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**Issue 332**

**June/July 2026**



***INSIDE THIS ISSUE***

**Catfish  
Tips**

**BASS  
News**

**DNR  
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## Cover Photo

Michael Ramey (on the left) of Poca set a new state weight record for blue catfish after catching a 71-pound, 50.23-inch fish on May 9 while fishing the Ohio River in Jackson County. Ramey caught the fish using cut bait on a 100-pound test line. The catch surpasses the previous state weight record of 69.45 pounds established in 2023 by Michael John Drake.

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# Three New Fish Records in WV

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) today announced that three new state fishing records have been broken, highlighting the exceptional fishing opportunities available across the state as anglers head into the summer.

The record-breaking catches include a 71-pound blue catfish caught on the Ohio River in Jackson County, a 13.32-pound tiger trout caught at Summit Lake and a 6.46-pound redhorse sucker caught at Kanawha Falls.

“These incredible catches highlight the outstanding fishing opportunities that West Virginia has to offer,” said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. “From scenic lakes to iconic river destinations,

anglers can find excellent fishing experiences all across our state. We encourage everyone to get outside, cast a line and enjoy West Virginia’s waters this summer. You never know when you might reel in a record-breaker.”

## RECORD BLUE CATFISH

Michael Ramey of Poca set a new state weight record for blue catfish after catching a 71-pound, 50.23-inch fish on May 9 while fishing the Ohio River in Jackson County. Ramey caught the fish using cut bait on a 100-pound test line. The catch surpasses the previous state weight record of 69.45 pounds established in 2023 by Michael John Drake. The new

continue to the next page



Zak Roper, from Fayette Co., caught a 6.46 lb, 25.45 inch redhorse sucker at Kanawha Falls.



82 year old Donnie Workman, from Nicholas Co., landed a 13.32 lb., 29.8 inch tiger trout at Summit Lake. It had been out of the water for some time.

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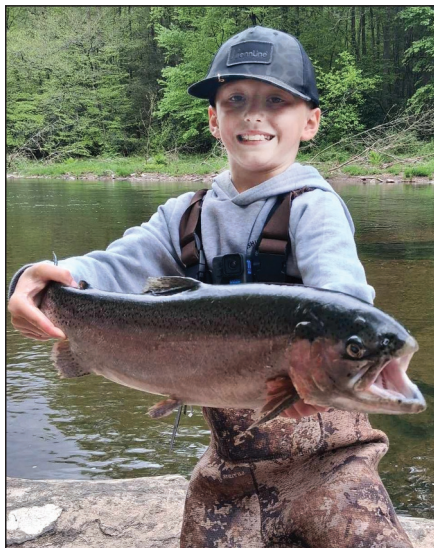
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was verified by WVDNR fisheries biologists Nate Taylor and Drew Carter from the District 6 office in Parkersburg. Justin Connor continues to hold the state blue catfish length record at 51.49 inches from the Kanawha River.

**RECORD REDHORSE SUCKER**

Zachary “Zak” Roper of Fayette County set a new state record for redhorse sucker after catching a 6.46-pound, 25.43-inch fish on May 7 at Kanawha Falls. Roper caught the fish using corn on 15-pound test line. The catch surpasses the previous record of 5.75 pounds and 24.57 inches established in April 2025 by Jason Floyd at the Belleville Lock and Dam. The record was officially verified by WVDNR District 4 fisheries biologist Cory Hartman.

**RECORD TIGER TROUT**  
Donnie Workman of Nicholas County set a new state record for tiger trout on April 26 while fishing at Summit Lake. The fish weighed 13.32 pounds and measured 29.80 inches in length. Workman caught the tiger trout



Young Allen Plum hooked a 6 lb. rainbow. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.



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using meal worms and orange salmon eggs on 8-pound test line. The record was officially verified by WVDNR District 4 fisheries biologist Cory Hartman.

Anglers who believe they have caught a state record fish should keep the fish alive in a livewell, chilled on ice or wrapped in plastic wrap and frozen, then contact their local WVDNR district office

for official weight and length verification.

To learn more about state record categories, anglers may consult the West Virginia Fishing Regulations Summary at [WVdnr.gov/fishing-regulations](http://WVdnr.gov/fishing-regulations). Information about the Trophy Fish Citation and Master Angler programs is also available in the regulations summary.

**Immediate OPENINGS LEFT - Get In For The 2025 Season**



Lick Run Hunt Club is located in **Webster County**, West Virginia and encompasses over **8000** acres near the community of Hacker Valley. The Club is home to deer, turkey, bear and squirrel. Our members are invited to stay and camp and enjoy the many activities within the Club as well as the surrounding areas. Lick Run Hunt Club emphasizes the outdoor experience in a private setting with beautiful mountain scenery.

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## Removal Of Horse- power Restrictions on Several 10 HP Lakes In WV

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) today announced the following changes to boating regulations, effective immediately:

Over 10 hp motorboats are now permitted to operate at no wake speed on Elk Fork, North Bend, O'Brien, Stonecoal and Woodrum Lakes. The same regulation is continuing for the Upper Mud River Lake.

No special permits are required.

Any vessel with an electric motor must operate at no wake speed on an electric motor only impoundment.

These changes were approved by the West Virginia Legislature during the 2026 Regular Session. For more information on boating safety and regulations, visit [wvdnr.gov/lands-waters/boating](http://wvdnr.gov/lands-waters/boating).



Phillip and Adam Maltemple doubled up on turkeys in Summers Co.



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## Interesting Animal Information

Earth is home to more than one million known animal species, each representing an ancient tome of biological trivia. Much of this random knowledge gets lost in the ether, leaving us to speculate

about things like dinosaur divorce rates or amphibian dance moves. But we still catch an awful lot, providing us with plenty of interesting—if not always actionable—facts about our fellow fauna.

36 weird animal facts that may interest you.

1. Octopuses have three hearts. One pumps blood around the body, while the other two pump it to the gills. Oh, and that blood is



Jay Harman has a couple of Stone-wall Jackson tournament bass.

The list of amazing animal facts below is a tribute to such trivia. From extinct penguins to newly identified wasps, these tidbits reflect the depth of our species' curiosity about nature and our skill in shedding new light on it. As you peruse these facts, imagine all that went into discovering each one. We embrace their randomness here, but most hail from a robust body of knowledge about the animal in question.

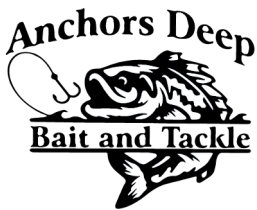
So, without further ado, here are



CJ Hayes reeled in a huge flathead catfish from the Kanawha River.

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blue, thanks to high copper levels!

2. Owls don't have eyeballs. They have eye tubes.

3. Polar bears have black skin, which helps them absorb heat from the sun to stay warm in an Arctic climate, and it likely protects the bears from harmful UV rays.



Lisa Wolfe, from Charleston, has a PB rainbow trout - 23".

4. A human brain operates on about 15 watts.

5. Butterflies can taste with their feet, using something called chemoreceptors to help them identify plants. Females select the correct leaf on which to lay eggs by "drumming" it with their feet to release juices.

6. Animals with smaller bodies and faster metabolism see in slow motion.

7. Dogs' sense of smell is about 100,000 times stronger than humans', but they have just one-sixth our number of taste buds.

8. Reindeer eyeballs turn blue in winter to help them see at lower light levels. (They're golden-colored in summer.) No other mammals are known to have this ability.

9. A single strand of spider silk is thinner than a human hair but

also five times stronger than steel of the same width. A rope just 2 inches thick could reportedly stop a Boeing 747.

10. The claws of a mantis shrimp can accelerate as quickly as a .22-caliber bullet. Scientists must keep them in thick plastic tanks

continue to page 11



Nick Pahoundis has the big bass - 4 lb. 15 oz. at a tournament.

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because their punches can break glass.

11. A sea lion is the first nonhuman mammal with a proven ability to keep a beat. Scientists trained a female sea lion named Ronan to do it, and she then showed she could transfer that skill to a song with a different beat that she had not heard before.

12. Squirrels can't burp or vomit, nor can any other rodent, which is why rat poison is so effective; other mammals tend to expel any toxic substance they ingest.

13. The extinct colossus penguin stood as tall as LeBron James.

14. Honeybees can flap their wings 200 times every second.

15. A type of "immortal" jellyfish can cheat death indefinitely.

16. Cats and horses are highly susceptible to black widow venom, but dogs are relatively resistant. Sheep and rabbits are apparently immune.

17. Sharks kill fewer than 10 people per year. Humans kill about 100 million sharks per year. They should be much more scared of us than we are of them.

18. Tardigrades are extremely durable microscopic animals that

exist all over Earth. They can survive any of the following: 300 degrees Fahrenheit (149 Celsius), -458 degrees F (-272 C), the vacuum of space, pressure six times stronger than the ocean floor, and more than a decade without food.

19. Wild dolphins call each other by name. They let out a unique whistle to identify each other and will respond if they hear their call played back.

20. Young goats pick up accents from each other, joining humans, bats, and whales as mammals known to adjust their vocal sounds to fit into a new social group.

21. Humpback whale songs spread like "cultural ripples from one population to another."

22. Elephants have a specific alarm call that means "human."

23. There's a place on Earth where seagulls prey on right whales.

They dive-bomb the calves coming up to breathe air and take bites of blubber from their backs. The calves' skin is thinner than adults', and they have to come up for air more frequently, making them more exposed and vulnerable to attack.

24. Horses use facial expressions to communicate with each other. Researchers have identified 17 discrete facial movements in horses.

25. Azara's owl monkeys are more monogamous than humans. They live together as families, with two parents and offspring, for up to nine years or when one of the parents dies. Fathers are highly involved in caring for their young.

26. Male gentoo and Adelie penguins "propose" to females by giving them a pebble. These are

continue to the next page



John Bryan, from Wood Co., brought in a nice wild turkey.



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precious because the penguins use them to build their nests, and they can be hard to find along the barren Antarctic shoreline. If the female accepts the pebble, the pair bonds and mates for life.

27. Barn owls are generally monogamous, but about 25% of mated pairs "divorce." They do so if breeding is unsuccessful.

28. African buffalo herds display voting behavior, in which individuals register their travel preference by standing up, looking in one direction, and then lying back down. Only adult females can vote.

29. If a honeybee keeps waggle-dancing in favor of an unpopular nesting site, other workers headbutt her to help the colony reach a consensus.

30. The bone-house wasp stuffs the walls of its nest with dead

ants.

31. Less time separates the existence of humans and the Tyrannosaurus rex than the T-rex and the Stegosaurus.

32. Animals have some unusual group names. For instance, a group of parrots is known as a

pandemonium. Buffalo form an "obstinacy" and rhinoceroses a "crash." You may have heard of a "murder" of crows, but what about an "exaltation" of larks?

33. Warmer weather causes more turtles to be born female than male.



Dana Brown took his big boat to Stonecoal Lake for a quality bass.



Jack Comp, from Reedsville, hooked a huge largemouth bass.



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## Fishing For Catfish In A River

Catfish are bottom-dwellers, often found near structure and areas with slower-moving water within the river system. They have an excellent sense of smell and vibration, which they use to find food. Understanding their preferred spots is the first step to success.

Finding catfish in a river involves looking for specific types of underwater terrain and current breaks. Catfish aren't typically found in the fastest parts of a river. Instead, they seek out areas where they can conserve energy while still ambushing prey.

### Key Areas for Catfish in Rivers:

**Eddies and Slack Water:** These are areas behind obstacles like fallen trees, bridge pilings, large rocks, or river bends where the

current slows down significantly. Catfish rest and wait for food to drift by.

**Holes and Depressions:** Deeper sections of the river, especially those with a soft bottom, are attractive to catfish. They offer cover and a stable environment.

**Undercut Banks:** Banks that have been eroded by the water, creating an overhang, provide excellent shade and protection. Catfish will often hold tight to these areas.

**Channel Edges:** The transition zone between the main channel and shallower flats can be a productive spot. Catfish move between these areas to feed.

**Docks and Boating Structures:** Man-made structures offer shade, cover, and often attract baitfish, making them magnets for catfish. **Areas Downstream of Obstructions:** Anything that disrupts the current can create a feeding zone for catfish. Fallen trees, large boulders, and even boat wrecks can hold fish.

**Confluences:** Where two rivers or a creek meets a larger river, the changes in water flow, temperature, and oxygen levels can attract catfish.

**Deciphering Current and Catfish Presence:**

continue to the next page



Cliff Jones hooked a 40 pound blue catfish on the river.

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Confluences: Where two rivers or a creek meets a larger river, the changes in water flow, temperature, and oxygen levels can attract catfish.

Deciphering Current and Catfish Presence:

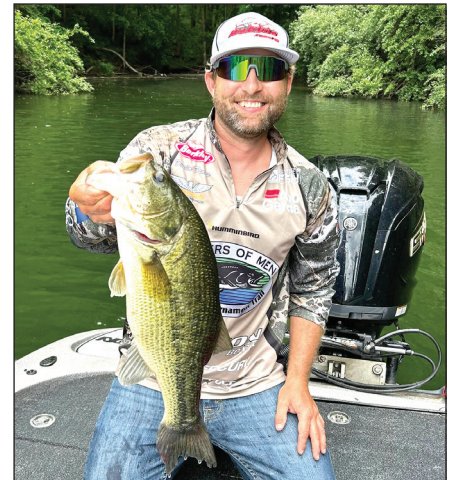
The presence and speed of the current play a crucial role. While catfish can handle some current, they prefer to position themselves out of the main force. Look for subtle breaks in the current where they can hold. This might be a slight eddy forming behind a sub-

merged log or the calmer water just off the main flow. Learning to read the water surface can tell you a lot about what's happening beneath. Ripples, smooth patches, and swirls can all indicate underwater structure or changes in flow that might be holding fish.

The Arsenal: Best Bait for River Catfish

The choice of bait is paramount when river fishing for catfish. Their keen sense of smell means that strong, pungent baits are

continue to page 16



Dustin Dennis spotted a big bass with his Solar Bat sunglasses.

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ily consume. The natural movement and scent are irresistible to them.

**Top Live Baits for River Catfish:**

**Worms:** Earthworms are a classic for a reason. They are readily available and appeal to a wide range of catfish species. Red wigglers or nightcrawlers are excellent choices.

**Minnnows/Shad:** Small, lively minnows or shad are dynamite for larger catfish, especially blues and flatheads. Hook them through the back or lips to keep them alive and wiggling.

**Crawfish:** Both live and dead crawfish can be very effective, particularly for flathead catfish. The scent and texture are highly appealing.

**Leeches:** In some regions, leeches are a highly sought-after bait for catfish due to their strong scent and erratic movement.

**Stinky and Savory: Prepared Baits**

When live bait isn't an option or you're looking for convenience, prepared baits can be incredibly effective, especially for channel catfish. These baits are designed to release a potent scent into the water.



Logan Spelock landed a big flathead from the Kanawha River.



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**Popular Prepared Catfish Baits:**

**Punch Baits:** These are soft, dough-like baits often packaged in tubs. They are designed to stick to a treble hook and release a strong odor. Flavors like chicken liver, cheese, and blood are popular.

**Scented Dough Balls:** Similar to punch baits, these are moldable baits infused with strong attractants. They are easy to use and can be molded to fit your hook.

continue to the next page



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Chicken Liver: A universally recognized catfish attractant. Chicken liver, especially when slightly aged for a stronger smell, is incredibly effective for channel catfish.

Beef Hearts/Kidneys: The dense, bloody nature of these organs makes them a powerful attractant for larger catfish.

The Power of “Catfish Dough” and Homemade Attractants

Many anglers have their secret recipes for catfish bait. These often involve a blend of strong-smelling ingredients.

Crafting Your Own Catfish Bait:

Many successful river catfish strategies involve experimenting with homemade baits. A common base might include:

Flour or Cornmeal: Acts as a binder.

Cheese (Sharp Cheddar, Limburger): Provides a potent, fermented scent.

Garlic Powder/Onion Powder: Adds aromatic appeal.

Chicken Liver or Fish Scraps: For



Jim Barnard got a big bearded gobbler in Tyler County.

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a meaty, bloody scent.

Pet Food (Tuna/Salmon Flavored Kibble): When moistened, it can create a strong, oily scent trail.

Mix these ingredients to a dough-like consistency. The key is a strong, pungent odor that will travel in the water.

Rigs for River Catfish: Setting the Hook

The right rig is essential for presenting your bait effectively and

ensuring a good hook-up rate. Catfish rigs for rivers need to be robust enough to handle the pull of a large catfish and the demands of river currents.

Simple and Effective: Carolina Rig

The Carolina rig is a staple for catching catfish in current. It’s designed to keep your bait slightly off the bottom, preventing it from

continue to the next page

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getting snagged and allowing the scent to disperse.

Components of a Carolina Rig:

**Sinker:** A heavy egg sinker or bell sinker (1 oz to 4 oz, depending on current).

**Bead:** A large plastic bead to protect the knot from the sinker.

**Swivel:** A heavy-duty barrel swivel to prevent line twist.

**Leader Line:** 12-24 inches of monofilament or fluorocarbon line, 20-60 lb test depending on target species.

**Hook:** A strong, sharp circle hook or Kahle hook, size 1/0 to 6/0.

**How to Tie a Carolina Rig:**  
Thread your main fishing line through the sinker, then the bead. Tie the bead to the swivel using

a strong knot (e.g., Improved Clinch Knot).

Tie your leader line to the other end of the swivel.

Tie your hook to the end of the leader line.

Bait the hook, ensuring it's presented naturally.

**Bounce and Drift:** Slip Sinker Rig  
Another popular rig for river fishing for catfish, the slip sinker rig allows the fish to take the bait without feeling the weight of the sinker immediately.

Components of a Slip Sinker Rig:  
**Sinker:** A worm or flat-line sinker that can slide freely on your main line.

**Stopper/Bobber Stop:** Placed  
continue to page 20

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Aiden Compton bagged a nice Ritchie County wild turkey.

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above the sinker to control how far the bait can drift.

Swivel: Connects the main line to the leader.

Leader Line: Similar to the Carolina rig.

Hook: Strong and sharp.

How to Tie a Slip Sinker Rig:

Thread your main line through the sinker.

Thread a bobber stop onto the line, then the sinker. Slide the bobber stop to the desired distance above the sinker.

Tie the main line to one end of the swivel.

Tie your leader line to the other end of the swivel.



Avery Starkey shot a pie bald turkey - lots of white in the wings.

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Attach your hook to the leader.

For the Lunkers: Circle Hooks

Circle hooks are highly recommended for catfish fishing. They are designed to slide into the corner of the fish's mouth, leading to fewer gut-hooked fish and higher survival rates for released fish. When a catfish takes the bait and swims away, the circle hook naturally sets itself.

Catfish Lures for Rivers? It's More About Scent!

While the term "lures" usually

refers to artificial baits, when it comes to catfish lures for rivers, the closest equivalent is something that mimics natural prey with scent and vibration. This often means using bait rigs that incorporate scent enhancers or  
continue to page 22

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Jeff Freuler had a nice nature pose with his WV gobbler.



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above the sinker to control how far the bait can drift.

**Swivel:** Connects the main line to the leader.

**Leader Line:** Similar to the Carolina rig.

**Hook:** Strong and sharp.

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Tie your leader line to the other

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Attach your hook to the leader.

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While the term "lures" usually refers to artificial baits, when it comes to catfish lures for rivers, the closest equivalent is something that mimics natural prey with scent and vibration. This often means using bait rigs that incorporate scent enhancers or artificial baits designed to mimic worms or fish with a strong scent. **Scented Artificial Worms:** Some artificial worms are infused with strong catfish attractants and have a wiggling action that can appeal to catfish.

**Scent Additives:** Many anglers will add liquid or paste scent attractants to their artificial baits or even natural baits to boost their appeal.



Thomas Davis used a glide crank-bait for a New River musky.

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Masterful Techniques for River Catfish

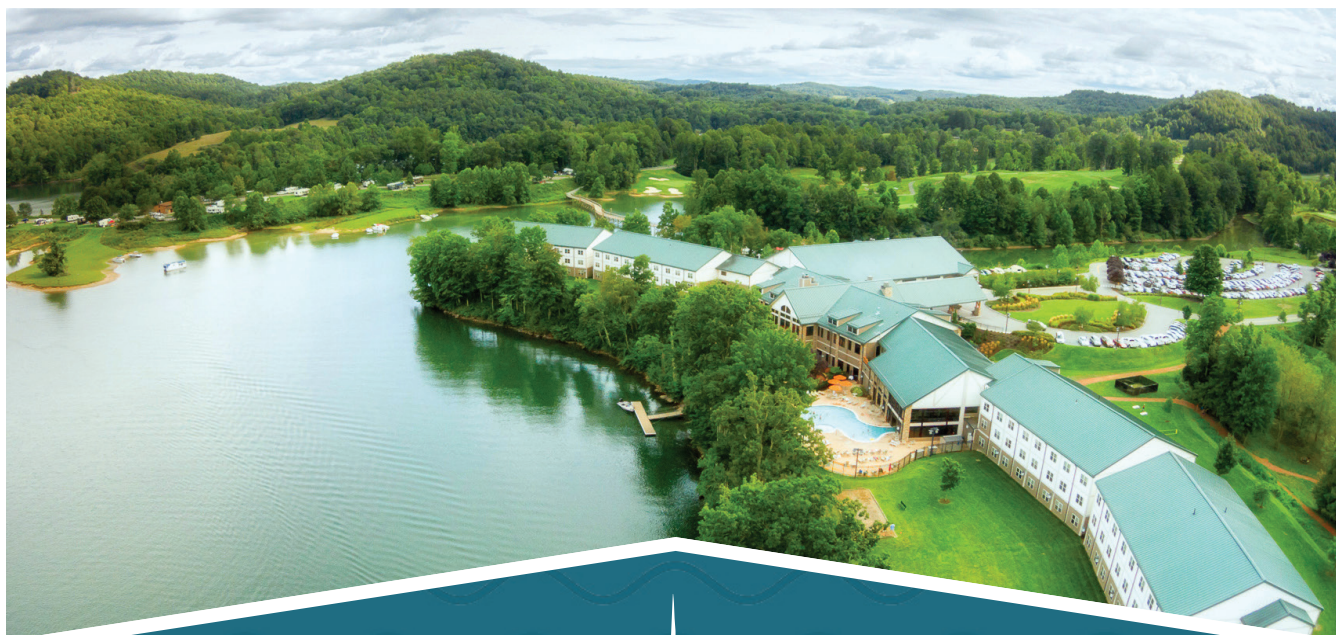
Successful catfish fishing techniques in a river involve more than just casting and waiting. It's about actively presenting your bait and being in the right place at the right time.

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Ashley Wayne used a compound bow for a Braxton Co. buck.



Alex Starcher hooked a large rainbow trout this spring.



Brantley Arbogast has a youth turkey. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.



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# Catching Bluegill

Bluegill are one of the most popular panfish in North America. They're feisty, plentiful, and great for anglers of all skill levels. Whether you're fishing for fun or planning a fish fry, catching bluegill can be both rewarding and enjoyable. Here's everything you need to know to reel in these scrappy fighters.

## 1. UNDERSTANDING BLUEGILL HABITS

One of the key factors in learning how to catch bluegill is understanding where they like to hang out. Bluegill are known for their preference for warm, sheltered waters and areas with plenty of



Harry Dalton caught a 24" rainbow trout. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.



EJ Shreve has a 24 1/2 lb. wild turkey. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.

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cover. Here are some of the best places to find bluegill:

**Warm, Shallow Waters:** Bluegill thrive in ponds, lakes, slow-moving rivers, and streams, especially where water temperatures are higher. Shallow coves and backwaters are particularly productive, especially during spring and early summer.

**Weed Beds and Structure:** Blue-

gill love hiding in dense vegetation, submerged logs, docks, piers, and brush piles. These areas provide shelter from predators and abundant food sources. Cast near lily pads, cattails, and submerged brush for the best results. **Depth Changes:** During spawning, look for drop-offs adjacent to shallow waters. Bluegill often

continue to the next page

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build nests in sandy or gravelly areas with nearby vegetation. Outside of spawning season, they tend to move slightly deeper but stay close to structure.

**Shady Areas:** On hot, sunny days, bluegill often seek shade under docks, fallen trees, or dense vegetation. Fishing in these cooler areas can yield better results.

**Creek Inlets and Outlets:** Bluegill are drawn to the flowing water of creek mouths and inlets, where the current brings in food and ox-

ygen. Fish these areas where the current meets the still water.

**Clear Water with Vegetation:** Bluegill are sight feeders, so clear water with abundant plant life is prime territory. Look for clear, shallow waters where you can spot bluegill schooling or guarding nests.

**Rocky Shorelines:** Areas with rocky outcroppings or riprap can also attract bluegill, especially when algae and aquatic insects

continue to the next page



Chris Jividen, from Charleston, reeled in an 8 pound bass in a lake in Jackson County.



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are present. Cast along the edges where rocks meet open water.

## 2. BEST TIME TO CATCH BLUEGILL

Knowing the best time to catch bluegill is crucial for maximizing your fishing success. If you're looking for tips on how to catch bluegill effectively, timing plays a major role. Bluegill are most active during specific parts of the day and throughout certain seasons:

**Spring and Early Summer:** During the spawning season, bluegill gather in shallow, warm



Josh Balsler landed the lunker bass at Stonewall Jackson Lake.



Brian Mabe has a New River 5 1/4 lb. smallmouth bass.

waters. This is the prime time to catch them as they are aggressively feeding and protecting their nests.

**Early Morning and Late Afternoon:** These cooler parts of the day see more feeding activity, making it the best time to catch bluegill.

**Late Summer and Fall:** As water

temperatures rise, bluegill move to deeper waters. Focus on drop-offs and submerged structures to find them during these periods.

## 3. ESSENTIAL GEAR FOR BLUEGILL FISHING

Having the right gear is crucial when learning how to catch bluegill. Since bluegill are small-

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er and more cautious than larger game fish, using light and sensitive equipment will significantly improve your chances of success. Here's what you need:

**Rod and Reel:** Choose a light or ultralight spinning combo. This setup provides the sensitivity needed to detect subtle bites and makes battling these feisty fish more enjoyable.

**Line:** Use 4-8 lb test monofilament or fluorocarbon line. These lines are nearly invisible underwater and help maintain a natural presentation, which is key when figuring out how to catch bluegill consistently.

**Hooks:** Use small, sharp hooks like size 8-12 bait hooks or Aberdeen hooks. Their thin wire is less likely to damage the fish and makes baiting easier.

**Bobbers and Sinkers:** A small bobber helps keep your bait at the right depth, while a light split-shot sinker ensures your bait stays suspended without dragging it to the bottom. We recommend slip bobbers which you can find [HERE](#).

(As an Amazon Associate, I earn from qualifying purchases. This helps support our site at no extra cost to you.)

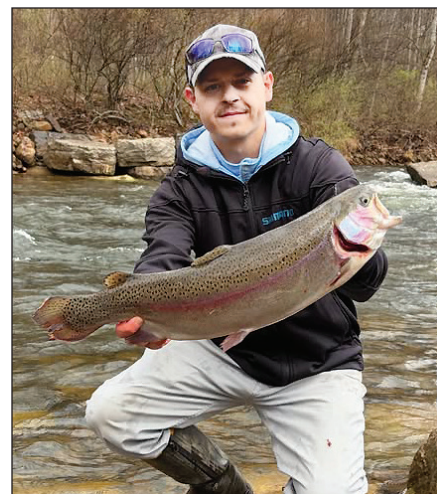
#### 4. BEST BAITS FOR BLUEGILL

Hand holding live earthworms (nightcrawlers) used as bait for bluegill fishing

One of the most important aspects of learning how to catch bluegill is selecting the right bait. Bluegill are opportunistic feeders, meaning they will go after a variety of natural and artificial options. To increase your chances of success,

here are the best baits to use:

**Live Bait:** Worms, crickets, waxworms, and mealworms are among the most effective choices. Bluegill are naturally drawn to these small, wriggling insects and continue to the next page



Dylan Sloan went to Shaver's Fork for a 6 lb., 2 oz. rainbow.

larvae. Hooking them lightly on a small hook keeps them lively and appealing.

**Artificial Lures:** Soft plastics like grubs, curly tails, and small jigs mimic the movement of insects and small aquatic creatures. Colors like chartreuse, white, and yellow are especially effective.

**Flies:** For fly anglers, small poppers, wet flies, and nymphs work well, especially during the spring and summer when insects are abundant.

**Prepared Baits:** Dough balls, corn kernels, and small bits of bread can work when bluegill are actively feeding near the surface. These baits are easy to carry and surprisingly effective.

### 5. EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES FOR CATCHING BLUEGILL

To truly master how to catch bluegill, it's essential to know the right fishing techniques. Bluegill are curious and active feeders, so using a variety of methods will help you adapt to their behavior. Here are some of the most effective techniques:

**Bobber Fishing:** One of the most popular methods for catching bluegill. Attach a small bobber



Jake Watkins, from Logan Co., landed an 8 lb., 2 oz. largemouth.



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1-2 feet above your bait to keep it suspended just above the bottom or within the feeding zone. Watch for any slight movement or dip in the bobber, as bluegill bites can be subtle.

**Jigging:** Use small jigs tipped with live bait or soft plastics. Cast near vegetation or submerged structure, and use a slow, vertical jigging motion. This mimics small insects or aquatic life that bluegill naturally feed on.

**Fly Fishing:** Bluegill are highly responsive to small poppers, wet flies, and nymphs, especially during warmer months. Use a

lightweight fly rod and present the fly near surface disturbances or around shallow cover.

**Drop Shot Rig:** Ideal when bluegill are holding closer to the bottom. continue to page 32



John Goots caught a couple of nice smallmouths in a tournament.

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Back Issues From 20026 On

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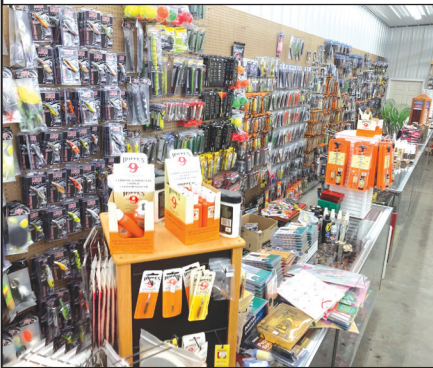


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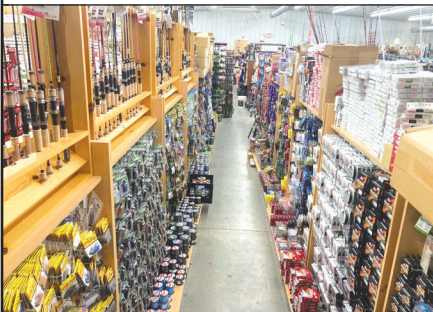
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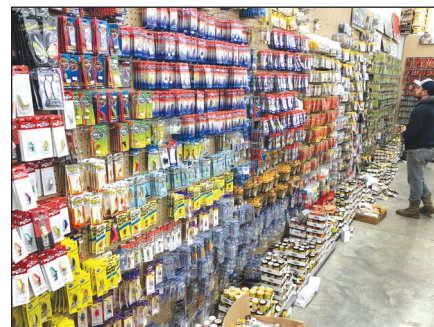


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tom. Use a small hook about a foot above a sinker and tip it with live bait or soft plastics. This set-up keeps the bait elevated while staying near the bottom where bluegill often forage.

**Slow Retrieve:** Bluegill are not the fastest swimmers, so a slow and steady retrieve works best. Whether using a jig, spinner, or fly, avoid rapid movements that may spook them.

**Chumming:** In areas where it's legal, chumming can attract schools of bluegill. Use small bits of bread, corn, or cut worms to create an enticing feeding zone.

**Tightlining:** This method is great for deeper water. Attach a small weight to your line and let the bait sink to the desired depth. Keep the line taut and feel for any subtle bites. This technique works well when bluegill are less active.

## 6. TIPS FOR LANDING MORE BLUEGILL

If you want to master how to catch bluegill consistently, it's important to fine-tune your approach. Even with the right gear and bait, small adjustments can make a big difference. Here are some expert tips to help you land more bluegill:

**Keep it Light:** Bluegill are easily spooked, so use a light line and avoid making loud noises.

**Be Patient:** If you're not getting bites, try varying your bait presentation or moving to a new spot.

**Watch the Spawn:** During spawning, you'll see nests in the shallows that look like small craters. These are prime areas to target.

Bluegill fishing is accessible and fun, whether you're targeting them from the shore, a boat, or even a kayak. With the right gear and techniques, you'll be landing plenty of these spirited fighters in no time. Keep experimenting with different baits and presentations, and remember to respect local fishing regulations. Don't forget to get a fishing license before you head out!



Brandon Frye, from Fairmont, got a double beard wild turkey.

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## Top Bass Lures For 2026

The top new bass lures for 2026 include the Berkley Chop Block, Gary Yamamoto Senko, Rapala Mooch Minnow, Strike King KVD 1.5 Square Bill, and Max-Scent Stank-Bug, each offering unique action and proven bass-catching performance.

### Top New Lures

1. Berkley Chop Block – A stand-out glide bait with a lightweight design and soft body that creates fluid, lifelike action. Available in 6-, 8-, and 10-inch sizes, it's effective for both small and large bass, and has already produced near 7-pound catches in early testing.

2. Gary Yamamoto Senko – A high-salt soft plastic stick bait that excels in subtle presentations. Its natural fall and shimmy provoke aggressive strikes, making it ver-

continue to the next page

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satile for weightless, Texas rig, or wacky rig setups in shallow cover  
 3. Rapala Mooch Minnow – A 3.5-inch soft plastic minnow with a tab tail that enhances action. It has been tournament-tested by Bass Pro Tour champion Dustin Connell, demonstrating effectiveness on smallmouth, largemouth, and spotted bass.

4. Strike King KVD 1.5 Square Bill Crankbait – Designed for shallow water, this crankbait deflects off cover without snagging,

creating erratic action that triggers reaction strikes. Professional anglers report up to 40% higher catch rates compared to round-bill crankbaits.

5. MaxScent Stank-Bug – A mid-sized craw with scent and taste technology, tight claw action, and moderate thump. It's versatile for flipping, Carolina rigs, or as a trailer on buzzbaits and jig heads, providing year-round reliability.

Seasonal and Water Conditions  
 Cold Water (<55°F): Jigs, soft plastics, and suspending jerkbaits are most effective.

Moderate Water (55–70°F): Crankbaits, spinnerbaits, and top-

water lures perform well.

Warm Water (>70°F): Buzzbaits, swimbaits, and reaction lures trigger aggressive strikes.

Tournament Insights

The 2026 Bassmaster Classic highlighted the effectiveness of these lures in prespawn conditions, with top anglers targeting staging areas and using specialized lures to maximize bites.

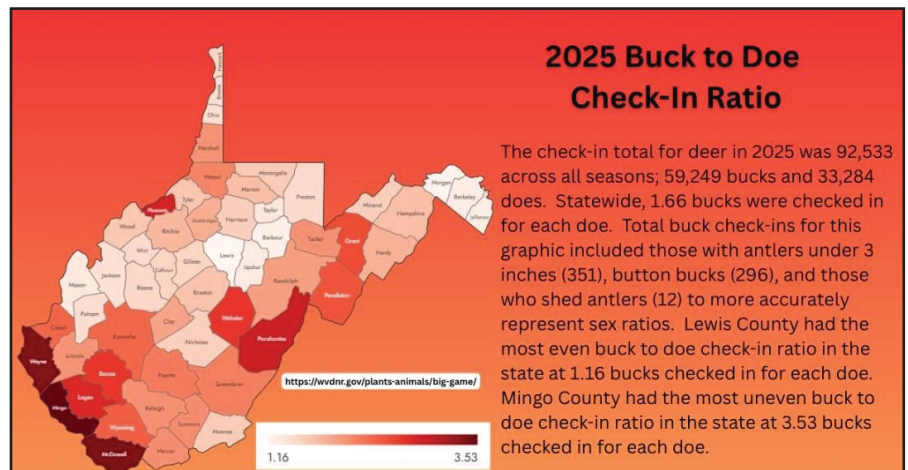
Key Takeaway

For 2026, anglers should focus on lures that combine innovative action, realistic profiles, and versatility across water conditions.

Good luck bass fishing in WV this season.



Tim Wade caught a 5lb. 11 oz. big bass at Stonewall at a Bass Sportsman event. Next Bass Sportsman event there is 6/21. Info page 22.



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## New Chain Pickerel WV Record

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) today announced that Matt Born of Reedsville, West Virginia, has caught a new state record chain pickerel.

Born landed the 27.95-inch, 5.65-pound fish on April 21 using a homemade spinner on a 4-pound test line while fishing at a private pond in Preston County. Born broke his own length record from 2019, when he caught a 27.87-inch chain pickerel from Upper Deckers Lake in Preston County. Steven Demma still holds the

weight record with a 6.19-pound chain pickerel caught in 2001 at Tuckahoe Lake. The new state record was confirmed by WVDNR District 1 fisheries biologists Dustin Smith and E.M. Dean.

To learn more about state record fish categories, visit [wvdnr.gov/fishing/state-records](http://wvdnr.gov/fishing/state-records) or consult page 24 of the West Virginia Fishing Regulations Summary.



Matt Born fished in Preston Co. for a new chain pickerel record.



Stacey Shiflett has a fine wild turkey. *Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.*

## Leave Young Wildlife Alone

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) today reminded the public to leave young wildlife alone, noting that handling wild animals can harm them, spread disease and violate state law.

“Watching wildlife is one of the many joys of outdoor recreation in West Virginia,” said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. “When it comes to public safety and what’s best for our native wildlife, it’s always best to not disturb young animals and leave wildlife alone.”

Each spring, the WVDNR receives calls about fawns, birds and other young animals that may appear abandoned. In most cases, these animals are not orphaned and are behaving as they should in the wild. For example, white-tailed deer often leave fawns hidden for hours while they feed. The fawns’ camouflage and lack of scent help protect them from predators. Approaching or handling a fawn can increase its risk of harm. Similarly, many young birds found on the ground are fledglings learning to

continue to page 36

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ly and should be left alone.

Touching, picking up or even approaching young animals can leave behind human scent, which may attract predators and put the animal at risk. Contact with wildlife also increases the chance of spreading diseases and parasites such as rabies, ticks, Lyme disease and roundworms.

The WVDNR reminds the public that possessing wildlife without a permit is illegal. Violations can result in fines ranging from \$20 to \$300 and up to 100 days in jail. To learn more about wildlife in West Virginia, visit WVdnr.gov.

Advertise in the  
**W. Va. Sportsman**  
Details & prices on page 3.

## Green Bottom Boat Ramp Reopened

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) announced today that the public boat ramp located on Green Bottom Wildlife Management Area in Cabell County has reopened after a short closure.

WVDNR officials are exploring plans for future upgrades to the facility. These planned improvements will better accommodate the needs of West Virginia's angling and boating communities. Public notice will be provided prior to the upgrades beginning.

"We are committed to providing high-quality access to our state's waterways," said WVDNR Director Brett McMillion. "Future

enhancements at Green Bottom WMA are part of our ongoing effort to improve outdoor recreation opportunities for all visitors."



Chad Roades caught a 9 1/2 lb. hybrid bass at Beech Fork Lake.

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Young Ben Styer reeled in a fine New River smallmouth bass.

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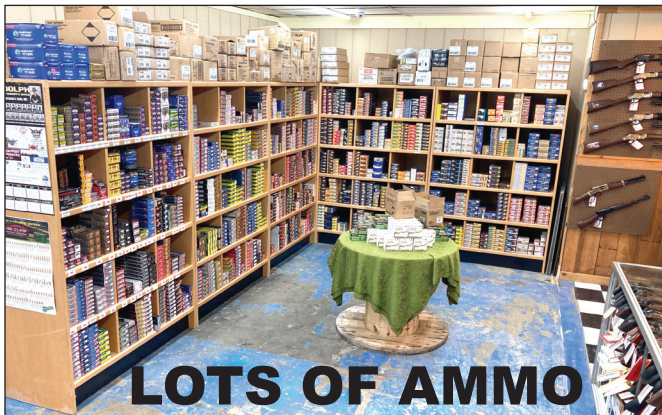
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