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WILD WINGS

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BY INSPIRATION MINISTRIES

Dependable

“And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.”—Jeremiah 18:4

God told Jeremiah to go to a potter’s house. There he saw a man working at his wheel, shaping clay that had been marred. The potter worked until the pot was formed to his satisfaction. Then the Lord spoke: “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?” (v. 6).

We need to remember that God Himself works like a potter in our lives. We may feel we are in control and know what is best for us. We may feel that we already have the proper shape, personality, and character, and have been sufficiently molded.

But we need to remember that we are God’s vessels. He sees our potential and knows why we were created. He knows how we can function best, what we should avoid, and what is best for us. He will shape us until we are the vessels He wants us to be and He is satisfied with our shape, character, personality, and habits.

Realize that God is at work in your life just like that potter. Even if you think He is finished, He may see more work that needs to be done. When this happens, understand that He is not punishing you. He is your Creator. He loves you and desires to mold you until He is satisfied.

Trust Him to shape you. Submit to His molding process. Cooperate as He perfects you.

Reflection Question: Write a prayer thanking God for all He’s done to make you more like Him.



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Bay's oyster shell shortage gets relief from the West Coast

At water's edge in lower Dorchester County MD, two hulking mounds of oyster shells dwarf docked workboats and nearby storage sheds. John "Benny" Horseman, a waterman turned seafood industry entrepreneur, dubbed the larger pile "Mount Everest" — its peak could well be the highest spot in this low-lying area of the Eastern Shore.

Trucked cross-country from the Pacific Northwest, these shells will help relieve a chronic bottleneck in ambitious efforts to rebuild the Chesapeake Bay's oyster population. In Maryland, there aren't nearly enough oyster shells available to meet projected needs for restoring reefs in the state's oyster sanctuaries and replenishing others in public fishery waters.

Until now, the state has been getting about 230,000 bushels of shells a year for those purposes, most of them from Virginia. But in a report produced in late 2023, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources projected the need for up to 17.5 million bushels of shells over the next decade for oyster sanctuaries and public reefs and to support a growing aquaculture industry.

In response to that report, a task force created by Democratic Gov. Wes Moore has been studying how the state can meet that need, either with shells or alternate substrates such as stones, concrete, porcelain or even steel slag. It's tasked with providing recommendations by Dec. 1, 2024.

Help is already on the way, though. DNR has authorized the importation this year of more than 200,000 bushels of oyster shells from Washington state. That's where Horseman and his partners have tapped into a massive stockpile of discarded shells — millions of bushels that were otherwise destined to be ground up for hiking and biking trails, among other things.

"This is going to help majorly," Horseman said. Before the oyster spawning season begins this summer, he and his group intend to plant these shells on wild fishery reefs in three Eastern Shore counties. They hope to bring in even more shells in years to come.

The shells are from a different species of oyster than what grows in the Chesapeake and along the East and Gulf coasts. *Crassostrea gigas* are native to the Pacific coast of Asia but have been introduced throughout the Pacific and even in Europe. They are the most widely cultured oyster in the world and have been farmed on the West Coast for a century.

Asian species eyed year ago Twenty-five years ago, when diseases, loss of habitat and overharvesting had severely diminished the Chesapeake's native population of *Crassostrea virginica*, two Asian species — *C. gigas* and *C. ariakensis* — were considered as potentially disease-resistant replacements.

But scientists and conservationists opposed the introduction of non-native oysters, warning that the new-

comers could bring new parasites and diseases to the Bay and may not thrive here.

Ultimately, Maryland, Virginia and federal officials decided instead to redouble efforts to revive native oysters; in 2014 they committed to large reef restoration efforts in five Bay tributaries in each state. Meanwhile, the diseases afflicting oysters abated, and commercial harvests have in the past decade rebounded as the bivalve numbers recovered, though both abundance and harvests are still well below historic levels.

The large restoration projects strained the available supply of oyster shells, which have traditionally been used to provide a landing place or substrate where new generations of oysters grow. Oysters build their own shells, but to get started, freshly spawned larvae, or spat, generally settle on the shells of either dead or living oysters.

Because the diseases MSX and Dermo killed off many of the Bay's oysters from the late 1980s into the 2000s, though, there were fewer oysters reproducing or being harvested, leaving fewer shells for future generations to set on. Many existing reefs silted over, preventing spat from settling on the bottom.

In Maryland, the loss of habitat was particularly acute because declining harvests shuttered oyster processing facilities, reducing the supply of shells available for replenishing reefs. Shells from the few remaining shucking houses now go mainly to oyster hatcheries.

Now, up to 70% of the oysters harvested in Maryland get shipped to Virginia for shucking and packing, according to the DNR, and the shells only come back if paid for. The numbers returned to Maryland have been limited, both by the cost and by the Virginia oyster processors retaining shells to ensure they have enough for their oyster farms.

Virginia's shell squeeze isn't as tight because the state also dredges enough fossil shells every year from the bottom of the James River to replenish about 600 to 800 acres of mostly public fishery reefs.

Maryland also used to dredge up shells from silted-over reefs — up



Approximately 200,000 bushels of Pacific oyster shells have been trucked from Washington state to Maryland's Eastern Shore, where they will be loaded onto boats for planting on reefs this summer. Some of the shells are stored at Farm Creek Oyster Farm, shown here, in Dorchester County. Photo by Dave Harp

to 5 million bushels annually decades ago — for use in replenishing reefs worn down by harvest. The state stopped the practice in the early 2000s "in part due to a reduction in optimal areas to dredge," according to DNR. Also, state's federal dredging permit expired, and for a time it did not pursue a new one.

In 2008, the Maryland General Assembly directed DNR to seek a permit to dredge shell from Man O'War Shoal, a moribund reef outside the mouth of the Patapsco River that's estimated to contain up to 100 million bushels. But recreational fishing groups, conservationists and even some watermen objected, contending that dredging would degrade rich underwater fish habitat there.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers finally authorized DNR in 2017 to dredge up to 5 million bushels, but amid continued opposition the state Board of Public Works has never voted to go forward.

Alternatives to shell

Meanwhile, federal and state agencies turned to alternate substrates to carry out Maryland's five large reef restoration projects because the need far exceeded the

available supply.

For a couple of years, DNR bought fossil shells excavated from a Florida quarry and used them in Harris Creek and the Little Choptank River. Hatchery-reared spat deposited on oyster shells were planted atop the Florida shells. But watermen objected, even staging a floating blockade in the Little Choptank.

The Army Corps, which took the lead in Harris Creek and the Tred Avon River projects, used clam and other shells bought from New Jersey, as well as granite stones. Those likewise garnered pushback from watermen, who cited instances of boats being damaged by stones being piled up too close to the water's surface.

Watermen maintain that oyster shells are the ideal substrate for oyster larvae. Some research supports that belief, but many other studies have found that other hard materials work as well.

With demand growing, the costs of securing enough shell or other substrates have mounted. DNR estimated it could cost \$105 mil-

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EARLY SUMMER BASS

Fishing for bass in the early days of summer can be challenging. You will find late-spawning bass, post spawn bass, and those that are in there summer locations. In early June, it is not uncommon to find bass in all three stages at the same time. The angler has to figure out what stage the bass are in, in the area he or she is fishing on that given day. That, in itself, is the biggest factor on how to catch them.

Targeting spawning bass in tidal water is not a sight fishing scenario like what you may see in televised bass tournaments. The stain of brackish water makes it difficult to see the beds. The known spawning areas are gravel banks, grass beds, boat dock pilings, and bulkheads. The techniques for catching spawning bass are meticulous and time consuming. Soft plastic baits cast to bedding areas are the best way to target them. The lure is left in the presumed bed to goad the bass into biting. Many fishermen prefer craw and creature baits, while others have found wacky rigged stick worm to be appealing. A new trend is to cast a drop shot rig into the bed.

Post-spawn bass are just as challenging to catch as the spawning class. Female bass that have recently spawned are in rest mode. They need a few days to recuperate for the riggers of the spawn. They have not moved far from the beds but will be hard to catch. Male bass will still be at the beds guarding the newborn fry. They are willing to attack most anything they perceive as threat to the fry. While these bass are in protect and attack mode, catching them can leave the fry vulnerable to predation from blue gills and perch.

The lady bass can be found along grass lines, pier pilings, and sunken wood along spawning banks. When they feel the need to feed, they are aren't going to be in chase mode. Soft plastics are still the way to go. Texas rigged or wacky rigged stick worms, fluke-style minnows, craw and

creature baits worked slowly in these areas will produce strikes. A not-so-commonplace tactic is to work poppers and walking baits painstakingly slow along these same areas. Mimicking an injured baitfish, and working it in place, presents an easy target for late post spawn bass.

It is safe to say that by late June, most bass in our tidal waters have spawned and are in the summer mode. This is when males are no longer guarding fry, and the female bass will be more active. The problem that arises here is that the bass are spread out. You will still have bass in spawning areas. Often times blue gills and sunfish use the beds made by bass for their spawning area, giving bass the opportunity to feed on them. Docks are always a good option as they provide shade and a degree or so cooler water. Fallen shoreline wood provides ambush cover and grass provided cover, and more oxygenated water.

At this point, it's up to the angler to find where the bite is happening and what it takes to get the bass to bite. Add in the ebb and flow of the tides that position bass on the different types of cover. That's what is known as finding the pattern. A lot has to do with the comfort level of the angler. Do they favor fishing docks, grass, or shoreline cover; or are they versatile enough to fish it all?

I've have caught bass from shoreline wood on occasion. I take a two-pronged approach. For a slower approach I like worms, craws, and jigs. To find more aggressive bass, I'll work swim jigs, chatter baits, and spinnerbaits through the limbs. I work the outer extremities first as not to alert those bass while catching others closer to the bank.

Working boat docks is not much different than working wood cover. I start at the far end of docks, and work my way in. I not only target the pilings, but will work below the decking as the tide allows. My main tool is a wacky rigged stick worm skipped under the



Randy Yarnall shows a big bass from the backwaters.

pier. I also use swim jigs and spinnerbaits for the more active bite.

In early summer, grass beds, for the most part, have not matted up. You can still work individual clumps, or work over the entire grass bed. On a high tide scenario, you can efficiently work over the top of a grass flat with any number of lures. Topwater plugs and buzzbaits are great choices for working the surface. Swimbait, swim jigs, chatter baits, and shallow running crankbait fit the need when fishing subsurface.

As the tide drops to low, you can see the individual strands and clumps of vegetation. The baits just mentioned still allow you to work the area looking for a reaction bite. Your casts can now

be more focused. With the vegetation in view, you can be more methodical. You can pitch and flip crawfish and creature lures to the clumps. Stick worms work as well. Should the bites be tough, try longer casts to clumps farther from the boat. Often times, our pressured waters have made bass weary of our close in tactics around the vegetation.

Early summer bass fishing has its challenges and rewards. Knowing where to look for bass is the start to catching them. You may have to work through a few lures and techniques to find the pattern. When you find the lure and pattern, challenge becomes the reward with catching the bass.



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SHELLS...

Continued from pg. 5

lion over the next decade to acquire enough shell.

About 18 months ago, Horseman said, he and his brother Alex, also a waterman, teamed up with Nick Hargrove, owner of Wittman Wharf Seafood in Tilghman, to begin looking for other sources of shell. They found a massive stockpile at an oyster processing facility in South Bend, WA, owned by Oregon-based Pacific Seafood.

They visited the site a couple of times and struck a deal to purchase shells that they were told had been sitting there for a decade or more.

"It was a waste product," said Hargrove. "They were grinding it up and turning it into park trails."

Pacific oyster shell

"This project ... was definitely not for revenue purposes," said Jenn Allison, manager of the Washington processing plant. Company officials



Pacific oyster shells, like this one from the stockpile on Farm Creek in Dorchester County, MD, tend to be larger than those of native Eastern oysters and have more ripples on them. (Courtesy of Maryland Department of Natural Resources)

view it as a partnership to help restore Bay oysters and ensure the sustainability of the shellfish industry.

Horseman said he built a conveyor at the Washington facility to load the shells on trucks, then organized convoys of dozens of tractor trailers to bring them to Maryland.

The operation was privately financed, but they still needed approval from state and local regulators to bring the gigas shells in for reef restoration in the Bay.

"The first time we asked about it," Hargrove recalled, "DNR wrote back and said no." But he and the Horsemans refused to give up and pressed to win over state officials.

Brian Callam, DNR's aquaculture coordinator, said state officials initially rejected the idea of importing shells from the West Coast because they were concerned about the possibility that a relatively new disease in Pacific oysters might spread to Eastern oysters. Studies later concluded there was little risk of that happening, he said.

Then, last year, with renewed requests to import Pacific shells, DNR relented.

"All the shellfish pathologists indicated that the risk of bringing in aquatic diseases on shells is low to begin with," Callam said. Furthermore, he said, keeping the shells on dry land exposed to the air and sunshine for months to years kills any pathogens and "essentially turns them into a pile of rocks. There's virtually no risk at all."

Permission granted

DNR issued the first permit last August to bring Pacific shell into the state, but the approval came too late to place the shells in the water

in time for oyster spawning, which takes place in early summer.

This spring, though, DNR issued three new permits allowing the importation of 220,000 bushels of Pacific oyster shell this year. Two of the permits allow a combined 200,000 bushels for the Horseman brothers' Dorchester County businesses: Farm Creek Oyster Farm and Madison Shell Recycling.

The other permit authorizes 20,000 bushels of imported shell by the WRF Group, a Cambridge-based business that Maryland has commissioned to restore oyster sanctuaries in Eastern Bay as part of a sixth large restoration project the state has initiated.

Watermen have welcomed the imports, especially because the bulk of the shell is promised for replenishing reefs in public fishery areas, which they feel have been shortchanged in favor of sanctuary reefs.

"It's what we have to do if we want to continue growing," said Jeff Harrison, chairman of the Talbot (County) Watermen Association. This year, with the imported shells augmenting what's available closer to home, Harrison said his group will be able to plant twice as much as they would have otherwise.

Pacific oyster shell pile in The permits specify that the shells must be stored on land for an unspecified interval until the oyster tissue has decomposed and there are no other organic materials present. They also say the shells should be stored "far enough from Maryland waters such that any inadvertent introduction by storm or flood is unlikely." The latter condition is challenging, given the low-lying nature of

Dorchester County. The stockpile on Farm Creek in Toddville is on gravel next to the water.

Allison Colden, Maryland director of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and a fisheries biologist, said that with proper biosecurity precautions she's okay with using Pacific oyster shell in the Bay.

"As long as the material's inspected, and we know where it's come from," Colden said, "and that [it's determined to be] no risk, it can be useful because the demand for shell across all sectors is only continuing to grow."

After inspecting shells that have already arrived, DNR asked that dirt and debris, including bits of twine, be removed. On a recent visit to the Farm Creek stockpile, Horseman had an employee hand-culling the twine from the shells. Spring rains, he said, would wash out any dirt.

"As long as the economics support it," said DNR's Callam, "I think we're going to see continued interest in bringing this material in here until we generate enough of our own shells that we no longer need to import it. There are some people [who] have concerns about it, but I feel very confident that we are taking all the appropriate steps to make sure that the material that's coming in is as safe as possible."

Holding a Pacific oyster shell in his hand, Horseman said he thinks it may even be superior to native Eastern oyster shells for converting oyster larvae to spat.

"These shells are better because they've got more ripples for the larvae to catch onto," he said.

Article courtesy of Tim Wheeler, Bay Journal.

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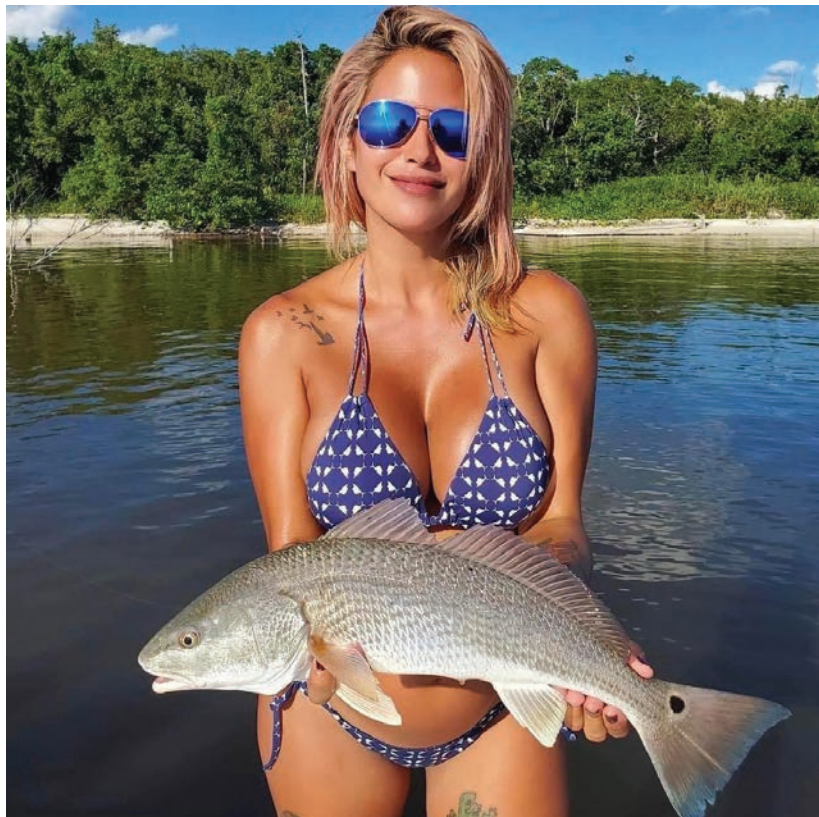
15-year-old Jaylynn Parker from New Richmond, OH beat the Ohio state record when she landed a mammoth blue catfish in the Ohio River.

With a touch of help from her dad, left, Jaylynn Parker, a sophomore from New Richmond, Ohio, snagged the 101-pound beast on April 7 in Clermont County, the Cincinnati Enquirer, part of the USA TODAY Network reported.

New Richmond is a historic village on the Ohio River, about 20 miles southeast of downtown Cincinnati.

Jaylynn caught the massive catfish while jugging. It's when a person lets bait dangle beneath a free-floating canister attached by a line to a fixed point like a tree trunk or something else on shore. The process is sometimes also called juglining.

The Outdoor Writers of Ohio, who crowned Jaylynn with the title recently at a conference, keeps Ohio's official angling records, Fred Snyder, chairman of the Outdoor Writers of Ohio Record Fish Committee, told the Enquire.



Dylan with her sweet red drum.



James Johnson and Sean McNelis landed a 7 foot bull shark last month from the surf down Assateague, Md.



Nice Bull Red out of the surf in Delaware.



“Tuna The Tide”

NOW WHAT

By Captain Mark Galasso

If nothing else commercial fisherman and hard core recreational fisherman are persistent and adaptable. Populations of target species fluctuate sometimes in wide swings for better and for worse. As one species declines another usually fills in the gap. One of the main species in the Chesapeake Bay is the Striped Bass or Rockfish as it's known in Maryland and Virginia. Recently it has been a main focus by fisherman from North Carolina to Maine and in Maryland is the State fish. But it hasn't always been that way.

Though Rockfish has always held a special place for fisherman in the Chesapeake Bay it hasn't always been the dominant species caught by fisherman. If you have been fishing in the middle and upper Chesapeake for more than forty years you can remember a time when Bluefish ruled the roost and it was difficult sometimes to find a good Rockfish. Since Bluefish were not considered the best eating fish anglers pursued them more for sport and other species for the table. Species like Summer Flounder, Spot, White Perch and Croakers generally found their way to the table while Bluefish were either thrown back or brought home and buried in the garden.

As Rockfish became more plentiful Bluefish populations in the Bay dwindled. But as Rockfish populations recently started to decline it has been a question as to what top predators will take their place. And with recent restrictions to help bring the Rockfish populations back many fisherman both commercial and recreational are trying to figure out what to target next.

I recently spent a day with a young light tackle guide and we had that discussion. How do we adjust and do our part to take some pressure off Rockfish and still run a charter business. Here is what we came up with. And I can't say I agree with everything he told me but we all have to adjust. The bottom line was we need to target other species.

The obvious answer to a lot of anglers as well as DNR is to target Blue Catfish. In some areas they are the latest top predator. They are fun to catch and good to eat. A great combination. And in certain areas they are big and plentiful. The Potomac River and up-

per Bay are FULL of them. A friend of mine fished with a full time guide for Blue Cats out of DC. When they got in the guide apologized for only catching 30 and none over 25 pounds! WOW! From Poole's Island north Catfish are everywhere and guides as well as recreational fisherman are targeting them.

Many of the light tackle guides that have been targeting Rock all winter up the Bay move down the Bay to target Cobia and Red Drum in the summer. Though the limits are pretty stringent on these species they are a blast to catch and populations seem to be on the rise. In fact at our custom rod shop we are seeing orders for rods specifically made to target these hard fighting fish.

In my case I'm getting to old and lazy to run to far south, or north. I like it where I am in Kent Narrows and have been trying to figure out what to catch close to home. So here is what I came up with. We do have a few Catfish up in the Chester and out in our portion of the Bay. They better look out. I'll be armed and dangerous. Cut bait and a fishfinder rig is all you need. Anchor up on good bottom, not too deep and there you go.

I remember the days we used to catch a few Summer Flounder around Kent Island. In fact I still catch a few every year on jigs or if you can believe it, trolling spoons. They are almost always undersized. But then again you never know. In the past we used Flounder rigs like we used in Barnegat Bay or Chincoteague. Spinners and Bucktails with minnows or squid strips. I did find however that all the flash and color didn't help much in the Bay. Just a minnow or squid strip on a small Kahlae hook with enough weight to get to the bottom worked fine. The trick with the Squid strips is to make sure they had that wavy action so it looked alive. As a bonus we had a lot of Black Sea Bass in the area last year and I know they love Squid, Minnows and Shrimp as well. Flounder like channel edges where the current sweeps bait off the edge to them while Sea Bass like structure. Our area has both.

There were a lot of tiny Croakers last year. Maybe they grew up a bit. They like the same baits and rigs though they prefer sandy areas around the structure where the Sea Bass fre-



quent. There were also a few Grey Sea Trout (Weakfish) caught in the area. They like metal jigs worked in the channel. You never know what will hit a small metal jig along the edges of channels. Almost anything. When Sea Trout populations peaked in the late nineties in and around the Eastern Bay we used Trout Bombs. They were basically a painted weight with a feathered hook attached. Up about three feet from the weight was a three way swivel with another stiff eight inch leader attached. Tied to this leader was a small deceiver fly maybe two inches or so. In the fall these rigs caught just about everything, Rockfish, Trout, Bluefish and White Perch. Sometime two differ-

ent species at the same time.

Since the moratorium was lifted on Rockfish in 1996 mid Bay anglers have been spoiled by the abundance of the species. The bottom line is we haven't been very adventuresome in the pursuit of other species. But times have changed and like it or not we have to adapt. So if your new to the game and get tired of hearing all the old timers talk about "the good old days." Pay better attention. They might be talking about something you never even thought of. Fishing opportunities that have always been right under your boat. You just never thought to try. The Bay is changing and no one knows whether it's for the better or the worse. Only time will tell.

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A rare catch from the Potomac River today - a piebald blue catfish. Piebald animals have leucism, a condition caused by defects in their skin, feather or hair pigment cells.

Photo courtesy Jay Fleming.



It's that time again!!

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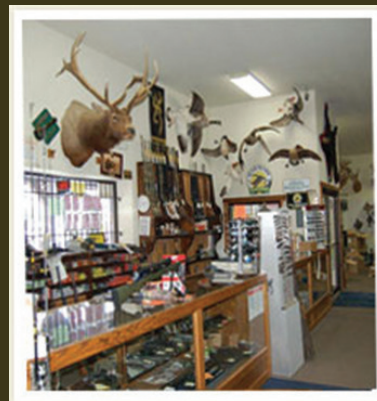
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Maryland Department of Natural Resources Confirms 52 Deer With Chronic Wasting Disease

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources reported today that 52 white-tailed deer sampled within Allegany, Baltimore, Frederick, Montgomery and Washington counties in 2023 tested positive for chronic wasting disease, a neurological disease found in deer, elk, and moose.

Of the positive samples, 49 came from within the existing chronic wasting disease management area (Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, and Washington counties), while one positive sample came from Baltimore County and two positive samples came from Montgomery County.

In response to finding positive samples in Baltimore and Montgomery counties, the Chronic Wasting Disease Management Area has been expanded to include all of Allegany, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Montgomery, and Washington counties.

The Department of Natural Resources conducts annual surveillance and works with neighboring states to monitor chronic wasting disease in the deer population. Management areas are established to help keep hunters informed, regulate how deer carcasses can be transported, and hopefully slow the spread of the disease.

“Unfortunately, like many other states with chronic wasting disease, we are seeing the disease spread in Maryland,” Wildlife and Heritage Service Director Karina Stonesifer said. “The department will continue to monitor the disease closely, provide the public with the most up-to-date information on the disease, and follow the best science available for deer management.”

Maryland’s chronic wasting disease surveillance program began in 1999 and, to date, more than 14,394 deer have been tested. A total of 1,080 samples were submitted for laboratory testing from 2023.

Chronic wasting disease was first confirmed in Maryland in February 2011. Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia have all documented chronic wasting disease in the region. The latest findings bring the number of positive cases in Maryland to 223. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, Maryland is one of 33 states and four Canadian provinces with chronic wasting disease documented in free-ranging

cervids in North America.

Concerns about chronic wasting disease should not stop anyone from hunting deer or enjoying venison. Research suggests the disease cannot be naturally transmitted to humans. However, as a general safety precaution it is recommended that hunters avoid consuming the meat

of sick animals as well as the brain, lymph nodes or spinal column of any deer — all of which are normally removed during the butchering process.

Hunters and other wildlife enthusiasts can help by reporting any deer that are emaciated, unhealthy, or acting abnormally. Hunters can also

help by granting permission to the department to collect tissue samples from harvested deer. The department can be reached at 410-260-8540.

To find more information on chronic wasting disease in Maryland, citizens should visit the Maryland Department of Natural Resources website.

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DNR Biologists' Study: Older, Larger Female Striped Bass Produce Far More Eggs

A new study looks at the age at which female striped bass mature and how many eggs they produce as they age

Two of the most important traits to understand fish population growth are the age at which females mature and their fecundity, or how many eggs they can produce at each age on average.

A new study from biologists in the Maryland Department of Natural Resources has helped to update information on those factors in striped bass, making available current biological information about the population for use in the stock assessment model, which estimates the numbers and biomass of mature females in the Atlantic coast striped bass stock.

The study, published in *Marine and Coastal Fisheries: Dynamics, Management, and Ecosystem Science* in February, determined that half of females reach sexual maturity between ages 5 and 6, and larger, older females produce more eggs per kilogram body mass than smaller, younger females.

"This research demonstrates the importance of protecting the female breeding stock of striped bass, both throughout their life cycle and particularly when they are at large, productive sizes," said Lynn Fegley, director of the department's Fishing and Boating Services. "By protecting large female striped bass, we can help make sure they produce a lot of eggs that will survive better when the environmental conditions are right for successful spawning."

This study sought to use updated methods to define maturity and explore whether weight and fecundity were proportional when estimating the size of the striped bass spawning stock.

Three Maryland Department of

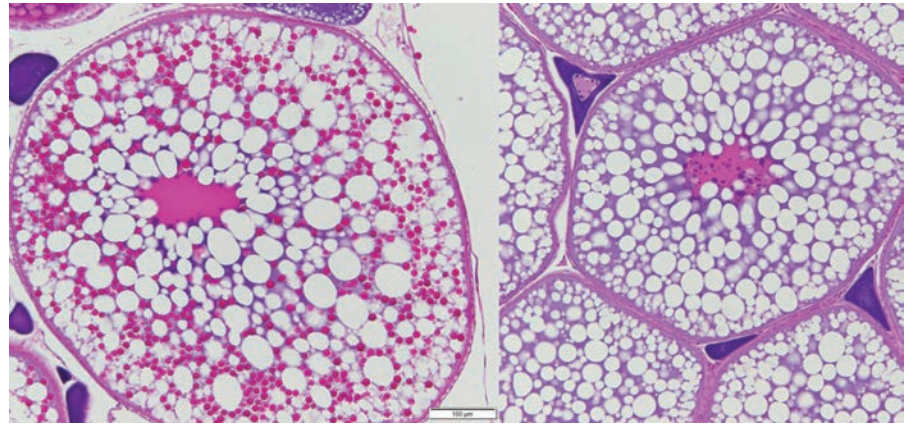
Natural Resources biologists—Simon Brown, Angela Giuliano, and Beth Versak—examined the microscopic anatomy of striped bass ovaries to better understand specific aspects of the reproductive biology of female Atlantic striped bass.

The biologists used the latest standards in applying histology—the microscopic study of tissues—to identify maturity in fish, standards which have progressed since the last time the female age-at-maturity schedule used previously in the assessment was calculated. They then analyzed striped bass ovaries to distinguish between immature, maturing and functionally mature developmental stages.

Through collaboration with multiple state and federal agencies, surveyors collected a wide range of samples throughout the fall and the entire spring spawning season in the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Coast, accounting for all developmental stages.

Scientists at the Oxford Cooperative Laboratory then stained cross sections of striped bass ovaries with special dyes, encased them in paraffin wax, and mounted thin slices on a glass slide. The dye highlights different components of the developing eggs, allowing biologists to determine if a striped bass could produce fully developed eggs by the spawning season, or had just recently spawned.

The authors found that some younger females produced enlarged oocytes (developing eggs) that appeared developed but lacked the critical yolk material. These were determined to be fish that had begun maturing, and go through a "practice" reproductive cycle, but hadn't yet become fully mature adults capable of reproducing. As



Striped bass oocytes under a microscope

Close-up images of striped bass oocytes (developing egg) from histologically prepared ovarian tissue samples collected during the spawning season. From left to right: an oocyte from a functionally mature individual containing numerous vitellogenin-derived yolk protein granules (red dots) and an oocyte from a maturing individual that will not spawn this season. The transparent sponge-like areas of the oocyte are the neutral lipids that aid in egg buoyancy as striped bass eggs float in the water column until hatching.

water temperatures rise in June, the unspawned, unreleased eggs are reabsorbed in a process called atresia. The resulting analysis showed that just a small percentage of females reach maturity by age 4, but about 90% do by age 7.

The female age-at-maturity schedule is used in the stock assessment to calculate spawning stock biomass but was previously estimated during the 1980s when the stock was considered collapsed. This study determined the female age and length at 50% maturity in Atlantic striped bass based on spring samples were around ages 5 and 6 and 24 inches long. The updated maturity schedule was used in the last benchmark stock assessment for striped bass.

The researchers determined fecundity by taking a photo of small samples of mature striped bass eggs, using a computer algorithm to count the eggs in the photos, and conducting further calculations to come up with an estimate of the total numbers of eggs found in a ripe striped bass ovary.

The number of eggs produced by a female striped bass ranged up to 4 million in a 13-year-old fish, but eggs also increased disproportionately with body weight. This means, for example, that in one spawning season, a 30-pound striped bass will produce more eggs than two 15-pound striped bass combined.

"Detailed information on the reproductive life history traits that translate female striped bass biomass into reproductive capacity is crucial for informing future management of the stock," Brown, fisheries

biologist and study co-author, said.

While the authors noted methodological and interpretive differences between this study and others ranging over the past decades, the resulting calculations of age at 50% maturity and fecundity were consistent with previous findings. Given that environmental and fishing pressure on spawning striped bass has been variable over the last four decades, this study concludes that reproductive-related life history traits of female Atlantic striped bass are robust to long-term changes.

This research contributes to the department's effort to understand the spawning challenges striped bass face in the Chesapeake Bay and use the latest science to inform management.

Fisheries managers monitor a variety of factors that influence striped bass recruitment. Environmental conditions, including warm winters and low water flows, have been unfavorable for striped bass recruitment and are considered to be factors behind recent decreased reproductive success. After five consecutive years of below-average spawning success in Maryland's four major spawning rivers, as well as the stock assessment indicating an overfished status of the Atlantic striped bass stock, Maryland and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission have approved management actions aimed at protecting the spawning stock and reducing fishing mortality in 2024.

Article courtesy Sinclair Boggs, Marketing Strategist with Maryland Department of Natural Resources Fishing and Boating Services

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Maryland Department of Natural Resources Reports Results from the 2024 Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab Winter Dredge Survey



Photo by Jennifer Dudley, submitted to the 2023 Maryland DNR Photo Contest.

The Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab Winter Dredge Survey, a cooperative effort between the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), estimates 317 million blue crabs in the Chesapeake Bay in 2024, compared to 323 million crabs last year.

The number of spawning age female crabs decreased from 152 million crabs in 2023 to 133 million crabs in 2024, but is still well above the management threshold of 72.5 million crabs. The threshold indicates whether the female crab population is being overfished or not.

Adult male crabs also experienced a slight decrease from 55 million crabs in 2023 to 46 million crabs in 2024.

The number of juvenile crabs in the Chesapeake Bay has been below average for the past four years, but rose to 138 million juvenile crabs in 2024. Blue crab reproduction is naturally variable and influenced by many factors such as oceanic conditions, available nursery habitat, predation, and other environmental impacts.

“An increase in juvenile recruitment is certainly welcome news, and the stock and population as a whole remains healthy,” said Maryland DNR Fishing and Boating Services Director Lynn Fegley. “However the continued relatively low recruitment numbers warrant a closer look at our approach moving forward.”

The consecutive years of low juvenile abundance prompted the Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee to plan a new stock assessment for blue crabs, which will begin this summer. The new assessment will al-

low fishery managers to take an in-depth look at their understanding of the ecology of this species, how it is modeled, and whether the reference points used for management should be revised.

Mandy Bromilow, DNR’s blue crab program manager, noted there has not been an overall reexamination of the data that contributed to the 2011 stock assessment on blue crabs in the Chesapeake Bay.

“We haven’t had a real evaluation of the assumptions we have in the model, and there are new analytical methods that could be applied to the data,” she said. The stock assessment is set to be completed and published in March 2026.

In the meantime, the Chesapeake Bay Stock Assessment Committee will review the survey results for this year and provide their scientific advice for management. Following their advice, DNR will begin discussions with the state’s Blue Crab Industry Advisory Committee to provide guidance concerning management options for 2024 that promotes the health and sustainability of the Chesapeake Bay blue crab population and its fisheries.

The Winter Dredge Survey has been conducted cooperatively by Maryland and Virginia since 1990, and the results are reviewed annually in an effort to have consistent management efforts across the jurisdictions. Throughout the survey, biologists use dredge equipment to capture, measure, record and release blue crabs at 1,500 sites throughout the Chesapeake Bay from December through March. Detailed results are on the DNR website.

Fisherman arrested for cheating in bass tournament with lead weights



LAKE CHARLES, La. - A Louisiana fisherman was arrested for cheating in a bass fishing contest by using weights to boost his score.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries enforcement said officers arrested Aaron Moreau, 38, for fishing contest fraud.

Authorities said they were contacted by the Big Bass Splash tournament directors at Toledo Bend over one of the anglers placing lead weights in a fish he caught and used for weigh in on May 17.

Moreau is believed to have placed 2.59 pounds of lead weights in a fish he used for weigh-in and then left the scene.

After an arrest warrant was issued, Moreau turned himself into authorities on May 23 and was taken to the Sabine Parish Detention Center.

If convicted, he faces up to a \$3,000 fine and one year in jail. Cheating in a fishing contest isn’t unheard of.

Last year, two men who admitted stuffing fish with lead weights and fish fillets in an attempt to win thousands of dollars in an Ohio fishing tournament in 2022 were sentenced to ten-day jail terms and other penalties, including the forfeiture of a boat valued at \$100,000.

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“Montana Grant”



By Grant Soukup

BOUNTY ANGLERS!!!

We have heard of Bounty Hunters. These skilled hunter’s track and capture escaped felons, lost people and pets, or invasive critters. They hunt for money and can be very successful.

Bounty Anglers are also becoming a Management Tool being used by Fisheries staff and commissions across the country.

If you want to get rid of something, put a dollar figure on it and tada! Too many glass bottles or cans littering an area, put a return fee on them. A bounty will be a great way to create jobs and get rid of unwanted invasives. In Florida, invasive pythons and iguanas are legally caught and turned in for hundreds and thousands of dollars. Gator populations are controlled by catching and killing gators by the boatload.

In Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, the watersheds were once full of steelhead and salmon. Hatcheries release millions of fry annually. Natural reproduction also helps to replenish the populations until predator’s feast on the small offspring. Pikeminnows are natural to the areas but feast on these fish populations by eating millions a season. To help reduce predator mortality, the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission put out a bounty on all Pikeminnows. Bounty Anglers rose to the occasion. Here’s what the bounty looks like.

Any size pikeminnow

\$6 for the first 25 turned in.

\$8 for the next 175 captured

\$10 per pikeminnow over 200 caught.

A bonus fee of \$200-\$500 is given for Pikeminnows with Salmon transponder tags inside them, from eaten tagged salmon.



Bounty Anglers have removed 5.3 million Pikeminnows since 1990. 3 anglers have made over \$100,000 each. The biggest Bounty Angler made \$119,341 in 2016!

11,954 Bounty Anglers captured 156,505 pikeminnows in 2023. This was a 10% increase over 2022’s bounty harvest. This means a 40% decline in juvenile salmon and steelhead predation.

This Sport Reward Fishery is paying off in helping to control the abundant pikeminnow predators while improving the salmon and steelhead fisheries. Thanks to this strategy, the fisheries are being restored to a more natural balance.

Other states having invasive fishery challenges should consider Bounty Anglers to help restore a healthy fishery balance.

Maryland has a few invasive fish that need some Bounty Angler attention. The Blue and Flathead Catfish, and the Snakeheads are devastating the Chesapeake Bays crab and rockfish population. Mussels and other fish and shellfish species are being consumed by these non-native predators.

It would be a simple solution to simply place a money/pound bounty on these voracious predators. The Bounty fee could be paid by the seafood industry, which could then process and sell these fish. Many



Tim with his 13 lb. 32 inches.

consider these fish to be a tasty seafood choice but not at the expense of other vulnerable species.

Tim Campbell, a local writer, and angler recently caught a huge Snakehead. Let’s say a \$5 /pound bounty was allowed. His 13 lb., 32-inch-long Snakehead could earn him \$65. Over 1,000 large Snakeheads have been captured at the Conowingo Fish Lift this year alone. The seafood industry could then market the fish for well over the Bounty fee. Fresh Snakehead and Catfish can be well over \$10/pound at a market, and more at a restaurant. Local,

registered, and certified fish markets could accept these Bounty Fish.

The invasive Catfish grow even larger. Blue Catfish can grow over 50 pounds. A 32 lb. Flathead Catfish was recently captured at the Conowingo Fish Lift.

These invasive species are currently being caught in the Shad fish traps at the Conowingo Dam and given away to seafood companies. Perhaps capturing these predators and selling them instead, could pay for the fishery management programs.

Catch a big one and cash in!



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21-Year-Old Angler Earns Fish-Maryland Master Angler Award



Adam Krauss of Baltimore County has earned a Master Angler Milestone Award under the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) FishMaryland program.

The award recognizes recreational anglers who catch ten different trophy-sized species of fish in Maryland. Krauss, 21, is the ninth Master Angler since the program began in 2019.

The FishMaryland program includes dozens of species from both salt and freshwater. Krauss submitted entries for all ten catches and received individual certificates for each catch. The department plans to present the Master Angler Milestone Award certificate along with a gift card prize from Bass Pro Shops at its Arundel Mills store. Krauss caught his tenth FishMaryland eligible fish, a 31.5-inch carp, on April 17.

"It was a very last minute solo session, but I knew it was worth a try because last time I was there I noticed a lot of big carp jumping," Krauss said. "I took a quick picture next to the measuring tape, then back into the water it went. Thank you DNR for the opportunity to participate in this program."

Krauss' qualifying catches, in order, were:

- Largemouth bass, 21 inches
- Northern snakehead, 31 inches
- White perch, 13 inches
- Rainbow trout, 24 inches
- Sand tiger shark, 84 inches
- Striped bass, 48 inches
- Hickory shad, 18 inches
- Yellow perch, 14 inches
- Chain pickerel, 24 inches
- Carp, 31.5 inches

Krauss' fishing obsession start-

ed when he was five years old, when his father took him fishing at Nico-demus Road in Baltimore County, where he has lived his entire life. He is a multi-species angler who mainly fishes non-tidal and tidal freshwater locations, but will venture to saltwater occasionally. His favorite fish is the Northern Snakehead because of their unique, snake-like appearance and "the way that they strike so violently gives me a thrill!" He also has a YouTube channel where he records his many fishing adventures.

"My goal is to catch as many new species and personal bests as possible," Krauss said. "I will continue to teach people about fishing and how to respect nature along the way."



Scott Stapleford with his first Maryland turkey. 22lbs 1.5 inch spurs and 10 inch beard.

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Coastal Report

By Capt. Mark Sampson

With the 2024 “boating” season now in full swing there are and for the next few months will continue to be a lot of people out on the water doing their thing whether that be trying to catch a fish, dragging a wake-boarder around a sheltered cove, taking the family out for an afternoon cruise down the river, or any of a million other reasons to hop in a boat and shove off from a dock. On the road we have lanes and lines and signs to keep us somewhat under control, but on the water we have a lot more freedom to go where, and do what we want, which is a big part of the enjoyment of boating. Of course, with so much freedom and diverse activity on and around the water it’s not uncommon for some folks to get a bit hot under the collar by the way someone is operating their boat.

Whether you’re running through the inlet, fishing along the edge of a channel, or just cleaning your boat in its slip at the end of the day, the speed that someone else is operating their boat when you’re sitting in yours is probably the one thing that irritates people more than any other aspect of boating. Too close, too fast, too much wake; there are so many things that can get under your skin when another boat comes zooming past. But except for congested areas where there are posted six-mph speed limits, on most bodies of water it’s pretty much up to the operator how fast they want to push their vessel and since no two boats or boat operators are identical in abilities and attitudes, you can bet that on any given body of water most boats are going to be traveling at wildly different speeds.

But even though a body of water might have no posted speed limits, “what speed to run” is a decision made by the skipper that must be based on a number of constantly changing variables which will often result in constantly changing speeds of the boat. The mark of a good captain is knowing how to get their vessel from point “A” to point “B” safely, efficiently, and quickly (in that order) and how he uses the throttle to accomplish those goals is just as important as which way he turns the rudder.

Rule “six” in both the International and Inland Rules of the Road states; “Every vessel shall at all times proceed at a safe speed so that she can take proper and effective action to avoid collision and be stopped within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions.” Notice that this rule says nothing about specific speeds, it just instructs boaters to

navigate at whatever speed is best to stay safe. “Safe speed” is, therefore, a judgment call on behalf of the captain. But to properly make that decision one is required to consider such variables as visibility, maneuverability of the vessel, other boat traffic, weather and sea conditions, and anything else that might go wrong if the correct speed is not maintained.

The best example of how speed must be changed to accommodate external conditions is when visibility changes. Imagine a boat that can cruise at 25-knots. By most standards, on a calm ocean, and under clear conditions, that might be a very safe speed. But if that same boat suddenly encounters thick fog that limits visibility to a hundred feet you can bet that in order to keep from running into someone the skipper might have to throttle way down to maybe 5-knots in order to keep a “safe speed”. If the fog thins and visibility increases to a mile the safe speed might be increased to maybe 15-knots, once the fog burns off the same boat might be back to their 25-knot cruising speed. The same holds true for seas conditions – in order to keep the boat and its passengers safe, the rougher it gets the more the throttle needs to be pulled back or the boat could start coming apart.

Traffic density must always be taken into account when considering how fast to run. Just because you run a certain strip of water every day of your life at a particular speed doesn’t mean that you can continue to do so when you pull up one day and encounter 20 kayakers paddling across the channel. Even in situations where other boaters are doing things that they shouldn’t be doing, like anchoring in the middle of a narrow channel, every boater must maintain a safe speed for both their



The red drum bite has started for Captain Harry.

vessels and the surrounding vessels. Remember no matter where you are - you are always responsible for the effects of your wake. So don’t cop an attitude like “those guys shouldn’t be there in the first place so they’re just going to have to deal with my wake!” Rule-6 says, “Every vessel shall at all times proceed at a safe speed...”

By the rules, running at a safe speed means that there is no risk of collision. Digging deeper into the rules one will find that if the operator of a vessel even remotely “thinks” there might

be a risk of collision, then there is one and he or she is required to take the appropriate action, which in most cases will involve slowing down. One of the greatest joys of boating is the ability to run “fast and free.” But “fast” can be downright “deadly” or at the very least an annoyance to other boaters when a skipper doesn’t have the smarts to know when to tone it down a bit. So if you don’t want to make enemies, get a ticket, damage a boat, or possibly kill someone – slowdown!

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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”

**LEGISLATIVE
ROUNDUP**

By Steve Huettner

Turkey season has ended, a late rockfish season has started and our attention turns to barbecues, crabs, and the beach. It also means that the Maryland General Assembly has ended their sessions and bills have either been signed or vetoed by the Governor. This past session saw what seemed like the typical amount of bills introduced concerning hunting. When the dust settled it looked like the status quo reigned.

One bill that saw hunters on both sides of the issue was legislation that would completely ban lead and lead-based ammunition for hunting. The bill did not mandate non-lead for recreational shooting, trap shooting, sporting clays, etc. As most hunters know, lead ammunition for waterfowl was banned several decades ago, and moving forward hunting of all game at Maryland's Federal Refugees will require non-lead ammunition. Currently, there are some non-lead alternatives, Barnes ammunition comes to mind as a premium non-lead choice. Some hunters expressed concern about lead fragments in deer and their effect on both humans and animals that consume deer carcasses. Others in the hunting community voiced concerns about a quickly timed phase-out of lead ammunition and whether ammo producers would be able to fill the void with non-lead alternatives. In the end, the bill did not pass out of the General Assembly. My take is that lead ammunition for hunting will eventually be phased out in

Maryland and we should be ready to use alternatives.

One issue with Maryland's generous bag limit is what to do with all those deer. In reality, most hunters only take one to two deer for themselves and perhaps another for a neighbor or friend. For those hunters who want to help maintain a healthy herd and also help those less fortunate, the General Assembly approved a \$300 tax credit for anyone who donates processed deer to a food bank. Meat is one of the least offered items at a food bank and would help provide healthy, low-fat protein. While a good start, something like this just scratches the surface. Perhaps one day we can have a program similar to Delaware. The state maintains several walk-in boxes throughout the state. Hunters can drop them off anytime and the deer are picked up and delivered to either participating butchers or the state prison which offers a butcher program. The processed deer is then distributed to food banks and soup kitchens throughout the state.

Sika deer over the last several years have become the "IT" animal to pursue. Ever since the MEAT EATER TV crew did their two-part segment on marsh ghosts it feels like everyone and their brother is hunting them. Blackwater Refuge has had to limit the number of permits, lease prices have grown exponentially, guided hunts are approaching western hunt numbers and a lot of out-

of-state hunters have discovered sika hunting. 2023 mandated Sika hunters purchase a stamp, \$10 resident and \$20 non-resident. This year the price of Sika for non-residents has been increased to \$200, quite the increase from the prior year. Maryland hunters realized they were competing with out-of-state hunters, with a limited supply and area of sika deer felt non-residents should have more skin in the game. While I realize no one likes paying more for anything, it falls in line with what other states charge non-residents for highly vaunted, limited quantity species (elk, mule deer, sheep, etc.). I hope that stamp money goes toward acquiring more public lands and creating a Sika deer management plan.

Waterfowl hunters had two bills this session, with neither advancing. One

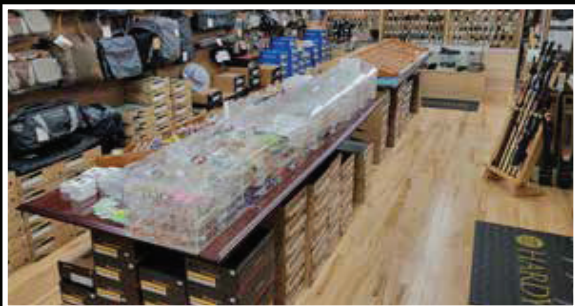
would have allowed the hunting of tundra swans which failed. Interesting that Maryland DNR has the authority to implement the season, but seeks an ok from the General Assembly. I don't ever remember DNR asking for permission. Look back at the history of the black bear hunt and how DNR fought to keep control of bears as a game animal. Our neighbors to the North and South have tundra swan seasons (Delaware, Virginia, and North Carolina). On the docket again was Sunday waterfowl hunting, which I have discussed in prior articles. In my opinion, it will eventually pass in some format with Virginia having several seasons under their belt and Delaware just having approved it. I'm starting to think we should be emulating our tiny neighbor to the north when it comes to managing our resources.



NWTF Southern Maryland Youth Hunt.



Monocacy Valley NWTF Youth Day Hunt.



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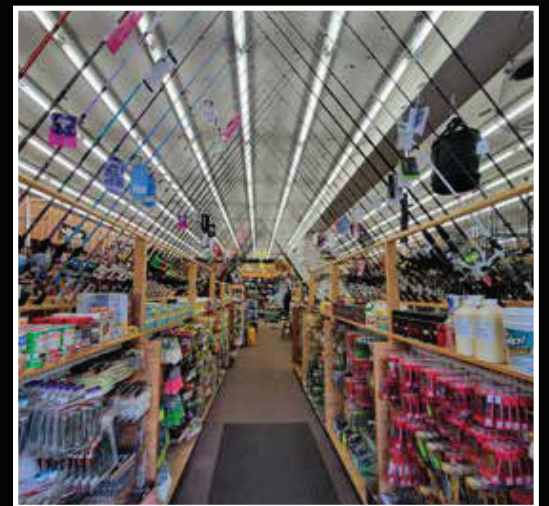
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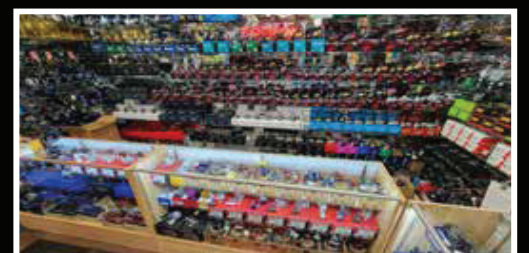
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Recipe of the Month

FLOUNDER WITH BROWN BUTTER, LEMON AND TARRAGON



INGREDIENTS

Yield:

4 servings

1 cup all-purpose flour

Salt and pepper

Pinch of cayenne

1 tablespoon olive oil

4 flounder fillets of equal size, 6 to 8 ounces each

3 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cut into chunks

1 tablespoon lemon juice

2 tablespoons roughly chopped parsley

1 teaspoon roughly chopped tarragon

A few tarragon leaves, for garnish

Lemon wedges

DIRECTIONS

Step 1

Put flour in a low bowl or pie plate and stir in a generous amount of salt and pepper and a pinch of cayenne.

Step 2

Place a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add olive oil and tilt pan to coat bottom.

Step 3

Season the fillets lightly with salt and pepper. Dip each fillet quickly into flour mixture, shaking off excess flour.

Step 4

Lay fillets in skillet in one layer. Cook for about 2 minutes per side, until golden. Transfer cooked fish to a warm platter.

Step 5

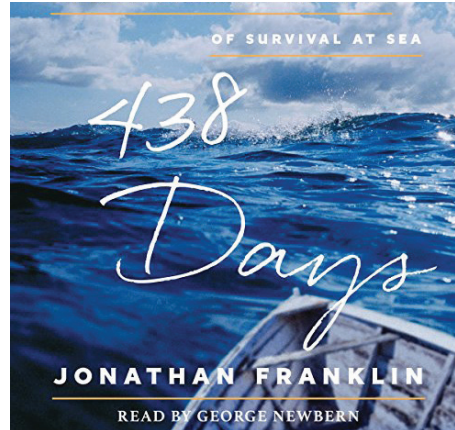
Leave the heat at medium-high and add cold butter. Let butter sizzle until foamy and brown, but do not let it burn. Add lemon juice, parsley and chopped tarragon and swirl to incorporate.

Step 6

Spoon butter sauce over fish. Garnish with a few tarragon leaves and serve immediately with lemon wedges.

Book of the Month

438 DAYS: AN EXTRAORDINARY TRUE STORY OF SURVIVAL AT SEA



On November 17, 2012, Salvador Alvarenga left the coast of Mexico for a two-day fishing trip. A vicious storm killed his engine, and the current dragged his boat out to sea. The storm picked up and blasted him west. When he washed ashore on January 29, 2014, he had arrived in the Marshall Islands, 9,000 miles away - equivalent to traveling from New York to Moscow round trip.

For 14 months, Alvarenga survived constant shark attacks. He learned to catch fish with his bare hands. He built a fish net from a pair of empty plastic bottles. Taking apart the outboard motor, he fashioned a huge fishhook. Using fish vertebrae as needles, he stitched together his own clothes.

He considered suicide on multiple occasions - including offering himself up to a pack of sharks. But Alvarenga never failed to invent an alternative reality. He imagined a method of survival that kept his body and mind intact long enough for the Pacific Ocean to toss him up on a remote, palm-studded island, where he was saved by a local couple living alone in their own Pacific Island paradise.

Based on dozens of hours of interviews with Alvarenga and interviews with his colleagues, search and rescue officials, the medical team that saved his life, and the remote islanders who nursed him back to health, this is an epic tale of survival, an all-true version of the fictional *Life of Pi*. *438 Days* is a study of the resilience, will, ingenuity, and determination required for one man to survive 14 months lost at sea.



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Tenth FishMaryland Master Angler is First Youth Angler to Achieve Milestone

Lucy Perez of Cecil County has earned a Master Angler Milestone Award under the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) FishMaryland program. The award recognizes recreational anglers who catch ten different trophy-sized species of fish in Maryland. Perez, 11, is the tenth Master Angler since the program began in 2019, the first female angler, and the youngest by a decade.

"I think this award is such an amazing accomplishment for me – I'm only 11 years old and have been fishing for 10 years and did something so incredible," Perez said. "Being able to catch so many cool kinds of fish and to have people excited to see me getting closer to this goal is what kept me trying to get this award – this was really a lot of fun."

The FishMaryland program includes dozens of species from both salt and freshwater. Perez submitted entries for all ten catches and received individual certificates for each catch. The department plans to present the Master Angler Milestone Award certificate along with a gift card prize from Bass Pro Shops at its Arundel Mills store. Perez caught her tenth FishMaryland eligible fish, an American shad, on May 6, 2024.

Perez' qualifying catches, in order, were:

Chain pickerel, 27 inches

White perch, 13 inches

Bluegill, 11 inches

Yellow perch, 14 inches

Crappie, 15 inches

Smallmouth bass, 20 inches

Hickory shad, 18 inches

Carp, 33 inches

Pumpkinseed, 10 inches

American shad, 24 inches

She regularly fishes with her father Nick, who has often submitted photos of Lucy's impressive catches to DNR's Maryland Fishing Report and Angler's Log.

"Lucy has been an avid angler for as long as she was able to hold a fishing rod," said Nick Perez. "Her love for the sport is almost unmatched, and her preferred method of fishing is actually on the fly. At 11 years old she has caught fish a lot of people have only dreamed of, from exotic clown knifefish, to wrangling the 'fish of 10,000 casts,' the muskellunge – she does it all."

Lucy Perez also wants to pursue a marine biology degree when she is older and is considering a career in fisheries management.

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



Lucy Perez, 11, awarded for catching diversity of species.

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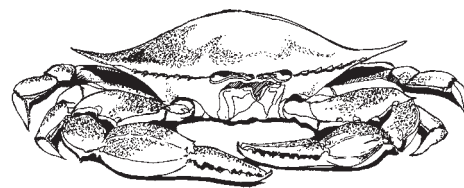
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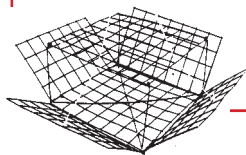
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