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Issue 260

March/April 2017



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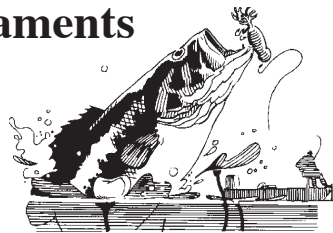
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Cover Photo

Joey Eddy was fishing for catfish in February in the Willow Island Pool of the Ohio River. He inadvertently snagged this huge paddlefish. The largest recorded one was 198 pounds in Iowa. They must be released immediately.

Send in your 2016/17 game and fish TEXT pics. Send to 304-482-7217. Bucks only - no does.

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.

Game Tracking Signs

I have come to learn that most hunting shows and many national hunting articles are all about big business. Many are featuring hunts and articles about hunting behind high fences, accompanied by professional photographers. That holds little interest for me, and I'm sure many others in WV. Since I think WV hunters are among the best anywhere. I thought an article about tracking might be helpful for beginners and people without someone to help them get started. Seasoned WV hunters know all these things, and more, but for some I hope it's helpful.

THERE'S ALWAYS SIGN

Oh, the lost art of tracking, in today's high tech fast speed world. There is still one art / skill that as far as I know remains unpolluted by "progress". Tracking, I'm happy to say, must be done much the way the long hunters of 1760 did it.

It has been said that an "expert" is someone who has made every mistake possible in a narrow field. Under that definition I "reckon." I am as much of an expert as anyone in this field. No article on tracking would be complete without the standard tracking 101 bullet points.

You made the shot. The deer or bear took off like a freight train. Next step, settle down, take your

time, memorize a tree or log or something that's adjacent to where you last saw him. Know this, it will all look different from the ground once you climb out of the tree. So be very careful in memorizing the spot. When possible, "triangulate" it; that's to say, memorize 3 points that leaves nothing to chance about where he was. Even a compass reading from the tree is helpful. Whatever you do, do not mess this up. Many animals are lost by failure to do this. There is no room for error here. Mark the spot with a trail marker and look back at the tree to make sure you're right. If you must climb back into your stand, look at your marker and make sure it's right, do it. A friend can help a lot here. One more time-----make sure your right. Do not get discouraged, if blood is not present immediately (goes double for bear). It may take a little while for blood to make it to ground. Use hair, tracks, turned up leaves, anything to start the trail. Finding the arrow is gold at this point. My guess is more deer are lost by a failure in this basic step than anything else.

continue to the next page

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Don't forget em'... They mark the trail... Even after dark!!!!
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Rhonda McKibben had success with a bow. Photo courtesy of Crooked Creek Archery in Williamstown.

and reusable. In an emergency cut up your hanky, or mark trees, but mark the trail, since it can pay big dividends later on.

Once you are sure you are at the right spot and azimuth, carefully look for blood, don't be too proud to get down on all fours. Note the kind of blood, bubbly? Probably lung hit. Bright red? An artery.

Dark red? Possible the liver. This is all helpful. Finding the arrow is a cornucopia of evidence and lighted knocks can be a great help. I always smile when I read of blood trails that an author says looks like they were "poured from a boot." I have only seen a couple of those in 100's of tracking jobs. Drips or
continue to the next page



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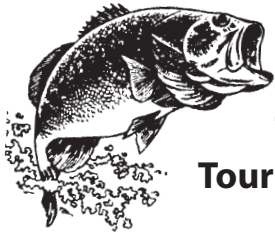
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sprays will be more likely, so look at leaves on bushes and sides of trees. I have heard many hunters complain about the redness in fall leaves. If in doubt touch the leaf with your finger to find blood. You are now on your way. Just remember slow is fast.

Next—the standard old---“wounded deer or bear will most often go downhill”. This is true but note the words “most often”. Just stay on the blood trail. If the deer starts up a big hill where he had an option not to, beware. He probably is not fatally hit. Mark the trail back out until morning, or at least a few hours to let him bed down.

You shot the animal “right before dark”. Should you proceed to track, or wait till morning? Here is where I differ from most “experts.” Unless I know it was a gut shot, I will at least find the first sign and mark it. I will then decide to pursue, based on the hit, the kind of blood, the weather forecast. If it’s going to rain, proceed. I do not like waiting till morning without marking sign because guaranteed it will all look different in the daylight. The morning dew or frost will also confuse things, along with domestic dogs, coyotes, or other critters on the blood trail during the night.

E) Bad hits---If you are certain your shot was too far back, wait till morning, or if shot was in the morning, wait at least 3-4 hrs. be-

fore even exiting the tree. He may be laying close. Typically, gut shot animals will run a short distance, lie down and watch their back trail. If you pursue you are in for a long track and will probably lose the animal. Discretion is by far the better part of valor here. I have found many gut shot, or even hind quarter shot animals, by simply waiting.

Now let’s move on to more advanced tracking tips.

I don’t know why it is, perhaps it’s a phrase I read as a very young hunter. The phrase was in a publication called “Pennsylvania Game News” and it was used in the context of preventing lost, wounded
continue to the next page



Cory Boothe, author of this story, brought in a couple of coyotes.

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animals from going down the “RAT HOLE OF WASTE.”

Maybe that was it, maybe not. Perhaps it was reading how native Americans, such as the Shawnee, the Iroquois, the Delaware, could track and how they used every part of a slain deer or bear. For whatever reason, I have been determined as a hunter not to waste any deer, no matter what. I think I have done pretty well. Bow hunters MUST develop tracking skills. Like everything else in life, you get good at what you practice. Here are some tips I have found helpful.

1) Track ‘em backwards

We all know how it goes. Most bow hunters start out as rifle hunters. You or your hunting buddy shoot a deer. It takes off and crashes, many times within seeing or hearing distance. Excitement abounds,

and handshakes, tagging, and field dressing ensues. Before removing your trophy or your friends, take the time to “reverse track them”. That is slowly and painstakingly track them back to where the shot occurred, marking the trail as you go. Notice everything. Note how little blood is visible as the deer moved fast, more blood as he moved slow. Note how he weaved before he fell, note how he bled more going up, even a little hill and less as he went downhill. Note the tracks. This simple exercise under no pressure can be the greatest skill builder in tracking. The more times a person does it the better he becomes. If your friend insists on removing the felled deer, mark the spot and start from there. I have read many articles about tracking and never read one that recommended this

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practice. It may seem silly after all you know where the deer is, it may even be on a 4-wheeler on its way out of the woods. However, you have just been presented a prime chance to practice tracking without being excited or pressured once you've tracked it to the spot of the shot, track it forward to where he fell. You'll start to get the picture.

2) Gotta be like a dog

continue to the next page

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Adam Black, from Milton, landed a 7 pound brown trout in Cabell County.

Photo tip: Always take 2 shots with your digital camera. Take the 1st one and step back a couple of feet and take another. You won't chop off the head. You don't pay for film with a digital camera. So, try this for better results.



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Ever notice how a dog tracks? His powerful nose smelling things we cannot, he will follow the trail exactly, if he gets off it. He always returns to the last spot he had it. This is exactly what you must do. Never, ever over run the sign, you risk stepping on critical clues. Every time you start on the trail picture the dog, use what you see him

do instinctively. So, must you hone your instincts.

In broken country, thick country, you will be tempted to walk around thickets. My advice is to stay on the blood trail. Thick country leaves even more opportunity for sign to appear.

While tracking bow-hit bear always have an armed friend covering you has you track.

3) Control your emotions

Remember this, and say it to yourself over and over---Once you lose the track and start blundering around the woods, looking for the animal your odds just went down

maybe as much as 80% in finding it. Let's be honest. Most of us don't have a dozen friend or family members to look for game. We may be alone or with a friend. It's natural to be jazzed after the shot, but your job is far from being over. Be serious, slow, and deliberate. Never risk fatally wounding these magnificent wild creatures and resort to finding them once the buzzards show up. There is no app on your phone for this—it will take grit, determination and perseverance, but most of all patience.

4) 3's a crowd

continue to the page 13



Caleb Myers shot an 8 point in Upshur County.



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Rick Dotson used a muzzleloader in Wood County for a big 10 point.



Dannie Siers, from Chloe, shot a great 10 point in Calhoun County. His grandson, Mason is on the left.



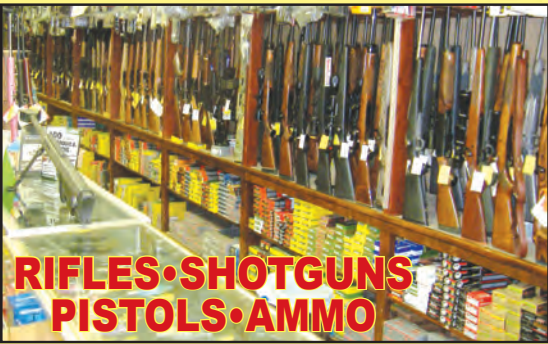
Joe Taylor hooked a 44" musky out of the Hughes River.

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This hunter tagged a fine buck.
Photo courtesy of Crossroads General Store near Newark.



Ethan Mahan harvested a nice 10 point buck in Jackson County.



Cari Weekley, from St. Marys, shot a 10 point in Ritchie County.

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Harley Jackson landed a nice small-mouth bass on the New River.



Josh Dennison harvested a good 9 point buck in Lewis County.




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While tracking, most times 2 people are all you want present, one to mark the trail and one to slowly scout ahead for next sign. You will find that, as more and more markers go up, the line gets established and the job usually becomes easier. The more people present, the higher the odds are of someone growing impatient and forging ahead and the harder it is to concentrate. The more chattering that goes on the worst things get. People by nature are impatient in groups. In this race the tortoise most often wins. It would seem the more people the better. I am saying not so much.

5) It's all in your head

Tracking begins with the mind set---THERE IS ALWAYS SIGN. Never ever give in to the thought there is none. Being 2 feet off the trail may have well be 20. When you cannot find a sign, go back to the last sign and start again (remember

the dog). Most often you'll find a spot of blood, an over turned leaf, a track, a broken twig or branch that will point the way. I cannot count the times hunters have told me "couldn't find a drop of blood," that I helped them unravel the trail. I have been accused of gifted vision a lot, but I think it's just perseverance.

6) Why mark the trail???

I hate writing this paragraph, but I feel I must. There may come a time, say crossing a barren corn field, or power line, or other such patch devoid of cover, when sign gets very thin, perhaps non-existent to the human eye. That is when marking the trail pays off big. Your past markers have established "LINE". Hurt deer or bear usually go from point A to point B, point B being the thick cover where they feel secure. Look at his route using the last few markers. Cross the opening in line

and odds are surely in your favor of picking up the sign on the other side and continuing the track. Only use this method if you must as it's not a substitute for staying on the blood trail. It's an option only to be used when you must. I call this plan "B" but I don't use it unless every single possibility of staying on the trail has been tried.



Young Logan White used a crossbow for this Jackson Co 8 point.

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The Power Of The Wacky Rig

It must seem out of place for me to be writing about a slow, methodical technique.

When you've built your reputation as a power fisherman who covers water and fishes fast, it hardly seems fitting for me to talk about something at the opposite end of the technique spectrum.

But I've learned the hard way. Wacky rigging is an important tool that can be so darn deadly in a variety of situations.

Like now. Fish are beginning to spawn in the southern half of the country and bass are more fickle about lure presentations than any other time of the year.

Sometimes you need to show the fish a little different action to get them to bite.

The wacky rig also works well around boat docks, under overhanging trees or even in a little current. It's ideal when the fish are being heavily pressured in clear water.

I also wacky rig for drop shotting

By Kevin VanDam

either a 4-inch Strike King Ocho (stick worm) or a Dream Shot. Both provide tantalizing action and give the fish something that they may not have seen before.

For general use, I typically use a
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Logan Jarrett reeled in a 7 pound, 1 oz. largemouth bass.

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straight-tail bait like a regular size Ocho or a Fat Baby Finesse Worm. When that's not working, I may switch to a standard, 6 1/2-inch finesse worm.

The finesse worm doesn't have much action when it falls, but when you twitch it has a lot more action when the ends fold beneath the



Patrick Price, from West Union, went to Ohio for a 20 point buck.

hook. The Ocho has a more subtle shimmying action on the fall.

Another bait that has worked well for me is the Rage Cutter Worm that has a body similar to the Ocho, real high salt content and subtle action. It sinks horizontally while the tail flaps slowly.

I usually rig those baits weightless, placing the hook in the middle of the bait so that the ends dangle.

I use "O" rings that I slide up over the bait to help secure the hook better. They allow you to catch a few more bass with one bait before it

tears up. I've also found that if you miss a bite, you can drop it quickly to the same fish without having to adjust the hook.

If fishing in deeper water or with a bait that doesn't have much salt, I will weight the hook with lead wire that I get from Bass Pro Shops fly tying department. It is fine wire that I wrap on the shank next to the eyelet and can add whatever I need to get the fall rate I want.

And while I prefer leaving the hook exposed, there are times when
 continue to the next page



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fishing around brush that you have to protect the point. To do that, I create my own weed guard with 30-pound fluorocarbon. I make a loop and fold the line, then wrap it against the hook with fly thread and a touch of glue. It's not foolproof, but it does a pretty good job, and the line is less visible than a wire guard.

I prefer to use wacky rigs on spinning tackle with 15-pound braid and 10- or 12-pound fluorocarbon leader combination. The key is to make sure you have a long enough

fluorocarbon leader that you get a good sink rate.

The next time you know bass are in a specific area, show them a wacky rig. It's something they can't pass up.

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Hannah White used her crossbow in Jackson County for a buck.

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DNR Cuts 84 Vehicles

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Following the example of Governor Jim Justice and other state government agencies, the Division of Natural Resources becomes the first West Virginia Department of Commerce agency to announce fleet reductions.

DNR Director Stephen McDaniel announced Thursday that 84 vehicles will be cut from its statewide fleet, a reduction of 14 percent.

The reductions will begin immediately and continue over the next year. Estimated one-time proceeds and cost savings from the sale of these vehicles is estimated at nearly \$500,000. An additional \$150,000 will be saved annually in fuel, maintenance and insurance costs.

"I'm proud that my staff has worked so diligently to do their part in identifying cost savings within the Division of Natural Resources," said DNR Director Stephen McDaniel. "By reducing the number of vehicles in our fleet, we will be able to save our state nearly \$500,000 during the next fiscal year."

McDaniel said that the fleet reduction will generate a cost savings for the people of West Virginia without hindering the ability of the DNR to provide services or perform daily operational tasks.

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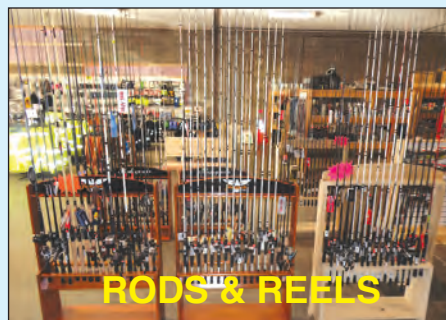
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Teresa Snyder landed a nice large-mouth. Photo courtesy of Star Printing in Ravenswood.



Cody Hobbs landed an 8 pound rainbow trout at Cranberry.



Dezmon Pierson used a bow in Fayette Co. for a wide racked buck.



Travis Morgan brought in a nice buck. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.



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Josh Murray caught a huge blue catfish at the Belleville Dam.



Caleb Smith, from Clothier, bagged a nice buck in Boone County.

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Luke Harper used a bow in Ritchie Co. for a buck. *Photo courtesy of Boone's Bow Shop in Parkersburg.*



Blake Eddy used a bow for a fine WV buck. *Photo courtesy of Crooked Creek Archery in Williamstown.*

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Jaxton Hostutter was happy with his buck. Photo courtesy of Tyler Outdoor Supply in Middlebourne.



Monty Koontz caught & released this rainbow trout.



William Wotring brought in a 12 point in Mason County.



Coty Pierson used a bow for this Fayette County buck.

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Spring Crappie Fishing

You may have heard that spring crappie fishing is one of the easiest types of fishing you can ever do. However, in reality it can be rather frustrating if you don't know a few good techniques that can help you continue catching crappie after the initial spawning days are over. The first thing that you need to do is understand that this is a busy time for crappie and so they are moving around a lot. Therefore, you have to be willing to move around as well.

The fish will be in the deeper water at the start of this season and they will slowly begin to work their way to the more shallow water as spring begins to set in and the water starts to warm up. They are in search of places to spawn. When summer starts they will be headed back out to the deeper water. Knowing this

information will help you figure out where the best places to fish for crappie will be.

When the weather conditions are not very favorable for the crappie you need to make it easy for them to catch the bait you are presenting to them. An example of this time would be early spring when it has been warm for a few days and then a sudden cold front moves in. This will startle the fish and they will try to return to the deeper water for comfort. It will also make them slower to bite. Therefore, if you use a technique that makes it easy for them to catch the bait during this confusing time you will catch more crappie.

Fishing Techniques

One technique that seems to work really good during this time of year is called "bumping bottom" and you use a dropper rig to accomplish this technique. The way it works is by presenting the min-

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now to the crappie vertically with a dropper rig. Of course, to do this type of fishing you need to know where the fish are hiding out in the deep water. They will be found in

continue to the next page



Brandon Roberts, from Munds-ville, hooked a 7 pound saugeye.



Tom Lynch caught a big blue catfish in the Kanawha River.

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ledges, rocks, stumps and similar areas.

You must present the bait by bumping it on the bottom in these locations or allowing it to hover around the openings. The best method to use is a 1/2 ounce bell sinker tied to the end of the swivel to prevent the line from twisting and a minnow will work great for the bait. It does require calm weather conditions to perform this technique or the line will be moving too fast for you to have any success.

Another technique that will require practice is leaning the difference between the fish biting and the bait brushing up against something. The reason this is so difficult is because the crappie has such a soft bite. You may get a little frustrated at first but remember with time and practice you will learn the difference.

Trolling is another crappie technique that you will find very useful for spring crappie fishing. With this technique you will align several rods in a row with the same type of line and bait on each one. Be

consistent and patient and you can catch a lot of fish with this method. However, you do need to check the regulations for trolling for each lake before going out because the rules for each one may vary.

A technique that combines trolling and "bumping bottom" together is called "pushing" and it is good for catching spring crappie when they are located in the shallow water. It is a very simple technique that is accomplished by using live bait. All you need to get started are a few rods with lightweight reels positioned off the edge of the boat. Add a bell sinker and a couple hooks about a foot apart and you are ready to start fishing.

It is the best method found to get the bait in positions where the biggest fish can get to it. It allows you to put the bait right where you want it and keep it there until the crappie become interested. Remember, you must always move very slowly to

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use this technique correctly or you will not get the response you are hoping for.

Dan Eggertsen is a fishing researcher and enthusiast who is committed to providing the best crappie fishing information possible. Get more information on crappie fishing here: www.askcrappiefishing.com



Noah Goodwin, from Leon, caught a nice rainbow trout.

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Early spring. It's the time of year that every Bass fisherman who is worth his salt looks forward to. The thought of Bass that haven't seen a lure for at least 3 months is enough to stir any of us into a frenzy. Early spring has it's advantages but it can have it's own unique problems as well. Rising water temperatures can send Bass into flurries of activity that are a Bass fisherman's dream come true. But, just as quickly, a stubborn early spring cold front can be a nightmare that puts the fish back into hibernation. The key to successful fishing dur-



Aly Blankenship, age 11, had success with a buck.

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ing this time of year lies in using the proper lures, presenting them properly and using the weather conditions to your advantage. Paying attention to the smallest details can sometimes mean the difference between a respectable day's catch and going home skunked.

Lure Details

When starting out in the spring you can expect water temperatures to be in the low 40 degree range. Most people shiver when they even think of fishing in this kind of cold water. But the temperature should clue you in as to what type of lure is apt to give you the best results. Think small. 3 inch grubs, 4 inch

plastic worms of the straight-tail variety and 1/4 oz. Jig & Pig combinations fit the bill. Another con-

continue to the next page



Amelia Smith got her first buck in Boone County.

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sistent producer under these conditions, in shallow bodies of water, is the Rapala original in the 3 1/2 inch & the 4 3/8 inch sizes. Spinnerbaits may also have their place but will not be as consistent as the previously mentioned lures.

With any of the aforementioned baits the key is S-L-O-W. The Bass's metabolism is still in low gear and they aren't in much of a chasing mood. The 3 inch grub should be rigged on a 1/8 oz. jig-head. Preferred colors are smoke, chartreuse or white depending on the clarity of the water you are fish-

ing. This should be retrieved either on a slow lift & drop or by letting it sink to the bottom, lifting it slightly and swimming it back just above the bottom of the lake. With either method a hit will usually just feel like extra weight on the end of the line. When in doubt set the hook. The 4 inch worm is best rigged on a 1/8 oz. Slider type head or Texas style with a light wire 1/0 hook & a 1/16 oz. bullet weight. Color is a matter of personal preference. However, black is always a good starting point. Smoke and pumpkinseed are also proven colors. A slow lift and drop retrieve is the

continue to the page 33



Don Cole, from Spencer, went to Durbin for a big smallmouth bass.



Young Dylan Bennett caught his 1st golden trout.

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Sutton Lake

June 17

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Stonewall Form

Is In This Issue

Ohio River Schedule

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A giant trout. trout was reeled in. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.

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Alice Warden, from Fayetteville, caught a 28" walleye at Stonewall Jackson Lake.

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Josh Russell recently caught and released a 50" musky at Stonewall Jackson Lake. Photo courtesy of Triple J Custom Bait & Tackle in Shinnston.

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Patricia Thomas bagged a quality buck in Wetzel Co. *Photo courtesy of Tyler Outdoor Supply in Middlebourne.*



Dallas McMillon used a bow for a top quality buck. *Photo courtesy of Lucky's Outdoors in Summersville.*

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New DNR Director Chosen

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Gov. Jim Justice today announced the appointment of Stephen McDaniel to serve as the director of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. The appointment became effective Feb. 6. McDaniel replaces Bob Fala, who served as director in 2015 and 2016.

“Steve brings both an enthusiasm for outdoor recreation and strong business background to the job, and I look forward to working with him to protect the state’s land and

wildlife, and to promote tourism in our state parks system,” Gov. Justice said.

“I’m excited to have Steve be a part of our team at the Department of Commerce,” said West Virginia Department of Commerce Secretary H. Wood Thrasher. “I know he has big plans for the Division of Natural Resources, and I look forward to working with him in this new role.”

McDaniel, a native of Bridgeport, attended West Virginia University and Fairmont State College, where he earned his bachelor’s degree while helping his family establish and grow Total Health Services of WV, a medical supply company.

“Through my family’s business, I visited nearly every county once

a week. It’s how I fell in love with West Virginia,” McDaniel said. “I took this job because I see the opportunity to enhance the outdoor
continue to the next page



Matt Pitcock went to Braxton County for his 8 point buck.

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Rodney Siers harvested a 10 point in Calhoun County.

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experience for the people of West Virginia and for the people that we want to bring in here to experience the things that we love. I've spent thousands of hours hunting and fishing. It's just something I love to do. I share Gov. Justice's passion for the outdoors and what can be done with this agency, and that's why I'm here."

McDaniel established the Moxark Mountain Tree Farm in Tucker County. He is also a member of Trout Unlimited and lifetime member of the National Rifle Association.

Looking For Bass
TOURNAMENTS?
Information Is In
This Issue

**12th Annual Archery
 In The Schools**

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. – The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (DNR) will host the 12th Annual West Virginia Archery in the Schools (AIS) State Tournament at the Charleston Civic Center Saturday, March 25, according to Art Shomo, Program Coordinator. The event will run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., followed by an awards ceremony at 4:30 p.m. Students from the following schools have qualified to participate in this year's tournament:

- Ansted Middle
- Beth Haven Christian
- Bridge Street Middle
- Buckhannon-Academy
- Upshur High
- Cabell Midland High
- Cameron High

- Chapmanville Regional High
- Chesapeake Elementary
- Clendenin Elementary
- Conner Street Elementary
- Crescent Elementary
- East Bank Middle
- Elkins High
- Elkview Middle
- Fayetteville High
- Home Educated Archery Team
- Herbert Hoover High
- Hodgesville Elementary
- Hollywood Elementary
- Hundred High
- Hurricane Middle
- James Monroe High
- John Marshall High
- Lakeside Elementary
- Marlinton Elementary
- Marlinton Middle

continue to the next page



Rodney Bumgardner landed a 7 1/2 pound rainbow trout.

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 Ripley Middle
 Ripley High
 Shady Spring High
 Shady Spring Middle
 Sherrard Middle
 Upshur County Homeschool Archery Association
 West Teays Elementary
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“DNR staff are very encouraged by the success of the Archery in the Schools Program and the inter-

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est in our State Tournament,” said Shomo. “Because of the continued growth in the tournament, students were required to qualify through a virtual tournament, where we had 1,200 participants, truly making this year’s tournament the best of the best.”

Tournament competition is open only to schools that have received the DNR-sponsored AIS training. For more information on the West Virginia Archery in the Schools Program or to attend the next training, visit the DNR website at www.wvdnr.gov/archery.

“A lot of work has gone into the planning of this year’s event, but none of this would have been pos-

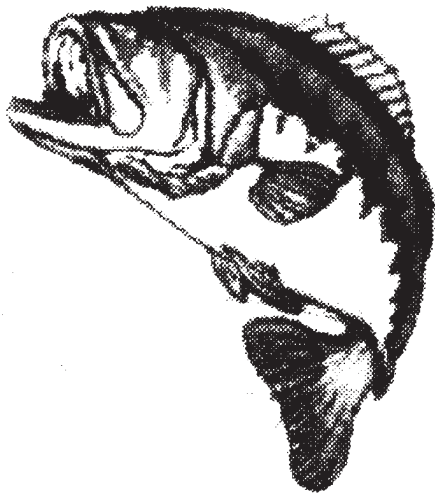
sible without the financial and volunteer assistance from wildlife and educational organizations around the state that are committed to our youth,” Shomo said.

continue to the next page



Delena Haight, from Grafton, landed a 6 pound plus trout.

Spring Burnsville Lake Team Challenge



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April 30

- 6 Fish Limit
- Obey DNR Rules
- No Live Bait
- One Big Bass Weighed Per Boat
- Complete Rules Given At The Event

Everyone is encouraged to attend and watch some of the best student archers in the state compete for top honors. The admission fee to watch the tournament is \$5 for adults (18 and older) and \$3 for children (6-17 years old). Children under 6 years of age get in free.

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Details On Page 3**



Kevin Shrewsberry got a fine bow buck from Wyoming County.



Billy Lesh used a bow in Fayette County for a great buck.



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