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Issue 315

April/May 2024



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Cover Photo

A new state record tiger trout was caught by Nathaniel Smith from Burlington. It broke the weight record with 11.98 pounds. His February 24th fish was caught at New Creek Lake.

Looks like spring weater is increasing the fish catching in the state. Always looking for new 2024 fish and game pictures. Informaton on how to send in your 2024 pics is on page 38.

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New State Record Fish

SOUTH CHARLESTON, WV — Gov. Jim Justice announced today that the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) has reported two new state record fish catches at New Creek Lake in February — a redbreast sunfish and a tiger trout. The catches follow a record blue catfish caught in December 2023 on the Ohio River.

“These record-breaking catches show that West Virginia is truly a world-class fishing destination with opportunities as diverse as our fish populations,” Gov. Justice said. “It also proves that we go above and beyond when it comes

to habitat protection, water quality improvement, conservation, and fishery management efforts. We will continue to take care of the amazing natural resources West Virginia has to offer, and I truly congratulate these anglers for setting new benchmarks that will inspire future generations.”

Record Redbreast Sunfish

Zach Adkins of Petersburg, W.Va., caught a record 9.29-inch, 9.1-ounce redbreast sunfish with a spoon on New Creek Lake (Dam 14) on Feb. 19. The sunfish was certified by WVDNR District 2

continue to the next page

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Nick Battista, from Weirton, caught a 30" Ohio River walleye.



Jonathan & Tyler Thompson brought in a 29.30 lb. 5 fish limit on day 2 of the Fishers of Men Championship Trail on Lake Harris in Florida. They landed 3 of the fish over 7 pounds. They finished 4th after the 3rd day. *Photo courtesy of 7 Rivers Marine in Coolville, OH.*

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biologist Brandon Keplinger. In 2022, Adkins became the first angler to receive the WVDNR's Master Angler Award.

Adkins's record redbreast sunfish was the first caught after the



Zach Adkins, from Petersburg, caught a state record redbreast sunfish - 9.29 inches.

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WVDNR added the species to the state record list on Jan. 1, 2024. The agency also added redear, pumpkinseed, black crappie and redhorse to the list. Each species has a minimum length set by WVDNR fishery biologists that anglers must meet or surpass to qualify for a state record for the species.

Record Tiger Trout - On the cover Nathaniel Smith of Burlington, W.Va., caught a 26.73-inch, 11.98-pound tiger trout with

a soft-plastic minnow and a 4-pound test line from the shoreline of New Creek Lake (Dam 14) on Feb. 24. Smith's record tiger trout broke the weight record previously held by Mike Connolly, whose fish weighed 10.65 pounds and was 28.7 inches long. Connolly, who caught his fish in Krodel Lake in 2011, retains the record for length. Smith's catch was confirmed by WVDNR District 2 biologists Drew Carter and Carly

continue to the next page

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“These records remind us of the importance of our ongoing efforts in habitat protection, water quality improvement and fishery management to ensure that our waters continue to produce record-breaking fish,” said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. “We congratulate these anglers and thank them

for exemplifying the passion and dedication that West Virginians have for the sport of fishing.”

To learn more about state fish record categories, check page 23 in the West Virginia Fishing Regulations Summary, available to download at WVDnr.gov/fishing-regulations. To learn more about the Master Angler Program, see page 9.

All anglers 15 and older must have a West Virginia fishing license, which can be purchased online at WVfish.com. Anglers are reminded that a trout stamp is required when fishing for trout. They are also encouraged to upgrade their fishing experience by opting for a physical license card when they purchase their 2024 fishing license.

**Send In Your 2024
Game & Fish Pics
Details are on page 38.**



Logan Powell landed a fat bellied smallmouth bass recently.

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New State Record Bowfin Caught

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) announced today that an angler has caught a state record bowfin on the Ohio River in Mason County, making this the fourth state record catch confirmed since December 2023.

“There’s nothing quite as exciting as finding a trophy at the end of your line and we’re thrilled that West Virginia anglers keep reeling in record catches and showing the world that our state is truly a world-class fishing destination,” said WVDNR Director Brett Mc-

Million. The record fish, a 10.60-pound, 30.20-inch bowfin, was caught and released on March 12 by Lauren Noble from Letart in Mason County using a small crankbait. Noble’s record bowfin was certified by WVDNR District 5 fish biologist Jeff Hansbarger.

News of Noble’s record-breaking catch comes less than a week after the WVDNR and Gov. Jim Justice announced that state-record redbreast sunfish and tiger trout were caught at New Creek Lake in February. A record blue catfish also was caught on the

Ohio River in December 2023.



Lauren Noble with her new state record bowfin - 10.60 lbs.



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Hamner Wins The Bassmaster Classic

TULSA, Okla. — When most anglers win the Super Bowl of Bass Fishing, they at least pretend like it came as the biggest surprise of their lives.

But not Justin Hamner.

The fourth-year Bassmaster Elite Series pro from Northport, Ala., said openly that he “just had a feeling” coming into this year’s Bass Pro Shops Bassmaster Classic presented by Jockey Outdoors that he was going to win — and in three days on Grand Lake O’ the Cherokees, he turned that feeling into a hard-core reality.

Hamner completed an assault on B.A.S.S. history with a Championship Sunday limit of five bass that weighed 15 pounds, 13 ounces, and pushed his three-day total to 58-3. He became only the 10th angler in the 54-year history of the event to lead all three days.

“I have no idea what’s been going on, but this past month has been pretty dang good,” said Hamner, who earned \$300,000 and the coveted Ray Scott trophy. “I can’t explain it, but I really did feel like I had a good chance to win.”

On day I used a shad-colored, deep-diving jerkbait to put to-

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gether a limit that weighed 22-6 and gave him the Day 1 lead.

He went back there for Day 2. But, just like in practice, he couldn’t replicate a pattern and was forced to redirect.

“The wind was blowing a ton of bait into the pocket I was fishing,” he said. “When all of that bait got in there, those fish were keyed in

on the bait and they wouldn’t bite my jerkbait. I couldn’t make them bite it, and I still can’t really explain it.”

That’s when Hamner relocated again and started using Garmin LiveScope to target largemouth in brushpiles. He quickly caught two 5-pounders that pushed him to a

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Carol Lusk caught a nice spotted bass a RD Bailey Lake in March.



Bert Rhinamon reeled in a huge rainbow trout in March.



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20-pound limit and helped him maintain the lead going into the final day.

Despite being in the most visible spot a professional angler can hold, Hamner said he never got nervous until around 1 p.m. on Championship Sunday. At that point, he said he lost four big bass, but he couldn't say if nerves caused him to lose the fish or if losing the fish caused the nerves.

"The first two didn't bother me at all," he said. "I still had that calm feeling. But around 1 o'clock, the fish changed and wouldn't even react. I don't know what caused what."

Despite his troubles, Hamner's

limit of 15-13 helped him hold off Wisconsin angler Adam Rasmusen who made a hard charge with 18-5 on the final day but finished almost 3 pounds back with 55-4.

"My father taught me not to talk about myself, so it's gonna be hard for me to get used to calling myself the Bassmaster Classic champion," said Hamner, who

finished 14th and third in the first two Elite Series events of the year in February. "But it's been an amazing month."

Hamner said he hadn't thought about where he'll put the massive Ray Scott trophy. Instead, he said he's more worried about moving out of the double-wide trailer

continue to the next page



Young Carson Jenks used a cross-bow in Wood County for a 10 pt.



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he's living in — something that should be easier to do with the \$350,000 he's won over the past two months.

Though he was coy about which brand of deep-diving jerkbait he used this week, he said he added No. 6 Duo Realis treble hooks — and since they were made from a heavy wire, they helped the bait sink a little further. He stuck with Yo-Zuri T7 Premium Fluorocarbon all week, using 12-pound test when he was around lighter cover and 14-pound test around thicker brush.

He used a variety of high-speed baitcasting reels, all on 7-foot Halo Scott Canterbury Series medium-heavy cranking rods.

One of the biggest keys to his success, he said, was adding scent from the BaitFuel Hardbait Stick.

“It's the new stick that they came out with that you can actually ap-

ply to the hard bait,” he said. “I had like six fish follow my jerk-bait today. I would stop and put that stuff on and then catch them. There's no doubt in my mind it makes a huge difference.

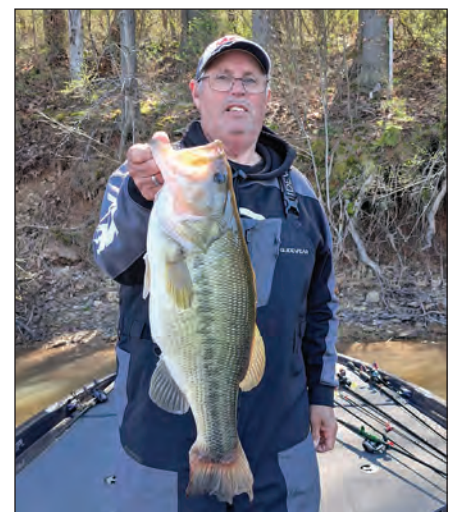
“It was like immediate. The

whole school would come up chasing it, but they wouldn't eat it. I put that on there and the first one that would come up would eat it.”

They always say that winning the Classic will earn you a million.



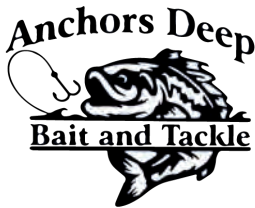
Craig Chidester hooked an 11 lb., 6 oz. trout. *Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.*



Andy Godwin landed a 7 pound March bass. *Photo courtesy of centralwvfishingintel.com*

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New Visitor Center & Elk Viewing Platform

CHARLESTON, W.Va — Gov. Jim Justice announced today that the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) has awarded a \$6.7 million contract to the March-Westin Company, Inc. of Morgantown to construct a new Tomblin Wildlife Management Area Visitor Center and Elk Viewing Platform in Logan County.

Construction on the new facility will begin this spring with an anticipated opening in 2025. This state-of-the-art facility is expected to draw in thousands of new visitors who will witness the majesty of the elk herd while contributing significantly to the local economy and supporting ongoing elk management efforts.

“I’m excited to announce that

this project is getting started because it will allow even more people to experience the awe-inspiring sight of our elk herd,” Gov. Justice said. “West Virginians have embraced these majestic creatures, and this new facility will ensure their continued suc-



New elk viewing platform in Logan County.

cess while boosting tourism and economic development in Logan County.”

Funding for the project comes from \$2.5 million in Abandoned continue to the next page



Tony Crumbliss hooked a 5 lb. 6 oz. largemouth at Maple Lake.

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Donnie Shanholtz hooked a 2 1/2 lb. Stonewall Jackson spot.

Mine Lands grants awarded by Gov. Justice, along with \$2.1 million from the West Virginia Department of Economic Development and an additional \$2.1 million from hunting and fishing license funds.

The elk viewing tower will provide an elevated platform for enhanced viewing areas and a level viewing area that will be accessible for those with limited mobility.

The adjacent visitor center will complement the elk viewing tower with more than 2,000-square feet of displays, conference facilities, offices and other amenities for visitors, volunteers, researchers and staff. There will also be more than 500-square feet dedicated to the history of the elk program and the reclaimed mine areas where they have been introduced.

Aside from the visitor center, the new facility will feature 3,300-square feet of space designed to meet the unique needs of managing and supporting West Virginia's growing elk herd, including a lab with an enlarged exterior door and overhead crane system for handling elk, five large equipment bay doors, research facilities, labs, and storage for supplies.

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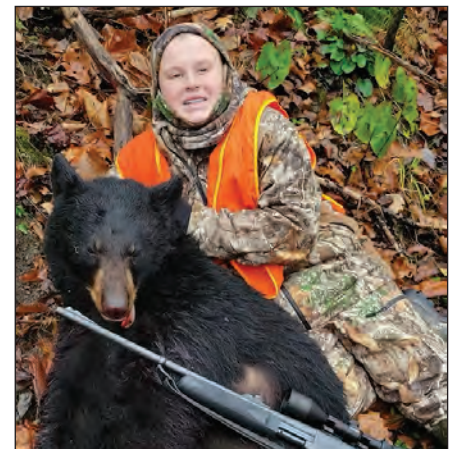
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Easton Dickerson shot a Kanawha County black bear last year.

plies and equipment.

“This facility will not only provide unparalleled opportunities for the public to connect with nature and witness our majestic elk herd but also plays a crucial role in our ongoing efforts to restore and manage elk populations in West Virginia,” WVDNR Director Brett McMillion said. “Thanks to the generous support from Gov. Justice, our state and the contributions of our hunting and fishing communities, we are able to bring this project to life. We believe this initiative will serve as a beacon for wildlife enthusiasts, researchers and tourists alike, offering a unique window into the beauty of West Virginia.”

Gov. Jim Justice and the WVDNR announced in January that 17 new elk had been transferred to the Tomblin WMA, bringing the state’s growing elk population up to 127. A second transport of 23 elk is scheduled to take place later this month.

ect

The WVDNR launched its Elk Restoration Project in 2016 with the release of 24 elk acquired from the Land Between the Lakes. Since 2018, the WVDNR



Sherry Doodle landed a big smallmouth bass on the New River.



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has introduced 57 elk (15 from Kentucky and 42 from Arizona) to the Tomblin Wildlife Management Area in Logan County.

To raise awareness about its elk restoration project, the WVDNR has offered guided elk tours in

Logan County where participants can learn more about the history of elk in West Virginia and get a chance to see elk in a natural setting. Tours are offered in September and October each year and often sell out.



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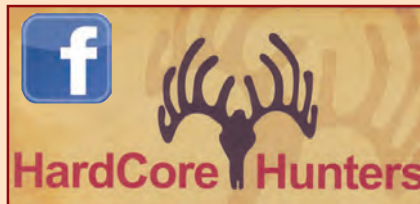
Big Game Bulletin Available

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.VA. — West Virginia’s Big Game Bulletin, which includes harvest numbers for white-tailed deer, wild turkey, black bear and wild boar for 2023, is now available to the public, the state Division of Natural Resources announced today.

“The Big Game Bulletin is a helpful tool that gives hunters an overview of harvest numbers and trends,” said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. “These harvest numbers also help our biologists monitor big game populations and recommend any needed changes in bag limits or season lengths so

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Adam Maltempie hunted in Raleigh Co. for his wide 8 point.

we can continue to sustain healthy populations of these important species.”

According to data in the report, buck season harvests have increased over the last five years. Wild boar harvest over the last six years have rivaled the high-harvest years in the 1990’s. Harvest numbers for other big game species and seasons have remained stable.

Highlights from this year’s re-

port include:

109,246 total white-tailed deer harvests

12,217 total wild turkey harvest

2,830 total black bear harvests

142 total wild boar harvests

In addition to including harvest numbers for each big game species, this year’s publication includes harvests by season and county area. Digital copies are available to download at WVdnr.gov/big-game.



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Forward Facing Sonar - What Is It?

Forward Facing Sonar (FFS) is one of the most exciting and important technologies to reach the recreational fishing world in the last decade.

By now, you've heard the buzz surrounding this new category of fishing electronics. But what is it,

and is it worth the intense hype surrounding it?

In this article, you will learn in simple terms what forward facing sonar is, how it works, the cost, and how it can help you with fishing.

Quick Navigation:

What is Forward Facing Sonar? Forward Facing Sonar are transducer systems that can show sonar returns from whatever direction an angler is fishing. Some call the whole category "Livescope," having been released first, but each major fish finder brand has developed a version of the technology.

Most people will tell you Forward Facing Sonar is only "live" sonar imaging, like Livescope, Active Target, and MEGA Live – and that will be the focus of this article.

However, 360 Imaging should continue to page 20

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also be considered FFS! 360 imaging shows a continuously updated picture of what is in front of and around the boat; it's just not a "live" image.

Up until FFS, fish finders were showing us "history." Whatever you saw on the screen was either directly below or already behind the boat. The transducer pinged, received a return, and the fish finder painted that to the screen. Garmin Livescope Plus Transducer and Black Box



Gary Ross went crappie fishing for this big one.

With FFS, anglers can now have real-time forward-looking sonar on their fish finders while the boat sits entirely still.

Anglers with Forward Facing Sonar have the massive advantage of seeing structure and fish on their screens before ever needing to make a cast.

How Forward Facing Sonar Works

Think about forward-looking so-



Lori Ketterman hooked a 9 lb. rainbow. *Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.*

nar systems as large ultrasounds designed for use in water. They both create an image that appears "live," capturing movements in the target area. There are key differences, of course.

Forward Facing Sonar transducers must cover broad sections of the water column at much longer ranges (up to 120 feet) and operate at medium frequencies in the 0.5 to 1.2 MHz range.

So how does this all work on the water? Forward Facing Sonar system has three components:

Transducer – Sends and Receives the sonar signals.

Black Box – Crunches the sonar signals with complicated math and algorithms and sends the data to the display.

Fish Finder – The images are displayed on the screen and can be adjusted with the typical Contrast and Sensitivity settings.

Most anglers are familiar with sonar "black boxes" and fish finders.
continue to page 22



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ers, so let's focus on the transducer. Lowrance had one for years to run their Side Scan and Down Scan sonars.

On a Livescope transducer, we can observe three long rectangular sections containing the piezo elements. Google searching for ultrasound transducer images, we find these pictures that look similar.

We can infer that each section of the Livescope transducer also has many piezo elements. Each small piezo crystal sends and receives many sound pulses from a tiny part of the water column. Each section of elements then makes up one-third of the total image.

Think of FFS as hundreds of tiny transducers working together as one larger transducer.

Combine them all (using electronics and math magic in the black box), and you get an image on the fish finder of the water in front of the transducer that appears to be live, much like the squirming baby in its mother's belly at the ultrasound appointment.

What Forward Facing Sonar Can Do

Forward facing sonar gives anglers a live view of the water column in whichever direction the transducer is pointed and oriented.

The FFS transducer can be oriented in 3 ways – Forward, Down, and Top Down.

What kinds of things can these sonar views tell us?

Type, size, and shape of cover and structure

Presence of fish

Quantity, Size, and Position of the fish

continue to page 24

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Ronnie Harbert took advantage of the trout stocked in WV.



Josh Manning caught an early musky on the New River.

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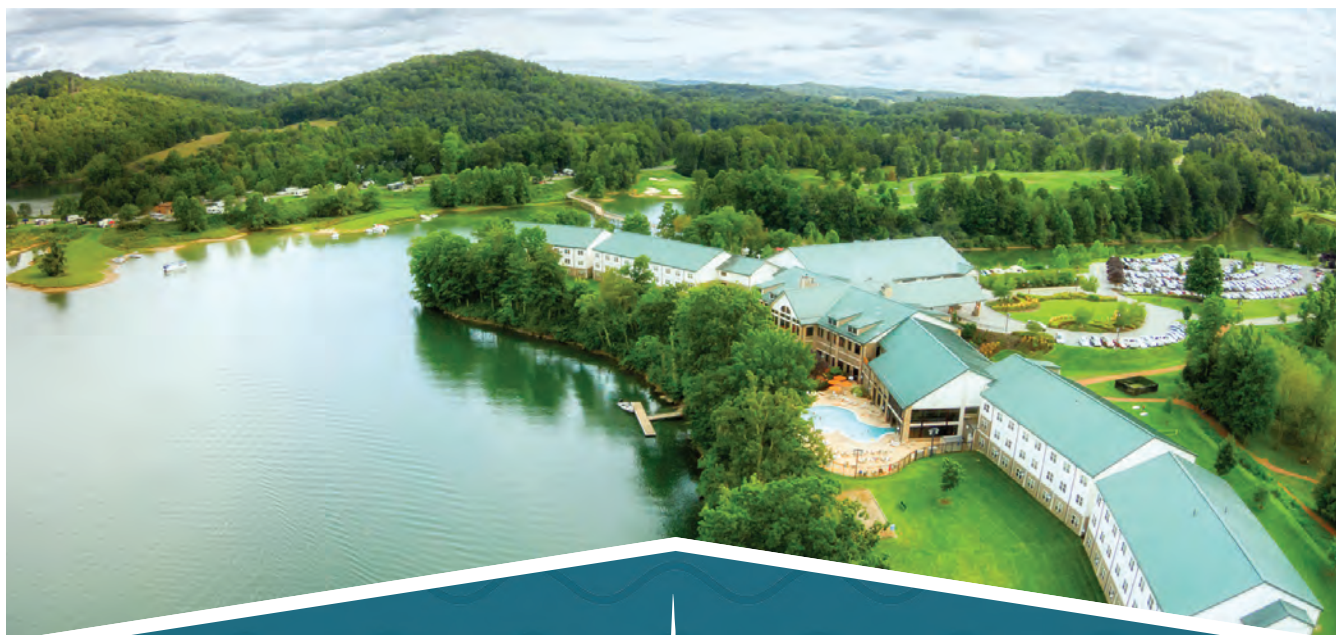


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Forward Mode – In this most commonly used mode, the transducer shows us a vertical pie slice of the water column stretching from the surface to the bottom.

Anglers that can cast their lure in the transducer's cone (a skill in itself) can track the lure back to the boat, watching how the fish react. Forward view screenshot of crappie

Forward View – 65 feet out 40 feet down.

Down Mode – The transducer has the center section pointed straight down. This mode is best for verti-

cal fishing with spoons, jigs, drop shots, and ice fishing.

Anglers can target and fish for individual fish, dropping their lure directly above them. This technique is deadly for walleye, smallmouth bass, and deep-water fishing.

MEGA Live screenshot showing a school of crappie

MEGA Live reveals a school of crappie over a tree.

Horizontal Mode – On Livescope, this is called Perspective Mode and is named Landscape Mode on MEGA Live. This orientation images a horizontal slice of the water column useful in shallow water and trolling.

Fishing for bedding panfish has never been easier than watching them as they guard their beds.

With that information at your

continue to page 26



Rick Bertozzi, shot an 8 point whitetail buck.



Doug Belcher got a fall turkey with white wings.

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fingertips – at all times – in any direction you choose, you can see how powerful this technology is for fishing.

What more could you possibly want to know without ever having to make a cast?

Is Forward Facing Sonar Ethical?

The ease of locating and catching fish has made many anglers question how fair fishing is with forward facing sonar like Livescope.

Some anglers view it simply as a new tool for locating and catching their fish.

Some anglers believe it takes the sport out of fishing and that the technology will ultimately harm the health of our fisheries.

It's best to spend some time fishing with FFS to understand what it can and can't do before forming your opinion.

Does Livescope Ruin the Fun of Fishing?

It seems that anglers believe the extra catch potential is worth the money.

Remember when you were younger and didn't have all these expensive electronics? Half the

fun of fishing was wondering when and where your next will happen. Using your eyes and ears to imagine where the best areas to fish could be.

Forward looking sonar diminishes the mystery of fishing as we experienced it as kids. But – fishing with live sonar is undoubtedly fun, but in a far different way than we are used to.

Should Livescope Be Banned?

The most extreme voices on social media will yell at clouds and say – Livescope should be banned!

On the other end, they say only after all our lakes get fished out will FFS be outlawed.

Certain fishing leagues, both pro and amateur might someday offer different classes of competition – One with Forward Sonar and one

without.

The Professional Muskie Team Tour has already taken that step, becoming the first tournament series to ban its use in competition.

Bottom line – the tech isn't going away, and will only get better.



Ben Francis reeled in a quality New River smallmouth bass.



Trent Mullenex fishes for trout a lot. This 10 lb. 9 ounce rainbow is one of his best catches. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.



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Preseason Turkey Scouting Information

If you're a deer hunter, you scout before the season. It's what you do. So, if you're a turkey hunter, why wouldn't you scout before the season? That's a rhetorical question. In fact, it's a question that recently entered my mind as I began to prepare for youth turkey season here in Wisconsin.

You see, this will be my first time

ever mentoring a youth hunter, and boy, do I want to get him on a bird.

Time your scouting right

Turkeys change their patterns dramatically from winter to spring. This shift from giant winter flocks to smaller, single-digit groups typically happens right before spring turkey seasons be-

gin in most states. Therefore, you want to hold off on scouting until about two weeks prior to your turkey hunting season. Scouting before that may lead to poor intel in regards to how turkeys are acting and where they will be during the season.

Use trail cameras to find turkey strut zones

By now, almost every hunter has a trail cam or two. Most hunters will use them during deer season, but only a few will keep them out during the winter and spring. If you're not going to keep them out during the freezing winter months, at least put them back out in time for turkey season. Trail cameras provide all sorts of great information that can help you bag a bird. Set them up in strutting locations to determine when and where you need to be sitting with a shotgun in hand. Strutting zones include open fields, food plots, pastures, ridge tops, and logging roads, to



Cody Toler and Coy Daniels caught several smallmouth bass at Bluestone Lake in Hinton this March.

continue to the next page

name a few.

One option that's becoming more popular on today's trail cameras is the ability to shoot in time-lapse mode. This is one of the most underutilized features on trail cameras, and, in my opinion, one of the most useful – for deer and turkey. Set your trail cameras up facing either north or south to prevent sun interference and set them to take a picture every 5-10 minutes during daylight. If there's several dips or rolling hills

in the field, you can set them up high in a tree to see the field in its entirety. Since it's not deer season you're not worried about identifying an individual buck, but rather, just trying to figure if and when turkeys are using a particular area.

Scout from the truck

Not much to explain on this pre-season turkey scouting tactic, but it is an effective way nonetheless. You don't necessarily need a roadside field for this method to be effective. Driving a daily loop on logging roads can be effective as well, as you can spot the toms strutting from a long way off.

Scouting from the truck is also a great way to keep the pressure off the birds. If you don't have any fields you can see from the road on your turkey hunting property, you can still gain valuable information by observing what the turkeys are doing in your area. You can usually get a good idea if they are henned up, with other toms, or alone – all key observations when it comes to deciding what decoys and calls to use.

Previous turkey hunting history
Understanding what turkeys
continue to page 30

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Franklin Stewart reeled in a huge flathead catfish last fall.

April/May 2024 ~ Page 28

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have done in the past is crucial to present and future success – after all, history tends to repeat itself. Learning how turkeys interact within the landscape of your hunting property is of utmost importance. Is there a barrier they don't like to cross? A specific roost tree they prefer? An annual strutting grounds? The list of site specific conditions goes on and on, and how well you know them usually plays a big part in your success. Don't just learn the ground you hunt, learn how the turkeys use it. Map it out

Mapping it out builds upon the previous tip of understanding

how turkeys interact within a specific landscape. Map out all the important features and obstacles that may impact your turkey hunt. Fence lines, roost sites, strut zones, creek bottoms, and feeding areas should all be marked on a

map, so that when one gobbles off in the distance you know exactly where to set up for the kill.

Mapping out turkey strut zones using google earth aerial photos.

Mapping out all the key turkey continue to the next page



Chase Bowman caught A New River starin walleye.

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areas will give you a good idea on where you should be hunting throughout the day. Also, when one gobbles unexpectedly you will have a good idea where he is or where he is headed and you can sneak in for the kill.

Boots on the ground

Last, but certainly not least, strap up your boots and get out there. Identifying turkey sign may not be as easy as finding deer sign in the woods, but if you know what you're looking for, certain markers can clue you in on a big strutter's whereabouts. Use the following forms of turkey sign to help you bag a big ol' longbeard this season.

Turkey Wing Feather

Finding a turkey wing feather in an open forest with mature trees is



Ed Bryan landed another big largemouth bass in February.

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Turkey droppings – easily spotted on bare ground and can signify a roosting site if found in high concentrations below a large tree. Turkey droppings are usually two-toned as the brown color tapers into a whitish gray end. Droppings from a gobbler are typically elongated with a J-hook on one end. Droppings from a hen are typically clumped or spiral shaped.

Turkey scratchings – most easily identified in a wooded area where

you can see the leaves roughed up. Turkeys will scratch the ground beneath them while they are searching for food.

Turkey feathers – look for black and white barred wing feathers and tail feathers to locate roost locations. Often a turkey will lose a wing or tail feather from the commotion of flying up or down from a roost tree. If you find several in one area, it's a sign you may want to set up nearby.

Turkey tracks – easily identified by the 3 long, front-facing toes – are a good clue.

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Reinstated Trout Stocking

CHARLESTON, WV — Gov. Jim Justice announced today that an agreement has been reached between the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to reinstate trout stockings to their original schedule.

“This agreement represents a victory for West Virginia’s long-standing tradition of world-class trout fishing,” Gov. Justice said. “My administration has fought to ensure that anglers across the state continue to enjoy the benefits of responsible, sustainable trout stocking practices. I’m proud of our continued commitment to both conservation and recreation, and I applaud the collaborative efforts of the WVDNR, USFWS, and West Virginia University that

made this agreement possible.”

As part of the agreement, the WVDNR will reinstate stockings in four previously closed waters and restore the stocking frequency of 20 iconic streams during the month of May. Streams returning to the original stocking schedule are:

- Pinnacle Creek – Wyoming County
- Camp Creek – Mercer County
- Laurel Creek of Cherry – Greenbrier/Nicholas County
- North Fork of Cherry – Greenbrier County

“We are thrilled to announce that these waters have returned to the original stocking schedule,” said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. “Thanks to the support and collaboration of Governor Justice, West Virginia anglers can continue to enjoy our world-class trout program.”

Following the initial decision to remove these waters from the stocking schedule due to endangered species concerns, Gov. Justice and WVDNR representatives engaged with the USFWS to explore a potential compromise. As a result, the streams will resume

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stocking as originally outlined in the 2024–2025 Fishing Regulations. Additionally, West Virginia University will conduct a trout food habitat study to ensure appropriate conservation measures are in place to protect the Candy Darter, Guyandotte River crayfish and Big Sandy Crayfish.

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Gabe Dixon landed a Plum Orchard lake smallmouth bass.



Jackie Winthrop, from Huntington, caught a good spring bass.

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WV Gold Rush Bigger This Year

SOUTH CHARLESTON, WV —

Gov. Jim Justice announced today that the West Virginia Gold Rush will be bigger and better than ever this year and include five times the number of chances to win prizes when the popular trout stocking event returns for its seventh year on April 1.

“As a lifelong angler, there’s nothing that brings me more joy than to announce the return of this incredible event. The West Virginia Gold Rush not only showcases the breathtaking beauty of our natural landscapes but also highlights the world-class fishing continue to the next page

“In response to a recent request from the WVDNR to change their trout stocking program while continuing to implement conservation measures for listed species, the Service provided a means to move forward as required under the Endangered Species Act. We have also updated the West Virginia grant to support the trout stocking program,” said Wendi

Weber, USFWS Regional Director. “We appreciate our strong working relationship with WVDNR. We collaboratively partner to conserve listed species and provide angling opportunities to the public.”

Anglers can find the full trout stocking schedule on pages 14–15 of the 2024 West Virginia Fishing Regulations Summary.



Gunner Fuller and Wesley Harman landed some quality gold trout.

Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.

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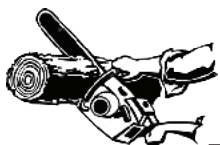
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opportunities our state offers,” said Gov. Justice. “From avid anglers to families looking for a fun outdoor activity, I want to encourage everyone to participate in this exciting event and help make this year’s Gold Rush the best one yet.”

This is the seventh annual Gold Rush, which had its inaugural stocking in April 2018. Since then, Gov. Justice has promoted the event by adding more golden rainbow trout, more stocking locations and more chances to win prizes.

“Gold Rush wouldn’t be what it is today without the leadership of Gov. Justice and his commitment to enhancing the angling experience in our state,” said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. “As we celebrate the seventh 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.” From April 1 to April 13, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources will stock more than 50,000 golden rainbow trout at 68 lakes and streams around the state, including waters in or near 15 state parks and forests. Stocking locations and details about the Gold Rush can be found at WVDnr.gov/goldrush.

The Gold Rush Giveaway
The Gold Rush Giveaway will return this year bigger and better than ever. Out of the 50,000 golden rainbow trout stocked during the event, 500 trout will receive a numbered tag, five times the number of tagged trout in past years. If an angler catches a trout with one of these tags, they can enter the tag number at WVDnr.gov/goldrush for a chance to win one of five free West Virginia resident

lifetime fishing licenses, a one-night stay at a state park or forest cabin or a \$25 West Virginia State Parks gift card.

In addition to increasing the number of tagged trout, the WVDNR is also giving away exclusive Gold Rush merchandise to continue to the next page



Cody Taggert fished off the bank for a huge largemouth bass.



8 year old Dawn Ann Arbogast caught an 8 pound rainbow trout.

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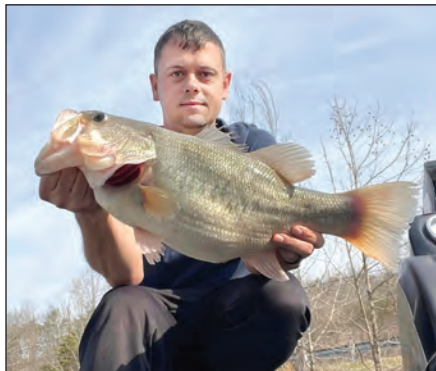
to everyone who reports their tagged golden rainbow trout catch during the event.

Fishing Licenses and Regulations

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 encouraged to upgrade their fishing experience by opting for a physical license card when they purchase their 2024 fishing license and trout stamp. Anglers are also reminded to follow West Virginia's fishing regulations. For more information about stockings and other fishing resources, visit WVdnr.gov.

Gold Rush Lodging Discount

To encourage anglers and their families to plan a Gold Rush adventure, West Virginia State Parks is offering a 15% discount on lodge rooms, cabins and campsites booked between now and April 30. To receive the discount, book online at WVstateparks.com and use the offer code GOLD at checkout. Good luck to all the people looking for "Gold".



Eddy Humphrys had an 8 lb. 1 oz. largemouth bass in Jackson Co.



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Adam Whetzel, from Petersburg, caught a 5 1/4 pound brown trout..



Tom Hart, from New Milton, hooked an 18" rainbow trout.



Ryan Smith, from Weston, has a 6 lb., 6 oz. largemouth bass.

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