By Vin T. Sparano

This may be one of the most important pieces I've ever written. Sooner or later, we will all head for the happy hunting grounds in heaven, where we will never miss a shot or lose a fish. But let me tell you a story that happened many years ago.

A friend showed up at my front door carrying a Fox Sterlingworth double-barrel shotgun. He had a gleam in his eyes and he told me that he bought it for $50 from widow who was trying to sell her deceased husband’s shotguns. I knew my friend and that the shotgun was worth, depending on condition, was worth from $300 to as much as $1,500.

My friend expected me to compliments him for making a good deal, but he got the reverse reaction. I told him he’d taken advantage of the widow, who obviously didn’t know what the handgun was worth. I told him she should ashamed of herself.

This incident came to mind recently at dinner with a good friend and a retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel. He told me he wanted to sell a German Luger pistol that he acquired about 30 years ago. He said it was in excellent condition. He had no idea what the handgun was worth, but he guessed about $500. I knew it was well worth more than $500 and I said I would check.

There are a bunch of variations of the German Luger 9 mm, but it didn't take much research to learn that a Luger in excellent condition could bring more than $2,000, and maybe a lot more.

Another object lesson here: if you have a lot of outdoor equipment, especially firearms, regularly check their value and make sure your spouse, children, or a close trustee knows their value. Also make a list of your equipment and attach a price reflecting their value.

For insurance purposes, you should have a list of your outdoor gear, along with photos. List a monetary value to your gear. Most insurance agents or adjusters may have no idea about the value of a Beretta shotgun or a Fin-Nor reel. You may have to provide evidence.

I am fortunate in having a son and grandson who hunt and fish and they know the value of a shotgun or a fishing reel. They have no idea what the handgun was worth, but they got the reverse reaction. I told him he’d taken advantage of the widow, who obviously didn’t know what the shotgun was worth. I told him she should ashamed of herself.

The regular Council meeting was moved to the Conservation Center due to construction at the Central Region Office. The following is a summary of select meeting highlights. Minutes of the meeting will be posted on the NJFA Council website after approval in January.

Acting Chairman Burke reported that there was a project in the developmental phase that would restore tidal flow and enhance the habitat on 720 acres of marsh.

NJ Fish and Game Council Meeting Highlights: December and January

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County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs Information Directory

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<td>Morris</td>
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<td>Dover Fire Department, 37 North Street, Dover, NJ</td>
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

May be sent by U.S. Mail to 155 Roseland Avenue Apt. 41, Caldwell, NJ 07006, or email (olshapiroinnj@gmail.com). Please include your town of residence, and club or organization affiliation (if any).
Nothing Going On?

I’ve heard it said many times: There’s nothing going on in February or March. We’re speaking, of course, of outdoors sporting opportunities. But we’ll all know that simply ain’t so. One particularly fond fishing memory I have is of a frigid February day a few years back when a friend and I braved the elements to try our luck for some of the salmonid dwellers on the Pequest River. I wouldn’t say that we exactly overwhelmed the fish population there but we did manage to convince a couple of the more gullible residents that our small nymphs were worth a try.

Just as rewarding in the adventure was the knowledge that we challenged and bested the elements, and rewarded ourselves with a midday meal at one of the local eateries where I encountered what may be the best oatmeal I’d ever tried. (It’s entirely possible that the oatmeal itself wasn’t particularly remarkable, but as an adjunct to the rest of the day’s activities it was that much more savory.) Anglers can have it either way – that is to say, hard or open water, depending on the weather as well as one’s choice of location, and ice anglers already know that the chances of catching really big pike and muskies are now. Keep in mind that the state record muskellunge was pulled through a thick covering of ice on the Monksville Reservoir back in 1997; it was just shy of 43 pounds. And most of the ice angling fraternity that gathers on Budd Lake is targeting the ever popular wolf, the northern pike.

Saltwater anglers can get in on the fun as well; I have similar great memories of putting on my winter hunting gear but instead heading “down a shore” to one of the still-operating party boats, in the hope of hooking into some big black bass, ling, or cod.

Hunting? No problem. There are some deer management zones with limited opportunities for those who may have already run out of venison; the challenge of varmint hunting (fox, coyote) beckons any who wish to rise to that test; and plenty of small game species (squirrels, chucks, possums, coons) can be legally taken. And February yet has some days for the goose hunter to go and bag a few more of this tasty bird. Just go out and give any of these a try. (Be sure, of course, to have your 2016 license and any needed permits and/or stamps with you.)

Shoppers can enjoy this time of the year perhaps even more than any other. Assuming travel conditions remain passable, the likelihood that you’ll have trouble finding an open station or lane at any of the outdoor shooting locations are rather minimal. Ditto for archers looking to maintain or hone their skills. To be sure, the more “traditional” February and March activities for sportsmen, at least in this part of the country, tend to revolve around things like tackle, firearm, and equipment maintenance; shopping for new items or doodads with which to pursue outdoor goals; or even just staying warm and reading some great outdoor yarns by the fire. And of course there are the ever-popular and well-worthwhile outdoor shows - just cast your eyes a bit to the right on this page.

But if you’re willing to layer up, make sure you have the right attire and other warmth-retention gear, and see whether you or Jack Frost will come out on top, there are plenty of things to do to stave off cabin fever.

Oliver Shapiro, Editor
Op-Ed: Garden State Seafood Association Fisheries Workshop Report
by John Toth
On December 11, the Garden State Seafood Association hosted a Fisheries Workshop and members of the recreational sporting community were invited to attend it. It was an all-day meeting and I attended along with Jersey Coast Anglers Association members Bill Figley and Ron Nachman. There were about 50 people in attendance and they represented the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Rutgers, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and other organizations that have deep ties to the fishing industry, both commercial and recreational.

Greg DiDomenico, Executive Director of the Garden State Seafood Association, chaired this meeting and he did a great job in moving the meeting along and keeping us on schedule. There were so many issues discussed and I cannot begin to put all of it in this writeup. If I did, it would be too long and truly challenging your willingness to read it all. So I will cover just a few major points that I hope will be of some interest.

The first speaker was Rick Robins, Chairman of the Mid-Atlantic Marine Fishery Council (MAMFC). He went quickly through the process of the factors that go into the development of our quotas. It is complicated and at times, quite frankly, I had trouble following it with the different terminologies used in the fishing industry. When he was done, the floor was open to questions.

I said that, while I did not want to be disrespectful, “We do not have any confidence in the numbers MAMFC comes out with. Nobody believes your numbers!” They are so bad that I refuse to even try to explain them to my Bergen County fishing club. While I did not have specific numbers on this at the meeting, I asked how we could catch more fluke during the time period of Sandy when boats were destroyed and missing? How are we catching more fluke when boat registrations are down so much that our legislature just recently reduced the taxes on boat sales to spur more people to buy boats? And how did they come up with a 45% reduction for our fluke quota in 2016 and that we are supposed to be so happy that you are spreading this pain over several years? The livelihood of businesses are on the line while we are trying to play by the rules of these quotas.

Jeff Michle, President of Land’s Fisheries, said that he agreed with me and also said “we do not need more data, but the right data.” I don’t think Mr. Robins expected these comments, and he responded with something like “we will try harder.”

Pat Sullivan, Associate Professor from Cornell University working with the Save Our Summer Flounder staff, and Eleanor Bochenek from Rutgers and representing Science Center for Marine Fisheries, reported on their efforts to develop a model that can give a much better picture of the stocks of summer flounder. This model will include sea of fish, length of fish, and discard information. All of this information is to give us a better picture, which we currently don’t have, of fluke stocks that can be useful in making a case against the reductions we are currently facing. Dr. Sullivan reported his new model is not expected to be in place for 2016, but hopes it will be in the near future.

27 inches long, had a girth of 18.75 inches, and weighed nine pounds. The paper work has been sent to the state of NJ. and when approved it will be a new state record for Black Sea Bass. The old record was eight pounds 4.5 ounces.

Steve is a member of the Point Pleasant Club in Pt. Pleasant N.J. The club owns a 44 foot boat docked in Pt. Pleasant. Steve fishes with the club on a regular basis.

We are proud to have a record holder as one of our members. If anyone is interested in becoming a member of the Point Pleasant Fishing club, you can find us on Facebook at 732-503-1317.

Happy New Year to you and your family! I hope you had some time to hunt this year. This is a recent picture (see below) with my son Adam home for the holidays.

We were hunting at Buttonwood Game Preserve and did quite well.

John Manderson from NMFS and Josh Kohut from Rutgers talked about the difficulty in getting the right data to develop a picture of fish stocks and the time it takes to decipher what they see and what fishing managers use to develop our fishing regulations. They also pointed out that climate change is altering their information, with fish on the move from their traditional grounds and moving northward.

Attending this workshop was Dr. Kevin Chu, Assistant Regional Administrator for Constituent Engagement, and he said that he has heard this lack-of-confidence statement a number of times and asked how this situation can be improved. While the obvious answer is to “get the right data,” I said that I have attended many management meetings and the groups running them, like the MAMFC and others, ask for public comment but in most cases never look at the person making the comments and don’t even make a “thank you” comment at the end of the comments. This lack of engagement gives the person making comments the impression that his comments are worthless; that decisions have already been made, and the managers running these meetings know everything and we know nothing.

Mr. Chu thanked me for this information and said he will pass it to John Babiak, Director of the NJSFSC. I hope that we will see some changes at least in how meetings are conducted.

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John Toth

February 2016

NEW JERSEY FEDERATED SPORTSMEN NEWS
Arched long cast from between a couple of leaf-barren bushes, cranked the reel around, and felt the whoomp of a bass. A minute later, gripping a chunky two-pounder as dusk gathered, I thoughted he knew my mind, my fishing countless largemouths during the very early season. A celebration, a warm-up before trout Opening Day, and yet in its own right a special time to get out fishing, a season unto itself.

Typically, late February or March thaws ponds before lakes and reservoirs offer active bass fishing, besides perhaps the tail end of ice fishing. Ponds with feeder creeks entering them will be the very first to lose their ice if rain comes. Even a very little stream with enough rain can erode and break up ice to partially open water. So long as icy water conditions have cleared after a couple of days, catching a bass or two becomes possible. I’ve scored by fishing the edge of ice and open water. Bass relate to structure in any form, and ice provides temporary shade they seem to find attractive with sunlit water nearby. In principle, it’s comparable to fishing the shadow line during summer. By casting a plastic worm into sunlit water at a shady edge, light illumi-

The at this time of year, however, I rec- ommend fishing the edge of a small marabou or twister-tail. It may seem coun-
terintuitive that a jig’s quicker descent pro-

Ponds Thaw First for Largemouths

We Need Your Help and Suggestions!

What can we do to increase interest in hunting, trapping, shooting, and fishing in New Jersey?

Please write down your ideas and send them to the New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen’s Clubs’ Hunter Retention Committee at:

BIGEDLU113@AOL.COM

or by mail to:

NJSFSC Hunter Retention Committee
ATTN: John Messeroll
P.O. Box 10173
Trenton, NJ 08650-0173
At some point in its history, it happens that the bass club member’s outboard won’t start, so he ends up fishing a tournament solely on his trolling motor, staying close to the ramp and eventually winning the event by a large margin. The club members surround him to offer their congratulations, the winner offers up effusive praise for his trolling motor, staying close to the ramp and winning every day and all day. Do you think that you have the right batteries to make sure that you have the right type of battery for the job: deep cycle, cranking, or dual purpose. Once you’ve got that right, make sure that they are of adequate size for the job. Space and weight limitations permitting, it’s always better to have “too much of a good thing.” Some speed fleas are encouraged to pay a premium on lightweight lithium batteries, but I’ve been pleased with the relatively low self-discharge rate. There’s a tradeoff (weight/power/longevity) to each kind, and there’s nothing wrong with a traditional wet-cell variety (usually the least expensive), as long as you maintain them by checking the levels of distilled water regularly.

Assuming you have the right type and right size of battery, make sure that you’re charging your batteries (whether onboard or stand-alone) is still working, and that it’s compatible with your batteries. Some won’t work with AGMs, for example, so you might switch over at check this out; you don’t want to wake up on tournament morning to see red lights on the charger, the signal of a dead or undercharged battery. A problem on tournament morning to see red lights on the charger, the signal of a dead or undercharged another issue is when refunds shall be pro-rated. That doesn’t mean one won’t suddenly go dead or undercharged money unnecessarily. Other things to check is whether all connections are solid, and all wires are in good shape. If there’s corrosion on the terminals take the time to check and ensure clean contacts once again. As always, remember any time you’re working on your batteries to remove any metal jewelry from your hands and wrists, and if using metal tools be sure not to touch a wet battery terminal.

Even the best cared-for marine battery occasionally runs out of power. Save your paperwork from the seller, because many have warranties for full replacement and if the battery fails, they will test it for you to provide some certainty. It could be an issue of excessive cranking, something of the outboard’s failure, but if his battery is dead or undercharged, rest assured you’ll hear about it. Of course that’s understandable because the last thing you want is to get stranded out in the middle of nowhere. Fortunately for them, their anglers fill their boats with the cheapest batteries, though. Of course that’s understandable, as long as you maintain them by checking the levels of distilled water regularly.

If the batteries are approaching the expected reasonable end of their life, but you’re not quite ready to invest in new ones, there are alternatives. For instance, if you have an outboard motor with a auto parts store, they should offer some. Note that new leases for utility right-of-ways will likely be re-introduced in the 2016-2017 legislative session due to construction at the Central Region toll plaza.

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It’s been a busy time of the year, with several boat shows underway on the agenda for recreational anglers. The shows, coupled with rummaging through last season’s tackle and equipment and repairing/replacing items, certainly has most ‘everyone occupied in anticipation of opening season ahead.

An item that’s often overlooked, and which certainly warrants attention, is being safe while fishing. It’s a subject unnoticed by many, and I’d like to take this opportunity to provide some positive thoughts based on my past experiences and observations that I hope will lend to a more pleasant season ahead, and one not marked by difficulties.

It’s easy to think about surf and jetty fishing as being a fun experience. But both have their drawbacks if you’re not careful, especially with all the changes that have been taking place along the shore since Hurricane Sandy, with changing jetty accessibility, some literally buried in sand with sand being pumped onto miles of shoreline to heights of upwards of 20 feet.

One change back in 1979 was the replacement of rocks and rubble at New Jersey inlet’s jetty with dolosse, each of which weighed upwards of 16 tons. This used to be a great jetty from which to fish, but the shape of the dolosse are such that irrespective of how careful you are or the footwear you wear, it is an extremely dangerous area to fish from the Manasquan or Point Pleasant sides.

Over this span of years the dolosse serve as an object of keeping the inlet navigable. But each season more people suffocating or drowning, trying to fish or maneuvering on the dolosse.

I’ve long prided myself as being a jetty jockey, and have fished the rock piles during the day and at night with calm seas at times and howling northeasters buffeting me at others. But long ago I learned that footwear on the jetts is the key to safety. More than three decades ago I followed the then-standard practice of having the soles of my waders and boots replaced with golf soles that had metal screw-in spikes. Eventually I moved up to just strapping on a pair of Korkers which are designed for ice fishing but excellent on slippery rocks.

The key is to never go onto a jetty without footwear that will secure you foot. I’ve seen too many anglers who failed to realize the dangers of walking on the wet, moss and seaweed covered rocks and experience serious injuries. If you’re fishing directly on the sand, don’t let a calm surf and sunny day fool you into wading out to a sandbar. So often anglers don’t waders, and with a tide on the ebb be able to wade through waist-deep water to reach a sandbar and spend a couple of hours casting. Then they realize that they can’t locate the shallow path that enabled them to reach the sandbar in the first place, especially on a flooding tide or a change of the current paralleling the beach. It can be treacherous, and especially near sand replacement projects that place you may find huge areas of shallows, and suddenly take a step into water five or ten feet deep.

Over the years I’ve had a couple of occasions where I was foolishly caught in these situations, and now find that the easiest and safest thing to do is just make longer casts with braided line, and fish in knee-deep water, which is certainly less challenging and safer.

Fresh water anglers wading in streams and river would do well to avoid wading into deep water, as a swift current can literally lift you off the bottom and tumble you over. Take care in those South Jersey streams that have soft mud bottom, as I’ve gone ankle deep in the mud on the occasion and really had to struggle to free myself from being trapped.

Each summer sees many newcomers to fishing decide to head out on an excurs on a rented, flat-bottom rowboat. Others use small outboard-powered skiffs they may have just purchased, and of late there are greatly increased number who are using kayaks. I can’t stress enough the importance of wearing a life vest on these very small boats, especially when on the broad reaches of saltwater rivers, bays, and the open ocean. You hardly know you’ve got a life vest on until the modern-day variations of the vest. I also can’t stress enough the importance of always, 100 percent of the time, have your children wear life vests when on any boat, regardless of size.

As a side note, many years ago I fished countless nights aboard flat-bottom rental rowboats. I religiously placed battery-powered navigation lights at the bow and stern, alerting other boaters of my presence. Having spent many years as a lifeguard have seen that a moment of carelessness can result in themselves in an unpleasant situation, as it’s the right thing to do, ensuring we all enjoy a safe season while fishing and boating.

Korks are designed for ice fishing, but give you secure footing when climbing around slippery moss and seaweed-covered rock jettes. Milt Rosko photo.

Safety Paramount in Season Ahead

by Mil Rosko

Reminder

Last month, Milt Rosko wrote about fishing for winter flounder. The readers that possession of these fish is prohibited during January and February, and all winter flounder caught during these months must be released unharmed.

(from prev. page) will begin early this cycle and that the Bureau will begin to collect data at the next end-of-season forums and trout meeting. Adoption of the 2016-2017 Fish Code is proceeding. The Freshwater Fish Digest should be available in early March.

Fish Hatchery Chief Jeff Matthews reported that rainbow trout are now 10 inches and should be 10.5 inches when stocking begins. He also noted that a third party will be needed for the solar project at the hatchery in order to qualify for financing, tax breaks and incentives.

Information and Education Chief Al Ivory reported that the Garden State Outdoor Show was a success and that 50 entrants displayed trophies at the Deer Classic. Twenty-eighth showing of the event was presented at the show on January 10. More than 200 people utilized the archery range at the show, and the range will be open during the summer and early fall.

Land Management Chief Dave Golden reported that the Makepeace shoreline buffer management project has been completed. The Round Valley boat ramp will be expanded and improved to alleviate congestion and erosion. A kayak launch area will be added. The Wildlife Management Area user survey was finalized and submitted to Stockton University. All WMAs in the region will be surveyed for 40 days per season.

Chief Golden presented a lease amendment request from Lower Township in Cape May County. The Township asked to expand its current lease (recreational complex) by three acres for the purpose of adding soccer fields. In exchange the Township will transfer ownership of 20 acres of land to the State. The land to be donated has endangered species habitat and has been hunted. The three acres to be added to the current lease is next to a school which precludes hunting. The eastern portion of the WMA tracts will remain open to hunting. The Council voted to rece the approval of the amendment to the Commissioner.

Acting Law Enforcement Chief Matt Brown reported that three officers had just completed their full year of training. Two officers will be assigned in the marine region and one in the northern region. Another officer in is training and will eventually be assigned to Monmouth and Ocean Counties. During the December reporting period, Conservation Officers conducted 5,379 (35 inspections, and issued 318 summonses and 15 warnings. Chief Brown reported that information from the Camden “shot tracking system” resulted in the apprehension of two individuals for illegal deer hunting and trespassing.

Actor Wildlife Management Chief Carole Stanko reported that a buck scoring 202 1/8 inches and weighing 210 pounds was among the trophy entrants at the Deer Classic. She noted that the deer harvest to date was off 22% from last year. A total of 64,958 deer were raised from 45,952 were stocked. $17,000 was received from the sale of surplus birds. Pleasing stocking for the youth day was doubled and pheasants were stocked instead of quail for dog training. Stanko also noted that Division staff will meet with the deer committee of the State Federation of Sportsmen’s Clubs later in January. The Game Committee of the Council will hold its first meeting with the Division later in January.

Biologist Jordi Powers presented Community Based Deer Management Permit applications from Bernards Township, Essex County Park System, and Princeton Township. The three applications were reviewed and approved by the Council. CBDMs involve allowing extended hunting dates and times, increased bag limits, alternative weapons, and relief from hunter orange and cased gun requirements. Bernards Twp. and Princeton Twp. have reduced their deer populations and the number of deer-vehicle collisions over the past several years through CBDM. Princeton Twp. will be advised to seek a bow hunting group or organization to replace UBH which is no longer involved in the bow hunting element of the program. Essex County Parks has had some success on specific land parcels with its program and will be advised to consider additional measures to reduce the deer population.

Barbara Stoff (administration/licensing section) reported that the “Fishing Buddies” License program was going and she was following up on problems with license agents not issuing licenses and organizing group outings. The Turkey Hunting Supplement is now on line. Tentative plans call for including the Turkey Supplement in the ice fishing Digest.

The strangely-shaped dolosse are a famil sighth for most jetty anglers. It’s impera ment to give a good deal of caution wh...
Can We Make a Case for the 28-Gauge?

by Bob Brunisholz

“Fascination” would probably be the key word in discussing my fixation on the venerable 28-gauge scattergun. Part of that could be directly to the fact that I’ve never owned one. Oh, I’ve shot the petite 28 a few times in my now-dwinding upland trips as well as at clays, though, to say I’ve shot trap with one would be a misnomer since the only clay disk I shot at (and I emphasize “at”) was at a sporting clays range and at a skeet range in Long Island where we were shooting pair with one shot. Despite that one shot, my overall scores were unimpressive, to say the least.

Nonetheless, I’ve always had a desire to introduce, innocent little. 28-gauge orphans to a modest family of hardware now nestled in my safe. But at today’s prices of about $1,500 or so to be (I recently checked an internet site that advertised 28-gauge shotguns, most of which were semi- autos, but there are a few side-by-side locks (my preference) and stock-barrels. Generally, prices are near $1,000 and increased from there to more than $10,000. Of course, the 28 also has a definite snob factor attached to it, and that could be at least one of the reasons for sky-high prices.

It’s the mention the snobbish element only because it does exist, like it or not, with many guns. The side-lock, the especially the extended side lock, is the other smoke-stick that comes with a built-in elitist reputation. (I fully recognize that I took a slight turn at the oblique here, rather than marching directly towards the point I’m attempting to make at this moment.) There are other elitist guns that come with name-dropping reputations accompanying their shootable barriers, e.g. the Elici, No. not the cow, but the revered Elise otherwise known as the L.C. Smith. Or, how about that high-falutin name of Parker? “That’s not a shotgun, son, that’s a Parker.”

But back to my point: Is the Liliputian of upland scatterguns merely an effete gun? No, it is merely a gun void in the march of gauges starting from the venerable .410 (caliber, not gauge) up through the .28 (caliber, not gauge) to just a fanciful symbol that allows upland hunters to pick out their clay blockers, aikie or claim bragging rights when they do well with it because, hey, it’s just a toy with which to test our refined skills grounded in decades of shooting “real guns”.

I think it’s a combination of both. While many would say the ballistic difference between a 28- and 20-gauge isn’t all that different, others say the 28 hits just as hard as the 20 and hits significantly harder than the .410 which has been labeled by hunters and clay busters alike to claim shotstring efficiency? One of the writers I read earlier is that this little gun possess some surprising knockdown power. That phrase has stuck with the gun and is often quoted, especially when the author is trying to impress his/her readers that the demure 28 is the equivalent of David taking on the Goliath’s, the 12 and 16 bores.

There are, according to my research on the Winchester-Western website, 439 pellets in 5-ounce of shot for a 28-gauge load, while a load of 7½ packs 263 pellets into 3-ounce of shot. That should be more than enough to tumble any pheasant, grouse, or quail that is hit center mass. In the case of the 28, however, it doesn’t leave much on the peripheries of your pattern board. So, if you’re packing a 28 on one of New Jersey’s Wildlife Management Areas in search of ringnecks, you’d be better served when you hit that shot. Want a better mental image of the 28s patterning efficiency? One of the writers I came across while researching the 28 put it this way: “What I have seen in shooting 28s and also ¾ ounce loads in my 12s is the pattern core (of the 28) remains a good, solid, and efficient tool that be? Why not just go with the 20? Besides, if you look at the ballistics, the 28 starts losing some of its patterning efficiency when one starts crumpling it with payload. Based on my own research, the 28’s Characteristics, and efficient tool only when fed the recommended shotshells.

And there’s always that issue about comfort when lugging around a 16-gauge or 12-bore when you could be toting a relatively light 28-gauge Avalon size shot, and do so with relative efficiency. Conversely, to the best of my knowledge, the 28 comes chambered for one shell size only. One could, I suppose, hunt around for that near-miss with one ounce of shot instead of the standard ¾ ounce of shot, but what would the sense of that be? Why not just go with the 20? Well, maybe. Though I’m certain there must be exceptions, nearly all 28-gauge shotguns are built on 20-gauge frames. The only weight you will not be carrying in the field is that slight difference in ounces or even fractions of an ounce that makes the difference between a 28-gauge barrel and that of a 20-gauge.

Okay, so we won’t quibble over a few ounces or even fractions of an ounce. How about a bullet? Is it really a toy size bullet and if so, is it expensive? I call it large firearm retail stores in New Jersey. Both had 28-gauge shells in stock, but only in ¾-ounce shot loads. No range was quoted for either. My point is that with shot 28s and also ¾ ounce loads in my 12s is that the pattern core (of the 28) remains dense enough to smack targets and puff feathers but it is not as heavy as the “hot center” of a 12 gauge pattern, nor does it have as many pellets to spare for the pattern fringes.

Additionally, a 20-gauge load of shot, depending on the size of the shot, is about 16 percent more than that of a 28. Thus the 28 has a 16 percent more chance of striking a bird or clay. Since most of us actually follow this publication frowns upon me attempting to fill all available white space (editor’s note: well, yes, sometimes….depends on the situation, of course!), I omitted the various factors that would, and do, make a difference in that 16 percent. These are averages and do not take into consideration factors such as choke, shotshell, load, velocity (e.g. 2 oz. or 1 ounce in the case of the 28), powder load, barrel length, and others. Forgive me you number-crunching reloaders out there.

Still, the 20, at least in my estimation, is by far a more advantageous gauge if only 20s are readily available with 3-inch chambers which, in turn, can handle both 28- and also ¾ ounce loads in my 12s is that the pattern core (of the 28) remains dense enough to smack targets and puff feathers but it is not as heavy as the “hot center” of a 12 gauge pattern, nor does it have as many pellets to spare for the pattern fringes.
Winter Fishing Just Another Wistful Memory

As this was written, just after New Year’s Day, not one flake of snow has flattened earthward in my neck of the woods. It is, according to the weather heads on TV, only a matter of time before it starts falling at night, following a balmy Christmas, but with temps in the high 40s and low 50s by day it hardly seems like real winter. This may be a good thing; there is nothing to shovel, blow, plow, or slip and fall on.

But it really is kind of boring. One good sock-to-us snowstorm would be salvation for a soul yearning for hoary nights and the call of the wild. I said “one.”

Winter is for a fire in the den hearth, a hot toddy or three, and watching football on the telly. Either that or hopping on the first flight out to a poolside condo in Key West and sipping margaritas. Or possibly hopping into a hot tub or three, and watching football on some roadside outlet. But it really is kind of boring.

I said “one.” But a few years ago we hitched up the buggy for a road trip to Asheville, a manly man road trip greater than the life of me I can’t figure out why one would want to do such a thing in bone-numbing winter. The mad dogs and Englishmen left over from the noonday sun of summer perhaps, but not me. The last time I wrote a line in the middle of a bone-numbing cold dreary winter was in the Big Flatbrook on the Blewett Tract, bouncing Muddler Minnows off the bottom, and actually occasionally catching a fish. It must have been 30 years ago, long before our bodies realized warmth was preferable to sloshing around in bone-numbing water.

When heaving feather and fur in conditions that suggested galloping dementia, we eventually came to our senses and repaired to the bar at the old Layton Hotel to soothe our spirits with Kentucky Nerve Tonic, burgers and fries, which now would require a bowl of Lipton’s on the side.

Although we have a winter trout stocking program here in New Jersey, and slinging bait or lure into the surf for striped bass when the cold winds blow may appeal to some warped sports, that plane ride south seems like a better idea.

Stop short of the snowbird route to God’s waiting room in Florida, however, and head to the Ashville area of North Carolina instead. Our only previous experience with the Tar Heel State was as a guest at that lovelygovernment-run resort known as Camp Lejeune, and taking the kids to the Outer Banks for a couple of weeks each summer; both a long time past.

As for my desire to own a 28-bore? As in all places where fish calling was preferable to sloshing around in bone-numbing water. The call of the wild.

It is, according to the weather heads on TV, only a matter of time before it starts falling at night, following a balmy Christmas, but with temps in the high 40s and low 50s by day it hardly seems like real winter. This may be a good thing; there is nothing to shovel, blow, plow, or slip and fall on.

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The expression “Plain and Fancy” relates to the philosophies and cultures of the people who live in the so-called Amish Country of eastern Pennsylvania near Lancaster. This population includes the Pennsylvania Dutch, who are actually of Swiss-German ancestry, including the Amish, Mennonites, Church of the Brethren and Schwarzenfelds, some of whom are historically concerned with the issue of looking and living “plain.” Also included here are the Pennsylvania Germans, Lehigh Valley Moravian, and Quaker, who have historically taken a more casual stance on plainness in favor of things to be regarded as “fancy.”

Thus adhering to plain living means, among other things, dressing in a simple, unadorned manner and living in a house devoid of all the conveniences of modern living. As living as fancy would allow for the choice of more contemporary and luxurious amenities, including stylish clothing and a home interior that features a flair for colorful and decorative taste.

Another example would be that a young woman being married in the plain tradition would most likely be married in a plain dress in a quiet ceremony held at home, followed by a simple down-home reception. On the other hand, getting married in the fancy would include the bride wearing an elaborately constructed gown, that would be decorated for the occasion, and followed by a festive reception.

Over the years, the expression Plain and Fancy has evolved to also refer to any of the lifestyles, customs, practices, and culinary offerings associated with the Pennsylvania Dutch.

The concept of Plain and Fancy also relates to long guns, shotguns in particular. Shotguns are made in many shapes and sizes. Some shotguns can be thought of as being plain in construction while others are decorated or fancy, with various configurations in-between. At opposite ends of the spectrum are field guns, also known as field grade or standard grade guns, and the high end, higher grade guns commonly referred to as trap, skeet, grade, sporting clay grade, pigeon grade, standard grade, premier and by other designations referred to as trap grade, skeet grade, or embellishments. Field guns are a good choice for a “first gun” and are usually pre-assembled gun models. Many high grade guns of any type have bright finished receivers or locks and side plates, trigger guards, or other decorative fittings. These are often engraved with scrollwork and/or hunting scenes that feature hunting dogs and/or game birds and animals.

There can be some confusion when it comes to identifying field guns, especially among those new to the shooting sports, and recognizing certain identifying factors can help. In general, field grade guns lack the embellishments found on higher grade guns. Although those standard grade guns may have receivers, locks, side-plates and trigger guards that are case hardened in color, and other engraved or ornate or absent. The barrels may be ribbed or plain, usually with a single bead. The stock will be of the same fit and the wood, if so equipped, will most likely feature a natural, oil finish or paint finish on stock and forearm. Checkering, if present at all, will usually be of the pressed type. The whole gun is made to be carried and shot under a variety of conditions including adverse ones, without concern for damage to ultra-fine features or embellishments. Field guns are the choice for a “first gun” and are usually priced attractively below their premium grade counterparts.

I have always appreciated the simplicity, functional beauty of field model shotguns. They are tailor-made for the traditional American “tough hunter,” a brush buster who rides through briers, slogs through wetlands, clambers over rocks, and climbs up into tree stands. Tough and dependable, the field gun will come through.

In recent years the use of the traditional patched round ball has as a projectile, once common, has become relatively rare in the muzzle-loading hunting community, along with the 18th and 19th century classic style rifle. There is still, however, a maverick group of old-time shot hunters and shooters out there who are not above recognizing the value of modernity if it improves their traditional-style shooting, and who are new to the pastime and shooting.

Tom DeCare of Lehigh Valley Custom made an upland gun that has evolved into a new, yet traditional, style patching firearm, woven from long grass of ground or less or that are twisted and spun together to make a durable yarn. The yarn is then twisted and spun, clamped and placed into a breech loading stock and bore, until it finishes with a little heat. Hi-Mountain claims its “is the perfect complement to any upland gun, and makes a great start for the day.”

The Hi-Mountain kit comes with everything needed for muzzleloading with retail for $7.99. A sausage stuffer and casings are required to create sausage loading to make your own loads. There are also many modified items available separately from Hi-Mountain. For more information on this and other Hi-Mountain products, see your local dealer or www.himt-jerky.com.

Rust Remedies

Did you ever buy an original antique gun – or, for that matter, a reproduction? If you desire to keep it in perfect condition, you must and begin to clean the bore only to find out that there seemed an endless supply of rust. A lot of folks, including me, have had that experience over the years. I recently had an online discussion with Gary Yee, an expert at Dixon’s Muzzleloading Shop’s event of the middle Atlantic states, Dixon’s Muzzleloading, Shop’s Muzzleloading Shop’s event of the middle Atlantic states, Dixon’s Muzzleloading, Shop’s event of the middle Atlantic states.

I have seen television pitchmen offering a number of times, as many readers are interested in the Blue Book of Gun Values’ new “Storagemaster” computer program. The program promises to make gun transactions easier to manage and record, as well as to instantly provide values for used arms. The system, designed to replace the cumbersome old fashioned bound arms. The system, designed to replace the cumbersome old fashioned bound arms. The system, designed to replace the cumbersome old fashioned bound arms.

“Hi-Mountain Sausage Recipe”

The season is over, and I hope you have some venison in the freezer – or maybe even a bear or two. Hi-Mountain Seasonings, well known for its jerky rubs, which I have often used in the past, has announced the addition of a new product labeled “Hunting Blend” to its line of breakfast sausages. The blend can be mixed with a variety of spices and a combination of pork and beef or venison. The new sausage patty mixture provides the smoky flavor that I have learned to love for its jerky, “snackin’ sticks,” and summer sausage, and features garlic sausage with a little heat. It finishes with a little heat. Hi-Mountain Sausage Recipe

from Great outdoor fun, come on downtown for the Greater Philadelphia Gun Sportshow, February 26-March 1, 2015 at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center in Philadelphia. The Greater Philadelphia Expo Center is just 20 minutes from Philadelphia and easily accessible from Route 76 (Schuylkill Expressway), the Pennsylvania Turnpike or Route 422.

From the office you may be interested in the Office of Information, 12:00 for adults and $3.00 for children ages 5 to 11 (cash only). Children under age 5 are admitted free with a paying adult. Ticket may be purchased online at www.sportshows.com. Show hours are Thursday, February 26 from noon to 8:00 pm, Friday, February 27 from noon to 8:00 pm, Saturday, February 28 from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm, Sunday, March 1 from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. The Expo is sponsored by the World Fishing Network, Fred, Stihl, Costa, Cabella’s, Plano and Keep America Fishing. For more information, visit www.sportshows.com.
Endangered and Nongame Species: Draft Report Published on Reptile and Amphibian Statuses in N.J.

The NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife's Endangered and Nongame Species Program (NSP) periodically conducts status assessments for large taxonomic groups of nongame wildlife. These assessments help to identify species that might be listed on the NJ Endangered Species list or designated as Threatened, Special Concern, Secure, or Stable. The status of each species is based on a Delphi Technique, which involves a panel of experts who review and discuss the available information to reach a consensus.

The Division recently published a draft report, “Statuses Review of Amphibians and Reptiles,” which is available for public review. The report includes findings for 74 species of amphibians and reptiles found in New Jersey, along with recommendations for management actions.

The final version of the report will be released soon, and the public will have the opportunity to provide comments on the findings. The information in the report will be used by state and federal agencies to develop conservation strategies for these species.

Tight Lines and Straightaway Shots®

by Robert Brunisholz

On Gun Buybacks

With the chores of the holidays clos- ing in as this is written, I don’t have the time nor inclination to go sorting through data discs trying to unearth a column written sometime back a decade ago. Consequently, readers will have to take my word for it: I did write a column in which I criticized gun grabbers. But I no longer trust government, including officials in all lower levels of state, county, and municipal governments.

If my foggy gray cells recall correctly, the column was named initiative called a “Gun Buyback” program. The program has been conducted by government officials here in New Jersey for many years. So I’ll take you into this new-minted “original” no longer trust government, including officials in all lower levels of state, county, and municipal governments.

And now, as the presidential race narrows, I can see no end to the same problems exist, but this time the words are not quite as alliterative, or catchy. Besides the fear of the opinion that the term Gun Buyback is “much ado about nothing,” may I suggest you use the back, the term “take back” when boasting that she would “take back” the second amendment from those extremists. Remember, words mean things. Additionally, Clinton’s use of the phrase “take back” suggests an inability to agree with the opinion that the chosen words are much more than innuendo or merely a bumper-sticker slogan. “Take back” was pre- cisely the words she used.

One might be tempted to take a stab at sarcasm simply because I was taking issue with Clinton’s handling of the problem of urban shootings and unlawfully obtained guns. A bit caviling, one may say? Well, it depends. It depends on why those particular words were chosen at the get-go. Was it merely a misunderstanding or mislabeling the gun laws because President Hillary Clinton walked through the door of the White House and said, “Don’t you believe that for a moment. I believe the choice of words were purpose- ful, resolute and full of malignant intent. The reason for my skepticism is that I know her administration has been considered T (Atlantic Green Sea Turtle).

Seven species were ranked Threatened. One species was recommended to be listed as T (Atlantic Green Sea Turtle).

Eleven species were ranked Special Concern.

Thirty-one species were ranked Secure/Stable.

One species was ranked Unknown/Undetermined.

No species were ranked Not Applicable because they no longer occur in N.J.

bestow upon the peons or take back (her words, not mine) her most cherished achievement, and she is unaware of the fact that her administration has been considered T (Atlantic Green Sea Turtle).

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The final version of the report will be released soon, and the public will have the opportunity to provide comments on the findings. The information in the report will be used by state and federal agencies to develop conservation strategies for these species.
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