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Taja Shear working the late night hours for this Snakehead.



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Fishing & Hunting Journal

Volume 34, Number 3

August 2024

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WHITE MARLIN OPEN
AUGUST 5TH - 9TH

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BY INSPIRATION MINISTRIES

A Disciplined Life

“If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life ... Now we command and exhort such persons ... to work peacefully.”—2 Thessalonians 3:10–13 NASB

Paul became a believer after a supernatural encounter with Jesus. Miraculous things took place throughout his ministry. But over time, he focused more on the practical impact of the Christian life. For example, in writing to the Thessalonians, he stressed the importance of living a disciplined life. He discovered that some believers were “undisciplined.” The Greek word has its roots in the military, referring to the response of soldiers to a commander, and the importance of completing assignments. As believers, we are to recognize God as our authority and obey Him, just as soldiers obey their commander.

Some believers did not have this discipline. Those who weren’t disciplined, in effect, were defying God, and being negligent about the gifts He has given them. Instead of putting their resources to use, they were “doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies” (v. 11).

Paul’s admonition was that these people needed to become disciplined. They should determine the fruit of their lives through their actions and attitudes. They still might be born again, but he commanded and exhorted them “in the Lord Jesus Christ to work peacefully and eat their own bread.”

Paul knew how easily we can become bored with being disciplined and working hard. He stressed that believers must not grow weary of doing good. In every situation, seek to be disciplined. Be a good steward of the resources God has given you.

Reflection Question: How do you combat weariness in doing good things?



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Virginia weighs regulations on hound hunting, citing tensions with landowners

Virginians have hunted deer and bears using hounds for centuries.

The tradition has benefits for wildlife management and recreation, state officials say. But they also say they're seeing rising conflict between hunters and landowners who don't want dogs encroaching on their property.

"This is the most common complaint that the department receives," Cale Godfrey with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources told a state board earlier this year. "Frequent, repeated instances of unwanted dog presence are the source of many of those complaints."

State officials are now weighing new regulations on hound hunting. This week the department launched a public comment period on two proposals.

One would require GPS tracking collars be used on all dogs involved in a hunt. Most hound hunters already use the collars, which can cost hundreds of dollars.

DWR says the collars would allow hunters to know where their dogs are at any particular time in order to retrieve them when necessary – and to show where the dogs have been if that comes into question.

The other proposed regulation would require hunters to make "reasonable efforts" to keep dogs from entering private property if the owner or wildlife police have stated the dogs aren't welcome there.

Kirby Burch, a Powhatan resident and CEO of the Virginia Hunting Dog Alliance, said he believes it would be "a first of its kind dog trespass law."

His group strongly opposes the proposal, which focuses on repeat offenders whose dogs have been on a private property without permission at least twice within a year.

It's unclear what the penalty would be. Burch worries the threat of a potential misdemeanor charge could keep people from



the sport, which is integral to life in rural Virginia.

"A dog has a mind of its own" and can't fully be controlled off-leash, he said.

"It's just a convoluted attempt to end hunting with dogs."

The state's been studying and attempting to manage the issue since at least 2008. Most recently, DWR commissioned the University of Virginia's Institute for Engagement and Negotiation to facilitate discussions with hunters, landowners and public officials.

The institute found that conflicts between property owners and hunters have likely grown from factors like the rise of social media and population growth in rural areas. Hotspots for complaints include the Middle Peninsula and areas west of Richmond.

Other states have instituted measures on hound hunting like

acreage limitations, permits and complete bans.

Attempts to get a permitting requirement or other restrictions through Virginia's General Assembly failed repeatedly, including this year.

In March, the Board of Wildlife Resources held a special session on the topic, where they narrowed down seven proposals to the two now up for public comment.

Hunters and property owners showed up with passion on both sides.

"Property rights of Virginians have to be respected and protected or this will continue to spiral out of control," said Chris Patton with the Virginia Property Rights Association. "Regulating hound hunting before it explodes into violence is the only way we save hound hunting in Virginia."

Hunter Tim Goodbar said

he sympathizes with property owners' concerns but thinks the regulations are a slippery slope.

"I think what we're going down the road here is to do away with hound hunting altogether," Goodbar said.

And "if it don't involve a hound, it ain't hunting."

Mike Foreman with UVA's institute said that everyone wants hound hunting to continue "if we can reach and achieve some measures to reduce the conflict that's involved."

Burch, with the hunting dog alliance, said it's "going to be a long fight."

DWR is collecting public comments on its website, or by email and snail mail, through July 5.

The wildlife board will then review the comments before bringing the topic back onto its agenda.



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SUMMER ON THE CHOPTANK

September 3rd, 1994 is a significant day in my fishing history. That day I caught a large white perch on the Choptank River that surpassed the “Fishing in Marland” magazine citation minimum. I took the perch to Tommy’s Sporting Good in Cambridge to receive the citation. Behind the counter was Fishing & Hunting Journal columnist, at the time, Chuck Prahl. I recognized him from his many photos related to his articles; and I had written few articles for the F&H J at the time. Chuck gave me his phone number and an open invitation to come fish with him.

Nearly 30 years later, our relationship has grown from mentor/protégé, to two veteran anglers sharing stories of family, and fishing trips at opposite ends of the Chesapeake. The open invitation from decades ago has led to numerous memorable outings. For me, it’s not just the fishing, it’s the history lessons, and Chuck waxing nostalgic on his life throughout the bay. I look forward to every trip.

We had planned a trip to the back bays of Ocean City for early summer. We were to target speckled trout and stripers, with the possibility of catching a red fish. Chuck had some health issues a few days prior that made him push the date for that trip later this year. Feeling better quickly, he invited he down to the Choptank a week later. Stripers close to his dock in Cambridge had left, but he had found some farther down river. This is also the time of year when you can expect a speckled sea trout or two in the mix.

Chuck is never one to give up on the deeper spots close to the marina. We checked the Route 50 bridge and a couple tripod day markers to no avail. There was ample bait at

these spots for stripers to feed on, but they weren’t there in numbers. There were a few stripers near the day markers, but they were not schooled. One of Chuck’s theories is that single fish are hard to catch. So, we moved on.

Optimism was not running high. I had never had a shallow water bite in summer with Chuck. North wind from the day before that blew out the tides; and warming water temperatures were not favorable for catching fish on shallow cover at the end of the low tide. This further damped our expectations. Yet, Chuck knew that this would be our only option. We worked our way into some of the feeder creeks and rivers on the Talbot County side of the river.

Our casts were directed to sunken rock cover that formed rips, eddies, and back flows. This is right up my alley – shallow water fishing with targeted casting. Paddle tail swim baits on light jig heads were the lure of the morning. Large baits were not needed; 3 ½ to 4 ½ -inch paddle tails did the trick. As we worked our way into the Tred Avon River, the bites were as expected for fishing the shallows in summer. Our first few spots yielded small stripers and some renegade white perch.

Working farther into the Tred Avon, we hit the magic “hour before the end of the tide” on a textbook shoreline that had all the right features. Here the bites became more frequent and the stripers were larger. Still, the stripers we were catching were an inch shy of being kept. As the tide went slack, our bites went away.

We headed back into the Choptank with the tide beginning to flood. Chuck said the next two spots were historically better at



Chuck Prahl shows a 19-inch redfish from the lower Choptank.

the top of the falling tide, but are always worth a try. We cast up onto the rocky shoal and had to reel fast to start, as not to snag our jigs. The tidal flow pushed a rip up against the shoal and stripers took advantage of the current. Here, too, the ones we caught and carefully released were just shy of 19 inches.

Our morning was winding to a close, as Chuck’s longevity on fishing trips lasts to a maximum of about 4 hours these days. I truly hope that if I live into my ninth decade as he has, that I have that much stamina. And leave it to him to keep the best spot for last. We made quick run across to the Dorchester County side of the river. Chuck mentioned that this is the area where he can count on speckled trout along with stripers.

The tide was getting better for us at this shoal. We could discern the primary and secondary rips. We started at the bigger of the two. Again, there were a couple short stripers. Several casts later my jig took a stronger strike. Could it be? Yes! It was the first, and only, keeper striper of the day at 20 inches.

We continued along the rip and my paddle tail jig took another hit.

This fight was different. I could feel thrashing head shakes. Immediately Chuck said: “That’s a trout!” Sure enough, the speckled trout was landed and put on ice. We moved up the minor rip and Chuck’s rod took a hit from strong fighter. As the fish fought closer to the boat, I saw twin spots and a beautiful blue hue on the tail. He had hooked, and landed a 19-inch red fish!

A few casts later Chuck was ready to call it quits. I knew we stayed out longer than he had planned. Even so, he still made a stop at a duck blind and a day marker for a few more casts. The irony of the day, and a pleasant one at that, was that we didn’t need a trip to the coast for the outing we had planned. All three species -- stripers, speckled trout, and redfish -- were caught in his home waters of the Choptank.

That’s another memorable trip. Low tide and warm water temps be damned, we still caught fish. We logged in a Choptank grand slam when you add in the tenacious white perch. Fishing in summer on the Choptank River never lacks for a mix for species!



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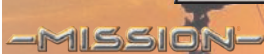


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Thousands of Invasive Fish Removed from Maryland Waters at Conowingo Dam

Thousands of invasive fish have been removed from the Chesapeake Bay watershed at the Conowingo Dam earlier this year and donated to local food banks through a continuing partnership between Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Conowingo Dam owner Constellation Energy, environmental consulting firm Normandeau Associates Inc., and local seafood wholesaler J.J. McDonnell and Co. Inc.

The fish lift at Conowingo Dam is essentially a water-filled elevator that collects migrating anadromous fish species, such as American shad, during their spawning run and transports them above the dam into the

upper Susquehanna River and their traditional spawning areas. When invasive fish enter the lift, technicians remove them by hand and send them out for beneficial use.

During the 2024 season, which ran from March to June, more than 18,000 pounds of invasive fish were removed from Maryland waters. Species prevented from passing upstream of the dam include 2,106 Chesapeake Channa, also known as northern snakehead; 746 flathead catfish; and 36 blue catfish. The number of Chesapeake Channa removed at the dam was more than double the amount removed in any year since the program began in 2021 (see chart below).

Chesapeake Channa, also known as northern snakehead, retrieved from the Conowingo Dam fish lift. Maryland Department of Natural Resources photo.

To put the harvested fish to good use, J.J. McDonnell processed most for consumption, including a portion they distributed to local food banks in Cecil County. DNR kept some fish for outreach events and scientific research to inform management toward minimizing the impact of these invasive species.



Conowingo Dam stretches across the Susquehanna River between Cecil and Harford counties. Fish lifts built onto the structure help migrating species move upriver, but also catch invasive species. Maryland Department of Natural Resources photo.



“Invasive fish pose a significant threat to ecologically and economically important native species in Maryland,” said Branson Williams, Maryland DNR’s Invasive Fishes Program Manager. “The removal effort at Conowingo Dam is a prime example of how partnership can amplify our ability to manage invasive fishes and limit their spread.”

Chesapeake Channa and blue and flathead catfish are the most notable and pervasive invasive fish in Maryland. They are all predatory species that consume large amounts of native aquatic species and have few natural predators. The department urges anglers to harvest these species when they catch them and report catches in new areas using the Invasive Species Tracker form on the DNR website.

A colorful advertisement for "Saltwater Adventures". The top half features the company name in a large, blue, stylized font. Below it, a map shows the Atlantic Ocean with "Ocean City" marked. Two large, detailed illustrations of fish, a bluefish and a striped bass, are shown. The bottom half of the ad has a blue background with white text that reads "Back Bay & Inshore Fishing with Capt Tony Batista". Below this, the location is given as "Located at Bahia Marina • Slip 5 21 Street Bayside - Ocean City, MD". At the very bottom, the website "ocsaltwater.com" and the phone number "443.235.9696" are displayed in large, bold black letters.



Rev Nolan Henson got his personal best Big Eye tuna, 143 lbs. at the Poormans. We had my two flat lines go off. I lost one reel (a 50 wide) and most off a rod, when my friend set the rod in the gunnel after he was on the left side fighting for about 30 minutes and I was on the right side fighting this fish. We put this best in the boat, we both said our work is done, we got back to OC down one 50 wide and up one personal best. We had to keep the drag tight but not locked because these beast kept dumping the reel. Fish on!!! If you get a 140 lbs with a 50 wide and half a rod please return it to me. lol.



Sandi Kennedy with a nice snakehead.

Applications Now Open for 2024 Maryland Black Bear Hunt Lottery

Hunters can now enter the lottery selection process for the annual six-day black bear hunt in Western Maryland. The cost to enter the lottery is \$15 and applications can be purchased from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) now through August 31.



Photo by Mitch Adolph, submitted to Maryland DNR Photo Contest.

The 2024 bear hunt will take place Oct 21-26 in Allegany, Frederick, Garrett, and Washington counties. The bear hunt is an important part of managing Maryland's expanding black bear population.

This year, 950 bear harvest permits will be issued through the lottery selection process. Hunters who have entered multiple years in a row receive "preference points," one additional entry for each consecutive year they have applied. Anyone who is not seeking a permit this year but may in the future can purchase a preference point for \$15 – they will not be entered in the 2024 lottery, but will not lose their advantage for next year.

Lottery entries and preference points may be purchased now through August 31 through the DNR online licensing website, a license agent, or by calling 866-344-8889 between 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

After the lottery deadline closes, hunters will be able to check the DNR black bear hunt website on September 4, 2024 to see if their DNRid was selected. Anyone with questions about the application process should email blackbear.dnr@maryland.gov.



Donna Tucker with her nice July rockfish.

SPANNING THE GLOBE



Koby Sparrow with an 11.2 lb spade caught on an offshore wreck near Cape Charles, VA



Just after noon, UnWined hooked up to a triple header of blue marlin. After releasing the first two fish, the local Bermudian team battled the grander marlin for approximately five hours before it could be subdued. Unable to bring the fish aboard the 36-foot Luhrs, the team secured the fish with ropes and buoys before slowly towing the fish to port.

Easily securing the daily jackpot for the biggest fish, UnWined will be awarded \$190,666 and is well-positioned to win the overall jackpot for the largest fish of the tournament. Adding to the impressiveness of the catch, UnWined is one of the smallest boats in the fleet and one of the few participating boats that does not have omni-sonar technology.



Mariah's Epic day catching Peacock Bass and way more species!



Jessica Harpole tagged a nice moose last fall! Definitely an exciting day for her.



By Captain Mark Galasso

I've always thought that the more you know about your quarries biology the more success you'll have in your pursuit of them. Deer hunters are the best example I can think of. They might not know what is the best deodorant to buy but they can tell you what you need to use to mask your scent from a deer standing down wind twenty feet away. They can tell you what pheromones and urines can attract a buck or a doe and when they work or don't work, They spend hours watching trail cams until they know what the deer do and when. When they feed. When they rest and when they decide it's time to reproduce. WOW. Let's take that same mentality and look at another far different animal. The Summer Flounder, *Paralichthys dentatus*, or Fluke as it's called by our northern neighbors.

Summer Flounder are part of a large family of "flatfish" which can be found in almost all brackish and salt waters throughout the world. They vary in size from the small Moses Sole, a couple of pounds, found in the Red Sea all the way up to the Giant Pacific Halibut, a couple of hundred pounds, found off the coasts of Northern California and Alaska. Flounders grow quickly but live short lives, 12 to 14 years, half of what a Striped Bass can live for. Like most fish females grow larger than males. Our Summer Flounder range on the east coast from Florida to Nova Scotia but the majority live in the mid atlantic from Cape Cod to Cape Fear. They tend to be larger in their northern range and females can grow to be up to 3 feet where males rarely grow to more than 2 feet.

Much like Striped Bass males can reproduce after only a couple of years while females take a little longer to mature. A female can produce between 450,000 and 4 million eggs and actually can reproduce multiple times in a single season.

Unlike Striped Bass which spawn in the spring inshore, Summer Flounder spawn in the fall and early winter offshore on the Continental shelf. Also unlike Striped Bass which migrate up and down the coast in a north/south migration Flounder tend to migrate east/west off the coast. However, much like our Striped Bass much of

"Tuna The Tide"

A LITTLE ON FLOUNDER AND STRIPER BIOLOGY

the driving force in these migrations is water temperature whether it is in relation to the fishes need to spawn or the fishes need to live and feed.

Larval fish of most species start as planktonic organisms. They feed and drift with other organisms in the water column, and spawning generally coincides with plankton blooms that are most conducive to provide the planktonic species the larval fish need to survive. As water temperatures change these cycles of spawning and larval feeding can get out of whack. In the Flounders case this doesn't seem to be a problem due to the offshore environment, however in the case of Striped Bass it is a real concern that temperature fluctuations and other environmental conditions are creating a scenario where larval Stripers can't find the plankton they need to survive.

So now let's concentrate on the Summer Flounder. In their first migration from offshore in towards the coast they make the journey as larvae following westerly currents. They look like any other fish with one eye on either side of their head. As they grow their diets become more varied. As they get closer to the coast and can feed on small fish and Crustaceans a weird metamorphosis happens. They settle to the bottom and one eye migrates to join it's partner on one side of the fishes head. After this metamorphosis the fish becomes either a right eyed Flounder or a left eyed Flounder and in fact the family of Flounders is divided up this way. Our Summer Flounder is a right eyed Flounder meaning if you look at the fish head on the eyes are to the right of the mouth.

Almost all fish have a darker back and a lighter belly. This is for two basic reasons. For feeding and to not be fed upon. Since Flounders become ambush feeders hiding on the bottom in the sand they generally have white bellies and darker sand colored backs. As fisherman it's important that we recognize our quarry as ambush feeders as opposed to open water feeders like the Tunas and larger pelagics.

And to put it in perspective we harvested in 2022 ten million pounds of Summer Flounder commercially worth over 26 million dollars and al-

most 8.6 million pounds recreation-ally. That's a lot of Quarry!

Over the years much like Striped Bass Flounder migrations have changed. As inshore waters have heated up larger Stripers and larger Summer Flounder have spent more time offshore and less in the shallows near the coast. Large Stripers head north earlier and earlier and Large Summer Flounder head east earlier and earlier. In the case of Flounder there seems to be an early bite in the shallow coastal Bays and creeks in April and early May but to catch larger Flounder in the summer one has to get well offshore between ten and twenty miles. The offshore Flounder tend to feed near structure which attracts various prey. They are NOT picky eaters. Sandy bottom is a must since the fish burrow in the sand and wait to pounce. Sandy bottom around coral beds and around wrecks seem to be the most productive. And Squid Strips, Gulp baits and live Spot tend to work the best. Squid strips usually are fished on bucktails but Flounder aren't that picky. Just get it close to the bottom.

In the spring the fish seem to be a bit more picky. One of the large Summer Flounders favorite foods when their inshore is Mantis Shrimp. These 3 to 5 inch Shrimp live in sand burrows in shallow water. They tend to be lively and colorful when out of their holes. Flounder feeding in the spring seem to like a lot of glitter and flash on Flounder rigs. Spinners, bucktail and beads dress thing up. Minnows and Squid strips add scent. As the currents get stronger and the tide drops Flounder tend to get on channel edges and wait for food to come off the shallow flats, however they will (and do) get into a couple feet of water and hunt.

Flounder are built for short bursts of speed and have extremely good eyesight for a fish. I've been trolling spoons at 5 knots in 20 feet of water and had small Flounder catch my spoon. And anyone who has hooked a large Halibut knows that when they get spooked and head

back to the bottom all you can do is hold on until they get there and start pumping again. Another anatomical nuance for Flounder is the way they grab food. They don't suck in a lot of water by gulping prey like some fish. Their mouth tends to be small and boney hence requiring the fish to grab it's prey and then gulp it down. Some Flounders that feed on small prey like worms and shrimp don't need lots of teeth but OUR fish, the Summer Flounder, have lots of needle sharp teeth. Experienced Fluke fisherman will tell you not to set the hook on the first indication of a strike. Lift the rod gently until you feel the fish actually gulp the bait down.

As Flounder become larger and larger they tend to spend less time inshore. In fact even 50 years ago when I worked on Head boats out of Barnegat Light, New Jersey in the summer if we wanted numbers we'd fish Barnegat Bay and the Inlet. If in fact we were targeting trophies we usually went to the wrecks between 5 and 15 miles offshore. Back then we drifted with belly strips of various fish from flounder to Mackerel offshore and minnows, squid strips and sand eels inshore. There seems to be a lot of parallels when we talk about Stripers and Flounder. It seems that Striped Bass also are changing the way they use their southern spawning areas like Chesapeake Bay. Larger fish seem to be coming into the Bay during the winter to be close to their spawning areas so that when conditions are right they can do their thing and get back to the ocean as soon as possible. Coastal areas like the Bay are much more prone to small increases in water temperatures where much deeper offshore waters are not.

Like all fisherman and hunters we look for patterns in our quarries behavior. If you understand the animals basic biology it is easier to understand why they behave like they do and how environmental changes affect things. Keep this in mind the next time you target Flounder, Stripers and anything else you might pursue. And by the way Flounder make GREAT table fare!

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Boating Accidents Trend Down, Arrests Up During Operation Dry Water 2024

The Maryland Natural Resources Police reported a statistically safer weekend than years past during the July 4 weekend this year.

Despite being the busiest boating holiday, no boating fatalities were recorded on Independence Day weekend. Nine boating accidents occurred on Maryland's waterways, down from 12 in each of the previous two years.

NRP officers made nine Operating While Under the Influence of Alcohol (OUI) arrests during the agency's "Operation Dry Water" heightened enforcement period from July 4-6. This was the highest number of arrests NRP recorded since making 12 arrests during Operation Dry Water in 2018.

Operation Dry Water was launched in 2009 by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators. NRP officers have participated in the joint effort since its inception, conducting "saturation patrols" in which increased numbers of officers concentrate in areas where drinking and boating are known to occur in Maryland.

Newly introduced into Maryland law as of July 1, 2024, "Nick's Law" allows the court system to prohibit OUI offenders from operating a vessel in state waters for up to two years, or if the violation results in a fatality, up to five years. Previously, offenders could only be prohibited from operating for just one year, and two years in fatal incidents.

Below are the charges filed during Operation Dry Water 2024. Each was charged with Operating While Under the Influence of Alcohol and other offenses

A 24-year-old Camp Springs man was charged after a personal watercraft collision that occurred in Rock Creek near Fort Smallwood State Park on July 4.

A 30-year-old Denton man was charged after being stopped for improper navigation lighting on the Choptank River in Cambridge on July 4.

A 23-year-old Eden man was charged after he was spotted operating a personal watercraft negligently in the Sinepuxent Bay in Ocean City on July 4.

A 44-year-old Sparrows Point man was charged after being stopped for operating without navigation lights in Bear Creek on July 5.

A 55-year-old Rockville man was charged after two vessels collided in Deep Creek Lake on July 5, causing injuries to several

occupants and heavy damage to both boats.


A 24-year-old Chester man was charged after a U.S. Coast Guard safety inspection in Kent Narrows on July 6.

A 59-year-old Cambridge man was charged after a U.S. Coast Guard safety inspection on the Choptank River in Cambridge on July 6.

A 50-year-old Jefferson Hills, Pa. man was charged after being stopped for improper navigation lighting on Deep Creek Lake on July 6.

A 22-year-old Middle River man was charged after officers located him on a fishing boat after a reported physical altercation at Wilson Point Park Boat Ramp on Dark Head Creek on July 6.

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Fisherman towed by fish, catches 135-pound tuna in Raritan Bay

One would be hard-pressed to recall the last time a bluefin tuna was caught in Raritan Bay but it happened Wednesday when a 135-pound bluefin took Steve Nosti of Holmdel for a Nantucket Sleighride - around Flynn's Knoll and through the Sandy Hook Rip in Nosti's 12-foot aluminum Jon boat, the Silver Bullet.

Nosti, who works in the charter industry and has a permit for such fish, had seen the bluefin in tight to the beach and left from his dock slip at Pleasure Bay Yacht Basin in Oceanport after sunrise to try to get one. He was outfitted with an 80-pound class tuna rod and reel and some Ron-Z lures. He called it "a shot in the dark."

It's about an 8 or 9 mile ride from the marina to the tip of Sandy Hook, so Nosti said he stopped at Bahrs Landing in Highlands to fuel up his 12-gallon tank. Then he was off to area known as the Rip, where the bay and ocean currents collide.

Nosti said the water temperature Wednesday morning was 75 degrees and there were a ton of bluefish and small baitfish in the Rip, which most likely explains the presence of the much larger bluefin tuna. It did not take long for one of the bluefin to be lured by the flashy jig darting in and out of the water and make a run at it.

Nosti said he was on the bay side of the rip when the reel started to hum. Once hooked up, the bluefin towed him for a couple of miles toward the ocean. As the fish pulled, the Jon boat acted as drag with Nosti gaining line until he had the big fish boat side where he could gaff it.

The bluefin haven popping up in several locales and fishing grounds from the beach out to the Chicken Canyon and some of the wrecks even further east. Fishermen's Headquarters in Ship Bottom reported one even washed up in the surf on Long Beach Island. It's reminiscent of the stories the old salts tell of horse mackerel, or giant tuna, shredding the pound nets set up in the surf.

He took a ride to test out the new fuel injection line he installed before a scheduled tuna charter he had on Thursday. He checked a few inshore spots before running about 90 minutes from Manasquan Inlet. He said the area was loaded with sand-eels.

He trolled ballyhoo through the bait and soon the rod was screaming with a runaway 200-pound bluefin tuna. The fish was decked and Dos Santos spent the rest of Wednesday handing out tuna steaks.



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“Fishin’ Back East”

BUZZ BAIT SAVVY

By Jim Gronaw

Over the years, literally decades, I have been fond of tossing the simple but effective buzz bait for late summer and early fall bass, both largemouths and smallmouths. Early attempts with these topwaters proved to be so discouraging to me as I would miss the great majority of the strikes I had on them. It was me, usually, and I had the bad habit of setting the hook too soon rather than waiting to feel the weight of the fish. Over time, I developed a knack for hooking more, and sometimes bigger bass with the buzz bait. To this day, it remains the most exciting forms of bass fishing for this burnt-out bluegiller.

Many companies make buzz baits, as well as a slew of independent lure manufacturers. Sizes run from 1/8th ounce minis to 5/8 the ounce hulks that entice the largest and most aggressive fish. Most of the time I’m throwing a 3/8th or 1/4 ounce model to target largemouths in the 3-pound range or smallies over the 2-pound mark. As a topwa-

ter bait, the buzzes are primarily a warm weather option when fish are looking up or shallow enough where a disturbance on the water can get their attention. Strikes can be anywhere from soft, subtle smacks off the surface or an explosive blast that rockets the lure skyward and it’s a total miss.

Blade materials vary, as lightweight metal, aluminum or Lexan is the choice, and the goal is to have a blade that will spin right along on the top at a fairly slow retrieve rate. High riding buzz baits usually have a flat or banana style body dynamic that enables the bait to plane easily on the surface without a fast retrieve. The slower the speed, the easier it is for a bass to track and overtake the bait as it lunges for the disturbance that it makes. Additionally, a wire offset on the lower body that holds the hook allows for better, cleaner hooksets.

Many anglers have long claimed the need for a plastic trailer on the hook and sometimes the



One big plus when using buzz baits is that they usually attract larger bass.

addition of a trailer hook will catch bass otherwise completely missed. I have found that the plastic addition actually leads to more missed strikes than solid hookups. I occasionally use a trailer hook, especially when the fish are tentative and seem to be striking short. But mostly, I have better success with baits that have the skirt just slightly past the bend of the hook.

Heralded as a lure for baitcasting gear, we have had good success with these lures using medium heavy spinning gear and braided lines in 20 to 30-pound test. Start your retrieve as soon as the lure hits the water rather than allowing it to fall in the water column and requiring increased speed to get it back up to the surface. Often, quality bass will pound a buzz bait the instant it hits the water, prompting a huge reaction strike. I actually use my hand to flip the bail of the spinning reel just before it lands on the water and get the bait moving, rather than sinking.

We also like to tie the line directly to the bait with either the Palomar knot or a doubled, 4-wrap clinch knot. Do not “improve” the doubled, 4-wrap clinch knot as it is very difficult to cinch up. Some anglers use 15 to 30-pound test fluorocarbon but I feel this is not necessary as the line during lure travel is out of the water during the retrieve and fish will not be line shy on this reaction bait. Be careful not to make casts that are too long that challenge hook-setting capabilities of your tackle. Indeed, a nice long cast can get a strike, but even with braid setting hooks in the tough mouths of bass can be chal-

lenging. We like to make shorter, accurate tosses in the 20-to-40-foot range and get better results with our hooksets.

Buzz baits have been around a long time and most people have their favorites. Currently, I have enjoyed success with the Wild Thang Series of buzz baits from GA. Boy Lures from Craig James of Waycross, Georgia. He makes a variety of sizes and color combos for those deep south, black-water rivers and streams where quick ambush strikes rule the day. The long-established Buzz King, by Strike King Lures, is another fan favorite over the decades of buzzing for bass. There are many others out there as well. Both two and three-bladed lures catch their share of fish and keep in mind that the slower you retrieve the bait the better hookset ratio you are likely to have. Just remember to set the hook when you feel the weight of the fish rather than when you see the strike.

If you are going night fishing for bass then the buzz bait can be a good choice for exciting, explosive topwater action. Just keep in mind that you should set hooks to the right or left side of your body to avoid a lure flying back at your face due to a missed strike. And the after-hours gig might be the time to use the stinger hook for those near-miss attempts by marauding bass. Any time the water temperatures are above 60 degree F and the fish are feeding shallow can be a good time to tie one of these on. It’s exciting, fun and can lead to some of the biggest bass of the year when you toss buzz baits in your favorite lakes, ponds and rivers.



Kayak efforts are a good way to put the buzz on the bass.

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Get lost in some good books about the Chesapeake Bay and the natural world

I always have my nose stuck in a book, but summer really lends itself to carefree reading. Camping, hammock time in the backyard, beach days — wherever you go, the too-hot afternoons and the long hours of daylight make reading one of the best summer pastimes. I have not read all of these books personally, but many were featured at a Chesapeake Collective art project at last year's Chesapeake Watershed Forum.

The Chesapeake Collective is a creative initiative that began in 2014 as part of the annual Watershed Forum, but now has a life of its own. It is the foundation for the type of social movement needed to meet our collective restoration goals. The collective encourages the use of shared spaces for uplifting unique voices and cultivating thoughtful conversations. The 2023 project, titled "Books We Love," built a shared library for conference attendees to further elevate environmental inspiration across text and time. Visit the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay's website, allianceforthebay.org, and search "Chesapeake Collective" to learn more about it.

Then, hit up your local library and lose yourself in a book this summer.

Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail By Bill Bryson (memoir, humor, travelogue, 1998). Bryson is, first and foremost, a comedic writer — not an expert hiker. If you read this book looking for advice about traveling the Appalachian Trail, you won't find it. About 75% of thru-hiking attempts on the roughly 2,200-mile trail are unsuccessful, and Bryson falls squarely in that majority. But I appreciate the realistic way he describes his attempt; I have no delusions of ever being a successful AT hiker. I like reading about other people's experiences while surrounded by nature in my own backyard.

Braiding Sweetgrass: Indig-

enous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants By Robin Wall Kimmerer (non-fiction, Indigenous American philosophy, 2013). Braiding Sweetgrass is highly recommended by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay staff. Since publication, it has exploded on all the top lists of environmental books, and for good reason. Kimmerer's book provides extensive knowledge and perspective on ecology and ethnobotany that has been overlooked, downplayed or blatantly disregarded in the Western mainstream environmental field. It also addresses the spiritual aspect of our connection to living things.

Chesapeake Requiem: A Year with the Watermen of Vanishing Tangier Island By Earl Swift (nonfiction, 2018). This is the quintessential book about the modern Chesapeake Bay, its unique culture and all of the challenges it faces. Tangier, VA, is a town of only a few hundred residents located 12 miles offshore in the Chesapeake. The island is rapidly shrinking, both in population and actual land. Despite being a stronghold of the blue crab industry, Tangier is the proverbial canary in the coal mine when it comes to climate change impacts. Residents of the island have ties to the nature of the land in ways most Americans cannot fathom. Chesapeake Requiem asks a good question: What is our measuring stick for determining when to save a community?

The Water Knife By Paolo Bacigalupi (science fiction, climate fiction, 2015). Water in the Western U.S. is a complicated business. In these more arid landscapes, the Colorado River often fails to reach its outfall at the Pacific Ocean, and Denver pulls its water across the continental divide. Wars have been fought over access to water. The Water Knife takes that concept into a parched near future, where climate change refugees struggle to be able to cross state borders, and assassin-

terrorist-saboteurs called Water Knives work for nefarious organizations to secure control of water sources.

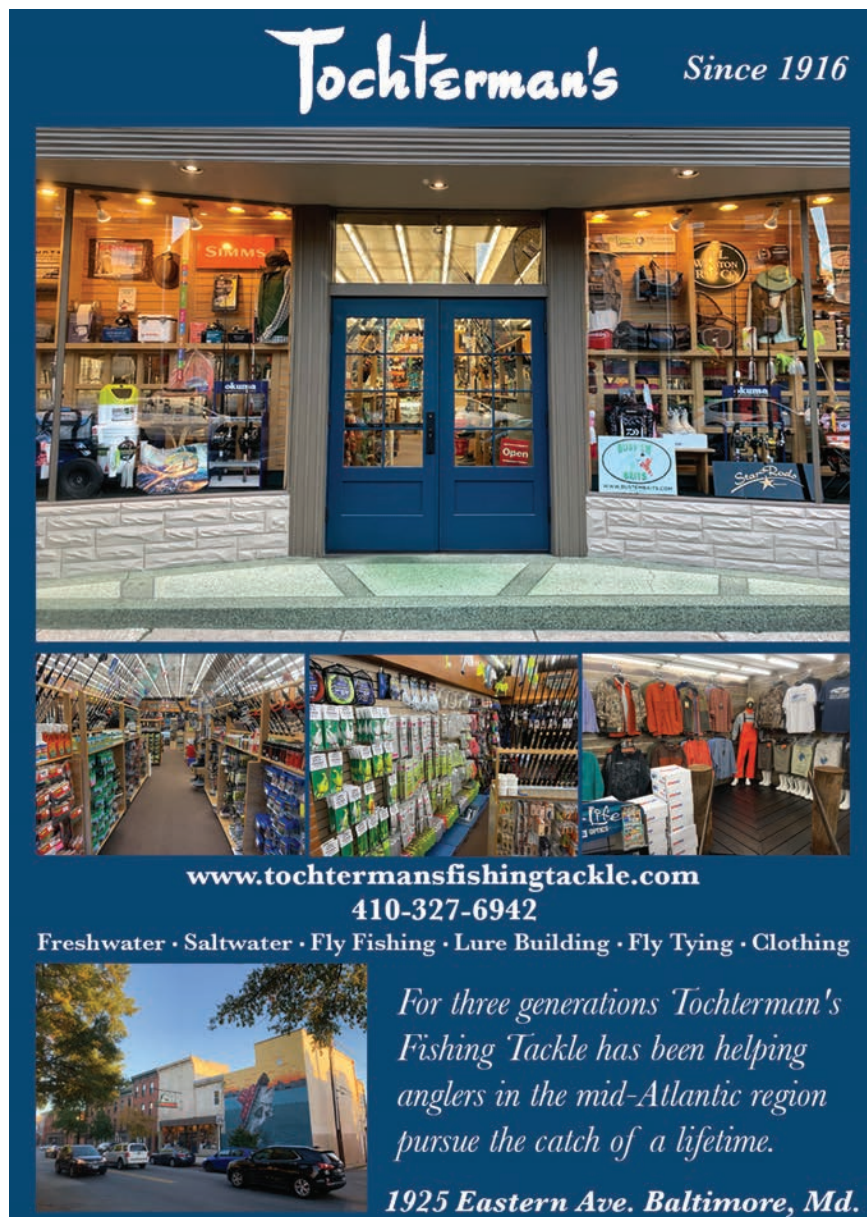
Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder By Richard Louv (nonfiction, 2005). When it received the Audubon medal in 2008, Last Child in the Woods was lauded for "sounding the alarm about the health and societal costs of children's isolation from the natural world." Nearly 20 years have passed since the book was first published, and one could argue that the disconnection between youth and nature has worsened. However, with increasing thanks to this book, so has awareness and the effort to get kids outside again.

Beautiful Swimmers: Watermen, Crabs and the Chesapeake Bay

By William Warner (nonfiction, 1976). If all you know about blue crabs is how delicious they are, then this might be the book for you. Awarded the Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction the year after it was published, Beautiful Swimmers explores all aspects of the iconic critter: its life stages, how to pick a crab and illustrations of equipment used for harvesting. It also goes into the history and traditions of the people who work the crab boats.

This is far from an exhaustive list of recommendations. So find something that works for you and spend time this summer exploring the natural world from the comfort of a good chair.

Written by Cathleen Anthony. She is the Pennsylvania projects coordinator for the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay.



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“Montana Grant”



By Grant Soukup

SIMPLE FISH

Fish is a healthy and tasty food source. Many folks enjoy Fish Friday, for religious reasons, or simply eating fish religiously. The nutrients and protein found in fish are healthy and nutritious.

When did you eat your first fish? Back in the day, I remember catching bluegills and small bass in the Potomac River. We often just cleaned the fish and cooked on the bank over a campfire. Later my grandmother would batter and bake/fry our catch. She also taught me how to filet and remove all the bones. My Uncle Jim loved fish but would panic when he located a tiny bone in his portions.

When we travel to fishing destinations, fish are always on the menu. Alaska treks return with boxes of our fileted and frozen catch.

There are many healthy and tasty ways to cook fish. Here is one of my favorite and easiest ways to make a delicious fish dinner.

SIMPLE FISH

3 lbs. fish filets. Trout works especially well.

2 tbsp. butter

1 lemon

½ of French Dressing. Homemade is easy and fun.

Old Bay seasoning. You can use just salt and pepper, but Old Bay is great with fish too.

Place the filets in aluminum foil. Dot the butter on top of the dried filets. Now spread the salad dressing over the filets. Add the Old Bay. Now wrap and seal the foil so it will not leak. This may take 2 layers.

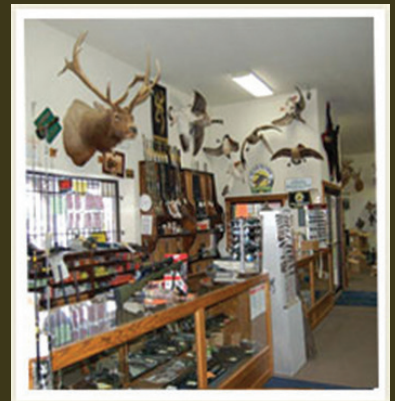
Place the serving sized trout packages on campfire coals, a grill. You need around 350 degrees for a thorough 10 -15-minute cook. Thicker or bigger filets take longer.

Serve on the foil, to save a paper plate. You can also add the cooked fish onto a fresh roll or bread. If you like fish tacos, flake the meat and load up a tortilla.

Once you try this recipe, fish will become a regular part of your Catch and Eat diet.



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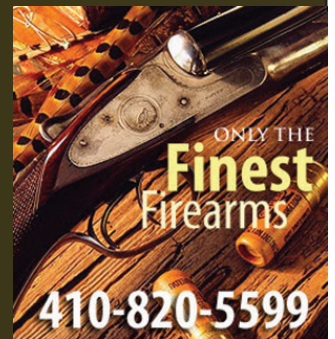


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Hunting outfitter tricked clients with staged mountain lion hunts in Utah, feds say

A big-game hunting outfitter and his houndsman tricked their clients into participating in an illegal hunting method in Utah, federal officials said. The duo pleaded guilty to conspiring to defraud their high-paying clients by leading them on “canned hunts for commercial gain,” the U.S. District Attorney’s Office in Utah said July 22 in a news release.

A “canned hunt” is “when a cougar is treed, cornered, held at bay or its ability to escape is otherwise restricted to allow a person who was not a member of the initial hunting party to arrive and take the cougar,” charging documents say. Canned hunts violate the concept of fair chase, an ethical framework for hunters that prevents them from gaining an unfair advantage over game animals, according to nonprofit hunting organization Boone and Crockett Club. Utah law requires that when dogs are used to hunt cougars, the hunter who intends to kill the cougar needs to be present when the dogs are released and must participate in the hunt until it’s done, the documents say. Wade Lemon, of Holden, Utah, has long owned and operated Wade Lemon Hunting — and tricked his clients into believing they were participating in live — not canned — mountain lion hunts, federal officials said. He sold his guiding services for cougar hunts for \$5,000 to \$7,000 per hunt, and his houndsman, Kasey Yardley, would often corner the mountain lion long before the client arrived for the hunt, officials said. Lemon’s company website boasts of an almost 100% success rate on trophy mountain lion hunts — which are notoriously risky, unpredictable and difficult. The website claimed more than 3,000 clients had “achieved their dream of harvesting a Trophy Mountain Lion.”

“What the website does not mention is that Wade Lemon has been cheating,” federal officials said. “His cougar hunts were canned.” Those hunting mountain lions can typically expect to spend several long days tracking a cougar, officials said. During one canned hunt, Lemon’s client was “on the mountain for only

37 minutes before the hunt was over” — because while the client didn’t know it, Yardley’s dogs had already cornered the cougar before the client even got there, sentencing documents say.

State wildlife officials have long suspected Lemon of leading high-paying clients on trophy hunts using the illegal method and have been investigating him for years, The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources has investigated him more than eight times for “allegedly breaking the law to ensure a successful hunt,” the outlet reported. Infamously, Lemon faced multiple felony charges for allegedly baiting a black bear that Donald Trump Jr. shot in 2018 and making it seem like a legitimate hunt, the outlet reported along with the Utah Investigative Journalism Project.

On July 18, Lemon was sentenced to two months in prison, ordered to pay a \$10,500 fine and banned from commercial activities on federal land for one year, officials said.

Yardley, 47, of Enoch, was sentenced to six months of bench probation after he pleaded guilty to his involvement in the scheme with Lemon, officials said. He is also banned from federal land for commercial purposes as part of his probationary terms. McClatchy News reached out to attorneys for both Lemon and Yardley but did not receive an



immediate response from either side. “This is a unique and important case because hunting is an important part of Utah’s culture,” said U.S. Attorney Trina A. Higgins of the District of Utah in the news release. “Canned hunts are illegal because they create an unfair advantage and can lead to inhumane treatment of the

animals. It is also unfair to hunters who paid thousands of dollars for a guide and had no idea that they were participating in a canned hunt. My office and our law enforcement partners take these crimes seriously because they negatively impact our state and the hunting community.”

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Coastal Report

By Capt. Mark Sampson

Casting Dilemmas

After guiding anglers for many years and watching thousands of folks at all skill levels trying to put a bait or lure in front of, or at least near to a fish, I've concluded that, given optimal conditions and decent tackle, most fishermen are pretty fair casters and can usually drop a bait at least "close enough" to have a shot at hooking whatever it is they're trying to catch. The problem is, out on the water it's common for fishermen to have anything but the type of conditions that allow for a simple cast to get the job done. Wind, currents, spooky fish, other boats, structures, and long distances often make getting a hook to a fish challenging for some and virtually impossible for others. But where there's a will there's a way, and eventually many fishermen either learn or invent techniques that overcome whatever is that's keeping them from depositing an offering to their quarry.

Take "distance" for instance. Of all the things that keep casters from reaching the strike zone, too great a gap between fish and fisherman is the number one dilemma. If the fish are 50-yards out but you can only cast 35-yards you've got a problem. Sometimes anglers can get a bit more distance just by adding a little more weight to their line or switching to a lure that's heavier and has less aerodynamic drag. But often those options can't be employed quickly enough before the fish have spooked or just moved on requiring that anglers find other, more creative, ways to reach out to their fish.

One way to get the hooks where they need to be is to forget casting altogether and let the current do the work. By positioning the boat directly up current of where the fish are holding, anglers can sometimes drift floating lures or baits suspended under floats back to the fish. Once they get where they need to be, lures can be worked back into the current or baits left to hang in the strike zone. This same technique can be used to fish under or around objects that would hinder a normal cast such as low bridges or docks, or to get line way back behind the boat or out from a shoreline. There have been times when I've had to float heavy lures back to fish and the only way I could so was to cut little squares from a cheap foam cooler and put the lure on the foam like a mini life raft. I let the lure drift back on the foam until it's where I want it to be and then simply tug on the line to pull the lure off the float and put it

to work. An unconventional technique, but at times it's the only way I can make things work.

A different casting dilemma occurs when anglers must get baits or lures out to fish that are likely to spook if the offering plops down close by. Food raining from the sky is not a normal occurrence for most fish so a sudden and noisy appearance of something, even though it looks like food, can send an entire school fleeing. As solution is to cast well beyond the quarry and then retrieve the bait or lure so that it passes in front of the fish. If the fish are moving, the line should be cranked in at a rate so that they intercept the bait or lure but not the line. For really spooky fish this sometimes requires casting well in front and beyond the fish and quickly cranking the reel until the offering is in the travel path then stopping the retrieve and allowing the fish to swim up to it. Care must be taken never to cast directly over fish; otherwise the line itself will likely spook them during the retrieve. While these techniques are mostly used when anglers can actually see the fish they are casting to, even if the fish cannot be seen anglers should try to at least imagine where they think the fish "should be" and make their casts accordingly.

Another rather unconventional way to quietly present a bait or lure to a fish is to actually cast it up onto something above the water such as a pier, a rock, a marsh bank, or the beach and then gently slip it off structure and into the waters. Particularly if the structure is low to the water this can allow the bait to slide in among the fish so silently that even the most skittish will not be alarmed. Naturally, anglers who at-

tempt this technique must take great care not to snag whatever it is they're casting up onto, otherwise their attempt at stealth will backfire on them.

A more common way to get a bait or lure in front of spooky fish is to drop the line in the water and then make a wide circle around the fish with your boat while letting line out. Once on the other side, the line can be cranked back in thus drawing the terminal end to the fish you're trying to catch. A downside to this tactic is that you often have a lot of line off your reel before you even get a bite and if the fish are big and the

tackle light you could get "spooled." The good thing is that done properly the bait or lure will follow a bit of an arch during the retrieve giving a very lifelike appearance of a baitfish skirting around a school of predators.

The design and engineering of modern rods and reels has made it easier than ever for anglers of all skill levels to deliver accurate casts to the fish they're trying to catch. But no engineering can account for all the unique challenges anglers will encounter. For that, fishermen will always have to rely on their own experience and resourcefulness.



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Ernest Hemingway
“Somebody behind you while you are fishing is as bad as someone looking over your shoulder while you write a letter to your girl.”



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“The Last Word”

TWO DECADES OF BEAR HUNTING

By Steve Huettner

To paraphrase the American Author Horace Greely, “Go west young man (or woman) if you want to hunt bears. By the time you are reading this article, you will have hopefully entered the black bear lottery. Come September 950 lucky individuals (along with one or two of their hunting buddies) will have been notified by Maryland’s Department of Resources that they are recipients of a permit to hunt black bears in Allegany, Garrett, Frederick, and Washington Counties.

The 2024 black bear season will be the 21st year of black bear hunting in the Free State and heralds the conservation success story of the species. The changes that have occurred in the hunt over the last twenty years are nothing short of incredible.

The road to that initial season bear hunt was one filled with twists and turns and a few attempted roadblocks. Before any hunting could begin in 2002 a black bear task force was assembled to look at all things related to the black bear. The commission was comprised of residents from Western MD, sportsmen, elected county officials, animal rights organizations, the MD farm bureau, and biologists. Several of the findings were to ensure long-term population viability,

maintain the cultural carrying capacity, conserve habitat, address human-bear conflicts, and reopen a bear hunting season. After completion of the task force report, the DNR came up with the 10-year black bear management plan to chart a course for a decade.

While hunters were eagerly awaiting the initial season, those opposed to any hunting did a full-court press via the Maryland General Assembly in 2003 to prevent hunting by reclassifying black bears as non-game animals. After some theatrical and colorful testimony by the anti-hunting crowd, science and biology prevailed in the end and 2004 would see the reopening of black bear hunting.

After 51 years (the last bear hunt in Maryland occurred in 1953) that 2004 season saw 200 lucky hunters draw a permit and 20 bears were checked in on opening day and closing day of the season. The first several years of the bear hunt required calling a phone number to see how many bears had been killed and if the season was still open. Now, the season runs for six consecutive days without a cap on the number of bears. The initial few years of the hunt saw lucky tag holders having to attend a pre-hunt class on bears and habitats to get their tag.

The health of black bears in Maryland is an estimated 2000, and they are now found in multiple counties. Black bears seem to find the habitat of western Maryland amenable for breeding and raising a family.

Hunter demand to participate in the hunt over the last twenty years has averaged about 3700 hunters hoping to get drawn (from a low of 2200 hunters in 2005 to a high of 5200 hunters in 2020). Hunter’s success rate over the last twenty years has averaged 20%. This is considerably higher than surrounding states that have a black bear season and even more impressive since Maryland does not allow the use of bait or dogs.

Bear hunting in Maryland involves knowledge of bears, what they like to eat, and some boot leather. Over the last twenty years, Maryland hunters have learned how to successfully hunt bears. 2016 saw the most bears harvested at 167, and the 2016-2020 time period saw an average of 139 bears. The last three years have seen a decrease in the num-

bers taken (86% avg) and the success rate (9.1% avg)

Maryland DNR deserves credit for timing the season when bears are constantly looking for food to put on calories for the upcoming winter. This means that a hunter has a chance of seeing and connecting with a bear regardless of what time they are in the woods.

After two decades of successful bear hunting, the 2024 season will see the 950 permits given out, along with a 6 day season without a quota. A far cry from the first eight years that saw less than 260 permits a year.

I have been fortunate enough to draw a tag and participate in multiple bears hunts since its inception. Everyone hunt has been an adventure, with plenty of work, and even some success. I tell those getting drawn is the best, low cost hunt you can ask for. Add in ample public lands, some willing private landowners, low hunter density, high bear numbers who are on the prowl for food and it’s a no brainer.

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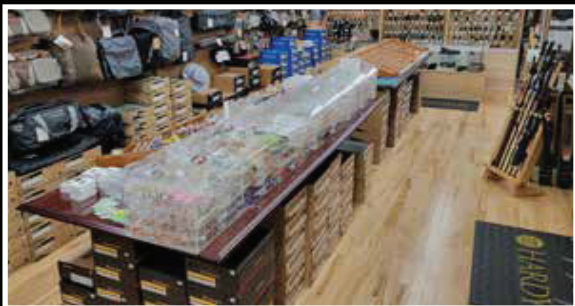
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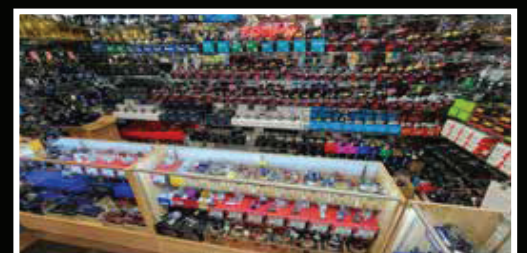
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Recipe of the Month

BLACKENED COBIA TACO BOWL

INGREDIENTS

Blackened Cobia

2 6-8oz cobia fish fillets, skin off

2 teaspoons chili powder

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon paprika

1/8 teaspoon black pepper or cayenne pepper

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

1 tablespoon avocado oil

Fish Taco Bowl

10 oz package frozen brown or white rice

8 oz pre-shredded slaw mix

1 sliced mango

1 tablespoon distilled white vinegar or lime juice*

1/2 teaspoon honey

2 teaspoons olive oil

1/4 cup mayonnaise

1/2-1 teaspoon favorite hot sauce

Optional: Cilantro, chopped tomatoes, chopped radish



DIRECTIONS

In a small bowl, mix together the chili powder, garlic powder, paprika, kosher salt, and pepper. Pat both sides of the cobia with the spice mixture.

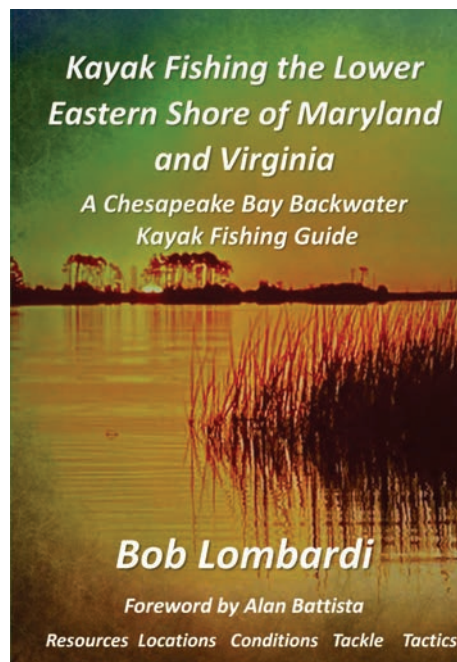
Using a large pan, heat avocado oil over medium high heat. When oil is shimmering and hot, add the seasoned cobia and sear for 4-5 minutes, until blackened and crispy. Flip and cook another 3-4 minutes until blackened and cooked through.

Meanwhile, whisk together the vinegar, honey, and olive oil in a large bowl. Toss in slaw mixture and stir till slaw is well-coated. Place in the fridge. The slaw will soften over the next 10-15 minutes.

Mix together the mayonnaise and hot sauce and taste, adding more hot sauce for more spice. In a large bowl, place the rice and slaw at the bottom, serve the cobia fillet on top with mango, spicy mayo, and whatever other additions you like.

Book of the Month

KAYAK FISHING THE LOWER EASTERN SHORE OF MARYLAND AND VIRGINIA: A CHESAPEAKE BAY BACKWATER KAYAK FISHING GUIDE



This book is a kayak fishing guide to the backwaters of Maryland and Virginia's lower eastern shore. Topics cover trip planning, resources, locations, tides, tackle and tactics. Learn strategies to find and fish new locations successfully targeting a variety of hard structure and grass flats. Included are over 100 color photos, maps and charts to illustrate your journey into this amazing fishery. Locations, case studies, and setting up your kayak for success are all covered. If you are kayak angler who loves catching rockfish, speckled trout and redfish in beautiful locations with clear water this is for you!



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Avid Kayak and Shore Fisherman from Solomons becomes Eleventh FishMaryland Master Angler

Eric Packard of Calvert County has earned a Master Angler Milestone Award under the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) FishMaryland program. The award recognizes recreational anglers who catch ten trophy-sized fish of different species in Maryland. Packard is the eleventh Master Angler since the program began in 2019.

In addition to being an extremely avid angler—fishing an average of 240 days per year—Packard serves as a commissioner on the Maryland Sports Fisheries Advisory Commission, representing the tidal and non-tidal recreational anglers in southern Maryland.

“A cast not taken is a fish not caught,” said Packard. “So get out and take that cast, you can’t catch a Maryland citation-sized fish if you don’t. It all starts with a simple cast.”

The FishMaryland program includes dozens of species from both salt and freshwater. Packard submitted entries for all ten catches and received individual certificates for each catch. The department will present the Master Angler Milestone Award certificate and a gift card prize to Bass Pro Shops at its store in Hanover, Maryland. Packard caught his tenth FishMaryland eligible fish, a spotted seatrout, on July 2, 2024, off of Point Lookout.

Packard’s qualifying catches, in order, were:

- Chain pickerel – 26 inches
- Largemouth bass – 22.25 inches
- Chesapeake Channa (northern snakehead) – 30 inches
- Red drum – 45 inches
- Crappie – 15 inches
- Spanish mackerel – 22 inches
- Hickory shad – 18 inches
- Carp – 31 inches
- Striped bass – 43 inches
- Spotted seatrout – 24 inches

Packard fishes frequently in Southern Maryland and in other parts of the state in fresh, brackish, and salt waters. He fishes mainly by kayak and shore, but also fishes on power boats with his extensive network of fishing friends. He is a contributing writer to FishTalk Magazine, providing content about kayak fishing, shoreline fishing, and weekly reports on fishing around the Chesapeake Bay region, fresh, and saltwater.



Eric Packard holds a hickory shad. Photo courtesy of Eric Packard

During the rare times when Packard is not fishing, he paints as a self-taught artist working in oil paintings, ink or pencil drawings, and pastels. Packard worked in IT for the national office of the United Association of Plumbers and Pipe Fitters before retiring.

Packard has fished since youth and recalls his first time fishing alone in Kansas, where his father was stationed with the Army. “One day my mom said I could fish a nearby pond,” Packard said. “I remember finding a topwater bait hanging in a bush. I tied it onto my Zebco 77, took a cast, and a largemouth bass blew up on the bait. I believe I ran straight home to show my mom the fish! That fish was hooked and so was I.”

FishMaryland is Maryland’s recreational fishing award program and is a fun way to explore year-round recreational fishing and enjoy affordable, accessible, diverse, and high-quality fishing opportunities. More information on the Master Angler Milestone Award and the FishMaryland program is available on the program’s website.

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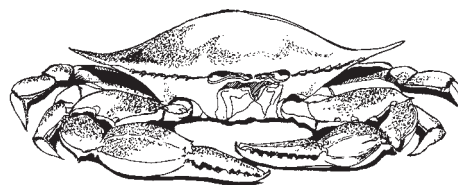
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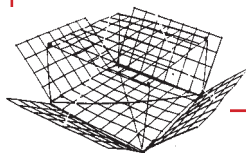
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