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Issue 331

April/May 2026



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Outdoor Photos

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Cover Photo

Fishing in the Smoke Hole area, Hunter Rohr reeled in a new golden trout state record. The Buckhannon native's fish broke the weight and length records. It measured 28" and weighed 11.84 (11 lbs., 13 oz).

Turkey season starts April 18 in WV. Hunt carefully and good luck to all.

Lots of big fish have been caught. Send pics Page 38 info.

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Deer Harvest For The Season

The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) today announced that hunters harvested 92,553 white-tailed deer during the 2025-2026 seasons, which is a 17 percent decrease from the 2024 deer harvest of 111,646 and 14 percent below the 5-year average of 107,434.

This year's decreased harvest was caused by an increase in hard mast production, which often results in decreased harvests due to the difficulty of tracking and targeting game species spread out over a landscape. Several counties also experienced an outbreak of hemorrhagic disease, which likely impacted hunter success, especially in the western part of the state.

According to preliminary num-

bers collected through the WVDNR's electronic game checking system, hunters harvested 33,823 bucks during the traditional buck firearm season, 25,453 antlerless deer during all antlerless firearm hunting opportunities, 29,654 deer during the urban and regular archery/crossbow seasons, 3,102 deer during the muzzleloader season and 501 deer during the Mountaineer Heritage season.

ANTLERLESS DEER SEASON

Hunters harvested 25,453 deer during the 2025 antlerless deer season, which includes the youth, class Q and Class XS deer season. The harvest was a 23 percent decrease compared to the 2024 harvest of 33,057 and 13 percent below the 5-year average of 29,303. The top ten counties for antlerless deer harvests were Preston

continue to page 6



Ben Smith traveled to Boone County for a dandy buck.



Zack Yost hunted in Tyler County for his gun buck.

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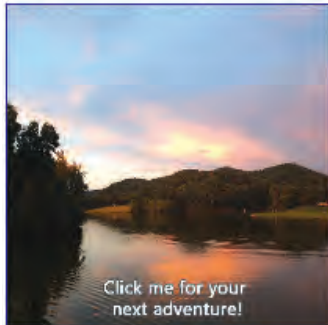
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You must have Adobe Acrobat Reader Version 7.0 or later to view the Sportsman Magazine. If you don't have it, click the image below to get the latest version.



Dale Locklear is pleased with his whitetail buck.



Zac Bolling used a bow for a huge McDowell Co. buck



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(1,442), Upshur (907), Greenbrier (877), Monroe (876), Mason (841), Lewis (836), Hardy (775), Randolph (774), Barbour (695) and Braxton (680).

ARCHERY AND CROSSBOW DEER SEASONS

Hunters harvested 29,654 deer during the 2025 archery and crossbow season. The 2025 harvest was an 8 percent decrease over the 2024 harvest of 32,240 and 5 percent below the 5-year average of 31,139. The proportion of the archery harvest taken using a crossbow has stabilized and was

greater than deer reportedly taken by a bow.

The archery and crossbow harvest does not include the 29 deer taken with recurve or longbows during the Mountaineer Heritage season. The top ten counties for archery and crossbow deer harvests were Preston (1,573), Raleigh (1,378), Wyoming (1,224), Kanawha (1,045), Fayette (1,032), Mercer (892), Nicholas (889), McDowell (876), Randolph (860) and Monongalia (842).

MUZZLELOADER DEER SEASON

Hunters harvested 3,102 deer during the 2025 muzzleloader season, which was 26 percent less than the 2024 harvest of 4,173 and

22 percent below the 5-year average of 3,979. The muzzleloader deer season harvest does not in-

continue to the next page



Aiden Johnson - 9 - got a nice buck during muzzleload season.



Jonathan Caltrider got a nice 9 point in Ritchie County



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clude the 472 deer taken with side lock and flintlock muzzleloaders during the Mountaineer Heritage season. The top ten counties for muzzleloader deer harvests were Nicholas (186), Preston (179), Randolph (158), Greenbrier (131), Upshur (115), Fayette (111), Raleigh (95), Mason (93), Barbour (90) and Kanawha (88). PUBLIC MEETINGS ON PROPOSED HUNTING REGULATIONS

Hunters are reminded that in-person public meetings on proposed hunting regulations will be held on March 17-18 at six locations around the state. Specific proposals will be made available to the public following the quarterly meeting of the West Virginia Natural Resources Commission on March 12 at WVdnr.gov/pub-

lic-regulations-meetings.

For more information about hunting in West Virginia and

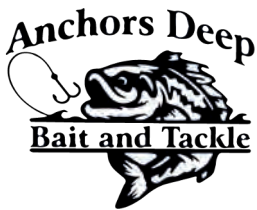
to purchase a 2026 license and stamps, visit WVdnr.gov. Lots of happy hunters that got a deer.



John Terry of Gallagher, W.Va. has set a new state record for tiger trout. Terry caught a 29.13-inch, 11.04-pound tiger trout on March 19 from Seneca Lake in Pocahontas County using a Panther Martin Spinner and 4-pound test line. His catch passed the state length record of 28.7 inches recorded by Mike Connelly in 2011 at Krodel Lake.

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Spring Bass Fishing - Time To Get On The Water

Any knowledgeable angler will tell you that to catch a fish, you need to think like it. Bass have spent most of their winter days foraging the deep waters. As the spring kicks in, they'll start moving to spots that are rapidly warm-

ing up. They're eager to spawn and set up their nests in shallow water, especially spots with structure.

This means you should look for fallen trees, grass, rocks, water lilies – anything that can serve as a cover. It can sometimes be hard to spot these places, but with the right electronics or a bit of research, you can find a real prize.

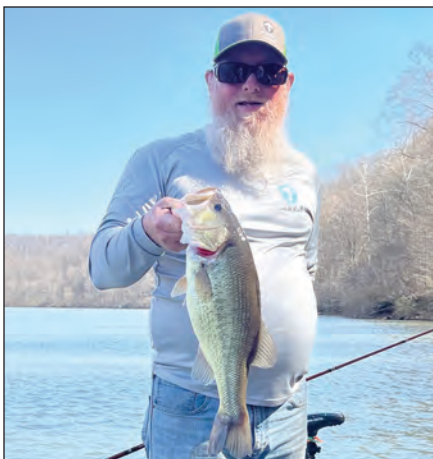
However, Bass are always on the run and can get unpredictable, especially if the weather is finicky. One day can be all bite and fight. Come to the same spot the next day, and you get skunked. You need to be patient and experiment with the fishery. As a rule of thumb, fish with faster lures and patterns on warm spring days and swap these for slower-moving

baits on colder days.

Come Rain or Shine: Best Weather for Bass

The weather can be tough in spring, but the fish are well worth it.

When fishing for pre-spawn continue to page 11



David Riddle went to Stonewall Jackson for an early season bass.



Gage Lane reeled in a top quality spring largemouth bass.

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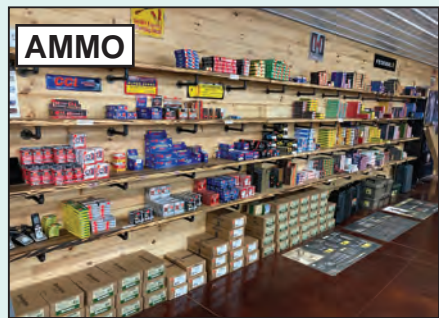


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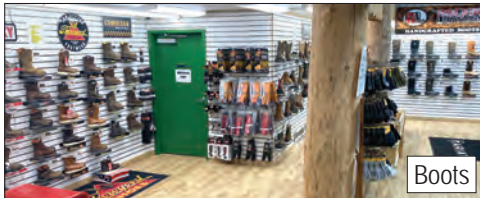
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Bass, the weather can really help you out. On cloudy days, Bass will move around the lake. You'll have better chances of catching them as they explore the shallower parts as well.

Another element that plays to your advantage is rain. Bass tend to be more aggressive when it's raining and leave their cover to feed, so grab a good pair of boots and go stand in the rain. Spring showers also make it more difficult for Bass to spot you.

Lastly, don't shy away from the breeze. The wind will spur bait fish to congregate in cover and Bass won't skip a meal. On windy days, the fish will move to shallower parts. You may find it tricky to navigate a boat on a day like this, but on the plus side, the water movements caused by the wind will make it harder for the Bass to spot your boat.

The Three Stages of Spawning

Everything in spring revolves around the spawn. Whether fish are looking for a mate, holed up on their nests, or moving back out onto the lake, understanding their goal will help you achieve yours. Here's a brief summary of the three stages of the spring Bass spawn: pre-spawn, spawn, and post-spawn.



Early Spring Bass Fishing

The early spring can be a hit and miss, especially if the snow and ice continue into April. Bass are sensitive to temperature changes and will stay alert in order to find the spawning grounds.

However, the cold front will still keep them near the depths – they continue to the next page




Daniel Post and Garrett Tucker had an unusual catch at an event in March. They landed 4 fat spotted bass (see the lines on the bellies) and a quality smallmouth bass at Sutton Lake. *Photo courtesy of Mountaineer Gun Sales in Morgantown.*

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won't risk venturing into cold shallows. What Bass do in that case is look for deep waters near shorelines where they can find secluded spots such as rocks and weeds.

Once the weather improves, Bass will head to the shallows. They will stick to areas with access to deeper water, though, to avoid sudden drops in water temperature. Because of this, transition areas like points and coves are a good place to look.
Mid-Spring Bass Fishing

Depending on where you live, the spawn normally kicks off in the middle of spring. Bear in mind, though, that not all Bass spawn at the same time. You can target females waiting for the males to set up spawning beds, as

well as fish already holed up on their nests.

Bass are at their most aggressive immediately before or during the spawn. They're fighting for their chance to mate and won't let anything stand in their way. You'll find most of the action in the

shallows during this time. However, that's also where you'll find the most fishing pressure. If it's too busy, look for fish staging in deeper water too.

Once the fish have spawned, the males will hole up on their nests,

continue to the next page



Luke Ankrom hooked a 6 lb., 3 oz largemouth with Dustin Dennis.



Justin Stanton released a big Stonewall Jackson largemouth



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and the larger females will move out to the edges of the spawning zones to rest. This makes them easy to find, but hard to tempt. They're either exhausted or guarding the nests, and will mainly bite out of annoyance or the perception of a threat.

Late Spring Bass Fishing

Once the spawn's over, the fish are back out on the hunt. This can be a great time to target large females, as they're angrily feeding up after the efforts of spawning. What makes this even better is the arrival of smaller fish like Bluegill, who move in to spawn after the Bass are done.

Ambush is the name of the game here. Bass will lurk around cover, waiting to jump out at unsuspecting fish. Use this to your advantage, pitching deep into cover with weedless lures. This will also help you escape the strong fish pressure of late spring.

As spring turns to summer, water temperatures stabilize and Bass start to leave the shorelines. This signals the end of the spring fishing season. However, you can still get in some last-minute trips if you hit the water early, before the morning sun warms the water.

Spring Bass Fishing Lures
When it comes to lures, there's no cookie-cutter solution. Pack a

variety as you'll probably need to vary your tactics to stand a chance. You'll also need to factor in the weather and the sea-

son (pre-spawn, spawning, post-spawn). But before you do all that, let's have a look at the most
continue to the next page



Tim Wade hooked a nice Stone-wall Jackson largemouth bass.



Fishing at Bluestone Lake, Marvin Jeffrey has a big smallmouth.

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common lures used in catching spring Bass.

Spinnerbaits

What are spinnerbaits for? Creating vibrations and noise that will make the Bass think that prey is near. Bass rely heavily on their sense of hearing, so you'll want to create some noise, more so if you're fishing calm waters with little to no wind.

Luckily, spinnerbaits are a pretty versatile lure. The metal blades attached to them come in different shapes and sizes. Some an-

glers also trim the skirt of the lure so that it doesn't get tangled and wound up.

On a calm day, you can retreat the lure more slowly, but when there's wind, make sure to start reeling in the second your lure is in the water. You need to make a splash and the blades' shiny appearance will entice the fish. Yo-yoing (pulling the lure up and then dropping it) should also produce a good effect and get the Bass going.

continue to page 16



David Bernardo landed a huge rainbow trout at Curtisville Lake.

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Jerkbaits

If you want to winch up a pre-spawning Bass, you need to work jerkbaits. They're common weapons of choice for a good reason. Bass monitor the water temperature closely, making sure to stay in warmer parts. You'll need jerkbaits to work both the clean shallow waters and grassy patch-

es.

Be sure to try out various jerkbait presentations. The rhythm can be key to enticing Bass, and if you're fishing during a cold front, you'll want the pause between jerks to be longer. Also, keeping slack in the line is essential to successful jerk movements. If you're fishing on a breezy day, use long casts

and bigger lures that will attract bigger fish.

Jigs

For anglers who don't mind taking things slow, working jigs to imitate Crawfish can produce some real magic. Pre-spawn fish will be moving from deeper waters to spawning grounds, so the key is to jig slowly and near the bottom. If the weather allows it, you can just drag the bait over the bottom and slowly retrieve it.

When looking for Bass in more secluded waters and grass lay-downs, you'll want to thread your jig trailer to the jig body until it's leveled with the hook point.

Good luck in 2026 for bass.



Dustin Dennis is pleased with a big Stonewall Jackson Lake bass.

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WV DNR Master Angler Award

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) today announced that Scott Lattea from Harrison County has become the state's eighth Master Angler Award recipient.

Lattea completed this feat by catching 22 fish species on 11 waters across West Virginia.

"Receiving the Master Angler Award takes dedication, skill and a willingness to try new techniques," said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. "We congratulate Scott Lattea on this impressive achievement and encourage anglers across West Virginia to take on the Master Angler challenge."

The Master Angler Award is one of the most prestigious achievements for anglers in West Virginia. To earn this recognition, participants must complete six slams, each requiring them to catch a set number of fish species that meet specified length criteria within a designated time period.

"There were several fish on the list that I had never caught, and I

had to learn a lot of new things to get them all caught," said Lattea. "I think my favorite slam was the predator slam, and musky was the most challenging. I will definitely be going back to try and catch a lot more of those fish."

Lattea completed his first slam (trout) in 2022, but did not attempt to complete other slams until June 2025. He completed his final slam in December 2025 by reeling in a fallfish on the Cacapon River.

Anglers must legally catch each fish in West Virginia, ensure each meets the minimum length for its species, and submit a time-stamped photo of their catch. All slams must be completed within a

calendar year to qualify.

Previous Master Angler Award recipients include Zach Adkins of Grant County, Jonathan Paine of Randolph County, Alex Foster of Kanawha County, Jesse Truman of Kanawha County, Ken Neer of Monongalia County, Steven Cooper, Jr. of Upshur County, and Carson Shock of Putnam County.

All anglers 15 years and older are required to have a West Virginia fishing license and a valid form of identification. Trout stamps are required while fishing for trout. Licenses and stamps can be purchased at 160 retail locations across the state or online at WVfish.com.



Scott Lattea won the Master Angler Award this year.

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Gold Rush Trout Stocking Program

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) today announced the return of Gold Rush stockings at 69 lakes and streams around the state starting March 30.

“As we celebrate the ninth anniversary of the Gold Rush, we look forward to seeing all of the ways this exciting event helps recruit the next generation of anglers and helps us keep West Virginia’s outdoor traditions alive and well for years to come,” said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion.

From March 30 – April 11, the WVDNR will stock more than 50,000 golden rainbow trout at 69 lakes and streams around the state, including waters in or near 15 state parks and forests. Of these fish, 100 will receive a numbered yellow tag. If an angler catches a golden trout with one of these tags, they can enter the tag number online for a chance to win one of the following prizes:

(1) Free Resident West Virginia Lifetime Fishing License (1 Winner)



Daniel Clark reeled in a huge blue catfish.



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 Prizes will be awarded by random drawing. All anglers with a valid

fishing license and trout stamp who report a verified tag during the event will be eligible to receive a gift bag with Gold Rush merchandise. To learn more about Gold Rush giveaways and stock-

continue to page 20



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To encourage anglers and their families to plan a Gold Rush adventure, West Virginia State Parks is offering a 15% discount on lodge rooms and cabins at select parks booked between now and April 30. Offer is valid only on new stays (two-night minimum) at Blackwater Falls, Cacapon Resort, Cass, North Bend, Pipestem Resort, Tygart Lake and Watoga state parks. To receive the dis-



Lilly Dillon hooked a 5 lb., 7 oz. golden trout.

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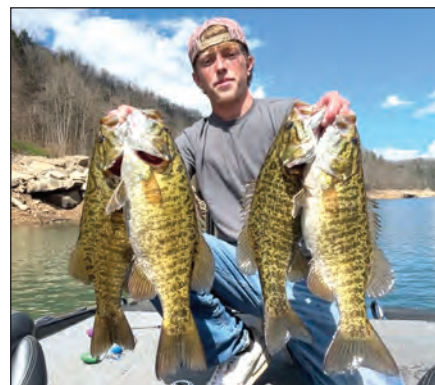


count, book online at WVstateparks.com and use the offer code GOLD at checkout.

All anglers 15 and older must have a West Virginia fishing license with a current trout stamp and a valid form of identification while fishing during Gold Rush. Licenses and stamps can be purchased online at WVfish.com. Anglers are also reminded to follow West Virginia's fishing regulations, available to download at WVdnr.gov/fishing-regulations.



Charles Hall, from Parkersburg, reeled in a nice rainbow trout.



Aiden Crockett caught some nice Summersville Lake smallmouth.

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State Wildlife Action Plan

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) announced today that members of the public may now review and submit comments on a draft update to the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP).

Developed in response to a congressional requirement for all states to create wildlife conservation plans, the SWAP serves as a comprehensive, science-based guide for the WVDNR and its partners to conserve West Virginia's fish, wildlife and habitats.

"The State Wildlife Action Plan is a roadmap for conserving West Virginia's rich natural resources, but its success depends on collaboration," said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. "We encourage all West Virginians to review the draft plan and share their feedback. Whether you're a landown-

er, hunter, angler, nature enthusiast or someone who enjoys the outdoors, your input helps ensure this plan reflects the values and priorities of the people we serve."

First developed in 2005 and last updated in 2015, West Virginia's SWAP has evolved from a focus on research and monitoring to a more action-driven strategy that prioritizes conservation efforts where they can have the greatest impact. Key updates in the plan include:

An expanded focus on 1,292 species of greatest conservation need, up from 1,143 in the previous plan.

Reinforcement of existing goals to halt the decline of at-risk species, assist in the recovery of federally listed species, keep common species common and conserve all habitat types across the state.

Concentrates efforts on 21 conservation focus areas, where high-quality habitats and diverse wildlife populations offer the greatest opportunities for effective conservation.

Conservation.

The draft State Wildlife Action Plan is available for review at wvdnr.gov/state-wildlife-action-plan. Comments and recommendations can be submitted by email to DNRSWAP@wv.gov until April 22.

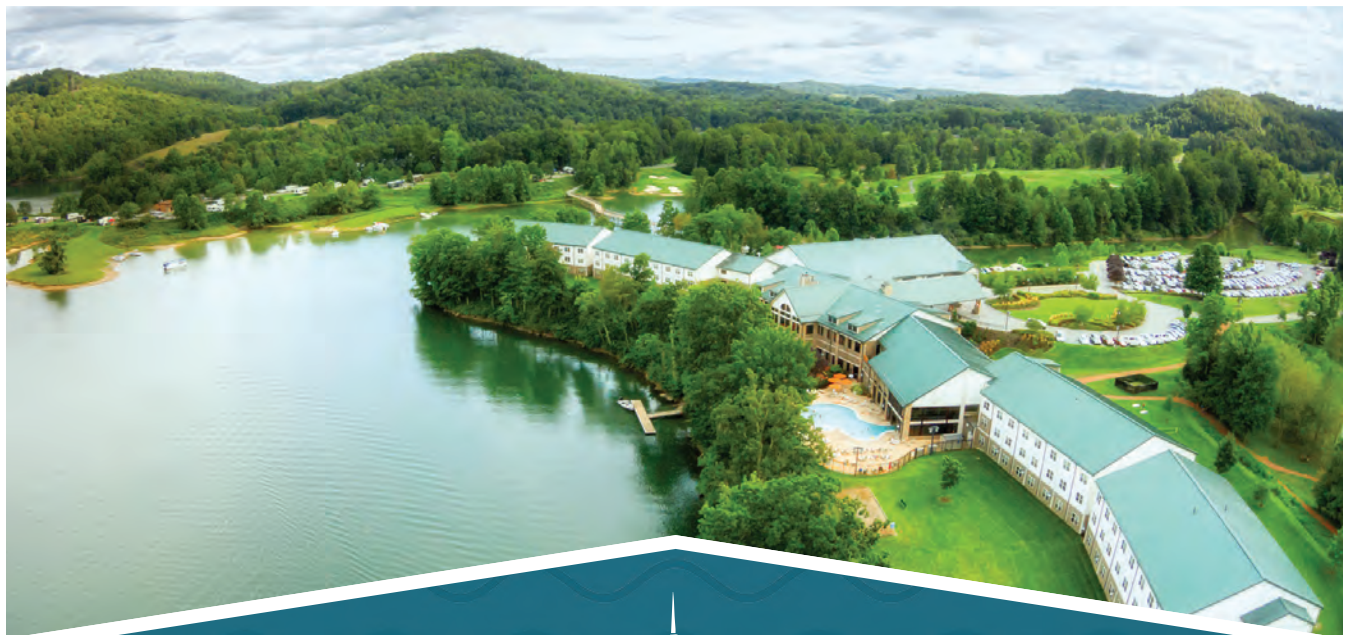
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Cory Cleavenger hooked a 50" musky last fall.



Tyler Scott used a compound bow in Wood Co. for his quality buck.



Monica Shay Kimble caught an assortment of trout last fall.



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Effective Turkey Calling Strategies

Start out soft

One of the best turkey calling tips is knowing how to sound like a real hen, and that starts with calling at the proper volume. While turkey hunters and competition callers call loud and proud, you often won't hear a real hen calling until they are fairly close to you. Real turkeys talk to each other at a softer volume most of the time, only turning things up when they're all alone or when they're being aggressive toward other turkeys. It's best to start out calling softly not only to sound more realistic but also to prevent scaring off nearby turkeys that you may not have known were there.

So the next time you start your calling, tone down the volume a couple of notches. You may just



Chriss Ferguson has a 9 lb., 4 oz trout. *Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.*



Danny Hunt rainbow 10 lb., 9 oz rainbow. *Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.*

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coax in a seasoned gobbler.

While calling softer is better most of the time, sometimes you do need to turn up the volume. If you are mimicking another hen to get her fired up and draw in a gobbler that she's with, go ahead and increase your volume to match her aggression. It is also best to call louder when calling to birds that are farther away, or when you

are faced with higher winds.

Mix up your calls

One of the most popular turkey calling tips that you will hear from hunters is to have a variety of calls at your disposal. Each turkey call has its own unique sound. Some are clearer and higher pitched, while others are raspier or lower-pitched. Depending on the

continue to the next page



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day, some gobblers may respond better to different types of calls. Having multiple calls, like a box call, slate call, and mouth call, can help you pinpoint which one will get the best response out of the gobbler that you are hunting.

To take this one step further, you can also have multiple types of the same call in your vest. For example, a slate call with different types of materials will make different turkey sounds.

Pot calls: Pot calls come in a variety

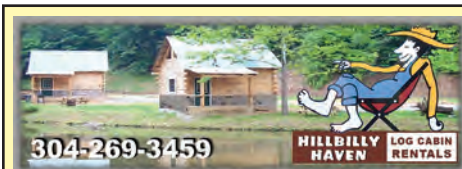
of different surfaces and sound board materials. You can get surface materials ranging from slate, to glass, ceramic, and even metals like aluminum and copper. Each surface material has a unique sound that can work differently depending on the situation and the gobbler you are hunting.

Box calls: Box calls come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and wood types. The two biggest factors influencing sound will be the size of

continue to the next page



Jason Blankenship reeled in and released a 6 lb. largemouth bass.



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the sound chamber and the wood the call is made from. Larger, longer box calls made from denser wood will have a deeper, raspier sound. Smaller box calls made from lighter wood will have higher-pitched sounds that can carry farther over wide-open spaces. Diaphragm calls: Diaphragm calls can be made with different cuts in the reeds, as well as different thicknesses and numbers of reeds. All of these factors influence the variety of vocalizations you can make with the call, as well as the pitch and tone of the call. Grab a few different calls to

try them out and see which ones you can make the best calls with! Change up your cadence

One of the turkey calling tips that is not as often thought about is changing up the cadence of your calling. This is a major area where you can stand out as a caller and sound more like a real turkey. Turkeys very rarely

repeat the same calling cadence multiple times. They will throw clucks and purrs into their yelps, speed up or slow down their calling in the same sequence, and change the length of their calling sequence on the fly. If you want to sound more like a hen, just be random! Throw a few clucks into

continue to the next page



Dave Post reeled in a 5 lb., 10 oz. rainbow trout.



Young Cole Milhoan bagged an 8 point gun buck.

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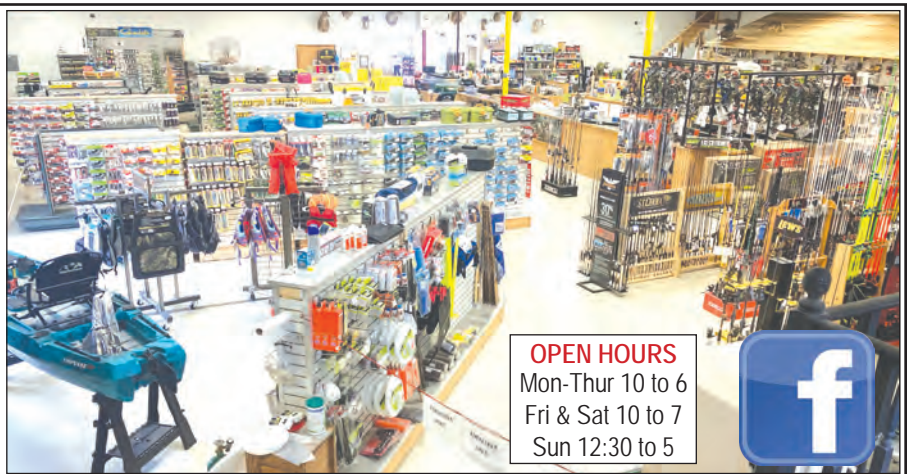
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your yelping, adjust your volume slightly to add some inflection to your calling, and use a random number of notes to sound more like a real turkey walking through the woods.

Read the room

While most turkey calling tips deal with actively calling and conversing with turkeys, this one is more about reading turkeys and understanding their next move. If you are calling to a gobbler and he continues to gobble from the same spot, or you can see him from afar and he isn't coming any closer, he likely has hens nearby. Knowing that behavior cue can help you determine your next move, whether that is making a move on the gobbler to get closer, backing off to sound like a disinterested hen and attempt to draw him away, or just

moving on to hunt a different bird entirely.

There are a few other common turkey behaviors that you will want to take note of to use to your advantage while hunting:

Hung up: It happens to many turkey hunters, you have a gobbler coming in on a line and suddenly he stops just outside of shotgun range. What does it mean? It means that he either sees something he doesn't like or doesn't see something he expects to see. If a gobbler hangs up, go easy and soft on the calling. Switch to clucks and purrs, scratch in the leaves, or just be quiet and let him work his way in slowly before you seal the deal.

Hammer time: If you have a gobbler that is firing back at your calls before you're even done

making them, it's a good sign that he is fired up and ready to come in. It may be tempting to get him to gobble more by calling
continue to the next page



Josh Murray, from Wood Co, trapped a big fawn eating bobcat.



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to him, but that is the last thing you should be doing. When he's firing right back at you, he knows exactly where you are at. A hen that is waiting and knows a gobbler is coming doesn't need to call anymore, and neither do you. So get your shotgun up and ready for when he makes his appearance.

Tug of war: Sometimes gobblers like to play a game of ping-pong or tug of war – where he goes back and forth over and over again between where he is at and where you are calling from. This gobbler likely wants you, the hen, to come to where he is at. To combat this, you may need to switch up your tactics by going silent and sneaking around him, or falling back farther and calling to make him think you're losing interest.

Common Turkey Calling Mis-

takes

Every turkey hunter makes mistakes every season. No matter how many turkey calling tips you read about, how much you practice, or how many hunts you have been on, everyone messes up in the spring woods. Here are some

continue to page 32



Ben Nowalk won the Great Outdoors event in Summersville with 11 lbs, 14 oz.

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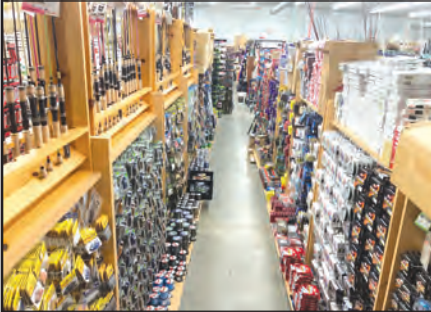
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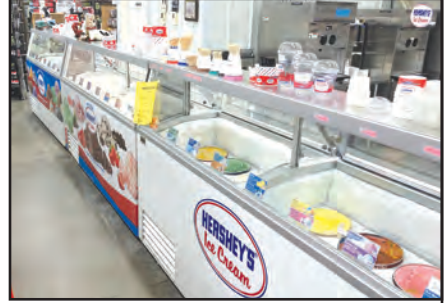
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of the most common mistakes to avoid when you're working a gobbler.

Overcalling

One of the biggest mistakes in turkey hunting is overcalling. Calling every five to ten minutes is unnatural to turkeys, and it will often turn a gobbler away without you ever even knowing he was nearby. Less is more when it comes to turkey calling, so if you find yourself calling too often, try dialing it back to help draw in more gobblers.

Using the wrong call for the situation

Not all turkey calls work in every situation. If it's early in the morning when turkeys are just waking up, you don't want to start off cutting and calling aggressively. Likewise, if you have a gobbler that is far off and you are trying

to get him fired up, using a cluck and purr is not an ideal call to use. Knowing when to use each type of call is just as important, if not more important, than making the call sound like the perfect hen.

Poor setup

Setup can be just as important as call selection. If you're set up in a bad spot, it can leave you exposed to turkeys seeing you or cause them to hang up out of range. Make sure your position is well-concealed from where you believe turkeys will be approaching, and avoid sitting too close to barriers like fence lines, large ditches, creeks, and ravines. If you sit too close to a barrier that causes a gobbler to hang up, then all your calling will be for nothing!

Failing to adapt

Changes happen fast when you're turkey hunting, and you will always need to be thinking on your toes and adapting your calling strategy to the situation. If a gobbler isn't responding to a call like you want him to, or if you're not hearing any birds at all in response to your calling, don't be afraid to change things up and try something different. Being stuck in the same routine rarely calls in birds, but taking a chance once in a while can turn a whole hunt around!

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Mastering the art of turkey calling requires practice, patience, and a keen understanding of turkey behavior. By following these turkey calling tips, using the right calls at the right time, and avoiding common mistakes, you can significantly improve your chances of success in the field. good luck hunting turkey this season.


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Andy Carte got a buck in Nicholas County with a fine rack



Beau Dakon harvested a black bear in the season.

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Interesting Fishing Facts

The Ancient Practice of Fishing

Fishing is one of the oldest human practices dating back nearly 40,000 years. Archaeological evidence like fish hooks made of bone and cave paintings depict early humans fishing, underlining the fact that this pastime has been central to our survival and cultural evolution.

Fishing's Economic Impact

Fishing isn't just a hobby—it's a significant economic force. Globally, it's estimated that the fishing

industry, including commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishing, contributes over \$240 billion to the world economy each year, providing livelihoods for hundreds of millions of people.

A World of Fish Species

There are approximately 34,000 species of fish in the world, more than all birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians combined! From the smallest Paedocypris to the largest whale shark, the diversity in the piscine world is truly astonishing.

Fish Feel Pain

Contrary to common belief, scientific research shows that fish can feel pain. Their nervous systems are complex, similar to birds and mammals, and they respond to harmful stimuli. This understanding has led to the development of more humane fishing practices.

Recreational Fishing Popularity

Recreational fishing, also known as sport fishing, is a popular hobby worldwide. In the U.S. alone, more than 49 million people engage in recreational fishing annually.

ally.

Fishing Techniques: Rod and Line to Nets

Fishing techniques have evolved over time. From traditional rod and line methods to using nets and fish traps, the manner of fishing varies across cultures and regions based on local aquatic ecosystems and cultural practices.

Fly Fishing Artistry

Fly fishing, a popular form of fishing, continues to the next page



Rylie Martin caught a rainbow trout at Sutton Lake. *Photo courtesy of WV Wild Outdoors in Birch River.*



Jack Comp, from Reedsville, caught his best largemouth bass.

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angling, uses an artificial “fly” as bait and involves casting a nearly weightless lure, which can be a beautiful and artistic practice. The earliest known references to fly fishing date back to the 2nd century, highlighting its long-standing history.

The Benefits of Fishing

Fishing isn't just fun—it offers numerous health benefits. It promotes physical health through outdoor activity, improves mental well-being by reducing stress, and encourages social bonding when fishing with others.

Sport Fishing Tournaments

Fishing isn't just a relaxing pastime—it can also be a competitive sport. Sport fishing tournaments attract anglers worldwide, who compete for prizes and bragging rights. Some of these events, like the White Marlin Open, offer millions in prize money.

World's Most Expensive Fish

The most expensive fish ever sold was a Pacific bluefin tuna in Japan. This prized catch fetched a staggering \$3.1 million in 2019,

demonstrating the high value some species hold in certain cultures.

Aquaculture: Farming in Water

As a response to overfishing and to meet the growing demand for fish, aquaculture, or fish farming, has emerged as a significant part of the industry. It involves breeding, rearing, and harvesting fish, shellfish, and aquatic plants in all types of water environments.

Fishing Superstitions

Fishing is rife with superstitions. Some anglers believe in good luck charms, others think it's bad luck

to change rods during a successful day of fishing. These beliefs add a touch of mystery and fun to the fishing experience.

Record-Breaking Catches

The world record for the largest fish ever caught on a rod and reel belongs to a 2,664-pound Great White Shark. It was captured off the coast of Australia in 1959 and still holds the record over six decades later.

The Risks of Fishing

Despite its serene appearance, fishing can sometimes be dangerous. Anglers must watch out for

continue to page 36



Hunting in Mason Co., Eli Summers bagged a nice buck.



Brandon Whittle got a nice white-tail buck on a snowy day.

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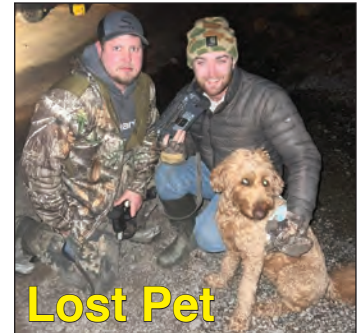
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hazards like poor weather conditions, water currents, and even certain fish species. Always remember, safety first!

Women in Fishing

While traditionally seen as a male-dominated activity, women have been making waves in the fishing world. The number of female anglers has been steadily rising, shattering stereotypes and contributing to diversity in the sport.

Overfishing: A Global Problem

Overfishing poses a significant threat to oceanic ecosystems. It depletes fish populations, disrupts food chains, and threatens biodiversity. Efforts are ongoing globally to combat overfishing and promote sustainable fishing

practices.

Technology has made significant inroads in fishing. Today, gadgets like fish finders, GPS devices, and even drone technology are being utilized to locate fish, making the sport more accessible and exciting than ever.

The Future of Fishing

Looking ahead, the future of fishing is set to become more sustainable and technology-driven. Advancements in fishing gear, real-time data collection, and regulations for protecting marine biodiversity will continue to shape the sport and industry in the years to come.

Final Word

These 18 fishing facts present a compelling view of a world deep-

ly entwined with human history, culture, and survival. Fishing is far more than just a leisure activity—it's a window into our relationship with the natural world, reflecting our respect and understanding of life beneath the water's surface.



Dustin Kizer bagged a whitetail-buck with a very wide rack.

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