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David Parks with a nice Whitetail.



Kelly Double and crew on a good diver hunt with Tuscarora Outfitters. Photo courtesy of Nature's Best.



Trevor Hammon's group is all smiles.



Hunter Hill with his stag.

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Fishing & Hunting Journal

Volume 33, Number 8

February 24/March 24

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SNOW GEESE
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Fishing & Hunting Journal

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www.fishingandhuntingjournal.com

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BY INSPIRATION MINISTRIES

God's Priorities

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.—1 John 4:1 NASB

Millions of people today live in spiritual confusion. Fostered by an intense media barrage, society is overwhelmed with messages about the occult. More than two-thirds of Americans believe in the paranormal.

According to a recent study, interest in the paranormal is particularly high among those people "with more liberal views of the Bible" and those who don't regularly attend church. These people are particularly vulnerable because they are not solidly grounded. In contrast, there is a major difference between people who regularly attend church and believe in the Bible.

The Bible warns that deceptive spirits are at work in the world. This is why we need discernment to know the truth. We are warned not to "believe every spirit, but test the spirits." Realize that only the spirit that "confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" is from God. We also are warned about a "spirit of antichrist," a spirit that denies that Jesus is Lord (vs. 2-3).

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would "testify about Me" (John 15:26). This is why we need to be led by and filled with the Spirit. Commit to Jesus as your Lord.

Be alert for deception. Pray about any questionable issues. Fill your mind with the Bible, and make it the basis of your beliefs. Test the spirits. Be sure God's Spirit is leading you.

Reflection Question: How can you cultivate a spirit of discernment?



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Maryland Pursuing Actions to Control Invasive Catfish after Federal Fisheries Disaster Declined

Last month, the U.S. Department of Commerce notified Maryland Gov. Wes Moore that it has declined Maryland's request for a federal commercial fisheries disaster declaration that was sought to help address the economic and ecological damage caused by the spread of invasive catfish and snakeheads in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Maryland made the unique request in March as a way to highlight and mitigate the harm that invasive Chesapeake blue catfish, flathead catfish, and snakehead have on economically important Bay species such as blue crabs and menhaden, which the invasives eat. Under federal law, fishery disaster requests can be granted after a state experiences a large, sudden, and unexpected decrease in fish stock that causes a significant loss in a commercial fishery. Commerce ruled that blue catfish have not had sufficient impact on commercial fishery revenues to qualify for fisheries disaster aid.

In the letter notifying Maryland of its decision, U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo wrote that NOAA Fisheries recognizes the challenges invasive species have created in the Bay ecosystem and offered to discuss potential opportunities in the future with Maryland.

"We're disappointed in the decision, but also understand the ruling due to the limits of federal law surrounding fisheries disasters," said Maryland Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz.

"We will continue to work with our federal partners to determine what form of federal assistance can help us mitigate the continued and pervasive spread of blue catfish and other invasive species impacting commercial fisheries in the Bay. However, this was just one of several efforts underway to tackle this issue. Maryland is taking proactive steps on its own to limit the spread of blue catfish and other invasive species."

In November, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) hired a dedicated program manager to coordinate strategies across agencies and industries to reduce populations of invasive fish in Maryland.

DNR is also:
Increasing blue catfish research and monitoring programs;
Urging recreational and commercial anglers to increase their harvest of blue catfish and other invasives; and
Working to educate the public about how invasive fish species affect the Bay ecosystem.

Maryland has no fishing limits on invasive fish, which means anglers can catch and keep any number of them, at any size, during any time of year.

At the same time, Maryland's Department of Agriculture (MDA) is ramping up marketing efforts to promote wild-caught Chesapeake blue catfish to chefs, consumers, restaurants, grocery stores and distributors to encourage more people to buy,

eat, and sell wild-caught Chesapeake blue catfish. The marketing and promotional campaign activities currently focus on media appearances, social media posts, and roadside billboards highlighting the culinary versatility of blue catfish and how eating more of the fish is an important way we can all help watermen, local businesses, and the health of the Bay. MDA also works closely with chefs to attend various events throughout the state to provide demonstrations and samplings of wild-caught Chesapeake blue catfish.

Additionally, MDA has included more than \$1 million for Maryland-caught blue catfish filet purchases in its program supporting food bank purchases of local food. The agency is also promoting blue catfish as part of the state's goal of 20 percent local purchases by colleges and other state institutions through the Certified Local Farm and Fish Program.

Blue catfish were first introduced in Virginia in the 1970s as a target for recreational fishing. The catfish are native to the Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, and Rio Grande river basins. Against expectations, the catfish expanded out of freshwater and into the higher salinity waters of the Bay, and from there began to spread into other rivers and tributaries in Maryland and Virginia. Blue catfish populations grow rapidly, and studies have found the invasive catfish making up 75% of the total biomass of fish in a Virginia river.

Blue catfish are voracious eaters and have been documented as preying on blue crabs, menhaden, white perch and other species. They out-compete the native species for habitat space and food and pose a threat to key commercial fisheries including blue crab, striped bass, white perch, yellow perch, and American eel.

Flathead catfish and snakehead are also known to prey on and out-compete native species. With few natural predators, these fish can spread quickly through Maryland waters.

Six people receive combined 180 charges related to illegal deer hunting in North Carolina

North Carolina Wildlife recently received an anonymous tip about hunters illegally killing deer.

An investigation into the tip began in late 2023 and involved people in Pender, Duplin, Sampson and Vance County.

Four search warrants were obtained for various vehicles and property, with evidence leading to six people receiving a combined 180 charges.

Those charged are accused of illegally hunting and killing deer at night and using a spotlight to do so. They are also accused of killing more than the legal limit for the year. In North Carolina, a hunter can legally harvest six deer during a hunting season.

Dylan Jackson Scott and Nick Rackley are among those charged.



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OFFSEASON TACKLE MAINTENANCE

Keeping up with tackle maintenance in a must to be worry free on the water. No matter what level of angler you are, it's in your best interest to go over your gear. This is the time of year to work on your rods, reels, line, and lures. It's not laborious like washing your car or changing oil. Much of the maintenance can be done while keeping up with your favorite sports teams on television.

The most overlooked tackle is rods. We take for granted that they will land our fish year after year. Start by wiping down the blank with soapy water. Cleaning the blank will help keep the clear coat intact. While wiping down a rod, feel for any abrasions, blemishes, or weak spots that could cause a rod to break. Let's not forget about the guides. It's best to use a cotton swab on them.

The swab helps thoroughly clean the guides, especially the small ones and the tip. Yet, also, the cotton will snag on any abrasions. Should this happen, that guide or tip should be replaced. If not,

you can scar your line and likely break off lures, rigs, and worse yet -- a fish.

Reels are the next consideration. You know, that one reel that didn't cast smoothly and sounded a bit grinding. If that's your reel, then you should get it to your local reel repair shop. And do it now, so the shop has time to repair it in time for the season to come. However, you may be able to handle routine maintenance if you are adept at working with small gears and tools. A good cleaning and lubrication can go a long way to prevent the first scenario.

Next up is fishing line. Braid, mono,

fluorocarbon, copolymer – it all needs to be inspected and/or replaced. If you are an avid fisherman, you are likely replacing line throughout the year. If you are a casual angler, you may not worry about your line. This is a mistake. First, you may not have enough line on your spool to give you decent casting distance. Next, you may not even know when was the last time you changed your line. If these are the cases, you are overdue. My thoughts are, if there is any doubt about your line, change it. Line is THE most important link between you and the fish!

I keep up with my line, but still inspect it. I look for the adequate amount of line on my spools, and look for any wear spots on braided line. I don't just do a visual check. I feel the leading few feet by of all types of line by running my fingernails along it. This will allow me to feel any nicks in the line better than if I used just use my fingers. If I find abrasions, I work farther up the line to see if

it's a line deficiency or it it's from wear and tear in the first couple feet. I do this check during and after each fishing trip as well. I clip off the fouled line a couple inches above the top bad spot. As an angler that specializes in lure fishing, I need to inspect the products that I use. It's important to do this after each trip; yet, going through your baits in the offseason provides checks and balances. I look for rust: rust on hook hangers, rusty split rings, rusty hooks. Lure manufacturers don't always use the best hardware in the products, so it is up to us to me mindful of what we use.



WINNER WINNER!!! Congratulations to Mr. George Jones of Rock Hall, MD on winning the Molly's and @hevishotammo ATV Giveaway! He picked up his 2023 Polaris Sportsman last month. Happy Hunting! Stay tuned for more BIG giveaways in 2024.

There isn't much we can do about rusty hook hangers and line ties but to discard the lure. Rusty split rings and hooks should be replaced. I also look for chip and cracks in lures. A chipped crankbait lip will surely have it running out of tune. A crack in a plastic lure might allow water to enter the hollow cavities. Even worse, a hook hanger may pull out while you are fighting a fish (ask me how I know that). Any

cranks in wooden lures should be smoothed done with light sanding and resealed with epoxy. Sure, the paint job will be less than appealing; but there are guys who can take care of that as well.

Take the time now to get your fishing gear in working order. By taking care of basic tackle maintenance, you will be insured to have worry-free fishing excursions this year and beyond.



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Jenna Hoffman age 7, first Sika stag. A nice 6 pointer taken in Church Creek, MD.



Joe Lough of Ellicott City went out deer hunting New Year's Eve, and ended up with this nice female coyote. Joe used a Barnett crossbow with a Rage tip. Courtesy of Clyde's Sports Shop

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Jeff Oberdorf and his brother had a real good morning in early January.



Tamia Hamilton, left, age 9 of Princess Anne, Md. bagged her first 9 pt buck during the 2023 Junior Hunt Day in Somerset County.



Timothy Hamilton age 6 of Princess Anne, Md. put the hammer down on his 1st deer ever.



Carleigh Black with her 9 pt. buck

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Lisa Martin and her 1st buck, a 9 point. The buck was taken during muzzle loader season in Queen Anne's County.

SPANNING THE GLOBE

Mushing: With late pass, Nenana teen Emily Robinson tops stacked field to win Knik 200



Thirteen seconds separated teenager Emily Robinson and race leader Brent Sass as the pair approached the homestretch of the Knik 200 in an online video posted Sunday.

Sass, the 2022 Iditarod champion, must have felt like a sitting duck. He desperately ran up a small hill while pushing his sled. He then kicked and ski-poled and glanced over his shoulder as Robinson, his junior by 28 years, and her powerhouse team of 10 huskies followed in hot pursuit.

“Hut! Hut! Good dogs, good dogs,” Robinson said as she continued to reel Sass in. (The video, with 2,900 views and counting, can be seen [HERE](#)).

The pass, not caught on video, occurred shortly thereafter and according to Robinson involved some “technical difficulties.” But Robinson managed to get by Sass’ team on the narrow trail in the woods approaching Knik Lake.

The finish stretch, captured by Kale Casey Live on YouTube, then showed Robinson, led by leaders Urchin and Vickie, cruise under the finish banner. Sass followed 65 seconds later.

“Got my butt beat in the last mile,” Sass said good-naturedly to on-lookers before sharing a hug with Robinson. “Congratulations, awesome race. That was epic. I was fearing that sled coming behind me ... for like the last 50 miles.”

Replied Robinson: “I thought I wasn’t going to catch you.” She only had the opportunity because the race committee of the Knik 200, officially named the Knik 200 Joe Redington Sr. Memorial Sled Dog Race, changed its rules to allow those under age 18 to compete provided they have finished two qualifying events.

The 16-year-old Robinson, representing the Robinson Racing Kennel near Nenana, had never raced farther than 150 miles. She won \$5,000 and a pair of beaver mitts.

“To be able to run in a race like this as a teenager is a very honorable thing,” Robinson said in her acceptance speech during the awards ceremony at the Broken Boat Knik Bar & Grill. “And to be competing with Yukon Quest winners and Iditarod winners and everything else in-between is such an honor and such a privilege, and to be receiving encouraging words of advice from those people is amazing.”

Robinson trailed Sass by seven minutes after the first 100-mile

leg. Following a mandatory six-hour rest, she set off chasing him at 2:39 a.m. Sunday. Less than 11 hours later, she finished with the narrow victory in an elapsed time of 26 hours, 15 minutes and 52 seconds. Her speed (not including the mandatory rest) averaged nearly 10 miles per hour.

Sass earned \$4,000 with his time of 26:16:57.

Ryan Redington, the 2023 Iditarod champion, took third barely a minute ahead of Amanda Otto and Travis Beals. All three were around 40 minutes behind Robinson.

The stellar field included past Knik 200 champions Eddie Burke, Jr. (sixth this year), and Nic Petit (eighth), along with Iditarod veterans Michelle Phillips (seventh), Wade Marrs (13th) and others. Robinson didn’t come out of obscurity to topple them. In addition to claiming the last two Junior Iditarods, she won the Willow 150 and Alpine Creek Excursion 64-mile race against adult competition last season along with the Knik 100 last month. But she’d never faced a field as stacked as this year’s Knik 200.

“I’m so, so proud of my dogs and what they did,” Robinson said in her acceptance speech. “I was not expecting to end up where I ended up.”

Robinson’s father Wally, a 2001 Iditarod finisher, first took Emily mushing when she was three years old, according to her Junior Iditarod biography.

“By the time I was four, he had built a small dog sled and would tie a rope to the sled so I could glide behind him,” Robinson wrote. “I would watch his every move in front of me and copy them. At that early age, I fell in love with dog mushing.”

Robinson also credited her family, who cheered wildly when she first came into view at Knik Lake, with the success she’s experiencing. “To be able to do this as a family and to take care of our dogs is something that I really, really do love, and they support me as well as my dogs,” she said.

Knik 200 race marshal Donna Russell-Swope also praised Robinson in the Kale Casey Live broadcast.

“She is amazing,” Russell-Swope said. “To watch a young musher like her win, it’s beautiful.”



Dalton Wilson killed a monster buck in Moore County, NC. He shot the mainframe 10-point buck, which was estimated at 6 1/2-years-old, with a .308 at 55 yards. The buck has been green-scored at 159 3/8 inches.



“Tuna The Tide”

OLD SCHOOL

By Captain Mark Galasso

I knew there was a goose blind out there somewhere. The sun hadn't come up yet and a low-lying mist hung over the field. It wasn't quite a fog but it was still impossible to see anything. The air was heavy and thick and I heard someone comment that the lack of wind was going to be a problem.

The six of us packed up our gear and headed in the direction of the blind, an eight man pit about a quarter of

a mile away. I was a guest so all I brought was a gun and a few shells stuffed in the pocket of my camo coat. It wasn't all that cold so the walk was a pleasant one.

I had never hunted this particular farm so I didn't really have any bearings. I was just following the person in front of me. They seemed to know where they were headed. Every few hundred yards the group would stop short and listen. I was told the Pit was close to a pond and we would stop and listen to hear if any geese were on the pond or in the decoys. Since it was still dark no one had a loaded gun. Well before we got to the pit we heard them. They obviously heard us too since what we heard was the frantic call of a few geese leaving the pond. It was so still you could hear their wing beats and flapping feet as they flew and walked across the pond at the same time. After a few seconds it was silent again.

I could just start to see the edge of the decoy spread. The sun was starting to show. The decoy spread was massive. Recently I've gotten used to hunting over small spreads of stuffers or Big Feet. Easy to deploy and easy to pick up or move depending on the wind direction. Also with the one bird limit not as much work if you only have a few hunters. This spread was nothing like that. There had to be four hundred decoys with the pit square in the middle. There were silhouettes, tires, shells and a few Big Feet all mixed together.

Whoever laid them out knew what they were doing. There were small holes and landing strips throughout the spread so that whatever the wind the birds would come close to the pit. Kind of like designing an airport and laying out the runways.

The pit was covered with switch grass in small bundles tied loosely to the top of the pit. Once we all got settled in it was easy to rebundle everything to create openings to shoot through. This way a hunter could actually see what was going on. Not like the old pit covers that had

mechanical doors with cupolas that only the guide could see through. Back when I was guiding I can remember always telling my clients to watch me. Let me watch the birds. I'll call the shot and point to where the shot will be. It worked out great as long as there was some wind. Not so much on a still day like today. I again thought of the runways and if maybe today there would be some sort of direction the birds would set in from.

It took about an hour to find out. As the sun got a little higher the birds started to fly. There was a conference of hunters in the blind. Our host would call the shot. Towards the south would be “out front”. North would be “out back”. You can look but don't make a lot of movement. We would flag until the birds noticed and then stop. Our host would call as well as one other hunter. When the birds got close or straight up calling would cease. Our host was calling with an old OLT call and his partner had an old Shoreman. Together they sounded pretty good. Glad I left my old Scooby in the truck. “OUT FRONT” someone yelled in a whisper. We all hunkered down. We could hear the geese off in a distance heading our way. The conversation started. Honking back and forth until it was hard to tell who was talking to who. “Out Back”. “Locked up”. “Five”. “Get Ready”. “Take em”. When I popped up through the grass they were straight up. I drew a bead on



the lead bird. They were climbing fast. Just as I went to pull the trigger the bird folded. So I drew a bead on another bird. It too folded before I shot. I was confused. My first shot wasn't at anything in particular and nothing fell. My second shot downed a bird going away. By the time I could get off another shot there wasn't anything to shoot at. These boys are shooters!

In the next hour we had two more tolls and we were done. Life is good. I wish all MY parties went like that. The cool thing was we didn't have to put out OR pick up any decoys. It was an Old School Goose hunt. Classic rig and classic calling. The only difference was the last time I hunted like that we had a three bird, ninety day season. And it was a far bit colder.



Kevin Kuhne harvested this 12 point buck in Dorchester County.

Maryland Holding First Youth-Only Trout Fishing Day on March 23

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is offering the state's first-ever Youth-Only Trout Fishing Day for children under 16 years of age on March 23, one week before opening day for all trout anglers.

"Trout fishing is a great way to introduce young people to the sport and our state's natural beauty," said John Mullican, Maryland DNR's director of freshwater fisheries and hatcheries. "We hope children across the state will take advantage of this day reserved just for them to enjoy stocked waterways that are typically still closed."

On March 23, the state's put-and-take trout areas under closure at that time will be open to youth from 6:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. These will be stocked in advance. Fishing areas under closure are online and in the Maryland Guide to Fishing and Crabbing. Youth anglers may catch and keep up to two trout each, except brook trout, which must be released if caught.

Anglers should note that not all locations are open or accessible during fishing hours, so they should confirm their local access point's operating hours before attending.

The traditional trout opening day for anglers of all ages will occur on March 30, beginning at 6:30 a.m.

Maryland's coldwater hatcheries produce about 290,000 adult rainbow, golden rainbow, and brown trout annually to meet the demands of the put-and-take stocking program. The department stocks more than 100 waterbodies in 19 counties.



Tim Schaffner and his Talbot county stud.

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Charlie Hennigar took this stag early evening on December 4th in Wicomico County.



Cody Calloway took this good looking stag in Wicomico County.



Richard Higgins of Neavitt, MD sharing his love for hunting with his great granddaughter Julia Reese, left, Grace, right, and granddaughter Christina, far right.

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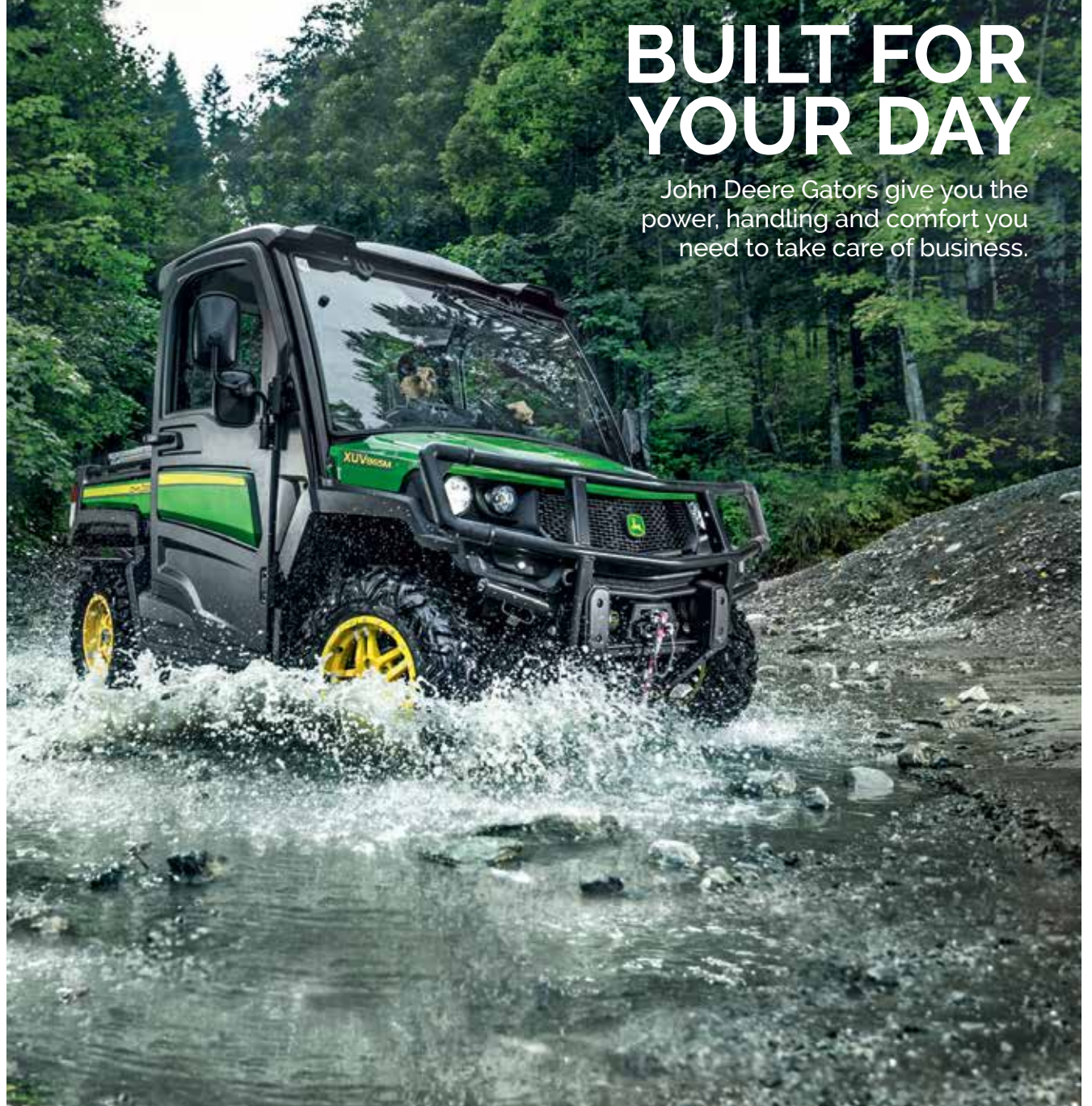
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Chris with a nice blue bill and a king Bufflehead. Photo courtesy of Lawrence Tyler.



Kolter, above and Kinley Elliott, below, got these deer with their Pop Pop.



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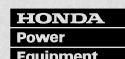
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STIHL



Chesapeake Bay 2023 Fall Oyster Survey Records Outstanding Spatfall

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources' Fall Oyster Survey recorded a remarkable year for juvenile oysters in Maryland waters, finding both prolific numbers and a widespread distribution throughout many regions of the Chesapeake Bay.

The survey's spatfall intensity index, a measure of reproductive success and potential population growth for oysters, was 86.8 spat, or juvenile oysters, per bushel, nearly four times the 39-year median of 23.6 spat per bushel and the fifth highest in that timeframe.

"We have not recorded this extent of oyster spat recruitment in the fall survey in a generation," said Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz. "Both the quantity and the wide distribution of spat throughout the Bay, including several areas where our biologists have rarely observed spat in nearly 40 years of results, are outstanding. We plan to build on these natural spatsets by continuing oyster restoration efforts and promoting aquaculture to bolster the overall oyster population."

This survey, which measures the population status of oysters in the Bay, marks the fourth consecutive year of above-median results for juvenile oysters, a promising sign for restoration efforts for the bivalve, which has faced precipitous population declines over the decades.

Aside from the spatfall intensity index, the department looks to see how widely young oysters are distributed throughout Maryland's oyster habitat. For example, the 1997 survey produced the highest index in the history of the survey at 277 spat per bushel, but the spatset of that year was concentrated in particular areas of the Chesapeake Bay: the eastern portion of Eastern Bay, the Miles River, the northeast portion of the lower Choptank River, and in parts of the Little Choptank

and St. Marys rivers.

By comparison, the 2023 survey found spat in areas where they are rarely observed, including in the upper reaches of Bay tributaries that are typically too brackish for strong oyster reproduction. The distribution of the 2023 spatset far exceeded prior spatsets.

The Potomac River and two of its tributaries, the Wicomico River and Breton Bay, in addition to the Patuxent River and the Tred Avon River, received a once-in-a-generation spatset. A supplemental survey in the Potomac found numerous spat well above the Route 301 bridge, an area where devastating freshwater deluges of 2018-19 had all but wiped out the oysters there. Eastern Bay, where oysters have been in decline for over a decade, also saw a significant increase in spatset. Many of the areas that typically receive high spatsets did so again in 2023: the lower Eastern Shore, the lower Western Shore, Broad Creek, and others.

This year, the department recorded spat at 50 out of 53 key bars, the primary sampling sites for the spat survey. Spat have not been recorded at this many key bars since 1985.

Environmental conditions, such as adequate water salinity, play a role in successful oyster recruitment. This past year, salinity measurements have been above their long-term averages due to below-average rainfall in the watershed, providing ideal conditions for oyster recruitment. However, in some years, spatset may be lower than expected despite adequate salinity conditions, emphasizing that other forces influence recruitment.

While many factors played a part in the 2023 spatset, Maryland Department of Natural Resources scientists believe the considerable numbers and distribution recorded — in conjunction with the three



DNR Secretary Josh Kurtz joins Fishing and Boating Services staff analyze to oyster spat during the fall survey. Photo by Robert Bussell, Maryland DNR.

previous years of above-average recruitment — are encouraging signs for ongoing management efforts.

Eastern oysters, the species found in the Bay and parts of the Atlantic coast, are critical to the Chesapeake ecosystem. They are an important food source and the reefs they form provide habitats for fish and crustaceans. Each mature oyster can filter gallons of water daily and consume algae, which removes excess nutrients and helps clarify the water.

Oyster harvesting is an economic engine for Maryland watermen, second only to crabbing in terms of dockside value. Over time, overharvesting, habitat loss, pollution and oyster diseases have decimated the population of oysters in the Bay, leading to intensive management practices aimed at bolstering the population.

The department works in consultation with the Oyster Advisory Commission to manage oysters in Maryland's portion of Chesapeake Bay in an ongoing effort to increase the population and habitat as well as to facilitate long-term, sustainable oyster harvest. Following a three-pronged approach to restoration, the department protects 50% of the most productive oyster bars in sanc-

tuaries, creates new opportunities for oyster aquaculture, and utilizes a data-driven management strategy for public fishery areas.

Since 1939, the department and its predecessor agencies have monitored the state's oyster population with an annual field survey — one of the longest-running programs of this kind in the world. Locations monitored include natural oyster bars, oyster seed production areas, seed and shell planting sites, and sanctuaries.

Oysters reproduce by external fertilization, releasing their eggs and sperm into the water column when triggered by both temperature and the presence of gametes from other oysters. The more closely situated adult oysters are to each other, the greater the likelihood of successful fertilization.

Once the eggs are fertilized, they develop into free-swimming larvae and are subject to wind, tides, currents, and a host of predators, such that only a minute fraction survive to settlement. At that time, using a tiny foot, they seek out hard substrates, namely the shells of other oysters, on which to attach and remain for the rest of their lives. After attachment, the juvenile oysters are known as spat. By the follow-

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Harford County Angler Catches Maryland State Record Rock Bass

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources recognizes Thomas Over Jr. of Darlington as a new state record holder for rock bass (*Ambloplites rupestris*) in the Chesapeake Division. Over caught a 1.0-pound rock bass January 6 in the lower Susquehanna River.

Over was fishing with a light spinning rod and jigging for yellow perch when he hooked the large rock bass.

"I was throwing a tandem perch rig with BPS jig heads and Southern Pro lil Hustler 1.5-inch white/red tube in deep water," Over said. "When I felt the 'thump' and started cranking, I thought I had a doubleheader of jumbo yellow perch, but to my surprise, it was a new species of fish that I did not recognize. I sent a picture to a few friends, and Paul Badders replied, 'rock bass, and a pretty big one from the looks of it.'"

The fish measured 10.5 inches long. Its weight was determined on a certified scale at Angler's Sport Center in Annapolis, and Maryland DNR Recreational Fishing Outreach Coordinator Erik Zlokovitz confirmed the species. The catch ties the record set by Timothy A. Adams on the Susquehanna River on May 4, 1997.

A member of the sunfish family, rock bass have short, robust bodies with an olive-green top and gold or brassy-colored sides. The scales along their sides have a dark spot, often forming a striped-like appearance. The anal fin has five to seven spines, and on adult rock bass, this fin has a dark outline. The number of anal fin spines distinguishes this fish from a similar fish, the warmouth (*Lepomis gulosus*), which has only three anal spines. Rock bass are not related to striped bass, which are often called "rockfish."

The Department of Natural Resources maintains state records for sport fish in four divisions – Atlantic, Chesapeake, Nontidal, and Invasive. Anglers who think they have a potential record catch should download and complete a state record application and call 443-569-1398. The department recommends the fish be immersed in ice water to preserve its weight until an official can check, confirm, and certify it.



Eric Sutton with a limit out in Oklahoma. Photo courtesy Shore Taxidermy.

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“Montana Grant”



By Grant Soukup

MARYLAND TROUTING

Maryland has a diversity of fishing opportunities from the Atlantic Ocean, Chesapeake Bay, reservoirs, and Appalachian Mountain creeks and rivers. One of the most popular fish to catch in Maryland is freshwater Trout.

The state's trout program stocks over a half million adult rainbow, brown, and Golden trout annually. 10 % of these fish are 3-4-year-old BIG, 5-8 lb. fish. Each stocking includes a few of these monsters. The average trout stocked in Maryland's designated trout waters are 11-17-month-old adult fish. They range in size from 9-16 inches.

Trout can be seasonally caught throughout the state. 4 primary hatcheries raise the fish for transport to designated Trout Waters. These waters can be found using the state's website map programs. Stockings are also fairly reported, using the same website. Local DNR offices are also great sources of information. The website also has an Angler's Log to highlight fishing stories and catches.

Maryland's annual Opening Day is the last Saturday in March. A Youth Only event happens prior to the general opening. Some closures allow the state to plant trout prior to these days. If you do not want to celebrate fishing in a group of other fishermen, you can fish any day. Many anglers lack patience. Weekday fishing offers fewer crowds and more opportunity. Stocked trout swim and spread out quickly. They also adapt to their new homes and feed more naturally.

When trout are stocked, they are transported using special aquarium trucks. Once at a pond, a hose is attached to the truck's outflow and the trout are quickly released into the lake or pond. Nets and buckets are also used to carry and release trout into local creeks, streams, and other waters.

Trout are very durable and can be stocked from aircraft drops or helicopters. Smaller fish have been backpacked for miles and then released into remote waters. These are common practices in western states. Some waters in Maryland are stocked from railroad tracks that parallel the watersheds.

When carried in a bucket, or net, about 20 fish are quickly dumped into the water. Bridge crossings are good places for quick releases. The splash into the water encourages them to quickly swim away. Stocked trout can migrate for miles up and down the watersheds. Most "Wild", naturally reproducing trout, in Maryland and Montana, are the result of stocking.

Many of Maryland's Designated Trout Waters are seasonal. This means that the stocked trout will not survive the Summers warm and low waters. A few may find cold springs or migrate up smaller, cooler streams, but the rest are designated to be caught by sportfishermen. A Trout Stamp is required to fish for freshwater trout in the state. This pays for the fishery management, production, and research.

Large lakes and reservoirs are great places for trout fishing year around. Deep Creek Lake for example has great BIG trout fishing in deeper, colder waters. Bigger rivers offer more habitat for fish to spread out. Trout adapt well to their new homes and can be most difficult to catch.

Maryland has also been the home to western Cutthroat trout in the past. The state has also stocked Brook Trout but has currently changed Brook trout regulations. Brooks are no longer stocked, all caught Brooks must be released, and ongoing research is helping to better manage this Native trout.

Trout fishing opportunities in Maryland's diverse waters can be done from boats, shores, ponds, streams, creeks, rivers, and lakes. There is something for everyone.

Put and Take These waters allow an angler to keep a limit of trout. Most waters allow 5 trout to be caught. Some waters have smaller limits and seasonal limits/closures.

Delayed Harvest These waters are stocked each Fall when waters are cold and in flow. They are stocked throughout the year until Spring. In June, these waters are opened for keeping a limit of trout. Sadly, not all the trout waters can keep trout alive year around due to low, warm water conditions. In this way, trout can be used/ consumed and not wasted. Trout that die in the wild will be consumed by other wildlife.

Catch and Release Areas Several watersheds offer Catch and Release Fly Fishing or artificial lures only fishing. Many of these areas will support trout year around. There may also be some reproduction in these waters but not enough to support the fishing pressure that they get.

Senior and Kid only fishing Youth and senior fishing opportunities allow for handicapped, new, and older anglers to enjoy easily accessible waters.

Some anglers complain about killing any trout. They prefer Catch and Release "wild" trout only. Maryland's trout ecosystems have changed dramatically over the years. Development, floods, weather, pollution, droughts, and other issues challenge healthy waters. Stocked trout offer a consumable resource. Trout are a delicious and healthy food. As a measure of healthy waters, they can't survive in polluted areas. Without stocking, Maryland would have almost no freshwater trout.

Trout Fishing is a readily available fishing resource that invites all anglers. Many Maryland anglers' first fish was from a state sponsored

fishing derby, Free Fishing Day, clinic, or family trout outing. Fishing is great fun for all ages. Outdoor sports are needed for all youth to learn about nature, rules, regulations, limits, skills, choice, and food. Humans are Hunters and Gatherers and gathering a limit of trout for dinner is exciting, fulfilling, and FUN!

Trout are Kid Friendly. They lack the sharp teeth or fins found in other fish species. With a minimum of tackle and a helpful Mentor, trout are cooperative feeders. Maryland does a great job of providing a wonderful seasonal fishery for all to enjoy. Trout About and have some FUN!



It's that time again!!

We are getting our schedule together for our annual Cape Charles drum and cobia run. Big black and red drum in May and early June then cobia starting up mid June. Right now we still have some great dates available for these brutes.



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Larry Sanders and Crew with his Grandson Luke Payne holding one of six surprised Speckle belly geese they shot in Charles County.

Maryland Fifth Graders Invited to Submit Arbor Day Posters for 2024

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Forest Conservancy District Boards invite all Maryland fifth graders in private and public schools to participate in the annual Arbor Day Poster Contest.

The theme for 2024 is: "Trees Are Terrific...in All Shapes and Sizes!" to celebrate the importance of diversity of tree species within a community.

All entries must be delivered to a local Maryland Forest Service office by noon on March 1, 2024.

Students are encouraged to share their appreciation for Maryland's forests and trees through original works of art. Poster size must be no smaller than 8.5 by 11 inches and no larger than 22 by 28 inches. They must be drawn in acrylic, crayon, ink, marker, paint pens, regular or colored pencil, tempera paint, or watercolor.

Posters will be judged on a county level and then submitted to the Maryland Urban and Community Forest Committee to compete at the statewide level. A select panel will then choose the top three winning posters that will receive tree plantings at the artists' schools - first place will win 15 trees, second place will receive 10, and third place will receive five. Teachers will be notified by late March, and school plantings will be scheduled in spring.

Contest comments or questions may be directed to Melissa Nash of the Maryland Forest Service at 301-334-3296 or melissa.nash@maryland.gov.



Addilyn Centineo, of Eldersburg, Carroll County won first place in the 2023 Arbor Day Poster Contest, with a prize of 15 trees to her school for planting.



A big shout out to Mr Ronnie Shirley star of TV series Lizard Lick Towing and his amazing family for hunting with Harrison's Outfitters Service St. Michaels Maryland we had three great days of hunting. Shooting a mixed bag of sea ducks -divers and Canada geese. I also want to send out a thank you to Captain Austin Spurry and Captain Logan Hammon for putting them on the birds





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Coastal Report

By Capt. Mark Sampson

Local fishermen may feel that the summer is a long way off, but those who don't start getting ready for it now may well find it arriving much sooner than they think and then, before they realize it, the fish will be biting and they'll be stuck at the dock wondering what they did with all their spare time back in the winter.

Advance planning is often a crucial element in successful fishing. For instance; there are a lot of fishermen out there who know right now that they are going to charter a fishing boat this summer. Maybe they're planning on going bottom fishing in May, tuna fishing in June, or chase marlin in July. Perhaps their plan is to fish the White Marlin Open or some other tournament this season, or just take a day off and go bottom fishing in September. Unfortunately, even though they know now that they want to go fishing this summer, they won't bother to make reservations for a boat until the season has arrived, and by then they could find that it's too late.

January through March is when many charter captains do the bulk of their advance booking. As soon as the hunting seasons end sportsmen start suffering from withdrawals and many cannot wait to set up their next adventure. At the same time, during these cold weather months every weekend or so there's another boat or sportsman show going on somewhere in the region which also help to get folks fired up about fishing and before long they're dialing up their favorite captain to line up a date this summer.

Being in the charter business myself, I've come to learn that most bookings made early in the year come from out-of-town anglers who want everything to be set up and ready for their trip to Ocean City. Many locals, however, figure that since they're down here all the time, they can get away with waiting until the fishing gets hot, and then just grab a boat and go.

Unfortunately, by then most of the popular charter boats are going to be booked up and the only ones left to draw from are those that might be considered "less desirable", for one reason or another. Anglers should keep in mind that boats and captains with good reputations become a bit of a hot commodity during the fishing season, and they're

likely to be booked up many months in advance. In fact some captains will start their season off with almost every day of the summer pre-booked.

There are reasons why a captain will book a lot of trips. Likely it's because he's a pleasant, professional captain, a good fisherman who runs a good boat. But anglers who wait until the last minute to book may never know about this, instead they'll learn first hand why the boat has a lot of dates available right in the middle of a bust fishing season.

The fish off our coast run in predictable enough patterns that captains will normally be able to inform anglers in advance what fish will be available during any part of the season. So there's no need to wait until the fish are actually biting to line up a charter. Anglers need only decide what kind of fish they want to catch, and then schedule a fishing day during the period that species is usually running. Booking in advance allows anglers to lock in a date for the busiest and possibly the best part of the fishing season. And depending upon the captains rescheduling policies, if between now and the start of the season, if someone needs to change their date or even cancel the trip they can usually do so, but at least they'll be on the boat's calendar and have something to plan on and look forward to.

We may not be as "weather tough" as our ancestors used to be, but with the proper equipment and planning, just about any of our forays outdoors can be as comfortable and enjoyable as if they were happening on a beautiful spring day - well almost.



Matt Hargrove with a jigged up Bluefin Tuna within sight of Ocean City.

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Scott Green got this stag in Wicomico County.



Steve Richardson shot this whitetail on his home farm in Dorchester County.

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“The best thing about hunting and fishing,’ the Old Man said, ‘is that you don’t have to actually do it to enjoy it. You can go to bed every night thinking about how much fun you had twenty years ago, and it all comes back clear as moonlight.” — Robert Ruark



*excluding select items



“The Last Word”

SIKA DEER AND THE NEXT STEP OF MANAGEMENT

By Steve Huettner

I recently attended the stakeholder concept meeting for hunters that Wildlife and Heritage. This is an opportunity for the Department to put forth potential proposals and elicit feedback from representatives of the hunting and conservation community. This provides an opportunity for both the department and the hunting community to talk face-to-face and fine-tune proposals before putting it out for public comment.

The first proposal would expand the Sea Duck and Offshore Waterfowl Hunting Zone boundaries to include the largest extent of both zones. This change would exclude changes to the Kent County Shoreline, lower Chester River, lower Choptank River, and lower Little Choptank River, which will remain open to sea duck (scoters, long-tailed duck, eiders) harvest only by allowing the traditional Sea Duck Zone boundaries to remain in place.

Rationale/Goal: Expanding the Sea Duck and Offshore Waterfowl Hunting Zones will simplify regulations by reducing the discrepancies between the two zone descriptions and creating additional hunting opportunities on public waters. This proposed change will also improve winter boating safety by allowing hunters to legally pursue crippled ducks while under power in these large open water zones as that practice is only allowed in the Sea Duck Zone as per Federal law.

Comments: Reducing the regulation

complexity of migratory game bird hunting laws wherever possible is a guiding principle of regulation formulation and a common “ask” by hunters. Hunter opportunity will be expanded in areas that were formerly Sea Duck Harvest only (ex. Atlantic Ocean) by allowing the harvest of other waterfowl species when the regular duck season is open. The USFWS allows the pursuit of crippled waterfowl under power within a States described/delineated Sea Duck Zone as a winter boating safety measure. Expanding the Sea Duck Zone to geographic areas formerly occupied only by the Offshore Waterfowl Zone expands this important open-water winter boating safety capability to a larger area. The consensus was this change was warranted and made sense.

The second proposal would extend the fox and coyote trapping seasons in both zones to furnish additional opportunities for trappers. Land trapping seasons closing on February 1 would extend to February 15. Seasons closing on February 15 would extend until the last day in February.

Rationale/Goal: Extending land trapping seasons past the closure of the February primitive weapons deer season will reduce competition for private land access among user groups and function in trapper retention/re-activation.

Extensions of deer hunting seasons contribute to limited access to private land that previously supported other pur-

suits such as trapping and small game hunting. Providing fox and coyote trappers with additional opportunities to pursue late-season foxes is not likely to have population-level effects, but may help to retain existing trappers. Fisher, long-tailed weasel, raccoon, and opossum trapping seasons will remain unchanged.

A third proposal would eliminate the unlimited bag limit for red squirrels. Consolidate red squirrels with other gray squirrels and eastern fox squirrels into a single bag limit.

Utilizing the same bag limit for all squirrel species eliminates the potential for limitless take of red squirrels and simplifies regulations.

Unlimited bag limits may be considered to be a de facto ‘nuisance’ designation and are not applied elsewhere except for furbearer species. Elimination of separate bag limits for different squirrel species simplifies regulation and reduces the potential for confusion.

Proposal four would allow Region A hunters to harvest two antlerless deer during the archery season to increase opportunity but not increase the bag limit.

Rationale/Goal: Currently, hunters in Region A can harvest two antlerless deer but they must be harvested during two different weapon seasons. The management concept would increase antlerless deer hunting opportunities for hunters in Region A but would not increase the overall bag limit.

Increasing antlerless harvest opportunities is a very common request from hunters and the agricultural community seeking to mitigate damage to crops. By allowing hunters to harvest two antlerless deer during archery season, it will create additional opportunities to harvest a deer and extend what is otherwise a short antlerless season for those hunters that have already harvested one antlerless deer. It is important to note that we are not proposing an increase in the bag limit, only an increase in opportunity. Many comments revolved around allowing the two doe to be taken regardless of

season.

Fifth add additional black bear hunting opportunities in the eastern portion of the bear range through a modified black bear lottery. **Rationale/Goal:** The current black bear hunting season is working to slow the growth of our statewide bear population and limit the expansion of resident bear populations in eastern counties. However, several factors suggest we should offer additional hunting opportunities beyond the established permitting system. It is important to note that we are not proposing a significant increase in the number of permits, but rather an increase in opportunity for hunters in the eastern portion of the bear range to mitigate the expansion of the black bear population.

Hunters can harvest a black bear in all four western counties, roughly 68% of the bear harvest occurs in the westernmost portion of the occupied bear range, Garrett County. Recently, reports of black bears in more developed portions of the eastern bear range, and beyond, have become more frequent. This is an indication that the bear population is growing and expanding eastward.

To increase hunter participation in the eastern portion of the bear range, and provide a greater opportunity to hunters living in these areas, we propose A. Providing two separate lottery options. The first is 950 permits to be used anywhere within the existing occupied black bear range. The second lottery option is 100 bear permits that can only be filled in Washington or Frederick counties.

This option would increase the number of bear permits and provide hunters in the eastern portion of the occupied bear range with a greater chance of obtaining a bear permit. By providing two lottery options, hunters can designate the area they wish to hunt and increase hunting opportunities and participation in the eastern portion of the bear range. Hunters would be required to choose one of the two lottery options when they purchase their lottery application.



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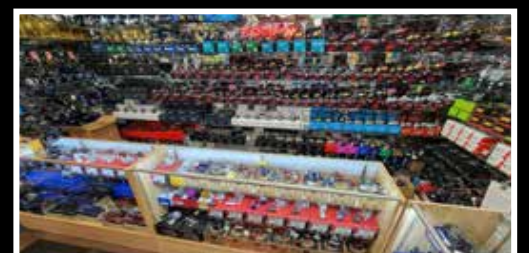
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Recipe of the Month

EASY SLOW COOKER SQUIRREL AND DUMPLINGS



INGREDIENTS

3 to 4 older squirrels, fox or gray
2 quarts chicken or turkey broth
1 tablespoon Better Than Bouillon Roasted Chicken flavor
1 quart water, if needed
1 jumbo or 2 regular sized cans of biscuits
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
Salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

Salt and pepper the cleaned squirrel well and place in your Weston Realtree Slow Cooker. Add 2 quarts of homemade or store-bought chicken (or wild turkey) stock.

Add the seasoned squirrel to your slow cooker.
Add the seasoned squirrel to your slow cooker.

Cook on high for 3 to 4 hours, or low for 6 to 8 hours. Remove the squirrel from the slow cooker and allow it to cool for a few minutes.

Pick the meat from the bones and return it to the broth in the slow cooker. Add the Better Than Bouillon Chicken base.

Cook the squirrel until it is tender, then remove the bones and return the meat to the slow cooker.
Cook the squirrel until it is tender, then remove the bones and return the meat to the slow cooker.

Lightly flour your work surface. Use a rolling pin to flatten the biscuits to about a 1/4-inch thickness. Lightly flour the top of the biscuits. Use a knife or pizza cutter to cut the dough into strips.

Roll the biscuits flat on a floured surface, then cut into dumpling-sized strips.

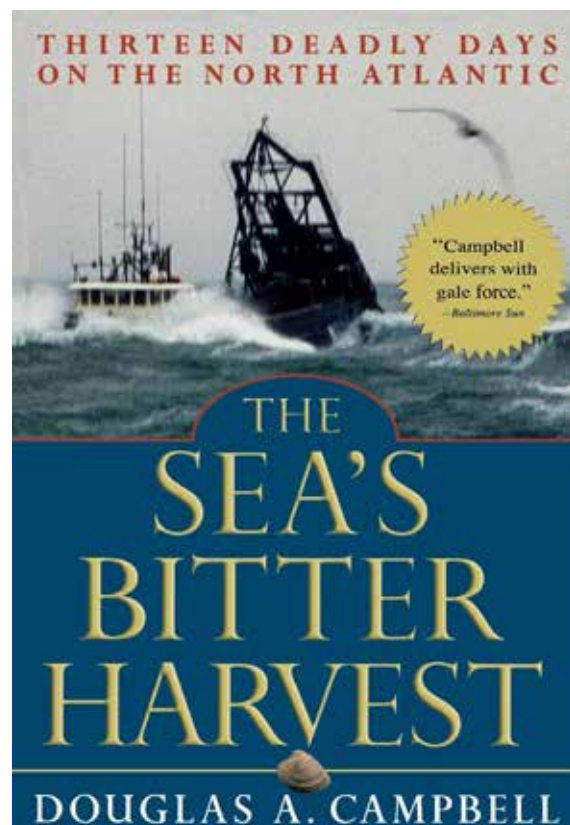
Add the dumplings, a few at a time, to the slow cooker turned onto high. Add enough water to fill the slow cooker to within 2 inches of the lid, if needed. Leave the space for the dumplings to expand. Cook for another 1 to 2 hours or until the dumplings are cooked through. Stir from time to time as the dumplings cook. Test for seasoning and add additional salt and pepper, if needed.

Book of the Month

THE SEA'S BITTER HARVEST: THIRTEEN DEADLY DAYS ON THE NORTH ATLANTIC

In the course of thirteen days in January 1999, four commercial clam boats sank in horrifying succession while working the waters of the Atlantic Ocean,

taking the lives of ten men. Husbands, fathers, loners, and drug users, each man was lured to the nation's most dangerous trade by the lucrative wages offered to those who dared to reap the harvest of the ocean. In this compelling maritime tale of risk and danger, acclaimed journalist Douglas Campbell compassionately portrays the destinies of the men who lost their lives to the Atlantic and the lure of profits from clamming. From the tough and sometimes troubled young men on deck to their families on shore, and the courageous people who tried to rescue them, this narrative memorializes a way of life, and exposes the hazards of this dangerous trade.



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Prime Deer and Turkey lease available in Hocking Hills Ohio. 286 acres fully wooded with great trail system and parking. Surrounded by AG on several sides makes this a Deer and Turkey Paradise. There are new ladder stands up and ready for your enjoyment! Lease runs February 1st 2024 through December 31st 2024. Lease allows up to 6 hunters this is a \$xx,xxx this is a five figure lease. Serious inquiries ONLY! We will only respond via text or call. 859-707-6600

Great flying ducks!
Lots of fun!
Dry Creek Ranch
Ragley, LA
Call 337-515-3666 to book your hunt!



MAIN E SCAPE is a 2015 Grady-White Canyon 336 Center Console powered with twin Yamaha F350 engines. The twin Yamahas have 1228 hours and all services have been performed. MAIN E

FOR SALE

SCAPE features twin Garmin GPSMAP 7212xsv Chartplotter, Autopilot, Fishfinder, dockside power, deluxe rigging station, and a cabin with stand up head that includes a shower and sink, 2 automatic bilge pumps, Battery charger, Fusion Stereo, Integrated outboard mounting system w/ Swim Platform & ladder, Fresh Water tank, Port & Starboard insulated Fish Box w/OB drain (2), Aft insulated Fish Box w/ Lights (2) & OB drain, Hydraulic Tilt Steering, Deluxe Lean Bar, Diesel Generator, Refrigerated box and more. \$169,000 call 410.507.4150 or click link for detailed listing. <https://blue-wateryachtsales.com/inventory/yachts-for-sale/grady-white-canyon-336-2015/2807034/#i3>



2005 DMR 45 foot
2005 45' x 16' passenger (inspected) DMR
Built in Arundel ME Currently 100mi ticket 42+2

FOR SALE

Powered by 2 John deer 660 horsepower + Northern lights 10 KW Generator.
Hull inspection done 4/23, topside 8/23
Awesome smaller private head boat and limited load party boat Practically ready set go for 2024 season
Custom anchor tree with anchor hauler, One head, washdown hose, raymarine electronics, radar
Boat location Bridgeport ct
Message or call for price @9144095866

2017 Nitro Z19 fish and ski

Nitro Z19 Fish and Ski boat for sale, comes with trailer, two removable pedestal fishing seats, and cover.
Upgraded Trolling motor with spot lock (24V).
Comes with a two bank charger
200 hp 2 Stroke
Lowrance fish finder
Stereo with Bluetooth
Live wells
Plenty of storage
Roughly 200 hours on it
Very Good shape!
Call for more information 636-699-7193

FOR SALE

Attention Small Game and Varmint Hunters
Rabbit, squirrel, fox, and coyote
Guided or Unguided
Call 410-758-1824

Not happy with the tags in PA? Leases in MD, PA & DE not available? Eastern Shore leases too expensive? Take a look at leases in SNJ. We have a number of currently available leases in Salem, Cumberland & Gloucester counties. They are readily accessible to hunters in South East PA, Northern DE & North Eastern MD. The quality & quantity of game is just as good as any property in these areas. And the pricing is very comparable as well.

Waterfowl Hunters Wanted
Rent Blinds by the day in the Chestertown Area
Guided Hunts Also Available
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Attention Upland Bird Hunters
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Guided or Unguided
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Here's Johnny... With his Monster Montgomery County Buck. Photo courtesy of Clyde's Sport Shop.

MARCH 23, 2024 REGISTRATION 8:30AM

18TH ANNUAL TIM KERN MEMORIAL CLAY SHOOT

HOPKINS GAME FARM
13003 TURNERS CREEK ROAD
KENNEDYVILLE, MD 21645

\$80 PER SHOOTER
SHOOT TIME 9-NOON
NEW THIS YEAR - JUDGES AT EACH STATION

**LUNCH PROVIDED BY
THE FISH WHISTLE**

NON-SHOOTER LUNCH \$30
KIDS UNDER 10 EAT FREE

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AFTER PARTY
TO FOLLOW**

**RAFFLES
50/50
& MORE!**

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Store Wide Fishing Sale
Friday, March 1st thru
Sunday, March 10th

10% OFF
ALL Fishing Rods,
Combos and ALL
Fishing Tackle
Excludes bait & Licenses

Penn Spinning Reels On Sale!
Featuring Battle III Series!

Pflueger Spinning Reels On Sale!
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From 1 1/2 Cents per yard • Bring Your Empty Spools and
Have Us Install New Line.
(Sale Does Not Include Power Pro)

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Rod & Reel Repairs - Lures -
Hooks - Lead Weights -
Tackle for Perch, Panfish & Bass
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