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Issue 221

August 2012



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Cover Photo

A 40 pound farm pond flat-head catfish was landed by 13 year old Jeffrey Myers. This Parkersburg native's fish was 42 inches long.

The 2nd Annual Kings of the Lakes bass tournament will be held at Sutton and Burnsville Lakes. Dates are August 18 & 19. Look for the entry form in this issue on page 23. This event qualifies for Ranger Cup bonus money. It is open to all interested teams.

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Bass After Dark

I've always loved night fishing for bass, and I've been doing it a long time. As a fishing guide and tournament angler, I don't often get to pick the times I go fishing, but in the summer I'm almost always going to choose the night bite.

There are several reasons I like bass fishing after dark in the summer, but the biggest are that there's less boat traffic and better water conditions. When kids are out of school and parents are on vacation, your favorite lake or reservoir likely turns into a watery playground. I know that's true on the waters of Kentucky and Tennessee where I do most of my fishing.

With the reduction in boating pressure that comes after dark, I can fish areas that I couldn't even get to during the day because of all the water skiers, jet skiers, tubers and pleasure boaters.

If you've ever tried to methodically work a bait in 25 feet of water while a skier passed within 10 yards of your bass boat, you know what I'm talking about. Rather than fight them for the spot, I decided a

long time ago to let them have it during the day and fish it at night. The fishing's better after dark anyway.

You know what they say: If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

For this summer's fishing, it's already too late to do the first step in planning that I'm going to recommend, but I want to cover it so you'll be ready for next summer.

My preparation for summertime bass fishing actually begins in the winter, when water levels are drawn down on many reservoirs around the country. That's the ideal
continue to the next page



Floyd Dennis reeled in a big Burnsville Lake bass.

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time to take a break from watching football and plant some cover on your favorite lake.

If you've never planted brush before, it's not hard. All you need are some hardwood trees that you can either cut down or retrieve from trash piles, some rocks or cinder blocks and some big zip ties. A lot of anglers like to use discarded Christmas trees. I realize they're easy to find and collect, but they're not very good as bass cover. Since the limbs are so close together, bass can't get into the middle of the brush easily. A better choice is something like a dogwood or other hardwood with plenty of limbs that aren't so dense.

Wooden pallets are also great for this, and you can sometimes get old ones from warehouses that would otherwise throw them away.

Building a bass home

Once you've got your limbs or pallets, it's time to start building. Using zip ties, wire or twine, tie the brush together until you have a substantial piece of cover. I like to make my brushpiles about half the size of a bass boat. Anything bigger is too hard to handle; anything smaller can be difficult to locate after you sink it and will deteriorate more quickly underwater.

If you're working with pallets, try



Brian Thomas, from SC, caught a 26 3/4" citation channel catfish.



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tying them together in a pyramid shape. That way, no matter how they land or shift on the bottom, they're always standing up and creating a sizeable piece of cover.

Don't weight your brushpiles until you have them out on the water and are ready to sink them. Weighting them sooner than that just makes

continue to the next page



Bill Looney hooked a 46" citation musky and released it later on..



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30 TARGET 3-D ARCHERY RANGE

The location of the crappie school in open water seems to vary by type water. In water that has some defined current flow (reservoir impoundments and rivers), crappie appear to like the main channel areas, or at least where there is a slight water movement. Possibly, this has to do with the fact that moving water has little or no temperature stratification because the water is always mixing.

In areas away from current flow, or a confined lake, they seem to like to school in open water adjacent to some cover or structure feature. I have seen this happen where a weedline bordered on a drop-off into deep water, such as where a submerged creek channel ran in close to a grass flat. I have also seen crappie key to the wall of a steep bluff bank, or off to the side of deep submerged timber.

Having a general idea as to depth and possible location, I recommend drifting live minnows as the quickest and most confident manner of finding open water summer crappie. No fish can resist live bait, whether hungry or not. And, it is easy to 'saturate' an area and eventually find the fish. Jigs can, of course, be used, but are not normally as effective as live bait dur-



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ing the warmer months.

I use three or four rods and put a small #2 wire hook on the line. I, then, go above the hook 10 inches and add split shot weights. Normally, I will use enough weight to make the baited hook stay generally directly beneath the rod. I do not use a bobber, but rely on watching the tip of the rod for signs of a strike. If there is a wind and the boat is rocking, you may need to rig a bobber with a bobber stop at the desired depth.

Once I have the rods set up, I bait them by hooking the minnows through the rear part of the body, near the tip of the tail. They will be very active and live longer when hooked that way, plus are not as likely to get pulled off as when hooked through the lips. I drop the bait down to the chosen depth and start to very slowly move about the area, trying to make contact with the fish. If I am using a number of

rods, I will occasionally vary the depth of some of them to spread my depth search.

An interesting quirk about crappie is that they tend to school in a horizontal plane; that is, all at generally the same depth. Once we confirm a depth, that is where most of that particular school will be found.

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Brian Thomas, from SC, caught a 14" yellow perch at Summersville Lake.

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Hot Weather Bassin'

It's the middle of summer and it's been as hot as can be lately. I know a lot of anglers are complaining about the fishing, but if you approach it right, this can be a great time to be out on the water. That's especially true if you're looking for a big fish. There is absolutely no reason to wait for fall.

Picking the right place to fish is the first step. I know a lot of guys tell you to go real deep at this time of the year. That's good advice. You can most definitely catch them that way. But I have a couple of other things you might want to try. Not all the fish are deep, and not all the fish are lethargic just because it's hot.

My first choice is to fish either under heavy, matted vegetation or around it. The fish like to get under there, in the dark shade, and wait

things out. My best bait for under the mats — actually my only bait for this style of angling — is a Gambler BB Cricket. I usually put a big heavy weight on it and let it punch right through the mat. Move it around a little bit and then do it again. If you don't get a bite, move along. I like colors that match the local forage. They seem to work best.

If I'm working around the mat, I throw a Snag Proof Frog. If you don't have a favorite color, go with something that looks natural.

Another great place is anywhere there's running water. Summertime brings strong rainstorms and they make for heavy water flows into the lake you're fishing. It cools the water and washes food in at the same time. I've made some great catches over the years in those



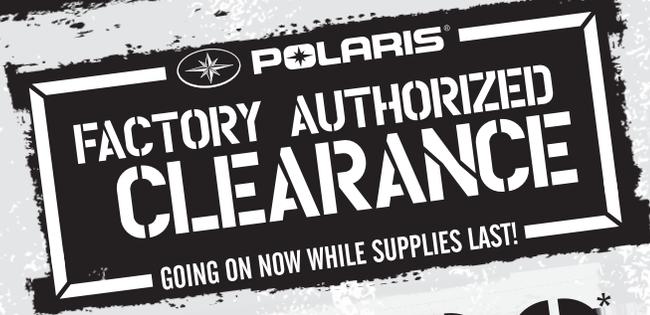
Bryan Richards reeled in a nice bass. *Photo courtesy of Jarrett's Bait in Elizabeth.*

kinds of places.

I approach these areas with a Luck "E" Strike RC 2.5 square bill crank-bait. Work it all around the moving water, and don't be afraid to vary its speed. Again, I try to match the hatch whenever possible.

After you've been fishing those

continue to the next page



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spots for a while, you'll probably be hot and sweaty. That's when it's time to cool off. Put on a pair of swim trunks or just take your wallet out of your pants, and jump overboard. That'll cool you off in no time. Then, get back in the boat and do everything all over again.

A word of safety is in order here. Make sure the water's deep where you jump in. You can get hurt real bad jumping into shallow water. Never jump in headfirst. You're asking for trouble if you do. Another thing is to have a ladder off

the back of your boat. It seems easy to climb in a bass boat when you don't have to. It's another matter when you're tired. And always have a lifejacket nearby. Throwing one into the water before you jump in isn't a bad idea.

I've had a lot of fun catching summer bass and swimming in my favorite lake. You can, too.



Alena Sarver caught a nice bass at Forked Run Lake in Ohio.



Dakota Miller hooked a nice large-mouth bass. Photo courtesy of Backwater Bait in Newport, Ohio.

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The WV State Water Festival bass tournament winners were Zach Peaslee & Jason Adams. They weighed in 13.10 pounds and had the big bass - 3.90. They won a total of \$4,200 pounds at the event held on Bluestone Lake.

The upcoming Kings of the Lakes bass tournament will be held on August 18 & 19. 1st day at Sutton Lake and the 2nd on Burnsville Lake. It also qualifies for Ranger Cup bonus money. It is open to all interested teams - Page 23. *Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.*

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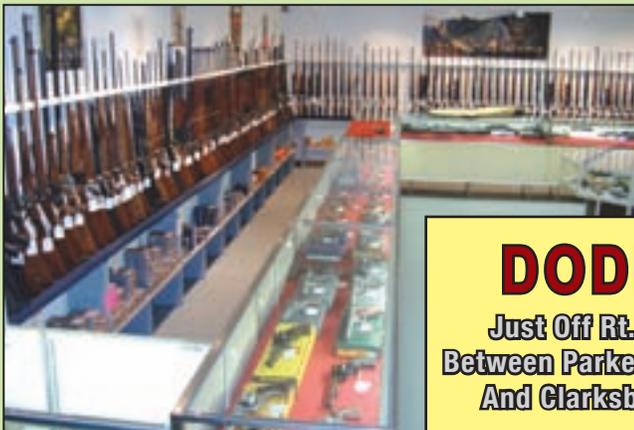
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Tommy Spada, from Sand Fork, landed his first nice bass with his Spiderman rod.

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Bill Summers went to Africa for this 45" spread Cape Buffalo. Photo courtesy of Clark's Taxidermy in Parkersburg.

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WV Sport Fish Posters

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. – A new West Virginia Sport Fish Identification Poster is now available either as a printed poster or online at the Division of Natural Resources website, according to Frank Jezioro, director of the West Virginia DNR. The poster, featuring paintings of game fish found in the Mountain State, was produced by the DNR Wildlife Resources Section.

“We’ve published this poster in response to many outdoor enthusiasts who have been asking for something like this for a while,” said Jezioro. “The fish illustrations have been printed on the back of

our fishing regulations for years, but the images on this poster are much larger and clearer. I’m told many people who have received the posters have framed them and hung them on their office or recreation room walls.”

The color poster features warm-water and coldwater fish species. Fish enthusiasts can go to the DNR website and print the poster in either letter size or 11-by-17-inch sizes. To print a copy, go to www.wvdnr.gov and click on “Sport Fish Identification Poster” under the Fishing heading.

Printed 18-by-24-inch flat posters are available for pick-up at



Matt Ciarapica caught a big drum.

DNR district offices and many West Virginia state parks. In addition, folded 11-by-17-inch posters can be mailed from the DNR South Charleston office by calling 304-558-2771 or writing to WVDNR, 324 Fourth Avenue, South Charleston WV 25303.

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Night Bass Tournament Techniques

It's summertime, which means bass anglers with a taste for competition are probably tossing their weekly allowance – and their pride – into the kitty at jackpot tournaments down at the local res. What is it about fishing for gas money and bragging rights that makes summer night tournaments such an anticipated tradition?

In any case, if you fish the local “(insert day of the week)-nighter” on your lake, you're probably going to be doing a lot of tournament fishing after dark. And if you don't know it already, everything changes when the lights go out.

To help you keep your tournament success going while the folks at home are asleep, we laid out a step-by-step game plan on how to approach an after-dark event. As you'll notice, some of the steps are the same as those you'd employ in the preparation for a daytime event. Yet, there are a few key wrinkles to this guide that have paid off big for several Walmart FLW Tour pros.

Step 1: Gear Up

Night tournaments require special equipment and preparation. Black lights, fluorescent line, head lamps – these are not exactly essentials during the day, but they can be

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at night. Of course, you can fish without them, but not if you want to succeed consistently. They help keep you from wasting time.

“Having the right gear is critical,” Walmart pro Wesley Strader says. “You can be more efficient and won't miss bites.”

So what do you need? Glad you asked.

Black lights: There are new models with suction cups on them that can be easily attached to the gunwale. Other models must be hard-wired, such as the Punisher Lures CAST-GLO L.E.D. Fishing Light (pun-continue to the next page



Coy Daniles caught some tournament bass *Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.*



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isherlures.com) seen here. The purplish light they emit is just enough to allow you to see the bank, while not disturbing the fish. Plus, a black light pairs really well with ...

Fluorescent line: Strader's favorite is 17-pound-test Stren monofilament in clear blue, but any blue fluorescent line, when hit by the black light, will glow. That helps to see bites, make accurate casts and time the splashdown of a lure to avoid backlashes.

Glowing buoys: If you're planning on fishing offshore like Kettle Brand Chips pro Dan Morehead does, you better have buoys that glow. You can buy some that do, or else make your own. Morehead drills small holes in his buoys, drops in a couple mini glow sticks and then plugs the holes with duct tape.

Headlamps/Spotlights: Use the spotlight to navigate the lake and the headlamp to navigate your boat compartments and net fish.

Dimmed electronics: Dimming the backlight on your electronics allows you to maintain night vision better throughout the evening. Consult your owner's manual to continue to the next page



Young Dalton Fields reeled in a nice bass.. Photo courtesy of Sutton Lake Marina on the lake.

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Step 2: Refine Your Lures

Lure selection is pretty simple after dark. For the most part, you can fish with a spinnerbait with a single Colorado blade and bulky jigs, although some pros prefer a soft-plastic worm. That's really all you need. How you modify and fish them, though, can be the game-changer.



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Spinnerbaits:

- The lighter the wire (0.30-inch diameter is ideal) the more vibration, which is a good thing.
- Everyone has a favorite spinnerbait trailer, but Strader and Morehead prefer the same trailer for night-fishing: a Zoom Big Salty Chunk. It's bulky and looks like a crayfish (more on that later).
- Trailer hooks are a must. If the fish are just slapping the lure or you're fishing around snaggy cover, thread the trailer hook through the soft-plastic trailer and rig it on the main hook. This will keep it from swinging around wildly.
- Both pros like to fish their spinnerbaits on or near bottom. Slowly crawling the lure so it's constantly touching bottom is one way. The other method is to lift and drop it on and off the bottom. Either use the rod or give a quick burst of cranks to get it just off the bottom and let the blade thump. Switch up techniques often, since bass change their preference regularly.

Jigs:

- Here again, you can't find a better trailer with more bulk than a Zoom Big Salty Chunk.
- While any jig will work, one with a rubber skirt will flair more and create a larger silhouette in the dark.
- Add rattles to help the fish find the jig.

continue to the next page
July 2012 ~ Page 16



Taiton Sarver, from Middleport, OH, hooked a huge pond bass.

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- Fish it as you would during the day.

Step 3: Game Plan

To make the transition easier for himself, Morehead equates night-fishing to deer hunting. Considering that he once won 14 of 16 night tournaments on his home lake, Kentucky Lake, placing second in the other two, Morehead's strategy is sound.

"Just like deer are nocturnal, I believe there is an entire population of bass that goes out at night to feed," Morehead says. "The key is fishing shallower than you would during the day because they are active fish."

"Shallower" is a relative term depending on where you fish. So let's look at two situations.

Shallow-Water Lakes:

Strader looks for shallow areas that top out anywhere from 2 to 7 feet deep and are adjacent to deep water.

"Nine out of 10 times, if I'm fishing at night, I'm fishing points," Strader says. "They're the quickest way for fish to get to the shallows and feed."

Offshore-Oriented Lakes:

Morehead stays offshore at night and targets the same types of ledges in the same areas that he would fish during the daylight, though shallower.

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"If I was fishing ledges that top out at 17 feet during the day, I'll switch to ones that top out at 10 or 12 feet after dark," Morehead says.

Look for ledges that are next to the main river channel and have hard bottom. Rock seems to be especially important in the early summer, with shell beds being good as well. Wood can be a bonus most of the summer, but as you hit late summer, offshore ledges that have wood be-

continue to the next page



A citation largemouth was hooked.

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come more and more of a necessity to attract fish that have abandoned their postspawn schools.

Step 4: Practice

Many guys practice all day before a night tournament. It's not necessary.

"Practicing during the day is no use at night," Strader says. "It goes against everything the fish are doing."

Instead, fish the night – or better yet, several nights – beforehand. Try to locate a good spot to catch a keeper or two before it gets dark, then run-and-gun in practice to figure out where the fish are likely to be when the lights go out. Don't worry so much about catching fish as much as simply locating them.

Make sure to identify important landmarks after dark too.

"GPS has made it less of a necessity, but figuring out landmarks on shore is still a big deal at night," Strader says. "You may want to reference a mountaintop or a light on a house to keep yourself oriented and know where to cast."

Once you figure out which type of point or ledge the fish are using, refine it more. Are they on pieces of wood? On the steep backside of a slow-tapering point? Up on top? Do they want shell beds rather than gravel? Figure out such details so you have a milk run of spots.

Step 5: Execute

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practice and preparation. Now it's a matter of going out and catching the fish. The key is following your game plan.

For Strader, he likes to have a couple of fish in the box before it gets dark to alleviate the pressure. Plus, he figures he can always cull them out if he gets on a good bite after dark.

For Morehead, no fish equals no worries.

"Nighttime is the right time," Morehead says. "You can get right in a hurry if you find the sweet spot. You just can't panic, because panicking after dark is even worse than during the day. You need to stick to a game plan.



Brian Woods landed a real nice flathead catfish. *Photo courtesy of Burnsville Docks on the lake.*



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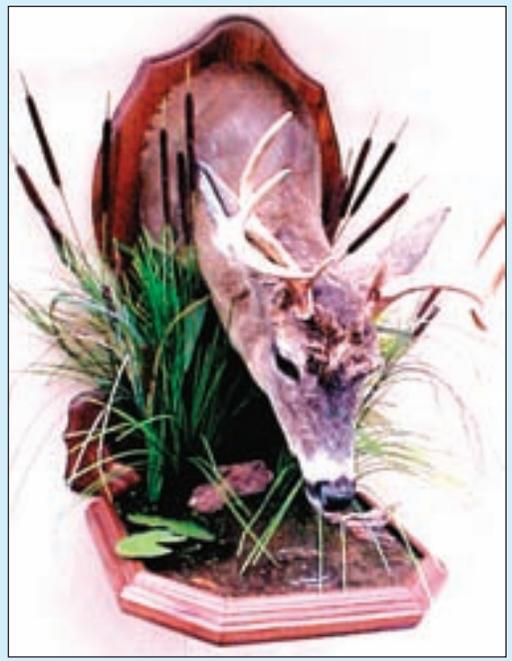
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Mae Strickland, from Sissonville, hooked a giant channel catfish recently.



Tammy Biddle went to Canada for this huge smallmouth bass.



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Red Jones & DJ Burdette brought in a 33 1/2 pound flathead. Photo courtesy of Jarrett's Bait in Elizabeth.



Jerry Hall landed a 21" smallmouth bass. Photo courtesy of Three Rivers Edge in Hinton.



Jon Bonnell used a bow for this black bear. Photo courtesy of Wabash Trading Post in West Union.

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Paul Clark (l) is discussing mounting Chris Smith's (r) 9' 8" alligator he bagged in Florida. Paul also took one on this trip. *Photo courtesy of Clark's Taxidermy in Parkersburg.*

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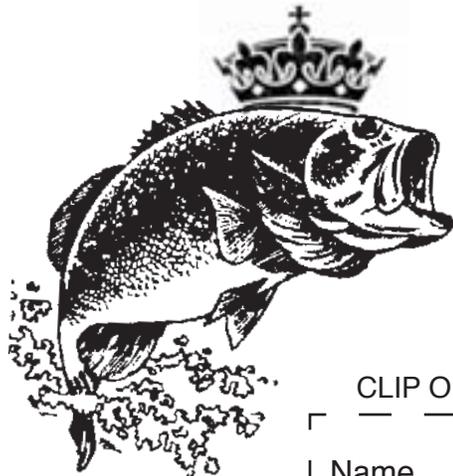
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Catfish Tips

Catfish are indigeous to the continental USA and like still water. They love to lie at the bottom. They love smelly bait but will take live bait as well. They are scavengers and will eat just about anything.

You may catch Catfish year round but the best temperature for catching catfish is between 50 and 80 degrees with 70 degress being the optimal. We like to fish for Cats at night when the wind is still. Catfish will grow on average to 10-15 pounds but can get 50lbs or better.

Catfish have stiff dorsal and side fins. Be Careful they can puncture you and cause real PAIN!

Fish at night and be quiet. Catfish seem to sense noise more than most fish. Be careful not to shine your light on the water. Catfish don't strike like most fish, so be patient. Let them take the bait, wait up to 10 seconds then set the hook. Be sure you are ready becuase a big cat can put up a heck of a fight. The bigs ones can fray a line quickly, so use sturdy line

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shallower at night.

Now that you have the bait, you are ready to pick a technique that works well for you and your location. My personal favorite is commonly known as jugging. The jug lines can be made before your fishing trip and stored in some out-of-the-way place until needed. For each of the jug lines, you will need one hook, one weight, and one piece of strong line of varying lengths. Next, you will need plastic jugs. I prefer the gallon size milk jugs, but any plastic jug will work, just be certain that they are clean and kind to the environment. If you find it necessary, the jugs can be sprayed with paint so they can be more easily seen and identified. OK, let's go cat fishing.

Pick your spot carefully and drop continue to the next page



Shawn Martin reeled in a 30 pound flathead catfish. Photo courtesy of Jarrett's Bait in Elizabeth.

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the anchor. If you are in a large river, a long straight stretch is a must so that your jugs have a long way to travel before a curve interferes. Tie your line to the jug and drop it overboard so that the current will keep the line tight. Bait the hook and gently drop it into the water. Do as many jugs this way as you can take care of, then raise the anchor and drift along behind. There is nothing more exciting than seeing a gallon jug take off in a direction and at a speed that could not be caused by the current. This is when the real fun begins. Start your engine and speed toward the escaping jug and hope that it does not go under for a very long time. You may also find it helpful to make a long pole with a large hook attached to one end to catch the line on the jug.

For those who prefer to stay high and dry, there is the bank-pole method. This is a great way to get plenty of exercise, as it requires a substantial amount of walking,

running, and bending. This method requires a number of cane poles that can be harvested along the streams where they grow. It is important to let them dry and season for one year after they are cut, and it is equally important to keep them straight while drying. They can be tied together in bundles and hung outside on a shed to season. When the poles are ready, tie a strong line near the base and wrap it around the pole to the top. This gives added support to the pole and insures that you will have another way to hold on in case the pole breaks. Wrap several feet of the line around the end so that you can adjust the length of the line to accommodate for different depths. You can also tie a small white strip of cloth to the end to help with visibility. OK, let's go cat fishing.

Pick your spot carefully. A dirt or mud bank is essential to hold your poles. Adjust the line length so that when your pole is in place the hook

is off the bottom. Stick the base of the pole deep into the bank so that the tip is hanging over the water. Bait your hook and gently toss it into the water. Do as many poles as you can take care of. For night fishing, a bell can be added to the tip of the pole.



Jason Brewer bagged a gobbler.
Photo courtesy of Wabash Trading Post in West Union.

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Special Hunt Applications

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Applications for the 2012 Antlerless Deer Season are now available at all West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (DNR) district offices, Elkins Operations Center and Charleston Headquarters, according to Curtis I. Taylor, Chief of the DNR's Wildlife Resources Section. These applications may also be downloaded from the DNR's Web page at www.wvdnr.gov under the "Hunting/Main Page" heading.

"These limited permit areas provide antlerless deer hunting opportunities in counties or areas of the state where wildlife biologists have determined that limited numbers of antlerless deer permits are necessary to meet management objectives," Taylor said.

Three Wildlife Management Areas (Calvin Price State Forest, Elk River and Upper Mud River), National Forest Land in Tucker County and five counties or portions thereof (Clay, Fayette, Nicholas, Pocahontas and Webster) will



Bradley Currence, from Elkins, hooked a citation musky.

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have a limited number of Class N licenses for resident and Class NN licenses for non-resident antlerless deer hunting from October 25-27 on private land only and November 19 through December 1, December 13-15 and December 28 through December 31 on private and public land.

Applications must be received by the DNR before the close of business on August 24, 2012. The 2012 limited antlerless deer season will provide an opportunity for 650 residents and non-residents to participate on the three WMAs and national forest land in Tucker County. An additional 1,500 residents and non-residents will be selected to hunt antlerless deer in

the five counties (Clay, Fayette, Nicholas, Pocahontas and Webster) that are restricted to antlerless deer hunting.

For complete information on antlerless deer season dates and bag limits, consult the 2012-2013 Hunting and Trapping Regulations Summary, which is available at West Virginia hunting and fishing license agents, DNR offices and online at www.wvdnr.gov.

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Island Deer Hunt

PARKERSBURG, W.Va. – A controlled deer hunt will be held on Blennerhassett Island on Monday, November 5 and Thursday, November 8, 2012. The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) monitors the white-tailed deer population on the island.

“Based upon survey results, a controlled hunt is needed to maintain the deer population at a level which is more in balance with the habitat conditions on the island,” said WVDNR Director Frank Jezioro.

Deer on Blennerhassett Island may not be hunted during the regular deer hunting seasons and, as a result, the deer population level gets much higher than on the mainland. Hunting is not permitted on state parks unless under a controlled hunt setting. Controlled hunts have been conducted on Blennerhassett Island in 2001, 2002, 2007 and 2010.

Hunting will be by permit only. Resident and non-resident hunters may apply. Applications and rules for the hunt are available at www.wvdnr.gov under “Hunting” and by clicking on the title “Controlled Hunts.” Applications must be submitted by U.S. mail only. Applications also are available at all WVDNR district offices, State Park and Forest offices, WVDNR headquarters in South Charleston, and at Blennerhassett Island His-

torical State Park (304-420-4800).

Applications for the Blennerhassett Island controlled hunt must be signed, legible, complete, and postmarked by August 30, 2012. Permits will be selected at random for each day of the hunt and successful applicants will be notified after October 1, 2012. All hunting must be done from elevated (minimum of eight feet off the ground) tree stands (ladder, or self-climbing) provided by the hunter. Tree stands must be able to adjust to trees up to 18 inches in diameter. A safety belt is required to be worn while in the tree stand. Only bows, muzzleloaders, and shotguns using

slugs with rifled barrels or chokes are allowed (high-powered rifles will not be permitted).

Successful applicants will be ferried from Civitan Park in Belpre, Ohio, to the island on the mornings of the hunt. Approximately 50 hunters for each day will be randomly selected for the hunt. Deer harvested will not count against the hunters’ annual bag limit.

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Jason Spence hooked a large flat-head catfish. *Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.*

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A big muzzloader deer was shot by Ron Hass. *Photo courtesy of Wash Trading Post in West Union.*

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A nice blue catfish was landed Joe Wyssell. *Photo courtesy of Catfish Paradise near Marietta, Ohio.*



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Robert Redman, from Burlington, landed a 4 1/2 pound smallmouth.



James Bender hooked a 30 pound blue catfish. Photo courtesy of Sure Catch Fish Farm in Elkins.

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This fisherman reeled in a large crappie. Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.

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Cheryl Smith bagged an Asian water buffalo in Florida. Photo courtesy of Clark's taxidermy in Parkersburg.



Ron Bolyard, from Tunnelton, trapped a 40 pound bobcat.

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* Regardless of whether you prefer to use live bait or lures, you will need to keep them small if you want to catch a lot of bluegill. Hook sizes from #6 to #10 are most



John Ours hooked a blue catfish at this pay lake. Photo courtesy of Sure Catch Fish Farm in Elkins.

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GAME CHECKING

effective. Hooks with long shank-will allow you to more easily remove them from the bluegill's tiny mouth and thin wire hooks work best for holding small baits. Live bait works especially well for bluegill. The most common baits are worms and night crawlers because they are readily available and bluegill love'em. The key is to use only a piece of a worm - just enough to cover the hook (keeping it small - remember!). Other productive baits

continue to the next page



Alex Mooney landed a Greenbrier River musky.

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include crickets, grasshoppers, red wigglers, and meal worms. Artificial lures also work well for bluegill. Some of the are black jigs (1/32 ounce and smaller) and tiny spinners. Small flies and poppers are very effective and can be used while flyfishing or in conjunction with a bobber for easy casting.

* Bluegill spawn in spring and early summer and this is a good time to catch them. When water temperatures exceed 70 degrees F begin looking for spawning bluegill in shallow water. The tell-tale "elephant tracks" will give away their location. Once a spawning colony is found, take care not to spook the bluegill as you are fishing. Cast beyond the nests and retrieve your bait through the colony. Male bluegill will guard nests against intruders and will aggressively take small lures.

* Bluegill can be readily caught after the spawning season, you just need to look in a different location. Although bluegill can be found in very shallow water in spring and early summer, they move into deeper water as summer progresses. In summer, bluegill can be found along the edges of weed beds, around brush piles,

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stake-beds, and flooded timber, especially if deeper water is nearby. Bluegill are commonly found in water over 10 feet deep in summer and typically locate just above the thermocline (the depth where water temperature changes dramatically and below which oxygen levels are usually low). Best fishing is usually in the morning and evening when the fish are most active.

* In fall, bluegill are usually found in similar locations as late summer. As the water begins to cool in early fall, bluegill will often move into shallower water more often. Look for bluegill in the same locations

continue to the next page



Josh Feron went to Colorado for this 5x5 elk.

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as late summer and also fish shallower water near weed beds, brush, or other types of cover. While morning and evening are the best times to fish during summer, mid-day fishing success often improves as water cools in the fall.

* In winter, bluegill are usually found in deeper water, usually 12 to 20 feet deep. They school near underwater structure, usually near the bottom. Bluegill do not feed actively in winter so the use of small baits and slow presentations is of utmost importance. Using light tackle and line is also essential because bluegill bite very lightly in winter and these bites would go undetected with less sensitive tackle.

* Bluegill experts agree that fresh, lively bait is vital for Bluegill fishing success. Keep minnows cool and well-aerated in your boat's livewell or in a bucket with an aerator pump. Night crawlers should be kept cool and moist in a container packed with worm bedding

or moss. Crickets should be kept out of direct sunlight in a screened container; they'll stay hoppin' fresh if you feed them some moist bread scraps between fishing trips.

* Small soft-plastic jigs are tremendous lures for all Bluegill, but don't use one that's too heavy. Start with a light (1/32 to 1/16 oz.) leadhead - this will have a slow, enticing fall, just like an injured minnow. White, pink and chartreuse are proven colors. Cast them around shallow wood cover and swim them back to the boat with a slow, steady retrieve. If fish happen to be deep, or if the wind picks up, switch to a heavier jig. Store Bluegill jigs in a multi-sectioned clear plastic utility box and write their weight on the lid above each section with a waterproof marker.

* Worms are a good bait for bluegills - so good, in fact, that you'll go through scores of worms in no time unless you economize. Once you've attracted a large school of

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'gills to your fishing area, use progressively smaller bits of worm on your hook - these panfish are competitive, and when there's a school present, they'll readily bite even the tiniest chunk of worm the instant it hits the water.

continue to the next page



Josh Reveal landed a whopper largemouth bass..

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* Crickets are the most effective bait on many waters, though bluegills will also bite mealworms, waxworms, redworms, earthworms, nightcrawler chunks and maggots. Larger bluegills will even eat the same size minnows that are used to catch Crappie. When using worms, be careful not to put too much bait on the hook, as bluegills are accomplished thieves. Smaller pieces will force the fish to bite at the hook, resulting in more hook-ups. Where legal, some fishermen like to chum for bluegills by launching maggots from specially modified slingshots. There are also special panfish chums made commercially, which can be purchased through tackle catalogs or at larger retail tackle shops.

* Bluegill lures include ice tick jigs, microjigs, small spinnerbaits, small in-line spinnerbaits, small grubs, small tube jigs, and miniature soft plastics. Many bluegill anglers tip jigs with a small cricket, piece of worm, or other bait. Bobbers are often used to suspend the lure or bait at the right depth and to

detect the often subtle bites. Bobbers can be very simple and traditional or very high tech, like slip-floats or tip-up designs. When jig fishing, try a 1/32 ounce or smaller jig, with two wet flies or nymphs above it at 1 foot intervals. Bounce the jig on the bottom as you retrieve it, and the wet flies or nymphs will pick up fish that are suspended near the bottom. For very active fish,



JR, from Buckhannon, hooked a good musky.

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GAME CHECKING



try a small yellow roostertail with a wind-wind-pause-wind-wind-pause rhythm.

* If you're out to catch small bluegills as bait for bass or catfish
continue to the next page

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(where legal), remember that it's often possible to catch bluegills on anything little that moves. As a kid, I used to catch bluegills off the end of a dock by gently vertical-jigging a bare size 16 golden treble hook. Since bluegills are both bold and curious, this trick works anytime the fish are even moderately active. It doesn't work during the spawn, though, as the fish do not congregate around docks when they are in the spawning mode.

* Fly anglers use almost any dry fly or terrestrial and almost any nymph. There are also specially designed panfish popper flies, many of which can also be used with ultralight spinning tackle. The most popular terrestrial patterns are crickets, grasshoppers, foam spiders, and ants. A clever fly setup, especially at spawning time, is a panfish popper with a dropper line and a weighted nymph, such as a beadhead hare's ear. (This can be done using ultralight tackle, as well). Try popping and stopping at different speeds. When the fish are active, work the rig quickly and they'll strike the popper. When they're less active, just pop a few times and stop for up to 1 minute at a time. The nymph will swing down and suspend in front of their faces. They won't be able to stand it, especially if they're guarding a nest.



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