto sleds. Features like fabric thickness, insulation, and capacity determine price.

Terry Miller, age 79, Crawford County, still considers the pop-up hut he bought 20 years ago new and much more convenient than the huts he used to build from plywood.

“When I was young, you made your own huts to get out of the wind,” said Miller.

But, he leaves sonar and other high-tech gear to the younger generation, relying instead on decades of experience and the same rods he used 60 years ago to locate and catch fish. “When you get to be my age, you just do not follow trends,” said Miller, who won a tournament on Canadohta Lake in 1996 by icing a 41-inch musky on a minnow.

“My rods are magnetic rods I sent away for and are now quite rare, very hard to find today. I use live bait, and I know where the weed beds are located,” said Miller. ☐



Tom Finkbiner, Fly Fishing Legend

by *Linda Stager*

photos by the author

Sitting with Tom Finkbiner and listening to him talk about fishing is like being a child again and listening to a master storyteller tell stories. Finkbiner, Slate Run, Lycoming County, has a lifetime of experience, particularly with fly fishing in Pennsylvania's trout streams. And, he has plenty of information to share with others about his philosophy of fly fishing.

"Most of the fun in life is the journey. It is not the destination. And, that is the way it is with fly fishing," said Finkbiner. "Trout live in coldwater streams in usually picturesque locations. You can stand in one of these locations all day long and not catch a single trout. But, if someone says to you, 'How was your day fishing,' you will say, 'fabulous.' Because, it is not really all about catching fish," said Finkbiner.

An angler who says its not really about catching fish? Finkbiner speaks for many who enjoy fishing for so much more than the fish at the end of the line.

Finkbiner is an encyclopedia of fly fishing and of trout lore. He got his first fly tying kit when he was a youngster in the late 1940s, back before fly fishing became the romantic experience so eloquently popularized in books like *A River Runs Through It*. The subsequent movie, directed by Robert Redford, drew new fans to the familiarity of the fly angler's rhythmic casting of a fly across the surface of a river in beautiful surroundings.

As Finkbiner tells it, his journey to Slate Run was a process of learning and of eye-opening experiences over a period of decades. It all started when he was around 8 years old. At that time, fly fishing was a secretive sport, often for elite anglers.

Finkbiner tells this story of the moment he knew he wanted to be a fly angler. His dad took him fishing one day. "We got to the stream, and we made our homemade casting rods. We broke a limb off, tied our line to the stick, and sat on a rock and waited. While we were there, this guy came down the other side of the stream. He had on waterproof waders, and he was fishing. I said to my dad, 'I do not want to do this, that is what I want to do,'" said Finkbiner.



Tom Finkbiner stocks Brown Trout with a Brown Trout Club member into “the Stretch” in Pine Creek.

By the next day, he caught house flies and was ready to go “fly” fishing with his dad after his dad got home from work. He was undeterred when his dad told him those were the wrong kinds of flies. He still wanted to be a fly angler.

One Christmas, his mother took the train to Gimbel’s Department store in Philadelphia to buy a Noll fly tying kit, a 10½ foot fly rod and a reel for Tom. He took his new equipment, tied some homemade artificial flies, and practiced casting in a little farm pond, where he caught sunfish.

Today, he knows that man-made artificial flies copy aquatic insects and that real flies hatch from a stream at particular times of the year. He now teaches the science behind the fishing skills he has learned as one of the best experts on the subject in the area.

Finkbiner currently resides in Slate Run, along Pine Creek, a stretch of picturesque river in the northcentral part of Pennsylvania. Pine Creek is designated as a Pennsylvania Scenic River by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Finkbiner and his wife Debbie own the Slate Run Tackle Shop. Tom is also active in the Brown Trout Club, a non-profit organization with a goal of creating world-class fishing opportunities on a segment of Pine Creek known as “the Stretch”. In 2015, a 2.88-mile section of Pine Creek was designated as Catch and Release All Tackle and continues to be managed with these regulations. Brown Trout are purchased by the club and stocked in this section of Pine Creek in addition to the trout stocked by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, which are primarily Rainbow Trout. According to Finkbiner, the 700-member club stocks trout from 14 inches to 23 inches long. Most are 16- to 17-inches long.

Finkbiner, since his arrival here, has always been instrumental in touting the Pine Creek area under the right conditions as one of the best places in the country to fly fish. “A good day of fishing in this section of Pine Creek

is equal to fishing on high-quality rivers,” said Finkbiner during a Trout Unlimited presentation. “A lot of guys around here go to Montana for this kind of experience. Now, they can get that experience right here.”

Finkbiner was not raised anywhere near Pine Creek, so how did he end up living here? He credits his wife Debbie for showing him her home area. As they settled in Slate Run, it was only natural for Tom to share his love of fly fishing with others.

Ask him about the hatch on Pine Creek and

he knows. He will take you to his expansive collections of ready-made flies in the shop and show you how to “match the hatch”. Want to purchase ready made flies? You can. Want to learn to make your own flies? He will tell you how. Finkbiner is a careful teacher and readily shares his knowledge.

And in part, because of how he approaches his favorite hobby, he has become a local legend. It is well worth listening to his stories. You will come away better for it. ☐



Tom Finkbiner holds a Noll fly tying kit, just like the one he started with as a kid.



Winter Trout Stream Exploration— *Relieve Cabin Fever by Preparing for Spring*

by Jerry Bush

photos by the author

Pennsylvania has a vast variety of streams available to anglers during periods that may be considered “off-season”. This presents great opportunities to catch and release a few fish, but that is not the only reason to access streams during off-peak seasons. This is a valuable time to research, learn, and plan for the primary trout season. You may intend to learn a stream later, but when the action is hot and heavy, it is more likely you will remain anchored to a few favorite spots.

After mid-April, most fly anglers find themselves locked into old habits and previously known locations that produce fish and never learn more about their favored waters. Worse are the unfortunate anglers who find limited success and waste key time striving to learn things that could have been learned during the off-season. Regardless of which end of

the spectrum, the message is clear—the best time to access a stream to learn more about the water and the fishery is now, when competition is absent and concentration on learning supersedes the desire to catch fish.

From the moment fly anglers leave their automobiles, they should be reminding themselves that the main goal during this time of year is to experience a learning process. People willing to walk more and cast less at this time are likely to benefit when the fishing is best. There will be time enough for casting and catching trout at a later date.

Begin with careful observation of your surroundings. Are you aware of the stream’s insect production, or are you limited to using a few imitations that your friends long ago advised? Why not take advantage of this time to wade into a stream and turn over some stones? Do not overlook the saturated leaves that clutter shallow water near the riverbanks. What types of insects and larvae will you find? Do the imitations carried in your fly box match the natural invertebrates you observe? Perhaps, there are some noticeable color or size variations that should be

added to your fly box. You will have time to hit the fly tying bench or local fly shop between now and the official season opener.

Are your favored fishing holes still viable? For years, a small waterfall existed on one of my favored streams that led into a small but decent pool where a fish or two could nearly always be caught. The heavily oxygenated water below that low waterfall was particularly attractive to large trout. One year, I unexpectedly found the tiny waterfall had eroded and was gone. I mentioned it to a friend who fished that stream in fall while I was bowhunting. "Oh yeah, I meant to tell you about that, it was gone after heavy rains moved into Pennsylvania from one of those major hurricanes that came in through the Gulf." I felt like I lost an old friend, and after a few subsequent visits, I found that little pool was never again productive.

Be mindful that you may never visit the exact same stream. We may not think about it, but streams are constantly changing in some manner or another. Sometimes, precipitation brings too much water. Often, droughts bring



Of course, there is nothing wrong with catching trout while exploring.

low water situations. As you are accessing streams now, try to imagine both circumstances and how you would adapt. Did heavy fall rains or winter snow melts dredge larger cuts into the outside curves of stream banks, where some trout may take up residence? That may be worth noting.

How do you know if the stream changed since you were on it last summer unless you visit it now? One of the most common stream-altering occurrences in Pennsylvania are fallen trees, which drastically or slightly change the flow of water. It may divert currents to dredge the streambed in new locations, or such occurrences may ruin cherished holes. Pools may exist where the rapids of shallow water previously flowed. Naturally small limbs that fall into or hang just barely over the surface of deep pools offer new fish-holding structure.

Remember that Saturday last spring when you arrived to find others fishing your favorite fishing holes? Did you find yourself wishing you were more familiar with the stream and that you may know exactly where less crowded, harder to reach fish were waiting? Now is the perfect time to walk a couple miles up or down the stream with a handheld GPS and mark alternate points. A relaxing drive along roadways paralleling the flowing water may also be advisable, so you may locate shortcuts leading to backup access points. Assuming private property is involved, this is the time to seek permission from landowners to access their property.

Of course, the stream will change slightly before the traditional opening day, but 90% of what you need to know will be pertinent in April. Learn your streams well enough to form backup plans. Prepare for the popularity of spring fishing situations or other factors that may present a problem at your favored fishing holes. It is a great excuse to relieve cabin fever. ☐



Turn over some stones to observe natural invertebrates to imitate.

Early Season Stoneflies



by Ralph Scherder

photos by the author

Stoneflies are one of the most common aquatic insects found in trout waters throughout North America. Stoneflies are found in a variety of colors and sizes, and some of the first hatches appear each spring. In fact, stoneflies have a tendency to emerge in cold weather, which has garnered these insects the nickname, “the snowflake hatch.” Many times, I have experienced some of the best stonefly action on February days when snow flurries were in the air. It was cold, but the fish were hungry, and I enjoyed every minute of it.

Early spring stonefly hatches include three different groups: little black stoneflies, early black stoneflies, and early brown stoneflies. These species range in size from 14 to 18, although occasionally these hatches run as large as size 12. Some stoneflies have a lifespan of multiple years, so it is common to find the same species in different stages of development.

Stoneflies do not emerge in the same manner that mayflies do. Stoneflies migrate from deeper pools and riffles toward shore and crawl out of the water onto rocks, logs, and other debris. Stoneflies lack a pupal stage and split from their nymphal shucks as full-grown adults. This simplifies things for fly anglers in terms of matching the hatch, because there are only two types of patterns you need to carry in your fly box—nymph and adult imitations.

Stonefly hatches are easy to miss, and many times the hatches are over before you realize it has begun. To get a sense of the status of the hatch, examine rocks along shorelines for nymphs or shucks. Once stoneflies climb up onto the bank, it can take hours or even days to transition into adults. If you are finding nymphs, chances are excellent that the next few days will produce some quality surface fishing. If all you find are shucks, nymphing will likely provide better results.



To determine the stage of the hatch, check rocks, sticks, and leaves along the shore for nymphs, husks, or adults like this black stonefly.



Stonefly nymph imitations are effective year-round. Never leave home without a selection of nymphs in various sizes and colors.

Even when adult stoneflies are in the air, though, trout do not always key in on insects the way you would expect. Stoneflies tend to hatch sporadically, and you will rarely find clouds of insects in the air, which means fishing a dry fly pattern is not always the best option. I do not often carry a selection of stonefly dry flies, so when trout are actively feeding on the surface, I do well with an Elk Hair Caddis or Flying Ant in the same size as the naturals. Stoneflies and caddisflies have wings that lie parallel to its bodies. The biggest difference is that stonefly wings lie flat along the backs while caddis wings are more tent shaped. Regardless, I had great success using a size 16 black Elk Hair Caddis during little black stonefly hatches and a Brown Caddis during early brown stonefly hatches.

Stonefly nymphs are a staple of a trout's diet year-round. I cannot think of a time of year when I have not caught trout on a stonefly nymph. Even better is that trout are not too finicky when it comes to the size of the imitation used. After all, at any time of year, stoneflies of all sizes can be found on the stream bottom. I usually start with a pattern a size or two bigger than the naturals, and if that doesn't work, I drop down to a smaller size. The most common colors I use are black, brown, and golden. All three in various sizes (ranging from size 6 down to size 18) will work any time of year wherever stoneflies are found.

Stonefly nymphs can be fished with or without an indicator. In deeper, slow-moving pools that require a more methodical approach, and strikes tend to be subtler, indicators are a valuable tool. Stoneflies, though, tend to thrive better in faster, well-oxygenated water such as riffles and runs. The low profile bodies and little hooks on the feet of stoneflies allows it to grip rocks in even the fastest moving water, so there really is no section of stream you should overlook.

In fast water, I like a high-stick method and no indicator, a technique that has become well-known lately as Euro-nymphing, which allows me to better manipulate the stonefly through pockets and behind boulders, where feeding fish are likely to be. I prefer a weighted nymph, and I sometimes add a small splitshot about a foot above the fly to help get it to the bottom quicker in faster current. This is why I do not use an indicator—the added weight of a splitshot in combination with the heavy current usually drags it underwater

anyway. Also, in fast water, strikes may be fierce and easy to detect.

Stonefly imitations work best when bounced along the bottom. Experiment with different sizes of splitshot that will get your fly down but not get snagged on every cast. Stoneflies cannot swim. When a stonefly is threatened or breaks loose from structure, it curls up as it bounces down through the current and uncurls once it settles and feels safe again.

Spring is symbolized by many things—the date on the calendar, the gobble of a big tom turkey, or the blooming of certain flowers. But, for fly anglers, it is those early season stoneflies. Stoneflies are a rite of spring not to be missed. ☐



Stoneflies have two tails and a distinctly segmented thorax. Stoneflies can be found in a variety of colors including black, brown, golden, and yellow (pictured above).

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

ANGLER AWARD PROGRAM

Qualifying Minimum Weights and State Records

Species	Catch & Release	Sr.			Jr.		State Record	
		Inches	Pounds	Ounces	Pounds	Ounces	Pounds	Ounces
Bass, Largemouth	20	5	0	4	0	11	3	
Bass, Rock	8	0	12	0	8	3	2	
Bass, Smallmouth	19	4	0	3	8	8	8	
Bass, Striped Marine (includes hybrid)	30	23	0	21	0	53	13	
Bass, Striped Inland (includes hybrid)	23	10	0	7	8	53	12	
Bass, White	14	2	0	1	8	4	0	
Bluegill	8	0	12	0	8	2	9	
Carp, Common	28	14	0	11	8	52	0	
Catfish, Bullhead & White	11	1	8	1	0	4	10	
Catfish, Channel	24	10	8	8	0	35	3	
Catfish, Flathead	34	20	0	16	0	56	3	
Crappie	10	1	4	1	0	4	3	
Drum, Freshwater	21	5	0	4	0	19	14	
Muskellunge (includes tiger)	40	28	0	20	0	54	3	
Perch, White	9	0	12	0	8	1	12	
Perch, Yellow	11	1	4	0	12	2	14	
Pickerel, Chain	20	4	0	3	0	8	15	
Pike, Northern	27	11	0	8	0	35	0	
Salmon, Atlantic	21	5	8	4	0	17	2	
Salmon, Chinook	30	14	0	11	8	28	15	
Salmon, Coho	24	8	0	6	8	15	5	
Salmon, Pink	17	3	0	2	8	4	8	
Sauger	18	2	0	1	8	4	0	
Shad, American	22	6	0	4	8	9	9	
Suckers	17	2	12	2	0	12	14	
Trout, Brook	15	2	0	1	8	7	0	
Trout, Brown	21	5	8	4	0	20	9	
Trout, Lake	30	15	0	12	0	31	13	
Trout, Golden Rainbow	20	5	0	3	8	13	8	
Trout, Rainbow	20	5	0	3	8	15	6	
Trout, Steelhead	24	10	0	8	0	20	3	
Walleye	23	8	0	6	0	17	9	

Rules

1. Program open to residents and non-residents.
2. All fish must be caught in Pennsylvania waters open to the public without charge or fee. Except for First Fish, fish taken from farm ponds, fee-fishing lakes, ponds or streams, or waters restricted to use by club members or their guests, do not qualify.
3. Fish must be caught by legal methods during legally open seasons.
4. Kept fish must be weighed and measured. Weight and measurement by fishing license agents, Official Measuring Stations, tackle stores, or authorized employees of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission is encouraged.
5. Catch-and-release and First Fish catches must be witnessed.
6. Measurements must be made with a metal ruler or tape measure. Measure from tip of the nose (with closed mouth) to tip of the tail.
7. Photographs: For kept fish – a clear, side-view photograph is preferred but not required. For catch-and-release fish – a clear, side-view photograph of the fish IS required. Photographs for catch-and-release category must be taken at the catch site. Driveway, bait shop, or kitchen shots are unacceptable for catch-and-release fish. Photos showing mishandling will be disqualified.
8. First Fish – need only a witness signature. Photos are encouraged but not required.
9. To be considered for the annual "Biggest Fish of the Year" list, applications must be received no later than February 28 of the following year.
10. To be considered as a potential STATE RECORD fish, additional requirements must be met and a separate application is required. See any Official Measuring Station or contact the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission at 717-705-7835 for an application. For more information on Official Measuring Stations, visit www.fishandboat.com.
11. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission reserves the right to investigate the identification, methods used in catching, and the accuracy of measurement and weighing. It also reserves the right to reject any application.
12. Only one patch will be awarded annually to each applicant.
13. Each entry becomes the property of the Fish and Boat Commission with all publication rights. The information contained on the application and accompanying photograph may be used in, but not limited to, press releases, published articles, and promotional materials. Photographs cannot be returned.
14. Parental signature is required when applicant is under 18 years of age.

Application for: (check one)

Senior Angler Award

for those anglers 16 and older.
Award includes certificate and patch.

Junior Angler Award

for those anglers under 16 years of age. Award includes certificate and patch.

Husky Musky Club

anglers who land a musky that is 50 inches or longer. Award includes certificate and patch.

Catch and Release

award for those anglers who practice catch and release. Qualifications based on length.

First Fish

certificate recognizing a new angler's first fish. There are no size qualifications.

www.fishandboat.com

Please print clearly.

Fish Species _____

Only the species with qualifying weights (in table above) are eligible for Angler Awards. Applications for other species will be returned.

Angler's Name _____ Age _____

Street or P.O. Box _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Fish Weight _____ lbs. _____ oz. Length _____ in. Girth _____ in.

Date Caught _____ County Where Caught _____

Water Where Caught _____

Rod _____ Reel _____ Line _____

Name of Bait or Lure _____

Weighed and Measured by _____

Catch Witnessed by _____

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____


Parental Signature if Applicant is Under 18 Years of Age _____

Mail application and photograph to: Angler Award · Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission · P.O. Box 67000 · Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000

2021 SEASONS, SIZES, and CREEL LIMITS

COMMONWEALTH INLAND WATERS-2021

(includes the Youghiogheny River Lake and does not include special regulation areas)

Species	Seasons	Minimum Size	Daily Limit
ALL SPECIES OF TROUT  Additional regulations may apply- see Trout Regulations for stream sections that are both Stocked Trout Waters and Class A Wild Trout Waters.	Regional Opening Day of Trout Season* - April 3 at 8 a.m. through Sept. 6 (only 18 southeastern PA counties)	7 inches	5-streams, lakes, and ponds (combined species)
	Regular Season - April 17 at 8 a.m. through Sept. 6	7 inches	5-streams, lakes, and ponds (combined species)
	Extended Season: <i>Stocked trout waters and all waters downstream of stocked trout waters.</i> Jan. 1 through Feb. 28 and Sept. 7 through Dec. 31	7 inches	3 (combined species)
	Extended Season: <i>Class A wild trout stream sections.</i> Jan. 1 through Feb. 28 and Sept. 7 through Dec. 31	NO HARVEST - Catch and immediate release only Class A stream listing: www.fishandboat.com/classa.pdf	
BASS-LAKES Largemouth, Smallmouth, and Spotted Additional regulations may apply.	Jan. 1 through April 16 and Nov. 1 through Dec. 31	15 inches	4 (combined species)
	April 17 through June 11	NO HARVEST - Catch and immediate release only (no tournaments permitted) See catch-and-release guidelines.	
	June 12 through Oct. 31	12 inches	6 (combined species)
BASS-RIVERS AND STREAMS Largemouth, Smallmouth, and Spotted Additional regulations may apply.	Jan. 1 through April 16 and Oct. 1 through Dec. 31	15 inches	4 (combined species)
	April 17 through June 11	NO HARVEST - Catch and immediate release only (no tournaments permitted)	
	June 12 through Sept. 30	12 inches	6 (combined species)
Muskellunge and Tiger Muskellunge** Pickeral** Northern Pike**	Open year-round	40 inches	1 (combined species)
		18 inches	4
		24 inches	2
Walleye and Saugeye (Hybrids)	Jan. 1 through March 14 and May 1 through Dec. 31	15 inches	6
Sauger	Jan. 1 through March 14 and May 1 through Dec. 31	12 inches	6
American Shad***	Open year-round	No minimum	3
American Shad	Open year-round - Lehigh River, Schuylkill River**** and tributaries	NO HARVEST - Catch and immediate release only	
American Shad	CLOSED YEAR-ROUND		
River Herring***	Susquehanna River and tributaries		
Hickory Shad***	CLOSED YEAR-ROUND		
Herring, Gizzard Shad	Open year-round	No minimum	50 (combined species)
American Eel	Open year-round	9 inches	25
Striped Bass and Striped Bass/White Bass Hybrids	Open year-round	20 inches	2 (combined species)
Sunfish, Yellow Perch, White Perch, Crappies, Catfish, Rock Bass, Suckers, Carp, White Bass, Bowfin, and other gamefish not otherwise listed Additional regulations may apply- see Panfish Enhancement Special Regulations.	Open year-round	No minimum	50 (combined species)
Baitfish/Fishbait***** (except Mudbugs/Includes Crayfish)	Open year-round	No minimum	50 (combined species)
Mudbugs (Dragonfly Nymphs)	Open year-round	No minimum	Unlimited if taken from lakes, ponds, swamps, and adjacent areas. 50 per day if taken from moving waters (rivers and streams).
Mussels/Clams	CLOSED YEAR-ROUND		
Paddlefish, Spotted Gar, and other threatened and endangered species	CLOSED YEAR-ROUND		

SEASONS, SIZES, AND CREEL LIMITS - Except for trout season, which begins at 8 a.m., all regulatory periods in the fishing regulations are based on the calendar day, one of which ends at midnight and the next of which begins immediately thereafter.

* Includes only those waters in 18 southeastern PA counties and four waters crossing from those counties listed in the **Regional Opening Day of Trout Season Program**.

** Except those species in waters listed in the **Brood Stock Lakes Program**. Tiger Muskellunge is a muskellunge hybrid.

*** Unlawful to take, catch, or kill American Shad in the Susquehanna River and all its tributaries. River Herring (Alewife and Blueback Herring) has a closed year-round season with zero daily limit applied to Susquehanna River and tributaries, Lehigh River and tributaries, Schuylkill River and tributaries, West Branch Delaware River, Delaware River, Delaware estuary, Delaware River tributaries upstream to the limit of the tidal influence, and Conowingo Reservoir.

**** Lehigh River upstream of the first dam in Easton, Pennsylvania and its tributaries and the Schuylkill River upstream of the I-95 Bridge and its tributaries.
NOTE: It is not a violation of the bass regulations if a bass is immediately returned unharmed to the waters from which it was taken. It is unlawful for an angler to cast repeatedly into a clearly visible bass spawning nest or redd in an effort to catch or take bass.

NOTE: For bass regulations, power dam pools and recreational dam pools on the Susquehanna River and navigational dam pools on the Ohio River drainage are "rivers." It is unlawful to conduct a fishing tournament on the North Branch, West Branch, or main stem of the Susquehanna River that allows a tournament angler to harvest bass.

NOTE: Stocked trout waters are closed to fishing from March 1 to the opening day of the regular trout season in April, unless included in the **Regional Opening Day of Trout Season Program or Stocked Trout Waters open to Year-Round Fishing Program**.

NOTE: Landlocked Alewife less than 8 inches in length taken from inland ponds, lakes, or reservoirs that are collected by legal means may be harvested for use as baitfish.

NOTE: It is legal to fish for trout in Class A trout streams year-round, with no harvest beginning the day after Labor Day through the opening day of trout season the following year. The exception is those stream sections designated as both Class A Wild Trout Streams and Stocked Trout Waters. These stream sections are closed to fishing from March 1 until 8 a.m. on the opening day of trout season.

***** **BAITFISH** includes all forms of minnows; suckers, chubs, Fallfish, lampreys; Gizzard Shad 8 inches or less; and all forms of darters, killifishes, and stonecats (except those listed as threatened or endangered species). Legally taken gamefish may be used as bait. It is unlawful to use or possess goldfish, comets, koi, and Common Carp as baitfish while fishing. **FISHBAIT** includes crayfish, crabs, and the nymphs, larvae, and pupae of all insects spending any part of their life cycle in the water.

For all crayfish species, the head must be immediately removed behind the eyes upon capture unless used as bait in the water from which taken.

2021 FISHING LICENSES

LICENSE YEAR

Annual licenses are valid from Dec. 1, 2020, through Dec. 31, 2021. WHILE FISHING, your license must be upon your person and provided upon the request of an officer.



Code	Type of Fishing License or Permit	Age	Cost*
101	Resident (Annual)	16-64	\$22.97
104	Senior Resident (Annual)	65 & up	\$11.97
105	Senior Resident (Lifetime)	65 & up	\$51.97
108	1-Day Resident (not valid March 15–April 30)	16 & up	\$11.97
102	Non-Resident (Annual)	16 & up	\$52.97
113	Non-Resident PA Student (Annual) ***	16 & up	\$22.97
106	1-Day Tourist ** (not valid March 15–April 30)	16 & up	\$26.97
103	3-Day Tourist	16 & up	\$26.97
107	7-Day Tourist	16 & up	\$34.97
110	Voluntary Youth Fishing License (Annual)	Less than 16	\$2.97
109	Mentored Youth Permit	Less than 16	\$0.00
150	Trout Permit	16 & up	\$9.97
033	3-Year Senior Lifetime Trout Permit	65 & up	\$25.97
053	5-Year Senior Lifetime Trout Permit	65 & up	\$41.97
063	10-Year Senior Lifetime Trout Permit	65 & up	\$81.97
151	Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$9.97
152	Combination Trout Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$15.97
136	Alternate Display Annual Fishing License Button	Any Age	\$10.00

* Includes issuing agent fee of \$1.00 and \$0.97 PALS transaction fee. Excludes the 109 Mentored Youth Permit.

** Includes Trout and Lake Erie permits, not valid March 15–April 30. *** Available after mid-January.

2021 MULTI-YEAR FISHING LICENSES

Code	Type of Fishing License or Permit	Age	Cost*
150	1-Year Trout Permit	16 & up	\$9.97
151	1-Year Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$9.97
152	1-Year Combo Trout Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$15.97
030	3-Year Resident	16-64	\$64.97
031	3-Year Non-Resident	16 & up	\$154.97
032	3-Year Senior Resident	65 & up	\$31.97
033	3-Year Trout Permit	16 & up	\$25.97
034	3-Year Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$25.97
035	3-Year Combo Trout Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$43.97
050	5-Year Resident	16-64	\$106.97
051	5-Year Non-Resident	16 & up	\$256.97
052	5-Year Senior Resident	65 & up	\$51.97
053	5-Year Trout Permit	16 & up	\$41.97
054	5-Year Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$41.97
055	5-Year Combo Trout Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$71.97
060	10-Year Resident	16 & up	\$211.97
061	10-Year Non-Resident	16 & up	\$511.97
063	10-Year Trout Permit	16 & up	\$81.97
064	10-Year Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$81.97
065	10-Year Combo Trout Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$141.97

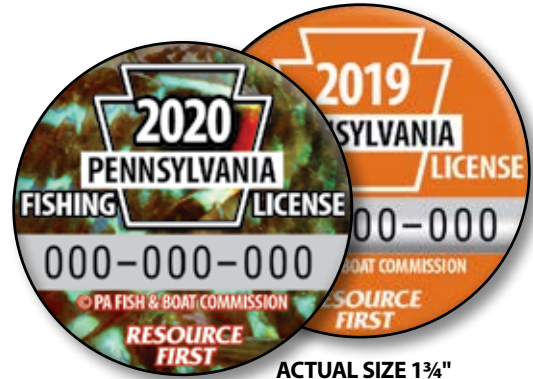
* Includes issuing agent fee of \$1.00 and \$0.97 PALS transaction fee.

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ACTUAL SIZE 1 3/4"

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2021 VOLUNTARY PERMITS

LICENSE YEAR

Voluntary Permits are designed to help maintain funding levels for several key fishing-related programs. Revenues generated from the sale of these permits will be reinvested into their respective program.



Code	Type of Voluntary Permits	Age	Cost*
073	Voluntary Bass Permit	Any	\$11.97
077	3-Year Voluntary Bass Permit	Any	\$31.97
081	5-Year Voluntary Bass Permit	Any	\$51.97
085	10-Year Voluntary Bass Permit	Any	\$101.97
071	Voluntary Musky Permit	Any	\$11.97
075	3-Year Voluntary Musky Permit	Any	\$31.97
079	5-Year Voluntary Musky Permit	Any	\$51.97
083	10-Year Voluntary Musky Permit	Any	\$101.97
070	Voluntary Habitat/Waterways Conservation Permit	Any	\$11.97
074	3-Year Voluntary Habitat/Waterways Conservation Permit	Any	\$31.97
078	5-Year Voluntary Habitat/Waterways Conservation Permit	Any	\$51.97
082	10-Year Voluntary Habitat/Waterways Conservation Permit	Any	\$101.97
072	Voluntary Wild Trout & Enhanced Waters Permit	Any	\$26.97
076	3-Year Voluntary Wild Trout & Enhanced Waters Permit	Any	\$76.97
080	5-Year Voluntary Wild Trout & Enhanced Waters Permit	Any	\$126.97
084	10-Year Voluntary Wild Trout & Enhanced Waters Permit	Any	\$251.97

* Includes issuing agent fee of \$1.00 and \$0.97 PALS transaction fee.

www.fishandboat.com



WACKY WORM, INC.

by Alex Zidock Jr. photos by the author

During a family trip, Louis Herfurth announced he wanted to launch a new venture aside from the retail meat market he and his brother owned in Gilbert, Monroe County. “My wife and I were talking about what we wanted to do as a secondary business. I was an angler since I was little, and I said I would like to open a tackle shop and call it Lou’s Tackle Shop.” His wife, Carol, quickly responded from the passenger seat, “No, it is not going to be called Lou’s Tackle Shop.”

Herfurth told his wife and kids that he wanted it to be the largest indoor soft plastic display in northeast Pennsylvania. Then, he said they heard a voice from the back seat. One of the kids quipped, “Dad, you’re wacky.”

“Before we reached our destination, the tackle shop became Wacky Worm, and that is how we got our name,” said Herfurth.

The tackle shop opened some 36 years ago. “Wacky Worm, Inc., was registered and in business long before the terminology of ‘rigging a worm wacky style’ was popular,” said Herfurth.

“In the beginning, we manufactured our soft plastic worms by hand. My kids will tell you stories about whenever they wanted to go anywhere, like an amusement park, that they had



Louis Herfurth, the owner, fills the display rack. Located in Gilbert, Monroe County, Wacky Worm, Inc., also offers rubber and synthetic tied jig heads.

to pack plastic worms in our Wacky Worm, Inc., bags before they could go,” said Herfurth.

It was not long before Herfurth’s unique bait designs and worm compositions were in such demand that he had to

outsource manufacturing. “The only thing we still do onsite is the large and small-sized Crinkle Worm, and we pour our design lead jig heads,” said Herfurth.

Relying on his experience when he fished the amateur bass circuits and his research into what it takes to make a certain-sized plastic bait fall optimally, Herfurth came up with a particular composition for his worms and lures. “Salt makes the difference. There are a wide variety of salts from very fine flour salts to very coarse salt. The type and amount of salt makes a difference in our products. Where most plastic bait manufacturers put a few tablespoons of salt into 5 gallons of plastic, I put 5- to 7-pounds of salt into 5 gallons of mix. Fish bite and hold on,” said Herfurth.

Complimenting Wacky Worm’s soft plastic baits, Herfurth developed a line of lead jig heads. “On our jig heads, the catch (keeper) is made of stainless steel and is molded right into the jig head itself. Unlike others, these will not break or give out,” said Herfurth.

“We have grown a lot. For example, we manufacture 52 different colors in our 5½-inch Wacko. In the store, we display 14,000 or 15,000 Wackos in bags of 50, plus thousands of Wackos in 10-count bags.” The most popular Wacko last year was the 5½-inch Green Pumpkin Candy.

“Fishing guides who work on the Susquehanna River and purchase our baits tell us all they need is a supply of our Swim Minnow in the Sun Perch color to keep clients happy,” said Herfurth. The Herfurth family also manufacture plastic tubes and what he calls the “Shaky Worm” for the drop-shot



Bright yellow packaging fills the aisles of Wacky Worm. Louis Herfurth’s goal of displaying the most plastic baits in the area has exceeded expectations with 3- to 5-million pieces of plastic baits on display at any one time.

technique, and another called the “Stubby” for Ned rigging and the Crinkle Worm.

“In our full-service tackle shop, we also carry a vast assortment of baits manufactured by other companies. We have between 3- to 5-million pieces of plastic on display, and we have another 2- to 3-million plastic baits in storage on site. I think we now qualify as one of the world’s largest in-store displays of plastic baits,” said Herfurth. □

More information

The first rubber or plastic worm for fishing was a product of Nick and Cosma Creme who, in 1949, brewed a combination of pigments, oil, and vinyl in their Akron, Ohio, basement that ended up molded into a realistic-looking earthworm. The famous Creme Wiggle Worm soon became the go-to for bass anglers in the south. Creme’s worms were fished in a natural manner, and many anglers dressed their Texas rigs or Carolina rigs with the worms. In 1991, Jeff Cammerino, a Pennsylvania resident, registered a trademark for Jersey Riggs. Cammerino said he watched a caterpillar fall from a tree into the water, and as he watched it sink and twitch on the way down, a bass gulped it. He developed a 3½-inch, pencil-thin, plastic bait more to simulate larvae than an earthworm. It was specifically designed to be hooked in the middle, and it was called fishing the ‘Jersey-Rig’ style. A few years later, Gary Yamamoto developed the Senko, and it too was to be hooked in the middle. Thus, wacky rigging a plastic worm became popular.



A variety of jig heads produced by Wacky Worm include the Tip-Up (upper left) that is constructed to hold the bait off the bottom. Moving clockwise is the mushroom head, the sled head, the shaky head, and the tube head. The “catch” or “keeper” is made of stainless steel and molded into the lead heads. The sled head is fashioned to “swim” the bait. Most jig heads are available from ¼-ounce to ⅝-ounce.

Wacky Worm

www.wackyworm.com



Ice Jigs for Open Water Panfish

by Braden Eisenhower

photos by the author

I would like to have back the time I squandered fishing traditional panfish jigs. True, $\frac{1}{16}$ -ounce jigs paired with $1\frac{1}{2}$ - or 2-inch grubs, tubes, or minnow-shaped plastics are recurring crappie favorites. And, at appropriate times, I have enjoyed much success. But, jigs of this size often limit the quantity and quality of the catch.

A panfish's diet is comprised mostly of microorganisms like zooplankton and invertebrates.



Bluegill

That should be the starting point when choosing a jig. The optimal jig exists, and it has a following on ice. But, ice jigs are as deadly in open water situations.

The ice jigs I use have a horizontal line tie. Some look like an ordinary jig head while others sport a bulbous head. The distinct feature amongst ice jigs are small hooks, which range between size 8 and size 16.

Switching to ice jigs is an exercise of downsizing. However, that is not to say one is limiting the size of a catch. In fact, tiny jigs account for my largest crappies each year. And, when fished in the appropriate places, I do not contend with undersized “bait stealers.”

Traditional crappie jigs often weed out Bluegills and perch. Ice jigs invite more panfish species to the party and even attract the occasional Golden Shiner, Largemouth Bass, or Chain Pickerel when conditions allow.

Shallow

Crappies and Bluegills move shallow towards the end of the ice season, and that is where I find fish when lakes thaw. The surest way to catch early season panfish is with a lightweight ice jig tipped with one to three waxworms.

Although this shallow migration is to feed, there is no guarantee of willing participants in cold water. Still, panfish are often receptive to the slow decent of ice jigs, which weigh between $\frac{1}{100}$ - and $\frac{1}{50}$ -ounces. The scent from the punctured waxworms helps turn lookers into biters. Bluegills effortlessly inhale tiny jigs. Minimal resistance means more hooksets and fewer rejections.

Lightweight ice jigs rely on the help of a float for accurate casting. Depending on the panfish, I suspend the jig between 10 inches and 24 inches below a fixed float. The added benefit to float fishing is that the jig stays in place, creating a vertical approach, much like ice fishing.

Using ice jigs is step one. But, why not bring the same principles of ice fishing into open water fishing?

With the float stationary, I impart the “pound” technique by aggressively shaking the rod tip with a locked wrist. Some may call this “bobber jigging” in open water. This tactic animates the jig and causes it to bounce.

Mid-depth

I target panfish in mid-depth zones—8- to 15-feet—during the early pre-spawn period and again after the spawn. This is the first significant depth change adjacent to spawning flats.

Horizontal casting or trolling presentations are best to locate isolated schools of fish. Once I find the schools, I pick the school apart with a jig fished beneath a slip float.

The traditional slip float setup places splitshot on the line a foot or so above a plain hook. Adding weight to



When presenting ice jigs beneath a float, push the clinch knot to the rear portion of the line tie (toward the hook), so the jig sits level. Opening the hook gap, thereby increasing the hook angle, can improve hookups. Be careful when adjusting as the hooks are quite fragile.

the line creates a considerable disadvantage for panfish as it limits detection of the “up” bite. The “up” bite occurs when fish, especially crappies, come from below the lure to bite. This upward force creates slack in the line, causing the float, on a balanced rig, to lay on its side rather than submerge.

With weight on the line, a fish may inhale and exhale the bait without the angler knowing. Ice jigs provide a direct connection, so additional weight is not necessary.

I choose heavier ice jigs to achieve the desired depth faster and pull the line more easily through the slip float.

I tip with halved redworms on occasion. Most often, I use scented soft plastics or biodegradable plastics.

Deep

Panfish location during the summertime closely mirrors wintering haunts. When air temperatures climb in July and August, panfish retreat to deeper water, where there is favorable water temperature and oxygen levels available. Again, zooplankton is the primary food source.

Vertical jigging effectively targets panfish schooling at depths greater than 15 feet of water.

Tungsten ice jigs are tailor-made for extracting fish from the fathoms. Since tungsten is a dense metal, tungsten jigs are much smaller than lead jigs of equal weight. This means tungsten jigs can be quite heavy, yet maintain profiles characteristic of deep-water forage.

Locating fish is the greatest obstacle. Studying lake maps and utilizing electronics help dispel the mysteries of offshore environments.

Gradually feather the jig downward, stopping above the school. In open water, smaller fish will prefer the safety of the school. The larger, less vulnerable fish will break from the pack. Experiment with the jigging motion until you find the fish-yielding cadence.

Panfish feed heavily on small organisms. Use ice jigs year-round to match the food source. □

Lured By Time: Collecting Antique Fishing Lures and Tackle

by Christian A. Shane

photos by the author

“The lure is a device made of some material, organic or inorganic, bearing a hook, a facility for tying it to a line, and made in such a way as to deceive a fish into thinking it to be a delicacy worthy of pursuit.” Carl F. Luckey, Old Fishing Lures & Tackle (1999).

From coins to stamps to vintage toys to comic books, people from all walks of life have found various things to gather and collect. Anglers fascinated with the history of fishing are no exception and have amassed their own myriad of lures, plugs, and tackle. Whether it is nostalgia, curiosity, or the search for something old or new, lure and tackle collecting in Pennsylvania has become a hobby for some anglers.

It started in my life when a family friend handed down an old tackle box to me. Among its contents, the wooden, crackle-bodied lures with glass eyes each held their own stories of time spent on the water. From manufacturers such as Heddon, Creek Chub, South Bend, Pflueger, and Shakespeare, the plugs had their own uniqueness and seemed different from the ones in my own tackle box. Then, I researched each lure and found that some had little value and some seemed to be a rare find. Thus, began my hobby of lure collecting. Bargaining at garage sales, bidding on the eBay website, and attending fishing shows, I assembled an impressive amateur collection. To this day, my lure hunt continues with the Creek Chub Gar Underwater Minnow as my relentless goal.

Getting started

The first step in collecting antique plugs is building and defining your collection. Lure collectors run the spectrum from casual to competitive. Some hobbyists enjoy



surprising finds and add cracked, damaged, and faded lures into their collections. Others prefer getting into the hobby as serious collectors to find that mint, new-in-box treasure. Ask yourself what kind of collector will you be? Will you stick to one distinct type of lure, color, style, or manufacturer? Does a particular pattern or plug grab your attention and interest?

Finding lures

Look for sources such as garage sales, estate sales, and flea markets, where you may locate vintage fishing tackle. You may ask friends or family if they have any old fishing gear that they are willing to part with for a price. Research if fishing groups and sporting clubs have fishing gear shows in your area to find secondhand lures and fishing tackle or an opportunity to swap pieces with fellow collectors. The internet is also a great place to find and purchase lures.

Decide how much you are willing to spend for a single plug or antique variety. To start, find books and information on



These Heddon “Crazy Crawlers” include two-piece surface hardware and side flapper blades, making interesting collectibles.

the values of the types of lures to that you will be searching. Lure collecting sites and clubs offer a lot of information on the history, hobby, and values of these antiques. If you become a serious collector, consider joining one of the premier lure collecting organizations. The National Fishing Lure Collectors Club (NFLCC) describes itself as a “non-profit, educational, international organization. The primary mission of the NFLCC is to promote the awareness of tackle collecting as a hobby and the preservation of vintage and collectible tackle information, history, and artifacts.” The NFLCC offers articles, membership, and even a buy/sell/trade section for its members. They also suggest numerical and monetary values and conditions of lures from the mint-in-box (MIB) to fair and poor (F/P).

The more research and information you have available, the more equipped you will be to find a reasonable price to pay for your find. You can always make an offer, and sellers can either accept, decline, or negotiate a price for the item.



The Creek Chub Bait Company created a line of pike lures, including the biggest, the Giant Pike.

Displaying your collection

Some enthusiasts simply hang their treasures from beams and ceiling rafters as they amass them. Some use wooden gun racks and rods as a means of display. Though these are easy methods, remember that dirt particles find their way onto surfaces, so be sure to dust them periodically. Also, if you have little ones around, safely guard metal tips with plastic hook guards.

For better conditioned and high-valued lures, consider a shadow box or a shelf that provides protection behind glass. Clear display windows allow the collector to observe their tackle without risking damage. Some collectors use box types with plexiglass to set upon a table. Many choices of display boxes are available at retail stores.

Pass it on

Never miss an opportunity to pass your lures on to kids you know. Give them a head start in the fascinating and rich history of fishing through lure collecting. Support the future of the hobby by involving future generations of lure collectors.

Enjoy the journey of finding and acquiring your antique lures and snag a new plug for yourself or your kid’s collection, and send me a message if you

happen to know anyone willing to part with a Creek Chub Gar Underwater Minnow. ☐

NFLCC Standard Lure Grading System Numerical Scale Description/Condition

- 10/(NIB) New-in-box. Unused with original box or carton
- 9/(M) Mint. Unused without box
- 8/(EXC) Excellent. Very little or no age cracks, very minor defects
- 7/(VG) Very Good. Little age cracks; some minor defects
- 5-6/(G) Good. Some age cracks; starting to chip, small defects
- 3-4/(AVG) Average. Some paint loss and/or chipping; showing age
- 2/(F) Fair. Major paint loss and/or defects; much chipping
- 1/(P) Poor. Parts missing, poor color, and/or major chipping
- 0/(R) Repaint. Original paint covered over in all or part

Various Lure Color Patterns (Jim Muma, NFLCC, 1990)

- *Frog - Dark green body and yellow spots
- *Green Cracked Back - Diamonds on a white body with red spots
- *Mottled - Colors blotched or overlapping
- *Natural Chub - Light green or brown scale pattern
- *Natural Pickerel - Yellow body with green, brown, or black stripes
- *Perch - Yellow body with vertical stripes
- *Rainbow Fire - Fluorescent rainbow stripes with white belly
- *Silver Scale - Silver color with decal eyes and scales
- *Snake - Green scale and yellow spots
- *Tiger - Yellow body with black vertical stripes
- *Zebra - Black and white alternating vertical stripes

ICE PUMPKINSEEDS



by Vic Attardo

photos by the author

Try as I might, I have not been able to find the derivation of the name “Pumpkinseed” for the vibrant fish in the sunfish family. Some references say it is because these fish are shaped like the seeds of a pumpkin.

One thing that stands out on the Pumpkinseed is the bright orangish-red ear flap at the end of the gill cover. Another key identifier is the aqua blue waves on its face and speckled blue-green and dark orange flanks. Anglers who, incorrectly, call these fish “sunnies” may actually have the best descriptive name—Pumpkinseeds are as brilliant as a ray of sunshine.

In every Pennsylvania water I have fished, it seems Bluegills outnumber Pumpkinseeds, so every Pumpkinseed I catch feels special.

When ice fishing for winter panfish, it is impossible to exclusively target Pumpkinseeds over other sunfish species. When you catch Pumpkinseeds, you are also going to catch Bluegills and vice versa.

Nevertheless, Pumpkinseeds do have some preferences that will increase your chances of attracting these fish.

Years of my ice fishing notes indicate that Pumpkinseeds stay close to the bottom, whereas Bluegills are often a bit higher in the water column.

For ice fishing, this translates to rigs with high/low offerings, also slightly heavier jigs for Pumpkinseeds. Another is the use of flashy chain spoons twitched just above the bottom.

I often use black jigs with micro soft plastics for Bluegills. When Pumpkinseeds are around, I forgo the



Pumpkinseeds get long and plump, making these fish great ice fishing targets.

black jigs for more colorful items such as chartreuse and white with highly contrasting soft plastics. Pumpkinseeds go for brighter colors.

A high/low rig with a chartreuse and orange soft plastic or a chartreuse jig with a blood red soft plastic and, for the upper offering, a black nymph fly is a double that has gotten me Bluegills on the top and Pumpkinseeds on the bottom.

Other than jigs, I favor a bright chain spoon adorned with a creamy larva on the dangling hook. Of all the Pumpkinseed offerings I fished, this is my favorite. It has the advantage of sinking quickly, getting below the Bluegills, and the flash is a major attractor for Pumpkinseeds. I favor spoons in perch, gold, and rainbow colors.

At times, Pumpkinseeds will gang up and take over a stretch of cover. Fishing at Hills Creek Lake, Tioga County, where Bluegills outnumber Pumpkinseeds, I have seen fishing spots suddenly go red hot with Pumpkinseeds. No doubt, Pumpkinseeds will gang up and move around together, and when this happens, you can quickly catch several fish. When I catch a Pumpkinseed, I quickly get my bait down again in hopes that these fish are moving about in groups.

Pumpkinseeds may not seem larger than Bluegills, but if you take an 8-inch Pumpkinseed and put it beside an 8-inch

Bluegill, the Pumpkinseed is bulkier. Pumpkinseeds have more meat on their bones than the same length Bluegill.

Pumpkinseeds may be aware of the weight advantage. Time and time again, I have seen, on camera, a Pumpkinseed outmuscle a Bluegill to the bait. Often, the first fish I catch from a fresh ice hole is a Pumpkinseed followed by a horde of Bluegills. Additionally, commotion seems to attract Pumpkinseeds to an area supplanting the Bluegill bite. I may quickly catch three or four Bluegills at one hole, and the next one or two fish are Pumpkinseeds. These scenarios are difficult to pin down, but I make sure I am prepared for the first strike at a new hole, and I give the Pumpkinseeds a little time to show up before I abandon one successful hole for another.

It is rare, but not impossible, to encounter a broad area in which Pumpkinseeds vastly outnumber Bluegills, even becoming exclusive to a site. I have seen this a few times on Lake Wallenpaupack, Pike and Wayne counties, and on Minsi Lake, Northampton County, before it was drained.

I noted that Pumpkinseeds prefer hugging the bottom, but I have also seen fish rise to just under the ice sheet. Then, I can sight fish for the bigger Pumpkinseeds. I drop a jig down only 1-foot below the hole and watch Pumpkinseeds rush to the bait. If the attacking Pumpkinseed does not seem worthy, I rip the offering from the hole and wait for a bigger fish. ☐

Look Before You Cast



by Jeff Knapp

photos by the author

Despite anglers' chronic search for that special lure, magic color, or hot lake, the most efficient way to catch fish is to be sure you are actually fishing around fish. Thanks to the quality of modern sonar units, this vital element of the fishing puzzle is easier to accomplish.

Equipped with three transducer options—seasoned with plenty of on-the-water experience needed to interpret produced images—it makes sense to take a good look at what is below you before you drop a lure into the water. These options are traditional 2D sonar, down imaging sonar, and side imaging sonar.

Traditional 2D sonar

Traditional 2D sonar is the standard view anglers have become accustomed to for years. Transducers with 2D sonar produce a conical beam similar to that of a flashlight, becoming

broader as the water deepens. Transducer frequencies in the 200 kHz range are most appropriate for the depths commonly encountered in Pennsylvania. Dual frequency transducers can also produce a lower frequency pulse—for instance 50 kHz or 77 kHz—which performs better in deeper water and produces a wider beam. Sonar units with the option of a split frequency screen allows a comparison of the two views.

The newest 2D sonar option to hit the market is Compressed High-Intensity Radiated Pulse (CHIRP) technology, with which the transducer beam scrolls through a defined frequency range. This provides better target separation such as fish holding tight to the bottom or separated images of individual fish in close proximity.

Down imaging sonar

The names of down imaging sonar (ClearVu, DownScan) vary depending upon the maker, but all share sonar beam characteristics that one manufacturer compares to that of



Having two side-by-side chartplotters allows the user to efficiently view charts and sonar views.

a copying machine. Down imaging sonar uses an array of continuous thin slices rather than the cone-shaped beam of traditional sonar.

The screen display of down imaging sonar is quite different than that of 2D sonar. Depending on the situation, some targets mark better on one over the other. For instance, when scanning an emerging weedbed, it can be challenging to interpret the cover solely from 2D sonar, which is displaying a cone-shaped beam on a two-dimensional screen. However, with down imaging sonar, it is often possible to see individual weed stalks, confirming you are in fact seeing emerging vegetation. Individual fish suspended above weed tops are more likely to “pop” on a downward scanning view.

Whereas fish mark as arches on 2D sonar, on down imaging sonar expect to see blips (bright marks against the dark background) on the screen. The size of the blips are often relative to fish size. If your unit provides such an option, splitting your sonar screen to show both views for comparison is advantageous.

Side imaging sonar

Side imaging sonar transducers shoot the same “copying machine” beam off to each side, producing a view on the sonar screen that scrolls from top to bottom with your boat being in the middle (if you have your unit set to display both the right and left sides). While side imaging sonar will show fish, it is particularly useful in locating underwater features such as submerged trees, foundations, bridges, and cribs. Since you are looking at objects from the side, rather than directly above the objects, it is easier to get a 3-dimensional interpretation of what is below the water’s surface.

The black band displayed off to each side of the boat is the water column between the transducer and the bottom. Fish located within this band will vividly show up. The bottom will display from the edge of the dark band to the outside edge of

the screen. How far the transducer “looks” is dependent upon the range you have set. When searching for structural and cover options, particularly on unfamiliar water, consider stretching the view to 100 feet per side. More detail will be revealed by reducing the range, so drop down to 50- to 60-feet when giving a spot a more thorough inspection.

Consistency in speed and direction is important when scanning to the side. A boat speed of around 3 miles per hour produces a good image, particularly if you set your scroll speed to match. Since any image will be distorted when the boat is in a turn, keep your heading straight when looking at a specific target such as a suspected sunken bridge. It may take several passes from various angles to get the best look at submerged objects.

With side imaging sonar, shadows cast by objects typically provide strong evidence of what you are looking at on the screen including bridge piers, foundation walls, and sunken trees. The shadows of fish off the bottom a bit often mark well, particularly against a relatively clean, harder bottom. With both down imaging sonar and side imaging sonar, the harder the bottom, the brighter the display.

Combining all three views on the same screen provides even more comparison and shortens the learning curve of interpreting the images. For this reason, it makes sense to purchase a unit with a large screen. Sonar units typically provide many color options, so experiment with the full range to see what your eyes respond to best. Also, experiment with gain and brightness options to reach the fullest potential of today’s high-resolution units. The latest units feature “favorite” buttons you can preset for your preferred screen options, so you can quickly toggle back and forth.

Fishing sonar is constantly evolving with real time sonar options such as Garmin’s Panoptix LiveScope and Lowrance’s LiveSight. But armed with the 2D, down imaging sonars, and side imaging, an angler is well on the way to keeping a lure in front of fish on a consistent basis. ☐



Fishing Rods for Toddlers

by John Allen

photos by the author

If there are two things toddlers are good at doing, it is breaking things and throwing tantrums. Put a fishing rod in their hands too close to naptime, and you will have a means for disaster. To date, my son has thrown his rod into a lake, thrown my rod into a lake, broke off a reel handle, broke two rod tips, and smashed a guide by stomping on it. After the first broken rod, I knew I needed to come up with a better option. There are several different options for children, depending on their skill level, age, and level of patience.

Repurposed rods

I felt buying another rod would just be a waste of money. At just 13 months old and not even walking yet, he just slapped the water each time out. He thoroughly enjoyed it until he slapped the wrong thing and it broke.

I first tried an old spinning rod with monofilament line tied on the end. The casting action was less than desirable, so he was getting frustrated by the line not going out when he “casted.” Next, I used a 6 foot fly rod with an old fly line tied to the hook keeper. I ran the fly line until it was about 12 inches out from the tip of the rod and tied on a leader. If he were a little older, the setup would have been good, but it was a little heavy on the end, so he was unable to whip it.

Homemade rods

This past fall, I decided to cut three pieces of bamboo under 6 feet long from the patch I had along the back edge of my property. I trimmed all the branches off and then,

hung the branches in my basement to dry for 2 months. I selected the best-looking piece and ran a string of 12-pound-test line from the handle to 12 inches past the tip while adding a small piece of duct tape every 6 inches. I wrapped where I tied the line with hockey tape to create a good gripping surface. At the end, I added a loop along with a 6-foot-long leader of 6-pound-test line. It looked pretty good, and it was inexpensive to make. I tested the strength by pulling the line until the rod bent into a “U”



A simple bamboo fishing rod is great for a child unable to use a reel.

The next test was showing it to my son. Now mind you, during this stretch of time, he considered every stick he found to be his fishing rod, so I knew the cards were in my favor. It was a huge hit to the point that it spent the night next to his bed.

The ultimate test was taking it to the local lake to try it out on some Bluegills. My timing was good, because the Bluegills were at peak spawn and right against the shoreline. The bamboo rod ended up being a fish catching machine. We even had a 17-inch Largemouth Bass grab our worm at one point. I was a little worried if the rod would hold up, but it easily did the job. The finished rod is just over 5 feet long, lightweight, and forgiving. I would highly recommend this setup to anyone with a child who wants to fish but is unable to use a reel. Obviously, casting distance is the biggest disadvantage, so it is limited to small streams and fishing close to shore.

Push button rods

The bamboo rod was a hit for 4 months until he did not like that his sister's rod had a reel and his did not. Being a little older, I bought him a small push button combo with his favorite train on it. After 2 months of regularly using the rod and watching his older sister, he was finally able to cast it on his own. These rods are good at getting kids interested in fishing but have their limitations. Push button fishing rods are inconsistent in casting performance and have no drag. Both of which can be a big issue in the right moment.

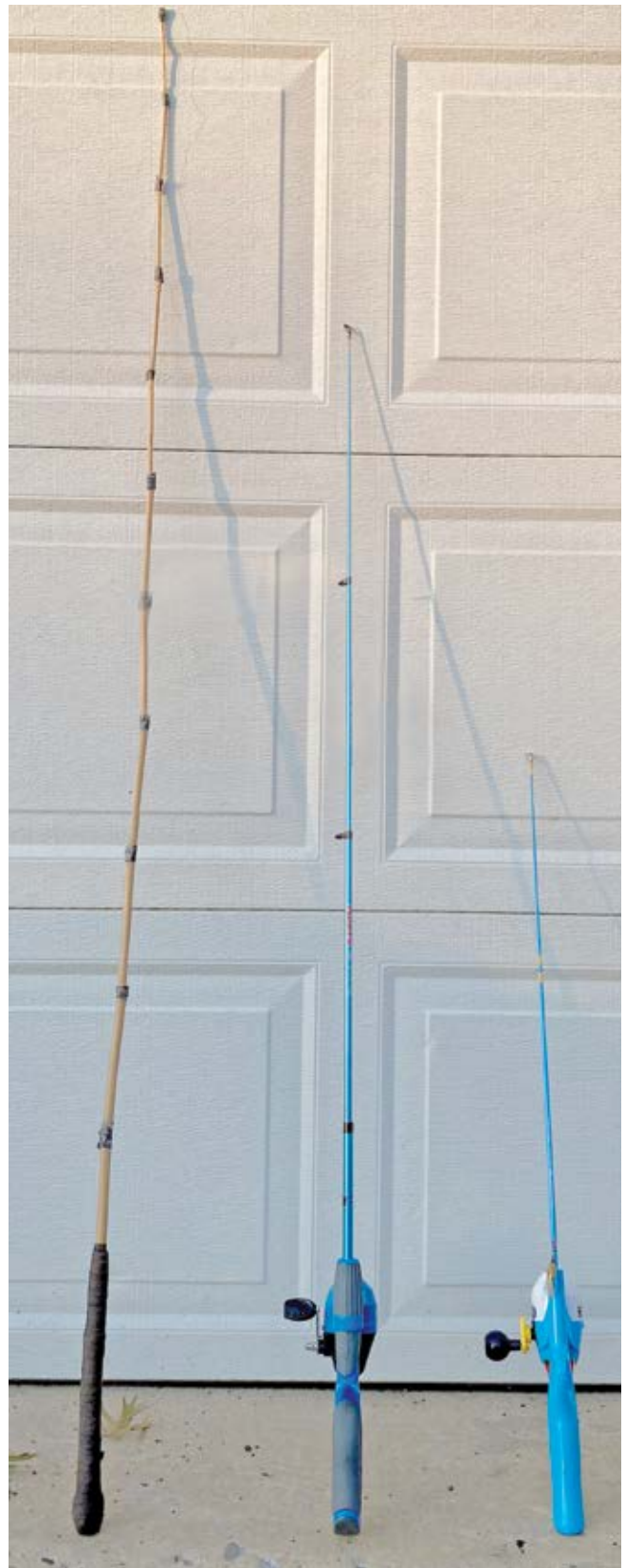
After losing a large trout due to a lack of drag, I purchased my daughter a better quality, push button combo. By that point, she was more than capable of handling a bigger setup. The drag has earned its worth on a few nice bass and is big enough that she will be able to use that setup for years to come.

If you have a toddler who is showing an interest in fishing, it is best to start them off simple to keep frustration to a minimum. A simple stick and string setup

can be a good start. At the end of the day, finding the right setup to keep your young one interested in fishing is just as important as finding the right fishing spot. ☐



The author's kids fishing with their favorite push button rods.



As toddlers' fishing skills advance, the setup options increase.

GOVERNOR'S YOUTH COUNCIL for Hunting, Fishing, and Conservation

by Elizabeth Bruner

Like most of you, I have a passion and love for nature. As a member of the Pennsylvania Governor's Youth Council for Hunting, Fishing, and Conservation, I am able to enrich my passion for nature, as well as develop skills, ideas, and projects to help protect, conserve, enhance, and experience Pennsylvania's natural resources. As a council member, one of my goals is to engage younger generations in conservation and preservation of the Commonwealth. I am working to achieve this goal by teaching others about macroinvertebrates, stream ecology, and stream health.

I have always loved the water. Eager to learn more about Pennsylvania's 86,000 miles of waterways and the wildlife that inhabits these waterways, I enrolled in the Wildlife Leadership Academy (WLA). Due to COVID-19, I virtually attended four WLA field schools. Two of these schools focused on fish. The "Bass School" focused on the black bass species, and the "Brookies School" focused on our state fish, the Brook Trout.

My favorite activity at the WLA was learning about macroinvertebrates and how these aquatic creatures are an indicator species to determine stream health. Prior to the WLA, I learned about macroinvertebrates through my 4-H outdoor club and the Three Rivers of Steel Educational Floating Center.

The WLA increased my interest in and knowledge about these marvelous creatures. Macroinvertebrates live the first few years of life in water. During the larval or nymph stage,



Macroinvertebrates are classified into three categories: pollution tolerant, intermediate, and pollution intolerant.



Photos: Comité Bruner

Elizabeth Bruner

macroinvertebrates are normally found in riffles or under submerged rocks.

Macroinvertebrates are important for many reasons. First, macroinvertebrates are a major part of the food web. Many fish species use these critters as a food source. Secondly, macroinvertebrates are a biomonitoring species, meaning you can monitor change in stream ecosystems by looking at the types of macroinvertebrates that currently live or previously lived in that stream.

Macroinvertebrates are also important, because these aquatic animals provide a fun, hands-on way to educate the public about water conservation. Macroinvertebrates are classified into three categories: pollution tolerant, intermediate, and pollution intolerant. Pollution tolerant macroinvertebrates, such as a midge pupa, can withstand highly polluted waters. A common misconception is that pollution tolerant macroinvertebrates are only found in polluted waters. This is not the case. Midges can survive in any type of water, but midges may be the only macroinvertebrates found in polluted waters. Intermediate macroinvertebrates, like damselfly larva, can live in moderate amounts of pollution. Pollution intolerant species, like a mayfly, are only found in clean, healthy waters.

Learning more about macroinvertebrates as indicators of healthy water quality, I became interested in teaching others about macroinvertebrates and pollution, as well as getting more youth involved in the wonderful world of conservation.

It is important to share what we know, whether it is about macroinvertebrates, birds, mammals, or reptiles. By teaching and motivating others to take action, we are doing our part in helping to conserve and protect the natural places and animals we all love. If we all give a little and work together, a huge difference can and will be made. ☐

PLAY



Winter
2021

Pennsylvania • League • of • Angling • Youth

Vernal Pools

Have you explored a woodlot, forest, or field in the spring and noticed a low-lying area filled with water? There may have been water ripples as critters scurried about it. Or, maybe you heard calling amphibians. Later, the water disappeared, leaving a muddy bottom with decomposing leaves and debris. You probably came across a **vernal pool**.

Vernal pools are also called seasonal pools. These wetlands are temporary, and usually dry up and return again the next year. Vernal pools are home to unique animal species.

In this *PLAY* issue, you will learn more about vernal pools, the animals that live in vernal pools, threats, and how to lend a helping hand.



Before



After

Vocabulary (*Watch for these words!*)

- **Autumnal** - fall
- **Facultative species** - take advantage of vernal pools but do not require vernal pools for survival
- **Habitat fragmentation** - large areas of habitat transformed into smaller patches
- **Hardpan Layer** - an impervious layer like clay below the soil that impairs water drainage
- **Herps** - amphibians and reptiles
- **Hydric soils** - soil that is saturated with water for long periods and has anaerobic conditions (lacks oxygen)
- **Hydrology** - study of water and its movement on Earth and underground
- **Impermeable** - not allowing fluid to pass through
- **Indicator species** - requires vernal pools at some stage of the life cycle
- **Oxbows** - standing bodies of water that form when a stream meander is cut off
- **Pingos** - dome-shaped hills formed in permafrost areas when the pressure of freezing groundwater pushes up a layer of frozen ground
- **Runoff** - water draining from the surface of a land area
- **Vernal pool** - seasonal pool of water

All About Vernal Pools

Geology

Here are some ways vernal pools form:

- Ice age glaciers that create depressions
- Streams and rivers that flood and create scour pockets in a floodplain
- Streams that meander across a floodplain and create **oxbows**
- Groundwater that dissolves limestone bedrock under impermeable surface soil layers, creating sag ponds
- Crescent-shaped wetlands that form on **pingos**

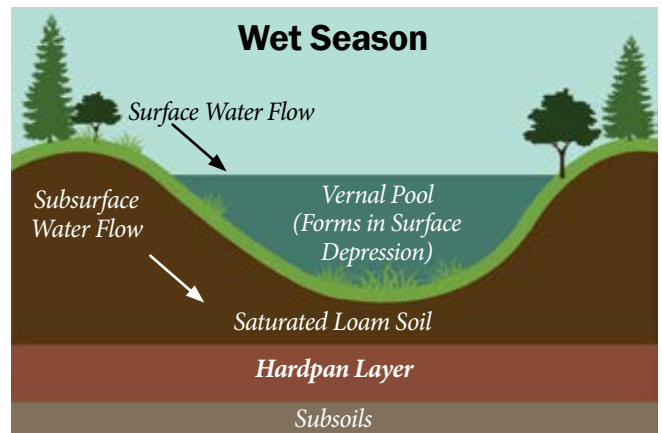
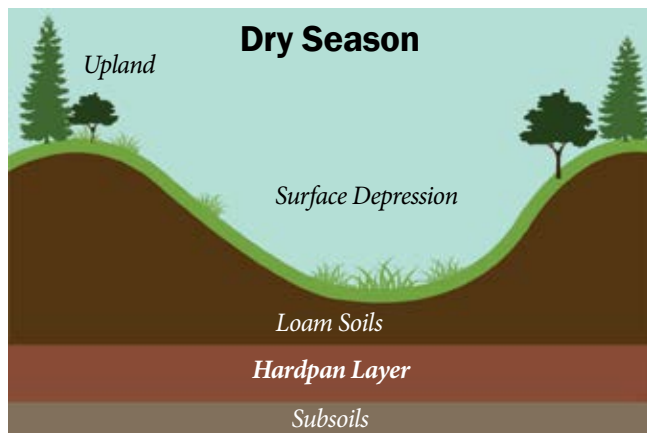
All these low-lying areas fill with water, becoming vernal pools.

Soils

Vernal pools have an **impermeable** soil layer that results in water ponding.

Hydric soils may form if saturated for

long periods. Nutrient rich soils will layer over top of the impermeable soil.



Hydrology

Hydrology is the study of water and its movement on Earth and underground. Vernal pools receive most water from rain or snowmelt **runoff** and fill in the fall (**autumnal**), winter, or early spring (vernal).

Some pools are close to the water table and have groundwater sources. Pools may also fill when nearby waterways overflow from heavy rains. Most pools dry up during summer.

Vegetation

Grasses, rushes, and pondweeds provide egg-laying sites and cover from predators. Shrubs and trees provide shade that regulates water temperature. Leaves and woody debris also supports the food web.

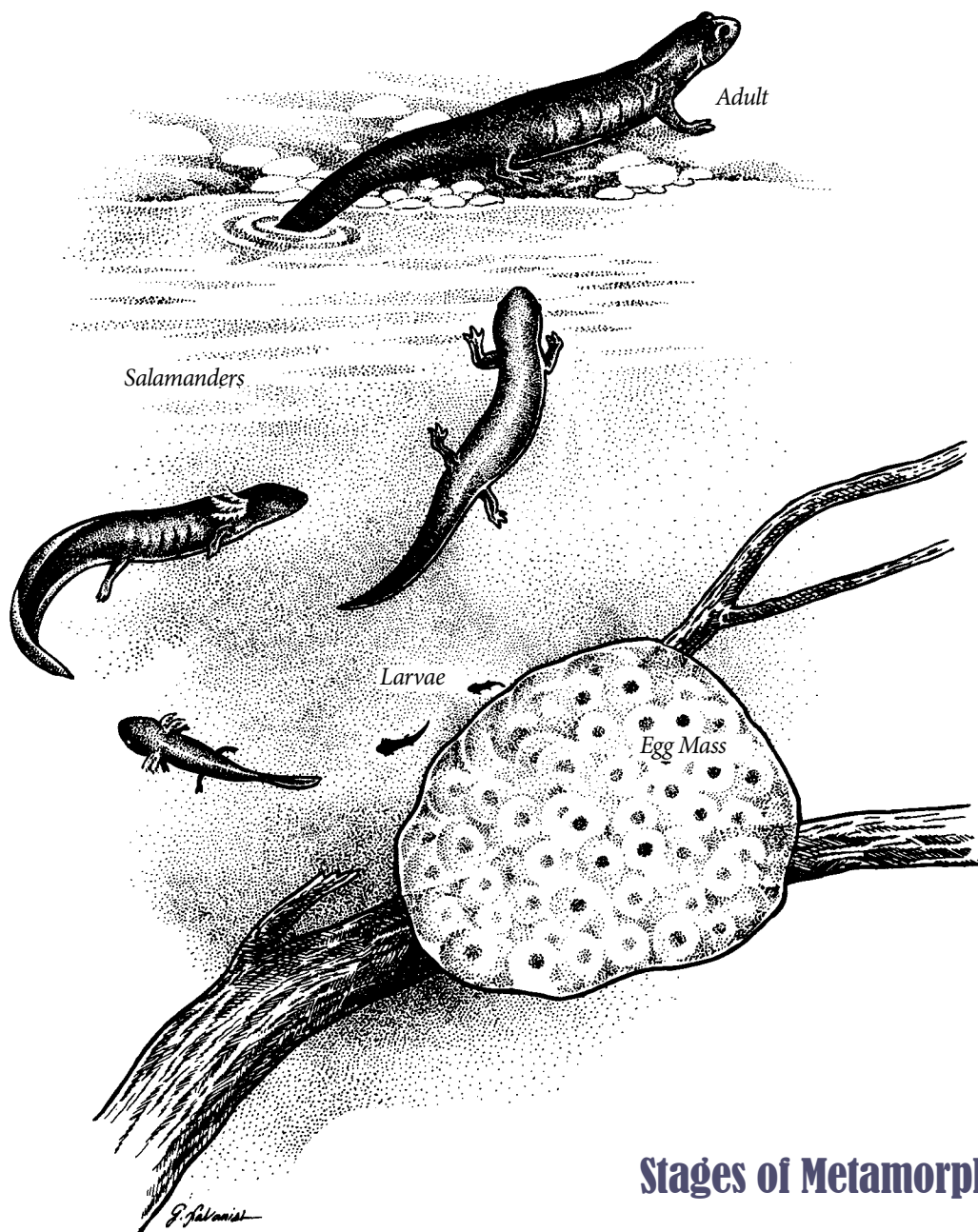


Ecology and Life Cycles

One advantage of a temporary pool is avoiding predators. Predators like fish cannot survive, because the pool eventually dries up. It is a safe place for eggs and larvae. The tradeoff is that vernal pool animals must adapt to dry conditions or leave the pool before it dries up.

Some invertebrates like fairy shrimp and clam shrimp leave eggs at the bottom of the pool. The eggs can withstand drying out in summer and freezing in winter.

Amphibians like salamanders and frogs can survive in aquatic and terrestrial habitats at different life stages. Adults spend the summer, fall, and winter in nearby uplands. There the adults find food, shelter, and overwintering sites. Amphibians migrate to vernal pools after spring rains and lay eggs. Larvae or tadpoles have gills and must grow quickly after hatching. Tadpoles metamorphose into adults and leave the pool before it dries up.



Stages of Metamorphosis

Vernal Pool Indicator Species

Certain species need vernal pools for a part of the life cycle. These animals are called **indicator species**.

Most amphibians return to the same vernal pool where born and travel past other pools and cross obstacles like roads on the migration journey.

Vernal pool indicator species include:

- Blue-spotted Salamander (*Endangered Species*)
- Clam Shrimp (*not pictured*)
- Eastern Spadefoot (*Threatened Species*)
- Fairy Shrimp (*not pictured*)
- Jefferson Salamander
- Marbled Salamander
- Spotted Salamander
- Wood Frog



Jefferson Salamander



Marbled Salamander



Blue-spotted Salamander, Endangered Species



Spotted Salamander



Eastern Spadefoot, Threatened Species



Wood Frog

Vernal Pool Facultative Species

Many other animals take advantage of vernal pools, but vernal pools are not required for survival. Vernal pools provide a source of food or shelter for these species, and species may breed in vernal pools but are also adapted for reproduction in other wetland habitats. These animals are referred to as **facultative species**.

Vernal pool facultative species include:

- American Bullfrog
- Eastern American Toad
- Northern Green Frog
- Spring Peeper
- Red-spotted Newt
- Spotted Turtle
- Wood Turtle
- Woodland Box Turtle (*not pictured*)



American Bullfrog



Red-spotted Newt



Eastern American Toad



Spotted Turtle



Northern Green Frog



Wood Turtle



Spring Peeper

For more information on these animals, visit www.fishandboat.com.

Functions and Values

Vernal pools have benefits to society and the environment.

- Flood control
- Water purification
- Habitat for animals
- Beautiful to explore

Threats

Vernal pools are sensitive to human harm.

Habitat Loss

Agriculture, construction, logging, and quarries cause a loss of habitat.

Changing Hydrology

Developments may decrease the water table. Pools may be dug deeper for a permanent fish pond.

Water Quality

Runoff contains sediment, salt, oil, and chemicals that harm pool life.

Climate Change

Temperature changes and rainfall amounts may affect animal life cycles.

Habitat Fragmentation

Construction and agriculture breaking up the landscape, animals killed crossing roads, and invasive species outcompeting native species in open areas are examples of **habitat fragmentation**.

Vegetation Changes

Logging reduces shade, increasing water temperature. Vegetation removal eliminates egg sites and cover.

Helping Hand

Here are steps to protect vernal pools.

- Allow a buffer; avoid mowing too close
- Avoid cutting trees around the pool
- Limit pesticides and herbicides
- Do not dig a temporary pool deeper
- Conserve water

Pennsylvania Vernal Pool Registry

This registry allows volunteers to submit information on vernal pools.

www.naturalheritage.state.pa.us/VernalPool_Register.aspx

Pennsylvania Amphibian and Reptiles Survey (PARS)

This statewide atlas helps us understand where **herps** live. Citizens can report observations or join as a volunteer.

<https://paherpsurvey.org>

Become a Superhero

Check out the *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* July/August 2020 PLAY

“Superheroes of Summer” to learn how to help and become a Citizen Scientist.



Vernal Pool Word Search

Find these vernal pool words in the following word search.

Word List

HYDRIC
 HYDROLOGY
 MIGRATION
 OXBOW
 SAG POND
 SEASONAL
 VERNAL
 AUTUMNAL
 RUNOFF
 IMPERMEABLE
 HERPS

(Hint: Some words may appear backwards.)

S P P H Y G O L O R D Y H R Z
 N I Q R S G Y F P Y Y Q Y M I
 W Y R U N O F F Z M S D D O O
 Y O G A U M S R C A S A R O N
 V H B W U A M E G N P V I T H
 N R D X J T R E A T D X C Y E
 E O R N O A U L Y S N J I W R
 B F I O G J W M A Q O G R E P
 T T J T S P J X N N P N L B S
 A A R C A K D R R A R B A H W
 I I M P E R M E A B L E K L K
 M P M W X O G I A K O K V F H
 K D C A U T R I L F N J W N Z
 P D U U Q X W U M C C O N V E
 F A Z S A G P O N D Z B O N A

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Answer Key



Highlights from the

2021

Boating Regulations Recap

Information All Boaters Must Know

This article reviews key regulatory and safety information that boaters must know before venturing out on the water. The annual Boating Regulations Recap brochure also highlights new regulations that were recently approved by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC). The Boating Regulations Recap paired with the *2021 Pennsylvania Fishing Summary/Boating Handbook* provides boaters with comprehensive safety information to use when operating watercraft on Pennsylvania waterways.

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

- A United States Coast Guard-approved wearable life jacket is required for each person on board. In addition, one throwable device is required on boats 16 feet in length or longer.
- Children 12 years of age and younger must wear an approved life jacket on Commonwealth waters when underway on any boat 20 feet or less in length and in all canoes and kayaks.
- All water skiers and anyone towed behind vessels, personal watercraft operators and passengers, and sailboarders must wear a life jacket. Inflatable life jackets are not acceptable for these activities.
- Wearable life jackets must be “readily accessible” or in the open where they can be easily reached. Throwable devices must be “immediately available” or within arm’s reach. A PFD that is stored in a protective covering or sealed in its original packaging is not readily accessible or immediately available.

Mandatory cold weather life jacket wear

From November 1 through April 30, boaters are required by law to wear life jackets on board boats less than 16 feet in length or any canoe or kayak. This regulation went into effect in 2012 and is intended to protect boaters from dangers of cold water shock if they fall into the water. Recreational boating fatalities that occur in Pennsylvania from November through April are primarily due to the effects of cold water immersion. When water temperatures are less than 70 degrees F, cold water shock is a major factor in boating fatalities. Victims who wear a life jacket when exposed to cold water have potentially life-saving advantages such as insulation from the cold, buoyancy for victims who are unable to tread water, and reduced risk of aspiration of water. In an effort to reduce the number of fatalities related to cold water

Mandatory boating education

HP OF MOTOR	RESTRICTIONS OF USE
PWC	All PWC (personal watercraft) operators, regardless of age, must have a Boating Safety Education Certificate. Persons 11 years of age or younger may NOT operate. Persons 12 through 15 years of age may NOT operate with any passengers on board 15 years of age or younger or rent a PWC.
0-25hp	None
Greater than 25hp	Persons 11 years of age or younger may NOT operate. Persons born on or after January 1, 1982, may not operate unless they have obtained and have in possession a Boating Safety Education Certificate.

immersion, the PFBC has amended regulations to require life jackets to be worn on small and unstable boats during the period most noted for cold temperatures.

Boating accidents

Boating accidents must be reported in writing by the boat operator or owner to the PFBC when:

- A person dies or disappears.
- A person is injured and requires advanced medical treatment beyond first aid.
- Damage to the boat and other property totals more than \$2,000, or there is a complete loss of the vessel.

Boating accident reports can be downloaded from the PFBC’s website at www.fishandboat.com/Transact/Forms/BoatingForms/Documents/pfbc260.pdf or obtained from any of our regional law enforcement offices.

Water-skiing and similar activities

- It is unlawful to operate a motorboat at any speed with a person or persons sitting, riding, or hanging on a swim platform (teak surfing) or swim ladder attached to the motorboat, except when launching, retrieving, docking, or anchoring the motorboat.
- It is unlawful to operate a motorboat at any speed when towing a person on water skis or other devices using a tow rope of 20 feet or less.
- Wake surfing is excluded from the 20-foot tow rope requirement.
- Boats engaged in the activity of wake surfing are limited to slow, no-wake speed when within 200 feet of the shoreline, docks, launch ramps, swimmers or downed skiers, persons wading in the water, anchored, moored or drifting boats, and other marked areas.
- It is unlawful to operate a motorboat propelled by an outboard motor, inboard/outboard motor, or water jet while a person is wake surfing in or on the wake of the motorboat, **unless the propulsion system is specifically designed by the manufacturer for that activity.**
- Skiing is illegal between sunset and sunrise.
- In addition to the operator, a competent observer must be in the boat in a position to observe the towed person.
- Conventional water-ski tow ropes may not exceed a length of 80 feet.

Specially regulated waters

Additional regulations such as speed limit and slow, no-wake areas affect boaters on specific waterways. Boaters should read all regulations posted on the bulletin boards at access areas. Know the waters you plan to boat before you go.

By understanding boating regulations and safety information, you will be prepared while on the water. Visit www.fishandboat.com. ☐

COLD WATER KILLS!



WEAR IT
National Safe Boating Council

WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET!

Boaters are required by law to wear life jackets on boats less than 16 feet in length or any canoe or kayak during the cold weather months from November 1 through April 30.

LIFE JACKET AND THROWABLE DEVICE REQUIREMENTS:

- All boats must have a United States Coast Guard (USCG)-approved wearable life jacket on board for each person.
- Life jackets must be the appropriate size for the person intended. Check the life jacket label to ensure it is the appropriate size for the person wearing it. Also, make sure the life jacket fits. See the *2021 Pennsylvania Fishing Summary/Boating Handbook* to learn how to check for proper fit and for more information. Life jackets must be appropriate for the activity for which worn. See the USCG-approval label for information.
- Wearable life jackets must be “readily accessible.” This means life jackets should be stowed where the life jackets can be easily reached or in the open, ready for wear. Throwable devices must be “immediately available,” which means the devices shall be within arm’s reach of the operator or passenger while the boat is operated. A life jacket that is sealed in its original packaging is not readily accessible or immediately available.
- All life jackets must be in good and serviceable condition and legibly marked showing the USCG-approval number. This means the life jacket must be functional, free of tears or defects in the material, and all buckles, straps, zippers, and other closures must be operable.
- In addition to wearable life jackets, boats 16 feet and over must have a throwable device (ring buoy, life ring, or buoyant seat cushion) on board. Canoes and kayaks, regardless of length, are not required to carry a throwable device.
- A throwable device may not be used as a substitute for a wearable device.

www.WearItPennsylvania.com

2021 Pennsylvania Fishing Licenses, Permits, and Gift Vouchers on Sale

During a time when more people than ever are looking for fun and affordable ways to enjoy the outdoors by themselves or safely with family and friends, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) reminds anglers that 2021 fishing licenses are now on sale.

Fishing licenses, permits, and vouchers can be purchased online at www.fishandboat.com or by visiting one of nearly 700 license-issuing agents. Licenses, permits, and vouchers that are purchased for 2021 are valid immediately for up to 13 months, from December 1, 2020 through December 31, 2021.

"Whether you're looking to get a jump on next season, or you've got holiday gift giving in mind, a fishing license or voucher will keep you and others connected to the outdoors," said Amber Nabors, Director of the PFBC Bureau of Outreach, Education, and Marketing. "When you buy a fishing license now, you really get the most value for your dollar, and you'll be covered for every fishing season for the rest of this year and next year."

Purchasing a fishing license can be done easily, conveniently, and safely online from your computer or smartphone. Licenses may be printed immediately upon purchase or saved digitally to a smart device, which serves as proof of possession. While many customers still prefer to purchase fishing licenses in person from local retailers, online purchases can save time and limit exposure to large crowds in stores during the holiday season, and can help you avoid long lines when many anglers purchase their licenses closer to the spring trout season.

In addition to licenses and permits, such as the trout or Lake Erie permits, customers may choose to purchase vouchers that can be given as gifts and be redeemed by recipients.

"Vouchers make great gifts for the avid angler in your life, but they can also be a great way to introduce someone new to the sport," said Nabors. "If you know someone who you think would enjoy fishing, especially now when we can all use more time outdoors, buying them a license voucher can be the nudge they need to join you on the water this year."

Once again for the 2021 license year, customers can purchase a collectible fishing license button for \$10.00. This year's button features a Chain Pickerel design and is customized with the angler's individual license number. Please note that buttons are not issued at the time of purchase and will be mailed to the buyer typically within 3 to 4 weeks.

Anglers who visit a license issuing agent in person can receive the *2021 Pennsylvania Fishing Summary/Boating Handbook* free of charge. The book outlines current fishing and boating regulations, seasons and creel limits, and safety information. A digital version of the book can



Photo: Mike Parker

be viewed and printed for free on the PFBC's website at www.fishandboat.com, or viewed on the free Fish Boat PA mobile app for smartphones.

"Pennsylvania anglers really have a lot to look forward to in 2021," said Nabors. "We made a lot of exciting improvements to our stocking operations ahead of the 2020 season that included doubling the number of trophy-sized trout that had been stocked in lakes and streams across the state in previous years. We also increased the number of golden Rainbow Trout that we stocked prior to last year's spring trout season and began stocking them in-season for the first time ever. Those improvements will once again be in place in 2021, so the chances that you'll catch one of these special trout continues to be better than ever."

Customers who purchase a 2021 fishing license can once again support their favorite PFBC programs through the purchase of Voluntary Permits for Bass, Musky, Wild Trout & Enhanced Waters, and Habitat/Waterways Conservation. These permits are not required for fishing and carry no additional privileges, but all funds generated through permits are reinvested into respective programs. Thanks to the generosity of anglers, the PFBC has invested more than \$125,000 into special projects funded by the sale of Voluntary Permits since 2019.

While youth anglers under age 16 do not require a fishing license, they must have either a Voluntary Youth Fishing License or a free Mentored Youth Permit to participate in various youth opportunities throughout the 2021 season. This includes the Mentored Youth Trout Days, which occur on the Saturdays before the openings of the regional and statewide seasons. Voluntary Youth Fishing Licenses purchased in advance of the 2020 Mentored Youth Trout Days that were canceled due to COVID-19 will be honored in 2021.

Deadline Approaching for Boating Facility Grant Program

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) reminds potential applicants for the Boating Facility Grant Program that the deadline to apply is December 30, 2020.

This program is open to townships, boroughs, municipal and county governments as well as nonprofit groups (501c3) including land trusts, conservancies, and watershed associations that are interested in the planning, acquisition, development, expansion, or rehabilitation of public boating access areas.

Local governments and eligible nonprofit groups may use funds awarded through the program to provide or improve public recreational boat access facilities in communities that are open and available for general public use.

Applicants can seek grants for site acquisition, project design and engineering, development, expansion, removal of aquatic invasive species, and major rehabilitation of recreational boat access facilities. Activities must benefit and directly support public recreational boating. Eligible projects must be constructed on lands owned in "fee simple" by the project sponsor or, where ownership is less than fee simple interest, ownership rights must provide for permanent control of the property commensurate with the proposed development. Eligible construction projects include, but are not limited to, boat ramps, courtesy floats, restrooms, access roads, parking areas, landscaping in direct relation to access development, transient tie-up floats, and signs. Grant funds can be used only for major site improvements and not for any routine maintenance or operation activities.

For the 2021 round of grants, the PFBC will accept applications from anywhere in the Commonwealth. Thanks to the availability of additional federal funding through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the PFBC will give special consideration to projects that provide public boating access in the Delaware River Watershed.

Successful applicants must agree to provide a 50% grant match and be willing to enter into a long-term agreement to keep the facility open to free public use for its useful life. The PFBC will give priority funding consideration to applicants who provide more than the required 50% match, thereby reducing the total amount of grant funds required to complete the project.

The Boating Facility Grant Program is a reimbursable grant program. Grant funds will be disbursed to the applicant/recipient only after completion of the project occurs and agency staff has verified that the work has been completed.

Program grant funds are available in each annual state fiscal period as authorized and allocated by the PFBC. All work funded for this round of grants should be completed by December 30, 2022. The Commission may adjust the amount of funds available, application, and consideration dates to meet existing needs or opportunities that may occur. Large projects may be phased in over several fiscal years to maximize leverage, distribution, and availability of funds.

The PFBC gives highest priority to the rehabilitation of existing facilities, followed by expansion of existing facilities, and then acquisition and development of new boating facilities. The Commission will rank projects based on local, regional, and statewide needs such as boat use and number of boaters served, relationship to adjacent or nearby public and private boating facilities (ramps and/or marinas), and needs based on strategic statewide, regional, or local plans.

Boating Facility Grant Program funds are derived from boat registration fees, launch use permits for unpowered boats, state fuel taxes collected on fuel used in motorboats, and taxes on fishing equipment and motorboat fuel from the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program.

For more information about the Boating Facility Grant Program and for application forms, visit the PFBC's website at www.fishandboat.com.

PALS Scheduled to be Upgraded in January

Fishing licenses and permits are sold by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and license issuing agents through an electronic point-of-sale system. The Pennsylvania Automated Licensing Service (PALS), also known as The Outdoor Shop, brings increased efficiency, more options, and easier upgrades for anglers and boaters. As of January 11, 2021 at 11:59 PM, the color of all fishing licenses and permits printed on durable paper stock will be changed from yellow to green, and the system will now be known as HuntFishPA moving forward. The Commission and issuing agents will be

unable to sell licenses and permits of any kind during the transition period of January 12 through January 18, 2021. While fishing

licenses will be unavailable for sale during this transition period, valid fishing licenses are required to fish and enforcement will be in full effect. Please plan accordingly to ensure that you can legally fish. Thanks in advance for your understanding.



Rivers Conservation and Fly Fishing Youth Camp to be Held

The Cumberland Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited is holding the 26th Rivers Conservation and Fly Fishing Youth Camp June 20 through June 25, 2021. The camp will be held at Messiah University, Grantham. It begins on Sunday and ends the following Friday.

Admission is limited to 24 selected and qualified students, ages 14 to 17. Students who were accepted for the 2020 camp will have the opportunity to attend the 2021 camp and be given priority without having to re-apply. However, it is incumbent upon the 2020 accepted student to contact the camp and state intention that the student wishes to attend camp in 2021. Students who were accepted for 2020 and wish to attend in 2021 must contact the camp at riverscamp@gmail.com. If there are less than 24 students from 2020, new applicants will be selected for the 2021 camp.

The Board of Directors is being optimistic and planning for the 2021 camp. Because of COVID-19 and the unknown factors associated with the pandemic, the camp size has been reduced from 32 students to 24 students. It is unknown at this time whether additional restrictions will be placed on the camp by Messiah University, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, or Trout Unlimited. The Rivers Conservation and Fly Fishing Youth Camp's priority is keeping students and staff safe. As additional information becomes known, information will be shared with the public and can be found on the camp's website www.riverscamp.com.

The deadline for early acceptance is December 31, 2020. Students selected for the early acceptance will be notified in early January 2021. Applicants who apply during the regular application period of January 1, 2021 through February 29, 2021 will be notified in early March 2021.

The camp began accepting applications for the 2021 camp on November 1, 2020. Applying using the camp website is preferred.

The camp tuition is \$550 per student. There is no cost to apply, and no money is required until a student is accepted. Financial aid may be available to qualified students. All meals and accommodations are included for the residence camp.

The highly structured curriculum is based on college level classes. Students are instructed in ecology, aquatic biology, geology, hydrogeology, erosion and sediment control, ichthyology, riparian corridor protection, watershed management, entomology, and more. Students also participate in a hands-on stream habitat improvement project. But, it is not all work. There are 10 fishing sessions, casting and fishing instruction, and fly tying classes. Over 25 instructors, all experts in their field, teach the various classes.

A student does not have to be an accomplished fly angler or a budding aquatic biologist to attend. The student only needs to be highly motivated and willing to learn.

For more information, a camp brochure, or to apply, visit www.riverscamp.com. Questions may be submitted through the website or by e-mail to riverscamp@gmail.com.

More Convenient Permit Process for Fishing Guides Adopted and Regulations for Fish Cleaning Stations Amended

During a special meeting held virtually on November 4, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) Board of Commissioners acted on two items that were not available for consideration during its recent quarterly business meeting. In both instances, the public comment period associated with each agenda item had not concluded when the regularly scheduled meeting occurred on October 19 through October 20.

The Board voted to amend regulations related to Charter Boat/Fishing Guide operations. An internal review of the current permit application process revealed a cumbersome system that could be made more efficient through an online process. The amendments to Section 51 (Pa. Title 58) will allow for the application and issuance of Charter Boat/Fishing Guide permits online exclusively through Pennsylvania's online fishing and hunting license portal at www.fishandboat.com. As part of this change, the requirement to display a decal on charter boats will be removed. Moving forward, Waterways Conservation Officers will verify applicant provided information during standard field checks. An additional change will require an individual guiding on Commonwealth Waters to have a Pennsylvania fishing license and permits. Under the current

language, a loophole was created that allows some non-residents to guide on Commonwealth Waters utilizing their out-of-state license with a Pennsylvania Non-Resident guide permit. This amendment will go into effect upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

Commissioners voted to amend regulations related to the sale and purchase of fish. The amendment to Section 63.19 (Pa. Title 58) will exempt byproducts from the PFBC recognized fish cleaning stations from regulations requiring a fish to remain intact until reaching its place of consumption. Currently, cleaning station operators are required to grind carcasses and place byproduct into wastewater treatment or landfills. The amended regulation will allow for the sale of byproducts to other entities for further beneficial use such as fertilizer in agriculture. This amendment will go into effect upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

"It is known that entities would be willing to pay for the fish waste, so this result is a benefit to both the environment and the operators of the fish cleaning stations," said Daniel J. Pastore, PFBC District 1 Commissioner. "Instead of throwing the waste into a sewage treatment plant, it can be recycled for agricultural purposes, and it is good for the cleaning stations, because they can actually sell that waste and recover some of the cost of operating the cleaning station."



Grants Available to Improve Sinnemahoning Creek Watershed

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) announced an invitation for project applications to the Sinnemahoning Creek Watershed Restoration Grant Program. This is the sixth round of grants.

Project applicants must meet the eligibility criteria and must use the application form specified in the grant application package. Project applications must be postmarked no later than Saturday, January 23, 2021. The PFBC anticipates final selection and public announcement of grant awards by the end of April 2021.

This funding is available through a 2007 settlement agreement with Norfolk Southern as restitution for environmental damages from a June 30, 2006 train derailment in rural Norwich Township, McKean County. The accident spilled sodium hydroxide into Big Fill Run, Sinnemahoning-Portage Creek, and the Driftwood Branch of the Sinnemahoning Creek. Under the settlement, Norfolk Southern agreed to pay the Commonwealth \$7.35 million as restitution for environmental damages. The PFBC received \$3.675 million of the settlement and must use the funds to develop and implement projects that benefit fishing, boating, and aquatic resources in Cameron, Elk, McKean, or Potter counties.

The PFBC's primary emphasis will be on projects in the Sinnemahoning Creek Watershed upstream of the confluence with the First Fork of Sinnemahoning Creek; however, projects located elsewhere within the eligible counties will be considered.

Projects eligible for funding in this round will be limited to the following: fish habitat protection and enhancement; restoration of aquatic habitat connectivity through the removal of barriers to fish passage; riparian buffer plantings of trees and shrubs; abandoned mine drainage treatment systems or mine reclamation projects that result in significant improvements

to water resources that are likely to benefit fish and other aquatic life; acquisition and development of properties for public fishing and boating access; enhancement or restoration of populations of specified aquatic Species of Greatest Conservation Need; storm water conservation practices/best management practices (including Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance (ESM) practices for dirt, gravel, and low volume roads) that maintain or improve water quality and/or habitat for fish and other aquatic life; and acid deposition abatement and alkaline addition to remediate adverse impacts from acidic precipitation to habitat for fish and other aquatic life.

Further description of these types of eligible projects and instructions for applying can be found within the grant application package available at www.fishandboat.com.

Awarding of funds for any selected projects will be contingent upon availability of funds. Currently, the balance of unobligated funds remaining in the program account is approximately \$380,000. For this round, the PFBC will consider individual grant awards in the range of \$10,000 to \$100,000. Depending on the total amount of funds ultimately awarded, which will be contingent on the number and quality of the applications received, this will likely be the last round of grants for this program. Therefore, this funding round is likely to be highly competitive.

Applicants must secure matching funds equal to at least 25% of the total project costs in order to supplement the PFBC funds and assist in implementing their proposed projects. This minimum match threshold is equal to one-third of the grant amount the applicant is requesting from the PFBC.

For more information about applying for this grant program, contact Fisheries Biologist Jeff Schmid at 814-359-5242 or jschmid@pa.gov.

Take Part in the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST



Winning entries will appear in a feature article in a future issue of *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* and on the Commission's Facebook page. The contest will run from November 1, 2020 through August 31, 2021.

Entries must be e-mailed to sgearhart@pa.gov. The following information must be included in the e-mail.

- Entrant's Name
- Entrant's Address
- Entrant's Phone Number
- Entrant's E-mail
- Photo Description (location, county, species, etc.)
- Date of Photo



The length of a fishing rod is a good measure of social distance when fishing with others.



www.fishandboat.com





Angler's Notebook

by Jerry Bush



photo-Jerry Bush

Cleaning and organizing cluttered tackle boxes is a productive winter activity. With each fishing trip last summer, you may have become lax about carefully placing tackle in assigned bins and boxes while quickly changing lures. The lack of organization may not have hindered you then, but when you open your tackle box during your first fishing trip next summer, it may slow down your productivity. Organized tackle will help you to be prepared. Many cleaners and chemicals used for automobile interiors work well for cleaning and protecting plastic tackle boxes.

When ice fishing, avoid using the same type of line that caught fish in July. Before stepping onto the ice, use line manufactured for ice fishing. The lines used in summer are usually engineered to allow casts over great distances, which is not a concern when dropping lures through holes when ice fishing. Use a line that remains flexible in cold conditions and holds up to the targeted species. Some ice fishing lines are made with special coatings, so these lines continue to slide through eyelets as ice builds up. If you are targeting panfish, a light line in the 2- to 4-pound-test line range is adequate. However, if you are also targeting bass, pike, or steelhead inhabiting the same water as panfish, choose a 6- to 8-pound-test line. There are braided ice fishing lines that hold up better than monofilament line and may allow the angler to bring even large fish through the hole with a smaller diameter line.

Many hard-fighting fish are caught by fly fishing enthusiasts during winter in Pennsylvania including bass,

pike, steelhead, Brown Trout, and Rainbow Trout. When your hands are cold and the fishing action has been slow, "maintain the arch" when fighting fish with a fly rod. Keep enough pressure on the fish, but not too much.

Cold line and iced eyelets create a different experience than summertime fishing, but maintaining the arch will help land hard-fighting fish. If you try too hard to stop a hard-fighting fish, it may break your line, or worse, a frigid rod tip. The fish may unhook itself if you let the line slack. Keep a vision in your mind of the perfect arch in the rod when you feel that a fish is hooked well.

Lake Erie is the shallowest of the Great Lakes. Therefore, Lake Erie has a reputation for wind to whip up white capped, 5- to 6-foot waves, sometimes larger, occurring a few times most years. As violent water crashes against the shoreline during winter, it may freeze. The frozen water is bombarded by more waves until huge chunks of ice break free, lift, and refreeze, eventually forming an uneven surface locals refer to as "ice dunes". These ice dunes provide an unstable, hollow surface that may be 5- to 10-feet above the lake below. Do not attempt to access the ice dunes for ice fishing. Falling through a hollow surface 5-feet above frigid water is dangerous and may not be escapable.

Fishin' from the Kitchen

Largemouth Bass and Pinto Beans on the Ice

by Wayne Phillips

Bring summer freshness to a winter meal by topping roasted pike with zesty gremolata.

At home ingredients for four servings:

- 2 19-ounce cans pinto beans
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- ½ pound bacon, diced and minced
- 1 large onion, coarsely chopped
- 1 14-ounce can tomato sauce
- Salt and black pepper to taste

On the ice ingredients:

- 1 pound boneless, skinless Largemouth Bass, cut into bite-size cubes

Procedure

Simmer the pinto beans to heat. Sauté bacon, onions, and garlic until softened. Add, along with the tomato sauce, to the

beans and simmer for 30 minutes. Season with salt and black pepper. Pack in a pot with a tight fitting lid. On the ice, bring beans to a simmer. Add the fresh fish and simmer for 15- to 20-minutes more. Add more water if needed.

Serve

Crusty rolls are all you need. If you like some zing in your beans and bass, add your favorite hot sauce.

Tips

On the ice, you may need to add more water. The finished dish should have plenty of liquid to dip your bread in the sauce.

Use any white fleshed fish in this recipe. In the summer, freshly caught fish is a regular feature for shore lunch. This recipe allows you to do that in the winter as well. Crappie, Walleye, perch, or pike are perfect for this dish.



photo-Wayne Phillips

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As the water temperatures start to fall and the boat traffic lightens the gamefish come out to feed. Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass, Northern Pike, and even Channel Catfish are biting! Check out our website for **Darl Black's Fishing Report** to see what is biting and where. Find your new favorite fishing spot on one of our eight lakes or cast a line in French Creek or one of our other streams. Relax in all fall has to offer right here in northwestern Pennsylvania.

PA VisitCrawford.org



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Pennsylvania's Best Fishing Waters is a program established by the Commission, using the expertise and knowledge of its fisheries biologists, to



highlight statewide locations for different categories of fish to assist anglers in knowing the prime fishing hotspots. Confirmed by survey catch rates and the availability of public access, the program waters offered are provided to help increase anglers' success and convenient access to this information. **You deserve the best!**

www.PaBestFishing.com

CAST & CAUGHT



Lawson Wilkinson, Pittsburgh, caught and released this Paddlefish while fishing the Allegheny River. The fish was caught using a stickbait.

For the "Cast & Caught" column, send only prints (no larger than 8"x10") and a completed "Model Release form" available at www.fishandboat.com/Transact/AnglerBoater. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want your photograph returned. Persons aboard boats must be wearing properly fitted and buckled life jackets. Mail to: Editor, **Pennsylvania Angler & Boater**, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000



TAKE ME FISHING



Jamey Mclean, age 3, and his father, Cody, caught this 3-pound, 23-inch golden Rainbow Trout while fishing Conococheague Creek, Franklin County.



Andrew Corfield, age 13, caught and released this Largemouth Bass while fishing on a pond at Hillman State Park, Washington County.



Raymond James Harris Jr., age 13, caught this 5-pound, 2¾-ounce, 22½-inch Rainbow Trout while fishing Loyalhanna Creek, Westmoreland County.



Becky Demarest, Montrose, caught this Chain Pickerel while fishing Lake Montrose, Susquehanna County.