

Pennsylvania **ANGLER & BOATER**



March/April 2025 \$5.00

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

FishandBoat.com



MENTORED YOUTH TROUT DAY
March 29 (Statewide)

TROUT OPENER
April 5 (Statewide)

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March/April 2025
Volume 94 Number 2

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Covers



Front cover: Cameron Sabara, Langhorne, enjoys fishing with Mateo Balerezo, age 3, at Tyler State Park, Bucks County.



Back cover: Juniata River, Perry County, from the Millerstown Community Park river trail.
Photos by PFBC archives



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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

KEEP GOING

by *Timothy D. Schaeffer*
Executive Director

It was nice to have a real winter again. If you're like me, the refreshing tingling of a numb face after braving a January morning walk adds to your gratitude for living in a state blessed with four seasons of outdoor opportunities offered by an abundance of natural resources. And, this year, winter blessed us with "hard" water. If you've never gone ice fishing, my colleague Bryan Chikotas shares his experience and helpful techniques below. Your interest will surely be piqued.

Ice fishing is just one of the many ways to reinvent your love of fishing. Whether you

learn how to land a new species this year or try a new waterway, make 2025 the year you broaden your fishing experiences.

You can also find new ways to reenergize your love of boating. Pocket your powerboat keys and dip a paddle as you experience kayaking or paddleboarding. Often, a new boating opportunity is close to home. Explore more about the Juniata Water Trail (pages 22-25).

Then, enhance your fishing and boating enjoyment by adding another adventure, like hiking to your fishing hole (pages 10-11), taking part in Fish-for-Free Days (pages 5-7) or joining an experience weekend at a state park (pages 40-41). Let's make 2025 the year we love fishing and boating in a whole new way. And, while you're at it, help someone else find their love of what our waters have to offer. Share the experience, and keep going. ☑

PFBC ON THE JOB

Bryan Chikotas
Area Fisheries Manager

When frigid temperatures start to form thin ice on lakes and ponds, I start thinking about ice fishing. I dust off the sled and get my gear ready for another ice fishing season. Last year, the prospects were fleeting, but I got in a few trips before mild weather quickly turned hardwater to open water. Growing up in the 70s, winters meant below normal temperatures. Today's temperatures are noticeably milder, so anglers must be diligent to apply safety precautions before ice fishing. The Commission's website is a valuable resource. Here, knowledgeable Commission staff and ice fishing enthusiasts share reports on latest conditions statewide. Ask bait shops near ice fishing waters about local conditions and areas to avoid like inlets, outlets and bridges, where current slows freezing. Inquire about congregating waterfowl that can create similar unsafe pockets, especially on larger lakes.

When information is not readily available on ice conditions, a common practice for anglers is to collect it by using a spud bar or ice chisel to test ice thickness and strength near shore. If the chisel fails to break through after vigorously driving it into the ice to make a hole, then jumping up and down is the next step to test its strength to support your weight. If the ice passes the "jump test," then drilling a test hole with an auger will expose the slab, so its thickness can be measured. As a rule of thumb, the ice should be at least 4 inches thick for ice fishing. Not all ice conditions are equal. New, clear ice, referred to as blue or black ice, is strongest and usually safer than cloudy white ice. On smooth, clear ice, look for cracks to gauge its thickness, especially when moving your gear beyond the fishing area you've confirmed as safe. Drill test holes periodically to check ice thickness when moving to find better bites. Wear a life jacket and ice cleats, take ice awls or hand spikes, carry a whistle, share your trip plan with others and fish in groups. Monitor weather conditions to ensure prior fishable ice hasn't become unsafe, especially on days when temperatures climb above freezing or when planning trips following rainy and windy weather.

For me, ice fishing is a way to sample panfish populations to better understand size structures, although fishing is not nearly as effective as my day job using trap nets and electrofishing gear. It's also a fun family activity that led to our Super Bowl Sunday fish fry tradition when my two children were young. I taught them how to ice fish for panfish while my better half cross country skied. Our fishing centered on setting and tending to tip-ups in various patterns across the lake and jigging near the basecamp sled, where a steady supply of sandwiches, snacks and hot chocolate satisfied appetites. Those memories go a long way now that our kids are grown, and renew my enthusiasm for the next ice fishing season, even if it's just for my wife and I to enjoy and reminisce as "empty nesters." ☑



photo-courtesy of Bryan Chikotas

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 and Gear

PLAN AHEAD FOR **FISH-FOR-FREE DAYS**



photo-Marilyn Black

by Marilyn Black

Mark your calendar now for two special days for anglers and perspective anglers. Sunday, May 25, and Friday, July 4, are Fish-for-Free Days across Pennsylvania in 2025. These enjoyable days offer the opportunity to experience fishing without having to first purchase a fishing license.

For several decades, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) encouraged using these days to introduce new and inactive anglers to this outdoor sport. Enjoying a day of fishing hopefully prompts the next step—purchasing a regular fishing license and related permits for targeted species.

While you're dreaming about the upcoming fishing season, invite someone who has not fished recently

in Pennsylvania to be your guest on one or both Fish-for-Free Days such as a relative who has been asking questions about fishing or a new neighbor who doesn't know where to find fishing hotspots. Or, ask a senior who lost their favorite long-time fishing buddy or now encounters health concerns, creating hesitancy to attempt a previously enjoyable hobby. Invite your guest well in advance of the fishing trek, so they can anticipate the fun and prepare for the outing.

The key to ensuring a pleasant and memorable outing is for your guest to experience first-hand the fun and feel the thrill of catching fish during your joint outing. Targeting panfish will have the highest probability of hooking and landing a fish. Choose a fishing destination within easy driving distance, so most of your time together can be spent on the water.

Seasonal movements of panfish put them in shallow waters within easy casting distance from anglers in a boat, on foot or seated in camping chairs.

photo-Marilyn Black



(Left to right) Ashlynn, Peyton, Anthony and their parents, Courtney and Kyle, practiced fishing skills during Fish-for-Free Day activities in Pymatuning State Park, Crawford County.

Concentrating on Bluegills, Pumpkinseeds and crappies will result in more hits, more runs, probably some errors, but certainly more action and giggles than attempting to focus on larger gamefish.

Plan ahead to make this adventure a positive one. Prepare fishing gear in advance. Put lures, terminal tackle and live bait rigs into easy to carry and access containers. For logistical simplicity, offer transportation. Bring a camera to capture successful and silly moments. Provide boat safety items including life jackets. Supply snacks and beverages for everyone. Remind others to bring hats, sunglasses, cameras and layered clothing suited to that day's weather conditions.

If you haven't fished for several years and want to give it a try again, consider which of your neighbors and acquaintances often fish, and let them know you are interested this year. Don't put it off until 2026. If you don't know a willing host, register for one of

PFBC's free fishing programs using the QR code on this page. Many Pennsylvania State Parks, libraries and the PFBC also lend out starting fishing gear.

Fish-for-Free Days in Pennsylvania are intended to promote the fun of fishing for state residents and non-residents of any age. All other Pennsylvania fishing regulations still apply including fishing techniques and harvest restrictions. Good planning will make for an even better outing for hosts and guests. Maybe, you can even stop at a tackle shop to purchase a license on the way home or conveniently purchase online at [HuntFish.PA.gov](https://www.huntfish.pa.gov). 📄

FISH-FOR-FREE DAYS May 25 and July 4

photos-PFBC archives

Register for Programs and Events:



Fishing Gear:



Fish-for-Free Days in Pennsylvania are intended to promote the fun of fishing for state residents and non-residents of any age. All other Pennsylvania fishing regulations still apply including fishing techniques and harvest restrictions.



Millcreek Rod & Gun Club Upgrades Aging Co-op Trout Facility

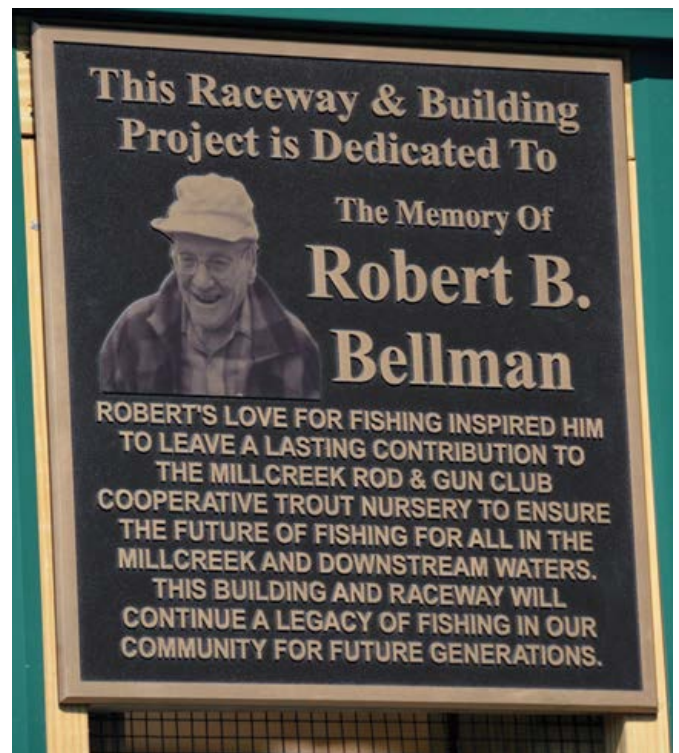
by Tyler Frantz

Entering its 75th year as a cooperative trout nursery for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC), Millcreek Rod & Gun Club, Newmanstown, Lebanon County, is one of the oldest cooperative nurseries in Pennsylvania. It's blessed with cold, clean water straight from nearby mountain springs, making it the perfect location to raise fish for local anglers. However, raising state-provided fingerling trout to catchable size since 1951 understandably puts some wear and tear on the infrastructure.

"A few years ago, our club recognized our raceways were starting to show their age, and we developed a plan for making some necessary repairs and upgrades," said nursery manager Scott Adams. "But, we're a small club with limited funding, so we figured we'd have to do this in multiple phases to afford what we needed."

In 2018, just as the club was fundraising for its renovation project, Robert B. Bellman showed up on the club grounds and approached Adams as he was working. He shared that he loved to fish in the area and wanted to financially help some local clubs.

Bellman started asking questions about upcoming project needs, how much things may cost and wrote Adams a check for \$10,000 to kick off Phase 1. Adams was shocked but delighted by the unexpected gift, and he pledged to put the money to good use. He kept in touch with Bellman, updating him on the club's progress until the benevolent donor passed away 2 years later.



Robert B. Bellman's financial contribution allowed Millcreek Rod & Gun Club Cooperative Trout Nursery to fully upgrade their facilities.



Raceways are covered by a 40-by-50-foot pole building to help regulate temperatures and deter predators.

photos-courtesy of Millcreek Rod & Gun Club

Months went by, and a lawyer eventually contacted Adams to inform him that Bellman created a trust fund as a legacy gift to be used towards fishing, land purchasing and leasing for public stream access. The club had been named as a beneficiary of this gift, and Millcreek Rod & Gun Club's wishes to fully update their facilities were about to be granted.

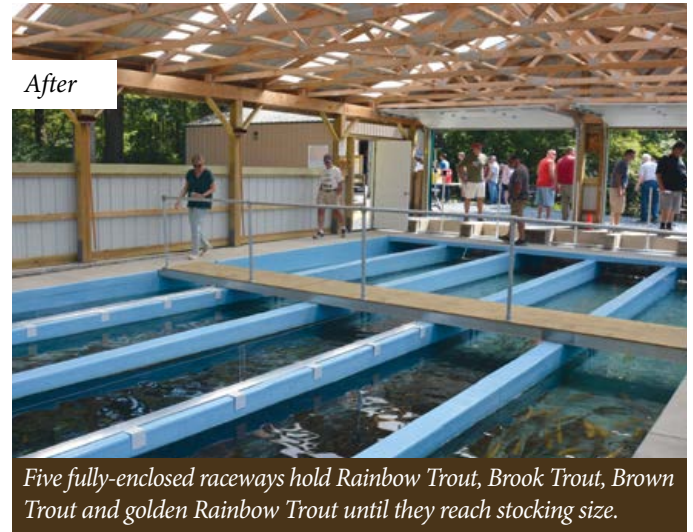
"He wanted to leave behind a legacy," said Adams. "For him to leave money behind for us really meant a lot. He wanted his life savings to be used for future promotion of the sport, and we were going to make good on our promise by completely renovating our operation, so we can raise better fish to stock for local anglers. His gift was a significant sum, which basically filled our entire wish list."

The club contracted with Balton Construction, Richland, Lebanon County, to remove the old four-lane stucco block raceways and replace them with five lanes of poured concrete. The PFBC provided Millcreek Rod & Gun Club \$25,000 through the Cooperative Nursery Grant Program for new construction of the raceway. These raceways were sealed with blue epoxy to help with cleaning and visibility to better watch the fish when feeding, which wastes less feed and keeps the water cleaner.

Three-foot walkways were poured around the entire perimeter, and a walk bridge cutting across the five raceways was installed for easier navigation of the facility. A 40-by-50-foot pole building was installed to help regulate temperatures



The transformation from a 1960s-era raceway to a modern facility with major upgrades is simply remarkable.



Five fully-enclosed raceways hold Rainbow Trout, Brook Trout, Brown Trout and golden Rainbow Trout until they reach stocking size.

and deter predators, complete with sliding garage doors for easy access when transporting fish to and from the site. A dedication was held on September 14, 2024, just a few weeks after receiving a new batch of fingerlings.

"We are set up perfectly to raise 4,000 Rainbow Trout, 2,000 Brook Trout, 2,000 Brown Trout and even have a fifth lane option for raising holdovers," said Adams. "The water flowing over the raceways is about 200 gallons per minute. We are seeing a healthier product in our first year already with fish approaching 9- to 10-inches in December, which was way ahead of what we're used to raising."

The trout raised at Millcreek are stocked in Mill Race and Millcreek, both tributaries to the Tulpehocken Creek. Others will be stocked at the club's Kids Fish Rodeo in May (open to the public), and a few fish will be donated to the Izaak Walton League for a veteran's fishing derby.

"It's remarkable to think this all came from a completely unexpected gift," said Adams. "When you walk into the building, you hear the water trickling past, and it soothes your soul. You think about what we were able to do here, and it's just amazing. Our wish was granted." ☑

More Information:

Millcreek Rod & Gun Club
401 Rod and Gun Road
P.O. Box 494
Newmanstown, PA 17073
Phone: 717-949-2194



TROUT FISHING WITH A PACK ON YOUR BACK

by *Carl Haensel* photos by the author

Hiking down the trail winding south along the Susquehanna River, we descended into thick rhododendrons. We could hear the stream burbling, sliding over bedrock ledges and through the forest. Soon, Tucquan Creek, Lancaster County, came into view as we followed the Conestoga Trail along the water. A few minutes down the trail, a deep pool appeared revealing the spot to unpack the rods and start casting. While it took a while to reach the water, it didn't take long to hook up with the first trout of the day, a beautifully colored Brook Trout. A designated Wild and Scenic River in Pennsylvania, Tucquan Creek was stunning at each bend and turn as we followed the trail towards its mouth at the big river. Underneath an old railroad bridge, a deep pool in the creek beckoned. We shouldered our packs and moved down to keep exploring our fishing options.

Streams similar to Tucquan Creek abound throughout Pennsylvania, and trout fishing with a backpack is one of the best ways to get out and explore Pennsylvania's more remote streams and rivers. Whether you use a robust day pack or a full-blown backpacking kit, you can get away from the hustle and bustle of roadside fishing and deep into untouched waters. As an angler, I consider any fishing more than a half-mile from the parking area

worthy of bringing along a pack. This includes both your fishing gear and the essentials for time on the trail to be comfortable and safe. Longer trips that involve overnight excursions need camping essentials, too.

Setting off on a backpack fishing trip is always exciting. While it's sometimes possible to park near the stream, sometimes you may be a long distance off and far from the water. The anticipation is real as you approach the water for the first time, wondering what you may find.

Fishing Methods for Backpacking

Traveling lighter is key to fishing with a backpack. I often pare my gear down to a single fly box or tackle box. Usually, just a few flies or lures work well to cover ground while you're fishing. Fish are often less picky about what fly or lure they will take. I rarely use live bait while hiking, because it transports poorly.

Finding trout with a backpack means covering water. If you're new to fishing a stream or river, don't spend too much time fishing any specific area. Focus on trying to catch actively feeding fish, whether with flies or spinning tackle. Flies and lures imitating baitfish are often productive for fish that are less pressured. Small inline spinners work wonders for ultralight spin fishing anglers. For safe catch and release, crimp the barbs on treble hooks and consider replacing them with a single



Use a small fly box with only a few patterns to keep fishing simple on the trail. These patterns include (top row left to right) Royal Wulff, Elk Hair Caddis, Foam Beetle, Bead Head Prince Nymph, Bead Head Woolly Bugger and Bead Head Soft Hackle Pheasant Tail.



A light box of lures is often all you need when backpacking. Top lures for trout on the trail include (top row left to right) an inline spinner, crayfish crankbait, minnow crankbait, small spoon and marabou jig.

⬅ Small, remote streams like this one are great to explore while backpacking. Carry a small hip or chest pack like the author to hold a small amount of gear when you're fishing after you take your pack off.

hook. Fly anglers will do well tossing Woolly Buggers or other streamers that can be stripped. In faster pocket water conditions, fluffy dry flies are the best way to find active fish. Flies like Elk Hair Caddis or Royal Wulffs do well.

If you don't find trout quickly, hike other areas along your trail route. Often, the further you hike, the more productive the fishing. You can sometimes find hefty trout on small streams in large pools. ☐

Backpack Fishing Areas

Some streams and areas have designated hiking trails along the water. Others are remote, and you'll need to find your own way. Plan thoroughly for a safe and enjoyable hiking adventure.

- Hickory Creek Wilderness, Warren County
- Hickory Run State Park, Carbon County
- Lick Run, Clinton County
- Quehanna Wild Area, Cameron, Clearfield and Elk counties
- Stony Creek Watershed, Dauphin County
- Tohickon Creek, Bucks County
- Tucquan Creek, Lancaster County
- Wallace Run, Centre County

Essentials for Backpack Fishing

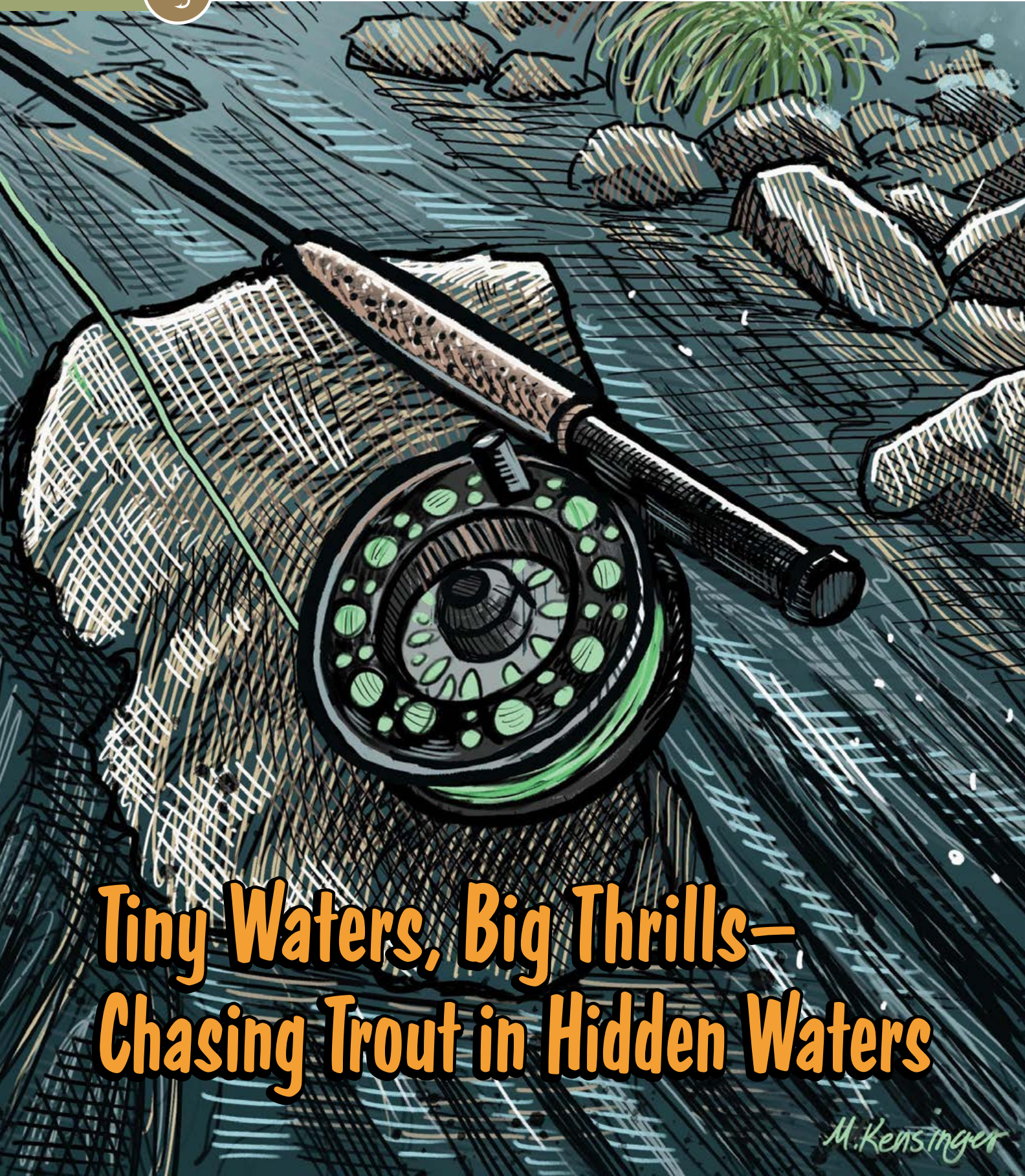
Fishing Gear

- Fly or Tackle Box
- Pack Rod and Reel
- Lanyard with Clippers and Forceps
- Spare Line, Leader and Tippet
- Fly Floatant
- Splitshot
- Polarized Sunglasses
- Fishing License

Hiking Gear

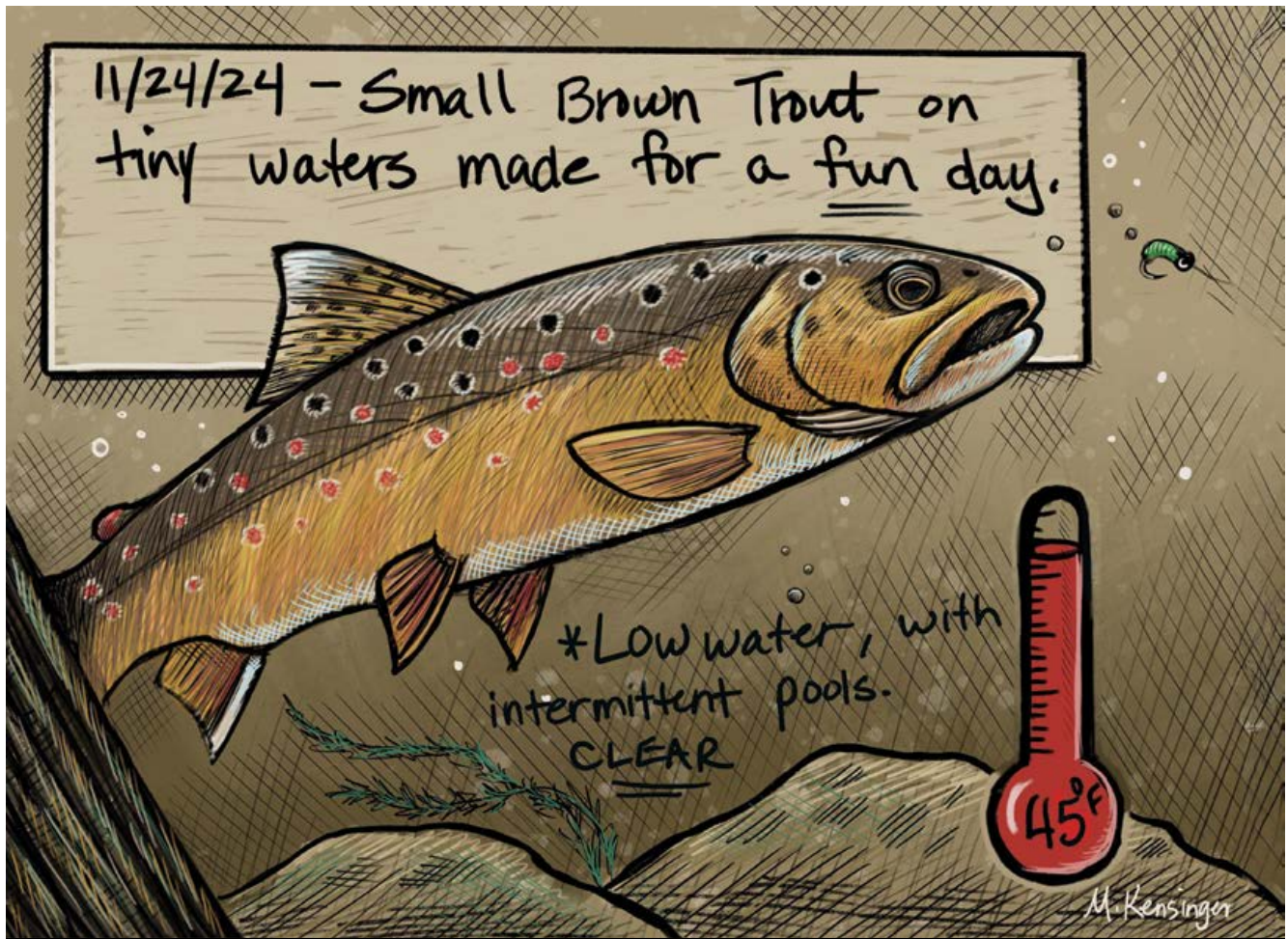
- First Aid Kit
- Water Bottle
- Snacks
- Knife
- Cell Phone Backup Battery
- Sunscreen
- Lip Balm
- Over-the-counter Painkillers
- Rain Jacket





Tiny Waters, Big Thrills— Chasing Trout in Hidden Waters

M. Kensinger



by Michael Kensinger

I enjoy fishing small rivulets that many would overlook, the kinds of waters where a 10-inch trout would be considered a trophy fish.

Last November, I found myself brimming with anxiety about getting on the water before winter arrived. And so, with most trees having shed their leafy adornments, the clock was ticking for me to insert fishing into every opening in my schedule. I had just led a birdwatching field trip for our local birding group and had arrived roughly 2½ hours before its start to allow for some time on the stream.

As the raucous muttering of a raven on the hillside echoed, I made my first cast. The nymph drifted perfectly. I felt a subtle tug and saw a flippant little fish dart under the bank. Not too heartbroken over the miss, I performed a roll cast and landed the nymph back into the current. This time, I felt a strike, lifted my rod tip and reeled in

a palm-sized wild Brown Trout. The beautiful fish still had its parr marks, and the crisp golden coloration of its belly made it even more spectacular.

In the areas where habitat structures were installed along the creek, there was ample room for fish despite relatively low waters. The fast, shallow sections of the stream had a lot of leaf debris, so I moved ahead, looking for the next log jam along the bank.

Within moments, I spotted a trout, roughly 8 inches long, in rather shallow water. I was surprised to see it there but not as surprised as it was to see me. This was a firm reminder not to overlook the riffles.

Just upstream, I saw a bend in the creek with a clump of grass on the opposite side. It was a tight cast, but I made it. Instantly, a trout looped out and took the nymph. However, it slipped off the hook and darted back under the bank.

I had to head back soon. The bird field trip was going to start in about 30

minutes. I opted to fish one final hole just upstream from where I stood.

Before me was a natural tree fall and a tall tree leaning over the water. Exposed rocks and a strong current swirled into a pool, making the spot enticing. I made my cast.

I watched the nymph hit its mark and saw it in the clear water as it followed the bend. Within seconds, a Brown Trout appeared out of nowhere and took the nymph. After a brief fight, I reeled the fish in and snapped a quick photograph. The amber fins and metallic-ochre flanks made for a fine photo.

A second cast revealed a larger trout, about 10 inches long, that pursued my nymph twice but lost interest. The fish would give chase but became instantly wary when the nymph hit an unnatural drift. Eventually, it lost interest, and I ran out of time. And so, I headed back to my car to change hats from fish to birds for the remainder of the day. ☐



CHASING THE WILD ONES

by Jeff Woleslagle

photo by the author

I vividly remember the first native Brook Trout I caught from a small mountain stream. It was at a scout camp in Clearfield County, and with all the camp chores complete, we had some free time before dinner. Grabbing my spinning rod and heading for the creek, I carefully approached a small run and flipped a hook baited with a red worm into an area near a log jam. Two fish darted out to grab the offering and I quickly landed the fastest fish to the bait. Looking at it up close, I recall being in awe of its stunning coloration. Cautiously, I approached a small plunge pool on the same creek and managed to side arm cast a brown beetle imitation into the center. Almost immediately, I saw the fly disappear from the water's surface in a swirl and soon had a gorgeous Brown Trout of more than 7 inches in hand. In several streams in Pennsylvania, it's possible to encounter both native Brook Trout as well as wild Brown Trout. Though Brown Trout are native to parts of Europe, they can spawn successfully in many of our waters. Although I love Brook Trout, some of the wild Brown Trout I've caught over the years have also exhibited amazing coloration.

When chasing the wild ones, stealth is key. If possible, I always like to work my way up a stream rather than down, as most fish are at key ambush points facing the current. I also dress in colors that match my surroundings, sometimes wearing the same camouflage clothing that I use for archery hunting in the fall. It's important to avoid any sudden or quick movements near the water and always avoid casting a shadow on the water.

Most of the casting distances are short and often in tight areas. Many wild trout streams flow through dense mountain laurel and rhododendron as well as thick stands of hemlock trees. Often, the scenery you encounter in pursuit of the wild ones is as beautiful as the fish themselves.

Small natural baits like red worms, pieces of nightcrawlers and waxworms are ideal, but an angler should quickly set the hook, as these baits can be swallowed by fish. Small hooks are essential. Size 10 and size 12 baitholder hooks are ideal, and anglers should use just enough splitshot to provide enough weight to cast. It's important that the bait enter the water with as little disturbance as possible. Wild trout aren't picky eaters, but they do startle easily. Small inline spinners are also a great choice as well as small jigs. Wild trout in small stream environments have a wide array of predators and few food sources, so they rarely pass up a chance at a meal. For flies, the wild ones normally aren't picky, especially in waters that don't receive a lot of fishing pressure. I like flies that can be easily seen on the surface. Terrestrial imitations of beetles and small grasshoppers are perfect, and you can almost never go wrong with an Adams Dry Fly or an Adams Humpy Fly. Consider using barbless hooks when venturing after wild fish. These native and wild fish are a precious resource, and we are lucky to have them in abundance in many areas of the state. Remove hooks quickly, leaving fish in the water if you can. A day spent chasing the Pennsylvania wild ones is always a day to remember. ☐



by Christian A. Shane

The Trout In the Classroom (TIC) projects across Pennsylvania are making a significant impact by fostering a love for nature and conservation. TIC programs provide valuable educational experiences for students that extend beyond the classroom and into the Commonwealth, inspiring the next generation of conservationists and anglers.

This month's "TIC Spotlight" includes teachers in two schools in the southcentral region of Pennsylvania and highlights their unique approach, successes and impact they have on students and communities.

- **Bedford County:** Bedford Middle School, Randy Barnes, 6th Grade Life Science
 - **Juniata County:** Juniata High School, Jessica Morgan, 9th-12th Grade Agriculture
- Christian: What inspired you to begin raising trout in your classroom?*

Randy: When I took over the role of sixth grade Life Science teacher 8 years ago, the teacher prior to me had the program running. I have always enjoyed trout fishing, so it was a great fit for me.

Jessica: When I was hired, the TIC program had a wonderful lead teacher, Mrs. Jennifer Winey. Mrs. Winey taught first grade and created a book every year with her class and used my high school students to help with implementing workshops at the release site. She was instrumental in getting me involved in this program and keeping me motivated each year with the program.

C: Tell us about your watershed and what connects your school to this place?

R: Our release site is Shobers Run, a tributary of the Raystown Branch Juniata River. The stream is located right behind the school, and many of our kids fish the stream throughout the year. It's centrally located in the community and used by a lot of people for recreation.

J: Over the years, our release site changed due to working with different groups and stream improvements in the county. The current site is close to the school.

C: Share a short story about what your students have gained from this experience?

R: The biggest take away from this program has been the appreciation students gain from doing stream observations and learning about the organisms that live there other than fish. It's always a joy to watch as they observe macroinvertebrates they've never seen before. I've had students come back and tell me how they've taken up the sport of fly fishing after learning about the food sources in the stream.

J: Teaching this program for 12 years, the best part is having the students who participated in the elementary level return as teachers to the elementary level and give back by teaching lessons on trout. Since our elementary school does not have the program currently, we are now collaborating with the local junior high school and preparing a release workshop with our middle schoolers.

C: What has been the biggest challenge or obstacle of the TIC project?

R: The biggest challenge has been finding ways to incorporate the project over all the core areas and not just in my science class.

J: The biggest challenge is finding the time to balance the curriculum with our current classroom demands.

C: How do you integrate the TIC project into the classroom? Do you have a particular lesson that you enjoy teaching to incorporate the trout?

R: We use the trout throughout the year to measure data sets and graphing while they are testing the water quality. In the spring, I have an ecology unit that we spend time doing a stream study before releasing the fish. We talk about the importance of biodiversity and maintaining a healthy food web for all organisms in and out of the water.

J: The TIC project fits nicely in our Wildlife and Fishery Science course. I do have a favorite lesson that my students teach elementary and middle schoolers called Freddie the Fish, in which they demonstrate the effects of pollution on fish by reading the story of Freddie as he travels downstream.

C: Do you do anything in conjunction with your TIC project that's related to fishing, watersheds, conservation or aquatic education?

R: I run a fishing club that meets two times per month from February until the end of the school year. We do a lot with macroinvertebrates and water quality before fishing season begins. Once trout season opens in April, we take the club fishing during school hours. The club includes kids that have never fished before and want to learn how.

J: Starting in 2018, we traveled to the Chesapeake Bay to participate in a residential program at Port Isobel. Students learn about life on the Chesapeake by crabbing, dredging for oysters and seeing first-hand how the watersheds are interconnected. ☐



photo-Randy Barnes

Students from Mr. Barnes's TIC project line up to release their fingerlings.



photo-Jessica Morgan

Students from Juniata High School observe aquatic life at the Chesapeake Bay.

BECOME A FISHING MENTOR



Borrow Gear:



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Anglers Discover More Than Just Fish in Spring

by Linda Stager





photos-Linda Stager



Bloodroot



Pink lady's slipper



Spring beauty

Every spring, anglers head into the woods to their favorite fishing spots as a cherished tradition. The air is crisp and cool, while the forest floor is still covered with remnants of winter. It's the season when anglers eagerly await the thrill of catching elusive trout.

However, spring brings more than just the urge to fish. It also offers an opportunity to enjoy the beauty of wildflowers and native plants blooming throughout the woods.

In the spring, millions—if not billions—of tiny wildflowers begin to emerge. Their pastel colors blanket our woodlands. It's a vibrant tapestry of color featuring bloodroot, hepaticas, pink lady's slippers, spring beauties, trilliums and trout lilies—all adding their unique splashes of beauty to the forest understory.

As the season progresses, other native wildflowers like bee balm, Joe Pye weed, and even Pennsylvania's state flower, the mountain laurel, bloom. We don't think of these big, bulky plants as wildflowers, but they are native plants that also play a big part in our ecosystem.

Experts warn, though, that while these natural wonders may be a joy to see, it's important to admire them from afar. Picking or digging up wildflowers can disrupt delicate ecosystems and harm future generations of flowers. In some cases, it's even illegal to disturb certain wildflowers.

This spring, I saw some rare wildflowers under the tutelage of wildflower expert, Mark Simonis, Tioga County. We visited some locations where the rarest of wildflowers exist. "Did you bring your blindfold?" Simonis joked as we headed into the Tioga State Forest.

The pink lady's slipper, a rare orchid, for instance, grows in soil that includes

a particular type of fungus. Without this symbiotic relationship, the flower will not grow. Producing a single flower can take a decade of dormancy before emerging from the soil.

Digging up this plant to take it home will cause it to die, because it can't survive without the soil fungus it needs. Even a deer can destroy a decades-old plant by simply nipping it off.

Pennsylvania established a wildflower classification system, and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) has the responsibility to protect certain wildflowers in some places. Section 11 of The Wild Resource Conservation Act makes it illegal to "disturb, pick, take or possess vulnerable, threatened or endangered wild plants" on state parks or forest lands.

Besides avoiding a penalty, we should be concerned about protecting wildflowers, because they are the unsung heroes of our ecosystem, and conservation always starts with us—people who love the woods, streams and fishing.

Instead of picking wildflowers, bring a camera and take photos. It'll round out the experience of genuinely enjoying the day, and it's a fun hobby. Slipping a camera into your pocket or grabbing your cell phone doesn't take much effort. No special equipment is needed. It's something everyone in the family can enjoy.

Seeing wildflowers is an extraordinary experience of springtime fishing. For some of us, the beauty of our natural world is as much a draw as the thrill of the catch. But, it's important to remember that natural wonders are fragile and should be treated respectfully.

Simonis said, "Look, but don't touch." As a photographer, I'd add, "Take photos!" 📷

Contribute to Conservation Efforts

- Respect the environment. Don't litter or disturb plant life.
- Stay on trails. Avoid trampling on delicate wildflowers and vegetation.
- Share experience and knowledge. Spread the word to help everyone appreciate the beauty of nature.
- Teach children to respect and appreciate nature.
- Support conservation efforts. Donate to organizations that protect natural habitats and support the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's projects.

Beware of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

AIS are non-native plants, animals or pathogens that cause harm to the environment, the economy, native species and human or animal health. These species disrupt ecosystems, reduce biodiversity and cost communities time, money, resources and revenue.

In Pennsylvania, aquatic invasive plant and algae species include:

- Curly-leaf Pondweed
- Didymo
- Eurasian Watermilfoil
- Hydrilla
- Yellow Floating Heart

Pennsylvania Sea Grant has developed fact sheets about specific AIS and the threats they pose.



photo-Brian Pilarcik

Hydrilla

AIS Fact Sheets:




photo-Linda Stager

Trout lily



photo-Linda Stager

Joe Pye weed

A hiker with a backpack is walking away on a dirt path through a forest. The path is flanked by large, dense bushes of light pink and white flowers. Tall, thin trees are visible in the background, and the scene is brightly lit with sunlight filtering through the leaves.

As the season progresses, native wildflowers like bee balm, Joe Pye weed and even Pennsylvania's state flower, the mountain laurel, bloom. We don't think of these big, bulky plants as being wildflowers, but they are native plants that also play a big part in our ecosystem.

photo-Linda Stager



3.2 MILLION REASONS TO FISH

That's how many **adult trout** we will stock in **2025** in **691** streams and **130** lakes.

Average size: 11 inches

Plus, **1.2 Million** trout stocked by **cooperative nurseries**.



2.4 Million

Rainbow Trout

693,000

Brown Trout

125,000

Brook Trout

14,000

Golden Rainbow Trout

(75% stocked before opening day)

72,000

trophy-sized Rainbow Trout, Brown Trout and Brook Trout.

Trophy size: 14 to 20 inches

(70% stocked before opening day)

FishandBoat.com

Pulling Plugs at State Fish Hatcheries

If you have a fish tank at home, you know how important it is to keep it clean. Maintaining clean water is essential to the health of our aquatic friends at Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's (PFBC's) hatcheries, too.

When fish waste or "sludge" accumulates, it can lead to an excess of toxins in the water. Fish sludge is made up of fish feces and is a breeding ground for disease carrying bacteria.

State Fish Hatcheries have come up with sustainable and innovative alternatives for waste management. The fish waste is also rich in nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and calcium. This makes it a great additive for enriching the soil and helping with crop yields at local farms.

Minimizing waste at our hatcheries is essential and supports the PFBC's goals of sustainable and eco-conscious practices to protect, conserve and enhance our aquatic resources.

Video:



photo-PFBC archives

2025 TROUT STOCKING Schedules



Available Online

FishandBoat.com

photo-PFBC archives

Juniata River *Water Trail*

SC
PA!

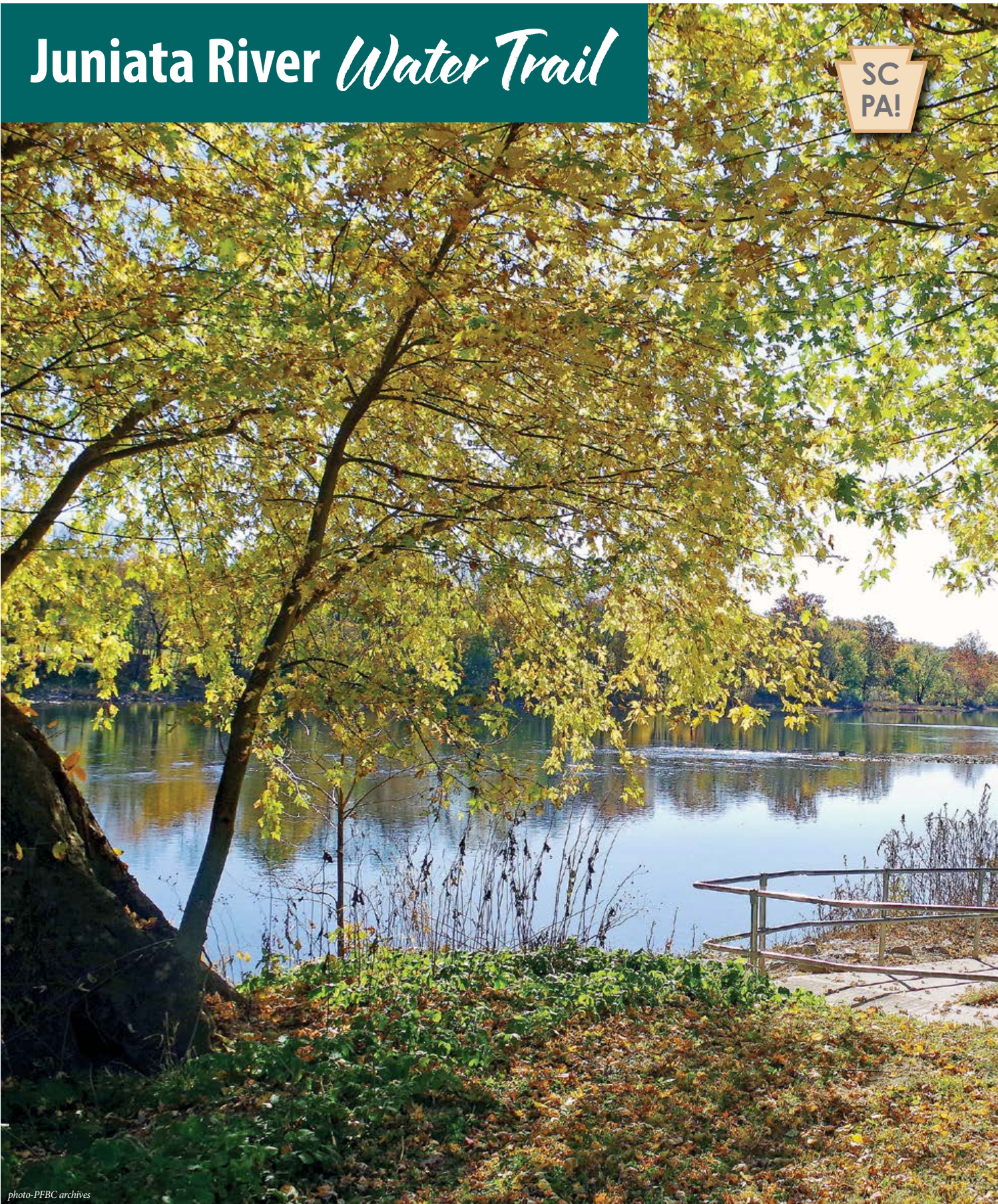


photo-PFBC archives



Howe Township Access, Perry County, features an Americans with Disabilities Act accessible boat launch on the Juniata River. A concrete walkway with a railing leads to the water.

by Bob Frye

If you've ever looked at a photograph in a magazine or on a website and thought, yeah, that's somewhere I want to explore, you know what Jane Sheffield's thinking.

She's the Executive Director of Allegheny Ridge Corporation, the Altoona-based nonprofit organization charged with restoring and developing the "historic, cultural and natural resources of the Allegheny Ridge Heritage Area" in central and western Pennsylvania, which includes Main Line Canal Greenway. The group also oversees the Juniata River Water Trail and Raystown Branch Juniata River Water Trail.

Maps of the upper, lower and Raystown Branch highlight points of interest for paddlers including publicly-owned islands where paddlers can camp.

The Juniata River Water Trail Lower Section map includes a photo of a tent on one island, the misty river flowing silently by and the far bank shrouded in fog if not also mystery. It's captivating.

"When I see that, I want to be there," said Sheffield. "I want to be in that tent. These camping islands are great, and they're very photogenic."

Each branch passes through or along state forests, state parks and state game lands, by little towns big on character and around wildlife.

The paddling is relatively easy, too. Both branches are Class I waters, meaning their riffles and rapids are suitable for beginners under normal conditions. There are always potential hazards on any river. The maps point out known ones, but paddlers need to pay attention to water levels. The Raystown Branch Juniata River Water Trail as well as the Frankstown Branch and the Little Juniata River, outlined on the upper section map, get shallow in the summer. Even on the mainstem Juniata River, there are places where the water gets low. Check the maps for recommended water levels, measured in feet, then compare that to real-time conditions on the United States Geological Survey website at waterdata.usgs.gov/pa/nwis/rt.

"The Juniata River is not the Susquehanna. It's not the Allegheny," said Sheffield. "It is a smaller river."

Don't read that to mean tame or boring, though. Some of the paddling feels wilder than you think. The 3-plus miles of the Juniata River between Mapleton and Mount Union, Huntingdon County, for example, pass through Jacks Narrows, the state's deepest gorge.

According to the Raystown Lake Region tourism bureau, the peaks of Jacks Mountain on the south side of the gorge are just over 2,120 feet in elevation, and 2.9 miles away, on the north side of the gorge, they are just over 2,320 feet.

"The river surface of the Juniata River drops from 566 feet above sea level at Mapleton to 545 feet above sea level 3.3 miles downstream at Mount Union. That makes the gorge nearly 1/3 of a mile deep," said Sheffield.



photo-Bob Frye

Many anglers target Smallmouth Bass on the Juniata River. But, it also holds good populations of Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, Muskellunge and Rock Bass. Those fishing at night may even catch American Eels, given their successful reintroduction.

These branches sometimes fish like bigger water, too.

According to Bryan Chikotas, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's (PFBC's) Southcentral Region Fisheries Manager, PFBC biologists annually survey the river to monitor Smallmouth Bass, the most abundant gamefish available in this waterway. Surveys show a healthy population of sometimes big fish. The 2024 survey, for example, found lots of Smallmouth Bass, 25 percent of them longer than 12 inches and 10 percent longer than 15 inches.

"The lower section primarily has a greater abundance of fish over 15 inches, and among those over 15 inches, quite a few are over 18 inches. You don't really see too many over 20 inches, but they're there in pretty good numbers," said Chikotas.

By the lower section, he means the stretch from Newport to the mouth. "It's good because of habitat, deep pools mixed with shallow riffles and runs with an influx of clean water from limestone tributary streams and an abundance of rusty crayfish for forage," said Chikotas.

The area between Mapleton, Huntingdon County, and Newton Hamilton, Mifflin County, is full of rubble and cobble. It can also produce some nice quality fish.

Two other species providing good fishing on the Juniata River are Rock Bass and Muskellunge. The former are almost always found in greatest abundance where there's eelgrass, a flat-bladed plant, or water willow, otherwise known as lizard's tail, alongside rocky habitat. In those places, anglers get into fish up to 9 inches.

As for Muskellunge, PFBC stocks them at numerous sites as 12-inch fingerlings in odd-numbered years. Anglers should look for them

first and foremost "wherever there's a colder-water tributary coming in," said Chikotas.

"If we get down to where a small trout stream comes in, like Cocolamus Creek or Delaware Creek, certain times of year Muskellunge really like to inhabit those cooler areas, where that colder little tributary pushes out into the river. They'll be in that cold-water plume," said Chikotas.

The upper section, from where the Little Juniata River meets the Frankstown Branch to form the mainstem, down to Huntingdon, seasonally holds Brown Trout.

The Raystown Branch, meanwhile, is smaller and holds less fish but has Smallmouth Bass and a few trout that move in and out of its tributary streams.

In the mid-19th century, to move goods east and west, engineers built Pennsylvania's Main Line Canal. It was a series of locks that took materials up the Juniata River by boat across the Allegheny Mountains by way of the Allegheny Portage Railroad and back down the other side along the Kiski-Conemaugh rivers. Remnants of that canal remain visible in numerous places. Near the Lewistown, Mifflin County, boat launch is a trail that leads to a restored 1.5-mile-section of the canal with a towpath. The site's listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The river trail maps list other historic sites. Kiosks at every launch site along the river highlight some of what you may see in that area as well.

Main Line Canal Greenway:



photos-Bob Frye



Some parts of the Juniata River attract motorboat anglers looking to catch Smallmouth Bass and other fish species.



The Lewistown Narrows Boat Access on the Juniata River offers a concrete ramp and lots of parking.



Kiosks, like this one at the Mifflintown Access, provide information about their respective stretches of water.

Whatever gets you on the water, the history, the fishing or the island camping, visit some of the towns along the way. They offer paddlers places to stay, places to eat and places to explore. Plans are in the works to make more of that information available to paddlers for each community.

“I think the beauty of these rivers is that they’re former transportation corridors and were for a long time, so you’re going through communities with a lot of character,” said Sheffield. Visiting these communities enhances the experience of the user by providing a better understanding of the area. ☐

More Information

Free, downloadable maps of the Juniata River Waters Trails are available at mainlinecanalgreenway.org. Every effort is made to keep these maps up to date, but things change. If you have any questions, call Allegheny Ridge Corporation at 814-940-1922.

To combine hiking with paddling, consider the Thousand Steps near Jacks Narrows, Huntingdon County. Part of the 85-mile Standing Steps Trail is a climb of about 850 feet in a little under a mile, up rock steps built by quarry workers. There are great views from the top. Visit standingstonetrail.org.

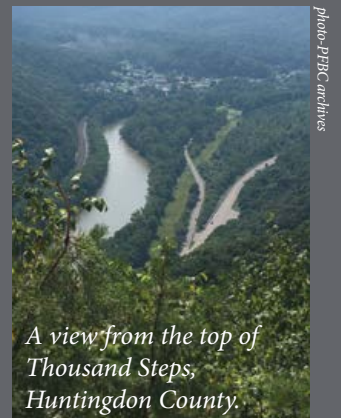


photo-PRC archives

A view from the top of Thousand Steps, Huntingdon County.



Tioga State Forest, Tioga County.

photo-Linda Stager

Adventure doesn't stop
where the trail ends
when you have
a fishing license.

Keep going.

When your favorite biking or hiking trail leads to a great fishing spot this spring, don't stop. A fishing license keeps the adventure going. Buy your license online at [HuntFish.PA.gov](https://www.huntfish.pa.gov). Because when the outdoors calls, you give in to the urge and just keep going.

[ExplorePAWaters.com](https://www.explorePAwaters.com)



Hiking during the spring is a beautiful time to get outdoors and can lead to great fishing spots.



Pennsylvania Grand Canyon, Tioga County, offers a breathtaking view.

photos-Linda Stager



Sinnemahoning State Park, Cameron and Potter counties, offers many fishing opportunities for both coldwater and warmwater species. Nearby creeks also provide good fishing experiences.

NOTES *from the Streams*

I Can't Swim

I was patrolling with Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) Erik P. Shellgren when we came upon a group of anglers along Tionesta Creek. We approached the group and started checking their fishing licenses. One person had the oddest response I have ever heard. As WCO Shellgren asked him to see his fishing license, the man quickly, without skipping a beat, said, "I don't have a fishing license, because I can't swim."

WCO Shellgren smiled and said, "Swimming is not a requirement to own a fishing license." Then, the man said he was afraid of the water, and since the fish are in the water, he doesn't go anywhere near the water to fish. Now, to paint a picture of the scene, the man was standing directly next to the deepest water section of Tionesta Creek, inches from the water. I explained that he should rethink his story as to why he did not have a fishing license. Encounters like this one remind me of the comedy one can find working in the field.—WCO Noah B. Grice, *Eastern Crawford and Warren counties.*

Alligator

I received a call for an alligator sighting in a private pond. Several blurry videos were attached, depicting the spines of a creature swimming just beneath the surface of the water. I arrived on the scene to meet with a frantic caller who was worried about the safety of her small dog. After tracking down the individual who took the original video, I was able to clearly see the creature in the video was actually just a large Snapping Turtle—WCO Andrew G. Saunier, *Western Crawford County.*

Life Jacket Safety

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) advocates for the use of life jackets when people are engaged in recreational activities in or around the water. One of the most frequent violations we encounter is people boating without adequate or life jackets. Those violations are typically addressed with a citation and an explanation of the importance of having and wearing appropriate life jackets.

Occasionally, we are surprised by a responsible boat operator who has all of his or her safety equipment, is aware of its location, function and is able to quickly provide it when asked. Even more rarely, people go above and beyond the legal requirements and employ extra safety equipment, taking it to the next level. This summer, while working a detail at a PFBC access area on the Susquehanna River, Sergeant Bryan C. Bendock and I witnessed one of these individuals. We saw a vehicle towing a boat approaching the boat launch area and stopped it to check for registration and safety equipment. We were pleased to see that the occupants of the vehicle were already wearing their properly-sized life jackets. I'm sure you've all seen the videos or heard horror stories about boat launch mishaps where a vehicle ends up in the water—it seems these boaters did, too, and were prepared. As the saying goes, "Safety First!"—WCO Jeremy L. Yohe, *Western Bradford and Sullivan counties.*

PFBC ON THE JOB



photo-PFBC archives

Kyle R. Robinson Waterways Conservation Officer

Home County: Huntingdon County
Current District: Mifflin and Northern Huntingdon counties
Years as a WCO: 5½ years



Who or what influenced you to become a WCO?

"I grew up watching my father be a WCO and knew from a young age I wanted to follow in his footsteps. I had a strong passion for law enforcement and conservation. Becoming a WCO allowed me to pursue both of those passions."

What is the best aspect of being a WCO?

"The best part of being a WCO is being able to serve the community that you live in. I take pride in making sure that community members who are fishing or boating go home safe to their families. I enjoy getting to interact with the community and children and to be a familiar face that the public can reach out to."

What is the funniest thing you've seen while on patrol?

"While patrolling Raystown Lake, I had the pleasure of talking to a man operating a personal watercraft. The man had a dog weighing over 100 pounds in a harness secured to his back. The dog was wearing goggles and was having the time of his life. I was jealous that this dog was getting to enjoy a day on the water while I had to work."



PSU FLY FISHING

by *Alaina Cummings*

I went spin fishing for the first time when I was 7 years old during my annual family vacation to the Outer Banks, North Carolina, I would send bloodworms over a pier for hours, even if I didn't get a bite. As I got older, my patience waned and I assumed new responsibilities and hobbies. I dedicated myself to school, took up interests in the arts and preferred to spend my vacations on the beach.

I'm a second year Nuclear Engineering major at Penn State. I have always loved the outdoors, but my major tends to constrain me to the library stacks. So, I was excited to have full freedom to select my health and wellness course. Remembering my old hobby, I was drawn to Kinesiology 004, Principles of Fly Tying and Fly Fishing for Trout.

I was not completely sure of what fly fishing was before showing up to the class my second semester. I did know that Joe Humphreys Fly Fishing Program was highly esteemed, and I was surrounded by some of the best trout waters in the country. The instructor George Daniel is also one of the best fly anglers in America, and I knew this was an opportunity I could not pass up.

I was actually inclined to enroll for the fly tying, because it looked like an art form. The delicate winding of fibers to

imitate a bug was so beautiful to me. I have always loved making art in all mediums. Fly fishing seemed like a perfect opportunity to get my fill of nature while creating art. I also loved learning about the science of the bug life cycle and how it corresponds to what trout feed on. Insects intrigued me and learning more about them deepened my interest in the sport.

Then came the actual fishing. It was much different than spin fishing and required many moving parts. I struggled for a while, and my cast and overall technique was quite poor. For the entirety of my first semester, I only caught Bluegills from still water. But, my struggles only made me want to get better. When registering for my next semester of classes, I was grateful for the opportunity to take Kinesiology 93, Enhancing Mastery in Physical Activity, Advanced Principles of Fly Fishing.

That summer, I purchased two fly rods for my father and taught him what I knew. Every Monday, we fished the warm creeks of Delaware County. Once again, our efforts yielded Bluegills and an occasional Fallfish.

I came back to school determined to improve. Kinesiology 93 entailed more field trips, and I was excited to potentially catch trout. My first few field trips yielded nothing, and I was growing more frustrated. I didn't give up, though. One rainy evening, I attended a field trip with few other people. The sun set, and I was beginning to lose hope when George Daniel offered me help. After an hour of moving up and down the stream, I finally landed my first Brown Trout, no bigger than the palm of my hand. Yet, I was so excited that my efforts were finally paying off.

I began to truly love and understand the sport during the two-day field trips to Penns Creek and the Little Juniata River. I had the opportunity to work one on one with TCO Fly Shop guides and work on my technique. In total, I landed seven trout. They were all much larger than my first, and I was so proud and grateful that I was improving. I felt like I had finally found my ability.

The many aspects of fly fishing make it all the more rewarding to admire my catch. I find the trout beautiful, and I love to spend hours on the shining waters where they live. I am by no means a master, but I am thankful that I was able to discover my love for a new hobby, and I intend to continue it late into my life. ☐



A Brown Trout caught by the author while fly fishing.

photo-Jamie SanFilippo



photo-George Costa



BUTLER MARINE PRODUCTS, LLC

by Alex Zidock Jr.

Swim and transom platforms are extensions on the stern (rear) of boats of all sizes. They are positioned just one step above the water, making it easier to get in and out of the water or as added usable space. They also play an important part in recreational boating safety as they cover the boat's propeller(s). Butler Marine Products, LLC, manufactures swim and transom platforms for new installations and replacements. Customers agree that this company's quality and craftsmanship are one step above as evidenced by the current work flow at their shop in Duryea, Luzerne County.

When Michael Clarke left the Navy, he began working as an apprentice making boat parts. This was his true calling since he'd been at the same company for 37 years, but the big difference is now he owns the company.

"During the 1970s, the original owner made racks to hold horse saddles and feed bags for horses. He owned a sailboat, and at boat shows, he saw someone making and selling mounts and bow pulpits. He decided to also make and sell them," said Clarke. "He eventually sold that business to my former boss, who continued to make anchor pulpits, and he added swim platforms and boat ladders. I bought the business from him in 2009," said Clarke.

Clarke makes swim and transom platforms of all sizes, from ones that fit smaller runabouts to larger boats. "The largest we made was for a boat about 60 feet long. That platform was 17 feet wide and 5 feet deep," said Clarke.

"We do sell to individuals, but most folks don't want to take the chance drilling holes and applying brackets that support the platforms on their boats. So, primarily we ship worldwide to boat builders and marinas who install our products," said Clarke.

In the mid-20th century, boat manufacturers began the switch from using teak and mahogany to fiberglass. Now, most boats are made of fiberglass. "While I also make fiberglass bow pulpits and transom platforms, it's only 50 percent of my



photo - Alex Zidock Jr.

business,” said Clarke. “There are many older boats out there that were trimmed in teak or mahogany, and the owners want to keep them original. I make a replica platform or improve the design, using the original wood material.” For example, “One customer had a platform 15 inches deep, and he wanted it 24 inches deep.”

“We primarily use Burma Teak for all of our wood builds,” said Clarke. “It’s the best, and no other wood can stand up to the durability of teak in the marine environment. It’s also bug-resistant.” Fiberglass platforms and anchor pulpits are built without using foam or wood core. Platforms are epoxied with at least 10 layers of two different fiberglass cloth materials. “We also have an assortment of anchor rollers and accessories for anchor pulpits made of wood or fiberglass,” said Clarke. “And, we can match the color of a fiberglass pulpit to any boat color.”

“A lot of boats are not made with swim or transom platforms, and we can custom make one from wood or fiberglass to fit any boat,” said Clarke. “We have thousands of patterns in our files, and if we don’t have a pattern for a particular model, we build the platform from the dimensions provided by the installer.”

Since the platform protrudes from the back of the boat, it sometimes receives unintentional abuse and damage when banging against docks or other structures during tight maneuvers. “Making swim platforms to replace ones because of age or natural wear and tear or making a replacement for damaged platforms are a big part of our business,” said Clarke. “As long as there are old boats out there and newer boats being built without swim platforms, I don’t see my business slowing down in the foreseeable future.”

Butler Marine Products is close to big boating lakes such as Harveys Lake, Luzerne County, Lake Wallenpaupack, Pike and Wayne counties, and the Susquehanna River. As business permits, Clarke enjoys getting outdoors. “We have a camp and boat on the Susquehanna River, and I fish a lot,” said Clarke. “I like to tie trout flies, and I enjoy fishing for trout and bass.” ☐

More Information:

butlermarine.com

← A teak swim platform for a smaller boat is crated and prepared to ship.

photo-Alex Ziabok Jr.



The first teak slats are glued and held in place with 3-inch stainless steel screws. Slats and blocks are put in place until this transom platform, for a 46-foot Grand Banks yacht, reaches 25 inches deep.

photo-courtesy of Michael Clarke



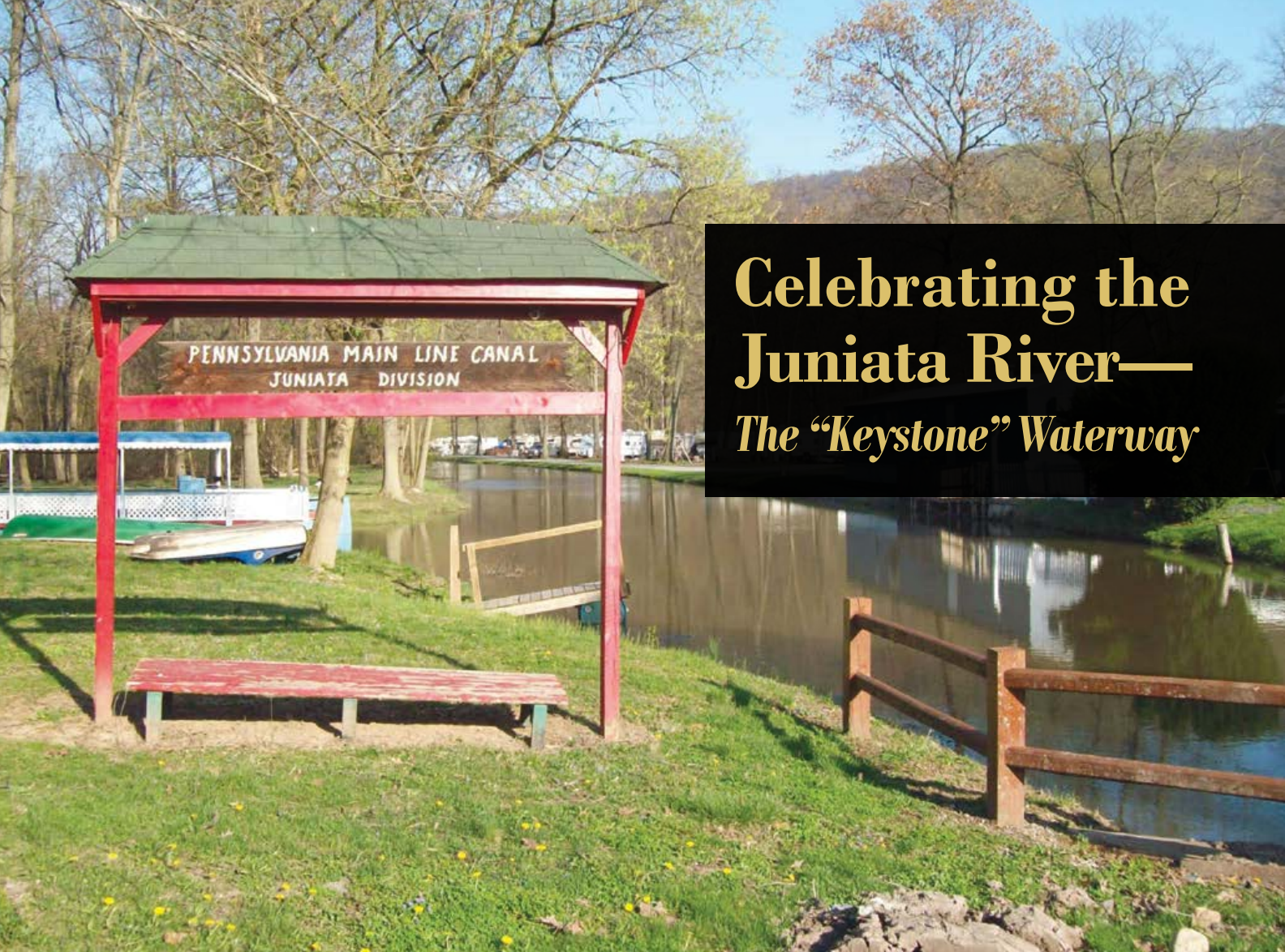
The final teak transom platform built by Butler Marine Products, Luzerne County, matches the original wood of this 46-foot Grand Banks.

Propeller Strikes

When people and motorboats share the same water, propeller strikes can and do occur. A typical recreational propeller can quickly rip a person from head to toe.

MOST PROPELLER STRIKES CAN BE PREVENTED!





Celebrating the Juniata River— The “Keystone” Waterway

photo-Pubdog, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

by Brady J. Crytzer

At 104 miles long, the Juniata River has always been the “keystone” of Pennsylvania’s waterways. Located in the heart of Southcentral PA, the Juniata River has long served as the Commonwealth’s halfway point. The river’s mouth forms 120 miles east of Pittsburgh, and it drains 120 miles west of Philadelphia. From ancient times to modern days, the Juniata River has been the link between east and west, and it holds a special place in Pennsylvania’s rich history.

The Juniata River is one of America’s most beautiful rivers. Wide and shallow, it snakes through the Allegheny Mountains en route to the vast Susquehanna River. Along its route, towering mountain peaks shade its course and offer plentiful habitat for a number of different fish species. Smallmouth Bass flourish in its shady pockets, and Channel Catfish and Walleyes skirt along its secluded depths. Whether using a fly rod or a reel, anglers have caught trophies along the banks of the

Juniata River for generations. In 1907, one Lewistown angler even landed a 92-pound sturgeon, which was headline news.

Long before modern anglers patrolled its banks, the Juniata River was a critical waterway. In the 17th century, the river was named *Onojutta*, after the Onojutta-Haga people that settled on its shores. With a small population, the Onojutta-Haga were ruled by the nearby Susquehannock nation and were prolific fishermen. In their time, both shad and sturgeon swam in abundance, and they survived off these large species. The term *Onojutta* translates to “standing stone,” in honor of a 15-foot obelisk that once sat on the site of modern Huntingdon, Huntingdon County. According to legend, the original stone told the ancient history of the Onojutta-Haga but was taken away when the tribe vacated the area in 1754. Today, a reproduction can still be found in Huntingdon.

The Juniata River was always a vital waterway, but it transformed American life in the 19th century. Infrastructure fever swept across the nation in 1790, signaling the beginning of the Canal Age. For most

of the colonial era, Philadelphia was one of the busiest ports on the continent. When New York announced the construction of the Erie Canal in 1817, Pennsylvanians rightly panicked. If completed, many feared that the 351-mile waterway would siphon commerce away from the Keystone State, and they jumped into action to dig a canal of their own.

Starting in Philadelphia and planned to run all the way to Pittsburgh, engineers began the “Pennsylvania Main Line Canal” in 1826. Hoping to connect the east to the west, the canal system linked the Delaware River to the Susquehanna River, and onward to the Allegheny River. It was an ambitious project, and it was the Juniata River that tied the entire system together. Utilizing a complex system of canals, inclined planes and railroads, the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal was an engineering marvel. By mid-century, commerce flooded across Pennsylvania, and the humble Juniata River was at the center of it all. As goods, produce and people floated steadily across Pennsylvania, communities, like Lewistown, Huntingdon and Hollidaysburg, prospered. By the 1850s Pennsylvania cemented itself as a vital center of American industry and commerce.

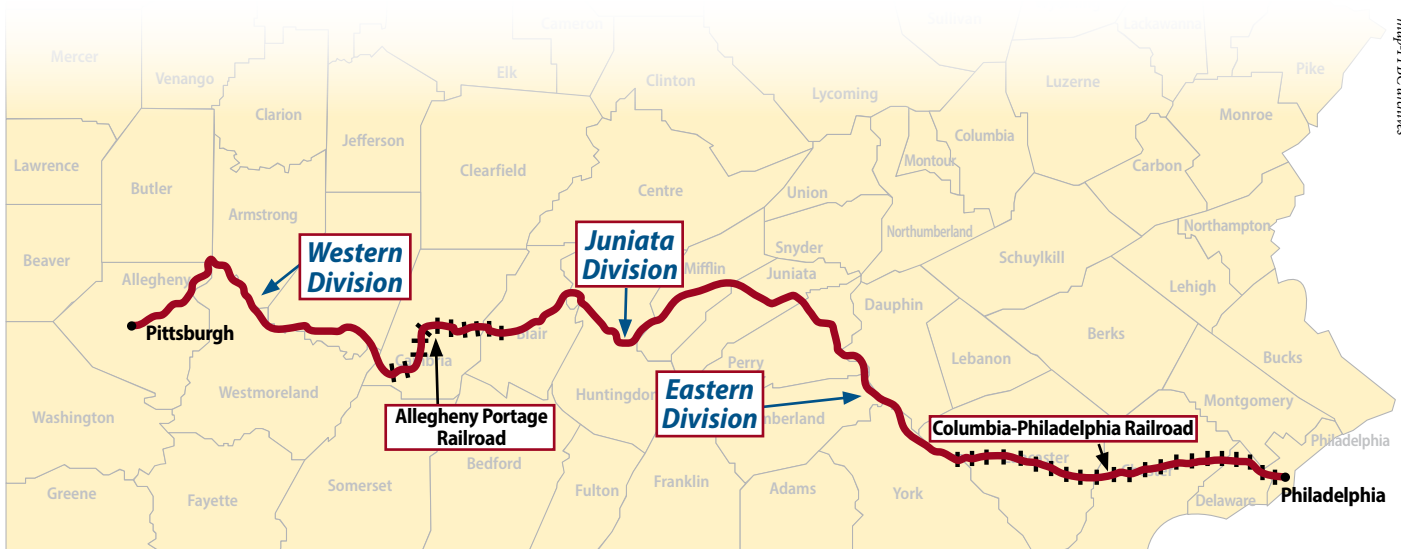
The Juniata River has played a vital role in the historic growth and success of Pennsylvania for centuries. It provided food for early fishermen, a reliable migration path for early settlers, and it transported the commercial goods that fueled America’s Industrial Age. Today, the Juniata River is a favorite river for anglers across the Commonwealth. Next time you cast a line into its waters, take a moment to appreciate the treasure that is the Juniata River. ☐

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.



photo-courtesy of Jonathan A. Burns, Ph.D.

Standing Stone replica in Huntingdon, Huntingdon County.



map-PPWC archives

Location of Main Line of Public Works in Pennsylvania.

R3 IN ACTION—

*Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy's
Floating Classroom*





SE
PA!

by Mike Parker

Communications Director

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

As a kid growing up and going to school, what was better than a field trip?

Sure, sometimes that big day away from school was nothing more than a class trip to a baseball game or amusement park, but the best field trips were the ones that were really fun but also provided real-world experiences to enhance what we'd only read about in our textbooks.

In southeastern Pennsylvania, the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy is serving up those memorable experiences for students and teachers, offering unique environmental education through its Floating Classroom program during spring and summer.

Partially funded through the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's (PFBC's) R3 (Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation) Grant program for its 2023 and 2024 seasons, the Conservancy provided both school programs and summer camps to hundreds of students, which introduced them to topics including watershed science, aquatic communities, ornithology, geology and botany.

The program's namesake, a literal floating classroom called the Dragonfly I, is a 24-foot pontoon boat converted into a working science lab. Propelled by a 10-horsepower electric motor powered by an array of solar panels, middle- and high school-aged students and campers take a journey on the boat to explore the 814-acre Green Lane Reservoir, Montgomery County.

A popular excursion along the way allows students to depart the Dragonfly I and learn basic boating safety and paddling skills aboard kayaks and canoes. While on the water, students observe their surroundings and collect samples including water, vegetation and aquatic life such as fish and turtles, conduct investigations and produce findings. The scientific aspects of the expedition are fun and rewarding, but some special free time is also provided for students to fish and enjoy paddling with their friends under the supervision of program guides.

The PFBC's R3 Grant program promotes new and renewed interest in fishing and boating by providing funding to partners who offer accessible and inclusive learning opportunities to increase knowledge, build confidence in skills, facilitate social support and empower participants to enjoy the waters in their communities. New grant opportunities are typically made available each fall and awarded in the spring.

More information about the grant program can be found on the PFBC's website at fishandboat.com. ☐

photo-courtesy Perkiomen Watershed Association

**Apply for an
R3 Grant:**





Tungsten Takeover



by Ross Robertson

photos by the author

For more than 100 years, lead has been the choice of lure manufacturers and Do It Yourself (DIY) tackle makers for its inexpensive cost, availability and ease of molding with its relatively low melting point. In recent years, anglers and manufacturers have been looking for an alternative for both environmental and technical advantages. In this race for an alternative lure manufacturing material, tungsten is superior to all other materials.

Size

Tungsten is more dense than lead, which allows a sinker of the same weight to be much smaller. When finesse fishing or dealing with finicky fish, having a more compact presentation is almost never a bad thing.

Non-toxic

Having lead in our waterways from breakoffs is toxic to wildlife. Unlike lead, tungsten is non-toxic and much more environmentally friendly.

Feel

The denseness of tungsten also allows anglers to have more feel when dragging a lure along the bottom. Feeling the difference between a softer mud bottom and a harder rock bottom is easily noticeable when choosing tungsten.

Chip Resistant

Softer lead lures easily become dented from hitting the bottom or hard structures. While this in itself may not be a big deal, it's one of the reasons painted lures chip and flake away much easier than tungsten painted lures.

Sound

Through the years, anglers have used many types of sinkers, such as brass, for no other reason except it makes a different sound in the water. The dense nature of tungsten makes a unique sound that anglers feel gives them an advantage more often than not.



Notice the size difference of the 1/4-ounce jig and 3/4-ounce drop shot weight.

Forward Facing Sonar

Forward facing sonar is the biggest and most controversial piece of fishing equipment in modern day fishing. The ability to see both fish and lures move in real time is a huge advantage. As previously mentioned, the harder and denser nature of tungsten allows it to be seen more clearly on live sonar. In many cases, lures that aren't tungsten won't show up on live sonar at distances away from the boat.

Ice Fishing

It's no secret that winter fishing brings out the most finicky fish of the season. Previously mentioned advantages such as smaller size and ability to be seen on live sonar are huge advantages when ice fishing, but one advantage that isn't often appreciated is the ability of tungsten to punch through slush pockets that are common when quickly hole hopping. The smaller size and increased sink rate also helps you stay on the school.

I have switched to tungsten for jigs, drop shot weights and almost any scenario where I'm not losing a lot of tackle. Tungsten does have a down



When using small finesse plastics, tungsten lets you use larger jigs to get deep without having the bulk of traditional jigs.

side, as its cost is significantly higher than the same lures or weights made from lead. Tungsten also has a much higher melting point, so the shapes and handling are more difficult. This makes crafting DIY homemade lures from it nearly impossible. Most jig manufacturers don't even mold them, but glue the pre-molded weight onto the hook.

The many advantages of tungsten lures and weights makes them attractive to anglers. This is not to say that lead or other materials don't have a time or place, but you're doing yourself an injustice if you don't add at least some tungsten lures and weights to your arsenal. ☐



Women in the Great Outdoors is Great for Pennsylvania

by Jessica Aiello

Getting women interested in outdoor recreational activities boosts the local economy by increasing spending on fishing tackle, tents and other gear. It also improves women's health and well-being, develops new stewards of the natural world and provides a medium to connect with others for shared outdoor pursuits.

Conquering a high peak, carrying a heavy backpack for miles over a weekend trek or snagging a record-sized trout can all boost a woman's self-esteem and provide a sense of empowerment that carries into daily life. Research shows a considerable gap between women's confidence levels and men's confidence levels. In an article titled "The Confidence Gap," Richard Petty, a psychology professor at the Ohio State University notes, "Confidence is not, as we once believed, just feeling good about yourself... Confidence is the stuff that turns thoughts into actions."

Being with other women outdoors provides camaraderie in a supportive environment. Creating mixed-ability groups allows participants to push limits, conquer fears and build confidence in their abilities. For

this reason and many others, the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF), several of its friend groups, state parks and state forests across Pennsylvania are organizing day-long and weekend-long events geared at breaking down barriers and building a love for outdoor recreation in teenage girls and women.

For example, on May 3, 2025 up to 175 girls and women from ages 14 and up can join a one-day-only event at Black Moshannon State Park, Centre County. They will have the opportunity to participate in four activities of their choosing, ranging from gun cleaning, yoga, fly fishing, wildlife safety and more. The event filled up in 2024, so register online today with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR).

In September this year, as many as 50 women will have the opportunity to gather at French Creek State Park, Chester and Berks counties, for "Women in the Big Woods". During this weekend-long outing, participants will select from a variety of activities such as fishing, orienteering with a map and compass, mountain biking, kayaking, hiking, disc golf and geocaching.

Last year's sold-out event kicked off with a brief orientation and introduction to the park followed by a team-building activity. Women self-selected



Photos courtesy of Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation

Participants of the 2024 Women in the Big Woods event.



Last year's sold-out Women in the Big Woods event kicked off with a brief orientation and introduction to the park followed by a team-building activity. Women self-selected their activities.

their activities. On Saturday evening, participants gathered around a campfire to try their hand at cooking outdoors. The best decorated “glamping” cottage award was presented followed by campfire storytelling. Small groups participated in fun outdoor activities on Sunday followed by a choice of history-focused walks.

While an exact date has not been set for the 2025 Women in the Big Woods, check in to register later in the year online at PPF.

The following women-only events have been announced for 2025:

- Women's Wellness Hikes at Kings Gap Environmental Education Center, Cumberland County (2025 dates vary)
- Women in the Wild at Little Buffalo State Park, Perry County (May 3, 2025)
- Summer Women in the Wilds at Sinnemahoning State Park, Cameron County (June 20-22, 2025)

“What the popularity of these women-only events shows is that women across Pennsylvania and beyond want to get outdoors,” said Marci Mowery, PPF President. “They want to meet other like-minded women and have fun. They want to be in a ‘safe space’ where they can make mistakes, learn from them and build lifelong skills and friendships. We will continue to organize events like this and welcome partners in this endeavor.”

If you work or volunteer for an organization that would be interested in organizing or helping with a women's outdoor event, email office@paparksandforests.org. Additional events for 2025 will be posted online, so check back often. ☐

PPFF Events:



PA DCNR Events:



PA Fish and Boat Commission Events:







OUTDOOR MOMENT



The American Bullfrog, *Lithobates catesbeianus*, is a large aquatic frog. Its familiar call is heard during early summer mornings and evenings.

Size: 3½ to 6 inches

Field Notes: American Bullfrogs are powerful swimmers with long, strong hind legs, which push them through the water. When under water, its skin acts as a large gill, allowing it to breathe. Its nostrils and lungs are not required when submerged. Bullfrogs can remain under water for months at a time during hibernation.

Did You Know? The American Bullfrog is extremely solitary—more so than any other Pennsylvania frog. It does not engage in chorus singing even during breeding season. The mating season may be the only time it socializes and only with its mate. An American Bullfrog guards its territory and keeps other male bullfrogs away from its calling site. When swimming under water, it can lower its eyes even with its head by pulling its eye sockets into its mouth, protecting its eyes and allowing the frog to swim only short distances before having to stop or slow down to view its surroundings.



photo-Linda Singer

Pennsylvania State-Record Fish

Bass, Largemouth Birch Run Reservoir Adams Co.	11 lb. 3 oz.	Donald Shade Waynesboro, PA 1983
Bass, Rock Elk Creek Erie Co.	3 lb. 2 oz.	David L. Weber Lake City, PA 1971
Bass, Smallmouth Scotts Run Lake Berks Co.	8 lb. 8 oz.	Robert T. Steelman Havertown, PA 1997
Bass, Striped - Inland Waters Raystown Lake Huntingdon Co.	53 lb. 12 oz.	Robert Price Huntingdon, PA 1994
Bass, Striped - Marine Delaware River Delaware Co.	53 lb. 13 oz.	Donald J. Clark Boothwyn, PA 1989
Bass, White Conneaut Lake Crawford Co.	4 lb.	Robert H. Hornstrom Meadville, PA 2002
Bluegill Keystone Lake Armstrong Co.	2 lb. 9 oz.	Tom Twincheck Blairsville, PA 1983
Carp, Common Juniata River Huntingdon Co.	52 lb.	George Brown Saltillo, PA 1962
Catfish, Bullhead Beltzville Lake Carbon Co.	4 lb. 10 oz.	Ian C. Radler Palmerton, PA 2011
Catfish, Channel Lehigh Canal Northampton Co.	35 lb. 3 oz.	Austin E. Roth III Bowmanstown, PA 1991
Catfish, Flathead Susquehanna River Lancaster Co.	66 lb. 6 oz.	Michael Wherley Fayetteville, PA 2023
Crappie Hammond Lake Tioga Co.	4 lb. 3 oz.	Richard A. Pino Covington, PA 2000
Drum, Freshwater (Sheepshead) Monongahela River Washington Co.	19 lb. 14 oz.	Tim Rogers Finleyville, PA 1994
Muskellunge Conneaut Lake Crawford Co.	54 lb. 3 oz.	Lewis Walker Jr. Meadville, PA 1924
Perch, White Delaware River Delaware Co.	2 lb. 1 oz.	Christopher Barrett Mohnton, PA 2024
Perch, Yellow Lake Erie Erie Co.	3 lb.	Kirk Rudzinski Erie, PA 2021
Pickereel, Chain Long Pond Wayne Co.	8 lb. 15 oz.	Dave Wilson Honesdale, PA 2002
Pike, Northern Allegheny Reservoir McKean Co.	35 lb.	Carl Stoltz Bradford, PA 2003
Salmon, Atlantic - Landlocked Lake Raystown Lake Huntingdon Co.	17 lb. 2 oz.	Brian Keller Altoona, PA 2001
Salmon, Chinook Lake Erie Erie Co.	28 lb. 15 oz.	Gregory Lasko Erie, PA 1990

Salmon, Coho Lake Erie Erie Co.	15 lb. 5 oz.	Jack Scheirer McMurry, PA 1985
Salmon, Pink Elk Creek Erie Co.	4 lb. 8 oz.	David A. Rabatin Bethel Park, PA 1995
Sauger Susquehanna River Lycoming Co.	4 lb.	Tim Waltz Williamsport, PA 2001
Shad, American Delaware River Pike Co.	9 lb. 9 oz.	Anthony Mecca Peckville, PA 1986
Suckers Allegheny River Forest Co.	12 lb. 14 oz.	Raymond C. Szalewicz Titusville, PA 2003
Trout, Brook Fishing Creek Clinton Co.	7 lb.	Vonada Ranck Watsonstown, PA 1996
Trout, Brown Lake Erie Erie Co.	20 lb. 9 oz.	Robert J. Ferraro Erie, PA 2020
Trout, Golden Rainbow Mahoning Creek Schuylkill Co.	13 lb. 8 oz.	Eli Borger Palmerton, PA 2008
Trout, Lake Lake Erie Erie Co.	31 lb. 13 oz.	Keith Miller Cranberry, PA 2019
Trout, Rainbow Jordan Creek Lehigh Co.	15 lb. 6 oz.	Dennis L. Clouse Bethlehem, PA 1986
Trout, Steelhead Walnut Creek Erie Co.	20 lb. 3 oz.	Corey T. Brown Osterburg, PA 2001
Walleye Youghiogheny River Fayette Co.	18 lb. 1 oz.	Richard E. Nicholson Connellsville, PA 2021

BUY A 2025 FISHING LICENSE BUTTON



BUTTON SHOWN AT ACTUAL SIZE

GET HOOKED ON
COLLECTING VINTAGE
FISHING LICENSE
BUTTONS



ACTUAL SIZE 1 3/4"

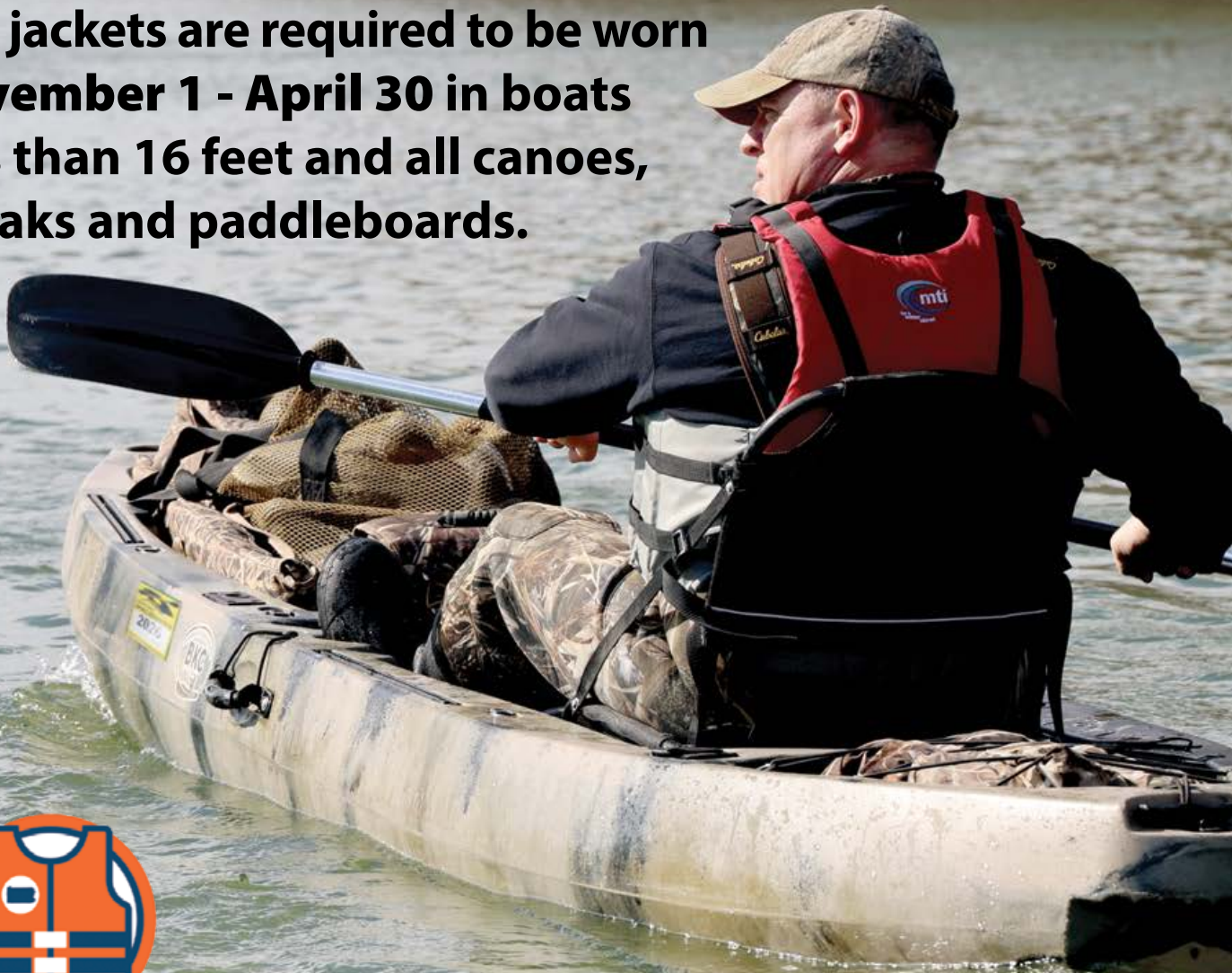
PaVintageFishingButtons.com

FishandBoat.com

Gear Up for Adventure!

**DON'T FORGET TO WEAR
YOUR LIFE JACKET.**

Life jackets are required to be worn
November 1 - April 30 in boats
less than 16 feet and all canoes,
kayaks and paddleboards.



WEAR IT
National Safe Boating Council
Pennsylvania
¡Póntelo!

Regulations:



photo-PFBC archives



MISSION MONDAYS

PFBC's Mission in Action

Join Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission biologists to learn more about the core of our mission to protect, conserve and enhance the Commonwealth's aquatic resources. You don't have to be an angler or boater for the work of the Commission to matter to you. Find out how the agency is keeping Pennsylvania's waters clean and our aquatic species and habitats restored, maintained and protected.

Mission Mondays Programs

Attend virtually from 12:00 p.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Topic	Date	Speaker(s)
Amphibian and Reptile Conservation	March 10	Kathy Gipe, Herpetologist/Nongame Biologist, and Chris Urban, Chief, Natural Diversity Section and Nongame Threatened and Endangered Species Coordinator
What are Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)?	March 17	Sean Hartzell, Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator
Stream Habitat Projects and Fishing Benefits	March 24	Mark Sausser, Chief, Stream Habitat Section
Lake Habitat Projects and Fishing Benefits	March 31	Ben Page, Chief, Lake Habitat Section

Register for Programs and Events:



FishandBoat.com

photo: PFBC archives



@PAfishandBoat #FishPA
#PAfishandBoat #WearIt

Join the Conversation!
Like, share and stay connected.

FishandBoat.com:

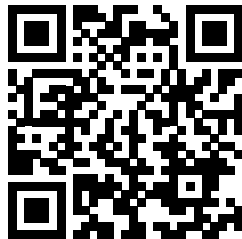


EXPLORE PA WATERS



As you're prepping your tackle box for fishing this spring, don't forget these handy tools to help you on your adventure!

Tackle Box Tools:



➔ **Eric Boyer Jr.**, age 7, caught his first fish, an 8¼-inch Bluegill, while fishing in Schuylkill County, using a worm for bait.



