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 seasonally driven. The ever-fickle Garden State has such dramatic changes in temperature, often from day to day or even during a given day that we can all do a better job in cleaning up our collective acts. How many times have we all said... 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. Many of us have already been on the water. However, here are some rules not to be broken lest you find yourself being carried out of church by the Handelians, manned by six of your best friends.

Rule number one: Before venturing out onto the ice, always check the thickness of the ice. We often hear the term “new ice,” as opposed to ice that has been frozen 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 previous winter.

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 on Wednesday, and may have been only a few days ago. In New Jersey, we have “new ice” several times a winter. 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 you want to hold that gear you’re dragging behind you, because conditions can change. The ice should be able to support your weight, and if it can be determined that the ice is too thin, use a chisel to make a hole to check the ice ahead of you as you walk. Start by banging the ice with the ice chisel to see if the sound of the ice is changing. If the sound changes, do not continue as the ice you are standing on may have been weakened by the chisel before you tested it. If you have a lot of thick ice, you should make a hole with the ice chisel and check the ice. The general rule of thumb is to never go farther than you can swim, as you may not be able to find your way back to shore. With these precautions, you should be able to enjoy the ice without incident.

So, how does one check the ice thickness to be safe?

First, never venture out on any ice without checking the ice thickness. This does not mean a quick tap on the ice. First, find a safe area to start. Next, use your ice chisel to cut a 6” x 6” hole in the ice. Tie a small piece of rope tied around the top of the chisel to your ice boot and use your boot to check the ice thickness. Always check the ice ahead of you as you walk.

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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 cons 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, NJ/NJ Baykeeper, the American Littoral Society, the Jersey Coast Anglers Association (JCAA), New Jersey Outdoor Alliance (NJOA), NJ Council of Drumming 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.

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 write 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 act. How many times have you gone to your favorite fishing spot and found it to be covered with all kinds of residue, empty wonk containers, empty plastic lure packages, cans, cigarette butts, daggies, 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 again 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 up after other less environmentally conscious fisherman!”

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Keeping Up With the Weather

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 weekday 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 week we’d been with my mother-in-law in New York, so guess who got to shovel her walk and driveway 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 all we know, conditions meowed out considerably after that not-near-record snowfall near which, interestingly, we’ve been seeing mostly “crazy mild” years, with 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 for a general layman’s perspective, it presents unusual problems to any editor of a month-by-month outdoors-related publication. As we all know, every year is very seasonal and very weather-related. In any typical year (at least typical ever since the most recent ice ages glaciers withdrew), we can look forward with fair confidence to things like sneaky conditions for winter bowhunter and late winter waterfowling, plenty of ice-crusted lakes and ponds for icefishing, and the like, as many of comparable predictions for the other seasons.

But right now - as Molly might have said to her companion - “Mr. McGee.” We hope that readers will keep this in mind as they peruse our offerings over this season. For example, I know at the time that Bob Branchial was working on his icing safety piece for this issue, we were seeing quite typically wintry and many of us assumed that we’d really settled into an actual-by-God winter.

Well, maybe so, but now staring out side and watching the snow melt at a near-record pace in this springlike 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 would be careful about what one wishes for.

Oliver Shapiro, Editor

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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**PERCH TOURNEY 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.njwshperch.com and on our Facebook page (Landisville Gunning Club). Thank you.

David Lorenzo, 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 NSFSC.

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. Keep in mind 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 Wolf, Editor, Edwin, NJ

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**NEW JERSEY FEDERATION OF SPORTSMEN’S CLUBS, INC.**

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**2015 SKILLFUL ANGLERS AWARDS**

This year marks the 33rd anniversary of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife’s Skillful Angler Recognition 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 2015. Although this is a problem, this change affects the format that has been in place for the last twenty years.

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

- Freshwater: largemouth bass (7), striped bass (7), striped bass hybrid (7), brown trout (1), chain pickerel (9), 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), sand shark (1), and weakfish (1).

- Inshore Slam and two Panfish Slams were awarded, with 14 applications, followed by the adult category with 11 applications each.

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

  - 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. 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 of each small- and largemouth bass.
  - Panfish Slam: catch one of each sunfish, crappie and yellow perch.

- In 2015, no entries were received for striped bass - freshwater, carp, American shad, brook trout, lake trout, black drum, cod, dolphinfish, kingfish, mako shark, blue marlin, white marlin, pollack, 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 variety category with 74 applications, and the junior with 65 applications. In 2015, 41 entries were received in the first fish category were received. Additionally, two Specialist Angler and two Panfish Slams 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 Baggett of Neptune won two categories: Adult Striped Bass - see Skillful Anglers, p. 11
It was the third week of January. The sea bass season had closed and the cod fishing was meager. The sea bass had taken out the only consistent action aberrant Jersey party boats being ling. But the radio chatter was usually reverberating with reports of ling. The shark pack 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; there had been no really warm days. As the summertime hasnuts, just vacating Georges Bank, the fish were a New Year and heading to southern winter quarters off Cape Hatteras. Several days of the mackerel being encountered by boats sailing from Sheepshead Bay, a couple of Jersey party packets ran into a normal number of mackerel, with schools of them moving throughout the north Jersey area. While the initial catches were modest at best, there were also many schools of sea herring in the same area. The consistent catches augured well for party packets sailing from Shark and Manasquan Inlets.

The January blizzard and its twenty-foot-plus north-north-east seas kept the party packets and even a couple of Jersey charter boats off the water. Flooded and the highways white instead of black, everyone pretty much thought it was enoughto discourage anglers from even thinking about going fishing. But the mackerel didn’t mind, as they just adjusted their travel schedules and moved to the waters where temperatures were more to their liking, which they may have found to be an excellent changeover to winter time conditions in Jersey waters.

But they’re back! Historically, as waters begin to warm each spring, the northern species make a seasonal migration north. The northern waters
to south of the Mason-Dixon line is a phenomenon that will ensure that many winter residents spend the spring and summer months in Jersey waters.

As you read this they may not yet have

beauty 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.

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

The Record
Northern Pike's Peak Season

by Bruce Edward Lilton

March 2016

NEW JERSEY FEDERATED SPORTSMEN NEWS

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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. Herrings had just become available in late April, awkwardly cast by theaginator of our surf rods (eight-foot sticks we use for stripped bass and bluefish). I remember taking a break from my teens the news of Herb Hepler’s 30-pound, two-ounce state record pike from the Passaic River in March. He and I recommend the same for all pike techniques, except for bobber fishing, when you plan to be away. And give them some safety check list. When planning an out-of-area flight, they always let someone know where you are. They may indicate where a probable predator is lurking. Urges and ideas never just happen randomly, unrelated to what you’re doing and the future ice fishing, and that’s a good thing.

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 securing ice anglers the spikes will be easily accessible when needed. Photo courtesy Rapala.

Tom Slota (left) with his first pike. Any kid can succeeed with a bobber setup, and the approach setting sun to the half hour is the best time. Bruce Lilton photo.

Though two and one-half inches may hold their breath, I wouldn’t trust it to hold me plus my gear. Try for at least four inches. Better safe than out in the back of an ambulance with some nearby first responder heaving 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 stitch 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. The weight of that trip to Nick’s Hardware necessary. Commercially manufactured safety spikes are available from several companies, and you can get some better than gutter spikes because they have molded handles that float, and they are completely stainless steel. You can have someone enabling one to “wear” them around the neck, or place the spikes in the pocket of your PFD so they are easily accessible when you plan to be away. And give them some safety check list. When planning an out-of-area flight, they always let someone know where you are. They may indicate where a probable predator is lurking. Urges and ideas never just happen randomly, unrelated to what you’re doing and the future ice fishing, and that’s a good thing.

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Took advantage of the pike’s habit of halting on spawning grounds, they rarely matters, but I prefer short pauses, just enough to make a regular retrieve interest them (safety spikes) as your ‘get-out-of-jail-free’ card.”

Regardless of any marginal reproductive success, the fish seek areas of residual weeds in lake and reservoir coves especially associated with feeder streams. The rivers congreate pike to 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 in the river in a tiny tributary creek within Veronica’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 many of them half-a-dozen such rods get set. Predictably, no matter how well placed the bobbers, most of the pike get caught by line-timing technique. A bobber means waiting on fish, it puts you in a reactive mode. Once in that awkward position, 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 when going after them involves outward observation of branch stickups, perhaps, or a belly of deeper water or creek channel in a cove. And all structure is important, but there’s more to finding fish. Pay attention to your own internal prompts. 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 truly intent on discovery.

Why make a cast unless you believe in it? At 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.

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There’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 Hawaii’s rocky shoreline, but fishermen 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 1½-pound giant trevally using a barbless circle hook.

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 crankbait rod, now they even make cranking sticks specifically for single lures, like Strike King’s monobraid 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-soft-plug baits, for lighter Texas rigs and small spinnerbaits and 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 topwater plugs, 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-soft-plug baits, for lighter Texas rigs and small spinnerbaits.

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.

Fisherfolk have tended to scoff at 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 Hawaii’s rocky shoreline, but fishermen discovered 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 1½-pound giant trevally using a barbless circle hook.

Barbless circle hooks are not new to most fishermen, especially among salmon anglers on the West Coast. There are some tournaments that now require the use of barbless circle hooks. If you don’t want to pinch barbs down, check your tackle shops; hook manufacturers will make barbless circle hooks in most sizes. I like fluke fishing (or summer flounder) as our southern fishermen call them) but I’m often plagued with shorts and I’m currently releasing small fluke. The same approach applies to sea 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.

"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 striped biomass is now considerably smaller as a result of the poor to mediocre year classes that have generally characterized the fishery since 2003. And 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.

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Conservation Officers reported a total of 6748 hours of duty. During patrols, Officers issued more than 1000 fishing citations, 27 hunting citations, and 170 traffic and consumer violations, including violations of operation of ATV on a WMA, Possession of under-sized deer during the closed season" and unlawful possession of an indigenous razor clam.

**Northern Region Highlights**

Conservation Officer Driscoll responded from home, to a complaint from the owners of a summer cottage located in Morris County, in reference to a deer being shot in a neighborhood. CO Driscoll responded late that night, and located 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 that was dropped into a wooded area. The man advised that he was only trying to scare the deer away.

On September 18, Conservation Officer Marieviewed the hunter and determined that the deer had actually been harvested in Wallpack Township, Sussex County (DMZ 4), which is also closed.

CO Martiak investigated a complaint about an ATV that was found damaged and abandoned on the Assunpink WMA. CO Martiak was able to track down the owner of the ATV after viewing and determining that it had actually dumped the ATV on the WMA.

Three summonses were issued, including a Title 39 summons for abandoning a motor vehicle on public property, a Title 39 summons for dumping refuse on a WMA, and a Title 13 summons for disposing of solid waste in excess of 0.1 cubic yard.

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

CO’s Leecke patrolled Durand Park Pool in Parsippany-Troy Hills, Morris County, to investigate a recent OGT complaint. From a surveillance point on the pond, he observed three fisherman catching fish and putting them in a cooler and a plastic bag. He did not observe any violation. During his search of the fisherman it was determined that they had taken 78 panfish in total. This is three fish over the legal limit for the date of the violation. They were cited for taking the over the bag limit of antlered deer.

Both Spruce Run and Round Valley Reservoirs were busy again during this report period. Officers Paey and Ocampo patrolled by vehicle and boat and took 38 summonses for violations of “fishing without a license,” “failure to exhibit a valid fishing license,” “possession of undersized bass,” “possession of under-sized crappie,” “possession of undersized trout,” “possession of an antlered deer outside of a WMA,” “killing/possessing a wild bird contrary to the state game code.”

Office Holmes was patrolling the Columbia Lake WMA in Warren County on Labor Day weekend. While on patrol he observed a group of people illegally fishing and consuming alcohol on the WMA. Several summonses were issued for “fishing without a license,” “possession of alcohol,” and “excessive possession of the daily bag limit of panfish.”

**Central Region Highlights**

Officers from the Central Region worked together to increase the catching activity and ATV 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. 35. During the month of September, four officers from the Central Region conducted patrols in Manchester Township on the west side of Rt. 35.

During early October, 49,800 acres were patrolled, 97 people were apprehended, and 76 summonses were issued. Violations included violations of operation of ATV on a WMA, entering a restricted area, operating an ATV off a WMA, and operating a motor vehicle off the established roadway, operating an unregistered ATV on the WMA, and possessing an alcoholic beverages on a WMA, interference with the duties of a Conservation Officer, operating an ATV without a helmet, swimming on an ATV, careless driving, and operating a motor vehicle with an expired driver’s license. CO’s Rivoiello, McManson, Szalaj, Mascio and Lt.’s. Lacrosse and Szulecki all participated in these patrols.

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

CO Fox was on patrol on the Maple Lake Wildlife Management Area in Estelle Manor, Atlantic County when he observed three fisherman catching fish and putting them in a cooler and a plastic bag. He did not observe any violation. During his search of the fisherman it was determined that they had taken 78 panfish in total. This is three fish over the legal limit for the date of the violation. They were cited for taking the over the bag limit of antlered deer.

CO’s Leecke patrolled Durand Park Pool in Parsippany-Troy Hills, Morris County, to investigate a recent OGT complaint. From a surveillance point on the pond, he observed three fisherman catching fish and putting them in a cooler and a plastic bag. He did not observe any violation. During his search of the fisherman it was determined that they had taken 78 panfish in total. This is three fish over the legal limit for the date of the violation. They were cited for taking the over the bag limit of antlered deer.

A short time later, the ATV operator arrived back at his vehicle and was apprehended. During the interview, he denied interfering with the duties of a Conservation Officer, operating an unregistered ATV on the 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 during a parade. CO Faith was contacted because of a 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 was contacted again by the same man who entered the enclosed area which is designed to protect the endangered beach blond plover. CO Faith requested the man to enter 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, with a 14-foot boat near the shore of the Assunpink WMA. During his field inspection, he determined that the fisherman used a cast net, over the limit tautog, interference with the duties of a Conservation Officer, wanton disregard for the law, and unlawful possession of an indigenous razor clam.

CO Faith was contacted by a local resident who stated that he had observed a man in a restricted area of the WMA. After four hours, one of the individuals produced the deed, which was immediately confiscated by CO Faith.

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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 D. 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 number of problems. These rabbits are becoming rare and came close to being classified as endangered in 2015. The downswing in numbers is due to declining populations and was declining due to habitat loss and vulnerability to predators. Federal wildlife officials estimate that the New England cottontail’s range has been reduced from the drug dose within two hours. 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 Furbear Research Program 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 good shape.

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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 been used since 1861, the .44-40 Winchester will be chambered in the .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, lever, 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; suggest a retail price for the 1866 is $3,329.99. For more information on Winchester Firearms, visit the company website at www.winchesterguns.com.

A Useful Survey

ShooterSurvey.com and Hunter-Survey.com recently learned that as many as 50 percent of the sportsmen they surveyed had taken a child shooting in the past 12 months, while 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 “the cutting edge” of design or technology. It does help, for sure, if your company is named, as “Cutting Edge Bullets.” This company has introduced a new projection 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. More information, see the company’s website: http://site.cuttingedgbullets.com/

Events for April, 2016

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The 1873’s silver-nitride-finished receiver side plates, lifter, dust cover, crescent butt plate, and forearm cap have 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 leaf 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.

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By now most of us have had our fill of the news regarding the takeover of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon by a revolutionary 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 about this militia group was much the same as when, decades earlier, I’d see a billboard of your favorite, alleged, misguided group. It is instead a capricious system of “lies” by these groups is, in itself, a bit broader than anyone could have anticipated.

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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 in Oregon’s old-growth forests. Photo courtesy of Wild Nature Institute.

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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 go-to people for anything that would restrict nearly any outdoor activity one could conjure up, especially if that activity includes the simple, everyday business of out-of-a page 10

NEW JERSEY FEDERATED SPORTSMEN NEWS

March 2016

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As recently as 2014, a group called the Natural Resources Defense Council, acting in Oregon County, California, filed a complaint that would halt construction of a highway project on 400,000 acres of land that included 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.

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 any-thing from misinformation to outrageous lies about the spotted owl to preserve millions of acres of “unprotected” forest land.

And there’s more. As recently as 2014, a group called the Natural Resources Defense Council, acting in Oregon County, California, filed a complaint that would halt construction of a highway project on 400,000 acres of land that included 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.

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Saltwater, and Catch and Release Striped Bass. Water, Christine is also recog-
ized as getting an Inshore Slam category. Christopher Pereira of Hopatcong was
winning the category Catch and Release Smallmouth Bass, Bullhead, Winter
Flounder, and Fluke. Pereira is also
recognized as getting a Panfish Slam and a
Specialist, and Master and Elite Angler Awards:

Kevin Kennedy of Mount Ephraim won two categories: Catch and Release Record Bluefish.
Frank Ruczynski of Monrovie tied
(twice!) with Paul Weidknecht of Phillipsburg
for the Adult Category Freshwater Species:

Muskellunge: 53 inches caught by
John Derolco, Sr. of Phillipsburg on
February 18. Vinnie was fishing
from a kayak on Lake Hopatcong when he reeled in the fish at 12:30 pm. Thirty-
pound-test was used with an Ugly-Stik GX2 rod and a Quantum reel. Pink Powerbait was
the lure. Girth was unavailable.

Winter Flounder: 18.375 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 spin-
ing reel. A bunker crab served as the bait.
Girth was unavailable.

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The McCardell's with the 2015 Skillful Anglers program-winning muskellunge. Photo
Geoffery N. Division of Fish & Wildlife.

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 Lavallette when he
landed the fish at 8:30 am. Thirty-
 pound brad 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 spin-
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