

# Pennsylvania **ANGLER & BOATER**



July/August 2020 \$5.00

*The Keystone State's  
Official Fishing &  
Boating Magazine*

[www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com)

**Fish-for-Free Day**  
Independence Day,  
Saturday, July 4





# MAKE IT A SAFE DAY ON THE WATER!



## ALWAYS WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET.

More than 80% of boating fatalities happen to boaters who are not wearing a life jacket.



## WEAR IT

National Safe Boating Council  
**Pennsylvania**

[www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com)



Tom Wolf, Governor

**Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission**

Eric Hussar, *President*  
Lewisburg

Richard Lewis, *Vice President*  
Gettysburg

Rocco S. Ali  
North Apollo

Donald K. Anderson  
Meyersdale

William C. Brock  
St. Marys

Charlie Charlesworth  
Clarks Summit

William Gibney  
Honesdale

Richard S. Kauffman  
Leesport

Dan Pastore  
Fairview

Robert B.J. Small  
Mechanicsburg

**Boating Advisory Board**

Loren W. Lustig, *Chairperson*  
Biglerville

Mary Gibson, *Vice Chairperson*  
Marysville

Scott Ballantyne  
Fleetwood

John Mahn Jr.  
Charlertoi

Michael Murray  
Philadelphia

**Ex Officio Members**

Timothy D. Schaeffer, *Executive Director*;  
Corey L. Britcher, *Director*,

*Bureau of Law Enforcement*;

Ryan Dysinger, *Department of*  
*Conservation and Natural Resources*

**Magazine Staff**

Editor—Spring Gearhart

Graphic Design—Andrea Feeny

Circulation—Ashley Nikles

**Regular Contributors**

John Allen	Tyler Frantz	Ralph Scherder
Vic Attardo	Chris Gorsuch	Christian A. Shane
Darl Black	Carl Haensel	Deborah Weisberg
Marilyn Black	Jeff Knapp	Jeff Wolesslagle
Mike Bleech	Marshall Nych	Nathan Wolesslagle
Rob Criswell	Ross Robertson	Alex Zidock Jr.
Braden Eisenhower		

*Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* adheres to the American Fisheries Society's style guide and the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of *Common and Scientific Names of Fishes from the United States, Canada, and Mexico* in keeping with the capitalization of the English common names of fishes as well as singular and plural fish name usage. In addition, *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* recognizes the standards established by the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles.

*Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* (ISSN1093-0574) is published bimonthly by the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, 1601 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9299. ©2020 Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission. Nothing in this magazine may be reprinted without the written permission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission. Subscription rates: one year, \$20; three years, \$48; single copies are \$5.00 each. Periodicals postage is paid at Harrisburg, PA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* Circulation, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000. For subscription and change of address, use above address. Please allow six weeks for processing. Send all other correspondence to: The Editor, *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater*, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000. Editorial queries and contributions are welcome but must be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes. Material accepted for publication is subject to Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission standards and requirements for editing and revising. Submissions are handled carefully, but the Commission assumes no responsibility for the return or safety of submissions in its possession or in transit. The authors' views, ideas, and advice expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the opinion or official position of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission or its staff. The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission receives federal aid in sport fish restoration. Under appropriate federal acts, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or handicap. If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire more information, please write to: The Office of Equal Opportunity, Department of the Interior, Washington, DC 20240.



**Subscription Inquiries**

717-705-7835 • E-mail: ra-pfbcmagazine@pa.gov

July/August 2020  
Volume 89 Number 4

# Pennsylvania ANGLER & BOATER

The Keystone State's Official Fishing & Boating Magazine

## Feature articles

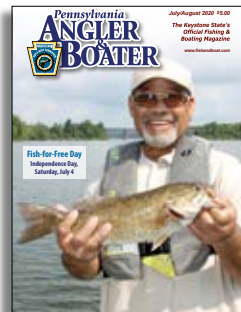
Big Fish and Where to Find Them <i>by Jeff Wolesslagle</i> .....	8
Summer Bass Fishing in Mini Lakes <i>by Jeff Knapp</i> .....	10
River Catfish on Artificial Lures <i>by Chris Gorsuch</i> .....	12
Wading Small Streams for Smallmouth Bass <i>by Marilyn Black</i> .....	14
Camping on an Allegheny River Island <i>by Don Feigert</i> .....	16
Northwestern Pennsylvania Bass on a Fly Rod <i>by Nick DelVecchio</i> .....	18
Summer's Dog Days and Cat Nights <i>by Marshall Nych</i> .....	20
White Flies on Yellow Breeches <i>by Ralph Scherder</i> .....	22
Cane Poles, Crawlers, and Corn—Simple Setup, Still Effective for Catching Fish <i>by Tyler Frantz</i> .....	28
Rock Hopping for Smallmouth Bass <i>by Nathan Wolesslagle</i> .....	32
Summer's Super 'Seeds and 'Gills <i>by Darl Black</i> .....	34
The Transition of Weaver Lures <i>by Alex Zidock Jr.</i> .....	36
Trim Some Whiskers for the Summer <i>by Vic Attardo</i> .....	38
Protecting French Creek <i>by Deborah Weisberg</i> .....	40
Floating the Conodoguinet Creek Water Trail <i>by John Allen</i> .....	42
Pine Creek Rail Trail <i>by Linda Stager</i> .....	54

## Special features

2020 Fishing Licenses.....	31
Summer PLAY Newsletter <i>by Miranda Smith</i> .....	45
Dam Repairs and New and Improved Fishing Opportunities <i>by Gary Smith</i> .....	52

## Regular features

What Does It Take? <i>by Executive Director Timothy D. Schaeffer</i> .....	4
Tying Together <i>by Christian A. Shane</i> .....	24
Notes from the Streams.....	26
Currents.....	58
Angler's Notebook <i>by Jerry Bush</i> .....	61
Fishin' from the Kitchen <i>by Wayne Phillips</i> .....	61
Cast & Caught.....	64



## On the cover

Lenny Hubbard of Brookfield, Ohio, caught this Smallmouth Bass from Shenango River Lake, Mercer County, while fishing for crappies with a 1/2-ounce jig. Photo by Darl Black.

The PFBC social media and mobile app:  
[www.fishandboat.com/socialmedia](http://www.fishandboat.com/socialmedia)

# What Does It Take?

*by Timothy D. Schaeffer*

*Executive Director*

*Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*

On June 26, it will be an honor and distinct pleasure to congratulate the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's (PFBC's) 22nd class of Waterways Conservation Officers (WCOs) as they graduate after nearly a year-long training program that has been like no other in the history of the agency. When they entered the State Police Academy for Municipal Police Officers Basic Training (Act 120) certification last July and then moved on to our H.R. Stackhouse School of Fishery Conservation and Watercraft Safety in January, no one could have predicted that the last three months would take place under the cloud of a global pandemic.

Undeterred in their drive to become WCOs, the 19 cadets persevered through amended training schedules, frequently changing conditions, a trout season like no other, and unprecedented safety precautions, and they are poised to take the final step to reaching their goal of standing on the front line of aquatic resource conservation in Pennsylvania. They come from 15 different counties with a variety of backgrounds and with a common and sustained commitment to excellence, as evidenced in some of the highest test scores among the recent classes at our training academy. Again, all while facing the uncertainty that marked the spring of 2020.

As the new WCOs take their place in counties across Pennsylvania, they will become trusted and familiar faces to you and other anglers and boaters. All of us here at the PFBC work for those of you who read this magazine every two months, and we take our responsibilities on behalf of the Commonwealth's one million anglers, three million boaters, and countless fish, reptiles, and amphibians seriously. If you see one of the new WCOs on your next trip to the river or lake, please introduce yourself and thank them for what they are doing to protect, conserve, and enhance that which you hold dear and keep us safe on the water.

photo - Mike Parker



*The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's 22nd class of Waterways Conservation Officers.*

Even before the current class has graduated, we are already recruiting for the next class of WCOs. This is part of a long-term commitment to fill vacant districts as quickly as possible to provide the officers themselves and those they are charged with serving the support and assistance that they deserve.

For the first time, we are seeking applicants who already possess Act 120 certification. This approach is intended to attract applicants who may be interested in conservation law enforcement but who, understandably, may be reluctant to repeat the Act 120 training if they already have it under their belt. We will be accepting applications until July 18. For more information on the application process, please visit [www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com).

As part of the recruitment materials, we produced a video highlighting the work that an applicant could anticipate if they took on the challenge of becoming a WCO. The soon-to-be-officers from the 22nd class are featured prominently in the video. Even if you are not interested in applying, please consider watching the video in which we ask, and the cadets help answer, “What does it take?” to be a WCO. You will come away impressed and inspired.

Without a doubt, the current class had to have even more of what it takes to be a WCO as they completed their training under unprecedented circumstances.

Please join me in welcoming the individuals listed below who have been assigned to the corresponding districts. And if you think you or someone you know has what it takes to join them, please get your application in by July 18.

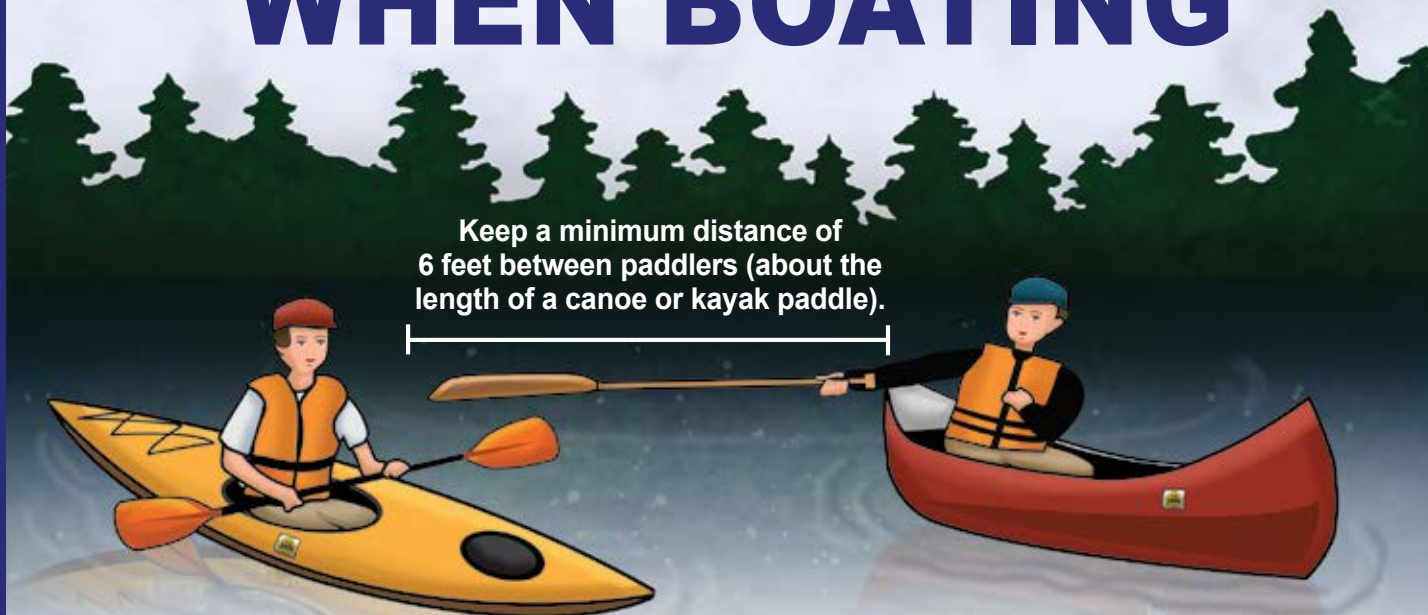
## 22nd Class of Waterways Conservation Officers

Name	Hometown	Assignment
Emily Borger	Kunkletown, Monroe County	Northern Wallenpaupack
Dina Cable	Bulger, Washington County	Southern Somerset
Matthew Deitrich	Millersburg, Dauphin County	Southern Wallenpaupack
Alec DeLong	New Tripoli, Lehigh County	Lackawanna/Wayne/Susquehanna
Ryan Erdman	Liverpool, Juniata County	Southern Huntingdon
Timothy Fuller	Conneaut Lake, Crawford County	Eastern Crawford/Warren
Sergio Herrera	Smethport, McKean County	McKean
David Seibel	Belle Vernon, Fayette County	Western Armstrong
Peter Labosh	Telford, Bucks County	Northern Bucks
Sean Lake	Wellsville, York County	Franklin/Eastern Fulton
Darrell Miller	Conneaut Lake, Crawford County	Lycoming
Shania Painter	Rossiter, Indiana County	Jefferson
Kyle Robinson	Petersburg, Huntingdon County	Mifflin/Northern Huntingdon
Andrew Saunier	Conneaut Lake, Crawford County	Warren
Justin Schillaci	Transfer, Mercer County	Clearfield
Jonathan Stark	North Charleroi, Washington County	Washington
Aaron Steager	Millersville, Lancaster County	Berks
Nathaniel Yingling	Colver, Cambria County	Cambria
Brandon Young	Murrysville, Westmoreland County	Eastern Allegheny

*Note – When the assignment includes multiple counties (e.g., Eastern Crawford/Warren), the district includes portions of each county.*

# SOCIAL DISTANCING WHEN BOATING

Keep a minimum distance of  
6 feet between paddlers (about the  
length of a canoe or kayak paddle).



## STAY CLOSE TO HOME

To find a boat ramp near you, download the free FishBoatPA app, and use the “Near Me” feature.

## PLAN AHEAD

Create a float plan. Let a family member or friend know where you are going, when you expect to return, and who should be notified if you do not return as scheduled.

## BOAT ONLY WITH THOSE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD

## KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

Maintain extra distance from other boats on the water and at the dock. If paddling, keep a minimum distance of 6 feet between paddlers—about the length of a fishing rod, or canoe or kayak paddle. No rafting or tying boats.

## BE PREPARED

Boat safe. Always wear a life jacket.



Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission  
[www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com)

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



**Keep a minimum distance of 6 feet between anglers**

**[www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com)**





# Big Fish and Where to Find Them

*by Jeff Woleslagle*

*photos by the author*

When I consider the big fish that I have caught over the years, a few patterns emerge. Reflecting on some of the largest fish I have landed, something I discovered long ago was that big fish are often in unique places. Some fish get large by living in locations where other anglers don't expect fish to be or in spots that are difficult to access.

I am always on the lookout for isolated areas or places that I think other anglers may overlook. At a state park lake near my home, there are some culverts that run under a road along the lake. When the lake level is high, water flows freely through these culverts, creating small ponds just inside the wood line on the opposite side of the road from the lake. While hiking, I decided to check one of the culverts out. The water was low, so any fish in the small ponds had no way to re-enter the lake, and I was stunned to see a big Largemouth Bass cruising in one. The next day I stealthily approached the small pond, spinning





*This large Brown Trout was holding near an undercut bank.*

rod in hand. I could not see the bass, but there was a large brush pile against the far bank, and I figured that would be a likely location to find it. I flipped a wacky rigged stickbait to the edge of the brush and immediately my line began to move sideways. I set the hook hard and reeled as fast as I could to keep the fish from getting tangled in the wood. Most anglers would never have thought to investigate that spot, but it resulted in one of my biggest bass that year.

Waterways that are remote and require determination to access are also super locations to search for a big fish. There are two ponds that are on state lands near my home and both require a decent hike but are well worth the effort. One of my best Largemouth Bass ever came from one of these ponds on a sweltering summer day. The water was low and clear, and I pitched a soft plastic bait to a large rock that was just barely visible under the surface near the center of the pond. The line twitched and my rod doubled when I set the hook. After an intense battle on light line, I took a few quick pictures and released it. I still wonder about the weight of that Largemouth Bass.

My best wild Brook Trout came from a remote beaver pond that I stumbled onto while working one summer in the Allegheny National Forest. The beavers made an extensive dam on a small creek almost 2 miles from the road, and I couldn't believe the number of native Brook Trout I saw cruising the pond and stacked at the inflow.

I used a large inline spinner on my first venture to keep from hooking the numerous smaller trout and landed one close to 14 inches. In my deer hunting forays, my eyes are always peeled for small areas where deer may not be pressured. The same holds true in fishing. When you find those locations, you are in a great area for a trophy fish.

Another thing I have found to be true is that many of the larger fish I have caught have been in what I can best describe as prime feeding areas. There is the old cliché that to catch a fish you need to think like a fish. I believe this applies to large fish. An angler is wise to consider where a truly big fish would likely be. Think about where you would be on any given body of water if you were looking for food. It only makes sense that locales that are not heavily pressured would be good starting points. Add in a spot that includes abundant feeding opportunities, and you can be sure big fish are present. Many large fish in rivers and streams will hold near the best current breaks. Look for fish near any kind of structure like large rocks, at the head of a sweeping bend, and holding close to undercut banks. On ponds and lakes, look for structure both along the bank and off shore. Pay close attention to wind direction, and fish the shoreline to which the wind is blowing.

If you are observant and search remote areas and ideal feeding locations, you will find your biggest fish of the season on the end of the line. ☐



# Summer Bass Fishing in Mini Lakes

*by Jeff Knapp*

*photos by the author*

Smaller impoundments, typically 300 to 350 acres or less, offer many opportunities for summertime bass anglers. It is common for such waters to support relatively high numbers of bass, mostly Largemouth Bass but Smallmouth Bass as well. Smaller-scale bass waters make finding bass an easier task; chances are good that you are putting your lure in front of fish. Also, anglers can expect a more tranquil experience, which is often not the case on larger lakes and impoundments where powerboat activity is common.

As many Pennsylvania anglers know, many smaller impoundments have been drained due to safety concerns with dam structures. As funding has become available, repair work has been completed with refilling and restocking taking place. This is good news for anglers returning to some of their favorite waters, as well as added venues for people looking to try new places, in many cases ones benefiting from the burst of aquatic life common in new and reclaimed impoundments.

Since bass populations tend to be dense—often more of a quantity over quality situation—the tactics used on mini waters may be varied. Bass lean to a more aggressive attitude due to

competition for the limited food supply. Moving baits such as soft swimbaits and soft jerkbaits are typically effective. When the need to slow down becomes evident, jigs and worms often get the job done. If you want to gain confidence in a lure or bait, mini lakes are a great place to do so. Armed with a level of success, it will pay off when you are on bigger waters, where the bass bite may be tougher, but the fish larger.

Here is a sampling of some of Pennsylvania's better mini bass waters, along with the most recent data from Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) surveys to give you the best idea of the bass fisheries present.

## Dutch Fork Lake

Dutch Fork Lake, Washington County, is a 91-acre impoundment refilled in 2013, following a draining made necessary due to damage to the lake's spillway. Dutch Fork Lake was emptied in 2004. Stocking by the PFBC of Bluegills, Channel Catfish, Largemouth Bass, and White Crappies began once the lake refilled.

Night electrofishing conducted in the spring of 2019 collected Largemouth Bass up to 20 inches in length and at a rate exceeding that required to meet Big Bass Program Special Regulations. Area Fisheries Management Area 8 assessed the Largemouth Bass fishing situation as "continuing to be excellent, and only improve as the population of bass increases."

Dutch Fork Lake is owned by the PFBC and is limited to non-powered and electric motors only.

## Bradys Run Lake

Bradys Run Lake is a 28-acre lake that is part of Beaver County's Bradys Run Park. It was restocked by the PFBC during 2010-2011 following a period in which the small lake was drained, dredged, and refilled.

Though much of the fishing attention at Bradys Run Lake is during the spring from trout anglers pursuing adult trout stocked by the PFBC, the lake also supports a good warmwater fishery, particularly that of Largemouth Bass. When Area Fisheries Management Area 1 personnel conducted a survey during the spring of 2017, including nighttime electrofishing efforts, they were impressed with the Largemouth Bass population, terming the catch rate and size distribution as excellent, citing strong year classes in 2015 and 2016.

## Kahle Lake

This 251-acre lake is owned by the PFBC and lies in Clarion and Venango counties. Historically, this productive body of water has supported a dense population of Largemouth Bass, which was evident again during the survey of 2018 conducted by the PFBC and Clarion University of Pennsylvania.

Night electrofishing activities completed during October 2018 collected a total of 1,456 Largemouth Bass, at a rate of 260.8 per hour. Area Fisheries Management Area 2 personnel termed this catch rate as exceptional compared to other northwest Pennsylvania waters.

Kahle Lake is currently being maintained at a pool level approximately 3 feet below full, due to concerns about the integrity of the spillway. Not considered a high risk, plans are to continue to hold this pool level until funds are available for necessary repairs. Kahle Lake is managed under Big Bass Program Special Regulations and is limited to non-powered and electric motors only.

## Colyer Lake

Located in Centre County, 77-acre Colyer Lake is owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and managed by the PFBC for fishing and boating. The lake was drawn down to address structural concerns with the dam structure and refilled in 2015. During the drawdown, numerous improvements were made including the addition of logs, tree piles, and post



*Some mini lakes, like Cambria County's Beaverdam Run Reservoir, support good Smallmouth Bass populations.*

clusters. The lakebed was also limed to improve the lake's water chemistry and productivity.

Nighttime electrofishing efforts done in 2017 and 2018 revealed a good Largemouth Bass population in addition to several other species. The lake was managed under Catch and Release Regulations initially to allow populations to become self-supporting but is now under standard statewide regulations.

## Opossum Lake

Opossum Lake, Cumberland County, is another example of a PFBC-owned lake that was lowered and subsequently refilled and is again providing good fishing for Largemouth Bass.

Emptied in 2008 to repair the dam and spillway, the lake was refilled in 2013 to a 47-acre pool, somewhat lower than its original 59-acre surface area. During its lowering, habitat structures were added to the lake.

Surveyed in both 2015 and 2018 Area Fisheries Management Area 7 personnel documented a Largemouth Bass fishery that is improving in size structure. The 2018 effort collected bass at a rate of 78 per hour, with 63% in the 10- to 11-inch range. The PFBC assessment of the two surveys documented recruitment of the Largemouth Bass quality and preferred sizes.

Other state mini lakes to consider include Beaverdam Run Reservoir, Cambria County, where Smallmouth Bass are the featured species, as well as Lake Jean, Luzerne and Sullivan counties, and Chambers Lake, Chester County. ☐



*Soft swimbaits worked over the top of mini lake weedbeds coax aggressive Largemouth Bass into biting.*



*Skirted jigs are appropriate for Largemouth Bass on many small lakes.*

# River Catfish on Artificial Lures

by Chris Gorsuch

photos by the author

My introduction to Channel Catfish was similar to most anglers—a medium-heavy rod and reel outfit rigged with a heavy sinker and some form of cut bait. Not a bad way to go about it, but it led to some very wrong presumptions as to the habitat and character of this fish species. My perception was that Channel Catfish were sluggish bottom feeders, often too deep to target by other fishing means. I was wrong.

Over the years, my eyes have been opened. As an angler who prefers targeting fish with artificial lures, it was difficult for me to place just where Channel Catfish fell in line with other gamefish in a given body of water. Largemouth Bass, Muskellunge, Smallmouth Bass, Walleyes, pike, and other species seem to be more predator-like and seemingly more willing to chase lures.

Since I spend about 200 days a year on Pennsylvania rivers, I had to evolve with the bass and Walleye population fluctuation that occurs year-to-year under a variety of ever-changing river levels and conditions. To be a successful river angler day after day, adapting to change and finding new areas and techniques is important. As I opened up to more available water on a variety of rivers across Pennsylvania, because conditions and seasonal patterns dictated it, I discovered why so many publications call Channel Catfish “apex predators.” I am convinced that there is not a depth that is too deep, too shallow, too swift, or turbid that these fish cannot function and find food in.

My first “lightbulb moment” was perhaps a decade ago while targeting bass and Walleye in swift, shallow water with slash baits. This aggressive tactic entices fish to strike

minnow-like artificial stickbaits, slashing erratically just a foot or so under water in swift current. The fish need to manage the current well and attack the struggling prey. High sun, shallow, fast water, and a mixed bag of Walleye



and bass is not where I expected catfish. When the strike occurred, it was vicious. The rod reacted, and I knew I had a nice fish. Seeing the catfish on the end of the lure had me puzzled. I looked to see if the Channel Catfish was foul hooked, but it was clearly in the mouth. This was just one of three catfish caught on artificial lures that day alone.

As the months passed, I started to experiment with crankbaits and spinnerbaits for catfish. I discovered that the first shallow ledges or riffles above a known catfish hole is almost a sure thing for Channel Catfish. Oddly, this species that seems to be at home in deep, slow moving pools is well-adapted to handle current that could possibly cause salmon to pause. Catfish are indeed a top predator.

Slowly, I started seeing Channel Catfish in a much different light. My lack of understanding the type of water these predators can manage and its ability to chase down prey was indeed an eye opener. If catfish could be targeted on artificial lures, I could open up a new



*A Channel Catfish caught with a tube jig.*

and exciting ways to introduce other anglers to the power this tough, fighting gamefish.

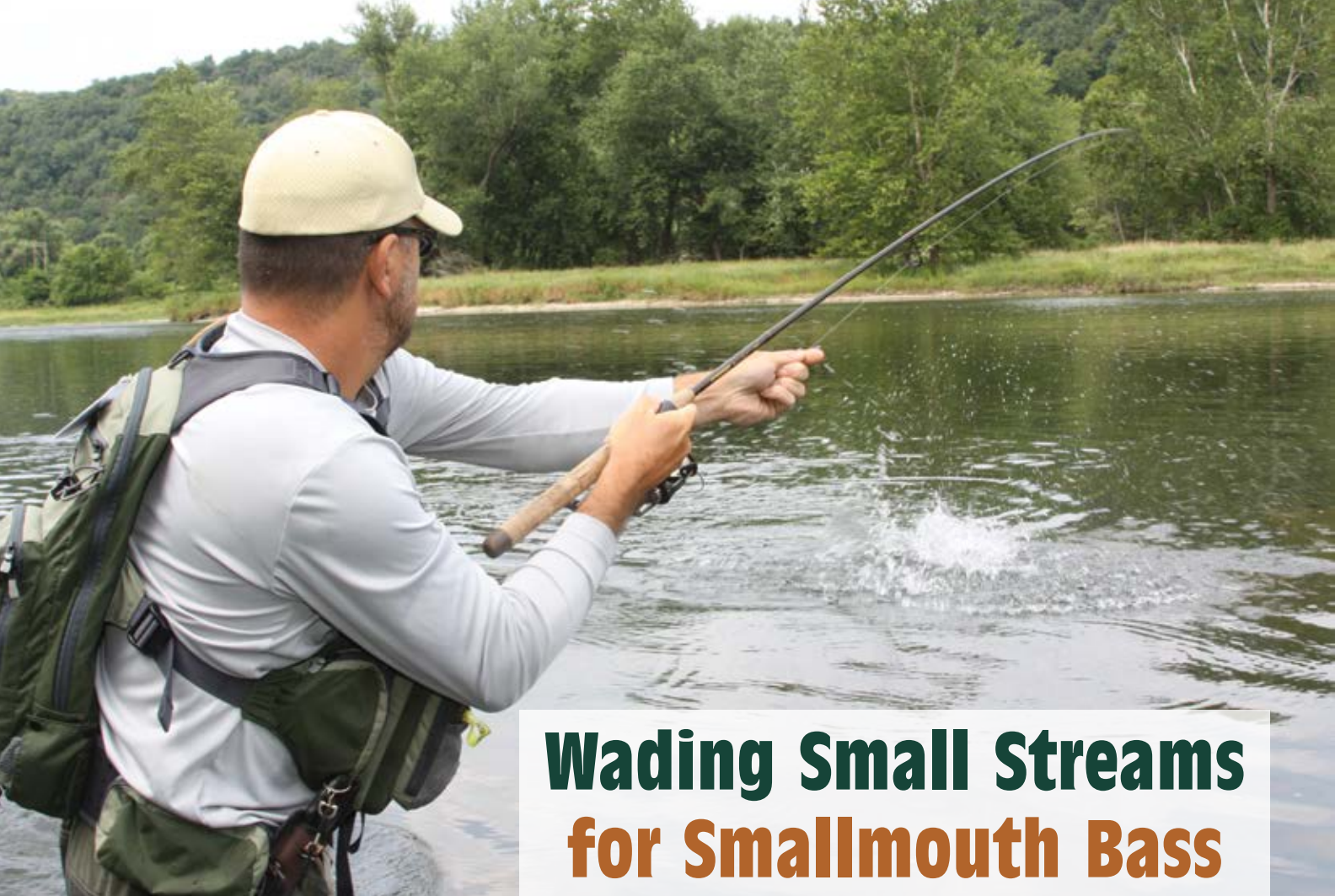
Soon, I was catching catfish regularly in riffles and runs with tube jigs, swimbaits, creature baits, and other soft plastic lures. Much like bass and Walleyes, these catfish were ambushing lures in much faster current that I would have thought possible. The key was finding the first rock or ledge area with significant current above a deep pool. In rivers like the Susquehanna River or Delaware River, deep may only be 6- to 10-feet, and the rocks in the current are often in less than 4 feet of water, where crankbaits, spinnerbaits, and tube jigs are effective.

Making use of its sense of smell is never a bad option. The same scent attractants that work for bass and Walleye also work well on Channel Catfish. Crayfish and minnow scents seem to work best for me. Another great option is saltwater lures that are packaged with scent already in the lures. One of my favorites is a 4-inch minnow in a smelt flavor. It can be used to swim aggressively or slowly jigged along the bottom. These lures are more durable than soft plastics made strictly from plastisol, and that is an added bonus.

Catching catfish on lures works extremely well in heavily stained water. It is no secret that catfish have a sense of smell far greater than any other gamefish. Catfish can pick up sound and vibration better than bass and Walleye, too. Due to its bone structure, catfish can sense vibration in a much greater frequency than other species, which is likely why blade and crankbaits work so well. On top of their keen sense of smell and hearing, catfish can see quite well. A catfish's night vision is only rivaled by Walleyes. Highly tuned senses make the catfish one of the most well-rounded predators in the river. □



*An angler fishing for catfish.*



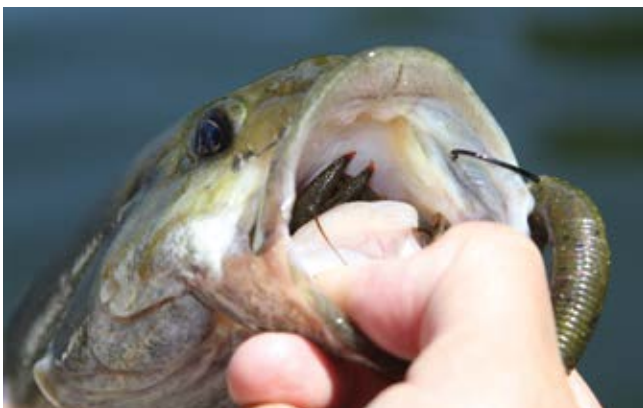
## Wading Small Streams for Smallmouth Bass

photos-Darl Black

*by Marilyn Black*

Why wade? There is nothing like feeling the tug of a frisky Smallmouth Bass on your line while you feel the flowing water in which the fish lives surging around your feet and legs. Catching fish is always fun, but the sense of interacting more directly with the waterway adds to your enjoyment and your connection with the aquatic habitat.

How do you wade and fish? Wade fishing is done thoroughly, slowly, cautiously, and with minimal gear. A



*This Smallmouth Bass took a dinger stickworm, which imitated a crayfish like the one the bass swallowed earlier.*

real plus of wading is that you can position yourself to take advantage of optimal casting angles, so you can repeatedly reach prime spots. Rarely should you cast directly downstream. Instead, cast upstream or across the flow, so the bait or lure is presented more naturally.

Do not hurry when you are wading. Walk slowly, being attentive to footing. Cast only after checking overhead clearances. Use your walking staff, which should include a loop around your wrist, to test the bottom materials and depth before each step.

My recommended list of “must have” wading equipment includes a 6- to 6½-foot medium-light spinning fishing rod spooled with 6-pound-test line, a floating walking staff, needle-nose pliers, clippers on a lanyard around the neck, an over-shoulder bag or fanny pack with a small assortment of lures and other terminal tackle, sunglasses, fishing license, and hat. You can go wet wading with water shoes, of course. In all but the hottest days, I prefer lightweight Gore-Tex chest waders with a padded wading belt at the waist.

Optional items that come in handy include a waterproof camera on a strap around your neck, a hand towel tucked into the front of chest waders, insect repellent, sunscreen, a moderate-size landing net on a strap over your shoulder, and if you are using live bait, a floating bait container on a rope, which is tied onto your belt.

## Where to wade

The key is to select sections of creeks, tributaries, and shallow rivers with access to prime spots for Smallmouth Bass. Smallmouth Bass like flowing water with plenty of natural food and current-break areas. Fish the edges of eddies, the downstream side of fallen timber or beaver huts, heads of riffles, tailouts, rock-strewn shallows, and deeper washouts just behind bridge pilings. I prefer to wade on gravel, firm sand, or sections with small rocks. I avoid wading in mud or where aquatic weeds block my view. Watch out for slippery, moss-covered rocks.

In northwestern Pennsylvania, wading for bass is a popular activity on French Creek for its entire length, the free-flowing sections of the Allegheny River, Sugar Creek in Venango County, Conewango Creek, Brokenstraw Creek in Warren County, Oil Creek from Drake Well Museum downstream to Oil City, Tionesta Creek, Forest County, most of the Clarion River, and segments of Redbank Creek.



*Releasing a Smallmouth Bass into the stream.*



*The author wet wading in the Allegheny River gets her first look at a nice Smallmouth Bass.*

## When to wade

Summer months are perfect for wading. Never wade in the dark. It is important to maintain your footing and balance yourself when casting or carrying your gear. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's regulations allow fishing for Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, and Spotted Bass in rivers and streams year-round, with catch and immediate release from mid-April to mid-June.

## With what artificial tackle?

There are lots of choices, so just take a few of your favorite types packed into one container. Top picks by the anglers in my household are beetle spin lures, small topwater baits, 4-inch floating or suspending minnow plugs, small crankbaits, 3- to 4-inch stick worms rigged wacky style or Texas style on a single wide gap hook, and lead head jigs (sizes  $\frac{1}{16}$ ,  $\frac{1}{8}$ , or  $\frac{3}{16}$ -ounce) with either twister tails, crayfish-like, or tube plastic bodies. Most of these baits are cast upstream and fished downstream with the current.

## Want to use live bait while wading

Rig live bait caught from the same stream you are fishing on a size #1 or #1/0 circle hook with a single splitshot. Do not use a bobber or float. Cast upstream and drift with the current.

## Who can wade

Wade fish with a friend. You will get good exercise and share hours of fishing enjoyment as you explore Smallmouth Bass streams near your home or across Pennsylvania. ☐

# Camping on an Allegheny River Island



photos-Todd Puleo

*by Don Feigert*

On a Saturday night, 12 of us camped in the Pennsylvania Wilds on an island in the Allegheny River with our tents crowded around a blazing campfire. The air felt cool and fresh, and the river calmed our nerves as it rushed its millions of gallons of water downstream. We dined on fried chicken, fresh Smallmouth Bass fillets, baked beans, cookies, and instant mashed potatoes, a meal fit for a king (or queen). Then, we waded out into the shallow waters for a fishing contest after dinner.

We had no luck for a while. Most of us quit and went back to the campfire to relax, but Todd and Donna Rae stayed in the river and competed to see who would make the first catch. Finally, Todd got a hit, but unfortunately missed the catch. Two minutes later, Donna Rae set her hook and yelled, "I've got one! I've got one!" She fought the hefty Smallmouth Bass for 10 minutes, her fourth Smallmouth Bass catch of the day, compared to Todd's two fish. Donna Rae held the 15-inch Smallmouth Bass up for all of us to see, especially Todd.

We arrived at our old family-owned cabin along the river in Warren County, on Friday evening and spent the



*An angler catches a Smallmouth Bass near the shoreline.*





*Brett displays a Smallmouth Bass from his new kayak as he approaches the island campground.*

first night like civilized people under a roof. Saturday morning, though, we sent our “scout crew” out to Conklin Island to set up tents and reserve a spot. They chose the Grassy Knoll location over Muddy Point for tent space and lack of mud over the better fishing at the other site. In mid-morning, we packed and convoyed five trucks for 10 miles up the river, past the chosen island, and launched our day-long float of one freight canoe, four double kayaks, and three single watercraft.

We paddled all afternoon and caught a few fish where currents formed eddies off the islands. At 6:00 p.m., we arrived at Grassy Knoll, just in time for a campfire, dinner, and fishing contest, followed by a long evening at the fire, telling jokes and stories, sipping beverages, and enjoying the outdoors. It was our fourth consecutive summer of staying overnight on a wilderness island, and we set records for volume of attendees and good, clean fun. Next year, we expect more campers and a lot more fish.

In 1992, the Pennsylvania Public Law added 87 miles of the Allegheny River to the National Wild and Scenic River System, including one segment that starts at the Buckaloons Recreation Area near the village of Irvine and finishes at the town of Tionesta, 30 miles downriver. Our cabin is located in the middle of this stretch, near Tidioute, and we launch

fishing trips and overnight camping adventures on the 7 Allegheny Wilderness Islands where camping and campfires are permitted. Search the internet for guidance on where to camp and what to take along. Do not expect any facilities on the Allegheny Wilderness Islands, though. Start your “what to bring” list with food, water, firewood, and toilet paper.

The good-natured socializing at the campfire lasted until 10:00 p.m. Saturday night, when individuals and couples started drifting away toward their tents. As usual, Donna Rae and I were the last two gathered at the fire, and we sat quietly and stared at the moon and listened to the coyotes howling in the dark before we retired for the night.

At daybreak, I wandered out by the campfire pit, where someone would soon start making coffee and cooking breakfast. I walked down to the river, where mists rose above the currents, and the early golden sun was just starting to bronze the hillside forest across the river.

Four common mergansers sped upstream just above the water’s surface, long bills straining in the wind and reddish-brown crests sparkling in the sun. It made me smile to see beautiful wild creatures up close. I heard a noise behind me and then another as my fellow campers rose to light the fire and start breakfast. We were in no hurry. Time stands still out on the waters in the big woods. ☐



# Northwestern Pennsylvania Bass on a Fly Rod

*by Nick DelVecchio*

*photos by the author*

As the boat eases into the sheltered cove, the sound of line being pulled from the fly reel breaks the otherwise serene silence. The whoosh of line ramps up the anticipation as the deer hair frog goes zipping through the air before it plops among the lily pads upon reaching its final destination. It takes a few stripping retrieves before the fly gets engulfed in the mouth of a hungry bass prowling the shallows in search of a meal. A hookset (part reactionary

and part instinctive) results in a flurry of splashing and thrashing, and the fight is on.

There is a stark contrast between fly fishing for bass and trout. The delicate, subtle presentations and gentle approaches commonplace on a trout stream are ignored for more rugged, aggressive tactics usually defined by thicker leaders and big streamers or poppers. Bass, while still finicky on certain days, attack flies with reckless abandon on the lakes of northwestern Pennsylvania, and experienced anglers on these waters know that any sunken log or weed bed can hold a true lunger.

The northwest corner of the state is littered with lakes featuring above average bass fishing opportunities with a fly rod. While lakes vary in size, access, and fishing



Smallmouth Bass. Fly anglers looking to creep through these shallow havens will not be disappointed in the number of strikes they will enjoy by fishing a mix of poppers and Bunny Leech Streamers in black and olive. Since there is a horsepower restriction, many open-water weed beds stay undisturbed throughout the day, which allows anglers a great shot at fish from dawn until dusk. There is also a large, shallow section on the north end of the lake, where big bass cruise before dark. Those willing to stay out until last light will not be disappointed in the results.

## Presque Isle

It is no secret that Lake Erie has some of the finest bass fishing not only in Pennsylvania but perhaps the entire country. What makes Lake Erie unique is Presque Isle, which provides bass anglers with fly rods the opportunity to wade

*There is nothing better than early spring bass action.*

opportunities, there is no doubt that northwestern Pennsylvania lakes are among some of the finest bass waters in the Commonwealth.

## Conneaut Lake

Pennsylvania's largest natural lake (925 acres) is just a short trip off of Interstate 79 in Meadville and provides anglers with a nice mixture of weed beds and underwater structure that bass love to call home. While it is certainly not a secret spot, Conneaut Lake, Crawford County, can often be less crowded than its larger, more well-known neighbor Pymatuning Reservoir, Crawford County. Anglers can take advantage of a Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission launch to put boats in, which is the best way to fish this lake due to extremely limited shore access. Those looking for numbers of fish may be disappointed, but there is a real shot at big fish. Smallmouth Bass in the 4- to 5-pound range are not uncommon and larger ones are caught every year.

## Two Mile Run Reservoir (Justus Lake)

The coves and bays of this Venango County lake offer the perfect refuge for both Largemouth Bass and

and sight fish. The bays and inlets of Presque Isle host a tremendous number of Smallmouth Bass in spring and early summer, and the angler willing to spend the time learning safe wading areas can have a phenomenal day. One of the great aspects of fishing here is the plethora of public access since most of the fishing is in Presque Isle State Park. That gives anglers plenty of parking options, and a bike trail provides easy maneuvering to and from their spots. Those not wanting to wade fish these freshwater flats can enjoy terrific kayak fishing by cruising into hard-to-reach areas often overlooked by others.

Fly fishing for bass can be one of the most rewarding and addicting aspects of our sport. It does not take many run-ins with a 4-pound Smallmouth Bass that attacks a frog imitation or Clouser Minnow to launch a full-blown obsession. Becoming well-versed in bass fishing with a fly rod gives anglers another outlet, and that is especially helpful on days when your local trout stream may be crowded or too high and muddy. Northwestern Pennsylvania, and the multitude of productive lakes in Pennsylvania, is the perfect place to get started. ☐

# Summer's Dog Days and Cat Nights



*by Marshall Nych*

*photos by the author*

Much has been said of the “dog days of summer,” though most of it is incorrect. Often, it is assumed “dog days” refer to lazy summer times or the hottest days. Actually, the phrase’s derivative has more to do with star alignment, specifically Sirius. Nevertheless, I say let the dog have its day. I will save the nights for cats. Reflecting upon the precious summers of my youth, many evenings were spent preparing for a night of catfish fishing.

Teenagers and catfish have more in common than either party would care to admit. Both creatures of the night fill voracious appetites with relentless midnight snacking. Teens and catfish alike enjoy predictable hangouts, be it the middle of the mall or the bottom of a deep hole. Typically, fellow and fish are not picky with respect to diet. Finally, teenagers and catfish are subject to remarkable growth spurts. Something bordering magic is conjured when kindred creatures connect.

During my childhood, I gained experience and confidence along the banks of local farm ponds. Though most daytime frequenters, including bass anglers and swimmers, never even knew catfish were present, the murky waters teemed with “bullheads”. Respect came

naturally. A catfish’s formidable dorsal fin and pointed pectoral fins earned it a tough reputation. Second only to catching the catfish was sneaking along the green, wet grass after a storm to snag nightcrawlers.

My buddies and I would meticulously thread our bait along small circle hooks, allowing an enticing end to dangle free. Roughly 12- to 18-inches above the bait, we would apply weight to our lines as generously as we did laughter. Our farm pond forays were generally illuminated by lantern, the well-coordinated ones by campfire. It seemed with more light, there was more bite. From flashlights to bells, we tinkered with various strike alarm systems. The most effective, in my opinion, proved to be small glow sticks affixed to the rod tip. Some were marketed, most were handmade. The slightest interest from a bullhead sent a vibration through the rod like a shooting star across the night sky.

As most evolving anglers experience, our sense of adventure grew along with our travels and, accordingly, our fish. So began our quest for Channel Catfish. As the name suggests, the silver stud prefers deeper channels of larger river systems. A few flowed within driving distance. One favorite spot was the Shenango River. A colorful cast of friends and anglers reunited along the tailrace.

Worlds apart from the farm pond, methods and techniques had to be adapted. Through trial and error, we found live baitfish were the best producers. Though a



*The author caught his first Flathead Catfish in Sarah Furnace, Clarion County.*

sundry of other baits, such as chicken livers, potent pastes, and classic nightcrawlers worked, Channel Catfish seemed to prefer a menu with minnows. The constant flow of water rendered our glowing rod tip tactic useless. Heavy weights secured to heavy line was the ticket. Once the bait settled, line was collected carefully until taut.

Hits were abrupt and exhilarating. With a Channel Catfish well over 10 pounds and 30 inches behind it, the medium to heavy rod looked like it would snap. Tangling with a Channel Catfish was an unfair fight; the lone angler must fight the fish, the current, and the darkness.

The biggest of Pennsylvania catfish is the Flathead Catfish. Flathead Catfish were the final catfish species to swim into the waters of my youth, prior to a career, a family, and a mortgage. Late night road trips to the Allegheny River targeted this notorious predator.

Hundreds of sunny drifts for Smallmouth Bass yielded not a single encounter with a Flathead Catfish. As if discovering a new species, we started to work the midnight shift. Our crew would punch in at dusk and return home after dawn. Though our destination was a deeper, slow pool of the Allegheny River, some nights offered fast action. As darkness trumped light, our group would set up shop atop one of the many large boulders strewn along the Allegheny River. Balancing personal experience with conversations of knowledgeable locals, we found large and local baitfish were crucial to catching these wily catfish. Such sizeable

bait was capable of escaping beneath river rocks and other snags. Though I never landed a Flathead Catfish of legendary proportions, I caught a few that had the rod and heart pumping. We could count on a few Flathead Catfish to make the trip interesting.

Summers come and go, and with their departure, the dog day's bark and bite often. Yet, during those dog days, I find myself daydreaming of cat nights. ☐



*This Flathead Catfish was caught while fishing in Sarah Furnace, Clarion County.*

# White Flies on Yellow Breeches



*by Ralph Scherder*

*photos by the author*

I pulled into the parking lot behind the Allenberry Resort in Boiling Springs, Cumberland County, a few hours before dark, just as the evening was starting to cool from the mid-August heat. I thought I was plenty early, and most times of year I would have been, but this was Yellow Breeches Creek and the white flies were on.

The white fly is not just a hatch. It is an event. In many of the waters where this species emerges, the spring mayfly fly hatches are a distant memory and the fall mayfly hatches uncertain. Right there in between is the white fly, *Ephoron leukon*, like a little oasis for fly anglers.

The white fly (*Ephoron leukon*) is roughly a size 14 mayfly not found on most trout streams in Pennsylvania. Several famous waters have the hatch such as the Little Juniata River, Penns Creek, and Oil Creek as well as a score of lesser-known streams. But, the white fly gets its glory from its appearance every July and August on the Susquehanna River and Yellow Breeches Creek. While the fishing on the Susquehanna River is primarily for Smallmouth Bass, on the Yellow Breeches



*When the white fly first appears, it ranges in size from 12 to 14. Several weeks later, sizes 16 and 18 are more common.*

Creek, it is all about trout. It brings people from hours away to experience it.

As I walked along the banks behind the Allenberry Resort, I encountered a husband and wife fishing team who drove from Virginia that afternoon just to fish the hatch that evening. It was the 22nd year in a row that they made the trip. Further downstream, I met a guy from Baltimore sitting with his back against a tree, studying the water for signs of activity. Downstream from him, nine guys lined up on one side of a deep run, all of them conversing and joking around and checking the time as if they were waiting for 8:00 a.m. on opening day of trout season. Like I said, the white fly hatch is an event.



*Although it's not a perfect match, a Light Cahill of the correct size is more than adequate for fishing over the white fly hatch.*

The most popular section on the Yellow Breeches Creek is the Catch and Release Artificial Lures Only (CRALO) section, which begins at the Run (the outflow of Childrens Lake in Boiling Springs) and extends about a mile downstream to the Allenberry Resort. The water coming out of the Run is a cool 55 degrees F year-round, and the CRALO section is stocked heavily. Fortunately, not every part of the stream gets that crowded, and solitude can be found on stretches outside of the special regulations area, even when the hatch is at its peak.

The Yellow Breeches Creek begins in Michaux State Forest and flows approximately 40 miles to its confluence with the Susquehanna River, and most of it contains populations of both wild and stocked trout. Talk to the regulars who fish it often, and you may hear the phrase, "It's a limestone stream, but it fishes like a freestoner." Translation—it is a fertile stream with abundant mayfly hatches, but the fish are not nearly as skittish or as hard to catch as in typical spring creeks such as Falling Spring Branch or Big Spring Creek.

You may encounter insect activity almost any day of the year on Yellow Breeches Creek. Even when no major hatches are taking place, you usually find at least a scattering of mayflies or caddisflies. The white fly, however, is primarily found in the lower half of the stream, below Mount Holly.

The white fly hatch on Yellow Breeches begins in early to mid-August and lasts about a month. As the hatch progresses, the naturals tend to get smaller. In the beginning, it is not uncommon to find flies as big as size 12 and 14.

Several weeks later, most of those flies will range from size 16 to 18, and occasionally smaller. Even later in the hatch, though, when the flies are smallest, a pattern a size or two bigger than what is hatching may still work, and the flies are a lot easier to see in low-light conditions when the flies tend to emerge.

Light Cahills or any pattern with cream hackle and dubbing in appropriate sizes will imitate the White Fly. More important than perfectly matching the hatch is how you present the fly to the fish. Low water and skittish fish can make for challenging conditions. Long leaders and fine tippets are the rule rather than the exception.

The flatter the water, the longer I like my setup. A 9.5-foot tapered 6x leader with a 2-foot section of 7x tippet is a good starting point. I use a 9-foot, 6-weight rod, which allows me to make longer casts and reach fish without having to walk too close.

During the peak of the hatch, it is not uncommon to begin the evening fishing over a good emergence of brown drakes. These comparatively huge mayflies, size 8, provide a nice lead-in to the white fly hatch right before dark. Sometimes, the white fly will also continue on after dark, so bring a small flashlight or headlamp for changing flies after the natural light is gone.

Most years, white flies continue to appear well into September. By then, you may sense summer winding down, and on some cool days, there is even a hint of fall in the air. Do not miss out on this unique hatch. The white fly is nature's summer farewell gift to fly anglers. ☐



Tying  
Together

# Teaching Children to Build a Better Bugger

by *Christian A. Shane*

photos by the author

*“If you’re stumped and wonder aloud what to do next, at least half of the fly fishers in North America will say, ‘I don’t know, try a Bugger.’” John Gierach, Good Flies (2000).*

I enjoy demonstrating the Woolly Bugger fly pattern to children, because children have a vast imagination of what fish food it could represent. Is it a leech, a nymph, a minnow, a salamander, or a crayfish? Depending on the tying materials, this pattern imitates multiple creatures in the underwater world, as shown by its popularity among fly anglers and fly tiers.

Reportedly designed by Russell Blessing, a Pennsylvania fly tier, Blessing tried to mimic the hellgrammite for Little Lehigh Creek Smallmouth Bass with the pattern. Now, it is a standby for anglers who fish in various seasons and water conditions and a great pattern to teach your young tier.

## Teaching Tails

The first component of building a better Woolly Bugger is in selecting the marabou feathers. Guide your tier to select quality feathers with long and soft fibers and a malleable

stem. Depending on the color palette of your bugger, the tail should compliment it.

Many tiers measure the tail length as equal to the length of the hook shank. Young tiers have a tendency to use the whole feather plume to extend off the back of the hook shank, displaying a long, exaggerated tail. I allow my tiers to extend the tail within reason. To observe movement in the fly, we experiment with tail feathers in an aquarium or small bucket to observe which tail lengths will be the most suitable.

When your tier attaches the tail to the hook shank, secure it with 4 to 5 tight wraps. A great trick with tails is to lift it and make a few wraps behind the tail to cinch it down.

At this point, I have my tiers tie in the hackle and then the body material. I find it is easier with young tiers to tie everything in at the tail, so they can follow the instructions of the pattern in sequential steps.

## Helpful hackles

No Woolly Bugger is complete without some legs. Choose the saddle hackle based upon the hook size. Hackle gauges are useful and help kids observe how their hackle will eventually twist around the hook shank. Usually, a good proportion for hackle barbs is one and a half times the hook gap. This allows the legs to stick out just a bit from the body without being too cumbersome.





*Experiment with your Woolly Bugger in an aquarium or bucket of water to see its movement in the water.*

We palmer the hackle forward by tying in the butt section of the feather. Take time to prepare the hackle by stripping off the unnecessary parts near the butt end then tie it in at the hook shank. Lay the feather on the hook shank with the feather curve cupped upwards. When the body is wound forward, your tier can work hackle pliers to palmer the feather forward with consistent spacing.



*This Woolly Bugger creation was nicknamed the "Thin Mint."*

## Building bodies

To create the body of the bugger, different colors and styles of chenille material are available to the tier at a relatively low cost. I find that young tiers get enthusiastic with more than the natural colors of black, olive, and brown. They prefer fluorescents, striped, Estaz, and mottled versions of this durable material.

Teach them the basics to wrapping a chenille body on the Woolly Bugger. Cut a small piece of the chenille to tie in, and they can practice wrapping it to the front of the hook shank. When they become adept at this technique, have them preen the chenille back with each wrap to create a consistent bugger body. The biggest mistake tiers make at this stage is not wrapping the thread forward to the eye before wrapping the chenille body and palmering the hackle.

With more advance tiers, have them intertwine two strands of chenille material to create a striped body. Simply, tie in the two materials at the back of the hook shank and make consistent wraps to the hook eye. These contrasting colors allow for some simple and neat variations.

We also create variegated bodies. First, tie in the two strands of chenille. After tying a knot at the chenille ends, twist the thread core with a dubbing or hook tool. When twisted at the right tension, the chenille will blend together to intermix the fibers, creating a mottled look, a lot like a caddis casing. Then, the tier can wrap this mixed material forward to the hook eye as a single strand of material.

## Bugger variations

The list of Woolly Bugger patterns continues to rise as tiers employ beadheads, cones, rubber legs, and dumbbell eyes. For some sparkle, many tiers also add a few strands of Krystal Flash to the tail. Using smaller hooks and proportions, my tiers have even experimented in creating Baby Buggers and Micro Woolly Buggers for a smaller variation on the pattern.

Once your Woolly Bugger tying is complete and your fly box is filled, the next best part is naming the fly, trying it out, and making some memories on the water. ☑

### Woolly Bugger

**Hook:** 2XL streamer sizes #6-10  
**Thread:** Black, brown, olive (or color to match) 3/0  
**Tail:** Marabou feather plumes  
**Body:** Chenille or dubbing  
**Hackle:** Saddle hackle (match hook size)  
**Optional:** Beadhead, cone, or added weight

### Baby Bugger

**Hook:** #12-20 dry fly  
**Thread:** Black, brown, or olive 3/0  
**Tail:** Marabou or clump of rabbit fur  
**Body:** Dubbing or micro chenille  
**Hackle:** Small saddle hackle



# NOTES *from the Streams*

## That's my lunch

While on the job as Waterways Conservation Officers (WCOs), we sometimes witness the beauty of nature. While I was on boat patrol on the Fourth of July with WCO Jonathan R. Kay, we witnessed an amazing sight. As we cruised across Lake Arthur, Butler County, we saw an osprey flying around in search of food. Suddenly, the osprey swooped down in front of us and grabbed a fish from the water. This was really cool to witness, but what happened next was even better. As the osprey was flying away with its lunch, a bald eagle came soaring down and hit the osprey like a wrecking ball, causing the osprey to drop the fish. As the osprey was struggling to regain flight, the bald eagle snagged the fish that fell to the water and flew off with it. The osprey chased the eagle, but the eagle was too powerful of a match for the osprey.—WCO Timothy Haas, Lawrence and Butler counties.

## Dentist visit

As WCOs, sometimes our work and personal lives blend together in unexpected ways. Neighbors may have an idea about our occupation since our patrol vehicles may be parked at our residence, or they may see us in uniform. Most WCOs try to keep work life and personal life separate as much as possible.

Like many people, I do not enjoy going to the dentist for my checkups. Keep in mind, my dentist is great, the staff is friendly, and they are always punctual. However, I just do not like having someone inspecting my mouth with sharp, metal objects while I am reclined. The experience makes me uneasy, and I cannot wait to get out of the office. At my most recent checkup, the dental hygienist was making the usual small talk as she reclined my chair and started to working. All of a sudden, she stopped and said, "You are a WCO down on the river, aren't you?" I could feel my pulse quicken as I smiled and replied, "I am...do you have a boat?" Sweat started to

break out on my brow as I thought to myself, "How could she know that?" My mind raced through the hundreds of encounters over the past summer with anglers and boaters, desperately trying to identify this woman. Most encounters were friendly, often ending in minor infractions. Serious or multiple violations result in a citation. Encounters that involve people Boating Under the Influence, using narcotics, or people with outstanding warrants end up with the subject in handcuffs. Which of the three categories did this woman belong in and how much pain was she going to inflict on me with that shiny metal scraper thing? The dental hygienist smiled back and said, "I don't have a boat. You mentioned what you did for a living a few years ago and I thought it was cool!" The relief on my face must have been obvious, but I agreed that I have the best job in the world. The rest of the appointment was completely uneventful.—WCO Matthew Raetsch, Western Allegheny County.

## Chatty

I was in a home improvement store to buy a shovel. As I entered the garden section of the store, a sales associate was talking to a person about current events and past friends.

The sales associate did not miss a beat in his conversation with this person and did not offer to help, so I walked to the location of the shovels. After a few minutes of looking at the selection, the sales associate came over and asked if I needed help.

I said no and continued to look. The sales associate remained standing



illustration—Andrea Feeney

at the other side of display and said to me, “This brand is better than the shovels you are looking at now.” I asked, “Why is that?”

His response was, “They have a lifetime warranty, and they make good snake shovels.”

I was intrigued by his answer, so I asked him to elaborate. He started to tell me about the snakes that he killed in his yard or garden over the years with this brand of shovel. I did not identify myself as a WCO but advised him that snakes are beneficial for eating insects and small rodents. Most importantly, though, the majority of snakes in Pennsylvania are protected under the law, either from possessing or killing them.

At that point, the sales associate became speechless.—WCO Thomas J. McMann, Elk County.

## Paper trail

One day during the course of my preseason trout fishing patrol, I noticed a vehicle that was parked somewhat near the area of a Stocked Trout Water that was closed to fishing. It was not uncommon to see vehicles parked in this area since people parked there to carpool, hike, and sometimes fish the nearby creek. I did not see anyone near the vehicle or in the immediate area of the stream, and there was no fishing equipment in the vehicle. However, much to my surprise, the owner of the vehicle left a note on the vehicle’s dash indicating and admitting that he was fishing in the creek. He also provided his cell phone number. It was unusual for someone to leave a paper trail like this behind and admit that they were fishing before the season. My initial thought was to call the angler and inform him that there was a problem, but I decided not to as it would be more interesting to meet him along the stream.

After walking the stream and past a number of posters indicating that the stream was a Stocked Trout Water and closed to fishing,

I located the angler fly fishing. Upon announcing my presence, the angler became somewhat startled and quickly stated that he was not catching any trout but that he had seen a lot of trout where he was fishing. Upon informing him that the stream was closed to fishing and that he was in violation for fishing in a closed Stocked Trout Water, he quickly informed me that he was not from the area, but he did know the name of the stream that he was fishing.

With the stream being posted and with a little checking and reading of the posters and checking the *Pennsylvania Fishing Summary* online, there should be no reason for him to be fishing in closed waters.

Upon escorting the angler back to his vehicle, I pointed out the posters on the trees. He commented that he did not see the posters as he was walking to the stream. Upon issuing him the citation, he told me that he fished the stream many times during the years and that he drives past the stream on a regular basis.

With all the posted posters, I wondered if people ever read the signs. But, I am willing to bet that if the signs were not posted, they would probably say posters were not displayed.—WCO Scott J. Christman, Southern Carbon and Southwestern Monroe counties.

## Mama knows best

While on lunch break from teaching a boating safety class, I went to a local store to get a sandwich. When getting back into my patrol vehicle, a car stopped beside me. The driver rolled the window down and said, “I am going to make your day.” Not knowing how to take the statement, I asked how. The woman went on to explain that I gave her son, who was in the passenger seat, a ticket in the past. At this point, I thought I knew where the conversation was going, and I awaited an ear beating. However,

she just wanted to thank me for issuing that ticket, because she always tells him that he needs to take a life jacket with him to be safe, and he did not listen. I guess she really did know best on this one.—WCO Daniel Wilson, Southern Westmoreland County.

## Making the front page

During the preseason stocking of Bens Creek, Somerset County, a volunteer told me he grew up along the stream and was reminiscing about fishing the waterway. At the last stop on the stream, he pulled out the 2020 *Pennsylvania Fishing Summary* and pointed to a child on the cover. He told me that this was his 5-year-old grandson, who was holding a beautiful 19½-inch Smallmouth Bass that he caught. This was the best fishing story I have heard in a long time.—WCO Patrick W. Ferko, Northern Somerset County.

## Lucky

The Northeast Region had WCO vacancies due to retirements, promotions, and officer transfers. Therefore, the remaining officers and supervisors have to pull together to get the streams and lakes stocked with trout for the much anticipated opening day.

WCO T. Curt Tereschak and I decided to stay ahead of the curve and travel along the scenic Lackawaxen River, familiarizing ourselves with each of the stocking points along the river. During our patrol and familiarization of the river, we encountered two bald eagles and one golden eagle. This is one of the many reasons why I am so lucky to have this job.—Sergeant Walter A. Buckman, Northeast Region.



## Cane Poles, Crawlers, and Corn— Simple Setup, Still Effective for Catching Fish

by Tyler Frantz    photos by the author

Today, with advanced technology and smart engineering, it is not uncommon to see anglers fully equipped with expensive jet boats, top-of-the-line baitcasting rigs, and fancy \$8 bass lures. There is nothing wrong with those setups—they catch a lot of fish.

Sometimes, it is fun to strip things down to bare bones again and target fish like anglers did back in the “good old days,” with nothing flashy, just basic materials like a hook, line, and sinker. All you need beyond that is a cane pole, nightcrawlers, and corn.

Resting comfortably on a shelf in my childhood memory bank is a fond reminiscence of past summers spent with my late cousin Ryan. He slept over at my house, where two farm ponds served as the perfect place for investing youthful energy and enthusiasm.

We were not exactly the Billy Coleman character from Wilson Rawls’ “Where the Red Fern Grows,” but it was close. We fished not out of necessity but for fun. Instead of



*Catching Bluegills with a homemade cane pole takes the author back to the carefree days of his youth, when his toughest decision in life was whether to bait his hook with corn or nightcrawlers.*

bib overalls and bare feet, we wore athletic shorts and sneakers, but our love for the outdoors was wild and true. The family farm was our Ozarks.

On nights before our morning fishing escapades, we concocted our “secret weapon” in a recycled margarine tub. The base for this magical creation was a can of corn, but we were certain the splash of milk, salt, and sugar we added to the mix was the true ticket to success. If the weather cooperated, we darted around the yard after dark catching nightcrawlers with our bare hands to further sweeten our offerings. Before bed, we circled our ever-growing “wish list” items in a dog-eared Cabela’s catalog.

At daybreak, we bounced down the hill and past the barn like a pair of jumping vanilla beans, bursting with excitement for what the day may hold. After an hour or so of plucking Bluegills from the lower pond, we migrated back up the hill to target bass, crappies, and catfish in the upper pond. It was a great way for two kids to spend a summer day.

What makes this memory so nostalgic, beyond the fact that Ryan is no longer here to fish with me anymore, is the innocent simplicity of our fishing setup. Often, we used cheap spincasting rods. But sometimes just for fun, we rigged up makeshift cane poles from long sticks found around the property. The interesting part is that we still caught fish just the same.

Last summer, after acquiring a perfect-sized bamboo switch while traveling, I decided to pay homage to the treasured days of my youth by reconstructing my cane pole outfit the way Ryan and I used to build our poles. In no time, I was hoisting up fish after fish, just like the good old days.

Certain big box retailers sell cane pole packages in fishing departments for less than \$5, but it is fun to be a do-it-yourselfer. To build your own, pick out a long, slender, but sturdy pole (bamboo is perfect since it is both strong and flexible) of at least 4 feet, but longer is better for greater control and casting. A length of 8 to 10 feet is ideal if you have access to a pole of this size.

The heavier end will serve as your handle, and the thinner end will be your rod tip. If possible, carefully whittle a faint notch in the thin end about 2 inches from the tip, just to hold the line, but not so much that it weakens the integrity of the pole. Tie a length of at least 6-pound-test fishing line to the tip with a threaded loop, and snip off the line about one-and-a-half times the length of the rod itself. Any excess line can carefully be wrapped around the pole until needed.

On the business end of the line, attach a size-8 hook, and affix a splitshot sinker 3- to 5-inches above it. If you wish to suspend your bait, which I recommend in a pond setting, add a bobber a foot or two up the line. Keeping things basic, an old wine cork, gently scribed around the middle with a sharp knife can be tied on to serve as a float.

Add a nightcrawler or two big kernels of corn to the hook and swing your bait out into the water using a



*Upon hooking up, keep your rod tip high and put tension on the pole to work the fish back toward dry land.*

pendulum-style cast from your waist while lifting your rod tip simultaneously. Let the bait sit or add a little gentle action with a soft twitch of the rod. When you hookup, lift your rod tip high again and use the pressure of the rod to work the fish back to shore. It is a lot of fun.

As I mentioned earlier, this setup is far from fancy. In fact, fishing with cane poles, nightcrawlers, and corn is probably one of the most simplistic setups, but it still brings plenty of fish to hand. Consider taking this throwback challenge to add variety to your summer fishing adventures. Bib overalls and bare feet are optional. ☐



*There is satisfaction in catching fish the old-fashioned way, as anglers have for many generations.*

# Tying the Crease Fly



by Carl Haensel

photos by the author

Summertime on the water is full of big fish potential. When the weather gets hot, it is a great opportunity to focus on bass fishing. Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass bite well in the heat, and summer brings schools of fast-growing forage fish that bass like to pursue. In waters that contain small shad or shiners, bass push schools of fish to the surface, gorging on the small fish.

While topwater poppers can work in some cases, the Crease Fly does a splendid job of imitating small, wounded minnows. A simple, durable fly made of foam, the Crease Fly can be tied in a variety of colors, based on your fishing circumstances. Some anglers tie up versions that look like small sunfish to target Largemouth Bass in weedy lakes and ponds. Use a basic solid color of foam, then use markers to color and highlight the fly. I like to use craft fur or other synthetic materials for the tail, as aggressive fish can easily destroy bucktail fibers. Originally developed by Captain Joe Blados over 20 years ago, the Crease Fly has become a standard pattern used for both freshwater and saltwater gamefish everywhere. Try tying it in a variety of sizes from size 4 to 2/0 for the different gamefish that you may encounter.

Fishing the Crease Fly is easy and enjoyable. Similar to a popper, cast the fly to cover or weed edges and work it on the surface of the water. Keep the tip of your fly rod low, and retrieve the fly by stripping it in with short, sharp movements. The Crease Fly will float and push water, but usually does not pop or dive. You can also work the fly slowly by retrieving it in small twitches. If you see bass or other gamefish "busting bait" by chasing it to the surface, cast the Crease Fly directly into the melee and strip it quickly back. If fish strike multiple times but miss, keep stripping the fly until you feel the fish

firmly on the line. The fly shines in these circumstances, and fishing it can lead to some memorable hookups. Keep a few flies in your box throughout the year. You never know when you may encounter other aggressive fish like hybrid Striped Bass in the springtime or big trout in the fall pushing bait. ☐

## Tying the Crease Fly Materials

**Hook:** Size 1/0 Mustad CK74S SS or similar

**Thread:** Tan Kevlar

**Tail:** White craft fur or bucktail

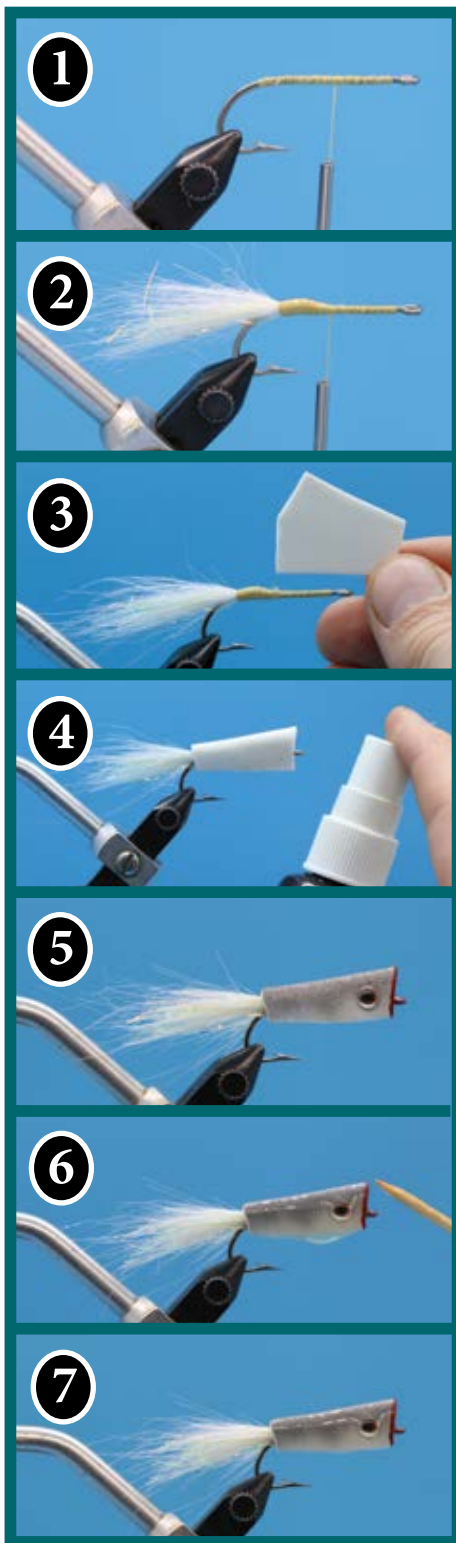
**Flash:** Pearl Krystal Flash or Flashabou

**Body:** 1/8-inch thin closed cell foam in color of choice

**Eyes:** Stick-on eyes

**Color:** Prismacolor permanent markers

**Adhesives:** Cyanoacrylate glue, Zip Kicker, 5-minute epoxy



- 1 Begin your fly by attaching your thread to the hook. Form a thread base over the entire hook.
- 2 Tie in the tail fibers, followed by the flash. Wrap the thread over all fibers to the front of the hook. Whip finish and trim the thread.
- 3 Cut the body of the fly out of a foam sheet. Commercial fly body die cutters are available. Test fit the body on the hook and trim to the desired shape.
- 4 Glue the body in place over the hook wraps using a cyanoacrylate glue. After the glue is applied, an accelerant such as Zip Kicker can be used to speed the curing process.
- 5 Add eyes, and color the fly as desired using permanent markers. Some anglers like to glue a small foam piece in the head of the fly to increase popping and flotation.
- 6 Mix up a small batch of 5-minute epoxy and lightly coat the entire foam portion of the fly, including the interior of the head.
- 7 After curing, your fly is ready to fish.

# 2020 FISHING LICENSES

## LICENSE YEAR

Annual licenses are valid from Dec. 1, 2019, through Dec. 31, 2020. Anglers must be prepared to furnish positive proof of identification.



Code	Type of Fishing License or Permit	Age	Cost*
101	Resident (Annual)	16-64	\$22.90
104	Senior Resident (Annual)	65 & up	\$11.90
105	Senior Resident (Lifetime)	65 & up	\$51.90
108	1-Day Resident (not valid March 15-April 30)	16 & up	\$11.90
119	Reduced Disabled Veteran License**	16 & up	\$2.90
123	National Guard/Armed Forces Reserve **(NGAFR) (Resident)	16 & up	\$2.90
124	Prisoner of War **(POW) (Senior Lifetime)	65 & up	\$2.90
125	Prisoner of War **(POW) (Resident)	16 & up	\$2.90
102	Non-Resident (Annual)	16 & up	\$52.90
106	1-Day Tourist *** (not valid March 15-April 30)	16 & up	\$26.90
103	3-Day Tourist	16 & up	\$26.90
107	7-Day Tourist	16 & up	\$34.90
110	Voluntary Youth Fishing License (Annual)	Less than 16	\$2.90
109	Mentored Youth Permit	Less than 16	\$0.00
150	Trout-Salmon Permit	16 & up	\$9.90
140	1-Year Trout/Salmon Permit ****	16 & up	\$9.90
143	3-Year Senior Lifetime Trout-Salmon Permit	65 & up	\$25.90
144	5-Year Senior Lifetime Trout-Salmon Permit	65 & up	\$41.90
145	10-Year Senior Lifetime Trout-Salmon Permit	65 & up	\$81.90
151	Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$9.90
152	Combination Trout-Salmon/Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$15.90
136	Alternate Display Annual Fishing License Button	Any Age	\$10.00

\* Includes issuing agent fee of \$1.00 and \$0.90 PALS transaction fee. Excludes the 109 Mentored Youth Permit.

\*\* Must have been deployed for 60 consecutive days (NGAFR). Sold only at county treasurer and PFBC offices (POW, Reduced Disabled Veteran, and NGAFR).

\*\*\* Includes Trout-Salmon and Lake Erie permits, not valid March 15-April 30. \*\*\*\* Applies to Senior Lifetime purchased on or after 1/1/2015 or may also be purchased as a trout program donation.

# 2020 MULTI-YEAR FISHING LICENSES

Code	Type of Fishing License or Permit	Age	Cost*
140	1-Year Trout/Salmon Permit**	16 & up	\$9.90
141	1-Year Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$9.90
142	1-Year Combo Trout/Salmon Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$15.90
030	3-Year Resident	16-64	\$64.90
031	3-Year Non-Resident	16 & up	\$154.90
032	3-Year Senior Resident	65 & up	\$31.90
033	3-Year Trout-Salmon Permit	16 & up	\$25.90
034	3-Year Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$25.90
035	3-Year Combo Trout-Salmon/Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$43.90
050	5-Year Resident	16-64	\$106.90
051	5-Year Non-Resident	16 & up	\$256.90
052	5-Year Senior Resident	65 & up	\$51.90
053	5-Year Trout-Salmon Permit	16 & up	\$41.90
054	5-Year Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$41.90
055	5-Year Combo Trout-Salmon/Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$71.90
060	10-Year Resident	16 & up	\$211.90
061	10-Year Non-Resident	16 & up	\$511.90
063	10-Year Trout-Salmon Permit	16 & up	\$81.90
064	10-Year Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$81.90
065	10-Year Combo Trout-Salmon/Lake Erie Permit	16 & up	\$141.90

\* Includes issuing agent fee of \$1.00 and \$0.90 PALS transaction fee. \*\* May also be purchased as a trout program donation.

# Rock Hopping for Smallmouth Bass

by *Nathan Woleslage*

*photos by the author*

Anyone who has ventured near the Susquehanna and Juniata rivers in the summertime can attest to how low the rivers become during dry periods of weather. Both rivers, when low, expose the large rocks that make up the bottoms of these rivers. In the heat of summer, wading out to these rocks and attempting to catch Smallmouth Bass is a great way to cool off and catch quality Smallmouth Bass.

First off, rock hopping for Smallmouth Bass requires the utmost attention to safety. It is best to only rock hop in sections of river where you are familiar with the depths and flows. Also, always fish with a friend when wade fishing Pennsylvania rivers. Make sure to notify family members of your fishing location.

When looking for a stretch of river to rock hop, it is essential that the water must be low and the flow is slow enough to tread safely between rocks. Google Earth is an excellent tool to utilize to identify portions of river that may be ideal for rock hopping. Within Google Earth, you can set the time period between the summer months to view the river when it is at its lowest. This will predominantly be during the months of July through September, although June can also provide low water opportunities.

My best rock hopping locations are no secret, as others also recognize the opportunity as shore anglers to extend their reach further out into the river. The portion of the Susquehanna River where Stony Creek flows in, near the infamous Statue of Liberty, is an excellent location to rock hop for bass. Anglers also reel in Walleyes and the occasional Musky in this stretch. Another portion of the Susquehanna River, just north of the town of Liverpool off of 11 and 15, is a great stretch as well that produces quality-size bass. However, the majority of my rock hopping outings occur on the Juniata River, as flows are often slower and safer for rock hopping.

Rock hopping requires slightly different gear and wading equipment to achieve success. Hip or chest waders are not ideal, as the water temperatures are typically warm enough to wet wade (wading in swim trunks or mesh shorts and pants). I personally wear mesh UPF 50 pants, along with slip resistant wading shoes. For carrying gear while wading, a sling pack does the job nicely, but I have found a simple drawstring gym bag also works. I put all of my soft plastic baits, snacks, and a bottle of water in the pack. One fishing rod is all that is required for rock hopping outings. My personal preferred single rod







*A Susquehanna River Smallmouth Bass*

setup for rock hop bass fishing is a 7-foot medium action spinning rod. This rod is accompanied with a 2500 size reel spooled with 6-pound fluorocarbon line.

Bait choices when rock hopping resemble the same baits most anglers use to target Smallmouth Bass from both boat and shore. Tubes, Ned rigs, and downsized fluke-style baits are all excellent soft plastic choices when the water is low and potentially clear. If rock hopping in the morning or evening, I love throwing small poppers and walking baits to draw aggressive topwater strikes. Topwater lures have produced some of my largest bass when rock hopping.

Towards late August and September, my bait choices begin to alter. I have found that curly tail grubs fished on an 1/8-ounce jig head consistently and abundantly catch bass of any size. I also begin to fish squarebill crankbaits and small jerkbaits, as the lowering water temperatures excite Smallmouth Bass into chasing lures more readily.

A fun way to target bass when rock hopping is to fly fish. Flies such as Clouser Minnows, Deer Hair Poppers, and streamers of varying design and size can be worked at close quarters between rocks to draw bass out of ambush. Fighting Smallmouth Bass on a fly rod, while being on a rock, makes for an interesting fight for the angler.

Rock hopping for summer Smallmouth Bass is an exciting way to target fish when the water is low. Again, safety is paramount when planning to fish and when you are on the water. The fish are often unpressured from boat anglers due to the ruggedness of rocky stretches of river, which should have the Smallmouth Bass in a lure eating mood. During the summer, keep your eyes out for a stretch to wade out and rock hop. Smallmouth Bass and a fun fishing sessions await. ☐



*A hard-fighting Smallmouth Bass breaks the surface.*

# Summer's Super 'Seeds and 'Gills

by *Darl Black*

*photos by the author*

Some anglers may be surprised to learn Bluegills and Pumpkinseeds are among my top ten favorite species. Why? The answer—good old-fashioned fishing fun. You do not have to travel far to find these fish, and when everything else has lockjaw, sunfish are still eating.

Although separate species, I generally lump Bluegills and Pumpkinseeds together when discussing techniques, because both species are found side-by-side in the lakes I intensively fish during the summer.

My favorite time to fish for 'seeds and 'gills is mid-July through early September, as opposed to late spring when so many anglers target beds. Why summer? I find the big ones in the summer.

A friend of mine specializes in catching big panfish from certain types of ponds and small shallow lakes in southeastern Pennsylvania and Maryland while fishing from shore. He is good at it. However, my approach is just the opposite—I fish deep.

Select lakes with reasonably clear water and ones that feature hard bottom areas in the 12- to 25-foot depths. The lake must have a decent population of predator fish to keep sunfish in check. Personally, I cannot find quality-size Bluegills and Pumpkinseeds from dingy or muddy water lakes.

In northwest Pennsylvania, sunfish species typically spawn primarily from late May through early July. By mid-July, weed growth usually has reached its peak growth on the flats, and many Bluegills and Pumpkinseeds hang around the vegetation all summer.

However, most of the big fish move offshore where panfish form small schools or packs to search out food as deep as 28 feet. These offshore panfish feed on the usual fare of insect larvae and nymphs, aquatic worms, and other invertebrates, plus small minnows and crayfish.

Turn on your fish finder sonar and begin cruising long points and humps, working from the outside edge of weed



growth to the thermocline. Points and humps are going to be firm bottom sites.

If there are objects on these areas such as a pile of rocks, a sunken boat, logs, or man-made fish crib, so much the better. While most Bluegill packs will roam, there will always be some 'gills and 'seeds that hold on these deep objects.

Crisscross a point or hump with sonar until you spot a pack of Bluegills moving in the water column. If you see similar size fish hugging the bottom, these may be Pumpkinseeds. Pumpkinseeds do not hold high in the water column.

When I spot a group of panfish, I immediately drop a buoy, then begin working a circular pattern around the spot while vertically fishing a drop shot rig. If you have the new forward-looking LiveScope™ sonar, staying on the pack should be easier.

The best rod is a light power, 7-foot rod with a soft tip. Light bites are most often detected by the rod tip being pulled slightly downward. Use 4- or 6-pound-test line. I recommend a high-visibility line, so you can tell if your presentation is drifting too far.



Marilyn Black with a summertime 10-inch Pumpkinseed caught using the drop-shot technique.

knot, attach a 1/64 or 1/32-ounce jighead with a size #8 or #6 hook about 4 inches below the swivel; (5) tie a cheap snap swivel to the end of the leader about 12 inches below the jighead; (6) based on depth and breeze, select an appropriate weight bell sinker (3/16, 1/4, 3/8, or 1/2-ounce) and slip it into the snap; (7) stick a 1- or 1.5-inch soft plastic body on the jig and tip it with a mealworm.

The large glow bead is used as an attractor as well as protection from winding the swivel through the rod's tip. A small jighead allows more efficient removal from the fish's mouth than a standard bait hook, which can be easily swallowed. The ideal hook is no smaller than a size #8 hook and no larger than a size #6.

Free-spool the rig to the bottom and take up the slack, so the line is tight to the sinker. If fish are close to the bottom, use the rod tip to lift the sinker about 12 inches off the bottom and slowly lower it back.

If fish are roaming higher in the column, begin fishing on the bottom. Every two minutes wind in about 2 feet of line. Then, fish the rig suspended for 2 minutes. Continue working the rig higher in the water column until you contact fish. ☐

Here are details for putting together the drop shot rig. (1) Slip a large-size soft glow bead onto the line; (2) tie a number 10 roller swivel to the line with a Uni Knot; (3) to the other end of swivel, tie an 18-inch leader of 4-pound-test line; (4) using a double overhand loop



Rig details: On the left, all the parts for creating a panfish drop shot rig. On the right, all the parts assembled.



Anglers enjoy the tug of a big Bluegill.



# The Transition of *WEAVER LURES*

by *Alex Zidock Jr.* photos by the author

As long as anyone has tried to catch fish, there have been artificial lures of one type or another. The first artificial lure was light. Native Americans used all sorts of ways to catch fish but lured fish to light while fishing at night. Besides nets, spears, and bare hands to secure the fish, one method was a “gorge,” the forerunner of the modern hook. It was a straight piece of wood, bone, or stone notched in the middle for tying a line. It was stuffed into bait, and when the fish swallowed it, tugging on the line wedged the gorge inside the fish, allowing the angler to pull the fish to the surface.

Throughout the late 18th century and early 19th century, artificial lures for sport fishing began making an appearance in America. Most came along with European gentlemen settling in the New World. In 1848, Julio T. Buel became the first to patent and manufacture a spoon lure in America.

For the next hundred years, others bent, twisted, and shaped metal to be trolled or cast using conventional reels. It was not until the first American-made spinning reels appeared in about 1940 that spoons and spinning lures increased in popularity for sport fishing.

John Weaver, Reading, was an avid angler who was one of those tinkerers. In the early 1950s, he turned his garage workshop into a facility to manufacture his fish-catching creation he called Mister Minnow.

“The lure Mr. Weaver developed was a spinning lure with a blade and beads, and he added a rubber minnow,” said Kevin Davis, owner of Weaver Lures.

Davis said Weaver eventually sold the company to Bob McQuiney, Kempton, who continued to manufacture and sell the Mister Minnow lures. A tinkerer himself, he added

and patented the Weaver Grabber Spoons and a tool for threading line through live bait he called the Mini-Latch.

When McQuiney sold the business to Davis’ father, Stephen, in 1998, manufacturing was headquartered in Allentown. “I bought the company from my father in 2016 and moved it to Bucks County,” said Davis.



*Kevin Davis, the current owner of Weaver Lures, plans to concentrate on the Weaver Grabber Spoons and the Mini-Latch to expand the line and develop new products.*



*Bob McQuiney, who once owned Weaver Lures, developed the Mini-Latch for Pennsylvania trout anglers. The Mini-Latch is used with rubber or plastic baits as well as live baits to position the hook in the desired location.*

One of the changes Davis made was to suspend the manufacture of the Mister Minnow lure and to change some of the color patterns of the Weaver Grabber Spoon lures. "I found that the Grabber Spoon was a better selling item, and I want to concentrate on its manufacture and expansion. The patented action is unusual, and it really does catch fish," said Davis.

"I fish as often as I can," said Davis, whose other business is repairing and servicing vacuum packing machines. "And while catching trout was what the Grabber Spoon lures were made for, I also catch bass and Walleye using it. In Pennsylvania, where the name and reputation of Weaver Lures are well known, we have a big following. But, we also sell a lot of lures in Canada," said Davis.

Weaver Grabber Spoons are solid brass. There are 11 different paint patterns in combination with the brass and nickel or gold plated backs. All combinations are available in 1/8, 1/4, or 3/8 ounces, and all painted lures have a unique crinkle finish.

"Our artist in Canada finishes each painted lure with a special clear coat after the final paint pattern dries. When the lure gets heated to a specific temperature, the clear coat begins to crinkle. The effect is that it looks like fish scales," said Davis.

He said that while people use Weaver Lures for jigging and ice fishing, Grabber Spoons work best in open water. "The idea is to cast the lure and let it sink to the desired depth and then use a slow retrieval. These spoons work when trolling very slowly. The unique bend of the spoon is why there is more of a fluttering action rather than the traditional wobble of other spoons."

Another product sold under the Weaver Lures banner is the Mini-Latch. "Bob McQuiney also developed the

Mini-Latch for bait threading, so you can thread a piece of monofilament line through live bait, rubber, or plastic bait to place the hook in the position you want it," said Davis. This altered sewing machine needle has a tiny latch mechanism that is positioned in one direction to smoothly pass through the baitfish's mouth and exit the vent. The pre-tied loop of a snelled hook is attached to the needle, the latch is moved to the opposite direction, and the monofilament line is pulled back through the fish.

"Live bait anglers in Pennsylvania have been using the Mini-Latch for many years. Anglers who prefer plastic or rubber baits are also finding that by using the Mini-Latch, they can thread almost any soft bait easily and securely using this system," said Davis.

"When my dad bought Weaver Lures, I was excited to help him make lures, and so I know the business from the ground up," said Davis. "My goal is to concentrate on the Weaver Grabber Spoons and the Mini-Latch. Weaver Lures has a good following, and now it is my turn to develop new products and grow the business, so I can get more anglers using a lure that has more than a half-century history of catching fish," said Davis. □



*All painted Weaver Grabber Spoons get a final clear coat of paint. When it is heated, it causes the finish to crinkle to resemble fish scales.*

**Weaver Lures**  
[www.weaverlure.com](http://www.weaverlure.com)

# Trim Some Whiskers for the Summer



*by Vic Attardo*

*photos by the author*

I usually grow a beard for fall hunting season and winter ice fishing season. Whiskers are beneficial, because they keep my face warm.

But come summer, the beard goes by the way of the trimmer and down the drain. Too hot to keep it.

Ironically, summer is when I renew my interest in certain whiskers—Channel Catfish whiskers in particular.

Channel Catfish are finished spawning by this time, and the main thing fish have in mind is food. Channel Catfish are voracious feeders, consuming everything from invertebrates like crayfish to vertebrates such as

small fish. Folks do not readily equate Channel Catfish as surface feeders, but in August, I have seen these fish surge through a flotilla of white flies as eagerly as Smallmouth Bass and trout.

When it comes to baits, the menu is wide open. Nightcrawlers are probably the most popular bait. Chicken livers are effective particularly when fishing rivers, because the scent drifts with the current, bringing the Channel Catfish in.

One bait that does not get as much attention is American Shad. Each shad season, I keep and freeze one to three medium-size shad. I cut the shad into chunks several days before my catfish outing and sprinkle the fish with kosher salt to make it tougher. Then, I store my allotment in a small tub, which I take to the water (even sprinkling it with anise extract). When fishing the Delaware River, which has an extensive shad run, there is



*The channels between bridge piers are great Channel Catfish fishing spots.*

After anywhere from 20- to 30-yards, with the rod tip high and line off the surface, the line is pulled to the side out of the current and comes to rest. Using either a conventional or a spinning reel, a good 7-foot medium action rod helps with line control, which is paramount.

Depending on the intensity of the current, I toss the shad chunk with a half-ounce, unpegged egg sinker or with no added weight. Using an unpegged sinker allows me to release a small amount of line through the weight after it has settled to the bottom and drift the bait a few feet downstream. If the weight does not feel correct, a Channel Catfish will drop the bait, so this is a good ploy.

In lakes, I like to appeal to the scent trail Channel Catfish will follow. Lakes have current, too, and if you are fishing above a spillway or dam outlet, position yourself, so the bait lies downstream.

In lakes, work along natural channels or places where the current sweeps near submerged hard structure or around surface structure. A point of rip rap, against a heightened cliff, or a flat where a wide cove meets the main lake may all be good. You may need the egg sinker to touch bottom with a wad of worms or chicken liver. Then, release a little line or keep the reel in free spool, so the catfish does not sense trouble.

Most likely, it will be hot out on the water, but you will be ready to shave some whiskers. ☐

no better bait. Shad are an oily fish and produce an effective scent trail.

Channel Catfish may also be caught with a piece of raw hot dog, which stays on the hook well. I have seen anglers remove a luncheon slice from a sandwich, a clam from a tin, or frozen shrimp from a bag to catch catfish.

When pursuing Channel Catfish, appeal to the fish's natural feeding style. Channel Catfish have remarkable olfactory senses and its whiskers help feel for food along the way. A Channel Catfish needs whiskers, because its eyes are small.

Most Channel Catfish are caught while anglers sit on a bank with their rods propped on forked sticks, or in an anchored boat around an eddy or pool. But, I like to wade a river and cast to the catfish, then fight the fish in the current.

To do this, I select a part of a river where I can wade just off the main current, yet cast into the current. As the bait hits the water, I free spool line, so it is taken downstream, keeping a moderate or controlled tension.



*Use pliers to remove a hook from a catfish's tough mouth.*

# Protecting French Creek

by *Deborah Weisberg*

*photos by the author*



French Creek in northwestern Pennsylvania is an ecological, historical, and recreational gem.

Named by a young George Washington who traveled it on a diplomatic mission on the eve of the French and Indian War, French Creek is better known for having the richest aquatic life of any waterway in Pennsylvania, making it popular to float and fish.

“It’s the most biologically diverse stream in Pennsylvania, and one of the most diverse in the United States,” said Brian Ensign, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) Area Fisheries Biologist. “The array of fish and mussel species and the different habitats are what make French Creek unique. You will find wetlands, pools, glides, riffles, and channels—and the species that match up with, and thrive in, each of them.”

From its headwaters in Chautauqua County, New York, French Creek meanders for 117 miles through Erie, Crawford, Venango, and Mercer counties in Pennsylvania before meeting the Allegheny River in Franklin. It supports 80 species of fish, including 10 different kinds of darters, and 26 species of mussels, some of which are rare.

Ensign and his team manage the French Creek fishery in sections. The uppermost reach, from the New York State line to the confluence with the West Branch of French Creek, is cold enough to be stocked with adult Rainbow Trout and Brown Trout, while the rest of the stream, from Union City to the mouth at Franklin, is a warm/coolwater fishery that sustains Muskellunge, Northern Pike, Pumpkinseed, Smallmouth Bass, Walleye, crappie, Bowfin, and other species. It is regularly planted with Walleye fry and yearling

Muskellunge. “This is the most productive section,” said Ensign, noting that where the stream begins to widen at Union City, habitat develops into a series of riffles, runs, and pools.

This 76-mile stretch from Union City to Franklin is also the navigable portion of French Creek, and a paddler’s



*French Creek is known for its rich aquatic life, making it popular to float and fish.*



delight. On the PFBC's Water Trail webpage at <https://pfbc.pa.gov/WaterTrail.htm>, kayakers and canoeists will find maps and guides for planning trips on the upper and lower sections of the creek that range in length from 3 to 15 river miles.

The creek owes its exceptional aquatic life to its glacial origins and to land use within the 790,000-acre watershed, according to Milt Ostrofsky, a retired Allegheny College biology professor and current member of the French Creek Valley Conservancy board.

"It's in a unique position in that it has never been channelized like streams in the intensive agricultural regions of Ohio and west, and its basin is free of oil and coal deposits whose exploitation damaged waterways to the east."

"So, I would say the biodiversity of French Creek is a lucky break resulting from glacial reversal of flow, the presence of marginal soils for farming, and the lack of fossil fuel deposits," said Ostrofsky.

French Creek is not without impacts, though, including farm runoff, treated sewage, and industrial discharges, which various conservation partners are working to curtail. The Crawford County Conservation District incentivizes farmers to reduce pollution and sedimentation by creating buffer zones between their properties and the creek, installing cattle fencing, and implementing other best practices. Hundreds of trees have been planted on the streambanks. The French Creek Valley Conservancy, a land trust, has purchased property and easements on 2,400 acres within the watershed to curtail development. Both organizations work to eradicate invasive plants, although invasive plants are difficult to control, admits Tracey J. Crawford, district manager of the Conservation District.

"Multiflora rose shrubs are a problem," said Crawford. "And, Japanese knotweed has taken over the banks in many places. But, we have not given up. We applied for a state grant to treat them."

A much greater menace has arrived at French Creek, the Round Goby, an invasive fish now threatening the waterway's native community.

Discovered in 2014 in LeBoeuf Creek, Round Gobies have since been documented in the main stem of French



*Muckets (left) and Kidneyshells (right) are just two of the 26 mussel species found in French Creek. Mussels form the foundation of a food chain, filtering water and, in some cases, serving as habitat for invertebrates, such as caddisflies. Mussels cannot survive in polluted environments.*

Creek about 300 meters below LeBoeuf Creek, as recently as the fall of 2019.

Presumably, Round Gobies were introduced to LeBoeuf Creek by an angler, perhaps from a bait bucket that had been used in Lake Erie, where Round Gobies abound, or another fishery.

Although proliferation has been relatively slow for reasons that are not yet clear, Round Gobies pose a serious threat to French Creek. "We expected to find more after 5 years, but they did not reproduce at the rate we thought, which is a good thing; we found just 20 here and 20 there. Even so, they are established, and eradication is not an option," said Ensign.

Round Gobies have not been studied much in the moving water of rivers and streams. In French Creek, biologists now have the opportunity to look at the impact on the native ecosystem, especially the mussels that Round Gobies are known to feed on and the darters that Round Gobies compete with as a bottom-dwelling species.

The consequences could be devastating to the creek's threatened and endangered mussels like the Snuffbox, Rayed Bean, Northern Riffleshell, Clubshell, Salamander Mussel, and Rabbitsfoot. "Right now, there is a lot of uncertainty, but we know that gobies consume juvenile mussels, and if those are lost, recruitment would be poor and a slow demise could occur over time," said Nevin Welte, PFBC malacologist.

French Creek's mussel community has always been regarded as one of the top four in the United States, if not the world. "It would be tragic if it were to disappear," said Welte. □



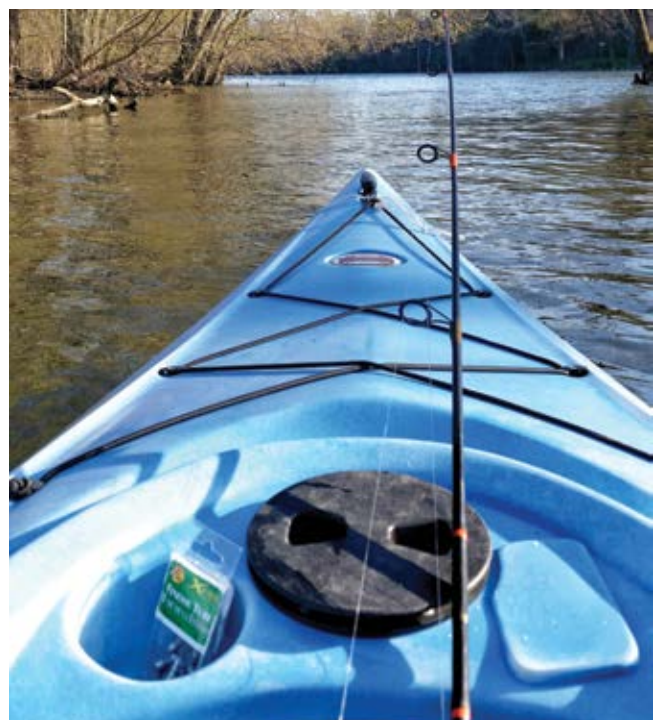
# *Floating the* **Conodoguinet Creek Water Trail**

*by John Allen*

*photos by the author*

As you float down the Conodoguinet Creek Water Trail, you begin to develop a case of “next bend” syndrome. No matter what stretch you fish, you can always see another bend up ahead. So, of course, you must go and explore. After about 6 miles on the water, you begin to realize how the creek got its name. “Conodoguinet” comes from an Indian word meaning “a long way with many bends.” The water trail covers 39 miles of the 90-mile-long creek, but if the water trail went in a straight line, it would be closer to 16 miles. There is a lot of stream in a relatively compact area. The Conodoguinet Creek is a great place to enjoy a day of paddling or fishing.

The Conodoguinet Creek begins its 90-mile journey as a small wild Brook Trout stream in the mountains of upper Franklin County before it enters the Letterkenny Reservoir. After departing the lake, the stream begins to widen as it flows through the Cumberland Valley. From Shippensburg to Mechanicsburg, the creek is fed by numerous limestone



*A point of view from the author's kayak.*



*A hefty Conodoguinet Smallmouth Bass comes to the net.*

streams, the two most notable being Big Spring Creek and Letort Spring Run. It is also through this section that the creek transforms from a coolwater fishery into a warmwater fishery. However, it is still able to maintain cool enough temperatures in most of the stream to hold trout into late spring.

From Carlisle to where it enters the Susquehanna River near Wormleysburg (directly across the river from Harrisburg), this is the most popular stretch for both fishing and boating. The water trail begins its journey in North Middleton Park but is briefly interrupted by a lowhead dam at Cave Hill Nature Center. The next access point is about a half-mile downstream from the lowhead dam at Creekview Park. From here, a person can float without having to get

out for over 36 miles. The first 30 miles have eight access points as it winds through private woodlands and away from roadways. The last 6 miles also has eight access points due to it being in a more densely populated area, where it borders a lot of residential neighborhoods. If anglers hope to enter the creek at an access point that is not publicly noted, they should show respect for the landowner and always ask permission.

The Conodoguinet Creek Water Trail has a wide array of fish species in it. It is one of the few bodies of water in Pennsylvania where you can catch just about anything. Smallmouth Bass tend to be the fish of choice for most anglers. There is a good, year-round population throughout the water



*Paddling the Conodoguinet Creek Water Trail provides a nice escape.*



*The Letort Falls is one of the many hidden gems along the trail.*

trail. In the summer months, these fish see a lot of pressure, as witnessed by the large number of vehicles in the access parking lots. During the peak of the summer, it is not uncommon to see 30 to 40 kayaks go by in a short period of time, as well as a lot of people on inner tubes or just out swimming in the creek which disturbs the fishing. Anglers looking for the most success should go fishing mid-week or early in the morning. Slow approaches towards holding points, as well as well-placed presentations are a must as you often see bass streaking past your kayak before you even make a cast. I generally like to throw baits that allow me to cover a lot of water in a short period of time. This includes topwater baits, jerkbaits, spinnerbaits, and various soft plastics.

The stream receives an annual stocking of tiger muskellunge, which has created a fishable population throughout the lower end of the creek. It is not uncommon to spot several of these fish as well as Muskellunge or an occasional Northern Pike during a float holding behind cover. Often, these fish follow your offering. You can try making figure eights in the water to entice a last second strike, but usually getting one to take your offering can be a chore. It never seems to fail, when you do hook one, it will be at the most inopportune time. I have had more than I can count break my 8-pound-test line while targeting bass.

The stream receives a few private stockings of trout each year. As the water warms, the trout tend to flock to the mouths of the coldwater streams and bridge piers seeking cooler water. I have experienced a few spring bass outings that have resulted in surprise Brown Trout. It is not a species that I plan to target but certainly makes for a bonus.

In addition, there are good Fallfish, carp, and catfish (bullheads, Channel Catfish, and some Flathead Catfish) populations. Many of the access areas are closed at night,

so you will have to do some scouting in advance to find a good area to target catfish. It is not impossible to occasionally catch Largemouth Bass, Walleyes, or panfish. On multiple fishing trips, I caught four or more species of fish.

There are many stretches that are wide and shallow with little cover. In these areas, you are lucky to find a few small bass and Fallfish. This is where taking your time to scout the creek ahead of time by using aerial maps and bridge crossings will help you maximize your time on this creek. When I first started exploring this stream, I planned 15-mile trips each time. I slowly floated through the good stretches while fishing every good-looking pocket and paddling through the bad spots. I call this method "hole hopping." After a while, you learn which stretches are better than others and your trip distances shorten.

There is an abundance of wildlife on this creek that calls the shorelines home. In many parts of the creek, you go off the beaten path and away from most roads. You may see minks, muskrats, white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, and just about every species of duck, and plenty of beautiful flora. When the fishing is slow, the wildlife may change your day.

There are some hidden gems about this creek, in the form of the landscapes. As you paddle along, you will see several small waterfalls at incoming creeks. The most popular one is the Letort Falls in Carlisle. Many people will make this a stopping point for lunch. There are also a lot of steep cliffs along the shorelines that will steal a moment of two of your attention.

The Conodoguinet Creek is a fun stream with a large variety of fish and tremendous scenery. If you find yourself in southcentral Pennsylvania looking for an enjoyable outing, check out the Conodoguinet Creek. ☐

# PLAY



Summer  
2020

Pennsylvania • League • of • Angling • Youth

## SUPERHEROES OF SUMMER



Summer is a time when people enjoy being outdoors in Pennsylvania, and the warm weather of summer makes being outdoors even more enjoyable. This summer, we hope you get outside and enjoy all of the excitement, beauty, and fun that nature provides.

If you like being outdoors, chances are you would also like to do your part to protect our waterways and the wildlife that live in and around it. In this issue, you will learn some ways that you can be a superhero of summer by doing your part to be a good **steward** of our waterways and the fish, reptiles, amphibians, and other critters found in and around the water.



Rock Bass

### Vocabulary (Watch for these words!)

- **Barb** - small, triangle-shaped metal at the sharp end of a hook, pointing in the opposite direction of the sharp end
- **Invertebrate** - an animal that does not have a backbone
- **Non-venomous** - an animal that does not have venom (venom is a toxic substance from a venomous animal's bite)
- **Population** - a group of individuals of the same species that live in a particular area
- **Steward** - a person who responsibly uses and protects a resource

# Fishing and Boating

## Don't Be a Litterbug

Do your part in keeping our waterways and nearby land clean by not only picking up your own trash, but also what others left behind.

- Reuse a shopping bag to hold the trash you pick up until you can dispose of it properly.
- Be careful when picking up hooks or broken glass. Get an adult to help with sharp items.



Fishing line is dangerous to all kinds of wildlife.

Look for fishing line collection tubes. Only put fishing line inside the tubes, not trash. The collected fishing line goes to a recycling program.

## Don't Spread Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) are plants or animals that were introduced into waterways where they do not live naturally. AIS have harmful effects on the habitat and people's use of the waterways. These aquatic invasive species may even be harmful to people's health.

AIS can travel on fishing gear, boats, life jackets, clothing, and shoes. Some species can live out of the water on damp items for days or even weeks. Some AIS are so small that the invasive species cannot be seen without a microscope.



*New Zealand Mudsnail*

## Some Ways You Can Help

- Check your gear before leaving any body of water. Inspect every inch of your boat, trailer, and fishing gear. Remove and leave behind plants, mud, and aquatic life.
- Do not transport any potential hitchhiker, even back to your home. Remove and leave hitchhikers at the site you visited.
- Put unwanted fishing bait in the trash.
- Drain water from all equipment before leaving the area you are visiting.
- Wash your gear with hot water or with a high-pressure spray. Or, allow gear to dry, then wait another 48 hours before entering new waters.

**CLEAN  
YOUR GEAR**

**Check  
Drain  
Clean  
Dry**

## Handle with Care

Good anglers only keep the fish that they use and follow regulations of seasons, sizes, and daily limits. Give fish the best chance to live another day by practicing catch and release.

- Keep the fish in the water as much as possible. Remember, fish cannot breathe while out of water.
- Handle the fish as little as possible.

If the fish doesn't swim off when you release it, you may try giving it "fish CPR." Hold the fish upright and gently move it back and forth, front to back, in the water.

- Wet your hands.
- Pinch down the **barb** on your hook or buy barbless hooks. Barbless hooks are much easier to remove.
- If the fish swallows the hook deeply, cut the line as close to the mouth as possible.
- Release the fish gently back into the water. Do not throw it.

Releasing the fish this way will pass water over the fish's gills and give an extra boost of oxygen.



*Brown Trout*

# Reptiles and Amphibians

Reptiles (snakes, turtles, and lizards) and amphibians (frogs, toads, and salamanders) are most active in warm weather. If you spend time outdoors in the summer, you will eventually come across a reptile or amphibian. Some people find these animal encounters to be pleasant while others may find these critters scary. Either way, we need to respect all animals including reptiles and amphibians.



*Northern Spring Peeper*

## Keep Them Wild

- It is best to observe wildlife when you find it. Watch the animal at a comfortable distance. Take some photos or make some sketches and notes about its appearance and behavior. Some people like to keep a nature journal.
- Wild animals typically do not make good pets. It is difficult to provide the food and habitat that wild animals need. It also affects the animal's **population** in the wild. Even taking just one reptile or amphibian can be harmful to the local population.
- It is illegal to take or keep many reptiles and amphibians. Check the current *Pennsylvania Fishing Summary* or visit [www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com) for regulations.



*Eastern Red-backed Salamander*



## Turtle Crossing

Turtles may be seen crossing roads in the summer. Ask an adult to help the turtle cross, but only if it is safe to do so. Do not go on the road by yourself. This should only be done by an adult. Be sure the adult puts the turtle to the side of the road in the direction it was heading. Extra caution must be taken with a Snapping Turtle due to its strong bite. Only pick a Snapping Turtle up at the back half of its shell or scoot it with a broom or other long object.



*Woodland Box Turtle*



*Eastern Gartersnake*

## Snake Encounters

While most snakes in Pennsylvania are **non-venomous**, it is best not to pick up snakes. Many snakes in Pennsylvania are not aggressive unless threatened. Snakes will often try to flee first before striking. Remember, snakes are an important part of nature and should not be harmed.

## Be a Citizen Scientist

Help scientists better understand reptile and amphibian populations in Pennsylvania by reporting your sightings to the Pennsylvania Amphibian & Reptile Survey. When people submit their sightings, it helps scientists better understand the animal's status and locations within Pennsylvania. Visit [www.paherpsurvey.org](http://www.paherpsurvey.org) for more information.



# Check Out a “Live Stream”

When people refer to a “live stream,” they are usually describing a video playing online at the same time it is being recorded. But, check out a real live stream. Streams are full of life. Summer is a great time to explore a stream. Just be sure to have an adult with you before getting your feet wet. Moving water is powerful and can be dangerous.



## Critters in the Creek

Some animals found in a stream or creek include fish, salamanders, crayfish, freshwater mussels, and insects.

Many insects start in the water and later become adults with wings, such as dragonflies, damselflies, mayflies, stoneflies, and caddisflies.

A great place to look for aquatic insects and other **invertebrates** is on the underside of rocks. Here are some tips to follow when exploring a stream or creek:

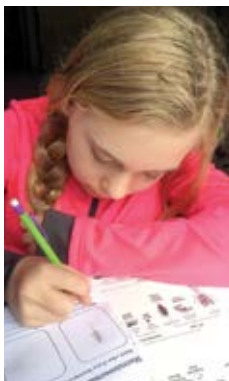
- Do not remove or stack rocks. The rocks provide habitat for salamanders, crayfish, insects, plants, and algae, and also provide a place for fish to lay eggs.

- Replace rocks where found. It is important to keep the habitat in place for all wildlife.
- Place critters in a small container with water for a closer look. Use a hand lens to see close-up. Then, return the critters to the same area.
- Use a small paintbrush to gently lift fragile critters off the rock for further investigation.
- Do not keep the critters out of the stream for long. Invertebrates need cold water and the oxygen it provides.



*Salamander eggs on a stream rock.*

## Young Scientist



Take a photo, video, or make sketches and notes in a nature journal. To identify these animals, visit [www.fishandboat.com/LearningCenter/Documents/pondstream.pdf](http://www.fishandboat.com/LearningCenter/Documents/pondstream.pdf) or [www.macroinvertebrates.org](http://www.macroinvertebrates.org).

*Produced by:* the Bureau of Outreach,  
Education & Marketing  
*Written by:* Miranda Smith  
*Editor:* Spring Gearhart  
*Design and illustrations:* Andrea Feeney  
*Photos:* Miranda Smith  
and PFBC archives  
© Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

# SUPERHERO BINGO

Cross off the squares of this bingo sheet to earn your "Superhero Status!"

Pick up trash while fishing or boating.	Observe a creek critter, and take a photo, video, or make sketches and notes in a nature journal.	Fish with a barbless hook.
Wet your hands before touching a fish.	<b>FREE SPACE</b>	Take time to observe a reptile or amphibian in the wild.
Report an amphibian or reptile sighting to <a href="http://www.paherpsurvey.org">www.paherpsurvey.org</a> .	Check your gear before leaving the water, and remove any plants, mud, or aquatic life.	Find and identify 3 different creek critters.

Cut out this certificate when you complete Superhero Bingo.

## Superhero of Summer Certificate

Presented to

---

Date

---





# Dam Repairs and New and Improved Fishing Opportunities

**by Gary Smith**  
*Fisheries Biologist*

A number of Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) impoundments have been drained in the last 10 years as part of dam rehabilitation projects to meet modern safety standards. Eleven lakes have been rehabilitated and refilled, including three lakes in 2020, and six lakes are currently drawn down. Future dam projects are planned at 12 PFBC lakes. During the time that lakes are drained, PFBC's Division of Habitat Management and Division of Construction and Maintenance staff have conducted habitat improvement projects on many of the lakes ("The Rebirth of Aging Reservoirs" – *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* July/August 2017). Additional habitat improvement work can also be done once lakes have been refilled. Once lakes are refilled,

PFBC's Division of Fisheries Management biologists will implement several fisheries management techniques.

## Stocking

PFBC Fisheries Management biologists will use water quality data, physical characteristics of the lake, and information regarding the former fish populations in the lake to determine what fish species to stock in a refilled impoundment. Water quality must be suitable for the fish species stocked in the lake. For most fish species, the pH level should be between 6.5 and 8.5. Total alkalinity is the buffering capacity of the water to neutralize acid and is an indicator of lake fertility. As total alkalinity increases, fertility increases and the greater the abundance of fish that a lake can support. Water temperature and dissolved oxygen levels, especially during the summer months, are also critical factors that fisheries biologists will use to determine what fish species will successfully reestablish populations after stocking. Other important physical characteristics such

Completed Dam Projects - Year	Dams Currently Drawn Down	Future Dam Projects
Dutch Fork Lake - 2013	Childrens Lake	Beechwood Lake
Opossum Lake - 2013	Lake Somerset	Belmont Lake
Leaser Lake - 2015	Lower Woods Pond	Cloe Lake
Colyer Lake - 2016	Meadow Grounds Lake	Fords Lake
Glade Run Lake - 2016	Miller Pond	Harris Pond
Speedwell Forge Lake - 2016	White Oak Pond	Hemlock Lake
Lake Nessmuk - 2017		High Point Lake
Donegal Lake - 2020		Hunters Lake
Kyle Lake - 2020		Kahle Lake
Minsi Lake - 2020		Rose Valley Lake
Tamarack Lake - 2020		Stevens Lake
		Virgin Run Lake



*In addition to warmwater/coolwater fish, hatchery trout are stocked after the lake is refilled.*

as lake size, water depth, and physical habitat also help define fish populations in lakes. For example, a shallow lake that has little to no cool water with adequate dissolved oxygen during the summer months would not be suitable for coolwater species such as Walleye.

One of the main objectives for stocking in newly refilled lakes is to reestablish formerly self-sustained fish populations. Fortunately, we can look back in time to see what fish species did well in the lakes prior to being drained. PFBC Division of Fisheries Management biologists routinely conduct fish surveys on lakes. During these surveys, biologists collected fish population data on gamefish relative abundance, size structure, age, growth, and mortality. Fish species that had good populations prior to the lake being drained will most likely do well after the lake is refilled. Information regarding angler catch and harvest can be gathered from several sources. If an angler creel survey was conducted at the lake, angler catch and harvest data would be available to evaluate fish populations. Feedback from Waterways Conservation Officers and anglers also provide valuable information about the fish populations in the lake prior to being drained.

PFBC Bureau of Hatcheries plays an important role in creating these new and improved fisheries. Most of the warmwater/coolwater fish produced at the PFBC's State Fish Hatcheries for stocking refilled reservoirs are fingerling or yearling fish. To ensure that refilled lakes receive the fish requested, the highest priority for state fish hatchery produced fish is given to newly refilled lake stockings.

The PFBC uses a general template or stocking strategy to establish warmwater/coolwater fish populations in refilled lakes. This stocking strategy has worked well in Pennsylvania restored lakes.

Typically, fingerling Largemouth Bass and minnow species are stocked in the first year, prior to panfish species. If Bluegill and Largemouth Bass fingerlings are stocked in the same year, the lake will often result in a stunted Bluegill population and/or a bass population that does not spawn successfully. To prevent this from happening, Largemouth Bass fingerlings are stocked one year ahead of Bluegill fingerlings. Minnow species provide an immediate food source for gamefish. In addition to warmwater/coolwater fish, hatchery trout are stocked after the lake is refilled if the lake was stocked with hatchery trout in the past. Over the next several years, fingerling Largemouth Bass and minnow species are stocked along with panfish species such as Bluegills, crappies, and other gamefish. After 3 or 4 years of repeated stockings, PFBC Division of Fisheries Management biologists will conduct an initial survey to determine the status

of the fish populations in the lake. If need be, the stocking strategy can be adjusted going forward. A complete survey of gamefish populations at the lake will be conducted after 5 years of the stocking.

## Fishing regulations

The PFBC will implement special fishing regulations on the fish populations in newly refilled lakes to protect the developing populations. All fish species except trout if they are stocked in the lake will be catch and release with no harvest. It is unlawful to take, kill, or possess any fish, except trout. All fish caught other than trout must be immediately returned unharmed. This special regulation will remain in effect until the PFBC determines that allowing harvest of protected fish species will not harm populations based on the survey data mentioned above.

## Fish populations and fishing

Most often when lakes are refilled, the lakes go through a significant boom period, commonly referred to as "New Lake Effect". Nutrients that were trapped in the lake bottom are released into the water and are used by aquatic organisms. The lake's food web from plankton to fish experience a rapid increase in growth rates and population size. The peak or best fishing will occur after a minimum of 5 to 8 years. Fish populations will need to reproduce and develop multiple year classes through the initial years. ☐

# Pine Creek Rail Trail



by *Linda Stager* photos by the author

Pine Creek—the Iroquois called it *Tiadaghton*, “*The River of Pines*”—home of their hunting and fishing grounds. Land of wild elk, black bear, eagles, and trout.

In the 1700s, Native American Seneca and Iroquois warriors used the creek’s bank as their “Pine Creek Path”, a major “highway” for them from south to north in central Pennsylvania. Over time, settlers arrived and word spread that this area was special. By the early 1900s, visitors traveled by



*A pair of bald eagles along the Pine Creek Rail Trail.*

train from the Philadelphia area to breathe the high-quality air they called “glame” at camps along Pine Creek.

The “Big Pine,” as locals call it, developed a reputation as a land of beauty, ruggedness, and isolation. Today, it is a land of serenity for visitors from all around the United States.

Pine Creek is a designated Pennsylvania water trail and a Pennsylvania Scenic River. Paddling Pine Creek in the spring is an adventure. The area around Owassee can spawn Class II or Class III rapids and wetsuit-clad, life jacket-wearing visitors enjoy the thrill of a swift trip downstream early in the spring on the largest creek in the country.

Fishing Pine Creek can be as much of a delight as paddling the “Big Pine”. The lower part of the creek sports a variety of warmwater species of fish, but upper Pine Creek, when water conditions are right, is first class for coldwater species.

Two sections of the stream are set aside as Miscellaneous Special Regulation areas. The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission stocks the Keystone Select section from the confluence of Marsh Creek to Bear Run with trophy trout. This section is regulated as Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only (DHALO). Further downstream, trophy-sized Brown Trout are stocked annually by the Brown Trout Club in the Catch and Release All Tackle section between the confluence of Slate and Bonnell runs, considered by some to be an angler’s paradise.

One of the best ways to access this area is by the Pine Creek Rail Trail, which follows the original Pine Creek Path.



*The Cedar Run steel truss railroad bridge provides a stunning landmark on the Pine Creek Rail Trail.*

The Pine Creek Rail Trail is perhaps the real draw year-round for many visitors to Pine Creek. It follows the old railroad bed constructed by the Jersey Shore, Pine Creek, and Buffalo Railway in 1883. The 8- to 12-foot wide trail is constructed of fine-packed limestone gravel and slices its way through pristine farmlands, wilderness areas, and suburban neighborhoods. It is never difficult riding with a less than 2% grade over the entire trail.

The Pine Creek Rail Trail is an award-winning destination. The all-purpose path travels along Pine Creek for most of its 62 miles, from near Wellsboro, Tioga County, on the northern end, to Jersey Shore, Lycoming County, on the southern end. Comfort stations (pit toilets) and access areas (parking lots) are spaced along the trail. Primitive campgrounds can be accessed directly off the trail by securing a no-cost Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) camping permit. The trail gives riders and walkers an up-front view of nationally-designated natural landmark areas. The only way to see the Pine Creek Gorge at creek level is to ride or walk the trail, which travels through mature forests

and along mountain-fed streams and seasonal waterfalls. Most of the path is shaded and is usually not crowded with visitors. Often, a trail visitor is alone in nature for miles on end. Wildlife is commonly seen along the trail.

For visitors who enjoy history, this area brings a strong chronicle of local folklore. From the memoirs of frontiersman Philip Tome who recounted his tales of hunting the area accompanied by Chief Cornplanter and his braves to the “Forest Runes” of author George Washington Sears, otherwise known as Nessmuk, the whispers of the area’s past are almost audible. Imagine the area’s rich logging history and the locomotives that hissed and rumbled along the very path the trail follows. Signs of the trail’s railroad history are visible. Think of the harsh lives of the settlers of this area who struggled to make a living in the sparsely-populated and isolated Pine Creek Valley.

There are still only a handful of towns along the trail and few community services along the way. A few general stores, an inn or two, ice cream stores, and delis dot the trail. This is “carry in carry out” territory. Come prepared.

The first 8 miles of the trail from the northern terminus at Stokesdale Junction follow the east-west wetlands along Marsh Creek, not far from Route 6. The trail passes through a wide valley and has a distinct look and feel, compared to the rest of the trail. It is open space with little shade. But, it is a birder’s paradise and is part of a designated “Important Bird Area”.

At the Marsh Creek Access Area (Mile 7.3), the trail passes underneath Route 6 as it turns south and starts through the Pine Creek Gorge, a 16-mile isolated segment that is designated a National Natural Landmark Area. The Darling Run Access Area, at the northern end of the Pine Creek Gorge (Mile 8.9), falls within the Keystone Select section, where trophy trout are stocked. Further south, two state parks rest on the rim of the gorge and riders can look up and pick out the overlooks at each park. Colton Point State Park is on the west side of the gorge. Leonard Harrison State Park is on the east side. At Mile 12, riders on the trail arrive at the Turkey Path, a 1 mile footpath that traverses the wall of the canyon between Leonard Harrison



*An angler fishing the trophy trout section of Pine Creek.*



The Pine Creek Rail Trail can be seen on the left bank of Pine Creek far below Colton Point State Park at the base of the Pine Creek Gorge.

State Park and the trail. Seasonal waterfalls are located at the base of Turkey Path, just off the trail. There are several eagle nests along the entire length of the trail.

At Mile 16.1, the trail passes the ghost town of Tiadaghton. A small, primitive creekside campground and pit toilets make for a nice respite. A kiosk along the trail details the history of the ghost town.

On the southern end of the landmark designation area is the teeny town of Blackwell (Mile 24.5), with its lone all-in-one grocery store, book store, and art gallery. It is one of the few places that visitors can restock with food and drinks for the trail. There is a boat launch (a small parking lot) in Blackwell. Five miles further south is the little town of Cedar Run (close to the half-way mark on the trail, mile 29.8), which hosts a private campground, old-time inn, and deli and ice cream store, no access area for the trail. Almost 5 miles further south (at Mile 35.2) is the little town of Slate Run, home of a restaurant-hotel, fly tying shop, and general store. The area around Slate Run is a hotspot for fly fishing.

At Waterville (Mile 50), the trail passes a historical tavern that houses a hotel and family-friendly restaurant. On the other end of a large parking area for the trail is a great deli.

The gorge begins to widen as the trail heads south, but the trail continues to closely follow Pine Creek. In Cedar Run, riders cross the first steel truss railroad bridge, a stunning example of the railroad's history. There are three more similar bridges along the trail: at Waterville (Mile 50), Ramsey (Mile 54), and Torbert (Mile 57.6). The trail has a more suburban look on the southern end, and visitors will welcome the return of a good cell service and other amenities of civilization. The last bridge on the trail is a mesh-covered overpass that crosses the four-lane highway, Route 220, just before the southern terminus at Jersey Shore (Mile 62).

Many recommend staying in the picturesque town of Wellsboro, near the northern end of the trail and starting the trail at that point. The town is 3 miles from the northern terminus of the trail, but riders can easily drive to several trail access points. Lodging in Wellsboro is superb, and there are several top-notch restaurants in town. The town's Victorian historical district has over 100 gaslights and is one of the prettiest rural Main Streets in America.

There is so much to like about this acclaimed rail trail, but perhaps its best asset is that it can be ridden by anyone. Its flat, smooth, well-groomed surface is just as accessible to youngsters as it is to adults. No special equipment is necessary to ride it. A single speed bicycle works almost as well as a multi-gear hybrid bicycle, though wider tires can be a positive. Bring a helmet, some bug spray, drinking water, and a camera (and maybe your fishing gear) and ride or walk.

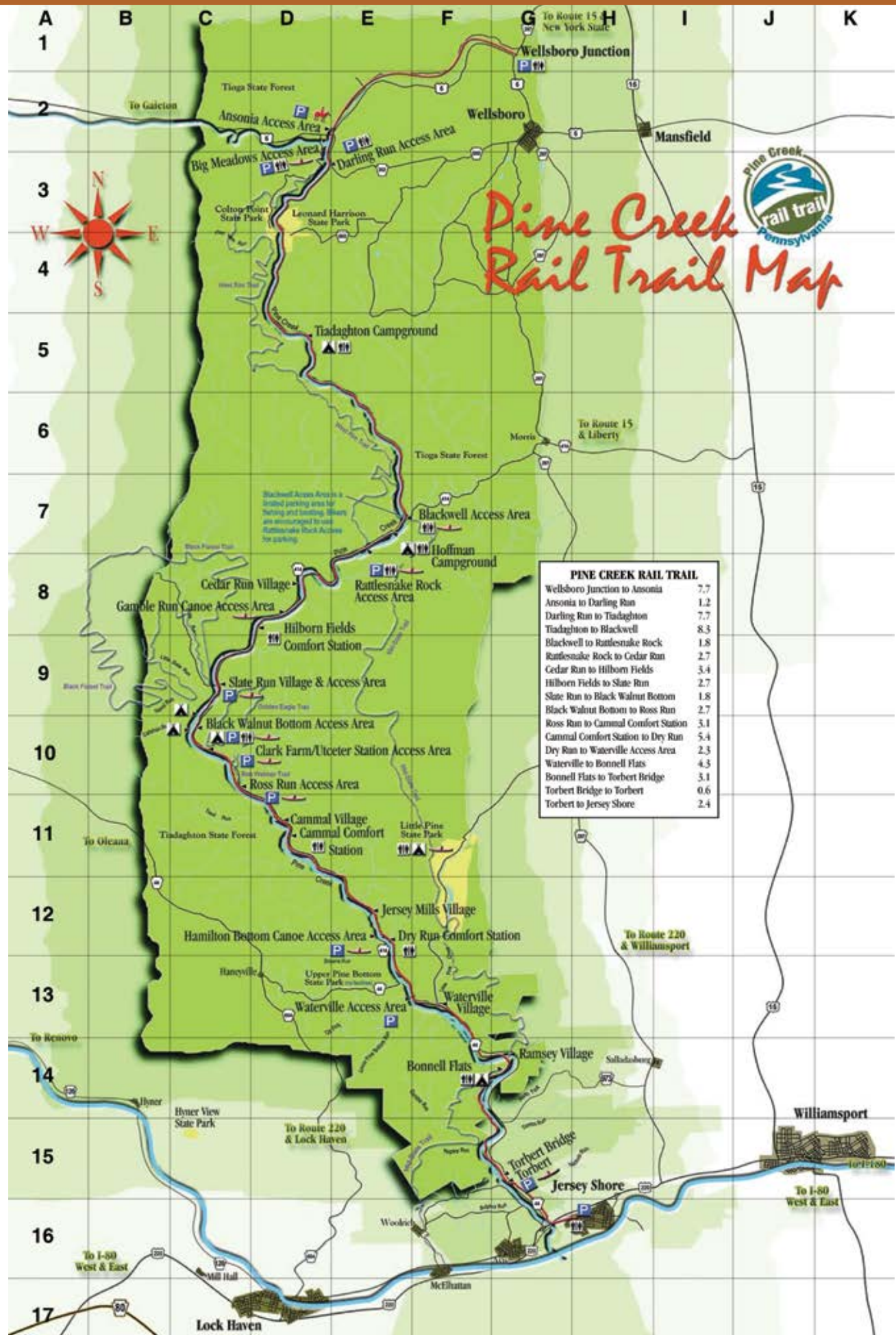
The trail can be ridden in a day, a weekend, or in segments. A guidebook for the trail *The Pine Creek Rail Trail Guidebook* details 7- to 13-mile sections of the trail that can easily be ridden in a day. It also details the locations of parking areas and comfort stations (pit toilets), which are evenly spaced along the 62 miles of the trail.

Winter visitors may cross country ski the trail. Some sections around the Wellsboro and Waterville area are groomed by PA DCNR, depending on weather conditions.

Spend the day, spend the weekend, or spend the season. You will find country hospitality on display and the same high-quality "glame" air here today that people came to breathe over a century ago.

Visit once and you may feel the urge to come back. And, once you are here, we may even tell you our favorite secret fishing spots. ☐





# Pine Creek Rail Trail Map

PINE CREEK RAIL TRAIL	
Wellsboro Junction to Ansonia	7.7
Ansonia to Darling Run	1.2
Darling Run to Tiadaghton	7.7
Tiadaghton to Blackwell	8.3
Blackwell to Rattlesnake Rock	1.8
Rattlesnake Rock to Cedar Run	2.7
Cedar Run to Hilborn Fields	3.4
Hilborn Fields to Slate Run	2.7
Slate Run to Black Walnut Bottom	1.8
Black Walnut Bottom to Ross Run	2.7
Ross Run to Cammal Comfort Station	3.1
Cammal Comfort Station to Dry Run	5.4
Dry Run to Waterville Access Area	2.3
Waterville to Bonnell Flats	4.3
Bonnell Flats to Torbert Bridge	3.1
Torbert Bridge to Torbert	0.6
Torbert to Jersey Shore	2.4

## Anglers Urged to Report, Dispose of Invasive Northern Snakeheads if Caught in Lower Susquehanna River

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) is urging anglers to report and dispose of any invasive Northern Snakehead fish that may be caught in the lower Susquehanna River.

This advisory follows the documented movement of 21 Northern Snakeheads past the Conowingo Dam into the Conowingo Pool, a 14-mile-long section of the Susquehanna River located between the Conowingo Dam in Maryland and the Holtwood Dam in Pennsylvania. Fisheries management of this river section is shared between the PFBC and Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

In late March, operators of the fish passage systems used at the Conowingo, Holtwood, and Safe Harbor dams to assist migrating American Shad during their spring spawning runs indicated that due to restrictions associated with COVID-19, fish passage operations had been delayed from the original start date of April 1.

Fish passage operations commenced on the afternoon of May 12 at Conowingo Dam's east fish lift. Historically by this date, nearly 70% of the annual American Shad spawning migration would have already passed Conowingo Dam during a typical spring. Over the course of four days, lift operators observed 35 Northern Snakeheads within the east fish lift; 14 of the invasive fish were able to be netted and removed, while another 21

entered the Conowingo Pool. During this same time, only 485 American Shad were counted at the east fish lift. Due to the concern over increased invasive species passage and the lateness of the season for successful American Shad passage, the Susquehanna River Anadromous Fish Restoration Cooperative (SRAFRC) recommended that fish passage operations be immediately ceased to prevent further passage of snakeheads. Fish passage operations at the Holtwood and Safe Harbor dams upriver were also ceased immediately, although no snakeheads were observed at either location. During two days of operations, 21 American Shad passed the Holtwood Dam, while one shad was observed passing the Safe Harbor Dam fish lift.

"Further introduction of an invasive species such as the Northern Snakehead to the Susquehanna River watershed in Pennsylvania is something we take very seriously," said Joshua Tryninewski, Fisheries Biologist with the PFBC's Anadromous Fish Restoration Unit. "Unfortunately, a late start to fish passage operations followed by an increasing occurrence of the unwanted fish presented unfavorable conditions for successful shad passage and have posed a serious threat to the Commonwealth's aquatic resources."

Northern Snakeheads, native to parts of China, Russia, and Korea, first drew attention in the mid-Atlantic region in 2002 when a pair were discovered in a Maryland pond. Snakeheads were first confirmed in Pennsylvania

in July 2004 in Meadow Lake, Philadelphia County, and are present in the connecting lower Schuylkill and Delaware rivers. In summer 2018, anglers began catching snakeheads in Octoraro Creek, Lancaster County, a tributary that enters the Susquehanna River below the Conowingo Dam; however, snakeheads are not known to occur in the upper Octoraro Creek basin above the dam at Pine Grove. In September 2019, an angler reported catching of a single snakehead in the Monongahela River near Braddock, PA, and the specimen was verified by PFBC biologists.

In response to the known presence of Northern Snakeheads in the Conowingo Pool, the PFBC began conducting surveillance operations utilizing boat electrofishing to locate and remove snakeheads. On May 21, while targeting likely habitat areas

photo-Geoff Smith



PFBC non-game Fisheries Biologist Doug Fischer holding a Northern Snakehead collected from the Conowingo Pool, lower Susquehanna River on May 21, 2020.

for the species, the PFBC successfully located and removed one snakehead from the river. In addition, a private environmental consulting firm which had been conducting an unrelated survey on the same section of the river also collected one snakehead and provided the specimen to the PFBC.

“Moving forward, biologists will combine other ongoing survey work targeting other species within the lower Susquehanna River to serve the dual purpose of searching for and removing snakeheads in the Conowingo Pond and its tributaries,” said Kris Kuhn, Director of the PFBC Bureau of Fisheries. “Anglers also play a critical role

in controlling the spread of the invasive species, and we’re counting on their cooperation.”

Anglers are reminded that possession, transport, and importation of a live snakehead is unlawful in both Pennsylvania and Maryland. Any of these invasive fish caught should be killed and disposed of properly or consumed. Anglers who suspect they have caught a snakehead are encouraged to not release it, and report it to the PFBC at 610-847-2442 or by e-mail to [tgrabowski@pa.gov](mailto:tgrabowski@pa.gov).

For more information on Northern Snakeheads in Pennsylvania, including an identification guide, visit the PFBC snakehead resource page at [www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com).

## Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission to Recruit New Class of Waterways Conservation Officer Trainees

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) is recruiting the 23rd class of Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) Trainees at its H.R. Stackhouse School of Fishery Conservation and Watercraft Safety.

WCOs protect, conserve, and enhance Pennsylvania’s aquatic resources through law enforcement, education, and community partnerships with anglers and boaters. These officers are specifically trained in all aspects of fisheries conservation and watercraft safety and work to preserve fishing and boating opportunities on Pennsylvania’s 86,000 miles of rivers, streams, and lakes. WCOs enjoy working outdoors and have an unmatched appreciation for the hundreds of native species of fish, reptiles, and amphibians that call Pennsylvania home.



The State Civil Service Commission (SCSC) will accept applications until July 18, 2020. Applications will only be accepted online. To view the announcement and apply, please visit the SCSC website at [www.employment.pa.gov](http://www.employment.pa.gov). The class of trainees is expected to report for training in January 2021 and graduate in the summer of 2021.

Applicants to this class must already possess Municipal Police Officers Basic Training (Act 120) certification.

Successful applicants will complete required physical testing and enter 30 weeks of training conducted at the H.R. Stackhouse School of Fishery Conservation and Watercraft Safety located in Bellefonte, Centre County, that includes field training alongside seasoned WCOs. Trainees will assist with investigations, patrol regions, participate in public outreach events, and stock waterways.

Applicants must meet the following basic criteria:

- Pennsylvania residency
- Possess a valid driver’s license
- Be at least 21 years of age
- High School Graduate or GED
- Pass a criminal background check
- Municipal Police Officers Basic Training Certification (Act 120)

For more information on the position, visit [www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com).

photos-PFBC archives



# CONVENIENT MULTI-YEAR FISHING

Anglers can purchase a license for three years, five years, or ten years with just one purchase. Upon purchase of a fishing license, a .pdf file containing an image of your license is provided and can be saved to a mobile device or computer.

[www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com)



## 2020 FISH-FOR-FREE-DAY! Independence Day, Saturday, July 4

No fishing license is needed to fish on this day. It's a great way to introduce someone to the world of fishing. Check the Commission's website for more information. Remember that all other regulations apply.

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

## Reel in the Memories!

Download the FREE  
FishBoatPA app.

[www.fishandboat.com/mobile.htm](http://www.fishandboat.com/mobile.htm)



**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](http://www.PaBestFishing.com)

## Take A Basic Boating Safety Course



All boaters born after December 31, 1981 who operate boats powered by motors greater than 25 horsepower must have a Pennsylvania Boating Safety Certificate. A certificate is also required for anyone who operates a personal watercraft (such as a jet ski), regardless of age. Online and classroom-based courses can be found at [www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com). Due to public health concerns related to COVID-19, classroom-based courses may be limited.



# Angler's Notebook

by Jerry Bush



photo-Jerry Bush

It is believed that a bass's olfactory system is not as great as that of catfish and salmon, but experts agree bass use the sense of smell more than was believed 50-years ago. For bass, a sense of smell becomes useful at night and in low-light situations. Many soft plastic lure manufacturers offer scented imitations resembling minnows, crayfish, tubes, and worms. One of the largest bass I caught was from Lake Erie using a scented minnow imitation during an overcast, rainy day.

This is big bass time. Never be discouraged when small bass are dominant. Consider small bass a good indicator that conditions are favorable for the continuing population within any body of water. Small fish may betray the location of larger bass, because large fish are rarely as far away as people think. Try casting bait and lures along the first significantly deeper ledge located beyond the area holding the small fish. If a creek flows into the lake within 100 yards or so, seek big bass at the creek's channel, in 5- to 15-feet of water.

A friend offered great tips regarding fishing for bass with soft plastic lures. My enjoyment of casting crankbaits was interfering with my technique, because my friend noticed I was retrieving my baits too quickly. I had more success after slowing down my soft plastic presentations. When I think I am reeling or jigging slow enough, I slow it down a bit more. Soft plastic lures are damaged more from being impaled by

hooks than by fish. If you want to prolong the longevity of soft plastic lures, consider squeezing the rubbery material into a rubber O-ring and attaching the hook to the O-ring instead of the bait.

There is no faster way to cover a lot of water when fishing for bass than to cast spinnerbaits including wire arms leading to soft plastic skirted lures. Versatile, flash lures work well on Lake Erie, inland lakes, rivers, and farm ponds. One condition that hampers skirted spinners is the presence of thick vegetation. When faced with such conditions, switch out the spinnerbaits for similar skirted lures that include a V-shaped propeller blade. These propeller blades are known as buzzbaits. When retrieved quickly along the surface, buzzbaits cause a commotion that may cause hiding bass to ambush from the vegetation. These lures also attract subsurface bass.

Boat owners should put together a small, waterproof box to stow away for times when forgetfulness could ruin a day on the water. The box should include sunscreen, a first aid kit, a multi-tool/pliers set, bottles of drinking water, and a sharp knife. My box also includes vinyl parkas, which take up little room and are useful during an unexpected storm. Also, silver emergency blankets consume little room. My final item is a pair of low-profile polarized sunglasses.

## Fishin' from the Kitchen

### Smallmouth Bass Wraps

by Wayne Phillips

On summer days when you do not feel like eating much, serve these refreshing Smallmouth Bass wraps.

#### Ingredients for four servings:

- 12- to 16-ounces boneless, skinless Smallmouth Bass, cut into strips
- 1 cup corn meal
- ½ cup canola or corn oil
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- 1 head iceberg lettuce, separated into individual leaves
- 6 ounces goat cheese
- 6 green onions, diced
- Hot sauce

#### Procedure

Coat the bass strips in corn meal. Heat oil over medium heat. Fry bass strips until golden. Drain and season with salt and black pepper. Place each bass strip on a lettuce leaf. Sprinkle on some goat cheese and green onions. Shake on the hot sauce. Place on a serving platter.



photo-Wayne Phillips

#### Serve

Serve hot or at room temperature. This is an ideal finger food to enjoy on the deck or at the lake.

#### Tips

You want these to be light, refreshing bites, so do not place too much into each lettuce leaf.

Lettuce wraps are all about replacing carbohydrates with crunchy lettuce. Goat cheese provides a tang, but feel free to use your favorite cheese. Blue cheese brings on even more flavor. The hot sauce gives the dish a focal point. If doing this for children, substitute ketchup or ranch dressing for the hot sauce.

# Dunham's

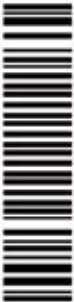
## SPORTS®

Big Names....Low Prices!

### 20% OFF\*

Regular Price Of Any One Item In Stock With Coupon

\*Exclusions may be mandated by the manufacturers. Excludes: Firearms, ammunition, licenses, select Asics, Nike, Perception, & TaylorMade product. ENO hammocks, Fitbit, GoPro, Lego, Merrell footwear, Nerf, New Balance, Oakley, Ray-Ban, Spyder, TenPoint, Terrain Blinds, Under Armour, Yeti, Columbia, Garmin, tennis balls, Nike practice golf balls (single & bulk), Titleist balls, bats over \$149.99, KL Pro 120 boat trailer, augers, shanties, bulk deer corn, GPS/fish finders, motors, marine batteries, motorized vehicles, gift cards. Not valid for online purchases. Cannot be used with another offer, coupon, current sale or clearance item. Only one coupon per item. One coupon per customer. Not valid on previous purchases. Void if copied. Not for resale.



2672000000000

**Dunham's** Coupon Expires December 31, 2020



### Dunham's Rewards

Receive money saving coupons and more.

[www.dunhamssports.com/signup](http://www.dunhamssports.com/signup)



### Sportsmen Club

Are you a member of a Sportsmen's Club with 25 or more members?

[www.dunhamssports.com/discount-program](http://www.dunhamssports.com/discount-program)



19-P-270

## "Experience Bradford County!"



ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES  
**BRADFORD COUNTY, PA**  
 Bradford County Tourism Promotion Agency | 1 Washington Street, Suite B, Towanda, PA 16848

570.265 • TOUR

[www.visitbradfordcounty.com](http://www.visitbradfordcounty.com) • Follow us on



# Crawford County, PA

Fish one of our eight lakes—one will fit you just right.

Conneaut Lake holds two state fishing records.

French Creek has two DCNR water trails.

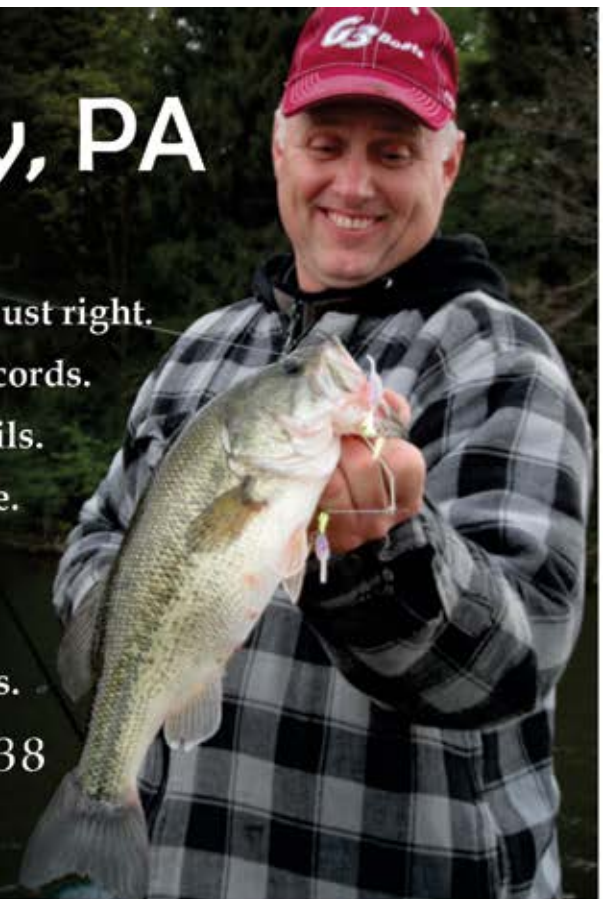
Ice fishing tournaments are huge here.

Boat rentals are available.

A fishing guide is available.

After fishing, check out our breweries.

VisitCrawford.org 800-332-2338



A DRIVE AWAY. A WORLD APART.



**Elk Country Visitor Center**  
134 Homestead Drive  
Benezette, PA 15821  
[ElkCountryVisitorCenter.com](http://ElkCountryVisitorCenter.com)

REEL IN YOUR  
BIGGEST  
ADVENTURE YET  
IN THE POCONOS.

POCONO  
MOUNTAINS  
#PoconoMtns  
[PoconoMountains.com](http://PoconoMountains.com)



## Advertising Opportunities for 2021



Advertising in the *Pennsylvania Fishing Summary* and *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* provides opportunities to reel in customers. Web advertising is also available on [www.fishinpa.com](http://www.fishinpa.com) with the purchase of an ad in both publications.

Advertising space is available on a first come, first serve basis. For more information, deadlines, and discounts: TCG Design, 717-569-7705 or [pafish@tcgad.com](mailto:pafish@tcgad.com).

## CAST & CAUGHT

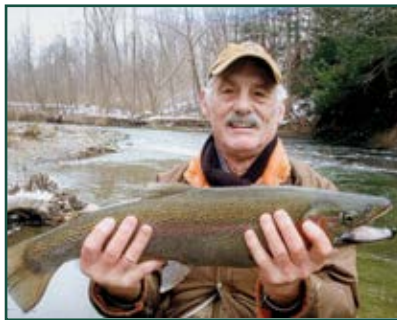


*Luis Ninalaya caught this 4-pound, 22½-inch golden Rainbow Trout while fishing Levittown Lake, Bucks County.*

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](http://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**



*Tooch Amalong, Latrobe, caught and released this steelhead while fishing Elk Creek, Erie County.*



*Dominick Hitz, age 16, caught this 21-inch Rainbow Trout while fishing Quittapahilla Creek, Lebanon County.*



*Allison Miller, age 8, caught and released this 25½-inch Walleye, held by her brother, Ryan Miller, while fishing the Susquehanna River.*



*Kevin Rohland, Brownsville, caught this 30-inch Muskellunge while fishing from a kayak at the mouth of Tenmile Creek, Washington County.*