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Vol. 1 Issue 198

Summer 2010

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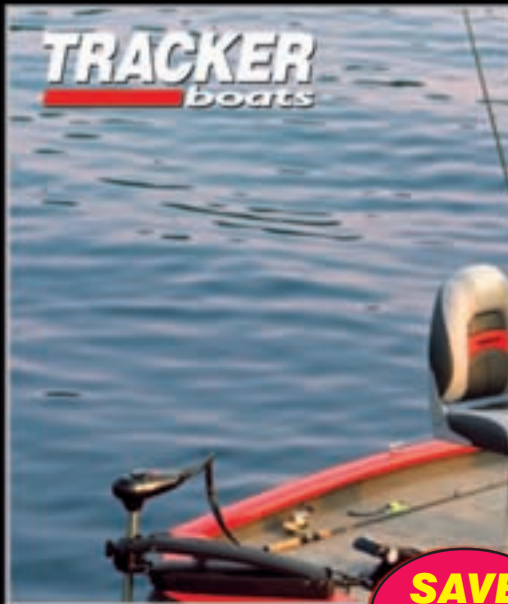
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Updates**



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Cover Photo

A new state record for length yellow perch was caught in early May. Craig Hollandsworth was fishing at Summersville Lake. His fish measured 15 7/16 inch. These fish have never been stocked by our state agencies. Apparently, fish were transported by private individual from other areas. Summersville Lake and Cheat Lake seem to have the largest amounts of these fish. *Photo courtesy of Christy's Trading Post in Mt. Nebo.*

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Bass Biology

Cold Blooded:

Their body temperature and more importantly, their metabolism is controlled by water temperature. The warmer the water, the higher their metabolism. Bass are most active between about 60 degrees and 75 degrees. Below about 50 degrees, their metabolism slows down, causing them to eat infrequently. Above about 80 degrees, low dissolved oxygen levels in the water place them under stress. Dead perch may be an indication of low oxygen levels.

What's more important than the current water temperature is what's happening to it (i.e. is it going up or down?). Changes in water temperature affect shallow bass much more than those residing in deep water. Keep in mind that water temperature is but one factor to consider when putting together a

fishing strategy.

A Schooling Fish:

If you catch a bass, you're likely to catch another in the same area. So once you "locate" bass, slow down and fish the area thoroughly. But don't put caught fish back in the water. Instead, put them in the livewell if you want to catch more fish. Panicked bass will scare the others off.

Pay attention to depth: the deeper the water, the tighter the school. Bass of similar sizes tend to school together.

Near Bottom:

Bass usually will be on the bottom or something that represents bottom. Usually, the closer to the bottom they are, the more they're in a position to feed. Knowing where the bottom is dictates what type of lure you use. Bottom contour, composition and depth play important

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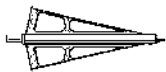
Seek Safety: Predators:

Bass are predators - they like live prey. But they don't hunt for prey, instead they prefer to lie in wait for an unsuspecting victim to happen by. Therefore, casting accuracy and presentation are vital to bass fishing success.

Seek Safety:

continue to the next page

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**Game
Check**



Doug Koenli hooked a 5 pound smallmouth. *Photo courtesy of MAD Sporting Goods in Boaz.*

Summer 2010 ~ Page 4

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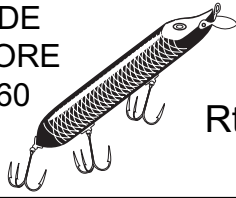
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While bass are a predator fish, they can also become the prey. Bass use cover and depth as refuge from other predators. Smallmouths and spotted bass prefer deeper water than do largemouths. But even largemouths - which may be found in water only inches deep - require relatively deep water to be nearby.

Near Structure:

Bass use objects as places to launch



Young Jarrett Small hooked his 1st nice bass. Photo courtesy of Burnsville Docks on the lake.

an ambush. They'll use just about anything - pilings, rocks, tires, wood, bushes, weeds, sunken objects or anything "different" from the bottom.

Near Edges:

When in a feeding mood, bass will position themselves on edges or "transitions" of any sort because it's easier to dart out and catch their prey. Bass prefer to be at or near the junction of any two or more features, including: small rocks and big rocks; shallow water and deep water; shady areas and sunlit areas; current and still water; weeds and open water; emergent weeds and mossy weeds; wood cover and weedy cover; etc.

Opportunistic:

Bass usually feed on crawfish, sculpin, and minnows. They won't stay long where there's no food so learn where to find the prevalent and preferred food types in each season, and you'll find bass. They will eat an easy meal, so crippled and injured prey are they're first choice - even if it's not on their main menu. Bass have been known to eat worms, insects, panfish, frogs, liz-

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Spawners:

Through much of the year, particularly from late winter through spring, bass usually can be found in or near spawning areas, namely fairly shallow, flat areas with some cover and with quick access to deeper water. Everything they do throughout the year is connected to the spawn. When searching for beds, keep in mind that generally the deeper the bed, the bigger the bass.



Donald Belcher, from Summersville, took a nice buck.

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Snakehead Fish

Recent reports from Maryland and Virginia on the presence of snakehead fish in their waters are cause for concern for West Virginia. Snakeheads have not been collected by our fisheries staff, or reported caught by anglers in West Virginia waters, but they have been found in a pet shop and in a home aquarium. We are concerned that these and other invasive aquatic species could become established in West Virginia and cause significant harm to our aquatic environments, particularly sport fish populations.

Please do not release the fish if you think that it may be a snakehead. Snakeheads have been added to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's injurious wildlife list (Current Injurious Wildlife Species List). Under this regulation, the importation into the United States and transportation across state lines are illegal. Additionally, West Virginia state law regulates the release of fish and other aquatic organisms into waters of the state.

Invasive aquatic species are an increasing threat to aquatic ecosystems across the country. Introductions of invasive zebra mussels and round gobies have had impacts on sport fishing in Lake Erie, and some species of Asian carp are threatening the Great Lakes as well. Recre-



This is what a snakehead looks like. Similar to a bowfin but with a more elongated head. Don't release.

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ational impacts and economic costs associated with invasive species can be substantial if invasive species do become a problem. Control measures usually are very expensive and difficult to implement. Informing anglers of these threats is important because they are our best first line of defense to guard against invasive species.

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Infection Causes

Preliminary laboratory results from a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service analysis of crappie from Stonewall Jackson Lake indicate that the recent fish kill is the result of a heavy columnaris infection found in the fish, according to Bret Preston, Assistant Chief of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources' Wildlife Resources Section.

"While we are awaiting final reports from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Northeast Fish Health Center in Lamar, Pa., initial findings suggest that the fish died from a bacterial infection," said Preston.

Columnaris bacteria are commonly found in water and generally do not cause problems in fish. Fish health can be affected by a number of environmental conditions. Individually, these conditions usually do not pose problems for fish, but a combination of conditions may cause enough stress to allow a disease to spread rapidly through a

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population.

DNR fisheries management staff are cooperating with the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to review water quality data to determine if conditions such as water temperature or dissolved oxygen could be associated with the fish kill involving more than 1,000 fish, mostly crappie.

"Columnaris outbreaks and fish kills in other areas of the country have been linked to unusually high or rapidly changing water temperatures or low dissolved oxy-

continue to the next page



Ronnie Somerville hooked a 42" catfish. *Photo courtesy of Jarrett's Bait in Elizabeth.*

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Sam Sutton, from Parkersburg, bagged a 42 pound Wood Coyote.

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"Columnaris outbreaks and fish kills in other areas of the country have been linked to unusually high or rapidly changing water temperatures or low dissolved oxygen levels," said DNR District 3 Fisheries Biologist Kevin Yokum, who is investigating the fish kill at Stonewall Jackson Lake. "We are

looking at the possibility that high water temperatures and earlier than usual stratification of the lake may have coincided with the spawning period of crappie in the lake. The added stress during spawning may have affected crappie and made them vulnerable to a columnaris infection."



Bryan Summers landed this 32 pound catfish. *Photo courtesy of Roberts' Fishing Hole in Glenville.*

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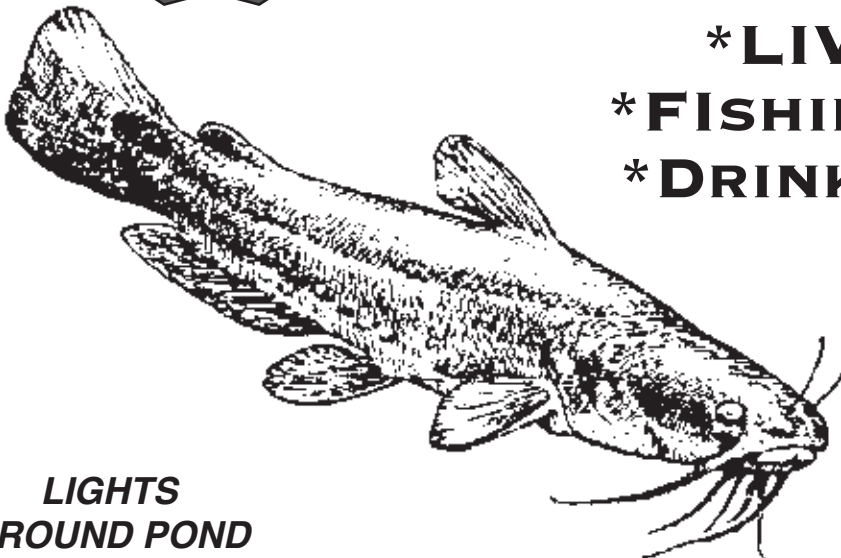
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Norma Stout landed a 22" saugeye.
Photo courtesy of Broken Wheel Camp-ground in Weston.



Doug Koenlien literally has his hands full of catfish. *Photo courtesy of MAD Sporting Goods in Boaz.*

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2010 Spring Turkey Harvest

Preliminary figures indicate West Virginia hunters harvested 10,006 bearded turkeys statewide during the recently completed 2010 spring gobbler season. This year's spring harvest is approximately two percent above the 9,787 birds taken in 2009. It is the first time the spring harvest exceeded 10,000 since 2006.

The top five counties in 2010 were Mason (536), Marshall (316), Putnam (315), Lincoln (278), and Harrison (269). Four of the state's districts had slight declines; however, two districts showed an increase in harvest from last year. Harvests in the western and southwestern portions of the state were higher in 2010. District 5 showed the greatest percentage increase (35), while District 2 had the largest decrease at 12 percent.

"Our biologists predicted a very similar kill in 2010 based on brood reports," said Curtis I. Taylor, Chief of the Wildlife Resources Section of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. "Normal weather conditions across much of the spring season enabled hunters

to have plenty of time afield. In addition, a good carryover of mature toms provided many mornings of recreation for Mountain State hunters."

Biologists had forecast a spring harvest of approximately 10,000 gobblers for 2010 based on past data. The lack of available mast

during fall 2009 may have affected gobbling in some regions but the overall population survived the winter in good shape.

With more favorable winter weather conditions and sufficient fall foods, there should be an abundance of gobblers for the 2011 spring season, Taylor predicted.



Young Dalton Mercer, from Tyler County, got a gobbler on the special youth day.

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Scott Rader hooked a big musky and catfish. Photo courtesy of Jarrett's Bait in Elizabeth.

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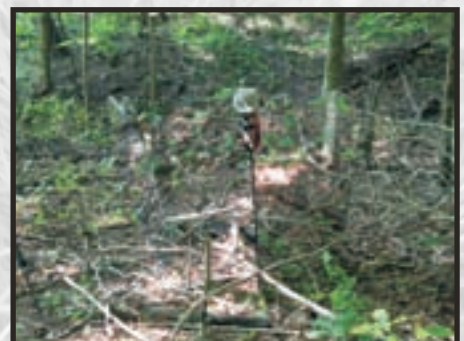
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Catfish & Carp Bait Recipes

Looking for carp or catfish this summer? Try some of these recipes for success on the WV waters.

Premium Carp Bait Recipe

Ingredients:

1 can creamed corn (blended)

2 Tbsps sugar

2 cps corn meal

1 cup Corn Flakes crumbs

1 Tbsp of corn starch

Mix corn meal and corn starch in a bowl and set aside.

Preparation:

Heat blended cream corn to bubbling, turn down to simmer, add sugar and dissolve, slowly add corn meal mix until you get a thick paste, remove from heat and cool 5 minutes. Put in a large bowl and add 1 cup of Corn Flakes Crumbs (found in baking section of super-market) mix thoroughly, and wah lah.....premium corn dough ball. No need to refrigerate if using right away. May refrigerate unused portion but warm to room temperature before using.

Catfish/Carp Corn Bait

Ingredients:

Can of whole corn

Vanilla extract



Yvette Brown hooked a 5 pound largemouth at Blustone Lake. *Photo courtesy of Three Rivers Edge in Hinton.*

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Preparation:

Drain the water from the can of corn, and leave only about 5 percent water in the can.

Pour enough vanilla in the can until the corn turns a brownish-yellow color (use your own judgement).

Shake the can, and let the vanilla absorb into the corn.

Depending on your hook, I personally use a #2 treble hook, you

should be able to slide on about 4 or 5 good sized pieces of corn.

Anise Carp Bait

Ingredients:

7 slices white bread-remove crusts

1 raw egg

1 raw carrot-shaved

1 cap anise

flour

Preparation:

continue to the next page



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Simple Dough Bait

Ingredients:

1 cup flour
 1 cup corn meal
 1 cup water
 Vanilla extract (as much as desired)

Preparation:

Put the corn meal and flour into a bowl.

Put the water into a pot and add as much vanilla flavor as you want.

After the water begins to boil add mixture of flour and corn meal, let absorb the water then take the pot off the heat.

Knead and mush the mixture until dough is thick enough to stay on your hook.

Put into a Ziploc baggie after it cools.

Sure Shot Carp Bait

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several handfuls
 Add banana combine with Wheaties until it begins to stick together then add vanilla extract
 Add in wheat germ, then corn
 Put a pinch of sugar in also
 Mix all together until you get sticky type results.
 Strawberry/Rice
 Ingredients:
 Rice
 Ketchup
 Hot sauce
 Strawberry Kool-aid or strawberry
 continue to the next page

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Sam Dorsey caught a mess of fish.
 Photo courtesy of Jarrett's Bait in Elizabeth.



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Jello
 Mix and put it in a container. Let sit
 in the refrigerator.

Blood Bait

Ingredients:

Brown sugar

Vanilla Extract

Bag of fresh chicken breasts or
 some other kind of meat with plen-
 tiful blood

Piece of plywood or some other
 container.

Preparation:

First start off by pouring your blood
 onto your container (make sure its
 a flat container.)

Then sprinkle a thick layer of brown
 sugar onto your blood bait.

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Let the blood dry up and become
 crusty and dry.

Pour your bottle of vanilla extract
 onto the blood bait covering as
 much as possible.

Once again sprinkle a thick layer

of brown sugar onto the blood bait
 again, then using a fork punch
 holes all over the bait.

Remove your bait from the ply-
 wood or container and let that side
 dry if necessary, then cut into 3/4
 of

an inch by 3/4 of an inch squares or
 something appropriate for the hook
 you use.

Sure Fire Bait

Ingredients:

4 to 5 cups of crushed corn flakes.

continue to the next page



Chris Quick caught her 1st three muskies in consecutive days at Stonewall Jackson Lake. Thsi Buckhannon native landed this 47", 27 pounds 1st.



Brian and McKenna Galloway, from Mt. Clare, are shown with a 9 3/4 and 8 1/2 pound hybrids caught at the Willow Island Dam

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1/4 cup vanilla abstract
1 cup Big Red (or any strawberry
soda)

Preparation:

Mix the crushed corn flakes and ingredients into a microwavable bowl and microwave for 6 minutes.

Let stand for 10 minutes.

Mix well and make into small balls.

Note: If mixture is not firm enough to remain on a treble hook, add more crushed corn flakes.

Buffalo Bait

Ingredients:

Cotton seed meal

Chocolate syrup or strawberry syrup

Add black pepper for buffalo carp.

Preparation:

Combine ingredients and use water, as needed, to make into dough balls.

King Cat Bait

Ingredients:

Tuna (3 cans)

Minced Garlic (1 tsp)

Rotten Cheese (1/2 stick Velveeta)

Preparation:

Add Tuna, Rotten Cheese and Garlic in 1 quart bowl.

Stir with spoon.

Peanut Butter/Bread Bait

Ingredients:

Peanut Butter

2 pieces of Whole Wheat Bread

Water

Preparation:

take two pieces of wholewheat



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bread and cut off crust
spread peanut butter on one side
only of each piece
put peanut butter slices together
and put into bowl
add (only) 2 tablespoons of water
and work with your hand
when ready it will leave your hand
and bowl clean.

Catfish Cornflakes

Ingredients:

Corn Flakes

water

cheese powder from Mac and
Cheese mix

creamy peanut butter

Preparation:

Take the Corn Flakes and add
water and smash it together
with a fork.

Let it sit for 5 minutes than add
the cheese powder and mix.

Then add the peanut butter and
mix and mash very well.

Freeze it until you are ready to
fish.

Strawberry Catfish Bait

Ingredients:

2cups of instant oats

3 oz of straberry jello

lake water (from where your going
to fish)

Preparation:

Mix instant oats, strawberry jello,
and lakewater in a 1 gallon zip-loc
baggie.

Mix until blended well.

continue to the next page



Paul Lester hooked a 5 pound, 6
oz. smallmouth on the New River.
*Photo courtesy of Three Rivers Edge in
Hinton.*

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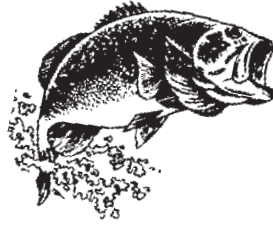
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---	---	---	--	---

Press mixture (in baggie) flat and let sit for 2-3 days.

Nuke Bait

Ingredients:

2 cups cornmeal

1 1/2 cups flour

1 cup oatmeal

3 tsp maple syrup

1/2 tsp salt

1 pkg gelatin(strawberry,cherry,grape-Any flavor)

1 tsp vanilla

2 cups water

1 bag of small flavored marshmallows

Preparation:

Pour all ingredients except flour into pot, mix together

On medium-low heat, stir all ingredient together till all marshmallows are gone

Add 1/2 cup flour and stir till there is no flour left.

Add another 1/2 cup flour and stir till there is no flour left

And once again add another 1/2 cup flour and stir till there is no flour left

Keep stirring till its like dough or till your wrist is broken, what ever comes first :-)

Put in a old butter tub and place in fridge till ready to use

When at the water, roll into good sized ball around hook.

Coconut Bait

Ingredients:

cut pieces of chicken bait

coconut essence

Preparation:

You will find coconut essence at your local grocery store. Just mix that with cut chicken bait overnight

and you will be ready.

Sardine Oil Bait

Ingredients:

one can of Sardines with oil

a couple dozen worms or crawlers

Preparation:

Simply mix all together.

Hotdog Bait

Ingredients:

six pack of really cheap hotdogs

teriyaki or vinegar

garlic salt

powdered iced tea

brown sugar

seasoned salt

parmesan cheese

Preparation:

Cut hotdogs up into lots of small pieces.

Do the same for some bacon.

continue to the next page

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put all the chopped pieces in a jar and pour some teriyaki, vinegar - it doesn't matter what kind.

add garlic salt, powdered iced tea, brown sugar, seasoned salt and parmesan cheese.

Hamburger Bait

Ingredients:

1 pound hamburger

two cups Wheaties

half jar of strawberry jelly
 flour

Preparation:

Start with 1 pound hamburger, add two cups Wheaties and mix together

Add about a half jar of strawberry jelly the bait will be very moist and sticky

Take some flour and mix and knead bait until you get your desired stiffness to stay on hook.

Oatmeal/Sardine Catfish Bait

Ingredients:

oatmeal

sardines

Preparation:

Mix sardines with oatmeal.

Add water* until oatmeal will stay on hook

*It does not hurt to use the soybean

oil that the sardines came in. Adds to the water a slick for fish to follow.

Instant Carp Bait

Ingredients:

Garlic Salt

Water

Cup of Flour

Wheaties

Preparation:

Mix Wheaties, Garlic Salt and Flour together (Wheaties needs to be crunched)

Dip in water

Mold into balls.

Chicken Liver Catfish Bait

Ingredients:

1 pound bag of instant grits plain chicken livers

anise extract

Preparation:

First dump grits in a bucket Separately blend chicken livers up with the anise extract then put in with grits mix until the texture is good enough to stay on hook

You may or may not need to add more grits

First put a sugar corn pop on the hook then wrap mixed dough around the pop.



Young Simon Carr landed his first catfish - a 29 pounder. Photo courtesy of PaPa Tom's Lake in Ravenswood.



Ryan Bragg caught a trout. Photo courtesy of JBC Archery in Shady Spring.

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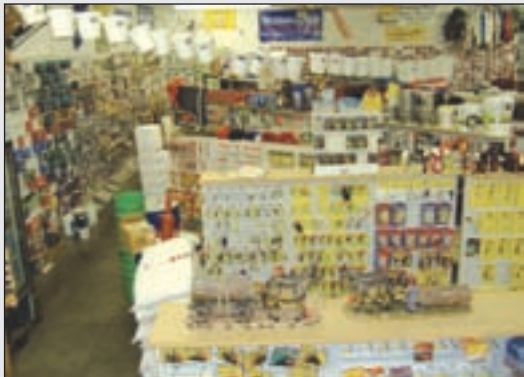
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Owen Adkins caught a 5 pound smallmouth. *Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.*



Bruce Bumgardner hooked a 10 pound bass. *Photo courtesy of Broken Whel Campground in Weston.*

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Rita Koenlien landed a 5 pound bass. *Photo courtesy of MAD Sporting Goods in Boaz.*

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MAIL IN FISH PHOTOS

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Page 38



Young Ryan and Roger Bragg took their 1st turkeys - a 21 /12 and a 17 1/2 pounder. Photo courtesy of JBC Archery in Shady Spring.



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Scott Marples landed a 58 pound catfish. Photo courtesy of Family Fishing in Grafton.



Tom Godby hooked a 6 1/2 pound smallmouth. Photo courtesy of Water-front Sporting Goods in Alderson.



Johnny Hart caught several drum. Photo courtesy of jarrett's Bait in Elizabeth.

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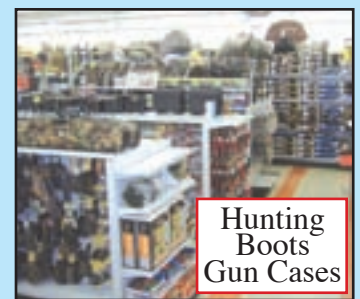
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Topwater Baits For Bass

Topwaters are among the most exciting baits you can fish for bass. Besides, topwaters are often very productive and can sometimes out-fish other techniques. In general, topwaters are most effective in warm to cool water, while slower, deeper baits such as jigs and worms are more effective in extremely cold and extremely hot water. If the water temperature is above 55 degrees, a topwater should be the first thing you throw in the morning. Topwaters are most effective in the early morning, late evening and during the calm before an approaching storm.

Poppers attract bass with a gurgling and popping sound on the

water's surface. Poppers should be retrieved in a series of starts and stops.

StickBaits have no action of their own and require the fisherman's skill to make them perform maneuvers such as "walking the dog." These baits work well in open water, and around boat docks, tree lines, stump rows, etc.

Buzzbaits are similar to spinnerbaits but are designed to be fished on top. Fish them right across logjams, submerged weeds, sparse grass, etc.

Propbaits create a disturbance when jerked slightly. They work best when the water temperature is above 60 degrees. Work close to cover on heavy tackle or off long points on drop-offs on lighter tackle.

JerkBaits Use jerkbaits anytime the water temperature is above 55 degrees.

When & Where to Fish Topwaters

In general, topwaters tend to work best in the late spring (just after the spawn), summer and fall. In hot weather, topwaters will produce on schooling bass; in dense cover, fish a buzzbait right over the heads of



Roger Bragg hooked a trout. *Photo courtesy of JBC Archery in Shady Spring.*

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bass. Topwaters are excellent baits for fishing big, open water as well as shallow shorelines. For example, if there is a drop-off from 15 to 25 feet, a topwater will often draw strikes from bass that are suspending there, especially in clear water. Long, tapering points are great places to try topwaters. Move to the end of the point and cast the area where the point falls off into deep water with a big topwater such as a stick bait. In extremely clear water with little structure, a silver, white, or gold minnow lure twitched quietly on the surface will often produce explosive strikes. Fish topwaters quickly in rivers and around extremely heavy cover. A buzzbait is ideal for these situations. The idea is to fish the lure fast over the heads of bass, provoking a reaction strike. In a river, bass may not enter

continue to the next page

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the current to strike.

Colors

Topwater color should match in a general way that of the dominate forage in your lake. But the color should more closely match than of baitfish that bottom-dwelling creatures. Therefore, a silver topwater would tend to be a better choice than a brown one. However, at night, use a black topwater, since black is the color that stands out most dramatically against the night sky to a bass looking upward. Chrome is an excellent choice in many reservoirs because it matches the colors of many baitfish, including alewives and shad. Sometimes a bright secondary color such as red or orange adds to the productivity of the lure. Smallmouth often prefer outrageously colored topwaters, including chartreuse and orange. More about lure colors.

Tips

Always have a follow-up bait lure for missed strikes (such as grubs, gitzits and worms). Sometimes a bass will strike at a topwater sever-

al times without connecting. When this happens, a plastic worm or jig immediately cast to the same area will often hook the fish.

Fish most topwaters with a fine-wire cross-locking snap. Minnow baits are especially prone to sluggish action without them.

Lightweight wooden topwaters including minnows should be fished on light line for greater casting distance and improved action. Lures with violent action such as stick baits should be fished on 12 or 14 pound test line, which will provide the right action without tangling in the lure's hooks.

Sometimes no action is the best action. A simple minnow lure or stick bait allowed to sit still for long periods can produce a strike.

In clear water, use a quieter lure. A minnow or sick bait is often better in a deep, clear highland reservoir than a noisier popper lure.

When fishing around dense cover in a shallow lake, remove the treble hook of a popper or chugger and replace with a single weedless hook for fewer hang-ups.

When fishing topwaters, wait for the lure to disappear before setting the hook.

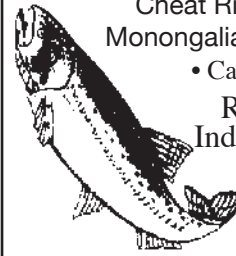
Keep one rod equipped with a topwater lure while fishing. When you spot a feeding bass working the surface, cast the topwater to it.

Topwaters are excellent lures to teach children the fun of bass fishing. Once they see a bass explode on their lure, they're hooked!

I was once fishing at an average

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sized pond that had not been fished in over 10 years. I was debating what to use and came to a floating Rapala in my tackle box. I cast right in the middle of the pond and saw literally what looked like 50



Brandon Keys hooked several catfish. *Photo courtesy of Backwater Bait in Newport, Ohio.*

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fish sitting under it, waiting. I gave it a tiny twitch and oh my. It was like World War III on that pond. I caught and released 35 bass in an hour. It's been my most memorable fishing experience. -- Curt Snyder

I have to say, for topwaters, the Rapala Original Floating minnow is one of my favorites, along with the Skitter Pop and the Skitter Prop. I've had success with all three of these lures, and highly recommend them to everyone. After much practice with topwater lures I found that one of the best is the Jitterbug. My favorite colors are yellow with red stripes, black, coach dog, and bass. Use the bigger jointed ones. -- Adam for bass

Fish a white mouse on river banks along logs and brushy cover. You want to fish a slow. Twitch it about 1-3 times and then let it sit for about 5-8 seconds. Hold on! -- Basslunkerlover

When using the Devil's Horse jerkbait, let sit for about 10 seconds and then jerk again in calm water.



Dave Gray hooked a walleye.

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Bluegill Fishing Tips

Bluegill fishing is one of the most popular game fish in North America. Most people's first fishing trip involved catching a lot of fighting bluegill.

While fishing for bluegill might be a good way to introduce someone to the world of fishing, experienced fisherman know that bluegill fishing is for people of all ages and skill levels. Bluegill are one of the best tasting freshwater fish and are excellent additions to any fish fry.

The premium time for bluegill fishing is from late spring to early autumn. The best temperature outside would be around 70 degrees so the bluegill will be in shallow water next to the shore. This makes locating the bluegill very easy to locate and fill up your stringer quickly. When the temperature gets warmer, as it does in most areas in the midwestern US, the bluegill move to deeper water and are more dif-

ficult to find without working with the ol' depthfinder.

Bluegill Bait and Tackle

I'll start with the rod and reel. Let's keep it simple. For bluegill fishing you really don't need a fancy setup. A simple pole and reel combination that you can buy at any store will work well when fishing for bluegill or bream. If you want to step it up a notch I recommend a lite graphite shakespeare Uglystick. They are really flexible and have sensitive rod tips so you can easily feel the bluegills nibbling at your bait. For the reel, pickup a light spinning reel. For bluegill fishing, be sure to use a light pound test because bluegill can be scared off by heavy line flopping into the water and they can also feel it a lot easier when pecking at the small baits.

Bluegill might be the least picky eaters out there, but some bait are

continue to the next page

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are more enticing to the ‘gills than others of course. My favorite live bait when bluegill fishing has to be crickets. I’ve had many instances where a bluegill jumps up and inhales the cricket right before it hits the water. When I did well in a couple panfish tournaments using only crickets. Live bait rigs are easy to setup. Just put a bobber or float on your line about a 18 inches up your line. Then put on a lightweight splitshot weight about 2 inches up the line. After that put your choice of small hook. Hook your bait through the back so it can wriggle and you’re ready to catch those ‘gills. Bluegill love other livebaits as well such as waxworms, flies, and beetles.

When I don’t want to mess with the hassle of using live bait when fishing for bluegill, I go for the artificial lures. My favorite lure to use would be a simple jig setup. The hooks come preweighted at the head for easy use and jigs come in a variety of colors. The bluegill in my area love the brown with pepper specks and the pink and white jigs. YOU can buy a huge variety of them for cheap at any store with a sporting goods section so try out all the colors to figure out which one gets the best reaction when bluegill

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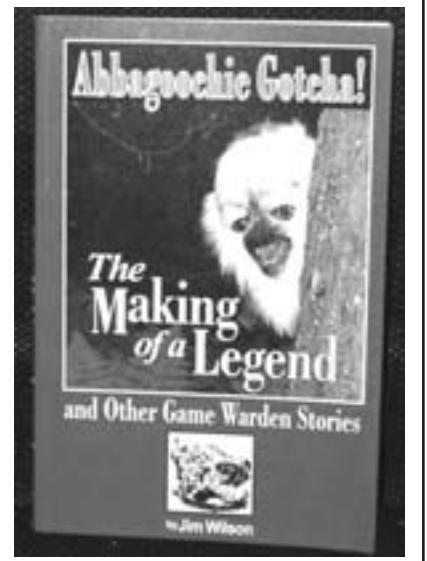
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fishing in your local body of water. Another lure that works well is a roostertail spinnerbait. These are minature spinnerpaits with a hairlike skirt coming off the body and bluegill love these as well when they are active. Personally, I prefer the jigs because they are cheaper and less work reeling but you choose the one to your taste of course.



Wyatt Cales hooked a smallmouth
Photo courtesy of Reese’s Country Store
in Deerwalk.

Don’t Feed The Bears

The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (DNR) cautions all residents that feeding black bears is a violation of state law, as well as a misguided disservice to our state animal, according to Colin Carpenter, black bear project leader for the DNR Wildlife Resources Section.

“It is understandable that some people will illegally set out food to get a glimpse of this beautiful animal,” Carpenter said. “However, these actions often result in the death of the bear. Bear movements are tied to food sources. Bears that wander near residential areas in search of food are less likely to stay and become a nuisance if they do not find anything to eat.”

Capturing and moving bears that have become accustomed to humans is a costly and often ineffec-

continue to the next page

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tive way of addressing the problem, especially when faced with the possibility of merely moving a problem bear from one area to another. That is why wildlife agencies around the country tell people that a “fed bear is a dead bear.”

Bear populations have increased and expanded across the state in the past 10 years. Bears are now found in areas where they have been absent for decades, and have been reported in all 55 counties. Multiple reports of sows with cubs have been received from the northern and western portions of the state.

Human/bear interactions increase during the spring and summer for several reasons. Natural food sources are at their lowest point when bears leave their dens in the spring. High-energy foods such as serviceberries, blackberries, raspberries and blueberries do not become available until later in the summer. In addition, the bear breeding season, which peaks from late June through July, puts many bears on the move. During the breeding season, males will cover large areas while searching for females. This is also the time of year when adult female bears will chase off their yearlings so that they may breed again. All bears, but especially yearlings that are on their



Blace Hutchens hooked a musky. Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.

own for the first time, will take advantage of easy food sources. Bears will continue on their way if they do not find easy food sources.

Bears quickly become habituated to handouts in the form of trash, bird seed and pet food, and lose their fear of humans. Bears that have lost their fear of humans resort to raiding garbage, outdoor freezers, storage sheds, vehicles and other structures associated with people. Unfortunately, when these activities are repeated, DNR personnel are forced to humanely destroy the offending animal for safety reasons.

“The unintentional feeding of black bears is something that can be prevented,” Carpenter explained. “Garbage needs to be secured in a bear-proof facility and placed out for collection on the morning of pick-up, not the night before. Food scraps that produce large amounts of odor should be sealed in a plastic bag before being placed in the trash. Residents should remove all outside pet food at night, and

bird feeders should be taken down, cleaned and stored until late fall to further discourage bears from feeding around human habitation.”

Feeding of any wildlife should be avoided for numerous reasons, including, but not limited to, disease transmission, increased predation, habitat destruction around the feeding site, ethical concerns, and the animal’s overall health. Following these practical and common sense recommendations will reduce human/bear conflicts .



Another New River smallmouth was caught. Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.

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Robbie Ciarapica caught a bass at Elk Fork Lake.



Martin Hess, from Sand Fork, brought in a 4 pound brown trout.

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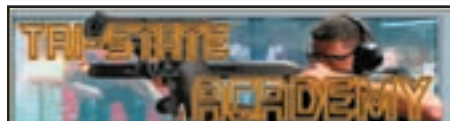
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Jeanie Harmon hooked a 24 pound catfish. *Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.*

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Chris Hall landed a nice hybrid bass. *Photo courtesy of Jarrett's Bait in Elizabeth.*



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Randy Timmons, from Harrisville, landed a 45" musky.



Sam Sutton, from Parkersburg got a 23 pound gobbler with an 11" beard.



Nice crappie caught by Feron Speelman. Photo courtesy of Riverside Bait & Tackle in Hockingport.

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It's A Snap - Crankbaits

Four crankbaits wobbling on the ends of four long lengths of lead core are effective at seining the depths for deep walleyes. That is, until one of the crankbaits snags a leaf, stick or some other assorted debris. Then it runs sideways. With the other lines nearby crisscrossing in the same water depths, it doesn't take a fishing genius to know a tangled disaster is in the making. Time to crank in that line – all 150 feet of it.

Open-water trollers negate many of the tangling problems with planer boards, of course. Planer boards serve a variety of other purposes, but keeping lines spread out and under control while fishing suspended walleyes is job one.



Chris Newell shot a nice gobbler. Photo courtesy of Reese's Country Stoe in Deerwalk.

Deep-water river trollers (and really, trollers who are using lead core anywhere) can accomplish the same purpose by swapping a few of their lead-core rods for set-ups with superline and heavy snap weights. This trick is really nothing new, but it is not commonly seen in conjunction or as a substitute for lead-core trolling.

Yet, some pros, such as Pat Neu of Forestville, Wis., and Dan Stier of Mina, S.D., are rapidly learning the benefits of running the two in tandem, or even abandoning lead core altogether. Dealing with a tangled mess of lead core, lead lines and crankbaits, particularly with cold hands during a big-river tournament, is likely to encourage anyone to search for a better way.

"In water that lends itself to use with lead core, you often have four lines running alongside one another within a 25-foot area," Neu said. "That's just a recipe for disaster if one of them picks up some debris. So I started looking for rigs that would still get lures down to the fish but would spread them out both horizontally and vertically.

"I remembered some tricks we began using on Lake Michigan with snap weights and superlines to get dodgers and flashers down to salmon in the 40- to 60-foot depth range. This was about 10 years ago when the lake began clearing up, and you had to fish deep because


the salmon were being spooked by the boats overhead."

Snap-weight rigs can still be used in conjunction with two lead-core lines, offering similar amounts of coverage without all the tangling hassles. Plus, the weights have the added benefit of collecting surface debris that gathers on the line before it can reach the crankbait. That

continue to the next page





Sterling Stover, from Hinton, shot a Corsican ram.



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is not possible with lead core – yet another advantage of this system that Stier learned from a veteran South Dakota angler several years ago.

“He always made fun of lead-core trollers,” Stier said. “He didn’t use anything other than snaps for contour-trolling crankbaits. I’ve learned that by using snap weights, you can be in the strike zone longer, adjust quickly by reeling up or releasing line, and land fish or retrieve baits in about a third of the time that you can with lead core. Plus, because you’re using braided line, you can see the vibration of your crankbait through your rod tip. That’s critical, especially in a river system where you have a lot of debris – and it’s not always easy to see with lead core. If you pick up trash and the bait stops wobbling, it’s instantly ineffective.”

Ease of use, tangle-free and capable of reaching the depths – you can’t ask for much more from a trolling system to chase the contours of deep water.



Tommy Richards bagged a gobbler. Photo courtesy of Reese’s Country Store in Deerwalk.

Simple set

The technique is deceptively simple to fish.

“I’ve fished with people this way, and many of them have asked, ‘Why haven’t I been doing this all along?’” Neu said.

Some basic crankbait trolling knowledge and the ability to read a depth finder are required. Neu has found at 1.8 to 2 mph, the speeds he typically runs crankbaits, the depth he wants to hit with his crankbaits will closely match the length of line from the rod to the snap weight, given an 8-ounce weight, 30-foot lead, diving crankbait and 14/6 superline.

“Basically, you let out 30 feet of line on your line counter and clip on the weight,” Neu said. “Then, reset your reel and let out another length of line that corresponds to the depth you’re fishing – 25 feet of line for 25 feet of water, in other words. Then, put it in the rod hold-

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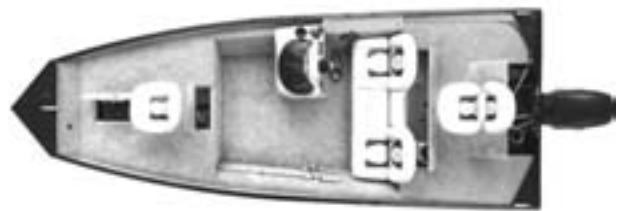
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er and wait for a strike. It's that simple."

Stier's setup is virtually identical, although he allows for a 50-foot lead (still trolling at approximately 2 mph).

"Fifty feet of line will usually provide about half of any crankbait's diving depth," he said. "If you have a bait that dives to around 12 feet or so, 50 feet is often about right."

Stier has used this technique in water as shallow as 7 feet and as deep as 70 feet. He sticks with 8-ounce weights regardless.

Experiment a bit with the lead length you prefer. If you use a

slightly heavier or lighter sinker, or if you have a favorite crankbait that runs a little shallower or digs a little deeper, some adjustments may be in order. These numbers are simply good starting points. Also, it is important to note the weight isn't dragging along bottom. Rather, it hovers above, with the line at roughly a 45-degree angle in the water column. The crankbait actually dives and runs below it.

Both Neu and Stier often run two lead-core lines and two snap-weight lines (where legal, of course). The lead-core rods are typically run on the corners of the boat, while the snap weights are fished on the inside, directly out the back of the boat. This reduces, or even eliminates, the chances of them crossing one another.

Simple equipment

Neu uses an 8 1/2- to 10-foot lead-core rod for this presentation. He likes a rod with a stout backbone but with a light tip so he can tell when the lure hits bottom and when it picks up debris.

Stier varies his rod lengths de-



Karl Moreland shot a turkey. *Photo courtesy of Reese's Country Store in Deerwalk.*



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pending on where they are positioned in the boat. Outside rods are generally 10 to 12 feet long. Inside rods might be as short as 6 feet.

continue to the next page



Robert Buckland hooked a golden trout. *Photo courtesy of Three Rivers Edge in Hinton.*

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Neu uses Off Shore Tackle snap weights. The typical size is 8 ounces as mentioned, but 6-ouncers are sometimes used as well, particularly when fishing shallow water. Similar to a planer board, these weights are attached to the line with an OR16 Snap Weight Clip that has a tiny protrusion through the center of the pad. The protruding stud on the OR16 clip keeps the clip from pulling off the line even with an 8-ounce weight attached.

Crankbait choices run the gamut, but something with a fair amount of wobble is best. Stier likes Salmo Hornets and Rapala Shad Raps. Neu often uses Reef Runners and SPRO MadEye Shads.

"You can really see them working in the rod tip, and it's easy to tell when they pick up sticks and stuff," Neu said. "Diving baits will pull down and run under the snap weight, but stick baits need longer leads to run under the ball. That's important to note. Also, if you're using a smaller shallower-running bait, like when you're fishing early in the season, you might be able to

use a shorter lead." Simple execution

Pulling a sizeable crankbait in current with an 8-ounce weight attached to the line will keep the rod loaded up, but detecting a strike isn't a problem.

"The instant you pick up debris, the rod tip stops vibrating so you don't troll very long with a fouled lure," Neu said. "There's also no doubt when you get a strike. They just nail it. And because you have so much less line out, you spend a lot less time reeling them in. That's important in a tournament."

Keeping fish hooked up isn't a problem. If you have a partner, he needs to be ready as the snap weight comes over the side of the boat. Unclipping it should be a fluid motion with one hand while the other hand keeps the lead taut. But with the current and the rod loaded from the weight and the fish, this isn't too difficult.

"I was fishing like this at a PWT event in Moberge, and it was easy to remove the weight and keep tension on the fish, even when I was by myself pre-fishing," Neu said.

Stier uses his reel's clicker when

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fishing with snap weights.

"I set the clicker, back the drag off until it clicks, and then tighten it slightly," he said. "When a fish hits, you'll often hear it before you

continue to the next page



A large New River smallmouth was caught *Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.*



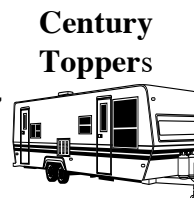
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it. Don't get in a hurry. Lots of guys want to pick the rod up and immediately begin reeling. But the current and the forward motion of the boat will cause that fish to rise right to the surface most of the time. I just pick up my rod and wait until the fish is up. When the clicker stops, I tighten the drag just a bit and reel it in."

Many fishing innovations and techniques have been created because of certain shortcomings or general discontent with other methods, but that doesn't mean the other methods don't still work and don't still have their place. Lead-core trolling is a time-honored art, but it does take some time to master, and maintaining a spread of lead-core lines in water with heavy debris can be challenging.

Snap weights, superlines and crankbaits provide a viable, easy-to-use alternative for deep-contour trolling. And using them in conjunction with lead-core lines is still an option. Then again, once you try the snap-weight system for yourself, deploying them with lead core might not be an option – your lead-core reels could be gathering dust in the garage.

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Brian Harvey landed an impressive 9 pound, 12 oz. rainbow trout. Photo courtesy of Three Rivers Edge in Hinton.

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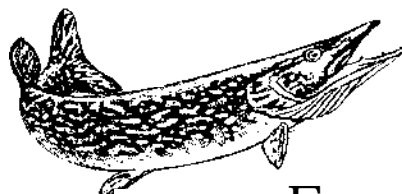
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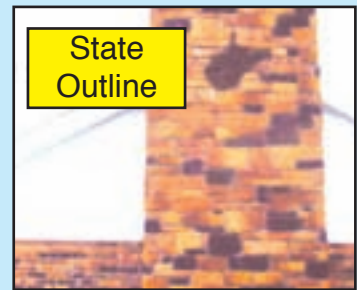
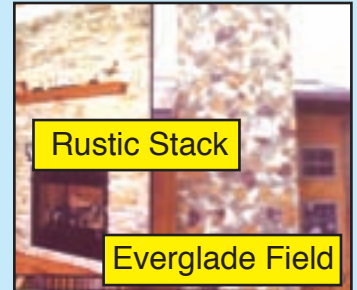
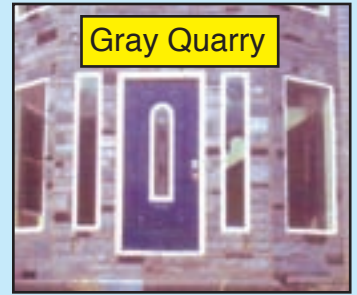
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