
Fishing & Hunting TM

Journal



- **Young of Year striped bass stock assessment shows little change**

- **3 More Oyster Sanctuaries Named**

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Another successful recovery of an Eastern Shore buck. After the clients daughter shot this deer last night the client attempted to recover this buck this morning but found it still alive and bumped it. I was called this afternoon and was able to come out at 9:00 pm. After 20 minutes of searching the deer was located in a thick hardwood area expired and the client was able to recover the buck. Congratulations to the client and his daughter on an outstanding deer. Bay Area Drone Services LLC is available give me a call. 410-739-4614. I service all the Maryland Eastern Shore.



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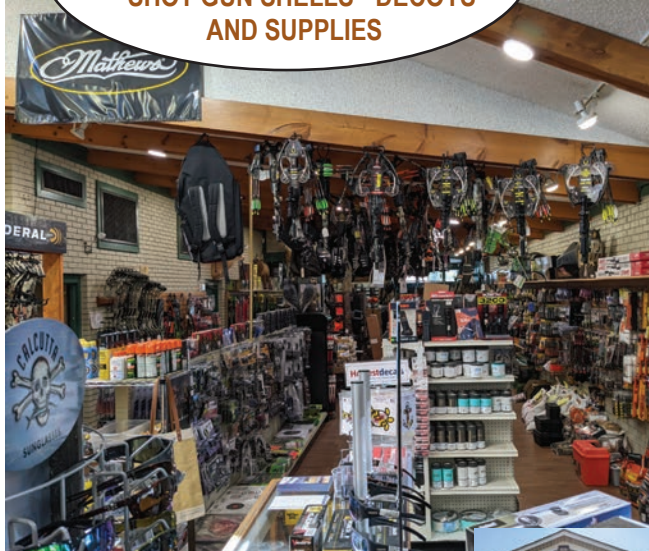
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Fishing & Hunting Journal

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BY INSPIRATION MINISTRIES

To the End of the Age

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations... behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” —Matthew 28:19-20 NASB

Robert Finley was born in Pennsylvania to Christian parents who had come to the New World from Scotland. Attending Princeton College, he prepared for a career as a teacher of languages. But as his son James later wrote, “There were great and pressing calls for ministerial labor in the new settlements of the Carolinas and Georgia.” Robert responded.

This was a bold decision. The “country was in an unsettled state” with “the gloomy clouds of war” hanging over the land. Tensions were high between the colonies and the English government. There also were strong divisions within Americans. Some advocated independence while others remained loyal to England. Eventually these divisions exploded in a violent revolution.

Going to the mission field meant leaving behind friends and family for life in a rugged, often untamed region, without any financial support. There, they faced constant peril and violence. All of his wife’s brothers were killed, and Robert himself was wounded. But as James wrote, Robert trusted “in God for help and direction.” In the face of dangers and unknowns, he refused to back down and continued preaching the Gospel.

Today, Finley is hardly a footnote in history. But he was a hero of the faith. He was more concerned with serving his Master than the world’s rewards. He was willing to leave everything behind to fulfill the Great Commission.

This still is our command until the end of the age.

Reflection Question: How are you helping to fulfill the Great Commission?

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ASMFC Considers Further Conservation Action Following Updated Striped Bass Stock Assessment

Further fishing restrictions likely following special December meeting

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) reviewed results yesterday from its coastwide 2024 Striped Bass Stock Assessment update, which indicated that fish numbers remain below sustainable levels. The updated assessment shows that although actions taken since 2019 have reduced striped bass mortality, the population is still considered overfished. Based on these results, rebuilding the striped bass population by the intended 2029 goal is unlikely without additional management action.

The Board voted to meet again in December to consider further action. This additional time will allow technical staff to develop options for new limits that can be implemented in the 2025 fishing season.

The species is also seeing consistently low recruitment, meaning young bass are not surviving in numbers necessary to restore the population. Earlier this month, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Virginia Institute of Marine Science released their annual striped bass juvenile index survey, which revealed for the sixth consecutive year that young striped bass fell far below the long-term average.

To address rising concerns over the striped bass population, ASMFC has already implemented several additional regulations. Most recently in January 2024, ASMFC issued new limits for the size and number of fish that can be harvested. States have also taken action. Maryland DNR prohibited fishing for striped bass from July 16 through July 31 when temperatures are highest and fish are most vulnerable, and recently shut down Maryland's trophy fishing season.

This week the ASMFC Board determined that at least an additional 15 percent reduction in fishing mortality would be necessary for the stock to have a 50 percent probability of rebuilding to sustainable levels by 2029. However, options to achieve that reduction were not available at the time of the meeting.

Therefore, ASMFC voted to meet in December to consider additional conservation measures for the 2025 fishing season for both the commercial and recreational fisheries. Conservation measures for the Board to

consider will be developed by the Striped Bass Technical Committee. This action will position the Board to take action for the 2025 fishing seasons.

Allison Colden, Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Maryland Executive Director, issued the following statement:

"The current trajectory of our striped bass population is alarming. Without continued diligence by ASMFC and proactive conservation by the Board, the possibility of rebuilding the striped bass stock will continue to slip further from our reach. Protecting the remaining strong year classes spawned in 2015 and 2018 must be a top priority for any management actions considered by the Board in December. We cannot delay efforts to protect these important spawning fish."

Chris Moore, Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Virginia Executive Director, issued the following statement:

"Despite recent management actions, striped bass continue to struggle. It is obvious that conditions have changed and striped bass will not have the same recovery they had in the 1980s. Warmer water from climate change, habitat loss, and invasive species are all making it very hard for striped bass to bounce back. While reviewing this latest young of the year survey, stock assessment, and future 2024 data, ASMFC should consider that striped bass will need continued intervention in order to fully restore this iconic Chesapeake Bay species."



Landon Smith of Somerset County tagged this beautiful 9pt Buck all by himself with his Compound on the evening of October 27th Photo Courtesy Winks Sporting Goods.



Congratulations Karissa on her first Maryland buck and her first buck with her crossbow. She sat patiently for days on days and got it done. Way to go.



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DAY OF PRACTICE - CONOWINGO

It's 8:45 on a Thursday morning and my phone rings. It's Sean Peddicord asking me if I can go fishing the next day. The answer is a hard and fast YES, all the while I was thinking about how I could get done or divert Friday's "to do" list. We're going to fish Conowingo Reservoir. It's a practice day, two days prior to the Conowingo Open Series Championship. Sean called me from the lake while he was investing the first of two days of practice.

I do have to say it is an honor that someone thinks my fishing skills and knowledge can add some benefit to their tournament preparation. Sean's first day of practice was the first sunny day after 12 straight with measurable rainfall. Our day's weather was to be cloudy with light and variable winds; except, the breeze kicked up from the south and the barometer spiked at 30.18. Tournament day was to be much like Thursday's weather.

The reservoir was still fairly clear despite the recent rains. The water level was a couple feet higher than normal pool. Sean fishes an 8-hour day for practice, as if he is fishing the tournament itself. His plan for the day is to focus on grass beds with bait in and around them. He has found numbers of bass, both largemouth and smallmouth, but is looking for big bass that will anchor a competitive bag at weigh in. The difference in light penetration from the prior day to ours will have him adjust the color choices of his lures rather than the lures themselves.

We started our day at what I will call the middle grass bed. It has shad everywhere, but Sean admits that he'd done better here later in the day, the day before. With this much of a food source, he's willing to check it anytime. We cast a barrage of Senkos, jerkbaits, spinnerbaits, and crankbaits but there

were no takers. We'll be back.

Our next stop was a bank with a defined edge of grass out in front of lakefront homes with floating piers. The electronics showed an ample amount of bait. Here there are a few options: cast along the floaters, work the grass, and work the edge of the grass. We did all three. We ran through the same gambit of lures along the floaters. It wasn't until we moved out of the grass to the edge that Sean got the first bite of the day on a Bandit 200 crankbait—a largemouth bass that measured 13 inches. It's a keeper, but one you'd like to cull out in a tournament. After working the area thoroughly with no more bites, we moved on.

This spot is what I will call the southernmost grass bed. I've been here before with Sean. It's an area he has confidence in and has given up quality bass. Noticing the small size of the baitfish, I downsized to a smaller 4-inch jerkbait in a more natural hue. Several casts later. I landed a 1-pound, 13-ounce largemouth. We continued farther along the grass bed and Sean landed a 1.5-pound smallmouth bass on a chartreuse spinnerbait.

Because Sean has done so well in this location, we worked the area extensively. We dropped down to the lower end of grass bed and slowed down with soft plastic baits. We both had several short-strike bites on Senkos and crawfish baits. I also missed a tremendous strike on a spinnerbait. While we didn't catch these fish, their presence shows the numbers of bass in that section of the vegetation. It's apparent that it's not a day to find a pattern. It also seems to be, with the high barometer, the kind of day when we'll have to hit them on the head to get them to bite and mean it.

We ran back up to the middle grass



Sean Peddicord shows a 2-pound smallmouth bass from Conowingo Reservoir.

bed where we started. During practice sessions, it's good strategy to try areas a few times during the day. As with the first stop, we marked a lot of baitfish. I downsized to a 4-inch Senko in a shad hue and landed an 11-inch largemouth bass. I also had a bump on my 4-inch jerkbait. The question here is: Are the bass not biting our lures because they have a natural buffet available?

From here, we ran farther up the reservoir to Sean's northernmost grass bed. He has actually won tournaments in the past from this spot. There is a lot of sunken wood within the grass and a define drop at the edge. Bait was plentiful here, but not as abundant as the middle bed. Try as we might with plethora of lures, the bass showed no interest.

We made on final stop on the lower grass bed. Again, there were several bass that wouldn't fully commit to our plastic baits. At the top end of the bed, Sean landed a 13-inch smallie that choked down a Keitech swimbait. Convinced that this area would be good on tournament day, we ran to one final spot.

The area was different than all the others. It's a sandy ridge that reaches up to 3 feet in some areas. Sean says it's an area where big smallmouth will cruise in fall. Sean cast a rattle trap to cover the area quickly. While

casting, he noticed baitfish breaking in a shallow cut in the shoreline. It was well worth venturing in. Both banks of the cut were loaded with fallen wood. We cast Rage Craws to the limbs of the denser deadfalls. We landed a fat 14-inch largemouth bass; and had a smallmouth bite and spit out the lure while airborne. With the eyeball scale, it appeared to be a 2-pounder.

Pleased with what we had found during the day, Sean was ready to head back to the ramp. His plan for tournament day was to venture down to the cut early, then focus on the grass beds later in the day. On the day of the contest, the reservoir had dropped down to the lowest water level Sean had seen for most of the year. After venturing down to the shallow cut, he had to scrap the location due to the low water. He stuck it out at the southernmost grass bed, hoping the larger bass would bite. He caught numerous bass, but was only able to weigh in a meager 5-bass limit to finish mid-pack.

While satisfied that his weather opposed practice days were beneficial, Sean realizes that best-laid plans are often foiled. He took the best of what he had found in practice and adapted it to the lowered lake levels he encountered. Congratulations to Sean for his competitive spirit on a tournament trail well-fished.



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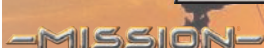


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Results of Chesapeake Bay 2024 Young-of-Year Striped Bass Survey Show Little Change

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources announced results of this year's juvenile striped bass survey, which tracks the reproductive success of Maryland's state fish in the Chesapeake Bay. The 2024 young-of-year index is 2.0, well below the long-term average of 11.0, and marks the sixth consecutive year of poor reproduction.

"These results underscore the complexity of managing a coastal migratory species whose life-cycle is influenced by environmental conditions during a brief spawning period," said Maryland DNR Fishing and Boating Services Director Lynn Fegley. "We will continue to explore ways to conserve and enhance the spawning population during this time when we are adding fewer young fish to the population."

During this annual survey, fishery managers examine 22 sites located in four major striped bass spawning areas: the Choptank, Nanticoke, and Potomac rivers, and the upper Chesapeake Bay. Biologists visit each site three times per summer, collecting fish with two sweeps of a 100-foot beach seine net. The

index represents the average number of young-of-year striped bass found in each sample. The juvenile striped bass average less than 3 inches long and are not usually encountered by anglers. Similar fish surveys conducted this summer in the Patapsco, Magothy, Rhode, West, Miles, and Tred Avon rivers found fewer striped bass, also known as rockfish.

Biologists use a seine net to capture fish for the annual striped bass juvenile index survey in the Nanticoke River. Photo by Joe Zimmermann, Maryland DNR

Biologists captured more than 56,000 fish of 56 different species while conducting this year's survey. Encouraging results were documented regarding two species lower on the food chain. Menhaden abundance was nearly equal to last year, which was the highest measured since 1990. Spot abundance was the highest measured since 1988. These species are vital to the ecology of the Bay as a food source for many other species of fish and wildlife.

Efforts to rebuild the Atlantic Coast population of striped bass have been ongoing for several



A juvenile striped bass caught and released by a survey crew in the Nanticoke River. Photo by Joe Zimmermann, Maryland DNR.

years. Although recent population estimates indicate improvement, low levels of reproduction will influence future conservation measures under consideration by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

In recent years, Maryland has implemented management actions aimed at rebuilding the spawning stock, including reductions to catch limits, increased protections for spawning fish, tighter slot limits, and season closures. However, warm conditions in winter continue to negatively impact the reproductive success of striped bass, whose larvae are very sensitive to water conditions and food availability in the first several weeks after hatching. Other species with similar spawning

behavior such as white perch, yellow perch, and American shad also experienced below-average reproduction this year.

The below-average year classes will likely become more apparent among the adult population of striped bass in the coming years, as the juveniles reach maturity. While environmental conditions hamper reproductive success, fisheries managers focus conservation efforts on adult striped bass so that the spawning population can produce a strong year class when environmental conditions are favorable.

The Virginia Institute of Marine Science conducts a similar survey in the southern portion of Chesapeake Bay.

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Chesapeake Channa Could Spawn More than Once a Year in Upper Bay, Maryland DNR Study Finds

A study conducted by Maryland Department of Natural Resources Biologist Dr. Joseph Love illuminates one of the biological factors that could be contributing to Chesapeake Channa's efficient spread through Maryland's waters.

The study, published in the July 2024 edition of *Northeastern Naturalist*, found that the majority of female Chesapeake Channa, also known as northern snakehead, collected from the upper Chesapeake Bay carried eggs in two distinct sizes, suggesting those fish could spawn twice a year.

In 2002, Chesapeake Channa adults were released to a pond in Crofton, Maryland, thousands of miles from their native habitat in East Asia. The fish were thought to be eliminated, but additional illegal introductions of the species in Maryland occurred. In the following decades, their range expanded to an average of three new Chesapeake Bay waterways per year, according to a study by Love and Newhard in 2018. Today, this invasive species is established in all tidal and many non-tidal subwatersheds in Maryland.

Chesapeake Channa are prolific invasive predators, well adapted to spread in new environments, yet their reproductive traits have not been well studied. What separates an invasive species from a non-native species is its ability to flourish in the ecosystem to which it has been introduced and its aptitude to cause damage to native inhabitants in the process.

"It is important to document life history traits of a species in different habitats because we know there is plasticity in the traits of fishes based on the environment," said Love. "This study fills a gap in what we know about Chesapeake Channa reproduction in the upper Chesapeake Bay."

Biologists collected fish at Conowingo Dam from April to June 2021 and 2022. A fish lift at the dam assists migrating fish species, such as American shad, during their spawning run. It transports them above the dam into the upper Susquehanna River and their traditional spawning areas. Chesapeake Channa are also known to travel upstream in search of nesting grounds at this time and when they enter the fish lift, technicians remove them to stall the expansion of their range further up the river.

Love weighed and measured 56 female Chesapeake Channa specimens before dissecting them to examine the quantity and size of the eggs stored in their ovaries. He used



digital photos and computer software to measure the diameter of the eggs.

The photos confirmed that the average number of eggs, known as fecundity, increased with the size (mass) of the female. The fish held an average of 63,569 eggs. For every additional gram of mass of the female's body, they averaged 27 more eggs in their ovaries. Most significantly, more than half of the ovaries held a group of eggs in a distinctly smaller size.

Dr. Love examined eggs from an additional July collection of fish to supplement the findings from the peak of the spawning season. The female fish in that collection had fewer eggs at larger sizes, which supports the theory that they can partially spawn in the spring and holdover eggs that continue to mature for spawning in late summer or fall.

Chesapeake Channa are such an effective invasive fish because they have biological and behavioral traits such as broader water temperature tolerance, aggressive predatory behavior, high egg production, and parental guardianship. Those traits and this new evidence of multiple spawns underscore why they have become an environmental nuisance in Maryland and other parts of the United States.

Fisheries managers consider a species' biology when they create strategies to control nuisance fish. The author suggests that it is crucial to focus Chesapeake Channa harvesting efforts on the largest fish in the period before they spawn.

Fishing for Chesapeake Channa has become popular in Maryland and helps the state manage the population. They are also considered excellent table fare. There is no season or limit for harvesting, and Maryland DNR has many resources available on its website for anglers interested in targeting Chesapeake Channa.



Unique and Notable Catch: Brice O'Malley caught this very large 23-inch, 6.15-pound Florida pompano in the Chesapeake Bay at the end of August. It was only a quarter of a pound lighter than the current state record pompano in the Chesapeake Bay Division. Pompano are summer visitors to the Bay, and some may linger through mid-October before they migrate south due to cooling water temperatures.

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Emelyn first Bull Elk and first Elk in Wyoming!



“Tuna The Tide”

OLD TIMERS

By Captain Mark Galasso

It was late November and it was shaping up to be a cold and blustery winter. A number of cold fronts had already passed through our area and some of our neighbors to the west had already experienced a few frosty nights. I was already in hunting mode and all my fishing gear was strewn all over my office waiting for winter repairs and maintenance. Like most of my adventures it started with receiving a simple phone call from a friend. It seemed there were a few Rockfish hanging around Kent Island and we were invited to fish with a Captain who was already a fishing legend in the mid and upper Chesapeake. It was going to happen on a Sunday so I wouldn't miss any opportunities to scare away any Geese with my fancy shooting abilities.

And so the following Sunday my buddies and I scraped off our windshields and headed off to meet our Captain in Annapolis. It's funny. Even though it was still dark as we drove across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge I could just tell the water was boiling just a hundred feet beneath us. The Seagulls were hovering over the road almost motionless like Hummingbirds feeding on a bright flower. The wind creating enough lift to keep the birds from dropping below the bridge spans.

We were going to meet the boat off some little creek, Mill Creek, I was told and our Captain and mate would be ready for us at sunrise. And it was so. I recognized the boat. It was an old wooden boat that I had seen many times while fishing around the Bay Bridge. It was well kept and the Captain and Mate were awful cheerful considering the wind was howling at least 20 knots out of the Northwest and the temperature was hovering around forty degrees. I was glad I dressed for a cold hunting trip complete with insulated rain gear. My buddies weren't so well prepared but what the lacked in outer wear they made up for with inner wear. IE Alcohol.

We made ourselves at home on the boat and headed for open water. After talking to the Mate we learned that our Captain was heading towards the north end of Kent Island to a broad area called the dumping grounds, an old time area where obviously things got dumped way back when. We were going to a tiny spot our captain knew to try a little chumming. I was skeptical considering the boat was already rocking violently before we even reached the Bridge. But our Captain had a reputation for

catching fish and I was excited to get the experience.

When we arrived at our destination it was to rough to anchor and the wind and tide were working against one another. The mate rigged us up while our Captain kept our bow into the waves. He did an incredible job and we were soon fishing. And more importantly we were soon catching! An hour later we were done with a box full of nice Rockfish and a very happy party. But now it was time to turn and burn. The trip home was not going to be pleasant but with a limit of fish in the box we were good to go.

Our Captain steered us for home and we all sat or stood out back. We all seemed to sense that his concentration needed to be on getting us home and nothing else so we left him to it and closed the cabin door. As we rounded one of the rock islands I noticed the cabin was filling with smoke and we could no longer see our Captain. It quickly was getting worse so we opened the cabin door. Yellow smoke came billowing out of the cabin and turned everything a golden shade of yellow. Kind of like a bad Pine Pollen day. Our Captain never flinched. He kept his eyes on the compass until we were all safe and sound back at the dock.

What we realized as we helped clean things up was that our Captain had inadvertently hit the fire extinguisher with his knee and set it off in the cabin. His mind was so focused on driving the boat that he never even took the time to open up the door and air out the cabin.

I've always been in awe of those old time Captains who could drive an old wooden boat through a hurricane with nothing more than a VHF Radio, a compass and if they were lucky an old loran receiver. I fished with a Captain, Charles Bryan, in Crisfield once. He was the same way. His son Charlie and I were talking the other day. Those Old timers were tough as nails. Us new timers are tough as Q-Tips. Oh well. That's another story.

Captain Ed Darwin was a chart boat Captain for 50 years and most of that time he was running his charters aboard his boat the Becky-D. The boat was a staple around the Bay bridge and Captain Darwin had a reputation for knowing the area like no one else. Ironically he lived to be 93 years old. He was the same age as my father and they passed away within a week of one another back in late September. Both men will be missed. The amount of fishing



knowledge that they passed down to future generations is invaluable. My Dad mostly to his immediate family like my brother and me. But Captain Darwin shared his knowledge of fishing and the Chesapeake Bay with friends, relatives and his literally thousands of customers.

Captain Darwin wrote in his unpublished memoirs “In order to be a fishing guide you must be able to

think like a fish, keep a good sense of humor and be somewhat sane.” I saw that in a column in the Baltimore Sun written by Dan Rodricks. I would also add you have to LOVE fishing and the outdoors. And you have to LOVE people. I don't think Captain Darwin would disagree.

Ed and Lou we'll miss the two of you.



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Chris Lingerman and his daughter Brianna say it never gets old on opening day of duck season.



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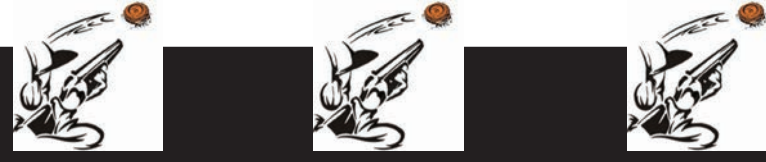
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DNR Announces Next Three Large-Scale Oyster Restoration Sanctuaries

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has selected the next three sites for large-scale oyster restoration in Maryland waters of the Chesapeake Bay, marking the beginning of the state's next phase of major oyster restoration.

The department will conduct oyster restoration and monitoring in sanctuaries in Herring Bay, the Nanticoke River, and Hoopers Strait. Staff presented the selected sites to the Oyster Advisory Commission at its meeting Tuesday.

Planning for these new restoration efforts comes as the department concludes its initial restoration of the "big five" sanctuary sites as required in the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. Initial restoration is complete at four sanctuaries, with work on the last site in Manokin River scheduled to be completed on target for 2025.

"These three large-scale restoration sanctuaries represent a new chapter for oyster restoration in Maryland," Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz said. "We've had tremendous success with our existing restoration sanctuaries, and we're excited to build on that achievement and keep up the momentum for oyster recovery in the Chesapeake Bay."

The new restoration sites are part of the department's new Four Point Oyster Sanctuary Plan. The plan was developed to help guide future oyster sanctuary restoration and management in Maryland. The four points include monitoring the first five large-scale sanctuaries; evaluating underperforming sanctuaries; continuing and expanding oyster restoration in sanctuaries; and developing strategies to connect oyster restoration to watershed restoration.

Eastern oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*) remain at a fraction of their historic population levels in the Bay after declines due to historic overharvesting, disease-related mortality, habitat degradation, and reduced water quality. Oysters act as a keystone species in the ecosystem of the Bay, provide a critical role by naturally filtering water, and continue to be an economic driver for the region.

Sanctuaries, which are permanently closed to harvest except on aquaculture lease sites, are areas where oysters can grow undisturbed in order to enhance the overall breeding population and build reefs that offer crucial habitat to many other Bay species. Restoring a sanctuary involves building hard substrate that can support reefs, and planting spat, or juvenile oysters.

Though final acreage of restoration at the next three large-scale sites will depend on further planning and study of the selected areas, DNR staff are expecting the Hoopers Strait restoration sanctuary to be comparable in size to the state's three largest restoration sites—Harris Creek, Little Choptank, and Manokin—which range from 348 to 455 acres. Restoration at Herring Bay could be larger, potentially making it the state's largest restoration effort to date.

Work at the Nanticoke River sanctuary, which will be a smaller site of about 175 acres on the south-

ern portion of the Eastern Shore, is expected to begin in the spring and summer of 2025. In 2026, restoration will begin at either Herring Bay, near southern Anne Arundel County, or Hoopers Strait, near Dorchester County, with work at the third site to follow.


The Chesapeake Bay Program is expected to set out new restoration goals for partner states beyond 2025. The department's Assistant Secretary of Aquatic Resources Jackie Specht said Maryland's new large-scale restoration sites will be a way to take proactive steps to-

ward further restoration before the goals are established.

"We met the goals of the 2014 Watershed Agreement for oyster restoration, and we anticipate additional ambitious goals for recovery after 2025," Specht said. "With these three restoration projects, we're getting started early on additional restoration and we're maintaining our continuous effort to establish more productive oyster habitat in the Chesapeake Bay."

The department worked
Continued on page 14




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Bear hunters say they do it for love of family, neighbors and the great outdoors

OAKLAND, Md. — Matthew Lidie, 57, and David Lidie Sr., 63, of Baltimore County, were among the first to arrive at the wildlife management area this week with a dead bear in tow. It had only taken David the first 30 minutes of his hunt to make the kill.

The feat had great personal significance for the two brothers, who had stayed overnight in a local cabin with no electricity and no running water in order to pursue a bucket-list item — hunting a black bear.

“I was given two things from my parents that I enjoy,” said David Lidie. “My mother was all about family, and my dad was all about hunting and nature.”

The two were among 950 people who got licenses to join Maryland’s six-day bear season, which started Monday and runs for a week in the state’s western counties. The hunt is part of Maryland’s Department of Natural Resources bear management plan, an annual event for the past two decades.

By noon that first day, five other hunters had arrived intermittently at the Mt. Nebo Wildlife Management Area. Upon each arrival, DNR staff greeted the hunters and helped them unload the bears. The team measured the bears, weighed them, checked the gender, learned about where the kill took place and extracted a tooth from the animal.

By Wednesday evening, 73 bears had been killed in the four participating counties — Garrett, Allegany, Washington and Frederick — including a male in Frederick County that weighed 650 pounds, surpassing the state record of a male bear weighing 643 pounds taken by a Garrett County hunter in 2023.

Information they gather helps them better understand and plan their bear management strategies, said Jonathan Trudeau, the game mammal section leader of the wildlife and heritage service of Maryland’s DNR.

Like the Lidie brothers, other hunters say that the activity has deep personal meaning. For Jesley Miller, 29, of Swanton, it’s about service to the community.

“I enjoy it as a sport,” said Miller, “but it’s more than just a sport. It’s about helping our local farmers out.”

Miller said that bears damage acres and acres of farmers’ crops, especially in Garrett County. He said the black bear population has a problem with mange, which other hunters echoed, but believes that culling the herd helps to minimize the skin disease.

The DNR’s website says securing human food sources like trash cans and bird feeders can prevent bears from congregating and curb the spread of mange.

“We don’t want to get rid of them,” Miller said. “We like to hunt them. We like to see them.” Still, he said the hunt is good for managing the bear population.

Animal rights advocates disagree. The Humane Society of the U.S. believes there are better ways to control the growing bear population. Out in nature, though, hunters believe in the merits of the activity.

Jon Dowden, 42, of Bloomington, arrived slightly after noon. Dowden, who got choked up

speaking about a recent death in his family, said he learned to hunt from his grandfather and his uncle.

“It’s a multi-generational tradition,” he said.

“The kids know that taking an appropriate amount in a safe and legal hunt is a good way to manage that,” he said, referring to the growing bear population. “We try to instill good sportsmanship, an honest kill and a clean kill.”

Dowden said he wants his kids to enjoy the outdoors, respect the

outdoors and put safety first.

One thing most of the hunters have in common — plans to feed friends or family from the hunt.

“I’ve never eaten bear,” said David Suarez, 54, from Pennsylvania. “We’re going to go skin it out, carve it up, and that will be dinner.”

Matthew Lidie says that’s how it should be.

“It’s food. It’s just the big circle of life,” said Suarez.

“We eat what we hunt.”



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Continued from page 12

with its Oyster Advisory Commission to acquire feedback on which sanctuary areas would be best suited for the next restoration areas. The Commission recommended three primary considerations in selecting the new areas: 1) the potential for a self-sustaining oyster population, 2) economic efficiency, and 3) working in different salinity zones to mitigate disease risk.

The Nanticoke River sanctuary has firm bottom and will only require planting spat-on-shell, while

Herring Bay has a large area that will support reef-based construction and spat-on-shell planting. Hoopers Strait will receive substrate and is near aquaculture leases and harvest areas that could benefit from spat that spread from the sanctuary.

“Together, these three restoration sanctuaries will strengthen the diversity of Maryland’s sanctuary program,” DNR Fishing and Boating Services Director Lynn Fegley. “With new projects on both the Western and the Eastern Shore, as well as the mid- and lower Bay, we’re helping to spread out disease risk and increase the oyster broodstock across all areas of the Chesapeake Bay.”

The new restoration projects

come at an exciting time for oysters in Maryland. As of 2023, across the “big five” oyster restoration sanctuaries, 98% of 6-year-old reefs have met the minimum success criteria for oyster density—15 oysters per square meter over 30% of the reef area—and 83% had more than 50 oysters per square meter in the same area. Harris Creek, the first Maryland sanctuary to be targeted, is now considered fully and successfully restored.

Maryland now has more than 1,000 acres of restoration oyster reefs, which is equivalent to 1.5 square miles or more than 800 football fields. Last year, the state reached record-setting oyster spat plantings.

This year in the Manokin River, the largest sanctuary in either Maryland or Virginia to be restored, department staff monitoring the site found that the natural spatset, or the number of juvenile oysters, was high enough that planting of hatchery-reared spat-on-shell was not needed. With 90 acres that will not require initial planting of oysters, this saves the department \$1.8 million on the site that can be spent on oyster recovery elsewhere.

Additional monitoring and planned second plantings will con-

tinue to foster the success of the first five sanctuaries.

The department is also currently planting at sites in Eastern Bay, which represents a new dynamic for oyster restoration as a multi-use project that includes protected sanctuaries, aquaculture lease sites, and harvest areas. The department identified Eastern Bay as a priority area in 2019 and launched the Eastern Bay Project.

The Maryland General Assembly committed \$2 million for oyster restoration per year in Eastern Bay in 2024 and 2025, with \$1 million for spat-on-shell plantings in sanctuary areas and \$1 million for shell and spat-on-shell plantings in public fishery harvest areas annually.

Last year, DNR shellfish biologists recorded an outstanding natural spatset of juvenile oysters in Maryland waters of the Chesapeake Bay. This abundant year-class of new oysters strengthens the overall population in both sanctuary and harvest areas for the future. In the 2023 to 2024 season, watermen harvested an estimated 430,000 bushels of oysters commercially in Maryland, generating a dockside value of about \$15 million. Last year, Maryland’s aquaculture operations harvested a record yield of 94,286 bushels of oysters.

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Caroline County Angler Named 14th FishMaryland Master Angler



Jeremy Elmore of Preston has earned a Master Angler Milestone Award under the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' FishMaryland program.

Jeremy Elmore of Preston has earned a Master Angler Milestone Award under the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' FishMaryland program.

Elmore is the 14th Master Angler since the program began in 2019. The award recognizes recreational anglers who catch ten trophy-sized fish of different species in Maryland.

Elmore, 36, is a lifelong Maryland resident who lives on the Eastern Shore but fishes across Maryland.

"I started fishing at a young age and was introduced to it by my father," Elmore said. "I grew up fishing near Baltimore and also down near Cape Charles, Va. on vacations. Needless to say, I was hooked. Fishing runs through my mind constantly and is literally my personality."

Elmore caught his first qualifying fish "by accident" – he was casting to breaking striped bass near the mouth of the Choptank River and hooked a large Spanish mackerel. It was the largest he had seen in person, so he pulled his phone out and started researching trophy-size fish in Maryland. He saw that it met the minimum size for a FishMaryland certificate, and submitted his catch. Learning that ten different species of trophy size are needed for a Master Angler Award, he challenged himself to reach the milestone.

"It became almost an obsession and I would not stop until I got it," Elmore said.

Elmore's qualifying catches, in order, were:

Spanish mackerel – 27 inches

Chesapeake channa (northern snakehead) – 30 inches

Sheepshead – 24 inches

Striped bass – 48 inches

Yellow perch -14 inches

Carp – 31 inches

Chain pickerel – 24.5 inches

Cobia – 46 inches

Red drum- 41.5 inches

Largemouth bass – 21 inches

Elmore's largest fish was a 48-inch striped bass. His final qualifying fish was a largemouth bass, which he caught in a pond from his wife's grandfather's tiny aluminum boat. Elmore said that meant a lot to his wife, because her grandfather's lifelong passion was bass fishing from that very boat before he passed.

The hardest fish to catch was the one Elmore never got. He said he's caught hundreds of crappie, but catching a 15-inch trophy-sized fish "has eluded me for now."

Elmore will continue fishing for a variety of trophy-sized fish in Maryland. "I don't plan on stopping at ten. There are many more species I plan to catch. I want to rack up as many as I can and see how far I can get. It has become a game to me and I'm thankful that the FishMaryland program was created," he said.

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.



Luke Wolfe with a QA county buck nice bow kill.

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“Montana Grant”



By Grant Soukup

KIDS KATCH!!!

Every veteran angler has learned a simple truth. Great anglers' best catches, trophies, and stories are when they teach new anglers how to catch a fish.

How many new anglers have you introduced to the sport of fishing? As a teacher I always had a Fishing Club, planned and presented Fishing Derbies, and mentored family and friends for a lifetime. I have never gotten tired of seeing the spark in a new anglers' eyes when they catch a fish. The spark is especially bright in the eyes of children.

The other day I took my Grandson CC trout fishing. We sat on a rocky bank along Canyon Ferry, a local reservoir. At age 6, Clyde Carey has been a successful angler at several kid ponds. Today was his first trip to an “adult fishing hole”. We have ice fished on Canyon Ferry but today “CC” would handle the rod as a “Big Kid”. Grandpa Grant, “GG”, has been training him to go from a fisherman to a “catcher of fish”. Setting new anglers up for success is needed.

Fishing started slowly and we were having fun despite some wind and a slow bite. I had brought along all the necessary snacks and drinks. Suddenly, the bite was on, and Clyde was hooked up. “This is most fun I have ever had”, he shouted. The young boy was becoming a man.

Canyon Ferry rainbows are monsters at this time of the year. 20–30-inch Montana monster trout were on the catch list. These fish are powerful, fat, and scrappy for an experienced adult, let alone a 6-year-old kid. The fish were jumping, taking out drag, bending the rods into pretzels, and putting on a great show.

Clyde's eyeballs and mouth were wide open, and he was as excited as a new angler could be. He was counting the blisters on his hands. Fishing is a sport that has all the recipes for raising a great kid. There are rules, limits, behaviors, outdoor places, strategy, skills, techniques, rewards, and most importantly, FUN! Hooking kids on fishing is a

healthy lifelong addiction. New anglers need mentors to show them how to evolve from “fishing” to “catching”. Without training and support, fishing is just time relaxing on the shore of a watershed. The real watershed moment is when they actually catch a fish.

Many of the best lifetime anglers begin at a very young age. Fishing trips with their dads are often where fishing begins. Sadly, there are few dads that are around to teach kids anything. Single parent families, dads that are workaholics, soldiers, and lack of mentors, is a reality. Moms do their best but not every kid wants to play soccer.

To fill the niche of mentors, other family members and friends need to step up.

Here are some simple truths about fishing.

Mentoring and hooking up new anglers never gets old.

You will never catch enough fish.

Every bite is as exciting as the first.

Fishing friends are the best!

You will remember almost every fish that you catch.

You will never be the Best Angler that you want to be.

You will always need to take one more cast!

Losing a fish is a part of fishing.

Fish lost are always huge.

You will never get to fish enough.

Great angling mentors come from many places in our lives. It doesn't



matter when it comes to age, sex, color, religion, or another limiting factor. It comes down to can you teach people how to catch a fish.

There is no limit on how many new anglers you can mentor. This next generation of fishing fanatics will vote and work to protect and preserve the environments and watersheds where they love to fish. Without these anglers, our great natural resources will be lost.

Most 6-year-olds have a short attention span. If you can get them to fish for an hour you are lucky. At some point this will change. After 2

hours of fun, I told CC that it was his choice when we would quit and go home. The choice was his and every 30 minutes the question came up. “I choose to keep on Fishing GG!” This lasted for several hours. I created a fishing monster.

Showing others how to fish is wonderful. No fish that you never catch will be better than the one you watch your student catch. CC still has much to learn about fishing, but the only question he asked was “When are we going fishing again GG?”

The best of us helps the rest of us!



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Coast Guard rescues a man clinging to a cooler in open water

When you're looking for a person in an ocean, a physical description isn't much help. But that's what the Coast Guard helicopter crew had: The day after Hurricane Milton blasted into Florida's Gulf Coast, they were searching for a boat captain who was somewhere in the water, wearing a red life jacket, black shirt, and black pants.

But the man also had an emergency locator beacon, a life jacket and a cooler. Thanks to those items, he weathered a night in the open water, buffeted by the hurricane's strong winds and massive waves — and on Thursday, he was hoisted to safety, some 30 miles off of Longboat Key in the Gulf of Mexico.

"Oh man, we were ecstatic," said Lt. Landon Klopfenstein, one of the Miami-based helicopter pilots, calling the successful rescue "a miracle."

"We do a lot of searches for people in the water," he added, in a video shared by the Coast Guard. "So to get to have a success story like this is not as common as we'd like it. And we were all very, very excited. We couldn't believe it, honestly, that he was OK."

One day earlier, with Milton bearing down on Florida's west coast, the man had been aboard a fishing boat called the Capt. Dave. He was trying to bring the vessel back into port after making repairs in the early hours of Wednesday when its rudder was disabled.

By the time the Coast Guard was alerted and got in touch with him, it was early afternoon, and conditions were deteriorating rapidly: The storm's tropical storm-force winds were due to arrive at 2 p.m., followed by Milton's fearsome power.

"The captain was instructed by the Coast Guard to don a life jacket and stay with the vessel's emergency position indicating radio beacon," the service said. The last contact was around 6:45 p.m., less than three hours before Milton made landfall nearby.

Along with a physical description, the helicopter crew also had a search pattern, staring at miles of open water in hopes that the man had somehow survived the nearby passage of a Category 3 storm far off the shore of Sarasota — and that they

could find him.

"It's a lot of math that determines where we're gonna go and search because we have limited resources, limited fuel," Lt. Ian Logan, the helicopter's other pilot, said.

Because another helicopter was on the same search pattern, the crew was told to prepare to head back to the coast. But then, Logan said, "We started to get an alert on our direction-finding equipment."

The crew's rescue swimmer asked the pilots how the system worked — and if it could differentiate between an aircraft and a personal locator beacon. They opted to trace the new signal, relying on directional bursts that came roughly once a minute.

"As we were turning to fly back, we started honing in on getting the signal, a stronger signal," Klopfenstein said. "We got a relative bearing marker in the opposite direction, so we turned around [and] started going towards the last vector, the last bearing line that we received."

U.S. Coast Guard helicopter pilot Lt. Ian Logan, right, speaks about a rescue mission in which he and another pilot, Lt. Landon Klopfenstein, left, pulled a man from the open water 30 miles off Longboat Key, Fla., on Thursday.

"As we were trucking that way, our swimmer noticed some debris or



Greg and Pat with a BIG Red Drum caught off of Tilghman Island last month.

an object about 2 o'clock on the aircraft," he said.

At first, the object was hard to make out.

"And then as we got closer, we saw the arms reach up in the air and realized at that moment that we had found the survivor, floating clinging to a big fishing cooler," Klopfenstein said.

The helicopter crew lowered the rescue swimmer into the water, and the man was hoisted to safety at around 1:30 p.m. — 17 hours after Milton's landfall.

"This man survived in a nightmare scenario for even the most experienced mariner," said Lt. Cmdr. Dana Grady, command center chief of Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg, adding that the man is estimated to have experienced winds of 75-90 mph in 20-25-foot seas for an

extended period.

After bringing the man aboard, the helicopter crew ferried him to Tampa General Hospital.

"I felt like today was one of those times where everyone's just kind of firing on all cylinders," Logan said, noting the swimmer's questions about the direction-finder and the positive attitude everyone brought to their mission.

"It was great because all that kind of came together to where our initiative resulted in us finding a guy that's been holding on to a cooler for 24 hours — like, through a hurricane."

"Survival equipment is priceless," Klopfenstein said.

And while a life jacket and emergency beacon are vital parts of safety preparations, it doesn't hurt to have a solid cooler on hand, either.

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Coastal Report

By Capt. Mark
Sampson

Over the years, I've become well acquainted with things that can be done to help "not" to catch fish. Not that I've ever gone out and purposely tried not to catch fish, but there have certainly been days when I bumbled around enough that it might at least appear to some that's what I was up to and I'm guessing also that more than just a few of you reading this column may have achieved at least a moderate level of proficiency at doing things that have helped you not catch fish as well.

Besides fishing where there aren't any fish, one of the best ways I know "not" to catch fish is to start out with lousy bait. So those who actually "do" want to catch a fish, the most obvious place to start is with their selection of what they're going to use on their hook.

Anglers who want to ensure they get the best-of-the-best bait should, whenever possible, take the time to catch their own, after all, there's no doubt about the freshness of bait that's flopping on a deck or swimming circles in your bucket! Fresher is better! No matter if you're fishing for sharks, chunking for tuna, bottom fishing for sea bass, drifting around the bay for flounder or vying for anything else that lurks in our waters, there will be times when (for some unknown reason) the fish won't touch anything but fresh bait. And when I say "fresh" I mean bait that was never frozen and at least when possible - caught that day.

But no matter how good a batch of bait is when it's first bought, caught, or pilfered, when you're actually out there trying to catch a fish it's never going to be "as good" as when you first procured it. Just like food in your refrigerator - the freshness and quality of bait is in a constant state of decline from the time you get it until it's finally on a hook and in the face of a fish. So if anglers actually want to catch a fish they'll do what's necessary to minimize or at least slow this pro-

cess down. Because, unless a fish is half blind, can't smell, or just really-really hungry, pink squid, mushy mullet, dried out shiners or any other bait that hasn't been properly taken care of throughout the day is not what most will recognize as something they want to eat, particularly when it comes with hooks and strings attached.

Bait needs to remain cool and moist (but not soaking wet) and be kept in a cooler with a lot of ice, not just enough ice to keep it a "little cool", but enough ice to keep it "really cold"! And except maybe for brined and salted rigged trolling baits, baits should be immersed in the ice not just laying on top of it. Of course bait laying in melted ice at the bottom of a cooler will get washed out and mushy so when possible it's best to leave the cooler's drain plug cracked

open a little to allow the ice water to drain out. In the same respect, when plastic bags or cardboard containers of bait are stored in a cooler, it's important to periodically drain off the liquids that will accumulate in the packaging in order to keep the bait from soaking in their own brine. By properly taking care of it, bait in a cooler can sometimes stay in great shape for a few days, neglect it and by lunchtime you might be assured of not catching any fish for the rest of the day.

While bottom fishing, anglers will often keep a supply of bait close at hand for quick and easy access while they're actively fishing. This ready to go bait usually sits on a cutting board, the gunwale of the boat, or somewhere else that allows anglers to grab it without having to open the lid and dig through the bait cooler every few minutes. This is actually a pretty good plan unless that bait is allowed to bake under a hot summer sun. Nothing helps someone not catch fish like putting squid jerky or dried out fish strips on their hooks! Anglers who want to keep some bait outside of the cooler and handy can help it to remain in much better condition by simply keeping it under a cool

damp rag. Just remember that the rag itself needs to be kept cool by periodically re-soaking it in cool water, and if you really want to keep your cut bait in prime shape you can use two wet rags with a handful of ice between them.

So you can neglect your bait in the cooler, you can neglect the bait sitting beside you on the cutting board, but if you really want to make sure you don't catch fish there's one more place where you can goof things up - your hook! Yep, even if you start out with having the freshest-of-the-fresh and best bait in the world on your hook, if something doesn't decide to eat it within a reasonable amount of time and you don't replace it you'll be fishing at a grave disadvantage. Don't get lazy! When the bite is a little slow it's all the more important to ensure that you're fishing with good bait by changing it frequently. Too long in the water and any bait is going to get washed out and lose much of its appeal, and it's when the fish aren't biting that it's most important to do what you can to make sure that your bait is the best it can be. But then again, if you actually don't want to catch fish...

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Maryland Hunters Harvest 125 Black Bears for 2024 Season

Maryland hunters harvested 125 black bears during the state's 21st annual black bear hunt held Oct. 21-26 in Allegany, Frederick, Garrett, and Washington counties. The 2024 harvest was higher than the previous 5-year average of 104 bears.

The 2024 harvest consisted of 52 male and 73 female bears. Total harvest from each county was 80 from Garrett County, 24 from Allegany County, 11 from Washington County, and 10 from Frederick County. The largest bear had a live weight of 650 pounds and was taken in Frederick County. An additional 16 bears (8 male and 8 female) were harvested between August 15 and October 27 by farmers with agricultural damage permits.

"Many hunters enjoyed a week of trekking through western Maryland's mountains pursuing one of the state's most elusive game species," Maryland Department of Natural Resources Wildlife and Heritage Service Director Karina Stonesifer said. "The state's bear hunting season is an essential part of the management strategy to mitigate human-bear conflict throughout the expanding black bear range."

Despite warm daytime temperatures early in the week, hunters were able to harvest 22 more bears during the 2024 season than during the 2023 season. The daily harvest stayed relatively consistent throughout the week-long season and many hunters attributed their success to locating hickory or white oak stands where nuts and acorns were abundant.

2024 Maryland black bear hunt by the numbers:

169 pounds was the average weight of bears taken

70% of bears were taken on private land

4,507 hunters applied for a permit

950 permits were awarded

More information about black bear management in Maryland is available on the department's website.

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



*excluding select items



“The Last Word”

NOVEMBER
FLU

By Steve Huettner

Every few years I run this article with some changes, but the premise remains the same. If I could choose any one single month to be disconnected it would be November.

Havilah Babcock the great southern outdoor writer and author of “My Health is Better in November” in his outdoor classic stated that no matter how bad he felt or what was ailing him, once November rolled around, he would magically feel better. November for Mr. Babcock seemed to be a cure-all. Being an outdoor writer and college professor, I am sure afforded Mr. Babcock plenty of time to enjoy the great outdoors.

For those of us who are working stiff and have families, our time to play outside never seems to be enough. If I were ever to write a novel, it would be entitled My Health is Worse in November. To compensate for that lack of time to hunt and fish I have come up with a list of ailments that my fellow sportsmen can use when calling in sick. All of these symptoms constitute the disease known as November flu. I am hoping this group of maladies will soon be recognized by the American Medical Association.

It seems that when the leaves are blowing off the trees, the skies are cloudy and overcast, and there is a cold nip in the air; I am overcome with all types of ailments. If one were to look at my sick time over

the last thirty years human resources would see I am relatively healthy individual until November (there is a small spike in sick time that coincides with the opening of spring rockfish and turkey season, but this is a pure coincidence).

The first ailment that arrives in November is Northern Waterfowl Fever. This fever rears its ugly head when one is sitting in the office or working from home; looking at the weather reports from states to the North. Early symptoms of waterfowl fever include blowing duck calls incessantly, driving with your eyes looking skyward for the arrival of new birds and making sure that all the decoy lines have been replaced/

Advanced cases lead to hunched back from studying the weather on a smartphone, looking for a forecast of wind, clouds, and a dropping barometer. This is followed by a phone call from a buddy who also just looked at the same weather app and managed to scout a few ponds and fields when he was out on a “sales call. Once infected with Northern Waterfowl Fever it moves through the system rapidly, usually within 10-12 hours. The only known cure is a morning in the blind, with the above-said friend, your dog, and a thermos of coffee.

Another sign of November flu is best known as the rut. This rut is not to be confused with the rut that many of us get into



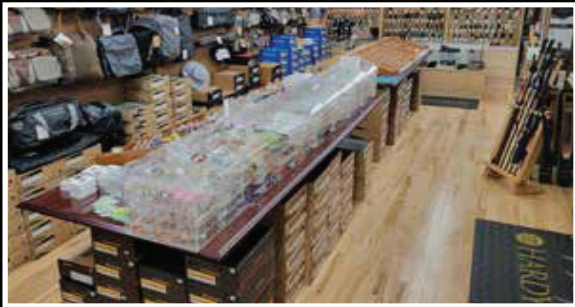
Tuan Nor Drum of Odenton, Maryland. Arrowed this beautiful Sika Hind on Sept. 26, 2024 on public land. Photo courtesy Winks.

at work, nor the rut we got the truck stuck in when trying to cure Northern Waterfowl Fever. Rut strikes in early November, and it gradually sneaks up on you. Early warning signs include carrying a grunt call, your deodorant replaced by the smell of doe in heat, and the nonstop chirp of new photos from your cellular trail camera. One day you are driving to work, passing the field that you drive by every day, and lo and behold during the middle of the afternoon a dandy 8-pointer appears. Before you know it, you have rut in the worst way. The only surefire cure for a case of the rut is a minimum of four to five days perched in your favorite tree stand with a bow in hand.

The third serious ailment to strike can best be classified as the Chesapeake Bay ache. Chesapeake ache begins to show up in the population towards the end of November and may sometimes run into December. Symptoms begin with conversations on fishing websites and updates from the DNR Fishing report. Following

the reports are photos e-mailed to you from your favorite charter boat captain. There is an unusual pain in the arms and legs and a salt deficiency for those with Chesapeake aches. The only known cure for Chesapeake Bay ache is a day on the Bay, dressed in your warmest clothes, chasing large ocean-run rockfish. As a caveat, with the recent dismal number from the young of the year index, Chesapeake Bay ache may have to be substituted from another fall ailment, perhaps Sika syndrome or Large Mouthitis.

In the end, fear not because there are cures for November flu. They all involve spending time in Maryland’s great outdoors. I can think of no better cure for such ailments. As a final word of suggestion, when calling in sick to the job, ensure it is done the night before. Many employers will not look kindly on calling in sick from the duck blind as your friend fires at the first toll of the morning. Here’s hoping that you get a bad case of November flu.



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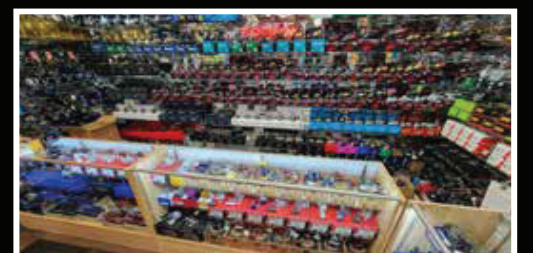
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Recipe of the Month

VENISON TATERTOT HOT DISH



INGREDIENTS

- 2 T oil any neutral oil will work
- 1 lb ground venison
- 1 yellow onion finely chopped
- 6 cloves garlic minced
- salt for seasoning
- pepper for seasoning
- 2-3 T ketchup I use Spicy Whataburger ketchup for extra zest
- 3 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 2 C frozen veggies pick your favorite! I use whatever is in my freezer, but my favorite is the green bean, corn, carrot mixture
- 3 cans cream of mushroom garlic soup any "cream of" soup will work... I like the garlic because it adds extra flavor
- 32 oz tater tots frozen- I set mine out when I start cooking so they can start to thaw
- 16 oz shredded cheese I like Colby Jack, but use whatever is in your freezer and don't be afraid to add more!

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 350°.
- Heat a pan to medium-high heat and add oil.
- Add onions and cook until translucent.
- Add garlic, meat, salt and pepper and cook until browned. Season as desired.
- Add ketchup and Worcestershire sauce. Mix well.
- Add veggies and mix well. Add soup and mix well. Cook for 5 minutes stirring occasionally.
- Grease a 9x13 casserole dish.
- Place mixture in dish and spread evenly.
- Top with 1/2 of cheese.
- Top with tater tots.
- Top with remaining cheese.
- Cook in the oven until cheese starts to brown and mixture is bubbling around edges. ENJOY!

Book of the Month

Small Stories from Big Sky Country

Welcome To Montana Grant contains fun stories themed in and about Big Sky Country. You will find recipes, campfire fun, hunting, and fishing stories, tips, and tricks. Montana Grant's lifetime experiences and lessons learned can be found throughout his writings. This book would make a great gift.

"Montana Grant" was originally "Maryland Grant". He was born in the Appalachian Mountains of Western Maryland. His youth was spent in "Maryland, America in Miniature". This is where he chased deer, turkeys, and brook trout. Grant's parents took the family west every summer to explore the Big Skies. We often camped for the summers in Yellowstone Park, moving our camp every 2 weeks. There are few waters in the west where Montana Grant has not wet a line.

As a Hunter, Grant is on the Rocky Mountain Game Calls Pro Team. Archery hunting is a seasonal treat. Grant has fished and hunted with many of the best and most notorious sportsmen and women in the country. Lefty Kreh, Rocky Jacobsen, Bob Jacklyn, and Bud Lilly have been his mentors and friends.

"Mr. Grant" was a Scoutmaster in Bozeman for several years and told many campfire stories that kept the young scouts awake at night. He has also been a camp cook and learned from some of the best Montana cooks over the years. His new book shares these memories, recipes, and stories.

Grant has been writing about the outdoors since the 1980's. This new book is a compilation of gems that relate to life in the Treasure State. His early English teachers would be proud of this publication. "The most important things that we learn are the things we learn after we already learn everything!"

You can purchase this book filled with stories, recipes, and ideas, at Amazon Books. Search the title Welcome to Montana Grant: a collection of stories about fishing and hunting and outdoor fun in Montana.



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EHD Outbreak Hits Maryland Deer Populations Statewide

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has confirmed cases of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) in the state's white-tailed deer population. The disease, commonly found throughout the eastern United States, has been detected in multiple Maryland counties, with the most significant outbreak occurring in Carroll, Frederick, and Washington counties. Though EHD primarily affects deer, it poses no risk to humans.

EHD is a naturally occurring disease that affects white-tailed deer, and while it can occasionally affect domestic livestock, such cases are rare. The virus is transmitted through the bites of tiny flying midges, often referred to as "no-see-ums," which are most active from mid-August through October. The disease is not spread through direct contact between deer and cannot be transmitted to humans. However, the DNR recommends hunters avoid consuming deer that have large open sores.

This year, EHD has been reported in Maryland counties on the Eastern Shore, in central and southern parts of the state, and as far west as Garrett County. Neighboring states, including Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia, have also docu-

mented cases of EHD in their deer populations.

According to the DNR, deer affected by the virus may display signs of lethargy, excessive salivation, and may lose their fear of humans. Hemorrhaging in the mouth and tongue, along with severe weight loss in animals that survive, are common symptoms. Deer are often found dead or dying near water sources during late summer and early fall, a typical indicator of an EHD outbreak.

Impact on Maryland's Deer Population

Though EHD can be fatal to deer, Maryland's healthy white-tailed deer population typically recovers from the disease. The state has experienced annual outbreaks of EHD, varying in intensity each year. While this year's outbreak is significant, DNR officials emphasize that the overall deer population remains robust.

It is important to distinguish EHD from Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), another fatal illness that affects deer. CWD has been documented in parts of western and central Maryland but is unrelated to EHD. EHD outbreaks tend to subside once colder temperatures arrive, as freez-

ing weather kills off the midges responsible for spreading the virus.

Guidelines for Hunters and Outdoor Enthusiasts

The Maryland DNR advises hunters and outdoor enthusiasts to be cautious when encountering sick or recently deceased deer. They recommend avoiding direct contact with these animals and instead reporting their location to local or regional DNR wildlife offices. The agency also reminds hunters not to consume

deer meat from animals with visible sores or signs of infection, regardless of the cause.

More information about EHD and Maryland's white-tailed deer population can be found on the DNR website, where hunters and the public can access resources on the diseases and parasites affecting local deer. The DNR's Wildlife and Heritage Service can also be contacted at 410-260-8540 for further details.



Sam Wittman with a nice 13 pt. buck. Photo courtesy Johns Butcher Shop

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