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Issue 276

March/April 2019



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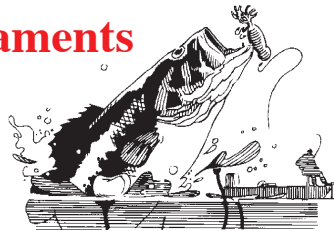
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Cover Photo

Denver Wilfong had success with a nearly 9 pound rainbow trout. Once brood trout age, their eggs are not as fertile as younger trout. They are released to be caught.

Go online to see this magazine online every 6 weeks. It is www.wvasportsman.net

TEXT, mail or email your large fish or game pictures. Info is on page 38.

Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.

Early Season Bluegill

Spring is the ideal time of year for anglers all across the United States to target bluegill. These hard-fighting panfish present a fisher with some excellent fishing action during this time of year, especially as the calendar approaches late spring. An angler who can find bluegill and who knows the best methods to fish for them is likely to bring home a bucketful of these very tasty fish.

Location

Bluegills spawn after species that largemouth bass and crappies do. Bluegill prefer the water temperature to be warmer than many types of fish before they begin to become active, meaning late May

and into June the bluegill bite will be at its best. Look for bluegill in ponds and lakes near the shore, where they dig out shallow beds in the gravel to use as "nests" in the shallows, usually in much less than 6 to 8 feet of water. The bluegills will overpopulate such areas, especially if there is any cover provided by such things as weed beds or downed trees. The water near a submerged tree or old log will usually yield bluegills, as will the region close to stumps and brush piles that are in the water. Since bluegills spawn in large groups, it makes little sense to continue fishing where you are not getting any bites. Move around along the shore or in your boat until you find a bunch of bluegills rather than waste time hoping that some come to you. In rivers, bluegill can be found in the spring in the calmer waters of coves and inlets or in places along the shore, where they can get a break from fighting the power of the current.

continue to the next page



Denver Ford landed an 8.2 and an 8.8 pound trout. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.

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Bait and Tackle

In the springtime, a bluegill is not particularly fussy about what



Caity used her bow in McDowell County for a quality buck.

it will attack and consume. Among the best baits for bluegill are night crawlers and earthworms, as well as leeches and red worms. Wax worms will also entice a bluegill to bite, as will crickets, corn and even bits of bacon. Artificial lures should have small hooks due to the smallish size of a bluegill's mouth. Smaller spinning baits, artificial flies, tiny crank baits, poppers and jigs will all work when the bluegills are spawning. For the ultimate bluegill experience, use the lightest possible tackle, such as an ultralight spinning rod rigged with 2 to 4 lb. monofilament line. Keep hooks small to accommodate the bluegill's mouth.

Bluegill Tactics

To catch bluegill one right after the other, hook your live bait, such as wax worms or night crawlers, on the hook underneath a small-

sized bobber. Cast out and wait for the bobber to indicate a bite before setting the hook. A bluegill gives as good a fight as any freshwater fish, and it is imperative that you steer it clear of any structure in the water, such as branches or stumps, or you risk the line becoming tangled. Artificial lures such as jigs can be tipped with a small chunk of a worm or with wax worms to get the bluegills to bite. If you are catching many small bluegills, it is unlikely that you will tie into any big ones, since overpopulation by this species tends to affect the availability of food and thus the size of the bluegill. Look for bigger bluegills in farm ponds that are not overstocked with fish and where extremely fertile soil eventually drains into the stream or pond.

Spring is finally here. Have some fun this season catching bluegill.

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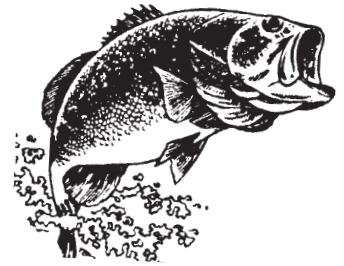
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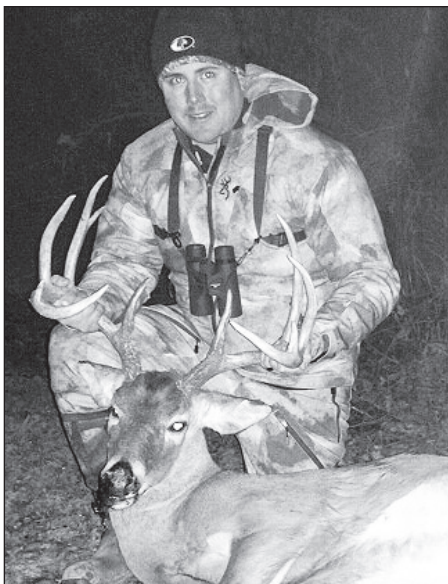
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2018 Total Deer Harvest Results

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. — Hunters in West Virginia registered 108,856 white-tailed deer



Jeremy Ferguson used a side hammer muzzleloader during the new Mountain Heritage season for this great buck. *Photo courtesy of Trigger Time in Spencer.*

through the electronic game checking system during the recently completed buck firearms, antlerless, muzzleloader, archery, crossbow, youth/Class Q/Class XS and Mountaineer Heritage seasons. The total harvest was within 1 percent of the 2017 deer harvest of 108,160 and 11 percent below the five-year average of 122,924, said Paul Johansen, chief of the Division of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Section.

A breakdown of the combined 2018 deer seasons reveals 44,599 bucks were harvested during the traditional buck firearm season, 32,751 antlerless deer were taken during all antlerless firearm hunting opportunities, 26,613 deer were harvested by bows and crossbows in the urban and regular archery/crossbow seasons, 4,234 deer were taken in the muzzleloader season and 659 deer were taken with prim-

itive bow and muzzleloader weapons in the Mountaineer Heritage season.

Antlerless Deer Season

The 2018 antlerless deer season harvest, which includes the youth/Class Q/Class XS deer season, was 2.5 percent less than in 2017 and 20 percent below the five-year average of 40,859.

“It is important to note that the antlerless harvest is the key component to any deer management strategy, as it controls the future deer population,” said Johansen.

DNR will hold 12 public meetings across the state on March 11 and 12 to gather input on fall 2019 antlerless deer hunting opportunity recommendations to increase, decrease or stabilize deer populations in each of the 51 counties where firearms deer hunting is permitted.

The top 10 counties were: Pres-
continue to the page 8

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ton (1,799), Upshur (1,289), Jackson (1,183), Lewis (1,160), Ritchie (1,123), Monroe (1,099), Roane (1,073), Hampshire (1,068), Wood (1,057) and Mason (922).

Muzzleloader Deer Season

The 2018 muzzleloader harvest of 4,870, which includes 636 deer taken with side-lock and flintlock muzzleloaders in the Mountaineer Heritage season, was 15 percent more than the 2017 harvest of 4,243 and 12 percent below the five-year average of 5,540.

The top 10 counties were Preston (213), Randolph (205), Nicholas (198), Greenbrier (178), Upshur (169), Fayette (165), Webster (158), Jackson (154), Braxton (142) and Mason (142).

Archery and Crossbow Deer Seasons

The bow and crossbow hunters' take of 26,636 deer, which included 23 bow-harvested deer in the

Mountaineer Heritage season, was 1.6 percent more than the 2017 archery season harvest of 26,206, and 3 percent below the five-year average archery season harvest of 27,506. The proportion of the harvest taken using a crossbow increased and was greater than deer

reported taken by a bow for the second year.

The top 10 counties were: Preston (1,333), Kanawha (1,045), Wyoming (976), Randolph (914), Raleigh (807), Logan (772), Fayette (765), Wood (709), Upshur (683) and Jackson (676).



Chad Raines bagged a huge buck in Jackson County this past season.

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State Record Yellow Perch Caught

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. — A state record yellow perch was caught by Clinton Mills of Ravenswood, West Virginia on Feb. 24, 2018. Mills caught the 14.5-inch, 2.04-pound fish on a 10-pound test line with live bait while fishing from a boat on Summersville Lake in Nicholas County.

Mills' yellow perch establishes a new West Virginia record for weight, exceeding the 1.93-pound fish caught by Joshua Estes from Summersville Lake in 2012.

Anglers who believe that they have caught a state record fish should check the record listing in the 2019 Fishing Regulations brochure. The brochure also outlines the procedure to follow for reporting their catch. This information is also available online at www.wvdnr.gov.



Clinton Mills, from Ravenswood landed a new state record yellow perch. This Summersville Lake fish weighed 2.04 pounds.

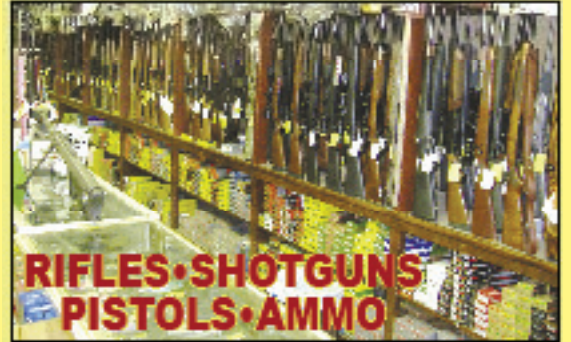
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10 Turkey Tips

Born in 1992, Tyler Jordan killed his first turkey at age eight. It's one of his favorite memories.

He and his father Bill Jordan, Realtree founder, shared the moment. They'd gone out on a Thursday afternoon to roost turkeys for their Friday morning hunt. Two birds not far from a big food plot responded.

"After convincing my mom and teacher to let me go hunt, we rose early the next morning and set up a hen decoy 15 yards from us, sat on the ground, and called," Jordan recalled. "One gobbled immediately. And it wasn't long before he hit the ground and came running to us. I shot him at 20 yards while he was strutting around the decoy."

First birds are special to all turkey hunters.

"Needless to say, you would not have found a happier 8-year-old boy or prouder dad that morning. And Mom was happy because I arrived at school before 10 a.m. I was hooked after that first one and have been hunting on our farms in Georgia and Alabama since then."

Tyler is currently attending Ole Miss, his dad's alma mater. Here are 10 of his top turkey hunting tips.


1: Scouting for Opening Day – and After

Instead of walking in the woods blind on opening day, Tyler Jordan will go where he plans to hunt, a day or two in advance.

"I'll use a barred owl or crow call to find where birds are roosting. Opening weekend is a great time to kill a turkey because they will sometimes gobble to almost anything," he said. "I try to use non-turkey locator calls before the season so the birds don't get used

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Creed Conley hunted in southern WV with a bow for this buck



Tyler McNemar hunted in Gilmer County for a fine buck.




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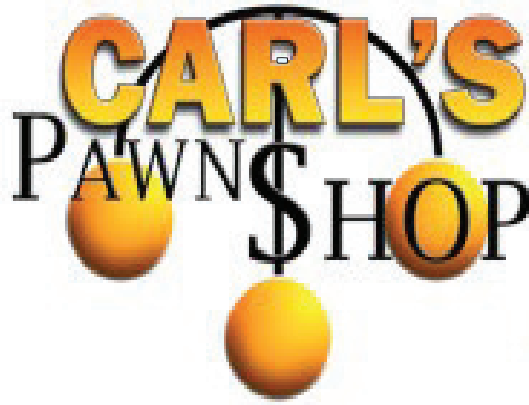
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to hearing my turkey calling. Eastern turkeys, the subspecies found where I usually hunt, get more leery when they hear the same turkey call over and over. If you play your cards right though, opening weekend could be the most successful out of the entire season.”

What about trail cameras?

“Later on, when hunting gets tougher, we’ll set up trail cameras to see if turkeys are passing by a particular area,” he explained. “Let’s face it, it’s much easier to call a turkey in when you’re already sitting where he wants to go.”

2: Open Field Gobbler Tactics

“Field turkeys are the most frustrating to hunt because you can see and hear them. But for whatever reason, they just won’t come the extra distance, which requires more work on your end,” Jordan said.

In his opinion, these can some-

times be the most exciting hunts. And he advised not to lose hope. Fanning – using a turkey fan or a decoy to move on a bird – is one of his favorite tactics. He stressed safety first and suggested reading turkey body language. He’s killed many turkeys with this trending strategy.

“There’s something about seeing that fan come closer that just gets turkeys fired up,” he said. “I learned this tip from my dad when I was 13. It was a hot afternoon, and the gobbler, underneath some shade on the edge of a big food plot, was strutting with two hens and had stopped responding to any of my calls. I snuck up the hill with my fan in front of my face and would occasionally look around to make sure he was looking at it. Sure enough, he came out of strut and stared at the fan for 15-20 sec-

onds before he made a break in my direction. I quickly backed up and got behind a tree before he reached the crest of the hill. He came right in at about 20 yards before I took the shot.”

3: Hennaed-Up Turkeys

As veteran turkey hunters know, to kill a spring gobbler, you some-

continue to the next page



Grayson Boyles hooked a 23 1/2” golden trout. *Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.*

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times have to call his hen to your position. Tyler Jordan agrees.

“You must have patience. In this situation, stop calling the gobbler, and try calling the hen. If you can get her fired up and cutting back at you, then there's a good chance she will bring the gobbler right in with her. They don't like other hens

talking to their boyfriends. That's when you must depend on your patience and calling ability to coax in the boss hen. What will make her more upset is if you start copying exactly what she's saying in a louder and more aggressive way,” he said.

On a Florida hunt two years ago, Jordan got a hen fired up and calling back. He never even heard the gobbler until he saw the turkey following her down the road, right to him.

4: Bad Weather Hunting

All hunters deal with tough weather conditions. Jordan believes you should tough it out.

“It's easy to give up on a turkey hunt when there's wind and rain. But hunting in bad weather can sometimes be good . . . if you adjust your tactics. Thunder can sometimes cause turkeys to shock gobble. And overcast activities

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Josh Dean hunted in Ohio with a crossbow for a huge buck.

will sometimes prolong gobbling throughout the day.”

As Jordan pointed out, turkeys will also stay on the roost longer when it's raining. They prefer open areas where predators are less likely to sneak up on them. His hunting advice: “You can try to stalk up on an open field where the vegetation is low or areas where there is less cover. The key here, though, is to be patient and to call very little, if at all. Try to determine where the continue to the next page

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birds are headed, and see if you can beat them there.”

Worst of all could be the wind. “There’s nothing I hate more than hunting in the wind,” Jordan said. “You can’t hear the turkeys, and you aren’t really sure if they can hear you. Another disadvantage of the wind is judging the distance of a gobbler if you can hear him. Try to get in thick timber where the wind isn’t as bad, and move from one spot to the next. Be loud using a box or a mouth call. And make sure your gun is up and ready because you probably won’t hear him coming.”

5: Hung-Up Gobblers

We’ve all been there. The gobbler answers but holds his ground. Tyler Jordan’s first course of action: move out and reposition. “He’s probably heard you call from the same spot and direction, and he’s just no longer interested. If the cover is thick enough, back out of the area and try calling from a different spot,” Jordan said.

“Sometimes I’ll even try a differ-



Natasha Vinson hunted in Wyoming County for a great buck.

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ent call to change things up. If that doesn’t work, and you have nothing to lose, maybe try to close the distance. It’s a risky tactic, but I’ve had it work under the right circumstances. There must be enough cover or something to block his view. You’ll probably fail more than you succeed doing this, but it may be all you can do.”

His final thought on hung-up gobblers? “Turkeys have their own schedules; all you might need is a little patience.”

6: Turkey Calls and Gear

What gear does Tyler Jordan carry?

“My number-1 essential is toilet paper because you never know when Mother Nature will come knocking. Another must-carry for me is an extra facemask and set of gloves. More than once, I’ve lost one or the other, and it cost me a turkey. Turkeys have unbelievable

eyesight, and everything you can do to conceal is a plus.”

Here’s his Top 10 gear list:

- Toilet paper
- Extra set of gloves and facemask
- Bottled water
- LED flashlight for early-morning hunts
- Clippers
- Box call

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7: Mouth-Calling Tips

Mouth diaphragms can be tough for some to use.

“Being able to run a mouth call can be a challenge if you’ve never done it before,” he said. “My only tip would be to just play around with it until you figure out a particular call brand or cut that suits you. It took me about two years until I got comfortable enough to call turkeys using one.”

His favorite cut is a triple reed. “For me, it's easier to blow and to control pitches.”

8: Turkey Hunting from Blinds

Upside: “If you have a small kid that can’t sit still long, or if it’s raining, blinds can be extremely effective. They also are great for hunting open fields where there are no trees and for bowhunting; with the eyesight turkeys have, it can be very hard to draw back on a bird while out in the open.”

Downside: “I personally don’t like ground blinds because they limit mobility,” he said.

9: Setting Up Turkey Decoys

You can’t just stake decoys and



Jim Pauley had hunting success this past season.





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expect them to work. You have to make choices.

“With strutter decoys, use a jake

fan so it doesn’t scare the dominant tom and so it attracts gobblers of

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ages,” Jordan said. “Depending on the time of year, the stake can be removed to resemble a gobbler and hen breeding, which will also coax a tom in. Also, any time you can add real feathers will make a huge difference.”

10: Mentoring Younger Hunters

“My dad took me at an early age to observe and learn the skills of turkey hunting. I was able to experience the excitement of calling in turkeys, hearing the gobblers, and witnessing the unbelievable sight of having them in full strut right in front of me. I got to spend time with him and see how it was done,” Jordan said.

“Allow a child to go along and experience the excitement firsthand. One thing my dad has done with all three of us is never pressure us into going. This has made all the difference in my mind. He exposed us to the outdoors and to turkey hunting. But he let us choose if it was for us or not. That’s what I would try to do with today’s young hunters.”



Dog hunting in southern WV, Matt Lanford, Cameron Lanford, Kenny Mullooly, Devin Bohan, Brantley Lanford & Brady Raymond.

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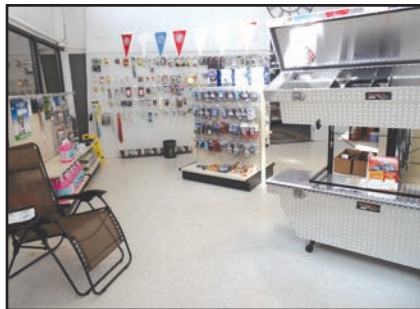
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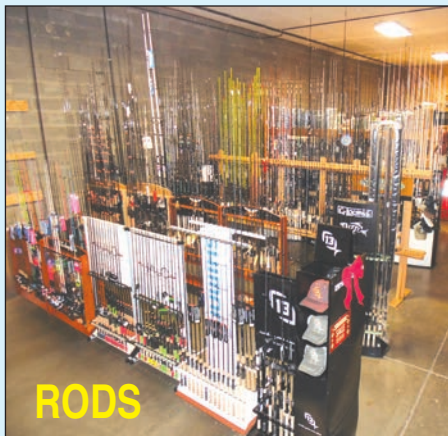


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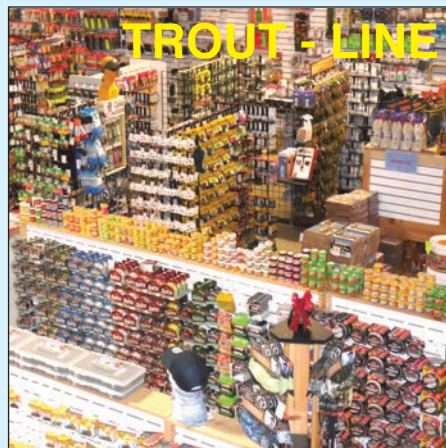
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Shallow Cranking

By Jake Whitaker

The bass are beginning to move toward their spawning areas in the South, and they will be doing so throughout the rest of the country in the coming weeks and months. That means it's time to get serious about shallow water cranking.

Whenever the water creeps up over 50 degrees, I'll be casting shallow crankbaits. I've caught bass on shallow cranks in water under 50 degrees, but the 50-degree mark is when the action really picks up.

Four shallow 6th Sense crankbaits keep a bow in my line throughout this prespawn migration. The water temperature tells me which of these baits I need to be casting.

I start with the 6th Sense Curve 55 when the water temperature is in the low 50s. That bait has a round bill and gets 5 to 9 feet deep. An internal weight swings left and right and makes the Curve 55 swim with an unpredictable hunting motion, kind of like a Wiggle Wart. It's a great search bait.

I throw it on 45-degree banks and channel swing banks from the

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mouths of creeks to about half-way back. Any bank with chunk rock is good. I want that bait to get down there and really beat on those rocks. The more things you can bounce it off of the better. I give it a steady retrieve. Not slow, but not fast either.

The bait color varies depending on the water's color. I like red, or
continue to the next page



Dwayne Bryan caught a 6 1/2 pound rainbow trout in Hurricane.



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ange or a crawfish pattern in lakes where I live in North Carolina because the water is usually stained at this time of year. I go with a shad color if the water is clear. That applies to all my shallow prespawn crankbait fishing.

When the water warms to the middle 50s I switch to the 6th Sense Crush Flat 75X. This flat-sided crankbait has a tight wiggle and dives 4 to 6 feet deep. It's kind of unique because it has a square bill and is awesome at coming through cover. Most flat crankbaits have round bills and tend to snag in cover.

I'm still fishing rocky banks and digging the bottom, but I'm starting half way back in a creek and



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working farther into it. I also increase the retrieve speed.

The bass become much more active and aggressive when the water warms to the upper 50s. That's when I go with the 6th Sense 50X Squarebill. This buoyant 3/8-ounce bait runs 2 to 5 feet deep. It has a great hunting action and plows through and over cover without snagging.

By this time the bass are making their way into spawning areas in the backs of creeks. I concentrate on the last channel swing bank in the back of a creek, the last boat docks in a creek and whatever cover the bass might relate to on spawning flats. If there's any riprap present, I never pass it up.

I cast all three of these baits with a glass 7-foot, medium-heavy ALX IKOS Hustler crankbait rod. I pair it with a Lew's Team Lite 6:8.1 gear ratio reel and 12-pound

P-Line Tactical Fluorocarbon. I go up to 15-pound when I'm grinding the 50X square bill over rough rock or wood.



Andy Wills, from Beckley, caught a 34 1/2" New River walleye. The New River walleye are a unique species of walleye.

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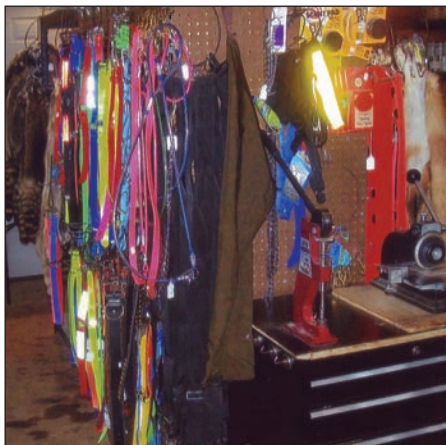
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Turkey Calling Help

As a callmaker I have spent a lot of time talking about how to call turkeys.

I have heard a lot of hunting stories about what works and what doesn't, and seen a lot of different types of calls. With that being said, I want to take a few minutes to talk about some of the best decisions you can make to call in a turkey.

Practice

First and foremost you have to practice your turkey calling. Think of it like an instrument; you wouldn't pick up a guitar and go play a concert without practicing, so why would you do it with a turkey call? The hunt is your concert; you need to practice and have each and every one of your calls down to perfection before you try them out on live turkeys.

practice

I know this might sound like something you expect to hear from a callmaker, but variation really is a key part of turkey hunting, especially if you only have a small area to hunt in.

Turkeys are very smart and they

continue to the next page



Young Bo Hollen got his first buck - an 8 point - way to go.

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will get used to the sound of your calls. If you only have one call and use it over and over, the turkey will stop responding, and eventually run the other way when they hear you calling. Variation can be as simple as buying a few extra strikers for your pot call, different woods of strikers will make different tones. Or you can be like many hunters out there and carry two or three of every type of call possible into the woods.

While this can get cumbersome, it can also lead to great results if you know how to use all of the calls together.

Hunters sometimes get the wrong impression about using turkey calls. You don't have to call every 30 seconds. I think this comes from a lack of patience and from seeing hunting shows where it appears that is what they are doing, but you have to remember, they tend to edit out the boring parts.

I have a general rule of calling no more than every 15 minutes if I am not getting an answer. I have never once heard a hen just stand in the woods and yelp continuously, so why would that be what I imitate? No Need to Yell

Sometimes you will need to use your calls as loud as possible. For example, if you are trying to locate, or if it is a windy day and you can see turkeys at a distance would

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both be good times to try to get full volume from your turkey calls.

But when you are actively calling a turkey and getting response, soften up. Remember, most of your calling is as a hen that is supposed to be enticing a gobbler to come towards her. Soft yelps, clucks, and purrs tend to get the job done a lot better than just yelping as loud as possible.

One of the calls that we sell the most of is what we call a Purr Pot.

continue to the next page



Alan Britton had deer success with this 8 point buck.



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It is just like a regular slate pot call, just smaller and has a much softer sound. Everybody who tries it in the woods says that it does a great job of getting a gobbler to come the last 15 yards or so needed to get off a shot.

Know When to Stop

The last piece of advice I have is to know when to stop calling. If you have a gobbler coming across a field directly towards you, you don't need to keep calling. Put down your calls and just wait.

The more you call, the more likely you are to mess up and send him running. If he stops or turns, then by all means call a little more.

NWTF Honors DNR Officers

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. — Two West Virginia Division of Natural Resources staff members have been recognized by the state chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) for their efforts in game management, conservation, enforcing wildlife laws and promoting hunter safety. During the NWTF's annual awards banquet in January, Wildlife Manager Michael Craig McDougal was presented the "Making Tracks Award" and Natural Resources Police Officer (NRPO) Justin Stewart

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was given the "Sharp Spur Award" by State Chapter President Jeff Jones.

Each year, NWTF recognizes a DNR wildlife manager who
continue to the next page

Bass Sportsman 2019 Events

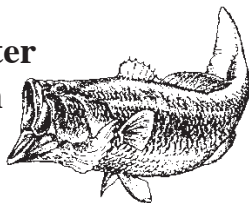
1st 33 - Ad in Magazine Now

Stonewall Classic - Ad in Magazine Now

Kings of The Lakes - 2 Day

Different Format & Entry Fee- TBA Later

Aug. 10 Burnsville and Aug. 11 Sutton



OTHER BASS TOURNAMENTS

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All 7am to 3:30pm NO-PREGISTRATION

• April 7 - May 26 - Sept. 29 - Stonewall - Vandalia Ramp

6 Fish Limit - 6 Can be Over 18"

• May 5 and July 28 Burnsville - 6 Fish Limit

Complete Rules Given At Events

Questions: Mark Goudy 304-482-7217 wvasport@gmail.com



Brian Clark, from Belle, has been catching lots of walleye on a charters swimbait rigged on an under-spin blade. Kanawha River catch.

demonstrates outstanding efforts in the management and conservation of wild turkey and other wildlife resources. McDougal has been the wildlife manager on the Pleasant Creek, Center Branch and Pruntytown State Farm Wildlife Management areas in Barbour, Harrison and Taylor counties since 2009.

He was chosen in recognition of his work in habitat improvement, including timber sales, border cuts, mourning dove fields, and young forest habitat and wetlands management that benefit many different species of wildlife, as well as hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts.

McDougal is from Taylor County and is an active hunter, trapper and fisherman. He also enjoys riding UTVs with his family.

Officer Stewart was recognized for his law enforcement efforts in 2018. He and NRPO Randy Cremeans contacted the West Virginia Army National Guard, which provided a helicopter to locate numerous illegal turkey bait sites in Wood, Tyler and Ritchie counties. Locating these bait sites spurred investigations that led to numerous individuals being caught and prosecuted

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Officer Stewart has also been a dedicated mentor to the younger generation of sportsmen and women. He has attended the “JAKES Day” event for the past five years, talking with kids about having fun and being safe during a turkey hunt. He is also a passionate hunter education instructor who promotes turkey hunting to the children of Wood County.

Officer Stewart’s passion for conservation doesn’t end when he is off duty. He has spent many personal days conducting habitat improvement projects for the Eastern Wild Turkey on his personal farm and other properties.

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Gobbler Season April 15 to May 11



Justin Dennis caught a 22 1/4 inch rainbow trout at Buffalo Lake.

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Over the winter, most anglers painstakingly organize their messy tackle boxes, eagerly anticipating the warmer spring weather and opportunity to wet a line. Now that trout season is here, did you know you really don't need that many different trout lures and baits to be successful?

While fly fishermen have small fly boxes they'll carry with them, using spinning tackle can be a little more cumbersome. However, there's no need to lug around a tackle box full of options. These trout lures and baits are all you need to catch trout on spinning gear in most parts of the country.

If you don't already have some, you can find the rest at your local sporting goods store easily. And since there aren't many, you don't have to break the bank either.

Spinners

It's hard to beat a spinner when fishing streams or rivers for trout. You can find them in various sizes and patterns to match your destination and intended trout species. Start with a Mepps Aglia, which features genuine bucktail or squirrel tail.

Another solid option for smaller streams is the Blue Fox Vibrax Shallow Spinner, which has a specialized blade to keep it from running deeper than two feet. Its life-like patterns and dressed tail will convince a wary trout to take a bite.

Jigs are powerful trout lures because you can fish them down the current or jig from above a pool with deadly results. In particular, trout love to chase marabou jigs.

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The Lindy Fuzz-E Grub is a great crossover between the marabou jig and a soft bait. You can fish it as is, or tip it with live bait for some added enticement.

Of course some good old Berkeley Power Bait is effective too.



Jimmie Gillis hooked a 26" rainbow trout. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.

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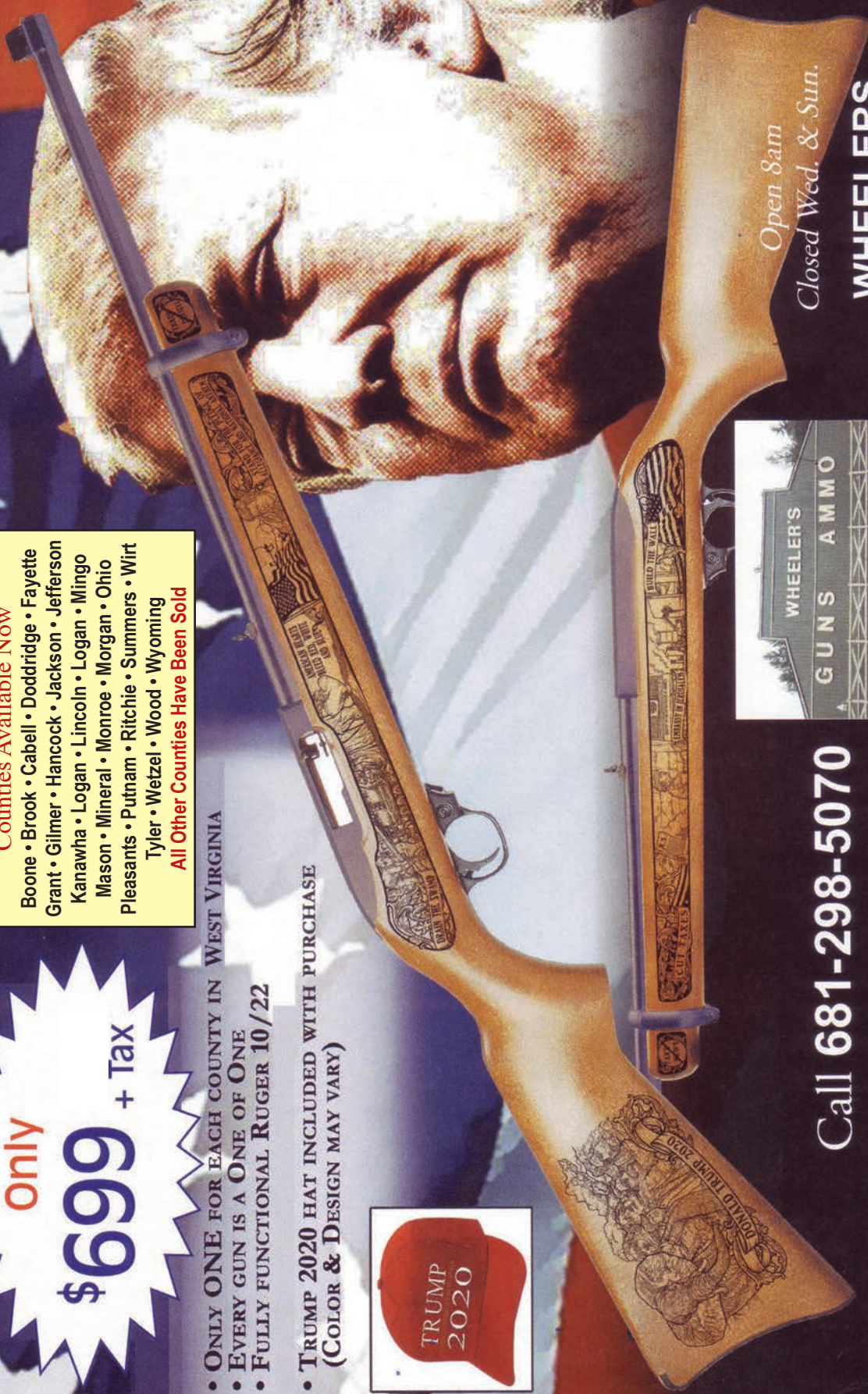


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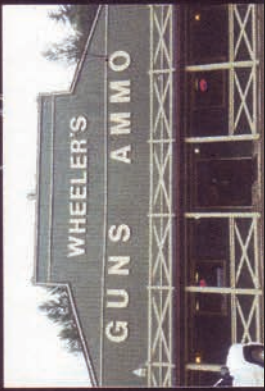
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Hunting Hung Up Gobblers

Make no mistake, a hung-up gobbler is nothing new. We frequently encounter them each season and often come out the loser. However, don't jump to conclusions and claim these birds are call shy. Veteran turkey hunters agree that it's simply a natural phenomenon for a gobbler to be hesitant. In fact, many birds we kill early in the calling session often hang up briefly before walking into range. There are many, though, that don't mind standing pat. So what can we do to convince a stubborn gobbler to move?

Remain Silent

Some gobblers seem to have more time on their hands than the hunter. The more you call, the more they hold their ground. Sometimes it is best give them the cold shoulder.

The silence tends to work favorably for the hunter.

It's a gobbler's nature to hang up. However, there are a few tricks you can use to force the action. (Photo by John and Vikki Trout)

We've all heard the old saying, "Wise men listen more than they speak." But, of course, there are times when complete silence doesn't work. Consider a Midwestern gobbler I encountered a few years ago. The tom barely gobbled, which left me guessing what he was up to. I hadn't made a peep for 30 minutes, and neither had he. My sixth sense told me the turkey was still there, 60 yards away.

Eventually I broke down and clucked — only once. Two minutes later, the bird showed. The one-cluck call excited him immensely,

but I'm sure he never heard the gun's report.

Off-The-Wall Calls

Sometimes desperate times call for desperate measures, and it might take that one unusual sound to convince a tom he should get moving.

continue to the next page



Doug Belcher, from Robson, brought in a nice 10 point buck.



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Several years ago, my son John and I faced a stubborn gobbler on two consecutive mornings. On the second day, when the longbeard hung up in the same exact spot, I pulled out the fighting-hen call. The sounds of two hens fighting sent the tom into a frenzy and brought him running. Since that day, I've used this tactic successfully on numerous occasions.

I don't suggest you use a gobble call often, and you should always apply caution because other hunters could mistake you for a tom. However, a gobble can work. For instance, I once worked a bird for more than three hours. The turkey had hung up across a creek. When I gobbled, he cut me off with a booming reply. Then all was quiet. Moments later, I saw his white head coming toward me. He flew across the creek and landed 12 steps from where I was sitting.

Gobbling is an ace-in-the-hole to consider. It can deter a jake or insubordinate gobbler from coming in, but can also shift the odds in your favor when the hung-up



Bucky Sargent used a bow for a huge Logan County buck.

turkey is a dominant and breeding boss bird.

Make Something Happen

Regardless of which course of action you choose to deal with a hung-up gobbler, you must first allow him to make the move. Too many hunters (myself included) need to take a course in patience. Don't get me wrong, I love it when I set up on a bird, hit a call, and he comes running. However, when
continue to the next page

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'm up against a bird that rides the brakes, I must force myself to stay put long enough to let something happen, and allow time for him to make a mistake.

However, there comes a time when patience doesn't get it done. In other words, you must make something happen. A short sprint to a new setup is yet another deadly tactic to make a turkey move.

Making a short move — allowing the bird to hear you move through the leaves or by simply calling from a different spot — builds a gobbler's confidence and lets him know there is nothing to worry about. I sincerely believe that re-locating is possibly the most effective tactic for making hung-up turkeys move.

Doubling Up

Teaming up with another hunter to take advantage of an obstinate gobbler has often seemed a little like cheating to me. Nevertheless, it's quite effective. It's nothing new, and it's not an unusual strategy, but I can't leave this tactic out of the story, simply because it's extremely effective.

If the caller sets up a short distance behind the shooter, it means a gobbler that hangs up 50 yards from the caller will be on top of the shooter. This method is hard to beat when facing a bird known to consistently hang up.

A gobbler might hang up because of hens around him. Or, perhaps some gobblers are nervous wrecks all the time and possess sharp survival instincts. Then again, maybe it's just a natural thing for him to do. One of the previously mentioned tactics could change it all in your favor. And I emphasize the word "could" because there's always a gobbler that's been there and done that!

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Logan Jarrett caught this 7 pound, 2 oz. largemouth bass in mid February in a Jackson County Lake.

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My Take On Dock Fishing

I love to fish docks. They produce bass for me from the prespawn through the postspawn and right on through the summer months. Docks are a high priority for me regardless of where I'm competing in a tournament. It doesn't matter if I'm fishing in the North, South, East or West, I'm sure to find bass under docks.

There is no single right way to fish a dock. I just know what works for me. And, I change tactics depending on what the bass are up to.

The first step to successful dock fishing is to determine where the bass are. Once you figure that out, you can concentrate on docks in those specific areas and bypass the rest of them. It doesn't matter if the docks are floating or stationary. The bass will relate to whatever types of docks happen to be there.

When the bass are in their pre-

By Jake Whitaker
spawn phase, I look in creeks for docks near channel swing banks and on secondary points. That's where the bass will stop and stage before moving up to spawn.

There are many different ways to catch dock bass at this time. I have my best luck with baits I can leave in there awhile because the

bass are not as active as they will be later. A jig, a shaky head and a weightless 5-inch Bizz Baits Sassy Stick sinking worm are my go-tos.

I cast the Sassy Stick and the shaky head on spinning tackle so I can skip them under the docks
continue to the next page



Jerimiah Howe, from Lumberport, caught a 24 1/2" rainbow trout.



Kole Biddle, from Waverly, shot a buck.

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and walkways. A 7-foot, Medium Soul 7 ALX Ikos Series rod is perfect for this. I pair the rod with 15-pound P-Line Braid that I knot to a 10-pound P-Line Tactical Fluorocarbon leader.

Once the water warms enough for the bass to begin spawning, I target the last few docks I find way back in spawning pockets. A jig is still good. But there's something about the slow-sinking Sassy Stick that bass can't resist just before they spawn and when they are actually spawning. A weightless swimbait skipped under a dock and slowly swum out also works well.

A lot of people fish the outer edges of docks and boat slips and overlook the walkways. It takes extra effort to position your boat to fish a walkway properly, but it's worth the trouble. A lot of big bass spawn



Blayne Thompson got his first buck - a 7 point in Randolph County.

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there. The Sassy Stick is a killer bait under walkways.

As the bass transition into their postspawn phase, they begin feeding on shad, bluegill and other baitfish. The Sassy Stick, jig and shaky head will catch them, but this is when I really like to start using moving baits like spinnerbaits, white swim jigs and Flukes. A hard plastic 6-inch swimbait is another bait that gets bites for me.

I continue to target docks in the

backs of creeks and pockets during the postspawn phase. When summer rolls around, I start looking more to deeper docks closer to the main lake in major creeks.

In summertime the bass use docks for shade as well as a source of food. Certain bass will live under a specific dock and never leave it. In the summer, you shouldn't go back to docks where you caught a bass the day or two before in a tournament. It will be awhile before another bass takes up residence there.



Bill Asbury bagged an 8 point in Wirt County. *Photo courtesy of Crossroads General Store near Newark.*

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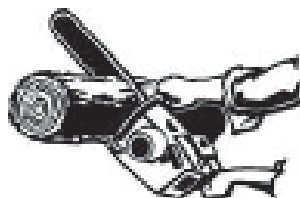
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Corrections In Fishing Regulations

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The 2019 West Virginia Fishing Regulations Summary contains two errors of which anglers and other parties should note.

On page 12, the code for Buffalo Fork (Pocahontas) should read BW-F, instead of W-F.

On page 13, Mill Creek (Hampshire) was not included in the regulations. Its code is BW.

The code BW means a stream or lake is stocked twice a month in February through April and once in May. Code F means a stream or lake is stocked once in each of the two weeks after the week that includes Columbus Day in October. These changes have been made to the electronic version of the regulations on the agency website www.wvdnr.gov.



Ruth Thompson, from Rockport landed a 22 1/4" rainbow trout.



Josh Bias used a bow for a huge Logan County buck.



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T.R. Hathaway says: "Spring gobler season is April 15 - May 11"



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