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**ANGLER  
&  
BOATER**

The logo for the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is a yellow shield-shaped emblem. It features a blue circular center with a white fish silhouette. The text "PENNSYLVANIA" is at the top, and "FISH & BOAT COMMISSION" is at the bottom of the shield.

*May/June 2024 \$5.00*

*The Keystone State's  
Official Fishing and  
Boating Magazine*

*FishandBoat.com*





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# National Safe Boating Week

## May 18 – 24, 2024

### National Safe Boating Week Programs and Events

*Highlighted programs and events only. There's more!*

Event	Date	Time	Location
Y Drown? Water Safety Event	May 18	2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Registration required)	Greater Johnstown Community YMCA, Cambria County
Kayaking Basics	May 18	10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (Registration required)	Maurice K. Goddard State Park, Mercer County
Kayaking Basics	May 18	9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. (Registration required)	Giving Pond, Delaware Canal State Park, Bucks County
Kayaking Basics	May 18	12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. (Registration required)	Giving Pond, Delaware Canal State Park, Bucks County
Kayaking Basics	May 20	1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. (Registration required)	Frances Slocum State Park, Luzerne County
Virtual Intro. to Kayak Fishing	May 23	7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. (Registration required)	Virtual Program, Statewide
Basic Boating Course	May 25	9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Registration required)	Intermediate Unit #1, Washington County
Water Safety Radio Show (Spanish Broadcast)	June 21	11:00 a.m. (Registration not required)	WXAC (91.3 FM) Albright College Radio Station, Berks County



**Register for programs and events:**



[register-ed.com/programs/landing/schedule/agency:38](https://register-ed.com/programs/landing/schedule/agency:38)

**FishandBoat.com**

photo: James Hoffmann

# Graphic Key

These icons represent specific topics.



Amphibians and Reptiles



Boating



Catch and Release



Conservation



Family Fishing



Fly Fishing



Ice Fishing



Lakes



Paddling



Rivers



State Parks



Streams



Tackle

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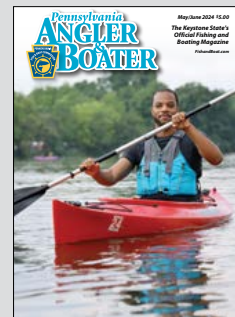
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Justin McFadden, Bucks County, enjoys a day of paddling on Edgewood Lake at Franklin Delano Roosevelt Park in Philadelphia, Philadelphia County.



# SUMMER STATE OF MIND

by **Timothy D. Schaeffer**  
*Executive Director*  
*Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission*

For outdoor enthusiasts like anglers and boaters, the anticipation of summer is nearly unbearable when May comes around. Though the weather can be unpredictable and sometimes unforgiving for outdoor activities, the calendar keeps spirits high. May and June are all about celebrating Pennsylvania's abundance of aquatic natural resources. The Opening Day of Walleye/Sauger jump starts May (May 4). Then, there's our first Fish-for-Free Day on May 26, and we roll right through the month of June to our final Fish-for-Free Day on July 4.

In between, we celebrate the Commonwealth's special fish and wildlife on Pennsylvania Native Species Day (May 16), support and honor our boating enthusiasts with National Safe Boating Week (May 18-24), build awareness of turtles on World Turtle Day (May 23), and celebrate places to go with National Rivers Month (June) and National Trails Day (June 1). Remember, as ethical anglers and boaters, we all play a bigger role on World Environment Day (June 5), giving us just enough time to gear up for Opening Day of Bass (June 8). Phew!

You don't need an official date on a calendar to experience all that awaits this season on Pennsylvania's waterways. By reading

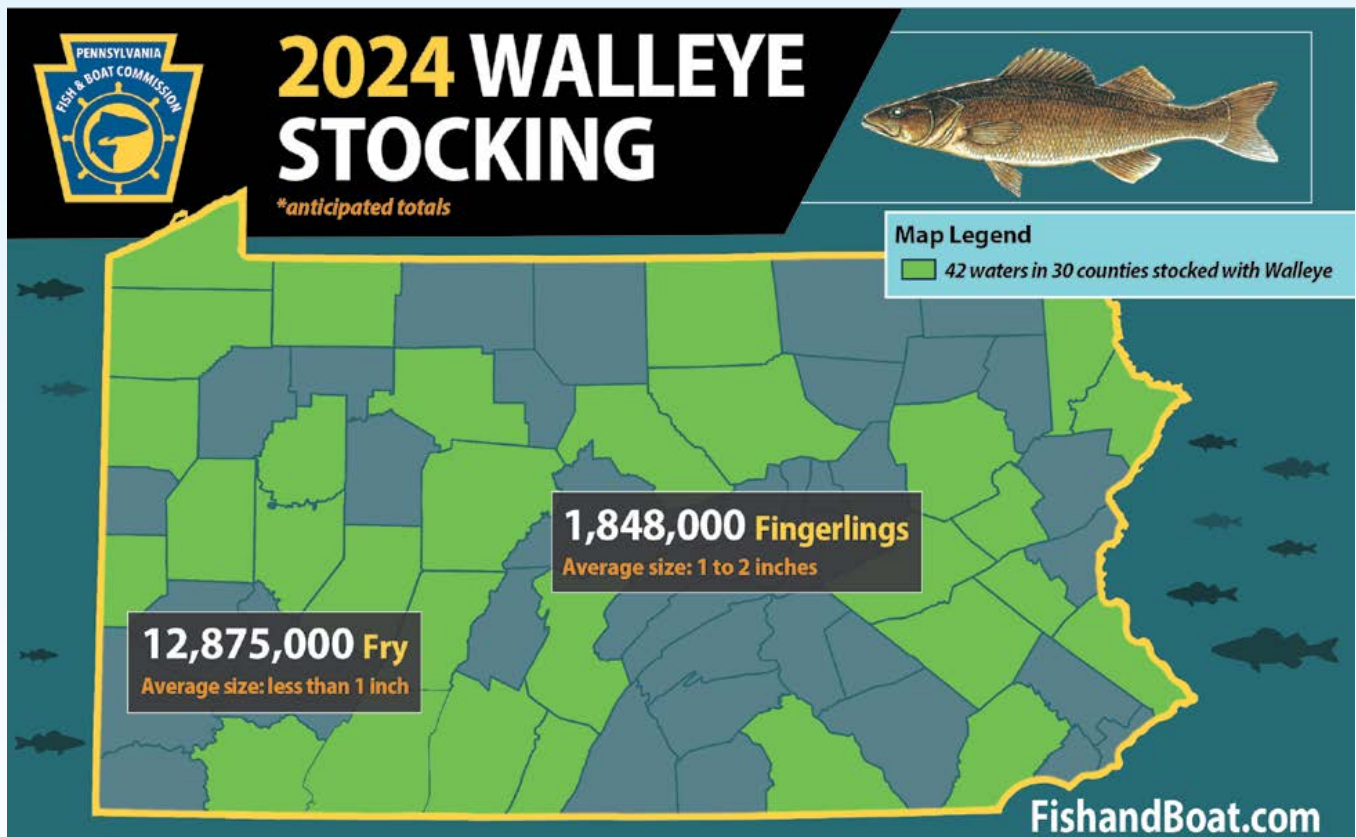
this issue, you are already on your way to fun and adventure in May and June. Keep the stream fishing enjoyable by staying safe and dry with the help of our "Tips for Safe Wading" (page 16). Get set for Opening Day of Bass with the help of our "Top Five Tips and Baits for Bass in June" (page 46).

While you are planning and then setting out on your adventures this season, your love of the water can be "catching" to someone else. Read about how a love of fishing instilled by her dad propels a woman to light the spark for so many others. May her story, "Go with the Flow" (pages 10 and 11), inspire you to share fishing and boating with someone else or to treat those who taught you this Mother's Day or Father's Day. We can help with "Fishing with Mom and Dad" tips (pages 8 and 9).

No matter what your adventure or what you are commemorating when you are out on the water, as always, make safety as important as the fun. Don't just take it along—wear your life jacket. Go outdoors, enjoy the sunshine, get into a positive state of mind and experience Pennsylvania fishing and boating. After all, spending time outdoors in nature has many health benefits. And, May is Mental Health Awareness Month, too. ☑



**WEAR IT**  
 National Safe Boating Council  
 Pennsylvania



**OPENING DAY OF WALLEYE/SAUGER**  
 May 4, 2024



# NOTES *from the Streams*

## Safely to the other side

Every year, there seems to be something swimming across Allegheny Reservoir. The first time, I saw a deer swimming across it. At the time, two new game wardens were with me on my patrol boat. Snakes and black bears also are excellent swimmers.

Hearing stories about animals getting harassed in these vulnerable instances is frustrating.

While traveling on the water, boat operators are obligated to be competent observers and be able to make the necessary corrections to ensure the safety of all passengers. After some hard rains, there may even be whole trees floating in the middle of the reservoir that washed downstream from the Allegheny River in New York state.

If you do come across wildlife swimming across a larger body of water, I understand the desire to get a closer look. But, you don't need to get too close and cause distress to wildlife. Keep a safe distance, and know your abilities as a boat operator. Protecting and conserving never gets old.—*WCO Sergio B. Herrera, McKean County.*

## Watch your step

After many complaints about suspects cast netting trout out of a local waterway, another Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) and I focused on patrolling the area one evening. I climbed a hillside and positioned myself in an area that provided a good vantage point. When the suspects arrived at the waterway and began to use cast nets, I made my way down the hill, not taking note of its steepness. I slid down the hill belly first. I attempted to slow my graceful descent with my hands and knees, to no avail. I was covered in mud. Luckily, I got to wash some of it off when I

waded in my patrol boots to retrieve evidence from the middle of the creek. It was worth it.—*WCO Daniel J. Wilson, Southern Westmoreland and Northern Fayette counties.*

## Muddy boots

WCOs work in diverse environments and deal with various weather conditions. To say the least, I got to experience one of Mother Nature's elements in the field—mud. While taking measurements for a pollution and stream disturbance on a logging site, I was walking down a skid trail caused by the heavy machinery. Suddenly, I got a blast of cold water and mud filling the tops of my muck boots. Just like that, I was knee deep in mud and somewhat stuck. After multiple efforts of trying to get out, I succeeded. I took a minute or two to dump the mud and water out of my boots. I finished my measurements and headed back to the truck to put on a fresh pair of socks and boots. After taking my boots off, I realized I had more mud on the inside of my boots than I did on the outside. My advice—always watch where you step, because one

day you may have mud in your boots.—*WCO Shane C. Casey, Western Schuylkill County.*

## The reason why

As the stocking season gets underway, it's always met with a bag of emotions. Between the excitement of the beginning to the stress of organizing schedules and then the fatigue at the end. WCOs sometimes wonder why we do it. During the first stocking of the year, I was fortunate enough to have some great stocking help. At that stocking, help was a young girl with her father, ready to carry buckets. As the first bucket of trout was given to her father, I accompanied them to the water. As soon as the lid came off the bucket, she was smiling from ear to ear. When the trout were put into the water, she hustled back to the stocking truck for more. At that moment, I knew I gained another valuable stocking helper for years to come. These are the moments to remember when WCOs think to ourselves, why are we doing it.—*WCO Luke E. Walter, Butler County.*



artwork-Andrea Feeney



# Shenango's Paddlers Parallel Canal History



*by Jerry Bush*

*photos by the author*

**A**t first, paddling a kayak or canoe on the Shenango River may stir thoughts of indigenous Americans who paddled the waterway, but in the mid-1800s, paddlers on the river witnessed a nearly unimaginable accomplishment of their era. The Erie Extension Canal paralleled portions of the river, and evidence of the historic landmark still remains.

The canal was nearly 60 feet wide in some areas, and extended south, 136 miles from Lake Erie. It included 137 floodable locks to overcome a change in elevation of nearly 1,000 feet, which was necessary so barges could transport goods between Erie and Pittsburgh. It was a marvel of its time, created by men equipped with little more than hand shovels and determination.

A good portion of the canal ran alongside the Shenango River, and the towpath that permitted mules to pull the barges is particularly visible near a 10-mile stretch of the river, between kayak launches at

Greenville and New Hamburg. Shenango River paddlers who are willing to exit their vessels at the east riverbank can walk short distances to view large indentations in the earth that remain from the old canal.

A walking trail can be accessed at Kidds Mill Covered Bridge kayak launch, which is about halfway between Greenville and New Hamburg. Much of this walking trail follows what used to be the towpath, and it passes so close to the river that it is easy to imagine tenders of the barges interacting with people on the river.

If needed, kayaks and canoes can be rented at Carried Away Outfitters, an establishment located in Greenville, next to the launch in Riverside Park. They offer shuttle service upstream but only occasionally downstream. Paddlers should assume they'll need a transport vehicle downstream, but it never hurts to ask.

Any person wanting to paddle the river and appreciate its history should visit The Canal Museum at Riverside Park dedicated to the canal's history. Here, onlookers can view an authentic barge and other remnants and photographs from the era. During the summer, the museum is open on weekends from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., but special appointments can be made to visit the center on weekdays by calling 724-588-3104.



*Lock #10, in Sharpsville, is the last remaining lock of the Erie Extension Canal that remains intact.*



*Examples of cargo carried on an Erie Extension Canal barge.*

The Shenango River is normally a calm waterway that rarely offers a challenge. It is a relatively narrow waterway that meanders along farmlands and through lush woodlands, which adds to its charm. If a paddler is quiet and willing to pass slowly, it is nearly impossible to avoid close encounters with beavers, rabbits, squirrels and white-tailed deer, as well as ducks, geese, eagles, ospreys and herons.

It's a good idea to have a rod and reel handy, because various fish species inhabit the Shenango River including bass, carp, panfish, pike, Walleyes and White Bass.

The Shenango Dam, which holds back water to create the Shenango River Lake, prevents boats of any kind from reaching the only remaining floodable lock of the Erie Extension Canal. A short drive is required to see Lock #10, in the nearby town of Sharpsville. Lock #10 is near the bridge over the river, which provides entrance to part of the Shenango Recreation Area and the Mahaney Boat Launch. People can pass through the lock while hiking a riverside path.

Imagine what paddlers of nearly 200 years ago must have thought as they watched men with shovels digging the Erie Extension Canal and later witnessed the accomplishment, as barges were pulled by horses and mules to move goods between communities. ☐



*It is nearly impossible to float on the Upper Shenango River Water Trail without seeing a heron.*

## Where to fish, boat and paddle:



[explorepawaters.com/find-a-waterway/](https://explorepawaters.com/find-a-waterway/)



# Fishing with Mom and Dad



*The author with his mom, Betty, and the Smallmouth Bass they caught.*

**by Jeff Woleslagle**

*photos by the author*

One of my earliest fishing memories dates back to 1975. I was about 5 years old, and my folks had taken me to Canoe Creek State Park, Blair County, to try our luck in the lake. I still recall that warm spring day while sitting on a grassy bank, snug between my mom and dad, fishing rod in hand, trying to be still and looking with hope at the water. Amazingly, the line suddenly began to peel off my fishing reel, and I frantically pulled in a beautiful Brown Trout. At that age and experience level, taking time to properly play a fish just wasn't in my knowledge bank. I vividly remember gazing in wide-eyed wonder at that stunning fish as it thrashed in our small landing net, and it set a course for me that I never

could have imagined at the time. I'm certain these scenarios have played out countless times over the years on Pennsylvania's waters with moms and dads and sons and daughters. Fishing is best taught in person, and traditions are often passed down from one generation to the next. It's a sport that can be enjoyed for a lifetime, and time shared on the water creates lasting family memories.

I often think it was more than a fish at the end of the line that day all those years ago; it was somehow my destiny. It shaped my college and career choices and certainly ignited a passion that burns no less bright today than it did when I was a child. It was my mom and dad who helped make that special moment happen, and we have been fishing together many times since that day.

If you love fishing and you want to share it with your family, a little upfront planning can ensure a good outing and help make stories that will be told for years of the lunkers that were landed and the ones that got away. For many years, I have made





*The author's dad, Len, with a nice Channel Catfish.*

it a regular practice to fish with my folks on Father's Day. Sometimes, my brother joins in when possible. My parents live on the shore of the Juniata River, so it usually doesn't take much planning beyond a phone call and a quick check of the weather forecast. Planning a trip with your fishing mentors can be as simple as visiting a local lake for Bluegills and other panfish or as elaborate as a guided trip to one of Pennsylvania's destination waters.

The year the COVID-19 pandemic arrived found my dad and I fishing from their river dock on Father's Day. It also found me worried deeply about what the future may hold, but one thing that has always been a calming constant is sharing time together. The peace and quiet that surrounds you while you're fishing provides a great opportunity for communication. That particular day, the winds were high and so was the water. Despite the adverse conditions we landed some nice Smallmouth Bass and a few Channel Catfish, and it was just the stress reliever we needed during an uncertain time.

If you are fortunate enough to have those folks in your life who introduced you to fishing in Pennsylvania, make sure you spend time with them this season. You'll be glad you did. The stories and memories that we have made together over the years are priceless. Think about a niece or nephew, a friend or neighbor, or anyone else you can introduce to fishing. You can be the spark that ignites a lifelong passion for someone, and you will most likely create another outdoor advocate who knows the value of clean waters and time shared together, just like my parents did for me. ☑

**A fishing license and Pennsylvania Angler & Boater subscription are the perfect gifts for **Mother's Day (May 12)** and **Father's Day (June 16)**.**

## Buy Your Fishing License ONLINE



HuntFish.PA.gov

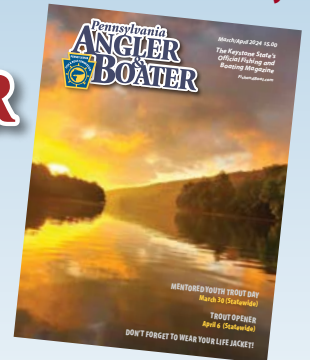
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photo-George Dahiel

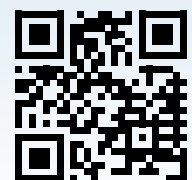
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# Go with the Flow

by Kimberly Refosco



Keystone Lake, Keystone State Park, Westmoreland County

**M**uch like the consistent ebb and flow of a waterway, my fishing experiences have ebbed and flowed through life's changes and continues trickling into the waters of many others in their own journey.

I grew up learning to fish with my father, Barry Colbert. When I was young, he would sometimes come into my room and wake me up well before dawn for a day of fishing. Living near Pittsburgh, we would often visit Keystone Lake, Westmoreland County; North Park Lake, Allegheny County; Lake Arthur, Butler County; and Twin Lakes, Westmoreland County. At that time, I would not touch the worms or the fish. My dad would have to get me all set up and sometimes immediately replace the bait I lost or unhook my fish. He was unable to do much fishing himself, with all my upkeep, and in retrospect, the only reason I can think of bringing along someone so needy was to begin to instill in me a lifelong love for the sport.

As I grew older, I continued to fish with my dad. I learned more about setting my own line and catching and releasing my fish safely. Still, no live worm bait for me though. We worked more as a team and fished some larger waters, like Lake Erie, and eventually tried Atlantic saltwater fishing. After some time, I grew curious about learning to fly fish, an interest we did not share. After several lessons, unsuccessful self-experiences, then back to lessons again, I cannot say that I always know what I'm doing. However, I can say that I'm much improved. My first experience fly fishing at Ohiopyle in waders on the first day of trout season was magical. The influx of knowledge of which lure to use in which situation and at which depth was fascinating. Learning the way trout behave and how to mimic the graceful dance of an insect is an art. The feeling of finally getting a cast just right and hooking that first trout was exhilarating. I was hooked. I don't always know what I am doing. My knots need a lot of work, I get frustrated, and there are plenty of days with no fish. Yet, time in and on the water creates a connection of belonging to the outdoors. It's a reminder that water and nature links us all together.

In 2019, the ebb and flow of life turned into raging waters. I lost my dad, and I quit fishing. Being near the water always created in me a sense of peace. Now, I didn't want peace. I was angry and sad, and I intended to stay that way. In fact, I did, for a long time. But, the waters continue to flow, and eventually, my buddy, Jimbo (James Baker), invited me back to the water. He treated me like my dad that first time back. He readied my line, weights and baits despite my know-how.

Jimbo let me have the "dad" moments I was craving. He would laugh at me and call me "silly" every time I named the trout. Doesn't everyone? He would hold them properly in the water until they swam away. My peace eased back into calmer waters after some time.

By now, I had become a volunteer leader with Outdoor Afro, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to inspiring black connections in nature. As a black woman and fly angler in western Pennsylvania, I became aware of not seeing many faces that looked like mine on the water. Fishing has always been a part of black, African and African American cultures, as both a necessity for food as well as recreation. Still, I noticed some barriers in my particular nook of the state that may also cause barriers for all who wish to fish. Location and transportation can be hurdles for any city dwellers, as quite a bit of traveling is needed to get to the lakes in and around Allegheny County. Gear may be expensive, especially if you are not sure yet that you are interested in investing in the sport. Fear may be a factor, with historical trauma associated with women, at times, and black and brown people being alone in woods amongst hunters and anglers that may not be welcoming to outdoor diversity. As a volunteer leader, I began working with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission education program. Together, we have been able to provide multiple fishing programs for Outdoor Afro participants in the region, connecting more people to their own aquatic journeys. Outdoor Afro, Pittsburgh, has also been able to partner with Venture Outdoors in leading kayaking trips for the group. Eventually, we plan to combine the fun with kayak fishing. I, myself, am still mastering walking and chewing gum at the same time, so I am curious how my kayak fishing will go, but that's the goal—to try something new, challenge myself and to do it with the people I'm most connected.

Recently, I lost my Jimbo, my newfound "fishing-dad." And, once again, it's difficult to get back on the water. I have yet to pick up a rod these past 8 months. Though, this time, Jimbo and my dad made me realize that it's not just for me. This time, I have folks relying on me to continue to create fishing programs, to teach them how to set the line, to teach them about different bait (that I will now touch with garden gloves), and to learn about different lures and fly tying. The water is not always calm. It will ebb and flow, and sometimes be tumultuous, but I will continue to find my way back to the water. ☐



*The author's father, Barry Colbert*



*The author's friend, Jimbo (James Baker)*



# Central PA Fish Camp

by Tyler Frantz

photos by the author

There's nothing more rejuvenating than evening campfire meals, sleeping beneath the stars and waking to a dawn filled with birdsong—unless, of course, one adds fishing to the mix, and the entire experience becomes even more fulfilling.

That's why last June found me doing just that to celebrate the conclusion of another school year and the beginning of a hard-earned summer break. In seeking respite from the day-to-day responsibilities of a busy public school teacher and coach, I was eager for some quiet time in nature—a few days to relax, unwind and sling some fly line amid the peace and tranquility of a quality trout stream.

One of the best places to do so in Pennsylvania is the centrally-located State College, Centre County, where multiple creeks offer top-notch fishing opportunities within an hour's drive from Bald Eagle State Park—the destination I chose to serve as home base for fish camp.

While Bald Eagle State Park offers a variety of amenities, including modern camping areas with full electrical hookups, I decided to keep things simple and select a rustic campsite in a densely wooded area on the backside of Foster Joseph Sayers Reservoir.

A primitive tent pad, metal fire ring and lantern holder located a short jaunt from the pull-off parking area provided bare necessities for a solo camper who intended to spend more time on the water than in camp.

I hastily erected a pop-up canopy, folding table and bucket chair on the tent pad to serve as a rain-proof dining and storage area for miscellaneous gear. A makeshift clothesline served as a place to hang waders and wet clothing, while a hammock strung between two trees provided a comfortable bed for my 3-day, 2-night stay.

The first stream I fished was the nearby Bald Eagle Creek, which has a nice stretch of Keystone Select Stocked Trout Waters near the Soaring Eagle Wetland. However, due to a recent downpour, I found the creek running high and muddy, so I



headed to Milesburg, roughly 25 minutes from my campsite to fish lower Spring Creek.

There, I lucked into some nice Rainbow Trout including a 20-plus-inch trout that eventually broke my line, while running a tandem rig of a tungsten ant and beadhead sowbug imitation, before heading back to camp for a ham steak dinner over the fire.

The next day, I again fished Spring Creek at first light with fair results before traveling to the Little Juniata River, where I caught a lively Brown Trout and a Rock Bass under the Ironville Bridge, Blair County, using a flashy Walt's Worm pattern. I returned to Spring Creek, where trout were rising enthusiastically to sulphur dry flies just before dark.

The final day of camp, after packing up in a light drizzle, I headed toward the town of Lamar, Clinton County, to try Fishing Creek before returning home. I was rewarded for wading the slick rocky bottom of this pristine wilderness stream with the gentle tug of a wild Brown Trout that fell for a Pheasant Tail Nymph during a steadily increasing rainfall.

Wet but satisfied, I broke down my fly rod, returned to the truck and headed for home a fully revitalized man—thanks to the restorative qualities of my State College Fish Camp. Nature never disappoints, so long as the trout are biting. ☐



*A simple pop-up canopy and hammock strung between trees served as basic shelter for a solo camping excursion in prime trout country.*



*The Little Juniata is a beautiful stream within reasonable driving distance of Bald Eagle State Park, Centre County.*



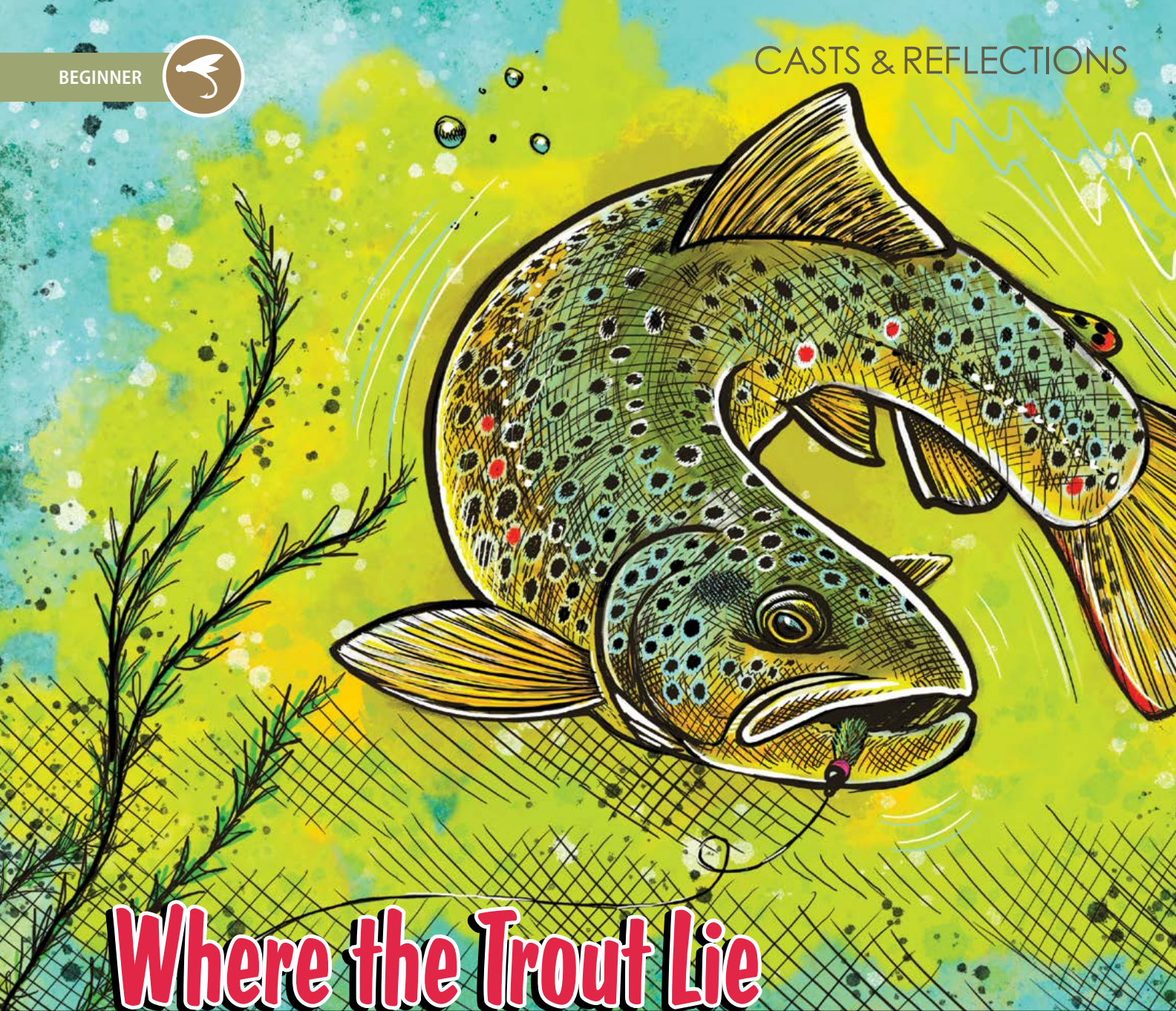
*With multiple trout fishing destinations less than an hour away, Bald Eagle State Park serves as the perfect home base for a fish camp in the State College area.*



*Cooking over an open flame adds to the overall enjoyment of the fish camp experience.*



*The author caught a lively wild Brown Trout while fishing the Little Juniata River, Blair County.*



# Where the Trout Lie

by Michael Kensinger

With failure comes insight. Over the course of the past several weeks, I've had plenty of, shall we say, insight. Luckily, I'm patient and persistent—qualities I attribute to being an artist. This is not a journey to be rushed, and after tangling a few flies in overhanging tree limbs, I'm happy to report I've finally arrived at some satisfaction in my fly fishing journey.

When last I wrote, I'd been practicing my cast in a plunge pool not far from my home. The water

temperatures were around 37 degrees F when I arrived, and I was having no luck. Closer inspection revealed the plunge pool was entirely devoid of fish. It was interesting because the pool does hold trout at times. Last summer, I saw trout swimming in the shadows to avoid the heat and predators. I figured, lethargic from the cold, trout would hole up here in winter as well. I was wrong, because my camera lens revealed nothing but bubbles and the occasional leaf on the bottom. On the bank, some mink tracks in the snow revealed a potential culprit. Although I'll never know for sure, I speculated that the mink had

scared the trout downstream into other holding water.

A second adventure a few days later took me to Cambria County to fish a medium-sized stream. I fished this creek before with spinners and had some luck with Brown Trout. I know this spot is annually stocked, and it also has a wild Brown Trout population. When I arrived, the water was running clear but high and still quite cold. Considering some of the warmwater species that inhabit this location, I assumed the water would be warmer. With water only 38 degrees F, I didn't catch anything, but I got some good practice drifting my nymphs and testing



# Modified Walt's Worm



different weights and sizes in varying sections of stream. After that, I decided to investigate and make a game plan for later that week.

After days of snowmelt and rain, I was finally greeted by a sunny February morning. Water conditions had improved, so I drove a short distance to a popular river. Fed by limestone springs, I learned that the water quality was great, and the water temperature here would be around 10 degrees warmer than the frigid freestone creeks where I'd been practicing. I immediately recognized an increase in biodiversity as lush aquatic vegetation swayed and danced in the stream current.

I grasped one plant and lifted some damaged portions out of the water. I was seeing stonefly and midge larvae all over the plant. My hand was covered with tiny midges, which told me I was in the right habitat for hungry trout. As I walked through the stream, I even saw what appeared to be a hellgrammite twitching its way through the current beside me. The water temperature checked at 45 degrees F, so I placed myself at a long deep run that cut under some fallen trees.

Above me on the hillside, a great horned owl called. I cast my nymph up the feeding lane. My

fly was made with brown hare's ear dubbing, sparkly green hare's ear dubbing mixed in and accented with a hot pink collar behind the black beadhead—my own variation of a Walt's Worm. I made another cast and found I had finally hooked a trout.

A 10-inch wild Brown Trout found a fly I tied enticing enough to eat. I reeled the fish closer admiring its red speckled sides and amber colored fins. Before I could snap a photo, it jerked its head, threw the barbless hook and was free. Just like that, the brown beauty slipped back down into the water, leaving me longing for another catch. ☐



# TIPS FOR SAFE WADING



*by Nick DelVecchio*

*photos by the author*

Anyone who has fished long enough knows that eventually things go wrong and you end up wet. Unfortunately, it's just part of the sport. But, there are some things we can do to prevent accidents. Getting wet and uncomfortable is one thing, but an injury is worse. To avoid injuries, follow these safe wading tips.

One of the easiest and most reliable ways to wade safely is to carry a stick or wading staff. Having a third anchor point is helpful and provides much needed stability on the uneven footing of a stream. Many fishing companies sell wading staffs, and they provide extra benefits like being collapsible. However, in a pinch, any sturdy stick found in the woods will do. Sometimes, anglers will even use trekking poles to assist in their wading. By attaching it to your vest, pack or wading belt, the staff is out of the way when you're fishing but also ready in a second's notice when you need it.

Going with a buddy, or making a friend while on the water, is another good way to stay safe. Linking

arms is a terrific method to navigate stream crossings. If one angler starts slipping, the other angler can stop moving through the water to help stabilize the wobbly companion. It's also good to fish with someone else in the event an accident does happen. Often, the sheer shock of falling creates problems, because a wrong decision in a panicked moment can cause things to go wrong in a hurry. Having someone else's help getting back upright is extremely helpful.

Possibly the most obvious tip, and yet most overlooked, is to take your time. Most stumbles into the water are avoidable and caused by anglers moving too fast. Make sure one foot is firmly planted on the stream bottom before picking up the trailing foot and moving forward. Standing on top of a rock is a means for disaster. Once all of your weight is on that foot, the rock can easily shift, resulting in a fall. This is fishing, after all. It's supposed to be a slowdown and reprieve from the hustle of everyday life. We're all guilty of getting excited and moving too quickly through the water, but slow it down. Take your time, and enjoy the day.

Eventually, we all end up wet, but the goal is to avoid breaking a wrist, ankle or worse. Following safe wading practices helps in that respect, and less time at the doctor or in an ankle brace means more time on the water. ☐



# MAINTAINING WETLANDS FOR BOG TURTLES



## Bog Turtle *Glyptemys muhlenbergii*

**Size:** No more than 4 inches long (along its shell)

**Field Notes:** Bog Turtles inhabit wetlands including bogs, marshes, swamps and wet pastures. They eat berries, slugs, tadpoles, snails, worms, insects and plant shoots. The Bog Turtle's carapace (upper shell) is light brown to mahogany. Its large scutes (bony plates on the shell) sometimes have a tinge of yellow or red in the center. Its plastron (lower shell or "belly") is brown or black with yellow along the middle. The head is black and marked with a yellow, orange or red blotch on each side.

**Did you Know?** The Bog Turtle was the first turtle to be placed on the Pennsylvania List of Endangered Species. It only appears in isolated populations, and loss of habitat is the biggest factor in its decline. The Bog Turtle is a secretive and shy turtle, which makes it difficult to study. It is active from April through mid-October. A Bog Turtle may bury itself in mud or vegetative debris during periods of extremely hot weather, and it hibernates during the coldest winter months, deeply buried in mud with flowing springs.



With brush cutters and gardening loppers, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) and Mid-Atlantic Center for Herpetology and Conservation recently trimmed their way through some precious and rare wetland habitats in Pennsylvania. Shrub and tree overgrowth in wetlands limits suitable habitat for Bog Turtles.

A spring-fed meadow with low sedges, shrubs and soft mud makes a great home for the Bog Turtle, North America's smallest turtle. It needs mud to burrow in and, as a reptile, the ability to move in and out of the sun for temperature regulation. Sunlight is critical for growth, disease prevention and incubating eggs.

When the woody vegetation is cut, this gives the tiny turtle the right combination of sun and mucky soil to thrive. Without this management practice, eventually the habitat will become overgrown and change from an open wetland to forest.

"If the habitat is not great, they may hang on for a while but can't successfully reproduce. Some populations we currently see are only older ones," said Josh Brown, PFBC biologist.

This work is part of a 5-year multistate grant with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service aimed at recovering the Bog Turtle through habitat restoration, management and protection. Ultimately, the goal is to remove the Bog Turtle from the Pennsylvania List of Endangered Species.

Along the way, PFBC biologists and partners are also surveying habitats to better understand the impacts of the management practice and provide more support to Bog Turtles for the future.

Bog Turtles are illegal to possess. So, please don't pick them up or take them home. If a turtle is on the road, move it across the road in the direction it's headed. You, too, can make a difference in Pennsylvania wetlands. ☑

### World Turtle Day May 23:



[worldturtleday.org/](http://worldturtleday.org/)



# REVOLUTIONARY RATTLES—

## How Pennsylvania's Timber Rattlesnake Fueled American Independence

by Brady J. Crytzer

Timber Rattlesnake, black phase

photo-Chris Calhoun

As we find ourselves in the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, we reflect on the people and ideas that shaped it. Since the 1750s, Pennsylvania's own Benjamin Franklin lobbied passionately for American liberty and adopted the Timber Rattlesnake, *Crotalus horridus*, as one of its most potent symbols.

Although Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston, MA, his move to Philadelphia at the age of 17 set him on the path to becoming one of America's most celebrated founding fathers. Following his move to Penn's colony, Franklin established himself as one of the leading voices of the people when he established the famed newspaper called *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. Using *The Pennsylvania Gazette* as his personal sounding board, Franklin tackled all the major issues of the day.

In May 1751, Americans were greatly unsettled by Great Britain's new policy of sending convicts to the New World to increase the population of the colonies. As boatloads of criminals arrived in Philadelphia, Franklin jokingly wrote to his readers that perhaps Timber Rattlesnakes should be sent to England in return. "I would propose to have them carefully distributed in St. James's Park... and other places of pleasure about London," he quipped.

After all, "Rattlesnakes seem the most suitable returns for the human serpents sent us by our Mother Country."

This was the first time that Franklin used Pennsylvania's Timber Rattlesnake to make his point, but it was not the last. Three years later, when hostilities with the French boiled over and ignited a global war, Franklin again turned to America's most famous serpent dweller. In 1754, Franklin proposed that America's colonies should join to combat their French enemy as a wartime measure.

Despite the looming threat of the Seven Years' War, most colonial governments refused to combine their efforts.

Frustrated by the stubborn politicians, Franklin called upon the rattlesnake yet again. This time in what would be his most famous editorial. Based on the fable that a chopped up rattlesnake could repair itself by nightfall (warning: it can't), on May 9, 1754, Franklin published his famed sketch declaring "JOIN, or DIE."

The image of the Timber Rattlesnake as a symbol of resistance caught on like wildfire in the colonies. Within a month of the publication of Franklin's cartoon, newspapers in New York and Massachusetts also adopted the image. Just as the American colonies were reaching their fullest potential, it seemed they had found their national mascot.

By the dawn of the American Revolution, the rattler had become synonymous with liberty and independence. On December 27, 1775, Franklin called upon the viper again, this time in *The Pennsylvania Journal*. He wrote its "eye excelled in brightness, that of any other animal, and that she has no eyelids. She may therefore be esteemed an emblem of vigilance. She never begins an attack, nor, when once engaged, ever surrenders: She is therefore an emblem of magnanimity and true courage."

Much as the colonies had warned the British that their new laws were a violation of American rights, Franklin suggested that the rattlesnake "never wounds till she has generously given notice, even to her enemy, and cautioned him against the danger of treading on her." He finally declared that the time for national unity had come. "One of those rattles singly, is incapable of producing sound, but the ringing of 13 together, is sufficient to alarm the boldest man living."



Benjamin Franklin, 1767

photo-Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Celebrated as one of the most beautiful and deadly residents of Penn's Woods, the Timber Rattlesnake remains a powerful connection to our own founding era. May its rattle continue to echo through the forest, nature's way of letting freedom ring. 🗣️

*Brady J. Crytzer teaches history at Robert Morris University. The author of seven books studying the early history of Pennsylvania, he lives and fishes outside of Pittsburgh.*



illustration-David Martin, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

*This political cartoon (attributed to Benjamin Franklin) originally appeared during the French and Indian War but was recycled to encourage the American colonies to unite against British rule.*



## Timber Rattlesnake *Crotalus horridus*

**Size:** 36 to 54 inches long

**Field Notes:** Timber Rattlesnakes are venomous. They inhabit timber-covered terrain with abundant rodent prey populations and typically use hillsides with stone ledges for basking. Rattlesnakes are found in two different color phases, black and the less common yellow phase. Coloration does not change from one phase to the other.

**Did you Know?** Snakes would rather be left alone. The Timber Rattlesnake is not an aggressive creature. It is prone to lie quietly or crawl away when given the chance. However, if it feels threatened and unable to escape, it stands its ground. Contrary to popular belief, a rattlesnake does not always “rattle” before striking. In fact, when striking because of fear or in defense, it often strikes without an audible warning.





# PENN STATE UNIVERSITY FLY FISHING CLUB

*by Gino Bartolini*

**A** student studying finance at Penn State University, I grew up in the small rural town of Saltsburg, Indiana County. Fly fishing has always been a passion of mine, but it was challenging to learn. Living in an area that lacks high-quality trout streams made it extremely difficult to practice outside of the springtime months. Over the course of time and after countless hours of watching fly fishing YouTube videos, I eventually learned to become a skillful fly angler.

Growing up, my goal was to go to college at Penn State. While education should've been my main focus, one thing was always in the back of my mind. Central Pennsylvania is a true "Fisherman's Paradise" and home to many world-renowned trout waters. In addition, Penn State has its own fly fishing club as well as the Joe Humphreys Fly Fishing Program. During my time at Penn State, I have fished some legendary trout streams. I have also met some of the fly fishing industry's finest anglers. One of these people is my professor, George Daniel.



photos-courtesy of Gino Bartolini

After my first year of college, I was able to take over as the president of Penn State's fly fishing club. The fly fishing club is a great resource for any student who is interested in fly fishing. We have students from all over the country with different levels of experience. While our goal is to improve our skills, we also focus on being involved in conservation. Our group meets weekly to either tie flies or spend time on the water. Being the club president has shown me that I'm passionate about sharing and teaching my knowledge of fly fishing. For those who fly fish, we know the sport is extremely technical, and there are a lot of different factors that determine our success. This is especially true for the wild trout that inhabit central Pennsylvania, as they often require a perfectly presented fly in order to entice a strike. Aside from the actual mechanics of using a fly rod to catch fish, it is a great place to learn about the stream ecosystem. Due to the unique limestone geology of these streams, a wide variety of aquatic insects live and thrive in our waters. For this

reason, we are able to see exceptional hatches in the springtime. The hatches make for unforgettable fly fishing experiences. With a collective group of young fly anglers within the club, we are leading and growing the next generation of fly anglers. It is important for those who are skilled and experienced to pass their knowledge onto new anglers both young and old.

The fly fishing community shares the common values of conservation and preservation of our natural resources. Without conservation efforts, stream health will suffer, bugs will die and our high-quality trout waters will cease to exist. For this reason, clubs and organizations are vital to the sport of fly fishing by spreading knowledge and promoting conservation. With this in mind, I encourage all who are interested in fly fishing to join a club or organization. Our wild trout waters are a precious thing. It is our job as the next generation of fly anglers to protect our natural resources and spread our passion for fly fishing. ☐



Club members fishing in Milesburg, Centre County.



George Daniel gives a casting demonstration for Penn State's fly fishing club.



Club members during their weekly fly tying.

En español:



[fishandboat.com/About-Us/PFBC-by-Region/Southeast-PA/Pages/default.aspx](http://fishandboat.com/About-Us/PFBC-by-Region/Southeast-PA/Pages/default.aspx)

# Pursue SOUTHEAST PA!

photo-Bob Fritz

by *Linda Stager*

Our state's tourism slogan, "Pursue Your Happiness," takes inspiration from the Declaration of Independence, signed right here in Pennsylvania. Our nation was created in Philadelphia, a place of legacy and historical significance. But, southeastern Pennsylvania is so much more—it's a region of diverse landscapes, urban vibrance, cultural mosaics and educational institutions.

On Pennsylvania's narrow Atlantic Coastal Plain, Philadelphia, the historically rich "City of Brotherly Love," sits between the Delaware River and the Schuylkill River basins and is an urban hub. Beyond its bustle, though, are fertile farmlands, rolling hills and rugged wilderness.

There is so much to explore in the 10 counties that comprise PA's southeast region. Visit national historical sites, a variety of state parks, wildlife preserves, the culturally rich, authentic Pennsylvania Dutch areas or any of the fantastic waterways here.

## Treasured trail

**Schuylkill River Trail and Schuylkill River Water Trail:** These interconnected trails celebrate the Schuylkill River (pronounced SKOO-kill), Dutch for Hidden River.

The Schuylkill River, a tributary of the Delaware River, flows southeastward from the mountains of Schuylkill County on a 135-mile journey through a variety of different environments. In rural areas, you'll find scenic landscapes, but its urban stretches flow through Philadelphia.

The Schuylkill River Trail is a multi-purpose path that offers a scenic route for walking, running, biking and other recreational activities. Most of the trail is built over





*Schuylkill River Trail, Philadelphia*



*Conestoga River, Berks and Lancaster counties*

*photo-PFBC archives*

abandoned railroad lines. Today, over 75 miles of paved and crushed stone trails are open to visitors.

One of our favorite segments is a 30-mile stretch of the trail starting at the 2,000-foot Schuylkill Banks Boardwalk. The trail travels to Valley Forge National Historical Park, past many of Philadelphia's most well-known attractions.

The corresponding Schuylkill River Water Trail is a paddler's paradise. There are multiple public access points to the river, from near Schuylkill Haven in the north to the Philadelphia Navy Yards on the Delaware River at its end. Beginners and novice kayakers will be drawn to the river's tranquil waters. Kayak rentals are readily available, and various outfitters offer

4- to 6-hour float trip itineraries. Outfitters help visitors negotiate dams and remnants of dams along the river.

Plan your trip at the right time of year, and the entire family can join the Schuylkill River Sojourn. This weeklong guided experience combines being on the river with educational programs about the importance of conservation. Do as little or as much of the sojourn as you want. All are welcome.

## Popular waterways

**Delaware River:** The Delaware River forms Pennsylvania's eastern border. Not only is it one of the largest rivers in the eastern part of our country, it is a major shipping route, and

*photo-Linda Stigger*



*Valley Forge National Historic Park, Montgomery and Chester counties*

*photo-Sherry Gilbert*



*Delaware River from Bowman's Hill Tower, Bucks County*



photo-PFBC archives

Lake Nockamixon, Bucks County

it has played a significant role in colonial history. For anglers, it's also an extraordinary fishing destination.

The United States Congress has declared parts of the Delaware River a National Wild and Scenic River. There are no dams along its entire length.

Every spring, the American Shad migration on the river is something to behold. Schools of shad arrive in large numbers. Stand with other anglers on the river's shore and throw in your line. It's an experience you will never forget.

Following the shad up the river come big Striped Bass. "Stripers" can be massive fish, with some big females, who arrive first, occasionally weighing in excess of 60 pounds. By May, most of the stripers have arrived, now a mix of different sizes of fish, they are just as aggressive on the line.

If you want to fish these big, fun fish, check out the section of the Delaware River near Neshaminy State Park, Bucks County.

By summer, anglers are also fishing for catfish, Smallmouth Bass, Muskellunge and Walleyes, too. Bring a boat or fish from one of the many public piers on the river. Public access to the river is plentiful.

**Lake Nockamixon:** The largest lake in southeast PA is at Nockamixon State Park. It's a popular place to boat as well as fish.

A boat rental concession has canoes, motorboats, rowboats, sailboats, paddleboards and pontoon boats available during the summer months. There are also 3 miles of hiking trails, a 2.8-mile bicycle trail and 20 miles of equestrian trails.

A special event for whitewater enthusiasts usually happens semiannually when water is released from the dam, creating

suitable whitewater conditions downstream. Check the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources's website and social media accounts for release dates.

The lake is classified as a trophy bass lake. If you are a birder, look for bald eagle and great blue heron rookeries.

Not far from here is Ringing Rocks County Park, a geological landmark. Try your hand at tapping the rocks to see if you can get them to ring. Bring your own hammer.



photo-Sherry Culbert

Ringing Rocks County Park, Bucks County





photo-PFBC archives

Neshaminy Creek, Tyler State Park, Bucks County

## Points of interest

- American Music Theatre/Dutch Apple Dinner Theatre/Fulton Theatre/Sight & Sound Theatres, Lancaster, Lancaster County
- “Christmas City, USA”/SteelStacks/National Museum of Industrial History, Bethlehem, Lehigh and Northampton counties
- Crayola Experience, Easton, Northampton County (explore art and technology, express creativity and experience color in a whole new way through a day of activities)
- Green Dragon Farmers Market, Ephrata, Lancaster County, and Lancaster Central Market, Lancaster, Lancaster County
- The Mütter Museum, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County (museum of medical history with collections of anatomical specimens, models and medical instruments)
- Wissahickon Valley Park, Philadelphia, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties (dozens of miles of trails along Wissahickon Creek)

## Best-loved adventures

Among our “must see” favorites are:

- **Philadelphia and the surrounding area:** Walk along Delaware River Waterfront, take in Independence Seaport Museum, look for tall ships in the harbor, and enjoy the vendors along the way. A hub for arts and culture, visit the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the African American Museum in Philadelphia, the Franklin Institute and the Reading Terminal Market. Bring your walking shoes and immerse your family into colonial history at Independence National Historical Park, complete with an exhibit of the famous Liberty Bell. A short drive out of the city to Kennett Square is Longwood Gardens and its indoor and outdoor garden displays. The popular botanical gardens are open year-round.

- **Lancaster and Pennsylvania Dutch Country:** Lancaster and the surrounding area are home to one of the oldest Amish communities in the country. Take a bus tour, visit a farm museum, and be sure to eat at one of the home-cooked meal restaurants. Lancaster County is also known for its covered bridges, so check out several of these “kissing bridges” for yourself on a self-guided driving tour.

- **Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area** is a wildlife preserve managed for wetland-dependent species. The annual migration of the snow geese here is a highlight for any birding enthusiast.

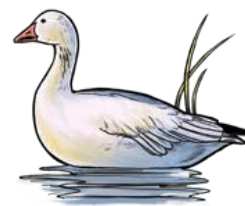


photo-Donna Dawson



Longwood Gardens, Chester County

photo-Linda Sager



A horse and buggy along the highway, Lancaster County.



*Snow geese at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, Lancaster County.*

The southeast region of Pennsylvania is a premier fishing and boating destination, with two major waterways and many lakes and streams. Add in the varied scenic landscapes and the large variety of things to do, and the whole family will find things they love.

You and your family will be able to “pursue your happiness”. ☐

## Fuel for your adventure

It's important to “fuel up” our bodies when we are on the water for a day of fun. The right nutrition keeps us moving and focused all day long.

What's the right nutrition? First, think portable, non-perishable foods that slip easily into a daypack without too much weight.

Then, think about nutrients. Pick some high protein snacks with a good mix of carbohydrates and fats.

Here are some suggestions for hungry adventurers:

- Trail mix
- Potato chips or pretzels
- Jerky
- Granola bars
- Fruits and nuts
- Peanut butter

Next, think about hydration. Bring plenty of water to stay hydrated, especially if you're outdoors for an extended time. Sports drinks are okay too, for a sweeter drink. Plan on 64 ounces of water a day. That's what your body needs, maybe more depending on temperature and conditions.

We all need good fuel for the trip. Bring the right snacks and drinks for a fun day outdoors. And, wear sunscreen and a wide brimmed hat, too.

One more thing—trash in, trash out. Pack out your wrappers and bottles. We can all do our part to conserve and keep our special places clean.

*Written by Linda Stager*



## Photos by the water

Anyone who thinks turtles are always slow has never tried walking up to one along the water's edge. They give you the side eye. Then, they're gone. Wariness is key to their survival, but it's frustrating when you want a good photo.

Approach wildlife from the water and things may be different. Creatures large and small may let a quiet, still paddler approach within easy photo-taking distance.

Having a camera, even the one on your phone, has other benefits afloat. Take photos of anglers with fish, fellow paddlers and landscapes. The only requirement is something to keep your gear dry. Dry boxes—hard-sided cases with rubber gaskets that seal tight—work great. Some, primarily for cell phones, come with a carabiner to clip to your life jacket or boat. Larger ones may have segmented foam inserts you pick out in pieces to custom fit your camera. Dry bags and snorkeler-style waterproof phone cases are other options.

Use a neck strap or lanyard specific to your phone to secure your camera when taking photos. Even if it falls from your hand, it's unlikely to go into the water.

When taking photos, look for opportunities to capture reflections. Shoot with your camera held directly above the water's surface for unique perspectives. Get out early and stay late for the most colorful skies. Above all, think creatively and have fun!

*Written by Bob Frye*



photo-Bob Frye

*Turtles and other wildlife will often let a quiet paddler approach closer than they would a photographer on foot. But, don't get too close. Respect the wildlife.*

## Popular waterways

### Southeast Region:

- Blue Marsh Lake
- Bushkill Creek
- Delaware River
- Lake Nockamixon
- Lehigh River
- Manatawny Creek
- Monocacy Creek
- Schuylkill River
- Tulpehocken Creek
- Wissahickon Creek



## Pennsylvania state parks

### Southeast Region:

- **Benjamin Rush State Park**, Philadelphia Co.
- **Big Elk Creek State Park**, Chester Co.
- **Delaware Canal State Park**, Bucks and Northampton counties (fishing and boating)
- **Evansburg State Park**, Montgomery Co. (fishing)
- **Fort Washington State Park**, Montgomery Co. (fishing)
- **French Creek State Park**, Berks and Chester counties (fishing and boating)
- **Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center**, Northampton Co. (fishing)
- **Locust Lake State Park**, Schuylkill Co. (fishing and boating)
- **Marsh Creek State Park**, Chester Co. (fishing and boating)
- **Neshaminy State Park**, Bucks Co. (fishing and boating)
- **Nockamixon State Park**, Bucks Co. (fishing and boating)
- **Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center**, Berks Co. (fishing)
- **Norristown Farm Park**, Montgomery Co. (fishing)
- **Ralph Stover State Park**, Bucks Co. (fishing and whitewater)
- **Ridley Creek State Park**, Delaware Co. (fishing)
- **Susquehannock State Park**, Lancaster Co.
- **Swatara State Park**, Lebanon and Schuylkill counties (fishing and paddling)
- **Tuscarora State Park**, Schuylkill Co. (fishing and boating)
- **Tyler State Park**, Bucks Co. (fishing and boating)
- **Washington Crossing Historic Park**, Bucks Co. (fishing and paddling)
- **White Clay Creek Preserve**, Chester Co. (fishing)



French Creek State Park, Berks and Chester counties

Regional designations are based on Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Law Enforcement regions.

artwork-Michael Kensinger

## Popular State Game Lands

- **State Game Lands 46 (Middle Creek)**, Lancaster County: Nearly 6,000 acres, this Wildlife Management Area is managed by the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) for waterfowl, grassland nesting birds and wetland-dependent species. Middle Creek hosts an interactive visitor center, an archery range, a seasonal wildlife driving tour and over 20 miles of hiking trails. Other recreational opportunities include wildlife viewing, special hunts and non-motorized boating. Middle Creek is one of six Globally Important Bird Areas in the state.
- **State Game Lands 205**, Lehigh County: Encompassing just over 1,300 acres, there are many hunting, hiking, biking and horseback riding opportunities. A public shooting range is available for rifles, shotguns and archery. With the adjacent Trexler Nature Preserve, the PGC employs grassland management practices such as prescribed fires. Species of interest include the American kestrel, a grassland-dependent falcon and Pennsylvania's smallest raptor. Banding efforts are conducted every summer to track population sizes and nesting success rates.



American kestrel

- **State Game Lands 280**, Berks County: With 2,550 acres surrounding Blue Marsh Lake, it is managed in conjunction with 2,730 acres owned by the United States Army Corps of Engineers. Primary habitat management goals are converting agriculture fields to native early successional habitats and grasslands. Primary game species include deer, mourning doves, rabbits, squirrels and various waterfowl species. Fishing and boating are popular recreational activities at the lake.
- **State Game Lands 217**, Carbon (Northeast Region), Lehigh and Schuylkill counties: Made up of 8,600 acres, popular game species are deer, bears and turkeys. The Appalachian Trail traverses the entire length of these lands, so hiking is extremely popular. This area is also popular with birders, especially during the fall at Bake Oven Knob. Counters have been recording raptor migration data for over 50 years, one of the longest raptor migration studies in the world. During spring migration, birders view a multitude of warbler and other songbird species.

photo-J. Dingel

photo-Bob Frye



photos-Darl Black

# Festivals *and* Fishing Around Pymatuning Reservoir

*by Marilyn Black*

In addition to year-round open fishing seasons for all warmwater fish species, Pymatuning Reservoir, on the border of Pennsylvania and Ohio, is the centerpiece for public festivals throughout the year.

The reservoir has the highest water acreage of any inland lake in Pennsylvania, drawing anglers, campers, boaters, hikers, swimmers, birdwatchers, sailboat enthusiasts, kayakers, competition anglers and others who enjoy the 20 horsepower limit on this wide lake. Multiple public and private campgrounds, rental cabins, small motels, and seasonal homes in close vicinity to Pymatuning Reservoir make it convenient for families from near and far.

## Onion Festival (Onion Fest)

The newest free public festival hosted by Pymatuning State Park (PSP), Crawford County, highlights onion fields cultivated in the late 19th and early 20th

centuries on wetlands, which today are beneath and surrounding Pymatuning Reservoir's northern section. In 2024, the Onion Festival is Friday, July 12, from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., and Saturday, July 13, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., at the Linesville Beach. Featuring assorted onion foods, Onion Fest provides exposure to the recreational activities the park offers. Visitors can enjoy pontoon boat rides, kayak rides, paddleboarding, swimming, educational programs by conservation organizations, archery, live music, arts and crafts, and concessions.

## Pymatuning Lake Festival (Lake Fest)

The Pymatuning Area Chamber of Commerce holds its annual Lake Fest in early August, with all free-admission activities based at the Ohio PSP Main Beach and its parking area just off the causeway in Andover, OH. Lisa Hulihan, Crawford County,



Jessica Rohrdanz, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Northwest Region Outreach and Education Coordinator, chats with avid angler Dan Wielobob, Crawford County, during the Pymatuning Winter Fun Day.

Non-campers must leave their vehicles at the lot beside the campground entrance and amble among colorful illuminated sites to reach beachside pumpkin-themed activities. Spooktacular features contests for costumes, site decorations, decorated pumpkins and pumpkin derby races, plus trick-or-treating. Each day also has an apple slingshot, a bonfire at the beach, live music, pumpkin decorating and crafts

especially enjoys “the outstanding Saturday night fireworks, combining explosive illuminations with the gorgeous lights on kayaks and other boats bobbing on the lake surface.” This festival also includes food, crafts, children’s activities, vendors and local entertainment.

## Kids Free Fishing Derby

Pymatuning Lake Association conducts its annual Kids Free Fishing Derby in early August. Pre-registered youth ages 2 to 15 years old fish from shore or boat on Pymatuning Reservoir, with the event headquarters and measuring station based at Espyville Boat Launch.

## Pymatuning Fall Spooktacular

According to Sean Benson, Assistant Park Manager at PSP, the annual free public event with the consistently highest attendance within PSP is Pymatuning Fall Spooktacular, averaging 4,000 attendees during two consecutive early autumn weekends. Campers at Jamestown Campground are encouraged to decorate their sites and wear costumes.

for kids, all conducted by campground hosts, volunteers and park employees.

## Pymatuning Winter Fun Day

PSP, the Pymatuning Trail Blazers Snowmobile Club, Relay For Life, scouts and other partners on the second Saturday each February gather at the Jamestown Day Use Area at Shelter #4 and Beach #2 to shake off cabin fever by showcasing cold weather outdoor activities. This free public event usually includes a charity fundraising polar plunge, displays of vintage snowmobiles, maple sugaring, sled dogs, informational stations by resource agencies, chainsaw carving, horse-drawn carriage rides and more.

## A Day at the Hatchery

To observe the process of raising fish, mark your calendar to attend the free open house on a Saturday in early April each year at the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Linesville State Fish Hatchery. This day-long event includes exhibits, craft activities for youngsters, displays by other conservation agencies and showcases its 10,000-gallon viewing tank. ☐

## Pymatuning Reservoir Events

Event	Date
Great Pymatuning Shoreline Cleanup	May 4, 2024
Gateway Jamestown Fireworks in the Park	June 29, 2024
Onion Festival (Onion Fest)	July 12-13, 2024
Pymatuning Lake Festival (Lake Fest)	August 3-4, 2024
Pymatuning Lake Association Kids Free Fishing Derby	August 3-4, 2024
Pymatuning Fall Spooktacular	September 27-28, 2024 October 4-5, 2024
Pymatuning Winter Fun Day	February 8, 2025
A Day at the Hatchery	April 12, 2025

Dates are subject to change.

# Pass It On





by Kelley Kirsch

photo by the author

Where did your fishing journey begin? How many people helped you along the way? I remember not too long ago being overwhelmed with everything I ought to know and feeling a lack of confidence on the water.

Fishing was not something I experienced growing up, and I did not find myself tangling with it until I was an adult. Now, all I think about is getting back onto the water to explore and find what nature will teach me next.

Passion for the sport of fly fishing is all-consuming. Full disclosure—I am no expert, guide or specialist, but I am on this journey of learning and know I will never learn it all. From bugs to ecosystems, species of fish, fishing techniques, gear and all the numerous ways to approach fishing, can you ever learn it all? I believe this is why it is an addiction for many and the reason I keep finding myself wading back into the water or on the bow of a boat aiming and casting to crack the code for the day like a detective.

For some, this may be a solo journey, and the solace can be transformative. However, I seek others to adventure with and share in the experience, because it makes the journey even more fun. I like to say, “I disconnect to reconnect with nature and fellow anglers alike.”

I have learned the most by fishing with others, sharing their passions, mishaps, successes and shenanigans. So, you don’t know what you don’t know until you know. Remember where you started and where you are now. Each of us, no matter what part of the journey you are on, can provide a nugget of advice or “a ha!” moments to fellow newbies or self-proclaimed experts.

Today, there is a ton of information available through social media. I personally belong to over a dozen fishing Facebook pages, where anglers share information and seek advice. These groups are so helpful and offer a wealth of knowledge, but they are also filled with negative comments. So, next time you see someone asking for help, consider educating instead of shaming. The more people we share best practices with while fishing and get connected to our waters, the better stewards of the environment they come to be. From state regulations, ethical practices, respect for others, techniques and conservation, there is so much to learn and share.

Taking things one step further, getting active and volunteering is a fantastic way to share your passion. Think global and act local. Doing your part in just a small way really makes a difference. There are programs to get involved in through the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Trout Unlimited, Project Healing Waters and Casting for Recovery, just to name a few. You do not have to be an expert to share knowledge. Teaching someone a new knot, sharing how to read water, bug identification, fish handling, helping with gear or even safety tips makes a difference. These are all simple ways to share with others and help someone do better and be better. No one woke up one day and knew it all.

Community, I believe, is where it is at. Surrounding yourself with like-minded people will advance and enhance your overall experience on the water. Do everyone a favor and share your knowledge and experiences. Our waterways need us to be better together, and our future generations need opportunities to gain experience.

We are forever students of the sport and stewards of our resources, so please share and pass it on. ☐

## 2024 FISH-FOR-FREE DAYS!

Sunday, May 26

Independence Day, Thursday, July 4

No fishing license is needed to fish on either of these days. Introduce someone to the world of fishing. Visit [fishandboat.com](http://fishandboat.com) for more information. Remember that all other regulations apply.



# BOAT-TOWED WATERSPORTS



*by Ariadne Capotis*

**W**ith numerous lakes, reservoirs and rivers, boat-towed watersport enthusiasts have lots of options in Pennsylvania. The three key components to finding a great location for boat-towed watersports are a large body of water that is typically calm or flat, a boat launch with a dock and a place to refuel on the water. To add to the fun, consider restaurants and entertainment near or along the water. A good spot to consider is Presque Isle Bay, Erie County.

Pennsylvania's only natural harbor, Presque Isle Bay is formed by a west to east arching sand peninsula known as Presque Isle State Park. The bay is a superb body of water to partake in boat-towed watersports like water skiing. There are public boat launches located on multiple sides of the bay, restaurants where you can dock your boat while you dine, fuel docks, and most importantly, the water is typically as calm as it is vast. It is ideal for the specialized wake boats that have become popular with water skiing enthusiasts. Presque Isle Bay is over 4.5 miles long and 1.5

miles wide—plenty of room for pleasure boaters, sailors, anglers and water skiers. For more information on boat launches, visit [porter.org/boating/](http://porter.org/boating/). The Erie Western PA Port Authority page lists locations and additional details about the four public launch ramps located in and around Presque Isle Bay. From west to east, they are Bay Harbor, Chestnut Street, Lampe Marina and East Avenue. Lampe Marina also offers bathrooms, picnic tables and a fuel dock. There are restaurants near the Bicentennial Tower, at State Street, that offer free boat docking while boaters dine. The closest boat launch to most of the food and entertainment is Bay Harbor. If Erie County is too far to launch an adventure that requires towing a boat, the Commonwealth boasts many other great options.

To the south of Presque Isle, Pittsburgh's Three Rivers, the Monongahela, Allegheny and Ohio, offer great opportunities for boat-towed watersports. The Allegheny Reservoir in the Allegheny National Forest offers a great flat water opportunity, among others found in the western part of the state.

The Susquehanna River flows through the central part of the state offering opportunities for skiing and boat-towed watersports





Photo: Scott Stover Photography

*There are many great locations for water skiing in Pennsylvania.*

from the northern to southern borders. Between the borders, watersport enthusiasts will also find Foster Joseph Sayers Lake ([dcnr.pa.gov](http://dcnr.pa.gov)) and Raystown Lake. Enjoy Bald Eagle State Park ([dcnr.pa.gov](http://dcnr.pa.gov)), Centre County, with other opportunities for outdoor recreation, as well. Raystown Lake, an artificial impoundment in Huntingdon County, is the largest lake located entirely within Pennsylvania with over 100 miles of shoreline. For more information on Raystown Lake, visit [raystown.org](http://raystown.org).

For boating enthusiasts needing a location in the eastern part of the state, sections of the lower Delaware River are popular for boat-towed watersports and personal watercraft. Blue Marsh Lake's 1,150 acres of flat water near Reading, Berks County, has three boat docks, and Lake Wallenpaupack, Pike and Wayne counties, has 52 miles of shoreline and seven docks and launch sites to support a great day of watersports.

Before setting out on any adventure, do your research. Check regulations regarding boat-towed watersport restrictions, designated areas, and other important information to ensure the safety of participants and others on the water. Make sure the location you have chosen is open and safe for the activity. Know

where you can launch, if the lake or reservoir has the proper depth for your activity and the necessary wake, and where the boat can be refueled. Find more information on the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's website under "Boating," "Where to Boat" and filter for Boat Accesses. The access should have unlimited horsepower and a dock, so you have a place to tie off the boat. You will need an observer and a boat operator for the person being towed, and remember that everyone should wear a life jacket, even those in the boat. Life jackets are required to be worn by all boat-towed watersport participants. Life jackets must also be carried onboard for all passengers in the boat, and it is strongly recommended that all passengers wear a life jacket. ☐

## Propeller safety

Propeller safety is important for all boaters, especially boat-towed watersport participants. Accidents involving propellers are often fatal or severe, leaving lifelong impacts. In addition to wearing a life jacket, staying sober and taking a boating safety course, here are some tips for boaters to ensure passengers are safe from propeller strikes:

- Turn off your engine before picking up boat-towed watersport participants and swimmers from the water.
- Ensure no one is near the swim platform, swim ladder or boarding ladder while the engine is running. People in the water near the propeller can be hard to see from the helm. Move to the rear of the boat and look for people before starting the engine.
- Wear an engine cut-off switch. It shuts off the engine if the operator moves too far from the helm or falls overboard.
- Be aware of your position. Stay at least 100 feet from dive flags, rafts, moored or anchored vessels, shorelines and swimming areas.
- Keep passengers in safe and secure locations. Don't allow passengers to ride on the bow, transom, seat backs, or gunwales, or outside the passenger carrying area.
- Use the correct engine for the activity. Boats with outboard, inboard/outboard and water jet engines are prohibited from towing a person in or on the wake of the boat.
- Read the *Pennsylvania Fishing Summary/Pennsylvania Boating Handbook* (available at [fishandboat.com](http://fishandboat.com)) for more boat-towed watersport tips and regulations.

### PFBC-owned lakes:



[fishandboat.com/About-Us/PFBC-by-Region/PFBC-Lakes/Pages/default.aspx](http://fishandboat.com/About-Us/PFBC-by-Region/PFBC-Lakes/Pages/default.aspx)



## TIM ABBOTT—CUSTOM BAMBOO ROD MASTER

*by Alex Zidock Jr.*

*photos by the author*

**D**uring my experience as an outdoor writer for more than six decades, I have encountered few one-percenters. That is the one percent of people who rank at the top of their craft—the best of the best. The innovators, trendsetters and developers of ideas and techniques others emulate. Tim Abbott, Bucks County, is such a craftsman.

In his early years as a Boy Scout, Abbott did a lot of spin fishing to earn a fishing merit badge. Then, in his teens, his interest turned to cars. Eventually, he designed and built a race car and at one time held a track record at Watkins Glen in his class. He even raced at Daytona. During this time, he was involved in the theatre.

“I designed and built stage sets for Broadway and off-Broadway movie sets. I also did the lighting and staging for rock concerts. If you went to a major rock concert anywhere in the country in the 1970s, I probably designed and built the stage and set the lighting,” said Abbott. He still gets calls from non-sporting entities to design, re-design or mend projects that are broken.

So, why extreme fly fishing rods and accessories?

“I saw a photograph with fly fishing in it, and it appealed to me. I said, I want to try this,” said Abbott.

“About 25 years ago, I met Art Weiler at a fishing show (see *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* September/October 2021, pages

36 and 37). Art was a schoolteacher, and he is a consummate teacher. He’d take two or three students one or two nights a week at his home, and he would take us through the basics and each ended up with a completed rod. We have a friendship that lasts until now,” said Abbott.

“I then went on my own and started to explore my way of building a bamboo fishing rod. I came up with many processes that are better than what was traditionally done during the age of the classics,” said Abbott. Some of his developments have now become industry standards.

“There was a good tradition among early bamboo rod makers, and they kept every process pretty tight. Some of the steps were secret to their employees. For instance, they cut the bamboo in a locked room, and the average employee was not allowed in,” said Abbott.

“But, back then, rods were derived empirically. Builders knew how to cast, they knew how to play fish and that’s how they developed the fly rod classics. To this day, there’s always a debate, because I also design empirically. Most rod builders embrace computer design, and there are so many flaws with computer programs that I have no interest in them. You’re going by what somebody else thinks is good and the limitations of other mathematical programs. Not by feel,” said Abbott.

A custom fly rod crafted by Abbott begins at \$4,000.00 and goes as high as \$7,500.00 or even more. He says you won’t find an Abbott rod on eBay for resale, but possibly as part of an estate sale, because they are bought, used and kept.

“If you are a good caster, a good rod does what you want it to do; a great rod does it without thought. It becomes part of



All of Tim Abbott's custom fly rods sport this silver butt cap.



Every component of Abbott's fly rods is in his shop, including the aluminum tube rod holder with a genuine leather bumper pad on each end.

you. The people who buy my rods want something they just think, and the fly goes there. It's not a conscious effort to cast anymore. You just wave your hand, and the magic happens," said Abbott.

"I make mostly six-sided trout rods for the most part. Right now on the bench, I have a 12-foot, three-piece, two-handed salmon rod. But, if somebody comes with a specific need, I like the challenge," said Abbott.

Abbott makes everything from tip to butt except the bamboo and thread. "When I started, some commercial line guides were very good, and now, I'm not happy with them. It takes a lot of work to make them usable, and I can make one from scratch and make it better in less time than I can modify a commercial guide to an acceptable level. And, as far as I know, I'm the only person that every guide on a rod is a different size," said Abbott.

If Abbott discovers a new way to alter or change a particular rod-building component, he has no problem developing and building a machine to produce the item. One such device is his steam node pressing machine that compresses the nodes on the bamboo as opposed to shaving them. He has sold more than 125 of the machines to rod builders worldwide.

A custom fly rod from Abbott can take 6 months or up to 2 years to build. He also remanufactures reels and makes custom reel feet.

"As I get older, I like the smaller projects and the detailed work. That's really what my future focus is, primarily custom bamboo fly rods and reels," said Abbott. ☐



Abbott calls it a wrap packer that he invented and has sold to other rod makers. The small guide squares the thread wrap to the blank and aligns it to the adjacent thread.

## More information

[timabbott@verizon.net](mailto:timabbott@verizon.net)



# RECAP OF 2023 BOATING FATALITIES

by *Ryan C. Walt*  
*Boating and Watercraft Safety Manager*  
*Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission*

Life jacket loaner sites:



[boatingsafety.com/page/life-jacket-loaner-program#life-jacket-map](https://boatingsafety.com/page/life-jacket-loaner-program#life-jacket-map)

The “Recap of 2023 Pennsylvania Boating Fatalities” is a summary of all fatal recreational boating accidents in the Commonwealth that year. This recap is intended to provide information to illustrate the importance of safe boating practices and help improve boating safety in Pennsylvania.

## 1. 1 Fatality

**Lake Henry, Wayne County**  
**3/18/23, 1:45 a.m., Saturday**

An 18-year-old male is deceased after the 10-foot rowboat he was operating capsized in 37-degree F water. The victim and two others launched the boat without any life jackets onboard and none were worn. The boat began taking on water and capsized, leaving all three individuals in the water. After failed attempts to upright the boat, two of the individuals held on to the boat and noticed the victim was face down in the water. The local fire department rescued the two individuals, and the victim was recovered a few hours later. The victim did not have any formal boating safety education. Sudden coldwater immersion and alcohol use may have been factors.

## 2. 1 Fatality

**Susquehanna River, Dauphin County**  
**4/13/23, 7:16 a.m., Thursday**

A 65-year-old male is deceased after the 12-foot open motorboat he was operating went over the Dock Street Dam and capsized. The boat had drifted too close to the dam after the engine stalled, and it went over the dam. The victim and passenger fell into the water. The passenger was wearing a life jacket and was rescued by another boater who happened to be in the area. He was transported to the hospital. The victim was wearing a life jacket when he went over the dam. However, when recovered approximately 6 hours later and nearly 5 miles from the site of the incident, the victim no longer had the life jacket on. The victim did not have any formal boating safety education. Sudden coldwater immersion may have been a factor.

## 3. 1 Fatality

**Wisecarver Reservoir, Greene County**  
**5/18/23, unknown time, Thursday**

A 65-year-old male is deceased after not returning home from a fishing trip. His 10-foot kayak was found adrift on the lake. An extensive search ensued, and the victim's body was recovered 10 days later. The victim was not wearing a life jacket nor was there one onboard. The operator was an experienced paddler but did not have any formal boating safety education. Sudden coldwater immersion and alcohol use may have been a factor.

## 4. 1 Fatality

**Susquehanna River, Dauphin County**  
**6/28/23, 3:45 p.m., Wednesday**

An 82-year-old male is deceased after capsizing his 12-foot canoe while paddling in high water. The victim was not wearing a life jacket; however, there was one onboard. The victim was an experienced paddler but did not have any formal boating safety education.

## 5. 1 Fatality

**Dresser Lake, Monroe County**  
**8/19/23, 12:33 p.m., Saturday**

A 26-year-old male is deceased after capsizing an 8-foot kayak. At some point, he ended up in the water and was seen struggling to stay above the water. He eventually went under the water and did not resurface. The victim's body was recovered approximately 3 hours later. He was not wearing a life jacket at the time of the incident and had no formal boating safety education. Drugs or alcohol may have been a factor.

## 6. 2 Fatalities

**Private Pond, Clinton County**  
**8/19/23, 8:56 p.m., Saturday**

A 41-year-old male and an 11-year-old male are deceased after their 6-foot homemade unpowered boat capsized while fishing. Two other children were onboard at the time of the incident and swam to shore to get help. The victims' bodies were recovered a short time later. The victims were not wearing life jackets and had no formal boating safety.

## 7. 1 Fatality

**Mountain Top Lake, Monroe County**  
**11/23/23, 2:40 p.m., Thursday**

A 31-year-old male is deceased after leaving his kayak to assist another kayaker. The victim and two children were onboard a 13-foot kayak. The victim left his kayak to assist a third child whose 8-foot kayak had capsized. After several attempts to right the third child's kayak, the victim disappeared under the water. The three children were all wearing life jackets and made it to shore safely. The victim was not wearing a life jacket, and his body was recovered a short time later. The victim was reported to be a good swimmer and had previous kayak experience. Sudden coldwater immersion may have been a factor. ☐



### When boating, remember to . . .

- Wear your life jacket. It floats, even if you don't. Wear it buckled and/or zipped.
- Never operate your boat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Look around. Avoid a collision by keeping a proper lookout.
- Watch your wake. It is the wave behind your boat and can cause damage.
- Stay away from manmade and natural hazards like dams and strainers (trees in the water).
- Never overload your boat. Keep your weight and gear centered.
- Stop that prop. Turn off your engine before picking up a skier or swimmer.
- Never anchor from the stern (back) of your boat—always at the bow (front).
- Stay with your boat on the upstream side if you capsize.
- Carry onboard a wearable life jacket for each person on a boat.
- Never boat alone. Boating safety increases with numbers.
- Never take your boat over a low-head dam.
- Carry a whistle that is audible for ½-mile.





# Camping Considerations for Clean Water

| *by Jessica Aiello*

*Ricketts Glenn State Park, Columbia, Luzerne and Sullivan counties*

*photo-Tasha Ferris*

**L**ots of activities are perfect companions to fishing, like camping, but there are things to keep in mind when setting up camp to protect the fish and other aquatic resources necessary for a successful fishing trip.

## Keep water quality in mind

“What I witness often with primitive campsites (i.e., those chosen by the camper, not designed specifically for camping by a land-owning entity), especially near waterways, is an area cleared of vegetation next to the water,” said Dale Ronk, a forester at Bald Eagle State Forest. “The sites usually have multiple stone fire rings and almost always have garbage and materials left behind. Ideally, after primitive camping, it should be hard to tell that the area was even used, and people should pack out everything that was packed in,” said Ronk.

While camping right next to the water may provide beautiful views, it can be terrible for water quality. The roots from vegetation in the riparian zone help to hold in the soil, keeping it out of streams and lakes. Otherwise, that loose soil can reduce water clarity and smother the eggs of fish and other aquatic life. In addition, campers tend to have other items with them that can be damaging to the water, like soaps, detergents and toothpaste.

“That these items are harmful to the aquatic environment and easily make their way into the waterway is often overlooked. Proper disposal of these items at least 200 feet away from a water source or packing out ‘gray water’ are best practices,” said Ronk.

*Tread Lightly*, an outdoor recreation website, offers a list of tips for minimizing the impact of camping. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources supports these recommendations in protecting the resources in Pennsylvania’s 124 state parks and 20 state forests. Recommendations include:

- Use existing campsites when possible, so you don’t disturb new ground. Never remove vegetation to make a new campsite.
- Set up camp at least 200 feet from the water.
- Bring a trash bag with you, packing up anything you brought, as well as any litter left by others.
- Use a portable latrine in places without toilets if possible, and pack out your waste. If you must bury your waste, dispose of it in a hole 6- to 8-inches deep that is at least 200 feet from water sources.

## Places to camp by the water

If you want to enjoy a scenic campsite near the water—but not too near—the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry has partnered with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission on the Water Trails program, which offers primitive camping on designated islands marked with island locator campsite signs, as well as along many state forest waterways. The North Branch Susquehanna River Water Trail and the Juniata River Water Trail are included. You can find more information on the Water Trails program and other primitive camp tips on the

Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation’s website ([paparksandforests.org](http://paparksandforests.org)). “When camping on the Water Trails’ river islands, use the designated camping area access points (clearly marked with signs) to limit erosion, and plan for a primitive camping experience by packing what you need to carry out,” said Joe Frassetta, a volunteer steward with the Susquehanna River Trail Association.

Keep in mind that anyone primitive camping for more than one night in a state forest will need a camping permit, as does anyone taking part in motorized, roadside camping. Also, camping in state forests offers no modern facilities, water, dump stations or utility hookups—it really is a “primitive” experience.

Camping within Pennsylvania state parks offers greater amenities and has a more formal process. A reservation or day-of-payment is required to secure a site. Find details on these opportunities, other camping requirements, and how to obtain a permit or reserve a site at [dcnr.pa.gov](http://dcnr.pa.gov), then click on the “Reservations” tent icon.

“My husband and I are volunteer campground hosts,” said Marci Mowery, President of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation. “We regularly host at Fowlers Hollow State Park (Perry County), a popular fishing destination. In addition to encouraging low-impact camping to protect water quality and the overall environment, we urge all campers to refrain from removing live trees for firewood and to thoroughly extinguish campfires.”

So, get ready for your next adventure. Grab your rod and tackle box, pack your backpack with a tent and other camping gear, and enjoy some of Pennsylvania’s beautiful lakes, rivers and streams. ☐



photo-Erin Ricketts

*Promised Land State Park, Pike County*



photos-PFBC archives

# CLEAN, DRAIN AND DRY— *Aquatic Invasive Species Composting Stations*

*by Sean Hartzell*  
*Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator*  
*Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission*

**Y**ou may have noticed a recent change at some Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) boat launches—new Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) composting stations.

AIS are non-native species that can cause environmental or economic harm to lakes, rivers and streams including impairment to sport fish and native organisms. They can also impede aquatic recreation like fishing and boating. In Pennsylvania, invasive plants like Hydrilla overtake and clog lakes, and Zebra Mussels contaminate boats, docks and beaches and can harm sport fish and native mussels. AIS can spread to different

waters in several ways including the inadvertent spread of AIS “hitchhiking” on boats and fishing gear. To help stop the spread of AIS in Pennsylvania, the PFBC and partners have always encouraged boaters to clean their boats. You may have seen signs at access sites. Beginning this year (2024), some recommendations are now PFBC regulations, and simple cleaning activities to stop the spread of AIS are required for boaters in Pennsylvania.

Scientific studies have shown that draining all water in a boat and then visually inspecting the boat and hand removing mud, debris, plant fragments and aquatic organisms is just as effective as taking your boat through washing systems to prevent the spread of AIS. The PFBC has been installing AIS composting stations at select lakes with known populations of Hydrilla, Zebra Mussels and other AIS, as a reminder to boaters to practice draining and inspecting their boats before leaving. Boaters can place plant fragments and other organic





An AIS composting station being installed at Tamarack Lake, Crawford County.

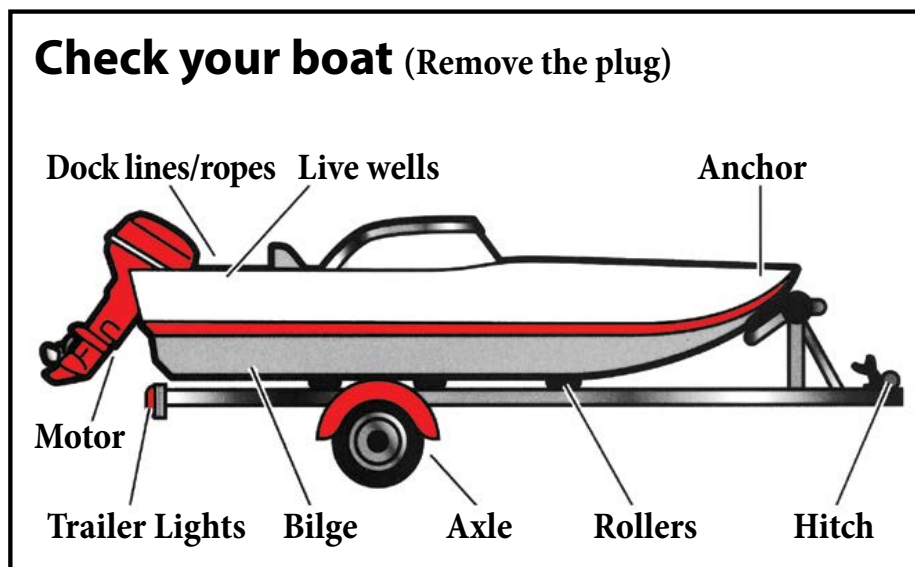
materials removed from their boat in the composting station to decompose on site. They can also compost unused live bait in these stations, as the release of unused live bait into the water is also unlawful in Pennsylvania and can contribute to the spread of AIS. The stations are a helpful reminder, but boaters must also inspect and remove mud, debris, plants and aquatic organisms from boats at areas that do not have composting stations. If a station is not available, boaters can simply bag plant fragments and aquatic organisms hitchhiking on boats

and throw them into the trash. Also, dispose of unused bait into the trash. AIS composting stations are intended for the composting of organic matter and are not receptacles for garbage.

The AIS composting stations at PFBC boat launches are a team effort of PFBC staff and Pennsylvania Sea Grant, supported by two federal grants from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Find AIS composting stations at the Walnut Creek Marina, Erie County; Tamarack Lake, Crawford County; Conneaut Lake, Crawford County; and Opossum Lake, Cumberland County, among several other locations. In addition, some partner conservation organizations have installed stations at locations like Harveys Lake, Luzerne County.

Other agencies, such as the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, have also installed the composting stations at select locations like Pymatuning State Park, Crawford County.

On your next trip, be on the lookout for AIS composting stations and follow regulations and guidance. We all need to do our part to protect Pennsylvania's waters from the spread of AIS. ☐



When tying down a powered or unpowered boat at the launch ramp prior to leaving, drain all the water from your boat and remove any aquatic organisms and plant fragments to comply with AIS regulations. Boaters should pay extra attention to the areas noted here.

# Saving Childrens Lake— *Heartbeat of Boiling Springs*

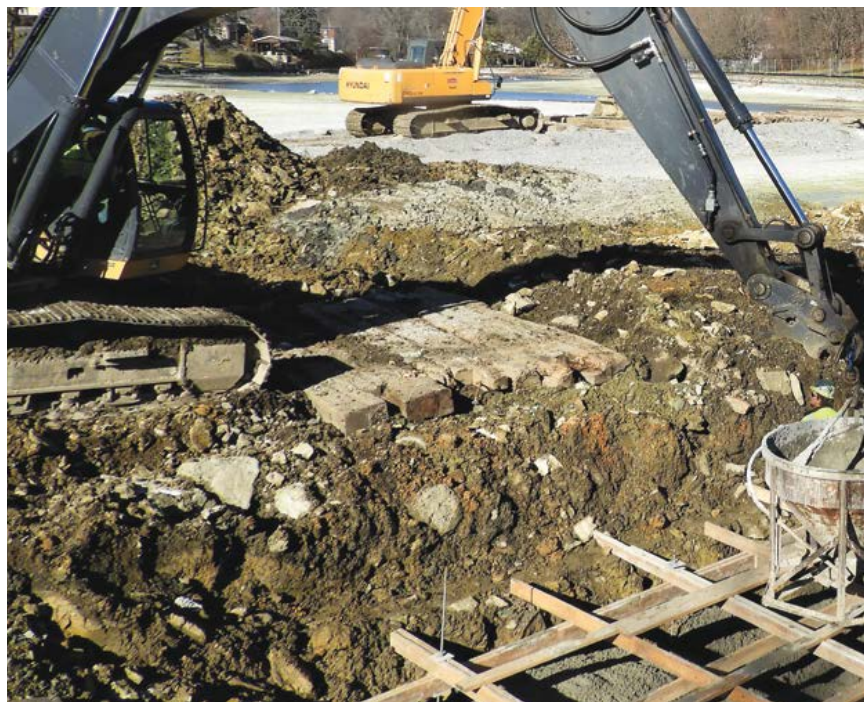


*by Samuel J. Rob*

*photos by the author*

**B**oiling Springs, Cumberland County, is a picturesque village of a little over 3,000 people nestled in southcentral Pennsylvania. The center of the village (listed on the National Register of Historic Places) is Childrens Lake. The lake is as integral to the village's identity as its people and buildings.

First created in the 1750s to provide waterpower to the iron works, the 7-acre lake later became the centerpiece of an early 1900s amusement park. Named Childrens Lake in 1987, the lake today is a magnet for anglers, hikers, artists, photographers, birdwatchers, and those inclined to sit on a bench and enjoy beautiful scenery. The lake is the site of annual village events such as the Carlisle Summerfair Anything Floats boat races and the holiday season luminaries, floating Christmas tree and Santa crossing the lake by boat. The lake is bordered on the northeastern side by the Appalachian





*Childrens Lake project, Cumberland County, November 5, 2022*



*Childrens Lake project, December 2, 2022*

Trail. The lake is owned by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC), with the grounds around the lake leased to South Middleton Township and maintained by the Boiling Springs Civic Association.

The lake is fed by approximately 30 underground springs, the largest of which, the Bubble (7th largest spring in the state), has a daily flow rate of 22 million gallons. The 52-degree F temperature water, originating near York and flowing under South Mountain, provides a perfect habitat for trout. The PFBC and the local Yellow Breeches Anglers and Conservation Association provide multiple stockings throughout the year. The outflow from the lake (known locally as “The Run”) dumps into the mile-long catch and release section of the Yellow Breeches Creek, which attracts fly anglers from all over the East Coast.

In 2016, a sinkhole was discovered that threatened the integrity of the lake’s dam. A grassroots citizen movement “Save the Lake” raised some funds, leading to involvement by South Middleton Township, influential state officials and ultimately the PFBC. The lake was closed to the public and drained in late summer of 2022, and a project groundbreaking ceremony was held on September 2, 2022. The \$5.2 million project constructed a new dam, a new retaining wall around the lake, upgraded the boat launch and made an American with Disabilities Act compliant fishing pier. The general contractor for the project was Charles J. Merlo, Inc.

Upon completion of the project, Cory Adams, South Middleton Township Manager, expressed appreciation. “The township is grateful to the outpouring of support and tireless efforts of countless individuals who had a hand in making this project possible. It has restored a cherished community landmark that will offer outdoor recreational opportunities to future generations to enjoy,” said Adams.

While the ever-popular opening day of trout season on Childrens Lake did not take place in 2023 and the project was delayed several times due to the COVID-19 pandemic and permit issues, mild weather over the winter of 2022-2023 allowed the contractor to bring the project in on budget and ahead of schedule. The lake has been refilled and stocked with trout.

On April 6, the opening day of Pennsylvania’s 2024 trout season, in what is a family tradition for many generations, Childrens Lake was ringed with the young and old, armed with fishing poles and dreams of trophy fish. Most importantly, the restored lake is once again in its rightful place as the heartbeat of the village of Boiling Springs. □



# ABANDONED AND DERELICT VESSELS

by *Paul Littman*

*Bureau of Boating Director*

*Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission*

**B**oating offers many great opportunities for fun, yet boat owners have a responsibility to maintain and tend to their vessels. Boats in poor condition can become a liability to other boaters and the environment. In recent years, abandoned and derelict vessels (ADV) have drawn increasing attention from residents, local conservation groups, government officials and legislators wanting to learn more and develop ways to address ADVs in the state.

Generally, a boat becomes abandoned or derelict when the owner fails to maintain it, properly secure it, remove the vessel in a timely manner or simply surrenders ownership. Boats at risk of becoming abandoned are often left unattended or in significant disrepair.

ADV's are not just eyesores. They can be dangerous to people and aquatic resources if they leak fuel and oil into water, obstruct waterways, or become a hazard to navigation. The problem gets worse over time as ADVs break down in waterways and become increasingly more expensive and difficult to remove. The boat's owner is responsible for the removal and pollution mitigation expenses.

Boat owners should keep their vessel in good working condition, check their vessel's mooring or docking site regularly, and take action promptly in the event of weather-related hazards or equipment failure. In addition, boat owners are required to notify the Pennsylvania Fish and

Boat Commission (PFBC) of any transfer, sale, destruction or abandonment of their registered boat within 15 days of such action. Boats may be moored at designated areas on PFBC property only between March 1 and November 30 if a current boat registration decal is displayed.

Unpowered boats can also become abandoned or derelict if left unattended or unsecured. Canoes and kayaks can be swept away in storm events or high waters, prompting dangerous search and rescue efforts by emergency responders and eventually landing on private properties downstream. Unpowered boats are often difficult to reconnect with their owners unless they are registered or contain the boat owner's contact information. See the PFBC website at [fishandboat.com](http://fishandboat.com) for simplified instructions to register an unpowered boat. Visit a PFBC Region Office or contact the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary to obtain a vessel identification decal to add your contact information to your boat. ☐



photos: PFBC archives

*Abandoned and derelict boats are not just eyesores, they can be dangerous to people and aquatic wildlife.*



# Bank Angler's Notebook— ENJOY FISHING FROM SHORE

photo-PFBC archives

by *Darl Black*

If you're a novice angler, you don't need a boat to be successful. In Pennsylvania, anglers fishing from shore catch plenty of fish every year including large gamefish.

## Go light

A single 6- to 7-foot medium-power spinning rod with 8-pound-test line is a good all-around choice. It will handle both live bait and a variety of artificial lures.

## Minimize tackle

You don't need "everything but the kitchen sink". Have one tackle case with live bait rigging items: #8 hooks for panfish and trout; #4 and #1 hooks for

bullheads, crappies and Walleyes; #2/0 hooks for big catfish and pike; and a few floating jig heads. Also, include splitshot, egg sinkers, swivels and several floats. Weighted bobbers and slip floats allow longer casts. Have a second tackle case with a limited selection of shallow-running artificial baits. Add a line cutter, long-nose pliers and a hook remover. Pack everything into a mid-size shoulder strap tackle bag.

## Move around

When possible, move around the area and target cover from different angles. Alternate short and long casts to locate fish.

## Be prepared

Bring sunscreen, insect repellent, soap, a small towel, spray-on wound cleanser and adhesive bandages.

## Don't go hungry

Include a snack and water bottle. Carry out your trash. Consider packing a garbage bag and picking up litter left by others. ☐

## Fishing trip checklist

- Fishing License
- Rod and Reel
- Tackle Box (with needle nose pliers, wire cutting pliers and nail clippers)
- Water/Snacks
- Bait/Lures
- First Aid Kit
- Personal Flotation Device (PFD)
- Sunscreen
- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Fish Identification Book

Adapted from the *F.I.S.H. Fishing Is Simple Handbook*.

## En español:



[fishandboat.com/Fishing/Basics/Gear/Documents/Spanish-FishingTripChecklist.pdf](https://fishandboat.com/Fishing/Basics/Gear/Documents/Spanish-FishingTripChecklist.pdf)

photo-Darl Black



Minimize tackle when fishing from shore. In a small tackle case, bring classic lures for a variety of fish species. In another case, bring a variety of hooks, weights and floats.



## OPENING DAY OF BASS

June 8, 2024



# TOP FIVE TIPS AND BAITS FOR BASS IN JUNE

*by John Allen      photo by the author*

**A**s the season opens in mid-June, bass are in between the post-spawn phase and their summer phase. The post-spawn is well-known for a tough bite, so you need to present your lures in a way that entices the fish to strike. This requires the right lures and techniques.

### Tube lures

The tube lure is my favorite lure to use on a tight-lipped fish. Whether in a lake or river, the goal of this lure is to mimic a crayfish, by bouncing the lure off the bottom around structure. I find a slow-bouncing lure is difficult for fish to turn down.

### Worm baits

Whether it's bouncing a Ned Rig along the bottom or throwing a wacky-rigged sinking worm, worm baits are always a good option. With a wacky-rigged bait, I let it sink through the water column, then jig the rod towards myself and let it sink a second time. This covers more water as you search for a willing bite.

### Chatterbaits

Chatterbaits are great for quickly covering a lot of water. During the post-spawn, I like to fish them on

multiple levels of the water column by pulling the rod back to move the bait, then reel down, and continue to repeat until the bait is back to the rod. Most strikes happen while the bait is dropping through the water column. When I begin to pull back again, I feel the strike. I'm already in the hook setting motion, so it results in better hooked fish.

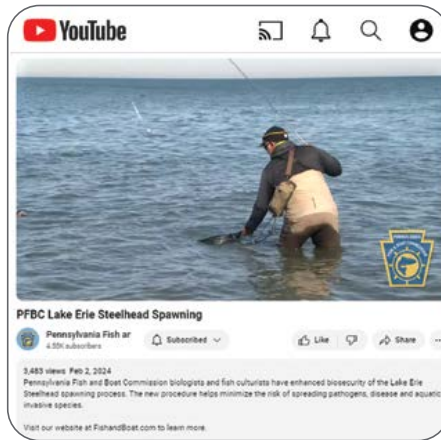
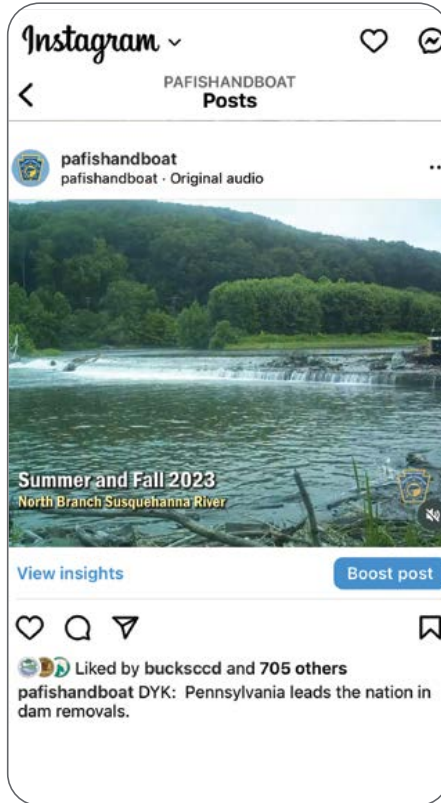
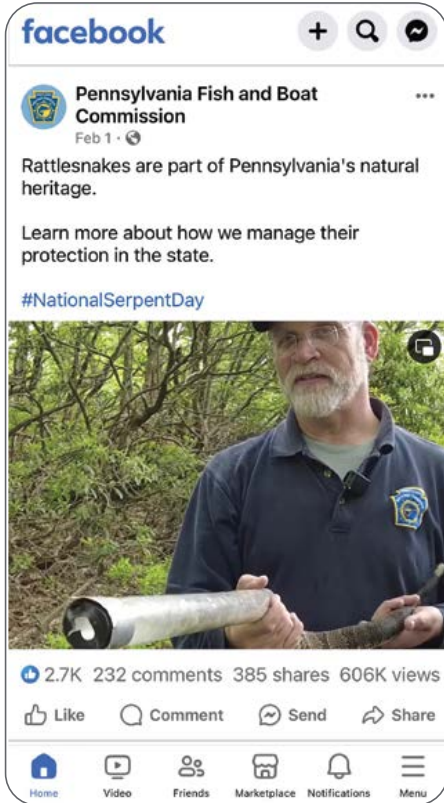
### Hard plastic baits


Whether crankbaits or jerkbaits, they both work well when using the reel-reel-pause-reel retrieval. When I'm fishing near a structure, as soon as my bait gets near it, I pause the retrieve for a few seconds and then slowly start the retrieve again. This is effective with both suspending and floating baits.

### Topwater baits

Early in bass season, you want baits that can entice a stubborn fish. For me, that has always been small frog baits and spooks. Remember, the fish are more used to chasing tadpoles than full-sized bullfrogs during this time of the year. I find the "walk the dog" retrieval motion from small spooks effective. Often, your strikes will come after you've paused the bait for a few seconds and then start moving it again. The most effective time to use these baits is first thing in the morning and late in the evening. ☐

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## CAST & CAUGHT



*Ellie Schultheis, age 8, and her father, Tim, caught and released this golden Rainbow Trout while fishing Loyalhanna Creek, Westmoreland County, on Mentored Youth Trout Day.*

For the "Cast & Caught" column, send only prints (no larger than 8"x10") and a completed "Model Release form" available at [fishandboat.com](http://fishandboat.com). Under "About Us", click on "Angler & Boater". Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want your photograph returned. People aboard boats must be wearing properly fitted and buckled life jackets. Mail to:  
**Editor, Pennsylvania Angler & Boater,**  
**P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000**



*Robert Cummings, age 12, caught this 18-inch Brown Trout while fishing Brokenstraw Creek, Warren County, on Mentored Youth Trout Day.*



*Adalyla Cavanaugh, age 10, caught this 22-inch Rainbow Trout while fishing Licking Creek, Juniata County, on Mentored Youth Trout Day.*



*Josie Houck, age 5, and her father, Mitchell, caught this 20-inch Rainbow Trout while fishing Yellow Creek, Bedford County, on Mentored Youth Trout Day.*



*Lucas Mark Reese, age 2, caught this golden Rainbow Trout at Lloyd Park, Chester County, with his first rod and first cast on Mentored Youth Trout Day.*