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Issue 220

July 2012



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Tips**

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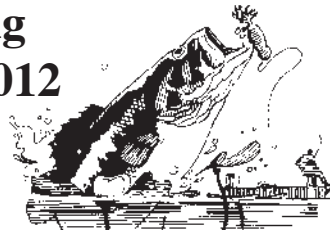
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Cover Photo

Fishing on the Ohio River, John Barnette hooked a monster 41 1/2" flathead catfish. Sometimes on the river, fishing near factories can yield quality fish. The turbulence creates an oxygen rich environment.

Hear about the big wind storm? Nearly all of WV suffered power outages recently. Numerous workers came from all over the country to get us back on the grid.

Photo courtesy of the DNR.

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Summer Crappie

Whether you call him Crappie, Freckles, Specks or Specked Perch, he sure is a tasty eating panfish. Rolled in a bit of cornmeal and fried to a golden brown, a platter of Mom's crappie sure were good when we were kids. Yep, that's one meal this old country boy likes year-round.

You do, too, huh? What's that - you have a problem?? Oh, that 'seasonal' problem thing has got your goat. You wonder where all the crappie go to in the summer? Hey, maybe we can help!

Anyone who fishes for crappie knows they are suicide-prone in the spring. When the spawning urge gets them into the shallow grass and stumps, crappies are probably the easiest fish of all to catch. All the angler has to do is locate a spawning area and they will be there by the hundreds. And, to top that off, they will be ferociously (well, as ferocious as a crappie can be) guarding their nesting area. Anything that comes into the area will be struck at.

Following that great fishing of

spring, there comes the heat of summer. And, for many, the crappie seem to pull off a successful Houdini and just plain disappear. Well, they did not really disappear; they just changed locations.

Most of us think the crappie stays in the brush and grass. In shallow, grassy lakes, such as in Florida, that is often true. But, in deep reservoirs and rivers, it is NOT! That misconception exists because that grass and wood cover is where 99% of us always fish for them.

continue to the next page



Glenn Gillispie, from Volga, hooked a 22 1/4" brook trout.

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So, since the only crappie we catch comes from cover, we think that is where they always must be.

The very first thing the angler needs to know is that crappie are a dedicated schooling fish. He lives in a pack of his like relatives and he generally stays in open water.

The crappie school, like any school fish, follows the baitfish schools for food. Occasionally, the baitfish will go into an area of cover for protections and/or to feed on the aquatic life that clings to the cover. The crappie may follow them and disperse within the cover. When that happens, and we come along and find them, we may catch crappie for a short period just as handily as during the spawn.

But, the open water is the real key to summer crappies.

Finding open water crappies in the summer months can be difficult. A depth finder may show something below the surface, but it might be any type fish, a baitfish mass, turtles, or loose wads of grass. A sonar signal can even be returned by a pocket of dense, cold water. So, we



Zach Cottrell caught a nice large-mouth bass.



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need to let the experience of others give us a timesaving head start in our search.

The depth summer crappies are found is usually a function of water clarity. In murky, stained waters, they seem to prefer depths of 8-15 feet. In waters with a normal algae content and visibility down to 4-

6 feet, crappies appear to like the 12-20 foot range. In those gin clear waters where the Smallmouth bass also roams, I have taken them as deep as 50 feet. In my own mind, I think the crappie's positioning is based on the positioning and movement patterns of their local food

continue to the next page



Dave Ray reeled in a large musky. Photo courtesy of JBC Archery in Shady Spring.

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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.

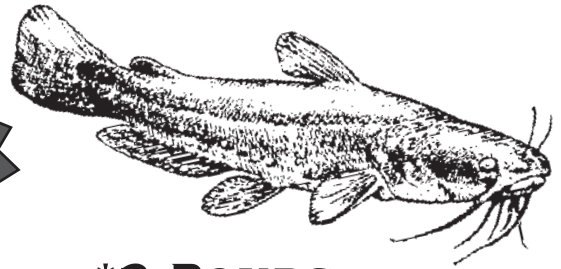
Having a general idea as to depth and possible location, I recommend drifting live minnows as the quickest and most confident manner of finding open water summer



Matthew Smith, from Upper Glade, caught a 13 1/2" yellow perch at Summersville Lake.

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crappie. No fish can resist live bait, whether hungry or not. And,

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eventually find the fish. Jigs can, of course, be used, but are not normally as effective as live bait during 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.

When you catch a crappie in this manner, it is important to immediately note where he was in relation to any surrounding cover, structure or depth. The school could be associating with a drop-off, a deep brush top or the outer edge of the weedline. If you are able to add that final factor to allow you to pinpoint them directly, the livewell is

as good as full.

Finally, keep this in mind: forget all of those old fables about fish not biting in hot weather. Fish are cold-blooded creatures of Nature. Their bodily metabolism rate is highest when the water is the warmest. That means they use and, therefore, need more food during the summer than at any other time.



William Mathias hooked a 22 1/4" largemouth bass.

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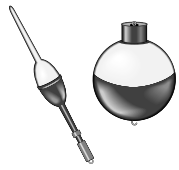
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Cole Grose shot a nice black bear.



Scott Light, from Logan, landed a 21" largemouth bass.

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Ryan Johnson caught a 32 1/2" carp. Photo courtesy of Three Rivers Edge in Hinton.

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The July 7th Full Moon event at Summersville Lake was won by Lowell & White with 10 pounds, 9 oz. They earned \$900 for 1st place plus \$300 for the 1st big bass (pays 2 for big bass). Next night tournament there is Sept 1. Look for an entry form in this issue.

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Hunter Goss, 5 years old, hooked a nice largemouth bass in Middle Island Creek. Photo courtesy of Wabash Trading Post in West Union.

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Jeff Dunn, from New Matamoros, shot a large bear in Webster Co.



Terry Waggoner, from St. Marys, hunts in Webster Co. for bear.

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 Details On Page 3

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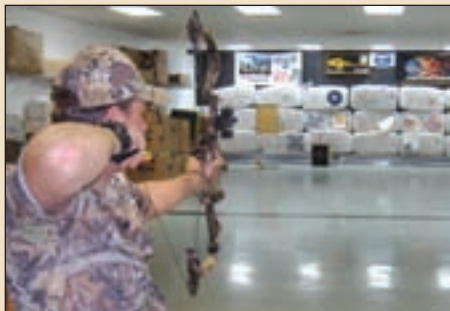
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It's that time of the year, the time when everyone and their brother starts talking about the thermocline. And, as you know, most of the talk says to stay above it or you won't catch any fish. I say bunk to that. It's just not true. There's plenty of big smallmouth below the thermocline and you can catch them if you fish correctly.

There's no arguing that there's less oxygen below the thermocline,

but there's less need for oxygen because the water's cold and the fish aren't moving around very much. In my opinion the really big ones drop down that deep because of the safety of deep water and because

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the water's a lot colder. It's easier on them and that's what big smallies are all about, an easy life.

I first learned about this from a local guide who is also a scuba diver
continue to the next page

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mjesse@suddenlink.net**

**Bassin' Fishing Tournament
Matt Jesse
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er. He noticed that in the summer when he'd drop down right on the thermocline and bang two rocks together, big smallmouth would come swimming up from the depths. He did this year after year under all sorts of weather conditions and he always saw those big bass swimming up towards him. That taught me two things.

First, smallmouth are curious creatures. Sometimes a little sound or something different — like a lure they've never seen before — will get their attention when nothing else will. It's a weakness they have that we should never forget.

Second, the idea that the fish stay above the thermocline is untrue. We know from his experience that they don't. They often live well below it, or at least hang out down there.

If you want to catch them, you have to get down to them. There's several ways to do that but I've come up with a way that I think is the best and you don't have to do that long-lining stuff that everybody's talking about.

I'm not saying long-lining doesn't work. I'm saying it's a lot of work to accomplish something that can be accomplished much easier.

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the fish will bite it, and you'll catch better than average size smallies.

Now, I'll be the first to admit that my experiences with this are all on Dale Hollow Lake, a deep, clear highland reservoir. But I can't see why the same thing isn't taking place all around the country. It's common sense to me. Smallmouth are smallmouth no matter where you fish.

Even if I'm wrong, though, I'd have to find it out the hard way. It's too easy to fish shallow and blame your lack of success on the moon, recreational anglers, the forage or something else.



Bethany Wolfe reeled in a nice New River musky. *Photo courtesy of Cardinal Pawnbrokers in Beckley.*



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New 2012 Hunting Regulations

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. – The 2012-2013 West Virginia Hunting and Trapping Regulations Summary brochure is now available at all West Virginia hunting and fishing license agents, Division of Natural Resources district offices, the Elkins Operation Center and South Charleston Headquarters. This regulations summary is also available online at the Division of Natural Resources' website: www.wvdnr.gov.

Sportsmen and women are encouraged to carefully review these regulations, as there will be several significant changes in place this fall during the hunting and trapping seasons. These include the following:

The statewide archery deer season will open on September 29, 2012, and run through December 31, 2012.

The statewide archery bear season will open earlier this year and be a split season that includes the following:

continue to the next page



A nice smallmouth was landed. Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.

Ohio River Team Tournaments

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August 12 - Moundsville

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ing days: September 29 - November 17, 2012, and December 3 - 31, 2012.

Ten counties or portions thereof will have special antlerless deer regulations in place this fall. Within these 10 counties, archery deer hunters will be required to take an antlerless deer during the archery deer season prior to harvesting a second antlered deer during the



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archery deer season. In addition, buck firearms season hunters will be required to take an antlerless deer during the antlerless firearms season prior to harvesting a second antlered deer during the buck firearms season.

Black bear firearms hunting seasons will include nine counties open from September 24 - 26, 2012; 12 counties open from September 24 - 29, 2012; eight counties open from November 19 - December 1, 2012 during the buck firearms season; all 55 counties open from December 3 - 31, 2012. The daily bag limit is one (1) bear and season limit is two (2) bears, provided at least one (1) bear comes from Boone, Fayette, Kanawha, Logan, McDowell, Mingo, Raleigh or Wyoming counties. The fall wild turkey hunting season will be expanded this this year with 15 counties open from October 13 - 20, 2012; seven (7) counties open from October 13 - 20, 2012 and October 29 - November 3; 14 counties open from October 13 - 20, 2012 and October 29 - November 17, 2012.

Beginning on January 1, 2013, the new Apprentice Hunting and Trapping Licenses for West Virginia residents (Class AH or AHJ) and non-residents (Class AAH or AAHJ) will be available to those individuals who have never had a valid base hunting/trapping license. Prior completion of a hunter safety

training course will not be required to purchase an Apprentice Hunting and Trapping License; however, holders of one of these licenses must be accompanied and directly supervised by a licensed adult

continue to the next page



A big blue catfish was hooked.
Photo courtesy of Catfish Paradise near Marietta.

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hunter. The Apprentice Hunting and Trapping licenses can only be purchased online at Division of Natural Resources' goWILD! website: www.wvhunt.com.

The Senior Hunting/Trapping/Fishing License (Class XS), which was available beginning January 1, 2012, is required for resident hunters and anglers who reach the age of 65 on or after January 1, 2012. Seniors holding a valid Class XS license may participate in the Special Split Youth, Class Q/QQ and Class XS antlerless deer season which will be held on October 20, 2012 and December 26 - 27, 2012.

It is legal to hunt between one-half hour after sunset and one-half hour before sunrise with a .22 caliber centerfire firearm or smaller or a shotgun using #2 shot or smaller.

Any color artificial light is legal for hunting coyote at night from January 1 - July 31, 2013, and for fox from January 1, 2013 - February 28, 2013.

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Details On Page 3



Bill Grose, from Fairmont, shot a big black bear last fall.



Preston Bush & Blake Casto have a Montana rainbow trout.

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Nathan and Ed Brooks brought in a 24 pound flathead catfish. *Photo courtesy of jarrett's Bait in Elizabeth.*



Randy Roberts, from Moundsville, hooked a big Ohio River hybrid.

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Details On Page 3**

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Blair Pratt's 48" musky looks a little crooked - great fish though. *Photo courtesy of Crossroads General Store near Newark.*



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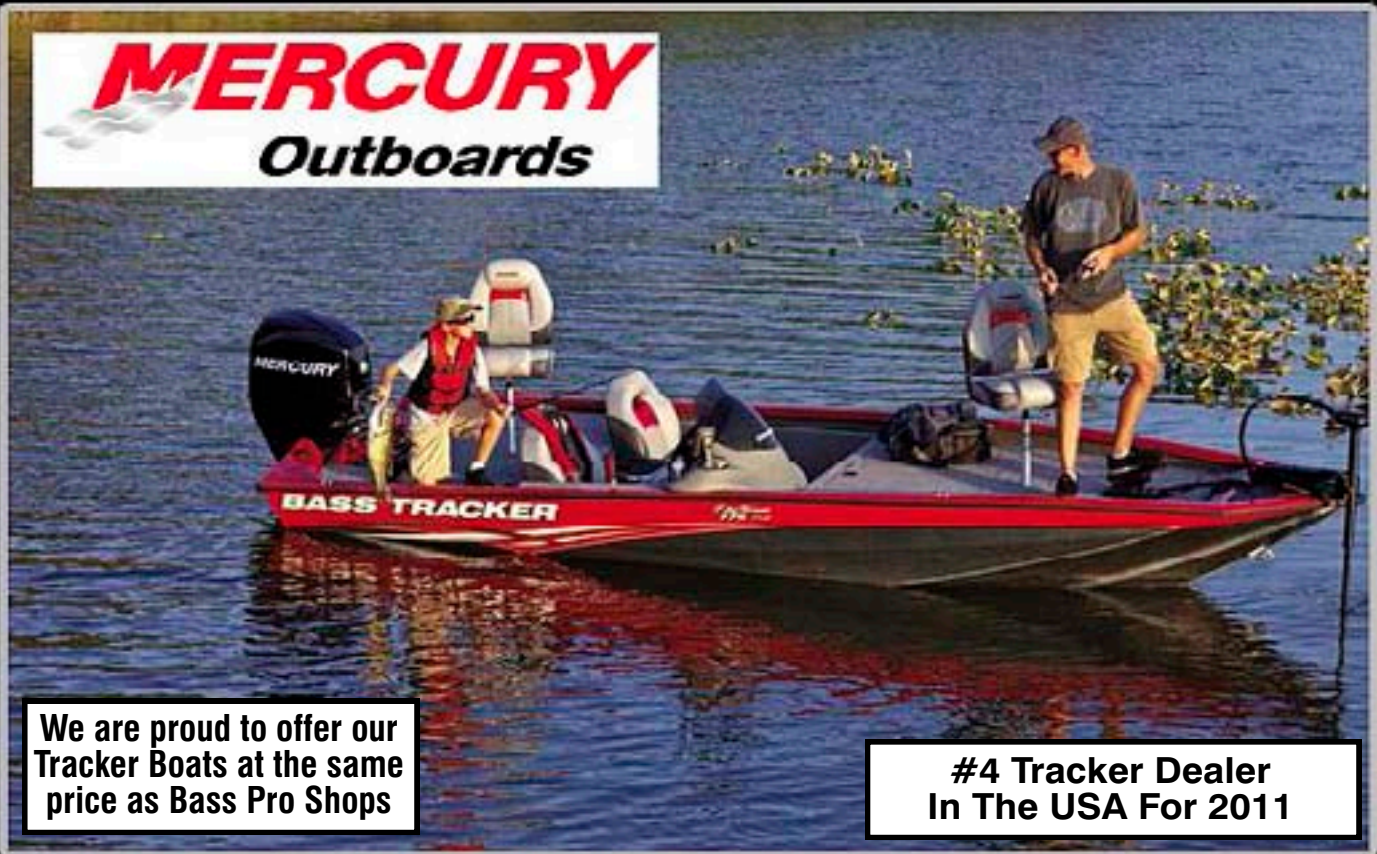
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Dusty Woverton used a trot line to hook 150 pounds of catfish. Photo courtesy of Holbert's Store in Big Bend.



Fred Dennison, from Canvas, shot a 354 field dressed black bear.



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Anthony Oldham hooked a bunch of drum. Photo courtesy of Jarrett's Bait in Elizabeth.



Chris Hensley, from VA, caught 2 citation size crappie.



Brian Kuhl landed a nice blue catfish. Photo courtesy of Sure Catch Fish Farm in Elkins.

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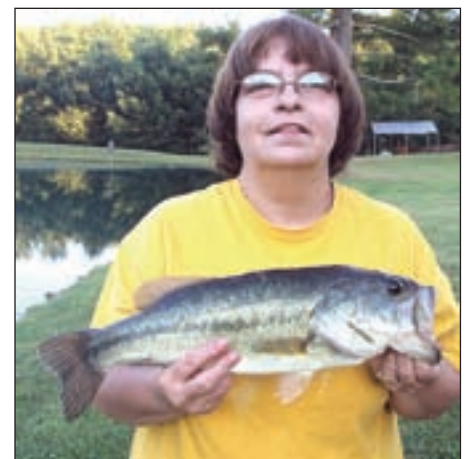
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Ken Mayle, from Fairmont, hooked a nice golden trout.



A 30" Little Kanawha River walleye was reeled in by Chuck Mills. Photo courtesy of Holbert's Store in Big Bend.



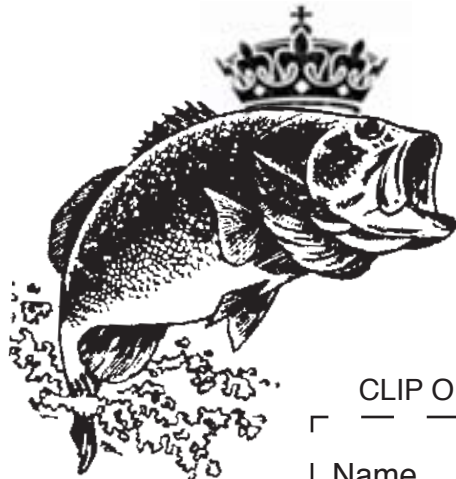
Francis Herron, from Buckhannon, caught a 19 1/2" largemouth.

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Common Fishing Mistakes

I'm often asked what mistakes I think most smallmouth anglers make. Or, to put it another way, what can the average recreational smallmouth angler do to improve his or her catches. That's a complicated question that has many answers. Still, there are three things I think anglers can do — right now — that'll improve their catches. Here goes:

1. Fish deeper

If there's one thing that I see recreational anglers do on a consistent basis, it's fish too shallow. It's rare for smallmouth bass to be real shallow or right up against the bank. Targeting laydowns and backwater areas might work for largemouth, but it's a poor strategy for smallmouth. They want deep water.

Turn your back to the bank, get several cast lengths away from it and start looking for underwater structure. Channel breaks, weed-lines and deep stump beds will usually out-produce anything along the shore. And even when there are a few up tight to the bank there's almost always more away from it.

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I know it's easier to fish shallow. Fishing in deep water is a skill you only acquire after many painful days on the water. But it's a necessary skill. Without it you'll have many painful days at the dock when you return without any fish.

2. Pay attention to the forage

Smallmouth bass are never very far away from something to eat. In most lakes they tend to hang below schools of forage that roam around the lake. To find those schools you have to know how to use your electronics. There's no other way to find them.

Practice is the key. If you want to learn to catch smallmouth bass, learn to use your electronics first. I recommend going out on the lake without tackle and spending the day just messing around, seeing what there is to see.

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continue to the next page



Rodney Tomlin, from Ripley, shot a big 8 point last fall.

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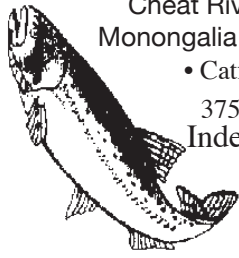
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3. Upsize your lures

For some reason the writers and anglers from years ago made it a point to convince everyone that you had to throw little baits on light tackle to catch brown bass. That might be true in streams and small rivers, but in lakes it's pure hogwash.

Smallmouth bass will hit big baits. In fact, sometimes that's the only way to catch them. I can't tell you how many two-pound smallies I've caught on big crankbaits, gaudy spinnerbaits and full-size Zara Spooks. Go big with confidence.

There's something else we need to talk about. It's the fact that where you fish makes a big difference. Smallmouth bass aren't largemouth bass. They aren't everywhere. You have to choose your streams, rivers and lakes carefully if you expect to make the best use of your fishing time.

Making that choice isn't easy. Hope this helps your success.

2012 Big Buck Contest Winners

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. – The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) has announced the winners of the 2011 West Virginia Big Buck Contest, according to Gene Thorn, chairman of the West Virginia Big Buck Contest Review Committee. The contest is cosponsored by WVDNR, Izaak Walton League of West Virginia, West Virginia Bowhunters Association, West Virginia Muzzle Loaders Association, West Virginia Physically Challenged Advisory Board and Toyota to recognize sportsmen and women who take an extraordinarily big antlered buck in West Virginia. This past year, 242 hunters had their deer antlers scored at one of the six WVDNR district offices, field offices, or the West Virginia Hunting and Fishing Show in Charleston. Hunters who took 106 big bucks with gun, muzzleloader, bow, or crossbow

(Class Y permit holders) that met the score minimums and other requirements participated in the 2011 Big Buck Contest.

Gun Category

Twenty-eight bucks killed by gun
continue to the next page



Payton Gwynn, age 8, shot his 1st bird. Photo courtesy of Crossroads General Store near Newark.

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hunters scored above 140 points (typical) or 165 points (non-typical). In the Typical-Gun category, the winner was Jonah Adkins from Branchland, West Virginia, with an 11-point buck killed in Lincoln County that scored 163 1/8. The winner this year in the Non-typical Gun category was Brandon Dishner from Athens, West Virginia, with a big 19-point buck from Mercer County that scored 165 4/8.

Muzzleloader Category

Two muzzleloader hunters killed bucks that scored above 140 points (typical) or 165 points (non-typical). William Fry of Loudonville, Ohio, took a 12-point Ritchie County buck that scored 149 5/8 and was top of the list in the Typical-Muzzleloader category. There was no non-typical buck taken with the muzzleloader this year that met the minimum score.

Bow Category

Bowhunters killed 73 deer that scored above 125 points (typical) or 155 points (non-typical). The winner of the Typical-Bow category was David Miller of Hurricane, West Virginia, with a whopper 12-point buck from Mingo County that scored 171 6/8. David's buck took over the Number 4 position for Typical Bow kills in the list that ranks the top five buck scores for all time in West Virginia. The Non-typical Bow category winner was Charles Daniel from Hurricane, West Virginia with a big 15-point buck from Cabell County that scored 169 1/8.

Physically Challenged Crossbow Category

Two bucks were killed by physically-challenged crossbow hunters that scored above 125 points (typical) or 155 points (non-typical). The Typical-Crossbow category winner was Freddie Houchins of

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Pineville, West Virginia with a 10-point Wyoming County buck that

scored 151 1/8. There was no non-continue to the next page



Jeremy Randolph hooked this giant hybrid at the Winfield Dam.



Tammy Biddle went to Canada for this fine 44 1/2 inch musky.

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-typical buck taken with the crossbow this year that met the minimum score.

The Boone and Crockett Club or Pope and Young Club rating systems are used to score bucks, depending upon the method of harvest.

The Boone and Crockett Club guidelines are used to score deer harvested with a firearm, muzzle-loader or crossbow (used by physically-challenged hunters with a Class Y Permit). Certificates are presented for racks scoring at least 140 points typical or 165 points non-typical for firearms and muzzleloaders and scoring at least 125 points typical or 155 points non-typical for crossbow.

Deer harvested with a bow are measured according to Pope and Young Club standards, and they are recognized with a certificate for racks scoring at least 125 points typical or 155 points non-typical.

The winner in each category will receive a plaque during the 2012 National Hunting and Fishing Day Celebration held the last weekend of September at Stonewall Resort State Park in Lewis County. A



These two fellows hooked numerous catfish. Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.

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list of all bucks meeting the minimum qualifications is posted on the Big Buck Contest page of the WVDNR's website: <http://www.wvdnr.gov/hunting/BigBuckContest.shtm>.

"The Big Buck Contest Committee congratulates all the hunters who took bucks that qualified for this year's contest," Thorn said. "We also thank all the hunters who participated and had antlers scored this past year."

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Robert Raines, from Ravenswood, hooked a big rainbow trout.

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Joe Valentine got a 40" rattler with 8 rattles and a button. *Photo courtesy of Jarrett's Bait in Elizabeth.*



Mike Connally, from Leon, hooked a 10 pound tiger trout.

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A nice blue catfish was landed at this pay lake. *Photo courtesy of Catfish Paradise near Marietta, Ohio.*



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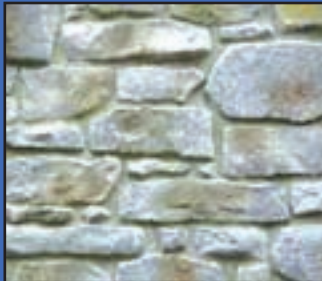
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Steve Furbee hooked this monster catfish at Salt Fork Lake while fishing in a Bass Sportsman event.



Young Logan Lane reeled in his first crappie. Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.



Angelo Iarussi, from Wellsburg, caught a 7.4 pound rainbow trout.

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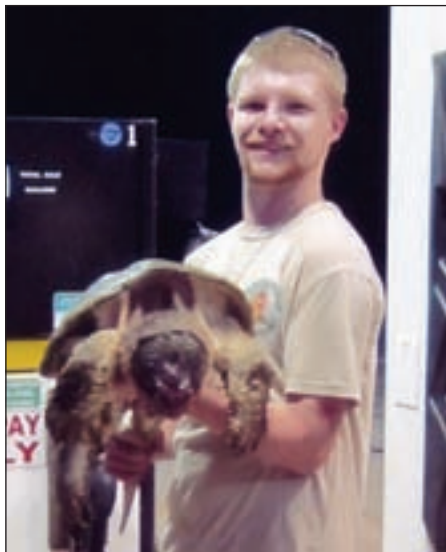
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A large smallmouth bass was caught. Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.



Chase Cunningham brought in a 25.6 pound snapping turtle. Photo courtesy of Crossroads General Store near Newark.

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Money Donated To Food Bank

GASSAWAY, W.Va. – West Virginia Division of Natural Resources Director Frank Jezioro has presented a check to the Mountaineer Food Bank representing \$75,000 raised during the fifth annual Governor's One Shot Deer Hunt, held in December 2011. The money will go to the Hunters Helping the Hungry Program (HHH), administered by WVDNR, to distribute venison to needy families across the state through the Mountaineer Food Bank and other agencies. The donation was made at the Food Bank's headquarters in Gassaway, Braxton County, on May 10.



Brian Pugh hooked a blue catfish at this pay lake. *Photo courtesy of Sure Catch Fish Farm in Elkins.*



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GAME CHECKING

The Governor's One Shot event is sponsored by WVDNR and the One Shot Committee. Private individuals and businesses donate money for the opportunity to participate in guided antlerless deer hunts on private property near Stonewall Resort State Park in Lewis County and end the event with an auction and an award banquet. All venison from the hunt, along with profits from the sponsorships, goes to HHH.

The first event in 2007 raised
continue to the next page



Marion & Wyatt Garrison reeled in a 32" catfish at Stonecoal Lake.

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\$17,000, the second in 2008 raised \$35,000, the third in 2009 raised \$50,000, and the fourth in 2010 raised \$75,000.

The HHH program allows hunters to donate legally-harvested deer to certified processors so the meat can be distributed to soup kitchens, food pantries, shelters, senior centers, missions, churches and community centers around the state. The HHH program has been highly successful since it began in 1992, providing meals to the neediest of West Virginians. However, the program also requires cash donations to pay for processing and distribution costs to benefit these needy individuals. More information about the HHH program is available at wvdnr.gov/Hunting/HHH.shtm.



Shane Nelson landed a big Jackson County largemouth bass.

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Special Deer Permit Available

GREEN BANK, W.Va. – The National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) in Green Bank, W.Va., has announced that applications are now available and are being accepted for the special resident-only, controlled deer hunt at the NRAO site. This controlled hunt is organized and planned in cooperation with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR).

Submitting an application enters the hunter in a drawing for a maximum of two (2) days on the NRAO site. Applications for the drawing must be received by NRAO on or

before August 3, 2012. Successful applicants will be notified by mail and issued a special NRAO letter of authorization to deer hunt. Only hunters who have made application and have received a letter for a particular day or days can hunt. “Walk-ons” will not be permitted to hunt.

The controlled hunts, held for two days (October 19 and 20, 2012) under the auspices of the WVDNR, will take place on four delineated areas ranging in size from 132 acres to 1,000 acres. Each area is designated: BOW ONLY; or MUZZLE-

continue to the next page

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LOADER ONLY. On the application, hunters must choose a bow or a type of firearm they wish to use during the hunt.

The maximum bag limit during the NRAO hunt is two antlerless deer (one per day), except that an on-site lottery will be held each day of the hunt which will allow five hunters to hunt a deer of either sex. These are bonus deer and do not count toward the hunters' annual licensed deer bag limit. However, participating hunters must possess appropriate base West Virginia hunting license (A, AH, AHJ, X, XJ, Lifetime) or be exempt from having to purchase a license. All deer harvested must be checked at

the official game checking station located on the NRAO site.

Due to the nature of the work at the Observatory, gasoline-powered vehicles are strictly controlled on the site. Hunters may park only in designated parking areas, and all vehicles will be issued a "pass" for display on the windshield. Transportation from hunter check-in to some hunt areas is provided by the NRAO. For purposes of safety and biological study of harvested deer, all hunters must pass through the check-in station each morning before the day's hunt. At the end of the day's hunt, all hunters must exit through the check-out station.

Applications may be picked up at any WVDNR district office, printed off the DNR website at www.wvdnr.gov, or may be requested by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the National Radio Astronomy Observatory at P.O. Box 2, Green Bank, WV 24944, Attention: Hunt Coordinator. Applications

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Eric Biddle went to Canada for this 46" musky.

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boaters also have had the option of taking an online course on a computer. Now, that online option is available on any mobile device by connecting to the newly revamped www.boat-ed.com. Access to the course structured for West Virginia can be accessed by visiting www.boat-ed.com/westvirginia.

“With half of all adults in the

U.S. now owning smartphones or tablets, and with e-readers gaining in popularity, it makes sense for boat-ed.com to be mobile ready,” said Edward Cossette, user exper-
continue to the next page



Deon Adkins, from Mineral Wells, went to Colorado for a mule deer.



Young Eli Prehoda, from Beverly, shot a nice gobbler.

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WVDNR offers free classes in many areas across the state. Boaters can find the next class offered closest to them by visiting the WVDNR website at http://wvdnr.gov/LEnforce/Boater_Ed/Classes.htm



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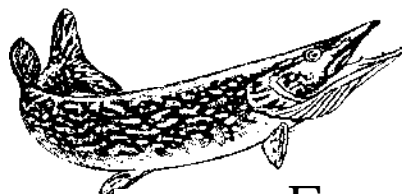
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