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Issue 324

May/June 2025



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**Spring
Bass**

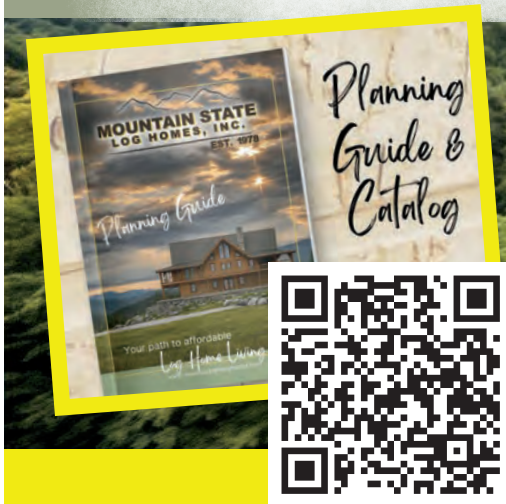
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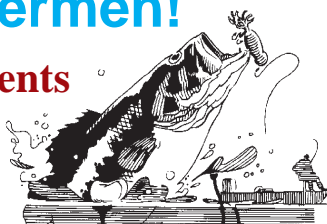
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Cover Photo

Fishing in a farm pond, Seth Spry, from Lumberport, reeled in a new largemouth bass length record at 26.375 inches. He used a bluegill on a bobber to hook this great fish. He released the bass. The old length record was set in 2001 by Eli Gain at Dog Run Lake. His largemouth bass measured 25.75 inches.

We are looking for big game pics. Form is on page 38.

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Delayed Harvest Regulation

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) announced today that delayed harvest regulations on five trout streams will end on Thursday, May 15. These streams will be under general statewide fishing regulations from May 16 through Oct. 31.

The streams returning to general regulations are Clear Fork of Guyandotte River in Wyoming County, Middle Wheeling Creek in Ohio County, Paint Creek in

Fayette and Kanawha counties, the lower section of Shavers Fork River in Randolph County and the Williams River in Pocahontas County. These waters are listed in the trout stocking schedule and will continue to receive trout through the end of May.

“Delayed harvest regulations are a critical part of our trout management program because they give anglers a unique opportunity to enjoy catch-and-release fishing while also conserving resources,” said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. “Thanks to these regulations, we’re able to extend quality trout fishing opportunities for West Virginia anglers in these incredible streams.”

The WVDNR reminds anglers that proper catch-and-release practices are essential for protecting trout populations. Anglers should minimize the time they handle fish, use barbless hooks or forceps to remove hooks quickly and release fish in calm water.

All anglers 15 years and older are required to have a West Virginia fishing license and a valid form of identification while fishing in the state of West Virginia. Trout stamps are required for those fishing for trout. Anglers are also encouraged to upgrade their fishing experience by opting for a collectible license card. Licenses and stamps may be purchased on-



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A very unusual albino wild turkey was harvested by 10 year old Ian Williamson in Pleasants County.

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Very Unusual Fishing Information

The Largest Fishing Lure In The World Is As Long As A School Bus

The largest fishing lure in the world is a red and yellow spoon with a treble hook that is more than 40 feet long, with the spoon being 27.5 feet long and 9.5 feet wide. The treble hook is 14 feet long and 8 feet wide.

The record is credited to siblings Brad Pallister and Jessica Dew and sits outside the Thompson-Pallister Bait Company in Alberta, Canada.

Female Anglerfish have a long

appendage on the top of their heads that has a fleshy lure at the end of it.

They use their "pole" to waive the lure around to entice other fish, then gulp them down!

Fishing Made Us Human

Scientists have found evidence

from 1.9 million years ago that our early, pre-human hominid ancestors caught, processed, and ate fish.

They believe that their diets, rich in fish protein, were a vital component that contributed to the rapid expansion of hominid brain size. This eventually led to the evolution of Homoerectus, later followed by Homosapiens!

The Fish Indians Taught The Pilgrims To Plant Is Still Used Today

Menhaden were the fish that the Indians told the first Pilgrims in Massachusetts to use as fertilizer.

They are still considered "the most important fish in the sea" and have several important uses including in pet foods, cosmetics, and food supplements, among other uses.

And yes, we still use them for
conintue to the next page



Tracy Sanders, from Vienna, caught a 6 lb. rainbow at a private Smoke Hole Cavern stream.



Eli Ellis hooked a huge Bluestone Lake largemouth bass.

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The Heaviest Blue Catfish

The heaviest catfish was caught in Kerr Lake, Bugg Island, Virginia.

It was caught on June 18th, 2011 by Richard Nicholas Anderson. The blue catfish he caught weighed in at 143 pounds!

Largemouth And Smallmouth Bass Aren't Actually Bass

Both of the most common species of bass aren't bass!

They are members of the sunfish family, which means that they are more closely related to bluegills and pumpkinseed fish than to real bass!

Stone Age Fishing Tackle Would Look Familiar To Modern Fisherman

At a site in Israel, archaeologists found stone-age fish hooks and

sinkers from 12,000 years ago.

The hooks were made of bone and correspond with modern fish-hooks, both in a range of sizes and styles. There are unbarbed hooks and also barbed hooks of several different types.

With the hooks, they also found

stone age sinkers! These were round pebbles with a groove carved around them to hold the fishing line.

More Than 30 Million Americans Go Fishing Each Year

The number of Americans who continue to the next page



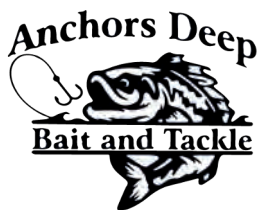
Hunter Rohr reeled in a huge Shavers Fork rainbow trout.



Chantz Williams caught a 6 lb., 8 oz. Ohio River smallmouth bass.

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go fishing in any given year is over 30 million, and that number is growing.

This means that well over ten-percent of the population over 16 goes fishing in any given year!

It's no wonder they say fishing is good for your health!

The Oldest Freshwater Gamefish

Ever Caught Was Over 100 Years Old

A female Bigmouth Buffalo caught near Pelican Rapids, Minnesota was found to be 112 years old.

Of the 386 bigmouth Buffalo they tested, 90 percent of the population was over 80 years old and five were over 100!

Maria Delores Montesinos Fernandez Is The Most Accurate Fly Caster Ever

On December 11th, 2011, Ms. Fernandez cast a weighted fly into a fishbowl that had a 6.8-inch opening from 23 feet away without touching the sides!

She did this on the set of El Show de Los Records, in Madrid, Spain. Fisherman Spend Over 45 Billion A Year On Fishing

This includes money spent on gear, licensing clothing, and ac-

commodations. Fishing is a serious boost to the economy and a major source of funding for the maintenance and conservation of our waterways and species.

The Hagfish Is The Weirdest Fish

Hagfish are an incredible slimy jawless eel that lives in the ocean.

continue to page 11



Jeff Johnson used a spinner bait for a quality largemouth bass.



Young Allen Plum reeled in a 28 1/2" rainbow. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.

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If disturbed they can produce enough slime to fill a two-gallon bucket in a matter of minutes.

They are also the only fish that sneezes. Weird!

Lampreys Are A Remnant Of The Ancient Past

Lampreys (along with hagfish) are the last holdovers of a time before fish evolved jaws. At one time, all fish were jawless.

Lampreys Are A Remnant Of The Ancient Past

For unknown reasons, these two species stopped evolving and are now the last representatives of what all fish once were like!

You Can Tell A Fish's Age The Same Way You Can Tell A Tree's

By counting growth rings! Just like a ring in the tree's wood tell its age, so do the rings in fish.

These can be either in their scales or ear bones, which are called otoliths. These methods have been tested by carbon dating and found to be totally accurate!

The Most Common Fishing Method Is Also The Oldest

The most common fishing method in the world is called bait fishing or still fishing.

It is also the simplest. You put a worm or bread ball, or any other bait on your hook, cast it out into

the water, and wait.

There's a reason it's the most common method. Not only is it simple and inexpensive, but it's also one of the most effective ways to catch fish!

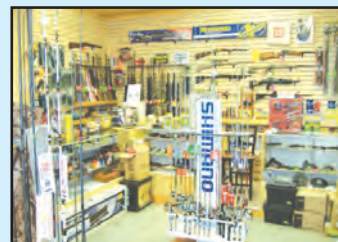


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Don Salisbury brought in a nice gobbler. Photo courtesy of Crossroads General Store in Walker.



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WV DNR Musky Hatchery

Muskellunge, often called musky, are known among anglers as the “fish of 10,000 casts.” These powerful, elusive predators are a bucket-list catch for many anglers and an iconic part of West Virgin-

ia’s freshwater fisheries. But what many don’t see is the behind-the-scenes work done by WVDNR fisheries biologists to ensure West Virginia musky continue to thrive across the Mountain State. In this

blog, we’ll take you inside the WVDNR’s musky spawning program to see how biologists collect, spawn and raise this remarkable fish, and why it matters for conservation and anglers alike.

WEST VIRGINIA MUSKY: A PREMIER PREDATOR

Muskellunge are considered by many anglers to be the premier freshwater sport fish. Their large size, explosive strikes and solitary, ambush-driven behavior make them one of the most sought-after catches in North America. In West Virginia, they’re native to the Ohio River drainage, but WVDNR stocking has expanded their range across the state.

Musky are long, cylindrical fish
 continue to the next page



WV DNR officers are involved in the musky stocking program.



Layla Stewart reeled in a quality spring smallmouth bass



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with a sharp snout, razor-like teeth, and a pattern of spots and bars over a base of olive, brown, or titanium-white coloring. These features make them nearly invisible to prey they are pursuing. As top-level predators, they prefer slack water, downed timber, and other ambush-friendly habitat, using a coil-and-spring strike to capture prey such as suckers, shad, and even small birds and mammals.

SPRING SPAWNING: COLLECTING MUSKY BROOD STOCK

Despite their fearsome reputation, muskellunge are vulnerable to habitat loss and water quality degradation like many other fishes. To counter these problems,

the WVDNR is involved in conservation efforts to maintain and enhance current populations so anglers have more opportunities than ever to chase these legendary predators.

One such effort is the WVDNR's musky spawning program. Spring temperatures trigger musky courtship behavior and movement, giving WVDNR fisheries biologists the rare opportunity to locate and collect wild brood stock.

In late March and early April, WVDNR fisheries biologists took to the water to collect fish for the project, using specialized electrofishing equipment. The team targeted Elk River, Middle Is-

land Creek, Kanawha River, New River, and North Bend Lake to capture male and female musky
continue to the next page



Tony Cline got a great bow buck in McDowell County last fall.



Steve Panas caught a 5 1/2 lb. November Ohio River smallmouth.



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to bring back to the WVDNR's Palestine and Apple Grove State Fish Hatcheries for spawning. But not every fish can make the cut. Biologists must carefully select healthy, sexually mature adult fish to support the hatchery program. **INDUCING MUSKY SPAWNING AT THE HATCHERY**

Musky spawning in the wild typically begins when water temperatures reach 50-55°F, and often involves large-scale migrations that congregate males and females for

courtship. At the hatchery, musky are safely held in mesh cages. Biologists then induce the spawning process by injecting females with common carp pituitary gland extract that stimulates eggs to be released approximately 72 hours after injection.

Eggs are collected from female

muskies and mixed with milt collected from male muskies—a delicate process that requires precision and care. After fertilization, the eggs are transferred to flow jars where they are aerated until they hatch.

RAISING AND STOCKING

continue to the next page



Chris Legrand reeled in a huge river flathead catfish..



Steve Starkey hooked a 46 1/2" Stonecoal Lake musky.

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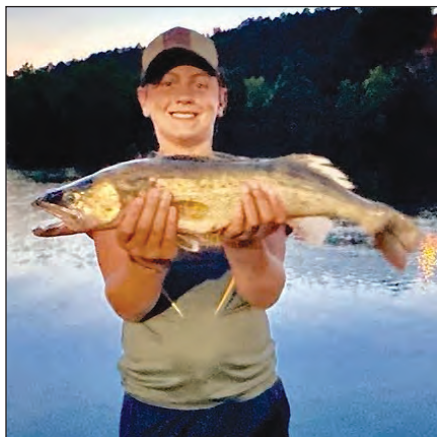


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After a few weeks of feeding on brine shrimp, musky fry are moved to hatchery ponds to grow. Musky are raised at the hatchery through the summer and fall until they reach advanced fingerling size (10+ inches), and they are stocked in waters throughout West Virginia from late October through early November. These stocked fish maintain stable population sizes in both native and expanded ranges where natural reproduction is not capable of sustaining a fishery.

Nate Taylor, a fisheries biologist for WVDNR District 6, states “It’s extremely rewarding to be a part of a program focused on the enhancement of musky fishing opportunities for the anglers of West Virginia.”

Musky anglers are passionate about the future of West Virginia’s musky populations and fishing opportunities. Many are active in sportsman’s groups that have worked to promote their sport through the donation of equipment that supports the WVDNR’s musky stocking program.



Camden Dalton reeled in a nice Monongahela River walleye.



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WHY MUSKY MANAGEMENT MATTERS

Muskies have a reputation for being difficult to catch, which has earned them the nickname “the fish of 10,000 casts.” Their solitary nature, preference for large territory and selective feeding habits make them a challenge even for seasoned anglers. Yet thanks to the WVDNR’s management efforts, West Virginia anglers have seen more frequent encounters with these apex predators.

“The quality of fishing in West Virginia today is really a testament to the WVDNR’s hatchery program,” said Taylor. “When it

comes to catching musky now, I believe our work has made them probably more like the fish of 1,000 casts.”



Trent Mullenex caught a 24” golden trout. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.

Safe Boating In WV

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — To help promote National Safe Boating Week, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) in partnership with its Law Enforcement Section, is reminding boaters to prepare for summer adventures on the water by brushing up on boating safety skills.

National Safe Boating Week, observed May 17–23, marks the start of the summer boating season and promotes the Safe Boating Campaign, a global initiative funded by the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund and administered by the U.S. Coast Guard. The campaign encourages boaters to prioritize safety every time they're on the water.

"We want everyone to enjoy our beautiful lakes and rivers, but that means wearing life jackets, staying sober and knowing the rules," said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. "Boating regulations aren't just tips — they're responsibilities that help keep every boater safe."

Natural Resources Police will be increasing patrols during National Safe Boating Week, which includes the Memorial Day weekend, to enforce boating under the influence laws and ensure compliance with life jacket regulations.







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Drowning is the reported cause of death in nearly 80% of recreational boating fatalities, and 87% of those victims were not wearing life jackets.

West Virginia law also requires

anyone born on or after Dec. 31, 1986, to complete a boater education course approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators before operating a motorboat.



Daniel Post hooked a huge Maple Lake largemouth bass.



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New State Record Black Crappie

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) announced today that the state's black crappie weight record has been broken by a Lincoln County angler.

The record was broken on May 7 by Jerry Porter of Harts, W.Va., who caught a 3.6-pound, 17.7-inch black crappie at East Lynn Lake in Wayne County. Porter used a minnow-tipped jig on a



Jerry Porter, from Harts, landed the new state record black crappie. His fish weighed 3.6 pounds - around 3 lbs, 10 ounces.



Emma Carr got her 1st gobbler in Randolph County.

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6-pound test line. WVDNR assistant district fisheries biologist Jake Whalen confirmed Porter's record-setting catch.

The previous state record was a 3.15-pound, 17.76-inch crappie caught in 2024 by Dwight Priestley of Alum Creek at Woodrum.

To learn more about state fish record categories, check page

28 in the West Virginia Fishing Regulations Summary, available to download at WVdnr.gov/fishing-regulations. Information pertaining to the Trophy Fish Citation and Master Angler programs can be found on page 32.

All anglers 15 and older must have a West Virginia fishing license.

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www.lickrunhuntclub.com



Remove Bear Attractants On Your Property

BECKLEY, W.VA. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) is urging residents around the state to secure trash, remove bird feeders and eliminate other potential food sources that may attract black bears to their property this spring.

While intentionally feeding a black bear is illegal in West Virginia, many residents unintentionally attract bears by leaving out unsecured garbage, pet food, bird seed or food scraps. These easy meals can lead to serious problems for people, their prop-

erty and the well-being of West Virginia's state animal. Bears that become food-conditioned become habituated to humans and often have to be humanely killed to protect public safety.

"As we enter peak bear activity season, we're asking everyone to help keep our state animal wild by cleaning up their property and removing food and trash that attracts bears," said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. "By being aware of bear activity and taking these precautions, we can reduce human-bear conflicts, protect

continue to page 20

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property and help ensure a future for healthy, wild black bear populations across West Virginia.”

Black bear activity increases and peaks in May and June, but the WVDNR starts receiving reports of human-bear conflicts as early as April when natural food sources such as berries and other high-energy fruits are scarce.

To help prevent conflicts, the WVDNR encourages residents to follow BearWise principles:

- Never feed or approach bears
- Secure food, garbage and recycling
- Remove bird feeders when bears are active
- Never leave pet food outdoors
- Clean and store grills
- Alert neighbors to bear activity
- By taking a few simple steps now, West Virginians can help protect

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their communities and ensure that black bears remain wild and wary of humans.

To learn more about black bears and how to prevent conflicts, visit wvdnr.gov.



David Riddle brought in a nice Lewis county wild turkey.



Buster Owens probably used a spinnerbait for his large bass.

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- Back Issues Dating Back to 2006

Advertising Info On Page 3



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Bassmaster Classic Results

The Super Bowl of bass fishing consistently showcases not only top-tier tactics, but also tips and tidbits of insight and perspective. Here, we find advice on bait adjustments, presentations, and personal motivation.

While the blustery conditions of days 1 and 3 had the fish tightly hugging the bases of trees and rock piles, the second day's calm-

By David Brown

er periods found them higher in the water column. Prespawners need sunshine to warm their bodies for egg development, so calmer spring days generally find them holding closer to the surface.

Bassmaster Classic winner Easton Fothergill did much of his work with a Neko rig (6-inch

continue to page 24



Autumn Watterson reeled in a nice largemouth bass in Mason.



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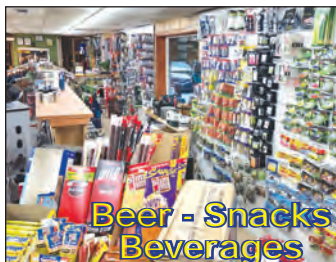


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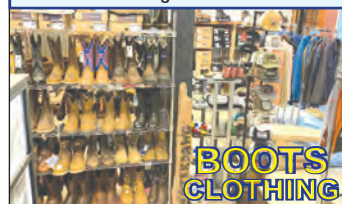
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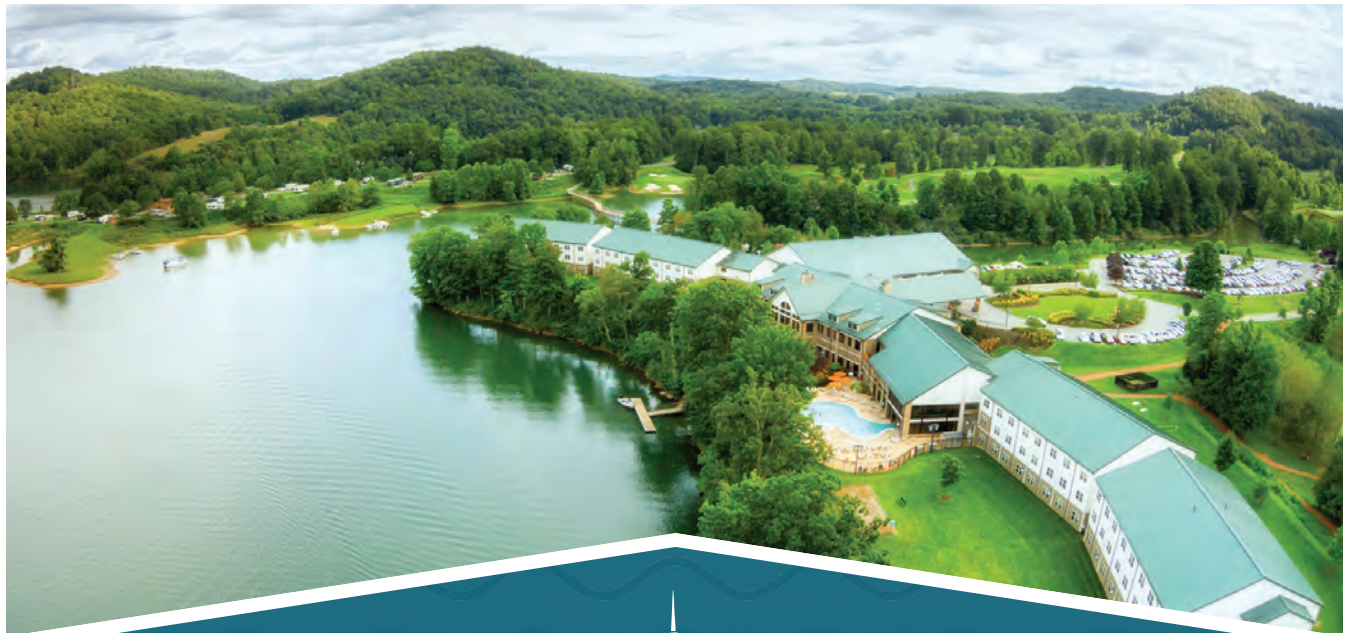
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River, Morgan & Rider Legg all caught a nice catfish recently



Joe Hall, from Parkersburg, reeled in an Ohio River hybrid bass.

redbug Strike King finesse worm with a nail weight in the nose), but downsizing from a 3/32-ounce weight to a 1/32-ounce allowed him to make softer presentations to fish that were sitting 1-2 feet below the water's surface.

"I was throwing it on their head, but the key was it had to land extremely softly, otherwise, they'd spook," Fothergill said. "I had to be extremely stealthy and if I made the right presentation, they'd eat it."

Presentation Tips

Third-place finisher Lee Livesay did most of his work with a Z-Man Chatterbait Jack Hammer. That's a common springtime bait, but while you see a lot of green



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pumpkin, black/blue and white color patterns this time of year, Livesay threw a pink Z-Man Chatterbait with a bubble gum colored 6th Sense 5.2 Flush (soft jerkbait).

This color scheme stood out better in the week's muddy water and allowed the fish easier targeting.

When the wind diminished for

the first half of Day 2, fourth-place Hunter Shryock replaced the bladed jig he used on Day 1 with a 3 1/2-inch Berkley PowerBait Tube, which provided a stealthier profile with erratic action. He Texas-rigged the tube and used 3/16- to a 3/8-ounce weights.

"I based my weight size on depth and wind," Shryock said. "We

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dealt with a lot of wind that week and with a lighter weight, the wind drag on your line would pull the bait away from cover while it was falling. When I had a lot of wind blowing on my line, that's when I switched to the 3/8-ounce."

Shryock also offered a tip on windy day boat control. Fishing with the wind at your back makes it easier to flip/pitch, but wind also accelerates the boat.

"I let the wind push me and I would use my Power-Poles to pole down," Shryock said. "The only thing is you don't want to get too close to where you're dragging your poles really close to whatever cover you're fishing, because it can spook the fish.

"If you go slow and use your poles, you don't have to use your trolling motor as much. You're being stealthy, as opposed to going against the wind." Editors Note: Hunter Shryock comes from Ohio and was known to fish many tournaments at Salt Fork Lake and others lakes in the area.

The Comeback: The Classic's most important lesson involved Fothergill's mental toughness and the admirable resolve that kept him pushing forward. Starting his rookie Elite season in February, Fothergill bombed the first two

events with a 101st-place finish at the St. Johns River and a 93rd at Lake Okeechobee.

Heading into the Classic with that burden on his shoulders reminded Fothergill of the 2023 Bassmaster College Classic Bracket presented by Lew's, where he won just over a month after undergoing surgery to remove an infected abscess on his brain.

"Two times when I was at low points in my life were (at the Classic) and when I won the Classic Bracket," Fothergill said. "Both times I was mentally kinda down, but I just had to dig deep both times.

"The biggest thing I want to say, for all you kids out there, 'It is possible. I'm living proof.'"

Lauding the blueprint that B.A.S.S. provides, Fothergill said

he committed himself to working up the ranks, from the Bassmaster Junior Series, to the Strike King Bassmaster High School Series, to the Strike King Bassmaster College Series presented by Bass Pro Shops, and then to the St. Croix Bassmaster Opens.

continue to the next page



Justin Pescetto hooked a 6 1/2 lb. largemouth at Burnsville Lake.



James Harris has a 28" rainbow trout. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.



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Last year saw Fothergill win Open titles at Oklahoma's Lake Eufaula and Minnesota's Leech Lake and earn his spot in the 2025 Classic.

"Winning that College Bracket tournament was the reason I fished the Opens (along with a 2024 Classic berth, he received paid entry fees into the Opens and the use of a fully rigged Toyota Tundra and Nitro Boat)," Fothergill said from the Classic stage. "I ended up having a blessed year in the Opens and that's the reason I'm here today.

"So, dream big, work hard and anything's possible."

The Takeaway: Bolstering his triumphant personal story, Fothergill and all who fared well on Ray Roberts did so despite the brutal lashing that whipped the lake into a muddy mess. Game plans were trashed and many never recovered.

No judgement here — it was definitely a tougher-than-usual Classic. But as Fothergill and others proved, persistence, flexibility and the drive to succeed often de-

liver big rewards.

That might be the Bassmaster Classic's Ray Scott Trophy, or it might be your first bass caught with a technique you've practiced for months. In any case, hard-earned success feels pretty cool.



Jeff Smith bagged a 16 point buck near Millwood.

Trout Study Plan

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) today announced plans to conduct a trout harvest rate study during the 2025 spring and fall trout stocking seasons. The study will help biologists better understand how long trout stay in stocked streams, how they move over time, and whether they survive through the summer.

As part of this effort, WVDNR hatchery staff will be releasing rainbow and golden rainbow trout marked with unique numbered
continue to the next page



Gary Hayes, from Danville, caught a huge blue catfish.

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blue tags into waters around the state. Anglers who catch a tagged trout are asked to clip off the tag and report it using the contact information printed on it. Those who participate in the study will receive a gift card up to \$100.

“West Virginia’s anglers are incredibly responsive and supportive and we appreciate their cooperation in this important research effort,” said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. “By reporting tagged trout, anglers are directly contributing to the science that helps us improve trout stocking and management across West Virginia.”

Anglers may keep or release the fish after removing the tag. If a fish has more than one tag, all tags should be removed and reported. To assist with data collection, WVDNR asks anglers to provide the following information when reporting a tagged trout:

Tag number

Location and date of catch
Whether the fish was harvested or released

Contact information for sending the reward

Tag reports can be submitted via email to dnrfishtags@wv.gov or by calling 304-637-0245.

Those fishing for trout are also

required to have a trout stamp. Fishing licenses and stamps can be purchased online at WVfish.com, where anglers can also upgrade their annual license with a collectible license card.

For more information on West Virginia’s trout stocking program, visit WVDnr.gov/fishing.



RJ Carr harvested his wild turkey in Randolph County.



Wayne Legnasky shot a nice gobbler and posed for the pic.



Julie Dottillis used a cross bow for her Harrison County buck.

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Two New State Record Fish Caught

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va.
— The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) today announced that a record-breaking redhorse sucker and redear sunfish were caught in April.

Jason Floyd of Washington, W.Va., set a new state record for redhorse sucker after catching a 24.57-inch, 5.75-pound fish on April 22 at the Belleville Lock and Dam on the Ohio River. He caught the fish using a FloBell Bottom Tackle swimbait and jighead on a 10-pound braided line. The new state record was confirmed by WVDNR District 6 Fisheries Biologist Nate Taylor.

On the same day, John Plott of Oak Hill, W.Va., broke his own state record for redear sunfish length by catching a 12.44-inch, 1.60-pound fish at Plum Orchard Lake in Fayette County. Plott's 1.75-pound weight record for redear sunfish still stands. He caught the fish using a night-crawler.

"We are thrilled to recognize Mr. Floyd and Mr. Plott for their outstanding achievements," said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. "These records highlight the incredible fishing opportunities available across West Virginia as well as the dedication and passion of our anglers."

"Establishing new record categories was an important step in honoring the diversity of our fisheries, and we look forward to seeing more milestones like these in the future," said McMillion.

To learn more, anglers may con-

sult page 28 in the West Virginia Fishing Regulations Summary, available to download at WVdnr.gov/fishing-regulations.



Jason Floyd, from Washington, caught a redhorse sucker record.



John Plott broke his own state record with this redear sunfish.

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1. Bang those boulders.

Pre-spawn bass – smallmouth or largemouth – frequent rocky flats or slopes not too far from their spawning hubs. These areas are about 20 to 30 feet deep underwater, so it's best to get the right gears ready for this depth.

Slowly dive crankbaits just along the bottom to catch that hefty fish.

Bang your lures right up against a big chunk of rock then create some kind of a slit as you do so. This action mimics a crawdad as he scurries hastily toward its hide-

out.

As you hit big boulders, let your bait sit for a moment. In no time, a massive bass will come charging

continue to page 32



Carter Riffle set the hook on a nice Stonewall Jackson bass.



Aiden Crockett has been HOT on big bass this year.



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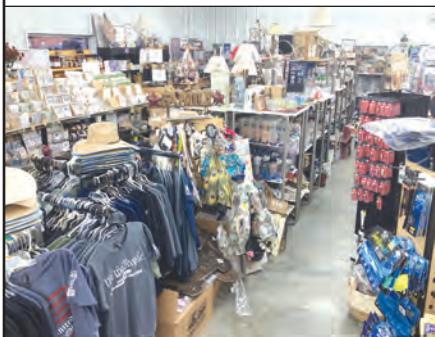
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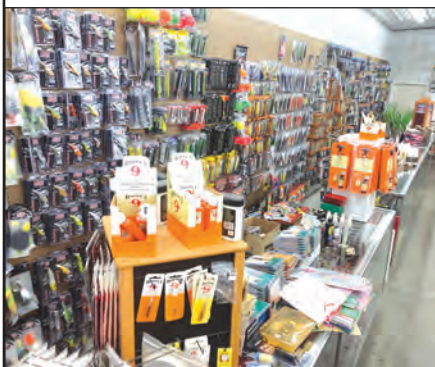
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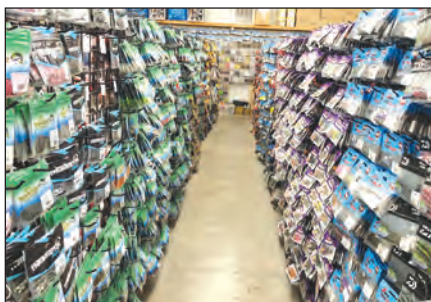


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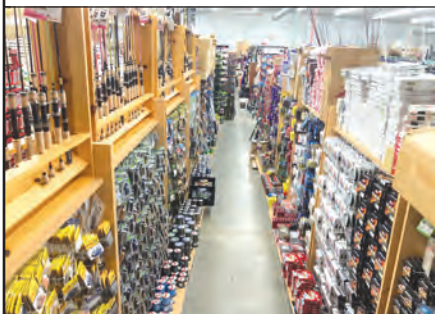
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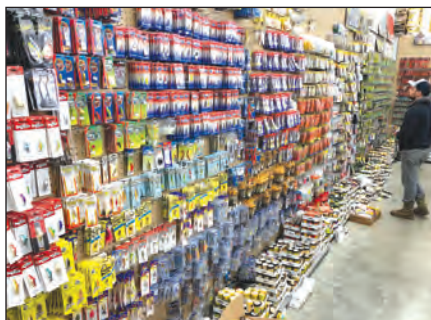


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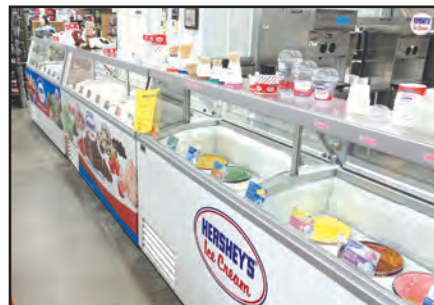
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2. Know the right temps.

A bass fish doesn't just hang around anywhere. Its lair depends largely on the temperature, so you have to be several steps ahead in determining the optimal temps for pre-spawning. Basically, largemouth bass is ready to hit pre-spawn once the water temperature reaches 48 to 55 degrees Fahrenheit. As it gets higher up to the low 60s, this is officially spawning time for them.

As for smallmouth bass, they prefer it to be a few degrees lower. So you should get the sweet spot and shoot for about 55 degrees. That way, you're golden for pre-spawning bass!

3. Wait for it to get dark.

It may not be too appealing to fish

at night in the early spring with the temps still a bit low but this is a good time to catch bass this season. With bass spawning at this time of the year, night fishing offers an excellent opportunity for you to attach spawning bass successfully.

If spotting spawning beds during the day in shallow water is easy-peasy, it's even more of a breeze to see them at night. You can pretty much expect every single cast you put out there in the midst of a bass strike zone.

And here's another advantage of night fishing in early spring – zero mosquitoes! You can barely see those buggers around, as well as the so-called "Toe Biters", which makes night fishing quite pleasurable.

Like we mentioned, expect the nights to be frigid. But it's nothing that a warm pair of pants and jacket can't solve. Dress accordingly and find your spot. We recommend the calm waters where you can get those noisy topwater lures to work their magic. Grab a couple of mice lures, jitterbugs, and the like, and you'll be lugging around a tank full of spawning bass hours before the crack of dawn.

One more thing – timing is essential during night fishing. Be sure to be sitting at your spot after dusk for a higher chance of bringing home a neat catch.

4. Get all the right elements in place.

Did you know that the moon is your ally when it comes to early spring bass fishing?

In addition to the water temperature, you need to keep track of the moon phase as a spawning behavior factor. It helps to keep a jour-

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nal handy where you login details of the moon phase and water temperature.

Invest in a temperature gauge for your boat, which works for tracking and recording the temps. You

continue to page 34

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Gary Murray bagged a gobbler during the youth season.

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can use this handy little gadget to monitor and record data about the temps every 5 feet deep. If you can't use a larger electronic for whatever reason, something handy as this one should be perfect.

5. Big lure for a big fish.

They say that if you want to catch a big fish, you need to use a big bait. It's an old saying that does have an ounce of truth but don't let this be the only rule in your head. You can also catch big ones with medium or even small-sized baits pretty much because bass eats whatever it can have its teeth on.

But yes, it doesn't hurt to get that big lure out of the box and see what it can do. In fact, it is likely to come in handy during that glorious pre-spawn season. This bite should work well, and chances are, you can hook in a few huge males... And you better count on the fact that large mama bass should be right around the corner, too!

So don't shy away from mixing

things up and play around baits of different sizes to see what works for you.

6. Cover your ground (er, water) with those hard lures.

Sometimes it is worth using hard lures that double up as a location lure. What this means is that you can cover the water at a much faster pace and elicit a strike from your game. This is what a hard lure is for, and they do a better job as a reaction lure than your finesse and slightly more graceful presentation.

7. Shore fishing is the way to go.

Small lakes hold bass, believe it or not. This is why it is a great idea to use a canoe or even get into shore fishing to catch that bass in a narrower body of water.

With a smaller boat, you can cover more lakes and maybe wear your waders and do some good ol' shore fishing.

Another good thing about a canoe is it is quiet. A kayak is good for this purpose, too. You can easily go for a quieter and more low profile approach for that elu-

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sive bass. A large boat makes too much noise, driving your prized game away.

At daytime, it is smart to put on polarized sunglasses that can help you scan the depths of the water. With the right eyewear, you should be able to spot that bass swimming around, allowing you to know where to strike. Get your nightcrawler or soft plastic ready once you spot your game, or even rubber to get him hooked.

8. Check the water features.

A little bit of observation goes a long way when it comes to early spring bass fishing.

Just a simple analysis on the lay of the land surrounding the lake can give you a good idea of where you should fish. Good luck.

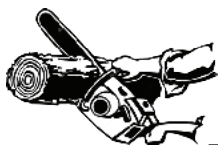


Josh Weaver reeled in a musky at Burnsville Lake.

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New Tiger Trout State Record

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) today announced that Robert Riggs of Grant Town, W.Va., has set a new state record for tiger trout. Riggs caught the 27.60-inch, 12.55-pound tiger trout on March 28 at Mannington Lake in Marion County using a casting spoon and 6-pound test line.

His catch surpasses the previous state weight record of 11.98 pounds set by Nathaniel Smith at New Creek Lake. However, the tiger trout length record of 28.7 inches recorded by Mike Connolly in 2011 at Krodell Lake remains unbroken. WVDNR District 1 fisheries biologist Dustin Smith verified Rigg's record catch.

"This incredible catch highlights the outstanding fishing opportunities that West Virginia has to offer," said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. "We encourage an-



Robert Riggs, from Grant Town, broke the tiger trout record with a 11.98 lb. trout



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glers to get outside, cast a line and experience the thrill of fishing in our state's waters this spring. You never know when you might reel in a record-breaker."

To learn more about state fish record categories, anglers may consult page 28 in the West Virginia Fishing Regulations Summary, available to download at WVdnr.gov/fishing-regulations. Details about the Trophy Fish Citation and Master Angler programs may be found on page 32.

Those fishing for trout are also required to have a trout stamp. Fishing licenses and stamps can be purchased online at WVfish.com, where anglers can also upgrade their annual license with a collectible license card.



Aiden Staffer won the Parkersburg Trout Derby with an 18" fish.

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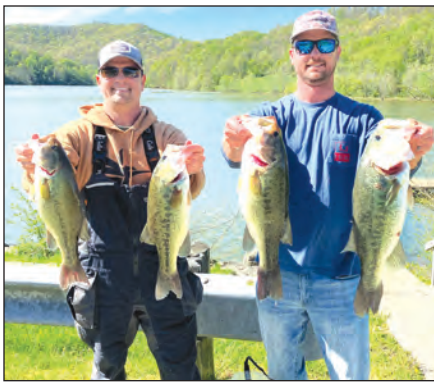
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Reams & Dodrill won the 1st Enter At The Ramp Bass Sportsman event at Stonewall Jackson Lake with a winning weight of 19 lbs, 14 oz. Schedule is on page 36.



Doug Belcher harvested a nice gobbler in Gilmer County.



Zak Koontz brought in his 2nd wild turkey of the season.



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