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NJ FEDERATED SPORTSMEN NEWS



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Ice Fishing: Dos and Don'ts

by Bob Brunisholz

Monthly deadlines are the bane of writers, especially outdoor writers since our topics are so often seasonably driven... which, in turn, brings us to today's topic of ice fishing. As these words are penned, it's mid-January and freezing temperatures seem finally here, at least for a while. Maybe.

Ice or not, here are some rules not to be broken lest you find yourself being carried out of church by the handles, manned by six of your best friends.

Rule number one: Before venturing out to your chosen spot, always check the thickness of the ice. We often hear the term "new ice," as opposed to ice that has been formed for weeks, and depending on where (what state or climate) you're fishing, the ice to which they are referring may have been around since the first freeze.

In New Jersey "new ice" takes on a different meaning. The ever-fickle Garden State has such dramatic changes in temperature, often from day to day or at least week to week, that new ice can mean ice that has formed since the last thaw which, in turn, may have been only a few days ago. In New Jersey, we have "new ice" several times most winters. Heck, sometimes we never even get to the point of any ice, let alone new ice.

The general rule of thumb indicates that four to five inches of good, solid (not mushy) ice is safe enough for foot travel and to hold that gear you're dragging behind.

So, how does one check the ice thickness and do so safely?

First, never venture out on any ice without a buddy watching your back. He does so by using a long length of rope tied around your waist or chest, then allowing the rope to trail back to the spot where he is standing. Tie the rope with a bowline knot, not a slip knot, and tie it around your chest or waist. Doing so leaves your arms free to pull yourself along with the rope should that become necessary.

Let's hope not.

Next, leave all your gear on land. Don't go dragging all that weight behind you, because if conditions are not safe, you're going to want to beat feet back to land rather than taking a little pre-summer dip, and dragging around extra weight doesn't help when you're trying to accomplish a rapid retreat.

Additionally, you'll need two things to check the ice. You should have an ice chisel, and always carry a pair of safety spikes. The ice chisel should have a shaft of at least five feet in length to facilitate checking the ice ahead of you as you walk. Start by banging the ice with the chisel. If it makes a good, solid thump, your next step is using the chisel to chop a small hole in the ice to determine its actual thickness. If the ice chisel makes what one of my cronies calls a "boing-ing" hollow noise, back off.

After chopping the small hole, let's say you check it and find... only two and one-half to three inches. Don't forget that sled full of bait buckets, tip-ups, and whatever else you have back on shore.

see Ice Fishing, p. 5

DEP Sued Over Beach and Waterway Access

by John Toth

You may have seen one or more articles about the NJ Department of Environmental Protection being sued over their authority to make regulations concerning beach access and waterways. The following is an update about this issue.

Two environmental organizations, The Hackensack Riverkeeper and the NY/NJ Baykeeper, recently brought a lawsuit to the NJ Appellate Court challenging the authority of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to control access to New Jersey's beaches and waterways. These groups brought this suit against the DEP over their growing frustration with the DEP's decisions concerning access. In their opinion, the DEP weakened access rules that were developed during the Corzine administration. The Appellate Court ruled on December 22, 2015 that the DEP had no authority to administer access regulations since there is no specific legislation on the books that grants it this authority. The DEP has for years made policy/regulations concerning our coastal environment and the seemingly DEP thought, like many others, that it had the authority to do so. But this decision of the Appellate Court "upset the apple cart."

Removing the authority of the DEP created a void as to who can regulate public access. In this void, can coastal municipalities take advantage of this situation and create new laws that can further restrict or even deny access to beaches? Who then has authority to manage beach replenishment or other coastal issues like setting up dune structures to prevent the flooding that Sandy caused? Who does the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers talk to about beach replenishment issues or problems about it?

Alarmed, our legislators sensed these concerns and the NJ Senate voted on January 12, 2016 to restore the authority of the DEP to manage public access and the NJ Assembly quickly voted for the same legislation. On January 19, Governor Christie added his signature to this legisla-

tion that effectively provides the DEP with the legal authority it needs to manage beach access and waterway issues.

It is amazing how this legislation passed so quickly and that both political parties were behind it. This does not usually happen in Trenton, with both political parties always sniping at each other for political advantage. To move this legislation quickly along, no amendments were added to it by both environmental and commercial interests. If only our legislators could work together like this on other issues that are also important to us.

The two groups that brought this lawsuit, however, want the DEP to be in charge of access, but they want the DEP to follow improved guidelines for it to follow in administering access. Besides these two groups, the American Littoral Society has been working with Senator Smith on a bill (S-919) that would incorporate language to provide better and definitive rules for the DEP to implement access.



Keep It Clean

by Lou Martinez

Recently I was engaged in a conversation with a co-worker. "You know, Lou," my friend Chris started, "maybe instead of writing articles on fishing, and how to catch 'em, you should do something on ethics, common courtesy, and cleaning up after yourself."

The wheels started turning, and I agreed that it's time to remind each other that we can all do a better job in cleaning up our collective acts. How many times have you gone to your favorite fishing spot and found it to be covered with all kinds of residue, empty worm containers, empty plastic lure packages, cans, cigarette butts, baggies, coffee containers... the list is endless.

"You know," Chris continued, "if I had a really good spot, I'd keep it impeccably clean so that no one would ever find it" he said. "That way it would remain MY secret spot." I couldn't argue with that fine logic.

So let's go over a few things that we can all easily do to make our next outing more enjoyable and less stress inducing, because after all fishing is supposed to be a stress-relieving, mind-resting activity. Many years ago, as a novice fisherman, the first thing that I learned is that when I was finished for the day I should leave nothing but footprints. Later as I started to adhere to the catch-and-release concept, I added "take nothing, but pictures."

As I relayed this to Chris, he stopped me and said, "Take a garbage bag, and pick

This effort will not be an easy task. There are a lot of interests that would not like to see this happen, like the folks who live near or by the beaches and are convinced that the beaches belong to only them. Companies who want to build condos and other business developments by the beaches that would give them big profits are also not eager to see improved access for anglers.

A number of us have been on several conference calls so that we all can be on the same page while working on language that could be incorporated in Senator Smith's bill to improve access. These groups include the Hackensack Riverkeeper, NY/NJ Baykeeper, the American Littoral Society, the Jersey Coast Anglers Association (JCAA), New Jersey Outdoor Alliance (NJOA), NJ Council of Diving Clubs, Surf Riders, the NJ Beach Buggy Association (NJBBA), and others. As progress on this issue continues, I hope to keep you updated on it.

up after other less environmentally conscious fisherman!"

Seems like a very easy thing to do. If each of us were to just keep our respective angling spots clean then imagine how much less of a mess we'd have to contend with each time we partake in our favorite activity.

Besides cleaning up, we should be cognizant of other fisherman's rights and not horn in on an area that they are currently using. Don't crowd them, move on to another location, and return after they have left, and we hope that they'll afford you the same courtesy. Know the fishing laws and follow them diligently.

Insist that your fellow anglers follow suit. If you see someone breaking the law, inform them in a non-threatening way. If they made an honest mistake, they'll correct it. Years ago I was fishing Darlington Lake in Bergen County. I came upon a bait fisherman who had two really nice bass in

see Clean, p. 4



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Club News Wanted!

Is your club holding a special event? Celebrating a landmark anniversary? Let the rest of the Federation know! Send your news to the Editor of this paper (contact information on this page).

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| Bergen | 1st Thursday of month, 8:00 PM except July and August | Fairlawn Athletic Club 14 Parmaless Avenue, Fairlawn, NJ | Frank Dara | 973-523-2640 |
| Burlington | 2nd Thursday of month, 7:30 PM except July and August | The American Legion 39 Pemberton-Julistown Rd., Pemberton, NJ | Bill Schultz | 856-235-3344 |
| Camden | 3rd Wednesday of month, 7:30 PM except July and August | Square Circle Sportsmen Club 97 Clementon Rd., Gibbsboro, NJ | Bill Schemel | 856-931-5009 |
| Cape May | <i>(please call for up-to-date information)</i> | | Ken McDermott III | 609-412-3811 |
| Cumberland | 2nd Thursday of month, 7:30 PM except July and August | Menantico Gun Club Union Rd., Maurice River Twp., NJ | Ken Whildin | 856-785-8062 |
| Essex | 2nd Thursday of month, 8:15 PM except July and August | Bloomfield Civic Center 84 Broad St., Bloomfield, NJ | Carmine Minichini | 908-964-5713 |
| Gloucester | 2nd Tuesday of month, 7:45 PM except July and August | George Ruch Building 14 St. and Highland Ave., Williamstown, NJ | Thomas Weeast | 609-313-7727 |
| Hunterdon | 2nd Thursday of month, 8:00 PM | Northern Region Office of Fish & Wildlife, Clinton WMA, 26 RT 173 W, Hampton, NJ | Loren Robinson | 908-782-1076 |
| Mercer | 3rd Monday of month, 7:00 PM except July and August | Sportsmen's Center US Highway 130 N., Bordentown, NJ | Rick Moore | 609-882-2202 |
| Middlesex | 1st Wednesday of month, 7:30 PM except July and August | Polish American Citizen's Club 66 Adirondack Ave., Spotswood, NJ | John Messeroll | 732-828-8543 |
| Monmouth | 4th Wednesday of month, 7:30 PM except July and August | 4 F's Gun Club Burke Rd, Freehold, NJ | Ken Ganson | 732-566-0841 |
| Morris | 1st Tuesday of month, 8:00 PM | Dover Fire Department 37 North Sussex Street, Dover, NJ | John Rogalo | 973-570-2359 |
| Ocean | 3rd Wednesday of month, 7:00 PM except July and August | Jamesburg Field and Stream 1131 Route 70, Whiting, NJ | Larry Cella | 908-839-0193 |
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AT THE OUTSET:

Keeping Up with the Weather



Tim C. Smith photo

Don't know about you, but I'm tired of those stats.

You know. Warmest winter on record, or latest in season for a snowfall, or fourth-worst blizzard ever to hit the region... and on and on.

As I'm sitting and typing this, it's less than two weeks after that big snowstorm that dumped anywhere from 15 to 29 inches (depending on your specific location, naturally) on us over a 24-hour weekend period in late January. Yeah, lots of fun.

As an aside, I'd kind of been looking forward to snow this winter. As many of you know, and the rest of you have undoubtedly deduced from my address change months ago, this past summer the missus and I moved from our suburban house to an apartment building, and the prospect of not having to shovel snow any more was very appealing to me.

Ha. As the fates would have it, that weekend we'd been with my mother-in-law in New York, so guess who got to shovel her walk and driveway that Sunday morning? And upon our return to our new place in Caldwell, guess who got to pitch in with another half-dozen or so tenants to clear the snow out from our cars and the parking area?

At any rate, as we all know, conditions mellowed out considerably after that nor'easter, and it reached near 60 degrees outside today. As I've been describing this winter to anybody who has cared to listen (not too many takers there), it's been "crazy mild, then an insane blizzard storm, then crazy mild again." As the bulk of February is still in front of us as I write this, we'll see what kind of topsy-turvy conditions may be in store for the remainder of this wacky winter.

Confusing as this may be from a general layman's perspective, it presents unusual problems to any editor of a month-

ly outdoors-related publication. As we all know, outdoors recreation is very seasonal and very weather-related. In any typical year (typical at least ever since the most recent ice age glaciers withdrew), we can look forward with fair confidence to things like snowy conditions for winter bowhunting and late waterfowling, plenty of ice-encrusted lakes and ponds for icefishing, and the like, as well as comparable predictions for the other seasons.

But right now - as Molly might have said to her companion - "'tain't so, McGee." We hope that readers will keep this in mind as they peruse our offerings over this season. For example, I know that at the time that Bob Brunisholz was working on his icefishing safety piece for this issue, things were seeming quite typically wintry and many of us assumed that we'd finally settled into an actual by-God winter.

Well, maybe so, but now staring outside and watching the snow melt at a near-record pace in this most springlike of weather spells, it's impossible to say with any kind of certainty. At the very least, I hope that readers will take the good advice from all of our contributors to heart, and even if the opportunity to put that advice into practice doesn't materialize within the next few weeks, the stories can always be clipped for future use and reference.

Assuming that winter never really does shape up for the '15-'16 season, there's always the one in '16-'17 to look forward to. On the other hand, though, I suppose one should be careful about what one wishes for.

Oliver Shapiro, Editor



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Perch Tournament This Spring

Dear Oliver,

Our club, the Landisville Gunning Club, is holding its 11th annual Perch Tournament on April 23, 2016. In-person registration will be at the Club on April 22 from 6 to 9 pm. More information can be found at www.njwhiteperch.com and on our Facebook page (Landisville Gunning Club). Thank you.

David Lorenzini, Principal
Landisville Gunning Club

Treasurer Position

Dear Oliver,

Back in November, 2014 at the State Federation meeting I announced that that was my last year as Treasurer of the NJSF-

SC. I have continued to do the job as Treasurer until June 1, 2015, and am still doing it as of the writing of this letter.

To the several people that keep saying I resigned, I never did; I only did not accept the nomination as Treasurer for 2015-2016.

Get the facts straight.

Gary Wolff
Edison, NJ

Gary Wolff had been Treasurer for 25 years! That's a long time to do a job as big as the one he did for pay, let alone as a volunteer. Outstanding!

I have known Gary for 11 of those years. When he indicated that he was not going to run for office again, it was a disappointment to me as the President but I understood that he was more interested in training the next Treasurer and being available for questions and mentoring than in running for another term. He agreed to be acting Treasurer and has been performing that task since then. (Gary was just not attending as many meetings.)

It's been tough to find a replacement because it seems no one wants to step into Gary's shoes, and as a Board of Directors we are endeavoring to find a solution to that because the Federation needs a solid treasurer with the mission and goals of the Federation as his or her primary motivators.

So, while we are clarifying issues and some perceived water cooler talk, maybe - just maybe - someone knows an individual who would like to know more about playing an important role in the NJ State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs. If you are interested or have an idea, we would appreciate hearing from you.

Pola Galie, President
NJSFSC

2015 Skillful Anglers Awards

This year marks the 33rd anniversary of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Skillful Angler Program. For more than three decades the Division has been recognizing anglers who catch fish of "not quite record" size but large enough to have tested the angler's skill and be worthy of recognition in each of the freshwater and marine species categories.

The Skillful Angler Recognition Program is designed to supplement the New Jersey State Record Fish Program. Significant changes were made in January of 2015. Although the program's three divisions remained the same (Adult, Junior, and Catch and Release), now there are new categories creating more opportunities for qualifying fish to earn the angler a series of personalized certificates:

Specialist Angler: catch five qualifying fish of the same species within one year.

Master Angler: catch five qualifying fish of five different species (saltwater and/or freshwater) within one year.

Elite Angler: catch 10 or more qualifying fish of 10 different species (saltwater and/or freshwater) within one year.

First Fish: catch your first fish of any species.

Three additional categories (the Slam Series) include:

Trout Slam: catch one each of rainbow, brook, and brown trout.

Bass Slam: catch one each of small- and largemouth bass.

Panfish Slam: catch one each of sunfish, crappie and yellow perch.

In 1983, the program began with 31 applicants. In 2015, 96 applications representing 21 different species were officially processed. Since the program's modest beginning, the Division has granted skillful angler status to 3,701 applicants.

The most frequently entered species by skillful anglers in 2015 (adult, junior, and catch and release divisions combined) was crappie, with 14 applications, followed by sunfish and perch with 11 applications each.

The following is a breakdown of applications received per species (all categories combined):

Freshwater: largemouth bass (7), smallmouth bass (7), striped bass hybrid (7), bullhead (0), channel catfish (1), crappie (14), muskellunge (1), yellow perch (11), chain pickerel (8), northern pike (3), brown trout (1), rainbow trout (4), Atlantic landlocked salmon (1), sunfish (11), and walleye (2).

Saltwater: black sea bass (1), striped bass (3), bluefish (6), winter flounder (1), fluke (3), and tautog (2).

In 2015, no entries were received for striped bass - freshwater, carp, American shad, brook trout, lake trout, black drum, cod, dolphin, kingfish, mako shark, blue marlin, white marlin, pollock, albacore tuna, bigeye tuna, bluefin tuna, yellowfin tuna, tuna (other), and weakfish.

The catch-and-release division had the most number of entries with 84 applications, followed by the adult category with nine applications, and the juniors with three applications.

In 2015, 41 entries in the First Fish category were received. Additionally, two Specialist Angler categories were awarded, as were two Master Angler categories. One Elite Angler status was also awarded for 2015.

In the Slam Series, there was one Inshore Slam and two Panfish Slams awarded.

Christopher Baggott of Neptune won two categories: Adult Striped Bass-

see Skillful Anglers, p. 11

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Mackerel, Jigs and Spring Go Together

by Milt Rosko

It was the third week of January. The sea bass season had closed and the cod fishing was mediocre at best, with about the only consistent action aboard Jersey party boats being ling. But the radio chatter disclosed that a Long Island party packet had encountered Atlantic mackerel, popularly called Boston mackerel because of their abundance off the New England coast during the summer months. The water temperatures had been very moderate up north, so the macks had remained in their summertime haunts, just vacating Georges Bank waters a few weeks into the New Year and heading to southern winter quarters off Cape Hatteras.

Within a couple of days of the mackerel being encountered by boats sailing from Sheepshead Bay, a couple of Jersey party packets ran into a nominal number of mackerel, with schools of them moving through the north Jersey coastal waters. While the initial catches were modest at best, there were also many schools of sea herring in the same areas. The combined catches augured well for party packets sailing from Shark and Manasquan Inlets.

I guess you know what happened. The January blizzard and its twenty-foot-plus north-north-east seas kept the party packets at dock, with the adjacent streets flooded and the highways white instead of black. Since the weather was in full force, it was enough to discourage anglers from even thinking about going fishing. But the macks didn't mind, as they just adjusted their travel schedules and moved to the waters where temperatures were more to their liking, while the herring pretty much became wintertime residents in Jersey waters.

But they'll be back. Historically, as waters begin to warm each spring, the northward-heading mackerel will join the myriad schools of herring in residence off our coast. Weather permitting, party boaters can rejoin the twosome, a great way for anglers to kick off the spring season while meeting the captains and mates who are just itching to get back into the swing of things.

Thanks to weekly web-based reports of mackerel activity off Delaware and Cape May, you can get a good idea that they'll show up within range of Barnegat, Manasquan, and Shark River's party boat



Beauties like this two-pound mackerel are the norm as they head towards summer quarters off New England and Georges Bank. They're fun to catch, great on the dinner table when skinned and filleted, and delicious when smoked. Milt Rosko photo.

fleets within a week's time. I've long ago learned it's best to be prepared, and as soon as the mackerel arrive to head out for a day of fun in the spring sunshine.

I'm inclined to use a medium-weight conventional outfit, one that's light enough to enjoy the tussle afforded by a double or even triple header of the scrappy macks, but has sufficient strength to swing aboard a combined catch that may weigh three to five pounds. I load the reel with 30- or 40-pound-test braided line, as the braid offers little resistance as you drift along in a swift wind or current, whereas mono is heavier in diameter and as a result you'll need a heavier jig.

A pair of hooks rigged on a high-low rig are pretty much standard aboard the packets, although I'll often make up my own rigs out of a three- to four-foot long piece of 30-pound-test monofilament. This enables me to tie large dropper loops, extending three or four inches out, at 12- to 18-inch intervals, onto which I slip teasers tied on size 1/0 hooks.

There are a variety of teasers that may be used, with the most basic a streamer fly, although a tuft of feathers tied to a

hook is often effective too. A red two-inch-long, hollow soft plastic tube works well, as does a Gulp! Nemesis synthetic soft bait, available in a variety of colors.

At the end of the leader, instead of adding a sinker, I snap on a diamond jig onto which I've mounted a single size 1/0 through 3/0 hook. If it's a calm, windless day with little wind, a two- or three-ounce jig works fine. If you're being blown along at a good clip there are times when a five- to eight-ounce one may be necessary in order to keep your line perpendicular to the bottom as you drift along.

There are times when you'll encounter the mackerel in just 50 feet of water close to shore. At other times they'll be traveling through the Mud Hole, where the depths run to 300 feet, and the hungry macks may be near the surface, or anywhere from there down a couple of hundred feet.

As you drift along, with the schools of mackerel having been located on the boat's electronics, the skipper will often announce the depth at which he's located the schools. This means you should work your rig through the choice depths at

which the fish are located, concentrating your jigging as the jig drops into the depths, and working it from 25 feet above to 25 feet below where the electronics have located them. Once you get the hang of it, you'll quickly concentrate your jigging efforts in that range and the strikes will often come fast and furious.

I've actually marked my line by tying small pieces of sewing thread at 50-foot intervals, which enables me to know the general range where I'm scoring. Usually, I'll simply use my thumb to permit five or ten feet of line to slip from my reel, all the while twitching my rod tip, causing the jig and teaser combo to dart towards the surface, then flutter down enticingly, repeating the procedure until I receive a hit, or get too deep. Then it's just a matter of reeling and jigging as you work the combo back to the surface.

When a mackerel is hooked, its activity will give action to the rest of the rig, so there's no need to immediately crank in just a single fish. Hesitate and keep a taut line, and often your patience will be rewarded with a double or triple.

Lots of times Atlantic herring, which spend the winter and spring in Jersey waters, will be in the same water as the migrating mackerel. It's not unusual for them to assault the teasers, although a smaller hook size, No. 5 through 10, is best, as they've a smaller mouth than the macks.

It's by no means uncommon during a good spring day's fishing to disembark with a cooler full of these popular species. The fresh mackerel are fine table fare; I've filleted and skinned them, removing and discarding the strip of dark meat, and they're just delicious in a variety of recipes. I've also smoked the mackerel, which are a delicious treat as well. With the herring, pickling is a favorite way to go, first filleting then skinning and cutting them into bite-size pieces and after pickling adding sour cream, for a delightful cocktail hour treat.

I've also frozen many mackerel, so I could cut strip baits from them when targeting doormat fluke. I've also used them whole when targeting the variety of sharks that migrate with them. But far and away the many surplus mackerel at the end of a day's fishing have been frozen and used as bait in my crab traps, where the oily flesh of the mackerel attracted beautiful blue claw crabs from late spring until they head for the mud in late fall.

As you read this they may not yet have arrived. Just be patient and ready. Keep track of them as they head north, so you can promptly sail and enjoy a hectic day's fishing with both mackerel and herring... but always appreciating the variety and many uses of these migrating visitors.

from *Clean*, p. 1

a five-gallon bucket, and the fish were spilling water trying to get out. Several nearby fisherman were livid because posted signs clearly stated that this facility was "Catch and Release Only," yet they remained silent. I walked over and admired the struggling fish, I commended this guy on his catch, and asked him if he knew that this was a C&R Lake. He said that he didn't care. I pointed to the two Mahwah police cars at the entrance and asked if he also didn't care that they were waiting for him to leave, and that each fish that he had would cost him about 500 dollars?

His wife, who had been sitting at a nearby picnic table with baby in carriage, came running over and gave him a tongue lashing neither of us will ever forget. Thankfully the two lunkers swam off strongly and he cleaned up his containers; I never saw him again.

Another instance in which we can show some common courtesy is in launching our boats. Never tow your boat over to the launch area and then begin to load your boat, while blocking access to the ramp. You are playing with fire and being a selfish jerk.

I can't tell you how many verbal altercations that I've witnessed, because some inconsiderate toad decided to block the ramp, run into the woods to do his "business," load their gear, or talk to a

A group of volunteers working with Central Jersey Stream Team get ready to tote away a day's cleanup. Lou Martinez photo.



buddy on the phone, while four or five other boats - loaded and ready to launch - have to wait on them.

Make sure to load your boat, check your gear, life preservers, lunch, and whatever else you may need, there in the parking area. Then and only then go down to launch your boat, move it to the side, tie it up, pull your tow vehicle away, park it, and take off. If there is a line, wait your turn.

(Here's where I also have a bone to pick with the owners of some Pay to Launch ramps. Why can't you have one of your employees or family members direct the boat traffic? You are getting \$20-\$30 per boat, the least you can do is make cer-

tain that none of your paying customers becomes embroiled in a battle that you could have easily avoided, just by doing the job you've been paid to do.)

Getting back to the subject of clean ups, some organizations take it to the next level. One group, the Central Jersey Stream Team, came into existence after a two-man team and two youngsters took a canoe ride on the Raritan river. The boys were encouraged to point out whatever wildlife they encountered on the trip. What they ended up actually doing was counting the number of tires dumped along the banks, a sobering testament to certain people's disdain for our natural resources and

the habitat that encompasses them.

Pulling one tire on the way out, they vowed to return and clean up their river. Over the next few years they motivated hundreds of volunteers to return with them to get the job done. They have removed many hundreds of tires, car parts, and litter by the dumpsterful, and helped restore a ten-mile stretch of river land to near-pristine condition.

Andy Still has made it part of his life's mission to cleaning up the Raritan River. This one man started out years ago taking on the responsibility to inform and motivate other fisherman and outdoor lovers to become involved in his quest. Hundreds of photos of the group's efforts are viewable on Facebook (group name is "Save the Raritan River"). The work done on our behalf is awe-inspiring. Volunteers are constantly needed, and checking either the FB page or Central Jersey Stream Teams website will give dates for future cleanups.

As this is being written, today's front page article in *The Record* is "Sexual mutations in fish raise alarm."

"Eggs in males seen as sign of chemicals in water," reads a quote from Bill Sheehan. The Hackensack Riverkeeper, another clean water advocate, states that "if this doesn't show we have a problem in this state, I don't know what does."

Seems to me that Chris was right on the button when he said "it's time to clean up!"

by Bruce Edward Litton

More than a decade ago, I took my young son to Lebanon Bait & Sport, bought live herring, and drove the short distance to Spruce Run Reservoir. Herring had just become available in late April, awkwardly cast by the lighter of our surf rods (eight-foot sticks we use for striped bass and Spanish mackerel). I remembered from my teens the news of Herb Hepler's 30-pound, two-ounce state record pike from the reservoir, and felt well prepared with big tackle.

The state record then got broken in Pompton Lakes by a 30-pound, 8.5-ounce pike in 2009, during the years when we came to Spruce Run beginning in March, having scaled back drastically on the tackle's burliness but still catching plenty of pike on large shiners.

I've met some who use seven-inch trout, bought at the Musky Fish Hatchery, for bait. And before Lebanon Bait & Sport closed its doors after the death of proprietor Steve Welgoss, the shop also carried extra-large shiners that I never felt were needed.

We catch plenty of three- to nine-pound pike on medium power, 5½-foot spinning rods with reels loaded with six-pound-test monofilament. For those large live shiners, a barrel swivel provides minimal weight, besides a size 6 hook and sinking 15-pound-test fluorocarbon leader. Pike weighing more than 15 pounds are caught fairly frequently in New Jersey, especially in the Passaic River, but an average pike is closer to five pounds, packing plenty of power to load light gear.

Pugnacious predators coiling like springs before striking, pike also hit a variety of lures even in cold water. My favorite is the suspending Rapala Husky Jerk. Take advantage of the pike's habit of halting before its body twists to explode on prey or a lure: Pause a lure or shiner during retrieve. Any brand of suspending jerkbaits can represent a deadly technique.

With short, intense twitches, the jerk-bait creates commotion to attract the curiosity of a nearby pike. If you follow the habits of most fishermen, you may notice they don't twitch the plug enough. Most jerk it a few times and pause, or retrieve constantly while bouncing the rod tip, as if the number of casts makes more of a difference than the presentation. Rather than focus on retrieve, focus on tantalizing any nearby pike by keeping the plug shaking in place as much as possible. The plug will move forward, but slowly. You can twitch for as long as 20 seconds to a full minute to draw any fish from a distance, and then cease all action. That pause

can trigger a strike, as if a pike's mesmerized attention suddenly transforms into action, the target plainly visible and vulnerable. A fast-action rod is a must, and I recommend the same for all pike techniques (except for bobber fishing, when any rod suffices).

With spinnerbaits, kill the action. Let a Colorado blade flutter relatively lamely as the lure descends to bottom, and if no strike happens, let it sit there a good five seconds. Pike are just as focused as fierce, apt to stare at the lure until you snap it off bottom and the fish charges. Chartreuse is a good color choice, as is any bright color or combination during sunny conditions. A brightly colored lure on bottom will help fix a pike's attention on it.

In-line spinners can be fished the same way if no residual weeds complicate matters, but I prefer short pauses, just enough to make a regular retrieve interesting. Many times, pike will follow. Pausing a spinner the first two or three times may not provoke a take, but by pausing in quicker succession thereafter, a pike may get irritated enough to turn interest into action. A moderately slow retrieve interrupted by increased pace can also provoke a charge.

A long American tradition associates lots of flash with the fierce reactions of pike. Spinners work. And they don't have to be outsized; a 3/8-ounce, size 6 variety fits the need, but if you can't find a spinner to your liking with reflective tape on the blade, you can buy tape separately and put it on yourself. The red tubing on the treble hook shaft of the Mepps Aglia Long serves the function of capturing that visual focus of pike and can make the difference. Bucktail offers possibilities also, especially in red, chartreuse, and white.

New Jersey has lots of pike destinations. The Passaic River, Pompton River, Millstone River, Spruce Run Reservoir, Pompton Lakes, Budd Lake, Cranberry Lake, Deal Lake, and even the Raritan River all have benefitted from the state's stocking program, although it is the Millstone, not Raritan River, that actually gets stocked; pike then work their way into the larger river system.

Pike also get caught in the South Branch Raritan River now and then, since Spruce Run Reservoir and Budd Lake feed its flow. All of these waters involve pike spawning behavior in March and April. Regardless of any marginal reproductive

Northern Pike's Peak Season

Tom Slota (left) with his first pike. Any kid can succeed with a bobber setup, and the half hour approaching sunset to the half hour thereafter, is the best time. Bruce Litton photo.



success, the fish seek areas of residual weeds in lake and reservoir coves especially associated with feeder streams. The rivers congregate pike at any dams, or otherwise at the mouths of tributaries. Passaic River veteran Steve Slota Jr. told me about sighting a three-foot-long pike well upstream of the river in a tiny tributary creek within Verona's city limits.

Until May's warmth breaks the pattern of cool water shallows, pike remain vulnerable like no other time of year. During the cold water period of March, when pike first get interested in congregating on spawning grounds, they rarely chase after jerkbaits cranked fast, or smash topwater plugs chugged along as if powered by a diesel engine.

Remember that pausing a lure is key to success with it, but if you like using live shiners, possibly this bait is never more appropriate, except for ice fishing. I always set out a couple of bobbers on whatever rods I don't care to actively fish. Usually, I fish pike with guests, so as many as half-a-dozen such rods get set. Predictably, no matter how well placed the bobbers, most of the pike get caught by live-lining technique. A bobber means

waiting on fish; it puts you in a reactive position. Live-lining is proactive, and it will always produce better, at least over time, in the hands of anglers who know how to do it.

Where exactly do the pike in a given cove hang out? They move about, but going after them involves outward observation of branch stickups, perhaps, or a belly of deeper water or creek channel in a cove. Any and all structure is important, but there's more to finding fish. Pay attention to your own internal promptings. Urges and ideas never just happen randomly, unrelated to what you're doing and where you are. They may indicate where a fish is, so long as you are truly intent on discovery.

Why make a cast unless you believe in it? At the least, let every cast be your best guess, and you may be surprised when something tells you this is the cast that really counts... and it comes true.

from Ice Fishing, p. 1

Though two and one-half inches may hold you, I wouldn't trust it to hold me plus my gear. Try for at least four inches. Better safe than thawing out in the back of an ambulance with some burly first responder beating on your chest.

While checking the ice, make certain you have a pair of safety spikes. Years ago, the term "safety spikes" meant a fast side trip to your local hardware store to buy two of those lengthy house gutter spikes. They're about seven or eight inches in length, and therefore serve the purpose.

No longer is that trip to Sid's Hardware necessary. Commercially manufactured safety spikes are available from several manufacturers and they are much better than gutter spikes because they have molded handles that float, and they are connected by a molded, coiled cable, thus enabling one to "wear" them around the neck, or place the spikes in the pocket of your jacket with the cable outside or around your shoulders for quick access. There's not much to be found on an icy surface in the way of handholds when trying to get yourself out of what could be deep trouble. Safety spikes offer such a life-saving grip.

Rapala makes a great set of safety spikes for a modest \$10.99. You can check them out by merely entering "Rapala Ice Force Safety Spike" in your search engine. In addition to Rapala's spikes, Eagle Claw makes a nice set that also sells for \$8.99 and H.T. Enterprises also weighed in with a set for a paltry \$5.39. Rapala's write-up

for their safety spikes said it all: "Think of them (safety spikes) as your 'get-out-of-jail-free' card."

Always be on the lookout for glare ice or ice that has recently formed. Ice can, and often does, have what are called pressure ridges that form while the waters freeze. These so-called pressure ridges can be difficult to spot since it's often possible for a section of ice to break free of the main surface and thus freeze on a slight angle to the rest of the surface. Think in terms of standing on land using a flat rock for footing, but that rock is held in place by only three or four inches of soil and can thus tilt or move when you stand on it. A pressure ridge can also be a gap or opening between two sheets of ice. Always check glare ice for pressure ridges.

Remember, we're checking newly formed ice as opposed to ice that has been used for several days and has proved safe. Thus it should also behoove ice anglers to wear a PFD while scouting the spots at which you're going to set up shop. Again, common sense. In fact, it wouldn't hurt to continually wear a PFD if only because you have no idea if some emergency may pop up somewhere else on the lake, pond, or river to which you had no intention of going, but now you do because someone's in trouble. Don't like the idea of continually wearing that cumbersome PFD? You probably can safely take it off once you've established your own safe ice area, but wearing it continually is a better idea.

Also, always use the buddy system. For obvious reasons, never go ice fishing alone. Bring a buddy along, and always

Several fishing tackle and outdoor suppliers now offer commercially manufactured Safety Spikes for ice fishing. This is Rapala's Ice Force set of safety spikes complete with coiled plastic-covered connectors assuring ice anglers the spikes will be easily accessible when needed. Photo courtesy Rapala.



file a flight plan with the control tower. "What?" you say. Sorry, but here we should take a page out of the private pilot's safety check list. When planning an out-of-area flight, they always let someone know where they are going and what time they plan on returning. Let someone at home know where you're going and how long you plan to be away. And give them some details: what kind of automobile you're driving, where you plan to park, and what part of the body of water you plan to fish. All of that helps should you fail to show up on time at home. Have a cell phone? Good, you can check in as soon as you're off the ice. That's common sense and common manners rather than have someone at home worrying about you.

Finally, should you find yourself out

on the ice and a fair distance from shore and the ice begins to crack, quickly get down on all fours and spread your weight evenly, even if that means lying on the ice on your belly. Once in that awkward position, start moving towards shore by sliding yourself crab-style towards shore, and it's best to remain in that prone position until you feel you're a safe distance from the area which began to crack under your weight. Remember, when ice begins to crack, nine times out of ten you'll hear it, and when you do, back off. Quickly.

Do not take these rules cavalierly. Being conscientious about following them will pretty much assure you another day of future ice fishing, and that's a good thing since the other option is anything but good.

Barbless Circle Hooks

by Vin T. Sparano

It's no secret that circle hooks are extremely effective in our catch-and-release culture and for releasing undersize fish unharmed. It's ironic that circle hooks, around since the turn of the century, were brought into worldwide use by commercial longline fishermen because of their deadly hooking ability. Because of its unique design, fish will be hooked in the corner of the mouth, making release easy without harm to the fish. What makes this hook effective is the fact that fish will also hook themselves, an important factor for longliners who leave their baited gear unattended.

For recreational fishermen, it's important to remember not to try to set a circle hook when a fish takes the bait. Leaving a rod in a rod holder on a boat (dead sticking) is sometimes the best technique when using circle hooks. Let the fish run and it will hook itself in the corner of the mouth.

But here's another approach to circle hooks and maybe a reason to use them. A Hawaiian fisheries biologist with NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Center is now promoting a program to take the circle hook phenomenon a step further. Kurt Kawamoto developed the Barbless Circle Hook Project to protect the seals on



This freshwater fly was constructed on a barbless circle hook. Use of these improves survival rates of hooked-and-released fish, with little or no reduction in hooking percentages. Image courtesy Paulpro PP (youtube.com).

Hawaii's rocky shoreline, but fisherman began to discover there was little or no difference between the effectiveness of barbed and barbless circle hooks in catching various species in Hawaiian waters. One angler hooked and landed a 117-pound giant trevally using a barbless circle

hook.

Fishermen in New Jersey no longer question the effectiveness of circle hooks, and it has made releasing fish easy, but we are faced with size limits for just about every gamefish in the Garden State. Even with the use of barbed circle hooks, we see

still see fish mortality numbers when circle hooks are imbedded in bone and torn loose by careless fishermen. Even if a fish breaks your line or is unavoidably released with a circle hook in its jaw, it may not be able to shed or shake the hook loose. A barbless circle hook, however, may eventually fall out or be self-shedding. And if you are unfortunate enough to sink a hook into your hand or arm, a barbless hook will make hook removal essentially painless.

Barbless circle hooks are not new to most fishermen, especially among salmon anglers on the West Coast. There are also some tournaments that now require the use of barbless circle hooks. If you don't want to pinch barbs down, check your tackle shop. Hook manufacturers now make barbless circle hooks in most sizes.

I like fluke fishing (or summer flounder, as our southern fishermen called them) but I'm often plagued with shorts and I'm constantly releasing small fluke. The same applies to sea bass, blackfish, and striped bass. I'll also include skates, which are a nightmare to release. This summer, especially if I'm using natural baits, I will try pinching the barbs down on my circle hooks. I'm convinced that releasing shorts will be a lot easier.

I suspect that getting New Jersey fishermen to use barbless circle hooks will be an uphill battle. Too many anglers will be worried about losing some hard-earned keepers. I urge you to give it a try this season. Remember that it's your skill and the hook design that catches fish, not the barb. Keep a tight line and a cool head, and you won't lose that doormat.

by Pete Robbins

For the newcomer to bass fishing, it's easy to get intimidated by the multitude of rod styles and actions that are available today. As techniques have become increasingly specialized, the rod companies have responded in kind, producing tools specifically for narrow niches. It's not enough to have a dedicated deep-cranking rod; now they even make cranking sticks specifically for single lures, like Strike King's monster deep diver the 10XD.

It would be easy to go bankrupt trying to make sure that you have the appropriate rod for every lure category that you might someday use. That's a fool's errand. While a case could be made that you might entice and land a few more fish with the perfect stick, don't let "the perfect" be the enemy of "the good." Start off by buying a few quality multi-dimensional rods, and as your fishing "profile" develops you can add more for pinpoint purposes. Whether you're on a budget, your boat has limited storage, or you're fishing as a co-angler and therefore limited to how many rods you can bring, here are four to get you started:

Six-and-a-Half-Foot Medium Action Spinning Rod

This is your all-around finesse rod, good for shakey heads and dropshots, as well as tubes and light balsa crankbaits like a Shad Rap. Spool it with 15- or 20-pound braided line, add a fluorocarbon leader, and you'll be able to handle a surprising number of techniques. Some would say go for a 7-footer, and if you're very tall that might be the preferable length, but I like a

slightly shorter rod because I use this one to skip wacky-rigged Senkos under docks.

Seven-Foot Medium Action Casting Rod

The medium-action casting rod will handle small poppers and also jerkbaits. It has a functional line range of 10- to 17-pound-test, which means that it's also good for lighter Texas rigs and small spinnerbaits.

Seven-Foot Medium Heavy Casting Rod

For most aspiring tournament anglers, this will be the workhorse. It handles larger topwaters, spinnerbaits, lipless cranks, vibrating jigs and swim jigs, as well as many of your Texas rigging chores. With braided line, it excels in vegetation, and with fluorocarbon you can crank bigger deep-diving plugs. If you only have one in this class, a sensitive graphite rod is better than a composite, but if you later add another try a dedicated cranking rod with a bit more flex in the tip.

Seven-and-a-Half-Foot Heavy Casting Rod

Serving well in lengths between seven feet three inches and seven feet six inches, this is your heavy cover, big fish whipping stick. With 50- or 65-pound braid on it, you can go to the mats with a

heavy tungsten weight or a hollow-bodied frog. It's also a good rod for flipping bulky jig-and-pig combos to both wood and grass, and depending on your preferences it can be used to vault Carolina Rigs and castable umbrella rigs (where allowed) long distances. If you flip (offerings into holes in heavy vegetation) but don't frog (work surface lures along their tops), try a 7-foot, 11-inch model for added leverage. If you're on the shorter side, you might want to head down to an even 7-footer.

If you're looking to extend your rod arsenal by a rod or two, figure out what you do the most and double down there. For example, if you fish deep clear waters for smallmouth a lot, add another spinning rod. If you flip and frog heavy matted vegetation, go heavy on the heavies.

Finally, a word about price. While top-quality rods may retail for \$300-500, there are tons of rods in the \$100 price



range that far exceed the quality of anything you could've bought a decade or two ago. Find a lineup with components that you prefer (cork or EVA handles? micro guides or regular?) and a good warranty policy and don't worry that anyone will look down on your "bargain" rods. The proof will be in your livewell.

Striper Fishing Survey Results In

The great majority of the anglers from North Carolina to Maine, responding to the 13th annual fishing survey taken by Strippers Forever, reported catching fewer

and smaller striped bass in 2015, reflecting a continuing downward trend in the quality of and thus angler interest in the fishery on the Atlantic Coast.

"Fully 84 percent of the 2015 survey respondents described the striper fishery as 'worse or much worse' than in previous years," said Brad Burns, president of Strippers Forever, a conservation organization advocating game fish status for stripers by ending the commercial fishery and managing the species coastwide for recreational fishing.

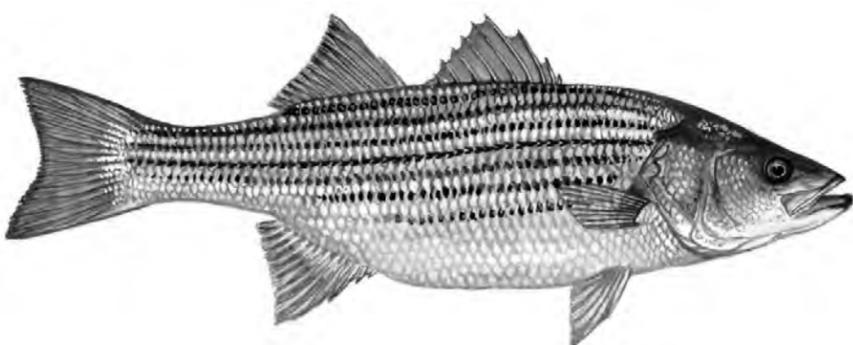
"The survey results also show a participation decline in the striper fishery for the second consecutive year which negatively affects guides, tackle businesses and fishing tourism."

"It seems evident," Burns continued, "that most of the older, larger prime breeding fish from the great spawning year classes of the 1990's and early 2000's have been removed from the striped bass population. The striper biomass is now considerably smaller as a result of the poor to mediocre year classes that have generally characterized the fishery since 2003. And

it is important to note that almost 85 percent of the survey respondents said that the 2011 year class - highly touted by the Atlantic States Marine Fishery Committee which manages the striped bass fishery - has not produced nearly as many surviving small schoolie-size stripers as expected."

A clear majority of anglers responding to the 2015 Strippers Forever survey believe that the large stripers so vital to future spawning should not be harvested and that a high percentage of the current commercial catch should be set aside for conservation. Further, 75 percent of all Strippers Forever members are willing to buy a striper stamp to finance a buyout of the commercial striper fishery.

The complete results of the annual survey are present under Recent News on the Strippers Forever website (stripersforever.org). For additional information, email stripers@stripersforever.org.



NJ DFW Law Enforcement Bureau Reports: September '15

Conservation Officers reported a total of 6748.1 hours of duty. During patrols, officers performed 4460 field inspections of hunters, fishermen or trappers, with 487 summonses issued. Estimated penalties collected during this report period by Conservation Officers came to \$37,593.00.

Northern Region Highlights

Conservation Officer Driscoll responded from home, to a complaint from the Mendham Borough Police Department in Morris County, in reference to a deer being shot in a neighborhood. CO Driscoll responded and was able to locate a freshly killed doe and obtain a confession from the shooter.

The man initially denied any knowledge of what happened, but eventually admitted that he had shot the deer with a .177 caliber pellet gun and then dragged it into a wooded area. The man advised that he was only trying to scare the deer away. Summonses were issued for "Hunting without a valid license," "Possessing a loaded firearm within 450 feet of an occupied dwelling," "Hunting white-tailed deer with an illegal firearm," "Hunting white-tailed deer during the closed season," "Using an illegal missile to take white-tailed deer," and "Possession of an untagged/unregistered white-tailed deer."

On September 18, Conservation Officer Driscoll and Lieutenant Sutton investigated a hunter who registered, via the Automated Deer Harvest Report System, two deer in DMZ 3, which does not open until October 3. The COs interviewed the hunter and determined that the deer had actually been harvested in Walpack Township, Sussex County (DMZ 4), which is also closed.

The hunter had registered a "doe" and a "spike" buck, but when the CO's seized the deer from a local butcher shop, they discovered that both deer were "spike" bucks. One of the bucks had antlers that were four inches long and the second had antlers that were eight inches long. The Officers then questioned the hunter, who advised that he had not seen the antlers on the smaller buck. Summonses were issued for "Hunting white-tailed deer during the closed season" and "Taking over the bag limit of antlered deer."

Both Spruce Run and Round Valley Reservoirs in Hunterdon County were very busy again during this report period. Officers Paey and Ocampo patrolled by vehicle and by boat, and issued over 50 summonses for violations of "fishing without a license," "failure to exhibit a valid fishing license," "possession of undersized bass," "possession of alcoholic beverages on a WMA," "no PFD's in possession while boating," "swimming on a WMA," "unregistered vehicle on a WMA," "interference with the duties of a Conservation Officer," "clamming without a license," "possession of undersized trout," "operating a vehicle on a closed area of a WMA," and "killing/possessing a wild bird contrary to the state game code."

Officer Holmes was patrolling the Columbia Lake WMA in Warren County on a Sunday afternoon when he encountered a group of people illegally fishing and consuming alcohol on the WMA. Seven summonses were issued for "fishing without a license," "possession of alcoholic beverages on a WMA," and "possession of over the daily bag limit of panfish."

Central Region Highlights

Officers from the Central Region worked together to combat the increasing ATV and off-road vehicle use in the Greenwood Forest WMA on the weekends. The officers concentrated their

efforts in the areas surrounding Parker's Pit in Lacey Township on the east side of Rt. 539 and the "Clay Holes" in Manchester Township on the west side of Rt. 539.

Over four days of patrols, 97 people were apprehended, and 76 summonses and two written warnings were issued. Violations included operation of ATV's on a WMA, entering a restricted area, operating a motor vehicle in a restricted area, operating a motor vehicle off the established roadway, operating an unregistered motor vehicle on a WMA, possession of alcoholic beverages on a WMA, interference with the duties of a Conservation Officer, operating an ATV without a helmet, swimming on a WMA, careless driving, and operating a motor vehicle with an expired driver's license. CO's Riviello, McManus, Szalaj, Mascio and Lt's. Lacroix and Szulecki all participated in these patrols.

CO Martiak investigated a complaint about an ATV that was found damaged and abandoned on the Assumpink WMA.

From witness statements and identification found on the ATV, CO Martiak was able to track down the owner of the ATV. During questioning, the owner eventually admitted to dumping the ATV on the WMA.

Three summonses were issued, including a Title 39 summons for abandoning a motor vehicle on public property, a Title 23 summons for dumping solid waste on a WMA, and a Title 13 summons for disposing of solid waste in excess of 0.148 cubic yards.

CO's Martiak, Mascio and Mutone conducted extensive background investigations for Conservation Officer Recruit candidates.

Lt. Szulecki patrolled Durand Park Pond in Freehold Township, Monmouth County, to investigate a recent OGT complaint. From a surveillance point on the opposite side of the pond, he observed three fishermen catching fish and putting them in a cooler and a plastic bag. He did not observe fishing licenses displayed on any of the three at the time.

During an inspection of the fishermen it was determined that they had taken 78 panfish in total. This is three fish over the legal limit and one of the fishermen admitted to taking the extra fish. He was issued a summons for the violation. One of the fishermen did not have a valid 2015 NJ Fishing License and was issued a summons for the violation.

Southern Region Highlights

CO Faith was on patrol in the Maple Lake Wildlife Management Area in Estelle Manor, Atlantic County when he observed an all-terrain vehicle. The rider, who was not wearing a helmet, immediately fled the area after CO Faith activated his emergency lights. CO Faith did not attempt to chase the ATV, but was able to locate a vehicle parked at another location that had a motorcycle helmet inside. He set up surveillance and waited for the operator to return to the vehicle.

A short time later, the ATV operator arrived back at his vehicle and was apprehended. CO Faith issued summonses for interference with the duties of a Conservation Officer, operating an unregistered ATV on a WMA, operating an ATV off established roadways, and operation of an ATV without a permit on a WMA.

CO Faith responded to a complaint in Egg Harbor Township in Atlantic County on Labor Day weekend at the Malibu Beach Wildlife Management Area. The complainant gave CO Faith the description of the man who entered a restricted area, but by the time CO Faith arrived the man was outside the enclosed area. CO Faith

informed the elderly man why the area was restricted and not to enter the area. A short time later, CO Faith observed the same man enter the enclosed area which is designed to protect the endangered beach nesting birds. CO Faith issued a summons for entering a restricted area of a WMA.

CO Faith observed a man using a cast net in marine waters at the Malibu Beach Wildlife Management Area in Egg Harbor Township in Atlantic County. During his field inspection, he determined that the black sea bass that were possessed were undersize and taken during the closed season. CO Faith issued a summons for taking black sea bass during the closed season.

CO James located a 17-foot fiberglass boat with a New Hampshire registration number in a pond at the Cape Island Wildlife Management Area in Lower Township, Cape May County. CO James interviewed the original owner who became very agitated and upset that he was being interviewed a second time by police and hung up.

CO James called back leaving a detailed message that informed the owner about the dumping of solid waste laws and strict liability. The original boat owner called back and gave CO James information that furthered his investigation and led him to a man in Delaware that purchased the boat. However, the new owner recently sold the boat to a local man familiar to CO James in Cape May.

The latest owner has been a wanted person for over a year; however, based on information provided in reference to the last sale, CO James has filed charges for the dumping of solid waste under Title 13 and dumping on a wildlife management area under Title 23.

CO Fox investigated a hunter who for the past three years checked a doe first thing on the opening day of archery season during the earn-a-buck season in Lawrence Township, Cumberland County. He conducted an inspection and interviewed the hunter. The hunter could not produce the deer and finally admitted that he checked a "phantom" doe. CO Fox issued a summons for improper registration of a deer.

CO's Kille and Trembley continued enforcement efforts over two weekends in the Winslow East section of Winslow Wildlife Management Area in Winslow Township, Camden County. They issued sixty-eight summonses for illegal activities; unlawfully operating unregistered ATV's on a WMA, unlawful operation of ATV's on a WMA without a permit, swimming on a WMA, unlawfully being in a WMA after hours, unlawful possession of alcohol on a WMA, and interference with the duties of a Conservation Officer. They took two individuals into custody for outstanding warrants and turned them over to local police. One was a no bail warrant for child neglect and the other for failing to appear for a driving under the influence charge.

CO's Stites and Toppin conducted and evening patrol at the DOD Wildlife Management Area in Carney's Point, Salem County. During the course of their patrol they issued summonses for littering on a wildlife management area and operation of a motor vehicle without a driver's license.

CO Toppin observed a fisherman in a boat close to shore at Malaga Lake in Franklin Township, Gloucester County. The fisherman did not have a license displayed and CO Toppin called him in to conduct an inspection. The fisherman did not have a valid fishing license or a valid boat registration. CO Toppin issued summonses for fishing without a valid license

and operation of a boat without a valid boat registration.

While checking a fisherman at Malaga Lake in Franklin Township, Gloucester County, CO Toppin was told that a pair of men went down into Scotland Run below the spillway with what appeared to be rakes and buckets. CO Toppin suspected illegal freshwater clamming and conducted a foot patrol and located the two men and watched until backup arrived. CO Fox and Lt. Risher responded to the location as CO Toppin made the apprehension. Both men harvested eight, five gallon buckets full of the Asian clams known as Corbicula. There was one freshwater mussel amongst several thousand clams. Each man was charged with clamming without a commercial clam license, clamming in prohibited waters and unlawful possession of an indigenous species, the protected freshwater mussel.

Marine Region Highlights

On September 7, Conservation Officer Joseph Soell responded to a complaint of two fishermen keeping undersize fish and hiding them under the stairs by the party boats in Belmar.

Upon arrival, CO Soell was joined by Conservation Officer Woerner, to make sure no fish were discarded during the inspection. The two fishermen, fishing by the party boat *Miss Belmar Princess*, told CO Soell that they had no fish. A search of the stairs by the *Miss Belmar Princess* and a search of the fishermen's cooler near the stairs by the party boat *Suzie Girl* revealed no fish.

CO Soell then looked under the stairs near the cooler and found two plastic bags containing fish. The bags contained a 16 1/4-inch fluke, a 7 1/4-inch black sea bass, a 7-inch tautog, and a bergall. The fisherman ultimately admitted the fish were his. He was issued summonses for the undersize fish and the closed season black sea bass.

On September 18, CO's Woerner and Moscatiello conducted a late-night striped bass patrol of the Manasquan River. Around midnight, the COs settled in at the railroad bridge in Pt. Pleasant to conduct surveillance of a vehicle associated with three fishermen, one of whom is known to poach striped bass in the area.

After four hours, one of the individuals, acting as a spotter, returned to their vehicle to drop off his belongings. About 45 minutes later, a second fisherman walked off the railroad bridge carrying two large bags over his back. The man hid one of the bags in the bushes.

Finally, after another 20 minutes, the third fishermen showed up at the vehicle. One fisherman was observed retrieving the large bag from the bushes and placing it into a large cooler in the back of the vehicle. CO's Woerner and Moscatiello emerged and conducted an inspection at 5:10 am, which revealed 12 undersize striped bass.

Two of the men took responsibility for all of the fish and were issued summonses for the possession of undersize striped bass and the possession of over limit striped bass. The third fisherman was issued a summons for littering for throwing garbage into a nearby bush. The sum of the fishermen's violations was over \$2,000.

During mid-September, Conservation Officers Harp and Nicklow stepped up surveillance of recreational fishermen in the Atlantic City area because of the increase in tautog fishing activity. In approximately one week the officers issued 22 summonses for undersize and over the limit tautog, interference with the duties of a Conservation Officer, wanton waste, and littering. A few fishermen that were apprehended are repeat offenders.

Rabbits in the News: Past and Present

Who ever heard of a New England rabbit? Surprise, surprise; they do exist. The New England cottontail rabbit (which have white tails and grayish-brown fur, measure 15-17 inches in length, and typically weigh about two pounds) is a different species than the eastern cottontail, a well-known New Jersey native, often pursued by upland hunters. And rabbits are known to be superstar breeders, right? Not true in all cases.

According to a report by Lisa I. Colangelo titled "Mo' bunny," published in the October 19, 2015 issue of the *New York Daily News*, the New England cottontail population has been experiencing a numbers problem. These rabbits are becoming rare and came close to being classified as endangered in 2015. The down-easter bunny population has been dwindling due to habitat loss and vulnerability to predators. Federal wildlife officials report that the New England cottontail's range suffered an 86% loss after the 1960's due to development. Thanks to conservation efforts the population is now estimated to be about 16,690 across six states.

On the other hand, according to officials, the more adaptable Eastern cottontail is experiencing a burgeoning population. Tony Tur, an endangered species biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stated, "Eastern cottontails are a lot better at avoiding predators."

Fortunately help is now on the way for the New England cottontail. The Queens Zoo is one of two zoos in the country taking steps to help increase the population and it does not involve pulling rabbits out of hats. It's all about hosting a rabbit breeding program.

Scott Silver, curator of the Queens Zoo, which is operated by the Wildlife Conservation Society, believes that it's important to preserve all species for the betterment of a vital ecosystem. As stated

by Silver, "You never know what kind of benefit they provide and you don't want to realize that when they are gone." As a first step toward boosting the New England cottontail population, the zoo successfully bred 11 rabbits that were subsequently released in wild areas of Rhode Island and New Hampshire.

Silver reported that the Queens Zoo received four males and five female rabbits that had been trapped in New York State, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. These were housed together for five days in a special off-exhibit compound set up for the project from March through September which included the breeding season. After the initial period of being together, the sexes were separated. Much to the delight of zoo staffers, the females started nesting which is an indication of successful mating.

The Roger Williams Park Zoo in Rhode Island is hosting a similar breeding program.

Tur emphasized the partnership efforts of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the zoos, stating, "Zoos have vet staff and facilities. We don't always have these kinds of resources."

* * *

Believe it or not, Basset hounds were once used as hunting dogs. According to a report published in the *Reading-Jersey Central Magazine*, Volume 1 No. 3, October 1936, the loveable, floppy-eared, waddling-gaited, heavy-weight dogs have a hunting background.

The above-mentioned magazine issue and the report it contains are preserved in the book *Reading-Jersey Central Magazine, Volume 1, Issues 1-6, June 1936 - November 1936*, compiled and indexed by railroad historian Benjamin L. Bernhart. *Reading-Jersey Central Magazine* was an employee publication



The Sporting View

by Marty Boa



The author's late Brittany spaniel Briarpatch's Beckett points a rabbit hidden in snow-blanketed, prime rabbit habitat on the Assumpink Wildlife Management Area, in Clarksburg. Marty Boa photo.

issued monthly, during various time periods by the Reading Company and the Central Railroad Company of New Jersey (CNJ).

The report "Engineer Raises Basset Hounds" is part of the magazine section "Jersey Central Notes" and details the activities of veteran CNJ locomotive engineer George Hawk, an avid hunter, who at the time was promoting the use of Basset hounds for hunting rabbits and pheasants. Hawk, who "hung his overalls" at the once-bustling but now-gone Communipaw engine terminal, which was located within what is now Liberty State Park in Jersey City, held that the dogs had great potential for hunting due in no small part to their bloodhound ancestry that traces back to England and Germany.

At the time, Hawk stated that there were very few Basset hounds in the United States, but speculated that their numbers would increase along with their popularity, especially with regard to hunting. He reported that dogs of this breed average

about 14 inches in height at the shoulder and are around 40 to 43 inches in length. Their average weight is around 45 pounds.

George Hawk reported that in his opinion Bassets have certain advantages over other hound dogs when it comes to hunting. He said that hunters who use these dogs call them "strikers." Hawk extolled the basset hounds not only for their keen noses, inherited from their bloodhound ancestors, but also because they trail game at a moderate speed and therefore less likely to "over-run" the scent as can be the case with faster working dogs that weigh less.

According to Engineer Hawk, the slow, sure pace of the Basset makes it less likely to pursue the game too fast which often results in it taking refuge by going to ground or "holing up," an important factor in rabbit hunting. He also said that for this reason the Bassets end up bringing more game around to the gun than any other breed of dog that he has used.

Fisher Caught by NJ Trapper

After its first discovery in over a century by the late Charles Kontos in October 2006, the inevitable finally happened - the Division of Fish and Wildlife received its first call from a trapper reporting the capture of a fisher on January 15, 2016.

Personnel from the Wildlife Services Unit and the Upland Wildlife and Furbearer Research Project responded to the call in Mansfield Township, Warren County on the Pequest Wildlife Management Area property. The fisher, a male weighing 11.46 pounds (5.20 kg), was captured in a cable restraint set for fox.

The animal was chemically immobilized, released from the snare, weighed, measured, and tagged, and DNA samples were taken. No apparent damage from the cable restraint was noted. The fisher recovered from the drug dose within two hours and was released back into the Pequest WMA woods in great shape.

Fishers are returning, naturally and through reintroduction efforts in New York and Pennsylvania, to most of their historic range in the northeastern United States. Fishers have been documented in several northern and southern New Jersey counties.

There is no open trapping season for either bobcat or fisher; possession is not permitted. If you encounter a live fisher (or bobcat) captured on your trapline, do not disturb the animal or the set, but immediately notify Fish and Wildlife by calling (877) WARNDP (877-927-6337).

A Fish and Wildlife technician will provide further instructions. Call the same number for a dead bobcat or fisher on your trapline; a Fish and Wildlife technician will arrange to pick up the animal. Biological samples will be taken from all bobcat and fisher carcasses. The data collected will be instrumental to understand the status of the species populations.

The Division's Upland Wildlife and Furbearer Research Project would like to

ask anyone who might have trail camera pictures of fishers to share them with us. We hear, usually second or third hand, that quite a few of our hunters have seen them but we've rarely received a picture of a fisher. Please send any clear, recognizable pictures of fishers to: joseph.garris@dep.nj.gov.

Excerpted from the New Jersey Furbearer Management Newsletter, Winter 2015-2016.

| Events for March, 2016 | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|----------------------------------|-----------|--|--------|--|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 Fish & Game Council meeting | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 Anglers & Hunters Assoc. Dinner, hound-home@msn.com |
| | | | | World Fishing & Outdoor Expo, Suffern NY | | |
| 13 NJOA Wild Game Dinner 201-304-4691 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 RVTA meeting fishrvta.com | 18 | 19 NJTA Fur Sale; fur drop-off 609-773-0470 |
| Outdoor Expo, NY | | | | | | |
| 20 NJTA Fur Sale 609-773-0470 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

BLACK POWDER NOTES

by Joe Bilby

New/Old Winchesters, Survey News, New Bullets, and a Must-See Video

The old Winchester plant in New Haven, Connecticut, is no more, but the Winchester Repeating Arms brand still exists, and is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. Although Oliver Winchester owned the Henry Repeating Arms company, which started producing its first Model 1860 lever-action repeating rifles in the summer of 1862, he did not name the company after himself until 1866. In commemoration of Oliver's bright idea, Winchester will be issuing special commemorative versions of five of its iconic firearms in limited quantities during the year. Two of these, the Model 1866 and Model 1873, will be of interest to black powder cartridge shooters, although the collectability and cost of these guns may well make a purchaser hesitate to fire them.

The Model 1866 "Yellow Boy" lever-action rifle was the first officially named Winchester. The polished brass frame 150th commemorative version is faithful to the original design in every mechanical detail. The only departure from original 1866 specifications is in the caliber. Instead of the .44 rimfire round, which has not been produced since 1917, the new gun will be chambered in .44-40 Winchester caliber, which is readily available in

smokeless powder ammunition in most gun shops and can be purchased or reloaded with the original black powder charge.

The custom grade walnut straight-grip stock on the 1866 has a satin oil finish and classic rifle-style forearm. There is 150th anniversary engraving on the polished brass receiver, lifter, lever, crescent butt plate, and forearm cap in the authentic style of 19th-century Winchester master engraver John Ulrich. The classic Winchester Horse and Rider logo and the WRA scroll trademark are included in the engraving.

The full octagon, 24-inch barrel features a gold barrel band, plus special Winchester 150th anniversary script and scroll engraving on the top of the barrel, as well as a ladder-style carbine rear sight with blade front sight. The receiver top tang is drilled and tapped for an optional tang-mounted rear aperture sight. Overall length of the rifle is 43 inches and it weighs 7½ pounds. It ain't cheap; suggested retail price for the 1866 is \$3,329.99.

Winchester Repeating Arms will also offer a 150th anniversary commemorative Model 1873 lever-action rifle. The Model 1873 will be offered in the .44-40

Winchester caliber, which is authentic to the original gun, and will feature a fancy grade walnut straight-grip stock and rifle-style forearm with classic cut checking and oil finish.

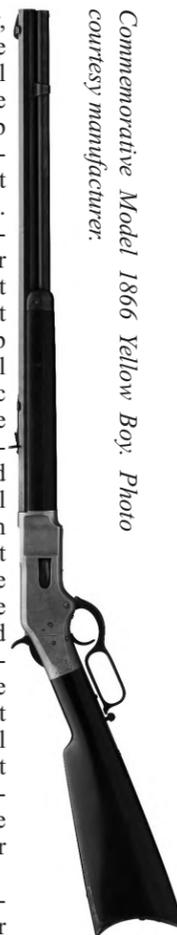
The 1873's silver-nitride-finished receiver side plates, lifter, dust cover, crescent butt plate, and forearm cap feature deep-relief scroll engraving in the classic Ulrich style, and the rifle has a full octagon 24-inch barrel with a gold band and special Winchester 150th Anniversary gold script engraving. The sights are a tang-mounted Marble Arms rear peep and adjustable rear semi-buckhorn with Marble Arms gold bead front sight. The 1873's overall length is 43 inches and it weighs 7½ lbs. The suggested retail price for the 1873 is the same as for the 1866, \$3,329.99.

For more information on Winchester Firearms, visit the company website at www.winchesterguns.com.

A Useful Survey

ShooterSurvey.com and HunterSurvey.com outdoor polling researchers recently learned that as many as 50 percent of the sportsmen they surveyed had taken a child shooting in the past 12 months, while

Commemorative Model 1866 Yellow Boy. Photo courtesy manufacturer.



37 percent had taken a child hunting. Most of these people were parents or close relatives of the children. This is a long time tradition that we have to continue in order to assure that our hobbies and sports continue on for future generations.

"Cutting Edge" Bullets

Anytime something new hits the market, the manufacturer's advertising guys almost always proclaim that the product is of "cutting edge" design or technology. It does help, for sure, if your company is named, ah, "Cutting Edge Bullets." The company has introduced projectiles for both muzzle loaders and cartridge arms, dubbed the MZL Raptor, and they do indeed incorporate some of the latest technology, as they are precision CNC-machined all-copper bullets. For more information, see the company's website: <http://site.cuttingedgebullets.com/>

Oops

I got a link to this interesting video from my friend David "Rosey" Rosenthal, an experienced black powder shooter who noted that he was recommending it to "all who are new to shooting black powder guns as well as modern in-lines that shoot Pyrodex pellets. Black powder is highly flammable and the slightest spark can make it explode. In the video a shooter is poised right over a table with what appears to be an open box of Pyrodex pellets which is much harder to ignite than black powder is."

Even though he is using Pyrodex the shooter gets a rather unwelcome surprise. So, as Rosey says, "pay attention to what you are doing when shooting a black powder gun." And that is our reminder for the month. To see the incident, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/jg6toz5>.

Forward "March" - Spring is Coming

OK, everybody who likes March raise their hand.

That should probably be "everyone" and "his or her" hand, but do you really want to nitpick? This, after all, is a month, with one or two exceptions, of deep funk to begin with.

Dang... I just ended a sentence with a preposition. My editor's head is exploding. (*Rats; now I can't change it. -Editor*) I like to keep him alert and feeling involved during a slow time of year. (*Thanks, Rick.*)

I suspect the number of folks signaling joy with upraised appendages whilst facing the last month of winter could fit in a phone booth... if they could find one these days.

As this is written, the tail end of January, there is still more than a foot of snow on the ground and, baby, it's cold outside. There is no football the week before Super Bowl Sunday, just some tricked-up hockey made-for-TV nonsense and 4,352 college and "pro" basketball games. Trained seals can put a ball through a hoop, which pretty much tells you what I think about basketball.

March is the month of the "Lion and Lamb" thing, coming and going. The Blizzard of '88 buried New York City in March. That was 1888 for those who remember. This month's name comes from the Latin "Martius," the first month in very old Roman calendars and named after their



ON THE ROAD

by Rick Methot

god of war... Mars.

Hostile people, those Romans. March, hey, I looked this stuff up so you didn't have to... you're welcome... is one of seven months with 31 days, that feel like 51. You want some good news about now?

Saint Patrick's Day is the 17th of this month. I haven't a drop of Irish blood in me, but I married Irish and our son and daughter are named Brian and Kathleen and our grandson is Colin.

I think I'll have another pint, thank

you.

Easter, if you're of the Christian faith, falls on the 27th. Easter is usually on a Sunday. Count on it. Purim, for those of the Jewish persuasion, is the 24th of this month. It's supposed to be a fun holiday.

We all could use a little fun in March. There's more. Most hunting preserves are still open, and I have a hunt booked for Game Creek down in South Jersey the early part of this month.

Shad may be appearing in the Delaware River this time of year. One of the earliest arrivals in my memory, when Fred Lewis was still alive and running the netting operation at Holcomb Island in Lambertville, was right around Saint Patrick's Day.

Trout season will officially open next month, but there are a heap of waters in New Jersey you can fish year-round if you're so inclined.

My days, however, of sloshing around in ice water are long over. I now prefer to lower my aging body onto a large boat where a guy in white nautical dress directs me to a fighting chair and takes my drink order.

There are "Strong Winds in the Sugar Bush" in March as the title to that month's chapter reads in one of my favorite books that I've mentioned several times in this space: *Cache Lake Country* by John J. Rowlands that came out in 1947. Google it, buy it. You will read and re-read it for the rest of your days if you have any love for the outdoors.

Meanwhile, I just received an email from my "word on the street" contact in Lake Placid, NY. He says we have more snow in New Jersey than they do.

"Send it up," he writes.

If I only could.

I'm going to build a fire in the den (there is a fireplace) about now and pour myself a toddy. It's the only way to deal with March.

Oops, it's still January... but what the heck, a fire and a toddy still sounds good. As well as dreams of spring.

Events for April, 2016

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--------|-----------------------------------|-----------|---|----------------------------|---|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 Trout Season opens |
| 10 | 11 | 12 Fish & Game Council meeting | 13 | 14 | 15 NJSFSC State Meeting | 16 Spring Reservoir Cleanup, RVTA fishrvta.org |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 RVTA meeting fishrvta.com | 22 | 23 Perch Tournament, Landisville Gunning Club njwhiteperch.com |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |

Endangered Spotted Owls and Other Lies

By now most of us have had our fill of the news regarding the takeover of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon by a so-called militia group. It resulted in nearly a month-long standoff which, in turn, resulted in the death of one of the militia group leaders during the waning days of January.

Quite candidly, my response to the news reports about this militia group was much the same as when, decades earlier, I'd see a billboard or poster or some other type of dispatch from the John Birch Society warning U.S. citizens of a nationwide takeover by some insurrectionist or revolutionary group. I paid no attention.

Maybe that's why wife says I'm like the proverbial Missouri mule that has to be "hit up alongside the head with a two-by-four before you get my attention." Now, at least five decades later, I'm finally paying attention.

My newfound attentiveness has nary a thing to do about the Oregon militia group, nor the John Birch Society. Instead, what has my attention is the often outrageous lies and sophistry promulgated by elite groups usually, but not always, called NGOs, or Non-Government Organizations. And allow me one additional observation: If you're a hunter, angler, competition shooter, or someone who merely enjoys the outdoors, most of these NGOs are not your friend, despite their often misleading labels and the male bovine excrement they try to force-feed us.

As a quick example, the Brady Group fosters an agenda that would prohibit the sale of as many guns as possible. The group's own web site claims it has blocked an "estimated 2-million prohibited gun purchases."

It has been said that one cannot prove a negative. Hence, how would the Brady Group know how many unlawful sales of weapons it blocked unless that sale started out with some form of proper registration, thus enabling the tracking agency—or agent—to keep tabs on the sale? By definition, criminals do not use registration forms when they buy their guns. They get them from the trunk of a 1995 Chevy.

Those same-style lies and deceptions have been used and are continuing today by NGOs nationwide. They run the gamut from allegedly tracking gun sales, so-called Smart Gun technology, and continue up the line to shape worldwide attitudes and influences such as Benghazi and the so-called "great deal" the Obama administration brokered with Iran in which U.S. taxpayers shelled out something like \$1.5 billion to a hostile government that has openly sworn to destroy us.

I will admit that my own labeling of "lies" by these groups is, in itself, a bit bridled. It is instead a capricious system of carefully calculated and malicious falsehoods designed to dupe, deceive and delude the public for various and nefarious political reasons. And the lies and fabrications don't start and stop with the administration of President Barak Hussein Obama, though they do set a new standard for new "laws" in duplicity.

Allow me to cite one of my favorite, glaring examples that originated in Foggy Bottom.

It was 1994 and I happened to be visiting Portland, Oregon, during the annual conference of the Outdoor Writers

Association of America. These conferences are a week in length, and during the conference "press trips" are arranged for members who registered for them, with the hope to take home something new and insightful for whatever publication happens to hire their metaphorical pens.

Yours truly had registered for such an outing to spend some time on Mt. St. Helens to see how her prominence was faring since she blew a head gasket on May 18, 1980. We were slated to spend two days and nights on the mountain where we would get up close and personal with items like road graders and bull dozers that were still buried up to their overhead exhaust systems in a pyroclastic envelope of pumice, as well as a few make-shift crucifixes to mark, we were told, the suspected and/or confirmed location of someone's remains that had yet to be extracted and probably never would.

That, however, is a story for another day. Our travel to Mt. St. Helens included a peripatetic excursion through Oregon's old-growth forests, a sight our guide direly wanted us to see. We spent nearly a full day in this old growth and I, for one, was hoping we could stop at least for an hour or two to fish the nearby crown jewel of Oregon, the Deschutes River. But we couldn't accomplish driving through a growth of old forest without one of us bringing up the sore topic of the Endangered Spotted Owl.

"The only thing that's endangered around here is a rather large family of lumber mill workers, foresters, and lumberjacks," our host and driver said, his words dripping with disdain.

He pointed with his hand, on an extended arm circling in all directions, indicating an unending and somewhat surreal surrounding of moss-covered trees. "All of this can now be considered tinder. We can't log it, hell we're lucky to even be able to drive through here if the NGOs had their way," he said, adding, "All we need is a good lightning strike and this place will go up like a napalm bomb. It's in sore need of timbering but thanks to a sham study about the spotted owl, it's all off limits."

Later, while camped on the periphery of Mt. St. Helens, we inquired of our guide as to why he considered the spotted owl study a sham, and how NGOs figured in it? "There really wasn't any study at all, or if there were, it wasn't much of a study. No one (from an NGO) was ever seen out here taking photos or conducting any kind of study. What really happened was certain preservation groups (he spat the word 'preservation') filed litigation demanding a halt to all timbering in the entire area but more specifically the old-growth areas. But they needed a reason, so the spotted owl provided the necessary cover," he said, noting that in this instance, the lead NGO was the Sierra Legal Defense Fund that led the charge with several other NGOs bringing up the rear.

"And we're not talking about only old growth forest," our guide said. "When Sierra finished, literally millions of acres of prime timber had been listed as off-limits to timbering, old growth as well as new," he said. As a personal observation, I now knew why there was an abundance of Oregon cars with bumper stickers reading: "Save a Logger, Kill a Spotted Owl," or "I Love Spotted Owls—Fried."

Tight Lines and Straightaway Shots®

by Robert Brunisholz



The spotted owl was the center of controversy in the early 1990s when the federal courts ruled that millions of acres of commercially viable timberlands could not be utilized because old-growth forests are home to the spotted owl. Decades later, according to sources, it was determined that the spotted owl never was endangered. Currently, there are approximately between 5,000 and 10,000 nesting pairs of spotted owls residing within Oregon's old-growth forests. Photo courtesy of Wild Nature Institute.

That was 22 years ago, or thereabouts. Since then, I've become more aware of what these so-called NGOs are up to, especially here in New Jersey where the Sierra Club seems to be the guidon bearer for anything that would restrict nearly any outdoor activity one could conjure up, especially if that activity included the harvesting of any wildlife.

About six or seven years ago, our oldest son bought a book titled *Global Governance*, by Henry Lamb, as a birthday present for yours truly. Lamb was a tireless constitutionalist and columnist for *World Net Daily*. Lamb died in 2012 at the age of 76, but not before exposing efforts of the United Nations that would, essentially, negate our constitution and eliminate the Second Amendment. The following quote, from the chapter titled, "Federal Land Use Control Through Ecosystem Management," is attributed to a guy named Andy Stahl of the Sierra Legal Defense Fund in a disarmingly candid admission while addressing a conference of fellow eco-freaks at the University of Oregon in 1988.

"The spotted owl has never been in danger of extinction. The spotted owl was just a 'surrogate' [we used] to stop further timber harvests until Congress has (had) a chance to provide specific statutory protection for these forests."

"The National Audubon Society, the Wilderness Society and other NGOs initiated litigation nationwide that prevented any use of millions of acres of prime timberland," according to Lamb when addressing Stahl's statement, and he wasn't speaking of only incidents involving the spotted owl.

But by this time a lot of folks, including some journalists, were starting to see through the misty haze so often created by

old growth forests. Consequently, reporter and author Gregg Easterbrook, writing in the April 24, 1994 edition of the *Sacramento Bee*, penned a story that was quite unwelcome by the "preservationists;" it was titled "The Spotted Owl Scam."

Admittedly, I couldn't locate a copy of Easterbrook's column in its entirety, so I contacted him. He verified Lamb's writings as to how the eco-fiends used anything from misinformation to outrageous lies about the spotted owl to preserve millions of acres of "untouched" forest land.

And there's more.

As recently as 2014, a group called the Natural Resources Defense Council, acting in Orange County, California, filed a complaint that would halt construction of a highway project on 400,000 acres of land because the California gnatcatcher (yes, a real bird), used the land to nest and feed. Of course, it went without saying that the California gnatcatcher was in danger of going the way of the passenger pigeon.

The judge threw it out of court. When asked why by a member of the NRDC, he simply stated, "That's easy. Because the California gnatcatcher is not now, nor has it ever been, endangered."

Translation: Nice try, jerks, but I wasn't born yesterday.

Instances as those mentioned here are but a minuscule percentage of those in which pseudo-science has been used to achieve social or political gains or exploit both public and private lands, and to keep sportsmen off of those lands. The actual problem is more complex than we will ever know, nor do we have any way of measuring how these people have already affected existing legislation or regulations, or for that matter, like the loggers in Oregon, how many lives have been ruined.

SCOTT L. BACH, ESQ.
NRA Board Member & ANJRPC Executive Director



NRA

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from *Skillful Anglers*, p. 3

Saltwater, and Catch and Release Striped Bass Saltwater. Christopher is also recognized as getting an Inshore Slam category.

Christopher Pereira of Hopatcong won four categories: Catch and Release Smallmouth Bass, Bullhead, Winter Flounder and Fluke. Christopher is also recognized as getting a Panfish Slam and a Specialist, Master and Elite Angler Awards.

Kevin Kennedy of Mount Ephraim won two categories: Catch and Release Crappie, and Rainbow Trout.

Frank Ruczynski of Monroeville tied (twice!) with Paul Weidknecht of Phillipsburg in the Catch and Release Sunfish category. Frank is also recognized as achieving a Panfish Slam, as well as a Master and Specialist Award.

The 2015 Skillful Angler Winners are as follows:

Adult Category Freshwater Species

Crappie: 2 pounds, 11.2 ounces caught by Randy Blaker of Pitman on October 10. Randy was fishing from a boat in the Salem Canal when he landed the fish at 2:30 pm. Ten-pound-test was used with a St. Croix rod and a Shimano reel. A crankbait served as the lure. The fish measured 16.25 inches in length. Girth was unknown.

Chain Pickerel: 4 pounds, 5 ounces caught by Vinnie DeStefano of Hampton on February 18. Vinnie was fishing through the ice on Lake Hopatcong when he landed the fish. Four-pound-test was used with a jigging rod and a spinning reel. A fathead/jig combo served as the bait. The length was unknown but the fish had a 12.5 inch girth.

Brown Trout: 9 pounds, 11 ounces caught by Francis G. Barrett of North Bergen on July 11. Francis was fishing from a kayak on Lake Aeroflex when he landed the fish at 4:45 pm. Ten-pound-test was used with an Ugly Stik rod and a spinning reel. A herring served as the bait. The fish measured 27.5 inches in length. Girth was unknown.

Rainbow Trout: 6 pounds, 0 ounces caught by Francis Kuchinski of Matawan on January 23. Francis was wading in the South Branch of the Raritan River in Long Valley when he landed the fish at 2:00 pm. Six pound fly line was used with a 7-foot, 5-inch Cortland Crown II fly rod with a conventional fly reel. A worm was the bait. The fish measured 20 inches in length and had an 11.5 inch girth.

Atlantic Landlocked Salmon: 4 pounds, 0 ounces caught by Charles McBride of Budd Lake on May 14. Charles was fishing from the shore at Tilcon Lake when he landed the fish at 7:30 pm. Six-pound-test was used with an Ugly Stik rod and a spinning reel. A gold Kastmaster served as the lure. The fish measured 23 inches in length and had an 12 inch girth.

Adult Category Saltwater Species

Black Sea Bass: 4 pounds, 8 ounces caught by William Mayfield of Manasquan on October 22. William was fishing from a boat in the ocean when he landed the fish at 10:30 am. Thirty-pound-test was used with a St. Croix rod and a reel. A clam served as bait. The fish measured 21.5 inches in length and had a 13.25 inch girth.

Striped Bass Saltwater: 48 pounds, 0 ounces caught by Christopher Baggott of Neptune on October 25. Christopher was fishing from the surf at Monmouth Beach when he landed the fish at 1:30 pm. Forty-pound braid was used with an 11-foot Tica rod and a spinning reel. A live bunker served as the bait. The fish measured 53 inches in length and had a 27.5 inch girth.

Tautog: 23 pounds, 0 ounces caught by Shane Burke of Holmdel on January 29. Shane was fishing from a boat out of Cape May when he landed the fish at 2:00 pm. Fifty-pound-test was used with a custom rod with a Newell reel. A white crab was the bait. The fish measured 30 inches in length and had an 24.5 inch girth.

Junior Category Freshwater Species

Largemouth Bass: 6 pounds, 10 ounces caught by 7-year-old T.J. Kepner, II of Somers Point on April 19. T.J. was fish-

ing from the shore at Birch Grove Park when he caught the fish at 12:45 pm. Twenty-pound-test was used with a spinning rod and reel. A nightcrawler was used as bait. The fish measured 21.5 inches in length and had a 16 inch girth.

Rainbow Trout: 4 pounds, 15.2 ounces caught by 14-year-old Kevin Devenney of Jackson on November 2. Kevin was fishing from the shore of the South Branch of the Metedeconk when he landed the fish at 6:30 pm. Four-pound-test was used with an Ugly Stik GX2 rod and a Quantum reel. Pink Powerbait was the bait of choice. The fish measured 23.125 inches in length and had a 12.25 inch girth.

Catch and Release Category Freshwater Species

Largemouth Bass: 23.25 inches caught by John Derolco, Sr. of Phillipsburg on June 6. John was fishing from the shore at Merrill Creek Reservoir when he reeled the fish in at 11:45 am. Twelve-pound-test was used with a Shimano Baitcaster rod and an Abu Garcia Black Max reel. A Berkeley Pitboss served as the lure. The girth was unknown.

Smallmouth Bass: 22.0625 inches caught by Christopher Pereira of Hopatcong on August 10. Christopher was fishing from a boat on Lake Hopatcong when he reeled the fish in at 9:30 pm. Ten-pound-test was used with an Ugly Stik rod and a Cabela's reel. A homemade fly was the bait of choice. The girth was unknown.

Striped Bass Hybrid: 25.75 inches caught by Rocco Favina, Jr. of Wayne on November 28. Rocco was fishing from a boat on Lake Hopatcong when he reeled in the fish at 9:40 am. Twenty-pound-test was used with a Daiwa rod and a Shimano reel. Chicken liver served as the bait. The girth was unknown.

Bullhead: 15.025 inches caught by Christopher Pereira of Hopatcong on April 21. Christopher was fishing from the shore of Demott Pond when he reeled in the fish at 8:15 pm. Eight-pound-test was used with an Abu Garcia rod and a Pflueger reel. Corn served as the bait. Girth was unavailable.

Channel Catfish: 30 inches caught by Rob Jasonek of Nutley on January 26. Rob was ice fishing on the Delaware River when he reeled in the fish at 12:05 pm. Four-pound-test braided line was used with a light action jigging rod and a spinning reel. A Rapala jig served as the lure. The girth was unknown.

Crappie: 16 inches caught by Kevin Kennedy of Mount Ephraim on November 4. Kevin was fishing from the shore of Mantua Creek when he reeled in the fish at 5:00 pm. Four-pound-test was used with a 6-foot light rod and a spinning reel. A 2-inch swim bait was used to attract the fish. Girth was unknown.

Muskellunge: 53 inches caught by Shawn McCardell of Thurmont, MD on November 15. Shawn was fishing from a boat on Oxford Furnace Lake when he reeled in the fish at 1:15 pm. Eighty-pound braid was used with a rod and an Abu Garcia reel. A rainbow trout served as the bait. The girth was unknown.

Yellow Perch: 14.75 inches caught by Chad Kratina of Flemington on January 17. Chad was fishing from through the ice on Lake Kittatinny when he reeled in the fish at 10:30 am. Ten-pound-test line was used with a tip-up and he used his hands to pull in the fish. Live bait attracted the fish. The girth was unknown.

Chain Pickerel: 27 inches caught by Larry Newman of Brick on December 14. Larry was fishing from a kayak on Lake Riviera when he landed the fish at 3:00 pm. Fifteen-pound-test was used with a TFO rod and a Quantum reel. A 4-inch Rapala Xrap was used as the lure. Girth was unknown.

Northern Pike: 38 inches caught by Megan Helsel of Nutley on March 20. Megan was fishing from the shore of the Passaic River when she landed the fish at 5:30 pm. Twenty pound test was used with a Daiwa rod and reel. A jerkbait served as the lure. The girth was unknown.

Rainbow Trout: 23.5 inches caught by Kevin Kennedy of Mount Ephraim on April 7. Kevin was fishing from the shore at Westville Lake when he landed the fish at 5:00 pm. Six-pound-test was used with a spinning rod and reel. Powerbait attracted

The McCardells with the 2015 Skillful Anglers program-winning muskellunge. Photo courtesy NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife.



the fish. Girth was unknown.

Sunfish: 9.5 inches caught by Frank Ruczynski of Monroeville on May 24. Frank was fishing from a boat on Garrison Lake when he reeled in the fish at 2:00 pm. Six-pound-test was used with a Shimano rod and reel. A Berkeley Gulp served as the lure. Girth was unknown.

(And...)

Sunfish: 9.5 inches caught by Frank Ruczynski of Monroeville on June 7. Frank was fishing from a boat on Garrison Lake when he reeled in the fish at 5:30 pm. Six-pound-test was used with a Shimano rod and reel. A trout magnet served as the lure. Girth was unknown.

(And...)

Sunfish: 9.5 inches caught by Paul Weidknecht of Phillipsburg on August 6. Paul was fishing from the shore of Watergate Lake in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area when he reeled in the fish at 7:15 pm. 5X line was used with a 5 weight G. Loomis fly rod and a G. Loomis reel. A #10 Henry's Fork Grasshopper pattern fly served as the bait. Girth was unknown.

Walleye: 27.5 inches caught by Michael Kolodziej of Bound Brook on December 20. Michael was fishing from a boat on the Delaware River when he reeled in the fish at 8:00 am. Ten-pound-test was used with a 7-foot St. Croix rod and a spinning reel. A shad served as the bait. Girth was unknown.

Catch and Release Category Saltwater Species

Striped Bass: 44.5 inches caught by Christopher Baggott of Neptune on November 4. Christopher was fishing from a kayak in the ocean off of Lavalette when he landed the fish at 8:30 am. Thirty-pound braid was used with a spinning rod and reel. A live bunker served as the bait. Girth was unavailable.

Bluefish: 35.75 inches caught by Arthur Kosakowski of Bayonne on May 26. Arthur was fishing from the shore of Upper New York Bay in Bayonne when he landed the fish. Twenty-pound-test was used with a medium/heavy rod and a spinning reel. A bunker chunk served as the bait. The girth was unavailable.

Winter Flounder: 18.375 inches caught by Christopher Pereira of Hopatcong on April 26. Christopher was fishing from a boat on Raritan Bay when he reeled in the fish at 12:30 pm. Thirty-pound-test was used with a Shimano rod and an Okuma reel. Clam served as the bait. Girth was unavailable.

Fluke: 28.0625 inches caught by Christopher Pereira of Hopatcong on May 24. Christopher was fishing from a boat on Raritan Bay when he reeled in the fish at 9:30 am. Twenty-pound-test was used with a Shimano rod and a Daiwa reel. A custom bucktail served as the lure. Girth was unavailable.

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