



# Straight Talk

## A Big Lift for the Susquehanna River

On Thursday, May 9, 1991, a dedication ceremony was held at the Conowingo Hydroelectric Station for the recently constructed east fish passage facility. The lift was designed following U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service guidelines in cooperation with Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York and other federal agencies. The new lift was completed by Philadelphia Electric Company on April 1, 1991, at a cost of \$12 million. It is designed to lift 750,000 American shad, and will be operated annually from April through mid-June.

Although it will be necessary to transport captured American shad upriver by truck for the next few years, the stage is now set



**Edward R. Miller, P.E.**

*Executive Director  
Pennsylvania Fish Commission*

to let American shad migrate again into the Pennsylvania waters of the Susquehanna, thereby triggering installation of the next lift at Holtwood Dam.

Speakers at the dedication ceremony included Nicholas DeBenedictis, Senior Vice President, Philadelphia Electric Company; Joseph F. Paquette, Jr., Chairman and CEO, Philadelphia Electric Company; Most Reverend William H. Keeler, Archbishop of Baltimore; Honorable William Donald Schaefer, Governor of Maryland; Honorable W. Tayloe Murphy, Jr., Chairman, Chesapeake Bay Commission; Honorable Frank Bracken, Deputy Secretary, U. S. Department of Interior; and me.

The following are my comments to the large group attending the dedication ceremony, which I want to share with *Angler* readers:

One hundred and twenty-five years ago, on March 6, Governor Andrew Curtin signed Act 336, which established the post of Pennsylvania Fish Commissioner. The first Commissioner was charged with the responsibility for management of Pennsylvania's fishery resources, with the specific mandate of managing and protecting the migratory fishes in the Susquehanna River. In 1931, Act 121, the first motorboat law was enacted and the Fish Commission was given the additional responsibility of regulating and managing motorboating activities on Pennsylvania waterways.

Today, management of Pennsylvania's valuable fisheries and related fishing and boating activities is in the hands of the 10 commissioners who comprise the Pennsylvania Fish Commission.

During this long heritage—125 years for fisheries and 60 years for boating—Pennsylvania has focused continually on the Susquehanna River migratory fish, which at one time migrated upriver more than 200 miles from Conowingo. Navigation dams built in the lower river during the 1830s began restricting upriver American shad migrations, and their ascent to upriver Pennsylvania waters was completely blocked by construction of Holtwood Dam in 1910 and Conowingo Dam in 1928.

Nearly 40 years ago, in 1952, the Pennsylvania Fish Commission and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducted experimental transplanting of shad from the Chesapeake Bay to various points above the dams. This effort was the beginning of

a coordinated restoration effort among Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Susquehanna River Basin Commission, dam owners in Maryland and Pennsylvania, and interested sportsmen.

A major breakthrough occurred in 1960 when Pennsylvania authorized Milo C. Bell and Harlan B. Holmes, West Coast fishway consultants, to study the feasibility of installing fish passage facilities at the four major dams on the lower Susquehanna River. The study concluded that the construction and operation of fish passage facilities for American shad at the four lower Susquehanna River dams was practical, and that restoration should proceed on an integrated step-by-step fish rehabilitation program.

During the past 30 years, involved dam owners and federal and state agencies, working together as the Susquehanna River Anadromous Fish Restoration Committee, have made great progress in restoring sufficient numbers of American shad and finding answers to the many technical and biological questions surrounding this effort.

This restoration effort was greatly enhanced in 1976 by creation of a shad rearing facility on the Juniata River at the village of Van Dyke, Pennsylvania. Operated by the Pennsylvania Fish Commission with financial support from the involved Pennsylvania utilities, this facility has successfully introduced over 100 million young shad into the river system.

The facility we are dedicating today is a fitting testimony to the combined efforts of these organizations during the past 40 years, and the continued presence and interest of the sportsmen throughout Maryland, Pennsylvania and New York. Pennsylvanians look forward to repeating this ceremony at Holtwood Dam. Safe Harbor Dam and York Haven Dam as passage facilities are installed in the remaining structures on the lower Susquehanna River.

Many people have worked many, many years to make this day possible. Philadelphia Electric Company has taken the first giant step in this great effort, and it is now time to move ahead with the next steps at Holtwood, Safe Harbor and York Haven. After 125 years as an agency, the Pennsylvania Fish Commission pledges its continued support for this endeavor.

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**Pennsylvania**  
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*The Keystone State's Official Fishing Magazine*

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Retired Commission "fish wardens" and waterways conservation officers reminisce in this month's 125th Commission anniversary article. To check out "the good old days" as they remember them, see page 4.

# I WAS A PENNSYLVANIA FISH 50 Years of Memories

A terrible situation was bemoaned in Pennsylvania's State Commissioners of Fisheries Report for 1883 and 1884. While the Commissioners were restoring "useful tribes of food fishes" to the waters of the Commonwealth, there were many whose lawless acts were undoing what the Commissioners were working so hard to accomplish.

At that time, the enforcement of the fishery laws was the province of sheriffs and constables. The problem was that many of these officers had "willfully and ... shamefully shirked their obligations. The streams have, therefore, been practically left to the mercy of those who set the laws at defiance, and the result is before the people in the constantly diminished quantities of food fishes."

"Is there no remedy for this?" the report went on to exclaim. "Must it be confessed that it is impossible to have the fishery laws of the state respected? Shall this wanton work of fish destruction, which would not be tolerated in a heathen country, and which is a disgrace to our civilization, be further permitted...?"

"... It becomes absolutely imperative, if the work already done by the Fishery Commissioners is not to prove wholly abortive, that means must be provided for the payment of fish-wardens or water-bailiffs, whose duties shall be rigidly defined by law, and who will, therefore, not be deterred from arresting offenders and testifying against them.... There seems to be no other remedy than the employment of paid wardens, with sworn obligations for the faithful performance of their prescribed duties."

Since that time, the Pennsylvania Fish Commission has had a long history of "faithful performance" by its "fish wardens." Today the title is Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO), reflecting more properly the scope of the duties, enforcing the fishery conservation and boating laws on the waterways of the state.

This past winter, the tenth class of WCO trainees attended instruction at the H.R. Stackhouse School of Fishery Conservation and Watercraft Safety, located at Fisherman's Paradise near Bellefonte. The officer class also completed municipal police officer training at the Pennsylvania State Police Academy, and extensive field training under the tutelage of experienced Fish Commission officers. It takes nine months of intensive training to ready today's "fish warden" men and women for their careers in conservation law enforcement.

When the new WCOs are sent out into their districts, they are issued thousands of dollars worth of equipment from hats, boots and badge to binoculars, boats, typewriters, sidemarm, vehicle, radio and more to aid them in performing all the facets of their jobs. Even computers are part of the equipment.

But it wasn't always like this. Anniversaries are a time for nostalgia, for looking back to see where we've been, how far we've come, what's changed and what hasn't. The Fish Commission's 125th

anniversary celebration is no different. Some of the "old-time fish wardens" who are enjoying their retirement in Pennsylvania were gracious enough to share their reminiscences with *Angler* readers.

## Ken Aley

From 1938 to 1974, if you said "Potter County fish warden," you meant Ken Aley. Ken still resides there, in his north country home town. Back in '38, Ken says, he was working for the highway department. When the opportunity came to get into the Fish Commission, he took it, because, "I'm lazy. I'd rather be a fish warden than shovel asphalt." Ken took a "not too stringent" exam and had to have the endorsement of his county chairman to get the job. He had an interview with the Board of Fisheries Commissioners and six weeks of "training" at the hatchery at Bellefonte, mostly manual labor.

The next stop for the fledgling officer was Harrisburg. There he was told he'd be paid \$100 a month, with a \$75 a month expense account, and was given the paperwork he needed for the job. He'd have to use his own car, compensated at the rate of five cents a mile, and would have to furnish the rest of his equipment himself.

Ken went back to Potter County, where he's been since, except for four years of World War II. The remainder of his training was "on his own," with help from neighboring Game Commission and Fish Commission officers. Though Potter's a big county, at one time Ken was responsible for portions of McKean and Cameron counties as well.

In 1949, Ken posed proudly for the cover of *Pennsylvania Angler* in the Fish Commission's first new uniform. Until then, officers were issued PA State Police hand-me-downs. But Ken says he worked in his hunting clothes most of the time. They were better for the rough-and-tumble outdoors.

In the old days, all he'd have to show to identify himself was his badge, or tell someone who he was. Because he was an institution in the county, most fishermen recognized him. Potter County was a tough one for prosecutions, Ken remembers, nearly all concerning trout. Typical violations sound a lot like today's—short trout, too many trout, no license. In his long career, Ken found the fish law violator to be ingenious. People hide their illegal fish almost anywhere, he says, trying to get away with something.



# WARDEN:



125 years

by Linda L. Steiner

One woman, whose companion was passing his short trout to her, put them down the front of her blouse. She retrieved them when she realized Ken couldn't be bluffed and would take her to the sheriff's to be searched.

Some violators try to play it innocent, like the old man who hid an undersize fish in a handkerchief in his pocket. When Ken asked him to take out his handkerchief and open it up, the man looked surprised to find the trout.

"Now how do you suppose that got in there?" he asked Ken.

Certainly Ken's most memorable case was when he was on the right side of the law, and the "Untouchable," Elliot Ness, was on the wrong. During the 1950s, Ness had moved to Coudersport. Ken had caught Ness's wife fishing with a resident license, when she should have purchased a non-resident permit. Ness balked, saying he'd fight it, but Ken stood his ground. In the end it was Ness who backed down and paid the fine. Afterward when Ken would see Ness in town, Ness would kid him about how slick he'd been catching his wife.

When Ken began his fish warden career over 50 years ago, there was not much public support for conservation law enforcement. But over time, he saw that people were recognizing, "There was an end to it, and you can't take it all without giving anything back." He's amazed at how many anglers now "fish for fun," whereas years ago the attitude was to keep them all. In retrospect, Ken says he met some "real good people," especially the sportsmen. He envies the new WCOs and their training.

## Clarence Shearer

In 1941, Clarence Shearer joined the Commission as a fish warden, retiring in Venango County in 1976. To take the job, Clarence quit a job at a steel mill, where he was making nearly \$100 a week. Fish warden pay started at \$100 a month. But those were hard times, Clarence remembers, and he knew that fish and game wardens always had a check coming in. Besides, he loved the outdoors.

Clarence took an exam in Harrisburg, and then he and other successful applicants reported for hatchery work at Bellefonte. They cleaned ponds and seined fish, "just to see if we'd work," he suggests. Next, they received their commissions, a badge and a firearm, and were told to go to their districts.

Clarence was sent first to Armstrong County. In his new job he relied on the experience he'd had as a deputy game protector. Clarence recalls the State Police uniform they used then, heavy leather leggings, black whipcord breeches, wool shirts and dark-gray stetson. Fish wardening was a full-time occupation, seven days a week in the busy spring and summer season. Holidays were always work days, which left little time for family or socializing.

By 1951, Clarence became one of the Fish Commission's first regional supervisors. He was sent to the northeast, Sweet Valley in Luzerne County. After three years, he transferred to the northcentral, at Lock Haven. By 1957, he was again a field officer, this time in Venango County.

Although law enforcement can be dangerous work, Clarence says he never had any serious confrontations with violators, "because I'm fairly good-sized." In the old days he rarely carried a firearm, but on one occasion he was glad he did. Clarence had stopped along the Allegheny River to check two fishermen who had an out-of-state car but resident licenses.

As they all went up the bank, he heard one ask the other, "Do you have your 'shiv'?" Clarence knew this meant knife. Luckily he had worn his sidearm that day, so he "sort of brushed my coat aside, so they could see. Their eyes got big, and it was obvious from then on they didn't want any trouble."

## Wilbur Williams

Wilbur Williams still lives in McKean County, where he was the fish warden for nearly 30 years. Wilbur began with the Commission in 1950, having been a deputy game protector for 11 years. Before he went on he was making \$5,000 a year in a silk mill. Starting salary as a fish warden was \$2,100, but this was a way to get into the conservation law enforcement he'd always wanted. After six weeks at the Bellefonte hatchery, Wilbur received his papers and reports in Harrisburg, a gun, "a used badge," and the inevitable state police uniform. He was told to report to Mt. Jewett the next morning. In addition to McKean, Wilbur had responsibilities for a time in Elk and Cameron counties.

Public sentiment "wasn't too much for conservation law enforcement at first," Wilbur remembers. Even the judges were difficult to convince. There was one before whom he never got a guilty verdict. Like the time Wilbur caught a violator with two dozen trout the first day of the season. The judge found the defendant not guilty on another man's affidavit, who Wilbur says wasn't even at the scene. Another time, he had two fellows for 11 short trout, interference with an officer and resisting arrest. In the fracas, one man broke his leg. The judge threw out the case because, Wilbur says, "What with



the broken leg and all, the judge figured he'd had enough problems."

Wilbur says to do the job effectively, a warden can't be afraid to check even the roughest looking suspect. He didn't dare let it show when he was shaking in his shoes, but had to keep calm and in control. That included the time someone tried to run him down with a car.

McKean County was always a big workload. When Wilbur first got there, fish law violations were rampant and public attitude was bad. "They didn't even try to hide it," he recalls. The creation of Kinzua Dam added to his busy hours. Pollution cases kept him hopping, especially oil and brine water. Since he started, he too saw a change in public attitude, and in the attitude of the oil industry in reporting spills and taking action to correct the problems.

Wilbur is especially proud of helping to institute "wired areas" on trout streams. The first was on the West Branch of Kinzua Creek in 1959. Wired areas were an attempt to remedy the problem of "muck followers" catching most of the fish from in-season stockings. Wilbur's idea was to stock within the wired-off zones and let the trout work out gradually, so that they would be available for a longer period. He says most people liked it, but he had quite a few prosecutions involving anglers who just couldn't resist sneaking in.

### Willard "Bucky" Persun

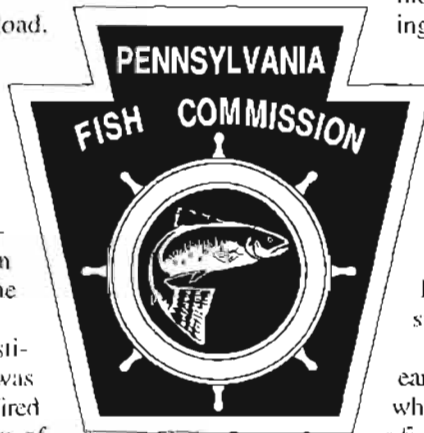
Willard "Bucky" Persun, Bradford County's fish warden from 1952 to 1981, says that in the "old days," all the wardens worked like crazy spring and summer. Then come Labor Day they "pretty much hung everything up." By contrast, today's WCOs have busy year-round schedules.

Bucky wanted to be a warden because he "wanted to help the sportsmen, to make better fishing, and to do law enforcement for them."

He insists that to be effective in the position, you've got to respect fishermen. "You have to respect even the biggest outlaw in the area, when he's right. Then lower the boom when he knows he's wrong." Bucky says he got every habitual violator he wanted except one, and "he died."

Bucky wanted to go on with the Game Commission at first, but went with the Fish Commission when there was an opening. He confides he was "stolen from the PGC." His first assignment was Bradford County, at \$2,100 a year salary. The equipment he was given "would have fit in your hand." Training was what he'd had as a Game Commission deputy, and what he picked up in the field from other officers. His first night in Bradford County he nabbed three violators on a roadblock.

Bucky often worked law enforcement in his civilian clothes, and would sit down right next to a suspected violator. Later the Commission gave him a shirt with a patch. "I had to hold my hands over it to hide it to make cases," he says. "Prosecutions could be chancy. Bucky recalls getting hold of the "wrong guy."



He and a deputy saw a man taking over the limit of fish, but when it went before the judge, he was found not guilty. The judge said to Bucky, "I've hunted and fished with this man and you fellows must be mistaken in what you saw."

On the other hand, there was the fisherman who caught eight trout, stashed them in his cabin and went out and caught eight more. The violator protested and wanted a hearing. When it came to court, the judge didn't want to hear any of the man's excuses.

"If Persun says you're guilty, then you're guilty," the judge thundered, and that was that.

Bucky himself was taken in by the "bottomless bucket" trick. He watched an angler placing undersize fish in a bucket that was sitting in the shallows of the lake. Bucky got to the bucket first to seize the evidence. But when he lifted it, there was no bottom, and all his evidence swam away.

Bucky got an education in handling people very early in his career. He remembers picking up a fellow, who was a businessman and community leader, for a fish law violation. The man's two boys were fishing upstream, so he and Bucky waited on a rock for them to return, before going to the J.P. Bucky noticed the man was very worried, very nervous. Finally he turned to Bucky and said, "Young man, if I had a pistol, do you know what I'd do?" "I suppose you'd want to use it on me," Bucky answered.

"No, I'd kill myself," the man responded.

Bucky found himself calming the distraught angler, convincing him that what he'd done didn't warrant anything like that. "I told him he wasn't the first person ever to be fined, and he wouldn't be the last. It's just two little short trout involved here." Bucky arranged to file the paperwork with the J.P. and have the man stop in and settle at his convenience. He recognized the man's integrity and that he couldn't bear to be humiliated in front of his sons.

### Steve Shabbick

When Steve Shabbick came on the Fish Commission as a warden in 1955, he was in the first group to take a comprehensive, competitive written examination, with 600 vying for the job. Steve had been a Game Commission deputy for seven years, and received additional training with Fish Commission field officers and supervisors. "When they felt you were ready, you'd get your district," Steve recalls. He retired in 1988 from his first assignment, Wyoming County.

Steve remembers starting at \$3,900 a year, with \$80 a month in expenses. In the beginning, when he needed a boat he'd borrow it from one of the Commission hatcheries. He wore his uniform only when participating in road blocks. For most occasions, he'd just show his badge.

Though that changed during his career, Steve says that the types of cases he had were consistent, such as no license, over the limit, nonresidents on resident licenses and such. Steve believes that more people visited his area years ago, crediting new impoundments and better fishing near the urban areas from which the angling and boating crowd used to come.

As other wardens, Steve has seen a change of attitude in the



## Fritz Ohlsen

Frederick "Fritz" Ohlsen was in the first class at the Fish Commission's H.R. Stackhouse training school in 1964. Fritz was hired in 1957 as a fish warden, and served in Carbon County until 1985. Fritz remembers it took several weeks for him to get his Fish Commission badge, so he used his Deputy Game Protector's badge in the meantime. Fritz had been selling insurance, but he wanted to do "law and order work." He took a statewide exam and scored high enough to begin as a fish warden at a "whopping" \$3,925 a year.

New wardens were still started in the hatchery. Then they went to the field in various parts of the state under the direction of supervisors until they were ready and a district was open. When his opening came it was for Carbon County, although at one time the district included slices of Schuylkill and southern Luzerne counties.

Carbon County's fish and boat law workload changed greatly during Fritz's tenure. When he started, the district had only one state park. By the time he retired, he was patrolling three state parks and one county park. At first there were no warmwater areas that weren't private. Then came Beltzville and other lakes, and lots of boating and warmwater fishing. His cases grew from 30 a year to 200, as more people came into his area for recreation.

On the down side, Fritz saw more posting against access, and he says he encountered less respect from the public than in the "old days." But he, too, is impressed at how many people are now releasing the fish they catch.

"Popular sentiment, which for a time was strongly arrayed against the Commissioners and their work, appears to have settled down to a full conviction of its importance...."

Though those words could have been written in 1991, they, too, are from the

Commissioners of Fisheries Report of 1883-84. Though there will probably always be those who will break whatever laws are made, "popular sentiment" continues to grow on the side of resource conservation. Former fish wardens Aley, Shearer, Williams, Persun, Shabbick and Ohlsen have seen this happen in the span of their careers. They can be proud, along with their fellow "fish wardens" and today's waterways conservation officers, to have had a part in effecting that change.

When he first went on, too much was tolerated. Steve was in on the Bowman's Creek pollution prosecution in 1962, when a tannery spill killed nearly 300 legal trout, including many lunkers. Fines and restitution were assessed at \$10,000.

In 1962, Steve was the subject of an article in *Sports Illustrated* by writer Barbara Heilman. It was titled "Long Hours, Low Pay, and Guns Fired in Anger," concerning the nation's conservation wardens. The author recounted some of Steve's experiences on patrols up and down the Susquehanna. Being featured in *Sports Illustrated* is a distinction few except the million-dollar athletes can claim.

Present Fish Wardens and Officers.—All fish wardens and special fish wardens holding office at 1

The author thanks all the "fish wardens" who contributed their memories and mementos so freely to the author's researching and writing this article.



# When Bluegills

## GO DEEP

by Jim Gronaw

Most anglers regard the sport of bluegill fishing as a shallow-water endeavor with short casts, garden worms and neighborhood children the prime ingredients for a successful outing. Indeed, this combination is a pleasant experience for all of us. But there are times when bluegills, especially the larger adults, are just not in shallow water or even near deep weed edges. Most of us have been conditioned to believe that bluegills are primarily fish of shallow water. This may be true of some farm pond fish, where there just isn't any deep water to speak of. But in larger lakes and reservoirs, 'gills often seek much deeper haunts.

During early summer, bluegills spawn in shallow water. A variety of methods works, and everybody tears them up. This season of easy pickings makes many people figure that these robust panfish are gullible and easy to catch. Ask these same anglers to catch some big bluegills during April, July, August or October and the results may be quite different. Throughout much of the year, tanker 'gills are fish of the depths. And by tanker standards, I mean fish that run eight to 10 inches long and weigh from a half-pound to one pound each. Any body of water that harbors panfish of this size in fishable numbers is a quality bluegill lake.



*The whole idea for success requires a slow, natural presentation for a fish that many anglers regard as "kid's stuff." By getting down to the nitty-gritty of deep-water bluegills, you'll be able to take big fish all year, not just during the spawn.*



## Where to look

Deep structure for bluegills is often the same location where you might expect to find bass, crappies or other gamefish. Pay particular attention to areas of submerged wood such as trees, brush or stump fields. Big 'gills are like crappies, and when faced with a variety of structure types, they usually show a preference for wood or brush. If such cover is not available, then deeper rock or manmade rip-rap areas can draw them. Submerged fence rows, creek channels, weedbeds or roadbeds are also worth investigation. Thought of as mostly bass territory, these areas also attract and hold adult bluegills, especially during early spring and after the hectic spawning period.

The term "deep" is relative, and it varies from one lake to the next, depending on water clarity, depth of weed growth or location of structure. In most cases, desirable structure in the eight- to 20-foot level are where you want to look.

Some waterways have very clear water coupled with heavy boat traffic. On these waterways even bedding bluegills spawn as deep as 12 to 18 feet on suitable gravel sites. On York County's Lake Marburg, for instance, boat traffic peaks around late May or early June and thus drives spawning fish much deeper than the customary two- to five-foot levels. The combination of ultra-clear water and boating disturbances often makes even spawning bluegills tough, deep-water adversaries. Even during the spawn, don't be afraid to look for deeper fish.

On larger lakes that have numerous bridges, you may want to check for suspended 'gills below the spans. Heavy rain often washes a variety of insects or earthworms into these areas, where fish may feed on wind-blown or washed-in morsels.

Of course, deep bluegills call for a depthfinder to determine their exact location. Without such a unit, this brand of fishing becomes haphazard. Use your electronics the same as you would for other gamefish, and using a marker buoy or wood structure eliminates the guesswork.

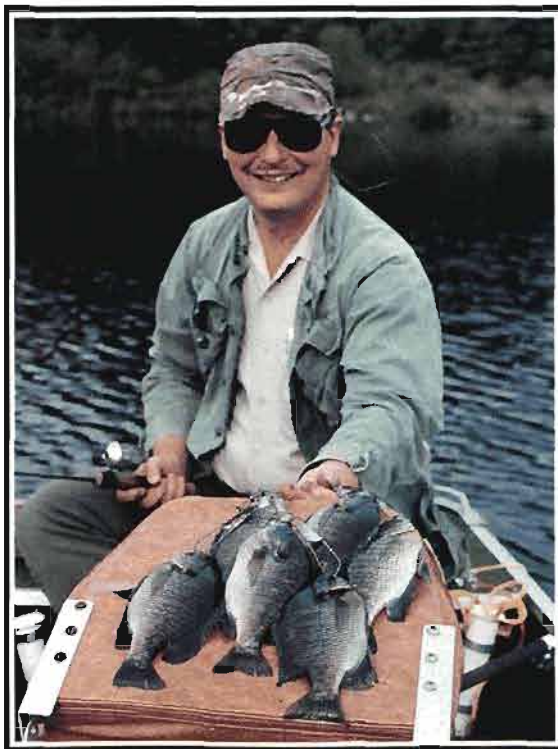
## Rod types

Three methods stand out for getting down to bluegills—vertical jigging, long pole, and slip-bobber tactics. All these strategies can be effective, but each has its own time and place.

Vertical jigging is effective, but it has shortcomings in terms of covering water.

and the presentation must be exact. In very clear water, this method may not be the best, because anchoring over structure in clear water often spooks fish. This tactic seems better for darker, more turbid lakes.

Although today's standard five-foot ultralight rods suffice, it is better to fish



vertically with longer, lightweight rods of 6 1/2 to seven feet. The longer the rod, the better the hookset on fish that are deep, because more length increases the upward "sweep" when setting the hook. This is important for 'gills that are deeper than 10 feet.

Long ultralight rods are just now catching on. For deeper panfishing, they are perhaps the most versatile rods.

Vertical fishing can also be done with long fiberglass poles that measure 10 to 12 feet. These rods are ideal for drifting bait or jigs over 'gills that are within the eight- to 14-foot depth because you need only a rod-length of line to reach the fish. Playing a fish involves just lifting the bluegill up and away from the structure and easing it up to the boat. Many newer "crappie poles" have line guides and accommodate an ultralight reel, making them adaptable to depth changes. A 3/4-pound bluegill can bend one of these rods to a horseshoe, adding to the excitement.

Whichever rod style you wish to use, perhaps the best way to get to the fish is using a slip-bobber rig. These rigs have been much improved since their origins of

years ago. The rig consists of a tiny rubber bead threaded onto the line, followed by a plastic bead, then a two-inch, in-line styrofoam float. Below the float is knotted a 1/64-ounce jig with a BB-sized splitshot above it to help drop the offering to the proper depth.

Once you've located fish on your depthfinder, you can adjust the rubber stop 10, 15 or 20 feet above the bait—wherever you saw fish on the screen. This option allows you to anchor close to 'gill-holding structure, without spooking them, while making easy lob casts to the fish. This is particularly useful in clear water where you don't want to get right on top of the fish.

When you've spotted good structure, it pays to pinpoint it with a marker buoy. Even after you've marked structure, circle around the buoy and determine exactly where the brush, dropoff or wood is in relation to the marker. Then anchor, drift or slow-troll the area with vertical or slip-bobber presentations.

## The business end

Ultimately, it's what you offer deep 'gills that determines your success. There are many baits and lures that are great for gills, but when you go deep, think small and think live bait.

A great, versatile option is to use 1/64- or 1/32-ounce plain, unpainted jigs and tip the hooks either with waxworms, maggots or portions of earthworms. Stay away from larger nightcrawlers because you end up missing more strikes than making hooksets. Size 10 long-shanked Aberdeen-style hooks are also excellent for impaling bait, and their thin-wire construction allows you to straighten them out when snagged. Reshape them with pliers, touch them up with a hone, and you're back in business.

Another excellent lure choice is a variety of ice flies and teardrop jigs that are so effective for ice fishermen. These tiny offerings are designed with vertical presentations in mind, and though seldom used outside of hard-water season, they are ideal for deep-water bluegills. The brighter fluorescent-color ice flies should be tipped with bait as well and their added visual appeal could be the needed enticement for discriminating deep-water 'gills.

The whole idea for success here requires a slow and natural presentation for a fish that many anglers regard as "kid's stuff." By getting down to the nitty-gritty of deep 'gills, you'll be able to take big fish all year, not just during the spawn.

# Keystone CRABBING

by William S. Ettinger

A fact little known to most is that blue crabs swim into fresh water, including our own Delaware River, moving upstream as far as the head of tide at Trenton, New Jersey. Believe it or not, you can catch crabs in the Keystone State.

The blue crab (*Callinectes sapidus*) is one of those unusual animals that can live in the ocean's salt water, in fresh water, and in the brackish mix we call an estuary. The two- to three-year life cycle is complex with several early planktonic stages that little resemble the later free-swimming and adult crabs.

Juvenile and adult crabs escape the cold of winter by burrowing in sediment at the bottom of Delaware Bay. When the water temperature begins to rise in the spring, the crabs crawl out of the sediment and swim and feed, slowly moving up the bay into the less salty water of the estuary. By June or July, some of them reach the fresh water of the Delaware River near Chester and may continue even farther. The majority of these "frontier" crabs are males because most of the females mate in the brackish upper estuary immediately following their last molt (shedding of the shell).

The females then rapidly migrate to the mouth of the bay where they brood millions of fertilized eggs per individual. In late July to early August, the eggs hatch into planktonic larvae called zoeae, which do not look at all like crabs. Because they are planktonic, the tiny zoeae are swept by tidal currents from the bay onto the Atlantic Ocean's inner continental shelf.

During four to six weeks of growth, they molt seven or eight times and then enter the next development stage, called megalopae. Megalopae look more crab-like than do zoeae. The planktonic megalopae drift back into Delaware Bay on tidal currents in September and early October. Within days they molt to the first of 20 swimming juvenile crab stages.

The juvenile crabs begin their swimming movement up the bay. By December, water temperatures are sufficiently cool to trigger sediment burrowing. The juveniles emerge the following April, resume swimming and feeding, and continue their slow movement up the bay until the following winter when they again burrow in the sediment. The following spring, the late juvenile-stage crabs emerge from the bay bottom and most molt to sexual maturity and mate to reproduce the next generation.

A commercial fishery for blue crabs in Delaware Bay has ex-

isted since the latter part of the 19th century. During the hundred years or so of crabbing, the total weight of blue crabs taken each year has varied considerably. These large fluctuations are thought to occur for two reasons. First, severe winters kill juvenile and adult crabs over-wintering in bay sediments.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, movement of the planktonic megalopae from the inner continental shelf into the bay via tidal currents appears to be largely wind-driven. If the prevailing wind pattern during the critical months of September



and early October is in a bayward direction, larger numbers of megalopae enter the bay than might otherwise. In fact, University of Delaware researchers believe that the success of the commercial crab catch in Delaware Bay two years later may be predicted through analysis of these wind patterns.

Recreational crabbers in Delaware County have been taking crabs since the mid-1970s and possibly earlier. At that time, apparently not much crabbing occurred, presumably because there were not many crabs to be caught. However, things seem to have changed since the early to mid-1980s. In fact, sufficient crabbing is now taking place, and the Fish Commission instituted crabbing regulations for the first time in its history on January 1, 1987.

## Water quality indicator

Why are we now seeing more blue crabs and crabbing in the freshwater Delaware River? Strong circumstantial evidence points to improved water quality in Pennsylvania waters, particularly in the vicinity of Philadelphia.

Pollution in the Delaware River has been observed for over 200 years. Water quality was worst during and shortly after World War II. In fact, pollution was so bad that river water damaged the paint of ships visiting the port of Philadelphia and airplane pilots flying overhead could smell the river. Large areas of the river contained little or no measurable dissolved oxygen through the summer, killing fish or blocking their spawning movements past Philadelphia.

Through interstate cooperation beginning shortly before the war years, great strides have been made in improving Delaware River water quality. Sewage treatment plants have been constructed and upgraded, and wasteload has been apportioned among industrial as well as municipal sources. The most obvious result is increased levels of dissolved oxygen measured even during mid-summer "dog days."

The effect of improved water quality is expressed dramatically in Delaware River fin fisheries. The population of American shad has increased and the area of the river in which this species spawns is greatly enlarged. In addition, the number of fish species captured in surveys conducted in the vicinity of Philadelphia has more

and the public boat access at the Commodore Barry Bridge in Chester. In Governor Printz Park, you can crab from 100 yards of open shoreline. The Commodore Barry Bridge access has less open shoreline, but it does have benches along the water's edge. You can launch a boat there, but be warned that you cannot legally crab from the floating docks.

Another good place to crab in Delaware County is in the Tinicum National Environmental Center. Here many lagoons were formed when material was excavated for construction of nearby I-95. Because the lagoons are connected to the Delaware River, crabs move in and out. You can crab from a 200-foot-long pier conveniently located just off Route 420.

Philadelphia County DWCO Norm Lewis says that crabs are taken from the shoreline at three locations: the Fish Commission's Frankford Arsenal Access; the Commission's Tacony Access, located off Princeton Avenue about eight-tenths of a mile north of the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge; and the city of Philadelphia's Linden Access, at the foot of Linden Avenue in the city's Torresdale section.

Don't forget the Schuylkill River, which is tidal to Fairmount Dam at the art museum. Public access is difficult, but some people do crab from both sides of the river near the dam.

Lower Bucks County WCO Wayne Imler says that not much crabbing occurs in his part of the Delaware River. However, biologists have caught crabs during fisheries surveys in Neshaminy Creek. If you want to try crabbing in this area, you can get to the water at two locations. There is public access at Neshaminy State Park, located at the Neshaminy Creek mouth, and another at the foot of Mill Street in Bristol.

Some people crab from anchored boats. If you do, be careful because Philadelphia is a major seaport and the volume of commercial traffic is large. A small boat can be swamped easily by a passing ship's wake.

When can you catch crabs? Just about anytime between early June and mid-October. However, you improve your chances if you wait until later in the season because by then more crabs will have made the long journey up from Delaware Bay. Try to time your crabbing with the arrival of high tide. The upstream movement of the water carries crabs with it.

You can crab in two easy ways. You can "chicken neck" or you can use a crab trap. The former is nothing more than the time-honored tradition of tying inexpensive bait, like chicken necks, backs, or even fish heads, to string or fishing line. Blue crabs eat almost anything. Dangle the baited line in the water. When you see a crab feeding on the bait or feel it tug the line, slowly pull it up and quickly sweep the crab out of the water with a small net.

The second and perhaps more effective method is to use a small trap lowered to the bottom with light rope. The crabs move into the trap around a series of baffles to get to the bait. Again, chicken or fish parts work well. The baffles prevent the crabs from escaping. You can buy an inexpensive trap at sporting goods stores or some discount stores, or you can build one easily using chicken wire or scrap wood.

So don't drive to Delaware, Maryland or New Jersey to crab. Try it in the Keystone State!

## Blue Crab Regulations

Crabbing requires a fishing license. The blue crab season is open year-round, and the daily limit is one bushel combined hard shell and soft shell crabs. The minimum size measured point to point is four inches for hard shell crabs and 3.5 inches for soft shell crabs.

Female blue crabs bearing eggs or from which the egg pouch or bunion has been removed may not be possessed. Crab pots are limited to no more than two pots per person when taking crabs. An unattended crab pot must be labeled with the name and address of the owner or user. Disturbing an unattended crab pot is unlawful, except by the owner, user or members of the immediate family and officers or representatives of the Fish Commission. Blue crab regulations for the Delaware River and estuary include tributaries to their limits of tidal influence.

than doubled from 1959-82 (16 species) to 1985-86 (36 species).

The improved water quality that has enhanced the Delaware Estuary fin fisheries has done the same for blue crabs. Blue crabs are known to be sensitive to low dissolved oxygen levels. In research conducted in the mid-1970s, crabs moved up the Delaware River to the mouth of the Schuylkill River in late spring. However, with the appearance of summertime dissolved oxygen sag, crabs left the area. They returned in early fall after dissolved oxygen levels rose.

### How to crab

Blue crabs move upstream in the Delaware River to the head of tide at Trenton, so you should be able to catch them throughout this reach. However, there are two important points to remember. First, the farther upstream you go, the farther crabs have to swim and the fewer will be available to catch. This is particularly true during wet years when increased Delaware River flow drives salinity bayward downstream of the Pennsylvania state line. This means that you can have greater success catching crabs in Delaware County than in Philadelphia or lower Bucks counties.

Secondly, the Delaware River shoreline from Delaware County through lower Bucks County is largely industrial with easy access to the water limited only to a few locations. Of course, with a boat you can crab nearly anywhere.

According to Delaware County WCO Alan Robinson, good access points for shoreline crabbing are Governor Printz Park in Essington

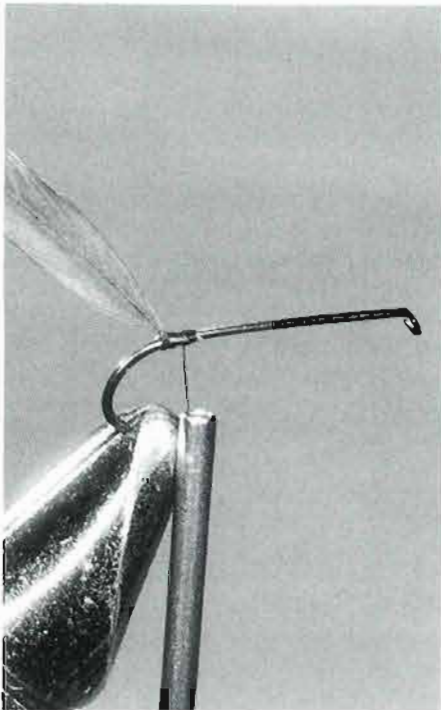
# The Gray Stone



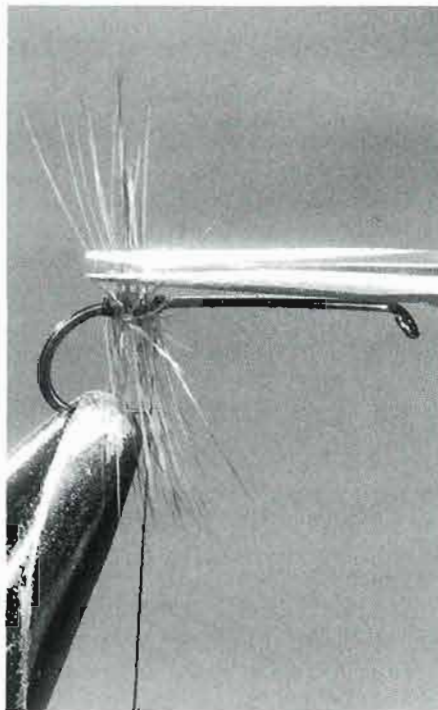
by Chauncy K. Lively  
photos by the author

Dry flies representing mayflies generally occupy much space in the typical fly box. I suppose this is to be expected because mayflies are perhaps the most frequent—and certainly the most recognizable—of all the aquatic insects anglers encounter on their favorite trout streams. Caddis flies have gained attention in recent years and more and more dry fly patterns representing *Tricoptera*s are appearing in the boxes of fly fishers everywhere. Although most of us carry a selection of stone fly nymphs, dry fly patterns representing adult stone flies are still relatively few. However, there are exceptions.

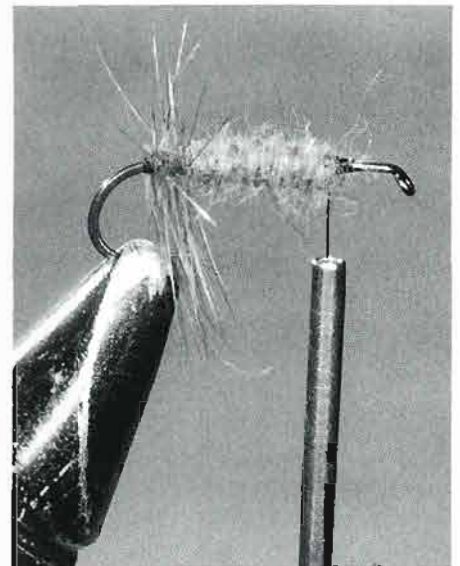
In the West the spectacular hatches of huge *Pteronarcys* and *Allonarcys* stone flies, the so-called salmon flies, have spawned such dry fly patterns as the Sofa Pillow and Troth's Salmon Fly. During the 1930s, Paul Young designed a dry fly he called the Michigan Stone, representing the smallish, pale stone flies known as the Yellow Sallies, and the pattern has gained enthusiastic acceptance by the relatively few anglers in the Midwest and East who have tried it. In past *Angler* columns I described a Little Black Stone Fly and a large Egg-Laying Stone Fly, as well as Mr. Young's Michi-



**1** Tie in the thread at the rear of the shank. Select a hackle with barbules as long as twice the hook gap width and tie it in with the dull side toward the rear.



**2** Wind the hackle in close turns and tie it off. With fine-pointed scissors, trim a "V" in the hackle above the shank.



**3** Wax the thread next to the shank and pinch-dub fur onto the thread. Wind the dubbed thread forward to produce a medium-thick body. Tie it off at about one-fourth the shank length behind the eye.

gan Stone, and these are dry fly patterns I would find it difficult to be without over the course of a season.

I suspect one of the principal reasons anglers have eschewed stone fly dries is the perception that stone flies always crawl out of the water—on boulders, logs or other projections—to emerge. If such were the case, too few adult stone flies would likely appear on the surface to interest the trout, except possibly on windy days.

I shared this belief for many years until I began to fish gravel-bottom streams totally devoid of boulders and I observed stone flies emerging at the surface in midstream, just like many mayflies. At first I really didn't believe what I was seeing and passed off the event as some kind of freakish, one-time happening. After all, this wasn't what the books described. But after seeing the phenomenon repeated many times I discussed it with other anglers and found they were seeing it, too. And not only were we finding this seeming discrepancy in stone fly emergence, we were also observing surface emergence with crane flies and *Isonychia* mayflies, both of which were always supposed to crawl out of the water to emerge.

Nowadays, many think we had grossly underestimated the adaptability of nature's creatures and that aquatic insects are not limited to a single mode of emergence. We are also finding it risky to use the words *always* and *never* in matters of natural history. We have discovered, sometimes to our own embarrassment, that nothing is etched in stone.

A few years ago, while rummaging through my fly boxes in an idle moment, it occurred to me that except for the little black stones, most of my stone fly dries were brown and yellow or all yellow. Somehow I had neglected to represent the gray stone flies that are perhaps not as plentiful as the brown/yellow species but nevertheless warrant a compartment or two in the fly box. That's when I began tying the Gray Stone and my first use was memorable.

There is a deep run along an undercut bank where I often fish. Some fine brown trout live in the shelter of the bank and I've caught and released enough of them to make them very wary of me. I fished there the afternoon I first tried the Gray Stone and with it I caught three fat browns of 13 to 15 inches on three consecutive casts—and all without moving from my tracks. You'll

have to forgive me for feeling a bit giddy; that was definitely not my usual, every-day performance!

The Gray Stone is not a difficult fly to tie. I dress it on size 12 and 14 fine-wire long-shank hooks (Mustad 94831 or 94832 are good choices) and it is hackled fore and aft. In varying degrees, most hackle is slightly concave across its width on the dull side. This aspect may be used to advantage in fore-and-aft hackling by securing and winding the rear hackle with its dull side to the rear, and the front hackle with its dull side toward the eye. In this configuration the strong sides oppose each other and provide the utmost stability on the water.

## Dressing: Gray Stone

Hook: Size 12 or 14 Mustad 94831 or 94832 or equivalent.

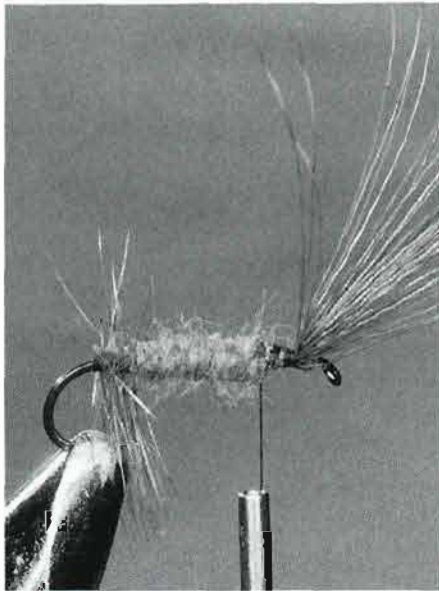
Thread: Black 6/0 prewaxed.

Hackle: Medium dun, dressed fore and aft.

Body: Gray fur or synthetic.

Wing: Thin gray deer hair.

Angler



**4** For a wing, cut a bunch of thin, gray deer hair and even the tips in a stacker. Measure the hair against the shank and trim the butts, leaving a hair length of twice the shank length. Tie in the hair by its butts in front of the body with the tips extending over the eye. Trim the excess butts.



**5** Place your dubbing needle over the hair behind the eye and fold the hair up and back over the needle, forming a head in front and a downwing over-body. Hold the hair in this position and withdraw the needle. Then bind the hair securely behind the eye. Select a second hackle with the barbules slightly shorter than the rear hackle and tie it in behind the head with the dull side toward the eye.



**6** Wind the front hackle, tie it off and whip-finish the thread behind the eye. Apply lacquer to the head windings and hair head.

# LOW-WATER

# Smallmouths

by Joe Reynolds

**River smallmouth bass** can be pushovers in ideal conditions, but it takes plenty of brain power, experience and special tactics to be successful as summertime water flows diminish and drought conditions plague Pennsylvania rivers.

Hot, humid weather—the “dog days”—can be a frustrating time for river smallmouth fishermen. Spring’s sweet freshness is only a memory; trees and plants look exhausted; topsoil dries and cracks. Rivers are in no better shape, with flows reduced to a comparative trickle and water temperatures soaring.

Smallmouth bass must survive in this shrinking, overheated environment, and fishing becomes a challenge.

Unfortunately, too many anglers continue using the same lures and techniques in the same places that produced during spring and early summer. Then they blame their lack of success on the heat. Hot weather requires adjustments.

I remember one summer evening on the Susquehanna River below Harrisburg. An unrelenting sun had beat down on the water through the humid haze of a windless day. Pools and riffles seemed devoid of life. Hours of casting had produced only a few runts. Then, as the searing source of the day’s sweltering heat dipped below the trees on the western edge of the river, a transformation began.

Like a snowstorm that begins with a light flurry, White Millers slowly dotted the darkening sky. At the day’s last glimmer, they came in a blizzard of fluttering flakes, covering the surface of the Susquehanna with a quivering carpet of white.

Breathing drew flies into my nose and mouth; it was difficult to keep them out of my eyes and I was forced to squint even though it was nearly dark. Hundreds of Millers collected on my pant legs as I wet-waded into the water.

At the height of the hatch the adult smallmouth bass began to feed. Now the strikes weren’t coming as often as during the earlier flurry stage of the hatch, but I wasn’t unhappy. These fish were larger, deep-bodied smallies that pounced ferociously on the popping bug. Their jumps were barely visible in the near darkness.

Then, just as suddenly, it was over. The summer blizzard abated and the river once again became smooth, now reflecting the cool light of a rising full moon. For a few minutes I stood there, feeling the push of the river against my legs, and reflecting on the hours of useless casting earlier in the day compared with the incredible action of the past half-hour.

This section of the Susquehanna was popular, yet I was the only angler there when the action began. Other anglers had called it quits just before sunset, dog-tired after long hours in nature’s oven. If they had known what was about to happen, most would not have left so soon. Rising smallmouths can breathe new life into any fisherman.

Those fishermen missed the best that day offered because they were not knowledgeable about the hatch. Most of them had good tackle and all the right flies or lures—important, to be sure, but

the critical factor will always be that biological computer located behind the eyes and between the ears.

I knew from experience that there was an excellent chance for a White Miller hatch just after sunset during that time of year. Trout addicts often arrange their lifestyles around the major fly hatches, but smallmouth bass fishermen don’t give the flies proper attention. Hatches are important, even for those who don’t happen to be fly fishermen. Quite often the bass strike anything that moves during a heavy hatch; the massive quantity of food sets off a feeding binge.

Anticipating the major hatches is even more important when river waters are low and warm. Oxygen levels are depleted and the bass don’t expend energy during periods when food is scarce and requires too much effort to obtain.

As oxygen levels become extremely low during an extended period of hot, dry weather, bass leave their normal haunts. Humans do the same on muggy, humid days, retreating to the comfort of air conditioned spaces. And also like humans, smallmouth bass tend to eat less at those times.

When water levels are low and temperatures high, look for smallmouth just below the heaviest riffles. Turbulent flow oxygenates the water and bass may gather in great numbers. Areas below dams are also good for the same reason, but observe caution near low-head dams.

Hydroelectric dam tailwaters are another area worth investigating when the flow is below normal. You can just about forget these spots when the flow is cut off at the dam, but action can pick up during times the turbines are in operation. Again, it is the oxygen-rich water that turns on the smallmouth.

During the low-water, high-temperature days of summer, a river smallmouth bass fisherman’s best bet is to fish very early or very late in the day. A flurry of activity is nearly guaranteed around first light; many times it will be the only productive period until just before dark.

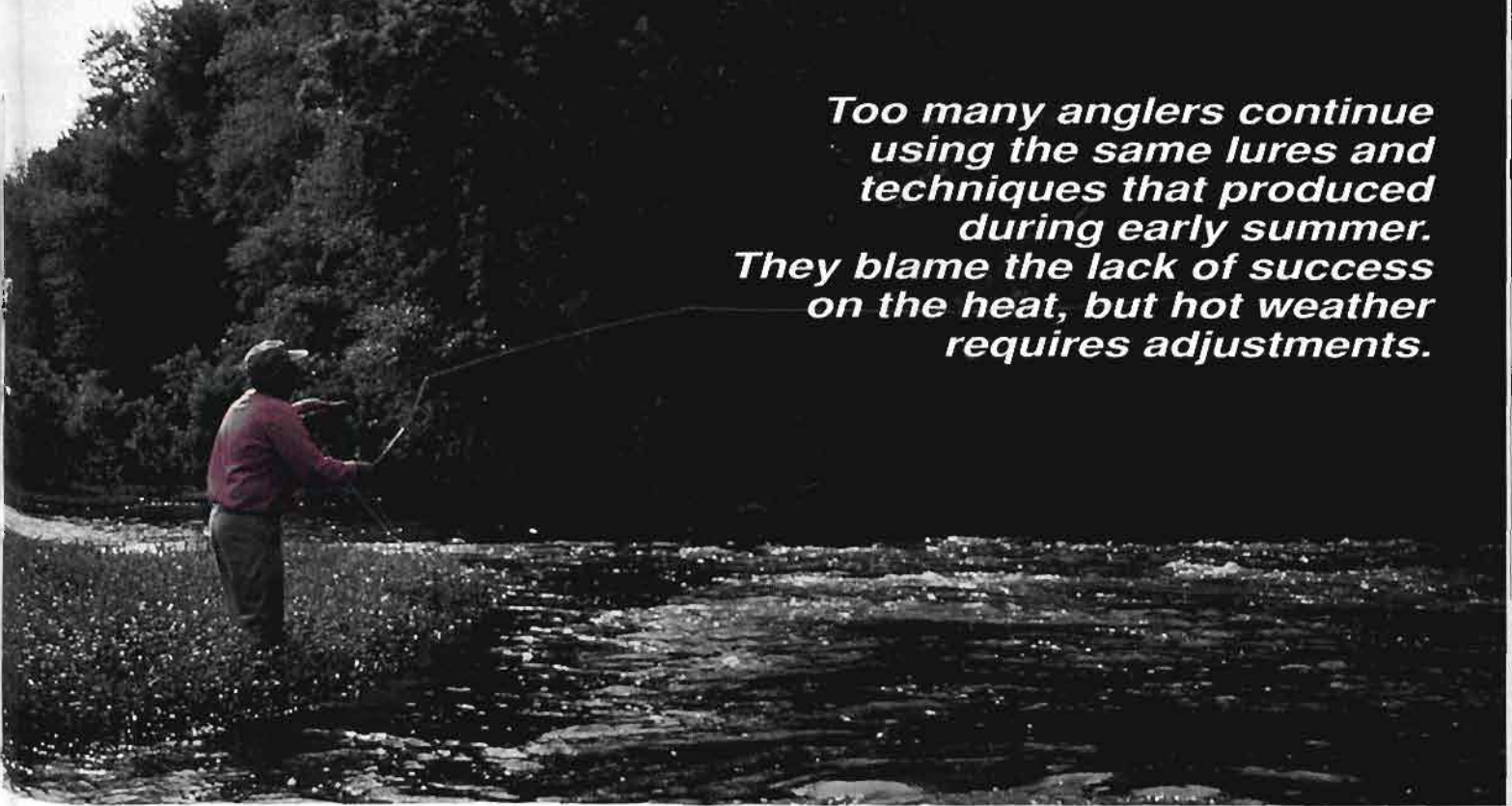
## Night fishing

Those with a masochistic bent may want to try night fishing. I wouldn’t advise it unless you are already very familiar with a river. Float fishing on a dark night is like playing Russian roulette. Wading a big river isn’t much safer.

Nighttime smallmouth success usually entails a good deal of daylight exploration to locate the potential haunts of larger bass. Experts pick their spots, working one or two areas during the course of an evening, without too much moving around. It takes a special breed to work the midnight smallmouth bass shift, but the rewards are often worth the effort.

If you must fish low summer water during the heat of the day, be prepared for more than a moderate amount of frustration. Some days nothing seems to work but there are a few techniques that have produced bass for me in the past.

**Too many anglers continue using the same lures and techniques that produced during early summer. They blame the lack of success on the heat, but hot weather requires adjustments.**



You will take more smallmouth if you treat one small part of a big river as if it were a 20-foot-wide stream. Scratch the notion that the biggest bass are always a hundred feet from where you stand. Don't look for bass across the river; look for them at the end of your rod tip.

If popping bugs or streamers fished on a long line don't produce in a hurry, I'll switch to short casts and fish nymphs or wets upstream. Spin fishermen can do the same with tiny plastic-tailed jigs. Pick your spots for this short-lining. You can spray long casts around at random, but with the short casts you want to pick a specific spot where bass are likely to be holding. Work quietly and keep a low profile. Remember, you are expecting strikes from bass only 15 feet or less away.

This system is especially productive when fishing a weighted nymph or jig right on the bottom. Each likely area should be worked carefully before moving on. Often the strikes are barely perceptible. At 10 feet you can see the slight line or leader movement when a bass takes. At 50 or 60 feet it's nearly impossible to detect a strike.

Anytime the smallmouth are feeding right on the bottom, which seems to be nearly always, a short-line expert can take more bass than the picture-book caster. This holds true for both fly and spin fishermen.

Casts across current can be effective with a sinking fly line, but problems develop if the line goes too deep. In this case it is not the fly that snags on the bottom—rather, the fast-sinking line hangs up on rocks. If this is a problem, make casts downstream, let the line sink, and then retrieve with slow, short jerks of the line.

When water levels drop close to the river bed and clarity is at a maximum, smallmouth bass become paranoid. Their world is shrinking, they feel exposed and they are less likely to move about during daylight hours.

Select fly lines and rods with the water conditions and the fish's paranoia in mind. Most times I use an 8-weight line, but for low water conditions I switch to a 6-weight outfit.

With anything less than a 6-weight line it becomes difficult to cast many of the larger smallmouth poppers and streamers. Fishermen with older fiberglass rods even have difficulty with the 6-weight line. The best bet is a graphite rod in the eight- to nine-foot lengths.

Leaders do not need to be excessively long. For low-water smallmouths I like to go with a leader about nine feet long tapered to a four-pound-test tippet.

Remember, however, to keep sinking line leaders short. This helps keep flies closer to the bottom. Spin fishermen should be using ultralight outfits and reels spooled with four-pound-test line.

Rain is scarce during the dog days. At best we can hope for the occasional thunderstorm to provide cooling relief. Lightning is scary and dangerous, but a little cool rain and a short respite from sunlight can work miracles on river bass, often touching off a brief period of frantic feeding. In any case, be safe and stay away from the water while an electrical storm is in the immediate vicinity.

Low-water success quite often depends on a knowledge of the river environment more than specific fishing techniques. In general, dark, drab-colored flies and jigs seem to be better low-water producers than rainbow-hued designs. Some anglers claim success with exact imitations of hellgrammites and such, but I'm not one of them.

Low water indeed presents challenges, but meeting and overcoming those challenges can provide a real sense of accomplishment. Strange as it may seem, there is still much room for experimentation and development of flies for specific smallmouth bass fishing situations. With more and more good fly fishermen concentrating on smallmouth, we can expect to see a variety of new flies and techniques that will increase our success, especially in low-water conditions.

Dog-day smallmouths may be contrary and frustrating at times, but wet wading for river bass is an important yearly ritual. I'd sooner pass up fireworks, apples on a stick, chocolate-flavored snowballs, opening day of trout season, mom's apple pie and six episodes of "Cheers."

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# A Lake for All Seasons:

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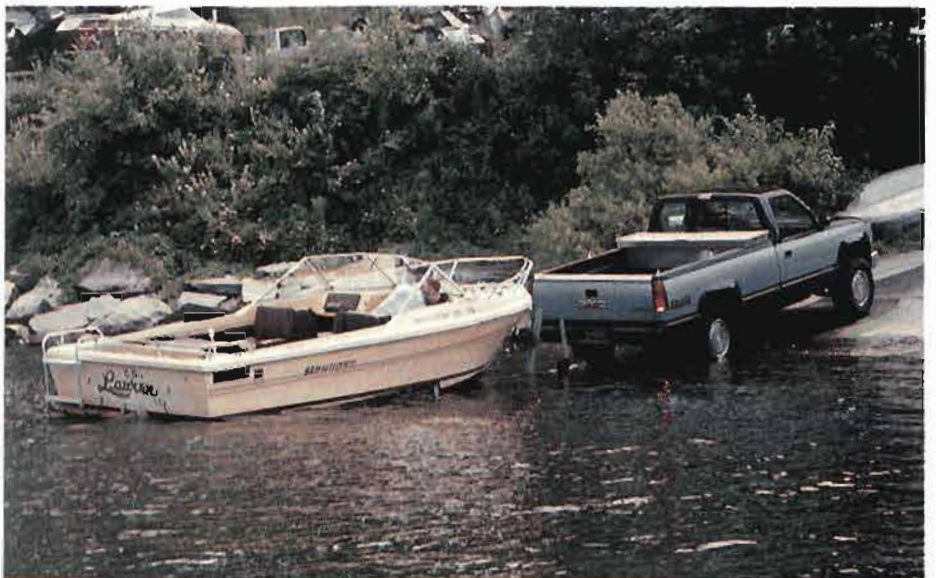
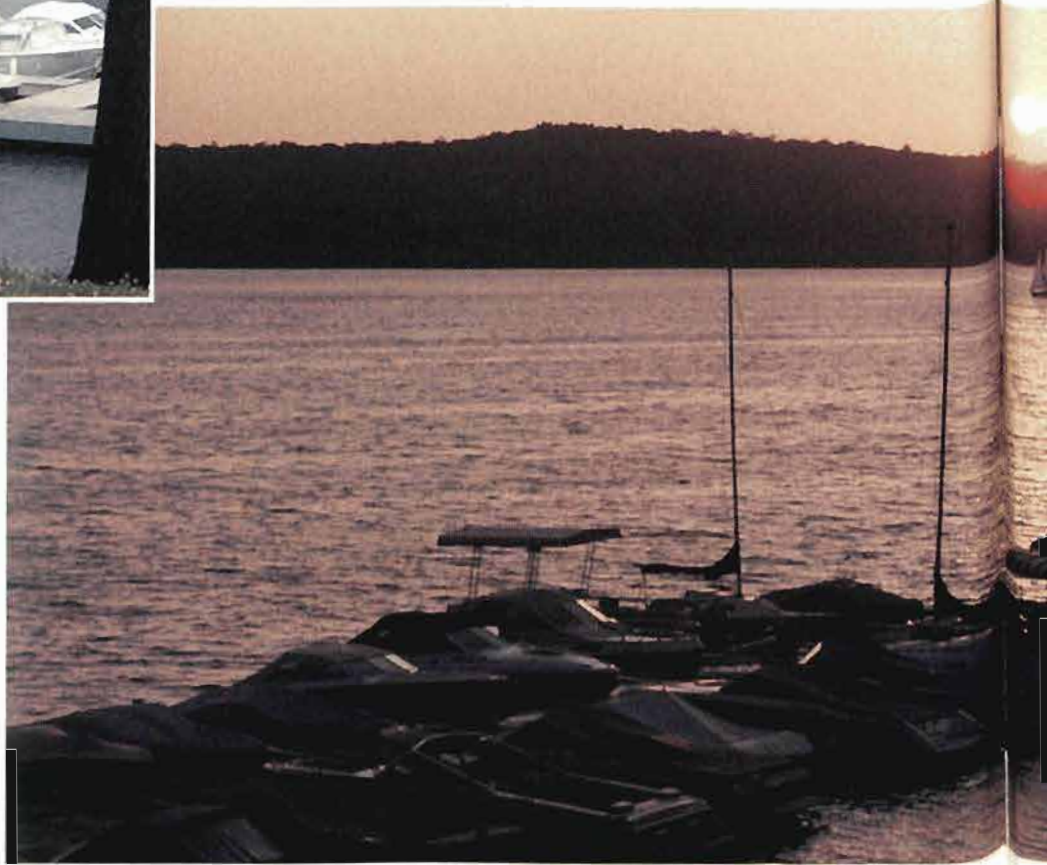


**In** spring, summer, fall or winter you can find fishermen searching for excellent catches of a variety of fish on Lake Wallenpaupack. Located in the northeastern part of the state, the lake is ideal for the sportsman who wants to get off by himself, or for the family interested in having all its members become involved in an outdoor activity that is both fun and wholesome.

The Leni-Lenape Indians named a stream flowing through this area "Wallenpaupack," meaning "the stream of swift and slow water." The land owned by William Penn was deeded to his son, and later to James Wilson, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and a United States Supreme Court justice. With the decision that a hydroelectric dam was necessary, Pennsylvania Power & Light Company (PP&L) named the site Wilsonville, in his honor.

To create the dam, most of the buildings, homes, barns and farms had to be moved or razed. Trees were cut and 17 miles of roads were rerouted. Flooding the valley created a 5,700-acre lake, 13 miles long with a 52-mile shoreline, enhanced by many coves. The concrete dam, 70 feet high and 1,280 feet long, was completed in 1926. A dike at Talfon was constructed to complete the lake bed. The depth of the lake varies between 40 and 70 feet.

Before construction of the dam, the population numbered around 500. Since the creation of the lake, Wallenpaupack has become one of the best fishing and recreational spots in the state, attracting anglers from all sections of the country.





# Wallenpaupack

by Bill and Bert Schill

photos by the authors

Four plots of land at various locations around the lake were set aside by PP&L for public use and access to the lake. Ledgesdale, Ironwood Point, Wilsonville and Caffrey Recreation areas provide campgrounds with electricity, water, showers, laundry facilities, a general store, boat rentals and dock space. Launch ramps, for a fee, are also available. All the camps remain open year-round but only with the restrooms and a frost-free water supply.

On the western shore of the lake, off Route 590, the Fish Commission maintains the Mangan Access, a free launch ramp. Near the access is a PP&L picnic area. Opposite the ramp, on the eastern shore, off Route 6, is the Wilsonville Dam and PP&L visitor center where photographs and exhibits of the hydroelectric project and the area's wildlife are displayed. A slide presentation explains the electric generating system. The adjacent Wallenpaupack Overlook provides a panoramic view of the lake.

## Fishing variety

Lake Wallenpaupack is a smorgasbord offering a choice of brown and rainbow trout, pickerel, yellow perch, walleye, bluegills and crappies. In 1988, the state record brown trout, weighing 17 pounds, 12 ounces, was caught here.

Beginning in 1990, the Commission

stocked Lake Wallenpaupack with Seeforellen brown trout, a European strain new to the lake. Seeforellen browns live about 25 years and grow to 50 or 60 pounds. The Fish Commission also stocks Lake Wallenpaupack annually with striped bass, walleye and channel catfish.

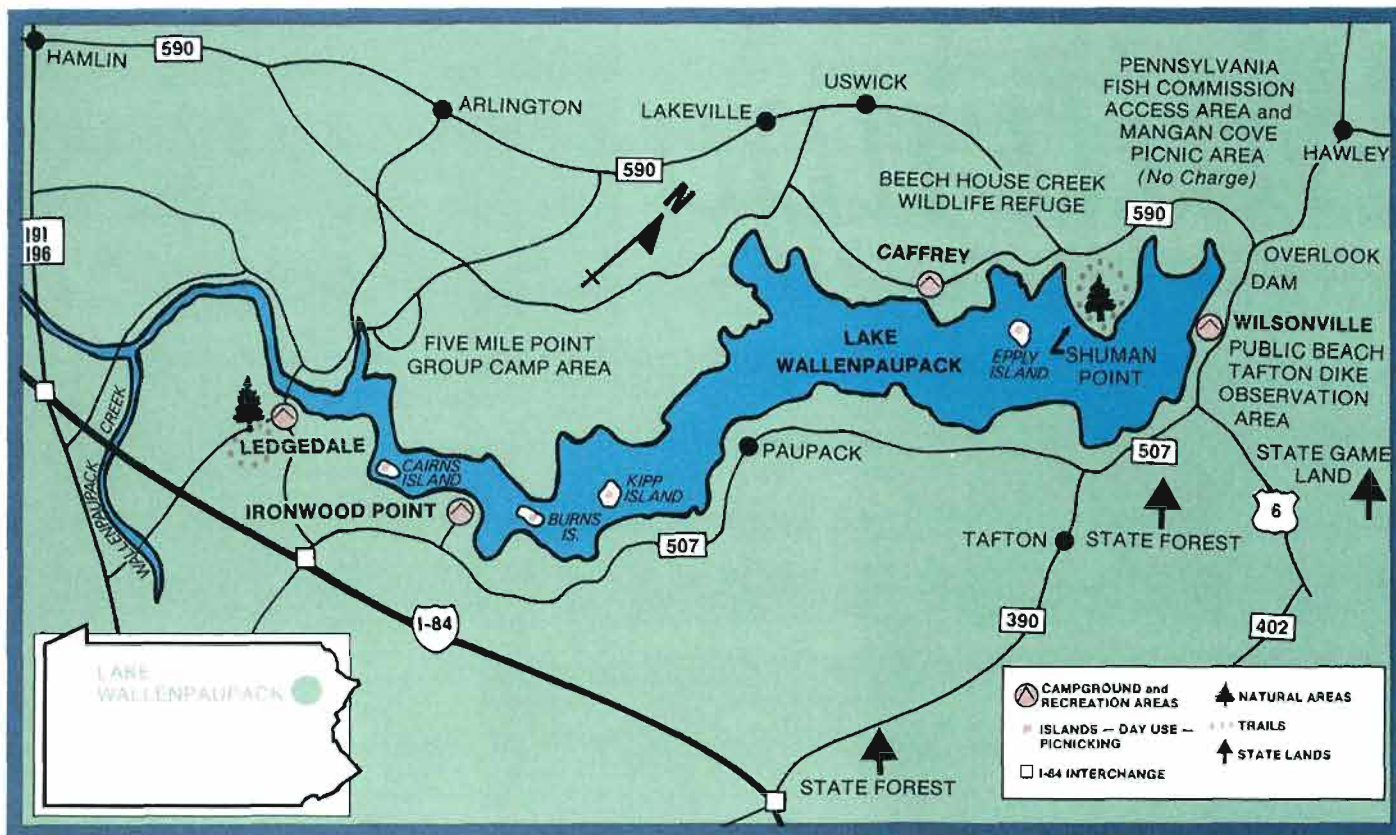
Fishing contests are becoming popular and a yearly striped bass tournament is drawing much interest. Stripers introduced in 1980 are reaching more than 25 pounds and hybrids are also creating great excitement. Alewives introduced into the lake provide good forage resulting in an abundance of fish.

Angler Greg Walsh, from Scranton, invited us to accompany him one evening. After boarding his boat, we headed off to try some of his favorite coves. Greg has won many tournaments, including a Red Man Tournament on Lake Wallenpaupack, two in Canada and another in Maryland. He has also been in the top 10 of additional Red Man tournaments. Trolling with his electric motor, he kept close to the shoreline and started using spinnerbaits.

He told us, "I like to try different blades and colored skirts on my lures. Sometimes white will be great and then at other times, for whatever reason, yellow or chartreuse will be the 'grabbers.' I also find spinners, bug and rattle baits to be very effective.

Lake  
Wallenpaupack  
encompasses  
5,700 acres.  
It is 13 miles  
long with  
52 miles of  
shoreline.





Trolling and constantly casting toward shore where there is good structure, or around boat docks, usually pays off."

During our exploration of the lake, we met Peter Porter, an avid fly fisherman who lives in the area. Questioning him about trout fishing in the lake, he said, "Early mornings and late evenings are the times to fly fish. Watching the hatches come off the water is the best way to determine the lures to use. However, you can also enjoy some exciting hours fly fishing for bluegills, rock bass, crappies, smallmouth bass and largemouth bass. The popular lures seem to be poppers and small dry fly patterns."

Another avid angler is Skip Regensky, who lives year-round at Paupack and fishes every chance he gets. Skip is very knowledgeable about the lake and took us to Sunset Point where there were several weed patches. We had some good hook-ups and while we fished, he said, "Shuman Point is excellent for striped bass. Tafton Dike, in early spring, is the place to try for stripers and perch. The wall of the dike extends down into the water eight to 10 feet and the fish feed around the wall."

There are four islands: Epply, Kipp, Burnes and Cairns, and around them good catches can be made. Camping is not permitted on the islands, but fishermen can anchor and use the picnic grills and tables provided.

Nemanie Cove, on the eastern shore, is a protected cove with good stumps that keep the boat traffic down. When the lake is high, the water is farther back in the bushes, creating more feeding grounds. There is also a dropoff offering productive fishing for walleye.

"Some of my favorite lures are Lazy Ikes, Rebels, plastic eels and an Indian Joe spinner with a long shank and a worm. Hellgrammites, minnows and grubs are good for perch, bluegills, crappies and rock bass."

The peak season is summer, but winter offers an excellent challenge for the hardy soul who would like to fish through the ice. Family outings at Wallenpaupack are popular in the winter, especially during January and February. While dad and mom fish, the youngsters have a ball ice skating or sledding.

Although the angler's main purpose for traveling to Lake Wallenpaupack is to spend some pleasant hours on the water and maybe hook into a trophy, there are other times for him and other members of his family that can be very enjoyable. Several interesting and historic places can be visited within a few miles of the lake. One of the world's famous authors, and a 10-time record-holder for fish caught, was Zane Grey. His home, located on the banks of the Delaware River at Lackawaxen, is a free museum containing copies of all his books,

plus memorabilia collected during his lifetime. Photographs of the ships he owned and the fish he caught are displayed on a wall in the museum.

Adjacent to the Grey property is the Roebling Aqueduct, the oldest existing wire suspension bridge in the United States. A national historic landmark, there is no charge to visit the aqueduct, which was originally built to carry coal-laden canal boats over the river.

A short distance from the Wilsonville campground is the restored Victorian town of Hawley with interesting shops and restaurants. An unforgettable museum is the Dorflinger Glass Museum, at White Mills, containing a stunning collection of beautifully etched crystal.

The entire Pocono area has a great deal to offer with many creeks, lakes and all sorts of attractions, but for a lake that has everything a fisherman can want year-round, Lake Wallenpaupack will more than satisfy.

For more information, contact: Cindy Chumard, Pocono Mountains Vacation Bureau, Box K, 1004 Main Street, Stroudsburg, PA 18360. Telephone: (717) 424-6050.

Sherwood J. Krum, Lake Wallenpaupack Superintendent, Pennsylvania Power & Light Company, Box 122, Hawley, PA 18428-0122. Telephone: (717) 226-3702.

# KID'S PAGE!

by Kelly Countouris

## Safety Comes First **1**

**Are you a safe angler?** Do you know what it takes to be a safe angler? Everyone who fishes, no matter where or when, needs to remember and practice these safety habits.




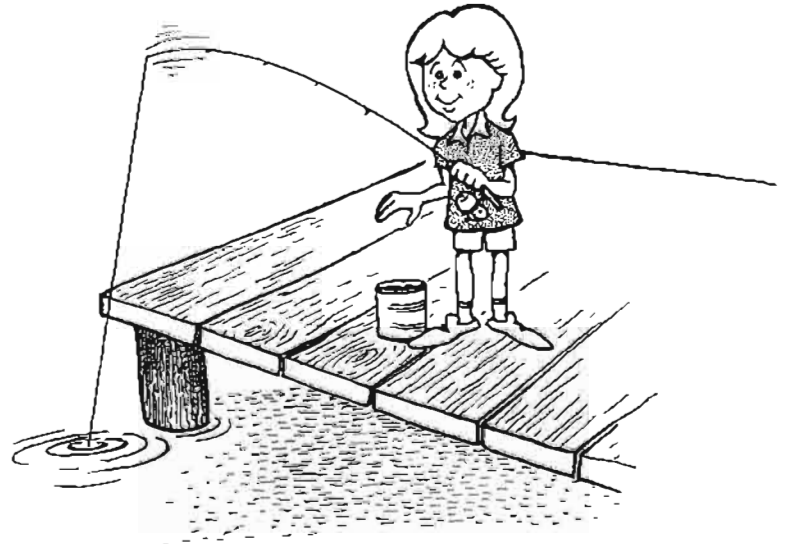
**1.** When around any water (lakes, creeks, rivers, etc.), walk near the edge or the banks. This is especially important when it is wet or freezing outside. During wet and very cold weather, muddy or frozen banks become slippery.

**2.** Handle hooks and fish with spiny rays (bluegills, perch, catfish) carefully. Make sure you have first aid equipment with you in case a hook or ray accidentally ends up where it shouldn't.

**3.** Always secure your hook to the guide on your rod when not fishing. A loose hook is trouble.

**4.** Stay clear of others when they are casting and check behind you before casting your line.

**5.** When fishing from piers, docks or banks, stay a few steps back from the edge. A good cast takes your line far out into the water and then you won't have to worry about your footing when a big one bites. 



### SECRET CODE

Now break the secret code below for one last safety message. One set of letters has been substituted for the correct letters. Re-

member, when "B" stands for "A" in one word, it stands for "A" in all other words, too. (HINT: B=A, O=N)

**BMXBZT XFBS B QFSTPOBM GMPUBUJPO  
EFWJDF (MJGFWFTU) XIFO GJTIOH GSPN B  
CPBU PS XIFO BSPVOE TXJGU, NPWJOH XBUFS.**

# FLATHEADS

The orange sun just sank behind the hills as Jim turned his pickup truck onto the narrow dirt road that led us into the Allegheny River valley. I looked at Larry, who was sitting in the middle, and saw a big grin, much like my grin. We were in for something different, something new to both of us.

Jim Rogers hosted Larry and me on our first serious fishing effort for flathead catfish. Jim is a real catfish king. He holds the Pennsylvania state record for channel catfish—35 pounds—but his specialty is the flathead cat.

Flathead catfish are one of the biggest catfish species, reaching a maximum size of about 100 pounds. They are native to rivers in the Mississippi drainage from the northernmost state south to the southernmost, and in northern Mexico. Sometimes called shovelheads, one of the flathead catfish's distinguishing characteristics is a flattened head. The lower jaw is longer than the upper jaw, the tail is rounded, and the adipose fin is large. Color varies from yellow-brown to dark brown on the back and sides, and dirty yellow or tan on the belly. Most have dark blotches along the sides, not distinct, but clearly visible.

Flatheads have never been as popular as channel catfish and some smaller members of the catfish family because most anglers seldom encounter them. Flatheads sometimes move into shallow water at night, but for the most part they inhabit the big, deep pools of large rivers, generally over hard bottom.

"The deepest water you can find, where there are big rocks along the shore," is Jim's advice for locating flathead cats. "My dad said they go under those big stones during the day.

"The line nearest shore usually gets the first bite. That's another reason I think they come out from under those big stones."

Jim, who retired in 1986, has been fishing for flathead cats since he was a boy. He was taught by his father, who was raised just upriver from where we were going fishing.

"My mother used to have big fish fries," he recalls. "We'd feed the neighborhood, feed the church."

Most of the flathead cats Jim catches weigh less than 10 pounds, but he has caught many that weighed between 20 pounds and 30 pounds. His largest was a 44-incher that weighed 37 pounds.

"When my dad got out of work at 11 o'clock we'd go out fishing. There would be lights all up and down the river. Now there's no one," Jim says.

We arrived at the river, and the only light was from the headlights of Jim's truck. He circled the truck on the gently sloping gravel bank to position the trailer for launching.

"It's hard for me to understand, with all the outdoor stuff going on now and there is nobody out enjoying this," Jim says.

Anglers like to talk about the good old days, usually commenting on how much better the fishing was then, and often using that as an excuse for not going fishing now. Jim obviously has fond memories of the good old days, but he surprised me when I asked how the fishing compared.

"If you hit the right weather and the right nights, it's just as good as it ever was," he says.

Most of our gear was already in the boat: Rods and reels, extra hooks and sinkers, bait buckets, flashlights and snacks. Jim's 18-foot flat-bottom boat is an impressive river craft. It is wide enough to stretch out and relax in, and the 70hp outboard jet can skim over the riffles in water less than four inches deep, which Jim demonstrated before we began fishing.

After a short run upriver, Jim headed the boat back downriver. He slowed, turned off the motor, and pointed to the place we would fish. While we drifted into position, Jim explained how he chooses a fishing area.

"The foam usually goes over the deepest part of the river," he says, pointing to the dirty white froth floating around the boat. Foam forms wherever the water is agitated, such as riffles that separate the river pools. It floats downriver mostly in the main channel, creating a long white stripe that marks the channel.

Flathead cats live in the deepest parts of the channel, and even though this is the main river current, Jim advises looking for places where the current is mildest. This typically occurs in the middle of a big river pool, where the river widens.

We set the anchor to hold the boat in the current.

I also noted the other things that Jim has explained about good flathead cat water. Big boulders lined the shore and presumably were also underwater. The anchor rope slid through my hands for about 20 feet before contacting bottom. Jim had mentioned 20 feet as a good depth for big flathead cats.

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*Most of the flatheads Jim catches weigh less than 10 pounds, but he's caught many that weighed between 20 and 30 pounds. His largest was a 44-incher that weighed 37 pounds.*

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## Tackle

In the last bit of daylight that remained, Jim showed us his catfishing rigs and explained the logic behind his using them. He uses short, stiff rods, and big, old, revolving-spool Ocean City reels, the kind you might expect to see on an ocean-going party boat. The reels were loaded with heavy braided line.

"I don't use anything less than 50-pound line, so we can get them in fast," Jim says. "I know from experience that a flathead can break twice its weight in line. A 20-pounder will break a 40-pound line when it lunges."

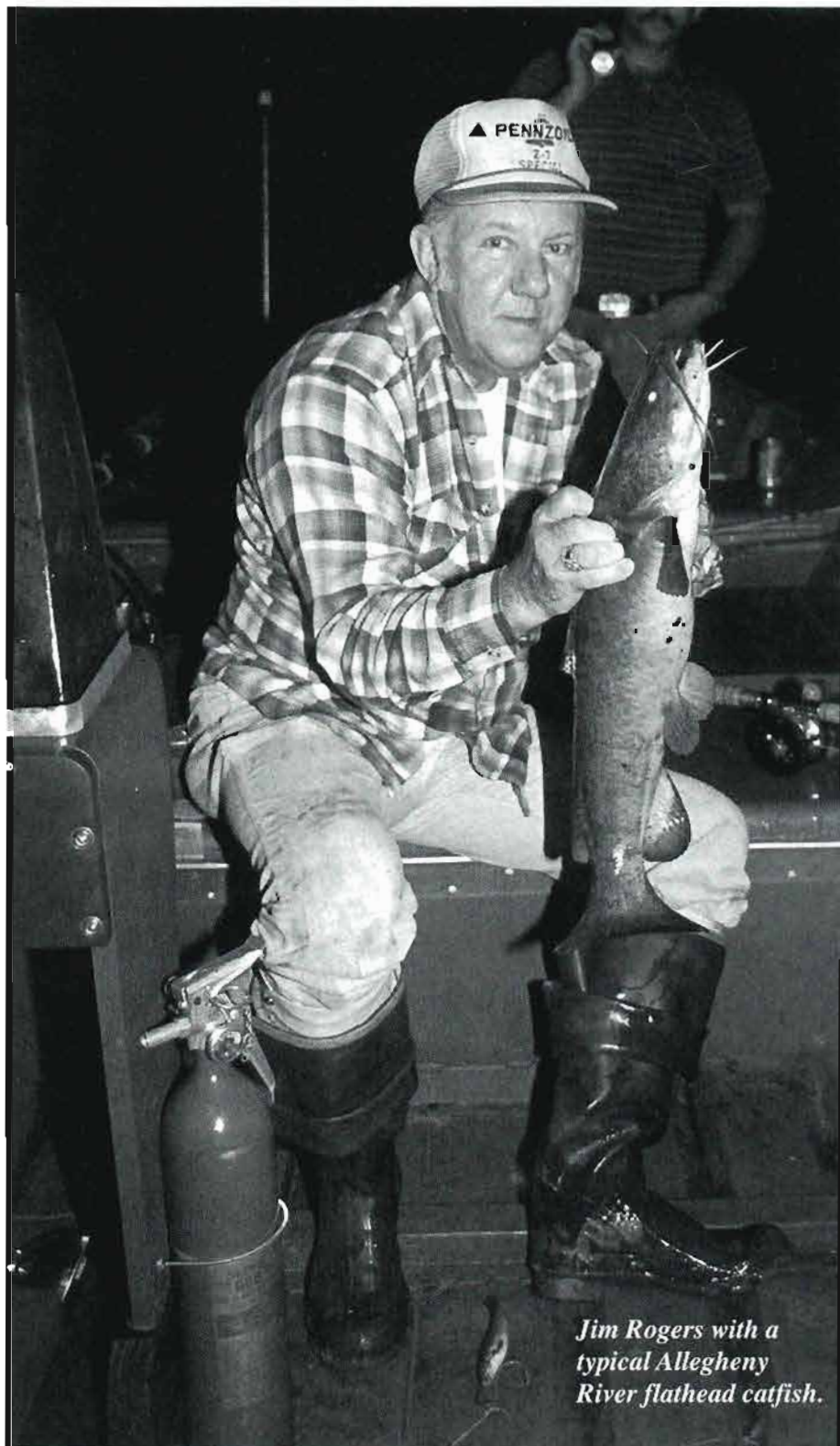
Jim sensed that I was about to ask why he doesn't take the time to enjoy the fight.

"The reason we don't play catfish is that when they start biting, the idea is to get them in the boat and get the line back in the water while they are still biting. It's a matter of what you want to do, if you want to play, or try to get a big one."

He figures that they travel in schools, or else they all go on a feeding binge at the same time. During a good night it appears as if schools move through because the pickups come in flurries.

# A Special Breed of Catfish

by Mike Bleech  
photos by the author



*Jim Rogers with a typical Allegheny River flathead catfish.*

## Bait

Jim keeps his bait bucket hidden in a small creek along the road to his river launching point. It's filled with fat chubs, about four to seven inches in length. The big flathead cats could easily take much larger bait, but Jim finds hook-setting more difficult with larger bait.

"The hardest part of catfishing is getting the bait," Jim says, "but it's kind of fun, too."

Jim catches all his bait from a particular creek, using a fly rod and a small hook baited with a piece of worm. Maybe those chubs taste better than other chubs. Whatever the reason, I trust Jim's judgment—and a half-century of flathead catfishing.

He tried other baits. Shiners proved worthless, possibly because these minnows do not use the same niche as flathead cats. All he could catch on chicken livers was water dogs. Nor have the flathead cats shown any interest in stink baits. However, Jim has identified some of the flathead cat's natural foods.

"Every catfish I have cleaned was just full of crabs (crayfish)," he says, "but I have never used crabs for bait. I imagine they would work."

"When I was a kid my dad and I would throw the catfish we caught in a pond. We would throw rock bass in there, too. Then when we got the catfish out to eat, they would have the rock bass in their bellies."

Both crayfish and rock bass share the flathead cat's niche on the rocky river bottom.

Jim ties a 3/4-ounce sinker to the end of his lines. Then he ties two large hooks to short dropper lines. I asked him which size and style hooks he uses. He said he did not pay attention to that. He just buys hooks that look big enough. The chubs are hooked through the lips, from the bottom up, lightly so that they remain lively. Flathead cats are carnivores, not scavengers.

When Jim tossed out his baited lines by hand it brought back memories of my childhood, before the time of spinning

reels and level winds with casting brakes. First he pulled several coils of line from the old Ocean City reels. Then he swung the rig around a few times before letting it fly. As the rig sank he fed out line so that it would not swing back toward the boat. When the sinker settled on the bottom, he pulled all the slack out of the line and set the reel in free spool with the clicker on.

By this time the last daylight was gone. A few stars were visible but fast disappearing behind increasing cloud cover. Jim voiced his approval of the clouds. It was very dark in the narrow river valley with no moon or stars. That was perfect, according to Jim. "The darker the better," he says.

## Night moves

Fishing for flathead cats is strictly a nighttime operation. Jim explains that the best times to fish for flathead cats are during the last quarter moon and the new moon, during May, June, July, August and September. Fishing is best when the moon is not in the sky.

"August is always best," he says. "A hot, sultry night."

Fog or heavy cloud cover is good. He likes low, clear water.

"My dad always said the rain stirred them up."

Jim's favorite fishing hours are 9:00 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. He often fishes until after midnight because the bigger flatheads generally hit later.

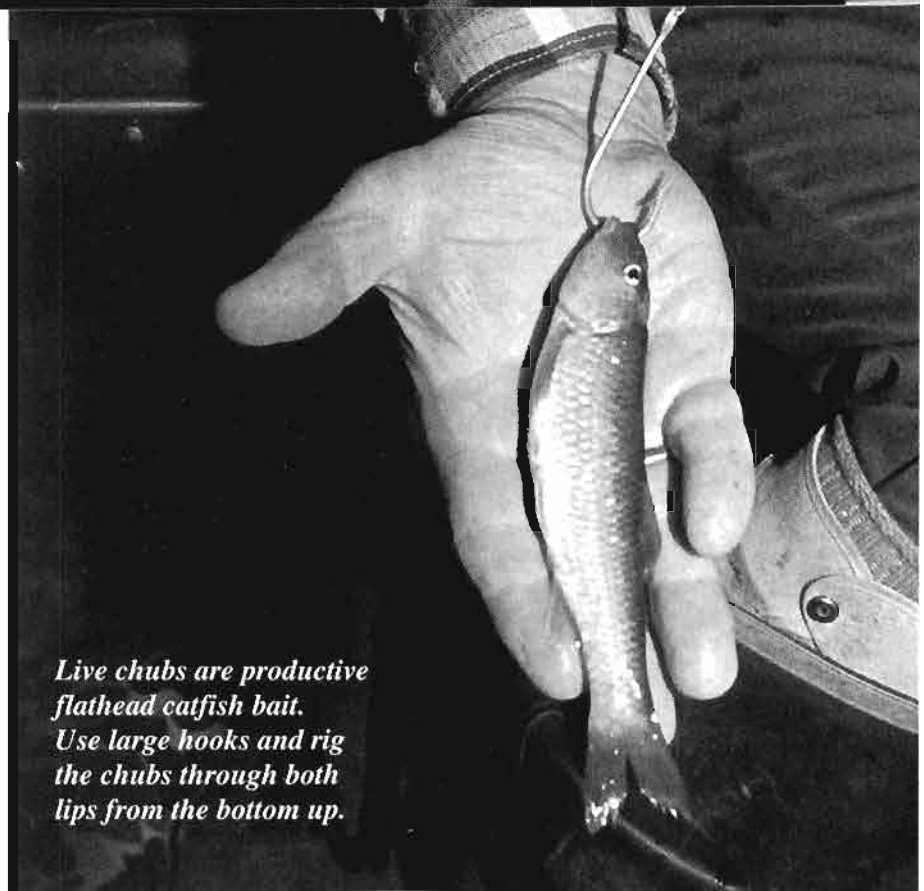
"From 11 o'clock to 2 o'clock is when you'll catch the big ones," he notes.

We sat in the darkness waiting, sometimes talking, sometimes listening to the sounds of the night. It was so dark, we could not even see one another sitting just a few feet apart. Several hundred yards downriver a screech owl serenaded us with its high pitched *hoot-oot-oot-oot-oot...* Another upriver answered.

A few comfortable, peaceful hours passed. The conversation faded. What a marvelous change from the usual routine of television in the evening. I drifted into that stage of half consciousness, perhaps meditation, when the mind truly relaxes. It is the time when, as a writer, I could do my best work—if I could get the thoughts onto paper without breaking the mood.

## Clicking noise

A clicking noise right beside me interrupted the spell. At first it did not register. Then I remembered that I was fishing, and that my reel was set in free spool with the clicker on...and that clicker was clicking. Still I did not get into motion until Jim said



*Live chubs are productive flathead catfish bait. Use large hooks and rig the chubs through both lips from the bottom up.*

softly, "Do you have a pick-up, Mike?"

I picked up the rod. Line still peeled out, making the clicker sound, so I flipped the lever that engaged the spool and tried to set the hook.

Nothing.

"Let it lay there," Jim urged, before I started reeling in line.

I dropped the rod tip to let the bait settle back to the bottom, flipped the reel back into free spool, and waited with the rod in my hands.

Seconds later I felt a tug, and line began accelerating off the reel again. I engaged the spool and jerked back on the stiff rod again. This time I felt something solid.

First nothing moved, and I wondered if I were just snug on the bottom. But the rod began to throb and the fish pulled out line. It felt as if I were hooked to a boulder rolling down steps. Remembering that I was using heavy tackle I started pumping and reeling, following Jim's advice to get the fish into the boat quickly. Even the catfish fought hard. No wonder few anglers see these flathead cats—not many anglers are equipped to catch them.

When the fish was alongside the boat, Jim reached into the water and swung my first flathead catfish aboard. It was somewhat over 25 inches, I guessed, maybe seven pounds. It had fought as if it were bigger. I unhooked it, held it long enough for Larry to take several photos, and slid it back into the water.

Jim got another chub from the bait bucket for me, and I re-baited and cast out my rig, making as little commotion as possible. Jim had cautioned Larry and me about the skittish nature of flathead cats.

"My dad always told me to be quiet, and not to shine lights," he says. "But when they'd start hitting well they would grab a bait right beside the boat. When they go into a feeding frenzy they just go crazy."

We did not see a feeding frenzy, but we did catch a half-dozen more flathead cats that evening. All the action came within a one-hour period, as Jim had predicted.

Jim had 24 pick-ups during his best night of flathead catfishing. He had a first-time cat angler with him that night.

"I get more kick out of taking other people than catching them myself," he said.

That was apparent. Jim was a delightful host. His stories of growing up along the river were a treasure, and the tips on flathead catfishing were an education I will put to good use.

At 1:00 a.m. we called it quits, after an hour of no pick-ups. An hour later we were back on top of the river ridge, back in the civilized world of artificial lights and sounds.

Then it really sank home—what a rare treat it had been, a night in the wild hidden from civilization by that steep river valley and that moonless sky. I guess flathead cats will never be popular fish.

thank heavens.

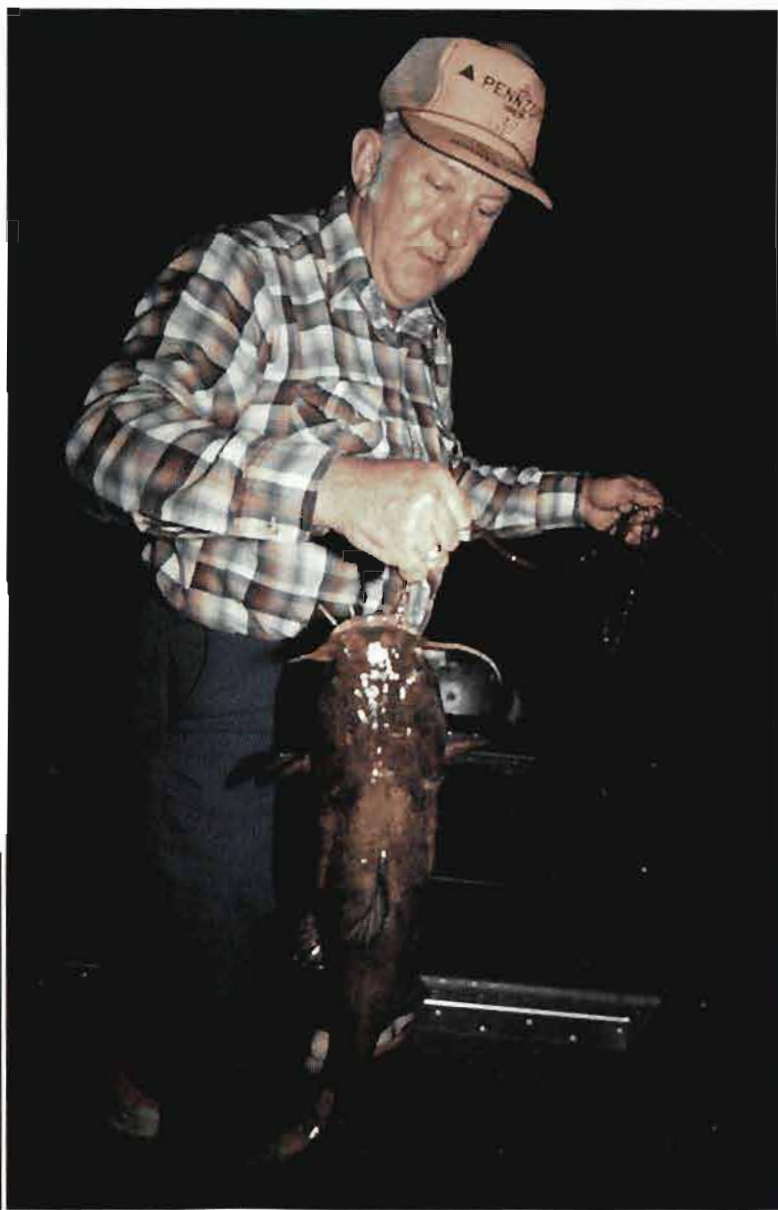
ANGLER

# Flathead Catfish Tackle

One reason so few anglers catch flathead cats is because few anglers use heavy enough tackle to handle big fish. Jim Rogers uses nothing lighter than 50-pound line so that he can horse in the flathead cats. You can use somewhat lighter gear, but remember that these fish can grow to 100 pounds. I use a rod that I bought for ocean pier fishing, a seven-foot casting rod rated for 15- to 30-pound line. My reel is loaded with 25-pound line. If I were fishing somewhere flathead cats weighing over 50 pounds could be expected, I would use heavier gear.

Hook size should correspond to the size of the bait. As a general rule, for the four- to seven-inch chubs Jim suggests as bait, a size 1/0 or 2/0 hook is adequate.

Flathead cats live in deep water, in current, so you need a reasonably heavy weight to keep the bait planted on the bottom. Use an assortment of weights from 1/2-ounce to at least one ounce.—MB



# Cooperation is the

# KEY

For the last several years the Delco-Manning Chapter of Trout Unlimited has been involved in a cooperative effort with the Fish Commission on stream improvement projects. Working on Ridley Creek in Delaware County, the chapter, with guidance from the Fish Commission, has completed projects aimed at protecting stream banks, narrowing channels and increasing stream flow. In addition, the chapter has erected a casting platform for disabled anglers.

Recently, a project planned for nearly a year was completed. Because of heavy fishing pressure during trout season, work was scheduled for late summer when both fishing pressure and water levels were low.

Karl Lutz, Eastern Area Coordinator for the Commission's Adopt-a-Stream Program, worked with the chapter Stream Improvement Chairman Ron Soto. Lutz selected the recently completed work sites for two reasons. Lutz says, "The stream was too wide here, and there is severe bank erosion caused by both water flow and fishermen's access to the stream."

It was jointly decided to protect the bank and narrow the channel by installing several jagged deflectors, made of rock one to two feet in diameter. According to Lutz, the reason for using a jagged deflector is to create more "edge," or fish habitat. The jagged deflector provides cover for both baitfish and the larger trout that prey on them.

"At this particular spot," says Lutz, "there is a nice hole in front of the deflector. Combined with all the nooks and crannies created by the new deflector, we have very good trout habitat."

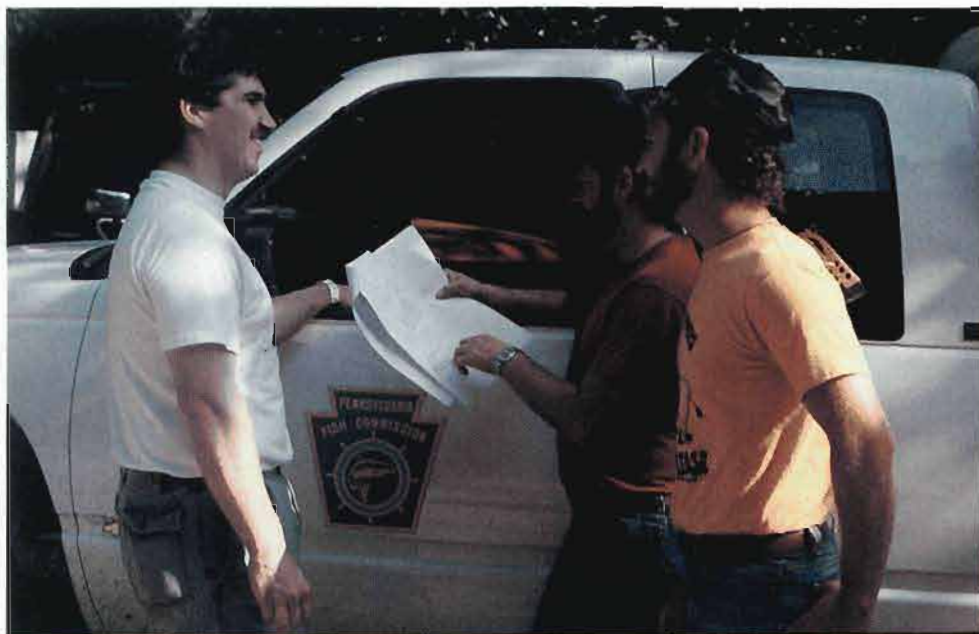
"The clubs involved on these projects should get the credit for all the work they do and the conservation work they accomplish," says Lutz.

Keller, a seasonal employee, echoes his boss's sentiments and adds, "It's good to see the involvement and dedication displayed by Trout Unlimited and the other organizations we work with."

One problem noted by both Lutz and Keller at Delco-Manning's work session, as well as at others, is the low number of young people. Says Lutz, "We've got to get our young people involved. They're the future of both our sport and our environment."

Barry Hall, chapter president, agrees with Lutz, but says, "The activities of TU, including habitat improvement work, is drawing more members and increased involvement. I hope more young people become involved to help with and carry on what we have started."

by John W. McGonigle



Working with stone the size of that used for this project calls for more than manpower. The chapter rented a backhoe for the day, and is fortunate to have an experienced operator, former club president Fred Peifer, to run it. Peifer went to work laying the foundation for the deflectors by moving the heavier stone into place. Smaller stone placed on top was then moved by hand to form the solid barrier needed to protect the stream bank from high water.

Ron Soto was pleased with the cooperation received from several quarters. "For starters," says Soto, "the Fish Commission has been helpful every step of the way, right down to Karl and Dave showing up in work clothes to lend a hand. As helpful as they've been, though, we've had additional assistance that took our project from the drawing board to completion."

Locally, the club received free stone and a reasonable price on having it hauled to the work site from Kiewit-Perini, a contractor working on a local highway project. Soto can't guarantee it, but he thinks similar arrangements might be available in other parts of the state if an organization takes the time to find it.

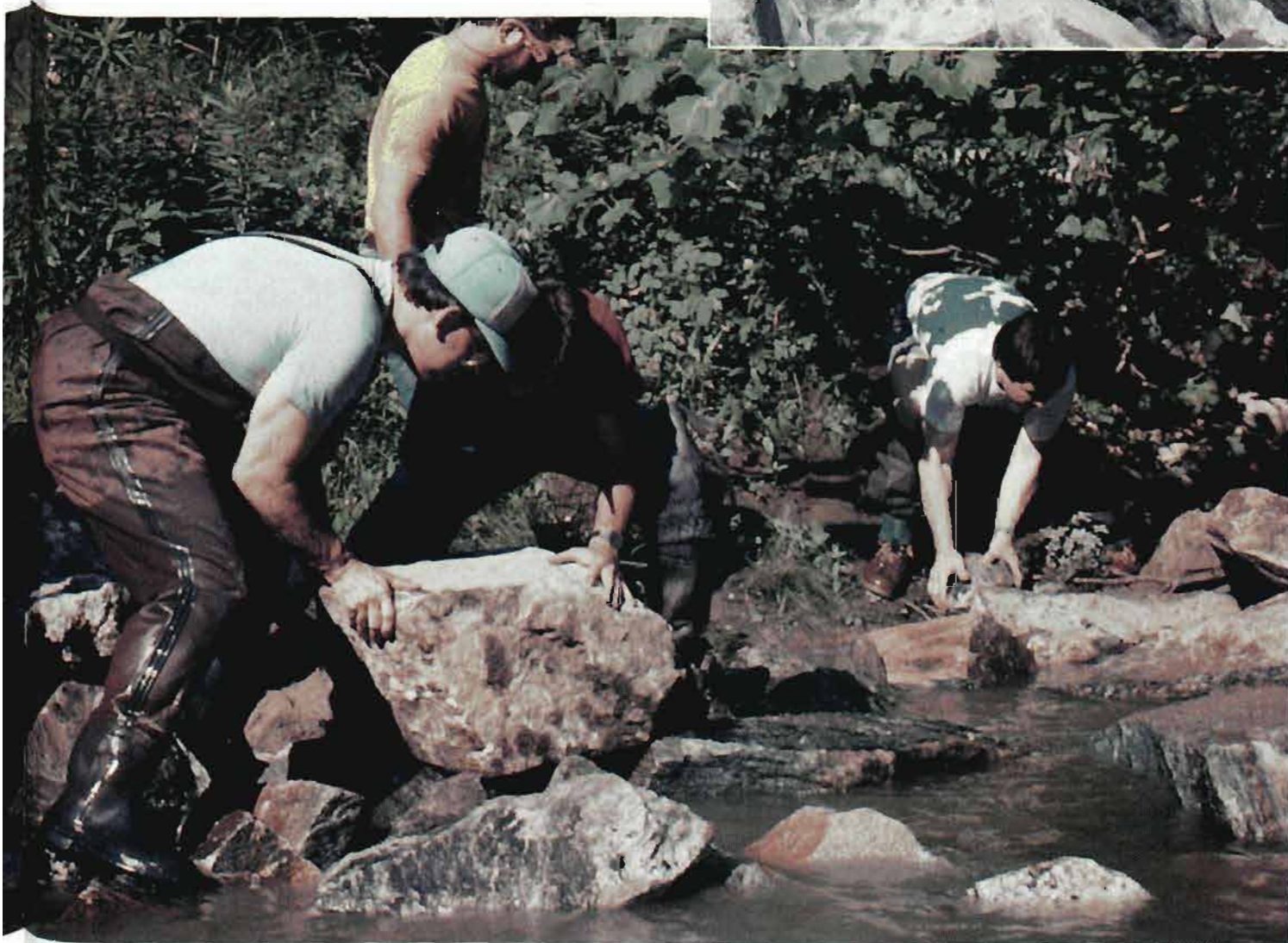




Funding, the nemesis of all volunteer organizations, was obtained from the Fish America Foundation. The chapter obtained a grant of \$2,470 for work on Ridley Creek, to be completed in two stages. The foundation is an industry-related group dedicated to promoting the positive aspects of sport fishing.

Some people believe that Trout Unlimited is devoted to fly fishing only, but it should be noted that the present project is the first to be done by the chapter within the fly-fishing-only stretch of Ridley Creek.

"Finally," says Hall, "we are going to dedicate our efforts for a time to the fly-fishing-only section. It is the only dedicated delayed-harvest area in Delaware County. We're going to get involved with fall stocking, continue our stream improvement efforts, create additional trout habitat and establish a quality suburban fly stretch."



Ridley Creek is blessed with good water quality and varied insect hatches, especially so for a suburban stream. According to Hall, "people like stream improvement projects." Combine these facts with the kind of cooperation shared between the Delco-Manning Chapter of TU and the Fish Commission, plus some additional help with materials and funding, and the future looks bright for anglers on Ridley Creek.

PHOTO: ANDLER

*Delco-Manning TU Chapter members and Fish Commission Adopt-a-Stream Program personnel built habitat improvement devices on Delaware County's Ridley Creek.*

*Write to the Fish America Foundation for more information on grants. The address is: 1010 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20001.*

# Pennsylvania's Biggest Largemouth Bass:

## *When, Where and How Anglers Catch Them*

by Art Michaels

The Commission issued 162 Junior and Senior Angler's awards for largemouth bass catches made in 1990. To qualify for a senior award, largemouth bass must be at least five pounds. Four pounds is the minimum largemouth bass weight for junior awards. Records show that 19 of the 162 awards were junior awards.

### When

Pennsylvania anglers caught their citation-sized bass during each month of 1990. Here are the numbers of bass caught during each month: January, 15; February, 3; March, 19; April, 13; May, 5; June, 30; July, 22; August, 22; September, 19; October, 6; November, 5; and December, 2.

### Where

Anglers caught these 162 largemouths in 74 Commonwealth waterways in 42 counties. Here are the names of those waterways with the number of bass fooled in each waterway: Lake Arthur, 26; Ontelaunee Reservoir, 13; Tamarack Lake, 11; and Peck's Pond, 6.

Four largemouths were caught in each of these waterways: Shohola Lake, Nockamixon Lake and Lake Wilhelm.

Three bass were fooled in these waterways: Marsh Creek Lake, Lilly Lake, Promised Land Lake and Cross Creek Lake.

Two were caught in each of these waterways: Allegheny River, Keystone Lake, Delaware River, Glendale Lake, Mauch

Chunk Lake, Middle Creek, Middle Creek Dam, Alvin R. Bush Dam, Youghiogheny River, Buzzard Swamps, Yellow Creek Lake, Octoraro Lake, Lake Chillisquaque, Walker Lake, Lake Carey, Pinchot Lake, Schuylkill River, Lake Marburg and Lake Redman.

One bass was landed in each of these waterways: Birch Run Reservoir, Ohio River, Blue Marsh Lake, Kaercher's Creek Lake, Churchville Reservoir, Silver Lake, Connoquenessing Creek, Glade Run Lake, Hereford Manor Lakes, Stevenson Dam, Sayres Dam, Black Moshannon Lake, Oil Creek, Woodcock Creek Lake, Susquehanna River, Elk Creek, Fairview Gravel Pit, Lake Erie, Pleasant Lake, Monongahela River, Mountain Lake, Fords Pond,

Lackawanna Lake, Octoraro Creek, Speedwell Forge Lake, Myerstown Quarry, Stover's Dam, Leaser Lake, Lake Jean, Brady's Lake, Tobyhanna Lake, Bradford Reservoir, Little Buffalo Lake, Penn Pocono Lake, Laurel Hill Lake, Youghiogheny Reservoir, Prompton Dam, White Oak Pond, Rossville State Game Lands Pond, Chestnut Ridge Dam, Keystone Lake, Lake Donegal, Loyalhanna Lake and L. B. Sheppard Reservoir.



### How

Here are the lures and baits anglers used to catch these big bass, and the number of bass caught with each type of bait or lure:

Lure, 30; plastic worm, 22; spinnerbait, 21; jig, 20; buzzbait, 5; spinner, 4; and spoon, 2.

Live minnows accounted for 38 largemouths. Nightcrawlers took 17, and suckers fooled 3.

### State record

No new largemouth bass state record was caught in 1990, so Donald Shade's record still stands. He caught the current state record in 1983 in Birch Run Reservoir, Adams County. The fish weighed 11 pounds, 3 ounces, and was 18 inches long.

Rick Nitkiewicz, of Pittsburgh, caught the biggest largemouth bass of 1990, a 9-pound, 10-ounce hawg that measured 26.25 inches long. The action occurred last September 3 at Lake Arthur. Nitkiewicz fooled the bass with a jig-and-pig.

### Your big fish

The Fish Commission has published *Catch a Big Fish in Pennsylvania*, a four-page brochure that explains the Commission's Angler Recognition Program. The program includes Angler's Awards, Husky Musky Club, Record Fish and Biggest Fish of the Year. The publication has applications, a list of current Pennsylvania state-record fish, and minimum weights in junior and senior categories for eligible fish species.

For a free single copy include a business-sized stamped, self-addressed envelope with requests. Contact: Publications Section, Dept. F, PA Fish Commission, P. O. Box 1673, Harrisburg, PA 17105-1673.





Meet Cecil R. Houser, chief of the Cooperative Nursery Unit. He and his staff oversee 156 sportsmen's clubs involved in cooperative fish-rearing at 183 hatcheries. Cecil coordinates the fingerling, fry and egg requests and deliveries among cooperative nurseries and the Commission, and he coordinates the stocking of these fish among the cooperative nurseries, WCOs and area fisheries managers. With his staff he inspects those 183 hatcheries, and he organizes and conducts six annual regional seminars for nursery sponsors.

### Don't Rock the Boat

The small fishing boat tends to be unstable, making it easy to swamp or capsize, or tip enough to send a standing angler into the water, the leading causes of boating fatalities.

Standing in a small boat raises its center of gravity, which increases its instability. Many anglers have fallen overboard when they stood up to cast, play a fish, land a catch or answer nature's call.

The National Safe Boating Council points out that modern outboard boats have a capacity plate that indicates the maximum safe outboard horsepower and carrying capacity of a boat. A boat's capacity includes the combined weight of passengers, outboard and other equipment. The number of seats in a boat is not a measure of its capacity. All weight should be distributed evenly in the boat.

If a boat is overloaded, it has little freeboard (the distance from the waterline to the top edge of the boat), which makes it more likely to tip or for water to come in over the edge.

If the boat does tip, stay with it. Most boats today have flotation, and they will remain afloat if they are tipped. Boaters who fall in should stay calm, get back in the boat or climb onto the top if it has overturned, and wait for help.

### Fishing, Boating in PA State Parks

For information on fishing and boating in Pennsylvania state parks, call 1-800-63-PARKS. The service can help you obtain answers to questions about state parks and the facilities and services each has.



I thought you might get a kick out of the enclosed picture of my nine-year-old son, Ken, proudly holding his catch of a beautiful walleye. He caught this fish on his first cast of the morning one day last fall. Ken and I often fish the Allegheny River near Franklin. We always use lures, and we always catch fish—walleye, smallmouth bass, northern pike and occasionally a musky. We release most of what we catch, but not before a picture is taken of those fish worthy of capturing on film.  
—Cliff Miller, Pittsburgh, PA.



Roper "The Rope" Houston caught this 21-inch brown trout last fall in Black Bear Run near Winburne. He was fishing his way to archery camp. The trout was known locally as "Henry" and was the target of persistent efforts by "Weasel" Hubley and Billy "The Mink." Rope was using a worm. Black Bear Run is a beautiful, inaccessible mountain stream with natural reproduction of both brook and brown trout. The fishery is dominated by brook trout. Given the cold water temperatures and small stream size, it is a real trophy waterway. I aged the scales—the fish was a 12-year-old wild brown trout.  
—Marty Marcinko, Coldwater Unit Leader, Bellefonte, PA.

## NOTES FROM THE STREAMS

### Big bait, big fish

How many times have you heard that you have to use big bait for big fish? While surveying the Allegheny and Youghiogheny rivers last summer, several large fish proved that big fish actually do prefer big dinners. Last August, biologists from the Southwest Fisheries Management office were surveying pool 5 on the Allegheny River near Clinton with gill nets. The day was routine with our net catching several carp, catfish, white bass and panfish. Then we hauled a large channel catfish into the boat. Interestingly, the catfish was not caught in the net; the net was caught in the catfish.

Apparently, the channel cat decided to dine on a seven-inch rock bass already entangled in the net. The catfish was able to swallow the rock bass, but very little of the 200-foot gill net.

After extracting the net and the rock bass, the catfish was measured and weighed. The big cat was 30 inches long and topped the scale at 12 pounds.

The next day on the lower end of pool 5 a similar situation occurred and this time the results were even more spectacular. A 32-inch, 16-pound flathead catfish swallowed a 15-inch channel catfish that was caught in the net. Finally, while electrofishing the Youghiogheny River below Ohioypyle last September, we collected a smallmouth bass near the mouth of Indian Creek. On closer inspection, the caudal fin of another fish was protruding from the mouth of the bass. After a careful extraction, this 14-inch smallmouth tried to consume an eight-inch river chub.—*Tom Shervinski, Fisheries Technician, Area 8.*

### Daring rescue

My family has a cabin located on an island in the Susquehanna River about a mile-and-a-half south of the Columbia Access. In this area the river is about a mile wide and between Columbia and the island there is a quarter-mile-long section that is rocky with shallows, deep holes and the submerged old canal dam. This area is strongly effected by Safe Harbor Dam's causing changes in

the depth and strength of the current.

On Monday evening, July 2, my 17-year-old son, Mark, and I were returning to Columbia from the island through this area in our 14-foot aluminum boat. Safe Harbor was drawing water, so the current was strong and the water abnormally low. We had to go slowly because of these conditions. We saw a cushion floating downriver more than 100 yards to our right between us and shore. I looked upriver and on the old dam saw two men standing in and bailing a 12-foot aluminum boat. One man got back in the boat and attempted to restart the motor. We continued to make our way upriver to a point where we could safely render assistance while continuing to observe the men and boat.

Things went from bad to worse. Their motor started moving the boat into deeper water. The second man attempted to get back into the boat, but it was moving and he could not pull himself over the sides. He ended up hanging on under the bow with one hand on either side of the bow. The boat was basically on top of him.

We pulled alongside and told the man in the boat to shut the motor off and drop the anchor, which we also did. We instructed the man in the water how to come over the side of our boat. Mark and I moved to the opposite side to prevent capsizing our boat. While this was being accomplished, the man in the boat cried out. He stood in the stern of the boat. It was sinking stem-first, rolling over and throwing him into the water. We used the same procedure to get this second man into our boat.

With both men safely in our boat, Mark entered the water and was able to right their boat and retrieve what gear he could. Mark got back into our boat, and with the anchor line towed the boat back to where the boat had been rented.

These men had rented this boat for fishing. They had been advised by the rental agent not to take the boat into this area because it was an area they were not familiar with. Neither of these men could swim nor did they wear PFDs.

Mark and I feel strongly that if we had not been on the river that evening, drownings would have occurred. We could imagine the one man being run over by the boat, and the other drowning when the boat sank. Fortunately, only equipment was lost, not lives.—*Vincent B. Wickenheiser, Boating and Water Safety Awareness Instructor, Columbia, PA.*

### Excuses, excuses

Here are 17 actual excuses for violating the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Code fishing regulations as told to me and my deputies.

1. Why three men were fishing without licenses: "We were told that the wardens are on 40 hours a week and they don't work weekends." (This happened on a Saturday.)

2. Why the fisherman on Lake Wal-lenpaupack was fishing with only a New Jersey license: "It's reciprocal and this is an estuary of the Delaware River."

3. Why the fisherman had no license: "I was just practicing."

4. Why the three doctors were fishing without licenses: "We weren't fishing—we were only trying to catch some sunfish for the kids." (Kids nowhere in sight.)

5. Why the fisherman was fishing without a license: "I had no intent to go fishing. I just took my dog for a walk."

6. Why the fisherman kept a 14-inch bass during the closed season: "It's the biggest fish I ever caught."

7. Why the doctor left his fishing rods unattended for 45 minutes: "I had to go buy a fishing license."

8. Why the man standing on the dock was fishing without a license: "I own the dock."

9. Why the man's wife was fishing without a license: "Because I (husband) got a ticket for fishing without a license two days ago."

10. Why the fisherman was fishing in approved trout waters 40 minutes early on the opening day: "What time is it?"

11. Why the fisherman was fishing in approved trout waters one hour early on the opening day: "I wanted to get a good spot."

12. Why the fisherman had four trout over the limit: "The fish were really biting."

13. Why the fisherman, who had kept his limit of trout, was back fishing and possessed more trout: "My buddies weren't back at the cabin yet."

14. Why four non-resident campers were cutting down trees on private, posted property: "We needed firewood—we didn't think it would hurt anything."

15. Why the man had thrown papers on the ground: "We do that all the time on Long Island. The birds use it to build nests."

16. Why the woman had thrown out a bag of garbage and an old carpet along a stream (her checking account receipt in the

## ANGLERS CURRENTS

bag showed a balance of \$17,648.93): "I didn't know what else to do with it."

17. Why three men, fishing with snagging hooks, possessed walleye during the closed season: "We were sucker fishing."

Here are 14 actual excuses for boating violations.

1. Why the motorboat owner/operator did not display his motorboat registration numbers on his boat (also why he failed to display his fishing license while fishing): "I didn't think anybody cared."

2. Why the female observer (clad in a skimpy bikini) was sitting on the motor cover of the tow boat: (Male skier's response) "So I could observe her."

3. Why the two male observers failed to notice the fallen skier. (We found the downed skier. The tow boat was 1/2-mile away searching for him.): "We were watching the girls on the docks."

4. Why the operator of the motorboat was turned around in his seat, talking to his passengers, while the motorboat was in motion: He was explaining to his out-of-state passengers how "the lake patrol stops boats for careless operation."

5. Why the owner of the motorboat with an illegal exhaust system did not stop for the siren: "I couldn't here the siren—my boat's too loud."

6. Why the operator of the motorboat ran over a "no ski" buoy: "What buoy?"

7. Why the motorboat operator was exceeding the slow, minimum height swell speed within 100 feet of the shoreline and a drifting boat: "I was going slow, I was at 2200 RPMs."

8. Why the personal watercraft operator was running wide open in an area marked with "no boat" buoys: "There's no boats in my way."

9. Why the motorboat was drifting in the middle of the lake at 11 p.m. with no lights on: "We got a babysitter for the kids and are being romantic."

10. Why the motorboat lights were off at 11:30 p.m.: "I just turned them off to go to the bathroom." Where? In the water?

11. Why the skier was still skiing 45 minutes after legal hours: "But officer, we're practicing safe skiing, there's no other boat traffic now."

12. Why the motorboat was operated at 11 p.m. with no lights (operator had a B.A.C. of .16 percent): "Why are you picking on a veteran on the 4th of July?"

13. Why the motorboat was operated after

dark with its bow lights reversed: "How did you notice that?"

14. Why the motorboat was operated at a high rate of speed with passengers riding on the motor cover: "Why aren't you out stopping people doing stupid stuff?"—*William Carey, WCO, Pike County.*

### Happy Halloween!

I'm a WCO who serves an urban district. I devote a substantial portion of my autumn schedule to serving arrest warrants issued for "less than cooperative" violators of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Code. After being unable to locate one especially elusive individual for more than a year, I obtained information that this subject worked in the south Philadelphia area as a self-employed painter. A phone call verified this lead. Posing as a potential client in need of painting, I arranged to meet the "contractor" for an estimate at an apartment house I claimed to own. Having now cast the freshly baited hook, DWCO John Celley and I anxiously awaited. The wait was short-lived and much to our surprise, the defendant arrived promptly as scheduled. Following formal introductions, the defendant conceded his guilt and wisely opted to pay the full fine and court costs to avoid being taken forthwith. Additionally noteworthy was the date this incident occurred, October 31, Halloween.—*WCO Alan D. Robinson, Delaware County.*

### If only

If only you would have stopped to think—you were so sure things would be OK. Why did you agree to go on that late-night swimming feat? There were no lights, everything was closed—you could not see the signs. It was well after midnight, but the water looked so refreshing you just couldn't resist jumping right in.

Did you have a cramp? Did you dive under and hit a stump or rock? Whatever—you simply slipped under the water then and never came back up. No hint of danger—no sounds—you were just gone. Your friends were in shock.

We, the rescue squad, were called—we took our boat out with the grappling hooks—the long poles moved us up and down the water inch by inch as we tried to snag something. Hour after hour, muscles tiring more after each pull, we went back and forth across the small lake now ablaze with flashing red lights of the police, fire and

rescue units—the sounds of the electric generators flashing lights on us was deafening and there in front of us were those warning signs.

At last the divers arrived to start their grueling underwater task. They jumped in with their air tanks as we continued to drag—then up came a diver—we just knew in our hearts they had done their job—we rowed over to the surfaced diver and gently helped him place you in our boat and headed back to shore—the silence was intense—we then saw the sun break through the morning haze.

A new day—the ambulance leaves and we pack up our gear and head back to base. Then home to drop in bed. Closing my eyes the tears uncontrollably start to flow as the adrenaline begins to slow down. Your face is right there under my eyelids—I'm not supposed to be affected by this job I was just part of, but regardless, my heart bleeds a little more each day I have a victim. The tears continue to wash away the hurt.

I'll go back tomorrow—tonight even—when I'm called to help drag a river, lake or pond. If only you would have checked it out—signs do mean a lot—warnings are useless if you don't heed them. "Oh well, if only," is so easy to say—but how it breaks the heart so many times.—*Kenny Ferretti, Bureau of Education and Information.*

### Sneak attack

Two young Washington County anglers, Robert "B.C." Cowden, 15, and Rick Loar, 11, accompanied Mr. Don Dallatore, Jr., to Marvin Creek in McKean County to learn the fine art of fishing for trout with minnows. A nice trout followed B.C.'s minnow but wouldn't take the bait. Mr. Dallatore said, "The fish probably saw you!" On the next cast, B.C. turned his head so the trout couldn't see him!—*Don Parrish, WCO, McKean County.*

### Anglers are great!

During a recent photographic outing for the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association at the delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only area on Oil Creek, my faith in mankind was restored. Someone left a graphite fly rod, reel, and other tackle leaning against a tree sometime mid-morning on a Friday. The mother of our "model" had left the rod there while she watched the photography session. The next Monday she remembered it. Sure enough, no one had touched it. Anglers are great!—*Robert L. Steiner, WCO, Venango County.*

## Pennsylvania Angler Volume Available

A limited number of bound copies of *Pennsylvania Angler* Volume 59 (January 1990 through December 1990) are available. This volume contains 1990's 12 issues. It is hardbound in black with gold-colored inscription.

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Dedicated to the sound conservation of our aquatic resources, the protection and management of the state's diversified fisheries, and the ideals of safe boating and optimum boating opportunities.

## Angler's Notebook *by Chris Dolnick*



Professional tournament anglers often wear a dampened bandana around their necks to prevent sunburn and to keep cool. A light-colored cap with a mesh back also helps protect your head, face and eyes.

Summertime water sports—fishing and boating—are fun, but the sun can take its toll and leave you fatigued. Be sure to take along plenty of sunscreen and cool, non-alcoholic beverages. A pair of UV-blocking sunglasses helps reduce eye strain.

When the summer doldrums put fish down, consider fishing after nightfall. If you fish from a boat, be sure the navigation lights work and that you have a whistle or airhorn on board.

Use heavier line than normal when fishing topwater lures at night. The fish won't see the line and you won't be able to finesse snags.

Timing is the key to hooking fish on a topwater lure in the dark. Resist the temptation to set the hook when you hear the strike. Wait until you feel the fish.

Attach your lures with a small snap swivel when fishing at night. The clip allows you to change lures without having to tie knots.

When the surface temperature reaches the mid-70s, topwater fishing comes into its own. Clear water adjacent to submerged vegetation is an ideal spot to try.

Creek channels are important mid-summer structure. Fish use the creek channels as highways, traveling them in search of food.

Finding abrupt structure is a key to catching fishing in warm weather. Creek channels, horseshoe bends, sunken islands, submerged bridges and timber probably hold concentrations of gamefish now.

Heat and sunlight weaken nylon fishing line. Line exposed to heat in the trunk of a car, or to sunlight in the window of a pickup truck, is suspect. Change the line if in doubt.

A common way professional anglers check line for abrasion is to run the line lightly between the lips. If the line feels rough, respool.

Putting a trophy fish on a stringer or loose in a cooler risks knocking scales off. To prevent this from happening, dampen a clean towel and wrap the fish in it. Keep the towel moist until you reach the taxidermist.

Wet flies are especially productive when the water begins to clear after a cloudburst.

Small, dark flies produce better than lighter-color flies when streams are low and clear.

*Illustration: George Lavanchi*

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# On the Water

## ON THE WATER

with Dave Wolf

## “Sunnies”

I stirred beneath the glow of the Coleman lanterns that dimly lit the musty-smelling cabin. My grandmother was an early riser and I felt her gentle nudge at the same time I smelled the bacon my grandfather was preparing on the wood-fired cook stove. I stumbled from the old army bunk, its green paint chipped and worn, and struggled out the cabin door to the trough that held the spring water directed by the wooden “V” my grandfather had built. I splashed the icy cold water on my face and was awake immediately. Like most boys, I did not wash thoroughly, even though I knew my grandmother would conduct inspection back inside the cabin.

Grandfather had plans to fish Penns Creek for trout today, meaning that my grandmother and I would walk the mile of dirt road to the lake that held “sunnies.” They were broad, heavy panfish, too lowly as a gamefish for my grandfather, but grandmother and I enjoyed the sport immensely. Besides, grandmother was more patient with this six-year-old—more willing to untangle lines and chat as we fished. When we trout fished, talking was not allowed “because it would scare the fish”—the fish that we always ate. Sunnies were different. We caught them only for fun, although we always took a scrub bucket along to collect our catch. We would always bring them back to the cabin to stock into the small pond we had dug near the spring. We did not understand that the water was too cold there and had always been puzzled by their disappearance.

We had gathered the Tonkin cane rods, warped and bent from years of casting splitshot, worms and liver, and the automatic reels loaded with eight-pound-test monofilament line. We would spend the entire day at the lake, placing the bent rods in forked sticks we found in the area.

Then we would sit and wait, our eyes fixed on the tiny white-and-red bobbers that rose and sank with each ripple of the wind-blown lake. My grandmother and I would sit and talk about nothing in particular. We ate a leisurely lunch and I will never forget the hard candy grandmother had stashed in her brown gym bag—candy with a wrapper covered with dirt that was easily brushed away.

I recall the tug on the bobber and my grandmother warning me to be patient and allow the bobber to disappear before setting the hook. I remember the large and brilliantly colored sunnies—slab-sided fish, at least in this youngster’s eyes, coming from a lake that received very little fishing pressure.

I recall day’s end as well, and the long walk back on the dirt road, often in the dark, and the occasional passing car leaving a plume of dust that gathered mostly in my teeth. To this day, I like the smell and taste of dirt roads. We would take turns carrying the bucket, and I would often stop and see how the fish were surviving the journey. They were fish destined for the spring pond, and I



had high hopes of building a population there, right near the cabin, something that would expand my fishing hours.

I would return happy and proud and my grandfather would look at the bucket of sunnies with disdain and ask if we had taken any trout. When we answered no, he would ask if we had tried the small stream that paralleled the dirt road, a stream we all knew held a good head of native brookies. Of course we had not. We had spent the day fishing for sunnies. My grandfather never appreciated the colorful creatures, or the lake that produced so few large trout. He never understood our passion for the fish or the place, and I’m not quite sure he understood or appreciated the quality time my grandmother and I spent there.

The questioning complete, grandfather would show us his impressive catch of browns from Penns Creek—fish that would be filleted and eaten that evening within the confines of the cabin. Fish that were simply that to a six-year-old—fish, no more or no less important than the sunnies finning in the cold spring pond behind the cabin.

Back on the army cot listening to the soothing song of the whippoorwill, I never considered my grandparents passing, or the inherited love of the sunny my grandmother would pass on. And now sunnies and still ponds still attract me, and bring memories from the closet of my mind. The memories that have been, and always will be, safeguarded for those lakes and ponds and the dirt roads that led me to them. These memories allow me never to fish for sunnies alone, for I still remember the patience and the kindness of a grandmother who led me to the still waters and those brilliant fish. They are much like the pot of gold at rainbow’s end.

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