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Issue 322

February/March 2025



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Outdoor Photos

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Attention Bass Fishermen!

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Cover Photo

Katie Brooks, from Cool Ridge, won the 2024 Big Buck Photo contest from the WV DNR. Photos were selected by random and winners were determined by a panel of judges. She has an option of a lifetime WV hunting license or a stay at a WV State Park. Look for an article on page 3.

We are looking for big game pics. Form is on page 38.

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WV DNR Big Buck Contest

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) announced today the winners of the state's fourth annual Big Buck Photo Contest during the opening ceremony of the West Virginia Hunting and Fishing Show at the Charleston Coliseum and Convention Center.

"West Virginia's hunting traditions are a big part of what makes our state so special and the Big Buck Photo Contest is just one of the ways we celebrate that heritage," said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. "I want to thank everyone who participated in the

contest because your contributions not only help us showcase the excellent hunting opportunities in our state but will help us keep our outdoor tradition alive for generations to come."

The Big Buck Photo Contest, which was sponsored again this year by the WVDNR and West Virginia Department of Tourism, was open to resident and nonresident youth and adult hunters. To enter, hunters were required to submit a photo with a buck they harvested during a 2024 hunting season along with a short account of their hunt. Each entrant was required to show proof of a valid 2024 West Virginia Hunting License and had to include their per-

continue to the next page



Stephanie Tinnel, from Nettie, was a winner in the state contest.



Dylan Shaffer, from Belpre, OH, got his non-resident deer in Wood Co. in the state contest.

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Ike Probst arrowed a Lewis Co. buck. Photo courtesy of Mountaineer RV and Outdoor Center in Jane Lew.

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Finalists were chosen by random drawing from all eligible entries and winners were selected by a judging committee. Winning photos were selected based on photo composition, size of the buck's antlers, number of antler points and how well the hunt was described.

The 16 winners included five resident adults, five resident youths, one non-resident youth and five non-resident adults who were selected from a list of more than 320 finalists. One resident adult grand prize winner was selected and will receive a lifetime hunting license or a West Virginia State Park cabin stay. The remaining resident adults and non-resident adult winners will receive a State Park cabin stay or a Cabela's prize package. All youth winners will receive a Cabela's prize package. Grand Prize Winner

– Katie Brooks — Cool Ridge, W.Va.

Resident Adult Division Winners

– Sandy Blake — New Martinsville, W.Va.

– Jeremy Hauser — Walker, W.Va.

continue to the next page



Youth contest winner Michael Miller brought in a great buck.

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- Gary Riley — Inwood, W.Va.
- Stephanie Tinnel — Nettie, W.Va.
- Resident Youth Division Winners
- Lilly Diule — Elkins, W.Va.
- Cambrie Legg — Winfield, W.Va.
- Leevi Martin — Sutton, W.Va.
- Rayden Meade — Kermit, W.Va.
- Michael Miller — Norman-town, W.Va.
- Non-Resident Youth Division Winner
- Josie Shobe — Gallipolis, Ohio

- Non-Resident Adult Division Winners
 - Xavier Aya-ay — Lutz, Fla.
 - Jevon Miller — Millersburg, Ohio
 - David Patton — Lincolnton, N.C.
 - Dylan Shaffer — Belpre, Ohio
 - Wyatt Whitfield — Bedford, Pa.
- For more information about hunting and fishing in West Virginia and to purchase a 2025 license and stamps, visit WVdnr.gov.



Jeromy Hauser, from Walker, was a winner in the adult contest.

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Gary Riley, from Inwood, was a winner in the adult contest.



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SKEETER

2024 Black Bear Harvest Results

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) announced today that hunters in West Virginia harvested 2,479 black bears during the combined 2024 archery, crossbow and firearms seasons.

The preliminary harvest for the combined 2024 seasons was lower than the 2,830 bears taken in 2023. As predicted by the 2024 Mast Survey and Hunting Outlook, the archery/crossbow harvest remained consistent with the previous year. However, the overall bear firearms harvest was lower than in 2023, despite a higher harvest during the September and October season segments.

During the first segment of the

2024 archery and crossbow seasons (Sept. 28 – Nov. 24), hunters harvested 899 bears. Of these harvests, 431 were taken with vertical bows and 468 were taken with crossbows. The top five counties

for archery/crossbow harvests were Fayette and Preston (55 each), Webster (48), Boone (43), Nicholas (42) and Wyoming (40).

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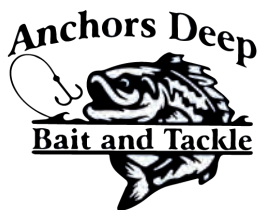
Bryon White bagged a nice buck in Kanawha County.



Josh Murray, from Parkersburg, brought in a huge bobcat.

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During the firearms season, hunters harvested 1,580 bears. This included 611 bears taken during the September and October seasons, 166 bears during the September youth, Class Q, XS season, 20 bears during the October youth, Class Q, XS season, 57 bears during the concurrent antlerless deer/bear season and 368 during the three early firearms seasons.

Additionally, hunters harvested 271 bears during the concurrent buck-gun bear season and 697 bears during the traditional December season. One bear was harvested with a muzzleloader during the Mountaineer Heritage Season. The top five counties for firearms harvests were Nicholas (167), Boone (153), Kanawha (115), Fayette (109), and Logan (92).

For more information about hunting opportunities in West Virginia, hunters should consult the 2024-2025 West Virginia Hunting and Trapping Regulations Summary, available to download at WVDnr.gov/hunting-regulations. Hunting licenses may be purchased online at WVhunt.com.

**SEND IN
BIG GAME - FISH PICS
FROM 2024 & 2025
DETAILS ON PAGE 38**



Tyler Davis bagged a snowshoe hare with help from his dogs.

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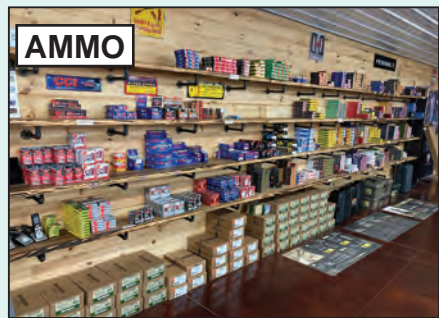


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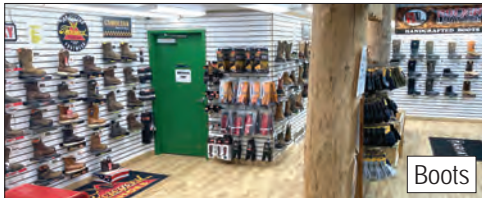
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WV Has Great Musky Fishing

Why do I say that, well there are several factors. West Virginia waters has a abundance of Musky due to the WV Musky stocking program, the Musky clubs and most of all, the Musky and Bass fisherman practicing catch and release preservation methods. One of the main reasons, is that West Virginia's don't give up, until those slimy Muskies are in the boat. They fish relentlessly.

They say it takes 10,000 cash to catch a Musky, but here in West Virginia because of being so many good streams and so many Muskies, it takes quite a few less cast than that.

I have been a fisherman most

of my 71 years, but only been a Musky fisherman about 9 years. Why do I say WV has the greatest Musky anglers. Well, let me tell you why. Not only are they able to catch them, but they know the right weather, wind direction, time of day, temperature, I almost believe these guys can take a test tube of water look at it, and tell you if there biting or not. Lol. Some of these guys eat, drink and sleep, Musky fishing.

I know one of these world class guys personally and I ask him, how many Musky's would you say you've caught in a year? He thought for a moment and said, well, in one year, I caught 110 Musky.

What!!! You might think, how is that even possible? I believe that

By Don Lilly - Sutton, WV guy was telling you a whopper. Really, you think so?

Let me ask you a question, how many Musky's do you catch in a good year, 5, 10, 15 possible, 30 if you really stay with it weekly.

What if I told you, he basically fished, everyday for a year, could a person catch that many? Now your thinking, Hummm maybe thats possible.

Let me tell you what I saw this Musky fisherman do. I was fishing down below, Burnsville Dam one day, I had all my favorite Musky lures, and I had not got one bite. He fished right down from me, right where I had just fished. In a few minutes I looked, and he held up what looked to be a 30+”



continue to the next page




Young Ryan Weese bagged a 9 point buck. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.



Luke Samples brought in a large rack whitetail buck.

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Musky.

At this point, I am ready to through all my fancy lures and tackle in the middle of the water. The worst part is, he just acted like he was at a pond just catching Bluegill and just pitching them back. No big deal, he wasn't even excited. Just another day.

For me, I couldn't remember the last time I caught or had even seen one. I would be tickled to death to of caught a 30 incher that day.

There are many Musky anglers in WV just like him. They are the best of the best.

Even though I am not in the same class as these guys. I have learned what it takes to catch a Musky. It's the same thing you use to catch people.

You might say what do you mean by that? Let me explain.

One of the questions I get ask is, how do you catch a musky?

Well, that's hard to tell someone, but here is something that I want to share, and I believe you will never forget it. Hopefully it will make you a much better Musky fisherman.

You have to get that Musky so involved in the lure he forgets about everything else. You probably had

people tell you a interesting story. They get you so involved in the story, you forget whats about to happen. You let your guard down.

continue to the next page



Travis Booth hunted a quality buck in Barbor County.



Travis Dawkins landed a big musky this January.



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For the Musky, it's on the same principle. The lure has to look right, It has to smell right, and it has to act right. The fish, like you, gets so involved, he forgets he has been caught 10 times before. And he takes it—HOOK, LINE, AND SINKER.

If you can do that, then you are truly a World Class Musky Fisherman.

Here let me prove it to you. Pay close attention to what I'm about to tell you.

One day, my two grandsons and I were out on the lake and we caught a beautiful 47 inch Musky at the Stonewall Jackson lake and released it. We went back to fishing, and after about 30 minutes or so, we noticed him swimming on top of the water. Swim as he may,

he just stayed on top. It appeared, he had air trapped inside of him, and he was to weak to expell it.

We tried and tried to revive him, but he would not go down. We all talked about it and we just couldn't figure out what to do. We just hated to see this beautiful fish die.

As the last resort, after we tried everything, the boys knew I carried a little bottle of alcohol on the boat, just in case we got a bite from a Musky or a hook in us. One of the boys suggested how about we pour a little alcohol in his mouth, maybe it would stimulate him to swim. I figured, well, at this point it would not hurt any-

thing. He was going to die any-
continue to the next page



Danny Burnette shot a 9 point Mercer County buck.



Jo Sargent hunted in Wood County for a fine 9 point buck.

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way.

We opened his mouth, being careful of those sharp teeth, and poured just a little in. Man, when that hit his gut he started flipping and flopping so we quickly put him in the water and he was gone.

We could not believe it actually worked. We started fishing again,

and It wasn't long though and that Musky was back on top, and this time he looked worse than the first time.

The boys not wanting to see him die said, give him a bigger drink of that stuff. I figured, ok old boy, it's now or never. I turned the bottle up and "gurgle" "gurgle" down his throat it went. When

that hit his gut, he went crazy, flipping, flopping and jumping, he was even snapping at our fingers. We had never seen a Musky try to bite us!

We felt for sure he was going to beat himself to death. He finally settled down we put him back in the water and he swam off, - continue to the next page



Easton Wilson got a fine buck in Wood County.



Keith Snipes landed a large walleye on the New River last fall.

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though not very straight. Finally, he was gone!

We did not see him again. We were so happy, we helped to save a Musky's life, to fight another day.

Well we fished around there for about an hour and we kept hearing something bumping on the side of the boat. I looked over the edge and you will not believe this but there, was that Musky, with his

mouth wide open, bloodshot eyes, whimpering like a dog, wanting another drink of that alcohol!!!!

GOTCHA!!! Oh, yes I did. You took this story —HOOK, LINE, AND SINKER!!!

I got you so involved with this story that you had no idea, that you were about to be caught. That's exactly the way you catch a Musky. It sounded and looked so good you could not resist. That's the way you have to present your lure to the fish.

Just remember, It doesn't take catching 110 Musky a year to be a World Class Musky fisherman. Take you wife, take your kids, the main thing is enjoy yourself.

You do your part right and the old Musky will do his, and you will have a thrill of a lifetime.

If you want to be a World Class Musky Fisherman.

Just keep your lure in the water it will happen, and always, take just one more cast before you end

your day.



Levi Tinsley used a bow for this very wierd racked Kanawha Co. buck. Extra antlers are on the side



Hollie Varner shot a nice buck in Wood County with a tall rack.

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Kevin Ross landed a fall hybrid striped bass.

Interesting Turkey Information

1 Female turkeys don't gobble, but they do purr.

Turkeys are known for the gobbling sound they make, but it turns out that only the male birds make that iconic call. Female turkeys—or hens—on the other hand, will instead cluck like a chicken, yelp if they're excited or agitated, or purr like a cat (although, according to the National Wild Turkey Federation, it's more of a "rolling, almost staccato call" than a purr, but it conveys the same feeling of contentment). And to bust some Thanksgiving-related myths, check out 8 Common Myths About Thanksgiving You Probably Still Believe.

2 Turkeys were once primarily bred for their feathers, not their meat.

These days, farmers breed turkeys in order to sell them for their meat. But, according to Encyclopedia Britannica, up until 1935, the birds were bred for their "beautifully colored plumage," which features stunning striped patterns.

3 An adult turkey has around 5,000 to 6,000 feathers.

Not only do turkeys have gorgeous feathers, but they also have a lot of them. According to the



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U.S. Fish and Wild Life Service, just like female chickens; but an adult turkey has anywhere from 5,000 to 6,000 individual feathers on their body.

4 Male turkeys are called toms or gobblers.

Female turkeys are called hens,

just like female chickens; but male turkeys aren't roosters. Instead, they're called toms, or, since male turkeys are the ones who make the notorious gobbling sound, they can also be called

continue to the next page



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gobblers. And if you ever wondered why we call them turkeys, check out This Is How Turkeys Got Their Name.

5 Toms have more warts than hens.

While some of the differences between male and female turkeys could be considered endearing—such as the noises they make and the names they’ve been given—there’s at least one difference between the two genders that isn’t quite so cute. Tom turkeys have more warts on their heads than their lady friends, according to



Nicloe Bunner was happy with a black bear hunt.



Zach Hatfield bow hunted in Logan Co. for a great buck.

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Encyclopedia Britannica. Hens also weigh about half as much as their male counterparts.

6 Male and female turkey droppings are shaped differently.

Although you might expect there to be a few differences between

the way male and female turkeys look, you might be surprised to find out that there’s also a difference

when it comes to their bathroom habits. According to the

Pennsylvania Game Commission, continue to the next page

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male droppings are "j-shaped," while those of females take on a more "spiral or curlycue" shape. 7 Turkeys hear certain sounds better than humans.

When you think about animals with amazing hearing, dogs, elephants, bats, or owls likely come to mind, but probably not turkeys. It turns out, however, tur-

keys can actually hear far-off and low-frequency sounds better than humans, according to the National Wild Turkey Federation. "Hearing allows the bird to detect a threat if its eyes are occupied on finding food," retired regional biologist Bob Eriksen for the NWTf explains. "Wild turkeys have an uncanny ability to locate

the source of a sound." 8 Turkeys lived around 10 million years ago.

The woolly mammoth had its hey-day on Earth until about 10,500 years ago before eventually becoming extinct 4,000 years ago. While it's hard to imagine a turkey flying above a gigantic woolly mammoth, the birds have actually been around for a lot longer. In fact, turkeys have been on the scene for almost 10 million years, according to the University of Illinois.

9 Turkeys almost went extinct—twice.

While turkeys aren't current—continue to page 20

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ly an endangered species, there were two points in the past when we almost lost them completely. According to the Colorado Arts and Sciences Magazine, the California turkey went extinct about 10,000 to 12,000 years ago, likely due to climate change or over-hunting, or a combination of the two. And when European settlers arrived in America, turkeys again found themselves as targets of prolific hunting. The birds were totally gone from Connecticut by 1813, disappeared from Vermont around 1842, and by the 1930s, turkeys were again growing dangerously close to extinction before efforts were taken to make sure they weren't wiped out.

10 Turkeys once wore booties while being walked to the market. As they say, these boots were made for walking and that's just what a herd of turkeys would do 200 years ago when they were being taken to market in England. The little bird-sized booties were meant to protect their feet as they were marching along, according to the University of Illinois.

11 Turkeys were named after the



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“Turkish” area despite being from North America.

You might have wondered why turkeys have the name that they do despite the fact that they originated in North America. Encyclopedia Britannica explains that when the bird became popular in England, the name turkey-cock, formerly used for the guinea fowl found in Islamic (or "Turkish") lands, was used to refer to the bird we know as a turkey today.

12 All but 12 U.S. states have turkeys.

While people in all 50 states enjoy turkey as a part of their Thanksgiving dinners, the birds,

specifically Eastern wild turkeys, can be found roaming wild in 38 states in the U.S., according to the
continue to page 22



John Birchland bagged an impressive Preston Co. buck.



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National Wild Turkey Federation. They can also be spotted in various provinces up in Canada. 13 Turkey beards grow three to five inches per year.

Yes, turkeys have beards, but they aren't made of hair. Instead, turkey beards consist of modified feathers that form bristles or filaments, according to the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Some turkeys even have multiple beards that can each grow up to three to

five inches each year.

14 Turkeys can—and will—attack humans.

Turkeys may not have the fierce reputation that some fang-gnashing, claw-showing predators have earned, but that doesn't mean that they don't have an aggressive side. In fact, turkeys are fully willing and able to attack humans. That's why the Massachusetts government provides tips on how



Only 6, Reid Smith used a cross-bow in Tucker County.

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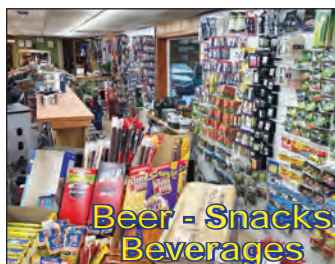


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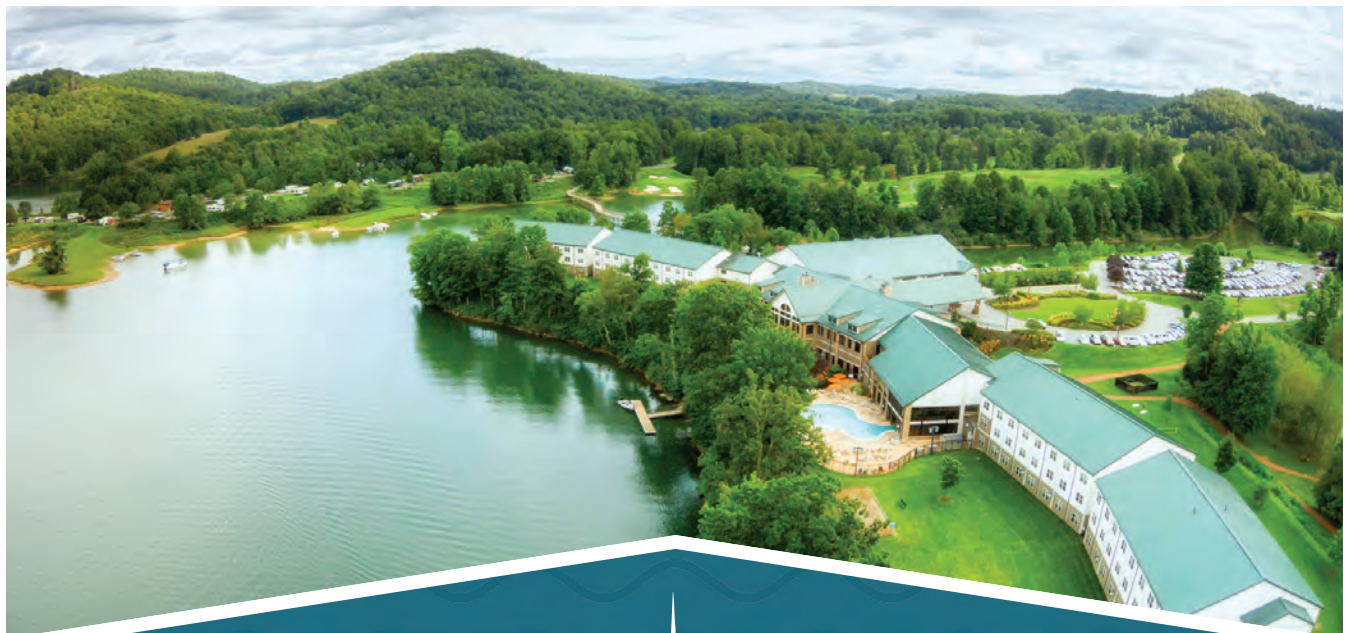
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to prevent conflicts with turkeys while both CBS Boston and Good Day Sacramento offer insights into what to do should you find yourself as a victim of a turkey attack.

15 Store-bought turkeys can't fly.

The turkey that you buy at the grocery store has been bred and raised to provide you with as much meat as possible. Because of this, they end up with unnaturally large breasts which hinder their ability to fly, according to The Patriot News.

16 Wild turkeys, however, can soar for over a mile.

Wild turkeys, on the other hand, are perfectly capable of taking flight. In fact, according to The Patriot News, they can reach speeds of up to 55 miles per hour while in the air. And the Pennsylvania Game Commission reports they can soar for a mile or more by alternating between strong wingbeats and gliding.

17 Turkeys can run 12 miles per hour.

Some turkeys may not be able to fly, but their inability to get airborne doesn't completely slow them down. Even while on the ground, they can still move at a pretty good clip, running upwards of 12 miles an hour, according to the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

18 Frying a turkey can lead to an explosion.

In 2018, firefighters across the country conducted demonstrations to show the public how attempting to fry the main dish for a Thanksgiving dinner can result in what IFL Science refers to as "exploding turkeys." In videos posted to social media of these fowl-fueled infernos, flames blast up into the air when a turkey is dropped into hot oil.



Brantlee Craig got an 8 point in Lewis County.



Ariana White hunted in Gilmer County for her 10 point buck.

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Prepare Now For Your Spring Turkey Season

West Virginia's spring gobbler season kicks off with a two-day youth season on April 19-20, giving young hunters a chance to take part in the excitement. Then on April 21, the regular season opens statewide and gives hunters five weeks to test their skills and enjoy the thrill of the hunt. As you count down the days to this exciting season, make sure you understand the latest regulations and inspect your gear to make sure everything is working properly. Here are a few tips to help you get ready for a successful spring gob-

bler season.
REVIEW WEST VIRGINIA'S TURKEY HUNTING REGULATIONS

Even if you've been hunting for years, we recommend familiarizing yourself with the regulations before you go into the field. Here's what you need to know:

It is illegal to use an electronic call, bait turkeys, hunt with dogs and kill a turkey without a beard during the spring season.

It is illegal to hunt with an air rifle less than .22 caliber or have an uncased bow, crossbow or firearms in your possession in the woods outside shooting hours (30 minutes before sunrise to 1 p.m.). Adult hunters may harvest one bearded bird per day, and the sea-

son bag limit is two.
 During the special two-day youth season, youth hunters under the age of 18 may harvest one bearded bird per day, which counts towards the annual turkey bag limit of two. Only shotguns, bows, or crossbows are legal implements of hunting during the youth Spring Gobbler Season.

For a complete summary of West Virginia's turkey hunting regulations, check pages 43-44 in the Hunting and Trapping Regulations. *continue to the next page*



Young Brantley Mace brought in a Wood County buck.



Trent Mullenex caught a 24" rainbow. *Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.*

Send In Your Big Game Photos from 2024 Form Is On Page 38

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tions Summary.

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All hunters 15 and older are required to have a valid West Virginia hunting license, which can be purchased at approximately 160 retail agents around the state or online at WVhunt.com. When it comes to hunting turkey, you may also need to purchase stamps. Resident landowners or their resident children or their resident parents or resident tenants of such land, may hunt on their own land without a license during the open seasons.

West Virginia residents who have a lifetime license or purchase one of our sportsman licenses, are all set. If you buy a regular hunting and trapping license (Class A), you'll also need to purchase a conservation (Class CS) and big game hunting stamp (Class BG). Nonresidents who purchase a regular hunting and trapping license (Class E) will need to buy a conservation and law enforcement

stamp (Class CS/LE) and a turkey hunting stamp (Class WW).

To see what license and stamp combination you need for all of West Virginia's big game hunting seasons, check page 46 in the Hunting and Trapping Regulations Summary.

INSPECT YOUR TURKEY HUNTING GEAR

Having the right gear is critical for a successful spring gobbler

season. The most common firearm used for turkey hunting is a 12- or 20-gauge pump action or semi-automatic shotgun. Your shotgun may have additional features, but you'll want to inspect it to make sure it can be safely discharged in the field.

Safety and functionality are key, so take the time to inspect each piece of gear thoroughly. Make sure your camouflage will help

continue to page 29



Brian Craig brought in a 30 pound bobcat from Lewis County.



Darth Stalnaker hunted with a bow in Wood Co. for this buck.



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you blend in with your surroundings and that your clothes will keep you warm. Double-check your hunting knife is sharp and test your turkey calls, range finder and binoculars to make sure they're in working order. Sturdy boots should provide both comfort and protection for navigating uneven terrain, and a well-organized hunting vest or backpack can make the difference between a smooth hunt and a frustrating one.

CHECK YOUR GAME

Before the spring gobbler season starts, make sure you are prepared to field dress and electronically check your turkey. Login to your WVDNR account and print plenty of field tags and gather a sharp knife, gloves and a clean bag or tarp to lay the turkey on. Practice your technique, if needed, and make sure your equipment is sanitized to avoid contamination.

Once you've harvested a turkey, fill out a field tag immediately, including your name, address, license number (if applicable), date, time and location of the harvest. Attach this tag to the turkey before moving it. Then, electron-

ically check your turkey using the WVDNR system within the required timeframe, attaching the 13-digit confirmation number to the carcass for legal transportation. To learn more about this process, read our guide to electronically checking big game harvests.

And while you're at it, consider participating in our Spring Gobbler Survey, which helps WVDNR wildlife biologists gather information for managing the state's wild turkey population. To learn more about the survey,

visit WVdnr.gov/surveys. **PLAN YOUR TURKEY HUNTING ADVENTURES TODAY**

Don't wait until the last minute to prepare for the season. Purchase your hunting license and necessary stamps, explore potential hunting spots using our interactive map and sharpen your shooting skills at a public range. By planning now, you'll increase your chances of a successful harvest.

Make this spring gobbler season one to remember. Visit WVhunt.



Richard Jenkins is hanging his nice buck before skinning it.

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Spring Trout Fishing Information

Spring is a season of change, it is generally represented by thawing ice and spawning fish. In the very early springs, rivers and streams often flow low and clear, and much of the water is still frozen. As the ice and snow melt, water levels rise and shallow, gin clear streams become torrents.

If I were to offer one key piece of advice to catch more trout when fishing during the spring is to seek and fish the warmest water you can find. That is because trout are very temperature sensitive, and if the water is too cold, they become sluggish and reluctant to feed.

1) Hints on where to fish in the early spring

First, I want to discuss where to fish. Trout fishing when the water is very cold is tough. So it is important to try and find slightly warmer water.

The warmest water, and generally the best place to target trout in the spring, is generally found in spring fed streams, deep lakes and reservoirs, and the tailwaters downstream of them.

Unless you live in a particularly mild climate, I suggest avoiding freestone and snowmelt rivers. Such rivers often contain a large volume of snow and ice melt

which really causes the temperature to drop.

2) In rivers, and streams target deeper, slower flowing water.

In the spring, trout are very reluctant to move, and still want to conserve their energy. This means they'll sit and wait, rather than actively cruise in search of food.

As a result, trout are likely to

wait in the deepest, slowest flowing parts of a river, where there is just enough current to bring the food to them. This does differ from the warmer months where they are more likely to feed right on the edge of the current.

When not feeding, trout will rest on the bottom of the deepest slowest water. The same often holds true year, round and not just in the spring.

In the spring, when the water is still cold, trout are most likely to feed in the deepest, slowest flowing sections of a run.

3) In Lakes and Ponds target Shallows and Drop Offs

Just like in the winter, shallow flats remain a great place to target trout in lakes. That is because shallow water warms slightly faster than depths so, during the

continue to page 32



Emma Shutts used a crossbow for a 10 point Wood Co. buck.



Mike Smith went to Shavers Fork for a quality spring rainbow trout.

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LIVE BAIT

Feb/March 2025 ~ Page 30

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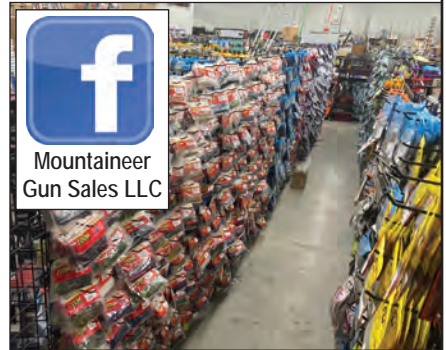


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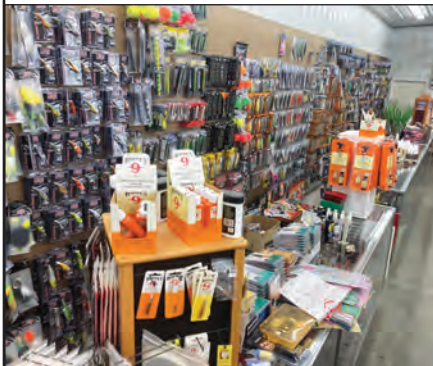


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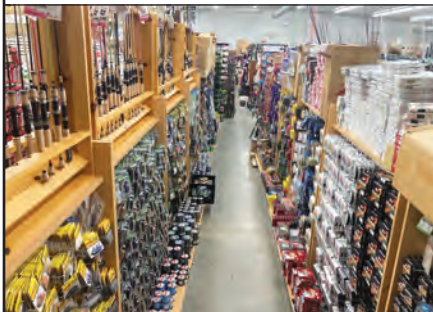
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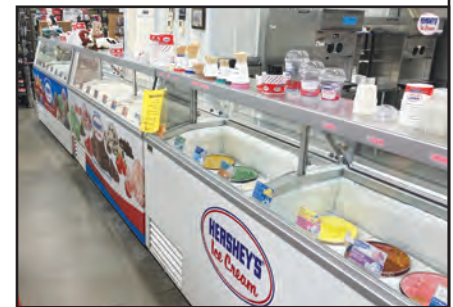
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day, lake-dwelling trout leave the deeper water where they spend the night to cruise the shallows in search of food.

Another prime spot to target trout in lakes is around the edge of drop offs. If fishing from a boat, it is a good idea to use the fish finder to locate drops offs down to about 15 yards. Trout often patrol such areas in search of food.

4) River mouths in empty into lakes and larger rivers are a hot spot for spring fishing.

The final, and maybe the hottest spot to target in the early spring is at river mouths. That is because fish gather there to spawn. It is not only rainbow trout that spawn in the early spring month but several species of baitfish. So shoals of baitfish gather around river mouths before pushing upstream. Large, hungry trout know that so

are often laying in wait.

5) Use a thermometer to find streams warmer than 45f

I often carry a thermometer with me while trout fishing. Trout, like all fish are cold blooded. When the water is cold they slow down, and they become more active when it warms slightly. In very warm conditions they start to suffocate.

Trout prefer to feed in temperatures between 45-65 degrees, and while trout can still be caught in water colder than that they become increasingly challenging.

So whenever I head out fishing, I record the water temperature, and over time I start to learn which rivers and ponds warm faster, and which remain cold well into the spring. This allows me to concentrate my fishing efforts on the warmest waters.

Flowers on Pussy Willows are an early sign of spring, despite the water still being icy cold and the trout were in no mood to feed.

6) Fish the warmest part of the day

So much fishing advice says the best time to trout fishing is the dawn. Well, this only applies in warm water conditions.

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In the spring, trout waters are still chilly, and trout often do not become active until the sun is higher in the sky and the temperature has started to rise slightly. So when trout fishing, target the warmest part of the day. This is usually some time between 10am and 4pm.

7) Spring trout are sluggish, use slow presentations.


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Sandy Blake, from New Martinsville is an adult WV Photo winner.

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In the early spring, trout are still sluggish. They do not want to waste energy on a high speed chase. So a very slow presentation works best, give the trout as much time as possible to strike.

8) Spring trout are more likely to stay deep

Trout rarely feed from the surface or rise during the spring. Several reasons why, but one of the main one is the lack of hatches and terrestrial insects. So unless you see trout actively rising, it is nearly always better to fish sub surface.

If you do see an early spring rise, then the trout are probably feeding upon midges rather than mayflies.

9) Avoid spawning Rainbow and Cutthroat trout

Spring is when these two species of trout spawn. While it is generally okay to target them during the spawning run, it is best to avoid fishing for them entirely while they are on their redds. Both species of trout generally make their redds in shallow gravel fairly close to shore. Often in

the perfect depth for wading.

At this time of year, only observe spawning trout and do not try to catch them. This helps protect the next generation of trout. I also try to avoid wading up wading streams, because that can disturb



Kyke Stackpole landed a huge flathead catfish last fall.

the beds and expose the eggs to
continue to page 36



Wyatt Snider shot an 11 point buck. Photo courtesy of Crossroads General Store in Walker.

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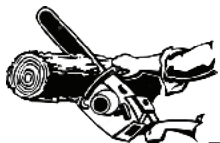
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predation.

Once the trout have finished spawning, it is okay to target them. Just keep in mind that they are usually in poor condition so need to be handled with care when catch and release fishing.

10) Use thin line and leaders

In the early spring, the water can be very low and clear. In such crystal clear conditions, it is very important to use a low diameter line to avoid spooking trout. In such conditions, I nearly always fish 4lb line.

11) Keep track of recent stockings

Starting in the spring many fisheries departments start to stock lakes and rivers with new releases of trout. If all you care about is catching fish, then heading to the ponds with recent releases usually gives the best chance of success.

These newly released stock trout are often more willing to feed than wild or holdover trout.

12) Start of the melt can be amazing fishing

Melting snow and ice usually chill the water, but there is one exception. The first few days of the



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spring melt can cause the trout to feed hard. The surge of meltwater can cause water levels to rise rapidly. This rapid thaw can wash the bodies of many insects into the river.

This readily available source of food can cause the trout to gorge themselves. So as long as the water does not get too cold, there can be a few days of amazing fishing as the thaw begins.

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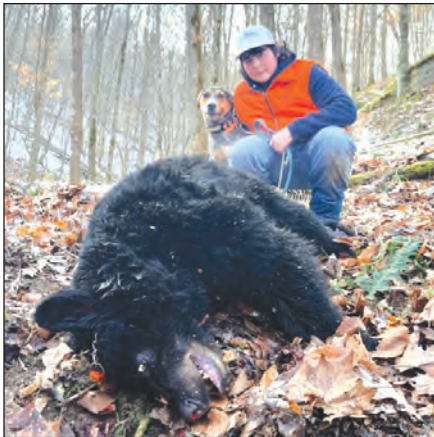
Shirley Sheppard bagged an 8 point in Wood Co. Photo courtesy of Crossroads General Store in Walker.



Jeff Smith arrowed a double brow tine buck in Jackson County.



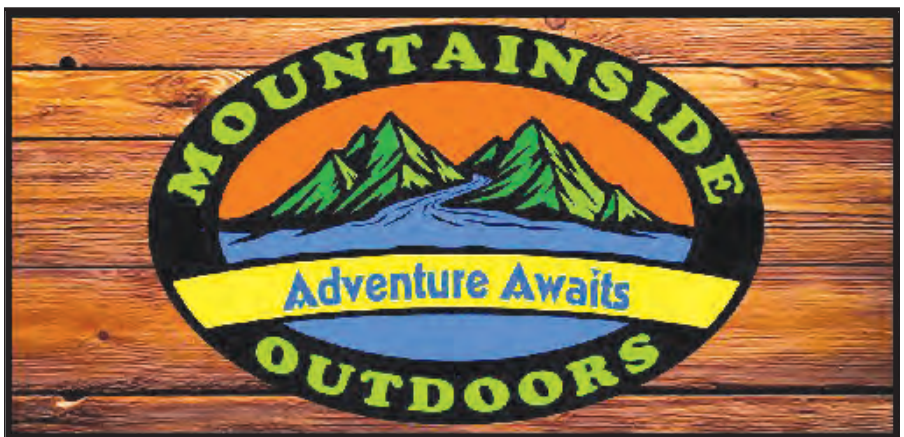
Hanna Evans reeled in a nice flat-head catfish last fall.



Ruger Carder got his first black bear in Gilmer County.



Abe Nowinski shot a 14 point buck in Gilmer County.



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