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Issue 318

August/September 2024



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Crappie**

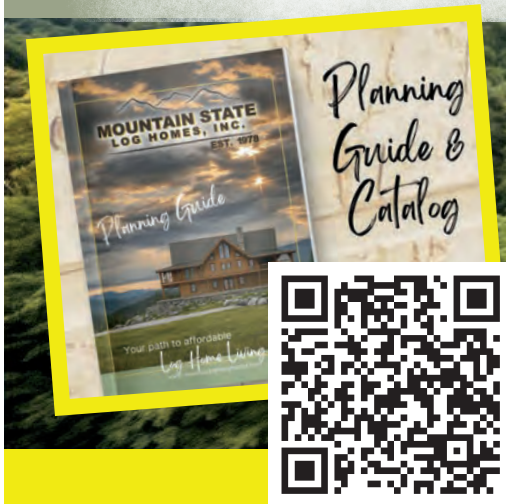
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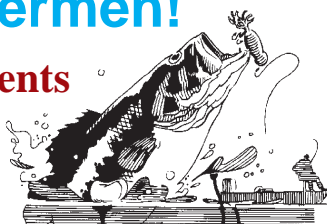
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Cover Photo

John Tyler Rutherford landed a new state record channel catfish on July 21. It weighed 33.51 pounds and measured 46.7 inches to break both prior records. He was fishing at his father's pond in Wayne County.

Crossbow and archery season opens on September 30. Time to get all your equipment ready for the season. Looking for pictures - form is on page 38.

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Preseason Deer Scouting

Some of the most fun about hunting deer is the pre-season scouting.

It's the beginning of unwrapping what the anticipation of the season gives us as a gift.

Which bucks lived? How many deer are moving through your hunting area? What improvements have been made to the habitat?

Avid deer hunters lean into their scouting gear and increase their scouting time more and more every season.

If you just started deer hunting, or are looking for some new tricks for your toolbox, here are some

time-tested scouting tactics to help you find success this hunting season.

Top 6 Scouting Tips and Tactics

1. Current Location Assessment

One of the most important factors is whether you are scouting a property you know, or one that you don't.

Obviously, a new lease or piece of public land is a mystery out of the box, but even a family deer camp can change with changes to the land and hunting pressure.

If you are hunting the same property for another season, look to see if there has been any logging

continue to the next page

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Ava Drake, from Parkersburg, is lifting her Ohio River hybrid bass.



Ryder Lockhart is pleased with a nice channel catfish he caught.



Lucas Richards won the Parkersburg trout derby - 1st time fishing.



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recently as the new under-growth should increase deer activity.

Also, try and see what, if anything, changed on the neighboring properties.

Did they put in food plots? Did they also have some logging done? Are there new treestands or hunting blinds that added more pressure on the local deer population?

2. High Impact vs. Low Impact Scouting

One of the most important factors to consider is high-impact scouting versus low-impact scouting.

High impact is making your way through the hunting area

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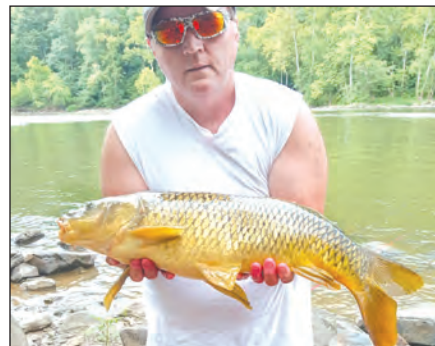
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on foot or by vehicle looking for deer signs and not really in a situation where you're concerned if you bump any deer while you're out there.

You know that startling any deer would only be temporary. High-impact scouting is great for looking for rubs, scrapes, game trails, bedding areas, and actual

continue to the next page



Paul Foley Jr. landed a 15 pound carp at Sandstone Falls.

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deer far from the start of the season.

Low impact scouting would certainly be closer to, or actually in, the hunting season.

You're looking for real-time data on where the deer are and what quality of deer could be there for movement of stands and blind locations.

Depending on the results - you could pull an audible on when or where you want to hunt.

3. Locate Food and Cover

Where's the food? Where's the cover?

These two questions you can ask and answer for yourself when scouting deer haven't changed in

a long time.

Using these answers, supported by deer trails, can help you to predict where the deer movement will be and when.

You can start with aerial maps to help narrow your search before you hit a new property, or if it's a property you know, adding a food plot could be the secret ingredient to future success.

Hunting power lines has been a source of success for many deer hunters.

Why? It's a constant clear cut leaving rich undergrowth for the deer to feed on with safe cover very close by.

Spending a summer evening watching a power line with some binoculars, or looking about 10 yards inside the tree cover could give you some very exciting information about deer activity in that area.

4. Locate Water Source

It's no secret deer also need water. continue to the next page



Shawn Smith landed a 2 1/4 pound white crappie in a pond.



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ter to survive.

So, in addition to stopping at creeks and rivers to get a drink, deer also like moving waterways as a means of travel.

Seeing a creek or river on a map can be a perfect place to start when looking for where to hang your stand or set up your ground blind.

The muddy banks can show recent tracks of deer movement and waterways can help funnel deer movement.

5. Ideal Scouting Locations

Scouting open fields in the evenings might be one of the most effective tactics there is.

After bedding all day most deer will make their way out for dinner just as the sun disappears.

Larger bucks especially love to wait until they feel most safe with

the least amount of light, so looking in areas just inside the tree line like a finger of trees pointing out into the field can be very exciting. Bucks will wait, or “stage” there

until it’s dark enough for them to eat, and chase does.

Stop by these areas to look for scrapes, rubs, droppings, and any
continue to the next page



Nathan Harper & Luke Long won the 15th Annual Kings of the Lakes event with 22 pounds, 11 oz. in 2 days. 2nd win at that event.

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other deer signs that could be there.

Then, all you have to do is set up at the best spot in range for the season.

If you're scouting in mountainous areas, you might not have the benefit of agricultural fields, clear cuts, and food plots.

Deer will eat over 400 species of plants but they still want to bed during the day for protection for the most part.

Most mountain hunters know that a lot of deer, bigger bucks especially, will move to high points of protection in the morning to spend their day looking out for danger.

As the sun begins to go down so will the deer. Scout up high and look for where they are traveling to get low in the evenings.

6. Using Trail Cams to Scout

There has been no bigger gamechanger for scouting in recent years like the trail camera.

Every year they get better and easier to use. Between image quality improving dramatically, most trail cameras also feature



Brian Galloway caught and released a nice musky.

HD video capture options, as well.

With the advent of cellular trail cameras, you don't even have to worry about physically accessing the trail cam to check your photos.

You can simply access the cellular trail cam photos remotely and without the worry of disturbing the deer.

Crossbow & archery season opens September 30 in WV.



Isaiah Killian, from Shinnston, caught & released a 43" musky.

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New State Record Channel Catfish

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va.
— The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) announced today that an angler from Wayne has caught a state record channel catfish, marking the sixth state record catch of 2024 so far.

“West Virginia’s incredible fishing opportunities continue to amaze and attract anglers from near and far and this record-breaking achievement showcases the world-class fishing adventures our state has to offer,” said Gov. Jim Justice.

John Tyler Rutherford caught the 43.51-inch, 46.70-pound channel catfish in his father’s farm pond in Wayne County on July 21, breaking the length record set in 2022 and the weight record set in 2023. Both records previously were held by Alan Burkett of Moorefield in Hardy County, who caught his fish at South Mill Creek Lake in Grant County.

“I want to congratulate John Tyler Rutherford on his outstanding catch,” said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion “This remarkable achievement highlights the



Roger Russell caught a musky while bass fishing at Stonewall.

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superior quality of West Virginia’s fisheries and the dedication of our team in maintaining and enhancing these aquatic resources.”

Rutherford reeled in his record catch using worms. WVDNR District Fishery Biologist Jeff Hansbarger and Assistant Fishery Biologist Jake Whalen traveled to the site to measure and weigh the record fish.

In addition to this channel catfish, record tiger trout, redbreast sunfish, bowfin, redear sunfish and black crappie have been caught this year.



Christian Johnson’s 1st fish was an Ohio River smallmouth bass.

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Live Scoping Bass Debate

Lately, we've heard a lot of pro anglers say, "I wish we could get back to real fishing."

Or, alternatively, the slightly less rueful, "I'm just going fishing today."

The part left unsaid is they've allowed themselves to be dragged down — or even demoralized — by the recent overwhelming dominance of anglers using forward-facing sonar (FFS). It's not that you can't use more "traditional" tactics, it's just that it's hard to compete against anglers who rely upon technology.

For the record, I'm still agnostic on whether FFS should be limited in any way. I've heard a great many people who I respect argue it is ruining the sport. I've been jarred by just how much and how quickly it has enabled previously unknown anglers to climb to the top of the leaderboard. Those factors at least force me to consider it may be detrimental to professional fishing. At the same time, I'm not swayed by many of the argu-

ments that the "antis" have lobbed at FFS.

It leads me to what I consider the most important questions here: What is "fishing?"

As far as I know there are no stone tablets providing us with guidance on this matter. Beyond any regulations or limitations set by prevailing law, the closest thing we have is the Bassmaster Elite Series rule sheet, which is both vague and hyper-specific. They used to refer to the idea that all fish need to be caught in a conventional and sporting manner. Today, they list specific restrictions (e.g., no umbrella rigs, no live bait, no rods over 10 feet, which is up from the previous limit of 8 feet).

By Pete Robbins

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My problem with many of the arguments against FFS is it feels like the advocates of limitation are sometimes throwing crap against the wall and seeing what sticks. For example, they claim it's bad for viewership, bad for conservation and bad for the tackle industry, without any real data

continue to the next page



Rusty Frame caught a 5 lb. 15 oz. bass at a night event at Burnsville Lake. Photo courtesy of Burnsville Docks.



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to back that up.

Think about professional football. I love the rocket-fueled nature of the modern passing game, but there was a long period when the forward pass wasn't legal. I'm sure the grind-it-out-on-the-ground traditionalists of the time were aghast and argued it wasn't "real football," but since then it's become an integral and now-traditional part of the game. Notably, once the forward pass was allowed, that didn't stop the league from continually refining how it should be viewed or regulated as the sport evolved.

Similarly, the NCAA banned the slam dunk from 1967 to 1976. It was allegedly done so at least partially to take away the advantages adhering to players like Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Today it's not only an accepted part of the game, but also a celebrated drawing factor.

I wasn't around when anglers like Dee Thomas and Dave Glibe first brought flipping to national attention, but I imagine there were naysayers who didn't consider it "real fishing." Someone who was around then correct me if I'm wrong, but I imagine the arguments could have gone

something like this:

"That's not real fishing. They don't even cast!"

"They're getting their lure in front of bass that were previously inaccessible. It's going to deplete the resource."

continue to the next page



John Smarr landed a 4 lb, 7 oz. bass at the Burnsville night event.

Photo courtesy of Burnsville Docks



Trenton Mullenex & Wesley Harmon got gobblers.. *Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods.*



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“They’re removing the fish from their beds when they’re at their most vulnerable, depleting future populations.”

If there had been live coverage of the sport back then, I’m sure the opponents of bed fishing would have said, “It’s just so boring, watching a guy sit over a 4-pounder for two hours, watching his back as he tries to make it bite.” Or, “Where’s the magic and mystery in that? He has the fish spotlighted in its most vulnerable state.”

To take it even further, live bait has been a part of fishing since the beginning of the sport – it is most assuredly capital-T-tradi-

tional-capital-F fishing, but we all seem to collectively agree it shouldn’t be a part of tournament fishing.

Our sport is mainly participatory, with even most ardent fans putting their own fishing above that of those they watch on TV. Many of us watch because we want to learn the 10 best ways to modify a Senko, or how to get a crank-bait to dive deepest, or what the latest trends from Japan might be. Anything that stifles that level of creativity is, in my opinion, presumptively a net negative to competitive fishing. I fear an “anti-anything-new” perspective undermines my favorite aspect

of what is best about playing and watching the game.



Doug Belcher bagged big gobbler in Fayette County.



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Hot Weather Crappie Fishing

Crappie readily bite for nearly everyone in the spring, but these panfish become more of a challenge to catch in the heat of summer.

When the summertime sun raises water temperatures above the 80-degree mark, crappie seek deeper water and heavier cover. The fish still remain active

though as they feed on schools of shad passing through the crappie's hot-weather haunts.

Summertime crappie fishing poses two problems: heavy recreational boat traffic and a lack of visible cover. Anglers solve the first problem by fishing early and late in the day to avoid traffic. Crappie tend to burrow into the

middle of brush when recreational boaters churn up the water and it becomes difficult to position a boat in the rolling waves and properly present my lure through the brush.

Some fish can also be caught in the clear water early and late in the day, but mid-day action is slow as the crappie suspend over deep water. In the stained water areas of a lake, the fish stay shallower and are easier to catch throughout the day.

How To Fish For Crappie In Shallow Water

Minnows are the most popular summertime bait for anglers fishing a tight line off docks or spider rigging in boats. Since a crappie's appetite is voracious during the summer, anglers select larger continue to page 16

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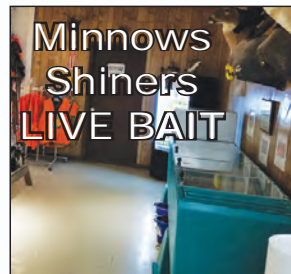


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minnows (sometimes bigger than 3 inches) for my bait. some prefer using 2/0 and 3/0 hooks because the bigger hook is easier to remove from a crappie and the fish don't swallow it as much as they do a smaller hook.

Jigs are also productive for summertime crappie. Anglers use either a single 1/16-ounce jig for shooting docks or a double rig for vertically jigging above brush piles. The double rig consists of a 1/16-ounce jig spaced 18 inches above a 1/8-ounce jig at the end of my line.

A shallow-water pattern produces best when a summertime shad hatch occurs, but for most of the summer you need to fish deeper water.

How To Fish For Crappie In Deep Water

The shallow pattern consists of dipping minnows with a long pole and slip-bobber system in timber along fence rows and tree lines on the main lake or creek channel. You can catch these fish less than 10 feet deep and sometimes even as shallow as 2 feet. The slip-bobber system allows you to adjust your bobber up or down to find the magic depth in which the



Alice Wardon hooked a 13 lb. hybrid bass at Kanawha Falls.



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crappie are holding. Use number 2 or 4 hooks and pinch on a couple of number 5 split shots about 2 to 3 inches above the hook. Keeping the weight close to the minnow will restrict its movement to prevent hang-ups in the heavy cover.

The deep-water pattern works best in timber along main lake bluffs and channel swings during the hottest part of summer. The fish will vary in depth from 15 to 25 feet depending on the lake's thermocline. Good luck fishing.



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WV DNR Dive Team

HINTON, WV — Gov. Jim Justice announced today the formation of a Natural Resources Police dive team within West Virginia's Division of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Section.

This team will assist the agency's law enforcement efforts in boating incidents, cases of missing persons, and evidence recovery. During the ceremony at Bluestone State Park, the team demonstrated their expertise by diving to the bottom of Bluestone Lake to retrieve a dog bone, which they then presented to Babydog.

"I'm beyond proud to see this new dive team in action, helping keep our state's beautiful natural resources and people safe," Gov. Justice said. "These dedicated officers are truly top-notch and ready to dive in and tackle any challenge that comes their way. Thanks to the Natural Resources Police and everyone involved in making this team happen. Your hard work is another shining example of our commitment to pro-

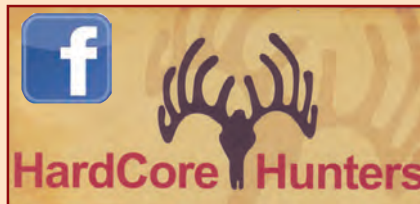
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Chase Sansom was in a kayak for his largemouth bass catch.



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protecting our people and preserving our great state's natural beauty."

The WVDNR Law Enforcement Section's dive team consists of 10 officers stationed throughout the state to ensure rapid response time and assist local and state agencies with their investigations. Members underwent two weeks of intensive open-water training with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Division's Aquatic In-

vestigations and Recovery Team. In addition to receiving initial certification, dive team members have completed over 100 hours of training on various methods, skills, and equipment.

"On behalf of our Law Enforcement Section, I would like to thank Colonel Chisholm Framp-ton and his staff at the South Carolina DNR for their assistance and guidance in training our dive team," WVDNR Director Brett

McMillion said. "We are thrilled to announce the addition of this new special unit to our already incredible Natural Resources Police force and look forward with confidence that this professional dive team will provide an additional law enforcement investigative service that will help fulfill our agency's mission and better serve the citizens of West Virginia."

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Archery Trail Open

SUMMERVILLE, W.Va. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) announced today that the Summersville Lake Wildlife Management Area (WMA) archery trail and range has been updated and reopened for public use.

Through a cooperative effort between the WVDNR, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and the Summersville Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, a 15-target archery trail has been reopened on Summersville Lake WMA. With the help of the co-operating groups, the trail has received extensive updates and is now open for public use.

“On behalf of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, I would like to thank the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Summersville Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation for their assistance in this project,” said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. “We are thrilled to be able to reopen such an important facility for our state.”

The archery trail is located on




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Summersville Lake WMA at the end of Summersville Airport Road. At the beginning of the



Chris Stacy hooked a huge blue catfish on the Kanawha River.

trail is a five-target practice range where you can tune in your bow skills before starting the half-mile, 15-target archery trail. The archery trail is open to the public from sunrise to sunset and is available on a first come, first served basis.

For more information on the archery trail please contact the WVDNR District 3 office at 304-924-6211. For more information about wildlife management areas in West Virginia, visit WVdnr.gov/wildlife-management-areas.

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Lottery Deer Hunts

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. — Gov. Jim Justice announced today that the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) will begin accepting applications for an archery lottery deer hunt at Twin Falls Resort State Park and that one lucky hunter will be chosen to participate in an episode of Whitetail Frenzy TV. Applications will be available starting July 15.

“I’m thrilled to announce this lottery hunt at Twin Falls and to be part of providing an unforgettable experience for one lucky hunter,” Gov. Justice said. “With gorgeous scenery, abundant wildlife and incredible opportunities like this, West Virginia continues to be the best place in the world to go hunting.”

There are 15 spots on the Twin

Falls lottery hunt, but only one grand prize winner will get to hunt with the Whitetail Frenzy TV film crew. They’ll also receive a special prize package, including lodging at Twin Falls Resort.

“I want to thank Whitetail Frenzy for partnering with the WVDNR to offer this extraordinary opportunity,” said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. “This hunt not only highlights our state’s natural beauty and abundant wildlife but

also supports our efforts in promoting sustainable hunting practices and wildlife conservation.”

The lottery hunt is open to residents and non-residents, and applications must be submitted online at WVhunt.com. Hunters must use their existing Electronic Licensing and Game Checking System account or create one to apply. Once logged in, applicants must select “Enter a Lottery Drawing” and choose one of the available options.

STATE PARK CONTROLLED DEER HUNT LOTTERIES

Gov. Justice and the WVDNR also announced dates and locations for controlled hunts at Beech

continue to page 24

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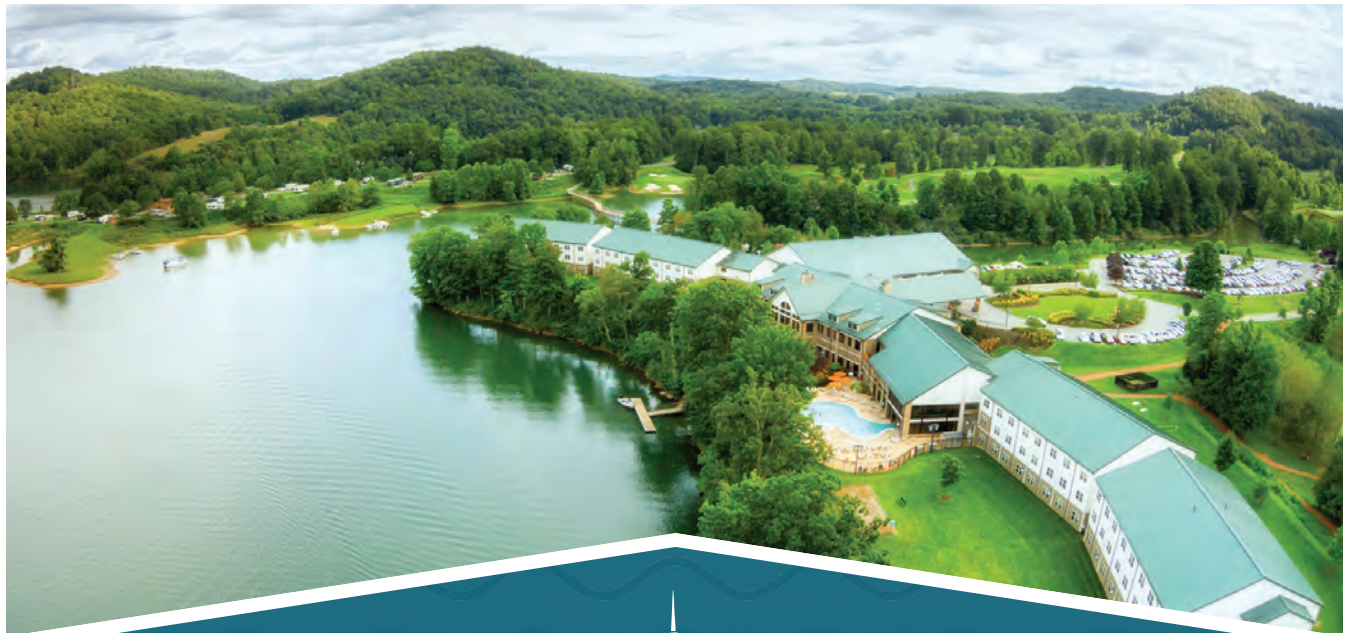
Anna Milam landed a 21” new river smallmouth bass.

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Fork, Bluestone, Cacapon Resort and Twin Falls Resort state parks. Beech Fork State Park (Nov. 4–6 and Nov. 11–13)

Bluestone State Park (Nov. 4–6)

Cacapon Resort State Park (Nov. 6–8 and Nov. 13–15)

Twin Falls Resort State Park (Nov. 6–8 and Nov. 11–13)

Applications are available starting July 15 and must be submitted online at WVhunt.com by Aug. 31. Hunters may apply for multiple hunts as an individual or as

part of a group, but can only enter each hunt once. There is a \$15 application fee for each entry.

CLASS N/NN DEER HUNT LOTTERY

Applications to hunt in 12 limited permit areas during the 2024 antlerless deer season will also be available starting July 15. Hunters have until midnight on Sept. 6 to apply. Locations for these hunts include:

Camp Creek State Forest
Greenbrier State Forest

Hillcrest WMA

National Forest Land (Pocahontas County)

Public Land (Randolph County) Boone County

Clay County (South Portion)

Greenbrier County (North Portion)

Kanawha County (North Portion)

Kanawha County (South Portion)

Nicholas County

Webster County

Hunters who receive a permit may hunt antlerless deer on private and public land in the 12 limited permit areas on the following dates: Oct. 24–27, Nov. 25 to Dec. 8, Dec. 12–15 and Dec. 28–31.

West Virginia hunting regulations apply to all controlled hunts. All hunters 15 and older must have a valid West Virginia hunting license, unless legally exempt from purchasing a license. To learn more about lottery hunts or to purchase a hunting license, visit WVdnr.gov/wv-lottery-hunts.

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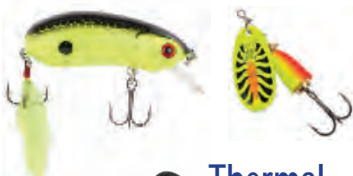


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Ian Freeman landed a huge Kanawha River blue catfish.

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Outdoorswoman Workshop

Have you ever wanted to immerse yourself in the great outdoors but felt unsure where to start? The Becoming an Outdoors Woman fall workshop is the perfect solution! Join us from September 13–15 at Canaan Valley Resort State Park for an empowering weekend filled with adventure and learning. Whether you're seeking a fresh experience or rekindling your love for outdoor activities, this workshop offers everything you need to embrace your inner adventurer.

WHAT IS BECOMING AN OUTDOORS WOMAN?

The Becoming an Outdoors Woman program is specially designed to introduce women to hunting, fishing, and various outdoor activities in a supportive and encouraging environment. The heart of the BOW experience lies in its weekend workshops, tailored for beginners but open to all skill levels. It's more than just a getaway — it's a lifelong apprenticeship program that fosters confidence and skills for outdoor pursuits.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM A BECOMING AN OUTDOORS

WOMAN WORKSHOP?

Attending a Becoming an Outdoors Woman workshop is an incredible opportunity to step away from the daily grind and dive into the natural beauty of West Virginia. Here's what you can look forward to:

Expert Guidance: Learn how to hunt, fish and do other outdoor activities with the help of fellow participants, volunteers and the WVDNR's friendly staff from the Wildlife Resources, Law Enforcement and State Parks sections.

All-Inclusive Experience: Come as you are and immerse yourself in the experience. Your registration fee covers meals and all of the materials and equipment needed for each class. A Friday

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Archery

continue to the next page



Jeremy Peringer landed a great New River walleye.

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So You Got A Deer?
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Be prepared for unpredictable weather by packing layered wool clothing and rain gear. Stay updated with the latest information on the WV Becoming an Outdoors Woman Facebook page. If you participate in hunting or fish-

ing courses, you must purchase a license, available at WVdnr.gov. **BENEFITS OF ATTENDING A BECOMING AN OUTDOORS WOMAN WORKSHOP**

One of the best things about attending a Becoming an Outdoors Woman workshop is that it gives you an opportunity to try a variety of outdoor activities in a low-pressure environment. This hands-on experience helps you determine if you truly enjoy an activity before investing in your own equipment.

Another benefit is that you get to explore these new interests of yours in the breathtaking landscapes of Almost Heaven, West Virginia. From serene fishing spots to challenging hiking trails, you'll get to experience the beauty of West Virginia's forests, streams and mountains.

But attending a Becoming an Outdoors Woman workshop is

more than a weekend of learning — it's a life-changing experience that empowers you to embrace your inner adventurer with confidence and courage. Whether it's learning how to navigate a trail and how to row in tandem with a friend, you'll leave with a new-found appreciation for yourself, for others and for the outdoors we all love. Reserve your spot soon.



Amber Shoemaker reeled in a flathead catfish in Crab Creek.

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Plum Orchard Lake Upgrades

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.VA. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) announced today the completion of several improvements at Plum Orchard Lake, including the addition of two new docks and shore maintenance designed to benefit anglers and boaters.

“The upgrades reflect our commitment to providing exceptional recreational opportunities in West Virginia and ensure that Plum Orchard Lake remains a prime destination for anglers and boaters alike,” said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. “By maintaining open water areas and supporting our fishery, we’re not only

enhancing the angling experience but also preserving the natural beauty of this treasured lake.”

The new floating docks at Plum Orchard Lake include an 8-foot by 32-foot dock at the main boat ramp near the dam and an 8-foot by 48-foot dock at the parking area near the dam. These docks offer a safer and more stable platform for public use. An existing dock at the upper boat launch is set to be refurbished later this year.

Other enhancements include herbicide spraying around the shore fishing areas, piers and boat launches. This effort maintains open water areas for both anglers and boaters while maintaining a good habitat for the fishery, which
continue to page 30

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Stonewall - Vandalia

August 18

Stonewall - Vandalia

September 29



Jeff Cornell reeled in a “hog” largemouth at Stonewall Jackson.



Ronald Criss reeled in a quality Stonewall Jackson Lake bass.

Aug/Sept 2024 ~ Page 28



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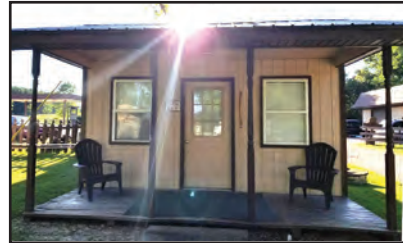
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was the location of a state record redear sunfish catch in June. These sunfish, introduced into Plum Orchard Lake a few years ago to control invasive snails, have proven to be a great benefit to the lake and are now reaching trophy sizes.

WVDNR Fish Tagging Studies

To continue gathering data for better trophy sunfish management, the WVDNR Fish Management Unit is currently conducting a fish tagging study at Plum Orchard Lake. Species tagged include bluegill, redear sunfish and

black crappie. Anglers who catch a tagged fish in any West Virginia waterbody are encouraged to report it by calling the phone number on the tag, contacting their local WVDNR district office or emailing dnrfishtags@wv.gov

and providing the following information:

Species

Tag number

Date of catch

Location of catch (if a river, in-

continue to the next page



Jeff Neugent caught a nice New River smallmouth bass.

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Kayaks



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clude the closest landmark)
Was the fish harvested or released (if released, was the tag removed?)

Angler's name, address and phone number

This important data will help biologists better manage the lake's fishery. And remember, each angler who reports their tagged fish qualifies for a reward for participating.

To learn more about fishing opportunities in West Virginia or to purchase a fishing license, visit WVDnr.gov/fishing.



David Smith landed a Tug River smallmouth bass.



Wyatt Gabehart reeled in a quality smallmouth bass.

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WV DNR Deer Spotlight Survey

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va

— The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) announced today that its personnel will be conducting deer spotlight surveys in all WVDNR districts during the months of August and September.

During the survey period, WVDNR personnel will be driving designated routes and using spotlights at night to count deer from county roads. This method allows personnel to estimate the deer population, which is essential for making informed decisions regarding wildlife conservation and

management.

This year's surveys are scheduled from July 29 to August 12 or August 26 to September 11, and will begin one half hour after sunset.

Residents may notice clearly marked WVDNR vehicles with spotlights along these routes during the survey period. The spotlight surveys are conducted in a safe and controlled manner, with all necessary precautions taken to minimize any disruption to residents and wildlife. For inquiries regarding the deer spotlight surveys, residents may contact their district WVDNR office.

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Accurate Archery

Archery is a great sport, with lots of different things to focus on. Some archers may be obsessed with their arrows and fletching, while others tune their bow paying attention to even the most minute detail.

What do they both have in common? They want more accuracy.

If you look at everything any archer does in the sport, it all comes down to getting more accurate. Getting your shots in tighter groups, and being able to do so consistently. If you're looking to improve your shooting and get more accurate – use the following archery tips for accuracy and you'll see your overall shots improve in no time.

Relax That Bow Grip Hand

There's one thing I see all the time that's so completely under-

estimated by ninety percent or more of new archers. They're focusing hard on the target, buying the newest and best gear and trying every brand of arrow possible. Yet their shots are still off.

They don't relax their grip on the bow! Your non-dominant hand has a huge influence on the accuracy of your shots. Remember this simple, little rule:

Your bow hand should have as little contact with your bow as is possible.

It should be as if your bow is just barely, gently resting on the top of your bow hand. Start to become more aware of how tightly you're gripping your bow the next few times you shoot, you'll start to see your accuracy improve greatly over time if you keep this in mind.

And while we're at it, regardless of what kind of bow you shoot, you'll need one of these. You can thank me later.

Relax and Breathe

When we become nervous, anxious or even just overly think about things, we as humans naturally do one thing – we hold our breath. The next time you feel

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yourself getting tense or nervous try to take note of your body, more than likely you're holding your breath.

This happens all the time: An archer's focusing on the target intently, making sure his form and stance is just right and keeping his draw held as he's been taught. He lets the arrow go, and the show is off it's mark.

He didn't breathe, the whole time he's focusing on all of those different things, he's so in his own head that he forgets to breathe.

Have you ever seen those movies where a sniper takes a deep breath in, let's it go, and then takes the shot? That's exactly why.

I'm not saying that you have to take a deep breath before every shot, just be sure that you're not holding your breath and are at least breathing normally. Most archers, especially newer archers should really read this – it'll help get you in the right mindset when

continue to page 34

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2.	12:00 PM	Springfield Hellcat 9mm	31.	2:10 PM	\$4,999.13 CASH
3.	12:00 PM	Ruger 10/22 22LR	32.	2:10 PM	Arex Delta G2L 9mm
4.	12:13 PM	\$2,999.13 CASH	33.	2:10 PM	Savage Impulse 243
5.	12:13 PM	Keltec Sub2K 40	34.	2:23 PM	\$4,999.13 CASH
6.	12:13 PM	LFA AMP 9mm	35.	2:23 PM	Winchester Wildcat 22LR
7.	12:26 PM	\$2,999.13 CASH	36.	2:23 PM	Henry Single Shot 45-70
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Nathan Goff Armory

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Practice at the Right Distance

A lot of new, inexperienced archers will ask a fellow archer what distance they should be practicing shots at. There are a few standard answers that keep getting passed around, whether they're right or not.

Many archers are to practice shots at five yards. And that's what they do. The real answer is to shoot the distance that you're currently capable of shooting accurately.

Don't feel like a dork if you can only hit the target from shorter distances, not only is that perfectly fine for now, but it will improve over time.

Start at three to five yards, even if you're really only shooting good at these distances – keep practicing for now. A weight lifter doesn't start lifting 300 pound barbells, and neither should you. Remember this second simple, little rule:

The further you move away from

the target, the more your mistakes are magnified.

Start by shooting where you're comfortable, and then when you're very accurate at that distance – move the target back one yard. Rinse and repeat over time and your shots will be getting consistently more accurate, and at further distances too.

Be Aware of Your Posture

Yeah, you've heard it before: Posture is important to improving your shot. But a lot of archers down play this important fact.

Your posture is hugely important as it directly affects your aim. If you really want to improve your accuracy, start focusing on your posture now.

We probably all know how we're supposed to be standing and the posture that we should have – but are you actually doing it?

Get your bow and get in front of a mirror large enough to be able to see your entire draw. But, don't look in the mirror yet. Draw your bow as you normally would

– don't look at yourself while doing this! Once you have your bow drawn, look at your draw in the mirror. Is your posture 100% correct?
continue to the next page



Shane Dillon hooked a 43 pound blue catfish on the Ohio River.

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Young Luke Samples reeled in a huge largemouth bass.

thing that people say, but fewer of them do. People tend to get so hyper-focused on their aim, their draw, their gear – everything but their feet.

The fact is, the wider apart your feet are, the stronger they'll be while you're shooting. Your feet should be at least shoulder length apart. A little trick that helps prevent overlooking your stance is this:

Every time you get set up for a shot, plant your feet first, then focus on your draw, your posture and all the other things that tend to cause us to overlook our footing.

continue to the next page

rect?

Do this a few more times, not looking while drawing the bow. Then look to see your posture. Are you noticing a mistake or an area that you need to work on improving?

Wait for it...

Some archers, especially newer ones will release their shot and then immediately look to see where it lands. They can't wait to see their shot, which ironically negatively affects their shot.

After you've released a shot, don't move until your shot has landed! An easy habit to teach yourself is this:

Every time you release a shot, don't move until you hear the arrow hit the target.

This simple trick will increase your accuracy if you make it a habit. Especially if you're new

to archery, trust me, do this every shot.

The 10 Second Rule

Many archers, even intermediate archers have a bad habit. They release their shots too quickly. They simply become impatient and don't aim long enough.

Just slowing down and letting yourself have enough time to really focus on the target, breathe, and then release the shot is sometimes one of the hardest things for newer archers to do.

Once you're lined up, focus on the target and aim your shot for at least ten seconds, then release the shot. Do this every time and you'll see your accuracy increase several times over.

Watch Your Footing

Another largely overlooked practice in archery is how your feet are planted. This is another

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Only Shoot a Draw Weight That You Can Support

A lot of guys make it a point of bragging about how heavy of a draw weight they can shoot. Ever notice that most of those guys aren't winning any competitions or tournaments?

One of the foundations of being a good archer is to always have the proper form. Some people can shoot a fifty pound bow accurately, while other may out shoot them several times over with a twenty five pound bow.

Besides, just because you're physically able to pull a sixty pound bow back, doesn't mean that you can actually shoot the thing accurately. Forget the ma-

cho bragging game, and find the perfect draw weight for you.

When it comes to the bragging

game, you can still win by being able to actually shoot ten times better than that guy anyway.



Bailey Gordon got a limit of big trout on the Cranberry River.



Kelly Miller landed a 27" walleye at Cheat Lake.

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Evan Anderson, from White Sulphur Springs, got a 6 lb. 3 oz. bass.



Justin Mounts caught an unusual paddlefish and released it..



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Lori Ketterman hooked a 9 pound rainbow trout. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.

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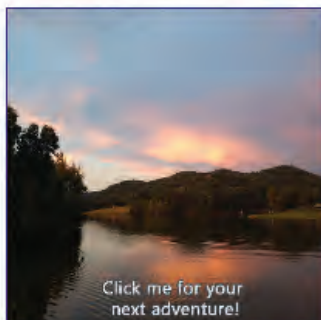
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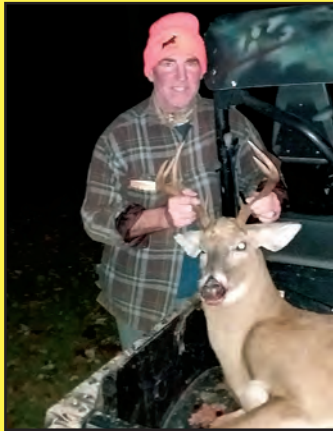
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