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The Keystone State's
Official Fishing &
Boating Magazine

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Pennsylvania ANGLER & BOATER

The logo of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is a shield-shaped emblem. It features a blue border with the text "PENNSYLVANIA FISH & BOAT COMMISSION" around the perimeter. Inside the shield, there is a circular seal containing a detailed illustration of a fish, likely a walleye, swimming in water.

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- **Fish-for-Free Days**
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- **Opening Day of Bass**
June 12





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Magazine Staff

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Graphic Design—Andrea Feeney

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Regular Contributors

John Allen Tyler Frantz Ralph Scherder
Vic Attardo Chris Gorsuch Christian A. Shane
Darl Black Carl Haensel Deborah Weisberg
Marilyn Black Jeff Knapp Jeff Wolesslagle
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717-705-7835 • E-mail: ra-pfbcmagazine@pa.gov

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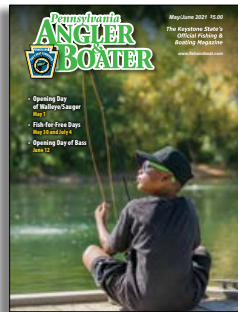
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On the cover

As part of The Mayfly Project, this boy is enjoying the day fly fishing. The Mayfly Project is a 501(c)(3) organization that uses fly fishing as a catalyst to mentor children in foster care. Their mission is to support children in foster care through fly fishing and introduce them to their local water ecosystems, with a hope that connecting them to a rewarding hobby will provide an opportunity for foster children to have fun, feel supported, and develop a meaningful connection with the outdoors. Read more on page 14.

Photo by Emma Brown.



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

Conservation Through Cooperation

by *Timothy D. Schaeffer*

Executive Director

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

The title of this column in the January/February issue of *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* was "Thank You for Fishing in 2020." That article was intended to thank the nearly 1 million anglers who took to the water in 2020 as a way to escape and find a sense of joy and normalcy in the midst of the craziest year that many of us have ever lived through.

That gratitude is sincere. On behalf of our Board of Commissioners, Boating Advisory Board, and staff, thank you for choosing to fish and boat in Pennsylvania last year and for joining us again in 2021. In so doing, you directly support the conservation and recreation work that forms the backbone of Pennsylvania's fishing and boating opportunities and the aquatic resources that sustain the ecological health and quality of life here in the Commonwealth.

The purpose of the column this time is to publicly thank the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's (PFBC's) phenomenally dedicated staff for all of their hard work over the past year under incredibly trying circumstances. The commissioners and I thank our entire team for keeping us moving forward, delivering top notch customer service, and displaying an unyielding dedication to the resources entrusted to our care.

The agency's collective 2020 accomplishments were recently highlighted in the annual report we delivered to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Game and Fisheries Committee. To read the report and also view the quarterly reports documenting progress in implementing the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan, please visit www.fishandboat.com. The examples laid out in the annual report are just a few of the many ways that our staff delivered for the Commonwealth.

It would be impossible to distill everything we achieved into one page, and highlighting some accomplishments may be misinterpreted as placing greater significance on one than another. All these accomplishments matter and contribute to meaningful progress.

So, rather than focus on a few examples, I will emphasize the collaborative spirit and culture that is permeating the agency and seemingly gaining momentum on a daily basis.

Thank you to every member of our 411 person team for thinking beyond the traditional lines on the organization



photo: Samantha Warner

Benner Spring State Fish Hatchery Foreman Terry Emel (left) loading Rainbow Trout with Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Executive Director Tim Schaeffer. Manager Doug Hess (background) is "crowding" the fish to be loaded. This truck was destined for Standing Stone Creek, Huntingdon County. Tim Schaeffer assisted WCO Kyle Robinson and Fish Culturist Samantha Warner with the stocking later that same day.

chart. While clear lines of accountability and reporting structures are important and needed, it is exciting to see the level of appreciation for working across those lines for the greater good of the agency and the people and resources we serve.

At the end of the day, an angler, boater, or fish likely does not know which division made which decision or implemented a certain project. What they see is that the PFBC did something with their best interest in mind. That something is invariably better if it is conceptualized, developed, and implemented with the input and collaboration of different parts of the agency. Such an approach is playing out across Pennsylvania, yielding meaningful and long-lasting results.

That spirit of collaboration extends beyond the agency and applies to our relationships with the other agencies and conservation allies without whom we would never be able to achieve our common goals.

To our staff, thank you for following the tenet of what our long-time and valued partners at the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (www.pecpa.org) coined "conservation through cooperation."

To the readers of this magazine and your fellow anglers and boaters, please know that the PFBC is working together for you, our aquatic resources, and everyone who is rediscovering (or discovering for the first time) all that Pennsylvania has to offer.

So, please get outside and have a fun, relaxing, and safe summer. As our friends at the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation say—the water is open for everyone!

Tioga-Hammond Lakes are a Great Place to Visit



by Linda Stager
photos by the author

At the tiny precipice overlook, just outside the village of Tioga, Tioga County, eagles glide past, often at eye level, sometimes even below eye level. Ospreys take to the sky to compete with the eagles for fishing rights. Shore birds and waterfowl gather on the water surface far below.

The western facing view is great at sunset. But, the sunrise is just as spectacular here. The Pennsylvania Welcome Center sits high on a mountainside overlooking the scene.

The handicapped accessible overlook, at the end of a short concrete pathway, is small, consisting only of a concrete platform surrounded by chain link fencing. Still, visitors can gaze south straight across Tioga Lake and gaze west past the channel below to Hammond Lake. Looking down, they can take in the sights below the outlook, where a narrow deep chasm is carved from the native bedrock.

For those who are interested, at this spot, visitors stand atop an engineering project that rivals the best. Born of necessity after the infamous statewide floods in 1972, two federal flood control lakes, known as the Tioga-Hammond Lakes, were built in Tioga County in 1978.

Tioga Lake stretches from near Mansfield, Tioga County, northward along the Tioga River to the dam constructed 14 miles away just before the town of Tioga. The narrow, north-south valley follows future Interstate-99, past Lambs Creek, Mill Cove, and the Welcome Center (accessible from the southbound lane only).

Hammond Lake stretches 3 miles from near the former village of Hammond, along Crooked Creek north-eastward to almost Tioga. This great valley runs along PA Route 287 and the railbed of the now Tioga Central Railroad.

Both lakes converge at the overlook. The chasm below the overlook is an engineered design that joins both lakes by a 2,700-foot connecting weir and channel. During flood stage periods, both lakes can be controlled by the mechanisms built into this bedrock and the gated tailrace of Tioga Dam. Most of the time, water from Hammond Lake flows into the Tioga Lake and through Tioga Lake dam tailrace, but during periods of extremely high water, the waters of Tioga Lake flow backwards into Hammond Lake, because there is more storage capacity in that lake, and the lakes become one.

Millions of residents downstream of the dams from southern New York state, throughout Pennsylvania, and to the Chesapeake Bay are protected in part from flooding because of these dams.

Although Tioga County may be home to one of the top geological engineered wonders of Pennsylvania, its twin dams and the resulting Tioga and Hammond lakes create fantastic recreational opportunities for locals and visitors.

Each lake has its own separate traits. Tioga River has a long history of acid mine drainage pollution from the deep coal and strip mines upstream. The dam project, although primarily for flood prevention purposes, tackled the pollution problem. Although there has been some mitigation of the pollution since construction, the waters of Tioga Lake still sometimes display the tell-tale blue-green coloring of acid mine drainage becoming neutralized by alkaline waters.

Likewise, by channeling the alkaline waters of Hammond Lake through the connecting channel of the two lakes, into the acid-tinged waters of Tioga Lake, the Army Corps of Engineers can control the quality of the water immediately south of the dam as well as downstream of it.

Aquatic life in Tioga Lake has steadily improved since the construction of the dams. Although not as well-known as Hammond Lake, Tioga Lake provides the opportunity to fish for Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, hybrid Striped Bass, Walleyes, catfish, crappies, and perch. There are even occasional reports of trout being caught at Tioga Lake, likely migrants from Mill Creek, which flows into the lake, and other stocked trout waters in the watershed.

The 498-acre Tioga Lake provides other great recreational opportunities. Lambs Creek Recreation Area, located on the southern end of the lake, near Mansfield, provides a boat launch, a nearby 3.5-mile hike-and-bike path, and picnic areas. Water skiing, kayaking, and tubing are popular on this lake. The view of Lambs Creek highway bridge, which crosses the lake at Mill Cove, is especially beautiful viewed from the water. An eagle's nest is not far from Mill Cove.

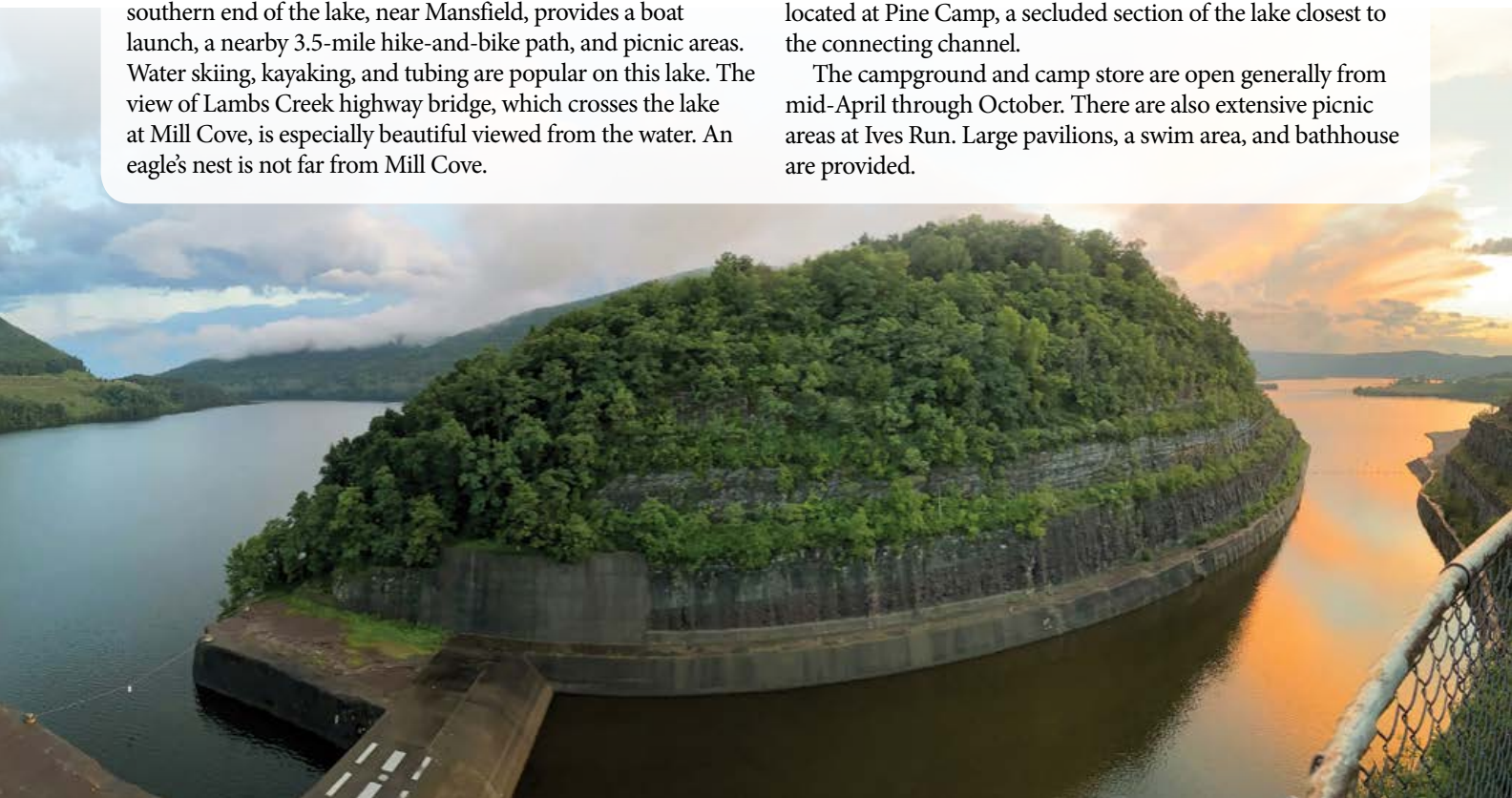


A resident eagle sits on its sentinal branch at Hammond Lake, Tioga County.

Likewise, Tioga Lake's conjoined-twin lake, Hammond Lake, is just as pretty and perhaps more peaceful. It is much wider, and most days, the 640-acre lake is glimmerglass-smooth with less wind than Tioga Lake. A variety of boats are often on the lake, during the day and at night.

Camping opportunities are located on Hammond Lake with the Army Corps of Engineers managing an almost 200-site campground on the eastern shore of the lake at Ives Run. Family campsites include full hook-up facilities. Group sites are available. A primitive lakefront camping area is also located at Pine Camp, a secluded section of the lake closest to the connecting channel.

The campground and camp store are open generally from mid-April through October. There are also extensive picnic areas at Ives Run. Large pavilions, a swim area, and bathhouse are provided.



This panorama photo shows both lakes at once from the connecting channel overlook.



Anglers on Hammond Lake, Tioga County.

Several hiking opportunities await visitors at Hammond Lake. The four trails here vary in length and intensity, but all trails offer a fresh look at the area. The 2019 Pennsylvania Trail of the Year, the Mid State Trail, also passes through Ives Run on its way north from Maryland to New York.

But Hammond Lake stands out for its varied fishing experiences. Fishing boats are often seen along the shoreline in quiet coves and along some of its outcroppings. A variety of fishing tournaments are held throughout the year. Fishing for Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, and Striped Bass is popular. But Channel Catfish, Walleyes, and crappies are also caught here.

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) held numerous stockings of various panfish and gamefish over the years at Hammond Lake, and the fish populations are thriving. According to the PFBC, more than 78,000



Visitors enjoying fireworks at Ives Run on Hammond Lake.

fingerling Walleyes and nearly 36,000 hybrid Striped Bass were released in Hammond Lake between 2014 and 2020.

Whether a visit to the Tioga-Hammond Lakes is for a day or a week, there is much to do, especially for anglers and/or boaters. Stay in the campground, launch a boat from any of the multiple launches, and try your hand at catching a big fish. The state-record crappie was caught on Hammond Lake several years ago, so you never know what awaits a fishing line.

While visiting the twin lakes, be sure to stop at the connecting channel overlook for a stellar view of the engineering wonder. Two dams, two lakes, and a connecting channel are a unique solution to flood control and pollution mitigation for Tioga County but also for a huge watershed downstream. ☑



A fantastic view of Hammond Lake.



photo-courtesy of Outdoor Afro

Outdoor Afro



by Charles Cantella

“Outdoor Afro has become the nation’s leading, cutting edge network that celebrates and inspires black connections and leadership in nature. We are a national not for profit organization with leadership networks around the country. With nearly 90 leaders in 42 cities from around the country, we connect thousands of people to nature experiences, who are changing the face of conservation. So come out in nature with us, or be a partner to help us grow our work so that we can help lead the way for inclusion in outdoor recreation, nature, and conservation for all!”
www.outdoorafro.com.

What is Outdoor Afro?

If you have never heard of Outdoor Afro, it is my pleasure to introduce you to this forward thinking organization, which has been referred to as “Quite possibly one of the most progressive organizations I have ever had the opportunity to be a part of” (Kevin B. from www.outdoorafro.com). This organization, which promotes getting black people more actively

involved in outdoor activities, is rapidly changing the demographic of who is outside enjoying nature. Outdoor Afro is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization based out of Oakland, California, with “networks” around the country. According to their online presence, “Outdoor Afro is a community that reconnects African-Americans with natural spaces and one another through recreational activities such as camping, hiking, biking, birding, fishing, gardening, skiing, and more. We use social media to create interest communities, events, and to help shift the visual representation of who gets outdoors.”

History of Outdoor Afro

The founder and CEO of Outdoor Afro is Rue Mapp, and the organization shares opportunities and chances to build a broader community through outdoor activities. Mapp’s work has garnered national support and recognition. Since the program’s inception as a blog in October of 2009, Mapp and her work has generated national recognition. Starting as a grassroots blog, Outdoor Afro is now nationally sponsored

and recognized for addressing the need to support and encourage diversity in the outdoors and in outdoor sports.

In 2010, Mapp was invited to the White House during the Obama administration to participate in the America's Great Outdoor Conference. She was also appointed to be an officer of the Stewardship Council's Foundation for Youth Investment to oversee its grant-making program from 2010-2012. Mapp was actively involved in First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" initiative. Twice she was chosen by The Root 100 as one of the most influential African Americans in the country (2012 and 2016), and Family Circle Magazine named Mapp as one of America's Most Influential Moms. But, these are just the tip of the list of accomplishments and accolades for Mapp and for Outdoor Afro. To learn more about Mapp, visit www.ruemapp.com.

Read all about it

Outdoor Afro has progressively used social media to encourage people of color to organize, promote, and participate in outdoor activities. In a time when many of the more traditional outdoor groups eschew the use of technology, Outdoor Afro embraces this technology. This effective use of technology has drawn national attention. In a December 5, 2014 article in the Wall Street Journal, writer Hannah Bloch writes of Mapp who was "...a Girl Scout who loved spending time on her family's ranch...there she learned to hunt and fish, went on long bike rides,



photo-courtesy of Outdoor Afro

Outdoor Afro Pittsburgh whitewater rafting the Youghiogheny River.

watched tadpoles turn into frogs, and spent hours exploring the woods." The article goes on to say how as a young girl she enjoyed sharing nature with her cousins and family friends. It seems like she is still sharing her love of all things outdoors. Outdoor Afro has also been featured in *Backpacker Magazine*, *Seattle Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Ebony Magazine*, *NPR*, and now *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater*, among others.

Outdoor Afro—Pittsburgh

In western Pennsylvania, the Outdoor Afro chapter is headed by Kimberly Refosco. Refosco grew up with a love for the outdoors. As the leader of the Pittsburgh Outdoor Afro community, she helps others explore and enjoy nature through a variety of organized events. These events may include hikes, kayaking, camping, and fishing trips. Outdoor Afro Pittsburgh tries to schedule at least one activity per month. Here is the link to a podcast, *The Slaw*, which is part of <https://pittsburgh.verylocal.com>. In the interview, Refosco talks about Outdoor Afro Pittsburgh, what the organization does, and how to get involved. "You can enjoy outside where ever you are," said Refosco. ☐

photo-Kimberly Refosco



Kimberly Refosco's daughter caught this fish on Keystone Lake, Armstrong County.

Connect with Outdoor Afro

www.outdoorafro.com

Outdoor Afro can also be found on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.



Stand-up Paddleboarding

by **Bob Frye**

photos by the author

My wife and I were in our kayaks, waiting for our younger son. He was using a rented stand-up paddleboard from a state park concessionaire.

He eventually came toward us on his knees.

“So far so good,” I said. “Now, you have to stand up. Did the rental guy give you any advice on how to do it?”

“Well, sort of,” my son replied. “He said ‘stay in the middle or you will fall off.’”

That was it. Our son was told to sink or swim—or maybe float or swim—he floated. We all did, on that and a few subsequent trips. By season’s end, we bought paddleboards of our own.

That hardly makes us unique. According to the Outdoor Foundation, the research arm of the Outdoor

Industry Association, participation in stand-up paddleboarding more than tripled between 2010 and 2018. No other outdoor sport grew faster.

“Currently, 3.5 million Americans participate in the activity, using a board and paddle to create endless possibilities—surfing, racing, cruising, fishing, yoga, and even taking loved ones or pets for a ride,” the report reads.

It is no wonder. Paddleboards are fun and easier to use than many think. Here is how to get started.

Pick a paddleboard

Paddleboards come in all shapes and sizes, with different boards suited for different situations. If you plan to spend your time cruising or fishing on calm lakes, a 10- to 12-foot-long board 30 inches or wider provides a stable platform. Choose one rated to handle the combined weight of you and your gear.

Solid paddleboards are more stable and cruise more efficiently. Inflatables are easier to store and carry if space at home or in your vehicle is a concern.

Complete your outfit

Legally considered boats, paddleboards are regulated like kayaks and canoes. If you plan to use one on a state park or Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission lake, for instance, you need a launch permit.

You also need a life jacket and a leash that attaches to the paddleboard on one end and your ankle on the other.

When choosing a paddle, make sure it fits. Stand it in front of you with your arm raised above your head. The top should reach your wrist.

Other gear to consider includes a safety whistle, a dry bag or box, and fishing gear.

Practice getting on

The easiest place to get on a paddleboard is in calm water out of the wind, along a beach or a gently sloping shore. Wade into the water until you are knee deep, so the paddleboard fin does not hit bottom.

With yourself between the paddleboard and shore, place your paddle perpendicular across the board at about its midpoint. Pull one knee up onto the board. Then, pull the other knee up.

If it is your first time, paddle from that kneeling position until you get a feel for how the board handles.

Standing up

Start on your hands and knees, gripping the paddle crosswise across the board in front of you. Draw your knees up, one at a time, keeping your hands on the board, until you are on your toes.

Next, press up—with your eyes on the horizon rather than staring down at your feet for balance—while keeping your back straight until you are upright.

Once standing, move your feet to the board's "sweet spot". Neither the front nor the back of the board should ride too high out of the water.

Some paddleboards have spots showing where your feet should be positioned. If yours does not, stand about where the carry handle is located.

Start paddling

Did you ever paddle a canoe? The technique here is the same. Your left hand will be on the paddle's T-grip



When standing up on a paddleboard, put your feet in the "sweet spot," that place where neither the front nor the rear of the paddleboard rides too high out of the water. Some paddleboards tell you where to put your feet, as is the case here; the ovals indicate where your feet go.

and your right hand a few feet down on the shaft when paddling on the right side. That is reversed when paddling on the left.

Just be sure your paddle faces the correct way.

The blade is angled relative to the shaft. Many newcomers hold the paddle so that the blade—like the concave face of a spoon—bends back toward them. But, that scooping splashes water onto the board and hinders with balance. Instead, paddle with the blade angling away from you.

Keep paddling. Just like when riding a bike, it is easier to stay upright when you are moving.

Falling

Spoiler alert—you will fall off your paddleboard at some point. The trick is to fall correctly.

Falling correctly means falling to the side of the board rather than directly down on it, reducing your chances of getting hurt.

Hold onto your paddle if you can. If not, return to your board, which can act like a big life preserver, first. Then, climb aboard and retrieve your paddle.

Getting back on

If you fall off your board in water too deep to stand, position yourself near the board's midpoint. Reach out with one hand and grab the carry handle located in the center of the paddleboard or on the far side. Pull yourself up while kicking with your feet.

Once on the board, swing around to face the front and pull yourself into a kneeling position. From there, paddle on your knees or stand up.

Armed with knowledge and a little practice, lots of people are discovering stand-up paddleboarding is another wonderful way to enjoy the water. Maybe, you are next? ☐

Penns Creek Wisdom

10 Tips for Fishing and Camping at Penns Creek



by Tyler Frantz

Penns Creek, Centre County, is nationally acclaimed for the trout that fin and feed in its currents, especially during the green drake mayfly hatch in June.

After a primitive fish camp experience in Poe Paddy State Park last year, I picked up some essential must-know tidbits for people looking to ply the water for wild Brown Trout by day and sleep beneath the stars by night. With multiple state parks offering camping in the area and challenging but potentially legendary trout fishing up for grabs, there is much to learn from these insider tips of Penns Creek wisdom.

Do not be late to the game

While our group of five anglers gazed awestruck at our phones' Instagram feeds, drooling over the size and number of trout being pulled from Penns Creek during the week leading up to our trip, we struggled to do much damage. Fishing hard for two straight days, I think our crew landed three fish total, confirming we had missed prime time by just a few days. Timing is everything. So, if you can go when the action is hot, do not delay.

Watch your step

While rounding the bend of a grassy creek bank toward a promising-looking stretch of riffles, I jumped at the



Watch your step when walking about. This yellow phase Timber Rattlesnake gave the author fair warning.

unmistakable sound of a venomous snake's warning. Glancing to a flat rock shelf mere feet from my right calf, a mature yellow phase Timber Rattlesnake coiled in defensive posture. Watch your step when walking about.

Pack a beanie in June to sleep

Though never discussed beforehand, I found it an intriguing coincidence that every member of our fishing party roused from his tent wearing a winter beanie at daybreak—a strange sight to see during the summer months. However, with overnight temperatures dipping down into the low 40 degrees F, we all sensibly covered our heads for a comfortable sleep. It is a good idea to pack one just in case.

Oatmeal is convenient, but bacon tastes better

While a collaborative dinner was planned, we all decided to fend for ourselves during breakfast and lunch. Most everyone had a simple breakfast prepared, quickly whipped together with hot water and instant oatmeal for convenience.

However, when I fired up the camp stove and threw on sizzling bacon and eggs, one fellow camper followed his nose to the table stating, "That does not sound or smell like oatmeal." It is a polite camping measure to fry enough bacon for sharing.

Wading staffs save the day

Even with cleated wading boots, I found the rocky bottom of Penns Creek significantly slick. Pair that with swift water and deep holes and treacherous wading conditions may prevail. Consider using an adjustable staff to maintain balance and aid navigation when wading.

Lock up your trash

Lock up your trash during any camping outing to prevent critters from rummaging through your trash. A spare plastic tote to store trash bags that can be placed in a vehicle overnight is an easy option. But, beware of chipmunks that climb up on picnic tables and chirp for table scraps during meals.

Fish a Brook Trout stream

Getting discouraged from lack of luck, we decided to switch things up around midday and head to a smaller tributary that yielded several nice Brook Trout. It was just the recharge we needed to restore confidence in our fishing abilities.



Photo-Tyler Prantz

Fresh brewed coffee and bacon—two of the most pleasant smells at camp.

Headlamps are essential

Some of the best feeding activity occurs at dawn and dusk, so pack a headlamp that frees your hand for casting, tying on flies, and walking to and from camp in the darkness. It also makes for convenient hands-free lighting around the campsite.

Make new friends and tap their knowledge

Many folks "head to their spot" early in the afternoon, even before the fish are really feeding, since the creek is often crowded. This downtime is a great opportunity to get to know fellow anglers. Ask questions about what is working and tap their knowledge of the stream. You may receive important information that may help you catch more fish.

When given the option, cook steak

Had we counted on fish for dinner, we would have been five cranky anglers. Instead, we opted for porterhouse steaks, grilled asparagus, and garlic mashed potatoes. The meal served as a capstone celebration of the outing and gave us something to look forward to even when the fish were not biting. Filling and delicious, this also would have allowed us to throw back our catch for future opportunities.

Penns Creek is a gem to fish. It provides a worthy challenge for anglers in a pristine wilderness setting. Pair the outing with good food, friends, and campfire, and it will never disappoint, whether reeling fish in or not. ☐



Photo-Nick Cobler

Brown Trout will make you work hard for your catch.



THE MAYFLY PROJECT

by Ralph Scherder

The Mayfly Project began with one angler's struggles with anxiety. Jess Westbrook has been fly fishing since he was 6 years old, but it wasn't until 2014 that he discovered the healing power of fishing.

Jess and Laura Westbrook started The Mayfly Project to take a local group of children fly fishing. He reached out to fly fishing artist, Andrea Larko, to have her create a logo for The Mayfly Project, because he wanted to have a beautiful symbol to share with their community. It was that symbol that caught the eye of mental health professional, Kaitlin Barnhart, Idaho. Larko told Barnhart the logo was for a guy in Arkansas taking foster children fly fishing. She immediately reached out to Jess, because she was doing the same thing in Idaho.

Barnhart had been taking children in foster care fly fishing since 2006. She was using fly fishing as a way to decompress from her stressful career working for Child Protective Services, Juvenile Detention, and residential treatment with foster children. Once Barnhart realized how beneficial fly fishing was for foster children specifically, it became her mission to lead this population to the rivers.



Photos-Emma Brown

Local foster children enjoying their day and learning about fly fishing with The Mayfly Project.

In 2016, after many hours of hashing through the possibilities of reaching more children in foster care across the United States, a partnership was formed, and the national program was created. The Mayfly Project is now booming across the United States.



Mentee with The Mayfly Project practicing her casting with her own mentor.

With this purpose, The Mayfly Project was founded, and now, almost 7 years later, 51 chapters (or as they call them “projects”) exist in 32 states. Two of those projects are found in Pennsylvania, one in Hollidaysburg and one in Smethport.

Heather Sees, a native of McKean County, currently serves as the National Project Liason for The Mayfly Project. Sees first became involved with The Mayfly Project while living in Colorado, where she founded the Denver Project in 2017. For Sees, the opportunity to help children in foster care has been a very rewarding experience.

“In Colorado, we went to a group home for teenage boys to see if any of the boys would be interested in the project, and the program leader said that if we could get one particular kid onboard, then the rest of the boys would follow. He had been in the group home the longest, was a little standoffish, and everyone sort of looked up to him, so I made it my personal mission to get him engaged,” said Sees.

Sees achieved that and more. But, it was not easy at first.

“We met with the boys every other week. Many of the boys had never been out of the city, so we were definitely taking them out of their comfort zone, which was awesome, because they needed that. They needed to know the healing power of the woods and water and just disconnect. I knew it would benefit them in the long run,” said Sees.

On each outing, Sees and a group of mentors focused on teaching the boys various aspects of fly fishing. From how to rig a fly rod to the basics of casting, and identifying what the fish are eating, Sees and the other mentors taught the boys skills that would help them be successful. After five or six outings, the boys were rewarded with a trip to fish private water swarming with large trout.

“The first outing was difficult. The kids were completely out of their comfort zones with strangers who they were

unsure they could trust. These kids were angry at the world, and rightfully so. We had to earn their trust. But, by the third event, I was standing in the river with that boy who was standoffish, and he looked at me and said, “Thanks so much for just coming out and showing up when you say you’re gonna show up and for not judging us. You make us feel really safe,” said Sees.

“That was the third outing and that kid was the only one who did not catch a fish. At that point, I realized it was not about catching fish. It was about us standing in the river or on the banks with these kids, showing them that there are people out there who care about them,” said Sees.

Sees moved back to Pennsylvania in 2018. The following year, Sees helped co-found the Smethport Project. “I knew I had to bring the project to McKean County,” said Sees. In the fall of 2019, 11 kids participated in the inaugural program.


“There was so much interest. We now have a curriculum we can follow, and it is very structured, which is something else the kids seem to thrive on. If you do not have structure, things may get squirrely really fast. But, that structure also made it easier to take everything I learned in Denver and apply it here at home,” said Sees.

Participants in the Smethport Project earn pins for good behavior such as picking up trash, being safe, and even proper fish handling. The goal is to instill respect and support for the conservation initiative and teach the kids how to take care of fragile ecosystems that we all love and enjoy.

“The Mayfly Project gives these kids a tool for their toolbox that can be used when life gets hard. Kids in foster care face challenges every day. They do not know where they are going to be living. They do not know if they will get adopted. They do not know if they will have to move to a different foster home. There is so much uncertainty in their lives,” said Sees.

“With this project, we show kids that we care, and we want to make sure they are okay. We do not judge them. We just let kids be kids and give them an opportunity to not have to worry about what may happen tomorrow,” said Sees.

“By the end of the event, it is amazing how much the kids have transformed, because they opened up and formed new relationships. For me, that is why I continue to be involved with The Mayfly Project. The fishing is just a bonus,” said Sees.

In 2021, 400 kids in foster care will be mentored through The Mayfly Project, a national 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. There are many ways to contribute to this program, through volunteering for one of their projects, donating gear, donating tackle, or conducting a fundraiser. For more information, visit www.themayflyproject.com. 



A Visit to Cook Forest State Park and Clarion River Water Trail



by Darl Black

photos by the author

First as a youngster with my family, then as a teenager with buddies, a frequent destination for me to camp, hike, watch wildlife, and eventually to fish was scenic Cook Forest State Park located along the Clarion River.

Clarifying “eventually to fish” is necessary, because during those early visits, the Clarion River was so badly polluted no gamefish were found in it. However, state and federal cleanup of point sources of pollution resulted in the return of gamefish species to the river and, in 1996, designation of the Clarion River as a National Wild and Scenic River. At some point along the river’s recovery, I started catching Smallmouth Bass from the river at Cooksburg and Brown Trout upriver towards Ridgway.

Outings to Cook Forest State Park and the middle section of the Clarion River grew less frequent. However, when the Clarion River was voted Pennsylvania River of the Year in

2019, Marilyn and I decided a return visit to the Clarion River Water Trail was in order for the spring of 2020. Then, COVID-19 hit. However, we finally made it to Cook Forest State Park during the late summer.

Although aware that state parks were experiencing higher than normal visitations, upon arrival, we were nonetheless overwhelmed with just how busy the Clarion River within the confines of Cook Forest State Park. From sunrise to sundown, there was a constant float parade of kayaks, canoes, and inflated tubes.

We spent the first morning wade fishing several sites along the river, but not a single fish of any species was caught. For the afternoon, we decided a hike was in order. Specifically, the Longfellow Trail through the fabled Forest Cathedral with 200- to 350-year-old trees measuring as much as 5 feet in diameter and 200 feet tall. If it had been October, we would have hiked to Seneca Point overlook for an unbelievable view of autumn foliage.

There are 29 miles of marked trails in Cook Forest State Park. Although neither bikes or horses are allowed on hiking trails, a 11.5-mile bicycle route plus a 4.5-mile bridal trail are provided. Furthermore, 25 miles of trails are available



The Longfellow Trail takes you through the Forest Cathedral of 300-year-old white pine and hemlock.

in nearby Clear Creek State Park, renowned for blooming mountain laurel and rhododendron during June.

Later that day at the Cook Forest State Park campground, Marilyn encountered an acquaintance from Oil City setting up her campsite while waiting for her friends to arrive. They had several days of outdoor adventure planned in the park.

Besides the campground, Cook Forest State Park offers 24 rental cabins, while Clear Creek State Park has a campground and 22 cabins. Additional lodging is available outside the park.

On day two, we rented a canoe from one of the two liveries in Cook Forest State Park and undertook a 4-mile float ending at Cooksburg. Our fishing success did not improve even by canoe.

We returned in late September to check out the Clarion River from Ridgway to Belldown. The plan was to visit each public access point in this section and wade fish each site for 20 or 30 minutes.

We were pleasantly surprised at the increase of canoe and kayak accesses in this section since the Clarion River had become an official Water Trail. Furthermore, we received history lessons on the logging operations and boomtowns that dominated the Clarion River valley in the 1800s simply by reading the informational placards. Only a handful of paddlers and anglers were encountered on this day.

Unfortunately, compared to previous fishing trips on this section, trout and Smallmouth Bass response to our lures were negligible. We figured exceptionally low flow and high river temperature made for unusually tough fishing.

A recent discussion with Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) Area 2 Fisheries Biologist Brian Ensign reinforced our conclusion when he stated dismal fishing reports from other Clarion River anglers had been received this past summer.

“Normally, angler reports for upper and middle Clarion are positive. The last electrofishing survey showed a robust Smallmouth Bass population from Little Toby Creek

downstream to the backwaters of Piney Dam. Some Brown Trout were also found,” said Ensign.

“Too bad you did not move further upstream between Johnsonburg and Ridgway, where cold water from East Branch Dam has created a world-class Brown Trout fishery, with trout up to 30 inches. However, public access is very limited, and the best approach to this section is by kayak,” said Ensign.

In the middle section we fished, Ensign feels any resident trout in the main river likely moved into tributary creeks to find cooler water, and Smallmouth Bass foraging may have slowed due to excessive water temperature.

If you have a kayak, a float trip from Cooksburg (or Gravel Lick Access south of Cooksburg) to Mill Creek Access in the backwaters of Piney Dam pool would be a better choice for Smallmouth Bass, thereby avoiding large numbers of float tubers in Cook Forest State Park.

If planning a trip, obtain the "Cook Forest State Park" brochure from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the "Clarion River Water Trail" map from the PFBC's website at www.fishandboat.com. ☐



As Andy DeZaio looks on, Jessie Covert lands a trout from the Youth and Handicap Fishing area near the park office.



NOTES *from the Streams*

Angler without a license

In Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) training school, there is a period of field training when we work alongside a veteran WCO, known as the Field Training Officer (FTO). This on-the-job training is arguably some of the most valuable and memorable time in the school.

As a cadet placed with an FTO, you must carefully observe, listen, and question your FTO, all while performing the essential job functions. Some of the interactions you have while working with your FTO will be remembered for years. I was recently reminded of such a time with a FTO. I recall a particular day when we were out on patrol along a trout stream. It was a slow day with minimal interactions. As we were driving, I was looking out of the window when I heard my FTO yell, “There is an angler without a license!” As my head spun around, I began to hear his chuckle. At this point, I realized I had been had. As

my gaze turned toward the angler, his suppressed cackle turned into a full-blown laugh. He kept laughing as we drove past a great blue heron standing along the stream looking for trout. I went back to looking out my window, and he continued to laugh until we reached our destination. I still think back to my FTO training just about every time I see a great blue heron.—WCO Zachary Rudd, Northampton County.

Nicknames

While patrolling Blue Spruce Lake, Indiana County, I approached a few of the “regulars” to see how the fishing was going. The two anglers replied in a rather agitated tone that they were not having much luck. However, the anglers did point out that “21 Cast Guy” across the lake was having great luck. My curiosity sparked, so I had to ask why they gave the angler that nickname. The one angler stated that “21 Cast Guy” goes there every day and fishes. If

he does not catch a fish in 21 casts, he goes home. The two anglers proceeded to tell me that they have nicknames for everyone. My curiosity piqued, I asked if I had a nickname. The two anglers stared blankly at me for a few seconds and abruptly changed the subject. I am still curious about my nickname.—WCO Matthew Colian, Indiana and Eastern Armstrong counties.

Life of a cadet (kind of)

As I sat in my office on a cold morning, drinking my coffee, the day before Thanksgiving 2020, I reflected on everything to be thankful for in life. The year 2020, with a global pandemic, and other current events, it may seem difficult to be thankful. It will be a year that we remember forever. As a new WCO with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC), the beginning of 2020 brought the start of the PFBC’s portion of our training for myself and 18 of my fellow comrades. Never did we think we would go through what we did, attending an academy in the midst of a global pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many changes to our training schedule. We had to stay at the facility, and each day had limitations. When April arrived, it looked as if things were about to get better. We received our field training assignments for the fishing portion of field training, and we were going to have the opportunity to work with some of the best officers in Pennsylvania during one of the most exciting times. The excitement lasted until the week before field training when we were told that field training was being delayed for a month. However, when May rolled around, it was time to get out there and put everything we learned over the last year to the test. The next few

photo-WCO Zachary Rudd



Blue Heron

weeks were filled with excitement with the various experiences that come with being a WCO.

When field training was over, it was time for graduation, though we were not able to have the graduation we had all hoped for when we started this journey together in July 2019. Even though the absence of our families at our graduation was difficult, everything that we worked for was about to pay off. In a year where it seems that nothing could go right and our entire world was flipped upside down, 2020 has given me the opportunity to serve the Commonwealth with pride and meet some of the best brothers and sisters in law enforcement. That is something I will be thankful for forever.—WCO *Matthew Deitrich, Northwestern Monroe, Western Pike, and Southern Wayne counties.*

Attention on deck

I came across a large group operating Personal Watercrafts (PWCs) while patrolling the Lehigh River near Canal Park. One operator decided to take a break and beached his PWC. As I approached the group, I heard someone announce my presence. Just like that, a man made a call on a two-way radio. Before I could get to the ramp at the bottom of the hill, five PWC operators pulled into shore. I greeted them with a hello and identified myself. All five operators got off of their PWCs, stood in a line, provided all required information, and showed their required safety equipment. This was a first where I had the operators conducting their own boardings prior to me asking. I felt like I was in the Navy conducting inspections. I briefly addressed a few navigational violations and stated “At ease, carry on.”—WCO *Travis Miller, Lehigh County.*

Who would've thought?

I was spending a considerable amount of my patrol time focusing on the trout waters of Clearfield County. This includes interacting with anglers, replacing signage, learning

stocking points, and streamside walks checking in on the “locals” or resident fish. Clearfield County has an overwhelming amount of native trout streams, some of which hold incredible Brook Trout reaching lengths of 9- to 10-inches. The wild reproduction of Brown Trout also creates some unique fishing opportunities if you know where to look.

During these patrols, I have learned some great places to stop and observe some of these fish. One place in particular, an easily accessible pool that I would estimate being approximately 12-feet across and 12-feet long, has given me a whole new perspective of what a small stream is capable of producing in terms of large fish. This pool typically sports two or three nice Brook Trout. One of these trout is closely approaching the ever so impressive 9- to 10-inches in length and would be a trophy catch for anyone who enjoys chasing these native trout.

I often make time to stop and visit this area as there are signs of fishing, and I am hoping to gain knowledge from the local anglers. On one particular afternoon with an overcast sky, I pulled in along this spot and took the few steps towards the creek. As I looked down into the pool towards the culvert, I could not believe what I was seeing. There, in the center of the current, was a behemoth of a Brown Trout, easily 24-inches in length. I watched the fish intensely for several minutes before realizing that there was an additional Brown Trout that was possibly 18 inches and just behind the other but more concealed in the riffing current. I peered into the same pool many times before and previously had been amazed by the size of the native Brook Trout, but now was at a loss for words for how I missed seeing these Brown Trout. I tried to formulate in my mind how fish of this size could possibly survive in a pool like this. And just like that, I was spotted. The two large Brown Trout vanished into an undercut

bank just like the ghosts they had been before.

This experience reminds me of how I fell in love with fishing in the first place. There is always more to learn and no matter how much time you spend on the water or how much time you spend studying this great sport, there will always be more. The mystery of the stream and what lies within will always keep me coming back for more. A 2-foot-long Brown Trout in a “ditch”, who would've thought?—WCO *Justin L. Schillaci, Clearfield County.*

Teamwork

With the COVID-19 pandemic, there were not a lot of bright spots in 2020. One area that really stood out to me was the level of teamwork that the PFBC employees put forth to get the trout stocked for the 2020 season. Volunteer help was prohibited, and it was up to the District WCO to make sure that the fish got in the water.

Our region works very well together. We all know what we need to do to get the job done. Nobody was going to be left to stock an entire truck by themselves. The WCOs who were not stocking on a particular day would link up with other WCOs who had fish and gave help as needed. Our captain and sergeants structured every day around the stocking schedule to help out the WCOs in the field. The cool thing was that the PFBC employees from different bureaus volunteered to come out and help stock. Biologists, office staff, maintenance, and engineering joined the Bureau of Law Enforcement and Division of Fish Production staff to stock 3.2 million trout across the Commonwealth in all kinds of weather conditions. This was not something that they had to do. It was something that they wanted to do, because it was the right thing to do for our customers, the anglers of Pennsylvania. While 2020 was not a year that anyone wants to repeat, it allowed the employees of the PFBC to demonstrate the true meaning of teamwork.—WCO *Matthew Raetsch, Western Allegheny County.*

Now is the Time



by Jeff Woleslagle

photos by the author

We arrived at the boat launch in the early evening, and my fishing companion helped me carry the kayak from my truck bed to the water's edge. We eagerly placed our small amount of gear in the kayak, put on our life jackets, and could already see dimples on the lake's surface created by steadily rising fish. He got in first and then I did, and we paddled off, headed for an area along the far bank lined with cattails that was just a short paddle away. He held the rod at the ready while I navigated into a place that gave him a good casting angle. I baited his small hook with two waxworms below a small bobber, and he casted the offering perfectly to a spot where we saw several fish. Immediately, the float went under and he set the hook into a Bluegill nearly the size of my hand. Over the course of 2 hours, he caught and released dozens of panfish, and he was already asking when we may be able to get out again as we loaded up our gear.

From the time my son, Nathan, was old enough to tag along, he had an intense interest in fishing. When he became comfortable enough around the water and with a fishing rod in his hand, I knew it was time to get him out in a kayak. The first few times we went kayaking, we left the fishing gear behind, as I just wanted him to get used to being out on the water. There are so many competing interests for kids these days between a full roster of sports



Minimal gear is needed to teach someone how to fish from a kayak.

and other school activities to the never-ending amount of screen time that comes with this digital age that any exposure to the natural world may become rare. Kayak fishing is a great way to make lasting memories, not to mention the health benefits and the lessons learned about nature and the environment that come along with the experience. Most kids love being around the water, and they also enjoy the sense of accomplishment of learning something new that they can eventually do on their own.

The very first thing you want to do when introducing someone to kayak fishing is to make sure they understand basic safety rules. Simple instruction on always wearing



A few trips without the fishing gear will help prepare your young angler to add fishing gear into the mix.

a properly fitted life jacket and knowing what to do if the boat capsizes are important.

The key to getting a young one interested in kayak fishing is to take it slow and make it fun. The first few times you go, pick a place that is easy to access and has a good population of Bluegills or other fish that will be relatively easy to catch and provide lots of action. Our first few trips were to a shallow area in a nearby state park lake that had ample panfish. Water with minimal boat traffic and lots of eager fish provide a perfect setting.

A 6-foot spinning or spin cast rod in light to ultra-light action and matched with the appropriate size reel is ideal. This setup spooled with 4- to 6-pound-test monofilament line is good in most situations. Use bait holder hooks in sizes 8 and 10 baited with waxworms or small pieces of earthworm and suspended below a small float. Small jigs tipped with a waxworm can provide lots of action as well.

Keep things simple and easy to access in the kayak. You do not need much gear, and less is more when you are teaching someone. Beyond your kayaks and life jackets, I would recommend taking a single fishing rod if you are sharing a kayak the first few times out. Take a small tackle bag with extra hooks, weights, floats, and whatever bait you may want to use, and you are in business. Include some snacks, water, and sunscreen to be well prepared for a few hours of adventure. Be patient and recognize that much of your time will be spent untangling line, baiting hooks, and doing whatever your mentee needs in order to keep a line in the water.

Make a big deal about success. Remember, the focus should be on the youth. The more encouragement the mentee receives, the more likely they will want to repeat the experience.

As the youth gets accustomed to being on the water, slowly start to expand the amount of gear you take along and try some more challenging locations. An easy float down a nearby stream or river when the water is low in the summer is a great way to spend an afternoon and a good first introduction to moving water.

If you have a young one, a niece or nephew, or know someone who would like to learn, now is the time to introduce Pennsylvania kayak fishing. Opportunities abound, and there is always room on the water. ☐



Small jigs, waxworms, and willing panfish are the perfect combination to get a young angler hooked on kayak fishing.

Shenango River Lake

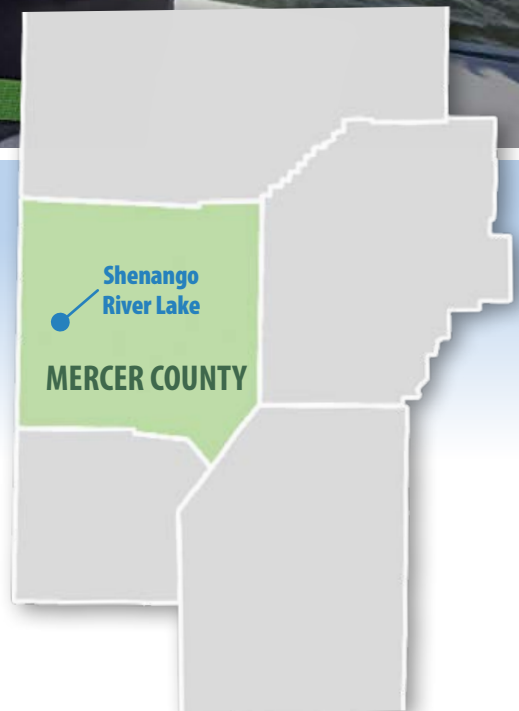
Fishing and Camping



by Jerry Bush

photos by the author

Pennsylvania offers many opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts to combine fishing, boating, and camping experiences. Many are remote experiences and others provide welcoming atmospheres for family members. Shenango River Lake and its accompanying United States Army Corps of Engineers campground fits nicely into that family-friendly category. Camping, boating, fishing, hiking, and fly fishing are available all summer to outdoor enthusiasts. For family members who may cherish a little break from outdoor experiences, the nearby communities of Hermitage and Sharon, Mercer County, offer an array of shopping and dining.



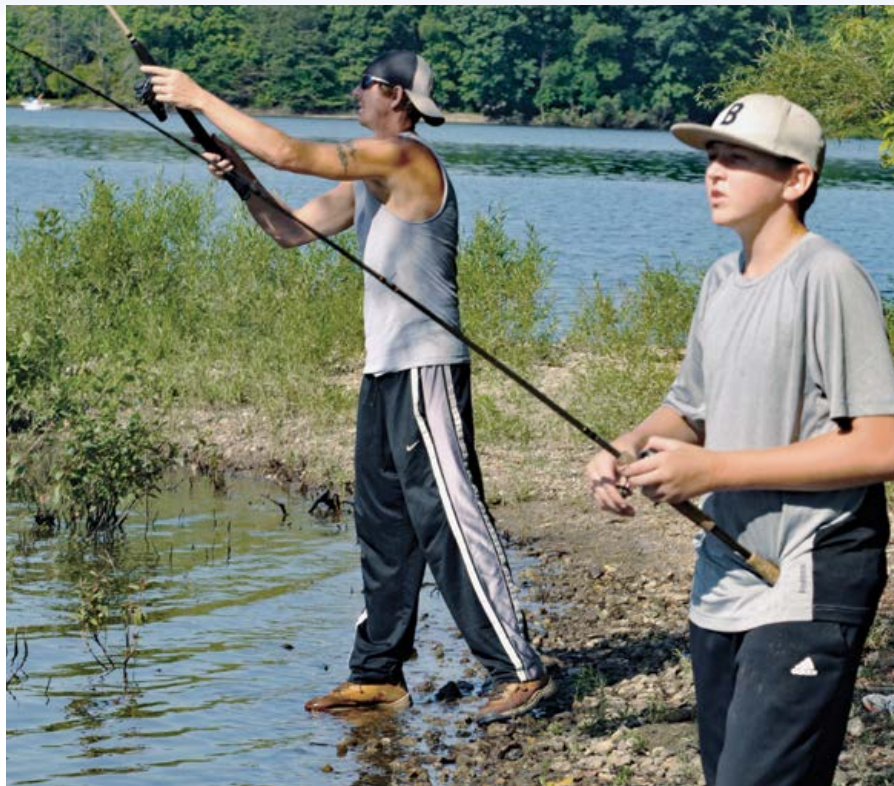
Shenango River Lake fishing is good. A few large crappies are usually caught, and skilled crappie anglers may produce fish from this water even during difficult periods. If you camp with children who like to fish, Bluegills, Pumpkinseeds, and perch are on the bite for shore anglers. A kid's fishing pole, a hook, a worm, and a bobber are as complicated as shore fishing here needs be. There is something memorable about a grinning child who is hoisting a large Bluegill, while standing just feet from your camper door.

A boat is necessary for the other fish in the lake including carp, Channel Catfish, Muskellunge, Northern Pike, Smallmouth Bass, Striped Bass, Walleyes, and White Bass. Shenango River Lake's Walleyes are difficult to locate. A sandbar rises just off the Chestnut Run Swim Beach that seems to hold a few for early or late anglers. This is not a daytime Walleye fishery. However, an occasional Muskellunge or Northern Pike may be caught during daylight hours.

The more cooperative and abundant fighter in Shenango River Lake is the Channel Catfish. Shenango River Lake has an abundant catfish population, some of which are large. Every year, a few giants are hoisted from these waters by proud anglers.

My adult daughter once had a large catfish on, but we never will know how large. The big fish struck while targeting bass and panfish with lightweight gear. After valiantly fighting a 5-minute tug-of-war, my daughter tightened the reel's drag in hopes of turning the unyielding fish. The creature responded with a strong burst and snapped the rod. A minute later, the line broke, and she never came close to moving the fish from the lake's floor.

The unlimited horsepower Shenango River Lake has great launches and access points. A four-lane ramp is placed at the campground. Launching into the 3,485-acre body of water is easy, but if you are restricted to the campground launch, be alert to the weather if staying dry is important to you. The launch is not limited to camper use, and it is popular with locals who are often using jet skis, skis, and towable floats of all sizes and shapes. Many people seem to wait until the last moment before speeding to the launch when a storm finally approaches. You will spend some frustrating moments in the rain waiting for your turn to take out, even with the four-lane launch, unless you exit an hour before a storm arrives.



Shenango River Lake offers many clearings for shore anglers.

Approximately 50% of the lakeside campsites include shoreline that is suitable for mooring, assuming a boat is properly equipped. Book your site early and choose wisely. Electric sites are on the inside of the loops. If you desire a lakeside site and find electric and air conditioning important amenities, you will need to provide your own, quiet run generator or solar panels. Campers tend to become frustrated with people who operate loud, open-frame generators.

Shenango River Lake is formed by a manmade dam. If you are a fly fishing angler, a short, 6-mile drive from the campground to the lower Shenango River below the dam is worth the journey. Many species of fish feed where water exits the dam's gates, and fly fishing anglers are liable to hook including bass, catfish, panfish, Northern Pike, and even Muskellunge or Walleyes.

If you have never hooked a carp with a fly rod, you will grin all day after your first experience. A fight will be presented by this heavy, powerful creature. A carp encounter will cause a fly fishing angler to add this fish to a list of favorites. Try black or olive Woolly Buggers when targeting these hard-fighting fish.

This camping area has poison ivy that may be found intertwined with many of the shrubs in the park. Campsites and mowed areas are safe, but advise children or anyone allergic that long pants and long-sleeve shirts are advisable if planning to stray from the beaten path.

If you are looking for a combined fishing and camping experience within Pennsylvania, Mercer County's Shenango River Lake should be on your list of destinations. ☐

Transporting and Launching your Canoe or Kayak



photos-Carl Haensel

by Carl Haensel

Exploring rivers, lakes, and streams in Pennsylvania with a canoe or kayak is great fun. Before you take a trip down your local waterway, you need to get your boat to the water and launch. Learn the tips, tricks, and skills and equipment that you need to transport your boat and launch it safely.

Rooftop carriers

The most common way to transport canoes and kayaks is on top of a car. To haul canoes and kayaks safely, boats need to be securely tied down. You do not want to injure either the boat or the finish of your car. If your car has a roof rack, it is often easy to put your boat on it and attach your boat with straps. Make sure your rack and the gunwales of your boat are protected from abrasion during transport. If you are looking to add a rooftop carrier to your vehicle, there are multiple styles and brands that work well. Thule, Yakima, Inno, and Rhino all offer comprehensive rack solutions that transport boats well. Some even offer boat-specific cradles that work well with kayaks.

What to do without a roof rack

If you drive a vehicle that does not have a roof rack, use foam gunwale blocks to safely position the boat on top of the vehicle while avoiding damage to either the vehicle or the boat. Place the foam blocks on the gunwales before lifting the

boat onto the vehicle. Since you will not be able to attach the boat to a rack, it is more challenging to secure it safely. Often, it may be secured through the inside of a vehicle with straps passing through the interior of the car and around the boat. Open the car doors first. Then, pass straps through both the front and rear passenger compartments of the vehicle. This is one of the few situations where ratchet-style straps may work well.



Foam gunwale blocks are useful for vehicles that do not have a roof rack for transporting items. Place foam gunwale blocks on a canoe as shown here before placing your boat on the vehicle.

Truck bed and hitch racks

While transporting a canoe or kayak in the bed of a truck seems simple, truck beds are often too short to hold the boat securely. Many solutions have been designed that attach to the trailer hitch receiver on a truck, allowing for an appropriate tie-down situation. Another option is to get a truck rack system that fits on the edges of the truck bed. This allows the tailgate to be closed and the boat to extend over the cab of the truck.

Lifting the boat

For some boaters, this is the easiest part of the trip to the water. For others, it is a challenge that limits their paddling excursions. Fortunately, there are mechanical devices to assist paddlers. There are three key options. First, rack extenders allow for the lifting of one end of the boat at a time. This makes a heavy boat much more manageable for one person. Second, a rear bar roller allows boaters to place the bow of the boat on the bar at the rear of the vehicle and lift and roll it forward, making for a smooth, easy loading situation. Third, there are kayak loading cradles that extend and lower, allowing the paddler to place the boat on the rack, then lift it on top of the car with mechanical assistance. If you do not use a mechanical assist, ask a paddling partner to help if possible to prevent injuries and damage to your boat and car. Remember to lift with your legs, not your back, and to stay underneath the center of gravity of the boat as much as possible.

Tie down those ends

The front and back, or bow and stern of your boat, may be unstable during transport. It is important, especially on longer kayaks and canoes, to tie these points down to your vehicle. Some cars and trucks have tie-down loops or hooks located under the bumper. Get down on the ground and look for these loops or hooks. Other vehicles have concealed tow-hook attachments that are useful. Look for a small, removable piece on your car bumper. Carefully removing this piece often reveals a tow hook or a place to attach one. When tying down your boat in this manner, be careful not to tension it too greatly, or you could overly flex and damage your watercraft.

Which strap to choose

There are plenty of different types of straps and lines you can use to attach your boat to your vehicle. Some are better suited to the job than others. Cam-style straps that use webbing are the best for most roof rack situations. These straps tighten securely, loosen easily, and do not mar the boat surface. A popular example is the classic NRS strap. Ratchet-style straps can work in some cases but should be largely avoided since these straps tend to scuff and scrape boats and cars, and the hooks can be challenging to attach securely. Over-tightening can severely damage fragile boats. Ropes and bungee cords



photo-Robert Meyer

This truck is using a truck bed rack that allows for a kayak over the cab of the vehicle as well as a hitch extension to safely transport two kayaks.

are the least useful tie-down options. For bow and stern attachment, some manufacturers offer specific tie-down ropes or straps designed for the job.

Launching your boat

After you get your boat to the shore, it is almost time to get in. Wear a properly fitted life jacket. Make sure your boat is not “bridged” on the shore. This occurs when only the ends of the boat are touching the ground, making it unstable. Capsizing while launching is common with canoes and kayaks in this situation.

In canoes, have one paddler or an assistant stabilize the stern, or back of the boat, while the front paddler gets in. Keeping a low center of gravity and maintaining three points of contact with the boat will help keep you stable. The canoe should be in the water, or nearly entirely so, before the second paddler enters the boat.

Kayaks can be launched from the shore with assistance. When the shore is smooth with a sand, grass, or similar surface, the assistant can slide the boat gently into the water. With no partner, be prepared to get your feet wet. ☐



photo-Carl Haensel

The stern end of this kayak is secured to the car with a rope ratchet available from different rack manufacturers.

Where to Find Trout When Water Gets Warm

by Nick DelVecchio

photos by the author



One of the great challenges facing Pennsylvania trout anglers is continuing to catch fish through summer as favorite streams warm to unsafe temperatures. Being a coldwater fish, trout are easily stressed by heat. At some point during most summers, it becomes borderline unethical to continue to fish for trout. However, May and June are generally outside the danger zone, and there are some truly spectacular opportunities across Pennsylvania as hatches are abundant and fish ferociously feed. What may throw people for a loop is that the water levels are lower now than in the previous months and trout holding areas change as water temperatures increase. Even the slightest change in stream temperatures can force trout to shift into different holding patterns to seek a reprieve from this warming trend. Knowing where to go and how to find trout when the warming trend starts is critical to having continued success.

Cold water discharges

The most common place to find trout during periods of warm water is wherever the water is cold. That sounds obvious, but it is the most productive and efficient way to target these fish during the summer. Tributaries entering a stream usually provide immediate discharges of cool water, and trout will go to these areas, or even up the tributary itself. It should be noted that water temperatures

should always be taken before fishing. If the reading comes back too high, anglers should consider leaving the trout alone. But, at the first warming trend, it is a safe bet trout will be pushing to tributaries. Dams may be another source of cold water for trout. Tailwater streams are perfect choices for summertime trout as bottom release dams keep a consistently cold discharge of water that has trout feeling happy and hungry throughout the year. It is nice to not have to worry about stream temperatures during summer, and nowhere is that more prevalent than on a tailwater.

Headwaters

Trout are far more migratory than many anglers like to think. Trout will often travel into the upper reaches of watersheds during the early summer to find cool tributaries and heavily canopied banks to avoid the heat. Headwater sections of streams typically have strong populations of wild fish. When lower stretches of drainages become too hot, few refuges provide more benefit to trout and anglers than small headwaters. These areas may be tricky to fish due to thick brush and easily startled trout, but there will be no shortage of opportunities for those willing to hike into headwater areas of their favorite trout stream. It is also a nice benefit that headwater sections may provide some stellar wild

trout action, making for a mixed bag of trout on each outing.

Shade

There is a good reason conservation groups spend so much time planting trees on the banks of trout streams. While some of the reasoning is to bolster banks from erosion, trees also provide critical shade that trout flock to during warm periods. It may only be a few degree difference, but shaded stream edges provide a welcome refuge for fish looking to escape the relentless summer sun. It is always a good idea for anglers to target shaded banks. If these areas also hold a little water depth and current, it is a sure bet trout are nearby. Even though the temperature difference may seem negligible, a small cooling of the water may be enough to give trout what is needed to get through a warm spell.



There is nothing like trout fishing during the warm early summer months, but knowing where to go to find fish is critical.

Few things match the enjoyment of spending a warm summer day on a favorite trout stream in the hopes of catching a beautiful fish. It is something that we all look forward to each year, and some of the best trout fishing

of the season may be experienced during these months. The delight is short-lived though, especially for those who do not adjust to the summer holding areas of trout looking to find cold water reprieves from warming temperatures. Knowing where to find trout that are not stressed from the heat is critical. These locations are a good start in continuing to catch trout during a time when many anglers start to transition away towards warmwater species. ☐



Brook Trout display stunning colors throughout the year and are a well-earned reward for those fishing headwaters or tributaries during summer.

Kayak Fishing for Smallmouth Bass



by Nathan Wolesslagle

photos by the author

Smallmouth Bass are found throughout Pennsylvania. From lakes and rivers to small streams, Smallmouth Bass thrive in Pennsylvania's coolwater fisheries. Kayak fishing for Smallmouth Bass offers anglers a unique method for targeting fish and often allows anglers to reach fishable areas that boats cannot reach.

Smallmouth Bass are known for hard fights, aggressive strikes, and eating a variety of prey. When heading to a body of water to fish for Smallmouth Bass from a kayak, it is crucial to define areas of interest that will likely hold fish. These areas will be different within lakes, rivers, and small streams.

In lakes, kayak fishing offers a great advantage, as you can reach tighter locations where boats struggle to maneuver, allowing access to fishing locations that see far less pressure than the open sections. Some lakes prohibit internal

combustion engines in Pennsylvania, so kayak fishing may be one of your limited methods of watercraft usage. Be sure to check the regulations of the lake you are fishing to ensure you are in compliance with all watercraft guidelines and policies before launching your kayak.

When fishing lakes for Smallmouth Bass, there are certain features to look for regardless of the time of year. Smallmouth Bass hang out around structure such as large boulders, sunken trees, or manmade fish structures, using these structures as staging areas to ambush prey. Transitions from weed beds to gravel bottoms in water from 6- to 12-feet may also be a great area to find cruising Smallmouth Bass that may be chasing baitfish.

Another aspect to consider when kayak fishing lakes is to find tight coves, backwaters, or any areas that boats simply cannot get into easily. Smallmouth Bass react to fishing pressure, as most fish do, and will actively seek areas that receive less human traffic and fishing pressure. By finding areas of water that not many people can access, you may stumble into your own secret fishing hole. Again, align these hard to access areas with structural

features that will be conducive to Smallmouth Bass.

When fishing rivers, kayak fishing has advantages. Kayaks offer a less intrusive presence than a boat, thus startling less fish. However, Smallmouth Bass in rivers tend to act differently than lake dwelling Smallmouth Bass. When targeting Smallmouth Bass in rivers from a kayak, seek deeper pockets and holes adjacent to or below riffles. Riffles will oxygenate the water, especially during the summer when Smallmouth Bass are seeking cooler areas of water to hold in. Riffles also carry prey directly to Smallmouth Bass that are awaiting to ambush. Structure is excellent as well. Submerged trees, rock outcroppings, and overhanging banks will all contain Smallmouth Bass.

Smaller creeks offer opportunities for anglers seeking adventure and prime fishing opportunities. One of my favorite creeks is Sherman Creek, Perry County. This creek tends to flow fast, so it is best to put in several miles upstream from your desired take-out point to extend your fishing session. Typically, downsized lure presentations are best as Smallmouth Bass in creeks are eating smaller prey than Smallmouth Bass living in lakes and larger rivers. Look for every deep pocket or hole you can find,



Jeff Woleslagle caught this Smallmouth Bass while kayaking on the Juniata River.

as this is commonly where the largest Smallmouth Bass hold. Do not be fooled by smaller creeks, as these creeks still retain substantial opportunity to catch trophy Smallmouth Bass ranging in the 3-, 4-, and even 5-pound range.

When fishing for Smallmouth Bass from a kayak, I only bring one or two fishing rod setups with me. Having rod holders on your kayak is an advantage, especially when paddling. My go-to rod setup is typically a 7-foot medium action spinning rod. I pair it with a 2500 size reel with 8- to 10-pound monofilament line or braided line. Smallmouth Bass in murkier water are not line shy, so I lean towards braided line when fishing murky waters.

As far as lures, the options are abundant. Smallmouth Bass eat prey like crayfish, baitfish, hellgrammites, small catfish, and leeches. I have even witnessed Smallmouth Bass eat frogs. The best lures to use are those that match the prey that resides in the body of water you are fishing. Research the species of baitfish, talk to other local anglers, and experiment with your lures. You will figure out what Smallmouth Bass react to the best.

Smallmouth Bass fishing from a kayak offers abundant fishing opportunities in Pennsylvania. From lakes, to the plentiful rivers the state has to offer, even to the smaller streams, Smallmouth Bass are found in a plethora of waterways. A kayak allows you to access difficult to access spots, flow down rivers with ease, and navigate into prime positions for casting. Kayak fishing offers advantages when planned and executed. Always wear your life jacket. The Smallmouth Bass are waiting for you, and these fish are willing to bite in Pennsylvania. ☐



Grant Commerer caught this Smallmouth Bass while kayak fishing on Sherman Creek, Perry County.

OIL CREEK IS IDEAL FOR TROUT FISHING



photo-Ralph Scherder

by Don Feigert

Oil Creek, Venango and Crawford counties in northwestern Pennsylvania, is much different from the tiny headwater streams I usually fish for native Brook Trout. However, Oil Creek is ideal for fly fishing. Oil Creek is full of Rainbow Trout and Brown Trout from recent stockings, holdover hatchery fish that have grown larger and wilder over time, and even a few wild Brook Trout that have meandered in from its three small tributaries—Boughton Run, Toy Run, and Jones Run.

Oil Creek is also a big stream, often 50- to 100-foot across, and popular with kayakers and canoeists. In most sections, it is shallow enough for an angler in waders to walk out to the middle, where there is plenty of room for overhead casting without worrying about backcasting into branches.

Oil Creek is a beautiful place to fish—a little different from the usual small mountain streams I often fish that feature dense overhanging hemlocks, sandstone boulders, and little pools and waterfalls. Oil Creek's currents and

depth are more constant, and the fish occupy rocky-bottom havens from shoreline to shoreline in the heavily wooded, wild, and beautiful 6,250-acre Oil Creek State Park, Venango County.

On a recent outing, my friend Brett led us down the 9.7-mile bicycle trail for a short distance until we reached his favorite trout fishing area on the creek. This paved trail through the scenic Oil Creek Gorge is a major attraction for bicycling recreation and for viewing historic markers describing events that took place during the oil strike by Edwin Drake in 1859 and the great oil boom of the 1860s. The trail also provides easy access to various fishing locations along the stream.

We reached a spot where a stretch of riffles runs downstream under a big metal bicycle bridge. On the way, we passed witch hazel thickets and blooming apple trees from untended orchards along the trail. We all gazed upward at the green-shouldered hillsides, with white dogwood petals sprinkled against the lime green of hardwood foliage and the darker greens of the pines and hemlocks.

Local anglers often claim that the best fishing in Oil Creek lies below the Pine Creek tributary downstream



A Brown Trout caught while fishing Oil Creek.

through Oil Creek State Park. Special notice is given to the two Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only (DHALO) sections of 1.0 and 1.55 miles. The best access points are near Titusville, Petroleum Center, and Rouseville, all reachable from Route 8 north and south.

On our recent trip, we scattered out over the wide stream near the bicycle trail bridge and began casting under the gray clouds in the cool spring breeze.

Brett and Brad looked skilled and picturesque with their overhead casting and their efficient stripping and mending of fly line, while Gary and I were less graceful but still competent on the waters.

Brett caught a good Brown Trout on a beadhead nymph right away, and Brad hooked a pair of nice Rainbow Trout on an olive-colored Woolly Bugger. I caught a feisty 14-inch Rainbow Trout so broad and heavy that Brett and I first thought I was fighting a Smallmouth Bass downstream in the swift current. Gary, who had recently committed to fly fishing exclusively for trout after a lifetime of fishing with live bait and artificial lures, caught one trout on a wet fly, a nice Brown Trout taken on a Copper John, and later caught a Rainbow Trout on a dry fly presentation, fooled by a tiny #20

Elk Hair Caddis. We carefully released all our fish that morning and hiked back to our vehicles at noon, rich in the memories of the day's experiences.

Oil Creek is a 46.7-mile tributary of the Allegheny River. It is joined by Pine Creek upstream from Oil Creek State Park and then flows through the park down to Oil City and empties into the Allegheny River. Springtime is probably the best time for trout fishing at this stream due to robust water levels and generally cooler water temperatures as well as the active aquatic insect activity. However, fall fishing is excellent,

too. In mid-summer, stream temperatures may get too warm for quality fishing, especially in the upper reaches.

The paved streamside trail is open for two-way bicycle traffic, but bikes are not allowed on the hiking trails. The 52 miles of hiking and interpretive trails in the park provide visitors with information about areas rich in scenic and historic interest. Trail maps are available at the park office. ☐



Brett takes a break on the bridge overlooking the stream.

The Explosion in Paddling



Photo: Chris Callhoun

by *Deborah Weisberg*

Brandi Baros started kayaking a decade ago when, as a board member of the Shenango River Watchers, she was helping to coordinate the conservation group's annual float trip.

Although Baros never paddled before, she decided to give it a try when someone offered to lend her an extra kayak. "It was fantastic," recalled Baros of her first foray on the Shenango River, Mercer County. She was hooked.

"What's not to like?" said Baros, who is now Shenango River Watchers president. "You get views of nature you just do not see anywhere else. I am a biologist, so I get excited about stuff like this anyway, but to be able to quietly float a river while birds are catching fish around you and turtles are crawling up the bank gives you so much to observe," said Baros.

"It is never boring. Changing conditions on the water makes every trip different than the last," said Baros.

Jeff Little, an avid angler who lives in New Windsor, Maryland, but often fishes in Pennsylvania, traded his canoe for a kayak in 1998 when he struggled to paddle a big aluminum boat downriver on a windy day. "Having a smaller one-person boat became more attractive to me," said Little. Little now owns a variety of kayaks. "It is fun to throw one of these little plastic boats over my shoulder and head to the water and go exploring," said Little.

Little and Baros are among 11 million kayakers in the United States, according to a 2019 report by The Outdoors Foundation, which found that recreational kayaking is the most popular of all paddle sports, having gained 1.5 million participants since 2013. The greatest growth has been among 25- to 34-year-olds, and among women, who now represent 49% of kayakers.

Consistent with The Outdoor Foundation's findings, Baros is drawn to kayaking as a fun way to exercise and socialize at the same time. "You do not have to be in super shape to kayak," said Baros.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, when I did not have my usual friends with me, I would go to Shenango River Lake to paddle by myself," said Baros. Baros uses a lift-assist to hoist her 40-pound boat onto the roof of her vehicle.

"In Pennsylvania, participation in kayaking and other unpowered boating has increased by 500% in the past decade and grew even more when the COVID-19 pandemic caused a surge in outdoor recreation," said Ryan Walt, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's (PFBC's) boating and watercraft safety manager. "We were already trending upward, and then last year, boat registration and launch permit sales rose 34%," said Walt.



Last year, boat registration and launch permit sales rose 34%.

Outfitters also reported a record boom in business. "Everything was shut down, so a lot more people were spending time on the water," said Brian Swingle, owner of Five Mountain Outfitters Co., a tackle and paddling shop on the Susquehanna River, Luzerne County.

Swingle's kayak rentals more than doubled from the usual 300 outings to 700, and kayak sales rose by 40%, with demand for boats exceeding supply. "I usually sell 60 kayaks a year, and the kayaks I carry are not cheap," said Swingle. "Last year, I sold 100, and if I would have been able to get 200 into the shop, I would have sold all of them," said Swingle.

Fishing kayaks were Swingle's hottest item. "Anglers like them, because they can get onto water that is 3 inches deep and into nooks and crannies and behind islands. They are cost effective and easy to store," said Swingle.

Swingle sells sit-in kayaks as well as sit-on-top kayaks that appeal to aging anglers, and he is experimenting with the sale of hybrid paddleboards this year. "A friend in the Carolinas convinced me to try them, because he likes the totally open floor plan with no sides. These kayaks are perfect for fly fishing, because you can stand up on them, and there is nothing to get snagged on when you cast," said Swingle.

Swingle bolstered his kayak inventory this year, because he expects kayaking to continue on its upward trajectory and thinks most of last year's first-time paddlers will stick with the sport. "I think it is going to be a 70-30 split. "Seventy percent will say 'this was really awesome,' and the other 30 percent will go back to whatever they were doing before the pandemic," said Swingle.

Other outfitters also expect recruitment and retention to remain strong. Chuck Cooper ordered 40 more kayaks for his business, Edge of the Woods Outfitters, which outfits kayakers, canoeists, and rafters floating the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, Monroe County.

"We are always full to capacity on weekends, but the big thing we saw last year was weekday rentals," said Cooper. Cooper's customers include folks from New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. Cooper opened in 2007 as a backpack and bike rental service and purchased an existing canoe livery in 2010.



Jeff Little kayak fishing on the Susquehanna River, Perry County.

photo-Jake Hershman

"We gained new market share and have seen an increase every year since then," said Cooper.

Municipalities are scrambling to keep up with the need for more public launch sites, as evidenced by the number of applications to the PFBC's Boating Facilities Grant Program, which provides matching funds to local governments and watershed groups to build or improve access.

"The demand is great," said the PFBC's Program Coordinator Scott Bollinger. "When the program started in 2005, the emphasis was on motorized boats, but over time, it has definitely shifted to paddlers. That, in and of itself, shows the increased need and demand for additional access. The pandemic took it to a whole new level," said Bollinger.

Of the 12 applications submitted in 2020, 11 were for access for unpowered boats. ☐



In 2020, kayak outfitters reported a record boom in business.

photo-Chris Callhoun



Mentored Youth Trout Day

March 27 (statewide)

Youth anglers and their adult mentors participated in an early start on trout fishing on Saturday, March 27. This was the only Mentored Youth Trout Day offered this year by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

Adult anglers (16 years of age or older) had to possess a valid Pennsylvania fishing license and a current trout/salmon permit and be accompanied by a youth angler (under the age of 16) who had a Mentored Youth Fishing Permit or Voluntary Youth Fishing License. A youth angler had to be accompanied by an adult angler when participating. Youth were permitted to keep 2 trout, 7 inches or larger, while mentors (adults) had to practice catch and release.

For every voluntary youth license sold, the Commission receives approximately \$5 in federal revenue from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's Sport Fish Restoration Act program.

For more information on the 2021 Mentored Youth Trout Days visit www.fishandboat.com/MentoredYouth.htm. ☐

photo-Spring Gearhart



Blair and Eliza Naylor caught these trout while fishing Cocolamus Creek, Juniata County.



photo-Adam Isgate

Makenna Hayman, age 9, caught this Rainbow Trout while fishing Deep Creek, Schuylkill County.

photo-courtesy of Heather Miller



Brynlee Miller, age 6, caught this 21-inch Rainbow Trout while fishing Powell Creek, Dauphin County.



photo-Terrance Foust

Gabe Foust, age 6, caught and released this 16½-inch Rainbow Trout while fishing the Allegheny River, Potter County.



photo-Andrea Feeny

Dean Breidigan caught this Rainbow Trout while fishing at Sweet Arrow Lake, Schuylkill County.

photo-Spring Gearhart



Frank Reasner and his daughter, Calleigh, age 8, caught this trout while fishing on Delaware Creek, Juniata County.



photo-Andrea Feeny

Abigail O'Donnell, age 5, with a nice Brook Trout she caught while fishing Whippoorwill Dam, Schuylkill County.



photo-Andrea Feeny

Miles Sinn, age 3, Ben Sinn, age 3, and Claire Sinn, age 6, caught these trout while fishing at Locust Lake, Schuylkill County.

Opening Day of Trout

April 3 (statewide)

The April 3 statewide opening day of trout marked the beginning of trout season in Pennsylvania. Licenses and buttons can be purchased on the Commission's website at www.fishandboat.com. ☐

photo-Spring Gearhart



Hannah Leach caught this Rainbow Trout while fishing Lost Creek, Juniata County, on opening day.



Gavin Scheib, age 13, caught this trophy Rainbow Trout while fishing Mahantango Creek, Schuylkill County.

photo-Mike Parker



Shane McGrath, Ashland, caught this Rainbow Trout from Deep Creek, Schuylkill County, on opening day.

photo-Dane Tarenelli

photo-Mike Parker



Richie Williard with daughters Callie, age 6, and Kirah, age 11, while fishing Mahantango Creek, Schuylkill County on opening day.



Steve Roe, Halifax, caught this Rainbow Trout while fishing Mahantango Creek, Schuylkill County.

photo-Mike Parker



Kase Rossman and his father Drew Rossman caught a Brown Trout on Lost Creek, Juniata County.

photo-Spring Gearhart

photo-Andrea Feeney



Brothers Dennis Hoffert and Harvey Hoffert, Shoemakersville, caught this Brook Trout on Locust Lake, Schuylkill County, on opening day.



Ainsley Tusing caught this Brook Trout while fishing Lost Creek, Juniata County.

photo-Spring Gearhart



IRT Reels

by Alex Zidock Jr. photos by the author

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree, so it was no surprise when Greg Header decided to build a better fishing reel and follow the groundbreaking blueprint of his successful flagship company, Solar Innovations. Innovation Reel Technologies (IRT), builds fishing reels in Pennsylvania,

with a core principle that the business will grow in a "green" environment and use only the best American-made products and technology that he can produce.

In 1998, Header formed Solar Innovations, manufacturing greenhouses and conservatories. Manufacturing windows, doors, and architectural hardware was soon added. The company currently ships products worldwide from its three-building campus of over 400,000 square-feet in Pine Grove, Schuylkill County.

"In about 2005, we hired 8 or 10 people that worked for Penn Fishing Reels who lost their jobs when Penn closed the nearby Hegins plant," said Header, president and owner of Solar Innovations and IRT Reels. "Those people were disheartened about losing their jobs in an industry they were so passionate about."

"When I hired these people from Hegins, the first point was to provide income for themselves and their families. After we did that, we had many discussions about what the possibilities would be to make an American fishing reel when almost all reels today were being outsourced overseas to make them cheaper, not better. And since our greenhouses, conservatories, and everything we do here at Solar Innovations was all American-made, we wanted to do the same thing with the fishing reels," said Header.



Greg Header, president and owner of IRT Reels, holds the prototype of the IRT700 aluminum extruded spinning reel that IRT Reels created in 2007. The 300UL in red, silver, and blue is the result of years of field testing and patented design improvements, making this American-made spinning reel unique in the industry.

"In 2005, we formed IRT, and made our first aluminum extruded spinning reel. I acquired our first fishing reel patent. In 2007, we started making our prototypes," said Header.

"It was a goal to prove that we could produce an American-made fishing reel and make it successful. That was really the whole point of doing it, and we minimized that risk by really having those former Penn employees work full time at their day job making Solar Innovations products, and their spare time was about making fishing reels. That is why it took a little longer to grow and evolve, but over that time, it allowed us to incubate, test, and develop," said Header.

They started producing prototypes for different charter boat captains and pro-staff people who tested them for about 5 years. "We were back and forth making gen one, gen two, and gen three reels and continuously improving them. In doing that, we developed a little cult following for a product that would become the best American-made reel in the world basically, and while it was a hard-fought thing, now it has turned into something far more than could be expected," said Header.

According to Ben Foreman, director of operations IRT Reels, the warranty on their reels is unique. "We offer a lifetime limited warranty, but we require you to send the reel back every year to maintain the longevity of that warranty. However, if anything has changed with that reel model, and we upgraded to a better material for one of our gears or made other changes, at the time you send that reel back, we would upgrade your reel and extend the warranty," said Foreman.

With more than 40 patents to his credit, Header says the ones for IRT Fly Reels are a game-changer. "One of our most unique fly reel patents is that the handle disengages when stripping line or the fish takes the drag and since we have that patent, you will not see that feature out there on other reels. Our 3-4 weight fly reel has a macro drag and that adjustment of the drag is on the same side as the handle, which is also our patent. By pushing down on the



Innovative designs set the IRT fly reels apart from others on the market. The patented macro drag adjustment is on the same side as the handle. By pushing down on the handle, you engage a micro drag that can be adjusted on-the-fly.

handle, you get a micro drag, so you can gain a partial drag that can be adjusted on-the-fly. This feature is a game-changer in small trout and larger saltwater inshore fishing. We will be launching this fly reel very shortly. We tested it for years with rave reviews, and once it is out there in the marketplace, we intend to add the 5-6 weight, the 7-8 weight, and our 9-10 weight to the lineup," said Header.

"Distribution for our IRT Reels is a bit unique. We basically retail everything through our website, offering promotions and so forth, and we also work with rod builders and specialty boutique dealers. We have not gone big box yet, because we are trying to provide the highest quality reel at the best margins for our customers, and the margins that work for those other bigger stores do not work too well with our model," said Header.

"Just as important as being made in America, living and working 'green' is both important to Solar Innovations and IRT Reels," said Header. "Our main core building is Net Zero. Our IRT Reels building is nearly 70 percent Net Zero this year," said Header. *Note: Net Zero means the total amount of energy used by the building on an annual basis is roughly equal to the amount of renewable energy created on the site.*

"We are always working to minimize our waste and maximize our reuse of materials, which is one of the reasons we offer a program called Refurbished Reels. These reels are usually returned test or busted reels that we rebuild and sell out at discounted prices to those first time people who want to try an IRT reel. What is unique about this program is that those reels work as good as a new reel but have been repurposed like many of the other things we do here. Everything is about being better for the environment and leaving it better than how we received it." ☐



Ben Foreman, director of operations IRT Reels, displays one of the aluminum products manufactured by Solar Innovations along with a combination of color components for IRT spinning reels.

Top Crappie Waters in Northwestern Pennsylvania



photo-Dani Black

by Marilyn Black

On May 12, 2019, 32-year-old Adam Dillner, Butler County, motored his boat to a shallow bay in the northern section of Pymatuning Reservoir, Crawford County. "I was fishing around lily pads in 4- to 5-feet of water when a strong fish grasped the small minnow on a 1/16-ounce lead jig under a float. I initially thought it was a Largemouth Bass. However, it was a whopper Black Crappie," said Dillner.

Dillner's 3-pound, 17 1/4-inch long catch turned out to be tied for the biggest crappie reported to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) that year. Dillner continues to fish Pymatuning Reservoir for crappies each weekend from ice-out through July 4, with additional outings for crappie to Lake Wilhelm, Mercer County.

Let's take a look at how fishery biologists rank northwestern waters. Providing statistics and observations from their on-the-water fish sampling surveys are PFBC Area

Fisheries Biologists Timothy Wilson for Area 1 and Brian Ensign for Area 2.

Pymatuning Reservoir

Special regulations took effect on boundary-water Pymatuning Reservoir on March 1, 2017, limiting daily harvest of Black Crappies and/or White Crappies to 20 fish measuring at least 9 inches. This 17,088-acre, 20-horsepower maximum reservoir ranks as the highest quality crappie location on Wilson's list. "It has good numbers present, and because of excellent growth rates, most crappies are equal to or greater than quality size (9 inches)," said Wilson. Black Crappies constitute most of the crappie population.

Anglers on Pymatuning Reservoir typically seek crappies by fishing in early spring in shallow bays, then into May at near-shore locations, summertime on deeper structure, and in winter from marina docks and through safe ice. Lures from 1/32-ounce to 1/4-ounce often tipped with maggots or minnows are cast or fished below bobbers and floats.



photo-Marilyn Black

These anglers are fishing for crappies near the United States Army Corps of Engineers campground on Shenango River Lake.

Shenango River Lake

Wilson's next choice is 3,560-acre unlimited horsepower Shenango River Lake, Mercer County. Both species here grow more rapidly than the state average, with White Crappies on average exceeding 9 inches early in its third year, and Black Crappies on average reaching 9 inches late in its fourth year. Interestingly, he notes, "Crappie populations are typically cyclical with alternating strong and weak year classes; in Shenango River Lake, a strong year class for Black Crappies often coincides with a weak year class for White Crappies and vice versa. Currently, White Crappies are providing the bulk of the quality size fish," said Wilson.

Since 2018, this lake has been managed with the same daily creel limit as Pymatuning Reservoir. "Shenango River Lake has much different habitat than Pymatuning Reservoir. Throughout the year, crappies will be relating to woody structure, from shoreline trees early to deeper brush piles and habitat structures in summer," said Wilson.

Lake Wilhelm

The PFBC's Fisheries Biologist Brian Ensign recognizes 1,680-acre Lake Wilhelm within Maurice K. Goddard State Park, Mercer County, as the foremost crappie fishery in Area 2. "The crappies in Lake Wilhelm reproduce at a rapid rate and grow extremely fast. For instance, when we surveyed the lake in 2018, over 61% of the White Crappies were over 9 inches long, as were over 17% of the Black Crappies," said Ensign.

"This large lake has moderate to shallow water, natural and manmade habitat features, an abundance of nutrients, and high crappie fertility and productivity, plus good public access," said Ensign. Ensign is concerned that surveys revealed a population of Gizzard Shad, which tend to compete for the same food resources as young crappies.

Edinboro Lake

Ensign's second choice is 245-acre Edinboro Lake, Erie County, which was surveyed in 2018. Many Black Crappies

were sampled, with 62% of those being over 9 inches, and the biggest was 13 inches. "Edinboro Lake contains a shallow upper end, surrounded by wetlands and game lands, which help with productivity. There is a good amount of vegetation for young fish to hide in. Stump fields, backwater coves, and downed trees provide welcome habitat for adult crappies, which makes it very productive," said Ensign. It is especially popular among ice anglers.

Presque Isle Bay

When the biologists use trap nets in the spring to sample various fish species in Presque Isle Bay, this 3,840-acre unlimited horsepower water surrounded by the City of Erie and Presque Isle State Park is, "a consistent producer of quality size crappies. Crappies are easiest to catch in spring in shallow areas such as Marina Bay and Horseshoe Pond and at the same areas in November," said Ensign.

Sugar Lake

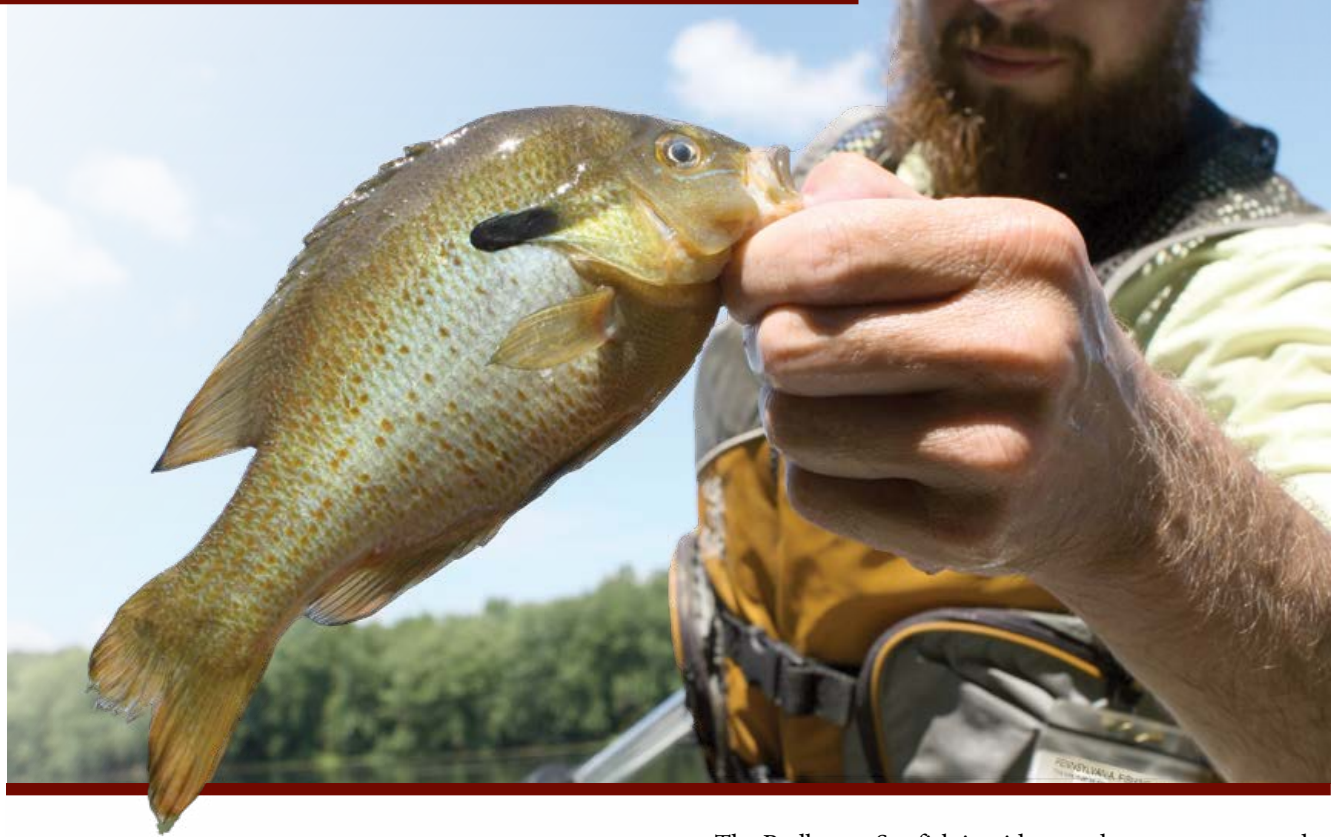
On Sugar Lake, Crawford County, boat motors are restricted to 10 horsepower on this 90-acre natural lake, which has one small public boat ramp and limited shoreline access. When Ensign surveyed it in spring 2017, "We recorded over 1,000 Black Crappies ranging from 3- to 12-inches in size. Historically, Sugar Lake has always produced good numbers and sizes of crappies for anglers to harvest," said Ensign. ☐

More information

The PFBC's Division of Habitat Management prepares detailed Fish Habitat Improvement Plans for many of Pennsylvania's public waters. These maps can be viewed and printed at www.fishandboat.com.

Redbreast Sunfish

are a Summer of Fun



by Vic Attardo

photos by the author

Some fish we love because of color. Some fish we admire as hard fighters and others as wild or native.

Put a checkmark beside all these categories for the Redbreast Sunfish. Redbreast Sunfish are colorful, hard fighters, and both wild and native to the eastern two-thirds of Pennsylvania. Also, these fish are fun to catch.

Many anglers may not know its name, calling these fish “sunnies” or “that Bluegill-looking fish.” Consequently, the Redbreast Sunfish (*Lepomis auritus*) does not get the respect it deserves.

As a former biologist of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) southeast region, Mike Kaufmann, once told me, “Redbreast Sunfish fight better than any Bluegill ever did.” I agree.

The Redbreast Sunfish is widespread across eastern and central Pennsylvania, but it is not found throughout the state. The heaviest concentrations are in the warmwater streams and rivers of the southeast, northeast, and southcentral regions. You will find Redbreast Sunfish in some ponds and lakes but not to any extent.

Redbreast Sunfish like flowing water. Not speedy, cascading water, but slow to moderate currents and places with hard cover such as jumbles of shoreline rocks, fallen trees, stream bank shoals, and deep pools. There are substantial populations of Redbreast Sunfish throughout the middle Delaware River, the lower Schuylkill River and all its tributaries, the Lackawaxen River, the lower Juniata River, and the eastern tributaries of the lower Susquehanna River. That is a lot of water with much of it wadable.

Often, in the southeast's stocked trout streams, when the trout are whisked off, Redbreast Sunfish make an appearance in mid May and June. Depending on conditions, fishing may be excellent from late spring through summer and fall to the early winter.



A Redbreast Sunfish caught while fly fishing.

Redbreast Sunfish are gregarious fish. Where you find one, you will likely find more.

Most of the better Redbreast Sunfish I catch are around 7 inches, some 8-inches, and a few 9-inches. However, Redbreast Sunfish are a broad-bodied fish. At any size, these fish know how to turn its flanks against the current and pull until you have them in hand. Its best identifying feature is its long, dark “ear” or opercle flap.

Catching made easy

These days, I do not dare baitfish for Redbreast Sunfish without a circle hook, size 10 or 12. Redbreast Sunfish

are worm swallowers, so a baitholder and other J-shaped hooks are unnecessary and may harm these fish.

But, there is no need to use bait to catch Redbreast Sunfish. Light fly fishing tackle, a 3- through 5-weight rod, depending on the water you are working, offers the most versatility and sport. For instance, when I wade the Delaware River between Easton and Trenton or the Juniata River from Port Royal east, a 9-foot, 5-weight rod is my choice, because I may need to make substantial casts with a sinking poly tip. When working the upper Lackawaxen River above Hawley or most of the medium-width tributaries of the Delaware River and Schuylkill River, I uncase a 7-foot, 3-weight rod and enjoy the relaxing tempo of casting a light rod with a floating line.

Where you may go wrong when fly fishing for Redbreast Sunfish is using too large of a fly—not because the fish will not try to eat it, but the fish will constantly nip at it. I have watched Redbreast Sunfish repeatedly vacuum a fly, and I have never felt a tickle on the line. Also, a fly with appendages such as long tails or rubber legs are a waste, because the fish will just nip at the tips avoiding the hook point.

My two choices for Redbreast Sunfish flies are a Tar’s Olive Flash or Woolly Worm pattern, size 12 streamer hook with a

single wrap of rainbow flashabou over the olive chenille body and under the trimmed-tight grizzly hackle.

Also, I use a size 12 Improved McGinty with contrasting yellow and black chenille with a yellow hackle. Neither fly has a tail.

It is important to keep the fly moving with short, staccato strips. Rhythmic strips are the only way you will feel the take as Redbreast Sunfish may strike rapidly. To set the hook, grasp the fly line firmly and raise the rod as fast as you can.

Though the Redbreast Sunfish is an excellent quarry for young fly anglers, it surely is not just a kid’s fish. ☐



Wild Trout Triple Slam

by Samuel Rob

photos by the author

Pennsylvania is blessed with native Brook Trout, as well as a healthy population of naturally-reproducing Brown Trout and Rainbow Trout. I am lucky enough to live in the Cumberland Valley, where all three of these fish are found. Southcentral Pennsylvania is an angler's paradise, with its famous spring-fed limestone streams (LeTort Spring Run, Yellow Breeches Creek, and Big Spring Creek) and the freestone streams (Mountain Creek and Conococheague Creek) that flow through Michaux State Forest, Pine Grove Furnace State Park, and Caledonia State Park.

Living in this trout-rich location gave me the opportunity to see if all three species of trout could be caught from three different streams in a single day. My fishing companion was my oldest son who was home on leave from the Army. My plan was to fish for Rainbow Trout in Big Spring Creek, fish for Brook Trout in Mountain Creek, and finish the day by fishing for Brown Trout in Yellow Breeches Creek, which flows through my hometown of Boiling Springs.

Big Spring Creek flows crystal clear through the farmlands surrounding the town of Newville, Cumberland County. It is

a short stream, only 5 miles long from the spring (fifth-largest in Pennsylvania) from which it derives its name to where it empties into Conodoguinet Creek. The 1.52-mile headwater section of the stream is managed with Catch and Release Fly-Fishing Only regulations and is not stocked. Both wild Brook Trout and Rainbow Trout can be found in this section, where recent physical habitat manipulations favoring Brook Trout were implemented. The water clarity, coupled with the constantly shifting currents and heavy aquatic growth, makes fishing Big Spring Creek a challenge for even the best fly anglers.

It was a crisp morning (40 degrees F at 6:00 a.m.) with a full moon when we started our 30 minute drive to Big Spring Creek, but the dawn sky promised a bright day to come. I tend to catch more fish on an overcast day, but the warming rays of the morning sun on a frosty morning is always welcome. That, and a cup of good coffee.

At the stream, we split up, with my son, Sam, working upstream from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) parking lot, while I headed downstream. I worked through a series of riffles and small pools without success, the fish ignoring my offerings of various scuds and midges that most Big Spring Creek regulars favor. I was not as stealthy as I needed to be; my silhouette and heavy footsteps warning fish of my approach. I reminded myself to slow



The author fishing the Catch and Release Fly-Fishing Only section of Big Spring Creek, Cumberland County.

down and started using the brush and grasses along the bank for concealment. I missed a soft hit on a Beadhead Pheasant Tail Nymph. Three casts later, a hard tug on the line, and a wild Rainbow Trout about 6-inches long burst from the water in a surprising jump. As I maneuvered the feisty little fish towards me, the line went suddenly limp, and I knew the fish was gone. I was crestfallen. Had I not actually “caught” the fish when I hooked him even if I did not bring it to hand? Isn’t “self-release” by the fish the best form of catch and release? These were the questions I pondered as I walked back to the parking lot.

Sam caught three wild Rainbow Trout—two of the fish in the 7- to 8-inch range and the largest fish 12- to 14-inches long. Sam also saw a nice Rainbow Trout in the 20-inch range but was never able to get in a position to make a good cast. He caught his fish from small riffles using the tight line nymphing technique and a size #18 pink-colored Euro nymph, hand-tied for him by a friend, Steve Parker.

After shedding gear, we hopped in the car, drank the last of the leftover cold coffee, and drove to South Mountain to fish one of the little tributaries that comprise the headwaters of Mountain Creek. Mountain Creek is a nice-size, 16-mile long freestone stream that is well-stocked by the PFBC from Pine Grove Furnace State Park downstream to where it

empties into the Yellow Breeches Creek outside of the village of Mt. Holly Springs, Cumberland County. The upper reaches of Mountain Creek, however, are shaded by evergreens and rhododendron and home only to diminutive Brook Trout that rarely exceed 6-inches in length.

What wild Brook Trout lack in size, these fish more than make up for in beautiful coloration and aggression. I started out with a small caddis dry fly, but low water (not more than 6-inches in places) and floating leaves soon caused me to switch to a size #18 Beadhead Squirmy Wormy. I finally coaxed a Brook Trout out from under a rock and we breathed a sigh of relief. Surprisingly, the trout we thought would be the easiest to catch turned out to be the most difficult.

It was now noon, so we walked back to the car and ate our lunch. We drove back over South Mountain to a section of the upper Yellow Breeches Creek. We were tempted to stop at the PFBC’s Huntsdale State Fish Hatchery along the way to admire the giant trout on view in its Visitor’s Center but thought better of it since we may need the extra time to accomplish our goal of catching a Brown Trout.

The Yellow Breeches Creek is possibly the most heavily stocked and fished trout water in Pennsylvania. The PFBC and a local sportsman club, the Yellow Breeches Anglers and Conservation Association, do multiple stockings throughout the year. These stockings supplement a healthy wild trout population and attract anglers from throughout central Pennsylvania, Maryland, and northern Virginia. Out-of-town fly anglers tend to focus on the 1.17 miles Catch and Release Artificial Lures Only section between Boiling Springs and the Allenberry Resort, but we decided to fish near the historic Barnitz Mill on the upper Yellow Breeches where Brown Trout are plentiful.

It was not long after we hit the water that Sam caught a small Brown Trout on a nymph in a 12-inch deep riffle. I caught a couple of small Brown Trout in the 6- to 8-inch range (both on nymphs), and Sam, as expected, caught several more of comparable size.

We quit mid-afternoon. It was a pleasant 72 degrees F, the sun was shining, and it was a 10 minute drive home. The fish were small but hardy. We caught three different species of wild trout (Rainbow Trout, Brook Trout, and Brown Trout) from three different streams, all in a little more than a half-day fishing and all within an hour drive from our home. The day was a remarkable testimony to the exceptional trout fishing found in Pennsylvania. □

Cicadas — Brood X



by John Allen photos by the author

In an unpredictable world, there is one thing that you can count on in 2021. The Brood X cicada emergence is coming to Pennsylvania. These large insects may seem like a nuisance, but cicadas will fire up the appetites of fish. Fishing a periodical cicada emergence takes good timing, patience, and the ability to find hungry fish.

Timing

The Brood X emergence will begin around late May and last about 5 or 6 weeks. This is the largest of the periodical broods that emerge. These cicadas will cover a large amount of southcentral and eastern Pennsylvania. Brood X cicadas only emerge from the ground to breed every 17 years, so you will have to wait until 2038 to catch this brood again. Once this brood begins to emerge, give the fish a few days to become acclimated to the Brood X cicada. Then, get on the water as much as you can. Brood XIV will emerge in northcentral Pennsylvania in 2025, but the Brood X emergence is better in my opinion. There is a reason I circled in this year on my calendar for 17 years. I have fished several other smaller broods in Pennsylvania, but I have yet to experience another summer like 2004.

This fly is the author's attempt at matching the hatch to a live cicada.

Fishing

In 2004, while walking to one of my favorite pools to fish the nightly sulphur hatch, I noticed hundreds of small holes in the ground. It looked as though someone had aerated the forest floor. A quick investigation revealed hundreds of cicada nymphs crawling up the surrounding trees. I had heard about the upcoming emergence but never thought much of it from a fishing standpoint.

I went home and did some research to learn more about the insects and figure out how they may impact my fishing. I took a size 6 4X long streamer hook, normally used for bass bugs, and tied in orange and black dubbing, a black piece of foam, orange, red, and crystal wings, and added rubber legs. It was not perfect, but I figured it would be a good prototype in my attempt to match the hatch. I repeated this process a few more times to be prepared for my next outing.

I went back to the same spot a few nights later. I no sooner stepped out of my truck and I could hear the sound



An angler with a cicada-hungry Brown Trout.

of cicadas echoing through the forest. It was almost deafening. For the remainder of the emergence, if I wanted to find cicadas, all I needed to do was listen. While fishing, the occasional cicada would come tumbling out of the trees and hit the water. After the cicadas hit the water, the surface would vibrate from its buzzing wings. The cicadas looked like the combination of a Jitterbug and torpedo bass lure rolled into one. The trout in the pool were interested and eager to strike the cicadas, but most trout struggled to grab these large insects. I tied on my pattern and tossed my line in.

Casting that large of a fly on a trout rod was a challenge. I had to shorten my leader to about 5 feet, just to get it out on the water. I got a few looks but none willing to commit. On one cast, I got stuck on an overhanging tree branch. I gave the line a quick yank, and the fly came crashing down onto the surface like a small stone hitting the water.



In the water, the cicada looks like the combination of a Jitterbug and torpedo bass lure rolled into one.

Within seconds, I had a trout engulf my fly. That was it. My previous presentations were too soft. Cicadas were about the least graceful bug I have ever seen. If I wanted to truly match the hatch, I needed to forget everything I learned about presenting dry flies. I started slapping the water with each cast and the strikes kept coming. I found my best action was in water with more current, where the trout would not have long to decide between striking or not striking. The deep, slow pools led the trout to investigate the flies a little longer, especially the further along the emergence went.

The next several weeks were something most anglers only dream about experiencing. Every lake, stream, and river around was a topwater feeding frenzy. Everything that could be feeding on these bugs was out in full force. I even caught a bullhead on a cicada pattern. The fish continued to strike cicada patterns for weeks after the cicadas disappeared. I tried hooking the live cicadas to a large hook, but keeping the cicadas on the hook was challenging. I found a fly pattern was much easier to use.

If you have never experienced fishing the periodical cicadas, it is something that you should try. If you are unsure if cicadas are around, just listen. Make an effort to experience this type of fishing. It is not something you want to miss. ☐

Tying the 20-Incher Stonefly Nymph



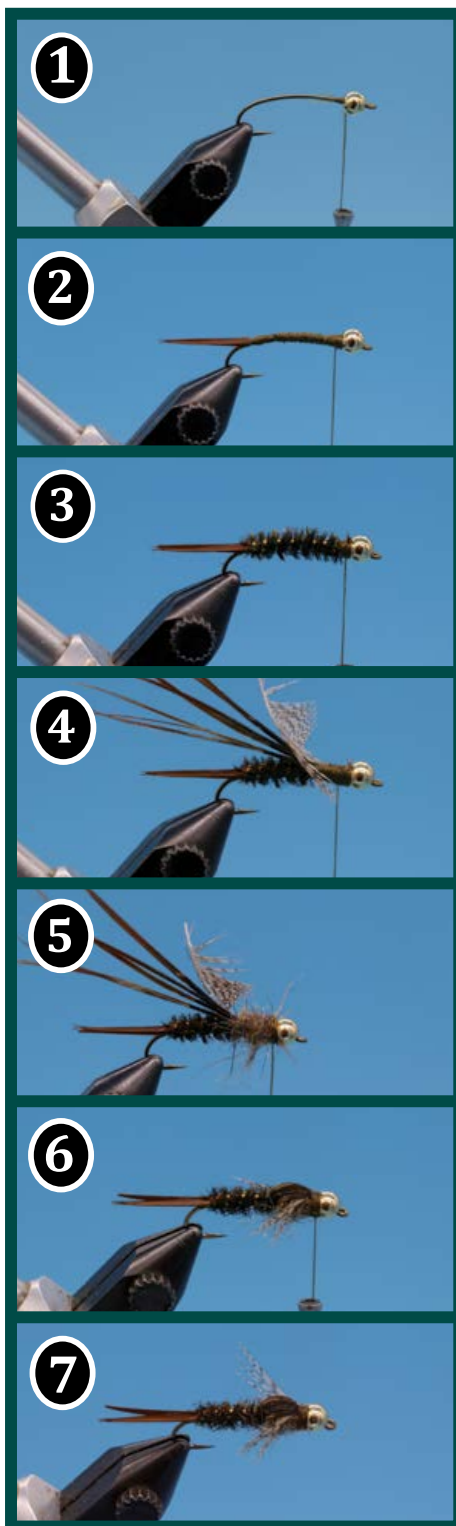
by Carl Haensel

photos by the author

In May and June, big stonefly nymphs are active in the trout streams flowing through Pennsylvania. Many stonefly species eventually hatch in the late spring and early summer, and its nymphs move with more frequency as they grow closer to emerging. Trout love to eat nymphs and take advantage of this time.

Stoneflies are abundant in the clear, cold high-quality water that wild trout require and are a great food source. When imitating these nymphs, the 20-Incher Stonefly Nymph pattern is a great option. It sinks quickly, and the color of the dubbing and wing case can be varied to closely match the coloration of your local stonefly nymphs. Colors of stoneflies in Pennsylvania may vary from dark brown to a deep golden yellow. Find stoneflies by turning over rocks in fast water. Stoneflies are often found on fist-size and larger rocks and boulders in swift current. Stoneflies are rarely found in slower environments or on silty or muddy stream bottoms.

To fish the 20-Incher Stonefly Nymph, try drifting it through the same fast, deep runs where you find real stoneflies. Trout that are keyed in on stoneflies will be more likely to take your fly in the swift water. Deep pools just downstream of these types of habitat are also good choices. In clear water, use flies that are tied with black or dark gray beads to provide a more natural presentation and avoid startling fish. Tie some smaller versions of the fly as well for these types of situations. Keep your drifts drag free and use plenty of weight to get down to the bottom. When fishing stoneflies, your nymphs should be ticking the rocks along the bottom of the stream or river, where the real ones are living. Using a strike indicator helps sense where the bottom is as well as detect when a fish takes the fly. Tie up plenty of spare 20-Incher Stonefly Nymph patterns, and bring them along on your fishing outing. While fishing, it is common to lose a few in the boulders. ☐



Tying the 20-Incher Stonefly Nymph Materials

Hook: Size 6-10 Tiemco 200R or similar curved nymph hook

Thread: Flat waxed olive

Bead: 5/32-inch gold tungsten bead

Weight: Lead-free wire

Tail: Brown goose biots

Rib: Medium gold French tinsel

Thorax: Antron/hare's ear dubbing

Wing Case: Pheasant tail fibers

Legs: Hungarian partridge soft hackle

Abdomen: Peacock herl

- 1 Thread the bead on the hook and attach the thread. Wrap a small amount of thread behind the bead to keep it in place.
- 2 Tie in the biot tails near the curve of the hook bend. Wrap the thread forward and add any desired lead-free wire for weight behind the bead. Cover the biot bases and wire with thread.
- 3 Tie in the French tinsel and 4 to 6 strands of peacock herl facing rearward at the bend of the hook. Wrap the peacock herl followed by the tinsel forward and secure behind the bead.
- 4 Tie in the pheasant tail fibers facing rearward for the wing case. Add a single large partridge feather, tied in at the tip facing rearward for legs.
- 5 Dub in the Antron/hare's ear blend between the wing case materials and the bead.
- 6 Pull the partridge and pheasant feathers over the dubbed area, tying it down just behind the bead. Use a bodkin or other tool to pull out and enhance the dubbed area.
- 7 Whip finish the fly just behind the bead. Add a drop of cyanoacrylate glue to the wraps. Add UV cure flex coating to the wing case for durability. Your fly is complete and ready to fish.

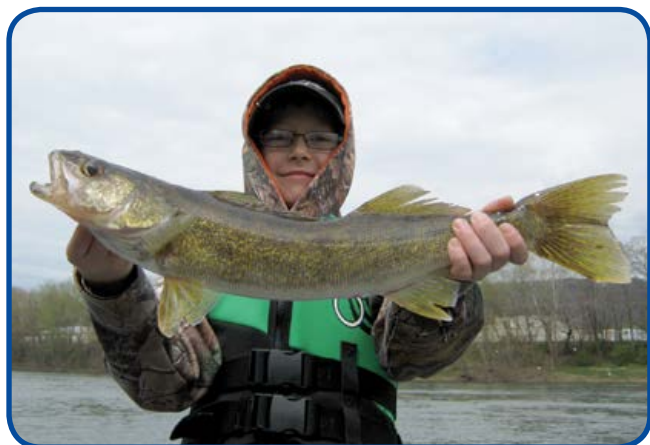
GOVERNOR'S YOUTH COUNCIL for Hunting, Fishing, and Conservation

by *Emery Gunsallus*

I am Emery Gunsallus. I am 17 years old, and this is my third year on the Governor's Youth Council for Hunting, Fishing, and Conservation. I value my time on the council and the experiences it has afforded me. On the council, I have worked firsthand with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, as well as the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC). I have learned a lot about conservation legislation, and it has given me insight on many possible career choices. As part of the council, I hope to contribute my insight as an avid hunter and angler to educate others about conservation-related issues that impact hunting and fishing in Pennsylvania.

What follows is a story about one of my favorite fish species to target and the experiences alongside my outdoor mentors that helped "reel" me into an interest of wanting to help conserve, protect, and enhance Pennsylvania's natural resources.

One of my favorite pastimes is fishing for Walleyes. For me, Walleye fishing is fun, exciting, and should I mention—tasty. I have been fishing for Walleyes on the Susquehanna River, with my pap and my friend, for as long as I can remember. In May, when the water begins to warm, Walleyes are ready, willing, and feed aggressively. You do not want to miss out on the action, as this can be the most productive time of the year to catch Walleyes.



Emery Gunsallus enjoys fishing for Walleyes.



Emery Gunsallus

photos: courtesy of Emery Gunsallus

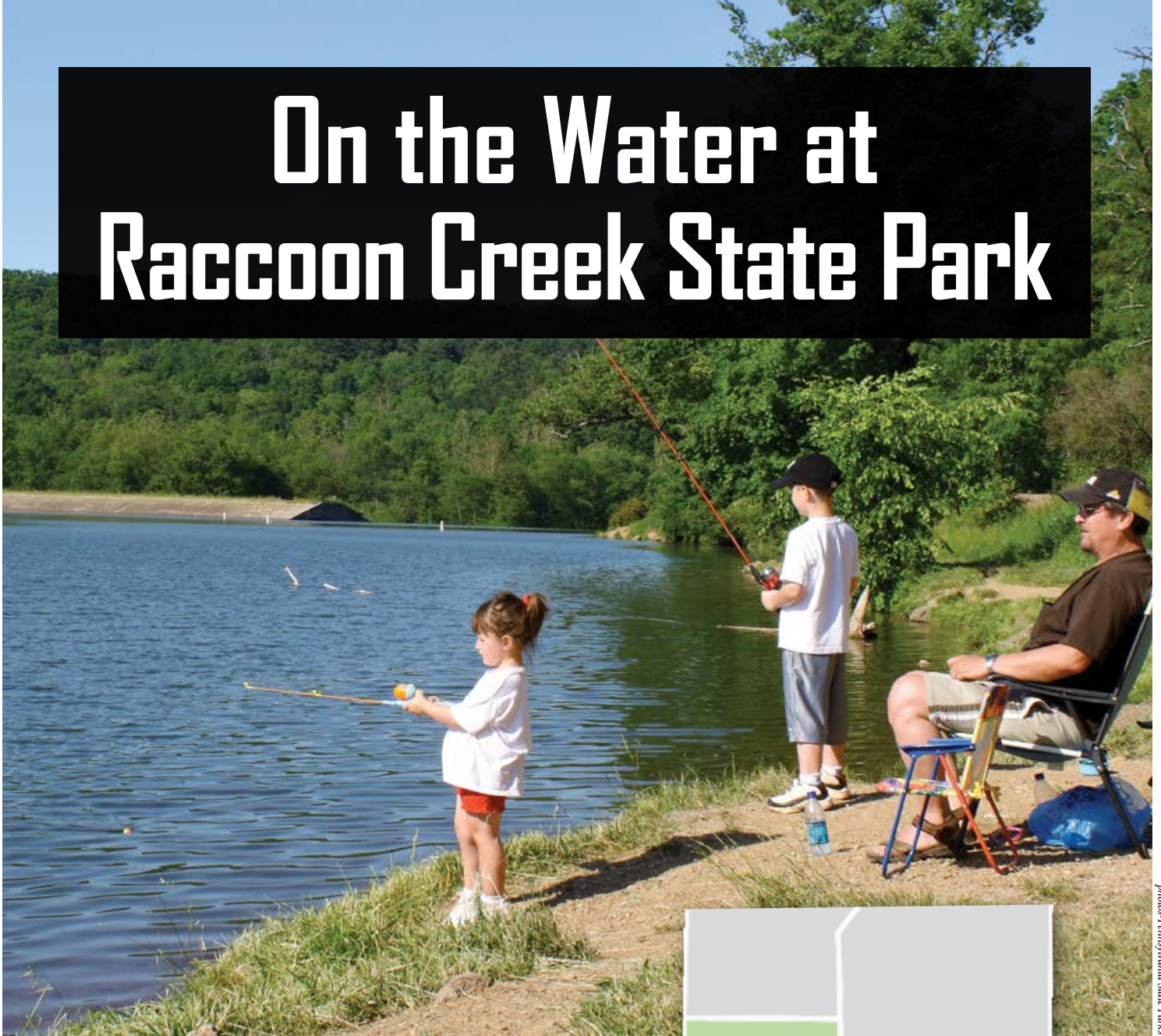
The name "Walleye" comes from the fact that the fish's eyes point outward, as if looking at the walls. Sometimes, Walleyes are referred to as "Old Marble Eyes". Beyond its odd-looking eyes, Walleyes are also known for sharp teeth. Both traits help with its ability to hunt prey under low light conditions. Walleyes tend to feed more extensively at dawn and dusk, but these fish also feed during the night. When my pap and I fish for Walleyes, we like to be on the water by sunrise to catch the Walleyes moving into shade or deeper water. If we do not go in the morning, we go right before dark to catch the Walleyes feeding. Walleyes feed on Yellow Perch, suckers, and minnows. Walleyes also love leeches and crayfish. When found in abundance, Walleyes also feed on insects and other bugs like dragonfly nymphs, damselfly nymphs, mayflies, and chironomids.

There are many ways to fish for Walleyes. Trolling on a boat, jigging, topwater, and fly fishing. My favorite ways to fish for Walleyes are trolling and jigging. My Pap and I fish on the West Branch Susquehanna River between Lock Haven and Montgomery. I remember the first time I caught a Walleye. I was 4 years old. My pap, my gram, and I were out on the boat trolling all day long. Finally, the rod bent over and we were hooked up. I started reeling it in but struggled to get the fish next to the boat. Pap dipped the net in the water and scooped it up. The fish was practically bigger than me. It was the best feeling ever, and I was hooked.

I found a poem that may sum up the feeling of many Walleye anglers, "Get up early, stay up late, fish all day, the grass can wait. Boat's on the trailer, trailer's on truck, Walleyes are bitin', wish me luck." -author unknown.

Pennsylvania is full of fishing experiences with over 85,000 miles of streams and rivers and 4,000 inland lakes. Thanks to the PFBC and their many partners, working each day to conserve, protect, and enhance Pennsylvania's waterways, while also providing safe boating and fishing opportunities, so you can enjoy these waters. Get out there and make memories on Pennsylvania's waters. ☐

On the Water at Raccoon Creek State Park



Photos: Pennsylvania State Parks

by Charles Cantella

If you find yourself looking for something fun to do on a hot summer day, Raccoon Lake may be what you need. Raccoon Lake at Raccoon Creek State Park, Beaver County, is a 101-acre treasure just a short drive from downtown Pittsburgh. At 7,572 mostly wooded acres, Raccoon Creek State Park is one of Pennsylvania's largest state parks. It is beckoning you to get out and enjoy the day.

Created in the 1930s, workers from both the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which were programs designed during the Great Depression to create jobs by providing meaningful work opportunities, began building the park. Due to the location of the park, a mere 30 miles from Pittsburgh, the park became popular. By 1945, the park was officially known as





Raccoon Creek State Park, Beaver County, is one of Pennsylvania's largest state parks.

Raccoon Creek State Park. Raccoon Creek State Park offers something for everyone.

Top ten things to do at Raccoon Creek State Park

1. Go hiking. There are over 40 miles of hiking trails at Raccoon Creek State Park.
2. Head to the beach—there is a beach and a concession stand.
3. Check out the lake by kayak, canoe, or hydrobike.
4. Enjoy the wildlife and plants at the Wildflower Reserve.
5. Go camping.
6. Participate in Environmental Education Programs.
7. Go fishing.
8. Learn about the Frankfort Mineral Spring.
9. Rent a cabin.
10. Go hunting. There are more than 7,000 acres open.

When I visited Raccoon Creek State Park in the summer of 2020, the country was in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Work schedules were in shambles, vacation plans were canceled, and it seemed like the perfect time to do a little social distancing and exploring. Grabbing my day pack filled with water and snacks, I headed down PA 18 toward Raccoon State Park.

When I arrived, there were plenty of signs alerting me to wear my mask and to maintain social distance. After renting a kayak, I ventured out onto the lake, a little

disappointed that I did not bring my fishing gear, but excited to paddle around and do a little reconnaissance for future trips. While the park was not crowded, there were still enough people out enjoying the park to not feel isolated.

I paddled around enjoying the breeze and soaking up the summer sun when I found the beach, which was crowded considering it was the middle of the day on a Wednesday. Not wanting to get sand into the rented kayak, I stayed offshore and continued nosing around the shoreline to see what else I could find.

Some kids on a hydrobike laughed their way across the lake in front of me. It was nice to hear people laughing—2020 was a rough year for a lot of people, and laughter was in short supply. In a sheltered cove, I met a father and daughter anchored up and doing well catching panfish for a fish fry they were planning later in the evening. COVID-19 inspired the father to slow down at work, and he was able to spend more time fishing with his daughter. It was nice to hear people making the best of a bad situation.

A little farther, where the lake starts to get shallow, I was grateful for the kayak, which allowed me to explore areas that other boats may not be able to reach. The bright sun and skinny water allowed me to observe schools of small fish cruising the shallows, a good sign of the health of the ecosystem. A little farther down, and on the other side of a mud flat that I could not get around, I saw a great blue heron stalking his lunch.

All in all, I was pleasantly surprised to find such a welcoming park so close to home. I hope you get the opportunity to enjoy all that Raccoon Creek State Park has to offer.

For those who fish

Raccoon Creek Lake is stocked with trout in spring and fall and gets fished heavily during these times. But, anglers may also catch Bluegills, Channel Catfish, Largemouth Bass, Muskellunge, Smallmouth Bass, Walleyes, Yellow Perch, bullheads, and crappies. Annually, over 500,000 visitors make their way to the Raccoon Creek State Park.

Getting there

The park can be accessed east and west using U.S. 30 or north and south using PA 18. For more information:

Raccoon Creek State Park
3000 State Route 18
Hookstown, PA 15050-1605
Phone: 724-899-2200
raccooncreeks@pa.gov

Facebook

There is also a Facebook group, Raccoon Creek State Park, that keeps members up to date on activities and events going on at the park. ☐

Dipsy Divers 101



by Ross Robertson

photos by the author

When Walleyes and trout go deep in the warmer months, getting lures deep is challenging. Long leads and adding lots of weight to a variety of presentations may work, but it is time consuming and may be a plan for disaster as far as tangles are concerned. Using dipsy divers allows anglers to fish deep without having to have a lot of extra gear.

How dipsy divers work

A dipsy diver is a weighted disc that has a dial on the back to adjust settings from 0 to 3. The higher



The dial on the back of the dipsy diver allows you to control the direction of the diver.



A good quality line counter reel is critical, because knowing exactly how much line is out is important.

the number, the farther away from the boat it will plane, allowing for more coverage and the ability to comfortably run three presentations on each side. A zero setting does not plane and will fish straight down.

In order to dive down, the dipsy has a trip mechanism that forces the diver to angle down and dive. The release tension is adjustable using a set screw. Some anglers use a fishing scale to adjust the actual pounds of pressure to release. Another way is to simply place it in the lake while fishing and use trial and error. If the setting is too loose, waves and speed increases will cause a premature release. If the setting is too tight, it will not release on a strike and will make it more difficult to detect light bites or small fish.

Rod and reel

Most manufacturers have a rod labeled as a “dipsy” rod. While this may seem convenient, these rods are designed more for larger salmon species in most cases. As a result, these rods are often too heavy of action and power to work for Walleyes and steelhead. You need a rod that is heavy enough to pull the constant force of a diver, yet soft enough to load at a wide range of trolling speeds and not rip hooks out. In layman’s terms, use the lighter model options if selecting what manufacturers are calling a “dipsy” rod when fishing for Walleyes and steelhead.

A good quality line counter reel is critical, because knowing exactly how much line is out is important. Knowing that all of the reels are reading the same amount of line out is essential, because line counters need to be calibrated by the amount of line spooled onto

the reel in order to match the number on the reel. While it may seem complicated, it is not, and many videos are found online to show the process.

Line

If you poll a majority of charter captains and guides to find out what type of line they are using, you overwhelmingly hear braided line. Braided line has a smaller diameter and does not stretch much. Both of these characteristics get the diver deeper and helps the device trip easier. Lines such as monofilament line have a lot more stretch and can act like a rubber band when a fish strikes, not allowing a bite to be seen or the release mechanism to trip easily. While line varies from manufacturer to manufacturer, a 30- to 50-pound-test braided line is most commonly used.

The leader off the back of the dipsy diver that connects to the lure end should be 5- to 10-feet in length. Many guides start with a leader equivalent to the rods length, because it makes netting and storing the rig easier. Using a fluorocarbon leader in the 15- to 30-pound range helps improve durability, while the stiffness of the leader material helps provide an extra kick to your presentation.

Terminal

The amount of force that the dipsy diver creates and the fight of the fish means good terminal tackle must be used. A good snap swivel should be used to connect the braided line to the diver. Adding a 6mm bead in front of the knot is a charter captain’s trick to keep from damaging the rod tips when anglers reel too far.

A simple swivel is included on the back side of most dipsy divers. Adding a duolock or crosslock snap onto that swivel makes switching leaders much more efficient.

Lures

Lures need to be shallow diving or light. Spoons are a popular option, but use thin trolling style lures and not thicker casting models in order to get the most action. You do not want a deep diving lure or one that will dive deeper than about 10 feet by itself. The dipsy diver is the diving device, and you do not want a lure to dive and fight or counteract against the diving device.

There are a lot of ways to get lures deep, but few are as simple and efficient as the dipsy diver. ☐

Recap of 2020 Pennsylvania Boating Fatalities



by Ryan C. Walt
Boating and Watercraft Safety Manager

In 2020, 9 recreational boating accidents resulted in 11 fatalities. This is an increase of 3 fatalities from the previous year and below the last 10-year average of 12.5 victims. Factoring in the 2020 fatalities, Pennsylvania's new 10-year average is 12.9 victims. None of the 11 victims in 2020 were wearing a life jacket at the time of the mishap that resulted in death. Seven of the 11 victims (64%) were not wearing a life jacket but did have life jackets onboard the boat.

The "Recap of 2020 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. 2 Fatalities

Conashaugh Lake, Pike County

4/6/20, 6:15 p.m., Monday

Two males (brothers), ages 26 and 28, are deceased as a result of their 15-foot canoe capsizing. Their overturned canoe was observed by their mother who notified emergency personnel. Area dive teams located and recovered the first victim the following day. The second victim was recovered 5 days later. Neither victim was wearing a life jacket and none were found at the scene. The victims had not taken a formal boating safety education course. Operator inexperience and sudden coldwater immersion may have been factors.

2. 1 Fatality

Delaware River, Bucks County

4/24/20, 4:02 p.m., Friday

A 37 year old male is deceased as a result of capsizing a 9-foot kayak. A witness saw the paddler capsize then struggle to get back into the kayak before going underwater. The paddler was not seen again. According to the witness, the victim was not wearing a life jacket and did not have one onboard. It is unknown if the victim had taken a formal boating safety education course. Operator inexperience and sudden coldwater immersion may have been factors. The victim was recovered the following week.

3. 2 Fatalities

Wilmore Dam, Cambria County

6/9/20, 5:34 p.m., Tuesday

A 68 year old male and a 78 year old male are deceased as a result of falling overboard a 16-foot open motorboat. There were no witnesses that observed how the victims ended up in the water. Two witnesses who were kayaking in the area observed the victims floating in the water unresponsive and immediately dialed 911. Neither victim was wearing a life jacket; however, life jackets were onboard. It is unknown if the victims had any formal boating safety education. Medical conditions may have been a factor.

4. 1 Fatality

Susquehanna River, Columbia County

6/24/20, 3:45 p.m., Wednesday

A 24 year old male is deceased as a result of capsizing or falling overboard a 10-foot sit-on-top kayak. A group of five were paddling when the victim became submerged underwater and did not resurface. There were no life jackets being worn or onboard the victim's kayak or by the other paddlers who were with him. It is unknown if the victim had any formal paddling or boating safety education. Drugs or alcohol may have been a factor.

5. 1 Fatality

Conneaut Lake, Crawford County

7/5/20, 5:37 p.m., Sunday

A 33 year old female is deceased as a result of falling overboard a 19-foot open motorboat. The victim was sitting in the transom seat of the moving motorboat when she fell overboard and did not resurface. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, but there were life jackets onboard. The victim was later recovered. It is unknown if the victim had any formal boating safety education.

6.1 Fatality

Hopewell Lake, Berks County
7/26/20, 5:30 p.m., Sunday

A 27 year old male is deceased as a result of entering the water from a 14-foot open motorboat. The victim was one of four people onboard the boat when he jumped out of the boat, causing it to capsize and sending the other individuals into the water. While one of the passengers (a child) was being helped back into the righted boat, the victim got back into the vessel and then jumped out into the water again and did not resurface. A passing boat picked up the child, child's father, and other passenger. The victim was not wearing a life jacket and had not taken a formal boating safety education course. The victim was later recovered, and cause of death was ruled as a drowning. Alcohol and drug use may have been factors.

7.1 Fatality

Allegheny River, Allegheny County
7/31/20, 9:45 p.m., Friday

A 28 year old male is deceased as a result of falling overboard from a 19-foot open motorboat while the operator was in the process of docking. Eight people were onboard the boat when the victim, who was sitting on the engine cover facing aft with feet on the swim platform, fell overboard and did not resurface. Witnesses stated that the victim appeared to fall head-first off the swim platform into the water. Witnesses also stated that the victim was intoxicated. The victim was not wearing a life jacket at the time of the incident, and it is not known if the victim had taken a formal boating safety education course. Alcohol use may have been a factor. The victim was later recovered.

8.1 Fatality

Big Elk Lake, Susquehanna County
10/15/20, 8:30 p.m., Thursday

A 73 year old male is deceased as a result of falling overboard from a wooden homemade 10-foot row boat while fishing. The victim had not returned home from his outing and a search began. The victim's row boat was found drifting approximately 60 yards offshore. Multiple resources including dive teams were involved in search operations, and the victim was later recovered. The victim was not wearing a life jacket; however, there was a life jacket onboard. The victim had successfully completed a formal boating safety education course. Medical conditions and sudden coldwater immersion may have been factors.

9.1 Fatality

Prompton Lake, Wayne County
11/24/20, 11:37 p.m., Tuesday

An 82 year old male is deceased as a result of falling overboard from a 12-foot open motorboat while fishing. The victim had gone fishing earlier in the day and did not return home before dark. Multiple resources were involved with search operations, and the victim was later recovered. The victim was not wearing a life jacket; however, there was a life jacket onboard. The victim had not taken a formal boating safety education course. Sudden coldwater immersion may have been a factor. ☐



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 manmade 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

2020 Deputy Waterways Conservation Officer Awards



Statewide 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 annually awarded the prestigious Statewide Deputy of the Year Award. Deputies are nominated by a WCO or other DWCOs in each law enforcement region. The Statewide 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.

DWCO Daniel E. Reiber, the Northwest Region's Deputy of the Year Award Nominee, received the 2020 Statewide Deputy of the Year Award.

The Deputy of the Year Award Nominees are:
DWCO Donald K. Anderson, Southwest Region
DWCO David A. Martin, Northcentral Region
DWCO Bradley H. Criswell, Southcentral Region
DWCO Walter M. Gutzan, Northeast Region
DWCO Paul V. Marchese, Southeast Region

Years of Service Recognition

The Commission recognized the following DWCOs for their years of service.

Northwest Region

30 years: Bradley W. Donor
35 years: Donald J. Cataldi
Deputy Retirement: Donald J. Benczkowski

Southwest Region

35 years: John. B. Toki
45 years: Charles W. Lutz Jr.

Southcentral Region:

Deputy Retirement: Mark S. Briner

Northeast Region

20 years: Theodore C. Smith Jr.
25 years: Steven K. Mason

Southeast Region:

20 years: Bradford C. Smith
30 years: Denis E. Mora
35 years: David F. Eichler



Southcentral Region retired DWCO Mark S. Briner was recognized for his 28 years of service to the anglers and boaters of Pennsylvania. Former DWCO Briner served Cumberland County. Northwest retired DWCO Donald J. Benczkowski was also recognized for his service (photo not available).

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/Boating Handbook*.

Getting to Know the Other Shads

by Rob Criswell

photos by the author

By now, the shad run is underway on the Delaware River. Dedicated anglers, tossing small spoons and “darts”, follow the spawning run from tidewater to the New York border from April through June. The American Shad, *Alosa sapidissima*, although best known, is not the only species of shad in Pennsylvania waters. Pennsylvania has six species of the family Clupeidae, plying our waters.

These fish all have laterally compressed bodies, and are overall silvery in color, with varying hues of metallic gold, green, and blue reflections, depending how the light strikes the fish. The fish usually swim in moderate to large schools, flashing brilliantly in unison as it forages and flees predators.

Four shad species (including the American Shad) are anadromous—living in salt water most of the year, then migrating into fresh water to spawn in the spring. Two of these species—the Alewife and Blueback Herring—are collectively known as “river herring” and managed by conservation agencies on a population level as a single unit. Although relatively small as adults, 10- to 12-inches and 6- to 10-inches, respectively, both have commercial value, although these fish have declined significantly since the early 1990s in the Delaware River drainage. The reason(s) for the decline is unclear, but some fisheries biologists believe predation from increasing numbers of Striped Bass may be partially to blame.

Unlike the Blueback Herring, which is confined to the Delaware River, the Alewife is now widespread and common (outside the Delaware River system). Native to the Delaware River and once rather widespread during spawning runs in the lower Susquehanna River (prior to blockage by dams), it has been introduced into all the Pennsylvania's drainages except the Potomac. It survives well in larger lakes (including Lake Erie), and its importance as a forage and baitfish is a great benefit to anglers, especially those targeting Striped Bass and Lake Trout. The most efficient method of collecting Alewives for bait is with a throw/cast net. Permits for such nets for inland lakes are available through the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC). However, Alewives may not be collected for bait in the Delaware River and many tributaries. For more details, review the PFBC regulations for the Delaware River and Estuary in the *2021 Pennsylvania Fishing Summary/Boating Handbook*.

Two other shads/herrings may be of minor interest to anglers. The anadromous Hickory Shad, a smaller version of the American Shad (usually 12- to 18-inches), also makes spawning runs up the lower Delaware River drainage during the spring. The two may be differentiated by the spots behind the gill covers—one prominent spot (and sometimes several vague spots behind it) on the American Shad and a series of obvious horizontal spots on the Hickory Shad. In states where it is common, anglers using tackle similar to that employed on American Shad are most successful. Fortunate anglers who latch on to a Hickory Shad are frequently rewarded with an exceptional aerial display. This shad, when hooked, will often leap clear of the water up to six or more times before succumbing to the landing net. Unfortunately, although the Hickory Shad population is increasing in the Delaware River, it is listed as endangered species by the PFBC.



Alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*)



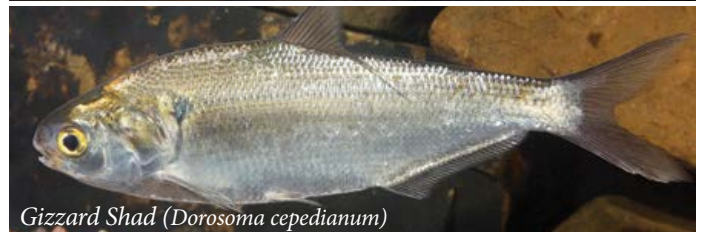
Blueback Herring (*Alosa aestivalis*)



Hickory Shad (*Alosa mediocris*)



Skipjack Herring (*Alosa chrysochloris*)



Gizzard Shad (*Dorosoma cepedianum*)

One of two inland species, the Skipjack Herring, is also targeted by a small contingent of river anglers. As its name implies, feeding schools frequently skip along above the water's surface in the pursuit of shiners and silversides. Confined to the mainstem Ohio River, and lower reaches of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, its range in Pennsylvania is limited, and finding a school is hit or miss. Skipjack Herrings, growing 12- to 18-inches, often makes upstream spawning runs of several hundred miles. Casting below dams in the spring with small spoons, jigs, and streamers provide the best opportunities for success. Latching on to a Skipjack Herring results in multiple tarpon-like series of leaps, providing outstanding sport on light tackle.

The Gizzard Shad occupies all Pennsylvania drainages except the Potomac River. It is the only Pennsylvania shad with a long filament extending from the back of its dorsal fin. Although of no value as a sportfish (it is a filter feeder with phytoplankton as the main diet), it is considered an important forage fish. Its benefit as a food fish is somewhat controversial, as it quickly grows (adult size 12- to 18-inches) beyond suitable size as a prey species for most gamefishes. Where populations are large, its diet is believed to cause shifts in some phytoplankton communities. Those effects may have unintended consequences to overall fish communities. Like the Alewife, the Gizzard Shad is a popular baitfish before it reaches adult size.

While the American Shad remains King of the Clupeids, Pennsylvania's other herrings and shads are all beneficial to anglers and important to aquatic communities. □

Poster is 17" x 22."

Books are 6" x 9."

Magazines are 8.25" x 10.88."



	Price	Quantity	Subtotal
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B Set of: Frogs, Salamanders, Snakes, Turtles (4 posters)	\$12.11	_____	_____
C Set of: Pennsylvania Fishes Wall Charts (2 posters)	\$ 9.16	_____	_____
D PA Amphibians & Reptiles Book (172 pages)	\$14.34	_____	_____
E PA Fishes Book (172 pages)	\$14.34	_____	_____
F "Wear It!" Safety Whistle	\$10.22	_____	_____
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Commission Awards Grants for Boating Facility and Erie Access Improvement Programs, Proposes New Trout Fishing and Ice Fishing Regulations, and Encourages Boating Safety

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) began its Commission meeting by encouraging anglers and boaters to enjoy the water safely this spring and summer.

In addition to the hundreds of thousands of anglers currently participating in the spring trout season, Executive Director Tim Schaeffer noted that warmer weather has already begun to attract more boaters to the water.

Schaeffer also noted that there have been three boating fatalities in 2021, all which occurred on private ponds, and none of the victims were wearing a life jacket. Anglers are reminded that a United States Coast Guard approved life jacket is required for each individual aboard any boat, and children ages 12 and under must always wear a life jacket when underway in any boat 20 feet or less in length and in all canoes, kayaks, and paddleboards. From November 1 through April 30, all boaters, regardless of age, are required to wear a life jacket while aboard boats under 16 feet in length including all canoes, kayaks, and paddleboards.

In other action, the PFBC awarded several grants through the Boating Facility Grant Program. Funds for this program are derived primarily from boat registration fees, state motorboat fuels tax, and restricted revenue accounts. In certain instances, federal aid is also used.

In 2020, the PFBC was awarded a \$200,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation under the auspices of the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act to improve access in the watershed and connect anglers, boaters, and others to the region's water resources. As a result of this funding, the PFBC gave special consideration to proposed boating facility projects within the Delaware River Watershed, resulting in over \$1.9 million being dedicated for seven impactful projects including:

- Carbon County; **County of Carbon**, Mauch Chunk Lake Park
- Chester County; **Natural Lands Trust**, Stroud Preserve Boat Launch, East Branch Brandywine Creek
- Chester County; **East Bradford Township**, Shaw's Bridge Park Canoe/Kayak Launch, Brandywine Creek
- Montgomery County; **Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy**, Marlborough Access Project, Perkiomen Creek
- Philadelphia County; **East Falls Development Association**, East Falls River Landing, Schuylkill River
- Wayne County; **Wayne County**, Industrial Point River Access, Lackawaxen River
- Wayne County; **Wayne County**, White Mills Access, Lackawaxen River

United States Fish and Wildlife Service North Atlantic-Appalachian Regional Director Wendi Weber

complimented the PFBC and its partners on the incredible return on investment of those funds and long-lasting benefits to wildlife and people.

Additional Boating Facility Grants awarded:

- Allegheny County; **Friends of the Riverfront, Inc.**, Braddock Borough Boat Launch, Monongahela River
- Cambria County; **Conemaugh Valley Conservancy**, Johnstown Inclined Plane Riverside Park, Stonycreek River
- Cambria County; **Conemaugh Valley Conservancy**, Johnstown Inclined Plane Riverside Park, Stonycreek River
- Centre County; **Howard Borough**, West End Park Rowing Docks, F.J. Sayers Lake
- Cumberland County; **Borough of New Cumberland**, Borough Park Boat Launch Improvements, Yellow Breeches Creek
- Erie County; **Lawrence Park Township**, Lakeside Boat Launch Ramp, Lake Erie
- Fayette County; **County of Fayette**, Dunlap Creek Lake Dock Replacement, Dunlap Creek Lake
- Greene County; **Greene County Commissioners**, Wisecarver Boat Launch and Access Improvements, Wisecarver Reservoir
- Lackawanna County; **Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority**, Parker's Landing Trailhead and Recreation Area Project, Lackawanna River
- Lawrence County; **Human Services Center**, New Castle River Access, Shenango River
- Luzerne County; **Plains Township**, Plainsville Flats Ray Condo Memorial Park, North Branch of the Susquehanna River
- Ohio and Western Susquehanna River Watersheds; **Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers**, Improving Public Access to Western Pennsylvania Rivers and Streams Mini Grant Program
- Snyder County; **County of Snyder**, Faylor Lake Boat Launch Improvements, Faylor Lake
- Statewide; **PA Lake Management Society**, Mobile Self-Reliant Boat Cleaning Facility, All Public Lakes in Pennsylvania
- Susquehanna River Watershed; **Susquehanna Greenway Partnership**, Susquehanna River Water Trail Wayfinding Program, Susquehanna River

In other action, the Commission awarded several grants through the Erie Access Improvement Program. This program is funded through proceeds from the sale of Lake Erie permits to be used towards programs that benefit public fishing including enhanced access and habitat projects on or at Lake Erie and the watersheds of

Lake Erie. Projects awarded through the 2020 round of grants include:

- Erie County; **Erie-Western PA Port Authority**, Holland Street Pier Fishing Access – Phase 2, Presque Isle Bay
- Erie County; **Erie-Western PA Port Authority**, Lampe Marina Fish Cleaning Station, Lake Erie
- Erie County; **Fairview Township**, Avonia Beach Park Improvements, Lake Erie
- Erie County; **Regional Science Consortium**, Lake Erie Buoy Project, Lake Erie and Presque Isle Bay

Commissioners approved the publication of proposed rulemaking pertaining to the Extended Trout Season (58 Pa. Code § 65.26). This amendment is necessary to improve trout stream fishing opportunities and experiences to best meet the preferences of anglers while providing additional protection to wild trout during the extended season. This amended regulation would provide increased protection and additional fishing opportunities in stream sections managed for wild trout that are downstream from Stocked Trout Waters (STWs). Currently, STWs and all waters downstream from STWs have a creel limit of three trout per day from the day after Labor Day until the last day of February and are closed to fishing from March 1st until 8 a.m. on the opening day of trout season. By amending the Extended Trout Season regulation to exclude all waters downstream of a STW, thousands of additional stream miles would be opened to fishing on a year-round basis during the current closed season and harvest of trout would be prohibited during the extended season downstream from STWs. If approved on final rulemaking at a future meeting, the amendment would go into effect January 1, 2022.

In consideration of proposed changes to the Extended Trout Season, the PFBC intends to add more detailed information about STWs to its annual *Pennsylvania Fishing Summary/Boating Handbook* (Handbook) beginning in 2022. Most stocked trout streams are not stocked throughout the entire length, and many of these streams also have sections that are managed for wild trout. Adding the section limits for stocked trout streams to the Handbook will: 1) clearly identify where stocking occurs to increase angler participation, especially for anglers unfamiliar with a stream; 2) provide increased protection to the stream sections managed for wild trout during the extended season; 3) increase fishing opportunities for wild trout in sections that are open to year-round fishing; 4) increase fishing opportunities downstream of STW sections; and 5) simplify regulations. While these stream section limits are currently published on the PFBC website and FishBoatPA mobile app, defining the limits in the Handbook will provide consistent STW information for anglers who use various sources to identify where to fish for stocked trout.

In Lehigh County, the Board approved the publication of proposed rulemaking to amend fishing regulations at Leaser Lake. Through this action, Leaser Lake will be proposed for removal from Miscellaneous Special Regulations, which allowed for the harvest of trout under Commonwealth Inland Waters fishing regulations but allowed only catch-and-release fishing for all other fish species. PFBC biologists have determined through surveys conducted from 2016-2020 that sportfish populations, including black bass and panfish, within the lake have improved to levels that can now sustain limited harvest. If approved on final rulemaking at a future meeting, the amendment will go into effect January 1, 2022.

Commissioners voted to add Meadow Grounds Lake, Fulton County, to the Catch and Release Lakes program. Following a dam rehabilitation project, refilling of the lake began on April 9, 2021. The refill process is dependent on weather conditions and is expected to take several months to complete. The PFBC plans to initiate stocking beginning in early summer 2021, or as soon as refilling conditions allow, with fingerling plants of select fish species to establish a high-quality, warmwater and coolwater fishery. During the process of rebuilding the fish community, staff propose to temporarily open the lake to fishing under the Catch and Release Lakes Program, which allows only catch-and-release fishing for all fish species. Staff believe this approach will allow for the most rapid development of a balanced warmwater and coolwater fish community, while offering acceptable levels of recreational fishing opportunities. The designation will go into effect January 1, 2022.

In similar action, the Board voted to add Somerset Lake, Somerset County, to the Catch and Release Lakes Program. Following a dam rehabilitation project, the lake is scheduled to be refilled beginning in summer 2021. The refill process is dependent on weather conditions and is expected to take several months to complete. The Commission plans to initiate stocking the lake beginning in fall 2021, or as soon as refilling conditions allow, with fingerling plants of select fish species to establish a high-quality, warmwater and coolwater fishery. During the process of rebuilding the fish community, staff propose to temporarily open the lake to fishing under the Catch and Release Lakes Program, which allows only catch-and-release fishing for all fish species. Staff believe this approach will allow for the most rapid development of a balanced warmwater and coolwater fish community, while offering acceptable levels of recreational fishing opportunities. The designation will go into effect January 1, 2022.

The Board approved the designation of 28 stream sections to the list of Class A wild trout streams. The board also approved the addition of 22 new waters to

the Commission's list of wild trout streams and revised the section limits of three waters currently listed. These additions and revisions will go into effect upon the publication of a second notice in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. A list of waters proposed for wild trout stream and Class A Wild Trout Stream designation can be found on the PFBC website.

The Board approved the publication of proposed rulemaking pertaining to authorized devices for ice fishing. The proposed amendments to 58 Pa. Code § 63.10 (Ice Fishing) and § 63.6 (Authorized Devices for Game Fish, Baitfish, and Fishbait) would allow for legal use of devices such as the JawJacker, Automatic Fisherman, Easy Set Hooksetter, Sure Shot Hooksetter, and Brocraft Ice Fishing Tip-up while ice fishing.

Over the past several ice fishing seasons, anglers have repeatedly asked the PFBC whether these devices are legal. These devices consist of a rod holder, which allows anglers to put a bend in the fishing rod and pre-load it with the aid of a triggering device. When a fish takes the lure or bait, tension on the fishing line causes the trigger mechanism to release the rod, which automatically sets the hook without additional assistance by the angler. The angler is then free to fight the fish with a normal fishing rod and reel.

Under the proposed changes, anglers must still be active participants in fishing, be near their equipment, and land the fish as quickly as possible.

If approved on final rulemaking at a future meeting, the new regulations will go into effect upon publication of a second notice in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

Pertaining to real estate matters, Commissioners authorized the acquisition of an easement along 1,675

linear feet of Crooked Creek in Springfield Township, Erie County. Pending due diligence, the PFBC will pay \$30,000 for the easement on the property along Holiday Road in Springboro, PA, which will be used for public fishing, boating, and riparian and fishery management. The easement will provide significant steelhead fishing opportunities in the area.

The Board authorized the sale of property located in Woodbury Township, Blair County. PennDOT, which will pay fair market value for the property, will require approximately 0.09 acres of permanent slope right-of-way and approximately 0.15 acres of temporary construction easement to perform a bridge replacement on State Route 2020-02B over Piney Creek. The project will not have a long-term adverse impact on the site and will improve public safety. This conveyance will be subject to PFBC staff performing the necessary due diligence.

In Allegheny County, Commissioners approved the sale of approximately 3.2 acres of property known as the President Access located along the Allegheny River in President Township, Venango County. The PFBC will sell the property to an adjoining property owner for \$5,000 and an easement located on the property owner's property for Commission staff to use an existing boat ramp and for parking. A non-profit group has secured funding for a restoration project to remove any unwanted manmade structure on the property and has committed to allow work on his adjoining property. The described disposition will not have an adverse impact on public fishing and boating and will allow for better use of an asset.

Take Part in the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST



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

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

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



Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Pennsylvania's Environmental Rights Amendment

Are you aware of your environmental rights? Are you aware of who takes care of this heritage on your behalf? While this is a task for every one of us, legally the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is the caretaker of this heritage. More specifically, but not exclusively, it is the four resource management agencies that are featured in this exhibit at the Ned Smith Center for Nature & Art (NSCNA). They are the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and Pennsylvania Game Commission. These agencies are collaborating with the NSCNA to produce an exhibit that celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the passage of Pennsylvania's Environmental Rights Amendment—The Green Amendment.

This Amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is Article 1 Declaration of Rights, Section 27 Natural Resources and the Public Estate. It broadly encompasses clean air, pure water, fish, wildlife, and public lands. The above-mentioned trustees

are excited to share with you examples of the work they are doing to conserve and enhance the public resources in their care. Examples of these resources include but are not limited to 86,000 miles of streams and rivers, public lands that comprise over a fifth of the state's land area including national and state parks and forests, game lands, water access areas, National Wildlife Refuges, and literally thousands of different kinds of wild flora and fauna including both common and endangered species.

Don't miss this amazing exhibit that melds their work into one gallery, showcasing what these organizations do for you and how they celebrate The Green Amendment every day.

For more information on the upcoming exhibit, *THE GREEN AMENDMENT: Celebrating Half a Century of Environmental Rights*, visit nedsmithcenter.org. The exhibit will be held in the Olewine Gallery at the Ned Smith Center and will run from April 22 through mid-August. A reception will be held on May 15, 2021, with Senator Franklin Kury on hand to talk about the amendment and his new book.



2021 FISH-FOR FREE DAYS!

Sunday, May 30

Independence Day, Sunday, July 4

Fish-For-Free Days

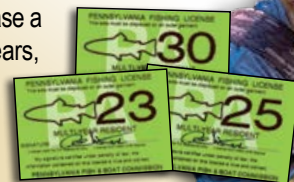


May 30 & July 4, 2021

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.

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 opening day or that weekend fishing opportunity with friends and family. To order and for more information on licenses:



www.fishandboat.com



Angler's Notebook

by Jerry Bush



photo-Jerry Bush

Use a spinnerbait if fishing a heavily populated Smallmouth Bass or Largemouth Bass lake with spinning equipment while restricted to using just one lure style. If the restrictions allow, choose and switch often between single-blade and double-blade units of various shapes and sizes, with chrome or gold blades. My go-to color of attached jig and rubber skirt is white, but chartreuse, black, and yellow skirted lures are also great choices depending on circumstances. Spinnerbaits may be fished to cover a lot of water quickly. These lures may also be fished deep or buzzed along the surface and reliably produce fish.

Boat owners may feel nervous when anglers toss lures toward their vessels. However, with permission to fish near docks for bass or panfish, they will seldom be disappointed. These structures are fish magnets. Docks provide protection and shade, which promotes cloaked ambush locations where gamefish wait to attack passing baitfish. Sometimes, permission is gained by assuring the owner you will resist casting lures and limit tactics to simply dropping rigged jigs near the structure.

Instead of carrying four or five fly boxes filled with a multitude of fly variations, limit your selection to several sizes of 6 to 8 "usually productive" offerings. Of course, include the flies that generate the most confidence. In Pennsylvania, it is difficult to go wrong by carrying a few staples such as Beadhead Pheasant Tail Nymphs, Hare's Ear Nymphs, Prince Nymphs, and several sizes of black

and olive Woolly Buggers with and without beadheads.

Add some Adams and Parachute Adams dry flies along with several sizes of Elk Hair Caddis for fishing the surface. Take a few Muddler Minnows and another "flashy" streamer that imitates baitfish.

The trend in recent years among anglers who desire to fish from a kayak is to purchase a vessel that allows the paddler to sit on top of the vessel, rather than inside a cockpit. While advantageous in many ways, there are several factors to consider. Sit-on-top kayaks are usually heavier than sit-in models. As a rule, vessels that allow elevated seating are wider and more difficult to paddle. However, the wider stance promotes stability. Purchasing a cheaper vessel may be a mistake, but it may be foolish to pay a high price as well. It is all about vessel design and how the angler will use it. Research kayak design and understand the many engineering factors that effect a manually paddled craft. Shop wisely, because another factor to consider are the included accessories that may need to be purchased separately if selecting a different vessel.

When fishing, avoid banging paddles and oars against canoes and kayaks. Soundwaves travel a long distance in water and include vibrations. At best, the vibrations confuse fish. At worst, the vibrations may cause fish to flee the area.

Fishin' from the Kitchen

Sweet and Sour Crappie Kebabs

by Wayne Phillips

Who can resist crappie kebabs slathered in sweet and sour sauce fresh off the grill?

Ingredients for four servings:

- 1- to 2-pounds boneless, skinless crappie fillets, cut into 1-inch by 2-inch pieces
- 3 to 4 slices fresh or canned pineapple, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 Vidalia or red onion, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 24 grape or cherry tomatoes
- Canola oil
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- 1- to 2-cups sweet and sour sauce

Procedure

Soak bamboo skewers in water for about 2 hours. Thread pieces of pineapple, crappie strips, onion, and tomato on a skewer. Folding over the crappie strips helps keep the fish from

falling apart when on the grill. Repeat three times for each skewer. Season with salt and black pepper to taste. Brush skewers with canola oil and grill over medium heat. Turn skewers during grilling. Brush with sweet and sour sauce a few minutes before the fillets are done and again after removing the fillets from the grill.

Serve

Serve over a bed of couscous or rice with diced vegetables.

Tips

Add whole mushrooms or slices of bell pepper to the skewers. Use a sweet and sour sauce from the supermarket or use a recipe online. Making your own sauce allows you to vary the amounts of the ingredients to suit your taste.



photo-Wayne Phillips

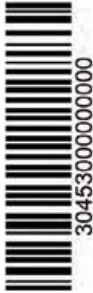
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As the water temperatures start to fall and the boat traffic lightens, the gamefish come out to feed. Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass, Northern Pike, and even Channel Catfish are biting! Check out our website for **Darl Black's Fishing Report**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

PA VisitCrawford.org



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

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CAST & CAUGHT



Yahaira Sherry, Wexford, caught her first steelhead while fishing on Elk Creek, Erie County. The fish weighed 7-pounds and measured 24-inches long.



Michael Mulray, age 13, caught this carp while fishing on the Delaware Canal, Bucks County.



Jake Mulray, age 11, caught this Largemouth Bass while fishing on a small pond in Bucks County.

For the "Cast & Caught" column, send only prints (no larger than 8"x10") and a completed "Model Release form" available at www.fishandboat.com/Transact/AnglerBoater. 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



Duayne Foust, Sunbury, caught this 43-inch Muskellunge while fishing on the Susquehanna River, Northumberland County.



Adriana Foust, age 3, caught and released her first Smallmouth Bass while fishing the Susquehanna River, Northumberland County.



TAKE ME FISHING