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Issue 248

Sept./Oct. 2015



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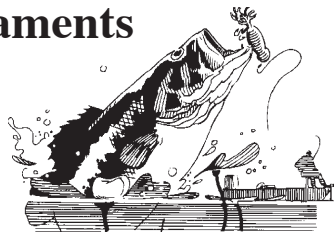
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Cover Photo

Jeremy Byers, from New Martinsville, caught & Released a 7 pound, 14 oz. Stonewall Jackson Lake largemouth bass.

Crossbows are no legal to use in 51 counties in WV, The date is concurrent with the bow season.

This magazine is now accepting **TEXT** pictures. So many people have their cell phones as their only source for taking pictures. Now, you can text the pics to this magazine. Just call this number: 304-482-7217.

Blennerhasset Island By Night

PARKERSBURG, West Virginia – Candles will light the way to the mansion on Blennerhassett Island Oct. 9 and 10, 2015. The Mansion by Candlelight Tour, sponsored by the Friends of Blennerhassett, began in 1996 and has since become the island's most popular annual event, according to Park Supt. Doug Wiant. The evening begins with a ride on the sternwheeler Island Belle, departing from Civitan Park in Belpre, Ohio.

“Blennerhassett Island takes on a new persona as the sun goes down and the candlelight from the hundreds of lanterns begin to illuminate the graveled paths directing you from the sternwheeler landing to the candlelit mansion, the servant's party, harvest supper, gift shop and other activities,” said special events coordinator Pam Salisbury. “The island is absolutely beautiful with candlelight and all the activities make it even more special.”



Brian Dillon hooked a 47 1/4” musky.

The Candlelight tour gives visitors an opportunity to visit Blennerhassett Island's recreated and exciting social life of 200 years ago -- the world known by Harman and Margaret Blennerhassett. Music from the Valley Renaissance Consort's recorders, the hammered dulcimer and other stringed instruments is part of the evening programming. There is also dancing and a lively game of cards.

“The autumn evening creates the setting for a journey back to the year 1805 where Mr. and Mrs. Blennerhassett have planned a grand party for all their guests,” Wiant said. “Harman Blennerhassett, a wealthy Irish aristocrat, settled on the wilderness island in 1798 with his lovely wife Margaret and completed construction of their magnificent mansion in 1800. Their island and home will be bustling with entertainment that will delight visitors.”

A picnic-style harvest supper at the island shelter consisting of tavern ham, baked potatoes, green beans, dinner roll, dessert and a beverage is available. Harvest supper tickets are limited and reservations for the supper are required. The concession stand will also be open each evening and offers a variety of foods and drink.

The horse-drawn wagon is included as part of the evening activities. *continue to the next page*

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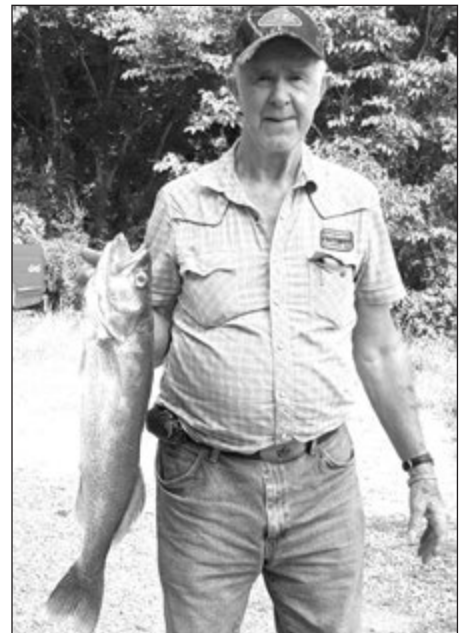
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tivities. The drivers of The Hardly Able Carriage Company will take attendees on a ride around the upper half of the island and talk about the island. The island gift shop is open both evenings.

The Servants Party invites everyone to the bonfire for a rather spirited celebration. The Servants Party includes live music and the West Virginia Mountain Pride dancers, who will be performing lively dances around the bonfire. Galen Smith, a local actor, will provide entertainment with spine-tingling stories of local folklore. Apple butter will be stirred and a blacksmith will be hard at work.

Boat departure times are to and from Civitan Park at 6, 6:30, 7, 7:30 and 8 p.m. with returns on the half-hour beginning at 8:30 p.m. The Harvest Supper has five seatings: 6:15, 6:45, 7:15, 7:45 and 8:15 p.m. Mansion by Candlelight tickets are \$30 for adults and \$25

for children ages 3-12. Tickets include a sternwheeler ride on the Island Bell, mansion visit, the horse-drawn wagon ride and activities. The harvest supper is optional and is \$15 per person.

Reservations are required. To make reservations, call the park office at 304-420-4800 or stop by the Blennerhassett Museum at 2nd and Juliana streets to purchase Mansion by Candlelight tickets. Learn more about Blennerhassett Island at www.blennerhassettislandstatepark.com.

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White Wins FLW Junior World Championship

West Virginia's Tyler White hit the mother lode of schooling bass to win the 2015 The Bass Federation Junior World Championship Aug. 21-22 on Arkansas' Lake Hamilton.

In doing so, he topped a hard-fishing field of 39 TBF junior state champions ranging in age from 11 to 15 years old, and claimed a \$2,500 scholarship to the school of his choice, plus a \$250 Cabela's gift card.

The jackpot didn't come right out of the gate, however – or without



WV native, Tyler White is shown with Hank Parker.



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a fight.

On day one of the two-day event, which was held in conjunction with the Forrest Wood Cup on nearby Lake Ouachita, the young competitors squared off against anglers from their own TBF divisions for a coveted spot in the final round.

White topped the Mid-Atlantic Division with a five-bass limit weighing 8 pounds, 11 ounces. He was second overall and one of just two anglers to break the 8-pound barrier.

Kentucky's Hunter Young paced the pack on day one with an 8-pound, 12-ounce limit. With a blossoming topwater program promising to bear even more fruit on day two, Young was the angler to beat as the remaining six finalists left the dock in a drizzle after a weather-delayed start at around 7 a.m. But White had other ideas.

White's go-to morning spot both days was a small island a short cast from the Clarion Resort launch ramp. A long, tapering point sweetened the structural pot, drawing passing pods of bass working their

way through the surrounding open water.

"I stopped right away on day one, threw a topwater up there and they smoked it," he says.

But such was definitely not the case on day two.

"I hadn't gotten a bite by 9:55," White says.

continue to the next page

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Details On Page 3**



Luke Holland hooked a smallmouth. *Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.*

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After a fishless start and looming rain clouds threatening a washout, White, of Oak Hill, was beginning to worry when a cove full of school-bass turned his day around.

“I got lucky,” he recalls. “We made a run and saw a bunch of schoolers in a cove. It was incredible. There were just schools of spots and largemouths.”

White still had his work cut out for him, however. Although he was wielding one of his confidence baits – a slim-bodied Lucky Craft Gunfish topwater – he couldn’t get the breaking fish to take the bait.

“I’d throw at a school, but couldn’t get them to race up on it,” he says.

With “flock-shooting” drawing a blank, he decided to target individual fish.

“When the next bass popped up I put the bait right on his nose and he hammered it,” White grins.

The tactic held water until the schoolies sounded.

“When the fish dove they slid out deeper, into about 24 feet of water,” he says. “I found them on the graph and dropped a drop-shot rig on them. I caught about a 3-pound spot.”

When the dust settled he had a decent limit, but hopes of upgrading his stringer faded as the day wore on. White never got another fish after 11:30.

With weights zeroed on Saturday, all six finalists were in the hunt. But Young’s day-one success was still fresh in their minds, and each also knew that with a field that rich in talent, anything could happen.

The crowd roared when White’s basket tipped the scale at 11 pounds, 4 ounces, and he took the hot seat, anxiously hoping it was enough for a victory.

In White’s third straight visit to the TBF Junior World Championship, it turned out that the third time was the charm. Young sacked a solid second limit, but it settled the
continue to the next page



Will Runion bagged a 23 1/2 pound gobbler this spring.



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scale at 6 pounds, 5 ounces, good for second place, a \$1,500 scholarship and \$200 Cabela's gift card. White was declared the winner.

"This is just amazing," White says of the win. "I don't know how many prayers I've said about it."

Top 6

1. Tyler White, Oak Hill, W.Va., 5 bass, 11-04, \$2,500 scholarship plus \$250 gift card
2. Hunter Young, Melbourne, Ky., 5 bass, 6-05, \$1,500 scholarship plus \$200 Cabela's gift card
3. Max Dispoto, Watertown, Conn., 3 bass, 4-14, \$750 scholarship plus \$200 Cabela's gift card
4. Colby Miller, Elmer, La., 4 bass, 4-05, \$325 scholarship plus \$100 Cabela's gift card
5. Brayden Liebe, Kelso, Wash., 2 bass, 2-06, \$250 scholarship plus \$100 Cabela's gift card
6. Maxwell Trotter, Decatur, Ill., 2 bass, 2-00, \$200 scholarship plus \$100 Cabela's gift card

For complete results, visit bassfederation.com.



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More Info

A total of 21 bass weighing 31 pounds, 2 ounces crossed the stage at the Clarion Resort on day two. Adding to the excitement, all Junior World Championship contestants participated in a champions' presentation and parade on the FLW main stage prior to Saturday's Forrest Wood Cup weigh-in at Bank of the Ozarks Arena in Hot Springs, Ark.

The no-entry-fee TBF Junior World Championship is produced

by a partnership between The Bass Federation and FLW. For details, contact TBF National Headquarters at 580.765.9031.

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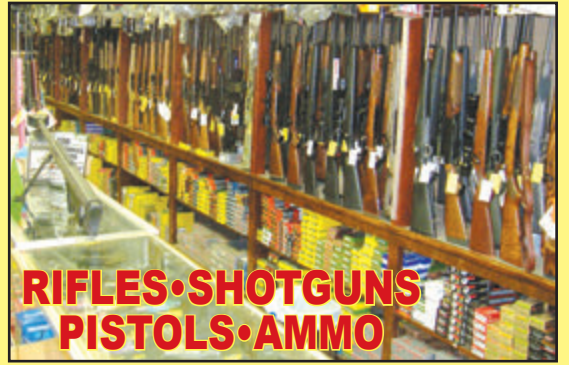
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Mitch Blake reeled in a large musky in Lewis County..

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New Land Aquisitions For Elk in WV

LOGAN, W.Va. – As part of its new elk reintroduction plan for southern West Virginia, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (DNR) has announced leases of nearly 9,000 acres in Logan and McDowell counties that will be a major part of the new “elk zone.” The announcement was made by DNR Director Bob Fala Sept. 11 at Chief Logan Lodge during a reception for many of the organizations and individuals who have played a

major part in the elk program. In particular, Ecosystem Investment Partners (EIP), the lessor of the property, was thanked.

In McDowell County, 4,500 acres will adjoin the existing Tug Fork Wildlife Management area, which already covers 2,266 acres between Iaeger and Welch. Additionally, 4,300 acres has been leased near Holden in the west-central part of Logan County and has been named “the Tomblin Wildlife Management Area” after Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin, a Logan County native who has

made the elk reintroduction a priority of his administration.

“The Tomblin WMA will be managed by the DNR in cooperation with EIP,” Director Fala said. “Though the area is in the typically steep, rugged terrain of southern West Virginia, it is unique in that most of the ridge-tops have been surface mined and reclaimed to ‘wildlife habitat,’ most recently by Alpha Natural Resources.

“The combination of mined mountain tops and forested valleys cre-
continue to the next page



Caden Clendenin, from Upper Glade, caught a 42” catfish.

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creates a mosaic of mixed habitat types which already serves as home to a wide variety of wildlife species. It will serve as a great place to host an elk population. Its entry into WMA status will ensure that the public will have the opportunity to enjoy all that it has to offer.”

Fala says the properties are under long-term leases from Ecosystem Investment Partners and may eventually be purchased by the DNR to ensure that the public will have access long after the elk reintroduction program is put into effect.

Fala also reported that nego-

tiations are still underway with Kentucky to import some of their healthy elk herd at the earliest opportunity, perhaps as early as this winter. In the meantime, DNR is working with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, which is providing more than \$97,000 in grants, to prepare facilities and provide equipment and training for DNR wildlife staff to handle and manage the elk when they arrive.

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Darren & Brent Kennedy, from Brenton, are with a 2014 deer..

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Small Game Seasons Open

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Several small game seasons are about to open for West Virginia hunters and trappers.

The statewide squirrel hunting season opens Sept. 12, 2015 and runs through Jan. 31, 2016. The daily bag limit is six squirrels. This fall, hunters should experience good numbers of squirrels due to the excellent hard mast production in 2014 which resulted in an increase in squirrel productivity in 2015 as well as excellent winter survival. Hunters should focus on areas with beech or hickory early in the season because they are favored food sources. For additional information on mast conditions, hunters should consult the DNR's 2015 Annual Mast Survey which will be available around the first of October.

Ruffed grouse hunting season opens Oct. 17, 2015 and will run through Feb. 29, 2016. Grouse hunters should seek heavily harvested forested stands which exhibit dense woody growth, preferably with soft mast producing trees like dogwood, hawthorn and sassafras, as well as vines such as wild grape. The daily bag limit is four grouse.

Raccoon hunting season will begin Oct. 17, 2015 and run through

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Tony McCumber reeled in a huge largemouth bass.



Jarrett Allender hooked a real large crappie. Photo courtesy of Broken Wheel Campground in Weston..

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Feb. 29, 2016. Hunters with hounds should experience success hunting near favored food sources. The daily bag limit is four raccoon per hunter or group of hunters.

Cottontail rabbit hunting season will run from Nov. 7, 2015, through Feb. 29, 2016, and the daily bag limit is five rabbits. Hunters should concentrate their efforts in agricultural areas where old field habitat dominates the landscape. Rabbit populations are expected to be good as a result of the better than average rainfall this summer and the associated increase in food and



Jake Sprouse landed a huge flat-head catfish..

cover this year.

Hunting seasons for snowshoe hare, bobwhite quail, bobcat, red fox, and gray fox will open Nov. 7, 2015. Hunters should check the regulations for specific closing dates for each species and associated bag limits. Red and gray fox night hunting will begin Jan. 1, 2016 and will run through Feb. 29, 2016.

Trapping seasons for red fox, gray fox, raccoon, mink, muskrat, coyote, skunk, opossum and weasel will open Nov. 7, 2015 and close Feb. 29, 2016. Furbearer populations are expected to be good this fall. Trappers are reminded that if they are planning to trap on a wildlife management area or state forest, they will need to obtain an area trapping permit from the appropriate DNR district wildlife biologist.

Trapping season for bobcat, fisher, beaver and otter will open Nov. 7, 2015, and will have varying closing dates depending on the species. Keep in mind that you must electronically register these species within 30 days of the close of the season for each species.

Good luck this season.

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A nice North Bend Lake was caught. Photo courtesy of Bait Shack in Harrisville.

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Chance Pickens, from Parkersburg, landed a New River smallmouth.

Electro Gloves Donated

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. - The Trooper Eric Workman Foundation recently provided gifts to the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Section (WVDNR) to honor the life of the late Eric Workman and his dedication to fish and fishing in West Virginia. The Foundation purchased minnows used for muskel-

lunge production in the state's fish hatcheries and Smith-Root electro anesthesia gloves to help safely handle large fish like muskies.

West Virginia State Trooper Workman and Corporal Marshall Bailey tragically were lost in the line of duty in 2012. Trooper Workman was an avid and accomplished angler and the Foundation works to support fishing and fisheries management work in the state. The Foundation also promotes drug-free awareness and supports local educational scholarships.

"We appreciate the gifts from the Foundation and look forward to future cooperative projects in Eric Workman's name and honor," said Bret Preston, WVDNR assistant chief for warmwater fisheries.

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Young Samuel Franco caught a catfish at the Winfield Locks.



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THANKS, shoot straight. We'll see you soon!



Chris Steele landed a nice musky in Jackson County.

CROSSBOWS NOW LEGAL IN WV FACTS

The West Virginia State Legislature took action earlier this year to legalize the use of crossbows during big game firearms seasons. They also instructed the Division of Natural Resources to establish a separate crossbow hunting season and identify those game species that could be hunted during this crossbow season. The following points are provided for your information and should serve to clarify the new crossbow hunting opportunities available during the fall 2015 hunting seasons.

Crossbow Hunting during Archery Seasons

- The Natural Resources Commission established a separate crossbow season that will run concurrent with the various archery seasons. Game species may be taken with a crossbow during their respective open archery seasons.
- Hunters must be properly licensed to hunt with a crossbow during the respective archery seasons. Depending upon the game species being hunted with a crossbow, a hunter will be required to possess the required licenses and stamps (e.g., base license, species-specific stamps and additional species-specific stamps).
- Game species harvested with a crossbow shall apply to the archery bag limit restrictions for that species (e.g., a properly licensed hunter may harvest no more than 3 deer with a crossbow or bow during the concurrent crossbow and archery deer season.).
- Resident hunters may harvest one deer on a base license (X, XJ, A plus CS plus BG, Lifetime, etc.) and up to two more deer if they have purchased two RB stamps.
- Nonresident hunters may harvest one deer after they have purchased the appropriate license combination (E plus CS/LE plus UU, XXJ, etc.) and up to two more deer if they have purchased two RRB stamps.
- Crossbows may not be used to hunt deer in Logan, Mingo, McDowell or Wyoming counties during the archery season; however, Class Y/YY license holders may still use crossbows in these counties during the archery seasons.
- Crossbows may be used during special deer hunts (e.g., urban, homeowner associations, state parks, etc.). Entities conducting these special deer hunts are allowed to establish more restrictive rules; therefore, they may limit the use of crossbows.
- Existing crossbow specifications (i.e., draw weight, safety, etc.) still apply.
- Big game harvests must be checked using the electronic game checking system and identify the crossbow as the weapon used.

Crossbow Hunting during Big Game Firearms Seasons

- The West Virginia State Legislature legalized the use of crossbows during big game (i.e., deer, bear, wild boar and wild turkey) firearms seasons.
- Hunters must be properly licensed to hunt with a crossbow during the respective big game firearms seasons. Depending upon the game species being hunted with a crossbow, a hunter will be required to possess the required licenses and stamps (e.g., base license, species-specific stamps and additional species-specific stamps).

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Dakota Posey landed a 55 pound blue cat. Photo courtesy of Bel Meadows Fishing Preserve near Lost Creek.



Gary Wendell, from Charleston, caught a 47 1/2 " musky.

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Michael Anthony Gill hooked a nice largemouth on the New River. Photo courtesy of the PC Bait&Tackle in Hinton.



Bill Williams, from Mineralwells, caught a 15 1/2" crappie.



Ronnie Williams landed a nice Kanawha River flathead.

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Cody Hicks caught & released a 52" Stonewall Jackson Lakea musky.

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Fall Bass Fishing Baits

As I'm getting everything ready for the Toyota Bassmaster Angler of the Year Championship set for Sturgeon Bay, Sept. 17-20, I'm starting to feel a little fall in the air. That means cooler weather is just around the corner and that's going to bring one of the most exciting times of the year for bass fishing.

We're starting to get into a transition when the fish are moving from a routine where they spend their days holding around structure, to a pattern of chasing bait. The fish know they're going to have to fatten up for winter, so fall triggers them to feed aggressively.

This is a really active time of year because it's all about the bait, and those baitfish are constantly moving. Some days they'll be up shallow; some days they'll be deep; some days they'll be high in the water column. They just move around.

This time of year it's hard to consistently catch them on deep ledges. You might catch them one day, but the next day you pull up there and you don't get a bite. It's the same thing up shallow.

Now what makes this such a fun time of year is the potential for schooling activity. When fish come

up busting, they're obviously feeding but these opportunities can come and go quickly.

I like to stay ready for this schooling activity by keeping a few particular baits on my deck this time of year.

Topwater

First and foremost is a One Knocker spook in the Lemon Shad color. When you see them schooling or chasing, this topwater presentation is almost always going to get their attention.

I always have this bait lying on my front deck. I may only make 10 casts with it a day, but the time it takes you to pull that rod out of the rod locker, or tie on a topwater, is time that you've wasted.

When they come to the top, they're easiest to see, but once they're done, they kinda get a little harder to catch.

You'll often see them breaking, but you have to keep an eye out for the birds. When you're a farther distance away, you may not be able to see them breaking, but if you see birds diving, you know that the bass are driving baitfish to the surface.

If I'm fishing and I see birds diving, I'll pull up the trolling motor and take off immediately. You

continue to the next page

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Mike Wilson went to Calhoun County for a good gobbler.

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might run over there and not get a bite; you might not see anything. But you also might run over there and spend an hour where you catch one on every cast.

Crankbait

My next pick would be a Bandit 200. It's a smaller size bait that will get a lot of bites and allow you to cover a lot of water. I also like this bait's tight action, which is good for medium to clear water. And the Bandit's colors are realistic, so if you get in that gin clear water, the bait has a convincing appearance.

I'm going to fish that Bandit 200 on windy banks, and I'm going to reel it very fast. This time of year, it seems like more speed equals more bites – especially when you're fishing for smallmouth.

I can fish quickly and cover the



Young Wyatt Young went to Tyler County for a 7 pointe..

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water, and if I hit a stretch where I catch a few on a crankbait, I can always turn around and fish it with something a little bit slower like a jig or a Texas-rigged YUM Bad Mama.

Spinnerbait

A 1/2- to 3/4-ounce Booyah Spinnerbait is a great bait for this transitional season. The 1/2-ounce size is something I'll throw down the side of docks, around laydowns – just shallow water fishing.

I'll keep the 3/4-ounce spinnerbait tied on for when I need to burn a bait (reeling it at high speed) maybe a foot or less under the water. This can be a very productive presentation whenever I'm around bait, but the fish aren't busting on top.

The fish are aggressive, but since they'll be running around trying to

catch those shad, you'll get a lot of short strikes. That's why I always use a trailer hook this time of year.

The key for me is to make the longest casts possible and cover a lot of water. I've caught some really nice fish doing this. It's a really deadly technique for spotted bass and smallmouth bass, but I catch plenty of largemouth on it too.

I throw the spinnerbait more in windy conditions, but if there's not as much wind I throw the crankbait. In any case, this time of year it's about covering a lot of water and finding those feeding fish.

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Trophy Mounts Wanted For Sport Show

ROANOKE, W.Va. - If you have a legally harvested and mounted West Virginia big buck trophy, or if you have a trophy fish caught from West Virginia waters, it's wanted for the Big Buck/Trophy Fish Display at West Virginia's Celebration of National Hunting and Fishing Day, Sept. 26-27, 2015, at Stonewall Resort State Park near Weston in Lewis County.

The West Virginia Wildlife Federation, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) and Toyota are seeking hunters who own trophy white-tailed bucks that were legally taken in West Virginia with either bow or gun and have a Pope and Young or Boone and Crockett score of 140 or greater.




Doug and Devon Johnston bagged 2 nice gobblers this spring.

They are also seeking fish that qualified for a trophy fish citation under the WVDNR guidelines.

"Each year the West Virginia Wildlife Federation and the DNR showcase these animals that are legally caught and legally harvested at the National Hunting and Fish-

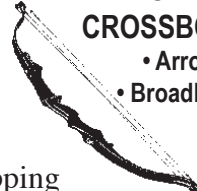
ing Day event," said display organizers James Walker and Rob Silvester, DNR wildlife biologists. "The display is a tremendous draw to West Virginia's Celebration of National Hunting and Fishing Day, attracting thousands of visitors an-

continue to the next page



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nually.”

Participation for trophy bucks will be limited to the first 30 qualifying trophy entries received. As an incentive for participation, hunters who display their trophy deer at the two-day event will be entered into an exclusive drawing for several valuable prizes.

Participation for trophy fish will be limited to 25 qualifying entries to be determined by a selection committee. No more than five entries of any species will be accepted. As an incentive for participation, each angler who displays his or her trophy fish mount at the two-day event will be eligible to win one of five \$100 gift certificates. Prizes will be picked randomly.

Interested hunters and anglers who have qualifying head, antler mounts and qualifying fish mounts should contact James Walker for fish or Rob Silvester for bucks at 304-924-6211 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. weekdays or email James.A.Walker@wv.gov or Rob.A.Silvester@wv.gov for additional information.

Error In The Game Regulations

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. - The 2015-2016 Hunting and Trapping Regulations Summary contains an error on page 15 with regards to the archery and cross-bow white-tailed deer maximum combined seasons bag limit. In the counties listed below, which are closed to the antlerless season, the maximum combined seasons bag limit is two either-sex deer, not three deer as printed. Those counties or parts thereof include:

- Boone Mineral (West Portion)
- Clay (South of Elk River)
- Pendleton (West Portion)
- Fayette (West Portion)
- Raleigh
- Greenbrier (North Portion)
- Tucker
- Kanawha (South Portion)
- Webster

Mineral (West Portion)
The Division of Natural Resources encourages hunters to refer to pages 22-23 of the Regulations Sum-

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mary for maps and descriptions of the split counties and regrets any inconvenience this error may cause. Questions can be directed to any DNR district office, the Elkins Operations Center or the South Charleston office.

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New DNR Publication

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Hunting is a West Virginia tradition, but everyone has to start somewhere. Many young people who would like to get involved don't have anyone to teach them, so the Natural Resources Police Officers of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources have started a new "Youth Hunting Program" to recruit and increase the number of young people participating in wild-life and hunting activities.

"We see this new program as fulfilling a need to get our state's youngsters outside and to promote our state's hunting heritage," said Col. Jerry Jenkins, chief of the WVDNR Law Enforcement Section. The goals of the Youth Hunting Program are to preserve the state's hunting heritage for present and future generations; to promote the highest ethical standards in hunting; to give the state's youth an initial, positive, safe, educational and mentored hunting experience; to teach basic skills, values, techniques and responsibilities of hunting; and to teach participants practical conservation measures.

Youth Hunting Program partici-



Jake Sprouse caught and released a North Bend Lake musky.

pants must be 8 to 17 years old and complete and submit an application. They also are required to complete the West Virginia Hunter Education Course, have a valid West Virginia hunting license (if required), and have a completed release form signed by a parent or guardian. Anyone interested in participating in the Youth Hunting Program should contact their closest DNR district office for information.

"Youth who enter the program will learn how to hunt safely, legally and ethically," said Col. Jenkins. "They also will learn how to track and field dress game, appreciate nature firsthand and make new friends."

Participants in the Youth Hunting Program will get their first opportunity Saturday, Sept. 5, which is the statewide, one-day Youth Squirrel Season. Future youth hunting days for antlerless deer are scheduled for Oct. 17, Dec. 26 and Dec. 28.

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For more information, about West Virginia's hunting seasons, refer to the 2015-2016 Hunting and Trapping Regulations Summary brochure available at DNR offices, license vendors and online at www.wvdnr.gov.

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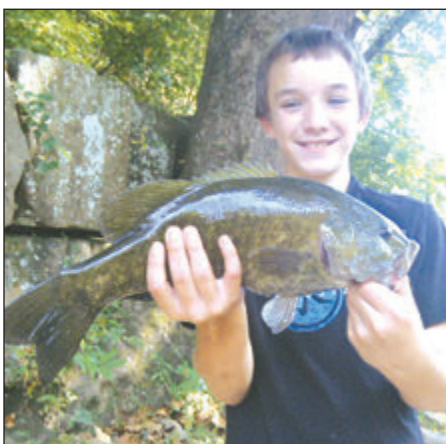
Candice Anderson went to Canaan Valley for a large bass.



Hannah & Lindeay Steele have a nice Jackson County bass.



Chris Lewis, from Elizabeth, hooked a huge largemouth bass..



Deacon Carmichael landed a big bass in Middle Island Creek.

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Johnny Fields caught a big channel catfish at Elk Fork Lake.

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Jerry Keen reeled in a nice smallmouth bass.



Freddie Collins went to Burnsville Lake for a large musky.



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Starlin Copper went to Raleigh Count for a nice gobbler. He fanned the feathers out nice for a pic.

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Chris Halstead landed a 4 pound New River smallmouth. *Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.*

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12 Crossbow Tips

How do you load a crossbow? How do you pull its string back? What's the trigger like? Do they kick like a rifle? Are they noisy? Are they accurate, and at what distances? Do they have power to kill a deer?

When I first started shooting modern crossbows several years ago, I had no idea what to expect. Like many who had never played with them, these tools confused me. I had seen them on TV, but without ever handling one, I wasn't sure about many things. Was I surprised!

Instead of an unwieldy, slow, inaccurate Robin Hood-era weapon, modern crossbows are something. They're fast, accurate, and powerful enough to take the largest big-game animals in North America cleanly. Modern crossbows are a pleasure to shoot, too. But to get the most from your crossbow, you must understand the basics of how



Heather Ebert landed a 18 1/2 pound snook in Florida. .

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to set one up for hunting and how to shoot it. Here are 12 tips to make you a crossbow-shooting machine using a crossbow-and-arrow setup designed specifically for hunting big game.

Use high-quality broadheads when shooting your crossbow. Generally, you get what you pay for.

1. Buy the Best You Can Afford

There's a big difference between an el cheapo, bargain-basement crossbow and a top-of-the-line model. Sure, the bargain model costs less, but it won't be built as well, be as accurate or reliable, and it will fail when the moment of truth arrives. You can buy crossbow packages that include everything needed to shoot and hunt—a crossbow, a few arrows and arrow points, a scope sight, a cocking device and quiver—for between \$800 and \$1,500. A good crossbow alone costs \$300–\$1,000, depending on the make and model. You get what you pay for.

2. Use Enough Draw Weight

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The principal specification that distinguishes a hunting crossbow from a target model is draw weight. Fortunately, most states have taken the guesswork out of determining what's sufficient by establishing a regulatory minimum. While those regulations vary considerably across states, the overall range runs from 75 to 125 pounds of draw weight. With little exception, any crossbow in that range should be adequate to kill a whitetail deer at moderate ranges. Most better-hunting crossbows are in the range of 150 to 175 pounds, a few exceeding 200 pounds. Generally, bigger is better—or, in this case, faster. You can go too heavy, though. And at least one state (Ohio) has a maximum allowable draw weight of 200 pounds.

continue to the next page



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3. Shoot a Fast Enough Arrow

Crossbow and compound bow makers continually strive to push the speed envelope. You make a crossbow faster by increasing its draw weight. That's why point No. 2 is so important. How fast is fast enough? I like my crossbows to shoot a hunting-weight arrow with an initial velocity of at least 300 fps. That will give your arrow enough kinetic energy to take any big-game animal cleanly and will reduce arrow trajectory at longer ranges, which makes accurate shooting easier. Some crossbows are beginning to push the 400-fps envelope, so look for improvements in this number.

4. Use a Scope Sight

Some crossbows still come with open sights, but you'll be much better served using a scope sight. These optical sighting devices make accurate shooting much easier. For magnification, you can choose from just about anything 0X to 5X. Inside the scope is the reticle, defined as some configuration of horizontal and vertical crosshairs, though for crossbows, it also includes any object projected or suspended across the field of view. Choices begin with a simple, single red dot or crosshair. With them, you sight-in for a fixed distance, typically 20 yards, but must compensate for lon-



Nick & Sabrina Hylton landed a big catfish at Brand/s Catfish Pond.

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ger shots by holding higher. Multi-reticle scopes are the most popular, particularly those with three or four dots or horizontal crosshairs. The top one is sighted in for 20 yards, and the next two are fixed at intervals that will be dead-on at 30, 40 and 50 yards, respectively, on most bows.

5. Use Quality Arrows

Unless your arrows (or bolts) fly like laserbeams, you'll never precisely hit your targets. Cheap arrows manufactured to sloppy tolerances will fly like knuckleballs. That's why you should use only the best arrows you can afford that are designed specifically for crossbow shooting. Many crossbow companies sell arrows, but they're made by Gold Tip, Easton, and other manufacturers. Ensure they have a nock designed for crossbows, not compound bows, are cut to the proper length, and have the proper fletches. Carbon and aluminum arrows work well, but by far, the most rugged and high-tech are made from carbon.

Scopes or open sights? You have a choice. The author generally recommends the use of scopes.

6. Use Quality Broadheads

The business end of a hunting arrow is the broadhead. Many makes, models and styles of hunting broadheads are available. Here again, the most expensive are generally those built to the tightest tolerances, have the sharpest blades, fly straight and true, and have a long track record

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of success. Replaceable-blade and mechanical broadhead designs will work well for crossbow shooters. The mechanical design becomes more popular each year. The most common weight for a hunting broadhead is 100 grains, 125 grains a distant second.

7. Take a Rest

A crossbow is a bit heavy so a rest certainly helps steady it. That can include using standard rifle-

continue to the next page

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-shooting positions, such as kneeling and sitting, using a set of shooting sticks or monopod, and using a shooting rail in a treestand or shooting house. I never turn an arrow loose from my crossbows without taking a rest. When using one, pad the crossbow's forearm with something soft like your hand, a rolled-up jacket or a daypack. This will help absorb recoil and make precise sighting easier.

8. Learn Arrow Trajectory

All arrows fired from a crossbow travel downrange in a large parabolic arc. Your crosshairs are set to hit dead-on at specific distances, but you'll often be shooting at a deer or other animal between these distances. When practicing, you'll soon learn where you must place your crosshairs relative to the animal to hit at these "tweener" ranges. Also, when you understand how the arrow arcs, you can arc the arrow over tree limbs and other obstacles between you and the game.

9. Use a Rangefinder

With the click of a button, a mod-



Tim Miller caught a Little Kanawha River musky.

ern laser rangefinder can give you the exact distance from you to the target—critical information in accurate shooting when you're lobbing an arrow at the target. The best laser rangefinders are as reliable as the sunrise. My Nikon Archer's Choice even tells me exactly where to aim when shooting at steep uphill and downhill angles. Priced between \$250 and \$400, they're a lifetime investment that's worth every penny.

To most novices, crossbow cocking might appear a simple task. But for the pros, it's serious business.

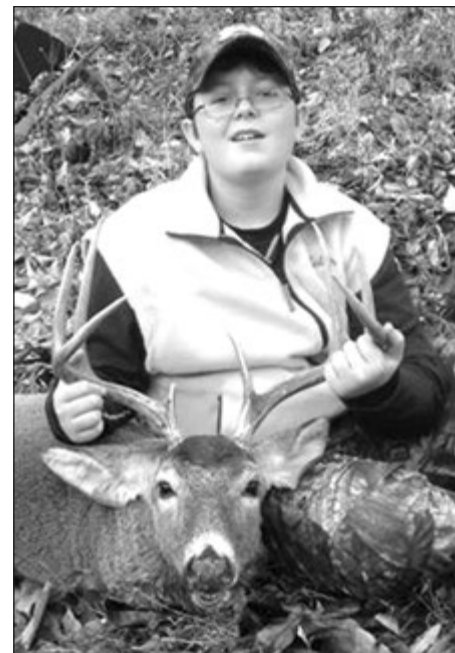
10. Get a Feel for the Trigger

Every crossbow has a unique trigger. You need to shoot your crossbow enough so you know exactly when the trigger will send the arrow on its way—not "maybe" when it will fire. Shoot with and without gloves so you know how both feel. (They will be different.)

11. Practice in the Field

The axiom "practice makes perfect" certainly applies to crossbow shooting. When setup and sighted, spend time shooting using a benchrest. Use these sessions to set your sights precisely and get a feel for the trigger. However, you then need to do "specificity training"—training specifically for the task at hand. Move away from the bench and practice shots that simulate actual hunting conditions. Shoot from the kneeling and sitting positions. Climb into your treestand or ground blind and shoot at the same

angles and distances you anticipate for your hunting season. Learn to use your shooting sticks or mono-
 continue to the next page



Montgomery Kelly got this buck last year in Jackson County.

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Whatever the crossbow used and no matter what the target, watch out for your fingers.

12. Maintain String, Rail and Trigger

A crossbow is a machine, so it will need regular maintenance to keep on ticking like a fine Swiss watch. That means you should always check the string and cables for wear. This is very important because on a crossbow you have direct string-to-rail contact, which creates friction and abrasion during every shot. At the first sign of fraying or abnormal wear, replace them. You can reduce the need for replacement with regular maintenance. Keep the string, cables and center serving clean and well maintained after each practice session and especially after every trip to the field. Lubricate the center serving. The rails should also be regularly lubed with light machine oil after every 100 to 150 shots. The rest of the string should be waxed with bowstring wax.

There you have it—12 fantastic tips that will greatly improve your crossbow shooting. Have fun, shoot straight—and stay safe.

**Advertise In The
W. Va. Sportsman
Details On Page 3**

Early Bear Season

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. -

An early black bear season during which hunters can choose whether or not to use dogs is underway in Logan, McDowell, Mingo and Wyoming counties through Sept. 12, according to Colin Carpenter, Black Bear Project leader for the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources.

All or parts of 15 counties will be open to bear hunting Sept. 19 - 25 and four counties will be open Oct. 3 - 9.

The counties or parts of counties open to bear hunting with or without dogs Sept. 19 - 25 include Barbour (east of State route 92), Braxton (east of I - 79), Clay (south of Elk River), Grant, Greenbrier, Hardy, Monroe (east of U.S. route



Jason Dunlap, from Elaner, caught a nice rainbow trout.

Sept/Oct. 2015 ~ Page 36

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219), Nicholas, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Preston, Randolph, Tucker, Upshur (east of State route 20), and Webster. The counties open for bear hunting with or without dogs Oct. 3 - 9 include Boone, Fayette, Kanawha and Raleigh.

“Counties open for early bear hunting are above their manage-
continue to the next page

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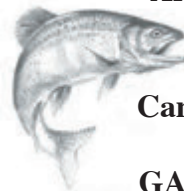
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ment objective,” said Carpenter. “We need to harvest additional bears to achieve our goal. The benefit of early seasons is that bears won’t be entering their dens for another two or more months, so all bears are available to be harvested.

“Oak mast appears to be less abundant in most areas than in 2014, but hickory, beech, and most of the soft mast species have done well,” said Carpenter. “Bears often feed heavily on soft mast early in the season before hard mast becomes available. Therefore, hunters who focus their efforts near black cherry trees that have fruit, abandoned apple orchards and autumn olive thickets should be able to find bruins.”

DNR Wildlife Resources Section personnel encourage successful hunters to submit a premolar tooth from each harvested bear to DNR. In addition, hunters who harvest a female black bear are encouraged to save the reproductive tract or all the entrails.

Hunters can get a bear tooth envelope at all Wildlife Resources Section district offices and the Elkins Operations Center. Hunters with reproductive tracts or entrails should keep them cool or freeze them and contact their nearest Wildlife Resources district office to arrange pick-up.



Roberta Hatcher caught a 29 pound catfish at a pay lake.



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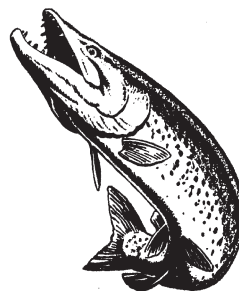
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