

Fishing & Hunting TM Journal

- **Invasive snakehead fish rebranded as “Chesapeake Channa”**



- **World Record Striped Bass on a Fly**

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Volume 34, Number 2

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**OFF THE DOCK BOY FISHING
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WILD WINGS**

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BY INSPIRATION MINISTRIES

Strong vs. Weak

“I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.”—1 Corinthians 2:3 NKJV

We often think of Paul as articulate and confident, a powerful writer. However, he confessed to the Corinthians that he struggled in ways that may have been surprising. He admitted that he came to them in weakness, fear, and trembling. As J.B. Philips translates this verse, Paul did not feel strong but was nervous and shaky. We can hardly picture a person being less secure. Paul spoke about weakness throughout his letters to the Corinthians. Paul wanted them to learn that we draw strength from the Lord. He can give us whatever we need.

He told them, “God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty” (1 Corinthians 1:27). He wrote that he could be strong by trusting in God (1 Corinthians 4:10). He told them, “To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak” (1 Corinthians 9:19–22). He had come to recognize that when he was weak, he could draw on God’s strength.

When we feel weak or inadequate, we need to turn to God, remembering that God can provide whatever we need, just as He did for people in Bible times, like Paul. Today, if you recognize weaknesses, don’t give up, but turn to God. He is with you. Ask Him in faith for whatever you need. Trust in Him.

Reflection Question: What weaknesses are you bringing to God today?



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Fishing Guide Makes One Cast & Catches World Record Striped Bass On A Fly Rod



When it comes to sport fishing, striped bass are certainly up there for fun. You can get into massive schools and catch them on literally every cast. These fish put up a good fight and can get big, reaching over 50 inches and weighing over 75 pounds.

These fish are also excellent to eat, making for a great fish fry. Naturally, many people are running to the water to catch them, especially on the East Coast... their native range. Striper is actually the state fish of Maryland, Rhode Island, and South Carolina.

This guide had the catch of his lifetime while out of the coast of Maryland, according to Outdoor Life.

In Chesapeake Bay fishing guide, Tom Weaver, had a client out on the water for some striper fishing. The fishing got good and the pair got into a big school of large fish, landing one after another.

That's when the guide decided to take a cast for himself, as he doesn't normally fish with clients on board. Digging out his fly rod, he heaved his fly out to where he saw a nice striped bass.

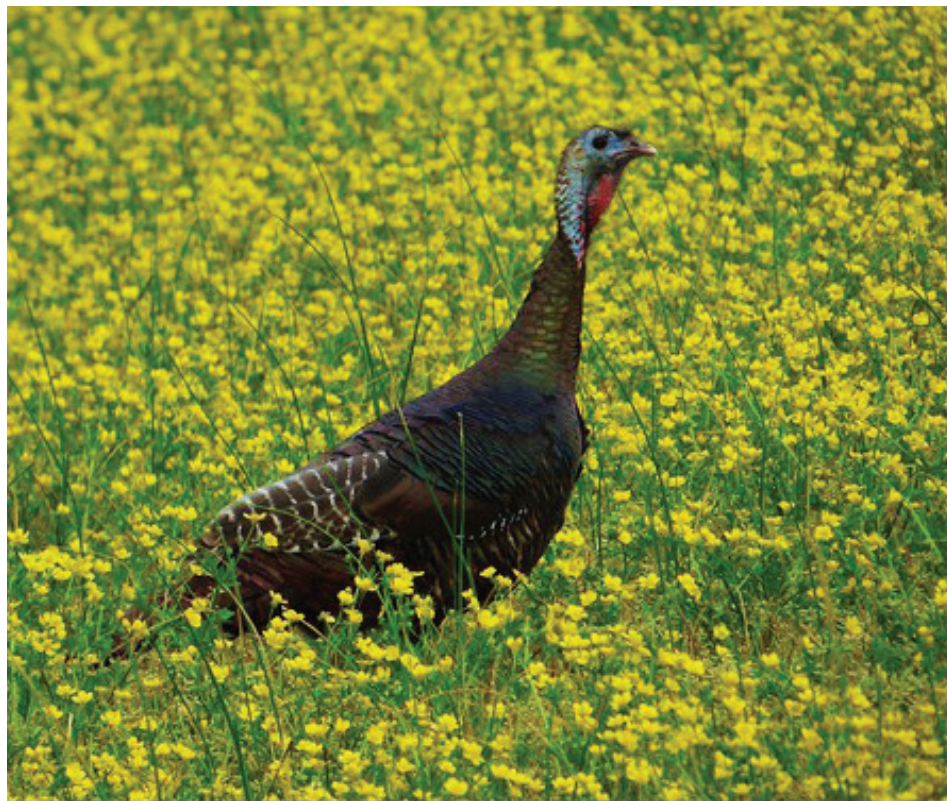
On that first cast, he hooked into a beauty. The fish fought hard but he gets it in.

After measuring it in at 40.16 inches long, weighing 35-40 pounds, it was deemed the world record striped bass caught and released on a fly.

Take about a fun catch right there... that's a big ol' bass to catch on a fly rod. "On December 30, 2023, IGFA Captain Tom Weaver was fishing out of Annapolis, Maryland, US, aboard his boat Miss Jimmy when this 102-centimeter striped bass struck his fly. After a 22-minute fight, Weaver boated the fish and quickly recorded a measurement on his Official IGFA Measuring Device before releasing the fish safely.

With this fish, Tom has set the new IGFA All-Tackle Length Fly World Record for the species."

Maryland Spring Turkey Hunters Harvest 4,959 Birds



Maryland hunters harvested 4,959 wild turkeys during the 2024 spring regular and junior turkey seasons. This year's harvest was 7% lower than the record amount set last spring, but surpassed the harvest totals from previous seasons.

Hunters took advantage of favorable weather and abundant turkey populations with another high harvest," Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife and Heritage Service Director Karina Stonesifer said. "A slight decrease was not unexpected after the record-breaking harvest in the spring of 2023."

DNR surveys documented average to excellent reproductive success in many regions during the summers of 2021 and 2022, resulting in a good number of 2-3 year-old gobblers available this spring. Adult gobblers comprised 87% of the total harvest.

Garrett County reported the highest harvest with 546 turkeys, followed by Charles County (472) and Washington County (442). Four counties produced record harvests: Charles, Queen Anne's, Wicomico, and Worcester.

Hunters started the spring turkey season statewide on April 13-14 with the Junior Turkey Hunt. Despite poor weather, junior hunters harvested 333 wild turkeys during that weekend, accounting for about 6% of the total. A total of 603 birds were taken on Sundays, comprising 12% of the total take.



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CLOSURE CATCH

In the middle of this month, striped bass get a much needed break from angler’s pressure in the heat of summer. So, what is there to target from July 16 through 31 when our beloved rockfish are off limits? Plenty! Captain Jeff Popp of Vista Lady Charters has plans to keep clients catching other species while rockfish are on hiatus.

Popp has access to the vast reaches of the upper Chesapeake. He operates a full-fledged, 40-foot charter boat in the Sparrows Point area where he fishes the Patapsco River and areas in the lower reaches of the upper bay. He also operates a 23-foot center console out of the Bush River, which gives him quick access to the northern extent of the bay.

Captain Jeff has no problem switching gears to target other species. A fan favorite amongst his clients is white perch. In areas where perch are found, catfish – both channel and blue cats – can also be found. In one trip, clients can have constant action by catching schools of white perch; and the thrill of battling brute-size catfish. There is always the option of focusing on just one of the species.

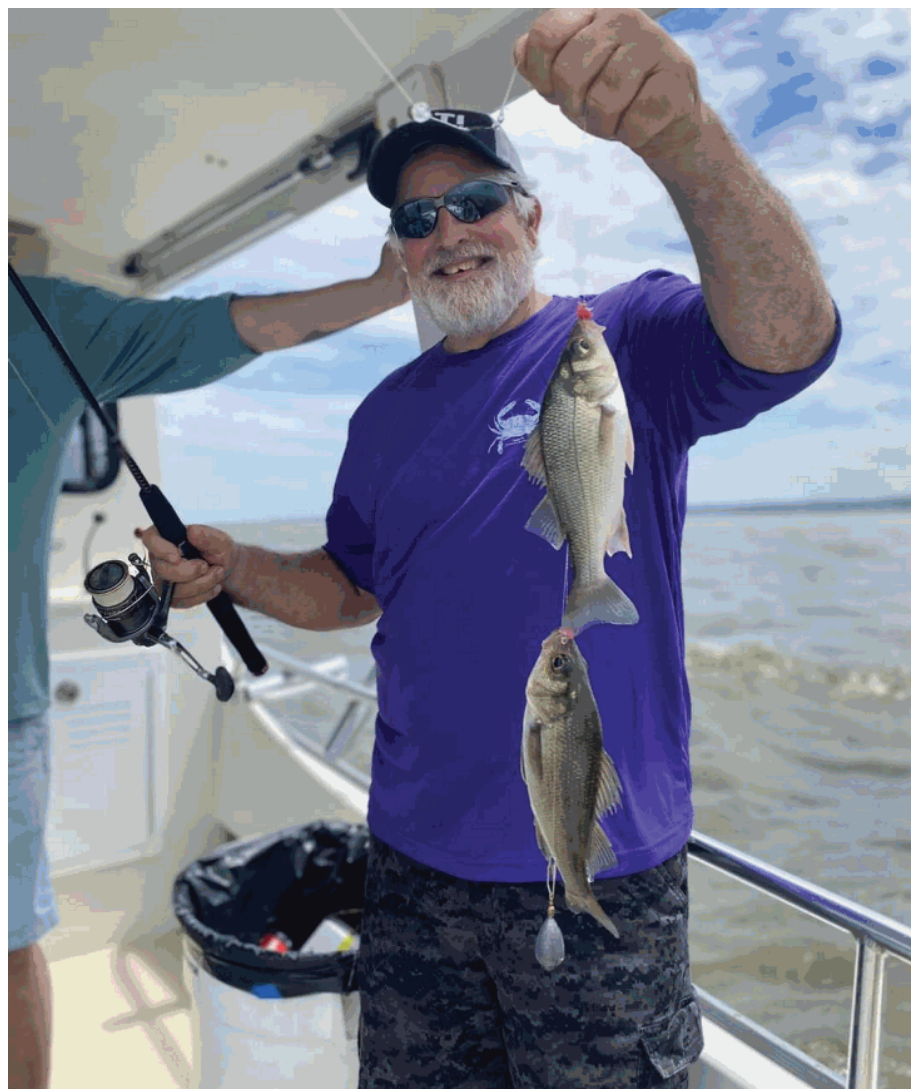
When Captain Jeff targets white perch in the southern part of the upper bay, he prefers areas in the bay rather than the Patapsco River. The spots in the river are singular, whereas locations such as 7-Foot Knoll, 9-Foot Knoll, and Belvedere Shoals feature humps, oyster bars, and drop offs all around a given location. It’s his experience, too, that both perch and channel catfish can be caught. White perch tend to be on shallow structure, while the catfish like the slightly deeper drops.

With slow tidal flow, the captain allows Vista Lady to drift in the

current while the anglers are bottom fishing. On a strong tide he will anchor. Medium power spinning rods paired with reels spooled with 10-pound-test braided line is Popp’s bottom fishing set up for perch. Double bottom rigs are baited with bits of peeler crab, strips of Spot, pieces of worms, or Fish Bites artificial bait. Captain Jeff feels that spot is, by far, the best bait. Worms must be fished on non-offset circle hooks to comply with tidal water live bait regulations. Jigging for perch also comes into play. Anglers may fish with Chesapeake sabiki rigs (2 hook rigs) or light metal jigs.

It’s not uncommon to find channel catfish mixed in with white perch. Popp will give his client the option of targeting them if he finds good schools on the deeper edges of humps and oyster bars. While channel cats are scavengers and will bite the Spot strips and peeler crab. He does, however, have a special bait for them. He baits the hooks with simple, cooked shrimp that you find in the freezer section of the grocery store.

The northern part of the upper bay is blue cat country. From the Susquehanna River to Poole’s Island is where you will find the best action. Flying Point Marina in the Bush River is Captain Jeff’s blue cat hub in the summer months. In this vast area of the northern bay, he looks for steep edges and drop offs at the mouth of the Bush River and in the Bay. You may find him off of Lego or Abby Points, or from Worton Point to the southeast end of Poole’s Island. The captain doesn’t have to exhaust himself with an anchor once he finds the fish. His center console is equipped with a GPS anchoring trolling motor that keeps him right on the spot.



Big white perch are a great option while rockfish are off limits.

Popp acknowledges that blue catfish with strike live bait. However, he prefers cut bait. Slabs of mud (gizzard) shad or menhaden are his go-to baits. He will sneak in white perch heads on occasion, from those he’s kept from cleaning customers’ catches.

Captain Jeff’s catfish rig is built for business. He starts with a 6-foot heavy power Ugly Stick GX2 spinning rod and pairs it with a Penn 5500 series reel spooled with 30-pound-test braided line. A ½-ounce egg sinker is placed inline. From here, he ties on a swivel and a 2-foot long, 50-pound-test leader.

On the business end of the leader is an 8/0 non-offset circle hook. The set up is a bit stout for channel catfish, but well-built for the blue cats.

We don’t have to fret about not being able to catch stripers for the last 16 days of the month. One of the best charter boat captains on the upper bay has plans to keep fish coming over the gunwale during the closure. Captain Jeff Popp’s plans for fun with white perch, and hard-fought battles with catfish can also help us keep the bite going in mid to late July.



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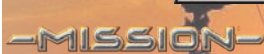


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Tenly Summerlin of Somerset County Lands her personal best Chesapeake Channa measuring 33" and 11.07 lbs in Princess Anne, Md.

Catfish 'the size of a 6th grader' tops state record after pulled from Oklahoma reservoir

VALLIANT, Okla. – Have you ever encountered a catfish so massive that it rivals the size of your teenager on summer break from middle school?

"Not to be too Oklahomish ... but do y'all wanna see a catfish the size of a 6th grader?" the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation asked followers Tuesday in a social media post.

Bradly Courtright made the impressive catch utilizing a

trotline to land a massive 95-pound flathead catfish at Pine Creek Reservoir near Valliant, Oklahoma. His catch is the largest ever recorded in Pine Creek, as confirmed by state wildlife officials.

The weight of the fish was nearly 20 pounds more than the state's current rod and reel record, the agency added. However, Courtright's catch fell short by 11 pounds of the unrestricted division record, which was captured on a trotline in 1977 in Wister Reservoir.

"They get bigger, almost 7th grade material," wildlife officials joked.

Flathead catfish are frequently found in Oklahoma waters, and the specimen legally caught by Courtright was believed to be between 30 and 40 years old.

"This is a great catch all around," state officials praised.



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SPANNING THE GLOBE



“The eyes are small and glistening, like threatening peas, and the hard body is almost crocodilian, armed with five longitudinal rows of sharp shields, or scutes.” - Robert H. Boyle, “The Hudson River: A Natural and Unnatural History,”

Recently, I joined our Hudson River Fisheries team led by fisheries scientist Amanda Higgs on their annual Hudson River Sturgeon Spawning Survey. I’ve encountered sub adults in my time in the Chesapeake, but most of those fish were young and rarely over a meter in length. This was an opportunity to see and acquire data on adult Sturgeon as they come into the Hudson to spawn. We were sampling specifically for Atlantic Sturgeon, which can grow to lengths of over 10 feet and several hundred pounds. Shortnose Sturgeon are also found in the Hudson. Both species are listed as endangered and any interaction with them requires permitting for scientific purposes only. Amanda and her staff are allowed to capture, sample and release Sturgeon under National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) endangered species research permit #20340. Myself and Katie (our Deputy Commissioner for Natural Resources) had to obtain special permission just to be on the vessel while conducting this survey. Amanda, Wes and Billy are all part of a team that had been trained to expertly handle these animals, fit them with Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags and collect tissue for genetic analysis.

Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*) are anadromous fish that spend most of the year in the ocean but the adults move in the Hudson this time of year to spawn. While in the ocean they migrate from FL to ME. Historically there was a fishery until it was closed coast wide in 1998 due to overfishing.

The survey has been conducted since 2006 to learn more about Atlantic sturgeon in the Hudson River. The commercial fishery in the Hudson and NY was closed in 1996. Atlantic sturgeon was listed as endangered in 2012 and here in NY, our staff at DEC Marine Resources are trying to track recovery and protect the fish while they are here spawning.

Currently we are using the survey to understand what is here to aggregate animals to spawn and track trends in their population. We sample for 4-6 weeks mid May to the end of June. We use single filament nets to capture the fish. Staff then process the fish, measure it, scan it for a tag (give it one if it doesn’t have one), take a piece of fin for genetic analysis and weigh it.

For some more background, Atlantic sturgeon are the Hudson’s biggest fish and NY’s largest sturgeon species, there are three. We also have shortnose sturgeon that live in the Hudson and then lake sturgeon that live in other parts of the state. The Hudson is thought to be the largest Atlantic sturgeon population along the east coast with the area near Hyde Park presumed to be the Hudson’s largest spawning and congregation area.

Thanks to Amanda, Wes, and Billy for allowing Katie, Josh and myself to come out to assist on the survey. As much as I love Striped Bass, this very ancient species was a sheer marvel to see first hand.



Sally Wesen got this 50” Bull moose on a river boat hunt in the Yukon!!



Carmelo and her Florida Snook.



“Tuna The Tide”

THE STOVALL SPINNER

By Captain Mark Galasso

I think I was just out of college. I basically worked, surfed and fished during the summer and worked and hunted in the winter. Apparently other than sleeping everything else took very little of my time, or interest. Well sleeping took a lot of time but I can only remember a few dreams. And they were either about hunting or fishing. Since I worked for fisheries even my work was related to fishing. I had the opportunity to meet a few of the Mason Dixon Outdoors writers back then and we would go on fishing and hunting excursions together.

Funny thing is as I'm getting to be the age they were back then I come to realize that maybe it wasn't that I was such a nice kid, it was probably more that they needed some young guns to do the heavy lifting while they took photos and got ideas for their articles. Two gentleman I spent a lot of time with were Keith Walters and Bill Burton. Keith was a retired NASA Photographic Section head, remember all those satellite infrared photos of the Chesapeake Bay. He retired to Bozeman and Bill Burton was The outdoor Editor for the Baltimore Sun for almost 37 years. He lived in Pasadena, and fished with Presidents and major sports figures.

These two Gentleman literally wrote the book on Striper fishing in the 50s, 60, and 70's and in fact Keith published a book, "Chesapeake Stripers" in 1990. And in fact the old Choptank River bridge that was turned into a fishing pier is named in Bill Burton's honor. Bill was also the publisher of Fishing in Maryland which was the guidebook each year as to how to fish and where to go. It had maps so everyone could see where to fish region by region. These magazines were the information staples for over 20 years.

In this modern day of cell phones and the internet these publications have become obsolete. In fact with the lack of Stripers in the Chesapeake and their new distributions many people think there is TOO much sharing of information and the art of the hunt is going by the wayside. Information is available so fast nowadays that a lot of times everyone knows where your fishing before you ever leave the SPOT.

But let's harken back to a less complicated time when you couldn't go to

the internet or call on a cell phone.

One steamy summer afternoon in probably the late 70's I got a call from Keith. He was planning a trip to Chincoteague, Virginia to do a little summer Flounder fishing. My family was renting a house on the Island and we had just gotten back. Flounder fishing was pretty good but not great.. Lots of wind and large mats of grass drifting through the inlets. The few fish being caught were shallow on lee shores. I explained all that to Keith. He didn't want an explanation he wanted me to show him. Soooo.

I went back to Chincoteague a few days later and did a little Flounder fishing with Keith, another fellow and Jack Stovall from down by Bethlehem. I don't remember whether Jack was a writer but I knew he liked to tinker with all things fishing. He wrapped fishing rods, repaired reels and rigged baits.

The morning we fished was brutal. The wind had finally stopped and was just a slight breeze from the west. You know what that means. Green Head Flies. The ones that draw blood. We had tons of bug repellent but nothing really worked. I figured it would be a short day. We tried lots of different depths and contours hoping we might find a few. After 2 hours nothing. I had one last spot on the back side of a small island where the current ran hard only a few feet from shore. Conditions were ideal.

I looked over at Jack and he was rigging a line. It was a Kahle hook with a long leader and a small weight. In front of the hook was a red bead. In front of that was a buzz bait blade about 1.5 inches in diameter and then finished with a green bead. Looked pretty goofy to me. And to Keith. We dubbed it the Stovall Spinner. As soon as it went into the water I could see the potential though. It spun like a tire on the ice. It made the Squid strip dance. Halfway through the first drift he was hooked up, a 23 incher! When we finished the drift we all asked for new rigs and were informed that it was a PROTOTYPE! What! No way. We dug through his tackle box but came up empty handed.

Well one Flounder was all they needed anyway. We weren't fishing for food it was for pictures. I sat there while they took pictures and we all



fed the Greenheads. I saw the picture months later with me on the cover of some magazine. I didn't even remember getting my picture taken I just wanted to get back to fishing. As anyone knows with fishing or hunting you have to fire while the irons hot.

As our season gets more and more

compressed I wonder if the Stovall Spinner might score some Flounder in our area. I plan on doing a test. No cell phones, No internet. Just some old fashioned ingenuity. I'm sure I bought some after that trip just can't remember where I put them 45 years ago!

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How National Park Service's deer management program is helping DC-area food banks

The D.C. area has a thriving deer population and, in some areas, an overabundance of deer. Each year, the National Park Service takes steps to reduce the population, and the result of it is food for people in need.

"Deer really love to eat the vegetation in our forests, particularly young tree seedlings, and we found that they've caused a lot of damage over the years," said Megan Nortrup with the National Park Service.

Each year, sharp shooters, who are also biologists, go into parks at night as part of the NPS' deer management program. This year, that operation at parks in D.C., Maryland and Virginia has resulted in almost 14,000 pounds of venison being donated to food banks. That meat was later turned into 55,000 meals.

"It's kind of a win-win. We get help for our neighbors in need and we're helping preserve our forests," Nortrup said.

Nortrup said the meat is tested, and if it passes inspection, it is sent to food banks such as the Maryland Food Bank, which services many counties in the state and the city of Baltimore.

The meat comes from deer management work in the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Manassas National Battlefield Park, Monocacy National Battlefield and Rock Creek Park among others.

President and CEO of the Maryland Food Bank, Carmen Del Guercio, said this year's donation from NPS resulted in more than 7,000 pounds of food for the organization, which he said is not only very nutritious but also considered a luxury for many.

"Venison in particular is (a) high-protein, low-fat option that a lot of folks either have had some experience before, but don't have regular access to it, or never tried it before and really have an opportunity to taste it for the first time," said Del Guercio.

Del Guercio said protein is in need right now as the organization has seen a 15% spike in demand due in part to inflation. He said where

people are in the most need may surprise people.

"The highest levels of food insecurity occur in some pretty rural markets on the Eastern Shore and Western Maryland, as well as in more emerging markets, like Baltimore City," he said.



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Invasive snakehead fish rebranded as “Chesapeake Channa” to sound more appetizing

BALTIMORE -- The snakehead fish is an invasive species that came into Maryland in the early 2000s. Now the fish is undergoing a rebrand to help control the population.

Snakehead fish have been a big problem for the area’s aquatic ecosystem because they eat everything, but nothing eats them, except for people.

To encourage more people to eat snakehead fish, and hopefully control the population, Maryland lawmakers thought the scientific name, Chesapeake Channa, sounded more appetizing. So that is the new official name.

“We have to eat our way out of this problem.”

The invasive species, known for its ability to survive on land, has been disrupting the bay’s ecosystem - eating rockfish, oysters and crabs – since it was introduced in Anne Arundel County about 20 years ago.

“There’s no natural real predator for them in the bay. We’re the predators so we have to eat our way out of this problem as we like to say,” said Matthew Scales, Seafood Marketing Director for the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

“The more that folks are eating it and more interested in trying the Chesapeake Channa the more we’re going to be able to pull out of the bay and the tributaries,” said Stephanie Pazzaglia, the Outreach and Development Manager for the seafood processor and distributor J.J. McDonnell.

Pazzaglia said they started processing and distributing Channa about six years ago and are currently doing about 1,000 pounds a week.

Chesapeake Channa is harvested by bow fishing, and seafood buyer Mitchell Bode said the market for Channa has a lot of potential.

“It is benefiting our economy by providing jobs - new jobs that is - but also helping our ecosystem,” said Bode.

At the Wegmans in Columbia, seafood manager Dave Burks is happy to answer customers’ questions about Chesapeake Channa. He said it’s comparable to rockfish or mahi mahi and makes an excellent fish taco.

“Get it out on the grill and grill it up,” said Burks. “You can pan-sear it, you can bake it, you can broil it, you can blacken it.”

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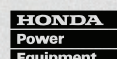
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STIHL



First baby eagles hatch on reborn Chesapeake island

Some eagle-eyed wildlife biologists have made a surprising discovery at Poplar Island.

That's the island in Maryland's portion of the Chesapeake Bay that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Maryland Port Authority have been rebuilding over the last 25 years. What was once almost entirely open water is now more than 1,700 acres of rock-ringed land.

One of the primary aims behind creating the island was to reestablish some of the habitat that waterfowl and shorebirds have lost around the Chesapeake to rising seas, erosion and shoreline development. According to the latest count, about 40 different bird species have successfully nested on Poplar and produced young.

But one iconic species wasn't among them — until now.

On May 2 this year, a veteran U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service scientist named Craig Koppie shimied up a cottonwood tree on a spit of higher terrain on the north side of the island. He peered down into a stick-laden nest known to have been built by bald eagles the previous fall. Inside were a pair of newly hatched eaglets — a male and a female.

"It's that quote where 'If you build it, they will come,'" said Peter McGowan, a Fish and Wildlife biologist who has been involved in the Poplar project since the mid-1990s. "If you have this nice habitat, things will move in, and they will move in quick. You never know what's going to show up, and that's one of the great parts of the job."

McGowan said he isn't surprised that eagles would nest on the island. He thought it would only be a matter of time. Still, the dynamics behind the island's reconstruction didn't make it a likely candidate to host eagles.



The original Poplar Island once sprawled across more than 1,100 acres a few miles west of Tilghman Island on the Eastern Shore. At its height, Poplar was home to a population of about 100 people. There were several farms, a school, a church, a post office and a sawmill.

Like dozens of other low-lying islands around the Chesapeake Bay, though, Poplar was washing away. By the 1920s, the last of its residents had fled to higher ground. By the late 1990s, only a few acres of land remained.

Enter the Paul S. Sarbanes Ecosystem Restoration Project. Named after the U.S. senator from Maryland who championed the effort, the project is rebuilding the island using mud dredged up from Baltimore's shipping channels to keep its port open to navigation.

The first mud delivery came in 2001, and the last is expected to ar-

rive in the mid-2030s.

To make the island as hospitable as possible for water-loving birds, engineers designed Poplar to poke only slightly above the surrounding tide. The landscape is largely given over to marshes and mudflats. The only trees planted so far have been a handful in a small test plot.

That doesn't bode well for eagles, who generally seek out trees as their nesting spots. But nature appears to have intervened on their behalf, McGowan said.

The cottonwood tree that harbors the young eagles sprang up on its own. It's part of a clutch of trees on about an acre's worth of slightly higher ground surrounded by marsh. Despite the harsh environment, some have grown more than 60 feet tall, McGowan estimates.

Eagles have been spotted flying overhead and hunting around Poplar since the earliest days of its restoration, he noted. A stone's throw away from Poplar lies tree-lined Coaches Island and its cache of four eagle nests (two of which are active).

But McGowan and his colleagues had to wait about 20 years into the project before they noticed the first signs that eagles were trying to nest on Poplar. It started with a pair of eagles' effort to build a nest on the metal grate top of a water-control structure in 2020.

Obviously, it wasn't the best place for an eagle to nest," he said.

The nest didn't last. A second attempt atop a spillway the following

year also failed. Then, the scientists noticed a mound of sticks growing larger in a cottonwood tree where a crow's nest had been. It was too big for the supporting branches and eventually tumbled out of the tree.

Another nest in the same tree started taking shape last fall. McGowan can't say for sure whether its builders are the same eagles that had enlarged the crow's nest, but he suspects they are. This time, the nest was more centered over the trunk and less likely to fall.

By March, the amount of time the eagles spent perched on the nest suggested that there were eggs inside of it. Koppie's climb in May confirmed the presence of two eaglets. Before descending, he attached purple bands on their legs, identifying one bird as "09/E" and the other as "10/E."

Disaster nearly struck toward the end of May when a strong storm knocked the nest out of the tree. Biologists quickly reconstructed a new nest on a nearby pole and put the eaglets in it. Soon, their parents were back to taking care of them, McGowan said.

The young birds will probably take wing by June, McGowan said. Will their parents try again in the future? McGowan is optimistic that they will.

"That's a good place to raise a family," he said. "So, they should come back next year and in following years."

Article courtesy Bay Journal.

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DNREC to Change Striped Bass Slot Size Limit for Summer

DELAWARE - Delaware anglers can expect new slot size requirements when fishing for rockfish this summer.

The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) has announced a revised striped bass summer slot size regulation, reducing the limit from 20 to 25 inches to a new 20 to 24 inches. The revision, according to DNREC, ensures compliance with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan.


DNREC says the new limit will be in effect from June 1st to August 31st and applies to the Delaware River and Bay and tidal tributaries.

The revision in Delaware comes as watermen in Maryland challenge the ASMFC's rockfish regulations in the Chesapeake, which designate fish over 25 inches as breeders and reduced the limit of allowable retained fish.

The ASMFC's regulation stems from Addendum II in their Management Plan, aimed to reduce fishing mortality for striped bass and boost stock rebuilding. The addendum was approved last February, according to DNREC, continuing ASMFC's 2023 emergency action to reduce rockfish removal by recreational activities by 15%.

The new slot size limit and other information on summer fishing in Delaware can be found on Delaware's 2024 Delaware Fishing Guide.

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By Grant Soukup

“Montana Grant”



FLY FREE

Maryland flies can be a Big Pain in the Butt. As the weather warms, flies emerge and often move into our homes, living spaces, marinas, and camps. Fish cleaning stations, crab feasts, and picnics mean flies will be on the menu. If they weren't so annoying and dangerous, maybe they wouldn't be of concern but...

Flies spread pathogens that are harmful. When they land on your sandwich, snack, or beer, they spread Cholera, dysentery, food poisoning, and many types of bacteria and germs. Why wouldn't they? They breed in rotting meat, plants, waste, and feces.

Military camps have been terrible places because of flies. Corregidor and other military bases in the Philippines were deadly due to flies. After the WW2 battles, corpses littered the area. Within a few days flies were abundant. The military decided to spray pesticide on the islands. They used DDT, which killed the insects. The ground was covered with dead flies and insects several inches deep! I am sure that it did not help the soldiers and citizens in the area.

Pesticides are dangerous to use. The long-term health issues outweigh the short-term results. This is also true for mosquitos. There are not any decent repellents for flies. The repellents for Squitos have issues as well.

110,000 species of flies' buzz around us. Only a few species are the deadliest. Blue Bottle and Blow Flies are the worst, and the ones that show up at our campsites, picnics, and homes. They are drawn to the smell of food and odors.

Drain flies enter our homes through pipes. Unused drains in bathrooms and sinks often loose water in their plumbing goosenecked pipes. The flies just fly into your home. Fruit Flies arrive with fruit and produce from the grocery.

There is no magic Bullet to deal with flies. They are part of our lives. Like it or not they get into our homes and make us sick more often than we want. So, how do we become more Fly Free?

Repair all screens. Add a screen

door to the home. Sliding door screens with magnet closures allow for fresh air and are a great barrier for flies.

Keep your plumbing drains active. Run some water down the drains to keep insects and odors from entering your kitchens and bathrooms.

Fans will keep/ blow flies away. I added some fan bulbs that have both a light and small fan to the lights under the deck overhang. We sit outside without the buzz.

Clean your yard of pet and critter waste. Feces is prime breeding territory for flies.

Discard old fruit and produce. Use mesh covers to cover outdoor picnic food.

Keep trash cans, recycle bins, and mulch piles away from your home, and down wind.

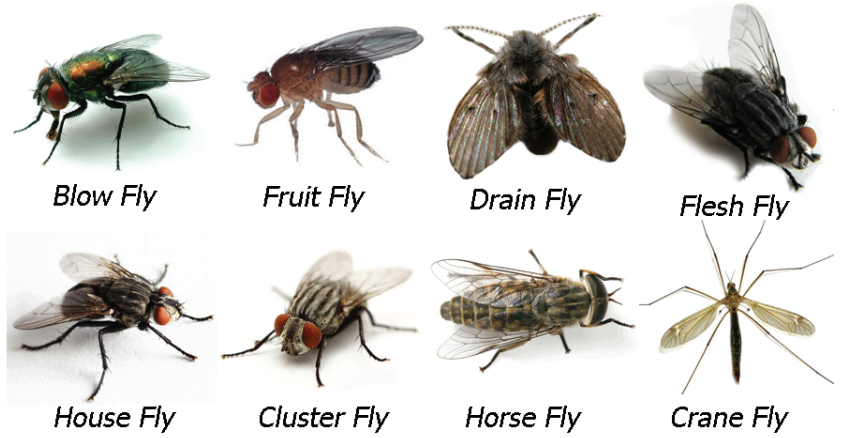
Dump your trash often. It is also good to use trash cans with lids.

The best way to get rid of flies is to Kill'em! You may just put a small dent in the population but swatting, and shooting flies is a great stress reliever. Salt Guns are accurate out to 5 feet and will not hurt you. Sticky traps also do the trick but look nasty. Change them often. There are also bags and traps that traps and contain flies. It is also a good idea to sanitize swatters occasionally.

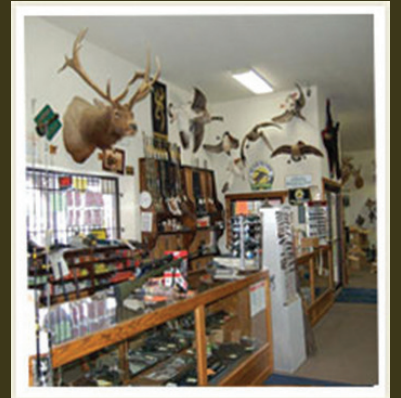
One of my great hunting dogs named Shelby, hated flies. If a fly flew by and bothered her, she just

ate it. It was amazing to watch her snap them out of the air. Shelby never got sick from flies, but she sure

put a dent in the population. Help keep your flies down!



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Virginia moves to end 16-year ban on dredging for crabs during winter

Virginia's fishery managers have lifted the longstanding ban on dredging for blue crabs during the winter in the Chesapeake Bay, a seismic policy shift that drew strong criticism from their Maryland counterparts and conservationists.

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission voted 5-4 on June 25 to repeal the 16-year prohibition on winter dredging. The board is expected to reconvene in September to consider staff recommendations on how to implement the fishery. The new season could open as early as this December.

It's a stopgap to keep our industry moving and keep our waterman working during those winter months," said Zach Widgeon, a VMRC spokesman. But, he added, "this is not us turning loose a fleet of boats to go out winter crab dredging right now. [Repealing the prohibition] opens up that dialog for our staff to go ahead and find these answers out."

The board's action came after the VMRC's Crab Management Advisory Committee, which is mostly made up of industry members, voted 10-2 in favor of reopening the winter season. After that May 29 vote, the agency received 186 public comments on the proposal — all in opposition.

In addition, the VMRC's own staff had urged the board against doing so, pointing to a declining trend in overall crab numbers in recent years.

"The reason staff recommend not opening at this time is [that] the abundance is still below average," said Pat Geer, VMRC's chief of fisheries management. He added that allowing watermen to harvest crabs in the winter would upend an ongoing species stock assessment, which is set for completion in 2026.

Conservation groups say they strongly oppose the reopening, arguing it would make it harder

to maintain the species at a healthy population.

"It is incredibly disappointing," said Chris Moore, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Virginia director. "The VMRC's vote imperils not only the vulnerable blue crab, but the sustainability of harvests throughout the year and other species in the Bay that depend on the blue crab for food."

The move would also put Virginia at odds with neighboring Maryland, where winter dredging has long been banned. Crabs move freely between both states' portions of the Bay during different parts of their life cycles.

Maryland fishery managers quickly denounced the VMRC's action.

"The success of the species' recovery after a steep decline in the 2000s can be directly traced to Maryland and Virginia cooperatively managing blue crabs, especially females, based on science," said Maryland Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz. "Today's action by Virginia breaks with this successful approach."

Dredging involves dragging a metal, rake-like apparatus behind a boat to scoop up semi-dormant crabs from the mud. Female



A female crab dredged from the York River in Virginia during an annual winter survey displays a numerical tag placed on it by a graduate student at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. Photo Courtesy Dave Harp

crabs migrate to the southern end of the Bay in the winter to release their eggs. As a result, they account for about 90% of the crabs caught in the winter in Virginia, Geer said.

A dramatic decline in the population led to a federal disaster declaration in 2008. Virginia, Maryland and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission responded by working together for the first time to enact shared harvest limits.

All three jurisdictions pledged to reduce the female harvest by

34%. In Virginia, the closure of the winter dredging fishery beginning in the 2008-2009 season was the centerpiece of the effort to protect crabs in that state's portion of the Bay. From then forward, the VMRC board had reauthorized the prohibition every year until June's vote.

All but one of the five votes supporting the repeal were made by members appointed by Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin. Those were A.J. Erskine, Jamie

Continued on page 18

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Coastal Report

By Capt. Mark Sampson

We all know that snakeheads are an invasive species of fish that no one stopped from illegally crossing over the border, into our state waters, and are now competing with resident fish for food, shelter, and the opportunity to raise their young and expand their population where they can enjoy the same freedoms and opportunities as do other species of fish that were actually born or hatched here.

A few years back Maryland's DNR took a stab at stopping the surge of migrant fish by literally poisoning lakes and ponds to kill the snakeheads and keep them from spreading throughout the state waterways. But while the lethal drugs associated with the migrant fish didn't work to stave the flow of snakeheads, it did succeed in killing thousands if not millions of resident fish that would otherwise be alive today if it weren't for the influx of the alien Invaders. I'm sure that somewhere someone might have suggested building some sort of barrier or "wall" to protect our local waters and the resident fish from the invading hordes of snakeheads, but apparently that idea was nixed because it was too simple and made too much sense, and after all, it's the government we're talking about here so, well - you know...

So in no time at all snakeheads wiggled their way into just about every drop of fresh or brackish water that they could. Fearing that the aggressive predators were going to eat up all our indigenous fish species, state officials told fishermen to "kill em if you catch em" and since then a lot of Maryland fishermen have done just that and been happy to discover the joy of snakehead fishing for both fun and food. In fact, this new fishery has prompted the start of a nice little cottage industry of tackle dealers and fishing guides who specialize in hooking their clients up to Maryland snakeheads.

As it turns out, the original fears of armageddon by snakeheads in our waters has not been realized, but the benefits to fishermen have. So in some respects snakeheads have actually turned out to be not such a bad thing after all. But I guess the folks in Annapolis can't have that, after all, too much of a good thing and the public might just decide they want "more" good stuff which could start a snowball rolling that could end in an avalanche of demands by the public to actually do something that makes sense for a change! But back to snakeheads ...

I hate to be so blunt about it but Maryland lost the fight with snakeheads. We've just got to face the fact that

they beat us, they're among us, they're everywhere, it's that simple. And as a Maryland resident I can live with that. But apparently the Maryland legislators are such sore losers that not only will they not admit defeat but they've actually found a way to claim total victory over the illegal alien fish. In fact, according to the folks in Annapolis there are no more snakeheads in Maryland! Yep, they passed a bill to change the name from snakehead to..... (wait for it)....."Chesapeake channa!" Yeah I know, it sounds like some kind of down-home backwoods dance, or perhaps more appropriately a cross between our local Chesapeake Bay retriever and a Mexican Chihuahua, but that's what they settled on. And while I don't know how it all went down in Annapolis the day they decided to change the name, I can only imagine it went something like this:

"Hey colleagues, we need to do something about the snakeheads that have taken over our state waters. Those alien fish are making us look bad because we failed to keep them from crossing the border into Maryland. How are we going to explain this to the public?"

"OK, I have a plan but first let's agree that we can't keep calling them "aliens" as that might hurt someone's feelings. Let's just refer to them as "fish that have been deprived of living in Maryland's waters". Then we change the name to something like... uuuuh..."Chesapeake channa" so we can honestly say that there are no longer any snakeheads in Maryland waters. And if we publicize how good Chesapeake channa are to eat, those dumb redneck fishermen will never stop to realize that it's the same fish with a different name!



Lady Luck shining bright on the Kingfish II once again.

So just like that Maryland's "snake-head" problem is solved and we have a wonderful new species thriving in our waters known as the Chesapeake channa (which I think is pronounced "chaaaaaaaanna") and to make sure they won't be accused of pulling the wool over the eyes of us dumb fishermen, the folks in Annapolis put out a statement about the exciting new change which stated, "The change is intended to make this tasty species a more loveable fish to diners and perhaps more appealing to consumers when it's sold in seafood retailers and restaurants".

So fishermen may have lost their snakeheads but they've gained a "loveable" fish and I'm sure that all the downhome-good-old-boys who have been toughing it out by mucking their way through the rivers and marshes to hook a snakehead or two will be the first to admit that the cute little name of "chaaaaanna" is a much better way

to describe this tough, aggressive fish that very closely resembles the head of a snake and eats baby ducks, frogs, fish, and about anything else it wants.

Of course the name was not changed to appease the fisherman, it was done to dupe patrons of fancy restaurants when they read on the menu something like; "Filet of lovable Chaaaaaaaanna with sweet creamery milkweed and bayberry sauce served on a bed of spring eelgrass" into thinking they're ordering anything but a fish that so closely resembles the head of a snake that God banned it from the Garden of Eden!

I know our politicians had good intent with the name change and I hope it works out for everyone. I'm just afraid it might all backfire when the fish actually gets close to the final consumer. I'm imagining a customer seeing chaaaaanna on the menu and asking their server for details about the fish:

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dredging for crabs

Continued from page 17

Green, Spencer Headley and Lynn Kellum. They were joined by James Minor, who was appointed by Youngkin's predecessor, Democratic Gov. Ralph Northam.

"I was here when we took it away from them," Kellum said. "I've said this before: Are we being fair to that user group that we took it away from?"

In opposition were three Youngkin appointees — Will Bransom, Patrick Hand and Jeanette Edwards — and one Northam appointee, Heather Lusk.

To maintain the 34% reduction for the female harvest, critics warn that the VMRC will almost certainly have to offset the additional catch in the winter with cuts to the crab pot fishery, which accounts for 97% of the state's current take.

"Opening this fishery in the winter would be for the benefit to the very few and come at a high risk to all crabbers," Bransom said.

In 2008, when winter dredging was last permitted, the state issued 98 licenses, leading to a harvest of about 1.4 million pounds of crabs. That represented about 7% of the total annual harvest, according to VMRC records

The VMRC estimates that about 15–20 crabbers would participate in the reopened fishery. The longtime prohibition closed the season from Dec. 1 to March 31. Headley suggested that crabbers should be allowed to dredge only in January and February.

In 2024, according to a recently released benchmark survey, the Baywide adult female crab population ticked down to 133 million from 152 million last year. But that figure is still above the recommended threshold of 72.5 million crabs.

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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."



*excluding select items



“The Last Word”

EAT FISH

By Steve Huettner

After a great morning of fishing on the Bay with friends, as we returned to the dock the thought of fresh grilled rockfish immediately entered my mind. A great gift from the land of pleasant living.

The fishing community is facing a myriad of issues; regulations, dead zones, warming temperatures, and slot limits. If that isn't enough another fissure has opened up amongst the fishing community. The catch-and-release purists.

Before I get a bunch of nasty texts and emails saying how I am contributing to the desecration of fisheries, I say remove the barbless hook from your finger and relax. There is nothing wrong with catch-and-release fishing per se. Many species are under threat from both man and environmental factors and can use a break. I'm a cheerleader for the use of circle hooks to prevent gut-hooking fish. Fines for those who take over the limit should be increased, and fisheries are a public resource that needs to be protected.

Offshore, there is no bigger challenge than getting a marlin to the side of the boat and getting a tag in him. Releasing that marlin, knowing that the next generation of fishermen will be able to feel

the burn in the shoulders as they watch a marlin jump while trying to throw the hook is a noble feeling. Sharks, being hammered by foreign long liners could use some help.

I love fishing for largemouth bass as much as the next guy, especially with my daughter, and think nothing of taking a quick picture and releasing that bass back into the water. I have no qualms with certain trout rivers that are catch-and-release only. Fishing for a trout in a catch-and-release-only area is a challenge akin to hunting an old mature whitetail deer on public land. Those trout have been there, seen that. An angler needs all his skills and luck to hook such a wary fish.

Where I draw the line is when so-called “purists” look down upon an angler who wants to eat some of what he catches. The fishermen berate their fellow fisherman who has fish on this stinger or in his cooler. Some consider bait fishermen Neanderthals who should be forgotten and only found in a museum.

There is even a small movement of “fly fishermen” who feel that even hooking a fish should be frowned upon. Some think that the mere act of a fish biting on a fly without a hook constitutes



Ryan Renoll with a big shark caught and released off the Assateague Surf.

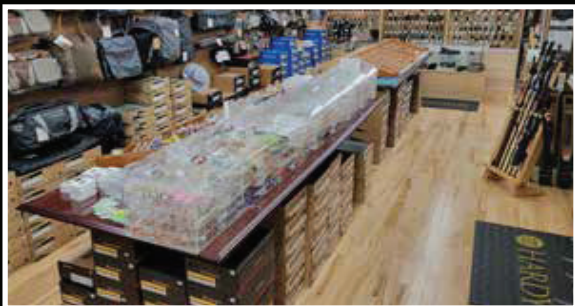
a catch. I am not sure how getting a fish to rise and bite without engaging the reel escapes me. I feel sorry for those who don't fight a fish. They never understand what it takes to keep a fish from diving deep into a tangle to break the line. They never see the fish clear the water trying to throw the hook, and never hear the scream of the drag as the fish tries to strip your line.

Perhaps I am a bit outdated, but one of the things I truly enjoy is filleting a fish. Honing the edge of the blade to surgical sharpness, making a clean cut along the spine, and producing a perfect-looking filet to be cooked is a labor of love. Whether it's a cooler full of croakers, a

stringer of trout, or a twenty-three-inch rockfish I say pass the knife and get those filets on ice.

The smell of fresh fish cooking makes you feel alive. It harkens us back to mankind's earliest days when mankind first had a fire and learned to catch fish, it's primal. Whether on the grill, in the deep fryer, or baking in the oven, freshly cooked fish gets the taste buds salivating.

What I would suggest to fellow fishermen who frown upon fishing and eating your catch is to relax and engage your tastebuds. Spend the day on the water, have fun, and throw a few fish in the cooler. Get home, open a cold beer, clean fish, cook it, and enjoy it.



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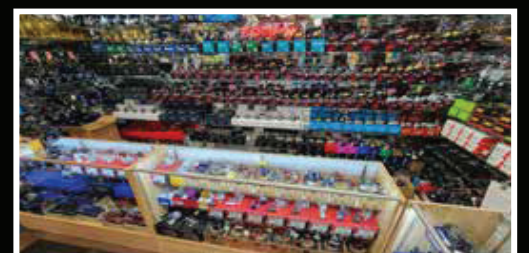
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Recipe of the Month

PAN-SEARED MAHI MAHI WITH UMAMI BUTTER SAUCE (30 MINUTES!)

INGREDIENTS

1 – 1 1/2 lb fresh mahi mahi, cut into fillets with skin-on or off
Old Bay seasoning, to taste
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 tablespoons fish sauce (I use Red Boat)
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce
2 teaspoons packed light or dark brown sugar
4 cloves of garlic, minced or pressed
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into pieces
1 tablespoon lightly dried parsley or freshly chopped parsley



DIRECTIONS

Season & rest the fish: On a large plate/platter, season the mahi mahi fillets with old bay seasoning- to taste, on all sides. Set the fish aside to rest and sit until they reach room temperature, about 20 minutes.

Prep the umami sauce: In a small bowl or measuring cup, combine the fish sauce, lemon juice, soy sauce, brown sugar, and garlic. Whisk the mixture together very well to thoroughly combine and set aside.

Sear the fish: Heat the oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Once the oil shimmers, gently swirl the skillet around to evenly coat the bottom. Add the mahi mahi fillets into the skillet. Cook the fish, undisturbed, until a golden-brown sear appears on the bottom and the sides are cooked about halfway up the fillets, about 3-4 minutes. Then use a fish spatula (or any similar utensil) to carefully flip the fillets onto the other side. Let the other side cook for 1-2 minutes or until the fish fillets are opaque in color (no longer translucent) and just cooked through with easily flaked flesh.

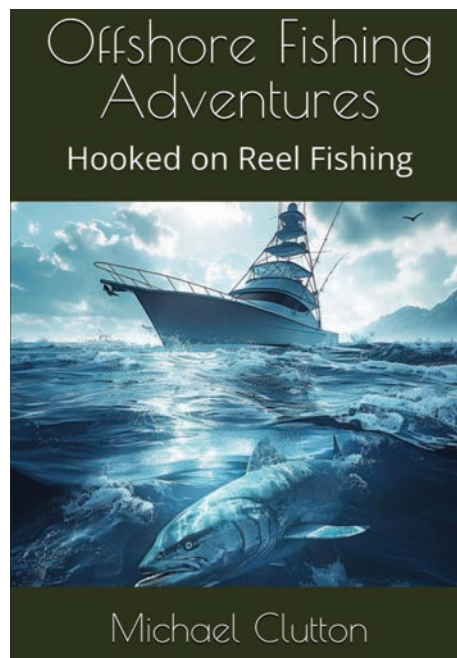
Add umami sauce + butter & simmer: Reduce the heat to medium-low. Pour the sauce into the skillet followed by the pieces of butter. Let the sauce and butter simmer until the butter melts through, about 1-2 minutes. Then sprinkle the parsley over the fillets and grab a spoon and baste the fillets with the sauce. Shut off the heat and remove the skillet from heat. Continue basting and gently swirling the skillet to move the fillets around in the sauce to meld, about 20 seconds of this with the residual heat.

Serve pan-seared mahi mahi with umami butter sauce alongside your favorite side items (mashed potatoes, green beans, etc.) Enjoy!

Book of the Month

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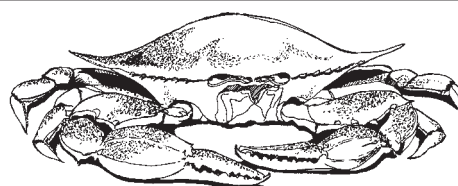
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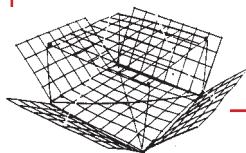
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