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Issue 253

May/June 2016



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Magazine

Volume 1 Issue 253

Publisher and Editor
Mark A. Goudy

Contributing Editors
West Virginia Division Of
Natural Resources

No Subscriptions Offered

Printed Every Six Weeks.

W.Va. Sportsman

P.O. Box 5521
Vienna, WV 26105

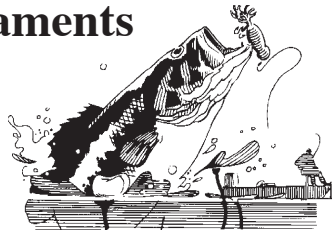
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Cover Photo

Roger Balsler caught a 5 pound, 13 oz. large mouth bass and another large one at the recent April 17th bass event at Stonewall Jackson lake. Look for an entry form on page 5 for future tournaments there.

Send in your 2015 TEXT pics.
Send to 304-482-7217.

There have been numerous text pics sent in this year. If you are not in the last couple of issues, look in future issues for your pic.

Spring Crappie Fishing

The spawn is on at many lakes across the southern US. The water temperatures have risen and if you can catch the conditions just right, you should be able to land a few slabs.

The #1 bait for catching Spring Crappie is without a doubt a live minnow. It has been estimated that over 50% of all Crappie are caught on live minnows. I am not totally sure of the accuracy of that quote, but I happen to believe it. The problem is that sometimes the local bait

shops will run out of minnows if the fish are really biting.

Other effective live baits you can use are crickets and grub worms. Earthworms may work, but my experience has been that they are better suited for catfish, sunfish, and an occasional bass. You can also try a cast net to catch some live bait.

Try fishing in the shallow water with a live minnow tied about 18 inches to 2 feet below the unweighted cork. Something you may try if cork fishing is to buy the plastic corks, and drill a small hole and put in a few very small split shot weights. Try casting your line out, and every now and then giving it a twitch. Spring Crappie will be curious about the rattling sound and come to check it out.

Jig fishing can also be effective for Spring Crappie, but jigs can be a bit harder in the very shallow water, unless you are dropping the jig
continue to the next page



Hunter Harlan bagged a gobbler. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.



Levi Casto, from Kenna, caught his largest bass in a kayak.

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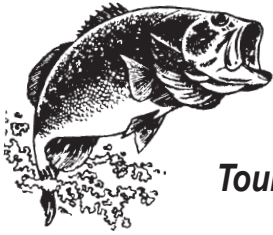
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April 17 ___ May 22 ___
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into heavy cover. If you are against the boat dock, or on a ledge, there is no cover to hide you away from the fish. Once the spawn is over and the Crappie begin to move off shore a bit, jigging can be very effective.

Crappie are not a very aggressive fish. The males will be a bit more aggressive than the females during the spawn, but still nowhere near as aggressive as a bass would be. So it is very important to fish slow. If you cast a jig out, reel back

slowly, and pause around branches and other cover to allow the bait to drop in the zone.

Spring Crappie fishing can be a blast if you catch the conditions just right. It can also be very frustrating when a front is approaching or has just passed through. Crappie.



Kyle Warner landed a 5 pound, 13 oz bass at the April 17 Stonewall. To the left is the schedule.



Beau Wyatt, from Ireland, got a nice 8 point in Wetzel Co.



Kendra Lambert, from Nitro, caught a 4 1/2 pound brook trout.



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Ben Leedom caught a trout at James Bailey Lake.



Cory McCoy, from Simpson, landed a 21" rainbow trout.

Turkey Forecast

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Hunting prospects look promising for the 2016 spring turkey season in West Virginia, which runs April 18 through May 14, with a special one-day youth season April 16.

Since the typical gobbler harvested is usually a 2-year-old bird, the Division of Natural Resources routinely uses the brood reports from the previous two years to estimate harvest trends. On a statewide level, the brood reports from 2014 were 30 percent higher than 2013 and mimicked the 5-year average, indicating that relative number of birds should be higher than last year.

Additionally, the brood reports



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6/26 - Powatan Point
7/24 - New Martinsville
8/28 - New Martinsville
9/11 - Powhatan Point
9/11 Date Changed from 9/25

- 6 Fish Limit
On The Ohio River

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from 2015 were 22 percent above the year before and 14 percent above the 5-year average on a statewide basis, indicating that more turkeys should be available this spring gobbler season than last. Despite this improved abundance, surviving hens at this time of year are absolutely critical for future population growth. Hunters are strongly urged

to protect their hens. Killing a hen in the spring ensures fewer birds both in the fall and following year.

As spring progresses, many hunters quit hunting for a variety of reasons, including a perception that the birds have finished gobbling. Highly vocal turkeys that are more prone to calling are taken during

continue to the next page

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the first week of the season, generating 58 percent of the season's harvest.

Good-to-excellent hunting, however, can still be had through the end of the season. According to a number of hunters, some of the best hunts take place in the last week and the last days of the season as gobblers that are interested in breeding easily come to calls. Also, the earlier start of the season means there will be less vegetation to block a hunter's vision during the last week of the season.



Ward Paris caught a musky in the Elk River.



David Rose, from Barboursville, caught a great rainbow trout.

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WV Wildlife Calendar Wins Award

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. - The 2016 full-color wall calendar published by the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources has again won national recognition by receiving a 2016 Gold Award in a prestigious calendar contest. According to Scott Warner, assistant chief of the WVDNR Wildlife Diversity Unit, the calendar's combination of original, creative artwork and well-written information earned it this award.

"We have won several silver and bronze awards in the past, but this is only the second time we have taken home the gold," Warner said. "Besides the beautiful paintings from West Virginia and national artists, our calendar contains informative articles, numerous natural history facts, along with hunting and fishing regulations."

The annual contest, sponsored by

the Calendar Marketing Association, featured hundreds of calendars from all over the country competing in a variety of categories. Awards were based on the superiority of the artwork, readability, information quality and originality. The DNR calendar received a gold award in the category of "most informative, wall calendar, retail division."

Proceeds from calendar sales help fund projects of the DNR Wildlife Diversity Program such as monitoring bird populations, developing educational wildlife trunks for use in schools, and printing of publications about wildlife species which are not hunted, trapped or fished.

The WVDNR Wildlife Calendar has been published since 1985 and is sold throughout the state. The 2016 calendar is still available at all DNR district offices and many

newsstands, convenience marts and food stores statewide. The price is \$10 each, plus \$6.50 shipping and handling. West Virginia residents must add \$.60 tax. To order the Wildlife Calendar, please contact the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, Wildlife Calendar, P.O. Box 67, Elkins, WV 26241; phone (304) 637-0245.



Gavin Price caught a large drum in the Ohio River.

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Colt Corder, from West Union, caught a native char. *Photo courtesy of Old & New Spots in Ravenswood.*



Jacob Frum bagged a good turkey. *Photo courtesy of Tyler Outdoor Supply in Middlebourne*



Steve Ellis used a bow for a 185 2/8 Mingo Co. drop tine buck.

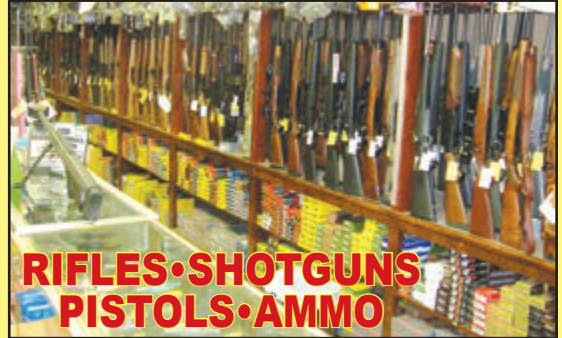
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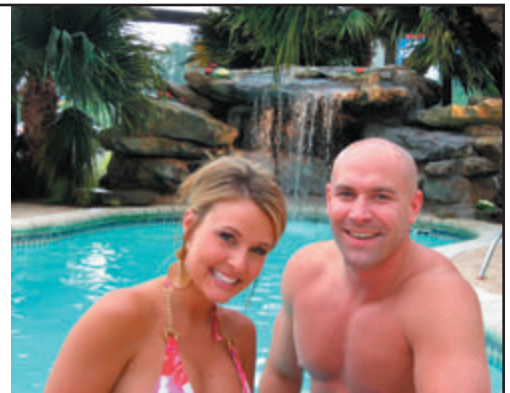
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Josh Compton took a huge gobbler with a 12" beard. *Photo courtesy of the Bait Shack in Harrisville.*

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Tim Wade caught a 6 -1 bass at the April 17th Stonewall event.



Larry Vucelich landed a 26" Florida bass with a 24" girth.




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Catfish Lures

Ready to have some freshwater fishing fun with using catfish lures?

Many fishermen are unaware of people catching catfish on artificial baits. Or might have heard about it happening. Never the less, it doesn't seem to be talked about much.

Fishing for catfish with lures is not very common at all. It's definitely not the traditional technique used for catching these whiskerfish.

The odds are much higher in your favor to use stinky dead baits to attract these bottom dwellers... yes, these are the best baits for catfish. Because catfish often reside in dark and dingy muddy waters, they are forced to seek out food mainly with their keen sense of smell. They can sniff out live and dead stinky bait

from far off distances to find a delightful meal to eat.

Catching Catfish With Fishing Lures

Anglers have caught catfish on fishing lures more than what seems to be reported. The majority of the time it's by complete accident. Surprised anglers have found them on the other end of their line when

fishing for largemouth bass, striped bass, crappie, trout and all kinds of other freshwater fish.

Some people have been known to
continue to the next page



Cynthia Toothman, from Barracksville, caught a 23 1/2" trout.



Adam Maltempie got this nice buck in Summers County.

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specifically focus their catfishing trips by targeting them with lures.

When the conditions are right, catfish can be caught with lures. The water clarity should be at least somewhat clear. And if the catfish are hungry enough, they will come after your presentations. The best times seem to be from pre-spawn to post-spawn, as they will be more actively feeding, before it gets too warm.

They have the ability to sense vibrations, like the vibrations of a lure which simulates an injured



Eli Ward shot a nice 6 point buck in Gilmer County.



Eric Johnson got a 20 pound gobbler with an 8" beard in Wood Co.

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gest covering you lures with some good smelly fish scent.

Types Of Lures Used To Catch Catfish

There've been numerous reports of catfish caught on all sorts of freshwater fishing lures. I've heard of people catching them on inline spinners, spinner baits, crankbaits, swimbaits, jigs, spoons, top water plugs and soft plastics. One fisherman even noted catching a bunch of channel catfish while trolling one day, all ranging in the one to two pound range.

Catfish Species Caught With Fishing Lures

The different species of catfish that have been know to hit on lures are flathead catfish, blue catfish, wels catfish, bullheads and channel catfish. I'm sure there are more, but these seem to be the most common

continue to the next page



Kaleb Finley went to Beech Fork Lake to catch this bass.



Mike Finley went to Beech Fork Lake to catch this bass.



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species for snacking on artificial fishing lures.

Catfish Lures And Artificial Cat-fishing Baits

Are you ready to get in on the exciting action of catching whiskerfish with some cool fishing lures for catfish?

There are companies that actually design and produce fishing lures specifically for catfish. These aren't the kind that you would necessarily cast out and crank in all day long.

There are various dough baits and dip baits to choose from. Many come with a treble hook inserted through a small sponge. Others have bait tubes to resemble worms. Usually, these are designed so that you can either dip them in a sauce, pack them with a smelly dough or paste, or all of the above if you wish to.

One of my favorite catfish lures is the Tear Drop plastic lure made by Uncle Josh. Check out the Tear

Drop Catfish Lures here.

I also love the Strike King Catfish Huckleberry baits. You can inject the lure with a stinky scented dough ball into the chamber. It won't fall out so there's no need to keep re-loading. Or you can just dip or soak them in a smelly dipping sauce.

Dip worm baits and other stink bait holders are just as effective with the right type of dips or doughs.

Some of the most popular attractive smelling flavors of scented dipping sauces are blood, shad, and cheese. Catfish love these tasty scents.

Good luck on your catfishing trips!

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Bobby Buskus Jr., from Oak Hill, got a nice 10 point buck.

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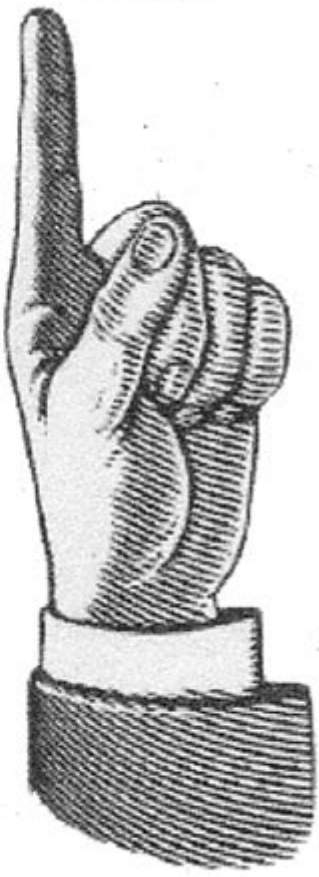
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Don't Feed The Bears

SOUTH CHARLESTON W.Va. - The Division of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds residents that feeding black bears is a violation of state law as well as a misguided disservice to our state animal, according to Colin Carpenter, black bear project leader for the DNR Wildlife Resources Section.

"It is understandable that some people will set out food to get a closer look at this often secretive animal," Carpenter said. "However, these actions often lead to the destruction of the bear. Bear movements are tied to food sources. Bears that roam in and around residential areas in search of food are less likely to stay if they do not find anything to eat. The key to avoiding human-bear conflicts is to remove or secure food attractants before a bear finds them.

"This year, we want to get the word out about human-bear conflicts before bears show up in your neighborhood," Carpenter said. "The peak of nuisance bear activity in West Virginia occurs during the month of May. However, bears begin leaving their dens in mid-March, and nuisance complaints begin coming in around April 1."

Capturing and moving bears that have become accustomed to humans is a costly and often ineffective way of addressing the problem, especially when faced with the possibility of merely moving a problem bear from one area to another. That is why wildlife agencies around the country tell people that a "fed bear is a dead bear."

Bear populations have increased in both number and distribution in the past 20 years. Bears are now found in areas where they have

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been absent for decades, and have been reported in all 55 counties. In 2015, bears were harvested in 48 of West Virginia's 55 counties. There is simply nowhere to move bears that have become a problem, according to Carpenter.

Feeding of any wildlife should be avoided for numerous reasons, including, but not limited to, disease transmission, increased predation, habitat destruction around the feeding site, ethical concerns, and the animal's overall health.

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Young Lane Slater, from Charleston, caught 6 rainbow trout.

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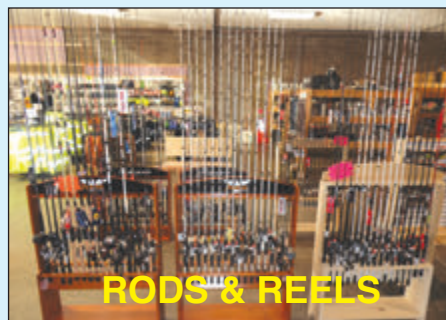
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Eric Mullins caught a 5 pound Stonewall Jackson bass at the April 17th bass tournament. He and his partner, Tony Crumbliss, ended up with a six fish limit weighing 20 pounds, 5 oz to win. 2nd was Summers & Benett with 18 - 13, 3rd Watson - Rickett with 17 - 15, 4th Warner - Warner with 16 - 5, 5th Settle - Whaples with 15 - 6, 6th Helmick - Shaffer with 15 - 1. The next tournament is May 22 at the Vandalia Ramp. An entry form is on page 5 of this issue. Pre-register to get a better number. The Stonewall Classic is on 9/24 and 9/25.

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Brian Galloway, from Mt. Clare, caught a 5 pound Stonewall bass.



Craig Coplin shot a 31 pound bobcat in Wirt County.



This young lady landed several nice trout. Photo courtesy of Sure Catch Fish Farm in Elkins.

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Capitalize On The Shad Spawn

The shad spawn is kicking in across the south, including here at Wheeler Lake where the Academy Sports + Outdoors Bassmaster Elite event is underway. It's a pretty cool phenomenon that every bass angler should be aware of.

Bass know when the shad are spawning and they gang up on them. Savvy anglers who find spawning shad locations can really log some good catches.

Shad spawn at night and especially around full moon periods.

They will continue spawning activity into the low light hours, but

once the sun gets up, they move off the structure. That's why it's important for anglers to be on the water at first light. It can last a little longer on cloudy or windy days, but early morning periods are the best time to capitalize.

Shad spawn against objects, broadcasting their eggs against the cover. If it's a grass lake, they will spawn around the grass. They'll get up against bushes, docks, or even anchored boats. Rip rap or rocky shorelines can be dynamite. If there isn't much shallow cover, they will spawn on clay banks and points.

By Kevin VanDam

There are a few ways to tell where it's happening. For one, the blue herons will be perched along those areas gobbling up the massive schools of bait. Gulls and egrets will take advantage of them, too.

Another big sign is when you see shad popping out of the water near
continue to the next page



Rooster and Bubba were in on a musky trip together. *Photo courtesy of Berry's Campground in Hinton.*

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shore.

There are a number of ways to catch bass feeding on spawning shad, but the spinnerbait is my favorite. It's also a good lure to help you find the baitfish, as the shad will literally follow your double willow blades back to the boat. If they're thick, they will bang into the bait and even make the blades stop turning. I've caught bass on a spinnerbait that was being followed by shad and have both shad and the lure in the fish's mouth!

Bass also will hit topwater poppers, buzzbaits and swimbaits worked through shad spawns, but if the water is stained, the spinnerbait should be your first choice.

Make accurate casts and track your lure tight to whatever object the shad is using. If it's the bank, get close to the bank and parallel it.

Another thing I do is run my






Stacy McCloy caught a 7 pound largemouth bass.

HydroWave on a shad pattern. Newer units also have blue herring patterns for those lakes that have herring. I like the frenzy or blitz pattern that replicates the sound of bass busting baitfish.

I've noticed that those underwater sounds coming from the unit will get the shad active when they aren't out moving around. I've seen it many times on Guntersville, where the moment I turned on the HydroWave around grass beds, the shad would get excited and the bass turned on. If you can get shad riled up during the spawn, the bass will get active, too.

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I get a lot of questions about how to use the HydroWave. In next week's blog, I delve into the various sound patterns and how I use them.

Remember, it's all in the attitude.



These two young fellows had a great turkey hunt. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.

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Ruffed Grouse Society Aids In Habitat

ELKINS, W.Va. – The Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) has provided a forestry mulching machine to assist several agencies with their efforts to provide better habitat for a number of wildlife species in West Virginia. Early successional habitat projects have been successful on the Monongahela National Forest (MNF) under a collaborative partnership among the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (DNR), the West Virginia Division of Forestry (DOF) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Early successional habitat (ESH) refers to areas that have well-developed ground cover or shrub and young trees, lack a closed tree canopy, and are created or maintained by intense or recurring disturbances. Disturbances and early successional habitats are important to maintain the diverse plant and wildlife species native to deciduous eastern forests. A variety of wildlife species require ESH during all or part of their lifecycle, most notably ruffed grouse, American woodcock and many species of songbirds.

The Caterpillar 299D XHP machine, mulching head, and a goose-

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June 18 7am to 4pm
July 23 7am to 4pm
August 13 7am to 4pm
Sept. 3 7am to 4pm
Oct. 29 7:30am to 4:30pm

Ohio River & North Bend Catfish Tournaments

May 7 7am to 7pm NB Lake
May 28 6am to 3pm OHR - Corning
June 4 7pm to 7am NR Lake
July 9 7pm to 7am
August 9 7pm to 7am
August 27 6pm to 8am OHR Corning
Sept. 10 6pm to 8am OHR Corning

neck trailer were bought by the RGS to maintain and create early successional habitat on the Beaver Dam, Cheat and Little River Cooperative wildlife management areas

of the MNF and Kumbrabow State
continue to the next page



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These boys were in on a trout catch. Photo courtesy of Sure Catch Fish Farm in Elkins.



Sammy Murphy got a good bird in the youth hunt.

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Forest. To help out, the USFS will hire an operator and cover maintenance costs, and the DNR will buy a heavy-duty truck to pull the trailer.

The group has set an initial goal of creating/maintaining 300 acres of habitat per year. Much thought has gone into project development and implementation, and results are already being seen on Kumbrabow State Forest, where the machine is currently working.

Jack Tribble, district ranger on the MNF Greenbrier Ranger District, complimented this effort by stating, "It is nice to see that over the past five years we have really moved forward on a comprehensive and cooperative approach to habitat management. Getting

it done on the ground is so paramount and we all are moving in the same direction with these positive results."

Rob Tallman, DNR wildlife manager on Cheat Cooperative Wildlife Management Area and Kumbrabow State Forest added, "Partnerships equal results. The partnerships we have developed and our interagency working relationship along with RGS support has proven very successful. The sportsmen and women of West Virginia should thank RGS and especially RGS Regional Biol-

continue to the next page

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Joe Farley hooked a 21 1/2" New River smallmouth bass.



A good gobbler was brought in. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.

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ogist Dr. Linda Ordiway for demonstrating their commitment to the wildlife resources of this state.”

Travis Miller, State Lands Manager for DOF said, “The goals for wildlife habitat management and forest management are essentially the same. The addition of the mulching machine provides us with a tool to not only create and maintain habitat but also to mechanically enhance our timber resources through crop tree release and timber stand improvement.”

Dr. Linda Ordiway said, “This type of agency commitment and cooperation in creating and enhancing existing habitat is needed for successful management. This is a model partnership where the end result is providing habitat for sustaining the wildlife and floral diversity that West Virginia is known for.”

For questions regarding these



Cory Boothe got a big New River smallmouth bass.

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projects or relating to the collaborative partnership, please contact

Rob Tallman at 304-552-2528 or at Robert.E.Tallman@wv.gov.



Emily Hagerman caught a nice bass at Stonecoal Lake.



Brandon Richards, from Elizabeth, got an 8 point in Wirt Co..

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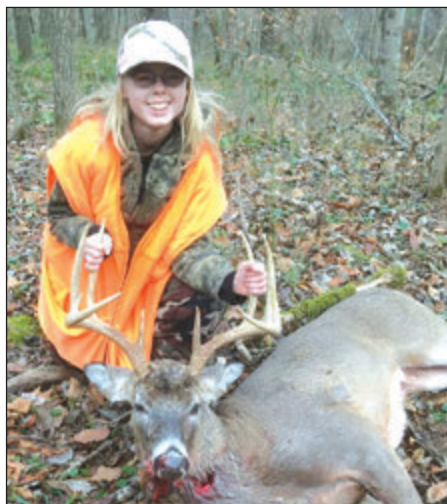
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Jesse Dillon, from Burnsville, has her uncle's 10 point buck.

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Nancy Morgan caught a huge brook trout. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sportins Goods in Elkins.

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Sight Fishing For Bedding Bass

By Alton Jones

One of the reasons I look forward to spring so much is that we can expect good weather. That may sound counterintuitive because, normally, we associate the best fishing with bad weather.

We often say that bass like a windy day, they like a stormy day, they like the day before the front

when it's raining sideways. But the springtime is different. That's the one time in a bass' life — especially a big bass — when they want warm sun and they want to get out of the wind.

For perspective, I like to use the analogy of my wife when she was nine months pregnant — all she

wanted to do was lie around in the sun. Can you blame her?

Bass are a lot like that, especially in the early spring. For these fish, it's all about comfort and preparation for their spawn.

This time of year, bass need plenty of warming sunshine to help their eggs incubate. They also want comfortable habitat during this time because they're literally bulging.

So, how do you choose a good spring fishing spot? Well, I have a formula that has worked well for
continue to the next page

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mula that has worked well for me: Go to windy side of the lake and find a place that's out of the wind. That might be a pocket off a cove, or any place with some protection from the elements.

The windy side warms up fastest, but once you get to that warmer water, you want to find a place where it's calm. The backs of creeks usually offer this preferred combination of warm water and calm conditions, but keep in mind that runoff from recent rains can throw a wrench into that premise.

But you want to stay off the main

lake and concentrate on pockets, creeks and coves. Look for places where the fish can find protection no matter what the weather throws at them. This is where you'll find a good spawning area.

This is also where you'll find one of my favorite elements of



Travis Elswick used a bow in Boone Co. for a nice 8 point buck.



Taylor Adkins shot an 18 pound, 6 oz gobbler. Photo courtesy of WV Wild Outdoors in Birch River.

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the spring season — sight fishing. I love looking at the fish I'm trying to catch. When you can see a fish and the fish can see you, at that point, it becomes a battle of wills.

There's no question that investing the time in working a bed fish continue to the next page



Mark Minear, from Vienna, hooked a big largemouth bass.

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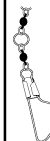
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and then succeeding in getting that fish to bite is one of bass fishing's greatest thrills. But you have to understand that not all bass are catchable.

I like to use what I call the "10 minute rule" to determine if I can catch a particular fish or not. In tournament fishing, time management is one of the most important factors to an angler's success.

You can waste your whole day fishing for a fish and never catch it; whereas you would have been better served leaving that fish and going to find one that's catchable.

The way I apply this rule is that within 10 minutes of getting set up and beginning to fish for that particular bass, I at least want to see that fish acknowledge the presence of my lure in the nest.

That might mean they stop and take a glance at it; maybe they nose down a little bit. But every now and then, you find a fish that's completely oblivious, and it doesn't care what you do.

Maybe it's locked, maybe it's not, but that doesn't matter as much to me. I want that fish to give me a sign that it's aware of my bait's presence and that it's a little agitated.

continue to the next page



James Garris went to Tyler County for an 8 point buck.

ADVERTISE

W. Va. Sportsman
Rates are on page 3



John Mullens bagged a 19 pound, 10 Oz. gobbler. Photo courtesy of WV Wild Outdoors in Birch River.

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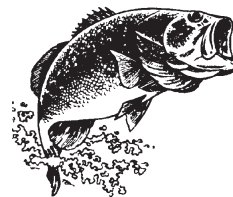
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If I can see that within 10 minutes, I feel like I can catch that fish in a reasonable amount of time, so I'll likely stay and fish for that fish. On the other hand, if the fish totally ignores my bait for 10 minutes, and I can't see any evidence that the fish has acknowledged my bait, I'm going to move to a different fish.


It's easy to see fish in the shallows in the spring, but it's not always easy to know which one to fish for. The 10 minute rule will help you make good time-management decisions.

In closing, here's a tip for locating bed fish: When I'm looking for fish, I find it's better to be on high speed with the trolling motor than it is to be on low speed. If you're going slowly, the fish can hear you coming, and they'll be looking in your direction.

A lot of times, a fish that has



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heard you approach will spook off before you get close enough to see them. (This is especially true with big females.). Sure, you make more noise when you're going fast, but you're going to catch the fish by surprise.

It may sound funny, but one of the best ways to find a big fish is to see her spook off the bed. Once you see one spook off, put your bait in that nest before the fish returns and back out as far as you can while still maintaining visual contact.

Good luck this year!



Rosia Richardson, from Sutton, bagged an 8 point buck.

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New backstops and target brackets will be added, and the shooting benches will be replaced. In addition, drainage problems will be corrected. The engineering and construction phases are expected to take about four months.

For additional information, please contact the DNR Parkersburg office at 304-420-4550 or Mountwood Park at 304-679-3611.

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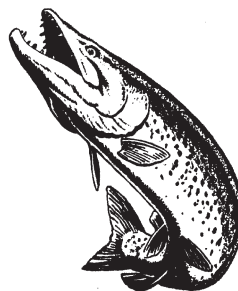
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