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The Keystone State's
Official Fishing &
Boating Magazine

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Pennsylvania ANGLER & BOATER



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- **Fish-for-Free Days**
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On the cover

Kayakers enjoy an idyllic day of fishing on the Schuylkill Banks of the Schuylkill River. This month's cover is an oil painting by illustrator Bill Wiist. Wiist began his career as a portrait artist and then moved into commercial work, creating illustrations for newspapers, magazines, and book publishers. For more information, e-mail blwst8@gmail.com or follow him on Facebook at Facebook.com/wiistillustratedlife. Painting by Bill Wiist.



The PFBC social media and mobile app:
www.fishandboat.com/socialmedia

Keep a Rod's Length Apart

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

By now, you all likely know that we opened trout season early on April 7. Our Board of Commissioners unanimously supported the decision after extensive consultation with the Office of the Governor, Pennsylvania Department of Health, and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Leading up to the decision, the concern was not with fishing. On the contrary, fishing has repeatedly been touted as an acceptable form of outdoor recreation that delivers both physical and mental health benefits. The concern was over the crowds of people expected on Mentored Youth Trout Day and the Opening Day of trout season.

Using a term with which we are all now familiar, the admittedly unannounced opener was aimed at flattening the curve of potentially harmful interactions that would have come with a traditional Opening Day. At the same time, anglers were instructed to abide by social distancing guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Governor Tom Wolf's Stay-at-Home Order regarding COVID-19.

In the days following the announcement, we have received overwhelmingly positive reports about anglers practicing social distancing.

If the *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* production schedule holds (although we all know nothing is a given during these uncertain times), you will receive this magazine on or around what would have been Opening Day. Unlike previous years, we urge you to set aside tradition and not rush out to the stream or lake as soon as you read this article. The trout will be there all spring. Most importantly, please adhere to the following guidelines.

In accordance with direction provided by the Governor, Department of Health, and the CDC, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission asks that anglers practice social distancing while fishing to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- Stay home if you do not feel well.
- Cover your face with a mask or cloth covering.
- Practice social distancing by keeping at least 6 feet (the length of an outstretched standard fishing rod) between you and the nearest angler.
- Avoid crowds. If you arrive at a fishing spot that is already occupied, find another location.
- Keep children from wandering into the personal space of others.
- Do not share fishing gear.
- Do not carpool.
- Buy your fishing license online at www.fishandboat.com or with the FishBoatPA mobile app.
- Continue to follow CDC guidelines, which include washing your hands or using hand sanitizer frequently, and not touching your face.
- If you are fishing at a state or local park, the restrooms may be closed. Use the bathroom before you visit or dispose of waste properly. Carry out your trash.

Fishing is an inherently self-policing activity, and we are asking all Pennsylvania anglers to add social distancing as an essential element of their ethical behavior. Thank you in advance for doing your part to protect the health and safety of yourself and those around you while fishing and boating.

Mentored Youth Trout Day did not take place this year. The PFBC will honor Voluntary Youth Fishing Licenses purchased in 2020 for all mentored youth fishing opportunities during the 2021 season.



Paddling the Delaware River



by Carl Haensel

photos by the author

The Delaware River holds a special place in the hearts of paddlers around the Mid-Atlantic Region. The longest, undammed river on the East Coast, the Delaware River offers recreational adventurers the opportunity to explore a river that feels not too dissimilar from when Washington crossed it nearly 250 years ago. To get the most out of your experience and have a safe and enjoyable time on the river, learn about it before you hit the water.

Flowing roughly 300 miles from the confluence of the East and West Branches of the Delaware River at Hancock, New York, the river forms the eastern border of Pennsylvania as it makes its way southward past Easton and Philadelphia, eventually reaching the Delaware Bay. Most of the main stem of the river is comfortably paddleable, alternating between swift reaches of flowing water and slower, more languid pools. This changes at Trenton, New Jersey. Here, the river meets tidewater and changes in character, offering different paddling opportunities as it flows to the ocean.

If you are looking for a wilderness feel on the water, the upstream portion of the river is the place to go. Popular with paddlers and anglers, there are fewer motorized boats on the water most of the way downstream to Easton. Plenty of accesses exist to help get on the water. New river users should know that it is common to travel about 2- to 3-miles-per-hour on the river when paddling. Plan for downtime to pull

off on a sandbar, eat lunch, fish, and relax on the water. Try out a 6- to 8-mile float for your first trip on the river, and consider longer floats after you have a few trips under your belt. If you do not own a boat, many companies offer rentals on the river around the Delaware Water Gap. This stunning national recreation area is managed by the National Park Service and is the center of the paddling culture on the river. Formerly the site of a large proposed dam, the area is now preserved for hiking and wilderness experiences. The protected mountains of the Kittatinny Ridge provide a scenic backdrop when you are on the water. Since this is a popular area, it is worth getting on the river early in the morning, especially in the reaches of the river that are popular with tubers. If you launch mid-morning, do not plan on a solitary experience.



The reach of the Delaware River from Easton downstream along the Delaware Canal State Park is a good place to start exploring the river on family paddling trips.



The Delaware River Viaduct crosses the river above Portland, PA. It is one of the many remnants of prior industries that utilized the river corridor and can be seen while paddling the river.

Below Easton, the river runs for 60 miles along Delaware Canal State Park. With regular access on both sides of the river, this slower, calmer section of the river is closer to many paddlers in the region. It also commonly experiences less use and is a great option to float and fish at the same time. Keep a sharp eye on the map if you are planning on paddling through the wing dams at New Hope and Lumberville, which are significant hazards and safety concerns. The river here is beautiful and still largely in a natural state along the riverbanks, though increasingly homes and towns dot the shoreline. Wildlife is common along the river if you paddle quietly and keep a sharp eye open as you round each broad bend. If you are on a longer trip, stop for lunch in quaint towns like Frenchtown, New Jersey. In addition to good food, there are plenty of historic and cultural learning opportunities in this reach of the river if you pause your paddling and explore off the water.

The Delaware River Water Trail

The Delaware River Water Trail website provides details about where to launch and locating facilities along the river. A map and guide is available at www.delawareriverwatertrail.org. The trail focuses on the reach from the confluence of the East and West Branches until it reaches tidewater. A separate trail covers the tidewater section of the river. The trail is a cooperative project involving the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and numerous partners. The map and guide can help you plan your float on the water and lead you to new and exciting opportunities on the river. Additional detailed maps of the river, the Delaware River Recreation Map Set, are available from the Delaware River Basin Commission through the State of New Jersey.

Paddling tidewater—exploring the Tidal Delaware River

If you are an adventurous paddler, check out the lower Delaware River below Trenton Falls. While the tidewater section seems flat and innocuous, it is more challenging paddling than on the upper river. The tidal range of the river varies by as much as 10 feet in height, and flows can speed up, change, and reverse in a short period of time. The reward for appropriate planning and safety on this reach of the river is the chance to experience varied wildlife and intriguing industry and shipping on the river. With no rapids to block upstream progress, there are also many creeks that enter the river that can be explored, and wildlife areas to experience, like Darby Creek in the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum. The lower end of Neshaminy Creek in Pennsylvania and Rancocas Creek in



A United States Coast Guard ship plies the waters of the lower Delaware River. Great paddling is available on the tidal section of the lower river, as long as boaters pay close attention to the safety concerns of large vessels and tides.

New Jersey are also good spots to explore. Maps of this section are available at www.tidaltrail.org. Steer clear of the shipping channel on the river. Huge oceangoing vessels ply the waters of the lower river, in addition to plenty of motorized recreational boaters. Wakes from large vessels can be challenging to handle in a canoe or kayak, even if you are hundreds of feet away from the ship.

The Delaware River Sojourn

If you are new to paddling or unsure about exploring the Delaware River on your own, there are a variety of programs that can help you get on the water. Delaware Canal State Park offers programming and summer paddling lessons that take place on the nearby Giving Pond Recreation Area, preparing new paddlers for life on the main river. Another great option is the Delaware River sojourn. The sojourn is a 7- or 8-day journey that explores the river from top to bottom and is a fully guided experience. Paddlers can travel along with the sojourn and experience sections of the entire river or pick a single day or two to get out on the water. River guides, excellent catered food, rental boats, and interpretive programming combine to create a comprehensive experience. The 2020 sojourn is scheduled for June 20-26. For more information, visit www.delawareriversojourn.com.

Fishing along the river

Excellent fishing opportunities exist on the Delaware River for trout, American Shad, Smallmouth Bass, Striped Bass, and a host of other fish. Fishing license reciprocity exists for anglers from New York



Paddlers make their way through the southern end of the Delaware Water Gap. Wild lands, good access, and stunning views make this section of the river a great choice to paddle.

and New Jersey who paddle and fish the water, providing even more opportunities. ☐



Paddlers on the Delaware River Sojourn prepare to head under the historic Roebling Bridge near Lackawaxen, PA—the oldest existing wire suspension bridge in the United States. Originally, this bridge carried barges on the Delaware and Hudson Canal over the river in an aqueduct.

HANG GLIDING FOR CRAPPIES

by Darl Black

photos by the author

Ken Smith, Mercer County, has a reputation as one of the best crappie anglers in northwest Pennsylvania.

I first met Smith about 10 years ago at Pymatuning Reservoir, Crawford County. I was looking for opportunities to take photos of successful ice anglers. Smith was the only one with a pile of panfish.

Nowadays, Smith and I share a day on the water about once a year. If we are bobber fishing the shallows or casting jigs to cover, I can hold my own. But when the bite is tough, Smith wins the day every time.

How does he do it? With a slow-troll technique he calls “hang gliding”.

“I have always loved crappie fishing. So, I started spending all my vacation time down on Kentucky Lake where they take crappie fishing very seriously,” said Smith.

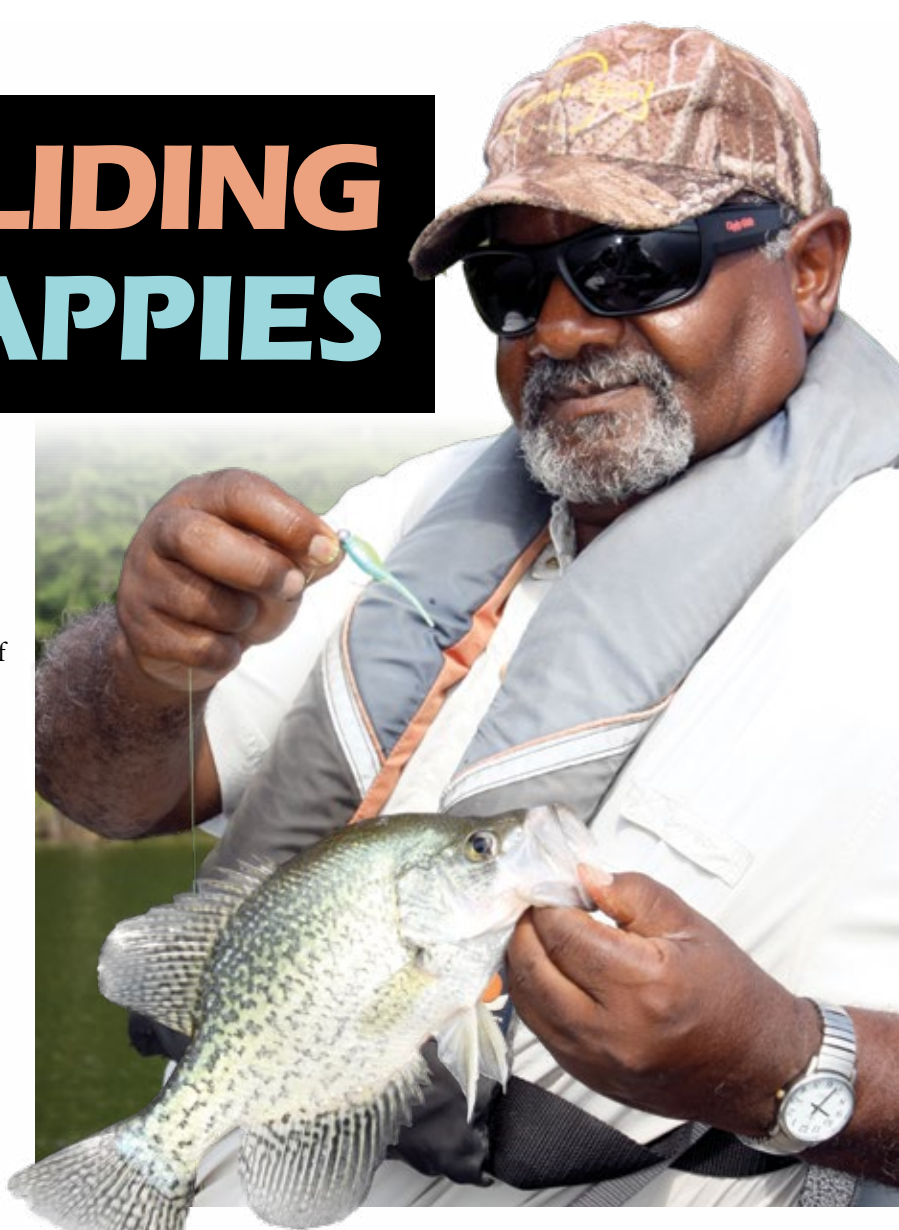
“Down South, most crappie anglers do spider rigging, where anglers position multiple long poles over the bow of the boat, lower crappie jigs, and then very slowly move forward on the trolling motor, pushing baits past stumps and brush piles,” said Smith.

Spider rigging boats have wide bow platforms that can accommodate two anglers in fishing chairs and up to 10 rods in rod holders. Smith knew his V-hull did not have enough room for two anglers on the front deck. Therefore, he ran all rods off one side of the boat, enabling his fishing partner in the back seat to have an equal opportunity to catch fish.

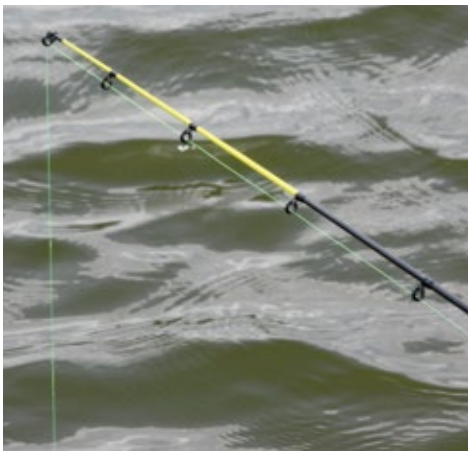
“Compared to Kentucky Lake, Pennsylvania reservoirs have few man-made brush piles and cribs. When I find wood cover up here, I want to keep my baits hanging out around it,” said Smith.

To do this successfully, Smith became a master of fish-finding electronics. The importance of electronics is evident by the amount of time he spends studying the signals throughout a day of fishing. Electronics can precisely locate crappies in, over, or beside cover.

But, when it comes to tackle, Smith’s equipment is basic. He employs the standard long crappie jig trolling rods in 12 foot models, preferring a tip action on the “stiffer” side. His



When Ken Smith learned about spider rigging in Tennessee, he adapted the technique to his V-hull boat, which does not have a wide bow platform for two anglers. He also slowed down forward speed in order to hang over cover longer.



The brightly painted tip on Ken Smith's rod serves as a bobber. As soon as Smith sees a dip, jiggle, or shimmy in the rod tip, he quickly lifts the rod.



Ken Smith's rig is simple—a wrapped 1/2-ounce egg sinker with a 14- to 20-inch lead to a small jig attached with a loop knot.



Ken Smith uses a variety of small quiver-tail lures with a minnow profile. These lures are attached to a 1/32- or 1/16-ounce unpainted jig head.

reels are spooled with quality 8-pound-test high visibility monofilament fishing line.

"I never use braided line because of possible damage to cover if a jig becomes snagged. I do not want to rip apart a brush pile by pulling on braid, simply to recover a crappie jig. With 8-pound-test monofilament line, I can usually pop the jig loose. If not, it is easy enough to break the line without destroying cover," said Smith.

Baits are 1 1/2- to 2 1/2-inch soft plastic quiver-tail bodies, which resemble small baitfish. These are mounted on 1/32- or 1/16-ounce unpainted leadheads. "Although I use scent, I never use live minnows," said Smith.

The final piece of tackle for the rig is a 1/4- or 1/2-ounce egg sinker. The 1/4-ounce size is used in the spring on calm days when crappies are 6- to 8-foot deep. The rest of the year at depths greater than 8 feet, the 1/2-ounce size gets the nod.

The egg sinker is threaded on the line and wrapped in place by passing the tag end of the line through the sinker three times, leaving approximately 24 inches of line as a leader. The jig is tied to the end of line with a loop knot.

When Smith passes over submerged cover, he notes the depth where fish are holding and drops a structure buoy on

the edge of the cover. Then, he moves to the downwind side, cuts the outboard, and deploys the rods. The egg sinkers on two of his rods are lowered to 12- to 18-inches above the marked fish. The jig on the leader will swim a bit deeper than the egg sinker. The third rod is positioned a bit higher in the column.

Smith approaches the cover on his trolling motor so his baits—not the boat—pass over the brush pile. He pauses and lets the wind carry him back. Then, he moves forward again. He continues this hovering maneuver around the cover until his baits have glided over and around every square foot of the brush pile.

Watching the rod tip is key to identifying a bite. When the brightly-colored tip dips or bounces, Smith immediately grabs the rod and lifts it upward. With a 10-foot rod, many times he simply swings the crappie aboard. But, when fishing deeper water in late summer and late fall, reeling in line will be necessary.

"Hang gliding works from late spring through late fall, in depths from about 8- to 28-feet. If you are having trouble catching crappies, try this technique, which gives your jigs maximum hang time in the crappie zone," said Smith. ☐



Lenny Hubbard (left) gets a lesson from Ken Smith on summertime hang gliding for crappies.

Let's Go, Go, Go To Venango!



by Charles Cantella

photos by the author

If you were to envision the quintessential small, All-American town, there is a good chance that the town in your mind may look a lot like the towns in and around Venango County. With a county population of about 51,000, Venango County ranks 44 out of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. What does that mean for outdoor enthusiasts? It means there are a lot of outdoor water opportunities available relatively close to the larger population centers of Pittsburgh and Erie, with plenty of elbow room for everyone. The chance to enjoy the experience of small town charm, local diners, various boating and fishing opportunities, and a rich history (Edwin Drake drilled the first successful oil drilling rig here, setting off an oil boom in the mid 1800s) draws people to Venango County.

Water Trails in Venango County

Venango County is unique in that two separate water trails cross the county. French Creek Water Trail begins in western New York and meanders its way through Erie, Crawford, and Mercer counties before it enters Venango County from

the west, where it eventually joins the Allegheny River in Franklin. In the book, *Keystone Fly Fishing*, Mike Heck et al call the French Creek, "one of the most biodiverse watersheds east of the Mississippi River." It is a relatively wild, warmwater creek with abundant wildlife and scenery. The name French Creek was probably chosen due to the large number of French fur traders in the area earlier in our country's history. The water flow in French Creek is relatively unaffected by dams or locks. This means it is more susceptible to wide swings of water flow. A call to one of the local kayak and canoe liveries in the area or by checking the United States Geological Survey Water Data website to see if French Creek is high enough to float is recommended. The weekend I visited French Creek, it was too low to float. Having the Allegheny River nearby saved the day. I have spoken to several kayakers who offered this advice to paddlers looking to experience French Creek. Be alert. It is a smaller watershed and trees occasionally fall, creating what is known as a strainer. Strainers can be extremely dangerous to kayakers and canoers. Don't be afraid to get wet. You may need to get out of your watercraft and portage around obstacles, strainers, or areas with low water. Dig out some old sneakers, and don't be afraid to get in and out of the boat as needed.

The Allegheny River begins around Raymond, PA, and flows into and out of New York before returning



The Allegheny River

to Pennsylvania to form the Allegheny Reservoir. It is a tremendous waterway of over 300 miles that derives its name from the Lenape word “oolikhanna” or “beautiful stream”. However, there are some legends of a tribe known as the Allegewi who lived along the Allegheny River and may have contributed to its name. With over 300 miles of river, it is likely that many different tribes utilized the river for its bounty of fish, as a source of water, and as a means of transportation. The Allegheny River rolls on a southwest path and enters Venango County from the east a few miles downstream from Tionesta and meanders down in a southwesterly direction toward Franklin. It maintains a pretty constant flow due to the Kinzua Dam and a series of locks and dams on the river. In 1992, almost 90 miles of the Allegheny River within Warren, Forest, and Venango counties were determined to be important enough to be designated as a National Wild and Scenic River. Being named a Wild and Scenic River means that the river will be protected due to its “outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations”(Wild and Scenic Rivers). The section I floated was from Franklin downstream to Fisherman’s Cove, near where Sandy Creek enters the Allegheny River. It is approximately a 9 mile float. The float can take from 2½ hours to 4 hours, depending

upon the flow and how hard you want to paddle. I was there to take pictures, chat with other kayakers, and make memories, so I was in no hurry. Here, the river is broad and relatively calm. There are some riffles but nothing that even a novice boater cannot handle. I observed turtles, herons, egrets, and hawks, and there are rumors of bald eagles. Overall, it was a great way to spend a few hours. I look forward to bringing my fishing gear next time. If you are looking for a fun way to beat the heat, you may want to load up the car and head to Venango County. ☐

Kayak and Boat Liveries

Outdoor Alleghany River Services (O.A.R.S.)
250 Elk Street, Franklin, PA 16323
814-388-9122

Wiegel On The Water
219 7th Street, Franklin, PA 16323
814-518-5509

Riverview Canoe & Kayak
613 Main Street, Emlenton, PA 16373
814-335-5433

Catching Crappies from a Kayak



by Jeff Woleslagle

photos by the author

The water was as calm and reflective as a mirror, and the sun was just beginning to lift over the ridge when I arrived at the state park boat launch. From a previous fishing trip, I knew where there was a pronounced weed edge about 15 yards from the shoreline. I figured that the fish would be holding somewhere near it. With a little patience and exploration, it would just be a matter of time until I located the fish. I positioned the kayak parallel to the submerged plant growth and made my first cast with a small jig suspended about 2 feet below a float. After the ripples on the water's surface dissipated, I gave the float a slight twitch with my rod, and it immediately went under. I set the hook lightly. As I suspected, it was a crappie. It normally takes a little roaming to locate a school, so I was pleased to find one right out of the gate. I had mentally marked the exact spot that fish came from, and I repeated the first cast with the same result. After I had caught and released six fish from that spot, it shut down, and I knew it was time to start looking for another school of active fish. Most lakes in

Pennsylvania boast ample numbers of crappies, but a little internet research can help anglers key in on popular bodies of water.

A kayak can be the ideal vessel to use in pursuing crappies. Kayaks provide stealth and maneuverability that allow anglers to stay close to actively feeding fish. A kayak can also permit access to waters that are too shallow or difficult to navigate with a larger boat. Without a motor, kayaks give anglers a quiet approach to likely looking spots.

Great baits for catching crappies from a kayak include small jigs and live minnows. I prefer jigs, because jigs are easier to deal with, but Fathead Minnows hooked through the lips and suspended below a small float can be deadly. Soft plastic jigs in natural colors such as white, clear, and minnow patterns are a good first choice when the water is relatively clear. Do not overlook darker colors like brown, purple, and black, which are effective in the right conditions. Chartreuse may also be productive for spring time crappies, especially in slightly stained water. Small tubes are also good fished on a matching colored $\frac{1}{16}$ -ounce jighead. Try suspending the jig or tube about 2 feet below a small float and twitching it periodically. Experiment until you find the depth fish are holding. Try adjusting the distance between the float and the jig until active fish are located.



Jigs and tiny tubes suspended below small floats are great for tempting crappies.

Look for crappies to be schooled up along the edges of weed beds. Isolated pieces of wood, stumps, brush piles, and manmade fish structures can be dynamite in the spring as the crappies prepare to spawn. Never overlook docks and bridge pilings, as these will frequently hold fish. Once you catch a fish, mark the spot, and take note of the depth and exact location of where the fish was caught. When you find fish at a certain depth, odds are good you can find them in a different part of the lake around the same type of structure and in the same depth range. Crappies normally school together, so fish an area thoroughly before searching for other fish. Depending on water temperature, look for crappies to gravitate to submerged brush and woody debris as the spawn approaches. Woody cover forms algae and draws other microscopic organisms that lure baitfish, which attract crappies. Position your kayak to cover each segment



Look for crappies in shallow water as the spawn approaches.

of nearby cover. After crappies spawn, fish tend to move to deeper water but often transition shallow again in the morning, early evening, and in low light conditions.

A 6½- to 7-foot spinning rod in light or ultra-light action is ideal for chasing crappies from a kayak. Paired with an appropriately sized spinning reel spooled with 4- or 6-pound-test monofilament or fluorocarbon line is perfect. Carry a small landing net as well. Crappies did not earn the nickname “papermouth” for nothing and often come unbuttoned easily once on the surface.

Crappies are terrific table fare and prolific fish. Often, crappies school together. It can be easy to over exploit these fish, but I normally keep just enough for a family fish fry and release the rest. If you have not tried pursuing crappies from a kayak, give it a try this spring and summer. ☐



A kayak can be the ideal way to pursue crappies in the spring and summer.

The Clarion River: *A World-Class Fishery*

by Ralph Scherder

photos by the author

The Clarion River is perhaps the most underrated fishery in Pennsylvania, if not the eastern United States. Outside of the small towns that dot its course, many folks do not realize that the river harbors world class trout and Smallmouth Bass fishing. Much of that can be attributed to the river's history. For over 100 years, deforestation, acid mine drainage, and poor sewage treatment impaired the watershed. However, massive cleanups began about 1980. In 1990, Willamette Industries purchased the aging paper mill in Johnsonburg and invested \$550 million into modernizing the plant and reducing source pollution that once made the Clarion River the most polluted river in Pennsylvania. Since then, water quality has improved every year as new treatment facilities neutralize tributaries that once poured acid mine drainage into the river system.

The comeback has been remarkable, and it happened fast. Within just a few years, aquatic life such as freshwater mussels and hellbenders, both signs of good water quality, began to flourish, and the river was stocked with trout. In 1996, the United States Forest Service designated a 52-mile section of the Clarion River as a National Wild and Scenic River. In 2019, it was named Pennsylvania's River of the Year.

Year-round opportunities

The Clarion River begins in Johnsonburg where the East Branch and West Branch converge. The first 8.48 miles of the



Charles Defanti shows off a Clarion River Brown Trout he caught by swinging a Woolly Bugger.

Clarion River, from Johnsonburg to Ridgway, is designated Catch and Release All-Tackle and ranges from 30- to 90-feet wide with plenty of productive riffles and long, deep pools. By the time it reaches Cook Forest State Park, the Clarion River is a gentle giant spanning over 200 feet wide.

Check the United States Geological Survey website for current conditions before planning a trip. When water levels are about 250-350 cubic feet per second (cfs) at the Johnsonburg station, most of the river can be waded. Flows higher than 450 cfs require a boat or canoe to effectively fish the river. Although I would not classify the river as dangerous when running at normal levels, I always use caution when wading. This is big water and even current that appears harmless can have substantial power behind it.

The line of demarcation between trout water and bass water is unclear. But, as a general rule, when you get downstream of the town of Hallton, Elk County, bass start to outnumber the trout. These lower sections down to Cook Forest State Park also see more summer activity than the upper reaches, and fishing in solitude means hitting the water early in the morning or staying late, after everyone else has gone home. I do not let river traffic deter me from fishing, though. The river is plenty big enough for everyone.

Tactics and hatches

Recently, I fished the Clarion River with Brian Minich of Fin & Fly Adventures, Warren. Minich has been guiding clients on the river for almost 20 years. If you want to see what the Clarion has to offer, visit his Facebook page and check out some of his fish pictures. Minich has seen the river through its various stages of recovery and its emergence as a wild Brown Trout mecca. In the early 2000s, when news first spread about the quality and size of the fish, he said it was common to see folks throwing oversized, articulated streamers. At first, these large flies were extremely effective, but the attraction wore thin within a few years. Nowadays, most of the big trout Minich and his clients catch are on small nymphs, and the top producer is usually a Beadhead Pheasant Tail.

Articulated streamers will still produce the occasional big trout, but if you want both big fish and numbers, traditional nymphs are hard to beat. On the occasions that I do use



Most of the trout in the river are stocked as fingerlings, but after a year, these trout look and behave like wild trout. Some grow quite large.

streamers, sizes 6-10 black Woolly Buggers and Zonkers can be effective. Black is a productive color for all of the Clarion River and its tributaries.

The river sees three major spring mayfly hatches, Hendricksons, Grannoms, and Sulphurs. During any of these hatches, long, flat pools that seem void of fish can suddenly come alive with feeding trout.

Since the early 2000s, the Clarion River has been managed as a “put, grow, and take” fishery through annual stockings of fingerling Brown Trout between 2- and 5-inches in length. After a year in the river, these fish are by all means wild trout in both appearance and behavior.

For perspective, consider the sheer volume of fingerling trout stocked every year. Approximately 85,000 Brown Trout fingerlings are dispersed over four sections and nearly 50 river miles beginning in Johnsonburg and ending in Cook Forest State Park near Cooksburg. Also, natural reproduction occurs in many of the tributaries throughout the watershed, and these small streams serve as nurseries for the big water. According to fisheries biologists, natural reproduction has not been documented in the river itself, but that does not necessarily mean none is taking place. Waters the size of the Clarion River are often hard to accurately sample.

Fish everywhere

The Clarion River is considered navigable. Once you gain access to the water, you can go anywhere as long as you stay between the normal spring high water marks.

When I started fishing the Clarion River, I did not want to fish anywhere else. I once went a whole season fishing only the Clarion River, and while I enjoy seeing new waters and places, I do not regret a single day. I caught a lot of nice fish that season. In a way, the Clarion River is like fishing multiple rivers, because it changes so much from the small river trout experience in its upper reaches to the sprawling, big water Smallmouth Bass fishery near Cook Forest State Park. You cannot appreciate what this river has to offer in a day, week, or even a year. It is truly a river that keeps you coming back for more. ☐



Hendricksons, Grannoms, and Sulphurs (pictured) are the most prolific mayfly hatches.

Small Pond Kayak Fishing

by Tyler Frantz

photos by the author

The late spring sunshine felt warm against my skin, as I maneuvered the open-hull kayak to the middle of the glistening farm pond. My fishing vest loosened to fit over my life jacket, I nonchalantly laid the paddle across my lap and sifted through my pockets to find the right tackle for the job.

Eyeing the shoreline cattails, I decided on a small, weighted swimbait to mimic baitfish fleeing from cover. Taking my time, I affixed my imitation lure, gave a half paddle sweep to turn my kayak broadside, and flipped the bail on my reel for a 25-foot cast toward the green vegetation towering above the water.

Immediately on the fall, I observed several flashes of fish vying for the bait as it fluttered downward. It was a hefty Bluegill that got there before I could even begin reeling—one of many panfish and bass caught and released from the inside edge of cover over the next hour or so of fishing.

Prospecting small ponds by kayak can be a real treat, especially for kayak fishing novices or those testing new equipment for the first time. It offers a low stress environment for getting acquainted with the multitasking techniques that kayak fishing requires before venturing out to bigger water such as lakes and rivers, where conditions further complicate the process.

The calm and tranquil water of a small pond is ideal for practicing basic paddling techniques such as alternating downward strokes for straight tracking, reverse strokes for

slowing down, and long horizontal sweeps for turning—in a controlled situation.

It is a great place to get kids involved too. I enjoy taking my son along with me on flat water once the weather warms. Even at 4-years-old, my son was able to paddle us around with a little guidance and instruction. If his interest or behavior began to diminish, it was reassuring to know dry land was only a short distance away.

Pond shorelines, which are typically flat and shallow, also provide stable areas for practicing entering and exiting a kayak, which tends to be one of the most likely scenarios to overturn. Keeping well-balanced weight distribution and a low profile is imperative to safely boarding and disembarking your vessel, even in shallow water.

Beyond offering a perfect place to learn the proper mechanics of kayaking, many ponds are often unpressured, receiving only occasional fishing attention. When ponds are targeted, it is likely that anglers generally cast from shore and only to places they can reach based on the vegetation or distance.

Fishing from a kayak allows anglers to present bait toward cover from a perpendicular angle, unlocking access to some of the most productive fishing imaginable, simply because it is fresh and realistic.

A highly effective technique is to parallel up to structure on your non-dominant side, lay the paddle across your lap, and cast across your body with your strong arm to present bait and work the lure back to your location. This engages the fish's predatory instincts to chase from cover into deeper water, often triggering a "feeding frenzy" of sorts that almost guarantees subsequent catches.

Be sure to keep gear well organized and within reach, such as in a vest or a secured lure box immediately in front of your body. Consider using a snap swivel to quickly and easily change out lures while the fishing is hot, even if one type, size, or color begins to fall out of favor.

Work all types of cover, including natural vegetation, submerged rocks, intake pipes, and docks, as each of these provide likely holding areas for fish. Try not to get too close that it puts off the bite.

When all targeted cover is exhausted, try dropping some weighted live bait into the deepest portion of the pond to let things settle for a bit. Then, go all in by “trolling” a deep diving crankbait through the middle of the pond as you paddle back to shore. More times than not, this approach prompts a last-minute strike.

Though the local farm pond may not be the most appealing destination for kayak fishing in Pennsylvania, I am willing to wager that if it harbors fish, you will catch

plenty by giving small pond kayak fishing a try. It is a great way to learn the ropes of kayaking while reeling in unpressured fish in the process. ☑



The relatively flat, calm water of a small pond is a great place for those new to kayak fishing.



Fishing from a centrally located kayak instead of a shoreline's perimeter affords anglers better access to some of the best fishing cover a pond may have to offer.

Brodhead Creek on the Rise

by Vic Attardo

photos by the author

Brodhead Creek is a rocky stream situated along Route 447 from Stroudsburg north to Canandensis. Located in Monroe County, Brodhead Creek offers exceptional fly fishing.

Life in Brodhead Creek is on the rise with numbers of fish and aquatic insects as well as improved accessibility. If you want to catch wild and stocked trout, Brodhead Creek has an ample supply of both. For those pursuing fish with flies, there is a wide range of naturals to imitate.

I continue to see good hatches of Hendrickson starting in mid-April, Sulphur in May, Slate Drake (*Isonychia*) in late May and June, an assortment of caddis about anytime in the spring, summer, and fall, and Blue-Winged Olive throughout trout season.

For much of the spring and summer, it is worth prospecting with dry flies such as John Wainwright's Hendrickson Wulff, the Red Quill, Rusty Spinner, Light Cahill, and Irresistible. It is hit or miss with the Yellow Sally in the summer, but I do not fear working over

stonefly-crazed trout with these flies in years with good flow. I have not used a better summer dry fly in these parts. On other summer evenings, I have successfully worked Light Cahill Spinner and White Miller.

To fish nymphs correctly, you need to be in close proximity of good holding water. The bouldery nature of the banks and stream bottom make this difficult in major sections. However, when feet are firmly placed beside a beautiful run or pocket stretch, use the Prince Nymph, Red Fox Squirrel Nymph, Tar's Olive Flash, Pheasant Tail, Copper John, and damselfly nymphs.

I have also successfully searched the bottom for full-bodied trout in the fall and winter using bright, shiny streamers, everything from the Mickey Finn to a heavy metal minnow and jig-head streamers made with silky synthetic strands.

As for safe wading, there is a United States Geological Survey gage station north of Analomink. I like a level below 2.20 feet with a discharge of roughly 100 cubic feet per second.

For night fishing, after working close-in with a Light Cahill Spinner or White Miller, I make long casts covering water with a high-winged wet fly like the Professor or the Tar's Sleepless Night. ☐





Allegheny River Trail

photo-Marshall Nych

by Marshall Nych

As temperatures and outdoor recreation opportunities increase during summer months, two options rise towards the top of my list—fishing and biking. Like two mountain trails merging into one or a pair of meandering creeks joining forces, these activities do not have to be enjoyed in isolation.

Many states, including Pennsylvania, have realized this unique resource. Restored railways, both scenic and historic, have been converted into accessible bike trails. Winding through some of Pennsylvania's most beautifully wild places are rivers. Along many of these

ivers, run railroad tracks. Though many miles snake throughout Pennsylvania, my pen will follow the Allegheny River Trail.

The Allegheny River Trail's access points fall within Clarion and Venango counties. One section of the trail connects U.S. 322 and Bredinsburg Road in Franklin, following the river to Emlenton's Main Street at River Avenue. The Allegheny River Trail picks up again in Foxburg, extending downriver to Perryville Road in Parker.

Historically a canoe route for local tribes and early French trappers, the stretch now boasts the designation as a national wild and scenic river. Currently, the trail is more than 30 miles and growing. Most of the 8-foot wide trail is flat, smooth asphalt atop an old railroad grade on



photo-Marshall Nych

Accessible bike trails wind along many restored railways and bike trails.

the river left. Two tunnels, one in Kennerdell and another near Rockland, require a light.

Though much of the trail is flat, bikers benefit from a quality mountain bike. Other riding equipment should include an air pump, helmet, and water bottle.

Gear should not be limited to those of a mountain bike. I suggest changing speeds by parking the bike to sneak in a few casts. Pack along fishing gear to enjoy both outdoor recreational activities simultaneously. Come summer, rubber hits the road, and bass hit the rubber. Soft plastics are not only lightweight and easy to transport but highly effective. Pack an ample supply of ¼-ounce jig heads and 3-inch grubs of various colors. Soft plastic swimbaits and Senkos are also reliable.

Another must is going from pedal to metal. Blade baits, such as spinnerbaits and ChatterBaits, seem to perfectly reflect the rays of summer before being pummeled by an enticed gamefish. Inline spinners enjoy their day in the sun too. Early and late rides are enhanced by a topwater plug. Buzzbaits and Heddon Torpedoes navigate the river current better than most other lures. Live baits, particularly cumbersome containers associated with baitfish, tend to be difficult to handle while pedaling and arduous to carry to and from the bike trail.

Bike fishing requires the need for lighter gear and less of it. Intelligent rod options include multi-piece rods broken down into transportable hard cases or a telescopic model. Reels and line follow suit. My reel tends to mirror the portable nature of the rod, a size smaller than when I leave the bike at home. Line strength of 8 pounds is ideal in most Allegheny River applications, particularly when pursuing Smallmouth Bass and Walleyes.

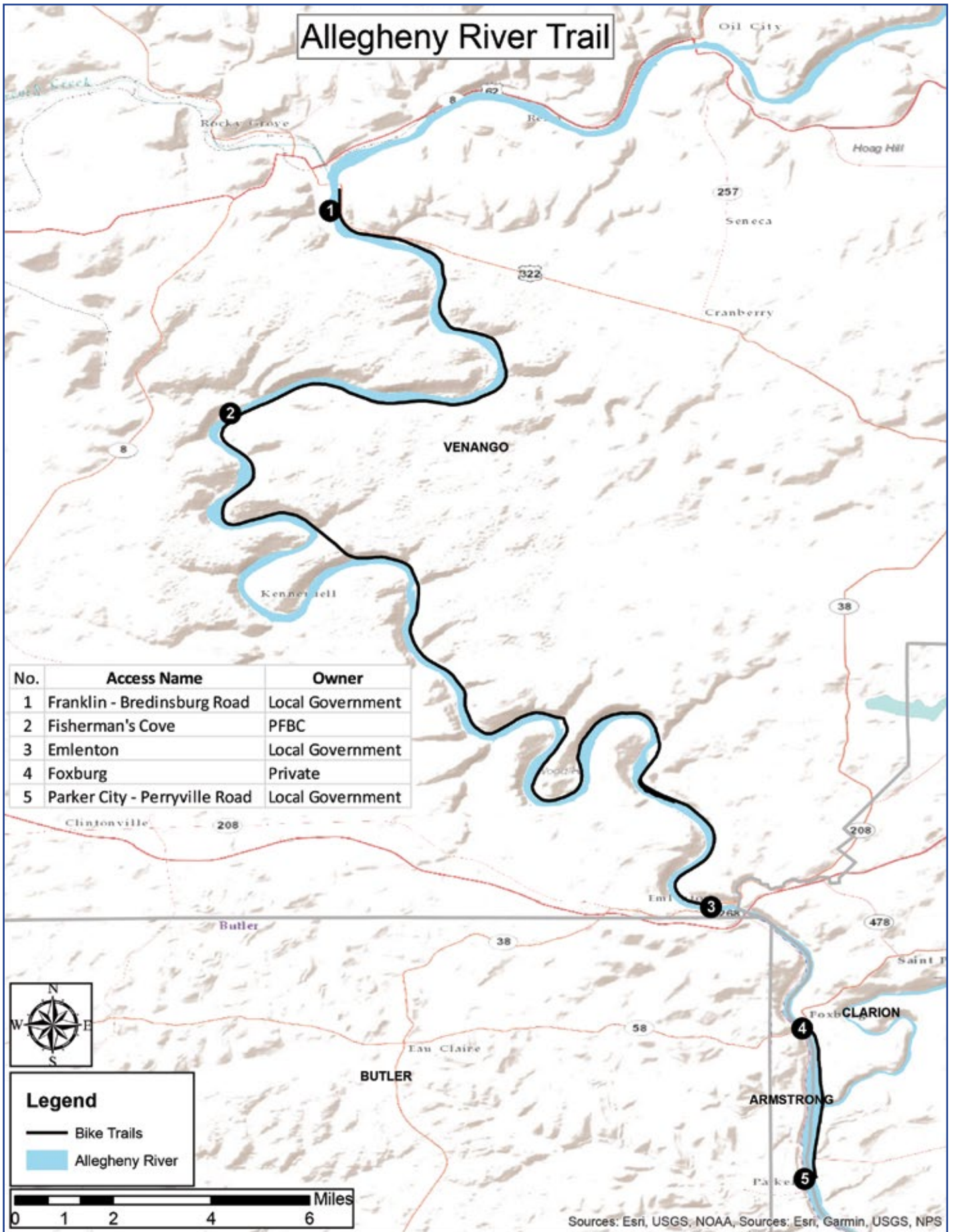
Modern innovations with tackle have all but eliminated the bulky box taking up Grandpa's whole boat or the entire corner of Uncle Bill's garage. I have seen comfortable packs simply slung over the back/shoulders or clipped across the waist. Such storage brags ample room for a day's tackle, a snack, and drink.

When fishing from a bike, proper dress can make or break the experience. Many brands offer rugged footwear that can double as wading shoes for the river rocks while still athletic enough to push the pedal. Head to toe, quick drying, synthetic clothes are ideal.

With bass fishing so good it has you on the edge of your bike seat, anglers will be racing from hole to hole along stretches of rapids.

If fishing from a boat, the Allegheny River Trail still offers perks. Transportation and dropping off vehicles is often an obstacle. More often than not, anglers must drive separate to coordinate the logistics. A bit less conventional, I once packed a bike in the bow of my boat. When I drifted from morning to late afternoon, I secured the boat and unloaded the bike. While my buddy (who did not have to drive separately) stayed with the boat and prepped equipment, I delighted in a one-way upriver ride towards my awaiting vehicle.

The Allegheny River Trail taps all elements. Be it a skyward sighting of a bald eagle, crossing whitetail deer tracks, or catching a spunky Smallmouth Bass from the clear waters, every trip affords an intimate experience with nature. If you have yet to experience the Allegheny River, the Allegheny River Trail, or both, it may be time to switch gears and give this recreational combination a try this summer. ☐



Map of the Allegheny River Trail and Access Points

Tips for Kayak Fly Fishing



by Nick DelVecchio

photos by the author

Anglers in larger boats with high-powered motors often lament at their inability to get into little coves and bays where fish cruise through in search of food. The edges of weed beds or sunken logs are often just out of casting reach for even the most skilled fly anglers, leaving them wondering “what if” as they head back out for open water. However, this does not have to be reality, as those who fly fish out of a kayak can attest.

Kayak fly fishing can be a difficult proposition at the onset. A long rod and limited space poses an immediate challenge with no apparent solution other than clumsy rowing and the potential for broken equipment. The secret to having a successful day (with rods, fly boxes, and nets coming back in one piece) often starts with having a basic understanding of what gear is needed and how to properly stow it inside the kayak while moving from spot to spot.

Packing light is crucial when fly fishing from a kayak. That does not mean skimping out on essential items, but when space is at a premium, the extra fly box and spare net may have to stay at home. Paring down on extra gear will allow for more room in the kayak and a lower risk

of breaking something. If possible, ditch the fishing vest, pack, or any other typical means of gear storage in favor of one large box or boat bag. Storing items this way keeps everything centrally located and easily accessible. While some boat boxes are quite expensive, stowing gear can be done efficiently and cheaply with a variety of plastic storage bins.

Once a fish is hooked, regardless of the species, try to fight it on the reel rather than strip line back in. While many anglers prefer to strip line rather than reel, it is just one more thing to get snagged on the boat, net, or debris in the water. Keeping the kayak deck clear of obstructions is crucial to landing fish without snarls of fly line tangled on everything in sight. If your drag is set correctly, a big bass or trout will pull line out of the reel when needed. Fly anglers should not worry about having dangling line out of the reel when a fish makes a run. There are more pressing things to be concerned with when a good fish is hooked other than how much line we need to manage. Let the reel do the work for you.

One of the more cumbersome activities in a kayak is building a new rig while trying to keep the boat upright and the fly rod, reel, and other gear dry. The night before a trip, build a few rigs from the leader to the fly and have the rigs stashed and ready to go for the next day. Not only will this eliminate the awkward re-tying, but it will save time and get you fishing more. A great way to store



A well-stocked bass fly box for the kayak.

these built rigs is on an empty roll of toilet paper. Attach the fly to the roll and simply wrap the line around it, being sure not to overlap it. The end of the line is easily secured with a little piece of tape. Just like that, you have an entire setup ready to be used the next day.

The benefit of a kayak is the ability to move around from spot to spot with relative ease. With that also comes the greatest challenge to the fly angler—what to do with your rod as you paddle to the next promising riffle or cove. Some worry may be alleviated by purchasing the right type of kayak and outfitting it with a fly rod holder, which can be purchased online or at outdoor retailers. These are well worth the investment since the alternative is breaking the rod down and stowing it at your feet any time you want to move. In the event you must disassemble your rod, having one that breaks down into four pieces really helps keep things organized and safe.



Keep fly rigs at the ready with the help of a toilet paper roll.

Fly fishing from a kayak is becoming increasingly popular. The ability to cover water otherwise inaccessible has opened up opportunities for anglers pursuing everything from bass to trout. With a little planning, the worries of kayak fly fishing can be put at ease by following these tips before putting the boat into the water. ☐



NOTES *from the Streams*

Garden gnome

On the opening day of trout season, I talked with anglers and looked for violations. While on Deer Creek, Allegheny County, I came to a bend in the stream where four anglers were fishing. Two of the anglers had their licenses displayed but did not have trout stamps on their licenses, while the other two anglers were displaying licenses with trout stamps. I asked to see everyone's licenses. All four anglers gave me both a license without a trout stamp and a license with a trout stamp. When asked why they each had two licenses, the anglers told me that they purchased the trout stamps to be able to participate in the Mentored Youth Trout Day with their children. I noticed that all four anglers were from McKeesport, Allegheny County. I asked them if there were any other anglers in their group who did the same thing and were currently fishing in the area. They stated that they had one other buddy in their group who did the same thing and that he was around the bend. I asked the anglers to give

me a brief description of their other friend. They told me I could not miss him—he was dressed in hip waders. Since almost everyone in the area had hip waders, I asked how that would help me locate their friend. Their answer was simple—he looks like a garden gnome. I paused for a second and asked, “Is he dressed like a garden gnome?” The anglers replied, “No, he just looks like a garden gnome.” I proceeded up the creek. I came around a bend and saw an angler in the creek. When I asked how he was doing, he turned around. I was shocked to see that he resembled a garden gnome. Then, I asked if he was from McKeesport. He said, “yes, how did you know?” I explained that his friends described how he was dressed, not wanting to say they told me to look for the guy who resembled a garden gnome. The angler immediately stated in a loud voice, “They called me a garden gnome again, didn't they? I wish they would quit doing that. Ever since I grew my beard, they keep calling me that.” As I was checking his license, his friends came up to see

how he was doing. I left to the sounds of good-natured banter between five friends.—WCO Michael P. Walsh, Eastern Allegheny County.

Floating orange indicator

The opening day of trout usually brings some interesting encounters for Waterways Conservation Officers (WCOs). Everything seemed quite normal for WCO Darrin W. Kephart and I as we patrolled Fulton County. It was a beautiful, seasonably warm day with some muddy water due to rains the night before. We stopped and talked to many anglers as they enjoyed different opening day rituals with friends and family. Many anglers enjoyed cooking breakfast by the creek as it seemed not much fishing was getting done, while other anglers enjoyed teaching their children how to fish flowing water for trout. Still, other anglers roamed the streams, hoping to find big fish. People were enjoying the day.

As the late afternoon neared, WCO Kephart and I decided to make our way towards Franklin and Adams counties. While driving, we both noticed something unusual. Between us and the truck ahead, it seemed that something orange was floating in the air. Both of us were confused and determined to identify what we were observing. As we followed the truck, the orange ball seemed to move farther away from the truck and closer to us. Before long, as the orange ball continued to move closer to us, a yellow line appeared from the truck bed, which was a dead giveaway. We then signaled the truck to pull over, and he did safely at a gas station. When he stopped the truck, the orange ball fell to the ground. As I got out of my truck, the man did as well, and he realized that he forgot to secure his fly rod line on his rod as



illustration-Andrea Feeney

he noticed the orange indicator on the ground. He thanked us, and said he thought he noticed the indicator flying in the wind. We all laughed at the irony of the encounter and continued on our ways. As we drove away, I said to WCO Kephart, “Only on the opening day of trout would you see that happen.”—WCO *Rachael Thurner-Diaz, Adams and western York counties.*

Facial recognition

While on boat patrol at Chambers Lake, Chester County, a designated panfish enhancement lake, I was beckoned by a kayak angler. This was his first time fishing Chambers Lake, so he asked me if I knew the best areas to fish and what species of fish he could expect to catch at the lake. I often fish Chambers Lake, so I am familiar with the depth and structure in the lake. I pointed out the various coves and fallen trees where he may have the most luck and explained what kinds of fish he may catch, along with the best baits and techniques to catch these fish. He thanked me for the information. As we shook hands, I said to the angler, “You are welcome, Tom,” telling him my name. He looked at me with surprise and said, “How did you know my name was Tom?” I replied that I did not know his name was Tom, but my name was Tom. He laughed and said that he assumed I must have something on board the boat that identifies people as WCOs approach or talk with anglers and boaters. At the time, my usual patrol boat was having engine issues, so I was utilizing a 14-foot aluminum row boat with a 9.9 horsepower Evinrude outboard tiller motor. I pointed at the boat, chuckled, and told the angler we were not that technologically advanced yet to equip our boats with facial recognition equipment or software.—WCO *Thomas E. Benevento, Southern Chester County.*

Catch me if you can

After a trout stocking, I decided to observe the activity at a well-stocked creek. As I sat patiently, a female

merganser gracefully glided into the large pool on the creek. Within a few seconds, the merganser made several dives into the deep pool. After its fourth dive, the merganser surfaced with a trout, swam to a large boulder across the stream, and devoured the fish. With the warm sunlight shining on the merganser, it groomed itself, almost showing off as if to say, “Catch me if you can.” Then, within a few seconds, the merganser took off upstream. I never did see if it had a license.—WCO *Walter A. Buckman, Lackawanna, Wayne, and Susquehanna counties.*

One in custody

As a WCO, I have made many arrests for Boating Under the Influence (BUI), Driving Under the Influence, dangerous felons with outstanding warrants, and drug offenses. One summer, however, I assisted with taking one subject into custody that I had not previously encountered. When I pulled into our marina to get the patrol boat ready for a busy summer weekend on the Three Rivers, the Police Dispatcher keyed up the radio and called out, “Are there any Fish & Boat Commission Officers in service?” I responded with my call sign and that I was available. She responded, “Pittsburgh Police requesting your

assistance at the 18th Street Boat Ramp.” I did not hear the nature of the call, as the 18th Street Boat Ramp is in a different patrol zone and on a different radio channel than the police zone our marina is in. I acknowledged the request and made my way to the boat ramp to provide assistance. My initial assumption was that I was being dispatched to a boating accident or BUI. The call turned out to be one of the more unusual ones of the summer.

As I arrived on location, several Pittsburgh officers quickly brought me up to speed with the nature of the call. A family was fishing near the boat ramp and spotted an alligator in the river. The gator was hiding under a tree near the ramp. Since alligators are not a native species to Pennsylvania, their capture and safe handling was not something that was covered in our curriculum during the cadet training program. Fortunately, Pittsburgh Animal Control arrived on location shortly after I did. After several minutes, and a team effort, we were able to safely capture the alligator and take it into custody.

Crocodile Dundee would have been proud. The alligator was treated by Humane Animal Rescue and later turned over to a wildlife refuge to live out its life.—WCO *Matthew Raetsch, western Allegheny County.*



photo-courtesy of WCO Matthew Raetsch

Tying
Together



BACK 2 BASICS:

Teaching Children to Tie the Elk Hair Caddis

by *Christian A. Shane*

photos by the author

“Caddisflies are almost always out dancing over trout streams. Trout are usually happy to take one, or a fly that looks like one. As a searching dry fly, the Elk Hair Caddis is on even terms with the Adams and Royal Wulff.” Dave Hughes, Essential Trout Flies (2000).

My first success with an Elk Hair Caddis pattern began in my younger years while fly fishing northwestern Pennsylvania's native Brook Trout streams. Dapping the buggy caddis brought the white-black-orange fin color combination out of the shadows. I was amazed at how trout would slash at the surface after this pattern. On one occasion, I recall observing a native Brook Trout track the Elk Hair Caddis floating by, and, with a whip of its tail, turn and strike at it 4 feet downstream to send my 3-weight rod into a frenzy.

Shaped like the tent wing of the natural caddis, the Elk Hair Caddis pattern sometimes floats high on the water surface, or at times, lays flush in the water film. The original pattern, designed by Pennsylvania tier, Al Troth, includes a dubbed body, palmered hackle, and an elk hair wing. Troth created it as a wet fly and found that it matched the caddis flies on

Loyalsock Creek and other Pennsylvania streams. Similar to an assembly line method, Troth mass produced his fly patterns. In fact, he pre-stacked his elk hair bundles and then stored the bundles in empty .22 caliber rifle shells.

Begin your tier on a similar path to tying the Elk Hair Caddis by teaching a simple Poly Caddis dry fly pattern. This basic construction consists of a dubbed body and a poly yarn wing tied in at the hook eye, similar to the Elk Hair Caddis. The Poly Caddis will give your tier the correct dry fly silhouette and allow confidence in adding the hackle and wings on the Elk Hair Caddis.

Body

Depending on the color choice, your tier may select the dubbing for the body. The original Elk Hair Caddis dubbing color consists of natural rabbit fur, but any synthetic dubbing works well. Young tiers enjoy the fluorescent dubbing shades. Remind your tier to not overdo the amount of dubbing on the body.

Hackle

The palmered hackle of the Elk Hair Caddis is essential in providing the legs of the pattern. Some tiers will tie the hackle tip in at the eye and wrap back to the hook shank. This requires either tying in wire or using the thread to counter wrap over it. I prefer having my tiers tie the hackle in at the



Stacking the hollow hairs for the wings of the Elk Hair Caddis allows a young tier to learn some new tying skills.

hook bend, palmer it forward, and tie it off with the thread, leaving room at the hook eye for the wing.

Hair wing

The last essential component and its namesake, the hair of the elk, will provide the buoyancy needed to simulate a caddisfly on the surface. Have your tier select the right amount of elk hair for the wing. Snipping from the elk hide,



The author caught this Rainbow Trout fishing a #14 Elk Hair Caddis dry-dropper combination suspended with a #16 Pheasant Tail.

a thinner bundle may sit lower in the water film for realism, whereas a thicker bundle will float higher and be more exaggerated. Less is sometimes better when it comes to hair wings and beginning tiers.

Introduce the hair stacker, a vital tool used to even up the tips of hair. Place the hair bundle in the stacker and tap it on a hard surface until the tips align. This can also be done by hand if individual hairs are pulled and redistributed, though I find the hair stacker to be helpful with youth in keeping things consistent.

Next, tie the bundle (roughly equal to the hook shank in length) directly to the hook shank above the hook eye. I teach more advanced tiers to make a loop wrap or two wraps around the bundle before securing it on the hook shank to give more stability to the wing and reduce slippage. Once they bind it on, the hairs will flare. Tiers will need to secure the wings with three or four wraps of thread. If they struggle with this step, I have them tie the hairs down in three or four places working their way up to the hook eye. It does not always have to look pretty. After a whip finish or several half hitches, they can trim and taper the head with scissors at a good angle.

Fishing the Elk Hair Caddis

Like many other dry fly attractor and terrestrial patterns, most anglers will fish the Elk Hair Caddis with a drag-free drift. At times, it can also be twitched to produce a strike from an aggressive fish. When fish prefer moving prey, skitter the Elk Hair Caddis on the water's surface. At the end of a long drift, I sometimes find myself incorporating movement into the pattern to induce a last effort strike, especially across the water seams.

The Elk Hair Caddis lends itself to supporting a dropper pattern, such as a smaller nymph or wet fly. Weighted flies, such as Copper Johns, Zebra Midges, Pheasant Tails, Hare's Ears, Rainbow Warriors, and Frenchies, are trusted flies to suspend with light tippet off of Elk Hair Caddis hook bends.

Teach your tier the basics of the Elk Hair Caddis and entice some fish to the surface. ▢

Elk Hair Caddis

Hook: #12-18 1X dry fly
Thread: Tan, olive, or brown 6/0, 8/0
Rib: Fine gold wire
Body: Hare's ear fur
Hackle: Ginger or dun
Wing: Natural tan or yearling elk hair

Poly Caddis

Hook: #12-20 dry fly
Thread: Tan, olive, or black 6/0, 8/0
Body: Dubbing (olive, tan, black, gray)
Legs: (Optional): Brown saddle hackle
Wing: Poly yarn (gray, yellow, tan, white)

The Quiet Paddler



photo-Juan Veruete

by Chris Gorsuch

Canoes and kayaks have been around for several thousand years. These paddlecrafts have strong roots in North America. The origin of the Inuit word kayak is “man-boat”. My introduction to the kayak was just over 40 years ago in a Skin-On-Frame (SOF) kayak. This lightweight kayak was an elaborate wooden skeleton frame with a heavy-duty cloth material stretched over the wood. The cloth was coated annually with liquid waterproofing, usually one of the first things done before the paddling season.

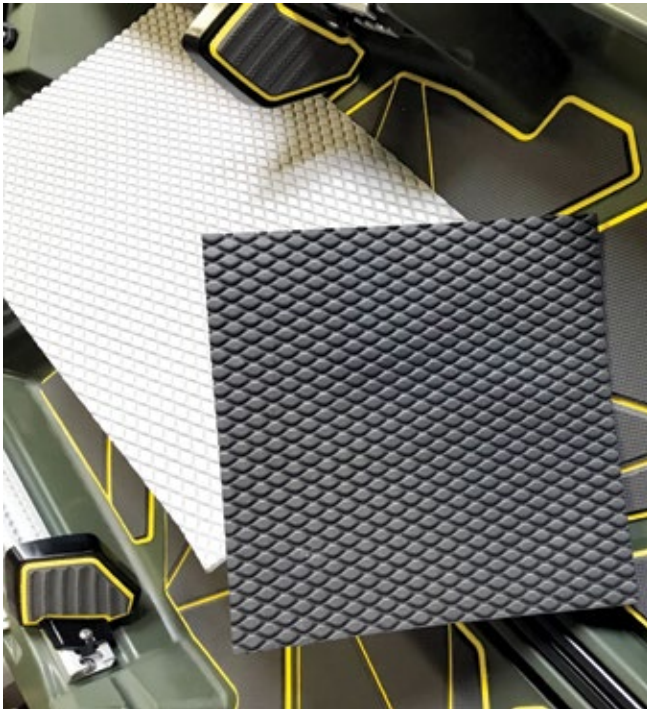
In the mid 1980s, plastic molded kayaks were introduced. As roto-molding improved, this manufacturing process made kayaks accessible to almost anyone. A little heavier than their SOF and fiberglass predecessors, roto-molded plastic kayaks and canoes were durable and less expensive. While kayaks and canoes have been used for hunting and fishing for thousands of years, the last two decades have offered more paddlecraft innovations than any time in its rich history.

When it comes to fishing from a kayak or canoe, there is more to it than getting from point A to point B. The long list of advantages is well known and shared. Having been associated with pro staff and accessory companies for the last 15 years

or so, I had the opportunity to write dozens of paddle articles and take part in video production that covered paddlecraft selection, paddle safety, cold water gear, rigging and outfitting, repair, and a host of fishing related kayak pieces. Today, however, I would like to take it one step further and share tips on how gear, accessories, and techniques will improve stealth when targeting gamefish.

Stealth as a technique to catching a fish of a lifetime is often overlooked and disregarded. Anglers will select the perfect location, lures, and presentation only to fail on one of the most elementary advantages of fishing from a canoe or kayak. Getting to the shallow, isolated, and hard to reach areas in your lake or river is what these paddlecrafts were designed to do. Managing that quietly takes a bit more effort but will help ensure all other efforts in your preparation pay off.

A kayak alone is noisy. Often, a mere quarter inch of material separates the rider from the water. Since noise is much more pronounced in water, paddlers need to be careful when sneaking into the key areas where big fish roam. When gamefish like bass are feeding, fish are often in less than 1 foot of water—places that are ideal for a canoe or kayak to get into without being detected. Adding EVA foam matting to the deck, floor, and cockpit of the kayak will substantially reduce noise. This helps when setting items such as pliers, fish



Foam decking kits come in basic sheets that can be cut to fit any kayak or in elaborate pre-cut kits for a specific kayak model.

grippers, lure boxes, rods, nets, and other gear on the deck or floor of the boat. EVA foam decking kits come in a wide variety of colors, patterns, and options. From whole sheets to be cut to size, to customized kits designed specifically for the type and model of kayak or canoe. Some are basic and some are elaborate.

The EVA foam decking often comes with a peel-and-stick backing. This makes application easy and eliminates the mess from glue and spray adhesives. Be sure to select PE/EVA decking that is designed for the application. There are several brands designed specifically for watercraft and offer ultraviolet protection as well.

The paddle is the next area to focus on. Paddles are designed for a variety of applications. While I find aluminum shafts noisy and heavy, this is not to suggest that the proper paddle will ensure quiet paddling. Good technique with a clean paddle entry, stroke, and exit takes practice, even with the perfect paddle. Blade shape and type of material is also important. Paddle shapes are designed for specific tasks and power, but each can offer a level of stealth. This is where a good paddle is recommended. I prefer the weight of an all-fiberglass paddle. The fiberglass blade is a terrible match for shallow, rocky river bottoms. This is where a nylon blade and carbon shaft come into play. This combination offers a good balance in quiet paddling, weight and durability. Straight versus bent shafts are my personal preference. I believe the bent shaft rests better on my lap when fishing, but adds expense and somewhat limits choices.

Other areas to improve stealth are shallow water anchoring techniques. Fiberglass anchor pins/poles and some conventional anchors can be noisy when deployed. A leg over



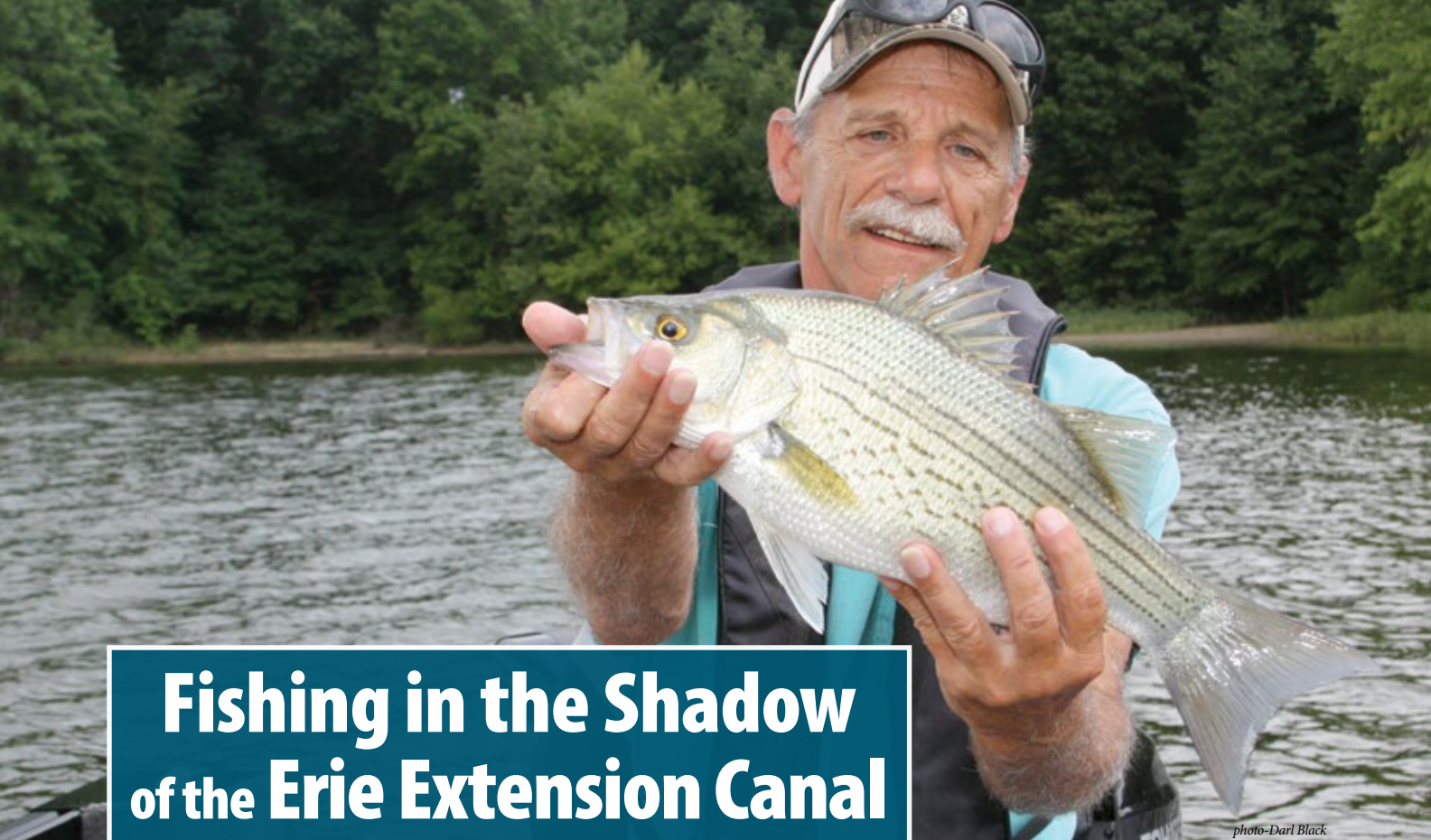
A standard metal brush gripper helps paddlers hold the paddlecraft steady when near tall grass or brush. A plastic fish gripper can be dual purpose for gripping your catch and as a brush anchor.

the side of a sit-in-kayak works if that is your paddle craft of choice but can fall short in other styles of paddlecraft or when bottom depth does not allow it. Since I am often near brush, grass, or wood when fishing shallows, a metal 'Brush Gripper' tethered by a nylon parachute cord is a simple but effective and quiet anchoring tool. Another option is to use a plastic fish gripper as a dual-purpose item. It works fairly well for anchoring and equally well when handling fish with teeth or treble hooks.

This season while chasing that trophy during the quiet of the day, practice being just as quiet. Learning stealth may be the most productive fishing tool in your arsenal. ☐



Since noise is much more pronounced in water, paddlers need to take extra caution when sneaking into the key areas where big fish roam.



Fishing in the Shadow of the Erie Extension Canal

by Marilyn Black

“Low bridge, everybody down! Low bridge cause we’re coming to a town. And you’ll always know your neighbor, and you’ll always know your pal, if you’ve ever navigated on the Erie Canal.” Chorus of 1905 song by Thomas S. Allen.

The Erie Extension Canal operated from 1854 to 1871 as the major transport of goods and people for 137 miles from the mouth of the Beaver River as it enters the Ohio River northward through Beaver, Lawrence, Mercer, Crawford, and Erie counties. The main stem was in turn augmented by the French Creek Feeder (another 25 miles running east/west from Bemustown Dam upstream of Meadville to Conneaut Lake) and the 22-mile Franklin Line from Shaw’s Landing downstream to the mouth of French Creek.

Although canals were replaced long ago by railroads and then by highways, anglers and outdoor enthusiasts still enjoy recreation in the shadow of this corridor. Thanks to numerous blue and gold roadside historical markers, anglers are reminded that access areas and unusual stone structures are traces of the canal era.

Fishing tips

The Erie Extension Canal network was engineered to utilize slackwater pools on natural rivers, with lowhead dams and locks built to bypass shallow riffles or boulder-strewn sections. Therefore, it made extensive use of the Beaver River, Shenango River, Little Shenango River, Hartstown Marsh, Conneaut Lake, Conneaut Creek, and

French Creek. Fish species found in these waterways include Largemouth Bass, Muskellunge, Smallmouth Bass, Walleyes, catfish, panfish, stocked trout, and in the Lake Erie tributaries, steelhead.

Shenango Reservoir covers a large central chunk of the former Erie Extension Canal. Wooden dams and planks at the south end of glacial Conneaut Lake, Crawford County, increased its capacity in order to function as a major canal basin. Today, both lakes contain widely diverse fish species,



This state historical marker describes the water diversion engineered in the 19th century in order to provide increased water supply for the Erie Extension Canal.



Pete Cartwright landed this Smallmouth Bass while wading French Creek adjacent to a collapsed lowhead dam and still-visible lock of the Franklin Line.

including all of the ones listed above for the rivers, plus Northern Pike, White Bass, additional sunfish species, and in the case of Shenango Reservoir, hybrid Striped Bass.

Access along the canal corridor

Beaver Division (31 miles) opened in 1834 to traffic from Rochester to New Castle and Pulaski with its Western Reserve Harbor. If anglers look hard, they may detect stones from former locks, towpath topography, and sites of previous canal locks and loading bays.

At 61 miles in length, Shenango Division (opened in 1838) stretched from Pulaski to the Mercer/Crawford county line, stringing together for commerce the ports of West Middlesex, Wheatland, Sharon, Sharpsville, Clarksville, Big Bend, New Hamburg, and Greenville. Abundant visible remnants of the Erie Extension Canal are evident today including restored Lock #10 at Sharpsville downstream



The only location in Pennsylvania where you can ride on a mule-drawn canal boat is on the short segment of the Lehigh Canal, Easton.

from the Shenango Dam, the former canal basin at Big Bend and its brick-lined eastern river bank to support the towpath, Shenango River Trail from Big Bend to the Kidds Mill Bridge, and the formerly robust canal town of New Hamburg. To see a full-size replica canal boat, visit The Canal Museum at Greenville's Riverside Park, adjacent to Lock #22.

Some of our fishing time on the Erie Extension Canal is on its Shenango Division with outings on the Shenango River and Shenango River Lake. My husband's family owned and operated canal boats. Their current homestead is beneath Shenango Reservoir.

We also frequently fish parts of the Conneaut Division, which includes the two largest reservoirs of the entire Erie Extension Canal, specifically a 600-acre man-made lake and Conneaut Lake. Construction through wetlands, numerous locks, and several high-level aqueducts in this 46-mile segment was the most costly and took from 1938 until 1844.

The northernmost canal basin was west of the tip of State Street in Erie. Its navigation commenced in spring 1845 and closed after the aqueduct carrying the canal across Elk Creek collapsed on September 5, 1871. Conneautville's Canal Park, Market Village off Route 18, contains

one of the last relatively undisturbed stretches of the Erie Extension Canal.

French Creek Feeder Canal linked the Erie Extension Canal with Meadville. Its western arm (Conneaut Outlet) is challenging today due to many fallen trees and significant erosion to its towpath. The 22-mile Franklin Line ran from the juncture with the Feeder Canal to Franklin. Plentiful canoe and kayak access areas now serve French Creek from Erie County through Venango County, providing convenient access for anglers as well. An almost intact lock is visible along Route 322 north of Franklin.

Explore by foot, by car, and by water the locations you can fish today, which once constituted the most vibrant transportation route from Erie to the Ohio River. Passenger boats of the Reed Line needed only 36 hours to accomplish its full length. Bulk freight boats were mule or oxen-pulled at the rate of 3 miles per daylight hour. ☐

More information

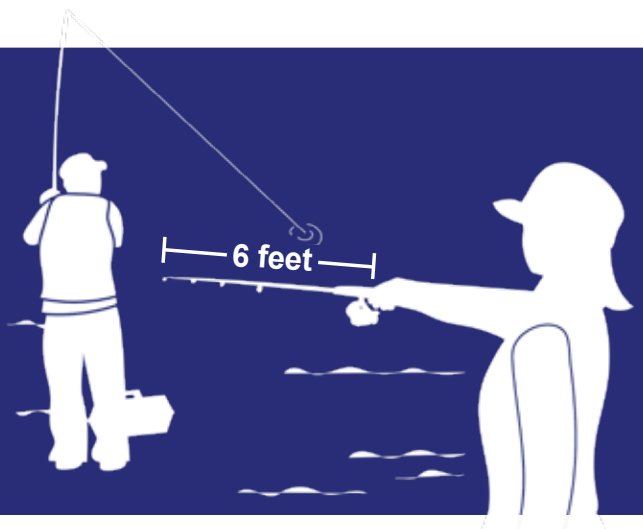
Canal Museum
60 Alan Avenue
Greenville, PA 16125
John Kokoski (724) 588-8718

"The Erie Extension Canal: A Hike With History,"
by Fred J. Brenner, Ph.D.

Canal history blogs on Facebook/"Visit Pymatuning Lake Pa" by Gary P. Hite

SOCIAL DISTANCING

COVID-19



FISH LOCAL WATERS

Fish in waterways close to your home. Fishing is currently acceptable per the guidelines issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Health as long as social distancing guidelines are followed.

BE SAFE

Keep a minimum distance of 6 feet between anglers. The length of a fishing rod is a good measure of social distancing. Refrain from carpooling, and avoid crowds. Advise children not to wander into the personal space of other anglers. Do not share fishing gear and bait. If you are not feeling well, stay home.

OBTAIN LICENSES, PERMITS, AND REGISTRATIONS

Anglers and boaters are now temporarily able to display their fishing license, launch permit, or boat registration renewal digitally on a phone or other mobile device as proof of possession. Printed licenses, permits, and registrations are also acceptable.

REPORT VIOLATIONS

Call the tip line at 1-855-FISH-KIL (1-855-347-4545) to report violations.



Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission
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



THE EXCITEMENT OF *Keystone Select* STOCKED TROUT STREAMS



by Ben Moyer

photos by the author

Laurel Hill Creek, Somerset County, and Meadow Run, Fayette County, are two streams I have enjoyed fishing most of my life. Both are lovely mountain streams, graced by lush hemlock and flowing through state parks within the scenic Laurel Highlands. Not long ago, I could not have imagined that these fishing waters could be further enhanced.

But, Laurel Hill Creek and Meadow Run now lure anglers with new excitement. Both are part of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's (PFBC's) Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters program, offering

anglers a better opportunity to catch big trout than ever before, in pleasing settings open to public fishing year-round.

Twenty-three stream sections, in all regions of Pennsylvania, are included in the Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters program. Designated segments

average 2½ miles in length, providing a total of 55 stream-miles where anglers can cast to denser concentrations of big trout than on other stocked trout waters.

All the streams selected for the Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters program are also managed as Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only waters. Only flies or artificial lures may be used, and trout may be killed or possessed only from June 15 through Labor Day. During that period, the creel limit is three trout of minimum 9-inch size.

To make the program work, the PFBC hatcheries reserve 9,500 larger trout, measuring 14- to 20-inches, for stocking within Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters sections. By crude mathematical analysis, that averages to nearly 175 big trout per stream-mile. However, to catch the big ones, you still need to read the water and detect the kinds of places where a lunker trout is likely to lurk.

The Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters program has grown since it began with eight streams in 2016. Laurel Hill Creek was one of the original streams selected, and my quick success with Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters lunkers there surprised me. On my first Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters attempt on Laurel Hill Creek, I caught a 16-inch Rainbow Trout and a 20-inch





This Brown Trout hit a black Woolly Bugger on the Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters section of Laurel Hill Creek, Somerset County.

Brown Trout by drifting a Prince Nymph through rocky pools. I now fish Laurel Hill Creek more frequently with confidence that I may hook a powerful fish.

When Meadow Run was added to the program, I initially had difficulty catching the big trout I knew were in the creek. Fishing friends were proclaiming their success with Brown Trout bigger than any of us had typically caught in Meadow Run.

Then, one morning last May, I fished in a light rain when no other anglers were on the stream. The water was up and nicely “tinted,” and I was casting a black Woolly Bugger, dead-drifting it through pools, then stripping it back. I caught some “normal-size” trout in popular holes but nothing big.

I decided to fish some fast water that I often skip in my routine to probe my favorite spots. On my first cast in the choppy rapids, I saw a coppery swirl, and my line slammed tight. The big Brown Trout bulled upstream, then down, and I thrilled to the whine of my drag as it yielded line. I landed that trout and caught another, even bigger, soon after.

I realized that within a span of 15 minutes, I caught the two largest Brown Trout I have landed in more than 40 years of fishing that stream. Every cast into Meadow Run since that day has been spiced with a new sense of anticipation.

One of the PFBC’s objectives with Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters was to create “destination

fisheries”—fishing opportunities that would draw anglers for a special kind of experience.

That goal was affirmed on a recent trip I made to the First Fork Sinnemahoning Creek, another Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters gem in Potter County.

On the May afternoon when I arrived, all the pull-offs along Route 872 were crammed with cars and trucks. I sidled my own pickup into a tight spot and peered down at clusters of anglers all up and down the First Fork valley. The scene looked like opening days I remember from long ago. The mood—if a valley can have a mood—was jovial.

A trio of young anglers clambered up the bank, friendly and eager for conversation.

They told me they lived in Mercer County, near the Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters span of Neshannock Creek, where they fish often. But on this weekend, they were making a “Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters road trip,” hitting all the Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters streams across the northern third of Pennsylvania. They were already halfway across Pennsylvania on the First Fork Sinnemahoning Creek, and their ambitious plan offered them more big-trout waters like the South Branch Tunkhannock Creek, Pine Creek, Little Pine Creek, Loyalsock Creek, Lycoming Creek, and McMichael Creek. I hope they achieved their goal. But, if they fell short, it is likely because they were unwilling to stop fishing at one of their destinations along the way. ☐



Flashy Flatware Still Finding Fish— *HOPKINS LURES*

by Alex Zidock Jr. photos by the author

During the 1970s, illusionist Uri Geller was astonishing television audiences by bending spoons and forks with his psychic powers. But, 30 years before Geller's fete, R.L. Hopkins beat and bent the handle of a butter knife into a saltwater lure. Few remember Geller's kitchen connection, but Hopkins Lures are still as popular as ever.

"R.L. Hopkins was an angler living in Virginia who wanted to design a lure he could use in saltwater," said Joseph Cipriani, President of Hopkins Lures. "R.L. had a friend who owned a forging company that made kitchen flatware. He took a butter knife home and cut off the blade end and began beating the handle into the shape he wanted. He came up with what he called the NO=EQL®. That was in 1948 when the company began, and that lure started as our three and a half."

Under the Hopkins banner is the NO=EQL®, the NO=EQL+®, and the NO=EQL Smoothie®. Then, there is the Shorty®, the Shorty+®, and the Shorty Smoothie®. The profile of the NO=EQL® is longer and more slender, and the Shorty® is fatter and squatter in the same weights and same basic design. Lures designated with "+" and some Smoothie lures have holographic tape applied and sometimes eyes for realism. Lures come with treble barbed hooks with or without bucktail enhancement. Single hooks on lures feature feathers or tubes for an extra dimension. Hopkins Lures also produces Hammered Spoons® that have a unique "port" in the "gill region" to permit passage of water as in a living fish.

Cipriani is also president of Keystone Forging Company, Inc., a 100,000 square-foot foundry established in Northumberland,

in 1893. Cipriani has worked there for 43 years. His forging company makes a myriad of products including jackhammer blades, high-pressure valves, aluminum valves, products for horse and buggies, and valves for SpaceX.

The process came full circle about 14 years ago, when R.L. Hopkins' son-in-law approached Cipriani, who had been forging stainless steel lures for him. "When Robbie was 82 or 83 years old, one day he looked at me and asked, Joe, do you think I should retire? I told him not if you are happy, stay with what you are doing. He said, No, I think its time, and he asked me if I would be interested in Hopkins Lures. However, it was only last year that we moved the lure company here, right next to the forge," said Cipriani.



Joseph Cipriani, President of Hopkins Lures

"I have been an avid angler since I was 5 years old," said Cipriani. "While I am a freshwater angler, he was a saltwater guy, but Hopkins does both freshwater and saltwater, so no problem to take it over."

"The original dies were made by hand with a process called hobbing, where they cut the impression into the metal," said Cipriani. "For the effect on the lures that have scales, they would take a hardened nail-set and whack it with a hammer for each scale."

Cipriani's Keystone Forging foundry is producing the same original lures, but they are now designing these lures with computers and a CNC machine. "We took all his original designs and do it that way now. We can tweak the design and make them more consistent, since weight is an essential factor, said Cipriani.

Hopkins Lures are made from 304 and 420 stainless steel. For the NO=EQL®, the stainless steel rod is cut into specific lengths and then heated to 2,250 degrees F. A massive press forms the lures, the excess is removed, and the lures are put into a medium to achieve the high gloss finish. Next, holes are punched so split rings and hooks can be added.

Hopkins Lures has about 700 different SKUs. "We distribute in Japan and the Middle East, and people are using Hopkins Lures all over the world, but the primary business is in the United States. Originally, people thought we were a saltwater lure, but the fact is we do about 60 percent saltwater and 40 percent freshwater. Size does not matter. While a heavier, larger lure may be used in saltwater, it may also be used in the Great Lakes trolling for big trout. Many times, an angler will find a ledge and drop the lure down and rip it up 5 or more feet and let it flutter down. It is on the downfall that the fish will come in and take it. These lures are so sturdy, the only dimples in the lures are put there by machine and not by bluefish teeth," said Cipriani.

"My wife Marlene is involved in the business, and our daughter, Phoebe, does the assembly. We also have another daughter, Elizabeth, who helps Phoebe. We build everything to order. When any of the big sporting goods stores place an order, we fill it then. We do not have finished lures sitting on shelves," said Cipriani.

"Since we feel one tackle shop cannot carry 700 SKUs, we also offer our lures online. We have something we call 'build a lure' on our website, where you can build a single lure using anything we have at our disposal," said Cipriani.

"Field & Stream magazine named Hopkins Lures in the top 50 greatest lures of all time a few years back, and Salt Water Sportsman magazine said Hopkins Lures were one of the top 25 greatest saltwater lures of all time," said Cipriani.

"We want to maintain it as a United States owned and built product," said Cipriani. We have much pride in what we do, and while people have suggested that we knock ourselves off and go for a lower-priced lure, we want to keep the integrity of the lure and keep it in stainless steel," said Cipriani. □



Hopkins Lures offers about 700 different lure choices. But, if you want a custom lure, you can design it on the company's website.



Joseph Cipriani's daughter, Phoebe, is responsible for managing lure production and filling custom orders.



A worker in the Keystone Forging Company grinds finishing touches on a mold.

Hopkins Lures
www.hopkinslures.com

Five Spinner Blade Styles for Walleyes



by *Ross Robertson*

photos by the author

Some call these types of lures spinners or nightcrawler harnesses, but regardless of the name, these lures are an effective tool for catching Walleyes when the water reaches about 45 degrees F. This versatile lure system is simple, yet it has lots of options. The biggest challenge is picking the correct style and size of blade for the conditions.

The blade itself is the attractor and the flash of the system. Each style has unique qualities. The five most popular and versatile choices are: Colorado, Indiana, willow, hatchet and prop.

Colorado

Regarded as the most versatile style by many anglers, the Colorado blade works well at slow speeds of just less than 0.8 miles per hour (mph), to about 1.6 mph. Much slower and the blade will not turn and much faster and the surface area of the blade causes it to lift in the water column substantially. A generally round shape, this style provides a good balance of both vibration and flash, making it good in either dirty or clear water. The most popular sizes are 3, 4, and 5 and will



Colorado blade

cover most circumstances. Some manufacturers offer this blade type in a deep cup option. The extra cup helps the blade turn better at slower speeds and provides more vibration and lift. If you were to carry only one style of blade for all of your fishing, the Colorado would likely be the best choice.

Indiana

Not as widely used and much narrower in design, the Indiana blade is still worth owning. The more slender design causes it to throw less vibration and more flash. The thinner profile lends it to catch less water, making it preferred at slightly faster speeds than a Colorado. The same can be said as far as water clarity; the added flash of the Indiana causes it to excel in cleaner water. Ideal fishing speeds are from 1.2 mph to 1.8 mph. Oddly enough, the shape of the Indiana blade visually changes as it gets larger. Sizes 3, 4, and 5 are the most widely used, but size 6 is much more teardrop shaped and excels when trolled for Walleyes on the Great Lakes. The oversized size 8 could easily be called a cowbell. Its flash and vibration rival that of a Colorado.



Indiana blade

Willow

The narrowest in shape, the willow blade provides the most amount of flash and least amount of vibration. The narrow shape allows these blades to be pulled at much faster speeds, ranging from 1.5 mph on the low end and up to 3 mph on the high end. Unlike other styles, it is common for



Put enough beads between the blades on tandem rigs, so the blades do not interfere with each other.

anglers to rig willow blades in tandem with two blades used. This imitates a small school of baitfish. When rigging in tandem, use enough beads between the blades to keep the blades spread out. Look at size charts, as the blades do not get incrementally larger as the sizes go up. For example, the size 4.5 is significantly larger than the relatively small size 4. An assortment of sizes 4, 4.5, and 6 cover most Walleye fishing situations.



Willow blade

Hatchet

Also referred to as a Tomahawk for its blade-like look, this style is the sleeper. A true hatchet has more rounded edges but almost identical shape. While the hatchet provides a significant amount of flash, it also offers a unique action that changes drastically with speed changes. Anglers have been known to run these in tandem in the Great Lakes, because the half sizes of the blades rotate



Hatchet

in the opposite direction of the whole sizes for a unique presentation. A hatchet can extract more fish from a school than other blade styles. Hatchets are also a go to for guides when fishing on the bottom, especially when used in conjunction with a bottom bouncer. An assortment of hatchet styles in the 4, 5, and 6 size range are a good place to start.

Prop

Made from a somewhat flexible plastic or hardened Mylar design, prop blades are designed for fishing at a wide array of speeds and maximum amount of flash. With the ability to turn at slow speeds of barely one half mph, props can be burned at speeds in excess of 2 mph. This versatility is why prop blades have been successful for guides. Live bait rigging props with a single hook and a few beads are the most rigged option. The fact that the blade needs to be threaded through the leader line makes it a little more cumbersome to rig and store. Sizes are not standard across different manufacturers, but blades with a diameter of approximately 1 to 1.5 inches are the most versatile.

There are more than five blade choices for Walleye anglers, but having an assortment of these five blade choices will cover you in almost any circumstance. ☐



Prop blade

Stand Up Kayak Fishing



by John Allen

photos by the author

Every year, something new comes to the fishing industry that has a direct impact on how I fish. The first time I saw someone standing in a kayak while fishing on television, I was skeptical. I figured it would be a quick fad. My skepticism was centered around safety and doubt that it could be better than a sitting kayak.

A few years later, I found myself at a kayak demonstration. There was a kayak advertised as being able to stand in it. I gave it a ride and could not believe how easy it was to stand up and sit back down without feeling like I was compromising my safety. I was also surprised at how much better of an angle it gave me for sight fishing. Several years later, I found myself in the market for a new kayak. By now, just about every major kayak manufacturer has a model that is advertised to be stable enough that you can stand in it. It was time to leave my years of doubt behind and make the purchase.

Safety

Standing up in a kayak is not for everyone. It takes effort and balance to stand up. Try the kayak out before purchasing it to ensure that it is stable enough for you. What is stable for me, may not be stable for you. It is better to be safe than sorry. Always wear your life jacket when you plan to stand. Even the most stable kayak is capable of tipping in the wrong situation. Safety always comes first.

Selecting the right kayak

The features to pay attention to when selecting a stand-up kayak is width, shape of the bottom, seat position, standing aids, and the platform. You will be looking for a kayak that is at least 33 inches wide. Wider is usually better, unless you do not have the right bottom. Then, it does not matter. It will not be stable enough to safely stand. Look for a double-U style hull. Think of this style of hull as having two pontoons on the bottom of the kayak. This style provides the ultimate stability. The seat position will make standing and sitting back down easier. The higher the seat sits, the better. A seat that is flush with the bottom of the kayak is extremely difficult to stand in as you are already too far down. Having a standing aid is



A double-U style hull provides the ultimate stability.

important too. Whether it be a waist-high rail that connects to the kayak or a strap that you can grab onto without a standing aid, you will find getting up and back down cumbersome. When standing, make sure that your platform area has good traction. Having shoes that also have good traction helps in conjunction with the floor material.

Fishing

My biggest reason for owning a stand-up kayak is the fishing advantages. I can spot structures coming up well before I get to these locations. This helps with sight fishing. Whereas, if I were sitting, I would not see structures until it is too late. You can still get into places that a boat cannot but with additional advantages.

How do you maneuver the kayak while standing? I use four methods, depending on the conditions and the kayak itself. One method is to figure out the direction of the wind and position yourself to turn your body into a sail, so the wind will push you along. Turn yourself by applying foot pressure to the direction you want to travel while twisting your upper body. If the breeze is above 5 miles per hour (mph), you will move easily. Another method is bringing a one-handed paddle. I keep it in my gear basket for access while I am standing. This reduces the amount of up and down movements. Using a rudder may also ensure that you will track in the desired direction. Use it to counter the wind or allow yourself to go in a general direction. Finally, if you have a kayak with a pedal system, it is not difficult to set your rudder, then reach down and crank the pedals with your hands as needed. All of these methods will accomplish the goal.

So far, my favorite scenario where the stand-up kayak earned its keep was when I found myself fishing a shallow, weedy area of a lake. Baitfish were jumping all over the place in about 1 foot of water. There were probably bigger fish chasing the baitfish, so I stood up and used my paddle to pole my way closer. I felt like I was chasing Bonefish on the flats of the Florida Keys. It did not take long before I spotted multiple large bass chasing these baitfish across the shallow water before pausing in deeper pockets. I found a matching bait in my box and started sight fishing for the bigger bass. The result was an



When standing, make sure your platform area has good traction.

extremely memorable morning that landed me five bass over 18 inches in under 1 hour. In a standard kayak, I never would have seen the fish and would have blindly cast until I got lucky. In a regular boat, I would have been stuck on the bottom of the lake without getting close enough to cast.

If you enjoy having a boat that can get about anywhere on the lake, a stand-up kayak is an excellent item to add to your fishing arsenal. A stand-up kayak requires some adjustments, but you may not want to go back to a standard kayak once you are comfortable. Safety is your priority, so use a kayak that allows you to stand in it. ☐



A one-handed paddle makes navigation while standing easier.



Having a standing aide is important in a stand-up kayak.

Summer Multi-Species Creek Fishing



by **Nathan Woleslagle**

photos by the author

Summer provides ideal conditions to spend afternoons and evenings fishing. Pennsylvania has no shortage of opportunity to do so with creeks seemingly everywhere.



Small plastic jigs and spinners may be better for catching larger, more aggressive fish.

For anglers looking to catch any species of fish willing to bite, creeks can be a great destination for steady action. The fishing gear required is simple, and the fishing is as easy as it is enjoyable. Creeks in the summer are fun to fish.

When choosing a creek to target in the summer, I often look for a few key features. Water temperatures will likely be warm. Finding stretches of creek with deeper holes and runs may be more abundant with fish

this time of year, as the water will be cooler in these sections. If I spend an entire afternoon or day fishing, I line up several sections in close proximity that I can walk or drive to in order to keep the bites coming.

No high-tech fishing gear is required. If you are looking to catch any fish, and see what cool species are living in the creeks, a spinning setup with a medium light to ultralight rod will do the trick. A reel spooled with 2- to 6-pound-test line will handle a majority of fish species. If you are fishing a section where you know larger fish reside, use 6-pound-test line and stay away from lower pound fishing line. An assortment of hooks can be used, but I like to fish with size 14 to 18 treble hooks. Small



Fallfish



Rock Bass

treble hooks increase your hook-up ratio, especially when catching fish with smaller mouths such as sunfish.

There are several baits to use to catch creek fish. The classic red worm or nightcrawler may be your best bet. Using small portions of worm, accompanied by a splitshot or two to get your bait down, will be hard for any fish to resist. Other live bait, such as waxworms, are another great option. Artificial lures, such as small plastic jigs and spinners, will catch fish as well and may be better for catching larger, more aggressive fish.

Another effective way to catch creek fish in the summer is by using a fly rod. A small nymph pattern or dry fly will catch many species of fish. Especially if you are a beginner, this may be a great opportunity to practice casting and land a few fish. Trout are still catchable during the summer, so there is an opportunity to hook into a solid fighting fish.

When I am heading out to fish creeks in the summer, I tend to choose certain creeks over others. I live along the Susquehanna River, which has many small tributary creeks that flow into it. During the summer months, bass, Walleyes, and even Muskellunge will run up these creeks from the river to get into colder water and find food. This provides exciting opportunities to fish for larger fish in a more intimate setting. When multi-species fishing with smaller baits, I keep a sturdier rod setup in my car. If I

happen to spot a large fish in a creek, I have a setup ready to switch to in an attempt to catch it.

While fishing a small tributary stream on a July afternoon, I hit a jackpot. The water was low and clear, and the fish were in an eating mood. My catch had consisted of Fallfish, Redbreast Sunfish, and Rock Bass. Then, I noticed a fish strange in appearance, slid a whole red worm onto my hook, and drifted in front of it. Without hesitation, the slender fish took my offering. After a brief, but exciting fight, I caught a 14-inch Walleye. That was not the only Walleye to be caught, as it turned out, there were several more hanging out in the same hole. Creeks in the summer can surprise an angler at any moment.

Fishing creeks in the summer is a great way to get youth involved in fishing, because it is exciting and fast paced. Bites come quickly in good holes, which keep kids entertained and wanting to continue casting. There is also the potential for a kid to hook into a quality fish and make a lasting memory.

When summer rolls around in Pennsylvania, turn to fishing creeks. There is no shortage of available water, the species of fish to catch are varied, and you may even catch a trophy. Plan a day to hit the water, rig up your rod, and go fishing. The fish are biting this summer in a creek near you. ☐

Bass by Process of Elimination: Unfamiliar Water Made Simple

by Jerry Bush

photos by the author

When bass anglers fish unfamiliar water, they think about where to cast lures or drop jigs. A lake, reservoir, or river encompasses so much water and presents so many variables it becomes difficult to evaluate. Variables such as access points, high water, low water, personal watercrafts, structure, other anglers, unknown depths, and seasonal weather patterns may cause anglers to become confused and overwhelmed when trying to figure things out.

Perhaps, the best advice is to stop evaluating the entire body of water. Spending hours or days trying to apprise an entire body of water usually proves frustrating and makes the task more difficult than it needs to be. Remove mindless clutter by eliminating the 80% of water unlikely to be productive. Then, evaluate the 20% that remains. It is an amazingly quick and easy strategy.

A map of the unfamiliar water is important to any plan. Bass anglers should be prepared and willing to personalize the map by crossing off areas to be ignored. That one step alone will make it easier to pinpoint areas of interest. The map can be transformed into a sectional visual aid that makes additional plan development obvious.

Contour lines that indicate depth are useful on a purchased map, but the best maps for bass anglers will also display known structures such as weed beds, man-made habitat structures, or submerged mounds of boulders. Knowing these structure locations help potential hot spots become increasingly evident, and lets the angler make an educated decision before accidentally eliminating areas that may look bland on an ordinary map.

Hand-drawn maps may be useful. A handmade sketch can be marked with information without ruining a purchased map. Even if structures are unknown, the sketch may show launches and display suspected bass holding points, bays, and bridge pylons. Add known, traditional, bass-attracting structures like lumber, boulders, and weed beds.

The logical goal for a boating angler is to determine how many promising areas are closest to each boat launch. The obvious plan is to launch near the greatest quantity of areas that are likely to hold bass, and fish as many of these places as possible. This becomes more critical for anglers launching a canoe or kayak from the launch site due to the time and energy required to reach each location.

Personalized maps that also display earthly landmarks are helpful to shore anglers visiting unfamiliar water. The goal of the shore angler is similar to that of the boating angler. Instead of looking for hot spots near boat launches, the shore angler



needs to locate access areas along banks that are nearest to bass friendly habitat. Among the areas anglers can quickly remove from consideration are known bass-holding habitats where access is forbidden. Many bass may live under a marina's docks for example, but that information is of little value to the shore-anchored angler if the marina forbids fishing.

Shoreline maps are also valuable to bass anglers who use canoes and kayaks to reach fish, because these boats may often be launched from shore access areas instead of boat launches. Unless exercise is part of the motivation, nobody wants to paddle farther than necessary to reach a school of bass.

Successful bass tournament anglers accept that while "perfect" locations change, routinely productive locations are fairly consistent. As a former FLW Series bass tournament champion, Tim Farley placed first in a tournament on Lake Lanier, Georgia, and took home \$100,000 during the event. Farley is my cousin, who grew up fishing northern lakes

before moving south. He assures the same strategy used by bass fishing professionals all across the country will work for recreational bass anglers everywhere.

“Begin by eliminating the greatest amount of water you can. Anglers need to understand, however, that the water to ignore differs from angler to angler, according to the type of fishing the angler is most comfortable with”, said Farley. “Your plan should include ignoring areas that require fishing with a tactic you are not confident in. Every bass angler will be most productive when practicing the style of fishing that gives each individual the most confidence” said Farley. This becomes even more evident when anglers find they lack the patience to suffer through dry spells that every angler eventually endures. If anglers doubt their ability, they are likely to prematurely abandon a potential fish holding location and seek areas where they can catch fish using their tried and true method. They would have enjoyed more success if they moved to that location in the first place.

If casting crankbaits, anglers would do well to cross off areas where thick weeds choke a shallow bay. A lure out of water fails to attract fish. If forced to reel a weed-laden crankbait to the boat and remove vegetation after nearly every cast, it becomes obvious the chance to hook a good number of bass becomes less likely for that angler. That same weed bed, however, should be enticing and worthy of consideration to anglers who are adept at dropping bait-tipped jigs into openings and hooking bass from the pockets other anglers are afraid to deal with.

Learn where bass can be expected to reside most often, and concentrate on hitting as many of these spots as possible that also match the angler’s fishing skill. Do not worry as much about hitting the best location, because areas may be



The author’s wife caught and released several Smallmouth Bass where the shoreline was littered with bass-attracting boulders.

inconsistent. Be content to concentrate on consistent factors that work anywhere at most times.

Bass are known to hammer lures cast near spawning beds in spring and early summer, but these areas are not consistently good. It is difficult to catch bass in that same location later in the summer or fall. Unless an angler knows their visit coincides with events like post-spawn activity, eliminate such locations from consideration.

Seek advice from local anglers and bait shops before fishing unfamiliar water. Bait shop owners help visiting anglers enjoy a productive outing. They realize return customers are necessary to the success of their business. If there is one thing a bait shop owner knows, it is where nobody reports catching fish. Do not be afraid to ask.

When seeking additional information, a little scrutiny goes a long way. If they enthusiastically proclaim where others have been enjoying success in the last week, add these areas to your intended targets. However, if the shop clerk reports where guys were catching bass a month ago, anglers should rely on their own research.

Rich Faler, publisher of *The Pennsylvania Outdoor Journal*, is one of Pennsylvania’s most prolific sportsmen. Faler advises, “Remove any water subject to heavy amounts of boat traffic from consideration. After realizing where to avoid fishing, concentrate on traditional, bass holding structures like weed beds, drop offs, distinct mounds, and lumber. If accessing water during a sunny day, eliminate the sunny side of weed beds and give special consideration to the shady side. Do not make the mistake of eliminating in-flowing water. Too many anglers fail to appreciate the benefits of feeder stream currents, which attract baitfish and wash other food sources into the main bodies of lakes and rivers.”

When anglers are confident they are fishing over structure where bass should be found, they should be prepared with several rods and reels rigged with different offerings. In most instances, fish should be offered several baits before abandoning the structure.

Be adaptable and willing to change a well developed strategy depending on the weather. Choppy water may cause a normally promising area to be unfishable. Conversely, bass dwelling in shallow areas may respond favorably if bright light is diminished by small waves on the surface. If a storm is expected to blow in sometime during the outing, fishing near boat launch facilities may become necessary.

Most professional bass anglers immediately eliminate water that is either too clear or too muddy. Water with a greenish tint hints at a good base for the food chain, which means baitfish are likely to inhabit that water. If baitfish routinely swim in an area, opportunistic bass will be close by.

If a relaxing experience is the main objective, eliminate areas that are “too good.” I leave competition fishing to the pros. I do not find joy in maneuvering my boat in a small bay already littered with other vessels. I have found that fish exposed to many lures can be more difficult to catch.

Developing a good plan should not be overwhelming or time consuming. Eliminate vast expanses of water quickly from consideration before concentrating on areas where encounters with bass are logical to expect. □

SNAP TO IT!



by Jeff Knapp

photos by the author

Anglers most commonly stimulate fish to bite lures or baits by either presenting fish with something that represents food or by invoking a reactionary strike by triggering its predatory instincts. Plentiful natural foods, heavy fishing pressure, and poor weather conditions are among the factors that reduce the effectiveness of food-representing baits, in which case, going for the reaction bite is often most effective. Snap jigging is one such tactic and is particularly effective on Walleyes and Smallmouth Bass.

Snap jigging is not necessarily a family of lures and baits but rather a way of presenting lures and baits in a manner that a fish strikes it. Appropriate lures include classic bucktail jigs and leadhead jigs dressed with appropriate soft body trailers; hard-bodied gliding jigs like Rapala's Jigging Rap, Moonshine's Shiver Minnow, and Acme's Hyper Rattle; and vibrating metal blade baits of the Silver Buddy style. All can be suitable for Pennsylvania fishing scenarios.

Snap jigged leadheads

Bucktail jigs, dressed with some sort of hair, feather, or combination of the two, and leadhead jigs combined with a soft bodied trailer are most commonly fished by making a cast, allowing the jig to reach bottom, then, employing a subtle retrieve. A lift/drop retrieve sees the rod raised from the 9 o'clock position to the 11 o'clock position, and the angler maintains a tight line to detect a strike as the jig settles to the bottom.

The same jig setup can be fished more aggressively by snap jigging it. Rather than subtle upward lifts that elevate the jig a few inches off the bottom, use a sharp upward snap of the wrist to rapidly shoot the jig off the bottom. Repeat the process shortly after it touches back down. Both the upward jig and bottom crash can trigger strikes. Also, use a heavier jig than normal. If a ¼-ounce jig is your normal choice given the situation, increase it to ⅜-ounce or ½-ounce. The heavier jig will allow more control when snap jigged and provide added noise and bottom disturbance (kicking up silt/sand) when it touches back down.

Snap jigged leadheads can work in a variety of situations, one of my favorites being the deep edge of a weedline. If the wind cooperates, you can drift slowly along the edge

of the cover, snap jigging a leadhead jig trailed behind the boat. If it is calm, the same can be accomplished by slow trolling with an electric trolling motor.

Hard-bodied gliding jigs

It wasn't long ago that lures such as Rapala's Jigging Rap were solely used through a hole in the ice. A few years back, however, Upper Midwest anglers began having success using these lures in open water for Walleyes.

Ask several Walleye anglers about the cadence they use to fish a gliding jig, and you will get many different answers. One thing is consistent, though—they put plenty of energy into the snap of the lure, so it jumps off the bottom and glides back down to the bottom. You can snap it once, twice, or three times to get it moving.

Following the snap(s), give the lure plenty of freedom by allowing it to fall back on a slack (or mostly slack) line. For example, do not follow it down on a tight line. You may feel some hits on the fall, but it is more likely the fish will “be there” when you snap follow up with the next snap jig.

Hard-bodied gliding jigs in the ½- to 1-ounce-plus size are commonly used for Walleyes. The lure is also effective on Smallmouth Bass.

Walleye tournament angler Dylan Nussbaum, St. Marys, uses gliding jigs extensively and has experienced excellent results on Kinzua Lake, often targeting small areas of specific structure.

When the bite gets tough this year, give your jig a snap. You are likely to receive another snap on the other end of the line.

Horizontal blade baits

Though not designed exclusively as a lure to vertically fish during the fall and winter, usually in deeper water, that is how most anglers fish blade baits. But, blade baits work well, sometimes exceptionally well, when fished horizontally and snap jigged along the bottom.

Snap jig a blade bait in a similar fashion as a hard-bodied gliding jig but with shorter snaps. If you snap jig a blade with too long of a stroke, there is a good chance the line will foul in a hook, ruining the cast. Many styles of blade baits have a series of line attachment holes (most commonly three) along the top of the lure. For horizontal snap jigging, I prefer the front hole rather than the middle hole I most commonly use for vertical fishing.

The essence of snap jigging a blade bait is to make a 30- to 40-foot cast and allow the lure to sink to the bottom. When on the bottom, give the lure a relatively short—about 1-foot or so—upward snap of the rod. This not only shoots the



Blade baits are one of the better snap jigging options for Walleyes.

bait off the bottom, it engages the vibrating action of the lure. Then, allow it to fall back to the bottom as you lower the rod tip. Reel in the slack and repeat. Like the hard-bodied gliding jig, Smallmouth Bass and Walleyes often pin the bait to the bottom. So, while you will occasionally feel a hit as the lure falls, most often, the fish will be there when you make your next upward jigging snap.

Horizontal snap jigged blades can be fished in the same scenarios as hard-bodied gliding jigs. The biggest difference is that the hard bodies rely more on side-to-side gliding action to trigger strikes, while the vibration of the blade bait seals the deal. ☐



Gliding jigs such as the Rapala Jigging Rap have become one of the hottest lures for Walleyes.



photo-PFBC archives

PARTNERING for a Healthier Watershed

by Tyler Neimond
Division of Habitat Management

In 2007, a partnership among the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC), the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, and the local county conservation districts was formed to tackle stream restoration and watershed stabilization in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. This Northcentral Stream Restoration Partnership has worked diligently since 2007 and is going to expand in 2020.

Pennsylvania has approximately 85,000 miles of streams and rivers. Unfortunately, this vast resource has been impacted by current and past land use practices. Many streams in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed are considered impaired by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. One of the common impairments in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed is nutrient enrichment and sedimentation in agricultural settings.

Some erosion in a stream channel is part of the natural stream hydrology. However, excessive erosion can release too much nitrogen and phosphorus-laden sediment into the stream, which can cover the stream bottom and destroy aquatic habitats and reduce the diversity and abundance of aquatic life. This is where the partnership comes into play.

The partnership strives to restore the watersheds of northcentral Pennsylvania while maintaining a working

agricultural landscape. We focus on a collaborative, low-cost approach to stream restoration. This involves working with the local landowners to advance stream corridor restoration projects that will reduce nonpoint source nutrient and sediment inputs in agricultural settings. A typical project involves installation of instream habitat improvement devices, livestock exclusion fencing, stable agricultural stream crossings, and riparian buffer plantings.

The PFBC Stream Habitat Section works with the partnership to design and construct instream habitat improvement devices that not only provide fish habitat but stabilize eroding streambanks. Habitat improvement devices such as mud sills and log vane deflectors are often used. Mud sills are a great way to stabilize eroding streambanks while providing an excellent source of overhead cover. Log vane



photo - Cameron English, PFBC

A completed project in 2019 where the partnership installed instream habitat improvement devices, livestock exclusion fencing, stable agricultural stream crossings, and riparian buffer plantings.



photos-PFBC archives

A historic time lapse of a project that was installed in 2000, showing how the landscape has responded to the project.

deflectors are used to deflect the flow of water away from the streambank to the center of the stream channel, thus reducing streambank erosion.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy, and the local county conservation districts design and install livestock exclusion fencing and stable agriculture stream crossings, as well as plant trees and other native vegetation streamside. Livestock exclusion fencing and stable stream crossings are critical to streambank stabilization and watershed restoration, while the riparian buffer, planted between the exclusion fencing and the stream, serves many benefits. Roots stabilize streambanks, reduce the amount of sediment that enters the stream, and absorb nutrients; mature trees and other plants provide shade to keep the water cooler; and woody debris and leaf litter that fall into streams help form the base of the food chain and provide habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms, like insects.

Installing instream habitat improvement devices, livestock exclusion fencing, stable agricultural stream crossings, and riparian buffers are great ways to achieve a healthy watershed in a working agricultural setting. Since the first construction season in 2009, the partnership has worked at over 120 sites and

improved over 25 miles of stream. In 2020, the partnership plans to expand its efforts in the northern part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed as well as begin efforts in the southern portion of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

A focus of the partnership is Turtle Creek, Union County. This area is predominately an agricultural landscape and is currently impaired due to excessive siltation. The project started with one landowner contacting the Union County Conservation District to request help with streambank erosion occurring in his pasture. Once completed and the results were clearly visible, the initial project prompted other farmers and neighbors to request assistance on their properties. This partnership restored over 4 miles of Turtle Creek to date with more projects planned for 2020 and beyond. Additionally, results from scientific surveys provide evidence that Turtle Creek is on its way to becoming a healthier watershed.

The Northcentral Pennsylvania Stream Restoration Partnership's motto is, "Everyone does a little, so no one has to do it all." This is just one of many partnerships that the PFBC's Stream Habitat Section participates in. For more information on habitat improvement in Pennsylvania, visit www.fishandboat.com/Resource/Habitat/Pages/default.aspx. ☐

Making a Splash with Safety



photo-Chris Calhoun

by Deborah Weisberg

Thomas Williams, president of the bass tournament group Kayak Anglers, recalls a mishap on French Creek in 2015 when he was relatively new to freshwater paddling.

While solo kayaking near the confluence with the Allegheny River, Williams encountered a series of Class II rapids he had not expected. “I noticed disturbed water ahead, but it did not look too serious,” said Williams. “When I was in it, though, I realized how dangerous it was and that I was unprepared. I capsized, with my boat on top of me, and I lost all my gear.”

Williams, Allegheny County, managed to get to shore, having learned a valuable lesson about the importance of safety. “I knew the river was running a little high and fast that day but did not look at the United States Geological Survey gauge readings,” said Williams. “I got into trouble because of poor planning.”

As manager of seven tournament chapters, including four in Pennsylvania, Williams has made safety the group’s top priority. “No one fishes without a life jacket, and everyone has to carry a whistle and a white light,” said Williams. “We go above and beyond what the state requires. And, because most of our members are not expert paddlers, when they join, we do a lot of education.”

According to Chris Calhoun, a kayak instructor at Butler County Community College and lead water rescue instructor for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC),

eagerness to get on the water prompts many paddlers to overestimate their competence—a mistake he made during his first paddling venture on Slippery Rock Creek decades ago.

“I was working as a naturalist at McConnells Mill State Park, Lawrence County, and used to watch folks floating through,” said Calhoun. “It looked like fun. When a colleague offered to sell me a boat, paddle, spray skirt, and helmet for \$200, I thought I would try it.”

“But, I realized quickly that I jumped in way above my skill set,” said Calhoun. “The people I was with were experienced and running the river at a much higher level. Sitting out of the rapids while everyone else got to play was not fun.”

That experience prompted Calhoun to take courses with a paddling school as well as the American Canoe Association (ACA), where he gained confidence along with expertise.

“Kayaking is a great way to get out and enjoy nature and have social time with friends. It is easy to purchase a kayak at any big box store and head straight to the water,” said Calhoun. “But, the smartest thing you can do is get proper training, because you don’t know what you don’t know, and that can hurt you.”

Calhoun never goes paddling without wearing a life jacket, even May through October when wearing one is not mandatory for anyone over age 12.

“A life jacket is like the seat belt in your car,” said Calhoun. “It is essential for paddling safety.”

American Canoe Association statistics support him: 77 percent of boating accidents are due to drowning, even among

good swimmers, and 84 percent of victims were not wearing life jackets.

In Pennsylvania last year, eight people, including three paddlers, died in boating mishaps, and only one was wearing a life jacket, according to the PFBC data. Reportable accidents—those resulting in serious injury or major damage to watercraft—totaled 55 in 2019, and the majority involved unpowered vessels.

In the past 20 years, 130 people have lost their lives in unpowered boating-related accidents in Pennsylvania. Capsizing was common, and in some cases, alcohol and high water were also factors.

Efforts to educate kayakers have expanded as their ranks have grown to include 11 million enthusiasts today, making kayaking the most popular paddlesport in America.

The majority of kayakers own rather than rent boats, but 79% have received no formal training and among those who have received training, only one third learned from an ACA-certified instructor. Another third learned from a local paddling club, and others were taught by a friend.

“Official boating safety courses, like those taught by the PFBC, are a paddler’s best bet,” said Ryan Walt, PFBC Boating & Watercraft Safety Manager. “Our courses are convenient since we have instructors all around Pennsylvania. You can also take courses online. Both types enable you to earn a Boating Safety Certificate, which is good for a lifetime.”

Organizations such as the Pittsburgh-based, non-profit Venture Outdoors also teach kayak skill-building at local pools, where outdoor enthusiasts learn paddling strokes as well as rescue techniques for coping with a capsized vessel.

At its Kayak Pittsburgh rental concessions on the Allegheny River and at North Park Lake, Allegheny County, Venture Outdoors serves close to 35,000 paddlers a year and more than half are new to the sport.

“If it is their first time on the water, we teach them basic strokes and put them in tandem boats, because it is more difficult to flip if you are in a tandem boat. But, if it rained



photo-Dustin Theobald

Fishing from a kayak is another way to enjoy this paddlesport. Taking a boating safety course enhances skills needed for paddlers.

heavily and the river is running too fast, we do not put anyone on the water,” said Marcus Shoffner, Paddlesports Manager.

Walt suggested paddlers who want to enhance their skills consider joining a paddling club.

“Check weather and conditions, and research the water you are going to be boating on to see if there are low-head dams, which are particularly dangerous, as well as obstacles like fallen trees—strainers—that could threaten safety,” said Walt.

Never kayak alone and file a float plan with estimated departure and arrival times with a friend.

Expect to get wet, and keep extra clothing and a cell phone in a dry bag. “If you capsize, try to stay with your boat,” said Walt. “Never stand up in swift-moving water, because your foot could get trapped under rocks, causing you to lose your balance. Instead, float face-up with your toes pointed downstream.”

For more information on water safety and boating courses, visit www.fishandboat.com. ☐



Never go kayaking without the proper safety equipment.

photo-Chris Calhoun



Recap of 2019 Pennsylvania Boating Fatalities

by *Ryan C. Walt*

Boating & Watercraft Safety Manager

In 2019, eight recreational boating accidents resulted in eight fatalities. This is a decrease of five fatalities from the previous year and below the last 10-year average of 12.9 victims. Factoring in the 2019 fatalities, Pennsylvania's new 10-year average is 12.5 victims. Only one of the eight victims in 2019 were wearing a life jacket at the time of the mishap that resulted in death. Three of the eight victims (38%) were not wearing a life jacket but did have life jackets onboard the boat.

The "Recap of 2019 Pennsylvania Boating Fatalities" is a summary of all fatal recreational boating accidents in the Commonwealth that year. This recap is intended to provide information to illustrate the importance of safe boating practices and help improve boating safety in Pennsylvania.

1. 1 Fatality

Mill Creek, Bucks County

5/29/19, 8:28 p.m., Wednesday

A 16 year old male lost his life when the kayak he was paddling capsized in Mill Creek near Levittown. The victim was kayaking in a flooded grass field adjacent to the waterway, which was flooding an estimated 10 feet above normal stage and running extremely fast due to recent heavy rains. The victim paddled his kayak too close to the swift current and was pulled by the current into the main flow of the creek, where his kayak capsized. The victim was then swept a short distance downstream until he became pinned against a tree, where he remained until first responders were able to extricate him from the water after approximately 5 minutes of being submerged. Upon recovery, the victim was unresponsive and in cardiac arrest. Responders administered CPR and were able to restore pulse, transporting the victim to the hospital where he was later pronounced deceased. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, and it is unknown if the victim had taken a formal boating safety education course. Operator inexperience and coldwater immersion may have been factors.

2. 1 Fatality

Lake Nockamixon, Bucks County

6/4/19, 5:45 p.m., Tuesday

A 43 year old male is deceased as a result of potentially falling overboard in a 14-foot open motorboat on Lake Nockamixon. Kayakers on the lake noticed a boat on the shoreline with the engine still running. The kayakers

signaled to an approaching vessel to inform them of the situation. The signaled vessel approached the victim's boat and determined that it was unoccupied, at which time they called 911. The victim was later found deceased after search efforts. Two wearable life jackets and a throwable personal flotation device were found onboard the boat, but none were worn. The victim had not taken a formal boating safety education course.

3. 1 Fatality

Churchhill Lake, Susquehanna County

6/11/19, 8:10 p.m., Tuesday

A 62 year old male is deceased as a result of capsizing in a 12-foot rowboat on Churchhill Lake. A family member returned home and noticed the victim's vehicle. Assuming the individual was out fishing, the family member went down to the lake (Churchhill Lake) and witnessed the victim's rowboat capsized in the water. The family member attempted to reach the victim by cell phone and by calling out but was unable to get a response. The family member then contacted 911 dispatch. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, however, there was one onboard. The victim did not have any formal boating safety education. Health issues and alcohol use may have been factors.

4. 1 Fatality

Greenwood Hunting Lodge Pond, Lycoming County

6/21/19, 1:00 p.m., Friday

A 68 year old male is deceased as a result of capsizing in a 12-foot rowboat on a pond at the Greenwood Hunting Lodge. The operator and victim decided to switch positions in the boat. The operator and victim both stood up to switch positions, causing a weight transfer, and the boat capsized. The operator was wearing a life jacket, but the victim was not. The operator and the victim attempted to swim the capsized boat to an island in the middle of the pond. The operator was at the stern on the starboard side and the victim was on the port side of the bow. Both the operator and victim were talking while swimming. The operator stated that it got quiet. Then, he saw the victim's feet. The operator called out, and there was no response. The operator grabbed the victim, who was unresponsive, and swam him to the shoreline. He then performed CPR for an undetermined time and traveled back to the lodge, where a member called 911. The victim was not wearing a life jacket and did not have any formal boating safety education.

5. 1 Fatality

Lake Wallenpaupack, Wayne County
7/10/2019, 3:43 p.m., Wednesday

A 64 year old male is deceased as a result of drowning while on a 20-foot open motorboat. The vessel was found drifting on Lake Wallenpaupack with personal belongings onboard, but the operator was missing. The victim was found by local Dive & Rescue departments after searching for several weeks. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, and it is unknown if the victim had taken a formal boating safety education course. Medical conditions may have been a factor.

6. 1 Fatality

Private Pond, Berks County
7/11/2019, 8:16 p.m., Thursday

A 5 year old male is deceased as a result of capsizing in a 6-foot kayak on a small retention pond in Berks County. The victim was playing on the kayak in the pond that is usually less than a foot deep. Due to strong thunderstorms earlier in the day, the pond had an approximate depth of 4 feet when the kayak capsized. Lifesaving measures including CPR were performed on-scene, however, the victim was later pronounced deceased at the hospital. The victim was not wearing a life jacket.

7. 1 Fatality

Allegheny River, Allegheny County
8/8/19, 12:12 p.m., Thursday

A 76 year old male is deceased as a result of falling overboard in an 18-foot pontoon boat on the Allegheny River. Allegheny County 911 was notified that a male fell

into the Allegheny River near the Hulton Bridge, Harmar Township, and did not come back up. EMS and fire services responded to the incident. The pontoon boat was found running with the key in the ignition. The boat was reported to be out of gear. A life jacket (reportedly thrown to the victim from a private dock) was found to be floating in the river with no one in the area. Fire crews deployed a boat and attempted to locate the victim. The victim was later discovered by using sonar and removed from the water. The victim was not wearing a life jacket and was said to not know how to swim. It is unknown if the victim had any formal boating safety education.

8. 1 Fatality

Youghiogheny River, Fayette County
8/31/19, 1:00 p.m., Saturday

A 46 year old male is deceased as a result of capsizing in a 12-foot inflatable raft on the Youghiogheny River while whitewater rafting. A group of four were whitewater rafting when their raft struck a rock and capsized in the area known as Flat Iron Rock. Three of the individuals were able to make it through the rapids, but the victim became trapped by his foot on the bottom of the river. Several attempts were made to free his foot entrapment by individuals on-scene and local raft guides but were unsuccessful. First Responders and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources Rangers from the Ohiopyle Complex arrived on-scene and were able to release and transport the victim, who was later pronounced deceased. The victim was believed to have been underwater for approximately 20- to 30-minutes. The victim was wearing a life jacket, but it is unknown if the victim had any formal boating safety education. ☐



WEAR IT
National Safe Boating Council
Pennsylvania

When boating, remember to . . .

- Wear your life jacket. It floats, even if you don't. Make sure to have it buckled or zipped.
- Never operate your boat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Look around. Avoid a collision by keeping a proper lookout.
- Watch your wake. It is the wave behind your boat and can cause damage.
- Stay away from man-made and natural hazards like dams and strainers (trees in the water).
- Never overload your boat. Keep your weight and gear centered.
- Stop that prop. Turn off your engine before picking up a skier or swimmer.
- Never anchor from the stern (back) of your boat—always at the bow (front).
- Stay with your boat on the upstream side if you capsize.
- Carry onboard a wearable life jacket for each person on a boat.
- Never boat alone. Boating safety increases with numbers.
- Never take your boat over a low-head dam.
- Carry a whistle that is audible for ½-mile.

www.fishandboat.com

2019 Deputy Waterways Conservation Officer Awards



Annual Deputy of the Year Program

Deputy Waterways Conservation Officers (DWCOs) assist Waterways Conservation Officers (WCOs) in the performance of specialized law enforcement duties to carry out the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's mission of protecting, conserving, and enhancing the Commonwealth's aquatic resources.

Deputies work long hours, usually on weekends and holidays, and at times by themselves. As volunteers, they receive a small stipend to help with expenses; however, they are not otherwise compensated.

One DWCO is awarded the prestigious DWCO of the Year Award annually. Deputies are nominated by a WCO or other DWCOs in each law enforcement region. The Deputy of the Year is then selected from six nominees by a committee comprised of law enforcement and other supervisors at headquarters. The Deputy of the Year is given an engraved badge plaque to honor the achievement.

The six region nominees are reviewed for a final selection of the Statewide Deputy of the Year Award winner. ☐

photo-DWCO David Twoey



DWCO E. Lawrence Krest (center), the Northcentral Region's Deputy of the Year Award Nominee, received the 2019 Statewide Deputy of the Year Award. Pictured with DWCO Krest are WCO Emmett Kyler (left) and Executive Director Tim Schaeffer.

photo-DWCO David Twoey



DWCO Robert C. Houser Jr. (center) is the Southcentral Region's Deputy of the Year Award Nominee. Pictured with DWCO Houser Jr. are Captain Anthony Quarracino Jr. (left) and Executive Director Tim Schaeffer.

photo-PFBC archives



DWCO Andrew R. Panessa (center) is the Northeast Region's Deputy of the Year Award Nominee. Pictured with DWCO Panessa are Executive Director Tim Schaeffer (left) and WCO Robert A. Plumb.

photo-Lieutenant Colonel Lawrence Farlong



DWCO Paul V. Marchese (center) is the Southeast Region's Deputy of the Year Award Nominee. Pictured with DWCO Marchese are WCO Robert J. Bonney (left) and Sergeant Jeffrey R. Sabo.



DWCO Donald J. Benczkowski (center) is the Northwest Region's Deputy of the Year Award Nominee. Pictured with DWCO Benczkowski are Executive Director Tim Schaeffer (left) and Colonel Corey L. Britcher.



DWCO John B. Toki (left) is the Southwest Region's Deputy of the Year Award Nominee. Pictured with DWCO Toki is Captain John G. Hopkins.

Years of Service Recognition

During the annual awards presentations, the Commission recognized the following DWCOs for their years of service.

Northeast Region

15 years: Peter J. Napoli Jr.

Northcentral Region

10 years: Chriss L. Brower

25 years: David W. Twoey

30 years: David A. Martin

40 years: E. Lawrence Krest

Northwest Region

10 years: Jayson M. Hoovler and Daniel E. Reiber

15 years: Anthony Rao Jr.

Deputy Retirement: Michael J. Reed

Southwest Region

35 years: Stephen J. Kutchman

Becoming a DWCO

DWCOs are recruited from all walks of life. All DWCOs share a common commitment: to safeguard the public along our waterways and to protect, conserve, and enhance the Commonwealth's aquatic resources. Many DWCOs use their training and experience to move to other law enforcement occupations.

Anyone interested in learning more about the DWCO position should contact the nearest Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Law Enforcement Region Office. These offices are listed on the Commission's website at www.fishandboat.com and in the *Pennsylvania Fishing Summary*.



Always Wear Your Life Jacket

Make sure the life jacket fits

For a life jacket to work properly, not only does it need to be on your body, it should fit properly as well. A properly fitting life jacket is more comfortable (meaning you are more likely to wear it) and is a legal requirement. More importantly, it functions better. Life jackets that are too large can ride up or even come off when you are in the water. For more information, go to www.fishandboat.com/Boat/BoatingRegulations.

Tonguetied Minnow



Cutlip Minnow



EYE-PICKER

by Rob Criswell

photos by the author

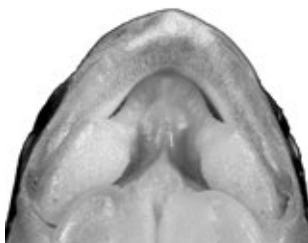
Two nearly identical minnows ply similar waters and habitats in Pennsylvania streams and rivers but in different drainages. These fish look like typical minnows, with stout, robust bodies that are cylindrical in cross section. Both minnows are generally a drab olive-green to brownish above, fading to silvery-white below but may have a pearly to purplish cast and an obscure lateral band.

However, flip either of these minnows on its back, and it sports atypical features. The lower lip of each is strangely structured and is responsible for their unusual names—Tonguetied Minnow and Cutlip Minnow. The genus name, *Exoglossum*, means outside tongue, and refers to a modification of the lower jaw. The lower jaw of the Tonguetied Minnow is pointed, with a triangular central lobe and a smaller lobe on each side. The jaw of the Cutlip Minnow is more highly specialized, with three distinct lobes. The lateral lobes appear fleshy, but the central one is bony.

The Tonguetied Minnow may be found in the Genesee and upper Allegheny river drainages, and the Cutlip Minnow occurs throughout the Delaware, Potomac, and Susquehanna river systems. Both species prefer waterways varying from medium-sized creeks to small rivers with gravel and plenty of cover in slow to medium currents. While the Cutlip Minnow is fond of warmer streams, the Tonguetied Minnow only occurs in cool waters such as those stocked with trout.

Aside from the difference in jaw structures, these minnows are nearly impossible to tell apart. The Tonguetied

Minnow has a small barbel at each corner of the mouth and is slightly smaller, rarely exceeding 5 inches, while the Cutlip Minnow lacks the barbels and may approach 6 inches in length.



Lower jaw of a Cutlip Minnow

Both species construct roundish nests approximately

18 inches in diameter and 3- to 4-inches high. These nests are usually situated near a boulder or log and are comprised of pebbles less than 3/4-inch in diameter. The pebbles in these nests are nearly uniform in size and may reflect a limit in the size of materials a fish can carry with its modified jaw. Males, the sole builders, carry pebbles to the nest at a rate of 6-per-minute, and from as far away as 20 feet.

Spawning occurs during May-July, with females producing up to 2,000 eggs. Offspring become sexually mature in 2 years, and seldom live past 4 four years.

These minnows have a varied menu of aquatic insects and crustaceans. One theory to explain the unusual mouth parts is to aid in dislodging snails and insect larva, and to crush mollusk shells and caddisfly cases.

The lip structure of the Cutlip Minnow also permits it to engage in a macabre behavior that has earned it the loathsome local name among bait anglers of “Eye Picker”. When it is crowded in a bait bucket or aquarium, or during low water conditions in the wild, it has the nasty habit of plucking the eyes of fish of other species. It appears that the bony middle lobe of the lower jaw strikes just below the victim’s eyeball, which is gouged out. A single strike is all it takes and may result in the death of the hapless fish. Sometimes, the aggressive Cutlip Minnow eats the detached eye. The Tonguetied Minnow is not known to engage in such behavior, probably because its jaw is not sufficiently modified.

Cutlip Minnows are common over most of their range in Pennsylvania, although neither it nor the Tonguetied Minnow is frequently found in large numbers. The Tonguetied Minnow, on the other hand, has declined over much of its original range, which is now fragmented into three isolated populations. Those isolated in the New River drainage in North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia, and in the Miami River system in Ohio have experienced recent declines. The Genesee and upper Allegheny population in Pennsylvania and in New York seems stable, but these isolated populations point to a serious overall decline. Both species show a preference for fairly clear waters and decline where siltation is persistent.

Because Pennsylvania harbors a significant proportion of the global population of both species, these minnows have been classified as “responsibility species” in the 2015-2025 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan, a proactive conservation blueprint developed to prevent the decline of both common and rare wildlife species in Pennsylvania. ☐

Online Resources Available for Paddlers and Boaters

During a time when many Pennsylvanians are unable to, or are being advised not to leave their homes, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) encourages boaters and paddlers to take advantage of online, educational resources.

Many of these resources are free of charge, while some providers charge nominal fees for services. This online learning library can be accessed through a computer, phone, or tablet. These online educational experiences will help the entire family learn to be safe boaters and direct them to the best local boating or paddling destinations.

Boating Safety Education Certificate and Boater Safety Education Courses

A Boating Safety Education Certificate (BSEC) is required by the PFBC for anyone who operates a personal watercraft, and for those born on or after January 1, 1982 who operate a boat powered by motors greater than 25 horsepower. Although in-classroom boating courses are not taking place at this time, boaters can earn a BSEC through online courses. There are two courses approved by the PFBC.

The courses cost \$34.50 each. Those who successfully complete the course receive a temporary certificate valid for 60 days from date of issue and can receive a permanent certificate from the PFBC for an additional \$10 fee. At this time, please allow additional time for processing and delivery.

Paddlesports online learning

While not required, the PFBC recommends that anyone paddling a canoe, kayak, or stand-up paddleboard complete basic safety training from an accredited source such as the American Canoe Association or certified PFBC

instructors. There are several online resources available to increase paddling knowledge.

BoaterExam.com: This Free Paddle Sports Safety Course includes kid-friendly animations and interactive quizzes, and is sanctioned by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators and recognized by the United States Coast Guard.

AmericanCanoe.org: The American Canoe Association offers online resources and an online course for \$24.50.

Other online resources

The Pennsylvania Boating Handbook can be downloaded for free on the PFBC website at www.fishandboat.com/Boat/BoatingRegulations/Pages/BoatingHandbook.aspx. This handbook provides information on rules of the water, boating etiquette, and regulatory requirements.

The PFBC also has resources for younger boaters. Online issues of the agency's quarterly newsletter for kids, *PLAY*, can be found at www.fishandboat.com. Each *PLAY* newsletter includes kid-friendly articles and activities related to boating, fishing, or conservation topics.

Those with an expired boat registration can renew it online through the Outdoor Shop at www.pa.wildlifelicenses.com.

Purchase your launch permit online. If you plan to paddle from a PFBC boat access or enjoy a PFBC or Pennsylvania state park lake, all unpowered boats using these facilities must have either a launch permit or be properly registered. PFBC launch permits can be purchased online at the Outdoor Shop. Single-year or two-year permits are available for purchase.

Find great places to paddle with the PFBC's interactive maps. These maps will lead you to access points and water trails near you.



On February 19, 2020, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Sergeant Walter Buckman received the Prestigious Distinguished Service Award for "Environmental Leadership" at a joint session of the Lackawanna Valley Trout Unlimited and the Lackawanna River Conservation Association. Sergeant Buckman received this award for his years of service and leadership to the 2020 River of the Year—the Lackawanna River and its watershed. Pictured are (left to right) Jacob Bliss, President Lackawanna Valley Trout Unlimited, Sergeant Buckman, and Commissioner Charlie Charlesworth.

photo-courtesy of Commissioner Charlesworth and Sergeant Buckman

CONVENIENT MULTI-YEAR FISHING

Anglers can purchase a license for three years, five years, or ten years with just one purchase. That's right, no more remembering at the last minute to buy a license before that weekend fishing opportunity with friends and family.

www.pa.wildlifelicense.com



2020 FISH-FOR-FREE-DAYS!

Sunday, May 24

Independence Day, Saturday, July 4

No fishing license is needed to fish on either of these days. 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

ATTENTION ANGLERS

As of April 1, 2020,
when fishing
with bait for any
species of fish in
the Pennsylvania
portion of the Tidal

Delaware River Estuary, the use of a non-offset (inline)
circle hook is required.



Circle hook



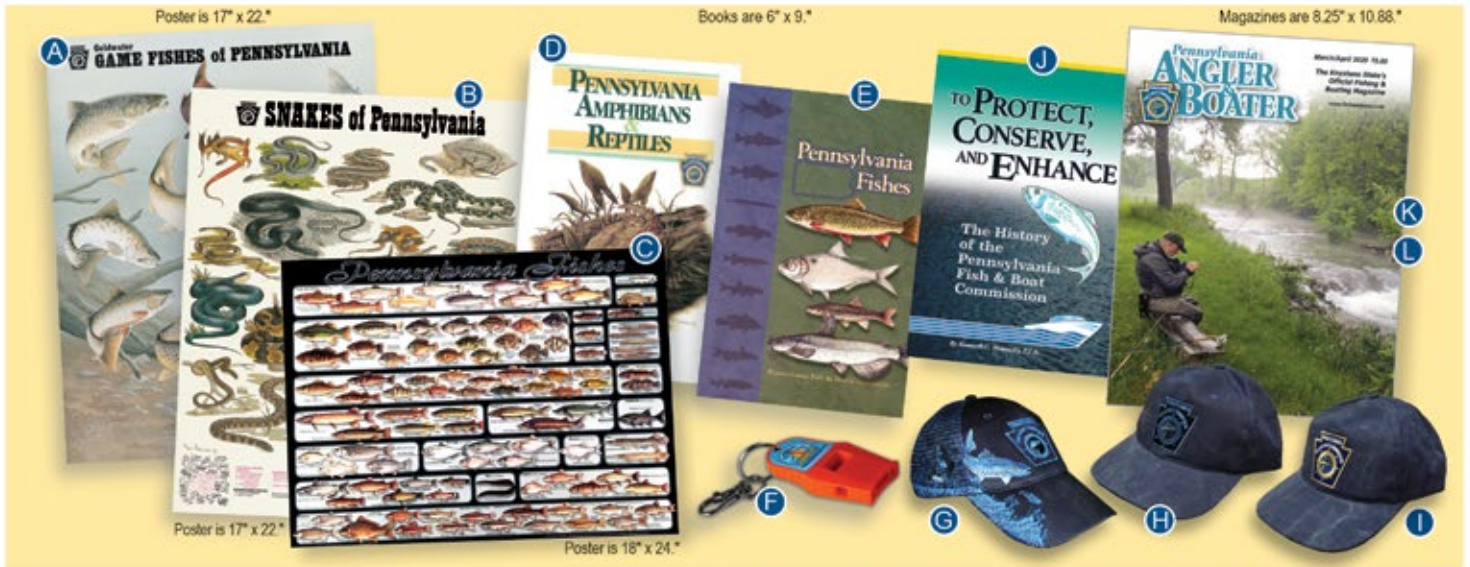
J-hook



Treble hook



www.fishandboat.com



	Price	Quantity	Subtotal
A Set of: Coldwater Fishes, Coolwater/Warmwater Fishes, Migratory Fishes, Miscellaneous Fishes, Panfishes, Forage Fishes (6 posters)	\$ 9.43	_____	_____
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C Set of: Pennsylvania Fishes Wall Charts (2 posters)	\$ 4.60	_____	_____
D PA Amphibians & Reptiles Book (172 pages)	\$ 9.43	_____	_____
E PA Fishes Book (172 pages)	\$ 9.43	_____	_____
F "Wear It!" Safety Whistle	\$ 5.66	_____	_____
G Navy Embroidered Hat - non-taxable	\$14.00	_____	_____
H Denim Blue Hat with Blue Logo - non-taxable	\$14.00	_____	_____
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	\$ 35.01 - \$ 60.00	\$ 6.95
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	\$ 150.01 - \$ 200.00	\$ 12.95
	\$ 200.01 - \$ 250.00	\$ 14.95
	\$ 250.01 and above	\$ 16.95

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Upon purchase of a fishing license, a .pdf file containing an image of your license is provided, which can be saved to your mobile device or computer. Similarly, with each boating related transaction, customers will receive a digital receipt that serves as a temporary permit or registration valid for immediate use.



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New Striped Bass Fishing Regulations for the Delaware River and Estuary



As of April 1, 2020, the seasons, sizes, and creel limits for Striped Bass have changed.

- Delaware River and Estuary (Tidal) - From Pennsylvania line upstream to Calhoun Street Bridge including all waters defined as the Delaware Estuary
- Delaware River (Non-Tidal) - From Calhoun Street Bridge upstream



Circle hook



J-hook



Treble hook

Seasons, Sizes, and Creel Limits

Delaware River and Estuary (Tidal)

Season Type	Seasons	Sizes	Daily Limit
Tidal Season	January 1 to March 31 and June 1 to December 31	28 to less than 35 inches	1
Spring Tidal Season	April 1 to May 31	21 to less than 24 inches	2

When fishing with bait for any species of fish, the use of a non-offset (inline) circle hook is required.

Delaware River (Non-Tidal)

Season Type	Seasons	Sizes	Daily Limit
Non-Tidal Season	Open Year-round	28 to less than 35 inches	1

When fishing with bait for any species of fish, the use of a non-offset (inline) circle hook is recommended.



Angler's Notebook

by Jerry Bush

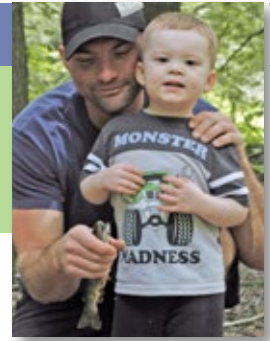


photo-Jerry Bush

Children's fishing events in Pennsylvania typically occur during May and June. A parent or guardian must have a license to assist a child in fishing.

Splitshot weights made of lead, brass, tin, or tungsten are important for anglers who fish Pennsylvania streams. Often, placing bait or lures in the strike zone is more important than the selection of lure. Therefore, various sizes of splitshot is necessary. Some splitshot weights are simple balls of material with a slit cut into the side where the line is crimped. These smooth, round balls sink well, and the simple design helps avoid snags. However, once crimped, these splitshot weights cannot be removed without cutting line. Removable splitshot weights are manufactured with butterfly tabs protruding from the sides. Pinching the tabs together opens the slit when repositioning or replacing the weight.

Crappie anglers often use fishing rods that measure 10- to 18-feet in length when fishing in clear water or shallow water. These rods are also useful when seeking Bluegills while using jig baits in clear water or shallow water. Extremely long rods are useful for shore anglers, allowing anglers to place bait in front of fish that may be out of reach. Most long rods offer extraordinary feel, so light bites can be detected. However, some long rods are intended for trolling to keep lines and baits away from spinning propellers. Those rods are stiffer and offer less notification of soft biting fish when jigging.

Stumps of tree trunks are bass holding structures. "Stump hopping" can be productive for bass anglers. Keep a minimum of three rods and reels ready for use. Equip at least two rods with crankbaits of different colors, and rig the other rod with a jig, tipped with soft plastic bait. Prevent the tip of the jig's hook from poking through the soft bait to avoid snags. If conditions are cloudy, cast the first crankbait several times beyond the stump, and reel it each time it is close to the stump. If a bass does not take the first lure, repeat using the rod and reel with the second crankbait. On sunny days, buzz the crankbaits along the shady side of structures. If the crankbaits are unfruitful, move in closer and drop the bait-tipped jig near the roots of the stump.

Drifting should be considered when fishing in a river or stream from a canoe or kayak. Paddle only enough to propel the watercraft toward the structure, but stop paddling well before reaching it with a goal of allowing bait to pass through the targeted area at a current-matching speed. Consider deploying a drift sock to slow the drift. Drifting must be done safely. Never allow the watercraft or drift aid to be dragged into or against any structure that could pin the watercraft and flip it. Even slow currents may be powerful enough to pin a strong adult.

Fishin' from the Kitchen

Panfish nuggets with dipping sauces

by Wayne Phillips

Crispy panfish nuggets are sure to please both young and old.

Ingredients for four servings:

- 16 ounces boneless, skinless panfish fillets
- 1 cup flour
- 1 Tsp baking powder
- 1 egg yolk
- Pinch of salt
- 2 cups beer or club soda
- 2 cups canola oil
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- Dipping sauces of your choice

Procedure

Cut the panfish fillets into bite size pieces. Mix together flour, baking powder, egg yolk, and salt. Add a cup of liquid, and whisk until smooth. Add another cup of liquid, and whisk until smooth. The mixture should be like pancake batter. Heat the canola oil in a deep sauce pot until it reaches 350 degrees F. Batter the fish. Fry, a few pieces at a time, until golden brown. Drain the fish on a paper towel. Season with salt and black pepper. Spoon sauces into small containers.

Serve

Place a container of sauce on a plate, and surround it with golden nuggets.

Tips

Using a carbonated liquid helps keep the batter light and allows it to become crispy. Using beer adds more flavor. The darker, heavier beers pack lots of extra flavor.

Using commercial sauces is quick and easy. Children will love ranch dressing, ketchup, or a mixture of ketchup and mayonnaise. For adults, try a mild hot sauce, Asian sweet chili sauce, tartar sauce, or tomatillo sauce.



photo-Wayne Phillips

Dunham's

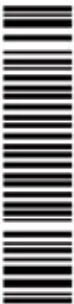
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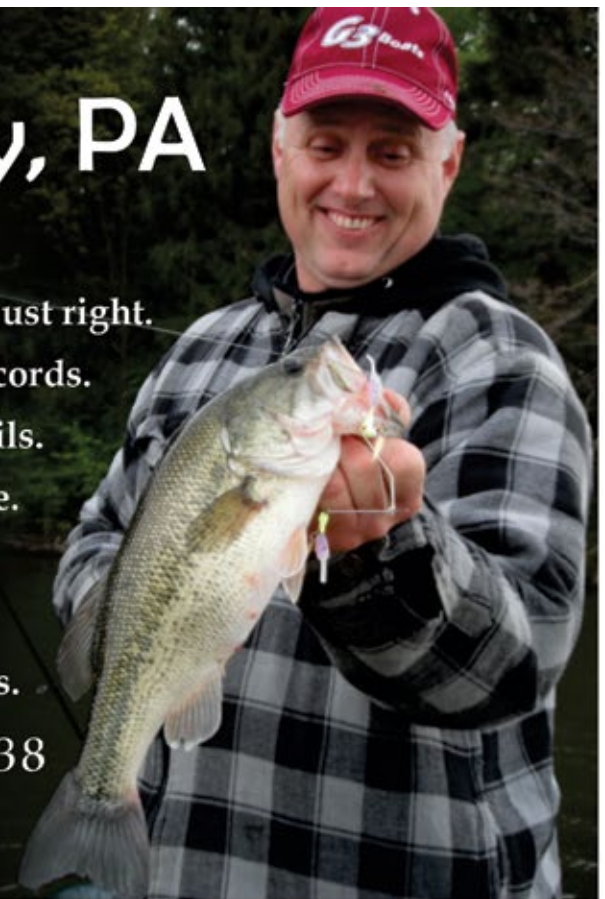
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CAST & CAUGHT



Vinny Szyborski, Age 6, caught and released this Bluegill while fishing on Cross Creek, Washington 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. 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



Chase Adams, age 8, caught these trout using powerbait while fishing Wiconisco Creek, Dauphin County.



Jaxson Suttie caught and released this 4-pound Largemouth Bass using a nightcrawler while fishing Lake Galena, Bucks County.



Joshua Kalin, Tafton, caught this 31-pound, 41-inch Striped Bass on a tip-up using live bait while fishing Lake Wallenpaupack, Pike and Wayne counties.



Jason Vodhanel, Canfield, OH, caught and released this 21-inch Rainbow Trout while fishing Kinzua Creek, McKean County.