

Fishing & Hunting TM Journal



FREE

IN THIS ISSUE

- NEW DELAWARE RECORD STRIPER
- MARYLAND HUNTING LICENSE- WHAT'S IN STORE FOR 2013
- MARYLAND DEER HARVEST DOWN
- PERCHIN'

New Record Delaware State Striper



A 52-pound striped bass caught Dec. 8, on the beach of Delaware Seashore State Park has broken the existing state record. Ben Smith of Bryn Mawr, Pa., caught the four-foot-plus fish at about 7:30 a.m.

Angler Ben Smith, right, and Chris Amone show off the state record striped bass caught by Smith last December.



Bryden Strannahan with a 9 point taken in Tolchester, MD.



Coty Strannahan with a 9 point taken in Denton, MD.

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“HOOKED ON FISHING”

Pre-perch Perch

By Lenny Rudow

Are you gearing up and looking forward to perch fishing in a month or two? If so, you're behind the ball and missing the bite. Most people wait to go perch fishing until March or even April, when both whites and yellows pour into small tributaries and creeks on their spawning run. Big mistake. Months earlier, you can find these fish in tightly-packed schools—and they're usually ready and willing to bite.

The Where:

These pre-spawn perch will be balled up in deep holes, often within a mile or two of the spawning grounds. Look for scoured-out creek bends with at least 10' of water; 15' to 20' of depth is even better. You'll find the best fishing usually comes at the tail end of an outgoing tide, when the fish are concentrated in the deepest part(s) of the holes and channels. During dead low the fishing is also usually good, but when the current switches direction expect the bite to die off and stay dead for hours at a time. During the transition through the high you'll often get a few nibbles, but it normally doesn't hold a candle to that low tide action.

You say you want specifics? Okay—here are a of my favorite eastern shore and western shore pre-perch perch fishing spots, which offer reliable fishing through most winters and into early spring.

Nanjemoy Creek – There's a fishing pier at Friendship Landing with a slight hole in front of it, but much better action can be found by launching a boat here (the ramp's small so an 18-footer is about as big as you'll want to try) and heading up the creek (to the right, when standing on the ramp and looking at the water). The first major bend which swings to the left and makes a 180 is often the best spot on the whole creek, and it's a very large, deep hole with enough room for several boats to fish. If they aren't biting here or there's too much competition, head farther up-creek. Ignore the next bend you come to (which doesn't have a hole) but stop short at the second one, which has a nice drop-off and often holds fish. Added bonus: If the tide's uncooperative, running farther up the creek and fishing blow-downs can net you some crappie.

Upper Patuxent - Another good western shore winter perch hotspot is the upper Patuxent River, though they usually come in here slightly later and stick around until the up-river run goes into full swing. There's a pier at Wayson's Corner (by the foot of the Rt. 4 bridge) which has decent depth

in front of it, but you'll do better and have more elbow room if you use the carry-in (no trailer access) launch at the parking lot and head up-river until you see the first feeder creek on your left. There's a nice hole here, where the creek meets the river. You can find fish in it during most winters and in the weeks just prior to the spawning run, it gets red hot.

Watts Creek – At Martinak State Park you'll find a boat ramp, a long bulkhead, and if you follow the path through the woods to their left, a pavilion that over-hangs the water. There's a nice hole here and since

the pavilion is covered, this spot is a great choice in bad weather. All along the bulkhead is also productive at times because a decnet channel runs along it, though it's not quite as good as the main hole by the pavilion. Unfortunately this spot hasn't seemed as productive in the past few years as it used to be, but hopefully fish will return in better numbers this season.

If you launch a boat here, run past the pavilion and then follow the creek through two turns to the left. The next turn is a right, and there's a small hole

See Rudow Page 5



Switch the bull minnow for grass shrimp when the white perch begin to show up, to fill the cooler with both species.



It's time for pre-perch perch fishing, at hotspots like Watts Creek, in Martinak State Park.

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In This Issue...

Fishing & Hunting Journal

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FISHING

- Pre-perch-Perch** by Lenny Rudow Page 3
- Lessons From The Fishing Hole** by Tim Sherman Page 6
- Two Options For Yellow Perch** by Jim Gronaw Page 12
- World Record Yellow Fin Tuna?** Page 10

HUNTING

- So You Want To Bow Hunt** by Mike Monteleone Page 8
- MD Hunting License - What's In Store for 2013**
by Steve Huettner Page 21

REGULARS

- Coastal Report** by Capt. Mark Sampson Page 15
- Mid Bay Forecast** by Chuck Prahll Page 18
- Sportsman's Classifieds** Page 22

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FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

Back in the mid 1960's, "Get Smart" was a popular TV sitcom. It was a funny show; certainly better than most of what currently passes for "entertainment", in my opinion anyway. The show was a spoof of such classic spy thrillers as the "Man from U.N.C.L.E" series and the James Bond movies. This basic premise provided a comic vehicle for the escapades of the bungling protagonist, Maxwell Smart, as he battled the agents of the sinister spy organization "KAOS". Just a few years ago a movie was released capitalizing on the popularity of this TV series, incorporating the same name and characters. The film opened with a narrator uttering the phrase "there has always been a delicate balance between chaos and control. Now with that balance threatened, it's time to turn to one man." Essentially both the TV show and the movie provided a light-hearted framework to depict the prototypical story line of good guys versus bad guys.

Unfortunately, the actual history of the epic struggle between good and evil is not so uplifting. Shortly before the "Get Smart" series came on the scene, Nikita Khrushchev was the leader of the Communist party in Russia. One of the reasons he had moved up the ranks within the party was the manner in which he handled an assignment he had received from Josef Stalin. Shortly after World War II, he was sent to put down a rebellion by Ukrainian nationalists. He performed this duty with such enthusiasm he earned the nickname "The Butcher of the Ukraine", and subsequently placed himself in position of influence within the Communist party. One of the moments for which he is most remembered is the day he stood before the United Nations and pounded his shoe on the table in an attempt to intimidate the representatives of the other countries. He even brought the U.S. to the very edge of nuclear war when the military actions he initiated triggered the Cuban Missile Crisis. To Americans he was frightening; his political rhetoric and aggressive actions posed a true threat to the American way of life, and he seemed to be the very embodiment of evil.

Recently, we Americans have all been shocked by the incomprehensible shootings which took place in Colorado and Connecticut. I'm sure it seems to most of us that evil is more prevalent than ever, and that the "bad guys" are winning the day. But we must understand that there has always been and always will be evil in this sin-stained world. As C.S Lewis so aptly stated, we Christians live in "enemy occupied territory", and thus we should not be surprised there is a cosmic struggle taking place between good and evil.

Edmund Burke, an English statesman of the 1700's, stated "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing". The question is, what do we do when confronted with evil? The Bible provides two definitive responses. One: Do not fear! The Apostle Paul exhorted the Christians of his day to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might! What an admonition for us today! In a day where men's hearts fail for fear we must realize as Christians that if God be with us, whom shall we fear! This allows us to perform the second response: Do good! Jesus Himself urged us to respond to evil by... doing good! (Mt 5:16 and Mt 5:44, among numerous others)

Evil will always be in our world. What are we to do? Exactly what our forefathers did during those perilous days of the war for independence. Put our faith in God, for we know He is sovereign. Realize whether we live or die, we are the Lord's (Rom 14:8); and taking confidence in these things. . . . do good!

This was the faith of our fathers and I trust it is yours.

Pastor Mel Brindley - Chestertown Baptist Church

Rudow ...

Continued from Page 3

here that sometimes holds fish. Go another 60 or 70 yards down the creek until you see a small pier on the left bank, and fish in the hole in front of it—this is another one that's been extremely good in some past years.

Transquaking River - at Bestpitch, look for the small parking lot next to the bridge. You can catch perch casting from the bank here so you don't need a boat, and the best fishing is right up against the bridge. Unfortunately, the current in this spot can be your worst enemy—it's so strong sometimes that any reasonable amount of weight you clip onto your rig can get washed right back to the bank. Time your arrival with slow water (a dead low tide or right at the end of the outgoing), however, and this can be a very productive spot.

The How:

Casting out a simple old-fashioned bottom rig with a half-ounce or so bank sinker and bull minnow for bait is hard to beat for yellow perch. And don't be afraid to use the biggest bulls in the bucket—though it seems impossible, a six or seven inch long yellow perch won't hesitate to chow down on a four-inch minnow. You don't need to give the minnow any action; just cast them out, and let them sit by the bottom until you feel a bite. Set the hook after a three-count, and reel 'em in. Remember that the colder the water is the slower the fish will be, and sometimes their bites are barely perceptible.

During periods of high tide you'll have some success by suspending the minnow three or four feet under a bobber, on a marabou jig or shad dart. Cast near blow-downs and undercut banks. Grass shrimp also work well for this tactic. Some anglers prefer to use grass shrimp on their bottom rigs as well, but they fall off on the cast sometimes, are easier for the fish to steal, and don't increase the bites when fishing on bottom one iota, IMHO. Slightly later in the year, however, when white perch move in and mix with the yellows, moving to grass shrimp is a smart move. Whites will hit them with abandon, far more often than they'll take those bull minnows.

Hunting season is winding down, the bay hasn't yet snapped out of its winter slumber, and in the coming weeks, many of us will be chomping at the bit to start off our new year of fishing. Why wait? Right now is a good time to go pre-perch perch fishing—especially if the kind of chomping you'd rather be doing is on a pile of freshly fried perch fillets.



Dave Beck on the Left with a 5x6 Mule Deer and Joel Haggerty on the right with a 8 point Whitetail from F&M Ranch in Montana.



Emma Smith of Taneytown, MD., 11 yrs. old won 2nd place in the shed division at the NRA Mason Dixon Contest



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“TACKLE BOX TIM”

Lessons from the Fishing Hole

By Tim Sherman

We've all heard the saying, "A bad day of fishing beats a good day at work." That is a broad prospective of a disappointing day on the water. Serious fishermen will look at the bad day of fishing, think of what went wrong, and how to counter those situations with a better performance the next time out. Here are some scenarios I've encountered that have taught fine lessons in getting fish to bite, or to keep the bite going. Lessons can be from fish, other fisherman, the environment in which you are fishing, or any combination thereof.

Late November last year a partner and I fished in a bass tournament. As luck would have it, being Mr. Human High Pressure System, we and the other contestants fished in upper 30-degree temperatures with wind from the west and northwest at 15 to 20 miles per hour. Knowing what high pressure does to fish, our game plan was to find bass

that were supposed to be shut down by the weather conditions and catch them with finesse lures. Our plan failed.

Entered in that same tournament was Randy Yarnall. Randy, too, considered the elements of the day, but he also took a broader look at the bass and the ecosystem. The water temperature was still in the mid- to upper 40's; and being late fall, bass were in "feed up for winter" mode. Randy and his partner found a small flat where bass could come up out of deep water to feed, and then retreat. They cast crankbaits and rattle baits to the shallows and were able to keep the bite going all day long at this spot and several others. Randy told me that, except during the slack tide, they never went more than a 1/2-hour without a bite. They finished third with a five-bass limit weighing over 18 pounds.

There are a few lessons to come away with here. Some would say not to fish with Mr. Human High Pressure System is the first, but that is beside the actual point. The main lesson I will take away from being skunked is to look at the entire situation and not get hung up on weather. Randy knew that with water temperatures in the mid- to upper 40s, bass would still be feeding

aggressively. In fall, their number one concern is feeding and storing enough energy to make it through cold winter months. Not even a stereotypical high pressure system can stop this instinct.

White perch are likely the most popular fish in the bay. In summer months, some anglers are dedicated to targeting them, while others catch them after they've caught a limit of stripers. They should be easy to catch, right? I fish for white perch with lures only. I haven't come across a day when I wished I had brought bait along, yet there have been days when they can be contrarians and leave me guessing. I typically look for perch in 10 feet or less of water and cast my tandem small soft plastic, skinny tail minnows to them. I've had numerous days when me and my guests have caught and released over 100 perch in this manner. So what do I do, even with fishing in the thickest schools, when perch turn off on the minnow jigs?

My first change will be with the minnow lure. Along with 2 1/2-inch Fin-S-Fish and Tiny Flukes, I carry Crème Lit'l Fishies and small paddle

tails. I will replace one of my skinny tail baits with a paddle tail or Lit'l Fishie to see if perch want a lure with a bit more vibration. Next, even though I am fishing in shallow water, I will drop the tandem rigs straight down and jig vertically. I also like to have a second rod at the ready with a 1/8 to 1/4-ounce blade jig, such as the Cicada or Silver Buddy, when jiggging vertically. Again, these jigs give off much more vibration than any of the soft plastics.

Most anglers have a special lure or class of lures that they use to catch fish. Often times the lure is especially good at a particular location. Anglers feel a sense of pride in catching fish on a lure they have such confidence in. Count me as one of them. Yet there within lies a problem ... overconfidence.

I've fallen victim to overconfidence twice in fall fishing. In the Gunpowder River, there is a particular sunken rock pile where stripers have a liking for the Stillwater Lures Clatter Shad rattle lure. If you're going to fish there, you have to cast it. This was my thinking

Continued on Page 7



Randy Yarnall and his partner Brian Johnston show 4 bass from their 18-pound limit in November.

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Continued from Page 6

one fall day a few years ago. Stripers would not touch the lure, but favored my friends Tom's and Mike's soft plastic lures. Sure, I cast a plastic from time to time, but went right back to the Clatter Shad.

Overconfidence Day 2 was an outing with Lee and Eddie Haile on the Patapsco. My favorite bait for the river is the Z-Man SwimmerZ swim bait. I cast it at several spots with no bites. This was a truly tough day, but our last stop at the Toothpaste Spot (now thought to be a restricted area depending on which Port Authority officer you talk to) proved fruitful ... for Eddie and Lee. They were casting the YUM Money Minnow swim bait that had a wider profile than the SwimmerZ. I was so confident in my swim bait on that river that I didn't

even carry Money Minnows with me. I would have asked Lee for one, but the price of renting the "lure of the day" (and the ridicule for not having one of my own) would have been steep. I not only carry wide body swim baits these days, but often have one tied on before leaving the house.

Overconfidence is a hard lesson from which to learn. Running the trolling motor and casting to no avail while your friends catch all the fish is a hard pill to swallow. Hopefully after two times being humbled, I've learned from it.

Learning from our mistakes in any aspect of life can make us a better person. Noting and rectifying our angling inequities will make us better fishermen in the long run. These are lessons I've learned from the fishing hole in recent years. What are some of yours?



The Rabbit Commanders were back on the scene at Wink's Sporting Goods in Princess Anne, MD.



Congratulations to John Carnes of Norfolk, VA for his citation 206 lb. Bluefin Tuna hooked last month off of Virginia Beach.



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Garret Hayden of Talbot County bagged this 200 lb Black Bear in Northern Maine



"HUNTING PASSION"

So You Want to Bowhunt?

By Mike Monteleone

Talk To A Pro

Maybe you know someone who does it. Maybe it's your uncle, a co-worker or even the neighbor a few houses down the street that hunts with a bow. Perhaps you don't know anyone who hunt, bow or gun. Maybe you've never pulled a bow to full draw, but the thought of hunting with a bow sounds exciting. It is!

Whatever force has pulled you to the idea of shooting a bow and arrow for the first time in your life, here's a look at how to get started.

I would recommend that a person go to a pro shop and get fitted properly. This is the first step in the right direction a beginner should take towards getting a bow. Nothing hurts a person's first archery experience more than shooting a bow that does not fit them. You want that first experience to be a positive one because that will make it more likely that the person will stay in the sport.

Your first course of action should be to research a few pro shops in your area. The paper that you are currently reading would be a great start or try "Google-ing" archery and your town. At the pro shop you will find a pro that can help you find a bow that fits. Resist the temptation to buy your first bow from mail order or an internet sale.

When I was a know-it-all teenager, my first bow came from a catalog and it did not fit properly. The few dollars I saved through the mail were lost when I frustrated and eventually went to a pro shop to buy something else. Mail order is fine for the experienced archer that knows exactly what he needs, but for the novice a face-to-face conversation and hands on with a pro shop employee is the best.

The most common mistake beginners make when choosing a bow on their own is getting one with a draw length that is too long and a draw weight that is too heavy. Most pro shop employees have been shooting bows for years and can help a novice, male or female, get started right. There's probably a good one near you.

It is normal for a pro shop to start beginners at low poundage and let them work their way up to more. For example, if a man can draw/pull 50 pounds, the shop will likely recommend he buy a bow with a 50-60 pound weight range. With today's bow technology, 50 and 60 pounds will create more than enough kinetic energy to send an arrow easily through the boiler room of a whitetail. After some prac-

tice his back muscles will strengthen and he can

usually add a little more weight if it is needed.

If a customer has never shot a bow before but has some experience with a rifle or pistol and understands the importance of squeezing the trigger for an accurate shot, shooting a release is an easy transition. The shop will help set a peep sight at the proper height, help find the shooter's anchor point and explain proper form. Most pro shops consistently get rookie shooters grouping arrows on an eight-inch bull's eye at 20 yards in less than an hour after setting up the bow.

The essentials that most pro shops will outfit a new shooter's bow include a sight, arrow rest and a peep. A rest that holds the arrow in place is important since new shooters often get frustrated if the arrow continually flops off the rest. Remember, archery is like carpentry, mechanics and the like crafts. You can't do any better than the tools you work with. Buy the best you can afford.

The biggest mistake women shooters make is trying to shoot their husbands' bow. Women are built differently and usually need a bow with a shorter draw length and less poundage. She needs her own bow to fit her properly.

At The Range

A novice is normally instructed to start shooting at close range, about 10 yards then gradually back up to 20 yards. The pro will watch closely then offer tips for improving form. Small details that help the shooter become more accurate and enjoy shooting more.

A practice schedule of three times per week is normally recommended to new shooters. As far as how many arrows to shoot, don't set a number. If you start to shake or get unsteady it's time to put the bow down and wait until the next practice session. For some shooters it might be 40 arrows per session and for others it might be much less.

Don't overshoot! When it comes to archery, "Practice does not make perfect. It's perfect practice that makes perfect" – An old archery saying paraphrased. In other words, concentrate on each shot. Work on form. That's more important than just shooting lots of arrows.

Safety is also stressed to beginners young and old. Safety is important in kids, but also with adults. You will be taught to look past the target to make sure there is a safe backstop behind whatever target you shoot at. Also, there should be no sky drawing (drawing a bow above your head where the arrow is pointed at the sky). Most

new comers just don't realize how powerful bows are. Safety can never be stressed too much.

In The Woods

You'll need some basic gear to take your new archery skills into the woods. According to the recording period statistic summary booklet from the Pope & Young Club, one of bowhunting most respected records keeping organizations; more than 80 percent of whitetails entered were shot from tree stands. Portable tree stands are a popular choice. These stands are light weight and mount securely to a tree using various methods such as chains, cinch-type strap belts, and mounting pins.

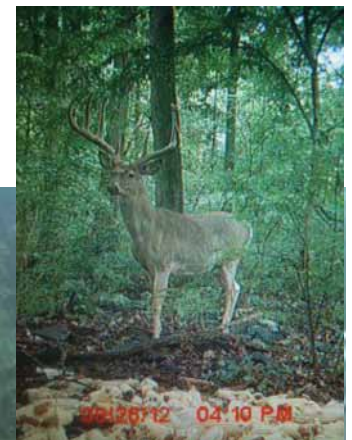
All tree stands are packaged with a safety harness, an absolute necessity, to secure you to the tree. If you fall asleep or slip due to excitement, the safety belt will likely save your life. And to climb the tree you'll need either screw in steps or climbing sticks. A pocket saw or pruning shears are handy for trimming branches to give your arrow a clear path to the deer trail below. That's tree stand, safety belt, climbing steps and saw – The basic

tackle for any whitetail bowhunter. A length or cord to hoist your bow up into the stand is also basic stuff. If you are not comfortable enough scaling trees consider a climbing stand or a ladder stand. A safety belt should be worn regardless of tree stand type.

The basic uniform of any bowhunter is head-to-toe camouflage. Multiple high-tech and detailed patterns like Mossy Oak are readily available at your local pro shop, Wal-Mart, or Bass Pro Shops.

Human scent scares the heck out of most deer. Therefore, most bowhunters go through a rigorous routine to try and eliminate as much of their human scent as possible. For starters, they shower in non-scented soaps and store hunting clothes in plastic bags or scent proof containers protected from household odors. When they

See Monteleone Page 9



Larry Hillenbrand with a 10 pointer which dressed out at 212 lbs / 26" spread was bagged with a crossbow on opening day September 7, 2012 at 6:30 pm in Darlington Md (Harford County). - The picture above was taken from his trail cam

Monteleone ...

Continued from Page 8

dress and just before they hike into the woods, they spray down with scent eliminating sprays. They also wear rubber, knee-high boots. Clothing made from companies like Scent-Lok and Scentblocker that trap odor is also popular and effective. Do whatever you can to minimize human odor.

The Shot

Keep shots at deer close your rookie season. Statistically, speaking, most whitetails are shot at less than 20 yards. Wait for broadside shots at stationary deer and aim behind the deer's front shoulder, in the chest area. Don't try to weave an arrow through thick brush and don't shoot at running deer. Use good ethics and only take high percentage shots at calm animals. Any deer, buck or doe, bagged ethically with a bow and arrow is a trophy to be proud of.

These are the basics. Get out there now. Start at the local pro shop, seek the advice of an expert on good shooting form, and practice from now until the season. When the season arrives you'll be ready to sit ring side for the greatest sport in the woods!

Top Ten Reasons Why Men Prefer Guns Over Women

And here we go...

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#9 - You can keep one gun at home and have another for when you're on the road.

#8 - If you admire a friend's gun and tell him so, he will probably let you try it out a few times.

#7 - Your primary gun doesn't mind if you keep another gun for a backup.

#6 - Your gun will stay with you even if you run out of ammo.

#5 - A gun doesn't take up a lot of closet space.

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#2 - A gun doesn't mind if you go to sleep after you use it.

And the Number One reason Why Men Prefer Guns over women.....

#1 - You can buy a silencer for a gun.



Hi, I enjoy your journal whenever I can pick it up. I've always enjoyed the big buck photo's and looked forward to sending a photo of my own. Well this is it, the biggest of my life.

At 65, I've taken many nice bucks but none bigger than this 10 point drop tine buck from Queen Anne's County. Results from years of QDM by me and some neighbors.....

Thanks for a great Journal. Don West



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World Record Yellow Fin Tuna?

As the Excel charter fishing boat was heading back toward San Diego at the conclusion of a 16-day fishing trip with a potential world record fish onboard, about 300 onlookers came to see the scale-shattering tuna being weighed. Before the sun rose on Sunday, December 9, the angler, John Petruescu, knew he had a world record

weight of 445 pounds on his hands. The current record for yellowfin tuna stands at 405 pounds, caught by Mike Livingston on November 30, 2010 in Magdalena Bay, Baja Sur, Mexico. At the time Petruescu caught his fish, another record was in the process of certification. That fish weighed 427 pounds and was caught by Guy Yocom in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. Yocom's fish is also up for a \$1 million prize since it was caught during the Mustad Hook-a-Million contest, which awards \$1 million to an angler who catches a certain species on a Mustad hook during the time of the contest. For the money to be awarded, the angler must reel the fish in unaided and there cannot be a bigger fish of the

same species caught within three months of the catch.

Although Petruescu caught the fish just two and a half months after Yocom, Yocom will still hold onto the record if certified. Petruescu's name won't be entered in the IGFA record books because the Excel's captain briefly grabbed the rod Petruescu used to manage the fish twice, invalidating his world record claim. No other person is allowed to touch the rod for a world record bid.

"[He] temporarily grabbed the pole for 15 or 20 seconds," Petruescu, who caught his fish on a 12/0 Mustad hook with a Sigler 60-pound black tip rod and Shimano Tiagra 50W reel, added in a phone interview.

As for Yocom, Mustad's Sales and Portfolio Manager Jeff Pierce said the company cannot comment as to whether he will get the \$1 million or not until it's officially certified by the International Game Fish Association (IGFA).

Despite not having his name in IGFA records, Petruescu is fond of the great time he had on the trip and the giant fish he caught.

"I feel great," Petruescu said. "I was at best hoping for a 200-pound



Excel Captain Justin Fleck (left) and John Petruescu (right) stand near his 445-pound catch that will not be certified as a world record.

cow to have to put on posters and walls and I ended catching the world's largest yellowfin. Even though it's not IGFA-certified, it still holds the record for world's largest yellowfin on rod and reel. Everybody [on the trip] caught cows every fisherman had big, big fish."

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Seminar Schedule:

10:00 AM

Capt. Charlie Schneider - "Small Boat Striper Trolling"

11:30 AM

Capt. Brady Bounds - "Eliminating Luck, How Guides Find Fish"

1:00 PM

Shawn Kimbro - "Gearing Down - How to Choose the Right Tackle for Light Tackle Trophies"

Contact: treyblackiston@yahoo.com

Why Bucks Shed Their Antlers

It happens around this time each deer season—a late-season hunter shoots a buck, but when he grabs an antler to drag him out of the woods, it comes off in his hands. Worse yet, a late-season hunter looking to fill his antlerless tag, connects on a doe only to find that it's a buck that has already shed his rack.

So what causes bucks to shed their racks? Is it colder-than-normal temperatures? Heavy snow? Truth of the matter is that although those factors may come into play, it's more about testosterone than anything else.

Antler casting typically begins sometime in mid-December in the North and is for the most part, completed by mid-February. It begins somewhat later in the South and extends somewhat longer.

A drop in testosterone levels triggers specialized cells called osteoclasts to activate. Osteoclasts eat away at the bone at the base of an antler and allow the antler to be cast. The process occurs quickly; antlers that are seemingly irremovable one day, readily fall off of their own accord a day or two later.

There appears to be a relationship between a deer's physical condition and early shedding. Wounded or otherwise injured deer often cast their antlers early. Biologists surmise injuries result in testosterone levels to drop early and trigger osteoclasts activation. Physically declining deer also seem to cast earlier than physically thriving deer; as do bucks that have rutted so aggressively so as to weaken their overall physical condition.

Dominant bucks in good condition in mild climates with high quality habitat are often reported to retain their antlers well into spring and keep them longer than subordinate bucks. Dominant breeding bucks in poorer condition in areas with harsh winters and limited nutrition often shed earlier than subordinate bucks.

Bottom line, this time of year look for red, raw, or scabbed over areas on either side of the forehead before pulling the trigger.

Maryland preliminary deer firearm season results announced

Hunters reported taking 36,088 deer during the statewide, two-week firearm deer season, which ended on December 8. This harvest represents a 13 percent decline compared to the 41,421 deer taken during the 2011 firearm season. DNR biologists believe the decline this year is primarily because of bad weather on key hunting days and an abundance of acorns that resulted in deer moving less.



The two-week firearm harvest was comprised of:
 12,329 antlered and 22,721 antlerless white-tailed deer;
 451 antlered and 587 antlerless sika deer;
 4,169 deer harvested on Sundays.

Region A deer hunters (Garrett, Allegany, and western Washington counties) reported 4,018 deer harvested during the two-week season, down 19 percent from last year's harvest of 4,962. Region A harvest was comprised of 2,533 antlered deer and 1,485 antlerless deer.

The Region B deer harvest declined 12 percent from last year's reported harvest of 36,397 deer to 32,070 deer. Region B harvest was comprised of 10,247 antlered deer and 21,823 antlerless deer.

Junior hunters harvested 2,636 deer during the November Junior Deer Hunt weekend, a decline of 13 percent from last year's 3,035 deer. Junior hunters reported 1,451 antlered deer and 1,185 antlerless deer.

Hunters can find complete bag limits, season dates, deer registration procedures and hunting regulations at dnr.maryland.gov/huntersguide. The 2012-2013 Maryland Guide to Hunting & Trapping also contains detailed information on all of Maryland's hunting seasons.

Hunters with any questions may contact the Wildlife & Heritage Service at 410-260-8540.



Brina Miller's 21 pt. deer is quite the trophy. It was taken on November 30th. in Still Pond Md.

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DEEP CREEK PERCH...

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lake. At 3900 acres, Deep Creek is Maryland’s largest inland lake and is subject to weather that, traditionally, is colder and snowier than most of the rest of the state. Most years it will lock up solid and allow safe ice fishing, but there are winter seasons that do not put safe ice on DCL. Do not attempt to fish on anything less than 4 inches of the clear, hard stuff...and I prefer six. Yellow perch at DCL are big, and 12-inch fish are not rare. Every year there are a number of fish caught that will exceed the 15-inch size and surpass 2 pounds in weight. I have personally iced two fish over 2 pounds and quite a few in the 13 to 14 ½ inch range.

As a bonus, legal to medium sized walleyes can also school with the perch on a good, late evening trip. There is a 10-fish limit, per angler, per day at DCL on yellow perch. Most ice fishing efforts here focus on one of two tactics...fish live minnows near the bottom on tip-ups, or ‘run-and-gun’ by jigging various spoons and jigging lures until you find the fish. The method I have found most effective is the jigging option, and the preferred lure in a #3 or #5 Rapala Jigging Minnow with a waxworm or maggot skewered on the middle, treble hook. We drop these lures right to the bottom on quality 4 or 6 pound monos and jig them anywhere from 2 feet to six inches off the bottom. We employ short, sensitive rods equipped with spinning reels. The very top guide of the rod has a wire extension on it to serve as a super sensitive strike indicator. Most perch strikes will thump the wire right down, but if you are fishing as deep as 30 feet, the wire moves ever so slightly in the depths. If ice is 4 to 12 inches thick, then a hand auger will help you cut plenty of holes, and the exercise



Jim with a pair of Deep Creek jumbos jigged out of 20 feet of water.

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The sensitive wire strike indicator detects the deep water Deep Creek Lake perch bite.

See Gronaw page 13



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Gronaw ...

Continued from Page 12

will keep you warm as well on a cold day. Any ice that is thicker is best scored with the use of a power auger. Perch will likely be on the move, so when you pop one at a particular hole you need to get your lure back down quickly. Most fish are found in the 15 to 20 foot depths, but as with the progression of the spawn, fish can



Ronald Dorsey shows an excellent North East River yellow perch using the drop-shot technique.

be shallower of much deeper. Some areas of the lake have green weeds that have not died off yet and they will attract perch as well as other gamesters. For the latest on ice conditions at DCL and fishing reports check out fishdeepcreek.com and click on related ice fishing homepages on that site.

SUSKY AND NORTH EAST RIVER PERCH...

With the expanded recreational creel limits to permit 10 yellow perch, per angler, per day, area panfishers are finding that the juice is worth the squeeze for upper bay neds. A fair amount of fish are in the 11 to 12 inch range and there always seems to be a few 13-plus inch perch in the mix. Get yourself a 10-fish limit of jumbos and you'll have a dynamite fish fry.

The North East River system sports a good run once the water temperatures get into the lower 40 degree mark and maintain for several days. Fish will school and stage outside of creek channels and cove mouths and over mid-river humps or depressions. At this time, bottoms bounced jigs and jig/minnow offerings can put fish in the boat. Some anglers prefer to utilize a drop-shot rig that takes a 1/2 or 3/4 ounce bass sinker on the bottom with a jig and minnow or

spinner harness and minnow about 12 to 16 inches above the sinker. Utilizing light spinning gear with 6 or 8 pound monos, they simply lift and drop the rig through a marked school of perch in the 8 to 18 foot depths. Strikes are usually easily detected so set the hook promptly.

Bull minnows, or killifish, are the premier live bait to put perch on the table. However, in recent years Berkley Gulp! Alive Minnows in 2 inch are a go to bait if the local shops are out of the bull minnows. Some anglers also like nightcrawlers or bloodworms as a tipping bait to the jigs. Another option is to jig spoons like the Acme Kastmaster, Swedish Pimple or the Northland Buckshot Spoon in 1/4 ounce sizes over channel edges and drops to entice staging yellow perch.

As the water warms through the forties, yellow perch will move shallow and the females will drop their eggs in long, gelatinous strands on emerging weed growth, shoreline brush or wood or any other structures that they can cling to. Dock and marina areas throughout the upper bay complex often become hotspots as fish move shallow and are vulnerable to the shoreline anglers using shad darts tipped with minnows or worms below a bobber. If a cold front roars through, as it often can during

February and March, then perch slide back out deeper and may develop lockjaw. After the weather stabilizes a few days, the fish will be back and active in the shallower haunts. For the latest scoop on upper bay perchin' call Herbs Tackle Shop in North East, Maryland at 410-287-5490.

There are many other perch hotspots throughout the Chesapeake region and beyond. But for starters, both of these fisheries have seen quality fish for a number of years. Remember...the early bird gets the perch!



A very nice North East River yellow perch.

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ASMFC Approves Atlantic Menhaden Amendment 2

Baltimore, MD – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has approved Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden. The Amendment establishes a 170,800 MT total allowable catch (TAC) beginning in 2013 and continuing until completion of, and Board action on, the next benchmark stock assessment, scheduled for 2014.

The TAC represents a 20% reduction from the average of landings from 2009-2011 and an approximately 25% reduction from 2011 levels. The Board also adopted new biological reference points for biomass based on maximum spawning potential (MSP), with the goal of increasing abundance, spawning stock biomass, and menhaden availability as a forage species.

“Through the selection of the MSP-based reference points, begin-

ning with adoption of Addendum V in 2011 and continuing today, the Board has made a conscious decision to address the ecosystem services provided by Atlantic menhaden,” stated Board Chair Louis Daniel of North Carolina. “Given the stock is experiencing overfishing and is most likely overfished based on the newly adopted reference points, it was incumbent upon the Board to reduce landings in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the resource and the fisheries that depend on it.”

The Amendment allocates the TAC on a state-by-state basis based on landings history of the fishery from 2009-2011; allocation will be revisited three years after implementation. Further, it reduces the Chesapeake Bay reduction fishery harvest cap by 20% (this is an adjustment of cap which was in place since 2006).

States will be required to close their fisheries when the state-specific portion of the TAC has been reached; any overages must be paid back the following year. The Amendment includes provisions to allow for the

transfer of quota between states and a bycatch allowance of 6,000 pounds for non-directed fisheries that are operating after a state TAC has been landed. The Amendment also establishes requirements for timely reporting and improved biological monitoring.

For more information, please contact Mike Waine, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mwaine@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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Coastal Report

By Capt. Mark Sampson

Offshore wreck fishing has gained a lot of popularity over the last decade which means that more and more anglers trying to learn the ins-and-outs of what it takes to fish offshore structures. In the process many have come to realize that there's a lot more to successful wreck fishing than simply running to some coordinates, dropping anchor and cranking up fish. Throughout the year, these reefs will produce not only black sea bass and tautog, but also bluefish, seatrout, croaker, flounder, triggerfish, spadefish, sheepshead, amberjack, codfish, cobia, porgy, sharks, mackerel, bonito, false albacore, dolphin, and tuna.

In other words, just about any fish in the sea is liable to hang-out in, over, or around a wreck when conditions are right. Smart anglers will approach a wreck loaded with enough variety of baits and tackle to take advantage of both expected and unexpected opportunities as they come along.

Proper positioning of the boat is critical to successfully fishing any structure. It can also be the most difficult and frustrating part of a wreck fishing day. Knowing how the structure is laid out is the first step in getting set-up. This requires not only finding the structure, but also properly marking it with a decent set of marker-buoys. Initially, anglers will approach a wreck using their GPS to guide them in. As they get close, they should monitor their depth finder for any sign of the structure, while someone onboard stands-by to deploy a marker-buoy as soon it's spotted.

Marker-buoys may be as simple as a gallon jug attached to a long cord with 2-5 pounds of weight as an anchor. But

most folks who do more than just a little wreck fishing will take this concept a step or two further. I prefer to use a two-float system. One float is permanently attached to the end of the line and the other is snapped to the line (via a long-line snap) as soon as the anchor hits the bottom. Two floats on one line makes for a better reference point that shows how the current is running and tells anglers where to set the anchor.

But before anchoring, anglers should circle the buoys a few times and watch their depth finder to get an idea exactly how the structure is laid out below. Sometimes better parts of the wreck lie to one side or the other of the buoys.

There are also times when, for one reason or the other, the fish are not hanging in the wreck as much as they are just outside (usually down current) from it. Circling around, watching the depth finder, and getting a "feel" for what's happening down below before setting anchor can mean the difference between having a steady pull of fish or just "picking away" at them.

When the boat comes tight on its anchor line, if it's not sitting just right, it can usually be swung over to one side or the other by "bridling off". This involves tying a second line to the anchor line about ten feet from the bow. The second line is then stretched to the spring-line cleat and tightened up until the boat is pulled slightly sideways in the current. This allows the boat to tack off to one side or the other and hopefully over a more productive bit of real-estate down below.

There are times when the wind and current are working at such different angles that getting the boat properly over the structure becomes a long drawn-out process of anchoring, re-anchoring, bridling, and adjusting. This can be a trying and sometimes frustrating experience for anglers eager to get their lines in the water. But when it all comes together, with the boat where it's supposed to be,

and the fish biting as quickly as the lines get to the bottom – all the work and aggravation is quickly forgotten!

In the course of a wreck fishing day anglers will likely spend most of their time fishing the bottom. But at any moment a "routine" day can take a wonderful change for the better when the fishing arena is visited by a school of big bluefish, cobia, amberjacks, dolphin, mackerel, bonito, tuna, or even a big shark. Though squid is the most common bottom bait, clams, crabs, live spot or minnows, peelers, mullet, butterfish, or just about any other whole or cut offering is likely to produce bites and a good supply of artificials including bucktails, spoons, jigs, Gotcha-plugs, and surface poppers can also help provide bites by many of the structure residents.

With such a variety in the size and type of fish that might be encountered over an offshore structure, there's no "one rig" that will cover all the possibilities. Therefore, anglers should be well armed with a variety of light and heavy tackle, wire and monofilament leaders, different size hooks, a selection of plugs and jigs, as well as different size sinkers and floats.

Even though most of their efforts may be directed at catching sea bass off the bottom, experienced wreck fishermen will often put out an extra line or two on the surface (under a float or kite) or in the midrange of the water column with a live or fresh cut bait for any of the larger predators that might wander past.

Anglers should also have surface plugs and deep jigs like bucktails or Hopkins lures ready at all times in case fish are spotted under the boat or cruising the surface. These artificials may also be blind-cast periodically to locate fish that haven't been seen first.

The most popular rig for sea bass and tautog usually involves a bank

sinker at the end of the line with one or two hooks tied above it on dropper loops. This simple rig is inexpensive, can be quickly tied, and is less likely to get snagged-up than other options.

Using the right amount of weight is an important but sometimes overlooked factor in the wreck fishing equation. Naturally, to effectively fish a structure, anglers must properly present their baits to the fish. This requires that they use enough weight to quickly get their rigs straight down below the boat while overcoming the sometimes strong currents that occur offshore. Anglers will know that they have enough weight on their line when they can feel the sinker bouncing off the bottom every time they raise and lower their rod tip.

At the same time, sinkers must not be so heavy that they hinder the angler from feeling the bites and nibbles that come when his bait finds it's way into the strike zone. Depth of water, strength of current, size of bait, and diameter of line all play a part in determining how much weight should be used.

Generally, anglers using 15-30 pound line can get away with three ounces of weight if they're fishing in 60 feet of water or less. To fish depths of 60-100 feet, or if the current is unusually strong, six ounces is more appropriate. Braided line has become the norm for serious wreck anglers as it not only allows them to feel the bite better but the thin diameter also allows them to get away with using less weight.

Mid-winter is a when a lot of us like to start getting ready for the upcoming fishing season, and since the offshore wrecks are where coastal anglers usually find the first action of the new season, now is a good time to start getting one's tackle and equipment in order for those first offshore trips.

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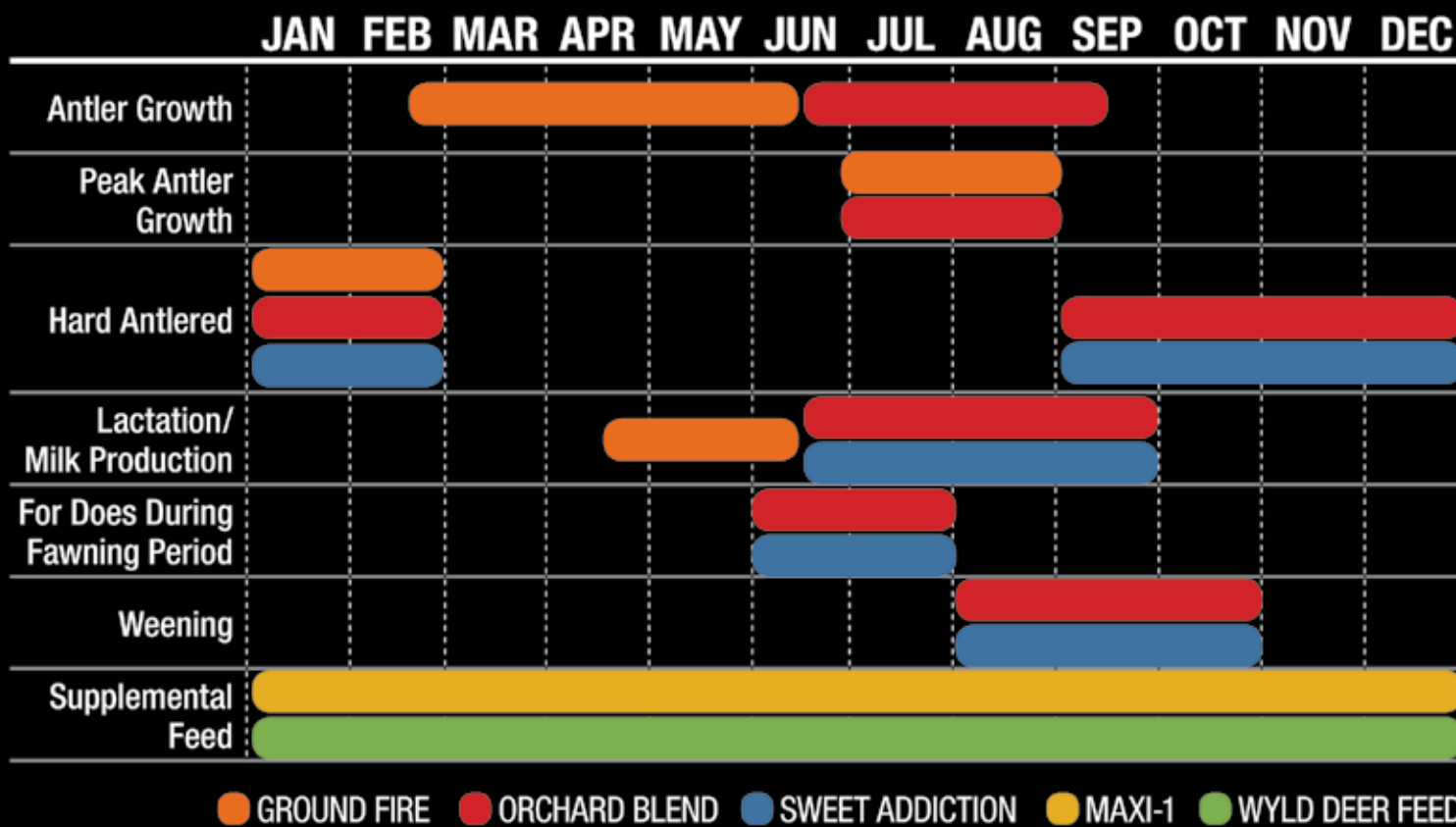


Luke Goldsborough who was home for a weekend from the Naval Academy when he bagged this 16 point buck and it had a gross score of 194. Photo Courtesy of Winks Sporting Goods.

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Lauren (10 yrs old) and Hunter Anderson (13 yrs old) are all smiles with this pair of bucks. Photo Courtesy of Ron's Bay Pro Shop



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On October 18th Lori bagged this nice 8 point buck. Photo courtesy of Tuckahoe Sportsman.

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- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 8-inch prepared pie shell

Combine ground venison, milk, ketchup, bread crumbs, onion, and oregano. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Prepare pastry to line one eight-inch pie plate (or use prepared shell). Fill with venison mixture.

Bake at 350 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes. Toss cheese with Worcestershire sauce; sprinkle on top of pie. Bake 10 minutes more.

Let stand 10 minutes before serving. Serves six.

Mid-Bay Report



By Chuck Prahl

My wife says "If you bring another rod into this house I'm leaving!" There's a joke that goes with that, but I can't remember. Anyway, I've been told that on many occasions.

This is the time of the year when anglers often buy major tackle items like rods, reels, and electronics. It is no small coincidence that sport shows, flea markets, and boat shows are in full swing. These shows are great opportunities to view a wide variety of tackle and gear in one place, and besides, what else is there to do in the doldrums of winter.

Actually, there's a lot to do if you like to tinker and take good care of your gear. Just because you've put it away doesn't mean it's safe. Salt that's accumulated in and on equipment continues to degrade almost everything it touches.

Spraying rods and reels with fresh water after a trip is laudable, but certainly does not eliminate salt. I have never really found any way to keep salt out of a reel that is used in tidal waters. The only remedy is to open it up and physically remove the salt.

There is actually two levels of internal cleaning of conventional reels. Removing the right side plate usually levels the spool, bearings, and gears. Bearings on each side of the spool should be oiled. Gears need to be greased.

Blasting with WD40 removes most of the salt contaminated grease, but disassembly may be required for badly contaminated reels. Some parts should be replaced periodically, such as drag washers and level wind pawls.

I get some pleasure just knowing that my reels are ready to go, come spring.

March heralds the perch spawning run. Yellow perch actually begin their ascension into fresh water streams in late February, but white perch start their run in March and do not move into small streams.

White perch are extremely plentiful and are available to boat and shoreline anglers in most Middle Bay river systems. The Big Choptank, Blackwater, Transquaking, Chicamacomico, and Nanticoke rivers all offer great perch fishing in their upper reaches. I usually try the perch after March 10th. This is a fairly safe date, but I have been skunked even that late.

March weather can be brutal, and even a good day can turn bitterly cold in a hurry. As long as you're putting in the time and effort besides some discomfort, you should at least be offering the perch the best bait available.

White perch respond to a variety of baits in this order: grass shrimp, bloodworms, minnows, and earthworms. I might add that minnows sometimes catch bigger fish. I like grass shrimp best because not only do perch love them but they fill the water with a scent trail to your hook.

Their biggest drawback is the fact that they do not stay on the hook well at all. If you get a bite and you miss setting the hook you might as well reel in and re-bait.

When I use grass shrimp, I often find that fish home in on the scent so well, that the bite comes as soon as the sinker touches bottom. I then start baiting with small pieces of bloodworm which stay on the hook much better.

Bloodworms and earthworms are often the only baits available to the average angler and they can be quite effective, especially when perch are aggressive. Changing baits often keeps the scent trail going.

In the Middle Bay grass shrimp are often available in March at sporting goods stores that sell bait. If not, grass shrimp are very plentiful in specific areas and small mesh nets easily catch them. In very protected waterways like marinas and boat ramps, I find shrimp on bulk-heading and vertical structure. They gravitate to sunlit places where the water warms rapidly.

When I recall last summer's wonderful perch fishing, I can only hope that this year's will be at least as good. There is good reason to believe that it might be.

Though this may seem totally unrelated, an unprecedented successful oyster spawn and spat set several years ago has resulted in one of the best oyster seasons in 25 years. When oysters disappeared in the late '80's, watermen needed a cold weather income to replace tonging for oyster. Many turned to drift netting for perch. The recreational fishery soon began to show signs of a steady decline in the size of an average perch.

Big perch brought big money and though plenty of perch remained in the system, the culling of large fish hurt sport fishing.

Watermen are returning to oystering in a big way. This may translate into better perch fishing for us in the years to come.

I have to mention the Dorchester Fishing Club's Flea Market on Saturday, February 23rd inside the American Legion Hall at the foot of the Choptank Bridge in Cambridge. There will be a good mix of new and old tackle and related gear. Doors open at 8 a.m.

I will be there displaying my "home-made" bucktails and will be glad to discuss Middle Bay and Choptank River fishing with anyone.

This is a one-day event and the good stuff can go early, so plan to be there when the doors open. Many of the vendors are local fishermen selling used merchandise which gives the event a real "Flea Market" atmosphere.

While it mainly caters to fishermen, you'll find marine and hunting items as well. Hope to see you there!

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3	7:11	5:30	6:36	6:01
4	7:10	5:31	6:34	6:02
5	7:09	5:32	6:33	6:03
6	7:08	5:33	6:31	6:04
7	7:07	5:34	6:30	6:05
8	7:06	5:36	6:28	6:07
9	7:05	5:37	6:27	6:08
10	7:04	5:38	7:25	7:09
11	7:03	5:39	7:24	7:10
12	7:02	5:40	7:22	7:11
13	7:00	5:41	7:21	7:12
14	6:59	5:43	7:19	7:13
15	6:58	5:44	7:17	7:14
16	6:57	5:45	7:16	7:15
17	6:55	5:46	7:14	7:16
18	6:54	5:47	7:13	7:17
19	6:53	5:48	7:11	7:18
20	6:52	5:49	7:10	7:19
21	6:50	5:50	7:08	7:20
22	6:49	5:52	7:06	7:21
23	6:47	5:53	7:05	7:22
24	6:46	5:54	7:03	7:23
25	6:45	5:55	7:02	7:24
26	6:43	5:56	7:00	7:25
27	6:42	5:57	6:58	7:26
28	6:40	5:58	6:57	7:27
29			6:55	7:28
30			6:54	7:29
31			6:52	7:30



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VIEWPOINT

PROPOSED SHARK REGULATIONS COULD SEVERELY IMPACT THE FISHERY.

Amendment 5

The National Marine Fisheries Service has proposed strict new regulations for recreational shark fishing. The following is my take on the proposal and information about how the public can respond to it.

By Mark Sampson

History

In November the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published "Amendment 5 to the Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan. Among other things, the amendment has a proposal designed to provide additional conservation for dusky sharks, which has caused a lot of anglers to wonder, "How and why would they attempt to provide dusky sharks with more conservation when that species is already totally protected from harvest?"

That's a fair question considering dusky sharks have been on the NMFS "Prohibited Species List" since 2000, and you'd think that after twelve-years of total protection dusky shark populations would be doing just fine, but apparently that's not the case. According to the folks at NMFS, dusky shark populations are so critically low that if all the factors affecting them stay the same it could take up to 400-years for numbers to rebound to what they once were. Obviously, that's a very good reason to take action for dusky sharks, but it doesn't answer the recreational angler's question of "Why look at us? We haven't been allowed to take dusky sharks for 12-years. If their numbers are still in decline it's not our doing!"

But according to NMFS a persistent problem is that recreational anglers confuse dusky sharks with other allowable species which has resulted in some harvest by mistaken identity, and in order to assure all that can be done is being done to help speed the dusky shark recovery, this harvest must come to an end. Taking all this at face value, it might seem like the right move for NMFS to initiate whatever steps are necessary to squelch the illegal recreational harvest of dusky sharks, but there is much more to consider about this issue before a proper course of action can be determined.

The Problem

Right from the start I'm sure a lot of recreational fishermen in the mid-Atlantic are shaking their heads at the mere suggestion that dusky shark numbers

have fallen to such a critically low level. And as an avid shark fisherman myself I can understand the skepticism. Each season we catch hundreds of dusky sharks and my logbook records show no decline in dusky catches over the last 25-years. However, as dusky sharks are spread out around the world I also understand that just because we're still seeing good numbers of them here doesn't mean that in other places around the globe they might be all but non-existent. So even though I haven't seen evidence of it myself, I'm not going to dispute the assertion that dusky populations are in trouble.

For as long as man has been dealing with sharks there have been problems with proper identification of the many species that might be encountered in any given location. Though some sharks such as the mako, thresher, and hammerhead are quite easy to distinguish, the more "generic" looking species such as the bull, sandbar, blacktip, sharpnose, and



dusky that share the basic shark shape and color tend to confuse fishermen who are not accustomed to seeing them on a regular basis. As a result, a lot of fishermen have become accustomed to using the name "dusky" as a term to describe sharks that they cannot easily identify. The inability of fishermen to properly identify sharks along with the improper use of the name "dusky" has hindered effective shark management and led to very inaccurate catch estimates of dusky sharks and other species. The mis-identification of dusky sharks not only leads to illegal harvest, it also results in inaccurate reporting of sharks that were boated or released. For instance; an angler might report that he landed a dusky even though it was actually a blacktip. Compounding the problem is the fact that much of the recreational catch estimates are generated by what is "reported" over the phone to have been caught, not by what was "observed" on the dock by those conducting the surveys.

The Data

NMFS claims that according to data from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) recreational anglers fishing the East Coast and Gulf have been catching and keeping dusky sharks even though they have been on the Prohibited Species

List for the last 12-years. The data that indicates this illegal dusky harvest has been piling up for 12-years but only recently has NMFS elected to take steps to minimize the reported landings.

The catch data NMFS is working with indicates that between 2002 and 2009 recreational anglers landed 10,590 dusky sharks. That's an average of 1,177 dusky sharks per year, although 2005 landings were as high as 3,040 and 2004 landing as low as 36. According to NMFS, in Maryland recreational anglers landed 2,510 dusky sharks in 2001 and 109 dusky sharks in 2003 but "0" dusky sharks in every other year between 2000 and 2012. According to the same catch data Delaware anglers landed 463 dusky sharks in 2005 but none in any other year between 2000 and 2012. Data coming from other coastal states are similar in that most years show "0" landings but then there will be a year or two where the landings are in the hundreds or thousands. You don't have to be a statistician to look at the wild fluctuations in those numbers and realize that something is terribly wrong with the catch numbers and also understand why the survey methods used to come up with these crazy estimates have always been extremely controversial.

If NMFS assertions are correct then in some years dead dusky sharks should have been a common sight on the docks, but I have yet to come across any photographic evidence of all these dusky sharks being landed (and you know how much we fishermen like to take pictures of our catch!) and I'm also still waiting to for someone to provide information about "any" citations that were written by law enforcement to recreational anglers for harvesting illegal dusky sharks. Where's the evidence of this harvest?

Proposed Actions

NMFS is required to take action to end overfishing anytime any species under their management reaches a certain minimum threshold. I'm guessing that with the catch limits already set at "zero" NMFS figured they couldn't do much more to protect dusky sharks so over the last decade they didn't seem to worry too much about a fishery that was characterized by very unreliable landings data. Unfortunately a petition by the environmental group "Wild Earth Guardians" to have dusky sharks listed as an endangered species has put NMFS under the gun to do "something" about dusky sharks sooner than later.

In effort to curtail the reported harvest of mis-identified dusky sharks, NMFS has proposed to increase the size limit of the twelve legal shark species that have a 54-inch (fork length) minimum to 96-inches. Since most of the dusky sharks that are supposedly being taken are smaller than 96-inches, it's thought that the new size limit on the legal sharks will curtail the take of dusky sharks. Just a few of the legal species of sharks that will be affected by this new regulation are the mako, thresher, spinner, blacktip, hammerhead, bull, tiger, and blue.

By increasing the minimum size limit to 96-inch fork length NMFS will effectively be requiring that recreational shark fishermen release everything they catch because it's a very rare event for anyone to land a shark of any species of that length - a 96-inch mako will weigh in at around 350-pounds, and since black-

tip sharks are a species that never grows more than about six-feet there is absolutely no chance that even the luckiest of fishermen will ever be able to land a keeper even though their populations are doing quite well. The icing on the cake is that even though recreational anglers will be effectively shut-out of keeping any sharks for their own consumption, commercial fishermen will still be able to land blacktips, makos and other shark species just as they have in the recent past.



A Better Solution

Public comments will be taken on this issue until February 12th, and despite what some anglers would probably "like" to say about Amendment 5, what NMFS needs to hear is constructive suggestions about how they can address the dusky situation. Right now from their standpoint it doesn't matter if the recreational landings data are accurate or not, NMFS is required to take action using the best available science and unfortunately what they're going by is the best they've been able to come up with. Just complaining about "bad science" or what a wacky proposal it is won't help, NMFS need recommendations! With this in mind I suggest the following as an alternative to the 96-inch fork length proposal:

Duskies are in a category of sharks known as "ridgebacks." All of the sharks in this group have a definite and very obvious crease of skin or "interdorsal ridge" that runs down the center of the back between the two dorsal fins which is easy to spot on a shark even when it is alive and in the water. Besides duskies, ridgeback species include; bignose, sandbar, night, silky, and tiger as well as the little smooth and spiny dogfish. Of these species the only sharks that may be legally harvested by recreational anglers include the tiger and the two dogfish. So if NMFS simply publicized that, besides dogfish, all ridgebacks are prohibited from being taken, then the perceived dusky mis-identification harvest issue should be minimized if not eliminated. In the process recreational anglers would lose tiger sharks, but since so few anglers choose to bring tiger sharks back to the dock anyway, this should not be much of an issue. Makos, threshers, blues, spinners, blacktips, bulls, hammerheads, porbeagles, lemons, sharpnose, and blacknose are all legal sharks in federal waters and none of them are ridgebacks. Eliminate the ridgebacks and you eliminate the perceived problem without affecting the take of legitimate species.

During the last decade NMFS has used the differences between ridgebacks and non-ridgebacks as a way to differentiate groups of sharks for management of commercial the shark fisheries. They already have printed publications demonstrating which species are ridgebacks and which species are not and many anglers have already started to use the presence or absence of the interdorsal ridge as way to differenti-

ate species. So the foundation has already been laid for this type of management as well as the education of anglers about ridgebacks. It will be much safer and more accurate for fisherman to look at a shark in the water and determine if it has a ridge on its back than attempt to determine if it is more than 96-inches in length.

Summary

Due to current regulations, angler ethics, and the fact that many of the species have little or no food value, recreational shark fishing has evolved into a "sustainable" fishery that is mostly catch-and-release. But as long as anglers are landing species that are not considered to

be over-fished, they should be allowed a reasonable opportunity to occasionally bring home a shark for their own consumption.

Though some might be inclined to argue that raising the minimum size limit to 96" will provide good conservation for makos and other shark species, it's important to keep in mind that the proposal in Amendment 5 was crafted by NMFS to provide conservation for "duskies" and not other species of sharks. The effect the new limit has on the take of other species will be an unintended consequence. If "good" science indicates that our marine managers need to curtail the take of "any" species of fish they can and should do so through the regulatory process. If or when makos, blacktips, or any other species require more conservation by recreational anglers it should be done through a deliberate management plan structured specifically for those sharks – not as a haphazard kick-back from regulations designed to help duskies.

Shark populations around the world desperately need the help of sound fishery management generated by accurate science, unfortunately the measures NMFS is proposing to help dusky sharks in Amendment 5 are neither. Before NMFS can do anything to help dusky sharks they need to get real about the catch data and stop blaming recreational anglers for landings that are not occurring. The proposed 96-inch recreational size limit will hurt the recreational fishing industry while doing nothing to help dusky sharks.

How to Make Public comments

The comment period for draft Amendment 5 ends on February 12. Written comments can be submitted electronically, by mail, or fax. Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2012-0161 and click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments. Submit written comments to Peter Cooper, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, mark the outside of the envelope "Comments on the Draft Amendment 5 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP." Comments may also be faxed to 301-713-1917

The public is also invited to make comments in person at any of the public meetings NMFS are scheduled between January 8th and February 7th in various locations along the coast. Those in the Ocean City Maryland area will find that one of the public meetings was scheduled to happen January 30th from 5-8:pm at the Ocean Pines Library.

For further information on these proposed measures, contact Peter Cooper, Guý DuBeck, Jennifer Cudney, or Karyl Brewster-Geisz at 301-427-8503. The information will also be posted on the HMS website at: www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms

Anyone in favor of the recommendations I've made about ridgeback sharks can copy and use them for their own comments to NMFS. I can be reached at 410-726-7946.

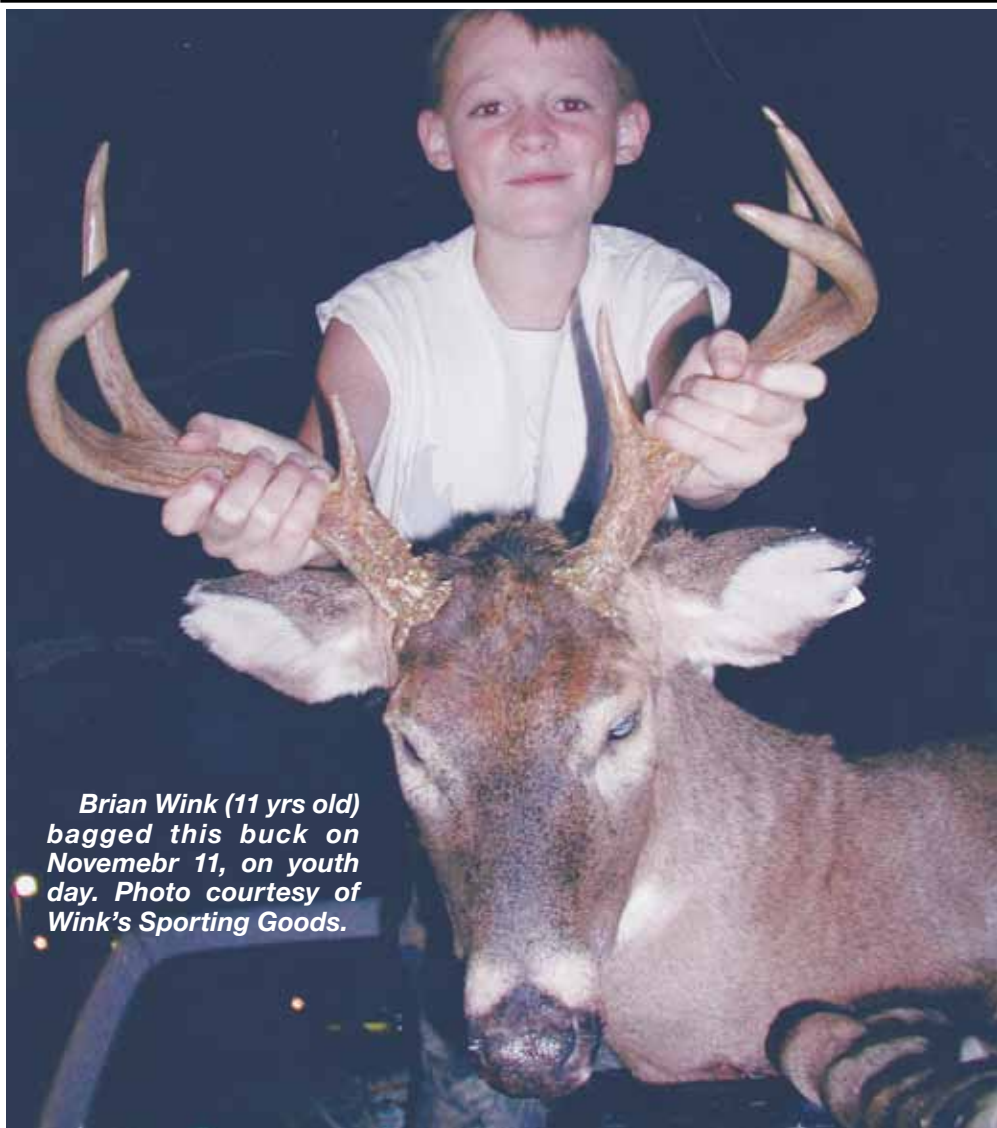
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Brian Wink (11 yrs old) bagged this buck on Novemebr 11, on youth day. Photo courtesy of Wink's Sporting Goods.



This Prohorn was taken in Saratoga, Wyoming by Joe Snuffer last Ocotober. Photo courtesy of Clyde's Sporting Goods.



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“THE LAST WORD”

Maryland Hunting License- What's in store for 2013

By Steve Huettner

Last year saw the Maryland Department of Natural Resources late in the 2012 legislative session introduce a proposed license fee increase. Due to a myriad of factors including timing, wording of the bill, other tax and fee increases, and lack of consensus building; the final bill failed in the House of Delegates by a 69-62 vote.

This year, Senator John Astle (Senate Co-Chair of the Maryland Sportsmen's Caucus) decided to contact hunting groups and see if a solution was possible. The problem being that the Department of Wildlife and Heritage was roughly \$2.25 million dollars in the red.

According to the Department of Legislative Services (DLS), beginning with the economic recession of the early 1990's, general fund support for Maryland's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has declined with less than an equal offsetting reliance on special fund support. The Wildlife and Heritage Service (WHS) has not been exempt from this funding shift, thus increasing operational dependence on dwindling hunting license fees. Over the last 4-5 years, the economic downturn has also necessitated further reductions in general fund support for the Service either through the annual Budget Bill or through actions by the Board of Public Works. Further exacerbating fiscal support for the Service has been a decline in hunting license fees because fewer sportsmen have taken afield. So the short is for the last 20 years the amount of money given the WHS from the general fund decreased since WHS was being funded by hunting license dollars.

During the fall and winter of 2012 representatives of sportsmen's groups from throughout the state sat down to discuss the funding problems of WHS, how

it arose, and what if any solutions could be found.

One question asked often was can the monies from hunting license be transferred into the General fund and used for purposes other than hunting and wildlife. According to the DLS and USFWS hunting license dollars cannot be diverted or used for anything. They can be used for management by DNR's Wildlife and Heritage Service for the 47 public Wildlife Management Areas, inclusive of other DNR-owned lands where public hunting is allowed; (2) conservation law enforcement by the Natural Resources Police; and (3) contractual services for species management research and surveys; (4) costs of existing personnel, supplies and equipment.

The second most common theme was while hunters don't mind contributing to the outdoors and wildlife which benefit all of Maryland citizens, why aren't more citizens, especially those who use Wildlife Management Areas (WMA's) paying their fair share. WMA's were purchased with monies generated from license dollars yet all citizens benefit from them. Could Maryland implement something similar to a stamp or license that is used in the Federal Refuge system?

After several meetings, discussion and lively debate a general consensus was reached that would provide a foundation for a bill. It would ensure WHS is properly funded, have hunters continue to contribute the lions share to WHS, and have non consumptive users (those without a hunting license) that use WMA's contributed their fair share. In its current form it would:

- Increase the resident, regular, at least 16 years old and under the age of 65 years from \$24.50 to \$44.50 [\$20]
- Increase the nonresident, regular, at least 16 years old from \$130 to \$150 [\$20]
- Increase the non-resident 3-day hunting license from \$45 to \$60 [\$15]

• Provide DNR with the regulatory authority to Impose fees -- @ 3-year intervals -- for non-consumptive activities on WMA's

• Credit wildlife fines imposed by the District Courts to the State Wildlife Management and Protection Fund over a 4-year period (2014)

• Authorize the Governor to provide increased General Funds -- in view of the Special Fund increase -- to DNR (

• Authorize the State Wildlife Management and Protection Fund to receive donations and gifts from non-profits and private sector

• Clarify that no diversions to the State's General Fund can be made from the State Wildlife Management and Protection Fund

Those in attendance made it clear that:

• no increases should be imposed upon youth or seniors;

• if the 2013 General Assembly moved to delete the provision requiring non-consumptive users of WMA's to pay a fee -- for the "first" time ever -- sportsmen would withdraw their collective support for the bill; and

• Their willingness to meet/confer with any interested stakeholder group @ their designated location in order to express the intent and purpose of the envisioned Act.

In the end it is up to each individual if they feel that the value they get for their hunting license is worth a \$20 increase, the cost of which hasn't been raised in 16 years. Considering I can hunt from September 1st through mid- May 9 (with a small break in March) the \$2.50 per month increase for me is a no brainer.

(Disclaimer- I am member of the Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Foundation (MLSF) that has been organizing the meetings and assisting in the legislation. My views and opinions are that of myself and do not represent those of the MLSF or anyone else)

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