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TOURNAMENT RESULTS



Fishers Of Men Legacy Series Tournament Director Curtis Welton has the 2023 season schedule posted. The teams will kick off the year March 25 at Lake Chesdin, April 22 on Lake Anna, May 6 on the tidal James River then finishing up on the Chickahominy River. To participate a team must have one angler who has not reached his/her 19th birthday before Jan. 1, 2023. For more info and standings visit www.fomntt.com.



Fishers of Men Chickahominy River



Tournament Trail

VAElite Tournament Director Steve is gearing up for another great season of VAElite events. The season kicks off March 11 with the Jackson Hudson Memorial on Bugg Island/Kerr Lake. Next is sight-fishing test April 1 on Lake Anna. Then it's more of the same at Smith Mountain April 29. May 20 on the tidal Potomac. June 17 on the tidal James and the fall classic on Lake Gaston Oct. 20-21. www.vaelite60.com.



'22 TOTY Chris Ricks & Ryan Broughman.



The Lake Anna Big Bass Battle is back coming to Anna Point Marina March 11.

Tournament Director Ed Dustin will once again hold this uniquely formatted event where there is an award every hour for the biggest fish weighed.

Last year's event produced bass over five pounds every hour in rain, wind and snow! For info contact Dustin at battleoftheborder@aol.com.



'22 LKA Big Bass Battle, Jeff Parrish



2023 Tournaments

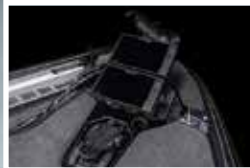
Anna Point Marina and Fish Tales will be the site of many events this coming year. Tournament Director Dave Fauntleroy invites anyone interested in testing their skills on one of Virginia's best bass fishing lakes to visit www.annapoint.com and review the 2023 event schedule posted there.

New for 2023 is a Big Bass Tournament March 4 as well as a number of open events held March 5, 12, 19 and 26.



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TOURNAMENT RESULTS



James River Tackle Co.

The first James River Tackle Co. Weekend Series event is scheduled for March 25. The rest of the season follows: April 22, May 20, June 10, July 8, Aug. 19, Sept. 30 and Oct. 1. All events launch from Hopewell Marina where teams can choose to fish the Appomattox, James or Chickahominy Rivers. Visit www.facebook.com/jamesrivertackleco for more dates and results.



James River Weekend Series

STURGEON CREEK MARINA



Congratulations to Tim Garner and Eric Johnson who won the Week 8 Sturgeon Creek Marina Winter Series event January 15 with 23.45 pounds. With just a few more tournaments to go Sullivan and Johnson held first place with a total of 40 bass weighing 127.60 pounds. Second place team, Jackson Norton and Sam Taylor had 114.08. For more info visit www.facebook.com/sturgeoncreekmarina.com.



Johnson and Garner



VA/NC Crappie Trail

The second Bobcat's Bait & Tackle VA/NC Crappie Trail event was held December 3 and won by Josh Morris and Ryan Smith with an 10.53-pound, seven-fish limit - good for \$1,473.

The next event will be held February 25. The final event on March 25 with an April 21-22 classic. For more info visit www.facebook.com/bobscatsbaitandtackle.



Morris and Smith



The Bass Bandits of Virginia will kick off the 2023 season March 11 on the Nottoway River from the Rt. 258 ramp. Next up is a visit to the Chickahominy River on March 19 out of the Rt. 5 Waterfront Park ramp. April 16 will bring a visit to the Appomattox River out of Hopewell Marina and a stop April 29 at the Chowan River out of Shoups Landing.

For more info and 2023 event dates visit www.facebook.com/groups/458306391457498.



Chowan River bass.



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Virginia East Legacy SERIES SCHEDULE*

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April 22 | Lake Anna | Sturgeon Creek Marina

May 6 | James River | Deep Bottom

June 3 | Chickahominy River | Rockahock

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Curtis Welton "Legacy" Series Director

*To participate, a team must consist of one angler who has reached his/her 19th birthday before Jan 1, 2023 and one angler who has not reached his/her 19th birthday before Jan 1, 2023. To register, complete the Legacy member application on line at the National website.

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2023 BEST IN SHOW

We scoured the aisles at the Richmond Fishing Show to bring you our favorites!



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COVER PHOTO BY MLAGS

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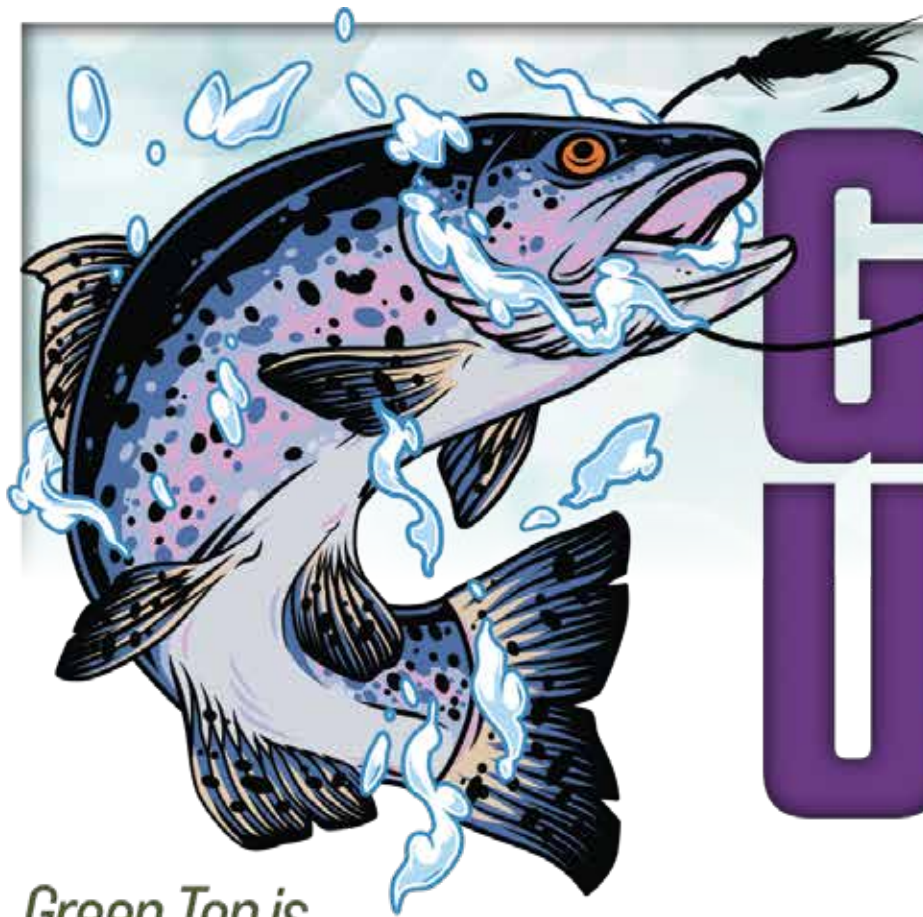


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Best In Show And Winter Fishing Edition

Welcome to our annual Winter Fishing Edition where you'll find more on how to catch fish when it's cold out than anywhere else!

We start off asking the question, "Are wiper Virginia's sportiest fish?" These hybrid striper/white bass have taken Lake Anna by storm and the state record pulled from Claytor a few years back may fall this spring.

Next up is an article on catching big winter slabs that features three of the top crappie anglers in the state including Josh Morris of the Richmond Crappie Club.

Everyone wants to catch a "dirty" 30, five-bass limit, right? Well, it was recently done at Lake Anna and we caught up one of those anglers for his take on big winter bass tactics.

Our annual Best In Show piece highlights the bevy of tackle, gear and boats we saw at the recent Richmond Fishing Expo.

We even have a piece on a special kids rabbit hunt that donated several hundred dollars to families in need in central Virginia.

There's all that, plus our monthly columnists (Ahnstrom, Gorsuch and Chaconas), a W2 Profile on Battle Series Director Ed Dustin, our famous Regional Focus Reports, tournament schedules, Tide/Moon Charts, Calendar of Events and an expanded Destinations section with a bunch of new outstanding real estate listings geared toward outdoor enthusiasts like you!

Information is what we provide. It's a passion and you should be able to tell this as you read.

If you like what you have seen, make it a habit to pick up a copy at any one of the over 75 shops around the state that carry W2 OR you can have it sent to your mailbox by signing up for a subscription at www.woodsandwatersmagazine.com.

Don't forget the website is all new. You can read the entire magazine online or just browse the articles and Regional Focus Reports.

Before I go I wanted to thank the Gray family for bringing back the Richmond Fishing Expo this year. Thank you to our fellow exhibitors and a BIG thank you to everyone that stopped by our display to say "Hi" or purchase a W2 cap, tee shirt or hoodie.

I especially want to thank those of you that were kind enough to view my New Product Showcase seminars on the Bass Tub.

Until next time, remember to cherish, protect and conserve the outdoors while sharing it with others.



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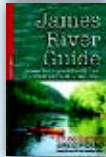
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Dear W2,

Here's a 44.5" muskie my seven-year-old son, EJ caught back in December on a trip we took with Blue Ridge Musky. He's now caught 61 species of fish. We enjoy reading your magazine!

Jackson Rogers
Richmond, Virginia



Great father and son pic. Thank you for sharing and good luck in the 2023 Big Fish Contest! - ED

Dear Editor,

Wanted to share this photo of William Andrew Kent of New Kent County. He closed out this 2022 hunting season with this impressive 23.5" spread, eight-pointer taken in Charles City County. This one holds dear to his heart as he'd like to dedicate it to his Pappa, William Christian, Jr.

AK Kent
New Kent, Virginia



Reader Letter Guidelines

We welcome your correspondence and photos. Letters must be sent to our office (114 Old Quarry Lane, Bumpass, VA 23024). Others email us (woodsandwatersmagazine@gmail.com). Paper photos cannot be returned. If we run your letter or email and you include your address, we will send you one of our truck/boat stickers.

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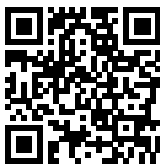

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Are Wiper Virginia's Sportiest Fish?

This Hybrid Between A Striper And White Bass Is Quickly Becoming An Old Dominion Favorite

BY C.C. MCCOTTER

I was waking a Berkley Surge Shad over an underwater point at Dike 3 on Lake Anna in heavy fog when I heard a slosh, and my seven-foot medium heavy action rod nearly jumped out of my hands, coming alive with what felt like a monster fish. After a tense minute or so I brought a fish boat side I had been wanting to catch for a while – a six pound plus hybrid striped bass or “wiper” as they are regionally known.

I held the fish in my hands admiring the iridescent pectoral fins, squat build, broken black stripes, Vise-Grip-like mouth and wide, powerful tail. This was like nothing I'd fought before, and I liked it!

For the anglers that have not yet experienced the thrill of fighting a hybrid striped bass on light tackle, you just don't know what you are missing, and you should seriously consider putting that accomplishment on your fishing goals list this year. That first nice Anna wiper came several years ago. Now, those fish are approaching 13+ pounds!



Photo from McCotter's Lake Anna Guide Service

Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources District Fisheries Biologist John Odenkirk has been managing Lake Anna for over 25 years. He and biologist Mike Isel oversee the Northern Virginia District, a 12-county region for Lake Anna north and from Skyline Drive east.

He's a big proponent of hybrid stripers and was instrumental in getting them stocked in Anna. He told me a bit about the fascinating history of the special fish in the southeast and Virginia.

“Hybrid striped bass came on the scene with a vengeance in the southeast primarily in the 80's. At the time I was working in Florida for the US Fish & Wildlife Service and they were stocking a cross between female striper and male white bass known as a sunshine bass, and a cross between female white bass and male striper known as a palmetto bass. They were stocking them all over Florida. As a federal wildlife agent, I and my fellow feds, were concerned the hybrids might mess up the pure Gulf

striper genetics.” Odenkirk recalled.

The longtime Virginia fisheries scientist then came to Virginia in 1989 noting: “They were stocking hybrids everywhere. Ni, Occoquan; essentially anywhere that had excessive gizzard shad. Stripers didn't do well on many of these lakes due to lack of habitat but wipers did well.”

Odenkirk said that one of the reasons the hybrids become so popular to stock had to do with the collapse of the Chesapeake Bay rockfish fishery.

“In the 80's the Atlantic rockfish stocks plummeted so no one got any stripers for years. Also at that time there was growing concern that hybrid wipers would breed with the pure Atlantic strain stripers. We actually caught gravid males below the Occoquan dam.”

Due to this concern, the stocking of hybrids ceased in any Chesapeake drainages. Non-Chesapeake drainages were the only places that received wipers into the 1990s due to that concern, according to Odenkirk.

Per the state fisheries biologist, two things then happened that affected the history of hybrid striper in Virginia; 1) at some point the Virginia Marine Resources Council (VMRC) became responsible for permitting any stocking of hybrid striper and 2) the aquaculture industry stepped up and began farm raising hybrid stripers to fill the void of rockfish in the consumer market.

Now fast forward to Lake Anna in 1993 and the disastrous stocking of grass carp.

“One good thing from that experience was the conclusion that grass carp did not migrate out of the lake: it was like a lock box,” Odenkirk told me.

At some point the biologist additionally realized “striper were not doing as well as we thought they would do in Lake Anna” so he began writing proposal letters to the VMRC about experimental stockings of hybrid striper in Anna in 2014.

After a three-year waiting period to see if the fish would get over/through the North Anna dam, no dissent was received, so Odenkirk and his staff began regular stocking of hybrids and the rest is history.

Currently the following lakes

receive regular stockings of hybrid striper/wiper: Lake Anna, Carvin’s Cove Reservoir, Hungry Mother, Rural Retreat, Flanagan and Claytor. DWR puts the stockings out to bid and the source varies from year to year.

While the current state record hybrid striped bass came from Claytor Lake and weighs 15-13 (Don Jessie, March 16, 2016), Odenkirk expects the fish in Anna to exceed that mark soon.

“To me it’s the absolute perfect place for hybrids. Because of the water conditions it was never great for striper. It just doesn’t stratify like many other lakes. The temperature is also subtly increasing and that is not good for striper, but fine for hybrids. The forage bass is large and diverse, giving those fish the opportunity to reach immense proportions. I fully expect a state record in a couple of years.”

Twenty inches is a statewide length regulation for land-locked striper (Smith Mountain Lake varies). Anna’s striper are the slowest growing striper in the southeast, however its hybrids grow more quickly. Odenkirk says Anna’s striper take 30 months on average to reach 20 inches. Wiper take a few months

less. A 20-inch striper weighs 2.5 pounds. A 20-inch hybrid weighs another pound-and-a-half.

What do wiper eat? Pretty much anything that swims. They are considered opportunistic but prefer to dine on threadfin shad, alewives, gizzard shad, blue back herring, even white perch.

We asked Odenkirk if striper and wiper school together?

“We catch both in our gill nets side by side and in the same condition, so while we aren’t 100% certain, we think they do school together.”

Anna receives the most hybrids in the state. They are stocked in early summer at the 208 bridge/High Point Marina and at Sturgeon Creek Marina. The lake has been receiving 96,000 hybrid stripers per year, approximately 10 fish per acre, based on the main lake of 9,600 acres.

Is this the year we see a state record wiper pulled from Anna? It’s very possible, as the largest caught last year was 12-6 pounds, and holdovers from the 2014 year class could reach 14+.

In the mean time, based on the year classes in the lake you can expect to catch fish from under a pound up to seven pounds and then fish from 10-12 pounds.

Wiper anglers have found small swimbaits and A-rigs effective for wiper in the cooler months on most lakes. Vertically jigged and fluttered spoons are also popular during the winter. Once the fish move shallow in the spring, they will accept dog walking and waked lures, topwater poppers, small, soft plastic jerkbaits, suspending jerkbaits, lipless crankbaits and swimbaits.

There’s even a growing contingency of flyfisherman that use sinking line and Clouser Minnows effectively in the summer and fall when the fish school and feed consistently.

Yes, you can also target wipers using live baits, but unlike striper, they will accept an artificial lure more often and vigorously.

Where do you start your search for wiper on Anna or other lakes where they are stocked? Generally, wiper head up river/lake in the spring to areas with current, down to deeper areas starting in late May and June, and then back up or at least to where baitfish schools are in the fall and winter.

Good luck this season catching a Virginia wiper. I think you’ll find them to be one of your new favorite fish should you succeed.



“Bobby, what the heck just blew by us?”
 - John Doe, Virginia tournament angler

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Catching Prespawn Virginia Slabs

*Regional Experts
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BY WALTER CLAXTON

Many Virginia anglers can find and catch crappie over the next month or two, but how do those elite freckle anglers find the truly big, saddlebag-sized fish? Is it a well-kept secret of the old timers or a series of subtle insights gained by panfish addicts spending countless days on the water?

Perhaps understanding crappie behavior is a good place to start. Beginning and longtime freckle fishermen should understand that when water temperatures are in the 40's crappie are schooled in over-wintering areas. When water warms into the 50-52 degree range, the crappie migrate from creek and/or river channels and head for food. This can come in the form of threadfin shad or other small fish, even invertebrates like freshwater shrimp and insect nymphs.

If shallow structure is present, these fish will go from feeding and begin the spawning process around 55-degrees, selecting a nest site, creating a nest and attracting a female (s).

Crappie prefer a solid, clean surface to spawn. Logs, roots, rocks and sand are the most common substrates and spawning materials in our region.

At around 58-60 degrees, the largest females will begin visiting the nests and depositing eggs. These truly trophy fish



Josh Morris with two Buggs Island white crappie.

Photo from Richmond Crappie Club

will only be shallow a few days before they move back out into deeper water.

Besides understanding the biological habits, a good way to find out how to catch big crappie is to learn from other anglers.

Richmond Crappie Club Ace

Josh Morris is the Tournament Director for the Richmond Crappie Club. He fishes for freckles all over the state. He employs a live sonar system to actually locate and watch fish. He says it's incredibly helpful to see exactly where a crappie is relative to the structure they are on as well as see how a fish reacts to his bait presentation.

"In the late winter we typically try to target the suspended, roaming crappie. With the use of livescope (and a lot of practice) we can selectively pick out the bigger fish and present our bait to these fish hoping to get a bite. It's a challenging technique to learn, but YouTube has a lot of helpful information."

By using the gridlines on the livescope and adjusting the range, we can get a

general sense of the size of the fish on the screen. From there we're able to look at the shape of the fish and gauge an idea about whether or not the fish may be a crappie. You're typically looking for a football shape roughly one foot long (give or take a few inches). "

There are several ways to target these suspended roamers, but one of the easiest ways is by using a trolling rod."

Prior to livescope, I would idle with a split screen showing side imaging and traditional down view. The side view would allow me to find the crappie that I didn't drive directly across and the down imaging would help me determine the precise depth of the fish."

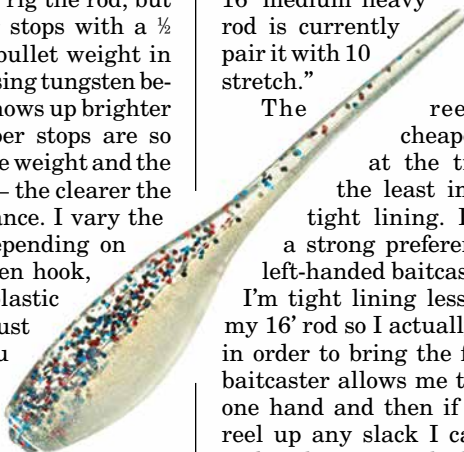
I later learned that crappie will drop down in depth as your boat travels across them so the depth you see on down imaging is the maximum depth you'll want to fish, plus most of the time crappie look for bait above them. From there I would spider rig with eight rods in the winter time and vary the depths of the baits until

we figured out the ideal depth for that day.”

After getting livescope, I continued to spider rig but I would use livescope to know the precise depth of the fish and adjust all of the baits accordingly. With a lot of practice, a single rod can be used more efficiently in order to cover more water and target the bigger fish. Once you find a fish that you want to target, slow the boat down and ease up to the fish. Present your bait above the fish and wait. When casting you’re waiting for the thump, but most of these suspended fish will hit the bait while swimming up so it’s not uncommon to not feel the bite at all.”

There are several ways to rig the rod, but I’ve started using 2 bobber stops with a ½ oz tungsten egg weight or bullet weight in between them. I’ve started using tungsten because the denser material shows up brighter on the livescope. The bobber stops are so that the distance between the weight and the hook can be easily adjusted – the clearer the water, the greater the distance. I vary the type of bait underneath depending on the conditions – an Aberdeen hook, jig head with a minnow, plastic on a jig head, hair jig, etc. Just because livescope shows you the fish certainly does not mean that the fish are going to bite. Every day is

Baby Shad



different and the presentation of the bait needs to be adjusted accordingly.”

Some of my favorite hooks and baits include Bobby Garland’s baby shad in Monkey Milk color paired with Mr. Crappie lead head jigs in 1/32 oz and 1/16 oz, 1/32 oz hand tied hair jigs by NicTaylors Jigs, and a #2 or #4 size tru-turn hook with a minnow.

I was previously using some old 16’ trolling rods, but since livescope has really taken off, companies such as Catch The Fever have developed rods that have much better sensitivity, are much lighter, and still have just as good of a backbone. The 16’ medium heavy precision trolling rod is currently my rod of choice. I pair it with 10 lb slime line super stretch.”

The reel I use was the cheapest reel I could find at the time because this is the least important item when tight lining. I do, however, have a strong preference towards using a left-handed baitcaster. Most of the time I’m tight lining less than 16’ deep with my 16’ rod so I actually have to let line out in order to bring the fish to the boat. The baitcaster allows me to do this easily with one hand and then if I happen to need to reel up any slack I can set the net down and reel up some slack with my left hand. As for casting, I love my 5’6” Ultra Light-

Moderate Fenwick Eagle rod paired with a Sedona 500 reel.”

Buggs Island/Kerr Reservoir

Bobby Whitlow owns Bobcat’s Bait & Tackle and fishes regularly on Buggs Island Lake on the Virginia/North Carolina border. He loves to crappie fish with friends and family on the 50,000-acre lake he calls home.

Buggs is a massive impoundment, so it’s easy to get overwhelmed. Traditional big crappie areas on Whitlow’s water include the stumpy flats in the backs of major creeks like Bluestone, Buffalo, Butcher’s, Rudd’s and Eastland.

Before the fish move up on these flats, though, Whitlow is targeting crappie suspended around and over underwater structure. He fishes mostly sunken brushpiles in late winter, but he has found good fish on bridge pilings and old road beds/underwater bridges.

Once the fish move up onto the flats, Whitlow’s tactics change. He does a lot of trolling in the late winter/early spring, mostly March and early April. At this time the fish are foraging in 3-5’ of water feeding on baitfish. This accomplished tournament angler trolls his jigs and live minnows not using the outboard, just the trolling motor.

At some point, usually on a full moon, Whitlow switches to targeting wood in the

| continued on page 27

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Photo from McCotter's Lake Anna Guide Service

4 BIG BASS

WINTER TACTICS FOR AREA WATERS

BY C.C. MCCOTTER

You see them on social media, especially on Mondays when you are back at work wishing you were fishing. You might also have a buddy text you a pic and ask, “Did you see this?” referring to another amazing limit catch of big winter bass by a consistently productive team.

Every lake around the state has them – the few anglers that catch the biggest fish, often in the winter months when everyone else is watching football or on vacation someplace warm.

The question is, how do they catch all these big bass, right? Do they know a lure or lures that others don’t? Do they know a secret spot everyone else has overlooked? Do they have knowledge of a timed feed that is the produce of years of experience?

It’s probably all of the above. The best big bass anglers and most consistent tournament winners on Virginia’s lakes and rivers know something you don’t. That coupled

with experience permits them to figure out when, where and how to consistently catch big bass.

One such example is the tournament team of Nate Sullivan and Eric Johnson. They are again on their way to winning the title of Winter Kings of Lake Anna (they’ve won it half a dozen times) this year and recently put an exclamation point on their season with a five bass limit weighing 30.11 pounds – the modern day heaviest for Anna. They had bass of 6.73, 6.70, 6.45, 6.28 and 3.95 pounds. The closest competitor was 11 pounds behind!

Sullivan and Johnson are predictably tight-lipped about what they do but we caught up recently with Sullivan and asked him about his secrets to success. His answers to our interview questions reveal an outline for catching big bass you can learn from and use on your home water or on theirs – Lake Anna.

Snakecharming

“The first and most productive big bass tactic in the wintertime, is using a jerkbait

around some type of structure,” the lifelong Spotsylvania County resident told W2. He added, “In every winter article you read there is a mention about a jerkbait and for good reason. A jerkbait worked slow around structure will entice those overweight fish to come up and eat. Lake Anna has good clarity from upper mid-lake on down to the dam and it is surprising how far these fish will come and eat a jerkbait. Working them slow around key lake contours will definitely pull some heavyweights out of the depths.”

Jerkbait aficionados call the tactic snake-charming because of the specific cadences of jerks and pauses necessary to coax a big, lethargic winter mailbox up from their deep water haunt.

Deep Swimming

Sullivan’s second winter big bass tactic might surprise some young anglers but not old school anglers. He likes a swimbait.

“The second tactic is to slow roll a swimbait across points and humps. When you need to cover water and the jerkbait bite seems to

The best big bass anglers and most consistent tournament winners on Virginia’s lakes and rivers know something you don’t.



The 30.11-pound limit caught by Nate Sullivan and tournament partner Eric Johnson in a recent winter tournament on Lake Anna.

be slow, the next best thing is to slow roll a swimbait. You can build a lot of confidence in the wintertime with a swimbait because it is so natural in the water and any fish halfway willing to bite will slurp it in when it comes creeping past. The swimbait is also a better hook-up to land ratio than the jerkbait. This is key in the winter because you usually do not get very many bites in the wintertime because the fish's metabolism is slow."

Heavy Metal

Another tactic Sullivan relies on in the wintertime is jiggging a spoon or blade bait on some of the same structure as he fishes the jerkbait.

"Jiggging a spoon or blade bait will get you that reaction bite in the winter. There are times when you can locate fish but cannot seem to get them to bite anything. This is where this tactic comes into play. Let the spoon or blade sink to the bottom and hop it in front of their face; you will know pretty quick if the fish are willing to bite."

While his next tactic is not as consistent a producer, it does have its winter moments.

"In certain conditions a jig dragged slowly on the bottom can be dynamite. A jig slowly dragged across hard bottom can get you the biggest bite of the day. The biggest deal with the jig is it does not work every day. There are days when it's the best thing to have in your hand and other days it seems you cannot get a bite," Sullivan notes.

The Panic Button

The successful tournament angler says he uses one more tactic in the winter when things are really tough – he'll downsize and employ a shakey head worm.

"When everything else fails you have to go with confidence and on Lake Anna that is a shakey head. The key in the winter time with the shakey head is to work it extremely slow. You need your bait to look natural and move ever so slightly on the bottom."

So now you know four tactics and lures the masters are using. Where do you target bass with them?

According to Sullivan: "The biggest key in the wintertime is proximity to deep water. The bass need a place to get comfortable (as well

as the baitfish) when we get an arctic blast from the north. One of the primary forages in Lake Anna is threadfin shad and they do not do well when the water temperatures plummet. These baitfish are going to be close to deep water throughout the winter."

Sullivan says generally, in the wintertime, the bites are few and far between, but when you get bit it is the right quality. He says when the water temperatures drop into the 40's a good day on the water will consist of seven or eight bites, and the fish this time of year are close to if not the biggest they will be all the year.

So, what's his key to producing consistently when money is on the line?

"The biggest key to catching the bag on Sunday was years of experience on the lake and 18 years tournament fishing on the lake. Knowing when to leave or stay and being able to key in on exactly what type of structure the fish are using that day was key. Once we were able to key in on where these fish were setting up, we were able to run with it effectively throughout the lake. Also, a little luck never hurts and to get four fish over six pounds to commit and bite. Luck had to play a little roll in it as well." 🍀🍀

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Rabbit Roundup Fuels Youth, Funds Charity



Participants are all smiles after the fourth annual Red Shovel Farm Rabbit Roundup.

Sharing the hunting tradition might seem like a trendy thing for some but in rural communities across Virginia it's an annual rite of passage marked by yearly hunts, meals, youth events and even charitable donations.

Every January such an event takes place in Louisa County, Virginia. An annual Rabbit Round Up occurs after deer season and is the fruit of an effort organized by Bumpass community hunters Andrew Hall, Mike Cash and Nick Barlow.



These men combined January 22 to provide the fourth annual hunting day for Louisa youth at Heath Honse's Red Shovel Farm.

Honse hosted the event on his 100-acre farm where rabbits abound, providing

a hearty breakfast and a safe hunting environment for the youth. Between Honse and the participants \$400 was raised for the Roger Byrd Charitable Fund administered to by Gilboa Church in nearby Mineral.

"I'd like to thank Heath for providing a great day of hunting for our kids. His generosity not only permitted us to share rabbit hunting to a new generation, it also provided funding to assist local people down on their luck," noted Andrew Hall.

Virginia rabbit season runs through February 28. The daily limit is six per day.

The Roger Byrd Fund provides relief for local residents behind on electric bills or other common needs. To contribute to the Roger Byrd Fund, send your donations to Gilboa Church, PO Box 214; Mineral, VA 23117.  



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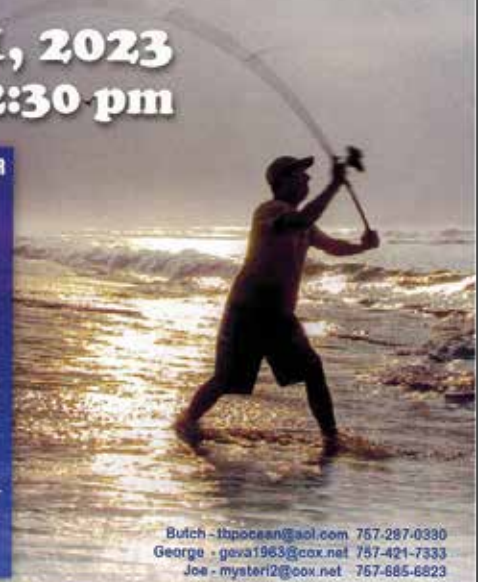
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Richmond Fishing Expo

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Each year we scour the aisles at the Richmond Fishing Expo for new stuff to use during our New Product Showcase seminars on the bass tank as well as to recognize with our Best In Show awards. After a two-year hiatus, this year's show had a bevy of new stuff from lures to boats and everything in between for showgoers to discover. Here are those we found to be the most intriguing heading into the new season.

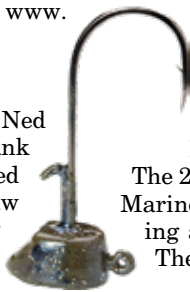
Finesse Soft Plastic

The Bizzbaits Baby Cutter Craw is a 3.25-inch soft plastic craw that can be fished Ned style, Texas-style, Carolina-rigged, as a jig or spinnerbait trailer. It comes in 10 colors including the Bourbon Blaze demonstrated on the Bass Tub. The white is great to use when sight fishing. Other colors include Green Pumpkin Magic, Green Pumpkin, Pumpkin, Alabama Craw, Black and Blue, Black and Blue Laminate, Junebug and Magic Craw. This bait is salt impregnated and scented with Jack'em Juice. www.bizzbaits.com.

Terminal Tackle

The new True South Straight Up Ned jig head was demonstrated on the tank by W2's own C.C. McCotter. Tipped with a Bizzbaits Mini Cutter Craw (see below), it was very appealing to the heavily-pressured fish in

TS Straight Up Ned Head



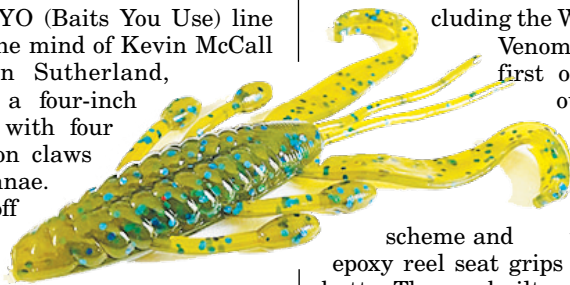
the Bass Tub of Oklahoma.

This head features a unique tear drop bottom shape wedge and a flat bottom that greatly enhances stand up presentations of finesse type baits. They come four per pak and are available in 1/8, 3/16 and 1/4-ounce versions. www.bizzbaits.com.

Creature Bait

The new BYO (Baits You Use) line comes out of the mind of Kevin McCall from down in Sutherland, Virginia. It's a four-inch creature bait with four legs, two action claws and two antennae.

You can pinch off as much or as little as you want to create your own bait. If you remove all the legs, it functions as a punch bait or trailer. Deftly pitch it to shallow shoreline grass or docks and it probably won't hit the bottom seven times out of 10 this early spring. The colors are regionally hot and the baits are coated with crawfish oil to drive bass nuts.



Boat

The 2023 Skeeter FXR21 in the Anna's Marine Center booth display was drawing a lot of attention from attendees. The cement and red gel coat was

stunning. The FXR21 is 21'4" long and an amazing 97" wide. The hull weigh 2,275 pounds, holds 48 gallons of fuel and up to 250 hp. www.annasmarine-center.com

Rods

Jeremy Reid and his trusty crew again brought a massive selection of J.B. Custom Rods to the show including the Wicked, ESP and

Venom Series rods, the first of which makes our Best In Show list. The Wicked rods feature a striking red and black color

scheme and the beautiful epoxy reel seat grips with EVA foam butts. The are built on ultra-sensitive and light Japanese blanks and retail for \$220. A number of different actions and lengths are available for everything from drop shotting to swimbaits, topwaters to worms. Jbcustomrods1@gmail.com

Reel

The ABU Garcia Jordan Lee spinning reels in size 20 and 30 were flying out of the Oceans East 2 booth display. These reels were introduced last year but have maintained their popularity among area anglers looking for value in a spinning reel. Each features a

| continued on page 22

"After a two-year hiatus, this year's show had a bevy of new stuff from lures to boats and everything in between for showgoers to discover."



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 **Best In Show** from page 20

composite body, metal spool, 6.2:1 gear ratio and six ball bearings for under \$70. www.abugarcia.com

Crankbait

Tiger Crankbaits are a local company that specializes in creating custom-colored crankbaits. The new Hot Cherry Craw is custom-painted medium diving crankbait similar to a Bandit 100 that show goers snapped up like free beers at a football game. The result of a collaboration between Greg and Heidi Stinnett and long-time tournament angler Harvey Reece, Tiger Crankbaits are hot. Heidi is the creative force behind the popularity and until she's totally overwhelmed with new bait production she'll even repaint your favorite crankbait with a custom color. tigercrankbaits@gmail.com



Tiger Crankbaits Hot Cherry Craw

Glidebait

Donnie Bell of James River Tackle Co. did the unthinkable – he created a legitimate knock-off of the Klash 9 and Tiny Klash 6.6 glide bait everyone wants. The original is only available in Japan for \$120+. Bell hand paints Klash blanks and sells them for \$75. He also has a gizzard shad glide bait that features foil finishes for \$75. Bell's talent is evident from six feet away. These baits are going to account for a number of double digit mailboxes this season. Each is sold with an extra tail, which sits horizontally, not vertically on the bait. The Klash Klone is nine inches long. The Tiny Klash Klone is six inches long. 804/668-5866.



Klash Klone

Jerkbait

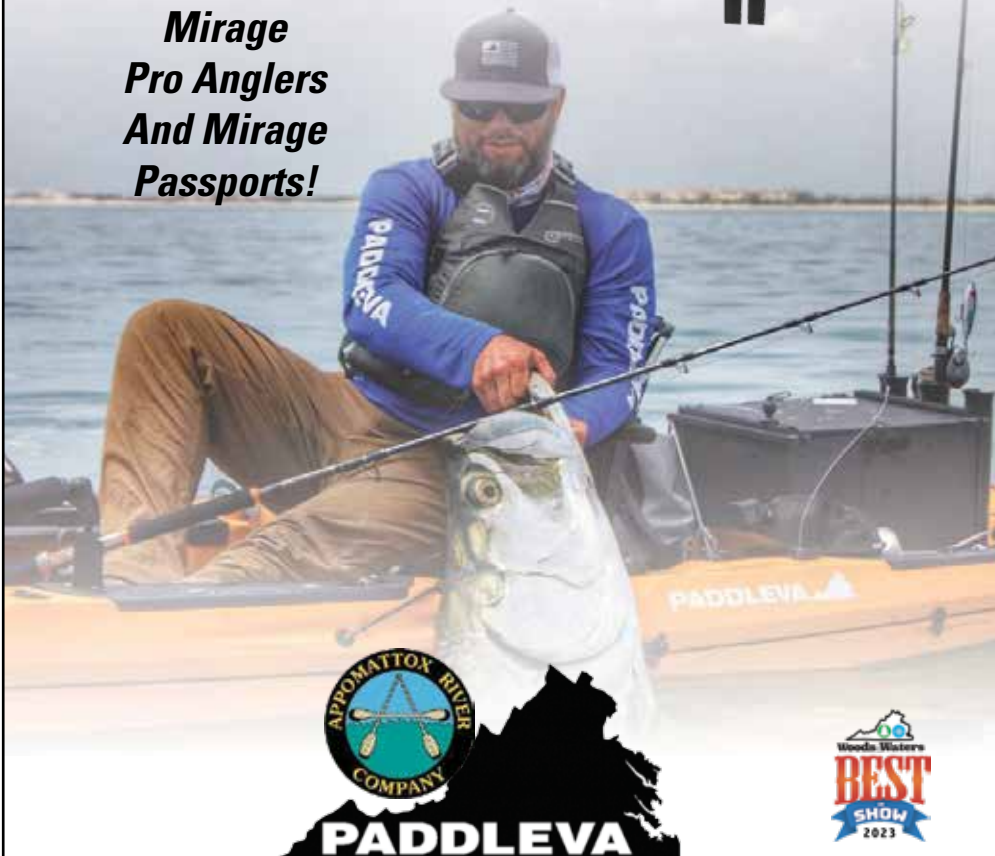
Lin Bell of Fishing Pro Tech once again wow'd the crowd with his selection of Megabass baits, in fact, he had a Megabass rep in his booth that brought with him all kinds of goodies for Bell. The new IxI Shad TX Megabass is part of the growing jerkbait/crankbait trend. It looks like a crankbait but it suspends and



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you can twitch it in place. The Spawn Killer color drove those tank bass wild! The I's in the name stand for Yuki Ito and Katsutaka Imae. These two Japanese bait designing geniuses aimed to pull out a target deeper than 12' with a small shad body of only 2.25". The mounting position of the rare instantaneous center of gravity movement system «Micro LBO PAT» is positioned to create a super forward leaning posture that cannot be achieved with a normal ball center of gravity. Ito designed the ultra-front mount, which allows the center of gravity head to approach the joint between the lip and body, and the shaft with a built-in bearing of the ultra-thin shaft. In the field test of the lab with six-pound fluorocarbon, the small bait was able to bring a masterpiece of ultra-long-distance flight and succeeded in generating an astonishing dive vector. In other words, you need one this late winter/early spring for fishing Smith Mountain Lake and Anna. 757/566-1278.

Frog

The new MES Lures Root Frog nearly sold out at the show. Seal's fertile lure designing mind has created a floating frog with two sets of legs imitated by silicone strands both fore and aft of a hollow body. The colors are insane, especially the one featuring day glow orange. There are 3/4 oz. hollow bodied versions as well as 1/2-oz. versions you'll want to try this season.



MES Lures Root Frog

Best Booth

With over 15 different fishing kayaks to pursue, the Appomattox River Co. display receives our Best In Show Best Display Award. Vince and his crew have to load in last and load out first since they are at one of the roll up doors and their massive display of boats takes a coordinated effort to set up and break down.

There were boats from Hobie, Jackson, Native and other manufactures from this Farmville-based kayak supplier. www.paddleva.com.

Congratulations to all who displayed at the Richmond Fishing Expo for a great effort. We enjoyed seeing you all and appreciate you



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The Preserve At Dundee

BY C.C. MCCOTTER

On a recent January day I found myself the historian for a special shooting event held at one of Virginia's most prestigious hunting reserves. I was fortunate enough to have been invited to cover a British style pheasant ring shoot held by the Barrett family of The Preserve at Dundee not far from Hanover, Virginia. Twenty fortunate souls would be looking to seize the day as guests.

I was early, as I prefer to be, so I could take account of the surroundings for photo angles, meet my host and the guests. The grounds were tidy and included a gardener's shed, guest house and carriage house. A restored Land Rover and wagon sat in the pull through drive with gun stands waiting use in the yard.

I tagged along with two other arrivals up the brick steps to the front door of the federal style home that once housed General Jeb Stuart's family and entered into what would prove to be just the first example of a lavish day afield.

My host awaited in a parlor-like room that featured a breakfast spread, fresh cut flowers and a cracking wood fire. His hearty welcome and handshake made me feel like

one of the VIPs that would participate in the shoot. As the guests arrived, each were greeted similarly until all were assembled.

Built in 1810, Dundee was completed in 1820. Nestled along River Road in the Hanover Courthouse district. The estate boasts 200 acres of rolling hillsides, plantation pine groves and magnificent hardwood forests.

Purchased in 1992 by the Barrett family, Dundee would undergo an extensive renovation and upgrade. Richard E. Barrett, Sr., owner of BC Wood Products, Inc, a specialty pallet and lumber company, had a vision for Dundee. Mr. Barrett was a Virginia native, born and raised farming in the Northern Neck.

With a deep love for the outdoors, gardening and sharing with friends and family, Mr. Barrett embarked on a monumental renovation of Dundee which had been dormant for 20 years. Realizing his dream of owning and restoring a historic plantation, he spent a full three years on the project. Utilizing 1900's techniques to preserve the historical properties of the home, Dundee was returned to its original

splendor but now with the amenities and comforts of modernization.

Driving up the long, river pebble drive and through the columns, you can easily envision fine carriages arriving at the front doorsteps of this handsomely appointed estate.

Richard Barrett, Sr. loved walking the footpaths, hunting deer, turkey and upland birds. As an active hunter and conservationist, it was truly a pleasure for him to share the fruits of Dundee.

After his passing in October 2020, his son, Richard E. Barrett, Jr. "Ted", wanted to ensure that his father's legacy and love of rural Hanover lived on at Dundee. Ted's fondest memory of his father was that of learning how to manage and run

the hunting grounds. Knowing the richness of its history and the beauty of its grounds and accommodations, Ted quickly went to work with a dedicated crew crafting the ultimate upland hunting experience and event venue, all less than 30 minutes north of Richmond.

As a fully licensed hunting preserve, Dundee offers phenomenal hunting even for the most discriminating shot.

Ted strives to fill every hunter's bag and stocks thousands of birds throughout the



The shoot would take place on a nicely manicured stand of Virginia pines.



Dundee Ring Shoot

year including quail, chukkar and pheasant. With no bag limits, that is certainly no easy task, but Ted's father instilled in him true southern hospitality. Keep the birds flying and the bourbon glasses full!

On the day of my visit, after the quick breakfast greeting, Ted then mustered the guns outside the main house for the peg draw (with a clever touch he employed numbered pheasant feathers), read a brief hunter's prayer and then it was time to load up the guests in that vintage Rover and wagon and head to the pegs.

The shoot would take place on a nicely manicured stand of pines. The 30-year-old forest had been thinned so there was ample space between trees. Multiple release blinds were strategically located close to the center of the ring in low spots. 10 pegs were arranged around the perimeter of the pines with a path used by the guns as they rotated. 500 pheasants would be released.

The hunt was held on a day straight out of tales of English upland hunting lore, complete with gray skies, 38-degree temperatures and snow flurries.

There were guests in shooting coats, breeks (3/4 length trousers), wool sweaters, wellies and hats of all sorts that had brought a number types of shooting pieces, dominated by

doubles – over-and-unders and side-by-sides. There were fathers and sons, husbands and wives, church brothers, business associates, and of course, hunting buddies.

As the guns made their way to their appropriate stands, we waited for the horn to signal the live on peg status of the shoot.

We didn't have to wait long as the horn sounded. The pheasants began to fly and the field began to crackle with the sound of gunfire and the occasional, "Good shot!"

Shooters spend roughly four minutes per peg and rotated fully through all the stands twice. There's about a two-minute break between live peg sessions. There are dog handlers every few pegs. I'm not sure who was more excited about the day; the guest, the handlers or the dogs.

I saw liver Boykin spaniels, brown, black and yellow Labrador retrievers, tan colored Novia Scotia duck tollers, even some type of boxer that had been trained to retrieve birds.

I was happy to walk along the outer ring path and chat with the shooters between live sessions.

During one such interlude I spoke with a father and son team, Jim and James, who were making quite a name for themselves based on the amount of birds that fell to their guns. The son, James was shooting a Beretta

600 series over-and-under and rarely missed. The father shot a Caesar Guerini.

When my camera batteries began to ebb during the second cycle, I walked back to the main house to see about charging them. I was met with the most amazing aroma and followed by nose to the source – the fully renovated carriage house where a caterer was cooking pot roast and BBQ for dinner later. This venue featured a rather comfortable looking leather couch and chairs with flat screen, darts and woodstove.

Once my batts were green again, it was time for the post hunt luncheon and I made my way back to the main house where Ted and his wife, Grace, along with Dundee staff had prepared a meal suitable for an English lord.

There was an outdoor firepit on the patio set within warming reach of the bar stocked with all the necessary accoutrements for a proper watering, a side table with hot oyster stew, oysters on the half shell and cheeses, pickles and fruit and then there was the main table. At approximately 40' long it was large enough to accommodate all 20 guests and set using the most beautiful pheasant feather napkin rings and greenery.

The shooters arrived rosy-cheeked and full of tales. All were appreciative of the warming

| continued on page 26

Photos from left to right - Guests are driven to the shooting area via Dundee's vintage Land Rover, handler Tom Petree with a Boykin spaniel pup, hosts Ted and Grace Barrett, two hunt participants enjoy a drink post shoot, the guns of Dundee, Ted giving the pre-shoot safety briefing, Amos retrieved the ribbon bird, doubles time.



After the hunt, a sumptuous bounty of chef-prepared charcuterie and drinks were available to the guests. Oyster stew and fresh oysters were popular options. Lunch and dinner was served to the participants in the ring shoot.

fires for their hands and stomachs. Bourbon, Scotch and craft beers were shared, and many toasts made.

When all had enjoyed the pre-game, the preserve's personal chef called the guests to the table and detailed the meal that included a classic Caesar salad, artisan roll with whipped sweet butter, roasted quail served over jeweled stuffing, venison roast with winter vegetables, deep fried pheasant served over buttermilk mashed potatoes and assorted mini cheesecake, cookies and brownie bites for dessert.

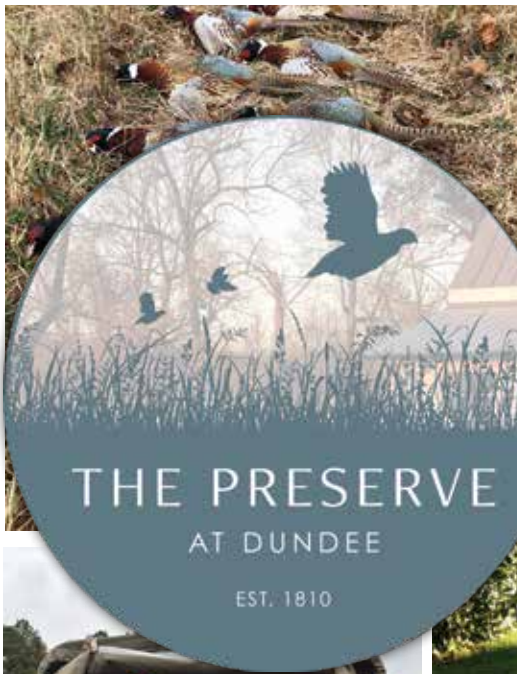
I left the merry party around 2:45 before they could move to the carriage house to enjoy another round and dinner. I did stop by the gardener's shed to ask for several pheasants to take home and congratulate the gamekeeper and "drivers" for a job well done.

Traditional British drive shoots involve large land holdings, beaters that drive birds to the guns. Double gunning is not uncommon where a loader hands the shooter a second gun and loads the empty one. The American versions are similar, but without the beaters and loaders. The birds, usually pheasants, are released and hunters take them as they fly.

The Preserve at Dundee holds three to four ring shoots each season. They all fill. Prices range from \$1,700 to \$1,950 per peg and two shooters can share one peg.

When the preserve is not running ring shoots, Ted and his guides offer daily upland hunts for groups of up to three hunters. The unique experience includes a round of clay shooting on the Dundee 5-Stand, unlimited birds, game cleaning and prep, hunting vehicles, lunch and/or post hunt hors d'oeuvres and drinks with an optional private dinner in the carriage house.

What I learned from covering this event is that Dundee has been making memories for guests over the past 200 years and now, in the care of the Barrett family, it is doing so in a whole new and amazing way.



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Built between 1810 and 1820, historical Dundee was the home of General JEB Stuart's cousins. During the Civil War, General Stuart and his wife lived in the large manor. The property was a camping ground for both armies and Dundee shows marks by bullets from both sides.

In the 1990's the farm underwent a three-year transformation, restored to its original splendor by the Barrett family. I look forward to sharing our beautiful grounds with you.

Ted Barrett, Owner & Director
The Preserve at Dundee



Winter Crappie continued from page 15

backs of these same creeks. Casting a jig or using it under a float and twitching, is his preferred tactic now. This is also when the fish begin spawning.

Whitlow notes: "If you catch a big crappie, in most cases, there's more around very close. They stay together."

Lake Anna

Lake Anna guide C.C. McCotter has fished Lake Anna for 28 years for bass, striper and crappie. His crappie nickname is Slab Daddy based on the number of citation fish he has caught and guided his clients to.

He says timing is important to catching the truly trophy specks.

"The fishing just doesn't get consistent until February or sometimes March. We need three days of warm nights (above 50 degrees), a southerly breeze, water around 49-52 degrees and a full moon helps to get the fish thinking about moving shallow."

He offers this good tip when you find you do find some crappie - don't linger when the small fish are biting.

"You simply must move off small crappie if you want to catch the bigger ones. They school according to size. Yes, it can be fun to catch a bunch, but when you're after the big ones, you must be willing to move on."

Good crappie structure at the end of winter on Anna usually consists of sunken brush or bridge pilings. The fish will school heavily just off these structures and can be enticed to bite with a skilled presentation. McCotter says the biggest girls will often suspend in open water, but not more than a

few feet away from the structure McCotter has a very specific way of fishing for crappie that he has learned over the years. He starts with a six-foot light action spinning rod and a small ABU Garcia spinning reel spooled with six-pound Trilene XL line.

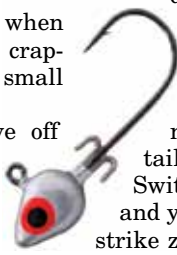
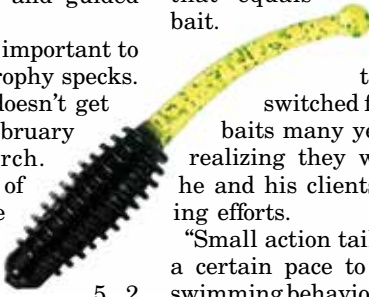
He'll usually tie on a Bass Pro Shops' Crappie Maxx Pro Minnow Jighead. The sharp-nosed, minnow-shaped jighead permits even the lightest baits to fall with little drag and keels the baits on a true line. A double wire keeper holds a crappie grub securely and that equals more fish per bait.

McCotter notes he switched from action tail baits many years back after realizing they were hindering he and his clients' crappie fishing efforts.

"Small action tail grubs require a certain pace to activate their swimming behavior. This pace can be too fast in certain conditions. Furthermore, action tail grubs do not drop as fast, nor as predictably as non-action tail plastics. If I need a bait to get down to 15' on a windy day, it's just not happening with a curly tail grub on a 1/16-oz. jighead. Switch to a straight tail grub and you will get the bait to the strike zone," he explains.

Soft plastics he uses for crappie are either the Bass Pro Shops Baby Shad or Bass Pro Shops Bumble Bee. The former looks like a two-inch threadfin shad. The latter has a ringed grub body with a straight tail and a ball on the end.

Enjoy the next two months because they will offer some of the best big crappie fishing opportunities of the year.



Photos, from above - Bass Pro Shops Bumble Bee grub, the Bass Pro Shops Crappie Maxx Pro Minnow Jighead and Lake Anna C.C. McCotter with a pre-spawn crappie.

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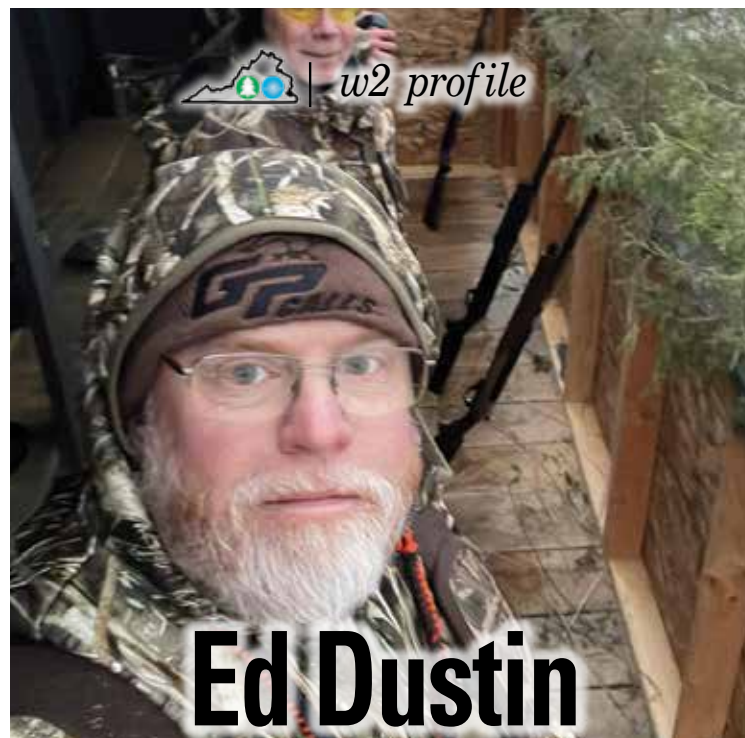
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Ed Dustin Big Bass Battle King

BY C.C. MCCOTTER

This month's W2 Profile features one Edward "Ed" Bryce Dustin, the 52-year-old, owner of Potomac Masonry LLC / Holiday Lightscaping Pros and owner /tournament director of the Potomac River Battle Series & Battle of the Border MDvsVA Charity Event.

We asked Dustin how he started bass fishing.

"A longtime friend Billy Bitto got me into bass fishing back in the early 90's. We started fishing tournaments together on Lake Anna in the mid 90's. He was my sole encouragement, but I would have to say that seeing the camaraderie of all the people fishing tournaments and how they treated each other with kindness and respect was my true inspiration to compete in tournaments."

The inspiration to run a tournament series came to Dustin a little later.

"My first interest in starting a tournament series came from helping Tank Mosley back in 2012 when he was the tournament director for the Battle

of the Border MDvsVA event. Later on in 2015 Tank Mosley was looking to step away from the event as director and asked me if I would like to take over. Without hesitation I said, yes.

"So in 2015 I became the new Tournament Director for the Battle of the Border MDvsVA event and was also nominated as the Virginia Team captain. Man, what a job that was; taking on double duties, but I think it turned out well.

"My first event turned out great and Virginia took back the title from the team I put together. After the big event, Lenny Baird and I started talking about putting together a series that would be sort of a vessel to get folks into the Battle of the Border MDvsVA annual event. So, we collaborated and began our series in 2016."

Dustin's tournament series is popular because of its simplicity and the opportunity for the teams to move on to the field in the annual Battle of the Border MDvsVA event.

"The format on the Potomac River Battle Series is a standard format for a team event,

"A typical team that enters one of our events is pretty much everyone who is interested in bass fishing."

- Ed Dustin, Battle Series Tournament Director

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Ed Dustin working blast-off.

no bells and whistles needed, but we do offer if you win one of our events that you automatically earn a spot on the roster for the Battle of the Border MDvsVA as long as one of you are from Maryland or Virginia.

“Our Battle of the Border MDvsVA annual event has a format where a select State board from Maryland and Virginia select an annual team captain and their job is to put together a team to go head-to-head on the Potomac River. I oversee and facilitate the captain selection process, the state board do the rest. We also choose a local charity to donate money to from the event whether it’s a local family in need or some sort of Veterans based organization, but we all vote on it and go from there.”

Dustin also runs a unique event on Lake Anna that debuted last year. Anglers weigh in one big bass per hour during the day for prize money. The 2022 event was held in early March during a rainy, snowy, windy day and the fishing was phenomenal. There was a five-plus pounder weighed every hour! Dustin explains the genesis of that event.

“Back in 2020 at one of our Big Bass Battles, I was approached by a friend Larry Martin about having a Big Bass Battle on Lake Anna, and it really didn’t take much thought to see it was a good idea. We coordinated with another good friend, Dave Fauntleroy at Anna Point Marina, and we were off and running!

This year’s Lake Anna Big Bass Battle event date is March 11.

We asked the tournament director and hunting guide what his Battle Series entrants were like.

“A typical team that enters one of our events is pretty much everyone who is interested in bass fishing. We are a no frills and no BS tournament series. We believe we run a fun, fair and efficient series. Don’t get me wrong, we aren’t perfect, but we fix our mistakes when they happen and are transparent when we make them. I believe that brings folks in and keeps them here. We encourage all levels of anglers

to come and fish our series with us, but my favorite is when we see family fishing together as a team whether it is father and son, father and daughter, brother and brother, brother and sister or any combination.

Why just the tidal Potomac River as the venue for the Battle Series?

“Hosting events on the Potomac River is undeniably a great choice, the Potomac itself is truly an incredible aquatic eco system, I would say. The habitat and forage is ever-changing and truly amazing at times. It’s highly accessible for our anglers to pre fish and fish our events from Washington DC down to the Rt. 301 bridge.

W2 asked Dustin what, in his opinion would be considered one of his most satisfying moments running the trail.

“I would have to say the most satisfying moment is a combination of everything: the camaraderie of great folks and the com-

petitive nature that drives us to a coveted victory at the end of the day. I will say that one of the most satisfying moments is seeing a team get their first win. The smiles on their faces tell it all.”

What can teams expect from the Battle Series?

“In 2022 we had around 100 teams or so. Various teams join us throughout the year when they could, and we paid out around \$40,000 and do so every year. We generally get 35-45 boats per event.”

Dustin says there are no major changes planned for the 2023, the eighth season for the Battle Series.

“I have made some incredible friends while fishing and running tournaments, and we have gathered some great sponsors for our series in the last seven years so I would like to thank the following for coming on board and continuing their support

| continued on page 41

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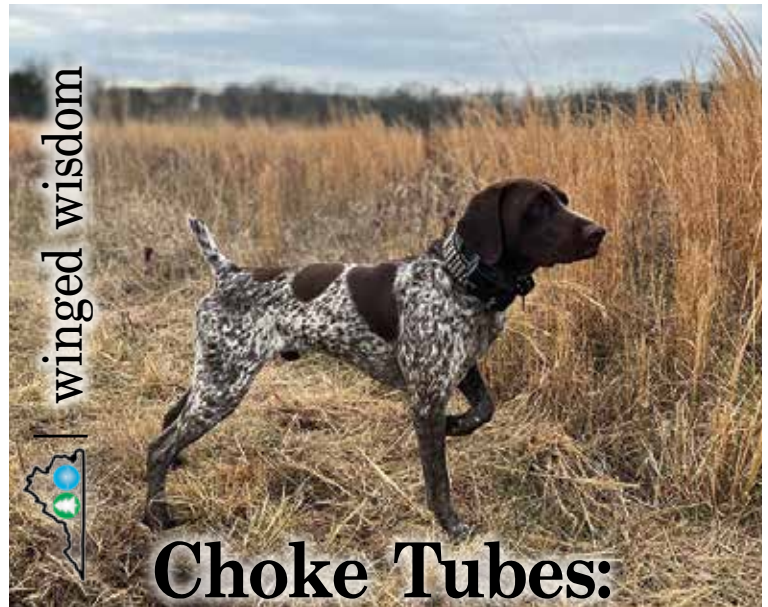


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Choke Tubes:

The Ultimate Argument

BY KATE AHNSTROM

This is a topic that I normally try to avoid like the plague. Why? Quite frankly, it's because everyone and I mean EVERYONE has a fairly staunch opinion on the topic. I've actually walked into the clubhouse at the course, stumbling into a heated debate among clay shooters about choke tubes and what does and doesn't work and I've just as quickly turned around to exit the building.

Chokes are a necessary part of any shooter's equipment. Regardless of whether you're shooting clay or feathers, you will need to, at some point be proficient in understanding the subtle nuances of changing out chokes, dependent on the presentation. Let's take a quick look at what exactly is a choke tube.

The first choke, a fixed choke, was patented in 1866 with the 1st interchangeable system not hitting the scene until 1969 with the WinChoke system from Winchester. A choke tube is utilized to either expand or constrict the flow of shot out of the muzzle of a shotgun. Keep in mind that this restriction or expansion is in ten thousandths of an inch.

So, with such a minuscule measurement, how in the world can that possibly assist your shooting on the clay course or the hunt field? Simple. Ballistics, controlled by physics and

geometry is a powerful thing, even in tiny increments. My own hubby Mike is experimenting with chokes for field trials.

When you must drop birds quickly and as close as possible so the retrieves are lightning fast, and you can't mutilate the bird, you have to create the perfect balance.

Mike has opted for a skeet choke for his Fabarm L4S 12ga shooting a Fiocchi 1 1/4oz 1330fps #8. This combination has proven deadly for quail all the way up to pheasant while keeping the breast meat intact.

Previously, he was using an improved cylinder and 1 1/8oz 1200fps shell. While we do have some fun video of him "poofing" the birds, the final result was either a close shot that led to a 10pt deduction for a mutilated bird or a farther shot that ended with either a lost bird or a long retrieve. Both detrimental to the final score.

He's ultimately purchasing a spreader choke specifically for the shoot to retrieve game we play so that he can obtain the best results for field trialing.

Typically, I will set up over/unders with modified in the top and improved cylinder in the bottom. This is the standard issued set up with a very good reason. It will allow the shooter to easily tackle the average presentations on the course and hunt field. I will often swap between my barrels depending on

the presentation. If I have an incoming clay inside of 20yds, I will absolutely set up my bottom barrel (improved cylinder) to fire first. For those farther out birds or rabbits, I let the top barrel (modified) handle the job.

For an autoloader, it depends on the manufacturer. More often than not, I will put in a modified as I'm not inclined to physically change out chokes while shooting the course. Instead, I will pop in a different shot shell and allow the ballistics of the load handle the differentiation in pattern.

With this in mind, you may want to play around with the shot size that you use. Most shooters like #7.5 shot for clay rabbits since the clay itself is so much thicker and requires more umph to break it. When shooting closer shots then a #9 shot size is a great choice as it puts a thicker pattern into the air. My go to is always a #8 though. It seems to handle the majority of the presentations with no problem.

No matter what choke or shot you select, you need to pattern it. Not all guns like to shoot all ammo. When you pattern, keep it realistic to the application. If you are shooting trap, then pattern at 16yds and 27yds. For skeet, pattern at 20yds and for sporting clays pattern at 30yds. Remember not all guns are built the same with some muzzles throwing a rounded pattern and some an oval pattern. This goes the same for all those aftermarket choke tubes. When you pattern, you are looking for about 70% of the load within a 30" circle showing minimal holes.

So, what's your favorite choke/shot size combination and application? Just remember, keep that muzzle smooth and slow your swing and you'll be amazed at how fast you can take down birds. Be sure to share the sport with a friend or family member and help grow this fantastic sport!



Kristen Murray Photography

Kate Ahnstrom, owner of Virginia Shooting Sports is a certified, professional instructor of the Paragon School of Sporting, pro staff Syren/Caesar Guerini, resident pro Orapax Hunting Preserve, Artemis ambassador for Virginia and field staff member of the Sisterhood of the Outdoors. Her tireless dedication to her students' success is obvious in each and every lesson.

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Maryland Combats Stockpiling On Tidal Potomac

Tournament bass anglers bring thousands of fish to the scales alive. They are released alive at the launch site. It's called stockpiling. Tournament release fish pile up at launch sites. More than 70% of the country's fisheries managers are concerned with this catch and release side effect. Relocating fish and fish handling stress are major concerns. Tagging studies monitor rates of dispersal from release points to capture areas. Return is dependent on how far away they were released. Also, higher stress limits return. When displaced more than 20 miles, return is more unlikely.

To address and curtail stockpiling, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Black Bass Advisory Committee encourages several Best Management Practices. Reducing numbers of fish released at sites can be accomplished with a redistributing plan, including moving fish by boat, truck, or long chutes. Working as a partner with tournament organizers, MD DNR will redistribute fish when requested. If considered biologically necessary and if organizations offset expenses and provide volunteers, arrangements for release trucks can be prepared.

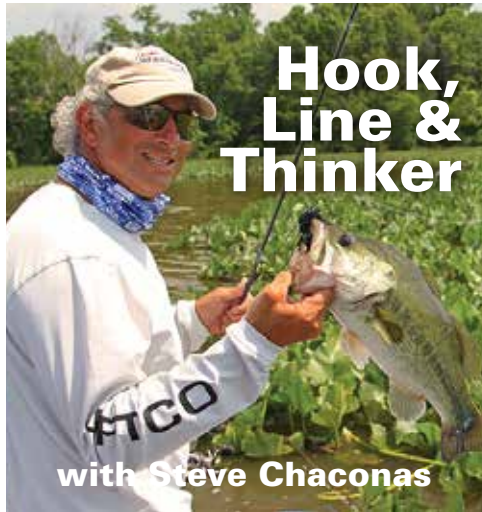
Creating fishing off-limits areas at release sites gives fish an opportunity to re-

cover and disperse. By using multiple launch sites, fewer fish will be centralized, redistributing fish in other areas of the fishery. By lowering creel limits, fewer fish will be stockpiled. A "fishable slot", reducing the number of larger fish brought to weigh-in, protects this population. Restricting the distance from the launch site enables likely return to capture areas. New no-possession tournament formats eliminate stockpiling altogether.

Tournament anglers believe stocking will address their concerns. MD DNR has been stocking fisheries, including the Potomac, for decades. Hundreds of thousands of bass, three inches and smaller, are stocked yearly. The expense and time it takes to produce bigger bass prohibits stocking of larger mature fish.

Capt. Scott Sewell's been Conservation Director for MD Bass Nation since 2001. "I didn't see what MD DNR was doing as having any effect. I wanted to do something in the right areas to make an impact."

Sewell noted Maryland stocking efforts were not much more than food for perch, bluegill, crappie, and catfish, and not doing much to enhance fishing. He concluded larger 12" fish, that would spawn to repopulate specific areas, needed to be





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stocked. These repopulators would be released in areas with necessary conditions for survival and spawning. Sewell says larger fish are big enough to consume and contain Northern Snakehead fry. But larger fish aren't cheap, costing \$21 each. Sewell proved to be a good fundraiser, presenting his case to businesses and fishing clubs. Marine Trades Association of Baltimore County is the top contributor, showing their dedication to helping the fishery.

Sewell credits MD Freshwater Fisheries Manager, Dr. Joe Love for providing guidance for this stocking program that has spent over \$20,000 since 2021. Sewell thanks the fishing community, supporting stockings with ample volunteer help.

Sewell says 302 fish were introduced into the waterways in 2022, producing results. Fishing has improved and tournament winners have turned neglected fishing holes into perennial hot spots. 🌱🌊



Author Capt. Steve Chaconas is Potomac bass fishing guide & freelance writer. Potomac River reports: www.nationalbass.com. YouTube video channel NationalBassGuide.



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#6625-#66853-16.62±Acres-\$39,000.00 Over 16 acres of gorgeous landscape consisting of towering hardwoods, rolling hills and a bold creek that meanders the back property line. Monster bucks that roam in the city limits of Danville. Bucks so big that pictures of them went viral on the internet. This land is a great representation of that. Another great bonus is the urban archery season in Danville is extended past the regular season in the surrounding areas. Let's not leave out it is located 7 minutes from the casino. There is a prescriptive easement being used to access the property. *Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011*

#6624-#66852-0.55±Acres-\$375,000.00 Enjoy the first glimpse of morning light overlooking the lake from your expansive screened in porch just steps from the water's edge. The open concept of the home allows for gorgeous views of the lake whether you're cooking, dining, or relaxing after a long day. The living room is quaint and cozy with a wood stove insert that fills the home with a warmth that only charm can give. The home provides the convenience of office space making working from your lake home more of a vacation. Each bedroom has the luxury of access to its own bath. The cool of the screen porch calls and the sounds of the lake play on the air and mingle with the twinkling of fireflies and the occasional falling star. Bring your dreams and let the beauty of Grassy Creek fill the void of the mundane as you dive into Kerr Lake Living. Nearby Oxford provides dining, shopping, hospital, Drs and I-85. Clarksville, VA is only 15 mins away. RDU 1 hr. away. *Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011*

#6623-#66845-0.90±Acres-\$29,900.00 Lake Gaston Waterfront Lot! Located in the Joyceville subdivision, this 0.9 acre lot in Mecklenburg County VA is only minutes from interstate 85 and centrally located between Richmond, VA and Raleigh, NC. This wooded building sight is ideal for a walk out basement! The community boat ramp gives you immediate access to 20,000 acres of water recreation! *Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011*

#6622-#66834-36.47±Acres-\$149,000.00 Phenomenal 36-acre tract of land in Meredithville/Brodnax, Virginia. Approximately 1.5 acres of open land with an existing two bedroom single-wide mobile home, three freshwater wells, two septic systems and drain fields, and power on site; single-wide mobile home conveys "as-is". The remainder of land is mixed with maturing planted pines and tall hardwoods. Two power lines intersect the property providing a corridor for outstanding wildlife traffic. Deer, turkey, and bear movement along the property was evident while touring the property. Located just 15 minutes northeast of South Hill and an easy hour southwest of Richmond; just 20 minutes from Lake Gaston and 40 minutes from Bugg's Island/Kerr Lake. *Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011*

#6617-#66819-2.67±Acres-\$98,000. This 2 bedroom home is located just outside the town of Chase City. The lot is large with a lovely backyard view, dotted with mature

trees for just the right amount of shade. The front porch and back deck give you ample outdoor living to take in the view. Inside the home you will find an ample living room and large eat-in kitchen. The primary bedroom has a door adjoining the bathroom. The bathroom also has an entrance from the kitchen area making it accessible to the household. The second bedroom is conveniently located just off the living room. The basement has plenty of storage area and great potential. The home has been an excellent rental for many years and would make a great investment. Located only 15 mins. to Microsoft in Boydton, 20 mins to lakeside Clarksville and 30 mins to either South Boston or South Hill where you will find hospitals and big box stores. 30 mins to I-85 in South Hill. Chase City is home to numerous business and industry, restaurants, distillery, winery and lovely gardens. *Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011*

#6615-#66811-0.53±Acres-\$79,000. Highly sought after home site located in the Bluestone quadrant of Kerr Lake. Lot 71 Lakefront Drive is located in Mooresville Estates. This unique property offers privacy with the amenities of a lakefront neighborhood. Enjoy beautiful views of the lake from your future home site. Shore dock your boat on the weekends & keep your boat on your trailer during the week to launch quickly from a private boat ramp for owners and guests a short distance from Bluestone Boat Ramp. No dock permit is currently available. Deer frequent this piece of paradise and offer great hunting opportunities on the Corp land that stretches away from the lake and homes nearby. Beautiful, mature hardwoods canopy this property. *Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011*

#6612-#66789-6.35±Acres-\$49,000.00 Ready to build your dream home in the country? 6.35 acres of rolling terrain offers many possibilities for your new home design. The property has a cleared entrance with a road pipe already in place! The western boundary line is bordered by a winding creek and part of the pond at the northwestern corner is within the the property lines as well. Wooded lot offers plenty of seclusion from the hustle & bustle while still being close to amenities such as the new Mecklenburg County High School and the town of South Hill. South Hill offers shopping, restaurants, a hospital and Interstate 85 can get you to Richmond, VA or Raleigh, NC in a short drive! John H Kerr Reservoir, aka Buggs Island Lake is only a few miles away. *Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011*

#6611-#66788-0.75±Acres-\$18,500.00 Nice wooded lot right across from Thornton Mill Road in Red House, VA. *Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011*

#6610-#66772-3.89±Acres-\$29,900.00 Here is your opportunity to build in the countryside only minutes to Drakes Branch with the ability to connect to town water and sewer while maintaining that relaxing country setting. With 3.89 acres freshly cleared and ready to build upon, you have the keys to design your next chapter of life. The land offers plenty of space for a home, garden, or garage/workshop while maintaining the ability to hunt your own corner of the world with stand trees, a branch along the rear line, and abundant browse along the lines. Deer are plentiful throughout the area and will certainly graze through your yard. Building lots are in limited supply, and the added bonus of town water and sewer availability are really rare to find. *Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011*

#6607-#66750-0.75±Acres-\$425,000. Beautiful 1620 sq. ft. manufactured home 3 bedrooms and 2 full baths on Buggs Island lake. Large aluminum dock in place with roof and aluminum walkway, Beautiful view of the lake from a large

screened in deck. Would make a great full time residence or a wonderful lake getaway. All appliances and furniture transfer. This lake is living at its best on Grassy Creek. *Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011*

#6606-#66747-3.26±Acres-\$39,000.00 Welcome to the country living amongst the towering oaks and peaceful sounds of nature. The property is backed by acres of vacant land, and is an ideal building site where wildlife abound. In just minutes you will be at Kerr Lake and the nearest fishing hole. Within 10 mins you can be at the lakeside town of Clarksville where you will find delicious dining options, a variety of shopping, doctors offices, boat ramps, recreation, and entertainment. Boydton is within 20 mins. South Boston & South Hill are within 30 mins. This property was tested in 2007 for a 3BR conventional septic system. *Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011*

#6602-#66735-3.41±Acres-\$34,500. Excellent building site on 3.41 acres and only 10 mins to the nearest boat launch on Kerr Lake. This beautiful piece of property has already had a perc test proving it to be an ideal homesite. The property has a mix of younger trees and a gentle roll making building a breeze. Only minutes to the lakeside town of Clarksville where you will find dining, shopping and entertainment. Chase City is also a few minutes away with great food, shopping options and MacCallum More Museum & Gardens, the world's largest Microsoft data center in Boydton, VA is only 15 mins away, and the larger towns of South Boston and South Hill are approx. 30 minutes away where you will find big box stores, hospitals, larger selection of employment opportunities, dining and entertainment. Mecklenburg Co. is located between Richmond, VA & Raleigh, NC and boasts of its agriculture, industry and recreation opportunities. Join us! *Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011*

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Putting The Odds In Your Favor For February

Four Aspects To Consider Before You Hit The River This Month

BY CHRIS GORSUCH

For most open-water anglers, February can be a depressing time of year. And while cabin fever can hit us all this time of year, I still look for opportunities to target bass and walleye on the river. Between outdoor shows and seminars, I enjoy a few days of fishing when conditions allow. Hands down, February can be one of the most challenging months to target smallmouth.

As I write this, winter 2023 has started off unseasonably mild. Finding and catching active bass the first three weeks was fairly easy compared to previous years. But no matter how mild a start, we all know that winter is coming, and cold weather is right around the corner. Anglers (myself included) will be watch-

ing the weather daily to see how far the evening temperatures drop. Overnight temperatures will impact the water temp, and just a few nights in the 20's will drop the river into the low to mid 30° mark. This is when targeting bass in true winter conditions takes a bit more effort.

The old saying; "Make hay when the sun shines" fits into this scenario perfectly. While figuratively, this refers to making good use of a given opportunity, the words 'sun shines' also play a key role here. When it comes to targeting smallmouth in the winter, here are a few things to set anglers up for such an opportunity.

First and foremost, is keeping a close eye the weather. Weather is the largest factor for setting up the best opportunities to find February fishing succes.

Warming Trend

For nearly two decades I have subscribed to the notion that a three-day warming trend will really improve the odds of success during the winter. A string of warmer weather days will start to increase the water temperature a few degrees and increase the probability of active fish. Even a modest rise from 33-34° to 36-37° can make a huge difference in bass activity.

When doing seasonal seminars, I describe it this way. In early fall, those first few days in the upper 30's has us all reaching for our jackets. In sharp contrast, give us an upper 30's day in February and we are out greeting the neighbors in a t-shirt. The neighborhood sidewalks start to come alive as people come out of hibernation mode and take advantage of the warm up, however

brief.

Being able to launch on that third or fourth day has proven to be the best scenario to finding active bass in the winter.

Wind Speed & Direction

Every successful lake angler I know prefers a little wind during the regular season. The surface disturbance created by the wind helps to hide the angler's location, move baitfish or more appropriately the forage baitfish feed on, increasing the odds of finding active fish. On the river, we have current for this sort of thing and outside of a cool light breeze mid-summer, I prefer low to no winds when fishing on the river... especially in the WINTER!

A strong wind will impact anglers on a few levels. First, it can make boat control more of an issue. Winter fishing generally means fishing slowly and boat control is key. If the wind is swinging the stern of the boat back and forth, the ability to feel what the lure is doing is diminished. Wind can also impact casting accuracy and line control. For those of us who watch our line, large bows created by the wind make it interesting to say the least. Lastly, wind in the winter has a terrible effect on faces and fingers. I would prefer light winds on a 38° day over a windy day at 45° this time of year.

Wind can be managed when the direction is favorable. On narrow rivers or those that wind and bend through mountains,

wind can be mitigated by dialing in areas that will offer more protection. If the primary wind direction is west, locating areas where wintering areas are found on the west shoreline or the western side of a string of islands is a good call. The Susquehanna main stem is a wide river and many of my best wintering areas are mid river. So here, wind direction is a key factor in determining where I launch in the winter.

Sunshine

With the exception of throwing spinner-baits, there are few times when bright sunshine is desirable. Having the morning sun reflect and flash off the blades of a spinner-bait in moderate current can truly be magical for catching smallmouth. Outside of that, sunshine is rarely a welcome friend.

In the winter however, bright sunshine is truly your friend. Beyond the effects direct sun has on keeping the angler warm and comfortable, it can warm up areas on the river. It is not uncommon for surface temps on the river being 2-3 degrees higher in the afternoon on banks with direct sun. These banks are worth serious consideration in winter months.

The one possible negative to sunshine in the winter is fishing low, clear water. In these instances, keeping the boat well away from the target area and making longer casts may be a good move.

River Levels

Warming trends in the winter can often add some level of precipitation into the river basin. Rain causing a moderate rise in the river is rarely a bad situation. I talk to many anglers who shy away from stained high water. If debris is not an issue, these situations offer a bonus. As the river rises, bass will draw closer to structure giving anglers predictable areas to throw to. The casting target is smaller in the winter, so situations that draw them into the best spot in a larger wintering area helps.

Targeting fishing days when two or more of these situations are in play will improve chances for success. Open water fishing during the winter can be a great cure for cabin fever. 🌊🐟



Author Chris Gorsuch is a licensed charter guide in the state of Pennsylvania. He started the Reel River Adventures guide service in '07 and spends 225-250 days on the water annually. His home base is on the Susquehanna River where he operates 20' jetboats. Chasing smallmouth is his specialty, however he enjoys catching walleye and other freshwater gamefish on the upper North Branch. He has written 100's of articles. You can follow his daily fishing reports on Facebook 'Reel River Adventures-RR' & Instagram @Chris_Gorsuch

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CHICKAHOMINY

Lake & River

For a map of the Chickahominy River or Lake visit woodsandwatersmagazine.com

Don't think for a minute the fishing isn't good over the winter in the Chickahominy region. All those 8-10 pound largemouth bass don't vaporize. No, what happens is that they head for overwintering areas where they can find schooled baitfish and continue to feed, albeit less frequently, all winter long.

Some traditional areas to look for winter bass on the tidal Chickahominy River include the backs of lower river creeks like Morris, Tomahund, Gordon's, Shipwreck and Yarmouth. Largemouth bass will school by the dozens in deeper creek bends with wood. You can target them with a three-inch swimbait on a 1/4-oz. jighead or a similar bait on a drop shot rig.

In the upper Chickahominy, you'll want to target the region from the first big bend up from Riverside Camp up to Walker's Dam. In this region, savvy anglers know hundreds of fish school in the deep channel bends. Don't be afraid to fish 18' of water with blade baits like a Riverside Ripper or Crazy Blade. Many species are harbored in this deep water including largemouth bass, crappie, yellow perch and catfish.

Crappie will school around Walker's Dam this month, too. Be careful to observe safe fishing practices around this structure. Crappie love the concrete and wood structure in the water here where the river is separated from the lake.

Nearby Adam's Sports Mart welcomes anglers and hunters. It's still the place to stop on the way to lake or river and fuel up the boat/truck and you with a hot food bar, plus a back room of tackle and live bait. Adam's is crappie fishing headquarters with jigs, terminal tackle, floats and live minnows.

Up on Chickahominy Lake, guide Art Conway says February can be a very good month to catch crappie. For the panfish he'll target



If you are looking for that Virginia chain pickerel citation, February is a great month to fish Chickahominy Lake out of **Ed Allen's Boats & Bait**.

deep wood with minnows and ultra-light jigs with his clients in the lower section of this lake.

When you are on the middle river, use Riverside Camp & Marina's facilities which include a fine boat ramp and piers, tackle shop and campground with rental cabins. On the upper river, Rockahock Campground (and cottages) is fishing headquarters.

Up on the lake, Ed Allen's Boats & Bait is fishing headquarters on the lower end of the lake. Here you'll find a boat ramp, jon boat

rentals, minnows, tackle shop, restaurant and fishing pier.

Another Chickahominy Lake launching option is Eagles Landing. Located a couple miles above Walker's Dam, Eagles Landing offers a concrete ramp, rental boats, tackle shop and live bait.

In nearby Toano, a bit down Rt. 60 there's a great gun shop and an awesome tackle shop. The wife might want to accompany you. Drop her off at the nearby Williamsburg outlets. Re-convene for lunch or dinner at the waterfront Lakeside Restaurant at Ed Allen's.

Toano General Gun Store is area headquarters for hunters and firearms enthusiasts. Inside you'll find everything from long guns to handguns, accessories to ammunition. You can also pick up a gun you've ordered online from the shop.

Visit Fishing ProTech this month for the new Megabass Ixl ShadTX or the classic Vision 110 Minnow. ProTech is also a stocking dealer of the CAST US Prodigy swimbait and over 40 ZOOM baits, some in special run colors.

Tomahund Marine is the area headquarters for marine resupply, repairs and winterization. They also sell War Eagle boats so if you are looking for a duck and fishing boat, perfect for hunting and fishing the marshes of the Chickahominy and James River they have options. Beavertail boats and motors are on the way to Tomahund. If you are a duck hunter you'll want to take a look at this popular line. *C.C. McCotter*



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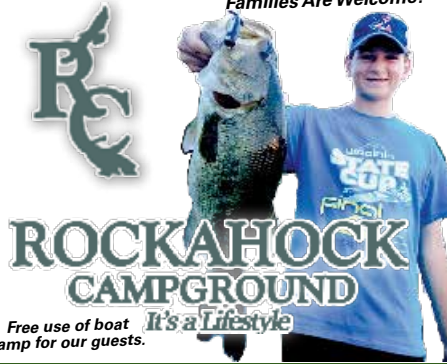
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	HIGH	LOW		HIGH	LOW		HIGH	LOW		HIGH	LOW
	1 6:38am	---		10 12:03am	6:15am		19 8:44am	2:16am		28 4:01am	10:32am
	6:52pm	1:03pm		12:16pm	6:30pm		9:01pm	3:00pm		4:21pm	10:21pm
	2 7:28am	12:47am		11 12:42am	7:00am	NEW	20 9:35am	3:12am		March Tides	
	7:40pm	1:50pm		12:56pm	7:08pm		21 10:23am	4:05am		1 5:08am	11:35am
	3 8:13am	1:36am		12 1:27am	7:51am		22 11:10am	4:57am		5:25pm	11:24pm
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	4 8:52am	2:21am		13 2:21am	8:50am		24 12:18am	6:39am		6:23pm	12:31pm
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	9 11:41am	5:35am					3 7:17am	2:28pm			
	---	5:56pm					4 7:51am	3:12pm			

James River All corrections taken from Newport News Chickahominy
 -0:12 Jordan Point +1:22 Richmond Deepwater Terminal +3:45 Ferry Point +4:55 Mt. Airy
 +1:23 Petersburg +1:57 Richmond City Locks +4:25 Wright Island +5:20 Lanexa

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REGIONAL FOCUS

Richmond

Tidal James River Region

For a map of the James River visit woodsandwatersmagazine.com

James River Tackle Co. owner Donnie Bell notes the tidal James River was receiving very little fishing pressure as very few tournaments were held in January or for that matter, this month. He said it's a good time to go get yourself a mailbox-sized bass. The river is stained and water temperature was around 40-43 degrees at the late-January W2 deadline.

Bell told W2 that as long as the water stays relatively clear anglers can expect to catch tidal James bass on jerkbaits, pig-n-jig and shaky head. Expect water temperatures to creep into the high 40's at some point later in the month.

Bell suggests fishing the barge and gravel pits, creek mouths and warm water outlets if you visit this month. He says he really doesn't go past Hopewell from Osborne, and that you can do pretty well around Dutch Gap.

Crappie fishing on the tidal James is very good now. You can still catch them in the Barge Pit up near the power plant, right up on the sunken boats and barges using jigs and minnows.

Lake Chesdin was a little high and but not too cold by mid-January. The water temperature was 43-44 degrees.

Bass are in the mid and down lake region this month as they follow schools of gizzard shad. A three-inch Keitech swimbait is the bait to use when you find these fish.

Try some flutter spooning and blade baits in 18-22' of water where schools of bass, striper, crappie and perch are feeding on bait and often revealed by sea gulls.

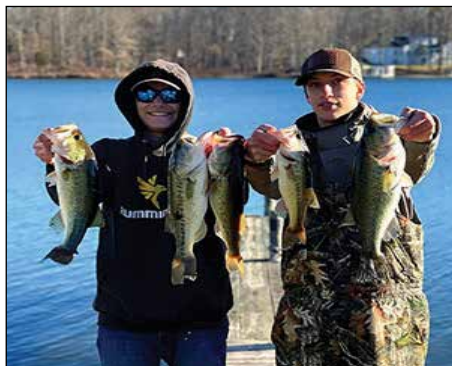
Bell notes fishing in the Appomattox

River can be pretty good in late February as many bass overwinter in it, off the James River. One of his favorite tactics is pitching a creature bait to wood on deep banks on a warm afternoon. Google Earth the Appomattox all the way up to Colonial Heights and note some good fishing areas to try this month. Check with Bell on launch ramps and current river conditions.

Shooter's Archery/Angler's Tackle is now known as Central Virginia Outdoors. The shop is north of Richmond, about halfway to Fredericksburg near Ladysmith. This shop offers bow hunting and archery enthusiasts a very unique venue that includes an indoor and outdoor range, pro shop and a fishing tackle section as well as live bait.

Robby Patterson of Propeller Dynamics invites you to stop by his showroom this month to see his selection of new Xpress and Falcon boats and used boats. He's also the area authorized warranty service center for Minn Kota, MotorGuide, Lowrance, Power Pole and Garmin so if you have a marine electronic, he can fix it or sell you a new one! He also offers propeller repairs and sales if you found a rock over the summer with your rig.

If this is the season you have decided to



Logan and Hayden took first place in the Jan. 15 Elite Anglers tourney on Lake Anna with an 11.87 lb. limit. Photo from **Central Virginia Outdoors**.

switch over to lithium batteries, consider having Patterson's crew install Ionic batteries and the accompanying charging system. They are a dealer and experts at rigging.

Jo Jo's in Manquin is counting the days to the first reports of croaker in the lower Rappahannock. This shop, west of Tappahannock on Rt. 301 is full of everything from fishing tackle to ammo, marine hardware to

apparel.

Surf & Turf Outdoor Sports near West Point is your area Toadfish dealer. They stock the drinkware, rods, reels and oyster knives. While this shop leans a little more to the saltwater side of angling due to its proximity to the York River, it also stocks freshwater fishing gear.

Green Top Sporting Goods near Ashland just received a truckload of Carhartt clothing. They are also a Wrangler Wear dealer and a Kuhle clothing dealer. The store's selection of Olukia and Hey Dude footwear is unmatched in the state.

This store is 60,000 sq. ft. of serious gear for anglers (including fly fishing), hunters and shooters. Their new and used gun selection sets the standard in the mid-Atlantic region and they recently received the prestigious top dealer recognition from Beretta.

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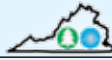
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Members of **Green Top Sporting Goods** accept the **Benelli Premium Dealer of the Year Award** at the recent **SHOT** show.

HPAI (Avian Flu) was found again in North America in January 2021, the first time it has been detected since 2014-15. It caused some localized mortality events in waterfowl and seabird populations in the winter of 2021 and resulted in the significant loss of domestic poultry in commercial farming operations across the country. As wild birds dispersed and migrated back north this past spring, the number of HPAI events in the U.S. declined. However, the virus was still present in some non-migratory bird populations, and it caused scattered mortality events in some "resident" Canada goose flocks, some backyard poultry flocks and among some local vulture populations over the past summer and fall. It has been detected again this fall in migratory waterfowl along the east coast and in Virginia. VDWR officials expect it to be even more prevalent than last winter, especially as more waterfowl and other migratory birds congregate on their migration and wintering grounds.



W2 Profile: Ed Dustin continued from page 29

in 2023: Green Top Sporting Goods, Mare of Aquia, Propeller Dynamics, TFO Rods, Optimum Baits, Omega Custom Tackle, 6th Sense Lures, K9 Fishing Line, Gamma Fishing Line, Stormr, Fish Tales @Anna Point and Sublime Wear USA.

"Many folks don't realize what it takes sometimes to make these events successful, but I do, and that's a combination of many things. For me it's my family and Lenny's family. They dedicate their time and efforts to help us from sometimes from dawn to dusk. I truly couldn't do it without them. My family is my backbone at these events. To my wife Jane, my daughter Peyton and my son Ashton, thank you for all your hard work.

Due to his commitment to the Battle Series and his business, Dustin says he hasn't spent much time on the water the past two years but he hasn't lost his competitive desire.

"I haven't lost that desire to fish or compete, I have just set it aside for the moment and hopefully I will be back in 2023 fishing tournaments. I believe it's about time for me to step back in a give it a harder go again."

Dustin noted he wanted to also thank some individual folks that helped him along his bass fishing journey including friend Bitto "for getting me into bass fishing and the many years we fished

tournaments together which are irreplaceable", Captain Steve Chaconas "for his friendship and support. He is an incredible ambassador to bass fishing here locally on the Potomac River and fighting non stop for tournament anglers on the Potomac River", his friend Lenny Baird "for keeping it real and keeping my head straight from time to time while running our events", to his friend Steve Camp "for lending some great knowledge and tips on running tournaments", his friend Teddy Carr "who really unknowingly created that competitive spirit inside me to fish tournaments which led me to the Bassmaster Weekend Series National Championship in 2012, you really kept my chin up in 2012!"

Last but not least to his wife Jane "who really let me be who I wanted to be and stay out and away fishing and competing thanks for everything and holding down the house, I love you and would be less of a man without you keeping me in line." 🟢🟢



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REGIONAL FOCUS

Lake Anna

For a map of Lake Anna visit woodsandwatersmagazine.com

The Lake Anna watershed received significant rainfall last month, however due to continued mild temperatures, the lake continues to be in great shape for a winter visit. The water level on the main lake is at full pool. The water level on the Waste Heat Treatment Facility or Cooling Ponds is about six inches low due to North Anna not using all the intake pumps since water temperatures are lower.

In fact, the water temperatures were 42-45 up and mid lake and 50-54 down lake.

These steady conditions created ideal fishing days last month and could again add up to a great February for big fish.

The big news last month was the 30.11 pound, five-bass limit caught by long time tournament partners Nathan Sullivan and Eric Johnson while fishing the January 22 Sturgeon Creek Winter Series event. (See our article on page 16). This is the heaviest five fish limit in known history - but who knows, it might be bested this month!

Here's what you can expect for a February visit with some news from around the lake.

Guide C.C. McCotter notes water temperatures were abnormally high for much of the early winter and remain mild with baitfish still in the upper regions of the lake. Water temperatures should rise by the end of the month ranging from 40-53. The Dike 3 discharge region will offer the warmest temperatures on the main lake at around 55-56 degrees.

Baitfish moved into the mid lake region back in December and oddly moved into the back of creeks like Pigeon, Mitchell and Sturgeon. Normally they would remain on the main lake.

This behavior has created good conditions



Here's the season's first 8-lb. largemouth, caught by Chris Celiberti and Matt McClusky fishing the January 8 Winter Series out of **Sturgeon Creek Marina**.

to target largemouth bass, striper and wiper around visible bait.

Mid lake should remain the best area to target the lake's largemouth bass this month. McCotter will use the Nikko Winnow 5" swimbait, the CAST US Prodigy 3.5" swimbait and various suspending jerkbaits for most of his bass fishing trips.

It's time to start "snake charming" big

bass with suspending jerkbaits like the Megabass Vision 110 +1, the Lucky Craft DD baits, Jackal Squirrels and Berkley Stunna.

Most bass caught on jerkbaits come from points where deep and shallow water touch. Targeting bass on bait will be another key. You'll find these situations daily, especially early and late in the day where seagulls will

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often indicate where to fish.

For February striped bass and wipers, McCotter is not going to make any predictions as the conditions will dictate where the fish go.

He's seen mild Februarys draw striper and wiper way up the North Anna and Pamunkey Branch, and harsh February's hold the fish mid lake.

When they find fish, he and his clients will be using Fitt River Darters on 1/4-oz. jigheads, Capt. Mack's Super Spoons, multi-arm rigs and suspending jerkbaits. Should you find birds on fish mid lake, try the swimbait or River Darter. If you see them deep on your depth finder try the spoons. When you find birds working move quickly and strike fast as the fish won't stick around.

It's entirely possible a state record wiper will be pulled from the lake in the coming year. A 13-4 fish was the high mark last year, caught in early May by Richard Stone. The original stocking took place in 2012. An interesting comparison is Claytor Lake. Wiper were first stocked there in 1993 and reached 10 pounds by 2000 with a 15-13 caught in 2016 holding as the state record.

McCotter says crappie fishing should improve over the next month. Crappie school on bridge pilings and deep brush now. Two-inch Baby Shad jigs on a 1/16-oz. head with six-pound test line are very good around structure in 10-20' depths. Mid lake has the biggest fish. Up lake has the most.

At some point the crappie will leave deep water and suspend near structure with bait nearby. This is when a good depth finder will help you stay on the fish. Forward-facing sonar is very effective when crappie fishing. Jigging or slow dropping for suspended fish can be excellent when all else fails.

Fish Tales is the home of Dave Fauntleroy, one of best resources for anglers on the lake. You'll always feel welcome at this shop that features a great selection of bass and crappie gear, fuel on the water and plenty of ramp/parking room. Dave will be on hand this winter to welcome you to the lake and point in the right direction for any species you want to pursue based on his 30+ years of experience at the lake.

Check out the schedule of tournaments coming up this year at Anna Point - it's impressive and includes the Big Bass



Dr. Paul Howard fished with *McCotter's Lake Anna Guide Service* last month and caught these bass using the Berkley Flicker Shad.

Battle on March 11 - a new event for the lake with multiple weigh-ins and prizes throughout the day, as well as a visit from the teams of the VAEIite70 on April 1. There's a new big bass tournament March 4 as well as a number of open events held March 5, 12, 19 and 26.

Over at High Point Marina/Lighthouse Inn, Carlos and his staff invite you to see their tackle shop; fully stocked with winter bass, striper and crappie lures like Toothache Spoons, Capt. Mack's spoons, Megabass jerkbaits and swimbaits, swimbaits from Fitt Premium Lures, Berkley and Missile Baits, ZOOM Flukes and Dave's Tournament Tackle spinnerbaits.

If you just like to recreationally fish or

| *continued on page 52*

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Lake Anna Report

are fishing with a guide and need lodging, call the Lighthouse Inn and make a reservation. All rooms are waterfront with dockage for boats.

Sturgeon Creek Marina is home to the Winter Series where the Kings Of Cold are crowned each year after a series of tourneys held in November, December and January. Some of the year's most impressive limits are usually weighed in this series.

After nine weeks the team of Nate Sullivan and Eric Johnson had a solid lead of over 25 pounds from their closest competitor. In nine events this duo had weighed 45 bass that weighed 157.71 pounds - a 17.52-lb. average!

Sturgeon Creek Marina also has a great tackle shop with lures and live baits, 24/7



The team of Nate Sullivan and Eric Johnson had this record-setting, 30.11-pound limit to win the **Sturgeon Creek Marina** Winter Series tournament on January 22.

fuel on the water and multiple launch ramps located in a protected mid-lake creek.

Before the season breaks open, stop by Anna's Marine Center and see Dee or Will about a SKEETER, Nitro or TRACKER boat because the 2023s are here and arriving!

Elk Creek Store is "hot side" fishing headquarters. Check out Uncle Mike's Tackle Shop for the fishing tackle and minnows you'll need. The deli offers sandwiches, fried chicken and pizza. They sell Exxon gasoline.

While it doesn't open seasonally until April, it might be a good time now to call Christopher Run Campground and make your reservation. They offer cabins as well as camping sites. *Chrissie McCotter*

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REGIONAL FOCUS

Smith Mountain Lake

New River Valley

Smith Mountain Lake level was 794.50' and rising due to rainfall by the end of January. This is slightly lower than at the end of December. Keep in mind normal pond is 795' so the lake was in good shape.

Water temperature was 47 degrees on the surface from mid to down lake by the late-January W2 deadline. Expect the lake level to hold steady in January and watch the water temperature begin to rise into the lower 50s by the end of the month.

February on Smith Mountain is not unlike January with mostly diehard anglers on the water pursuing striper with a smattering of bass fisherman.

February is a good time to catch a big SML smallmouth. Using an Alabama rig within a couple miles of the dam over rocky humps and around rocky points on cloudy days is a common tactic used by local anglers. If baitfish are present, you should do well. Finesse and hair jigs fishing slowly along the bottom can be good when you cannot find any baitfish.

Closer to the end of February a decent suspending jerkbait bite will begin as well as a swimbait pattern.

Most February largemouth bass will be caught deep on spoons and blade baits but some will be around bait, and they can also be targeted with A-rigs and swimbaits. Bait, in the form of alewives is a key factor to finding bass this month. Suspending jerkbaits are good for largemouth bass, too, by the end of the month.



Here's the CertainTEED party fishing with Kathy of *Spike's Prime Time Fishin'*.



Gary had this 16-pound Smith Mountain Lake striper fishing with *Spike's Prime Time Fishin'*.

If you visit for striper, target them in the mid section of the lake this month, especially in larger creeks.

Best striper lures are swimbaits, jiggling

spoons and ZOOM Flukes fished on 1/4 to 1/2 oz. jigheads. The best depths will be from near the surface to 60 feet deep. Fish areas with the largest concentrations of baitfish.

Fishing for crappie will be fair on SML this month. They will be found 15 to 40 feet deep. The best areas will be in the larger, main creeks around brush and around bridge pilings in the mid portion of the lake. Small live minnows and 1 1/2 to 2 inch tubes or shad shaped plastic lures fished on 1/32 to 1/16 oz. lead heads will work best.

Spike and Kathy Francescini operate Spike's PrimeTime Fishin', one of the longest continuously operated guide services in Virginia.

They note striper will often migrate into and lower portion AND upper portion of the lake at some point in the late winter with the baitfish. Live bait anglers will target them with shad fish begin side planers with long leaders along deep banks.

Jiggling spoons, Zoom Super Fluke Jr's on jigheads, A-rigs and swimbaits are all good choices for anglers that prefer to cast to winter striper on SML. Remember, you can now keep two fish per day under 30" or over 40".

Give them a call if you want to try fishing the lake this coming season. Spike and Kathy are now booking their 2023 season!

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REGIONAL FOCUS

Buggs/Gaston

Kerr Lake/Lake Gaston

Lake Gaston

By mid-January the water level on Gaston was around 199.85' (200' is full pool) and Dominion was holding the level steady. Water temperature was 46-degrees. Anglers can expect 48-54 degree water temperatures for February in most parts of the main lake.

For February on Gaston, BASSMaster Elite angler and guide Rick Morris says the most consistent bass bite will be around the mouth of creeks like Poplar and Lizard in 10-25' of water. Morris says to fish on the bottom using 3/8 to 1/2 oz War Eagle jigs for fat spotted bass and the occasional largemouth using braid with a fluorocarbon leader and a spinning rod.

There's also a winter spoon bite that could continue the month. Keep a keen eye out, though as spotted bass can school and feed in 5' of water when you looking out deep instead.

Morris also suggests you fish a suspending jerkbait around mid and down lake points at the mouth of spawning coves.

Holly Grove Marina is a family-friendly tackle shop, boat ramp, restaurant/gathering place on the lake and we're glad to have them with us. Holly Grove is located about 10 minutes off I-95 at the Bracey exit on Rt. 903.

Kerr Reservoir (Buggs Island)

The water level on Kerr Lake by the W2 late January deadline was 297.22' and rising (about a half foot lower than last month). 300' is full pool. Daytime water temperatures were around 42-44 degrees depending on

the region of the lake late last month.

This month anglers should expect a modest rise in water temperatures - back down to around 45-50 degrees eventually.

Shad and herring are now on the main lake and still lingering at the mouth of some major creeks. Many anglers here use spoons on points now. Some like to use swimbaits. If you visit, you are mostly going to be targeting schooling bass, striper or crappie on or near baitfish. The suspending jerkbait bite could develop later this month, too.

If you cannot get a reaction bite, you can also try fishing shaky head worms and drop shotted worms around 15-20' humps and points with underwater cover like rocks and brush-piles.

Fishing points in the larger creeks like Nutbush, Bluestone, Rudd's, Butcher's and Eastland as well as main lake points at the mouths of these creeks should be the pattern now.

Striper anglers are still fishing the Clarksville area where they are finding feeding fish under



Tom came down from Roanoke to do some winter fishing on Lake Gaston and had a good day with guide, Rick Morris on the bass and crappie.

birds and busting bait.

Casters will want to use three-inch spoons like the KT Slab/Toothache spoon around the mouth of creeks and on main lake channel bends. Swimbaits or soft plastic jerkbaits on jigheads are also good where you find birds. Some striper anglers will troll umbrella rigs this month tipped with swimbaits.

Before you head out onto the lake, be sure to stop by Bobcat's Bait and Tackle to get a current fishing report and all the gear you could possibly need.

The next VA/NC Team Crappie event will be held March 25. We'll have the results of the February 25 event in our March edition.

The lake's big blue catfish are also feeding heavily now. This is where the state and world record came

from, so if you like catching big catfish, Buggs is a fine place to start.

Before you head out onto the lake, be sure

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REGIONAL FOCUS

Potomac River

January water temperatures on the tidal Potomac River got down to an icy 40 degrees but things cleared up just fine for February, as days get longer and the food chain starts to activate.

Fish are where we want them now, on drops and edges, grouped up and making for some great winter fishing. Water temperatures hover around 40 and occasionally up to 45. It's important to pay attention to warm spots...two degrees can make a HUGE difference.

Fishing during the warmest part of the day will be more productive with moving lures. When determining depth and speed...i.e., lure and presentation selection, remember outgoing tides bring warmer water below Blue Plains and incoming tides can lower water temperatures by five degrees.

Areas that stay warm include Quantico Creek, Blue Plains and Four Mile Run. Out of the current areas are The Spoils, Smoots, Belle Haven, Mount Vernon, Oxen Cove, Washington Channel, and Pohick Bay and the Pentagon Lagoon have deep water.

In Four Mile Run, the point in front of the

restaurant is a great place to use Silver Buddy lures and drop-shots. The deeper water around the marina is also good.

Just up the creek, water temperature can rise to near 60. Riprap and bridge pilings are great places to toss stick-worms on Gamma fluorocarbon.

I prefer to toss suspending jerkbaits in Baby Bass and other "natural" patterns. Shallow crankbaits are good, too.

At Blue Plains, work drop shot, split shot, Carolina rigs, with 5-inch creature baits soaked in attractant very slowly. Don't leave without using green/orange hair jigs on six-pound test Gamma Copoly. When tides fall, the Blue Plains dock is great... fish beneath it on sunny days and around front on cloudy



Here's Capt. Mike of *Apex Predators Guide Service* with a 40-pound, citation blue catfish he caught last month.

days. The Dominion Possum Point Power Plant pumps out warmed water into Quantico Creek. Fish the entire creek according to temperature.

Fox Ferry fish are grouped on drop-offs, 6-15 feet deep depending on water temperature. On warmer tides, use tight wiggle crankbaits in craw patterns, chartreuse/brown back on 10-pound test. Crank parallel to

the Ferry and pause when contacting cover. Same works on riprap around Oxen Cove.

The Spoils has plenty of drops, concrete islands, a jetty, a few wreck remnants, and a ditch rimming outside. Below the bridge Smoot Bay has similar drops and two obvious points, one north and one south. Other

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less obvious spots seldom fished: Fort Washington Lighthouse Point and Hogg Island. You'll locate fish in deep water near flats with cover out of current.

The 1/2-ounce size Silver Buddy is my favorite, but I use 1/4-oz. when the bite is tough. Cast them on 10-pound test Gamma EDGE on a casting reel to three-foot depths and work down drops with very short burps, noting where bites come. Good depths depend on water temperature and how long water has been at that temperature. Fish aren't chasing baits, so when you get one; you've found the day's winter depth.

For rods, I really like a medium action Quantum graphite. Replace worn Silver Buddy hooks...use Mustad Ultra Point split shank trebles, or cut the hook eye, twist open, attach, snap back to close.

Hair jigs are awesome for cold water...compact and the hair breathes, prompting strikes when sitting! Use 1/4-ounce hair jigs in two colors...black/blue, and olive/orange. Light line and either pork or plastic chunks with rattles worked very slowly. Attractants get fish to hold on longer! Hair jigs soak up attractants! "Gel" style attractants make the hair clog up! Keep rod tips lower to set the hook. Don't use a huge hookset, just reel and lift.

Use a 1/4-ounce round jig heads with Mustad hooks for grubs on spinning gear spooled with 10 pound test Gamma Torque braid with six-pound test Edge leader. Work these along the bottom slowly, stopping often. Rather than hopping, lift, glide and stop, shake occasionally. Shaky heads work well too! Start with five-inch worms, cut until you get the right size.

In 45-degree water throw crankbaits and spinnerbaits! Not many throw spinnerbaits. Willow/Colorado gold blades keep baits down, bumping cover. Chartreuse with brown back flat crankbaits are effective to about six feet and can provide a lot of vibration at very slow speeds. Using 10-pound or 8-pound test Edge fluorocarbon, make long casts, crank it down and slowly sweep rod, making long pauses.

Now is the time to call Capt. Mike with Apex Predators Guide Service or Capt. Travis Stauch of Ram Rod Guide Service if you want to target snakeheads on the river this season. Capt. Mike most often guides anglers that want to cast to these river monsters. Capt. Stauch is mostly a bowfishing guide.

Mike is also taking reservations for his spring tidal Potomac crappie fishing trips that mostly take place in Aquia Creek.

Locust Shade Park on Rt. 1 near Aquia is now receiving trout. The lake there is a pleasant place to fish for trout from the bank in February.

Much of the gear mentioned here can be found in area tackle shops like Taylors Bait & Tackle or Costellos in Warrenton. These two tackle shops - one in a convenience store, the other in a hardware store offer outstanding selection. C.C. McCotter & Steve Chaconas

POTOMAC TIDE/MOON CHART

	HIGH	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH	LOW
1	5:19am	11:32am	10 11:16am	5:31am	19 7:26am	1:59am	28 2:55am	9:01am
	5:38pm	----		11:40pm		7:49pm	3:10pm	10:10pm
2	6:11am	12:34am	11 11:55am	6:04am	NEW 20 8:19am	2:50am		
	6:29pm	12:26pm		6:45pm		8:44pm	3:03pm	
3	7:00am	1:23am	12 12:24am	6:42am	21 9:10am	3:38am		
	7:17pm	1:17pm		12:40pm		9:36pm	3:57pm	
4	7:45am	2:08am	13 1:15am	7:27am	22 9:59am	4:23am		
	8:02pm	2:04pm		1:30pm		10:26pm	4:49pm	
FULL 5	8:27am	2:50am	14 2:14am	8:20am	23 10:48am	5:08am		
	8:42pm	2:47pm		2:28pm		11:17pm	5:40pm	
6	9:05am	3:28am	15 3:19am	9:23am	24 11:36am	5:51am		
	9:19pm	3:28pm		3:32pm		----	6:32pm	
7	9:40am	4:02am	16 4:26am	10:39am	25 12:08am	6:35am		
	9:53pm	4:06pm		4:41pm		12:26pm	7:24pm	
8	10:11am	4:33am	17 5:30am	12:05am	26 1:02am	7:20am		
	10:26pm	4:44pm		5:48pm		1:17pm	8:18pm	
9	10:42am	5:02am	18 6:30am	1:04am	27 1:58am	8:08am		
	11:01pm	5:21pm		6:51pm		2:12pm	9:14pm	

March Tides

1	3:53am	10:00am
	4:11pm	11:06pm
2	4:50am	11:00am
	5:09pm	----
	5:43am	12:00am
	6:04pm	11:58pm

Tides for Aquia Creek. See corrections below

Corrections:

Washington Channel:	Alexandria: Low: +2:21	Occoquan Bay: Low: +1:04	Port Tobacco: Low: -2:35	Dahlgren: Low: -3:01
Low: +2:32	High: +1:45	High: + :26	High: -2:40	High: -3:14
High: +1:28	Lewisetta: Low: -4:52	High: -2:40	Cornfield: Low: +7:50	High: +7:27

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REGIONAL FOCUS

BACK BAY

Northwest River, North River, Currituck Sound

James Waters at Bob's Fishing Hole reports that the Winter Series continues this month, Sundays, 8am to 3pm with a three-fish limit, entry fee \$25/person. There are also five-fish limit events on certain weekends.

The events have been drawing a couple dozen, diehard teams/boats and the three-fish limits have been up to 12 pounds. Winter fishing tournaments on the Northwest River are a little new but the fishing and anglers are holding up well and learning new patterns every week.

On Saturday, January 21 Bob's launched 13 boats and 17 anglers that brought back nine limits. Rick Plemons took first with a three-fish limit for 9.20 pounds and lunker at 4.86 pounds.

Bob's Fishing Hole is located on Rt. 168 (Chesapeake Expressway) on the way to the Outer Banks. It offers anglers access not only to the great fishing on the Northwest River but also to Back Bay.

For the coming season keep in mind North Bay Shore Campground welcomes anglers and has cabins and a bath house for overnight stays. A canal runs right behind the cabins, so you can keep your boat in the water and you are minutes from Sandbridge. This is a



Russell Gammon and Richard Hall took first place in the **Bob's Fishing Hole** tournament on January 8 with 15.38 lbs. and the lunker at 5.06 lbs.

great place to use as basecamp when planning a Back Bay fishing trip.

North Landing Beach RV Resort & Cottages is a good place to use as a family basecamp for Back Bay fishing. The resort is first class, has its own ramp and is nearby two others and about 20 minutes from Bob's Fishing Hole.

Book a two bedroom cottage and settle in for a few days of great fishing this coming spring and summer.

Backwater Adventures Guide David Ward notes February, like last month, will be all about the weather. Water temps will be in the 40's depending on the weather. Ward says, "fish always seem to know spring is coming and fishing will start to improve even with the cold weather as the days start to get longer."

Crankbaits, bladed jigs, and jigs will be the main weapons of his choice, fishing close to cover. On those really cold days, he says it's a great time to organize your boat and tackle for the season!

If you are looking for accommodations and a new place to fish, consider the AJ Outfitters cabin on the Chowan River near Harrellsville, North Carolina. This is a riverside cabin with pier and nearby boat ramp that offers angler the opportunity to fish perhaps the best bass river in NC.

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REGIONAL FOCUS

Chesapeake Bay

As cold water temperatures prevail this month, fish will naturally look for warmer water — and nowhere is better than the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant warm water discharge. This location is no secret to anyone who fishes the middle Bay, and those jigging there have been finding some speckled trout that are feeling a bit chilly. During the winter months this location is a popular spot to check for a little striped bass catch-and-release jigging during the closed season.

Fishing for rockfish is now only legal in non-coastal waters. Coastal regulations apply in Virginia's Territorial Sea, plus all of the creeks, bays, inlets, and tributaries on the seaside of Accomack County, Northhampton County (including areas east of the causeway from Fisherman Island to the mainland) and the City of Virginia Beach (including federal areas and state parks fronting on the Atlantic Ocean and east and south of the point where the shoreward boundary of the Territorial Sea joins the mainland at Cape Henry).

Some of the year's biggest rockfish are caught this month in legal areas off the coast. We'll see if this year produces any state record class fish. The mark to beat is 74 pounds.

With Chesapeake Bay water temperatures in the upper 30s, bay fish are currently at winter holding areas. With plenty of cool waters and oxygen from surface to bottom, anglers can look for concentrations of fish in some of the remaining warm water areas.

Upper Chesapeake Bay

Most of the focus in this area will be in the middle to upper reaches of the region's tidal rivers. Fishing for yellow perch will be on the top of the list this month for those seeking a quiet spot along a narrowing section of water



Tautog fishing remains good on near shore wrecks for anglers willing to brave chilly conditions. Photo courtesy of **G'Daddy's Bait & Tackle**.

with some considerable depth.

One of the most effective ways to fish is with a lip-hooked minnow on a very small jig head, often around 1/16 of an ounce. This calls for light line, and many have found that braid in the 6-pound range can offer the distance needed when casting a light offering out across open water from shore. Another option is to lip-hook a minnow and place an appropriate sized split shot about two feet up the line from the hook. Either of these rigs should be allowed to sink to the bottom and worked slowly along the bottom with frequent pauses.

For those who just want fish for an hour or so and don't have the time to purchase minnows and transport them there is another option. Placing a small piece of red felt on a small jig and a drop or two of anise flavoring or your favorite fish scent on the felt often works well.

Middle Bay

Areas of the upper Choptank, Tuckahoe, and Nanticoke rivers are already providing some exciting yellow perch action for those fishing the deeper areas that may range from 5 feet to 12 feet deep, which are holding staging yellow perch.

Lower Bay

G'Daddy's Bait & Tackle in Carrollton, Virginia (just across the James River Bridge in Hampton) is stocked with ZOOM soft plastic baits, a limited special collection of Poe's classic all-wood crankbaits, Duckett rods and Reel Blessed custom rods. Profound Outdoors baits can also be found in the shop. Gift certificates are available at the shop as well as fishing licenses and the City of Norfolk lake fishing permits.

Coast

Surf anglers are braving the cold at the Assateague Beaches and soaking large cut baits, hoping to intercept striped bass that measure over 28 inches. Along the coast, striped bass measuring less than 28 inches or greater than 35 inches must be returned to the water unharmed. Striped bass are being caught at the inlet and Route 50 Bridge area by anglers casting soft plastic jigs or by drifting cut bait. Most of the striped bass fail to meet the 28-inch minimum but the catch-and-release action is plenty of fun.

Tautog are providing fishing opportunities at the inlet jetties, the Route 50 Bridge piers, and nearby bulkheads. Sand fleas are the preferred bait. A fair percentage of the tautog being caught fail to meet the 16-inch minimum but the fishing is fun. The daily creel limit for tautog is four per day.

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REGIONAL FOCUS

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The new year started off with favorable weather conditions for anglers in the Shenandoah Valley. Scotty Kline got into a mess of Shenandoah walleye with three citations. The biggest measured 30.25 inches and weighed in at 12.14 pounds. The other two weighed in at 8.11 pounds and 5.13 pounds. Interesting enough, there were several other boats on the water that day with each getting blanked on smallmouth. The toothy critters were eating though, with Jeff Miller hooking a musky.

Speaking of Walleye, fun fact the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources stocks 20,000 1-2" fingerlings in the Shenandoah River each spring!

February will obviously follow a winter pattern with cold, crystal clear water. Remember you won't always catch numbers of fish in the winter, but the overall size of the fish you catch have the potential to be bigger than usual.

To improve your chances for success consider downsizing your line to six-pound test line. Make longer casts and plan to fish slowly. Start in the deeper wintering holes of the river, but as we've mentioned in previous articles, it's a good idea to fish the entire river from bank to bank. Always consider boat positioning when you're fishing any given hole. It's never a good idea to run right up to the hole. Approach it from the down river side and pay attention to the direction of the current and how quickly its

flowing.

Depending on where the fish are holding you have to get the lure down to them in the strike zone. Pay attention to your rate of fall and how your line and lure track. You may have to adjust your boat positioning to get it right.

Keep in mind tubes, hair jigs, blade baits, jerkbaits, and Ned rigs are traditional cold water choices. Work the bottom of the river thoroughly before moving up in the middle depths.

The small paddle tail swimbaits are a versatile option as they can be fished at different rates of speed throughout the entire water column. Put these on a small ball head hook on light line and let it sink before bringing it in on a slow steady retrieve.

If no luck, keep your same hook but throw on a 2.5-inch Gulp! Minnow and twitch it around in the clear water. The Gulp! will catch them when a lot of other things won't. This takes me to downsizing your presentation when the bite is slow. Consider anything the crappie or trout angler would throw. How many times have you experienced or heard



Shenandoah Walleye King Scotty Kline with two beauts - one 12.14 pounds, the other 8.11 pounds. Photo from *Jake's Bait & Tackle*.

of guys crappie fishing and hooking a big 'un?

The Berkley Powerbait Atomic Tubes and Atomic Teasers give you the tube look and action in a much smaller profile. I'm also a fan of the Arkie 1.5-inch paddle tail minnow on a small jig hook. Nikko, Freaky Franks, and Bobby Garland Crappie Baits each have a good selection of small plastic natural looking forage options.

The power fisherman reading this right now are puckering up at the thought of hooking a solid fish on

such a light set up. I would challenge it may be the only way they'll eat when the fish are tight lipped and the bite is tough.

Prayers go out to the families and friends of the two young anglers that passed away at Smith Mountain Lake doing what we all love to do. Same for the waterfowl hunter from the Warren County area that capsized. These tragic events remind us to always practice safety on the water by wearing a properly-fitted life preserver. Use a kill switch on motorized boats. Have a throw cushion accessible with a rope tied off to it in windy conditions. Always tell friends or family where you are going and when you plan to be back. *Jerod Mounts*

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Thankfully February is a short month as the days can seem long. Cabin fever can set in if you're not careful to keep yourself busy. We're thankful for the many opportunities we have in our region to get out of the house and attend an outdoor show. It doesn't matter if it's cold and raining cats and dogs outside, these shows will surely brighten your day. On February 11 & 12 the Augusta County Bass Jons are once again hosting their Fishing & Outdoor Expo at the Augusta Expoland in Fishersville, VA and on February 11 the Rapidan Trout Unlimited Fishing Show is at the Highland School just up Route 29 in Warrenton. Mark your calendars and make plans to attend. Check out the calendar of events for other events and the full line-up of area tournament opportunities.

Youth waterfowl day is February 4 and is a great opportunity to share the age-old tradition with our next generation. Remember that if you come home empty-handed, the time shared will always be remembered. There's more to a youth hunt than teaching gun safety, although that is always a top priority. Share your tips on dressing appropriately, what licenses and stamps are required, what your gear checklist is before heading out to the blind (include PFDs if going in a boat) and identifying all the beautiful species that are flying that day. My kids, now in their 20s, fondly recall their many waterfowl hunts from their younger days and it amazes me the details they remember. Never under-

estimate the impression you can have on children.

February also means rabbit season and rabbit hunting is also a fantastic way to introduce youth to hunting. If you're lucky you can find a local hunt club that hosts organized hunts in your area. The camaraderie of a rabbit hunt with friends is a good way to spend a chilly afternoon and also provides the main course for an excellent meal later.

VDWR continues their trout stocking efforts in area streams. Be sure to check their website often as they update it daily. General statewide limits are six trout per day and no fish less than 7-inches. There are a number of exceptions for certain areas and waters so please visit the VDWR website for specifics.

Razorback Guide Service has a few Spring Gobbler hunting dates left so don't delay in booking your trip. There's nothing quite as exciting as getting out in the early spring woods and bagging a gobbler and guide Brian "Razor" Bodine will ensure your success.

Razor is also taking reservations for spring time smallmouth trips on the James River.



Luke Johnson and his father, of Midlothian, with a nice late season, eight point buck taken with **Razorback Guide Service**.

This month smallies will be biting on jigs but as temperatures drop it's a good idea to switch over to spinnerbaits using a very slow retrieve. Look for them to move into sunny pockets as the day warms and you should hook up.

Area pan fishermen are having good luck using jigs on local reservoirs and are boating a good number of perch as well.

Lake Anna Outfitters is a locally owned small business that

carries a wide array of kayaks that are perfect for those of us who aren't quite ready for a boat payment. Kayaks vastly expand your opportunities for fishing reservoirs, rivers and ponds and can get you back into the shallower/vegetated areas that are unnavigable to larger boats. You can fish, hunt and even just paddle for fun and/or exercise in a kayak. Give LKA Outfitters a call today to schedule a visit and check out the 3Waters Big Fish pedal drive kayaks. They also carry Feel Free Lures 11.5 V2 with pedal drives that area anglers find to be excellent rigs. They're easy to find, right off Route 208 in the High Point Marina complex. *Chrissie McCotter*



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Outdoor Calendar

Event listings are free for advertisers and non-profit organizations or clubs. Deadline is 14th of the month before the month to appear.

Please send or email information you want to appear to: Woods & Waters Notebook, 114 Old Quarry Lane, Bumpass, VA 23024.

Send emails to: woodsandwatersmagazine@gmail.com

Fishing Tournaments

- February 11 – Ed Allen's Boats & Bait Weekend Tournament – Chickahominy Lake, 8am-4pm. Call 804/966-5368.
- February 25 – Bobcat's Virginia/Carolina Crappie Trail – Visit BobcatsLakeCountry.com
- February 25 – Ed Allen's Boats & Bait Weekend Tournament – Chickahominy Lake, 8am-4pm. Call 804/966-5368.
- February 25 – Fishers of Men Virginia East Tournament – Buggs Island Lake. Call Andy Lavin for more information 804/591-9710.
- February 26 – Richmond Crappie Club Tournament – Lake Anna, Anna Point Marina. Follow on Facebook or contact Josh Morris 804/968-8963.
- March 4 – Fish Tales Big Bass Tournament – Lake Anna, Anna Point Marina, 8am-4pm. Call Dave 540/840-6772.
- March 4 & 5 – Jon Boat Elite Tournament – Roanoke Rapids Lake. Contact Brad Webb bassnbucks60@gmail.com.
- March 5 – Fish Tales Open – Lake Anna, Anna Point Marina, 8am-4pm. Call Dave 540/840-6772
- March 11 – Bass Bandits of Virginia Tournament – Nottoway River, Rt. 258 Ramp. Visit BassBanditsofVirginia.com for more information.
- March 11 – Ed Allen's Boats & Bait Weekend Tournament – Chickahominy Lake, 8am-4pm. Call 804/966-5368.
- March 11 – Potomac River Battle Series Big Bass Battle – Lake Anna, Anna Point Marina, 7am-3pm. Visit the Facebook page for more information.
- March 25 – James River Tackle Co. Tournament – Hopewell Marina, SL-3pm. Call Dinnie 804/668-5866.
- March 25 – Potomac Teams Bass Tournament – Leesylvania State Park, SL-3pm. Visit www.PotomacTeams.com or email rpetey@comcast.net.

Shows/Community/Other Events

- February 3-5 – The Nation's Gun Show – Dulles Expo Center – Visit www.ShowmastersGunShows.com.
- February 4 – 27th Annual Dale City Bass Tackle Show – Hillendale Fire Dept., 13511 Hillendale Dr. Dale City, VA.
- February 4-12 – NRA Great American Outdoor Show – Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex – Harrisburg, PA. Visit GreatAmericanOutdoorShow.org.
- February 8-11 – Bobcat's Annual Cabin Fever & Stew Sale – Clarksville, VA. Email BobcatsFishing@gmail.com.
- February 11 & 12 – Augusta County Fishing & Outdoor Expo – Augusta Expoland, Fishersville, VA. Saturday 9-5, Sunday 9-3. Email acbassjans@yahoo.com
- February 11, 2023 – Field Pheasant Ring Shoot – The Preserve at Dundee, Hanover, VA – Visit ThePreserveatDundee.com.
- February 11 & 12 – Augusta Fishing & Outdoor Expo – Augusta Expoland, Fishersville, VA. Visit www.AugustaCoBass.com.
- February 11 – Rapidan Trout Unlimited Fishing Show – Highland School, Warrenton VA. Visit RapidanTU.org.
- March 11 – Great Bridge Fishermen's Association annual Flea Market - Chesapeake Conference Center, 8 am - 2:30 pm. For info call Butch at 757/287-0330.

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