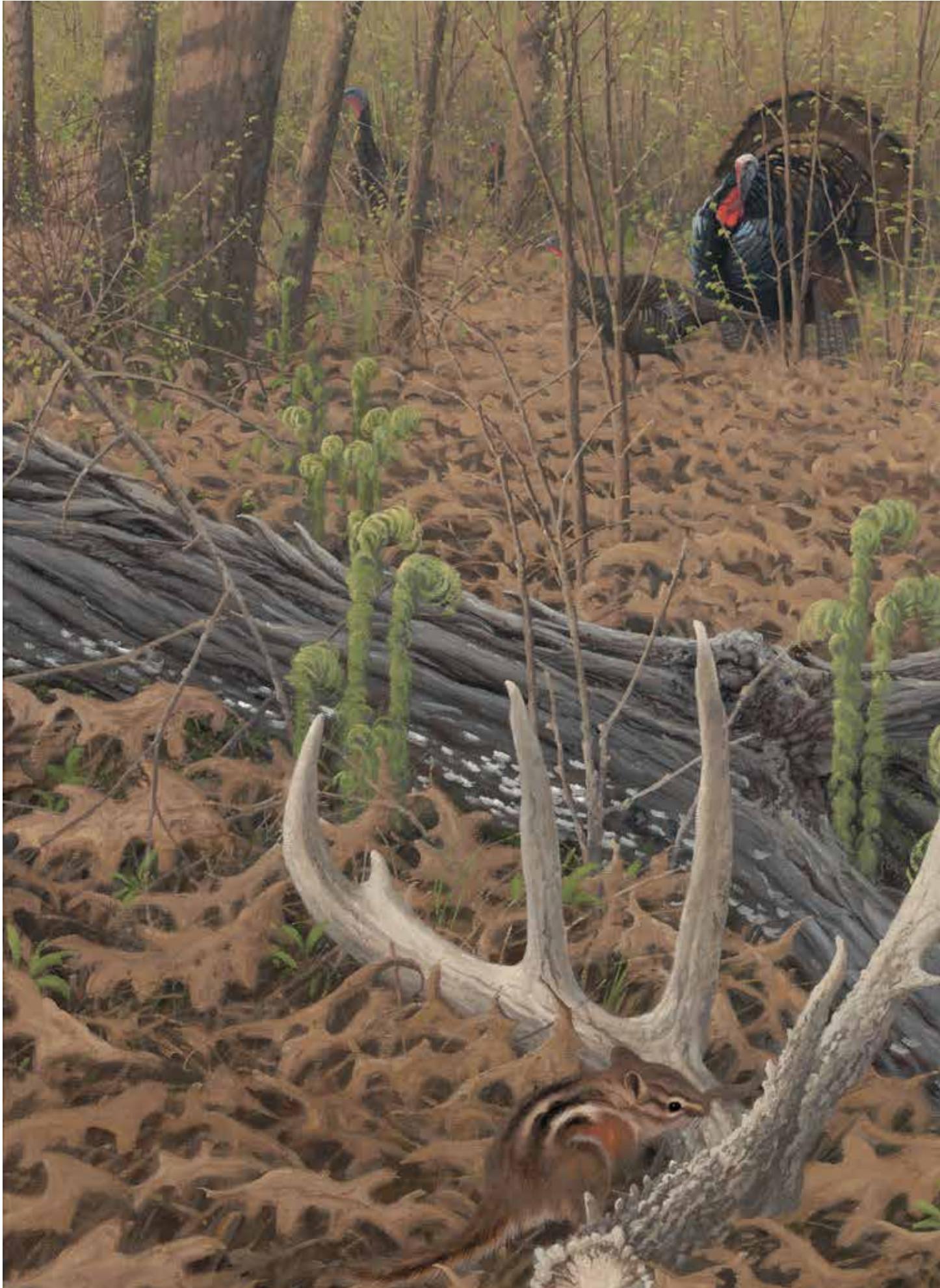


Fishing & Hunting

Journal



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- **WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MARYLAND SALTWATER SPORTFISHING ASSOCIATION?**
- **SPRING BASS ON THE CHOPTANK**
- **SHAD TO BE HAD**

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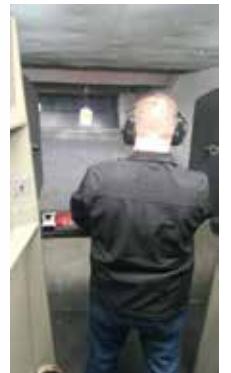
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“Campbell’s Catch”

Shad to be Had

Old timers say the best time for shad fishing in this area is when the dogwood trees are in bloom. The bite starts in mid-March, peaks in late April and runs into early June. Local anglers can find shad from below the Conowingo Dam to the mouth of Deer Creek and all along the lower Susquehanna River. Most anglers wear hip-boots or chest-waders to fish from the shoreline, while others like to fish from a small boat. Watching anglers lined up shoulder-to-shoulder casting light spinning outfits while merrily reeling in shad on every cast is a familiar sight on the river. It is fun fishing below the dam, but the easy fishing belies the bitter truth. American shad and to a lesser extent, hickory shad are in trouble, and have been for a while. Maryland has had a moratorium on keeping shad since 1980. Thankfully, catch and release fishing for shad is permitted. If you are new to the sport and don't know much about it, fear not. There are often friendly and experienced anglers around the river who are happy to share their shad fishing tips. These folks understand that passing on their knowledge is vital to the future of recreational fishing.

Shad fishing above the bridge in Deer Creek is a popular tradition among fly anglers. It was there some years ago that I caught my first fish on a fly rod with coaching from a guy I had just met named Don. Before long, a practiced cast to the right spot found a feisty male hickory shad taking off for the ocean with Don's hand-tied fly in its mouth. To land and release that fish was a kick. Don took my picture, shook my hand and patted me on the

back. Hundreds if not thousands of new fly anglers have experienced the same thrill, and have been hooked on shad fishing ever since.

The Gunpowder River off of Route 40 is another well-known shad fishing spot. It's a short hike downhill from the unpaved parking lot to the river. This wooded area off of Jones Road is somewhat remote, so it attracts vagrants and young partiers not much interested in fishing. Times have changed. It's a good idea to go there with a fishing buddy. I regard it as a welcome sight to see Department of Natural Resources officers checking people's fishing licenses here on a regular basis. By Memorial Day or soon thereafter, DNR locks the gate for the summer. The park reopens after Labor Day. There are plenty of other places in Maryland to fish for shad. Check the DNR website (dnr.maryland.gov) for shad hotspots, fishing reports, and lots of other good information. Participate in the online shad survey. You might win a prize.

American and hickory shad are a schooling fish in the herring family. They are a highly migratory species. Shad are anadromous, which means they live in the ocean, and only swim into fresh water to spawn. Just about every river on the Atlantic Coast once had a shad spawn, a lot still do. At one time the shad runs were so abundant that people thought they could never be overfished. In the olden days, farmers even used shad for fertilizer! Poor water quality, over-fishing and dams blocking spawning areas all contributed to the collapse of shad stocks. Hickory shad are plentiful in

comparison to American shad, but because the two species are close in appearance and easily confused by the average person, both species are exclusively catch and release. Therefore, be gentle releasing these fish. Use single hooks, not trebles and consider going barbless. Forget about using bait. Shad mainly eat plankton, but they aren't eating in the river anyway, they are on a spawning mission. Why then do shad bite a lure? Maybe it is because they are annoyed by it. Who knows?

One favorite lure is a #13 Tony, gold or silver spoon with the barb mashed down on the hook. It's much easier to release the fish with a barbless hook,

especially when catching them one after another. There's also less chance the fish could be harmed by taking the hook too deep. Some days, shad darts rigged in tandem work just as well as Tony spoons. Catching two shad at a time often occurs using a tandem rig. Some diehard anglers swear by a certain shad dart color combo. I don't think color matters that much. Orange and green, red and white and pink and black darts all seem to catch shad with equal results. Whatever lures or style of fishing you choose, enjoy the rivers and join in the fun. There's shad to be had.



Tim Campbell holding his first shad on a fly. Photo by Don Hershfeld.



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Fishing & Hunting Journal

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April 2019

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FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

A word from our Pastor-

Search No More

Last week I, along with some of our graduating seniors, had the privilege of visiting the Holocaust Museum in our Nation's capital. What a sobering reminder of the absolute torture and devastation that tens of millions of people endured during this horrific era.

During our visit we were able to listen to one survivor's account of what he remembered as a small child during this time. It was an extremely moving experience to hear of the atrocities he and his family endured.

"Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?" This old phrase, although made famous by a fictional character, is so true! Jeremiah the prophet said that our hearts are deceitfully wicked who can know them. In the gospels, Jesus said that which defiles a person comes from within. The slaughter of innocent people from the Russians and the Nazis are a telltale sign of the utter wickedness of the heart.

Our day is no different. Thousands are killed each year in the name of religion. Many others are killed because of their ethnicity. By the millions, the innocent have been murdered before ever being able to see the light of day! Jesus said in the end times men's hearts would grow cold.

We search for answers. However, we won't find them in money, our environment, or even in military might. The answer is plain and simple...it's Jesus! Isaiah prophesied of his coming to earth and described him as Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Yes, Jesus was the answer, is the answer and always will be the answer! The gospel of Christ brings peace to this troubled world. There is no other way.

MEL BRINDLEY Pastor
Chestertown, Md., Baptist Church



Eathan Beard harvested a nice 10 point buck in Frederick county.

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“Tackle Box Tim”

Spring Bass on the Choptank

Spring has arrived, and with it, tidal bass fishermen are in top gear. You can bet they will be zooming around on the Potomac River and the upper Chesapeake looking for Mr. Bucket Mouth. On the eastern shore, the Choptank River has become an afterthought when it comes to bass fishing. Brian LeClair, a Denton, Maryland native and topnotch tournament angler, knows the river and the fishery. Brian has fished amateur and club lever tournament trails, has made numerous Bass Federation and BASS Nation state teams, and has competed in a BASS Master's Classic.

LeClair has fished for Choptank bass for decades. He's seen the fishery at its best and when it's been lagging. He says that the Choptank is on the rebound. He believes that, years back, numerous multi-day tournaments from instate and out-of-state bass tournament trails took its toll on the fishery. Since the fishery lost its popularity due to its decline, the river is on the upswing. He's even seeing milfoil and hydrilla in the Denton area and farther south in the river where there hadn't been

grass before. He says that, these days, if you learn the seasonal bass patterns, landing a 20-pound limit in your best 5 bass is not out of the question.

Years ago, you could catch bass far upriver from Denton and as far down river as the town of Choptank. Brian doesn't often venture far from the Denton area these days. He says that there are plenty of good spots within a mile upriver and downriver from the ramp. "Why make a long run if you don't have to," he says? When the bite is on, he will make longer runs, checking out the nostalgic spots. By doing this, he's checking his patterns and seeing if the numbers of bass are expanding their range.

Brian believes the best time to learn the Choptank is in late winter. Bass stack up in deep water holes and haunts where they live among rocky bottoms and flooded stumps. As the river warms, bass will move to the closest shallow areas. When the river temperature reaches 50 degrees, bass leave the deep water. They move on to mud flats where they will be chasing shad.

There is a 1-2 punch when the bass first move up. Brian relies on a spinnerbait and rattle trap. While these are lures used as search baits to cover the water quickly, he retrieves them at a slow pace. With the spinnerbait, it's just fast enough to keep the blades turning. He cranks the rattle trap just so he can feel the vibration. To slow things down another notch, LeClair will work a suspending jerkbait on a mud flat. He will work on his cadence of twitches and pauses to see how long bass want the bait to suspend in front of them before striking. He casts these lures in shad, white perch and yellow perch patterns.

When spring water temperatures start a steady incline, bass move into lily pads. During this prespawn time of spring, bass are feeding up. Brian looks for irregularities with in the pads where they take up vantage points. He looks for sunken wood, rocks, and ditches; and he focuses his casts there. Because bass are actively feeding, he casts shallow diving crankbaits and buzzbaits through the pads.

Shoreline cover also holds bass in spring. LeClair targets rocks, pilings, sunken wood, and old rundown bulkheads. He is still keying on the active fish. He will offer them a hollow body frog when they first move up. As the river warms, he works in a buzzbait. Brian also likes the hybrid hollow body swimming frog like the one made by Zoom. He can work it slowly in place or get the legs churning the water, like a buzzbait does, with a steady retrieve.

When bass get finicky, Brian gears down his approach. You might even call it "old school". In a world of soft plastic creature baits and crawfish imitators, he still favors a 4-inch lizard, Texas-rigged with a 1/16-ounce slip sinker. He works it slowly around the cover. To take finesse fishing even further, he'll break out a

Senko stick worm, often dead sticking it. These are the tactics he uses, but knows other lures will also work. In comes down to what the individual fisherman has confidence in.

The Choptank River differs physically in several ways from that of the Potomac and upper bay. It's a narrower body of water and has stronger tides. LeClair says the ebb and flood flows will position bass even more so than on larger tidal bass fisheries. He looks for them along the calm side of current seems, and on the down current side of cover. This is one reason why the ditches within the pads are good target areas. On a falling tide they act as funnels, pushing baitfish along in the flow.

Brian says it's important to pay attention to tide charts. There can often be a 3 1/2 to 4-foot swing in the tide. On an ebbing tide, you will want to get to and from your spots in feeder creeks both large and small. They can empty out quickly and leave you stranded until the next high tide. Paying attention to the navigation markers is essential. In many areas, the river can be cruel if you wind up on the wrong side of a marker.

LeClair says the water clarity is in constant flux on the Choptank. The river can get muddy in a hurry after a downpour. The mud line is also slow moving. Areas that were clear "yesterday" will see muddy conditions "tomorrow". That doesn't mean that the bass won't bite, but they will be tougher to catch. It can take 10 days to 2 weeks of dry weather for the river to clear up.

The Choptank River's largemouth bass fishery is on the comeback. Bass are moving into early spring and, soon, prespawn patterns. Brian LeClair will be chasing them and hopes you will try some of his techniques on the river as well.



Brian LeClair shows a hefty bass from the Choptank River.

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“Tuna The Tide”

Guns!

By Captain Mark Galasso

A few years ago I was sitting in my office when I heard my home phone ring. Turns out it was a Mr. Wayne Le Pierre from the NRA calling in response to a letter I had written regarding my opinions on regulating assault weapons and the NRA's response to proposed new laws and regulations. I believe my letter was pretty mainstream. We needed better background checks for people purchasing these firearms as well as more hands on training for sport shooters. Mr. Le Pierre's response was that once we started down the road of regulating firearms it could snow ball and next we will be regulating all guns including our hunting firearms. At that point we respectfully agreed to disagree.

Fast forward about ten years later to the recent Maryland House and Senate legislative sessions. Bills

are being introduced right and left regulating all firearms. And yes, some of them would have major impacts on your ability to own hunting rifles and shotguns. I've always believed that it is important to look at all sides of a story and base my judgement on the facts. So here is a little background on where and why these bills are being introduced. No one can argue that we don't have a problem with violence in Maryland. Just watch the local news at night. Baltimore is becoming the murder capital of the Country. And PG County is becoming a dangerous place to live and work as well. Violence is spilling out into neighboring areas. And yes a lot of the homicides are done with guns. Legislators from those areas are frustrated and want to keep guns out of the hands of criminals.

Mass shootings are always a potential threat in Maryland as well as the rest of the country and are on the rise. Mentally unstable individuals that get pushed over the edge by some experience or event take their

frustrations out on innocent groups of people. Many times they target a group of people they think are responsible for all their problems. And yes again they find a way to arm themselves with guns.

So with that backdrop what needs to be done? The knee jerk reaction is more gun control. In Maryland we already have some of the strictest gun control laws in the nation. To purchase a hand gun in Maryland you need to take supervised training, register yourself with the State Police, wait on background checks and register any new gun purchased. The same is being proposed for ALL guns. And surprise. There is a fee each time this happens.

One bill that is being proposed would make it a felony to loan your gun to another individual. Think about that one in a hunting situation. Another bill could affect out of state hunters bringing firearms into the state.

Recently a group of individuals got together at the Talbot Rod and Gun Club to discuss how these bills might affect their operations. It was well attended by a diverse dynamic of people. Hunters, Guides, Gun shop owners, Law enforcement as well as a Delegate and Senator. The ironic thing was it was NEVER mentioned that it is our Second Amendment right to own and bear arms. The discussion was about how the proposed Bills would affect our way of life and would

they help the problems plaguing our neighbors across the bridge.

The answer was a unanimous no. Assuming every bill passed and went into law where would we be. Criminals would still buy guns whether on the black market in Maryland or in some other state. Shot guns and hunting rifles are rarely used in crimes and we already have regulations in place on semiautomatic weapons and handguns. Law Enforcement can't hope to control who has or doesn't have guns. They simply don't have the man power to get warrants and go door to door to see if law abiding citizens are complying. Felons and the mentally unstable are already not allowed to possess guns. How about enforcing the already existing laws pertaining to them rather than create new laws to hurt law abiding citizens.

Here are a couple of novel ideas. Lets let law enforcement do it's job. Don't let the court rooms become revolving doors for criminals. The vast majority of gun violence cases are perpetrated by repeat offenders. And they aren't buying guns at the local gun shop. And lets work on a far more insidious problem plaguing our nation, the Opioid crisis. Think about how many more people die from accidental drug overdoses than accidental hunting and gun ownership accidents. The numbers are staggering. Go on line and read these proposed bills for yourself. Become educated and make your voices heard.

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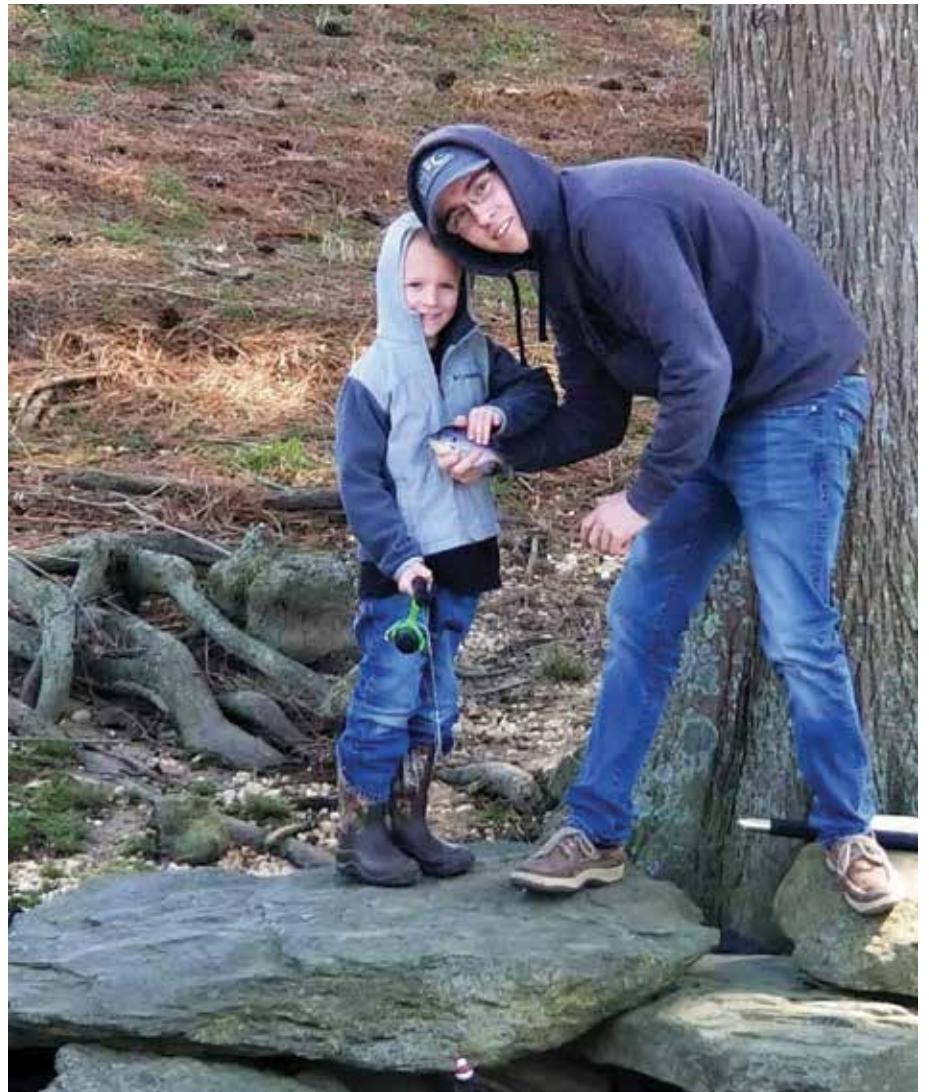
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EVERYTHING MUST GO!!!



From Left to Right: Captain Jason Seman, Mike Damesyn with his first Trophy Striped Bass, and first Mate Chris Jones. This fish was truly a special fish. It was Mike's first Trophy Striped Bass (days before his wedding), it was the first fish aboard The Marylander, and marked a great start to our first year in business in 2018!

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Five year old Colton Lee and step brother Brandon Stacey with Colton's first Bluegill.

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Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after. Thank you, dear God, for this good life and forgive us if we do not love it enough. The charm of fishing is that it is the pursuit of what is elusive but attainable, a perpetual series of occasions for hope.



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“Fishin’ Back East”

NATIVES

By Jim Gronaw

It’s spring, things are happening, and fish of all kinds are feeding like crazy. The bass guys are lovin’ it, the striper guys can’t wait for the trophy season and panfishermen are icing delicious fillets from perch, bluegills and crappies. The shad are running, and the monster blue cats are on the prowl. Let’s face it...there’s a lot to do in the spring, let alone the long list of home chores on the “honey-do” list.

But to some anglers, warming temperatures and longer days mean something else. To some who dare to search, there are the hopes and dreams, and successes, of finding and catching native trout from unheralded streams that most people would just drive by and write off as a cow-pasture trickle. Yet such places are the very target of those seeking native brown or brook trout in the Mid Atlantic.

My very first experiences with native brook trout came with a heavy dose of hiking as a long-time

angling friend clued me in on several gorgeous foot hill streams that held these fish in good quantity. The fish weren’t big, but their stunning coloration during the fall spawning periods made for a great, local adventure. Tiny waterfalls here and there and slower, deeper runs that bottomed out at two feet were more than enough water to hold an “adult” brook trout of 9 inches or more. Yes...a 9-inch fish was the focal point of a several mile hike and bush-whacking effort to see one of God’s most beautiful creatures that still, yes still, live in some of our waters not terribly far from the masses.

The day was memorable, and my legs much sturdier than now, minus the arthritis. I think we fished three different tributary runs that are part of a well-known, larger river system. We knew a long haul was needed to find some fish and our tactics were simplistic as it gets. Ultralight spinning rods, 4-pound test clear mono

and a #12 hook with a whole garden worm. Yes, the red-necked version of native trout fishing. Amazingly basic and effective, we caught perhaps 40 beauties that day with a pair of giants, 10 and 11-inches long, being the highlight of the day. And over time, it was the highlight of my entire efforts for native brookies as both fish were caught back-to-back from a midget waterfall that was canopied almost to darkness.

I had heard stories, even seen photos, of what were reported to be native brook trout that stretched the tape to 14, even 15-inches of incredible length. Quite a fish for a mountain stream that barely holds water during a dry summer. I had my doubts, but couldn’t help wondering...do monsters like this still exist? I never found out, for that 11-inch male spawning brookie remains my brightest moment in the native brook trout world.

Native, or naturalized, brown trout are another story. They’re bigger, stronger, more aggressive. They are in more streams than we realize, and they can be challenging, yet an easy quarry, depending on the situation. They like larger streams and are more tuned to lower gradient flows. Some are the ancestors of stocked fish from long ago, having survived the floods, the summer droughts and the fishing pressure over many years, even decades of angling. Those big, hook-jawed males are an awesome sight and the black/red spot patterns are stunning. They eat many food items, but larger adults, 16-inches and up, tend to target meat and potatoes... minnows, crayfish, sculpins, larger insects and, yes, even mice.

I would be lying, outright, if I said I was NOT jealous of several friends of mine who have caught, and released, wild brown trout that have measured up to the 24-inch mark. Yes, terribly, jealous, green with envy and at times frustrated. Human qualities I sometimes can’t escape. Almost embarrassingly, I must confess that my best wild brown is a 17.5-inch fish, almost two inches shorter than the one my son caught many seasons ago from a small, obscure creek in southern Pennsylv-



A gorgeous brown trout that had to have a Kast Master spoon.

vania on Opening Day. But despite it all, it is still a full-fledged hoot to catch even a small, brilliant brown trout from the confines of any stream within driving distance of my home.

Unlike their brook trout counterparts, lures always caught our better browns with spinners, spoons, crankbaits and jigs getting the majority of the fish. Yes, there are those who swear by the big minnows and nightcrawlers. But most of today’s regulations oppose the live bait concepts. Fly anglers get them on larger streamers and sculpin patterns (and yes...the mouse patterns). But being of marginal fly angling skill, I’ll stick to chucking hardware. The aggressiveness of the browns can be addictive, especially in a small stream environment where you can’t possibly believe a fish of that size could live in that tiny undercut or washout. And when a bigger one slams a spinner the heart skips a beat, perhaps several!

True, seeking native, wild or naturalized trout is not for all, but it is something that is still available, still “out there”. Indeed, a breath of fresh air compared to the plump, pellet-fed fish that are missing some of their fins and most of their tails from former concrete environments. And I’ll likely chase those once the natives prove too challenging.

Matt Gronaw with a wild brown trout from a southern Pennsylvania stream.



Matt Gronaw with a wild brown trout from a southern Pennsylvania stream.

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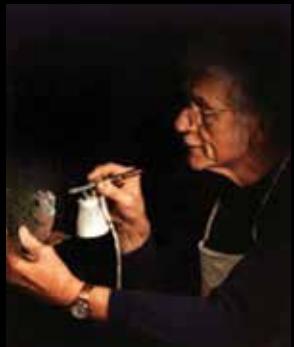
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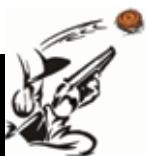
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ASMFC expected to set stricter regs for harvesting striped bass

Note: This is an update to an article posted by the Bay Journal on February 7, 2019.

By - Karl Blankenship

A new status review has found the striped bass population to be in worse shape than previously thought, a result that will almost certainly trigger new catch restrictions for the prized species next year in the Chesapeake Bay and along the East Coast.

As other species have declined, there has been an increasing focus on catching striped bass. (Dave Harp) As other species have declined, there has been an increasing focus on catching

striped bass. (Dave Harp)

A preview of a soon-to-be-released stock assessment presented in February to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission indicates that the striped bass population is overfished and has been for several years.

Members of the commission, a panel of East Coast fishery managers, knew that the migratory species has been in coastwide decline for more than a decade, but the new assessment paints a bleaker picture than many expected, including data that show recreational catches are significantly higher than previously estimated.

"We had all hoped that the results of the assessment would be a little

better," said Mike Luisi, an estuarine and marine fisheries manager with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. "It is clear that we need to do something."

Once the ASMFC officially accepts the new stock assessment, it will need to implement a plan within a year to end overfishing.

The commission can't adopt the assessment until its May meeting, though. Its completion was delayed by the partial federal government shutdown, which sidelined biologists with the National Marine Fisheries Service who were working to complete both the final document and the peer review report.

In the meantime, the ASMFC's Striped Bass Management Board has asked its technical advisers to estimate the amount of catch reductions that will be needed to restore the stock to an acceptable level.

"We know it is going to be pretty drastic," cautioned John Clark, of the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife, a member of the board.

Striped bass, also known as rockfish, is one of the most popular sport and commercial species in the Bay and along the mid-Atlantic coast — the fish is even depicted on the Maryland state flag.

Overharvesting, though, drove the population to record-low levels in the early 1980s. Widespread concern over the fate of the stock sparked a federal law that gave more power to enforce the ASMFC management plan for the species, which previously had been voluntary, resulting in steep fishing reductions. As part of the effort, Maryland closed its fishery for five years, and other states enacted shorter moratoriums.

The population rebounded, allowing harvests to gradually resume, starting in 1990. The stock was declared "recovered" by 1995, a result heralded as a fisheries management success at a time when many other species were in peril.

In the wake of its success, Congress passed a law requiring all East Coast states to adhere to ASMFC management plans or face moratoriums. By the early 2000s, the coastwide striped bass population had reached levels not seen in decades.

The recovery was helped by a pe-

riod of extremely high reproductive success for striped bass, a species that lives much of its life in the ocean but returns to coastal rivers to spawn. In a 13-year span from 1993 through 2005, reproduction was at or above the long-term average 10 times in the Maryland Young-of-Year index, which is historically one of the best predictors of coastwide striped bass abundance.

Since then, reproductive success has been poorer, with a few good years mixed with several poor ones. As a result, the number of young striped bass "recruited" into the population has generally been declining since the mid-2000s.

Successful reproduction requires two things: lots of eggs and favorable weather conditions that allow larvae to survive long enough to be "recruited" into the overall population.

Some research suggests that certain climate patterns produce conditions that persist for a decade or more and are generally favorable (typically resulting in wet springs) or unfavorable (generally dry springs) for striped bass recruitment. While there may still be year-to-year variations, those long-term patterns can greatly affect recruitment success over time.

Because they can't control the weather, managers have tried to keep the abundance of mature female fish high to produce lots of eggs that will improve the chances of a strong "year class" of young when the conditions are right.

But spawning stock biomass, a measure of the adult female stock, has been declining steadily since 2010, according to the new preliminary assessment. In 2017, the estimated spawning stock biomass fell to 68,476 metric tons. That's well below the management threshold of 91,436 metric tons — the estimated amount in 1995 when the population was declared "recovered."

The assessment also shows that the spawning biomass has been below the threshold since 2012, meaning that the stock has been overfished. The scientists producing the assessment indicated strong confidence in that conclusion.

"The probability is very high that that is the case," said Mike Celestino, a member of the ASMFC's Assessment Science Committee who briefed the commission on the findings.



Bill Phillips bagged this nice non-typical buck on November 29, 2018 in Wicomico County, MD.

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Part of the reason for the assessment's worse-than-expected results is new data showing that mortality from recreational fishing was higher than previously thought. Of particular concern was an increase in the number of "dead discards" — fish that die after being released by anglers. The assessment estimates that 3.4 million striped bass died after being caught and handled by anglers in 2017. That was 48 percent of all striped bass killed by all fishing activities that year and higher than the 2.9 million fish that were kept by recreational anglers. Biologists estimate that about 9 percent

released fish is higher.

Another problem, Luisi and others say, is that as other species have declined, there has been an increasing focus on catching striped bass. And, some say management plans need to better account for changes in technology that help anglers find fish and use social media to quickly share hot spots with others and increase catches.

"The fish can't escape the fisherman anymore," said Martin Gary, executive director of the Potomac River Fisheries Commission. Further, Gary said, poor water quality — such as areas with low-oxygen levels — increasingly

coastal commercial harvest in recent years has been 10 percent or less of the entire catch and is limited by a fixed poundage quota, unlike the recreational fishery.

More focus should go toward dealing with the dead discards of anglers, he said. "They have always found a way to wiggle out of being held accountable for the amount of fish they are catching and destroying," Newberry said.

David Sikorski, executive director of the Coastal Conservation Association — Maryland, said he wasn't surprised at the estimated number of dead discards, given the popularity of striped bass, which migrate along the most populous part of the coast.

While that number was high, he said, it shows that about 37 million fish were actually caught, with many anglers simply enjoying the catching and releasing of fish. "That's a lot of boats, a lot of tackle, a lot of people out on the water accessing the resource," he said.

Sikorski said the overriding problem for striped bass has been low reproductive success in recent years, and that more needs to be done to improve habitats and water quality to help young fish survive.

He said anglers, many of whom supported more aggressive action to reduce catches in 2015, would like to see states act quickly to protect the stock, including new restrictions this year. "We are going to be facing large cuts without a doubt," Sikorski added.

While most everyone agrees on the need to act, many caution that the stock is nowhere near the crisis level that spurred the previous moratorium. Today's spawning stock biomass, while declining, is still four times higher than it was in the early 1980s.

"We're not in crisis mode with this," said Chris Moore, regional ecosystem scientist for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. "We're not in a situation like we were in the early '80s when we really needed to make huge changes in the way we managed the fishery. But we have a stock that hasn't performed as well as we would like it to for the last 10 years or so, and we need to make the necessary adjustments."

About Karl Blankenship

Karl Blankenship is editor of the Bay Journal and executive director of Bay Journal Media. He has served as editor of the Bay Journal since its inception in 1991.



Natalie Hagadorn and her Mother Renee Van Pelt with a late season Choptank River Striper.

of fish die after being handled.

Some fishery managers say that means previous management actions to protect the population — which imposed new minimum catch sizes — may have backfired. Because the minimum size was increased in 2015, they say the number of fish that were handled and ultimately died may also have increased as anglers tossed back more small fish while trying to catch one of legal size.

"We need to rethink what we are doing," Luisi said. "Increasing minimum sizes as a mechanism for reducing harvest only leads to more dead discards. Dead discards is a big problem."

A number of fishery managers indicated they would like to see the commission consider a broader array of options to reduce harvest. That might include things like gear restrictions or shorter seasons, which could reduce the number of fish being handled. Maryland, for instance, has been requiring the use of a less-lethal type of hook for certain fishing techniques during warm seasons when fish are more stressed and the mortality of

lead fish to congregate and make them easier to target.

"From my perspective," he said, "I think we are going to need every tool available to us to do the best job we can to get this resource back to where it needs to be."

Another possible topic for ASMFC discussion is the current goal of maintaining a spawning stock at or above the 1995 level. Some contend that this reference point for managing the stock could be unrealistically high, especially for a species whose reproduction is so variable.

"I do anticipate a conversation about the reference points," said Max Appelman, fishery management plan coordinator for the ASMFC.

Any actions involving striped bass are certain to spur passionate debate. Many recreational anglers have long sought to declare striped bass a "game fish," which would prohibit commercial catches, and those calls are likely to be amplified in the wake of the assessment's findings.

But, said Robert Newberry, chair of the Delmarva Fisheries Association, a seafood industry group, the total

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Eastern Shore Angler Catches Record Longnose Gar



A Dorchester County man set a state record for catching a 17.9-pound longnose gar. Secretary resident David Confair, 44, caught the fish Jan. 23 a few miles above the historic Brookview Bridge along Marshyhope Creek.

An experienced angler, Confair and a friend went fishing there after hearing reports of massive blue catfish. After just a few hours into their trip, Confair felt something unusual tug his line. "Get the net," Confair yelled to his friend. "This is a big fish."

Instead of a catfish, it was a longnose gar, a fish that dates to prehistoric times and can grow up to 6 feet long. Maryland Department of Natural Resources

staff verified the species, and Kool Ice and Seafood Company in Cambridge certified the fish's official weight. Confair's catch surpassed the state's previous record holder, Justin Kelly, who caught a 17-pound longnose gar in the Potomac River back in 2011.

Confair kept his catch alive for more than two days and released it back into the creek after the record was certified. "It deserves to live," Confair said. "I'm hoping to set a bigger record. I know there are bigger ones, I've seen them."

Maryland maintains state records in four divisions – Atlantic, Chesapeake, Nontidal and Invasive – and awards plaques to anglers who achieve record catches. Fish caught from privately-owned, fee-fishing waters are ineligible.

Anglers who think they have a potential record catch should fill-out the state record application and call 443-569-1381 or 410-260-8325. The department suggests the fish be immersed in ice water to preserve its weight until it can be checked, confirmed and certified.

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Photo Taken by: Krystal Sta-cey



Remembering Joe Yack, friend and fisherman. Photo by Tim Campbell.



Jay Fleming with a catch and release on the bay March 26th with Captain Boo.



Captain Buffalo Strong fo Rock Hall fished with Councill charters in Marathon Florida where they caught plenty of fish.

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By Grant Soukup

“Montana Grant”



PERCH PRIDE !!!

Yellow Perch are perfect for eating. Few fish are as tasty as a Yellow Perch. The meat has a firm texture and can be fileted easily, when using the right knife. Perch fishing is all about planning for a fish dinner. Fry up a side of Hush Puppies, onion rings, or fries and watch out. Perch are just plain delicious!

Each spring, Chesapeake Bay anglers look for a way to shake off the winter blues and have an excuse to warm up before trout season. Yellow Perch migrate into tidal and freshwater shallows to spawn. Locating the Perch is a challenge. The schools of spawning “Bucks and Roes”, wait for the water temperature to be just right and then they rush up into the creeks to spawn. Dense groups of perch fill small streams and become easily caught.

If you can find schools of perch staging for the spawning run, fishing can start sooner. Using electronics is a good idea. Search the deep channels at the mouths of popular spawning watersheds. Water temperatures are critical. Check with local bait and tackle shops for current conditions and reports. The MD. DNR also has current information on their website.

When spawning, the “Bucks” excite the females to shed out long skeins of eggs. These long egg sacks hook onto sticks, and debris, where they are then fertilized by the smaller “Bucks”. When you find the egg sacks, you have found the perch. Look for the deeper pools and snags to be filled with the “Yellow Neds”. Usually 3 weeks before St. Patrick’s Day is prime perch time. Where you find one perch, you will find more.

Light tackle is best for sport and fun. Shorter ultra-light rods allow you to explore the small streams. Take along a pair of pruners to help you cut trails through the tangles. 2-4 lb. test lines work great. Polaroid glasses allow you to see fish even better. They also protect your eyes from sticks, thorns and injury.

The average keeper yellow perch is about 10 inches or larger. 12-14-inch females, full of roe, are what are often most targeted. Perch can get larger. In Maryland, a 9 ½ inch perch is legal but does not offer much to eat. When you Catch and Release perch, use a pair of forceps to quickly allow you remove the hook. Hold the perch gently and keep the fish wet until released. A hand towel on your belt is a great idea to keep your gear and hands clean of the slime and mess.

Tiny shad darts, spoons, and jigs tipped with grass shrimp, worm or a

minnow work best. In larger pools, use a small bobber to drift the lures into position. Be certain to sharpen your hooks to allow for clean hook ups and hook removal. Plenty of local jigs and twitchy style lures are also available. Once you are into a honey hole stacked with Fat Roes, almost anything will work.

The best BIG PERCH rig may be the minnow double rig. Simply tie a #6 hook with a dropper and a terminal hook. A small weight may be needed between the 2 hooks to hold the rig in place, depending upon the tide. Lip hook a Mummichog minnow to each and lay on the bottom. Use rod holding sticks to keep your tackle off the muddy banks and tangle free. Simply watch your lines begin to pull away to see a bite. Hanging a mud ball or uncinched bobber on your line, between the 2 upper guides, will also serve as a sensitive strike indicator. The mud ball will fall off once you start to crank the perch in. The sliding bobber can get in the way and wrap around the rod.

You can tie a bunch of these rigs ahead of time and wrap them around a piece of cardboard. Place each rig in a plastic bag to avoid tangling. If your rig gets tangled, you need to only tie one knot to get back into the game. Sharpen your hooks, even new, ahead of time. Using barrel swivels will help you keep your line from spinning and allow a quick retie if needed.

Beginners need to remember that Yellow Perch have sharp spines on their fins. The gill plates are also razor sharp. Handling these scrappy fish can result in a cut or two. Once you realize how to fold down the dorsal fins and avoid the sharp gill plates, dealing with them is way easier. Forceps can be useful when removing deep hooks. Take along a rag to keep your hands dry and clean. The milt, slime, and eggs have a way of getting onto everything.

Filleting Yellow Perch is the best way to clean them. I do not scale perch, but instead skin them with a sharp filet knife. I also rinse the filets thoroughly. An electric filet knife also works well. Years ago, the limits were huge but today the populations are more protected and limits defined. Check the regulations for the area you fish. 15 perch are enough for a good meal. If you have some buddies with their limits, a fish fry is soon to follow.

Thoroughly rinse your filets. You can also Sweeten Your Filets using 1 gallon of cold water, 3 tbsp of salt, and 2 tsp of baking soda. Submerge the filets and let them soak in the refrigerator for a few hours or overnight.

You can weigh them down using a plate. Once you see the scum that comes out of your “fresh fish”, you will use this technique often for all your fish. The texture, flavor, and firmness of your filets will also be improved.

Cooking your precious Perch is simple. Try using a dry batter of complete Pancake Mix. Add the mix to a plastic bag and sprinkle in some additional Old Bay seasoning. Shake and bake your dry filets in the mix. Lay them onto wax paper for about 30 minutes so they can rest. This helps to keep the coating on the filet. Now fry them up in your preferred oil. They will cook in just a few minutes. Place them onto some paper towels to drain excess oil.

Some folks eat the Poor Man’s Caviar or Perch Eggs. Simply roll the egg sacks in corn meal and fry up in butter or mix them into your regular breakfast eggs. They are also healthy as a treat for pets. The other perch remnants can be added into a mulch bin or buried in your vegetable garden as wonderful nutrients.



Keith Albright and Curt Soukup showing off a limit.

Now it’s time to make a proper sandwich! Get out some fresh sandwich bread or rolls. Make a simple Tartar Sauce and have some thinly sliced tomatoes handy. The can of Old Bay can also be nearby. Place a couple filets onto the roll, add some sauce and a slice. This fresh fish sandwich will make all your hard work worthwhile.

Be perch proud and enjoy!
Montana Grant
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The young Angelina Watts is a true sports woman, here she is with a Spring 2019 giant yellow perch on the Choptank.



Coastal Report

By Capt. Mark Sampson

Whether fresh or frozen, live or dead, top quality bait will always out-fish the alternative. But acquiring quality bait is not always as easy as slipping into your favorite tackle shop and picking it up. No matter if you're after frozen, fresh, or live bait, the quality and quantity of bait that a shop has on hand at any given time can vary wildly from day to day and sometimes hour to hour so the last thing an angler who is ready to depart on a trip should do is put 100% faith in the notion that they can walk into a shop and get exactly the bait in the quality and quantity they need.

One morning last summer while on my way to the boat I made a pit stop at one of our local tackle shops to get some live eels to use on our charter that day I was in the same shop the night before and didn't get them then because I saw they had plenty and figured it would be easier in the morning and I wouldn't have to worry about keeping them alive overnight. So with just minutes to spare before I was scheduled to leave the dock with a group of paying customers, I hustled into the tackle shop with my eel bucket only to learn that a few hours prior the eels did what eels do best, they escaped! Apparently, early in the morning they made their prison break by knocking the screen off the drain tube and

escaping down the pipe. It just goes to show how smart a bunch of eels can be compared to a charter captain who was too dumb to get good bait when he had the chance! That morning live eels were not on the menu for the fish under my boat.

Bait inventories in even the best of tackle shops will vary wildly throughout the season because the supply of bait coming to them is not always as consistent as they would like. You can bet that Friday evenings and the days just prior to a major tournament bait inventories in tackle shops will dwindle and what's left to choose from will have been picked through and refused by a lot of other fishermen. Anglers who catch their own bait also learn that if they wait until the day they actually need to use the bait to pull their traps or throw their nets they might find themselves fishing with lures that day. Fishing is fishing with no guarantees, even for catching bait!

The best way to stay on top of the need for good bait is to be in a position to acquire the bait when it becomes available, which in turn requires one to have the necessary storage facilities for that bait, whether that means buying a big freezer, building or buying a good setup for keeping live bait healthy at the dock for extended periods, or just having a really good cooler and ice for short term holding.

It can also be helpful to know when your favorite tackle shop gets their supplies of bait. If you learn that sand fleas are always delivered on Tuesday morning you'll probably not want to try to buy your bait Sunday or Monday. Likewise with frozen bait, if a shop gets all it's ballyhoo in one spring shipment, then the best selection will be in the early season and it might be wise to stock your freezer early be-

cause after that it will be pot-luck on what you get.

Still, you can do everything right to ensure you head out on the water with the best bait in the world but if you don't also have a plan to keep it fresh and lively until it's hanging on a hook then all your efforts will have been in vain. Late one summer when the dolphin around the pot-markers had become very finicky towards cut bait I came up with a plan to take some minnows along as live bait figuring they might be just the ticket to sway the fish into biting. So one morning I threw couple pints of minnows in our live-well and off we went. Unfortunately, no sooner had we shut down to start fishing than my mate came in the cabin to inform me that all the minnows were dead! I was astonished - minnows can usually survive in anything, I couldn't understand how it could be until I asked my mate if he cleaned the bait-well last night with bleach and if he rinsed it out in the morning before putting the bait. "Yes" and "Apparently-no" were his answers. That morning we learned that finicky dolphin don't like dead bleached out minnows either!

Bait should be kept with the same care one would keep fish fillets they would eat themselves. Fresh-cut and whole bait can typically be kept in good shape for at least a couple days when properly stored on top of or surrounded by lots of ice - not soaking in slushy ice water in the bottom of the cooler. Obviously, using live bait requires the likes of an on board live-well or at the very least a decent bait bucket that will contain the bait and allow for good water circulation and exchange, and a plan to keep monitoring the condition of the bait to make sure there are no mass-casualties on the in the course of the day.



Frank Goodheart from Lititz Pa with a tarpon he caught in March while fishing in the Florida Keys with Capt Mark Sampson.



Paul Schmidt (right) from Lorton VA with a big permit he caught while fishing with Capt Mark Sampson in the Florida Keys in February.

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Governor Larry Hogan Announces Cabinet Appointment

Appoints Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio as Secretary of Natural Resources

Governor Larry Hogan announced Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio as the Secretary of Natural Resources. Haddaway-Riccio currently serves as a Deputy Chief of Staff in the governor's office, where she advises on environmental-related issues.

"Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio has been a strong member of my executive team since day one and has a proven track record of working to protect Maryland's environment," said Governor Hogan. "I know that Jeannie will be instrumental in ensuring that we continue to build on our incredible progress in preserving our state's precious natural resources."

Haddaway-Riccio was previously Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for Governor Hogan, where she served as the governor's liaison to local governments, including working with the Maryland Association of Counties and the Maryland Municipal League. Previously, she served

as District 37B Delegate from 2003 to 2015, where she was a member of numerous committees including the Economic Matters Committee, the Joint Committee on Federal Relations, and the Legislative Policy Committee. She also served as Minority Whip from 2011-2013. In addition, Haddaway-Riccio has worked for the Maryland Department of Environ-



ment's Air and Radiation Management Administration, as well as the National Audubon Society.

"As a lifelong and proud native of the Eastern Shore, serving our citizens and protecting Maryland's natural resources has always been my passion," said Haddaway-Riccio. "I would like to thank Governor Hogan for this exciting opportunity, and look forward to helping further the administration's environmental agenda in my new role."

Haddaway-Riccio will replace Secretary Mark Belton, who is returning to his former post as Charles County Administrator. Belton previously served in the role from December 2012 to December 2014, before joining the Hogan administration at the start of the governor's first term in 2015.

"I sincerely thank Secretary Belton for his service to the state and wish him the best of luck in his new position," said Governor Hogan.

Haddaway-Riccio's appointment took effect in early February.



Captain Brian Cuncell traveled to marathon for a month where Frances Rodney hooked this nice Jack Crevelle.



Last time out for the Youths on Youth Day Feb 09 2019 - Hunt was in St. Michaels Md off the Miles River - Landon Doyle age 10 Chester MD - Sean Hicks age 16 Crownsville MD - Steven Gill age 11 Stevensville MD

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“The Last Word”

What Happened to the Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association?

By Steve Huettner

The Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association (MSSA) was an organization with over 30 years of history in Maryland. MSSA hosted several tournaments in Maryland, including the largest striped bass tournament in the United States. MSSA had individual chapters throughout the state that helped support youth fishing programs and a scholarship fund. MSSA had a seat on the state and federal level dealing with fisheries management. It was by all accounts a solid, well run organization, with committed and passionate people. Their model and statewide success were the envy of many in the outdoor community.

In 2009 Dave Smith who at the time was Associate Executive Director took over for long time Executive Director Rich Novotony. (Disclosure Dave Smith and I both sat on the board of the Maryland Legislative Sportsman’s Foundation for two years during its existence).. Over the next several years the organization continued on track as it had done over the previous twenty five years. In 2016, stories began to circulate that the MSSA was struggling financially but few if any understood how bad. The 2017 season saw the MSSA host its annual fall tournament and shortly after that is when things really started to go sideways.

Winners from the 2017 fall tournament did not receive their checks after the tournament. Several months passed without payment and in January of 2018 winners began to questions where the money was. Winners were

told there was a dispute with one of the winners, delays in getting W-9’s from winners, and monies needed to be transferred around due to a horrible 2017 fundraising year. All of these were reasons were given for non-payment.

In late January board members received a phone call from their landlord informing them that the MSSA was \$4500 behind on rent and the organization was going to be evicted from their headquarters. Board members than realized something was amiss and examined bank statements for the last several months, finding irregularities. This lead to Dave Smith being terminated.

The MSSA website disappeared and the Facebook page stopped posting or taking comments in January of 2018. The board held meetings, lawyers were hired, police were notified, and accountants began to examine 8 years of financial records. During this time, individual chapters that were part of the MSSA dissolved and many placed any funds they had in escrow. Under the advice of counsel, not much was publicly said by those involved.

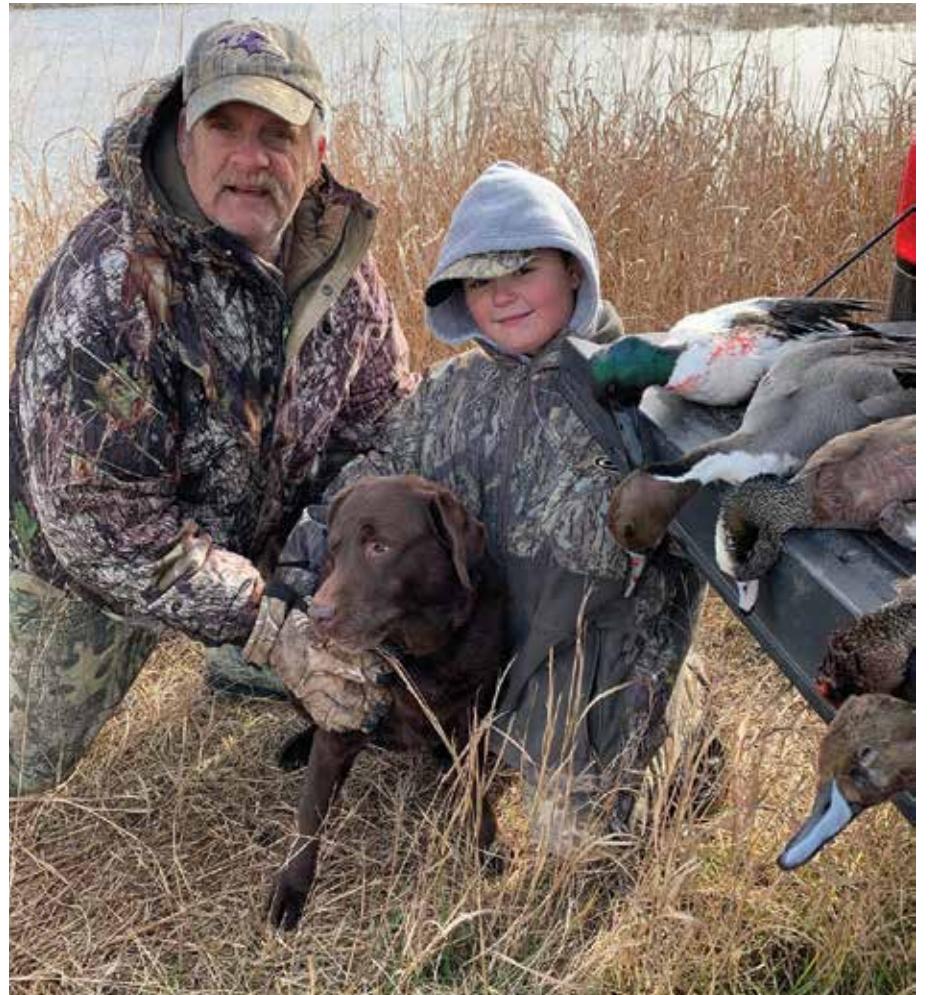
In September of 2018 a civil suit was filed by the MSSA against Dave Smith. The filing can be found at <http://casesearch.courts.state.md.us/casesearch/inquiry-index.jsp> Anne Arundel Circuit Court Case Number C-02-CV-18-001643.

The court filings paint a bleak picture of MSSA and its finances. It is alleged that in 2016 liabilities increased 1700% followed by another increase of 136% in 2017. Board members were never allegedly informed of the mounting liabilities. During this time a line of credit was opened with M&T Bank for \$50000. Along with

the line of credit, loans were taken out on behalf of MSSA from M&T Bank, High Speed Capital LLC and Sky Cap Funding. All lines of credit and loans allegedly were done without board knowledge or approval. It is further alleged that funds were removed from the account by Dave Smith and used for his personal use.

So what is left unfortunately is sad. The MSSA insolvent, chapters closed, lawyers and law enforcement involved, and winners of a tournament who have still not been paid. One hopes that perhaps once all the dust settles that monies controlled by the individual chapters can be used to make things right for the winners of the 2017 fall tournament.

MSSA regardless of your opinion represented the sport-fishing community in Annapolis. It was an organization by Maryland and for Maryland. The news this past season regarding striped bass, the overall health of the stock, and the kill related to recreational catch and release are all bad news for the iconic fish of Maryland. MSSA departure leaves a large hole in who will represent the interests of Chesapeake recreational anglers. With the issues that loom on the horizon, will anyone step up to fill the leadership void? Will they have enough backing and support to speak for the recreational angler? For the sake of the recreational community and the resource I hope so.



Carter age 8 with a limit of ducks for youth day with his dad Ed Crouch. 2 pintails, 2 widgeon, 2 shovelers.

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PAN FRIED SEA BASS WITH LEMON GARLIC HERB SAUCE

This Pan Fried Sea Bass with Lemon Garlic Herb Sauce is a 20 minute, one-pan recipe that will have you feeling super fancy, even on a busy weeknight.

It's a wonderful way to eat a mild, affordable fish, and it's packed with flavor from fresh oregano, thyme, and parsley. It's especially great if you have an abundance of fresh herbs in your garden you need to use up!

The butter gives it a rich, golden color, while the olive oil makes it crispy. Mixing the two is my favorite way to pan-fry almost anything.



Then, the sauce is made in the same pan by adding garlic, deglazing with white wine, and adding water or chicken stock (I used water- there is more than enough flavor from the other ingredients in the sauce, but for extra richness, use chicken stock). Then, another bit of butter is added in, along with fresh lemon juice and the herbs.

- 2 tablespoons butter, divided
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 lb. sea bass (or other mild white fish)
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more if needed
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper, plus more if needed
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 1/2 cup water or chicken broth
- juice of one lemon
- 1 tablespoon each chopped fresh oregano, thyme, and parsley.
- extra lemon for serving (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

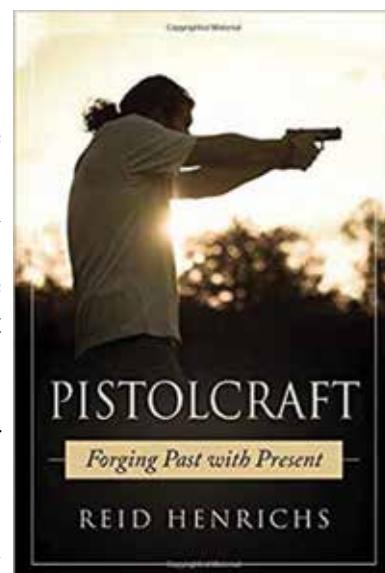
- Pat the fish dry with a paper towel.
- In a shallow dish, mix together the flour, salt, and pepper.
- Dredge each piece of fish in the flour mixture and shake off any excess.
- In a large heavy skillet, melt 1 tablespoon butter and 1 tablespoon olive oil over medium high heat.
- Cook the fish in the skillet for 3-4 minutes on each side, until golden brown and fully cooked.
- Remove fish from the skillet to a plate.
- If skillet is completely dry, add a little bit more oil or butter.
- Add the garlic to the skillet and sauté until fragrant, about 30 seconds.
- Add the white wine to the skillet to deglaze, stirring up any browned bits.
- When wine has reduced by about half, add the water and bring to a simmer.
- Turn off heat and stir in remaining 1 tablespoon butter, lemon juice, and fresh herbs. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary.
- Serve sauce on top of fish.

Book of the Month

PISTOLCRAFT: FORGING PAST AND PRESENT

by Reid Henrichs (Author)

Pistolcraft fuses proven fundamentals, knowledge, and lessons from the past with the modern day realities. This book is the result of extensive historical research coupled with modern analysis, offering the reader a thorough treatise on the pistol—from the development of technique, every day carry considerations, equipment, analysis of gun-fights, marksmanship techniques for use under stress, and proven methods that work when needed most. Containing over 150 detailed and sequential photographs, this well-documented work includes thorough explanations, range drills, proficiency standards, qualifications, shooting tests, an extensive bibliography with sources dating from 1875 to 2014, footnotes, and easy to read sections. This book is a treasure trove for the beginner shooter or seasoned practitioner of pistolcraft alike. It is sure to become a staple in the shooter's library. Pistolcraft is a book based on experience and historical research. The author, Reid Henrichs is a former US Marine, police officer, and full time firearm instructor. Reid's law enforcement experience included patrol, undercover narcotics, and Task Force Illinois sent to New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina and Rita. He has trained literally thousands of individuals in his career as a teacher of firearms. Reid has talked the talk and walked the walk. A master shooter in his own right, Reid enjoys teaching those who are willing to learn. Armed citizens, as well as members of the military and law enforcement have credited Reid's methods with helping them protect themselves and others when needed.



I had to read the book, first, before I could give an honest review. When I bought the book, there were none. So much for being number one!

First, this book is well written. If you've read anything by experienced writers, like Massad Ayoub, you'll notice the same effort for simplicity and clear language. Reid, however, dispenses with formal linguistic rigidity that makes it an easier read.

Second, the information is presented with authority by someone who knows and has studied his craft. He gives credit where it is due and names the source of the idea or method he discusses.

Third, the information is thorough - ranging from history to drills, ammo to holster requisites.

Finally, the spark that caused me to follow Reid on Youtube in the first place is the treatment he gives, albeit brief, on the reasons why this skill set is necessary and basic as a citizen with God-derived rights.

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MISC.

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Jay Diming with a 29" Red Drum he caught at the point in North Carolina.



Tim Campbell with toothy speckled trout, Gasparilla, FL 2-20-19. Photo by Sherman Baynard.



Tyler Lingerman from Rock Hall, MD with a nice Jack Crevelle caught in the Keys last month.

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