

May 2023

WOODS & WATERS



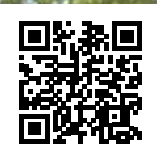
**Crappie
Junkie**

**Destination
Smith Mountain
Lake**

**Bucketlist
Rappahannock
River Shad**

**Late Season
Gobblers**

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W2 Profile

Tom Wilcox

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TOURNAMENT RESULTS



The teams of the Fishers of Men East division converged on Lake Anna April 14, and launched from Sturgeon Creek for the third event of the season. When all fish were weighed the team of Michael and Mark Heatwole had 21.51 pounds and a six-pound big fish for first place.

The teams next fish May 20 on Lake Gaston out of Holly Grove Marina. For more info and standings visit www.fomnt.com.



Micheal and Mark Heatwole



Tournament Trail

Chad Hicks and CG Hicks won the VA Elite 70's second stop at Lake Anna held April 1 out of Anna Point Marina with a 23.30 pound limit anchored by a 6.63 pound lunker. Don Wheeler and Greg Cooper were second with 22.69 pounds.

Next up is 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. For more information visit www.vaelite70.com.



Chad and CG Hicks



The March 25 James River Tackle Co. Weekend Series tournament was won by Nathan and Anthony P. with a limit weighing 16.88 pounds Marshall S. and Christopher W. were second with 16.161 pounds. Thirty-five teams participated. The teams will next fish May 20 and June 10.

For info contact Donnie Bell at donnie7196@gmail.com



Nathan and Athony P.

Jon Boat Elite TOURNAMENT TRAIL



The March 18-19 the Jon Boat Elite tournament was won by Jesse Pierce with a two-day total of 25.53 pounds. Dutin Webb was second with 25.04 pounds. W2 Pro Team member Noah Peters was third with 24.37 based on a 19+ limit on Day 2. The teams will next fish May 6-7 on Western Branch Reservoir. For more information visit www.facebook.com/jonboatelitetrail



Jesse Pierce

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TOURNAMENT RESULTS

Richmond Crappie Club

The Richmond Crappie Club fished Lake Chesdin March 26 for stop #2 on the 2023 trail. Thirteen teams looked for the heaviest seven-fish limit. In the end it was Josh and Farah-Dale Morris that won their second event in a row with 7.35 pounds noting they caught their fish from one dock.

Next up is May 13 on the Chickahominy River. Visit www.facebook.com/richmondcrappieclub for more dates and results.



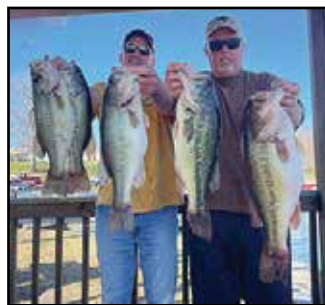
Josh and Farah-Dale Morris

STURGEON CREEK MARINA



Congratulations to George Decatur and Preston Cox for winning the April 2 Lake Anna Elite Series event with a 24.44-pound limit anchored by a 8.69-pound big fish. Trey and Dean Perris were second with 22.25 lbs. Most of the teams were sight fishing. The Elite teams next fish May 20.

For more info visit www.facebook.com/sturgeoncreekmarina.com.



George Decatur and Preston Cox



VA/NC Crappie Trail

The sixth VA/NC Crappie Trail for 2022/23 was held March 25. First place went to the team of Dean and Shane Grindstaff with 12.57 pounds, good for \$1,505. Five fish over two pounds were weighed. After six events, the team of Morris/Smith maintain a slim lead in the Team of the Year race. We'll have the April 21-22 Classic results in our June edition. For more info visit www.facebook.com/bobscatsbaitandtackle.



Dean and Shane Grindstaff



The Bass Bandits of Virginia fished the Appomatox River out of Hopewell Marina Park April 16. Twenty-six boats headed out for a great day of fishing. The water temps were 70 in most places. First place finishers Logan and Marchelo had a 16.23-pound limit.

May 13 will bring a visit to the Pamunkey River out of Hopewell Marina and a stop June 11 at the Chickahominy River. For more info visit www.facebook.com/groups/458306391457498.



Dave Carney and John Dunn

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- John Doe, Virginia tournament angler

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Find out how to bag a turkey before the season ends. *ROBERT RUNNETT*

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Join the state's dedicated freckle fishing trail. *AARON BALL*

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COVER PHOTO BY MADDOX WIGG



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May Means It's Time To Enjoy Virginia!

If the end of April was any indication what this month is going to be like, we are looking forward to being outdoors. Many of the state's lakes and rivers are in prime condition for your first fishing trip of the year if you haven't already been out, and this edition will give you a number of inspiring options.

For years now Smith Mountain Lake has been our Top Fishery based on many factors including big fish potential, scenery, access and relative success. Our Destination File visits this 22,000-acre mountain powerhouse and offers some great insight on the bass and striper fisheries.

Spring gobbler season finishes up May 21 and we have a great piece by Hunting Editor Robert Runnett on his tactics for bagging one of those wary late season turkeys.

Have you heard of the Richmond Crappie Club? It's a group of dedicated freckle anglers that travel around the state fishing crappie tournaments. Our Crappie Junkie article covers the first part of their tourney season from a competitor's point of view.

This month's Bucket List trip had Adventure Editor Aaron Ball visit the Rappahannock River for some light tackle shad fishing. He and his host enjoyed a stellar day and we bring you the story and some history on the fishery.

This month's W2 Profile is on long time outdoor retailer Tom Wilcox, president of Wilcox Bait & Tackle in Newport News. Tom has built on the business his mother and father began and his story is one we've wanted to tell for years.

There's all that, plus an interesting Smallmouth King article on tactics for catching post-spawn river smallmouth,

our monthly columnists (Ahnstrom, Gorsuch and Chaconas), news from VDWR on some new public hunting land opportunities just made available in southwest Virginia, 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!

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 and our YouTube Channel is up and running - Woods & Waters Adventures. You can read the entire magazine online or just browse the articles and Regional Focus Reports.

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



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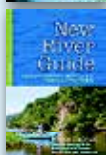
The James River

by Bruce Ingram \$16⁹⁵
 Paddlers to anglers will find this guide book a great tool when planning trips. 136 pgs., 15 river maps.



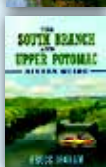
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Dear Woods & Waters Magazine,

I spent a beautiful March day catching a nice smallmouth bass like this on the Shenandoah river. Though you might use the pic in a upcoming edition.

Susan Barb
 Woodstock, Virginia.



Awesome pic, Barb! - ED

Dear W2,

My 16-year-old son, Dalton Ayers got his very first turkey this season. He's been waiting for years for this day! It was harvested on opening day in Warren County. It was 20 pounds with a 10 inch beard.

James Hardy
 Franklin, 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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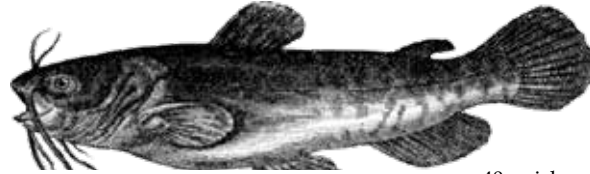


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Destination: Smith

BY C.C. MCCOTTER

Smith Mountain Lake is a 20,600-acre highland impoundment located near Roanoke, Virginia. This reservoir is annually ranked by Woods & Waters as one of Virginia's premier fisheries, offering a variety of species including largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, striped bass and crappie as well as recreational opportunities.

The reservoir is owned by American Electric Power Company and is managed primarily for hydroelectric power generation with a unique system of pumps that coordinate water releases into Leesville Lake (below Smith Mountain Lake dam) and returns water back into Smith Mountain.

Most of the shoreline is developed with residential homes but other facilities catering to outdoor enthusiasts are found at various locations. With such a varied user base, Smith Mountain Lake is one of the Virginia's most heavily

managed waters and Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries biologists are very busy.

Largemouth and smallmouth bass are the most sought after species by anglers at Smith Mountain Lake, with striped bass drawing a good amount of devoted anglers as well.

Largemouth bass comprise approximately 90% of the black bass fishery. Largemouth bass fishing is good but this fishery receives a lot of pressure. Extensive electrofishing surveys (conducted by fisheries biologists each spring) typically produce many largemouth bass in the two- to four-pound range, with the bulk of fish between 14 and 17 inches.

Extensive electrofishing surveys conducted by DWR fisheries biologists each spring provide annual assessments of the population and shows the largemouth bass population increased from 2015 to 2019 and has been stable the past three years. Fewer small-

mouth were collected in 2020-2021 than the long term average but smallmouth are not sampled as efficiently as largemouth bass and it could potentially be just sampling variation and not substantial changes in the population. Future sampling will confirm if the smallmouth numbers are declining or remaining stable

The highest densities of largemouth bass in this reservoir are found upstream of Hales Ford Bridge area in the Roanoke River arm and buoy B26 in the Blackwater River arm. However, anglers are often more successful in the downstream areas where the water is less stained and bottom contours are more favorable due to flatter shorelines found in the lower end than the vertical shorelines of the upper end.

Smallmouth bass are most abundant in the downstream end of the reservoir.

Piers and boathouses provide extensive shoreline cover that

anglers should target. Fishing around and under boat docks/piers from the water is legal but remember to be courteous to dock owners. Banging your bait off a \$120K wake boat is not cool no matter how bad they waked you earlier that day.

Additionally, natural structures such as fallen trees, rock shoals and points are seasonally productive. Coves typically produce the best largemouth bass angling opportunities during the winter and spring months due to shallower water and less boating traffic. However, these fish tend to move into deeper water, closer to the main channel areas, and often suspend seeking schooling shad during the warmer months (July-September).

To avoid the heavy boat traffic in the summer, anglers should concentrate their efforts at night or very early in the morning.

The Department of Wildlife Resources is currently involved in a pilot program to assess the



Mountain Lake

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potential for enhancing the quality of largemouth bass fisheries in large Virginia reservoirs (1,000 acres and larger) by stocking F1 largemouth (also referred to as "Tiger" bass) bass at relatively low rates.

F1 largemouth bass are produced by using one parent that is 100% Florida bass and the other 100% Northern bass. Crossing these 100% parents often produces offspring that grow a little faster than other largemouth bass. Largemouth bass (wild) in Smith Mountain Lake were actually about 50% Florida and 50% Northern genetics before stocking began so the stocking will not change the genetic makeup of the current bass population. Only the first cross of the 100% x 100% parents exhibit the growth advantage, so future offspring of the stocked bass will perform and grow just like the current wild bass population.

Smith Mountain Lake received the first stocking in 2015 and

DWR has recently added four additional large reservoirs as test

waters for this project. Only the reservoirs included in this pilot

program will be stocked with
continued on page 14



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Destination: Smith Mountain Lake from 13

F1 Largemouth Bass until the success, or lack of, has been fully evaluated. There are two primary components of the bass stocking study; how much do stocked bass add to the overall bass population and do stocked fish achieve larger sizes and improve the catch of trophy bass.



Nine-pound Smith Mountain Lake bass caught by client of Spike's Prime Time Fishing.

Initial evaluation of the stocking program at Smith Mountain Lake showed stocked bass added approximately 7% to the number of bass produced each year for the first few years. Additional data to determine stocking contribution to the population for three more years were collected in 2021 but all the samples have not been processed at the time of this report.

for its striped bass fishery. Striped bass have been stocked into this reservoir since impoundment in 1963. Lack of sufficient spawning habitat for striped bass prevents natural reproduction so, unlike other species, stocking is required to maintain the striped bass fishery.

Samples of largemouth bass weighing at least four pounds, have been collected each spring since 2019 to evaluate the trophy component of the stockings. The first stocked bass weighing over four pounds was found in 2019. Stocked bass collected over four pounds continues to increase and added 13% to the number of bass caught over four pounds in 2021.

Smith Mountain Lake is one of the few Virginia reservoirs that can consistently produce larger striped bass and the lake is managed specifically to maintain this trophy component with a protective slot limit of 30-40 inches (only for the months of Nov-May).

The Department of Wildlife Resources began experimenting with adding different types of habitat to Smith Mountain Lake that will protect juvenile fish during their first summer when mortality is highest. After several years of testing different habitat structures, larger scale habitat deployments began in 2017. Department of Wildlife Resources continues to monitor how fish use the various structures to determine the best structure designs for this lake. To date, structures have been placed primarily at the lower end of the lake because water clarity is better which allows DWR personnel to better evaluate the different structure designs. The structures are generally placed 8-10 feet deep because our studies have shown that juvenile fish seldom go deeper than 10 feet. Although these structures are not specifically designed as "fish attractors" for anglers to fish on, they are seasonally productive for adult fish, especially in the spring when most fish move shallower for spawning. GPS coordinates of these structures are available by contacting the DWR Forest regional office.

Studies have consistently shown that catch and release of striped bass in the summer months results in higher mortality than colder months. Most of these striped bass die 1-2 days after release, sink to the bottom, and never surface. Catch and release mortality appears to be especially high for the larger fish. Consequently, anglers should not be targeting large striped bass with the intent of catch and release during the summer months. Smaller fish (generally < 22 inches) usually survive summer release rather well.

The Department of Wildlife Resources encourages striped bass anglers to stop fishing after catching their two-fish limit in the months of June-September and occasionally during warm periods in October.

Catch and release mortality decreases substantially after water temperatures drop below 70°. Catch and release is recommended for striped bass from November through May.

Striped bass are distributed throughout the lake during most of the year, but are concentrated in lower lake (generally between

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the dam and the bridge on the Roanoke Arm and up to marker B14 of the Blackwater Arm) areas during the late spring and summer months. Coves are typically not very productive for striped bass during the summer, anglers should concentrate their efforts on the main lake when water temperatures begin to rise. Some of the bigger coves and the upper ends of the lake are more productive during the fall, winter, and spring months.

Although these are the general areas most striped bass are caught, these fish are very mobile and may change locations continuously depending on forage availability, water temperatures, and spawning.

Guide Clint Black of Clint's Stripper Guide Service notes May is when many of the lake's stripers will false spawn. They do so in the lower end of the lake, often in an area known as Cedar Keys, not far from the dam.

Black says this is his favorite time to catch a trophy class Smith Mountain striper using live bait. He'll pull a big gizzard shad on a side planer over a shallow point or flat for the biggest fish.

Anglers that prefer to cast lures to striper should consider the excellent night fishing in May and June.

Black explained that blueback herring spawn along the shoreline in the lower end of the lake at night and anglers casting and retrieving wake baits like a Storm Thunderstick can enjoy excellent night fishing.

Striped bass anglers utilize a variety of fishing methods such as drifting or slow trolling live shad, trolling (plugs, bucktail jigs, swim baits, umbrella rigs), casting lures (flukes, swim baits, bucktail jigs), or vertical jigging. Anglers use live shad throughout the year, trolling is most popular during the warmer months, casting lures is most productive during the winter and spring at night, and vertical jig fishing is productive in the winter and summer.

Anglers use live shad throughout the year, trolling is most popular during the warmer months, casting lures is most productive during the winter and spring at night.

New striped bass size limits were designed to limit the harvest of larger striped bass during periods when survival of catch and released fish is high and to allow harvest of these

fish during the summer, when survival is typically low. This new regulation did improve the number of larger striped bass in the population; only 2% of the adult population was over 30 inches in 2004. This improved to 18% by 2009, and held steady through 2011 and is rising through 2021

A new protective slot limit was adjusted in 2015 to 30-40 inches (only for the months of Nov-May), up from 26-36 inches initiated in 2006. From June 1 to October 31 there is a two-fish limit with no minimum size.

Anglers who prefer catch-and-release of 26-29 inch fish should continue that practice. Excessive harvest of this size group is not necessary to improve growth; some catch-and-release will still be necessary to maintain a trophy fishery.

This reservoir has limited crappie habitat. Although the lake produces many quality-size crappie, anglers should not expect to consistently catch large numbers of crappie.

Large coves and the upper ends of the reservoir should be the most productive, especially near fallen trees, brush piles, and some docks. Angler creel surveys indicate crappie anglers were generally most productive in March-May but October-December were also typically good months for crappie fishing.

Department of Wildlife Resources sampling indicated the crappie population had been stable for many years, produced lower numbers in 2018-2020, but returned to above average numbers in 2021.

White perch are a relatively new species to the lake and have recently provided great fishing opportunities. This species can be found throughout the reservoir but higher concentrations are typically found in the lower end (dam end) of the reservoir.

Numerous public and private boat ramps and marinas are found around the lake. In addition, there are very nice handicapped-accessible fishing piers located in the Smith Mountain Lake State Park and Franklin County Park.

Additional information on lodging, marinas, and other attractions can be obtained by calling the Smith Mountain Lake Visitors Center at 1-800-676-8203 or by visiting www.smith-mountain-lake-visitor-center.com.



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Photos by Garrett Doll

Late Season Gobblers

BY C.C. MCCOTTER

This month we asked W2 Prostaffer and Hunting Editor Robert Runnett to explain the intricacies of late season spring gobbler hunting.

The nearly 30-something native Virginian resides in Louisa County and does most of this hunting on properties around the region. He's taken numerous turkey and enjoys carry youngsters with him when he's not working as a City of Fredericksburg firefighter.

We asked him a series of questions to help him explain his proven system and share methods for taking a late season Tom.

What is the main difference between early season spring gobbler hunting and May hunting? Why?

The biggest difference between early and late season spring gobbler hunting is the routine that the birds are in. Most hens have committed to their nests by

the late season and are no longer seeking out vocal gobblers in the morning. Toms are aware that the hens have changed their patterns and will feel less driven to gobble for two reasons: necessity and pressure.

Now that most hens are no longer breeding, a Tom may feel that gobbling is unnecessary, he may focus his efforts more towards feeding. Along with lack of necessity, a Tom that has made it to the late season has likely felt pressure from hunting and overcalling over the last month.

Aside from human hunters, he may have had an encounter with a coyote or fox in the last month that has led him to keep his voice down. This does not mean that he is no longer interested in breeding. Given the opportunity he will likely seize it, but may proceed with caution.

What different tactics do you use during the later spring gobbler season?

Slow down. I still employ the same tactics first thing in the morning. Listen

for a gobble and try to make a play on it via setting up in the vicinity.

If I can't get any action first thing in the morning I will resort to the slow game. This involves going to areas where I know turkeys like to feed and sitting down and calling. While moving from place to place I may stop to glass a field or scan ridges looking for turkeys. I have scared many birds that simply were not answering me when I called.

When calling in the late season I will take a much softer approach. The early season is fast paced and loud. In the late season I have much better luck staying away from loud yelps and focusing on soft purrs and clucks. Softer calling isn't easy though, by the first week of May the woods have greened up and sound does not travel like it did on that first crisp morning.

Please describe the gun, ammo, calls and camo pattern you use for spring gobbler hunting?

My gear is nothing special and can



Photos - Above, Melissa Miller with her first spring gobbler taken this season. Facing page, Another first spring gobbler for a young lady outfitted by Green Top Sporting Goods.

all be bought on a budget for our friends at Green Top Sporting Goods or Dance's Sporting Goods.

I use a Remington 870 shotgun for all big game. When hunting turkeys I use a Remington Xtra-Full turkey choke and

shoot Federal 3rd Degree shells. Tighter chokes can come in handy during the late season when dealing with a timid gobbler who may hold up at 50 or 60 yards.

The calls I use can vary on the situation. When I'm trying to locate a gobbler by drawing a gobbler out of him I will use a box call, they are loud and very easy to use. Once I have located a gobbler and am set up to make a play on him I will usually revert to a diaphragm mouth call. With a little bit of practice they are very effective at mimicking a hen turkey.

Slate calls are great however I have found that when running and gunning it can be easy to misplace or drop your striker, I managed to pull that exact move on the first day of the season last year and it cost me a gobbler. They can also be difficult to use in a solo setting when you also have to man the gun, the less hand movement the better.

I don't use any specific camo pattern for any type of hunting, it can be Realtree one day, Mossy Oak the next, or a combination of the two. I find that camo is nowhere near as important as being smart in the woods.

When picking a set-up, find a tree that has a wider base than the outline of your body. Avoid walking across fields or ridges where you can be spotted from a long

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GREEN TOP Gear Check

Green Top Firearms expert Travis Barrett notes the options for turkey hunting firearms have never been more diverse with the shop carrying options from Charles Daly, CZ USA, Escort, Franchi, Mossburg, Retay Gordion, Rossi, Savage, TriStar and Winchester.

The Savage 320 Turkey has been generating interest with a new look and feel with a rugged thumbhole stock and ambidextrous cheek riser. The shotgun features an olive drab stock and forend feature rugged grip textures, a drilled and tapped receiver, an extended extra full turkey choke, and adjustable fiberoptic sights for the perfect shot. This shotgun features a smooth, reliable pump action (proven rotary bolt, and dual slide bars), 12 & 20 ga options, chrome alloy steel 22" matte black, ventilated rib barrel, 3-inch chamber, swivel stud on stock and magazine cap, bottom-loading tube magazine (5+1 capacity) and recoil pad. Retail is around \$300.



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Crappie Junkies

Richmond Crappie Club Members Are Disciples Of Speck Fishing

BY AARON BALL

As the calendar turns to May the Richmond Crappie Club tournament season is well underway and the region's crappie junkies are having a great year. These are the men and women that love freckle fishing. From Buggs to Chesdin, Lake Anna to Chickahominy Lake, they fish them all and come from all corners of the state to match skills with some of the best.

I too love crappie fishing and wanted to see how I would compare to other crappie masters, so I arranged to partner with Brian Green of Allbitson Digital Development and fish all of the Richmond Crappie Club events.

These tournaments permit the use of live bait in addition to artificial lures and there are some teams using cutting edge live sonar to catch otherwise unseen freckles. Long pole and live screen tactics, as well as casting jigs and even fishing minnows under bobbers are all employed by Richmond Crappie Club anglers.

The first stop of the season had 18 teams

competing on Lake Anna at end of February. The crappie were plentiful but small for most of the teams. Winners Josh and Farah-Dale Morris reported they focused on open water crappie in the upper ends of the lake using live sonar, long poles and hair jigs to secure the win. They had an impressive weight of 11.24 pounds anchored by a 1.74 big fish that currently is leading the big fish contest for the year.

For those of you unfamiliar with crappie tournaments, most go by a seven fish limit versus the traditional five in most bass tournaments. Brian and I ended up taking fifth place, mixing in a few Lake Anna staples for crappie fishing. We focused on bridge pilings and a few community docks in the mid-lake area as well. We also used a combination of Trippy Stix hair jigs and minnows fished under a slip bobber for our top five finish. We just didn't know there were big fish to be caught in the upper end of the lake and did the best we could with what we knew.

The second stop of the season was held on Lake Chesdin, located southwest of Richmond, Virginia. This lake was formed with the damming of the Appomattox River and

includes a deep, lower section and a swampy, shallow upper region. The lake harbors black and white crappie.

Unfortunately, the fishing was extremely tough for most teams that day. The crappie were still in the pre-spawn phase, with some males just beginning to push shallow. Many teams reported catching small fish, but there is a nine-inch minimum for crappies to be brought to the scales, per club rules.

Josh and Farah-Dale once again found the right fish to secure themselves a first-place finish with 7.35 pounds. They reported six of their seven fish came from one dock and caught them fishing a minnow under a slip bobber.

Brian and I once again found ourselves in fifth place with only three fish. We caught two of our fish in a shallow back water area while utilizing a Garmin Live Scope and hair jigs. I did manage one really nice white crappie towards the end of the day while casting a Trippy Stix jig under a dock.

One interesting note of the day was a biologist from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources attended the weigh in. He cracked open a few of the fish's skulls





Author (right) with Richmond Crappie Club fishing partner Brian Green with their Lake Anna limit.

to remove the otoliths, which they can use to age the crappie. He also advised that Lake Chesdin really needs the smaller crappie to be culled from the lake. The Richmond Crappie Club might host a small fish tournament later this year to help with this issue.

If you are interested in joining in on the fun or just want to follow along on-line you can find The Richmond Crappie Club on Facebook. We still have tournaments on Chickahominy Lake, River and the James River in June and an October classic.

The club is diverse with members that all share a love of crappie fishing. You can always learn a lot very quickly fishing with such talented anglers.

"I started the Richmond Crappie Club because I enjoy fishing different bodies of water, learning new techniques and meeting other fishermen. I decided to start the club after fishing some tournaments with the Peanut City Crappie Club in Suffolk, and I felt like there was an opportunity in the Richmond area for crappie tournaments. Each team weighs in their best seven fish by weight. We have some people that have fished for several years and others that this is their first year crappie fishing. It's a laid-back environment and a great place to learn. I'm hoping to grow the club each year."

Josh and Farah-Dale Morris of the Richmond Crappie Club.



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Long Beard Battle '23

Green Top's Youth Hunting Weekend Makes Big Impact

BY C.C. MCCOTTER

Spring gobbler hunting has always been a popular tradition among members of the Commonwealth hunting community. Combine the effect of Covid 19 and all the youngsters that took to the woods for the first time that season when schools went virtual and you had a noticeable bump in interest that continues now, some three seasons later.

Green Top Sporting Goods has always been ahead of trends and last year they introduced a new way to enjoy spring turkey season with the inaugural Long Beard Battle. This year continued the new tradition. This is a special promotion intended to encourage youth hunters aged 15 and under to participate in the spring hunting season.

Participants hunted the weekend of April 1-2, and were required to bring their harvested birds to Green Top for official weighing and measuring. Top finishers were announced with substantial prizes from sponsors.

We caught up with Todd Sadler, Green Top Long Beard Battle Coordinator and he told W2, "The inspiration behind the

event is simple. As hunters, anglers, conservationists, etc., we understand that the future of our collective passions is in the hands of the next generation. Youth involvement is key to continuing the traditions that we hold so close. Events like this will hopefully serve to light that fire in a young person that can grow, and hopefully one day be passed on again. I think as hunters and anglers we understand our love for the outdoors.

"I also believe that most of us would agree, that there are few things more incredible than watching a youngster hear his or her first gobbler in the spring, see that first duck pitch and drop into the decoys or feel that first tug on the other end of the line. This

event just serves as a chance to nudge or incentivize some of those adults out there to help make these things happen."

Some might remember the One Shot turkey promotion championed by past DWR Director Bob Duncan a few years back and note the similarity, and Sadler admits being inspired.

"Having worked with DWR in the past with some of the free fishing events that they put on each year, I was inspired.

Having seen firsthand the looks on some of these kid's faces when they experienced something like that for the first time, it was incredible."

The rules for the Long Beard Battle are simple: 1) You must be a youth hunter age 15 or under, 2) If you legally harvest a bird on the weekend of April 1-2, that bird MUST be brought to Green Top to be weighed and measured.

According to Sadler, the 2023 Green Top Long Beard Battle drew 100 pre-registered



| continued on page 22

"I also believe that most of us would agree, that there are few things more incredible than watching a youngster hear his or her first gobbler in the spring..."

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Long Beard Battle from 20



2023 Green Top Long Beard Battle Grand Champion Hudgins Eberly with Todd Sadler.

hunters that brought in 34 birds. Hunters aged four to 15 participated.

Grand Champion Hudgins Eberly harvested a 22-pound gobbler that scored 73 to top all entries. Runner up Nolan Neale had a 23-2-pound bird and scored 67.25. Second runner up Jacob Rollins bird was the heaviest of the event at 24.7 pounds, scoring 67.0625 points.

The Long Beard Young Gun recognition went to Bradon Neale with a 20-9 bird that scored 60.4375 points.

Nathan Cawthorne brought in a turkey with the longest beard at 12.0625 inches.

"I congratulate our top finishers and thank everyone that participated. We were able to partner with some of the best names in the industry when it comes to turkey hunting and included their merchandise as prizes. The prize packs included decoys, calls, and other turkey hunting gear, from companies like Avian-X decoys, Zink Calls, Hunters Specialties, Oaklan Farm Calls and more. There was a swag bag with some turkey gear in it this year for each participant that entered a bird. Trophies were back as well, including the first place Long Beard Battle cup where the name of the Grand Champion of each year is added, with plaques for 2nd and 3rd."

"All we want on our end is to see a bunch of smiling faces," said Sadler.

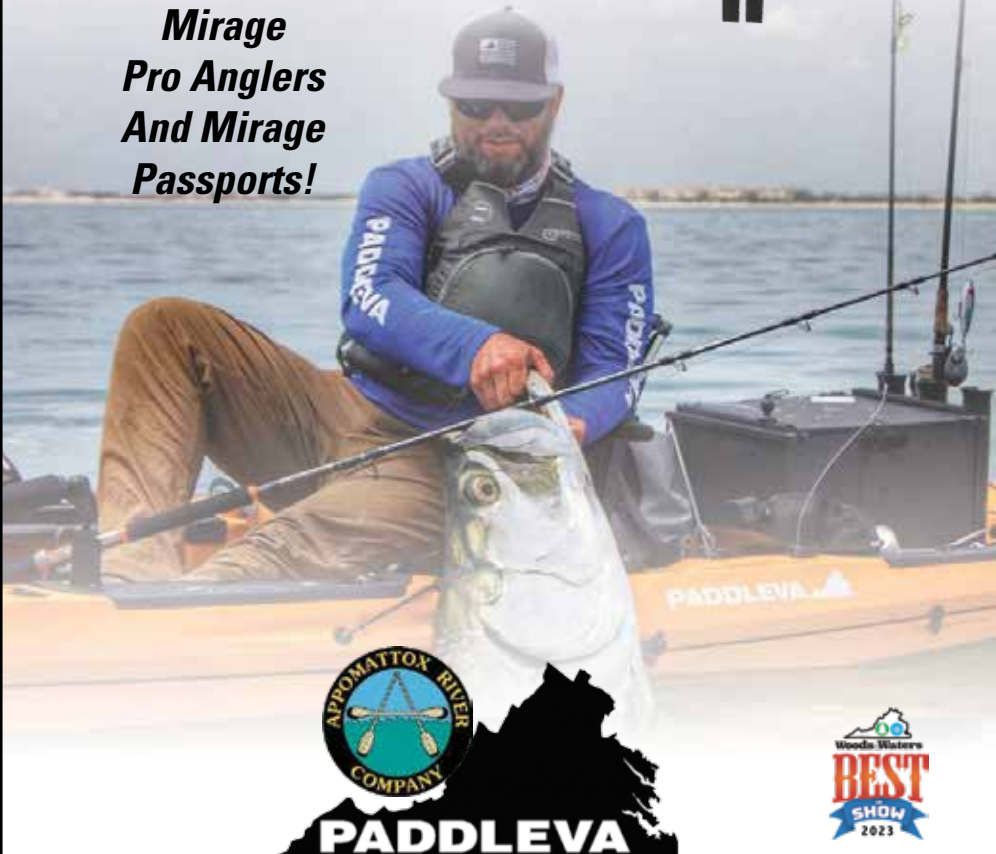
"This event isn't about Green Top giving these kids an opportunity to turkey hunt. It's about wanting to share their joy and love of the outdoors. It's about seeing those smiles and proud looks as the adults stand back and watch young men and women weigh in birds that THEY harvested. It's THEIR opportunity to stand in the spot light. That is what we want to be. We want to help them share their moment. With that comes prize packs and trophies, and bragging rights. It's our hope that this will become an annual tradition here at Green Top to start our spring turkey season each and every year." 🌲🌲



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How effective are decoys later in the season?

Decoys will work later in the season. Avoid strutting Tom decoys and be cautious to even put out a Jake. Gobblers are at the end of a month of breeding and are unlikely to commit energy to defending territory. A simple submissive or feeding hen will be sufficient. At this point you are giving the gobbler a chance to put a face with a voice.

What advice would you give to a beginning spring gobbler hunter for the late season?

Stay the course! This time of year it is hot and the bugs are biting. On top of that the sun is coming up much earlier than it was at the beginning of the season and it's much easier to press the snooze button at 4:30 am than it is to get up and hunt. Use a bug spray such as permethrin to keep the insects away and set the timer on that coffee pot. Your patience and persistence will pay off.

How important is completion of hunters' safety education prior to hunting in your opinion and why?

Hunter's education is incredibly important. I have personally been affected by a hunting accident that involved a person falling from a tree stand. Aside from personal experience I, as a first responder, will usually respond to about three hunting accidents a year. It is vital that we promote hunter's safety and education as well as demonstrate safe practices to youth hunters.

What type of terrain/venue are you looking for a late season spring gobbler hunt?

Turkeys can be found just about anywhere. Look for a place that hasn't seen hunting pressure. If you can find a place that has gone untouched all season you will likely have the best day of hunting you've ever had. 🌲🌲



Got a question for the author? You can contact Runnett at robrunnett@gmail.com



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Rappahannock River

BY AARON BALL & C.C. MCCOTTER

It seems like a lot of things have changed over the past few years, but some things remain the same here in Virginia come spring. The dogwoods are going to bloom, and the shad are going to run up the tidal rivers on their annual spring run to spawn.

Virginia anglers will have the opportunity to target hickory shad, American shad, and herring with only the hickory shad being aloud to be kept.

Many anglers take the spring run as an opportunity to stock up on catfish bait as many feel that the fresh shad to be the best catfish bait available.

The main reason I think you will see 100's of anglers lining the banks of our tidal rivers is because they are fun to catch. Many anglers reference these fish as a poor man's tarpon and once you have one of these silver missiles attached to your line you will see why. They often will leap from the water, putting on quite the acrobatic display.

Naturally, when my friend Mark invited me out recently for a day on the Rappahannock River to chase them, I had to say, yes. We dropped my boat in at the City Docks

Ramp located in Fredericksburg and idled a short way down the river. While many anglers target these fish with shad darts or small spoons, Mark handed me a spinning rod with a trolling sinker and a small crappie jig attached a few feet below the sinker. It didn't take long before both Mark and I had put a few fish in the boat, but it was obvious that Mark was doing something different because he was catching them three times as fast.

As any good angler would do, I made Mark switch rods with me to make sure that it was not the bait's fault. As Mark quickly hooked up on my rig, I realized that it was in fact not the bait, but me. Mark had a certain cadence dialed in and after a short while I was able to find my rhythm and started getting bit almost every cast.

I would be hard pressed to find a better way to spend a beautiful spring day on the water than catching shad almost every cast. Mark and I caught over 50 shad in a short period of time.

One other thing is you often end up with other fish besides shad on your line. I think we caught 9-10

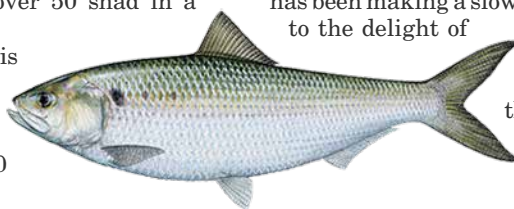
species of fish, including crappie, striper and bass during the time we were on the water.

The American shad is a fish with a life cycle similar to that of salmon; adults migrate from the ocean to freshwater to spawn, and after hatching, young shad remain in the rivers for their first summer and migrate to the ocean the following fall. They remain at sea to maturity and typically live for five to seven years.

The shad was the most important fish in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries from colonial times until the 1930s, when the population went into steep decline, the result of years of overfishing and fragmented habitat and spawning grounds.

The fish once ran up the Rappahannock to the mouth of the Hazel River, a few miles above the town of Remington, and up the Rapidan River to the town of Rapidan. The fish, once prized for its meat despite an abundance of bones, and more so for its roe, has been making a slow but steady comeback to the delight of sport anglers.

There were two major reasons for the precipitous decline in abundance of American Shad in



"I would be hard pressed to find a better way to spend a beautiful spring day on the water than catching shad almost every cast."



Shad Fishing

the James River: overfishing (primarily during the spring roe fishery) and dam proliferation; these factors worked in concert with general poor water quality.

Females are larger than males and typically mature at age five, which coincides with the age at which they have fully recruited to the gill nets used in the roe fishery. The removal of virgin females prior to spawning not just once but for multiple years greatly reduced spawning potential of the stock.

In the James River, American Shad historically migrated as far west as Covington, Virginia. In the mid-1800s, six dams, including Boshers' Dam at the fall line in Richmond, Virginia, were constructed, blocking access to spawning grounds and confining American shad to tidal waters.

All of these dams, except for Boshers' Dam, were either naturally or artificially breached between 1989 and 1993. A fishway was installed in Boshers' Dam in 1999 that was specifically designed for passage of American Shad, coinciding with removing blockades to migration. Further, a hatchery program on the James River was initiated in 1992 to support recovery of American Shad stocks in Virginia.

American shad have played an important role in supporting recreational and commercial fisheries since colonial times. Native

Americans and early settlers utilized shad as a major food supply. The Chesapeake Bay shad fishery became an important industry around 1869 and developed greatly in following years. Commercial landings of American shad in Virginia decreased from 11.5 million pounds in 1897 to less than a million pounds in 1982.

Concern about the decline in landings of American shad along the Atlantic coast prompted the development of an interstate fisheries management plan (FMP) by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Management Program. The main focus of the plan is to regulate exploitation and enhance stock restoration efforts. A moratorium on the taking of American shad in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries was established by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) beginning January 1, 1994. The prohibition applies to both recreational and commercial fishers.

Immediately following the moratorium, there were no monitoring programs that provided direct assessment of stock recovery. To address this deficiency, a method of scientific monitoring was proposed to estimate catch rates relative to those recorded before the prohibition of in-river fishing in 1994. Catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) were compiled from

logbooks that recorded commercial landings using staked gill nets in the middle reaches of the James, York and Rappahannock rivers during the period of 1980-1992.

The American shad monitoring program began in 1998 and consists of sampling techniques and locations that are consistent with and directly comparable to the historic logbook data collected by VIMS. The monitoring program is the only direct method available to determine the size of spawning runs relative to decades prior to the moratorium.

Back in 2003 the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stocked nearly a half million American shad fry into the Rappahannock River at Kelly Ford. The then director of the state agency declared flatly that there is no doubt the project will succeed.

"In three to five years, we'll be here celebrating a success story," said William L. Woodfin, who praised his agency's partnership with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

About 168,000 American shad fry for the stocking came from the state's King and Queen Hatchery near Tappahannock, Virginia, and 244,000 came from the Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery, operated by the Fish and Wildlife Service in Charles City County, Virginia.

The shad eggs that hatched into fry were collected from broodfish taken from the Potomac River by biologists from Virginia and the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin. That shad stocking program released a minimum of five million shad fry over the next several years, with the goal to aid in the speedy recovery of a healthy shad population.

Albert Spells, the Fish and Wildlife Service Virginia Fisheries Coordinator and manager of the Harrison Lake hatchery, said biologists expected about 1,000 returning adults for every 350,000 fry stocked in the wild.

The problem with the Rappahannock River was Embrey Dam, located a couple of miles above nearby Fredericksburg, that had blocked 73 miles of shad habitat for nearly 100 years. The 22-foot high, 900-foot wide dam was removed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2004.

When the Embrey dam, built in 1910, and a nearby crib dam, built in 1853, were removed, the Rapidan and Rappahannock Rivers provided a combined 112 reopened miles of shad and herring spawning and rearing habitat, and an estimated 900 miles of potential tributary habitat will become accessible.

Charles G. McDaniel, chairman of the state board that oversees the DWR, called the Rappahannock River stocking "something that's going to benefit everyone," and praised the support of Virginia Senators John Warner and George Allen for their help in securing a comeback for the American shad.

Well, in the years since stocked hatchery fish would be expected to return (i.e., age four fish in 2007), the percent hatchery origin fish

| continued on page 26

Photos, clockwise from left to right - Author and his host, Mark, with a double shad hook-up, Friends of the Rappahannock fly angler with shad, shad flies, author with shad and close-up of an American shad.



encountered in the Rappahannock River ranged from 0% (2007 and 2021) to 8.9% (2016). And due to the low level of return, DWR and USFW ceased stocking American shad in the Rappahannock River for the foreseeable future. The program was an unexpected failure.

Fisheries biologists were confused. The natural recruitment of American Shad in the James River and Rappahannock Rivers had been altered due to overfishing and dams. Therefore, they hy-

pothesized that increased hatchery inputs of American shad larvae and removal of the dams would lead to more returning adults as well as to a higher proportion of hatchery adults in the spawning stocks of that year-class.

Sadly, this didn't happen.

Long-term monitoring of the James River American Shad spawning population allowed for the critical examination of the contribution of hatchery individuals to the yearly spawning run and

the relative success rate of each hatchery year-class. Although American shad populations did not rebound as planned, from the data DWR and other state biologists determined that the James River spawning stock of American Shad was dependent upon hatchery inputs, with ideal hatchery returns occurring during years of moderate levels of hatchery stocking.

Unfortunately, hatchery operations for American shad on the

James River ceased in 2018 due to financial constraints, difficulty in obtaining broodstock, and the apparent ineffectiveness of restoring the natural population. Because the age-5 year-class is the first year of full recruitment to the gear used for monitoring the spawning stock, the full consequences of the termination of hatchery inputs on the James River should be evident this year.

Hickory shad are the most common shad species in the Rappahannock, while the larger American shad is caught from time to time.

Rappahannock River shad are most frequently caught between March and May. It is not uncommon for anglers to catch over 100 fish in a day of fishing. Some individuals swear by Mother Nature and wait until the shad bush starts blooming to go fish. Others start right when the cormorants appear at the fall line in Fredericksburg.

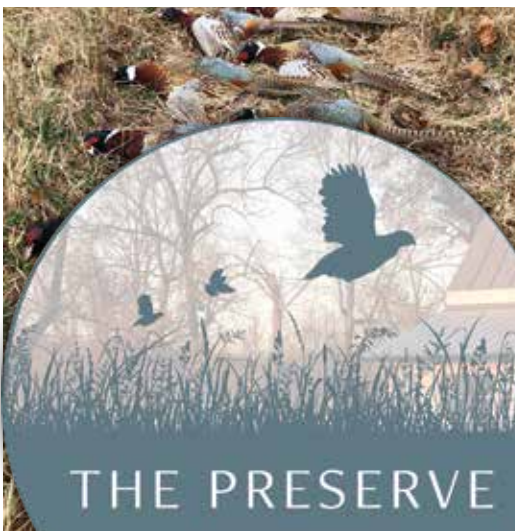
Shad are typically caught from the bank or a boat using a spin fishing rod or a fly rod. Shad congregate in large schools alongside several publicly-accessible locations in the City of Fredericksburg - a national destination for recreational shad fishing, especially for fly anglers.

Shad can be caught on spin tackle using artificial lures such as spoons, shad darts and jigs. Fly anglers often choose to use a sinking line and small, brightly-colored heavy flies such as Clouser minnows.

According to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, female shad release eggs at night when water temperatures reach about 61°F. Once fertilized, the eggs drift downstream with the current and hatch in 48 to 70 hours. Females can contain more than 300,000 eggs. After hatching, the young fry spend their first summer in freshwater and move towards higher salinity waters by fall.

Despite their great abundance in Fredericksburg, current shad populations are believed to represent just a fraction of their historical level.

If you try shad fishing this spring, keep in mind the Rappahannock, like all rivers can be dangerous. Some pools are deep and waders should take care. A properly fitted PFD is important



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Good shad fishing locations on the Rappahannock River.

to wear on days of high flow or fishing around strong current. Waders are helpful but bank anglers catch plenty of shad, too.

As noted above, most of the shad anglers pull from the Rappahannock are hickory shad but American shad are a possibility.

Light spinning gear and fly rods are the norm for Rapp River shad fishing. Weighted streamers, shad darts and small spoons work well most of the time.

White and red is a popular color combination for darts and streamers, but many local experts prefer chartreuse bodies with a dark green or red head. Usually a specific dart will be working, and if the fish are choosing smaller darts, anglers will rig two in tandem, one 18 to 24 inches ahead of the second one. Fishing two streamers at once on a fly rod can also be productive. A 5- to 7-weight outfit with a 9-foot rod is perfect for this fishing.

There are some nuances to learn when beginning shad fishing. Top spots to try are deep pools, with

the larger ones holding the most fish. Some shad can be caught in the upper sections of the pools, but the lower third of the pool usually holds the most fish.

To cast and present your bait to shad, first position yourself directly across from a prime zone or slightly upstream from it and cast across. Next, let the fly or dart sink a few feet, and then begin a slow to moderate pumping retrieve. The pulsing retrieve will draw more strikes than a steady one on most days.

The shad stay in the river and strike darts and flies through mid-May. This month the action slows, but if you scale down to smaller flies and darts you can still enjoy good action.

Shad fishing is a great way to take a kid fishing or perhaps somebody just looking to get into fishing. The bites are often plentiful, the equipment required is relatively cheap, and the weather can be great. 🌱🌊

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Tom Wilcox

Legacy Retailer

BY C.C. MCCOTTER

Established in 1954 by Elmo and Mary Anne Wilcox with the premise that hard work, competitive pricing, and excellent customer service were the ingredients to a successful business model, Wilcox Bait and Tackle in Newport News, VA has evolved into one of the Virginia's most highly regarded hunting and fishing retailers.

The current business, known not only in Tidewater but also up and down the east coast, had a surprisingly humble beginning. After Elmo was laid off from the shipyard, he and Mary Anne cashed in their life insurance policies valued at \$400 each to purchase a family corner grocery store near the current Wilcox location. Business was hard. Many of their customers couldn't pay and Elmo and Mary Anne extended credit. But this didn't help them pay their bills.

Soon after, though, a wholesaler from Richmond would change their lives. He pulled up in a white van loaded down with fishing supplies. Elmo expressed interest but said he just didn't have the money to invest. The

wholesaler offered to let them have \$50 worth of supplies, and he said he'd come back next week to get the money for it. Amongst their first fishing inventory were hooks, floats, fishing lines, corks, and cane poles. Elmo said.

Elmo then asked another gentleman if he could dig in his manure pile for worms. When the gentleman asked, "What in the world for?" Elmo confessed he wanted to sell them to support his new wife and new baby boy! The gentleman said that any man who was desperate enough to dig in a pile of manure for his family certainly deserved any money made from those worms!

Next, Elmo and a friend, Albert Slade, began fishing for minnows in New Market creek and a minnow tank was added to the corner store.

The fishing business became more popular and with that popularity came other traveling salespersons with bigger loaning power. Their store credit went from \$50 a week to \$10,000 a month and the little grocery store changed locations to the current location at Center Avenue & Jefferson. The 2'x4' fishing tackle display was now converted into an

"My mom and dad were good, Christian people, and I learned tons of stuff from them on the business side as far as doing what is right."

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Tom Wilcox with a participant in his Junior Olympic Archery Development Program.

entire floor with an expanded line including not just bait and tackle, but also guns, hunting supplies, canoes, and now, one of the most expansive archery lines available anywhere.

Today, the torch has been passed on to their son, Tom Wilcox, who eats, sleeps and breathes hunting and fishing. He has an incredible wealth of knowledge. Not only did Tom inherit this major role in the family business but he also inherited the work ethic that went along with it. People travel for miles to have Tom work on and service their archery equipment or set them up with the proper gear to catch fish.

The store now offers fishing and hunting supplies and tackle, an archery pro shop, guns, ammo and all kind of bait.

We caught up with the 65-year-young president of Wilcox Bait & Tackle for this month's W2 Profile and asked about how he got into fishing and hunting.

"The whole thing started with my dad and grandfather. They always hunted and fished and trapped. Dad and grandfather got me mixed up in trapping industry. I used to trap a lot of muskrat and raccoon in high school when the market was good. I still buy my trapping license each year. Both my parents were very instrumental in getting me into hunting and fishing," Wilcox told W2.

The lifelong Newport News businessman attended Denby High School and then Virginia Tech and earned a degree in Ag Tech. The family had some land where they grew Christmas trees for a while and sold across the street from the store some years back and Tom managed that joining the family business after graduating.

We asked if Wilcox had a mentor or major influencer in his life and his response was predictable.

"My parents. My mom and dad were good Christian people and I learned tons of stuff from them on the business side as far as doing what is right. There were really good, hard-working people."

With a reputation as a tireless, dedicated owner we asked Wilcox why he does it year after year?

"One that is pretty cool, we sell hunting and fishing stuff and tons of archery stuff. There are customers out there that we've sold bows to 40-45 years ago and we've sold bows to their kids and now their grandkids. The succession of customers loyal to Wilcox is humbling. People tend to trust us. That's one of the coolest things – the core customers that come in here. Some of them aren't sportfishing, they are fishing to feed their families. We have a good, loyal customer base."

We asked Wilcox what has changed most over the years he's been working at the store?

"Running a retail shop is just tough. Things change all the time. About the time you think you got a handle on it there's a new tax you have to pay, a new government policy or rising inflation. Invoice prices are constantly changing over the past couple years and that has been challenging."

What makes Wilcox different from other outdoor retailers is something many custom-

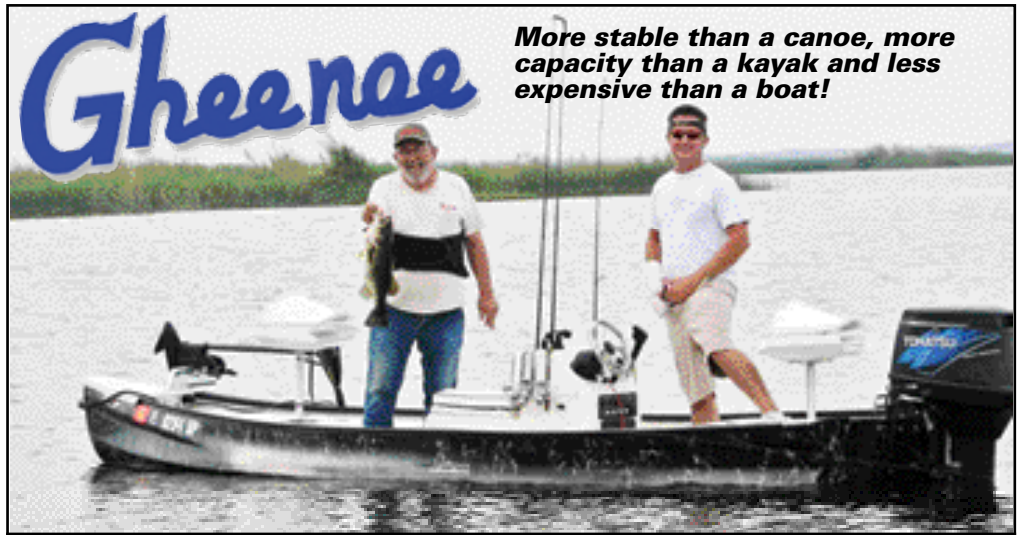
ers might not even know about – a thriving wholesale bait and merchandise side of the business.

"Probably our niche in the market is our wholesale business. Our warehouse, freezers and refrigerators are full of stuff that we take to a lot of mom-and-pop stores all over the mid-Atlantic coast. We wholesale bloodworms, nightcrawlers, squid and more to them in addition to tackle. Many of these places are small and this helps increase our tackle sales. My brother, Nathan, coordinates the wholesale side of the business that also includes supplying pet shops."

Wilcox has been a dedicated supporter of youth in the community by offering a junior Olympic archery development program for years.

"We have an indoor archery range across the street, and we do a junior Olympic archery development program for kids 8-18 years of

| continued on page 41



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winged wisdom

Why Does Gun Fit Matter?

BY KATE AHNSTROM

Geometry and physics are in EVERYTHING and every aspect of our lives. You can either embrace and go on successfully or try to fight it and struggle to be mediocre. Now, add in anatomy to the equation and gun fit not only matters, but it's also a crucial component of shooting.

The warmer weather and longer days are bringing families and friends to the clay courses. There are more and more youth and women getting into the sport. Women will naturally seek instruction and assistance with all of the aspects of the game. This is quite often the one and only shot you must create a pleasurable and comfortable experience for the new shooter.

Too many times a woman has stood in front of me and told me a dreadful story about a boyfriend or husband that has put a heavy 12ga something or other in their hands. To add insult to injury the poor unsuspecting shooter is given a load that is guaranteed to rattle teeth.

If you have been this "helpful" boyfriend or husband, please

don't do that ever again. It's mean and it hurts, and you are scaring the hell out of the person in front of you. Instead, grab a lighter and softer recoiling 20ga for that new shooter. Be sure the shells are light loads and make the experience a good one and encouraging to the shooter.

When selecting a gun for a woman or youth, please refrain from setting them up with a youth model right off the bat. Chances are they won't be able to use it because it will be too short. When selecting a gun for them, look more towards a gas autoloader, especially if they may be recoil sensitive. Grab the lightest loads the gun will cycle. Now, time to figure out LOP (length of pull), DAC (drop at comb), and all the other nuances of gun fit.

When putting a gun up to the shoulder, it should fit into the pocket below the clavicle and inside the shoulder bone itself. Make sure the buttstock is up high enough in the pocket or the shooter will be forced to hunch down to get their cheek on the gun.

"When selecting a gun for a woman or youth, please refrain from setting them up with a youth model right off the bat."



Don't overlook gun fit.

The shooter should turn their head a few degrees towards the comb (top of the stock) and move their head forward and down, sealing their cheek onto the comb. The comb should come up under the zygomatic bone and their nose should be just inside the stock. This will ensure their eye (iris) is in the middle of the rib and hopefully sitting flush. See if you can put two fingers between the tip of their nose and the start of the comb.

If the gun is getting caught up under the armpit, it's because the person is shooting from a very upright position. Have them lean forward and avoid tucking the stock under the arm.

When the stock is too long or too short, it's going to skew the sight picture, a lot! Too short can even cause the shooter to accidentally pop themselves in the nose on the recoil. I'm always amazed at how many shooters have never had their shotgun fitted to them. Once they have gone through a fitting, they are elated at the increase in their hitting percentage. All because now, they can shoot where they are looking.

Considering a new gun purchase? Mark your calendar for Saturday, May 6th. The Syren, Caesar Guerini, Far-barm demo day is at Old Forge Sporting Clays from 10a to 1p. It's only \$40pp and includes complimentary coaching, 25 clays, 25 shells, raffle prizes and full use of all demo guns! Be sure to register at VaShootingSports.com/events. 🌱🌿



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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Capitalizing on product reputation or staying relevant, fishing companies are expanding product lines.

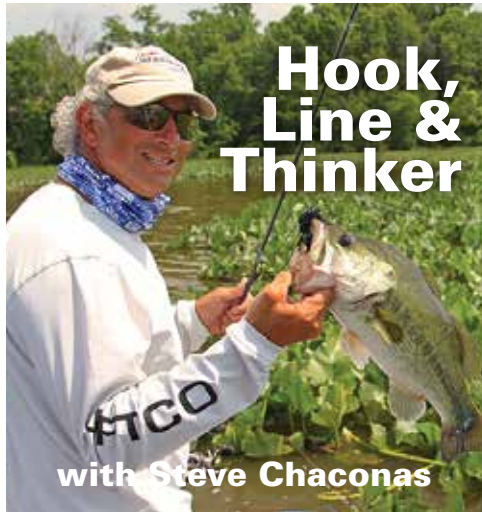
Garmin introduced forward-facing sonar. While other major players played catch up, Garmin raised the bar without requiring anglers to completely upgrade systems. New and improved LiveScope is available with a new transducer and free software updates. This is very rare in the electronics business as major improvements usually require replacing entire systems at great expense. The new LVS-34 transducer upgrade allows most users to keep their existing screens and enjoy improved screen clarity, transducer sensitivity and target separation. Garmin is setting another bar with how upgrades are sold to users.

Dominating a product category combined with quality service, Power-Pole Shallow Water Anchors own the market, with the fishing industry's best customer service. In a crowded trolling motor field, Power-Pole isn't doing it on price, instead boaters with high standards will be on board. A decade of research and development has produced Power-Pole's MOVE ZR Trolling Motor Black, a powerful and quiet brushless trolling motor, built for durability and performance with service to back it up.

Enduring full contact fishing, an unbreakable aerospace-grade titanium shaft includes a lifetime warranty. Power-Pole's custom-built steering motor is nearly silent while producing over 30% more thrust and efficiency than others. MOVE is up to 35% lighter, easier to lift. Power-Pole's website shows a dream list of features. 3 year warranty on all components.

When you develop and own a category, there's a built-in customer base. Z-Man's Original ChatterBait has company. It's another original category creator, billed as a 'self-walking' topwater lure. Z-Man's five-inch HellraiZer disturbs water and fish, doing the work of several topwater lures, splashing, sputtering, and making noise. It casts a mile and effortlessly planes as soon as it hits the water. Straight retrieves create a crazed fleeing action at any speed. ChatterBait inventor Ron Davis designed the HellraiZer with a weighted tail blade to accentuate swimming motion with a thin body, a belly line tie and a single treble hook for better hook ups. Z-Man's new HellraiZer presents a new topwater category.

If you can't beat them, invite them to be a part of your success. Not long ago, BassCat/Mercury Elite Series pro angler John Crews launched his line of pro-tested





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made in the USA soft plastics. Crews has seen a very large market being created by small, large swimbait makers that don't really have a marketplace for their unique and handmade lures. Crews says Missile Baits usually stays in their soft plastics and jigs lane. However, now they're going to sell small guy swim baits on the Missile Baits website. Shortly other sellers, too small to supply Missile with a monthly allotment, will rotate through as supplies are available. Crews says, "We are doing it to help these smaller guys out and create something fun to drive traffic to our site."

With conglomerates controlling the fishing industry, smaller companies aren't waiting to be gobbled up. Instead, they are doing the gobbling. 🐟🐟



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

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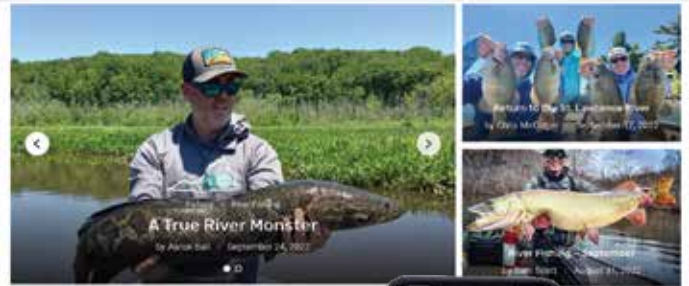
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Land For Sale

#6661-#67121-0.82±Acres-\$100,000.00 Welcome to the lake-front subdivision of The Cliffs at Prestwold on beautiful Kerr Lake. Lot 55 is .82 acre and is an ideal building lot which backs up to the Corps of Engineers land. This lot has lake access which leads to a large cove where the community dock rests. As you enter your driveway the beautiful lake view catches your eye. A short stroll to the point overlooking the main channel will have you enjoying the most gorgeous sunsets on Kerr Lake. This newer subdivision is a growing community with lovely homes and maintained paved roads. Bike rides, long walks, or an evening ride on your golf cart will be a highlight. A boat dock slip is available in the new community dock for (\$10,000). The lot has passed a perc test for a septic system in July 2020. The lot has been cleared and graded. Choose your building plans and start Kerr Lake Living! Minutes to shopping, dining, & entertainment. Hospitals & I-85 (30 mins.) Raleigh: 1 hr 15 min.

Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011

#6660-#67113-1.56±Acres-\$24,900.00 This 1.56 acre lot is ready for you to build your dream home in Mecklenburg County, VA. Located in the quiet, country setting of Baskerville, this land is fairly level and already has a natural buffer of mature trees on all sides. A homesite was previously perked and cleared. Flowering pear trees, crabapple trees and evergreens have been established on the edges. The new, underground fiber-optic lines have already been installed on this road providing great internet service to the property. The town of South Hill, with shopping, restaurants, Interstate 85 and a hospital, is a short drive east from here. Just a few minutes south, is John H Kerr Reservoir, Virginia's largest lake boasting 50,000 acres of freshwater fun. This is a rare gem offering all of the solitude of a country living with modern amenities close by.

Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011

#6659-#67114-247±Acres-\$650,000. Looking for a sizable piece of land that's perfect for investment or development? Check out this amazing 247-acre property in Kenbridge, VA. Located in Lunenburg County, this rural area boasts planted pines that will be ready for harvest in 2023, making this an excellent investment opportunity for those looking to add to their portfolio. The potential for this property is enormous, and it's just waiting for the right buyer to come along and take advantage of all it has to offer. Whether you're looking to develop the land for residential or commercial purposes or keep it as a long-term investment, the opportunities are endless. One of the most notable features of this property is the well-maintained road system that runs throughout the entire parcel. Contact us today to learn more about this fantastic opportunity.

Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011

#6658-#67097-120±Acres-\$350,000.00 Introducing the perfect opportunity for those seeking a diverse investment property in Scottsburg, VA - 120 acres of beautiful land waiting to be explored! With 90 acres of planted pines and 12 acres of mixed hardwoods, the property is ideal for hunting enthusiasts, outdoor enthusiasts or investors alike. Not only is the property surrounded by natural beauty, it also features two rental homes, both currently occupied by tenants. The first home is a spacious doublewide with three bedrooms and one bath, as well as a 20x20 workshop for added convenience. The second home is a charming and confidential built home with two bedrooms and one bath, measuring 820 square feet in total. A stream running through the 90 acres adds to the property's natural allure, and a half-acre pond provides an excellent spot for fishing or relaxation. With road frontage on both sides of Throckmorton Trail, the land can be easily accessed from multiple directions. Investors can also take advantage of the opportunity to divide the property into five separate parcels, each with their own potential building sites.

Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011

#6656-#67084-1.21±Acres-\$164,500.00 This could be the home you've been waiting for! A whole lot of house for this price; priced at just \$70/sq ft! Home boasts two full baths and four nice bedrooms with the master suite being on the opposite end of the home. New metal roof put on in 2018. Heat pump will need to be

replaced; the seller is offering a \$5,900 credit to the buyer. Home is located on a private lot situated off of the road down a winding driveway. Privacy fence installed next to the driveway & nice sized shed in the backyard. Enjoy spring and summer evenings on the large back deck that flows into the spacious yard. The home is currently vacant and is ready to be made YOURS! Don't wait to schedule your showing; this won't last long.

Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011

#6655-#67071-0.29±Acres-\$85,000.00 Bring your business to front and center Virginia Ave in downtown Clarksville, VA! This beautiful COMMERCIAL lot is located in the middle of one of the busiest sections of town. Just a few steps away is the downtown stage which features the best in live entertainment with the Lake Life Live Summer Series being at the top of the list. There is ample public parking in this location with Virginia Ave parking and side street parking both convenient to the lot. Kerr Lake/Buggs Island Lake brings an abundance of tourists throughout the year. Lake Fest is held in July which contributes well over 150,000 additional to the area. Our Small Town with a Big Heart mentality drives residents to shop local, dine local, and enjoy Kerr Lake Living to its fullest. 15 mins. away is the largest Microsoft data center in the world! There are local vineyards, breweries, craftsmen, golf courses, theater, and so much more on top of the 800 miles of shoreline of Kerr Lake. This is one of the last lots downtown. Don't miss out! Make your dream a reality today! **Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011**

#6654-#50112-40.53±Acres-\$129,900.00 Welcome to this beautiful 40.53-acre triangular shaped tract located on New Grove Road in Kenbridge, VA, Lunenburg County. This stunning property features a tranquil pond, perfect for fishing and relaxing by the water. The tract is located off of Bear's Element Creek, which provides ample opportunities for hunting and enjoying the abundant wildlife in the area. This property is a nature lover's dream, with rolling hills and lush greenery. The triangular shape of the tract provides privacy and a unique sense of seclusion. This expansive property is listed at an incredible price of \$129,900, making it an excellent value for the size and amenities it offers. Don't miss out on the opportunity to own this beautiful piece of land and create your own private oasis in the heart of Virginia. Contact us today to schedule a viewing!

Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011

#6653-#50110-103.07±Acres-\$329,000.00 This stunning 103.07-acre property in the heart of Burkeville, VA offers a rare opportunity to own a slice of pristine wilderness. Surrounded by gently rolling hills and verdant forests, this property is a nature lover's dream come true, with abundant wildlife and excellent hunting opportunities. Whether you're a seasoned hunter or simply looking for a peaceful retreat from the hustle and bustle of city life, you'll love exploring the vast expanses of this property and discovering its many hidden treasures. This property is home to a diverse array of wildlife, making it a true natural wonderland. If you're looking for a property that offers endless opportunities for adventure, relaxation, and outdoor recreation, look no further than this breathtaking piece of land in Burkeville, VA. **Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011**

#6652-#67070-12.4±Acres-\$229,000.00 An ideal location for a subdivision or townhome community nestled inside the town limits of South Hill with great access to the amenities of town. Town water and sewer increase the number of homes you could build within the 21.4 acres. Close proximity to VCU Hospital, restaurants, shopping, and entertainment create a great environment to participate in the housing sector growth as demand for homes is high. With frontage on Raleigh Avenue and Chaptico Road, you can map out your ideal development plan. Smith Creek flows through the property giving you an essence of nature in your backyard. Investors and developers, take advantage of today's home demand buoyed by the influx of people brought to the area with the Microsoft projects that are continually growing throughout the region. Be a part of the community expansion with an eye towards your bottom line as this is an excellent opportunity! **Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011**

#6651-#67069-15.6±Acres-\$249,000.00 Attention developers and investors - 15.6 acres of prime development land perfectly situated for a subdivision within the town limits of South Hill with town water and sewer. The land offers frontage on Chaptico Road and Raleigh Avenue with a park-like setting along Smith Creek flowing through the towering pines. With the land predominantly clear, you can envision your community whether it be a handful of lots or a sprawling subdivision. For the outdoor enthusiast, think conservation easement and reap the tax benefits of limiting the development potential while still enjoying the land. This property is the quintessential hidden gem with massive potential returns on today's investment.

Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011

#6649-#67051-52.19±Acres-\$149,000.00 A veritable hunting oasis tucked away with a mix of recently timbered land on the east side of Sandy Creek and mature standing timber on the west side of Sandy Creek. With abundant game signs throughout the property, you have the opportunity for everything from small game on up to deer, turkey, bear, and predator options such as coyote and bobcat at your fingertips. Plenty of space to build a cabin or off-grid getaway without disturbing the game you seek. Located less than 15 miles from Danville and close to VIR, set up your base camp for recreational nirvana and let the good times roll. Interested in growing timber? Replant the east side and harvest the west side. Thinking of opening up land, the east side would be easy to clear and would make for excellent rolling pastures.

Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011

#6648-#67049-1.47±Acres-\$125,000.00 Picture your home built overlooking Kerr Lake on the Dan River side with 50,000 acres of water to play upon and a beautifully wooded setting. With mature hardwoods standing majestically across the lot, you can keep that serene feel to your lakeside oasis. There is well over 400' of waterfront with plenty of space for a potential dock as there are none within the boundaries of this property. The zoning allows for stick-built, modular, and manufactured homes in this section of Holiday Shores. Elderberry Escape beckons!!

Virginia United Country Realty @434-374-2011

#887838 270-acres \$535,000 mountain top tract with good views and access. Great hunting and it adjoins National Forest. There are parts of the mountain top that are almost flat with panoramic views. Great road system and ATV trails. The property is in a 3 division Conservation Easement for view shed protection. Lake Moomaw, The Greenbriar, and The Homestead are 30 minutes away. Jackson River and I64 are less than 10. Seclusion, great views, outdoor recreation, and only minutes from shopping and restaurants. **Gateway Real Estate LLC Kenny Sexton (540) 969-9465 Roanoke Valley**

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Post Spawn Smallies

Who Is Chasing Who This Month On Area Rivers?

BY CHRIS GORSUCH

As we enter the month of May, at least here in the northeast, smallmouth bass are operating in various stages of post spawn. For anglers wishing to avoid bass bedding areas, there is a better way to catch plenty of bass without picking on those smaller male bass guarding nests.

Depending on the source, most biologists believe that only 60-70% of the adult population participate in the annual spawn. Another aspect to the spawn, at least in rivers, is that the bass do not all spawn at once. Generally, the largest, most mature females release their eggs first. A second note is that after the female spawns, she goes off to hide, eat and regain strength for a few days. This is generally when they are most vulnerable.

Once she recovers, she is off to her favorite ambush areas in or near current. So, we have a new group of large females coming into these current or ambush areas daily.

Between the bass who do not participate, and the females that recover daily, this leaves about no less than 40% of the adult population out and about. This is our target group.

Prior to now, most anglers have been fishing since ice out and have targeted bass from wintering areas and into spring feeding areas. Due to the cold water, a slower approach is generally taken. Meaning, slower presentations in deeper water to match the water temp. Soft-plastic jigs, such as the Fitt Chillee Willee tubes, or a jerkbait using longer pauses. As water temps climb into the 50's and low 60's, bass start to pair up and enter spawning

areas. Anglers wanting to catch bass, but leave bedding areas alone, must take a different approach. Switching gears some during the spawn and early weeks of post spawn is what I am going to ask you to try. It is as simple as this; "Let the bass chase you!"

We are going to abandon tight cover and protected still water areas and focus all our attention on stronger current and current seams.

Our approach is moving baits such as spinnerbaits, chatterbaits, crankbaits and swimbaits. It is not 100% power fishing, although anglers are going to cover a fair amount of water and do a lot of casting.

Actively targeting feeding areas in current and off current seams will help anglers to target bass that are no longer engaged in the spawn. Best of all, these actively feeding bass are going to chase

lures down. So, the more casts made, the more the likelihood of catching the eye of a feeding bass or better yet, a group of feeding bass.

Crankbaits

Bouncing a square bill off rocks in modest current triggers bass. And once that vibration and movement catch their eye, the chase is on. For the Susquehanna River, I prefer crankbait patterns and colors that resemble crayfish. As the water warms into the 50's, crayfish become active. Imitating a crayfish trying to escape is a vision few smallmouth can resist.

Spinnerbaits

Late spring, I like to burn or lift spinnerbaits so they roll just under the surface. Clients are often amazed at how well spinnerbaits work in shallow current and riffle areas that seem impossible of hiding a giant bass. And yet, many of my trophy bass come out of these shallow riffles and current seams. Bright sun, shallow current and the flash of a gold blade is all anglers need to connect with smallmouth in the latter months of spring and early summer.

Chatterbaits

If you are not throwing chatterbaits, you need to. The Susquehanna River is loaded with emerging grass beds and exposed rocks. Both structures create current seams at the top and sides of these often odd shaped structures.



Bouncing squarebill crankbaits off rocks produced this postspaw river smallmouth.

Feeding bass lie in wait along these structures and a chatterbait comes through these with relative ease. Craw or Minnow trailers are suggested and there is a large variety of them to choose from.

Swimbait

One of my favorite chase baits is a swim bait. The host of colors, sizes and shapes make for almost endless possibilities. The ease in throwing them makes this an incredible lure choice. They can be rigged on a weedless offset hook, combined with an underspin or an overspin rig, or just fished on a ball head. Jig weights as light as 1/16th ounce to well up to (and over) 3/8th ounce to cover any conditions anglers find themselves in. A slow drag off the bottom, to burning them through current simply generates strikes when few other soft plastics can.

So, this May, instead of chasing smallmouth, let them chase you instead. I guarantee it will be an experience you will want to repeat!



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. You can follow his daily fishing reports on Facebook 'Reel River Adventures-RRA' & Instagram @Chris_Gorsuch

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REGIONAL FOCUS

CHICKAHOMINY

Lake & River

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

Ed Allen's Boats & Baits on Chickahominy Lake reported that the lake level was down slightly, clear and in the lower 70's at the Woods & Waters deadline - just about right for this time of year. Largemouth bass were spawning, crappie had spawned and sunfish were getting ready to spawn. Here's what you can expect for a May visit.

Most of the lake's bass will be post-spawn but you might come upon some still bedding on the May 5 full moon.

Keep in mind this is a tannin-stained lake so it's difficult to see beds. You'll need to look for the light-colored sandy spots. Pitching Texas-rigged four-inch lizards or 1/8-ounce jigs is good if you can sight fish. Otherwise you'll need to fish wacky-rigged Senkos or Neko rigs in spawning shallows.

Post spawn fish guarding fry are susceptible to wacky-rigged worms and soft plastic jerkbaits. Some topwater action might be had on buzzbaits and poppers in the mornings.

By the end of the month, the topwater bite will really get going as spawning river herring will often enter the lake and the bass are ready to gorge on them. You'll want to fish Johnson and Lacy Creeks as well as the coves and small creeks within a mile or so of the dam.

Bluegill and shellcracker will be spawning heavily on the new and full moon this month. Crickets and fly rod poppers are great fun.

Ed Allen's has 200' long fishing pier, a fleet of jon boats and motors to rent, three rental pontoons and a great tackle shop. They are also a Tohatsu outboard dealer.

Up at Eagles Landing on the upper end of the lake Jill O'Brien-Jones invites you to visit her this season. The upper end of the lake features plenty of cypress knees and weedy shallows for you to explore this spring in your own boat or one of their rentals. The tackle selection is huge here including Senkos and plenty of topwater frogs. Walker's Dam separates the lake from Chick-



Another big 'un checked in at **Ed Allen's Boats & Bait** on Chickahominy Lake.

hominy River. There is a lock but it's not operable and it's just easier to launch at a river ramp like the newly refurbished one at Rockahock Campground. Anglers and their families can rent Rockahock's cabins, villas or yurts and be on the water at first light and enjoying Williamsburg attractions within a 15-minute drive.

The Bruce family invites you to visit Riverside Camp & Marina, a few miles below Walker's Dam. Here you'll find a quiet riverside campground

with cabins and cottages for rent (one waterfront cottage with two bedrooms, kitchen and bath), RV spots, rental jon boats and rental pontoon boats, a tackle shop and great access to the upper Chickahominy River.

May is when the bass often spawn on the river. Lily pads and cypress trees in the upper end of the river draw bedding bass. You'll want to target river bass around the pads and cypress knees using a Senko or creature bait.

The lower end of the river offers plenty of larger creeks like Diascund, Yarmouth and Gordon's with their own healthy bass populations. By the end of the month, you'll want to be throwing a topwater frog and a Chatterbait.

Adam's Sports Mart in nearby Providence Forge is what many folks come to first when they exit Interstate 64 on the way to fisheries in the region. This shop welcomes anglers with food, drinks, live bait and newly renovated tackle shop in the back room.

Fishing Pro Tech in nearby Toano attracts anglers from all over the region due to the diverse selection of bass tackle they carry. Fishing Pro Tech is the state headquarters for big glide and swimbaits and other hot tackle including the new Megabass Sleeper Craw AND the new Yamamoto Yamatanuki.

Nearby Toano General Gun Store busy, sells and trades new and used firearms and offers full gunsmithing services in the shop provided by Sordan Armament. They have been doing very well with all their personal protection handguns. *C.C. McCotter*



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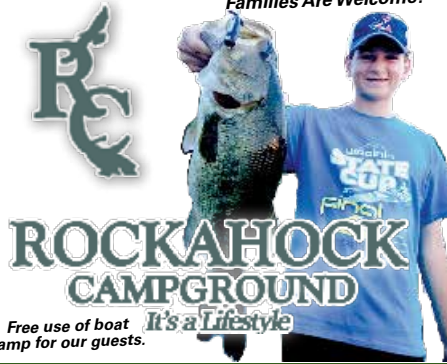
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HIGH		LOW		HIGH		LOW		HIGH		LOW	
1	7:18am	1:07am	10	1:40am	8:11am	NEW 19	10:13am	4:14am	28	4:35am	10:57am
	7:41pm	1:27pm		2:05pm	8:10pm		10:31pm	4:05pm		5:11pm	11:26pm
2	8:03am	1:57am	11	2:39am	9:09am	20	10:56am	4:59am	29	5:29am	11:44am
	8:24pm	2:08pm		3:07pm	9:16pm		11:14pm	4:48pm		6:03pm	----
3	8:46am	2:43am	12	3:43am	10:08am	21	11:37am	5:42am	30	6:22am	12:23am
	9:05pm	2:47pm		4:13pm	10:26pm		11:56pm	5:30pm		6:53pm	12:30pm
4	9:27am	3:27am	13	4:48am	11:07am	22	----	6:25am	31	7:13am	1:17am
	9:46pm	3:27pm		5:20pm	11:36pm		12:19pm	6:13pm		7:41pm	1:17pm
5	10:08am	4:11am	14	5:53am	----	23	12:38am	7:08am	June Tides		
	10:27pm	4:06pm		6:22pm	12:04pm		1:01pm	6:57pm	1	8:03am	2:09am
6	10:50am	4:54am	15	6:53am	12:42am	24	1:21am	7:51am		8:28pm	2:02pm
	11:10pm	4:48pm		7:19pm	12:57pm		1:45pm	7:44pm	2	8:51am	2:58am
7	11:33am	5:39am	16	7:48am	1:43am	25	2:06am	8:36am		9:16pm	2:49pm
	11:56pm	5:31pm		8:12pm	1:47pm		2:32pm	8:34pm			
8	----	6:27am	17	8:40am	2:37am	26	2:53am	9:22am			
	12:19pm	6:19pm		9:01pm	2:35pm		3:24pm	9:29pm			
9	12:46am	7:17am	18	9:28am	3:28am	27	3:43am	10:09am			
	1:10pm	7:11pm		9:47pm	3:21pm		4:17pm	10:27pm			

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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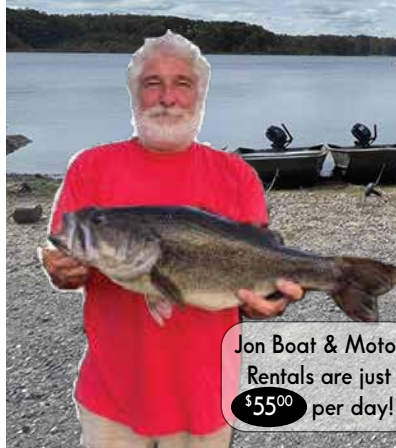
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Tidal James River Region

For a map of the James River visit woodsandwatersmagazine.com

May on the tidal James River can be as productive as it gets for multiple species including striper, blue and flathead catfish, hickory and American shad, white perch, largemouth bass, the list goes on.

Water temperatures should be getting close to the spawning range for catfish so the bite will be fast and furious until the river is consistently above 74 degrees. Like a switch the bite will die and the spawn will be on.

Trophy class rockfish will be scattered throughout the river. Anglers will want to use white bucktails and a grub trailer casting around rocks and jetties.

Bass fishing on the tidal James River has been outstanding this spring according to James River Tackle Co. owner Donnie Bell.

"Bass will still be in little cuts where they can get out of current and spawn. In the turns in the creeks. Chippokes and Wards Creeks are particularly good."

Bell notes by the end of the month you'll want to switch over to buzzbaits, small crankbaits and creature baits for post spawn bass. He is now stocking more bass tackle than ever at his Hopewell shop, just blocks from the boat ramp at Hopewell Marina.

Over on nearby Lake Chesdin, W2 Pro Staffer Red Fisher says the lake reached 60 degrees early last month and the shad moved into the creeks. A nice pre-spawn feed began with bass, striper and saugeye all feeding on gizzard shad.

For May, Fisher says most bass will be post spawn and guarding fry around boat docks and shallow vegetation. Anglers can target them with wacky-rigged worms and soft

plastic jerkbaits.

By the end of the month there should be a strong morning buzzbait and frog bite developing in creeks like Namozine, Cattle and Whipponock. Spinnerbaits, Chatterbaits and crankbaits are good during the day on Chesdin.

The James River Tackle Co. Sunday Series tournaments kicked off March 25 and 34 teams fished. Nathan and Anthony P. won with a 16.88-pound limit anchored by a 6.25-poundunker. Marshall S. and Christopher W. were second with 16.61 pounds. The teams will next fish May 20 and then June 10. All events launch from Hopewell Marina.

Let's not forget the annual shad run up the James continues this month. Shops like Pat's Sporting Goods in Chester, Castaway Sporting Goods in Chester and Green Top Sporting Goods have plenty of shad darts and spoons. Green Top even has an extensive fly fishing department.

Green Top carries dog kennels from Ruffland and Dakota. The store is in fact, dog friendly, so you can bring your companion and size it to the right kennel.

Congratulations to the top finishers in the annual Green Top Long Beard Battle. This event



Congrats to Nathan and Anthony P. for winning the March **James River Tackle Co.** Weekend Series Bass Tournament with this 16.88-pound limit and 6.25-pound big fish.

focuses on youth turkey hunting and takes place on Youth Hunting Weekend in early April. See the story on page 20 for all the details.

Pat's Sporting Goods also houses an archery pro shop and those talented hunters attempting to harvest a late spring gobbler with a bow will want to stop by and have Pat tune up their bow or cut them some new arrows.

Robbie Patterson and his team at Propeller

Dynamics welcome you and your rig to the shop. Patterson sells Xpress aluminum and Falcon fiberglass bass boats as well as offer marine repairs, marine electronics installation and is a factory-authorized Minn Kota and MotorGuide repair job. They will service, sell and install the new Lowrance and Garmin trolling motors and lithium batteries and the specialized digital charging systems that service them. They had a few Xpress and Falcon boats at the end of April but they sell fast!

Jo-Jo's Fishing/Hunting Express is on the way to some great lower Rappahannock River fishing on Rt. 360, west of Mechanicsville in Manquin. The shop has it all for fishing and hunting. The upper Pamunkey and Mattaponi are also nearby. *Donnie Bell*

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age Wednesday and Friday evenings. This gets young people into the sport and is very satisfying.”

So, what advice would Wilcox give to anyone else considering opening an outdoor shop in Virginia?

“It’s probably not a good idea if you like to hunt and fish. You can’t be successful if you aren’t going to be in the shop. I spend countless hours here, probably more than I should. You need to be dedicated to get in the trenches to know what comes in and out of the doors. You need to be dedicated enough to be there and do it.”

We asked how he competes with online archery sales?

“What it amounts to is our service. You can’t order a bow online and have it set up and sized. I’m not trying to be the cheapest. We sell some of the most advanced bows in the world, but they are no good if they aren’t set up properly. We work with customers on grip, technique, set up and more. Service is where we succeed. Anyone can open an online store, some of the stuff we sell and do you can’t get anywhere else on the east coast. Learning how to use what you have correctly is important with archery and we offer that.”

What does Wilcox enjoy doing in his spare time?

“I love to hunt and fish but I don’t get to do a ton of it. My wife and I own some property around the state, and I enjoy going to them and prepping them for fall hunting – pretty much messing with tractors and maintaining the properties.”



DWR Expands Access To Public Land In SW Virginia

The Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) announced last month that a total of 22,316 acres of land owned by TNC and Cumberland Forest Highlands, LLC (CFH) is now open to the public for the purposes of hunting, fishing, hiking, boating, and wildlife viewing. A Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program grant from the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service, provided funding through DWR to compensate landowners, improve access infrastructure, and enhance wildlife habitats. The properties are in Buchanan, Dickenson and Russell Counties, near the communities of Breaks, Dante and Vansant.

The Breaks Parcel includes designated access points to 7,816 acres in Buchanan and Dickenson Counties. This parcel stretches between the communities of Breaks and Greenbrier; which provide excellent opportunities to hunt deer, bear, turkey and small game. For the fortunate hunters who draw an elk license, the area provides good opportunities to hunt elk. This parcel also includes portions of the Coal Canyon and Ridgeview Trails that are part of the Spearhead Trails System managed by the Southwest Regional Recreation Authority (SRRA). These trails offer the first opportunities in Virginia for hunters and wildlife viewers to utilize ATVs or UTVs to reach public access destinations. Finally, this parcel provides bank fishing and paddling opportunities on the Rus-

sell Fork River near its confluence with the Pound River. Paddling on the Russell Fork River is extremely challenging during most of the year.

The Dante Parcel in Russell County includes 9,809 acres with designated access points. The Mountain View trail system, also managed by SRRA, will soon have a trailhead in Dante providing a mix of non-motorized and motorized access into portions of this recreation area including a hiking/biking trail around Straight Hollow, and a motorized trail along the ridgeline from the Dante Trailhead to Honey Branch Road. SRRA and the local community have plans to open these new trails later this spring.

Near Vansant, 4,253 acres of public access lands are now available. Most of this land is located on Big Fox and Little Fox Creeks. These parcels also offer excellent opportunities for deer, bear, turkey and small game. There is a chance of seeing elk on these parcels, but elk are not as numerous as they are on the Breaks parcel. Guided public elk viewing tours to this area are provided by Breaks Interstate Park, DWR, TNC, and Southwest Virginia Sportsmen, Inc. Managed hunts for elk, deer and turkey will be offered on TNC and CFH lands in the Elk Conservation Area in the future.

Maps of these new public recreation areas, as well as more detailed information regarding rules and regulations for use, are available on the DWR website at: dwr.virginia.gov/powrr/ or by calling the DWR Marion Office at 276-783-4860.



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REGIONAL FOCUS

Lake Anna

For a map of Lake Anna visit woodsandwatersmagazine.com

Late spring on Lake Anna is beautiful time of year and the fishing is excellent. This month you'll find the main lake mostly in the upper 60's and lower 70's with bass and crappie spawning and striper moving back into the lower up lake regions after their up lake early spring migration. Due to a lack of rain the lake is very clear all the way up. Fishing should be good most days. Here's what to expect on your May visit.

Guide C.C. McCotter notes spring spawn peaked the second week of April on the main lake with some earlier pockets here and there like Duke's Creek. In general the bass spawn first down lake then mid lake and finally up lake. Several largemouth bass over eight pounds were registered by anglers fishing tournaments.

McCotter says most down lake bass will be post-spawn this month. You find them packed up and roaming around docks and the limited willow grass in the down lake region. Get out in front of them with Neko rigs. Walking baits over points and humps will begin to catch bass this month down lake.

Mid lake bass were on the beds last month

and a few more will go on the May 5 full moon. You'll find them mostly on stumps, docks and willowgrass. Good areas to check include Pigeon Run, Contrary Creek, Sturgeon Creek, Hackney Creek and Hairfield Creek.

Up lake fish also spawned last month but there should still be more, again on the full moon, too. In this region, the bass generally prefer to spawn in willowgrass and stumps.

When bass are shallow on Anna you can catch them on many lures like a Neko rigged worm, a soft plastic jerkbait, topwater, a creature bait or jig, sometimes even a spinnerbait or buzzbait.

When they are spawning your selection narrows to baits you can keep in front of fish like



High Point Marina certified this new Lake Anna record snakehead caught on rod and reel last month for Ben Mann weighing 12-15.

a drop-shotted Berkley Minnow, a Dave's Tournament Tackle Finesse Jig, a four-inch lizard or tube.

You'll find up lake bass spawning around Stubb's Bridge and Ware Creek and over in the North Anna around Holiday Mill Bridge on up to the Harris Bridge.

McCotter notes striped bass and wiper should be heading back to the lower, up lake region like around Stubbs Bridge, Jetts Island, Rose Val-

ley and Big Ben Flats after a fair spring run into the upper portion of the lake. A good mid lake striper/wiper bite has developed in recent years, mostly around the power plant region.

You can cast artificial lures or pull live bait for striper/wiper this month.

Casters will want to use 3-4" swimbaits, soft plastic jerkbaits and topwaters like the Berkley

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Fish both over long, shallow points next to a channel or a hump. Early morning fishing is best with late afternoon second best. Wiper are mixed in with the striper. Many anglers are hoping to see a 13-pound + wiper caught this season.

As the spring progresses, more fish will be caught in the lower, up lake regions. Some fish will remain in the mid lake region and Dike 3 will offer down lake anglers good action this month.

Crappie fishing on the main lake has been fair so far this spring, notes McCotter. His trips have produced many 14.5" fish for clients and one 15"; two-pound citation. Most of the crappie had spawned by the W2 April deadline but you can expect a second wave of fish spawning this month in the mid and upper sections of the lake. Anglers should fish shallow along willow grass lined banks with rocky bottoms. Beaver huts are good now, too. Docks with brush can be excellent.

McCotter notes that when crappie are spawning, you'll need to use minnows on a slip bobber as they don't move off the bed far to take a lure. Before they spawn use two-inch straight tail jigs in clear water and Beetle Spins in stained water.

Good areas include Duck In Hole, Gold Mine and Christopher Creeks in the North Anna as well as pockets around Rose Valley. In the Pamunkey the hot zone is from Hunter's Landing on up. Mid lake crappie are mostly found on beaver huts and stumps.

If you catch an odd-looking fish with teeth this month, it's probably a saugeye. Remember keeper size is 18 inches on these relatively new residents stocked by DWR.

There was a bunch of snakeheads caught last month when the water temperature hit 65. Fishing with MLAGS Associate Guide Kip Hall, Ben Mann caught and certified a 12-15 snakehead - the new lake record caught on hook and line. Reports of bigger fish caught could indicate the record will be broken this month.

You'll find a great selection of bass, striper and crappie fishing gear at High Point Marina. This location also offers a convenience store, fuel on the water and rooms at The Lighthouse Inn - the only waterfront motel on the lake. Each room even has use of a wet slip and an incredible view looking up lake.

Lake Anna Outfitters is located at High Point Marina where you'll find the lake's paddling headquarters, fishing kayaks from Feel Free, Big Fish and Seastream and a great gift shop full of souvenir items like tees, caps and hoodies.



Dawn, Gary and Bob fished with **McCotter's Lake Anna Guide Service** last month and enjoyed a sight fishing Whackfest using Fitt Premium Lure Riverdarters!

Next door at Anna Point Marina's FishTales, Dave Fauntleroy is excited for the start of his Sunday Morning Bass Series. This is a popular tournament series that doesn't require you to be on the lake all day with tournament hours from safe light to 11 am. Fauntleroy also has Fish Tales stocked with rod and reel combos, Lake Anna apparel and other great fishing tackle just in time for the spring! Any visit to the lake isn't complete without a visit to Fish Tales so you and your family can feed Lake Anna's friendly and hungry carp.

Sturgeon Creek Marina is the home of the Elite Series tournaments. With two tournaments completed and more coming this month that draw some of the most talented anglers in the region. The marina's Youth Series also

| continued on page 44

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Lake Anna Report

kicked off last month and will continue all spring and summer.

Sturgeon Creek offers visiting anglers plenty of boat ramps, fuel-on-the-water, tackle shop and live baits from a mid lake location off Rt. 208.

Dee Kidd and his technicians at Anna's Marine Center are working hard rigging the boats that they can get this season! Demand remains record-setting high for SKEETERs, Nitros and TRACKERs in addition to the Bennington line of pontoons they sell. They are also experts at installing those complex new, networked fish finder systems. Call Kidd if you have a need and they'll do their very best to accommodate you.

Christopher Run Campground is open and welcomes your visit. Over the past couple years they have updated and renovated the



Congratulations to Todd Lewis who caught a new lake record wiper last month. **Sturgeon Creek Marina** certified it at 14.33 pounds and 29.5" long. Lewis caught the fish using live bait.

facilitates this off season and this mostly wooded campground is in beautiful shape heading into the season. The shoreline bulkhead upgrade is beautiful and launching your boat should be much easier.

Elk Creek Country Store is hot side fishing headquarters. With food, fuel, drinks, grocery items and Uncle Mike's Bait & Tackle, this shop is a must-do if you are fishing the Cooling Ponds side of the lake.

Elk Creek Store is also Dike 3 fishing headquarters. Uncle Mike says herring are running at the dike and that means the striper and wiper are there, too. Be sure and stay out of the posted No Trespassing areas on the dike so you don't get a ticket and enjoy the great public fishing access. *Chrissie McCotter*

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REGIONAL FOCUS

Smith Mountain Lake New River Valley

For maps of Smith Mountain Lake visit woodsandwatersmagazine.com

Smith Mountain Lake was around 64-68 degrees on the surface from mid to down lake by the mid-April W2 deadline. The lake level was 794.49' and steady. This was slightly lower than it was at the end of March. Keep in mind normal pond is 795'. Expect the lake level to rise slightly in April and watch the water temperature rise a bit to around 72-74 by the end of the month.

Woods & Waters would like to welcome Capt. Clint Gray to the Smith Mountain Lake Regional Focus. Gray is a long-time local at the lake and operates Clint's Striper Guide Service. He guides from a 26' Avenger center console and uses live bait.

Gray notes for May the lake's striper should be well into their annual false spawn in the lower end of the lake and that means big schools, planer boards and fishing shallow in the backs of major feeder creeks and over main lake points. Gray thinks there may also be some fish post spawn and that means it's time to break out the Thundersticks and fish after dark.

The lake's blueback herring will be spawning at night and tossing herring imitating baits after dark can be awesome not just for striper but also for largemouth bass and smallmouth.

"I think May is the best time of the year to use live bait to catch a bigger fish. It's pretty exciting to me," Black told W2.

The lake's smallmouth bass population will still be active this month and many will be spost spawn. Usually the best smallmouth



The smile says it all - a happy client that fished with **Clint's Striper Guide Service** last month on Smith Mountain Lake.

fishing is within sight of the dam here.

Anglers can target post-spawn SML brown bass on hard bottom shoals and points in 5-10' using soft plastic jerkbaits, small swimbaits, drop-shotted minnow baits, Ned rigs, the Neko rig and finesse jigs.

Most early May largemouth bass will still be on beds and can be caught around stumps and other wood cover. Best depths will be from three to eight feet deep.

You can pursue SML largemouth using a number of tactics depending on what you find. If the bass are spawning, use drop shot, Neko rig and a small jig. If the largemouth are post spawn try fishing docks with a wacky worm,

Ned and Neko rigs.

This lake has hundreds of docks and lay-downs. These two types of structure will be where many largemouth bass are caught in May.

Crappie fishing on Smith Mountain Lake is near a peak in early May. The best habitat exists in the upper end of both the Roanoke River arm and the Blackwater arm. Anglers should fish small jigs on shoreline laydowns.

Spike and Kathy Francescini operate Spike's PrimeTime Fishin', one of the longest continuously operated guide services in Virginia. Their 2023 season will kick off this month, so be sure and check out their daily reports at www.facebook.com/spikesprimetimefishing.

The Francescinis mostly fish with live baits and note the lake's striper population continues to grow and that May is one of the best months to land a citation (20+ pound) SML striper.

Not only do the Francescinis offer guided fishing trips but they also rent lodging they own at the lake. Kathy's Place, 3 br/2b, sleeps eight with game room. The other rental is a 2 br/1 bath, sleeps four with kitchen in the great room.

Cripple Creek Trout Farm and The Hidden Gem Trout Fishing are two of the three venues of the W2 Trophy Trout Trail you can visit in this region of the state. Both are private operations that offer visiting anglers a chance to catch large stocked trout.

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REGIONAL FOCUS

Buggs/Gaston

Kerr Lake/Lake Gaston

For maps of Buggs Island or Lake Gaston visit woodsandwatersmagazine.com

Lake Gaston

By mid-April the water level on Gaston was around 199.80' (200' is full pool) and Dominion was holding the level steady for fishing spawning. Water temperature was 62-67 degrees. Anglers can expect 70+ degree water temperatures this month in most parts of the main lake.

For May fishing on Gaston, BASS Master Open angler and guide Rick Morris says the most consistent bass bite will occur around docks and shoreline willowgrass. Many bass will be guarding fry early in the month while others will be starting to feed heavily in post-spawn packs. Look for blueback herring and shad spawning and the bass won't be too far away. Wading birds are helpful clues to note when post spawn fishing Gaston.

The last of the bass will bed around the full moon on May 5, so you can still target them closer to docks and other shallow structure then. By the end of the month, Morris says to try topwaters (think dog walking baits) and soft plastic jerkbaits for post spawn fish on bait.

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 this season. Holly Grove is located about 10 minutes off I-95 at the Bracey exit on Rt. 903 in the upper end of the lake.

Kerr Reservoir (Bugg Island)

The water level on Kerr Lake by the W2 late April deadline was 302.65' and rising

(about two feet higher than last month). 300' is full pool. Daytime water temperatures were around 63-70 degrees depending on the region of the lake late last month.

This month, anglers should expect a significant rise in water temperatures - to around 70-76 degrees.

Guide Rick Morris says Kerr Lake largemouth will be finishing up spawning all over the lake and especially in creeks like Nutbush, Rudds, Eastland, Grassy and Bluestone. For May he'll employ War Eagle spinner and buzzbaits as well as topwater frogs. He says on bright still days you'll want to flip a lizard or creature bait to flooded bushes. By the end of the month Morris notes it's time to be looking for the Spook bite on short, flat points for post spawners.

Striper anglers will enjoy good fishing around the Clarksville area this month. The striper made their annual migration into the Roanoke River and will linger around the mouth of creeks near Clarksville to eat gizzard shad. Up in the Hyco you can still target white bass.



Steve Darlington with citation crappie of 2.29 and 2.15 caught April 6 and brought in to **Bobcat's Bait & Tackle** for certification and a photo.

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 on your list.

The sixth VA/NC Crappie Trail for 2022/23 was held March 25. First place went to the team of Dean and Shane Grindstaff with 12.57 pounds, good for \$1,505. Five fish over two pounds were weighed. After six events, the team of Morris and Smith maintain a slim lead in the Team of the Year race.

Most Buggs crappie should be post spawn this month but some could still be spawning on the May 5 full moon. Look for them around bridge pilings, brushpiles and submerged wood cover.

Bobcat's Bait & Tackle is fishing headquarters for Buggs Island. They stock gear for largemouth bass, crappie, catfish and striper fishing supplies and welcome your visit.

Stinger Supply in nearby Boydton is the area headquarters for Garmin gear. You find excellent in stock supplies of Garmin Livescope sonar units, Force trolling motors and Alpha dog tracking collars. *Rick Morris*

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REGIONAL FOCUS

Potomac River

May is one of the best months to fish the tidal Potomac River for largemouth bass and snakehead. Here's what you can expect on your next visit and some news from around the area.

Fish are in various stages of spawn on the tidal Potomac River. For post-spawners, try bigger suspending jerkbaits on the first cover near flats. Look for post spawn fish on Wilson Bridge pilings, Foxes Ferry, and Hogg Island. The main river grass in Piscataway in Bryan's Cove is great. There's almost none for Broad, Swan, and the mouth of Little Hunting Creek, though. DC fishing provides good action in Four Mile Run, the Pentagon Lagoon, and in Washington Channel, but you must have a DC fishing license and a Coast Guard approved Safe Boating Certificate to navigate DC waters and Virginia.

At Blue Plains this month throw split shot rigs, Carolina rigs and shallow water drop shots. Clearer water here requires a faster pace for jerkbaits, like small suspending jerkbaits, to avoid giving fish a good look. Also use hair jigs in brown/orange, green/orange, and black/blue with matching plastic chunks

and rattles on 10-pound test GAMMA Fluorocarbon.

Spinnerbaits and shallow running crankbaits can locate fish over grass, or when fishing front grass edges or wood. Rip free for reaction strikes on 14-pound test GAMMA Edge fluorocarbon. Lipless crankbaits are great search baits: craw patterns, gold/stained water, and Shad patterns/fairly clear water.

Fish the inside of grass edges as tides come in. As tides fall, pitch or flip to grass clumps and edges. Start on up-current side then drag baits along outside edges, then inside edges, finally dropping through tops of leaned over grass. Fish will "tell" you what's best. Texas rig Tubes (Arkansas Craw) and weightless Texas rigged stick worms in green pumpkin



Capt. Mike of **Apex Predators Potomac Creek Guide Service** noted the dragons started biting well last month on the tidal Potomac River.

are productive. You can also skip tubes under docks.

Try swimming plastics and jigs over and through grass or wood cover. MES Lures swim jigs in black/blue, green pumpkin, and hot craw with soft plastic jerkbait trailer is good. Kill it when you reach clumps at the edge.

Soft plastic jerkbaits are deadly this time of year. White is a good choice. Watch your line, look for boils.

Beef up your line with Gamma Fluorocarbon 16-pound test. Use at least a 7-foot medium heavy graphite rod. Soaking baits in garlic attractant adds scent and allows baits to slide through grass easier.

In creeks like Swan and Little Hunting, look for wood like docks and laydowns. LHC also has

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pads. These creeks are usually stained, so darker jigs and plastics are best. Fish white skirted 1/4-ounce spinnerbaits around shallow wood and the 3/8 for higher tides over the pads. Bump wood or rip from grass.

Try buzzbaits, with a dangling trailer hook. Put 2/0 or 3/0 Mustad Ultra Point Stinger hooks on first, then the piece of tubing to keep it on, allowing the hook to move freely behind the main hook. The 1/4-ounce clacker is more effective at lower tides over grass, around pads, and along wood.

Carolina rig flats near drops in Smoots (National Harbor), along South Point, and around grass flats to cover water with lizards, on 3/0 hooks. Use split shot rigs with Water Gremlin bullet shaped splitshots, 3/16-ounce BULLSHOT weights. Drag along the bottom. Set the hook, sweeping to the side. Longer med/heavy spinning rods, like 7' make this easier.

Pitch shallow water drop shot rigs on 20-pound test GAMMA Torque braid with a 10-12 pound test Edge fluorocarbon leader line with green pumpkin 5-inch Jiggle Stick worms to milfoil clumps. The BULLSHOT (3/16-1/4 ounce) weight comes in handy as an anchor for this rig. When water is a bit stained slide the weight closer to baits putting them closer to the bottom and fish. Start with a leader of about 18 inches and work down to 6 inches. Another presentation that keeps baits in front of fish is the shaky head! The perfect bait to complement any shaky head is a stick worm, on a 1/4 ounce head.

The best topwater bite is in the evening, on cloudy days, with clear water and at lower tides. Evening water is the warmest, but don't overlook other times when conditions present themselves.

Hollow frogs are great anywhere, excellent over thicker grass but use must use braided line.

Capt. Mike and Capt. Chris of Apex Predators Guide Service Potomac Creek enjoyed a good run with the snakeheads last month and encourage you to book your trip now for May and June when the fishing is great for the biggest dragons of the year. They recently acquired another center console boat - a Ranger with a 115 hp Yamaha, so they are ready to rock on the river this season.

Taylor's Bait & Tackle notes the trout fishing season continues on nearby Locust Shade Park they stock all the trout baits you'd need to succeed as well as a large selection of bass tackle for the nearby tidal Potomac and live minnows for crappie fishing.

Costello's in Warrenton is the area YETI, and Big Green Egg dealer in addition to stocking the area's best selection of bass fishing tackle. Stop in and see and you will be impressed.

Virginia Arms Co. in Manassas is now making custom gun holsters while you wait. Inside this well-stocked shop you'll find personal protection pieces, long guns, black guns and ammo. *Capt. Steve Chaconas and C.C. McCotter*

POTOMAC RIVER TIDE/MOON CHART

	HIGH	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH	LOW	
FULL	1 6:19am	12:12am	10 12:35am	7:02am	NEW	19 8:57am	3:07am	28 3:50am	10:01am
	6:39pm	12:44pm	12:39pm	8:07pm		9:32pm	4:02pm	4:01pm	10:21pm
	2 7:03am	12:58am	11 1:32am	8:04am		20 9:41am	3:52am	29 4:41am	11:03am
	7:26pm	1:38pm	1:39pm	9:02pm		10:18pm	4:48pm	4:58pm	11:08pm
	3 7:43am	1:41am	12 2:34am	9:10am		21 10:23am	4:34am	30 5:29am	12:05pm
	8:09pm	2:29pm	2:47pm	9:58pm		11:03pm	5:33pm	5:52pm	11:56pm
	4 8:19am	2:23am	13 3:38am	10:17am		22 11:05am	5:16am	31 6:14am	----
	8:51pm	3:18pm	3:58pm	10:55pm		11:48pm	6:16pm	6:43pm	1:04pm
	5 8:55am	3:04am	14 4:41am	11:23am		23 11:47am	5:56am	June Tides	
9:32pm	4:05pm	15 5:40am	----	----	6:57pm	1 6:56am	12:45am		
6 9:32am	3:46am	16 6:06pm	12:26pm	24 12:32am	6:37am	7:31pm	1:59pm		
10:13pm	4:51pm	6:06pm	12:26pm	12:31pm	7:36pm	2 7:38am	1:35am		
7 10:12am	4:29am	16 6:34am	12:42am	25 1:18am	7:21am	8:19pm	2:52pm		
10:57pm	5:37pm	7:02pm	1:25pm	1:18pm	8:15pm				
8 10:56am	5:16am	17 7:25am	1:33am	26 2:07am	8:09am				
11:44pm	6:25pm	7:54pm	2:20pm	2:09pm	8:55pm				
9 11:44am	6:06am	18 8:12am	2:21am	27 2:58am	9:02am				
----	7:14pm	8:44pm	3:12pm	3:04pm	9:37pm				

Corrections:

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

Tides for Aquia Creek. See corrections below

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REGIONAL FOCUS

BACK BAY

Northwest River, North River, Currituck Sound

Bob's Fishing Hole spokesman James Waters notes spring tournament bass fishing on the Northwest River is in full swing.

Water temperatures varied from 65-70 degrees at the end of April - bit warmer than usual for this time of year. Many bass have already spawned.

Anglers are now using soft plastic stickbaits, creature baits, spinnerbaits, swimbaits and Chatterbaits on wood. Fish spawn just inside the mouths of little creeks, in protected main river pockets and especially in canals here.

For a May visit Waters says to stop in and he'll give you some tips on where to try fishing. This is mostly a shallow water fishery so don't make it too complicated. Enjoy the spring pattern and cover a lot of water from Bob's on down to Tull's Creek.

Stop by Bob's and shop an incredible selection of baits or bring your own. The tackle shop here is amazing. You'll find bladed jig lures, shallow diving crankbaits, creature baits like a ZOOM Ultra Vibe Speed Craw, frogs of all kinds, Senko and YUM Dingers, Johnson Silver spoons and much more.

The North Landing River also offers good bass fishing. Anglers will want to explore and fish Pocatay Creek, Milldam, Blackwater



Jeremy Gatewood and Charlie Reed won the April 16 **Bob's Fishing Hole** tourney with this 26.18 pound limit anchored by a 6.42-pound big fish.

and West Neck Creeks. You can launch into the North Landing River out of the Pungo Ferry Park ramp.

North Landing Beach RV Resort & Cottages is a great place to use as headquarters for a visit to fish the Northwest, North and middle Back Bay region. There are one bedroom and

two bedroom cottages available and anglers are welcomed.

North Bay Shore Campground is headquarters for North Bay or the upper portion of Back Bay behind Sandbridge. 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 10 minutes from Sandbridge restaurants!

The crappie fishing is outstanding now in the protected canals and creeks around North Bay. You can even catch them in the canals around the cabins and boat ramp.

Backwater Adventures guide David Ward says water temps will continue to rise to the upper 70's and higher if warmer weather becomes the trend this month. Spawning in the rivers will continue through May, slowing down as the month comes to an end. Topwater will be good all month with moving topwater baits such as frogs, ploppers, and buzzbaits becoming the go to over the more stationary topwaters. As the water warms the soft plastic bite will start to take over after the sun gets up. Soft stick baits fished Texas-rigged, weightless, and wacky produce. *C.C. McCotter*

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REGIONAL FOCUS

Chesapeake Bay

Chesapeake Bay anglers are patiently waiting for May 1, opening day of the trophy striped bass season, by tuning up gear and putting finishing touches on boats. Others enjoy fishing for white perch, and hickory shad in the tidal rivers. This month we should be hearing the first reports of croaker in Chesapeake rivers. Here's what's going on around the bay and near coastal waters.

White perch in the tidal rivers are steadily headed for the lower sections where they will reside until the fall. Most anglers are using bottom rigs baited with pieces of bloodworm to reach the white perch as they move along in the deeper waters.

Hickory shad runs peaked last month around the back but there will still be some action this month. Small shad darts rigged in tandem with small silver spoons are a popular choice for this catch-and-release fishery.

Lower Bay

The tidal rivers of the lower Bay are offering plenty of fishing action for blue catfish this week. The tidal Potomac River from the Wilson Bridge south to the Route 301 Bridge holds great numbers of blue catfish, some of which are very large. Anglers are drifting baits into the channels or jigging with soft plastics. Cut bait of menhaden, gizzard shad, chicken liver of breast, wild grocery store shrimp, and a variety of scented baits work well.

The Patuxent River from Benedict to Jug Bay holds large numbers of blue catfish, and the Nanticoke River near Sharpstown also holds a large population. Increasing numbers of blue catfish are beginning to



It's time to think about booking your own cobia fishing trip with **Capt. Kevin Salmon**.

show up in the Wicomico and Pocomoke rivers.

Hickory and American shad are provided fun catch-and-release fishing last month in the upper tidal Potomac at the Fletchers Landing area and Mattawoman Creek.

White perch are being found in the tidal creeks and middle sections of the region's tidal rivers. Most of the perch are deep as they use the channel waters to move down the rivers. Using bottom rigs baited with pieces of bloodworm are one of the best ways to fish for them.

Please use extreme caution when accessing the water immediately west of Barren Island and avoid the construction safety zone.

Atlantic Ocean and Coastal Bays

Along the beaches of Assateague Island, anglers are catching black drum in the surf. Sand fleas have been the most popular bait. At the

Ocean City Inlet and Route 50 Bridge area, tautog are being caught on sand fleas fished close to the rocks, bulkheads, and bridge piers. Striped bass are also being caught in the area by working soft plastic jigs close to the bottom. This is mostly a fun catch-and-release fishery.

Flounder are being caught in the back bay channels; those leading away from the inlet have been some of the most productive. Drifting Gulp! baits, minnows, or squid is the most common tactic. At the Route 90 Bridge anglers are catching and releasing sub-legal striped bass on soft plastic jigs and paddletails.

At the offshore wreck and reef sites, large tautog continue to entertain anglers. Most anglers can catch a limit of tautog, and some are treated to pulling up a tautog in the double-digit weight category.

Captain Pete Wallace is taking reservations for his spring flounder season at Chincoteague. After the flounder fishing peaks, Capt. Wallace turns to sharking. Call him if you'd like to see about fishing this season.

Capt. Kevin Salmon invites you to contact him about your trip dates as he gets booked up quickly. He specializes in big cobia and bull red drum from Virginia beach up to the Maryland line. Flounder, spadefish, sheepshead, Spanish mackerel and bottom fish trips are also available. He departs from Del-taville on a 27' Maycraft pilot house with full cobia tower.

Anglers wanting to find out what fish are in the lower James River should stop by G'Daddy's Bait & Tackle. This shop supplies that region's anglers and is a good resource to contact when planning a fishing trip to the James River pier.

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REGIONAL FOCUS

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Many good reports streamed in from anglers in the Shenandoah Valley for the month of April. Twenty to thirty fish days were not uncommon with several of citation size.

Josh Lambert landed a personal best 5.3 pound smallmouth on the North Fork of the Shenandoah River on a float trip. We know of at least two, five pounders caught in the month along with many three's and four's.

Pre-spawn patterns started emerging by mid-month with fish pushing up shallow and a few of those making beds. These numbers will have increased by the end of April.

By the time you are reading this article most of the smallmouth will have spawned out or laid her eggs on the nest. It is possible in certain areas you may find both the male and female up shallow, but it is more likely the female has moved off and you'll find the male guarding the nest. If you are fishing at this critical time period in the bass's life, we ask that you return caught fish as quickly as possible to the water.

We learned several years ago when searching for a hatchery to stock smallmouth in a private body of water these smallmouth hatcheries are few and far between across the entire country. Smallmouth reproduction success is difficult. It is true the Maryland DNR is developing a smallmouth stocking program while Virginia is researching it. The smallmouth bass lays considerably less eggs than the largemouth counterpart. Natural predators will kill eggs and small

fry when given the chance. Not to mention the diversity of a river system with current, high and low water levels, and drastic temperature swings that can eliminate even more future fish. It is a miracle for young of year smallmouth to make it to adult size when you consider all these factors.

With water temperatures in the sixties, everything in your tackle box can catch them. As I often say, work the river bank to bank throughout the entire water column top to bottom. Always throw to visible structures like submerged wood, rocks, and ledges. Consider dragging jigs and creature baits.

Speaking of creature baits, be sure to check out Bill Siemantel's Nature Series Line with Fish Lab Tackle. He wanted to provide more realistic detail to the "creature" lure. Together they created the Kickin' Craw, Flutter Nymph, Flippin' Frog, and Cover Bird. These plastic life-like imitations were designed for punching into heavy cover or flippin' into the river current for hungry bass.

As the water temperature continues to warm



Josh Lambert with a 5.3-pound smallmouth he caught fishing the Shenandoah River last month. Photo from **Jake's Bait & Tackle**.

from mid-month to the end of May look for fish to find moving water and current. The beginning of a summer pattern will emerge on the rivers. Warm low water pushes the fish to find the more oxygenated water in and around the rapids and riffles. Current lines and eddy's begin to come into play.

Spinnerbaits, chatterbaits, and paddle-tail swimbaits fished along these seams can produce good strikes. Don't forget about the topwater bite during early morning or late evening on

the sunny clear days or all day if it's overcast. The buzzbait, Whopper Plopper, or Spook are all good choices.

Jake's has brought on young talent Cade Bailey to tie trout and bass flies for our local anglers. Some should be thrown on a fly rod while others can be fished on lite spin tackle. Check him out on Instagram @ dead_drift_fishing to see his fly tying talent as well as the trout and big smallmouth he's catching on his creations. Trout, crappie, bass, and musky anglers understand how feathers and hair can fool even the wisest fish! Stop by Jake's and check out the selection of flies, fly tying materials, and new fly reels. *Jared Mounts*

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REGIONAL FOCUS

Central Virginia

Charlottesville Upper James
• New River

For a map of the upper James River visit woodsandwatersmagazine.com

Spring fever in the Old Dominion has many of us using our PTO days to wet a line and see what's biting. Local lakes and rivers are again teeming with anglers taking advantage of the warmer weather and longer days and it sure feels good!

Ever tried catfishing? If not then this month and next are prime times to try your luck on the James. Keep an eye on the water temperature - when it climbs into the 70s then it's time to hit the river. You'll have great luck using live bait and be certain to give your tackle a once over before dropping a line. James River cats can be formidable so you must make you've got good, strong line on your reel or you could risk breaking off a good catch!

You'll find catfish near creek mouths and up-stream of log jams near deep holes for the best action.

While some prefer to fish for cats, there are many who love going after smallmouth. Brian "Razor" Bodine of Razorback guide service is the number one smallmouth guide in the region and knows where to go and what to throw to land them. This month Razor will be looking for smallies behind large current breaks like islands and boulders that allow these fish to establish and maintain their beds.

"Tie on a spinnerbait, crankbait or a swimbait to quickly catch the move aggressive male protecting the bed," advises Bodine.

"Once you locate the smaller of the two fish, throw a jig or Senko back in to catch

the big cow sitting on the bed," he adds. Bodine implores anglers to return your catch to the water quickly so she can go about tending to the fry. CPR is key - catch, photograph and release as quickly as you can.

Don't forget that Razorback Guide Service offers popular "Businessman's Special" guided fishing trips. You can work your full day, clock out and then meet your guide for an evening of fishing. These trips are a good alternative if golfing isn't your "thing" and you want to impress a potential client or get some brownie points with the boss.

Believe it or not, Razor is already booking deer hunts for the fall and now is the best time to call him so that you can reserve the best dates possible.

Some school systems start their summer break this month and it's a wonderful time of year to take a youngster out after dinner and practice your shooting skills on area ground hogs. Here in Louisa County farmers and home owners with land are genuinely happy to allow you to set up in a field and take care of those whistle-pigs. Be sure to pack some drinks and bug spray and you'll find that something as simple



Another happy client after fishing with **Blue Ridge Musky** and **James River Outfitter** on the upper James River.

as shooting ground hogs will mean so much to a kid. What an excellent opportunity to model and discuss gun safety and hunting ethics, also. It's our responsibility to pass on the tradition so consider starting today.

James River Jets has been busy this spring custom rigging their Rhino boats for area river enthusiasts. These boats are more durable and actually more affordable than you may think and

there is no match for them on the James. Give Jim Starkey, owner of James River Jets, a call and set up an appointment so that you can learn more about how easy it is to own one of his desirable boats.

Lake Anna Outfitters offers a variety of kayaks that are perfect for anglers and waterfowl hunters alike. Stop by their shop, located at High Point Marina, and see for yourself how versatile their kayaks are. A kayak is a thoughtful Mother's Day or Father's Day gift that will be enjoyed for years to come. Your significant other will surely approve of adding a kayak or two because they can be paddled by all family members in all kinds of water. *Chrissie McCotter*



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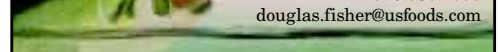
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Outdoor Calendar

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

Every Sunday Morning – Anna Point Marina's Sunday Morning Bass Series. 6am-11am. Call Dave 540/840-6772.

Every Tuesday evening (except May 31) – Ed Allen's Weekday Bass Tournament – Chickahominy Lake, 5:30-8:30pm. 804/966-5368.

May 1 – Ed Allen's Weekend Bass Tournament – Chickahominy Lake, 2-8:15pm. Call 804/966-5368.

May 6 – Anna Point Marina Big Bass Tournament, 7am-3pm. Call Dave 540/840-6772.

May 6 – Bass Bandits of Virginia State Federation Regional Tournament – Chickahominy River, Rt 5 Ramp. Email BassBanditsVirginia@gmail.com.

May 6-7 – Jon Boat Elite Trail – Pasquotank River, 6:30-4pm. Email bassnbucks60@gmail.com. Or follow on Facebook.

May 13 – Anna Point Marina Big Bass Tournament, 7am-3pm. Call Dave 540/840-6772.

May 13 – Bass Bandits of Virginia Tournament – Pamunkey River. Email BassBanditsVirginia@gmail.com.

May 13 – Lake Anna Youth Series – Sturgeon Creek Marina, 8am-2pm. Call 540/895-5095.

May 14 – Ed Allen's Weekend Bass Tournament – Chickahominy Lake, 6:30am-2:30pm. Call 804/966-5368.

May 20 – Bass Bandits of Virginia Region 8 Federation Tournament – Pamunkey River. Email BassBanditsVirginia@gmail.com.

May 20 – Fishers of Men East Tournament – Lake Gaston, Holley Grove Marina. Email ALavin@fomntt.com or call 804/591-9710.

May 20 – James River Tackle Company Bass Tournament - Hopewell Marina, SL-3pm. Call Donnie 804/668-5866.

May 20 – Lake Anna Elite Series – Sturgeon Creek Marina, 6am-3pm. Call 540/895-5095.

May 20 - Virginia Elite 70 Tournament –Potomac River, 6am-3pm. Visit www.vaelite70.com.

May 21 – Potomac River Battle Series – Leesylvania State Park. Visit the Facebook page for more information.

May 27 – Potomac Teams Fishing Tournament – Leesylvania State Park. SL-3pm. Visit PotomacTeams.com or call Bob Pettey 703/577-1304.

May 30 – Ed Allen's Weekend (Holiday) Bass Tournament – Chickahominy Lake, 6am-2pm. Call 804/966-5368.

Shooting Sports

May 6 – Virginia Shooting Sports Syren/Caesar Guerini Demo Day. 10am. Visit www.VirginiaShootingSports.com.

May 7 – The Preserve at Dundee Ladies Only Shoot & Sip – Enjoy two hours of clay shooting followed by drinks & catered hors d'oeuvres. Visit www.ThePreserveatDundee.com for more information and to register.

May 7 – Virginia Shooting Sports Ladies Practice – Palmyra, VA, 12pm. Visit www.VirginiaShootingSports.com.

May 13 – Mother's Day Clays & Crafts – Virginia Shooting Sports, Providence Forge, VA. Visit www.VirginiaShootingSports.com.

May 14 – Shotguns & Saddles – Virginia Shooting Sports, Swoope, VA. Visit www.VirginiaShootingSports.com.



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