

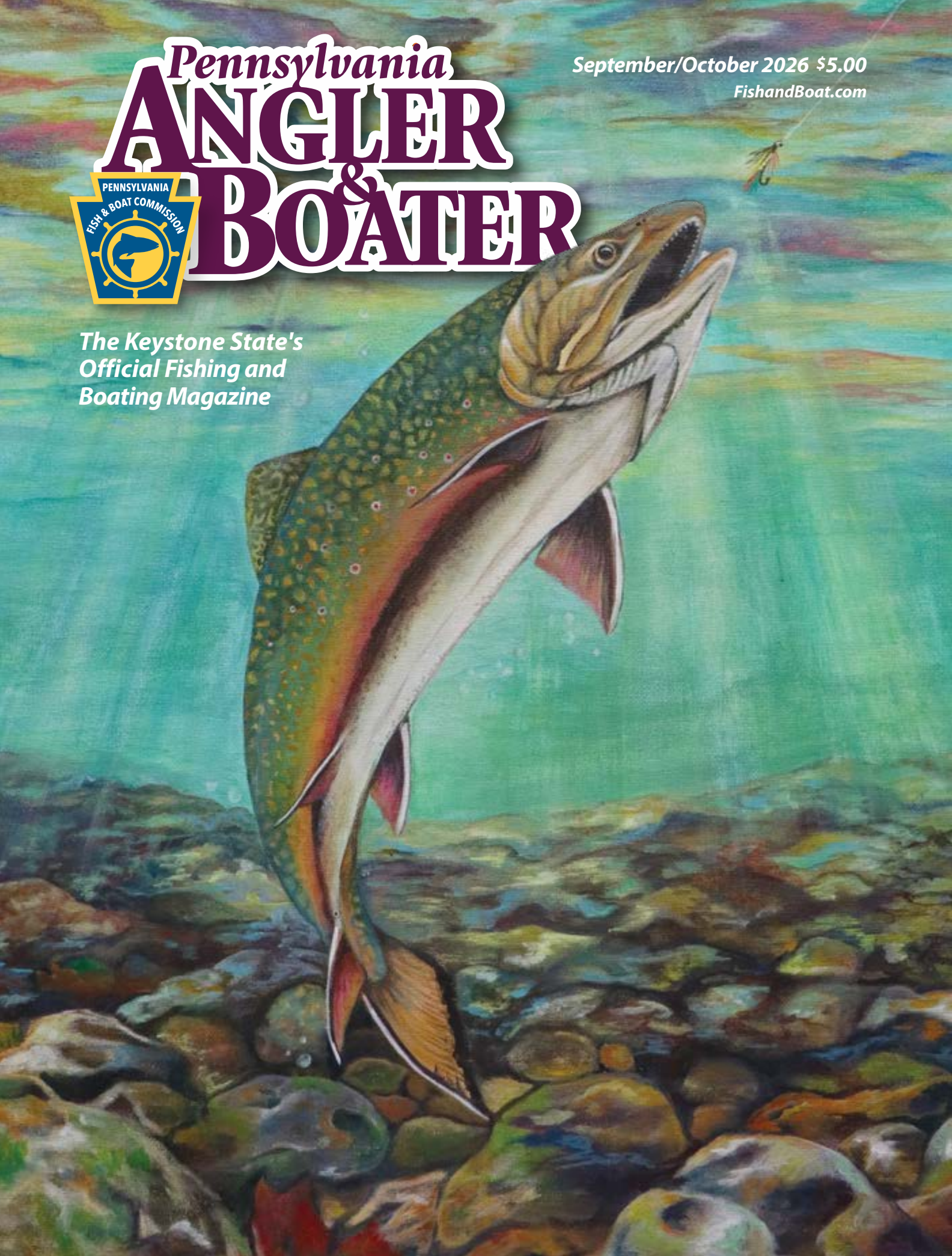
Pennsylvania **ANGLER & BOATER**



*The Keystone State's
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Regular Contributors

Darl Black	Jeff Knapp
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Sweet Arrow Lake, Pine Grove, Schuylkill County

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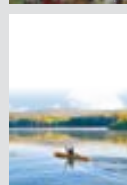
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Covers



Front cover: Autumn is a palette of amazing colors, and the vibrant colors of fall Brook Trout perfectly match that beauty. Extended trout season begins September 8, 2026, and these regulations must be followed for all species of trout. See the *2026 Pennsylvania Fishing Summary* for more information. *Artwork by Jessica Barlup.*



Back cover: An early morning kayaker glides across the calm waters of Hills Creek State Park, Tioga County. Just outside Wellsboro, the park's 137-acre lake is a favorite destination for kayaking, canoeing and fishing. Paddlers and anglers love its quiet coves and shorelines. *Photo by Linda Stager.*



Subscription Inquiries

717-705-7835 • E-mail: ra-pfbcmagazine@pa.gov

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FALL WATERWAY ACTIVITIES

by **Timothy D. Schaeffer**
Executive Director

There's never a better time than fall to take advantage of all our waterways have to offer. The milder temperatures, eruption of colorful foliage and abundance of daylight make for optimal conditions for a fishing or boating outing. In these pages, we offer lots of ideas of where to go and how to take advantage of this season.

Explore the bog of Black Moshannon State Park (pages 5-7) and the mysteries of Pennsylvania's three native carnivorous plants in the center of the state. While there, cast a line in the lake to catch all sorts of fish. In southeastern Pennsylvania, find lots of opportunities for fishing and boating at Blue Marsh Lake (pages 38-40).

Hook into some great advice on the best Smallmouth Bass waters (pages 16-18) in Northwest Pennsylvania. Finally, while the water holds on to summer's warmth, plan a float trip. The Delaware River Water Trail (pages 22-25) and its historic significance (pages 19-21) can help you round out your celebrations of America's 250th anniversary.

We, too, are celebrating a big anniversary this year as we commemorate our 150th year of the Corry State Fish Hatchery (pages 36-37). Can you guess how many fish we've grown there?

While every day is worth celebrating fishing, join us in September in the celebration of National Hunting and Fishing Day (page 9).

No matter where the trail takes you this fall, there's no better way to spend time outdoors than fishing, paddling or boating in Pennsylvania. ☐

PFBC ON THE JOB

Miranda (Mandy) Smith
Southwest Region
Education Specialist

As a child growing up in rural Pennsylvania, I spent much of my time outdoors. I climbed the large rock formations and swung on the wild grapevines in the woods behind our house, played with bugs in the backyard and used my pocket microscope to study things. For our annual vacations, my family camped at Prince Gallitzin State Park, Patton, Cambria County, each year. I was an avid and enthusiastic participant in the park's education programs and had a blast fishing Glendale Lake with my dad on the motorboat and from the shoreline.

It was these positive childhood experiences that led me to become an environmental educator. When I went to college, I was thrilled to see that I could major in Environmental Interpretation and build a career inspiring a love of nature in others.

I've been a Regional Environmental Education Specialist with the Pennsylvania

Fish and Boat Commission since 2007, with most of those years serving the Southwest Region. In my position, I provide education and outreach programs and trainings to audiences of all ages.

My favorite topics to teach are reptiles and amphibians and aquatic resource education. I greatly enjoy teaching fishing to those who have little to no fishing experience and witnessing their excitement when they catch their first fish. Likewise, the satisfaction of seeing a program participant who comes to a kayaking program feeling uncertain and leaves with newfound joy and confidence is rewarding, too.

I enjoy the opportunity to connect Pennsylvanians to our aquatic and natural resources and hope that I can inspire them to be good stewards of the resource. ☐



photo: PFBC archives

Graphic Key

These icons represent specific topics.



Amphibians and Reptiles



Boating



Catch and Release



Conservation



Fishing



Fly Fishing



Ice Fishing



Lakes



Paddling



Rivers



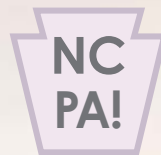
State Parks



Streams



Tackle and Gear



Visiting Black Moshannon State Park



by Linda Stager

photos by the author

Step onto the boardwalk at Black Moshannon State Park, Centre County, and the bog draws you in. The water gleams a deep, mysterious brownish-black, stained by centuries of moss and tannins.

“Black Moshannon, just over the mountain from State College, feels like a different world. Our park includes a 250-acre lake and a natural bog, surrounded by Moshannon State Forest. The lake, mainly used for kayaking and paddleboarding, is covered by lily pads and averages 4- to 6-feet deep,

with its deepest point—12 feet—at the fishing pier,” said Mathias Weizen, Park Manager.

Black Moshannon State Park has one of Pennsylvania’s most unique ecosystems—one of the finest reconstituted bogs in the state. A bog where rare plants flourish. These high-altitude, low-nutrient, acidic wetlands support specialized flora and fauna and filter water for downstream systems.

A sign at the park points out, “Large quantities of organic matter released from the bog impart a deep brown color to the water, thus the name Black Moshannon. Over a century ago, this poorly drained basin contained an exceptional quantity of white pine. These trees were cut in the late 1800s, and the resulting surplus groundwater inundated the area. Sphagnum, which had been restricted in the area, was released and the basin was once again dominated by bog communities.”



Step onto the boardwalk at Black Moshannon State Park, and the bog draws you in.



The water gleams a deep, mysterious brownish-black, stained by centuries of moss and tannins.

Sphagnum is a sponge and soaks up floodwater, helping filter pollution and preventing damage to downstream areas.

Pennsylvania is home to only three native carnivorous plants—purple pitcherplant, sundew and bladderwort. Black Moshannon State Park's bog is home to all three, along with 17 wild orchid species, cranberries, blueberries, sedges and cotton grasses. Species such as the Four-toed Salamander, *Hemidactylium scutatum*, which nests only in sphagnum moss and the Spotted Turtle, *Clemmys guttata*, a species of special concern, also thrive here.

Today, Black Moshannon State Park is both a camping destination and a classroom. Interpretive signs throughout the park tell the story of the bog's rare plants, the Civilian Conservation Corps crews that rebuilt the area after

lumbering depleted it and the ecological processes at work beneath the surface.

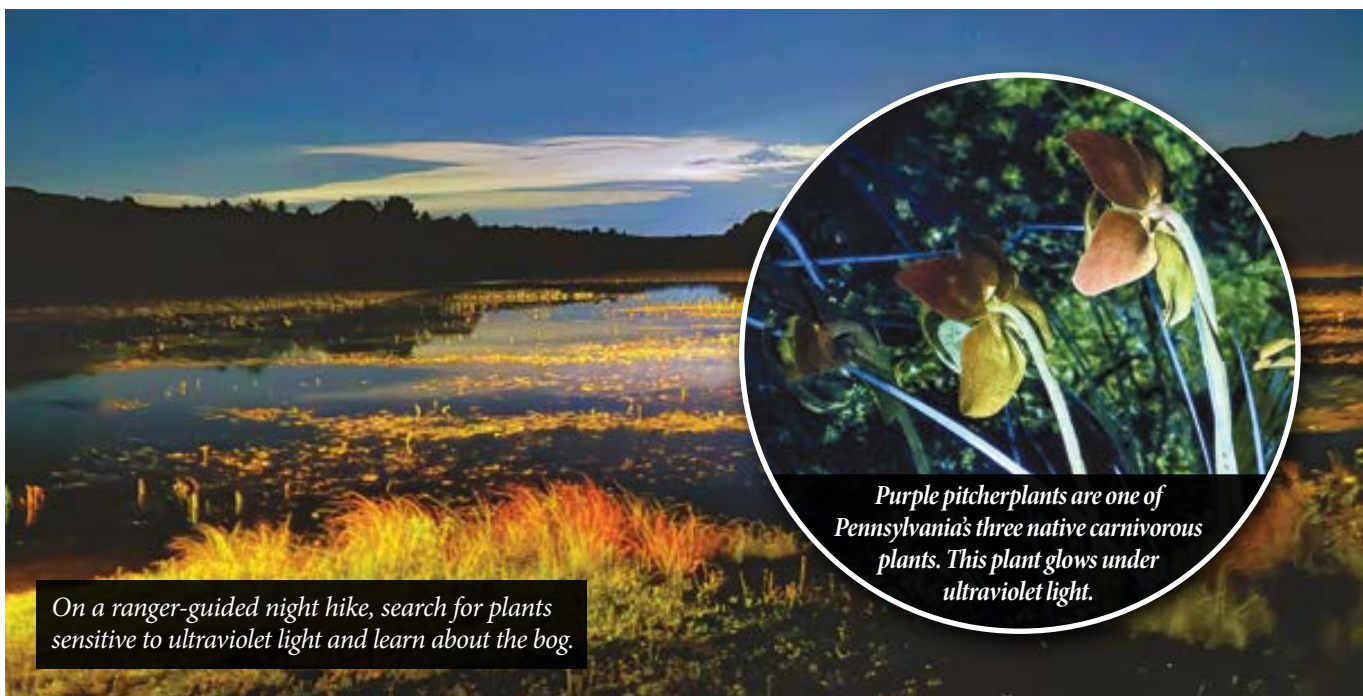
There are numerous trails, but the 0.3-mile accessible Bog Trail makes it easy for most anyone to explore the bog up close.

We signed up for a ranger-guided night hike and searched for plants sensitive to ultraviolet (UV) light. Did you know sphagnum moss and some carnivorous plants glow under UV light?

If you like to fish, the lake offers good fishing year-round. In spring and summer, you can fish for Chain Pickerels, Largemouth Bass and Pumpkinseeds. In winter, Black Moshannon State Park offers great ice fishing.



If you like to fish, the lake offers good fishing year-round.



On a ranger-guided night hike, search for plants sensitive to ultraviolet light and learn about the bog.

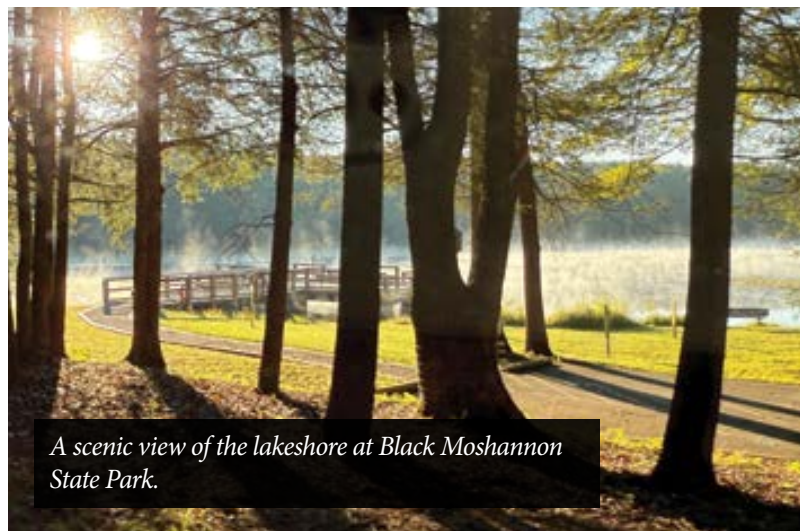
Purple pitcherplants are one of Pennsylvania's three native carnivorous plants. This plant glows under ultraviolet light.

The park is a Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission fishing tackle loaner program site, and visitors can borrow fishing equipment, flotation devices and a variety of recreation items.

This is the perfect place to throw in a line or go paddleboarding. Remember to wear dark-colored clothing, because the tannin in the water will dye any light-colored clothing you wear.

Black Moshannon State Park is among the rarest and most ecologically valuable places in Pennsylvania, significant for water quality and rich in environmental impact.

Visit and learn its vital importance to watershed conservation. ☐



A scenic view of the lakeshore at Black Moshannon State Park.



WHAT IS IT?

To celebrate World Reptile Day, try to identify this turtle. It's a semi-aquatic turtle and a species of special concern (protected) in Pennsylvania. The upper shell, carapace, is brown and keeled. Its scutes, or large scales, are a series of rough ridges and grooves. The plastron, or lower shell, is yellow and hingeless. Each scute has black blotches on the outer edge. The skin on the neck and front legs is often reddish orange. This turtle may live 40-80 years. Connect with us on Facebook or Instagram @PaFishAndBoat on October 21 to discover its identity. 🐢



photo-PFBC archives

National Hunting and Fishing Day Events

Highlighted programs and events only. There's more!
All programs and events require registration.

Event	Date	Time	Location
Women's Fly Fishing (Beginner)	September 25	5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.	Memorial Lake State Park, Lebanon County
Fly Fishing (Beginner)	September 26	10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Cowans Gap State Park, Fulton County
Representative Carol Kazeem's Dock Day	September 26	11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.	Chester City Boat Ramp, Delaware County
Fun Baits Fishing Meet-Up	September 26	4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.	Prince Gallitzin State Park, Cambria County
Panfish Fishing (Beginner)	September 27	9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Beltzville State Park, Carbon County
National Hunting and Fishing Day	September 27	10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.	Bald Eagle State Park, Centre County
National Hunting and Fishing Day	September 27	11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, Lancaster and Lebanon counties
Panfish Kayak Fishing Meet-Up	September 28	9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.	Fords Pond, Lackawanna County
Panfish Kayak Fishing Meet-Up	September 28	12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.	Fords Pond, Lackawanna County

photo: PFRC archives

Register for Programs and Events:



FishandBoat.com



NOTES *from the Streams*

An Unexpected Rescue

Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) Kyle Wirick and I were patrolling the Mahoning Creek Dam by boat on a beautiful sunny day. Mahoning Creek Dam is well-known for its catfish and musky fishing. It seems crappie fishing is pretty good, too, as an angler caught a crappie that rivals the biggest crappie I've ever seen.

I consider Mahoning Creek Dam to be a hidden gem. Tucked away in a quiet part of Armstrong County, just outside of Dayton, the fishing pressure seems fairly minimal, but the reservoir and surrounding land are stunning. Mahoning Creek Dam is operated by the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District, so that means all people in kayaks, canoes, paddleboards and boats under 16 feet must always wear their life jackets. The reservoir itself is also on the smaller side, so there is a horsepower restriction—a motor must be under 10 horsepower for it to be legally operated on the reservoir.

The wildlife is abundant around the area. You can almost always see a deer, and you may see a bear getting a drink at the water. Northern Spiny Softshell turtles seem to be quite plentiful in the water, too. Eagles are known to frequent the area and look for a meal at the surface of the water. You can't leave out squirrels—the woods may be a squirrel hunter's paradise.

Speaking of squirrels, WCO Wirick and I were on our way back to the Milton Loop Boat Ramp when we noticed an animal in the water. We slowed the boat down and got a closer look and realized the animal was a squirrel. It seemed to be

exhausted and struggling to stay afloat at this point. We continued to inch closer when we noticed the squirrel succumbed to its struggles. My fellow officer managed to scoop the squirrel onto the deck of our boat with a paddle and observed it lying motionless. WCO Wirick gave the squirrel a few chest compressions with two fingers to try and revive it. To our surprise, it worked. WCO Wirick managed to clear the water from its lungs and saved a squirrel's life. As a WCO, you never know what to expect on any given day or what life you may save that day.—WCO Nikolaus A. Black, Jefferson County.

The Perks of the Job

Like any job, there are the positives and the negatives. While on patrol, there are many people who say they would love to do the work we do. There are also people who express their displeasure after an interaction with us. Many of these comments are passing comments that don't give full weight to some of the tough parts of the job, some of the things we see and give up in order

to do this job. However, our job enables us to be outside much of the time, which is a huge perk for me. I try to deliberately snap some pictures capturing the scenes we take in on a daily basis to serve as a reminder.—Sergeant Zachary M. Rudd, Northeast Region.

Outfished

While on patrol, I was watching a group of anglers trying to catch trout. Each of the four anglers were equipped with top-of-the-line gear. I was about to approach the group and check their fishing licenses. Just then, a raccoon emerged and stood by the creek, looking at the anglers while they looked back at the raccoon. The raccoon went into the water, grabbed a trout, dragged it out of the water and dropped the fish on the bank. The raccoon looked at the anglers as if to say, "you're doing it wrong, this is how you catch a fish". One of the anglers ran toward the raccoon, obviously annoyed that the raccoon had more luck catching a trout. The raccoon grabbed its fish and took off into the bushes. The anglers continued to fish without any luck.

Sometimes, no matter how well-equipped or skilled, there are days when you get outfished by a raccoon. —WCO Sarah R. Bartle, Franklin/Eastern Fulton counties.

A Helping Hand

While on patrol in southern Blair County, I noticed a local police officer parked along the side of

photo: Sergeant Zachary M. Rudd



Lake Wallenpaupack, Pike and Wayne counties.

the road with his emergency lights activated. From a few blocks away, I could see him standing with several residents, all looking down at the ground. Curious about what was happening, I safely pulled my patrol truck off the road and used my binoculars to get a closer look. It appeared everyone was focused on a storm drain along the roadside.

As law enforcement officers, it's customary to back each other up whenever possible. I activated my emergency lights and pulled alongside the police officer. He seemed relieved to see a WCO arrive on the scene. I jokingly asked if there were any fish in the drainage system. To my surprise, several newly hatched mallard ducklings had fallen into the drain and were unable to climb back out.

One of the nearby residents provided a paper shopping bag, and I carefully lifted each duckling from the drain using my snake tongs. Their mother was understandably distressed and took shelter beside the foundation of a nearby house. I was able to safely secure her by keeping her wings tucked against

her body, preventing her from flying away or striking me with her wings.

The mother duck and her ducklings were then escorted on foot and safely released into Henry's Pond, Blair County.

The police officer was relieved that the situation had a positive outcome, and we exchanged contact information before returning to patrol. The residents were grateful to see the mallard family safely reunited and thanked us for the joint law enforcement effort.

Some days on patrol involve enforcing laws. Other days, they're about lending a helping hand—even if it means rescuing a family of ducks.—*WCO Brock A. Benson, Blair and Huntingdon counties.*

A Teaching Moment

One day, when on patrol, I was walking along the banks, talking to every angler I came across. Checking license after license, everyone seemed to be obeying the fishing rules and regulations for the area, so it was a good day. As I kept walking, I noticed two individuals along the bank who seemed to be

frustrated with their fishing gear. As I got closer, I noticed that their line was badly tangled. I offered my help, and they gladly accepted my offer. Through my time with them, I found out it was a mother and son duo that were new to fishing. They had no idea where to begin. I proceeded to untangle the line and gave them a crash course on how to fish. I taught them how to rig up their line, how to cast and how to bait their hooks. Just as I was about to walk away, I watched the son catch his first fish—a Bluegill. He was extremely happy. I showed them how to take a fish off the hook and return it to the water unharmed.—*WCO Seth J. Strawser, Perry and Juniata counties.*

Lessons Learned

I was patrolling on a rainy Sunday afternoon and stumbled upon two men fishing from a boat at Keystone Lake, Armstrong County. I approached both men and identified myself as a WCO. I asked for their fishing licenses, and the operator of the boat chuckled and handed me his fishing license. I looked at his friend who said, "I don't have a fishing license." I asked for a second form of identification and he replied, "You know it's Sunday and raining, and I didn't think you guys worked in the rain or on Sundays." I overheard the boat operator say, "I told you he was around." I found out that the boat operator's friend hasn't purchased a fishing license in quite some time. He told me that he's been fishing for many years without his license and has never seen a WCO around here. Even though I conducted enforcement action for the violation, we traded handshakes and smiles. The boat operator's friend said, "You're never too old to learn."—*WCO Kyle A. Wirick, Indiana and Eastern Armstrong counties.*



artwork-Andrea Fenney



photo-Susquehanna River Trail Association

Canoes, Kayaks and Camping Along Pennsylvania's Water Trails

by Jessica Aiello

For those looking to combine a passion for time spent on the water with a desire for tranquil and rustic overnight accommodations, trailside camping along one of Pennsylvania's 29 designated water trails may be the answer. Campers who bike, boat, ride horseback or hike to a trailside campsite can expect a simple and primitive site without restrooms or other typical campground facilities for a true wilderness experience.

Planning ahead is essential when trailside camping along a water trail. You'll need to securely pack all gear (e.g., sleeping bag, tent or hammock, toilet paper, hand sanitizer, food, water, etc.). Bring along a map to ensure you set up your campsite where it is allowed and not on private property, state game lands or outside of designated campgrounds within state parks. Digital water trail maps are helpful in choosing a location.

Nine Pennsylvania state forest districts have designated water trails and seven have water's edge camping:

- **Delaware River Water Trail:** This water trail runs from Hancock, NY, to Yardley, PA. There is one established camping area along the Upper Delaware River within the Delaware State Forest. Acquiring a permit in advance from the National Park Service is required.

**Also a National Recreation Trail.*

- **Juniata River Water Trail:** This water trail runs from Canoe Creek State Park in Hollidaysburg, Blair County, to the mouth of the Susquehanna River in Duncannon, Perry County. There are six river island campsites managed by Tuscarora State Forest and additional waterside areas managed by Rothrock State Forest.
- **Middle Allegheny River Water Trail:** This 107-mile-long water trail runs from Kinzua Dam, Warren County, to Emlenton, Clarion and Venango counties. The Danner Primitive Camping Area is in Clear Creek State Forest, Clarion County.
- **Middle Susquehanna River Water Trail:** This water trail runs from Sunbury, Northumberland County, to Harrisburg, Dauphin County. There are 23 volunteer-maintained island campsites for use within Weiser State Forest, Northumberland County.
- **North Branch Susquehanna River Water Trail:** This 146-mile-long water trail runs from the Great Bend area in Susquehanna County to East Berwick, Luzerne County. There are multiple, publicly accessible river island campsites managed by the Loyalsock and Pinchot state forests.
- **Pine Creek Water Trail:** This water trail runs from Ansonia, Tioga County, to Jersey Shore, Lycoming County. Waterside camping is available through Tiadaghton and Tioga state forests. Permits are required.
- **West Branch Susquehanna River Water Trail:** This 228-mile-long water trail runs from Cherry Tree, Indiana County, to Sunbury, Northumberland County. There is limited waterside camping managed by Sproul State Forest.



photo-Susquehanna River Trail Association

Middle Susquehanna River Water Trail

If camping at the same site on state forest lands for more than one night, a free camping permit is required. For camping on river islands, look for a river island locator sign. Otherwise, you may be squatting on private property. If the island can safely accommodate everyone, groups of 10 people or fewer may camp for one to two nights at any one designated island campsite without prior reservations. Don't remove trees or tramp vegetation to make room on smaller sites. All islands are first-come, first-served.

For example, on the Middle Susquehanna River Water Trail, each island campsite has a small metal box that contains a visitor logbook, where campers can leave their impressions of the island, paddle outing and overall experience. Recent comments include:

"We canoed around the island, saw many birds and a few fish. Enjoyed the new fire ring. It is a nice touch to the already fantastic campsite."—Brandon, Alexis, Brian and Carly.

"A peaceful spot to nestle down for the night. The sun was gorgeous this morning. Always a pleasure to come to this well-kept island. Thank you to the ones who keep it so!"—Mary G, family and friends.

"Paddled from Selinsgrove today en route to Harrisburg on 3-day trip. Can't believe all the crayfish here in this river. No luck fishing, though. Now sitting by the fire, being carried away by the fireflies."—Two couples from State College.

Campers can do their part to protect the natural resource, by following Leave No Trace principles.

- Camp at least 100 feet from the water's edge.
- Wash dishes in a container and dispose of the soapy water at least 200 feet from the river (rather than washing dishes directly in the waterway).
- Use designated fire rings for campfires and follow any seasonal burn ban guidance.
- Pack in and out all trash including used toilet paper and human solid waste in a plastic bag.

"Camping along a Pennsylvania water trail can be a fun family activity, a peaceful solo experience or a romantic getaway for two," said Marci Mowery, Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation President. "However, taking the time ahead of your trip to plan, prepare and pack makes all the difference in an excursion that's exciting for all the good reasons (watching wildlife, seeing a shooting star, catching a prize-sized fish) versus one that's exciting for all the wrong reasons (getting lost, being rained on, running out of drinking water)." □

10 Water Trail Essentials

1. LIFE JACKETS

Required to be worn by all persons 12 years old and younger, paddlers (canoes, kayaks and paddleboards) and on boats less than 16 feet from November 1 through April 30.

2. WHISTLE OR SOUND-PRODUCING DEVICE

Mandated to signal for help. On each boat, it's recommended to attach a whistle to each life jacket.

3. LAUNCH PERMIT

Required for all unpowered boats (canoes, kayaks, rowboats, paddleboards, etc.) to use Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and Pennsylvania State Parks/State Forests accesses.

4. LIGHT (all-around white light for unpowered boats)

Required for use between sunset and sunrise and during periods of restricted visibility.

5. DRY BAG

Protects carry-on items from water.

6. WATERPROOF TRAIL MAPS/GPS

Use waterproof trail maps or a GPS device sealed in a waterproof case.

7. SUN PROTECTION

Pack UV-blocking sunglasses, sunscreen and a hat.

8. FIRST AID KIT

Include waterproof bandages, medical tape and insect repellent.

9. DRINKING WATER

Pack more water than you expect to drink, plus a portable water filter in case you need it.

10. FLOAT PLAN

Scout your water trail ahead of time, check forecasted weather, have a plan for emergencies, select additional pullout locations, let someone know your plans and check-in and travel with a group when possible.



BAIT CRAFTERS

Combinations Offer Choices

by Alex Zidock Jr.

photos by the author

Combinations like peanut butter and jelly, panfish and mealworms and nightcrawler harnesses and Walleyes are common among anglers. Now, an innovative composition on the market, the VIG, Javelin and Stinky Balls are becoming popular choices among freshwater and saltwater anglers. According to Lee Taylor, owner of Bait Crafters, "That's what happens when great baits collide." Taylor's mix-and-match idea is how he intends to promote his latest lure offerings by combining his newest acquisition and his older creations. Taylor, Skippack, Montgomery County, purchased FITT Premium Lures last year.

"FITT Lures acquired the assets of Winco Custom Lures (formerly of Bristol, PA) that included the popular Stone Cattie, Chillee Willee, NOTTAFLUKE and a stand-up football jig made popular by Al Winco, a lure designer and noted Susquehanna and Delaware rivers angler and guide," said Taylor.

"Anglers use tube baits, and at FITT, we came up with a shortened tube with tentacles that was designed to hold a

shortened trailer," said Taylor. "We call the tube the VIG, short for 'vigorous,' and we call the trailer the Javelin, and when you combine the two, rigged with a Ned jig, you get an incredible combination."

Taylor also owns Zee Bait Company, Daddy Mac Lures, ThirdEye Fishing and Stinky Balls.

"We make a bait called 'Stinky Balls,' and anglers use them to attract a variety of gamefish," said Taylor. "Our 12 millimeter round ball is a biodegradable product that we make in 12 different flavors. We make six for freshwater and six for saltwater."

Taylor liquefies baitfish, shellfish and worms and adds other attractants specific to the targeted fish. The balls are formed without plastic but made strong enough to stay on the hook and still soft enough to release scent.

"The balls are heat sensitive and water soluble. At 80-85 degree F temperatures, they begin to melt," said Taylor. "To try and keep them solid longer in hot weather, we came up with this ingenious invention and found we can keep the balls solid longer when we place



Lee Taylor found a new application inserting Stinky Balls into his shortened tube bait called the VIG.

them inside our VIG tube and then hold the balls in place with a Ned jig.” He pointed out how his older Stinky Balls worked in combination with his newest shortened tube product.

“By putting the balls in the VIG, we found it would take 4 or 5 degrees more before the ball would begin to melt. And not only that, but we also developed a new application by combining both,” said Taylor.

“Lots of folks are familiar with our Stinky Balls brand, but they don’t know we now own other companies. We plan to vigorously cross-promote Stinky Balls with the newer FITT VIG going forward. A combination that will work well for bass in freshwater. And, when hooked through the head, the squid-like effect and the scent will also be a deadly lure in saltwater,” said Taylor.

All his products are American-made. “If you call on the phone, it may ring a few times, but I’m the one who will answer or get back to you shortly. And, if you place an order online, it will ship within 24 hours,” said Taylor.

Whether you intend to use Stinky Balls just on a bare hook, in combination with other lure setups or experiment with stuffing some of the balls into the hollow VIG, “Anglers should not leave the balls outside their original container in a tackle box or boat in hot weather, or they will release their scent, and they really will stink,” said Taylor.

Finding these products online is easy, since Taylor still maintains the FITT Lures site, fittlures.com, and Stinky Balls at stinkyballs.com. ☐



Stinky Balls come in fresh and saltwater formulas.



A Stinky Ball and the hole in the shortened tube bait called the VIG.



Original Al Winco designed Stone Cattie, which is a product of FITT Lures.

Bait Crafters
baitcrafters.com



NW
PA!

Favorite Fall Smallmouth Bass Waters of NW PA

by Marilyn Black

Fishing for Smallmouth Bass in September and October is an angler's delight. Autumn offers comfortable weather conditions, less-crowded waterways and feisty bronzebacks, which jump like acrobats as you work them to your net. You may find good luck at one of my favorite Smallmouth Bass waters in Northwest Pennsylvania.

Allegheny River

The free-flowing portion of the Allegheny River from Kinzua Dam at River Mile 198 downstream to River Lock #9 at River Mile 62.2 near Rimer, Armstrong County, has habitat well-suited to Smallmouth Bass—shallow water rippling over firm sandy or pebble bottoms, large, interspersed rocks and deeper pools with identifiable current seams. In the fall, I fish the river in Warren, Forest and Venango counties.

Shoreline fishing privileges are limited to land parcels owned by governmental agencies. Most anglers, wading or hiking on the shore, stick close to the public launch ramps. Boaters pursuing Smallmouth Bass should study maps when making strategic decisions about where to launch.

An excellent map from Warren downstream to Emlenton is included in the "Allegheny Wild and Scenic River Guide" available for free from the Oil Region Alliance at 814-677-3152 or online at oilregion.org/tourism/brochures.



photo-Darl Black

Conneaut Lake

Conneaut Lake, near Meadville, Crawford County, becomes more inviting to anglers in the fall, not only because there are fewer boats on this natural lake, but the lake also yields some of the largest Smallmouth Bass of the year. We've landed bronzebacks weighing 6 pounds and heavier during fall months.

The two public launch ramps on the lake are the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's (PFBC's) access area at the north end and Firemans Beach (a day use area just off North Second Street in Conneaut Lake Borough). The rest of the shoreline is privately owned.



The glacial origins of this lake provide bottom contours inviting to both Smallmouth Bass and anglers. Extensive weed flats, long points and numerous offshore hard-bottom humps create an environment for many gamefish and panfish.

Lake Erie and Presque Isle Bay

Lake Erie waters within Pennsylvania contain a diverse fishery. In the fall, anglers on the hunt for Smallmouth Bass often use the West Pier Boat Ramp (aka Marina Bay) within Presque Isle Bay (PIB) to access the bay as well as Lake Erie. Boat-based anglers may find some Smallmouth Bass in the

confines of PIB during the fall but nothing like the plentiful bronzeback that migrate into the bay for the late spring spawn.

The more reliable Smallmouth Bass bite is on the main lake, chiefly on the east side from the peninsula to the New York State line. Autumn lake anglers also use Harborcreek Township's Shades Beach and the North East Community Marina. Access both marinas from East Lake Drive (Pennsylvania Route 5). Novice Lake Erie boat anglers must have a boat of sufficient size to handle the lake swells. It's strongly suggested newcomers to Erie arrange to have a party of two boats fishing near one another for their first few times on the lake.



On the Allegheny River, a feisty Smallmouth Bass was caught by Dale Black.

Shenango River Lake

Shenango River Lake, Hermitage, Mercer County, has an average water depth of 8 feet with a maximum depth of about 40 feet near the dam. This shallow flatland reservoir offers submerged railroad beds, roads, building foundations, rocky points and a defined river bed, plus felled trees and man-made cribs to provide excellent structure and cover, creating a good black bass fishery. Almost the entire shoreline is open to fishing, and it's possible to catch Smallmouth Bass from the bank in certain areas during the fall.

For newcomers, I recommend launching boats at either the Mahaney Recreation Area, off Kelly Road, or Shenango Recreation Area, just off West Lake Road. There are additional secondary ramps on the lake, but these two locations have deeper water and adequate parking.

Fishing Tips

With cooling water temperatures in early autumn, Smallmouth Bass inhabiting inland lakes initially

follow baitfish schools into shallower water before moving to deeper water in late fall. While bronzebacks in flowing water also shift feeding locations in the fall, depth is less a factor than current breaks and seams due to changing river flow conditions.

Lake Erie is the wild card. A limited number of schooling Smallmouth Bass return to select areas in PIB to feed briefly on Emerald Shiner and Yellow Perch schools, which enter the bay in the fall. The dominant fish catching action remains in the main lake, where bass are spread from 10- to 30-feet.

The following lures, when properly presented, may produce Smallmouth Bass on most waters this time of year—dog-walking topwater baits, suspending jerkbaits, spinnerbaits, swim jigs, sinking lipless rattle baits, 4- to 6-inch soft swimbaits, Ned rigs, hair jigs and bottom-bumping blade baits.

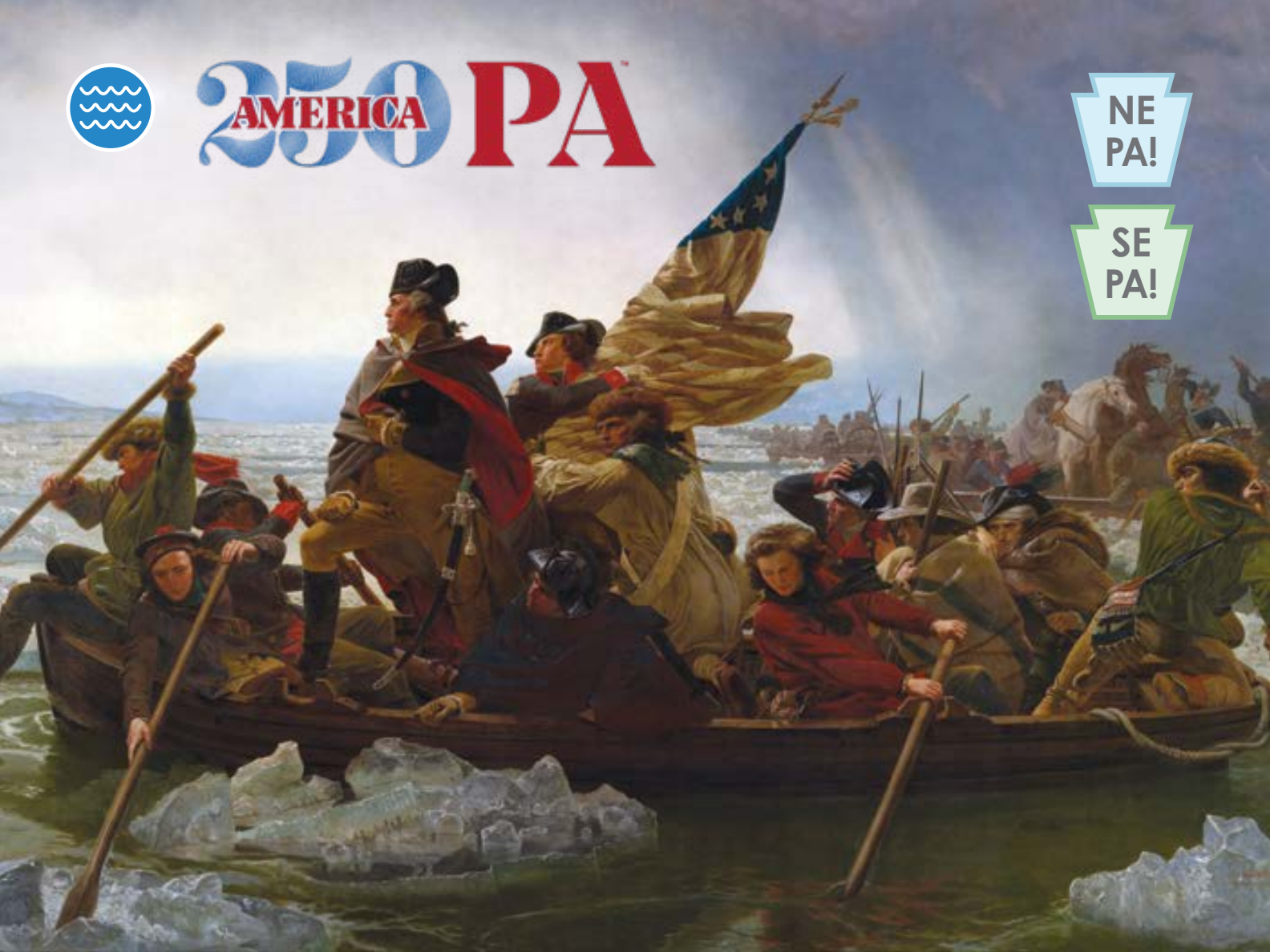
In my experience, though, crankbaits diving 4- to 8-feet deep are dynamite for Smallmouth Bass on the Shenango River Lake. And, don't get on the Allegheny River or Lake Erie without a tube jig tied to one rod. ☐



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painting-Emanuel Leutze-Washington Crossing the Delaware-American-The Metropolitan Museum of Art

WASHINGTON'S CROSSING OF THE DELAWARE TURNS 250

by *Brady J. Crytzer*

George Washington crossed the Delaware River and made history 250 years ago. Before soldiers marched to its banks in the winter of 1776, the river carved out a way of life through the heart of the Pennsylvania wilderness. Native peoples traveled its currents for generations, and Dutch and Swedish settlers built communities along its shores. By the time of the American Revolution, the Delaware River quite literally shaped the fate of empires.

But, on Christmas night, 1776, it became the stage for one of the most daring military gambles in American history.

When most Americans picture George Washington crossing the Delaware River, they imagine Emanuel Leutze's famous painting—towering ice floes, dramatic skies, and Washington standing heroically in the boat.

The real event was less theatrical but far more impressive. It was cold, wet, miserable and deeply uncertain. The Delaware River itself was the greatest obstacle Washington faced that night.

The river in the eighteenth century was an artery of commerce and transportation. Before railroads and

paved roads connected the colonies, rivers, like the Delaware River, were critical. Farmers floated grain towards Philadelphia, and ferrymen carried travelers across its dangerous currents.

Small towns from Trenton, NJ, to Burlington, NJ, depended on the river. But, winter transformed the Delaware River into an ice-choked channel. Sudden storms made crossings deadly, and the people who worked the river respected it, because they knew how quickly it could kill. Washington understood that reality.

By December 1776, the Continental Army was collapsing. Defeats in New York had driven Washington and his exhausted soldiers across New Jersey. Morale cratered and enlistments were expiring. British and Hessian troops believed the rebellion was nearly crushed. The Delaware River became the final defensive line protecting Pennsylvania and, more specifically, Philadelphia.

For General Washington, the river was both a shield and a sword.

He ordered nearly every boat for miles along the Delaware River confiscated or hidden from the British. Ferries and large, sturdy Durham boats

became critical to the plan. Originally built to haul iron ore and farm goods, these boats were uniquely suited for navigating icy water. The same river commerce that had enriched the colonies now provided Washington with the tools to save the Revolution.

On the night of December 25, soldiers assembled near McConkey's Ferry. Snow mixed with sleet. The wind cut through wool uniforms, and ice drifted heavily in the current. Local boatmen and ferrymen with soldiers from the Pennsylvania Navy led the way by carrying the army across the icy Delaware River.

The crossing took far longer than planned. In a chaotic scene, men slipped on frozen riverbanks and horses panicked. Ice continuously battered the boats. Fortunately, the Delaware River concealed Washington's movement. The weather discouraged British patrols and muffled the sounds of the operation.

That relationship between Americans and the Delaware River is what makes the crossing so historically powerful. It was not merely a military maneuver but a moment when geography, weather, commerce and human determination collided.

photo-PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources



The next morning, Washington's army struck the Hessian garrison at Trenton and won a stunning victory. Militarily, it was modest compared to later battles. Psychologically, it changed everything. The Revolution suddenly looked alive again.

And, at the center of it all stood the river.

Today, the Delaware River still flows past ferry towns, historic crossings and quiet stretches, where ice sometimes forms in the winter. Modern bridges and highways have tamed much of the landscape, but the river retains its old character.

It remains a reminder that American history was shaped not only by grand ideas but by waterways, weather and the stubborn realities of the natural world. ☐

Brady J. Crytzer teaches history at Robert Morris University. The author of eight books, his work has been featured in The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal and USA Today. He lives and fishes outside of Pittsburgh.

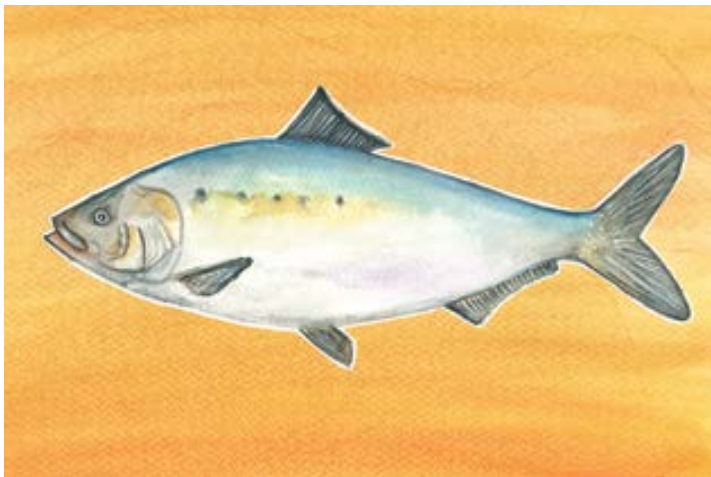
photo-PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources



The Delaware River at Washington Crossing.

Delaware River Shad

The Delaware River played two roles for Washington's army during the American Revolution. In December 1776, it was the obstacle his troops crossed at night to attack Trenton. Later, in spring 1778, while the army was camped at Valley Forge, large shad runs occurred in the river. Soldiers caught thousands of fish using nets, and the shad were salted and distributed as food. This came at a critical time, since the army was suffering from shortages. The fish supply helped feed the troops and support the camp until conditions improved, aiding the army's recovery before the 1778 campaign season.



artwork-Ashlyn Arthur

About the Artist

Ashlyn Arthur of AshArthur Originals specializes in watercolor fish portraiture. As a paramedic, Arthur developed her artistic practice as a creative outlet and grounding force amid the emotional demands of emergency services. Drawing inspiration from nature and abstract expression, her work explores themes of resilience, restoration and emotional presence.

Raised in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, she spent her childhood exploring the streams, forests and wildlife that continue to influence her work today. She currently resides in the Philadelphia area, where she frequently explores Pennypack Park and finds inspiration in the region's native ecosystems. Many of her paintings depict fish native to Pennsylvania and the surrounding region. Her current passion project focuses on painting endangered and threatened native Pennsylvania fish species, using art to celebrate freshwater biodiversity and raise awareness of local conservation issues. Follow her @AshArthurOriginals or stop by the Phoenixville First Friday events in September, October and November to view her work in person.



photo-courtesy of Ashlyn Arthur

Delaware River *Water Trail*

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Participants in the annual Delaware River Sojourn float away from a campsite to their next destination.

photo-courtesy of the Delaware River Sojourn

by Bob Frye

If you like exploring wild places by water, consider the Delaware River. Untamed, the Delaware River is the largest free-flowing river in the eastern United States according to the National Park Service. And, it's clean. It's the longest stretch of river in the country governed by anti-degradation regulations—meaning that water quality is better than typical standards, so rules are in place to protect water quality. It's beautiful, too. A good portion of the water trail is in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers program.

"Overall, it's a pretty pristine system," said Cooper Barshinger, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Fisheries Biologist.

History has not always been kind to the Delaware River. Industry and human population centers along its banks once emptied their waste into the river in an era when everyone believed "the solution to pollution was dilution," said Kate Schmidt, Delaware River Basin Communications Specialist. Some problems remain, especially in the Delaware River's lower sections.

"But, if you get on the river now, you can paddle and see wildlife, you can fish, you can see other people enjoying the river," said Schmidt. "We've seen eagles, bears, otters and all types of cool things. There's a lot of variety."

"Once you're paddling the river, once you're in it and on it, you really have a connection you don't get even from walking along it or driving over it in your car on your way to work."

The river offers different experiences depending on the section.

The northernmost 73 miles of the National Wild and Scenic River—from Hancock to Sparrowbush—are home to abundant whitewater. Though, under normal flow conditions, there are no rapids on the water trail above a Class II-plus, the most difficult areas are here.

Skinners Falls, near the town of Milanville, is one such challenge. The Narrow Falls, or Kunkelli Rapids, demand attention. Check the trail's



Paddlers traveling along the river through the Delaware Water Gap stop on a rocky beach to fish and eat lunch.

interactive map before your trip to ensure your skill level matches the water conditions. It's for that fast water that organizers of the annual Delaware River Sojourn employ aides from the National Canoe Safety Patrol. Volunteers give safety talks before each day on the water, lead paddlers through tricky spots and follow up where help is needed.

"I've been doing the sojourn for over a decade now, but I still consider myself somewhat of a beginner, and I still get nervous going through some of the rapids," said Schmidt. "There are sections I may not do on my own. But, I'm very comfortable doing them with our guides."

There are also eel weirs to be aware of in this section.

The 40 miles that make up the middle portion of the National Wild and Scenic Delaware River flow from about Milford to the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. It's a 70,000-acre playground with hiking trails, waterfalls, the bicycle-friendly McDade Recreation Trail and more. The river here is generally wider, slower and calmer, cutting through some of the oldest exposed bedrock in North America.

"So, it's a little more gentle, but it's fantastic scenery, and it's great for learning," said Cindy Kunnas, Delaware River Greenway Partnership Projects Coordinator.

There are lots of "braided" islands in the river, named for how they look on a map, with the river twisting and winding between them.

The final National Wild and Scenic River portion of the Delaware River is not contiguous but rather broken into sections between the lower end of the Delaware Water Gap to Washington Crossing Bridge, which connects Pennsylvania and New Jersey at the site where George Washington crossed the river on Christmas night in 1776 to fight the Battle of Trenton. It's relatively calm but has a couple of features to be aware of in the form of wing dams. There are opportunities to portage around the dams. In all cases, wear your life jacket.

If you plan to spend time on the Delaware River, pack a fishing rod. It offers tremendous opportunities.

"Pretty much anything that we have across the state in terms of sport fish species is also in the Delaware River," said Barshinger.

Smallmouth Bass are the most common. They exist in good numbers and can occasionally grow to nice sizes.

Anglers also get Walleyes, especially in the spring around the Delaware Water Gap.

"I've been out there in my kayak, and if you're there at the right time of year, you can really get into



An aerial view of Delaware River Sojourn participants.



A view of the Delaware River from an overlook in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.



Paddlers on the Delaware River Sojourn at one of their campsites.

them pretty good,” said Barshinger. “And, they reach good sizes. Most of them are around that 15- to 20-inch mark, but it wouldn’t be unheard of to get a 30-inch Walleye.”

The Delaware River also produces muskies growing into the mid-40-inch range and Striped Bass equally as large. The latter enter the river to spawn each spring and often go as far upriver as where the East Branch and the West Branch of the Delaware River meet. They sometimes stick around until early June.

American Shad—labeled “America’s fish” because of their importance as food to early European settlers—are back, too. Shad are born in the river, go to the ocean to mature, then return to spawn. In the past, pollution in the river’s lower stretches limited how far upriver shad could run, but they’re back now. They enter the river in February and March and slowly move upstream through late May or early June.

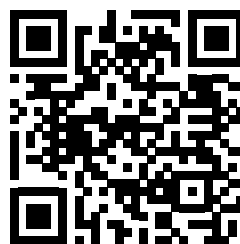
There’s history to see, too. The Battle of Minisink—a terrible blow for Americans during the American Revolution—was fought along the river. There are many cool rock formations, from the “Elephant’s Feet” to the “Devil’s Tea Table.” And,

plenty of old industrial towns that have embraced tourism still boast old mills, train stations and Victorian homes, some of them living new life as restaurants, antique centers and inns.

According to the National Park Service, usage of the river is surging. “That’s phenomenal for the river and the communities embracing it,” said Schmidt.

“The Delaware River gets a lot of attention from kayakers, anglers, tubers, really anyone who likes to recreate on the water,” said Kunas. “It has predictable and reliable flows, extensive public access and a strong network of guides and outfitters. That all makes it good for paddlers of all experience levels.” □

Interactive Map:



Guide:





PENNSYLVANIA SALAMANDERS



Allegheny Mountain Dusky Salamander
Desmognathus ochrophaeus



ENDANGERED

Blue-spotted Salamander
Ambystoma laterale



SPECIAL CONCERN

Eastern Hellbender
Cryptobranchus alleganiensis alleganiensis



Eastern Long-tailed Salamander
Eurycea longicauda longicauda



ENDANGERED

Eastern Mud Salamander
Pseudotriton montanus montanus



Eastern Red-backed Salamander
Plethodon cinereus



SPECIAL CONCERN

Eastern Tiger Salamander
Ambystoma tigrinum



Four-toed Salamander
Hemidactylium scutatum



THREATENED

Green Salamander
Aneides aeneus



SPECIAL CONCERN

Jefferson Salamander
Ambystoma jeffersonianum



SPECIAL CONCERN

Marbled Salamander
Ambystoma opacum



SPECIAL CONCERN

Mudpuppy
Necturus maculosus

photos-PFBC archives

Candidate=Candidate Species Endangered=Endangered Species Special Concern=Species of Special Concern Threatened=Threatened Species



Northern Dusky Salamander
Desmognathus fuscus



Northern Ravine Salamander
Plethodon electromorphus



Northern Red Salamander
Pseudotriton ruber ruber



Northern Seal Salamander
Desmognathus monticola



Northern Slimy Salamander
Plethodon glutinosus



Northern Spring Salamander
Gyrinophilus porphyriticus porphyriticus



Northern Two-lined Salamander
Eurycea bislineata



Red-spotted Newt
Notophthalmus viridescens viridescens



Spotted Salamander
Ambystoma maculatum

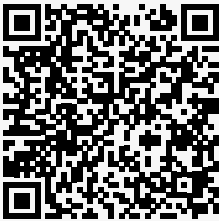


Valley and Ridge Salamander
Plethodon hoffmani

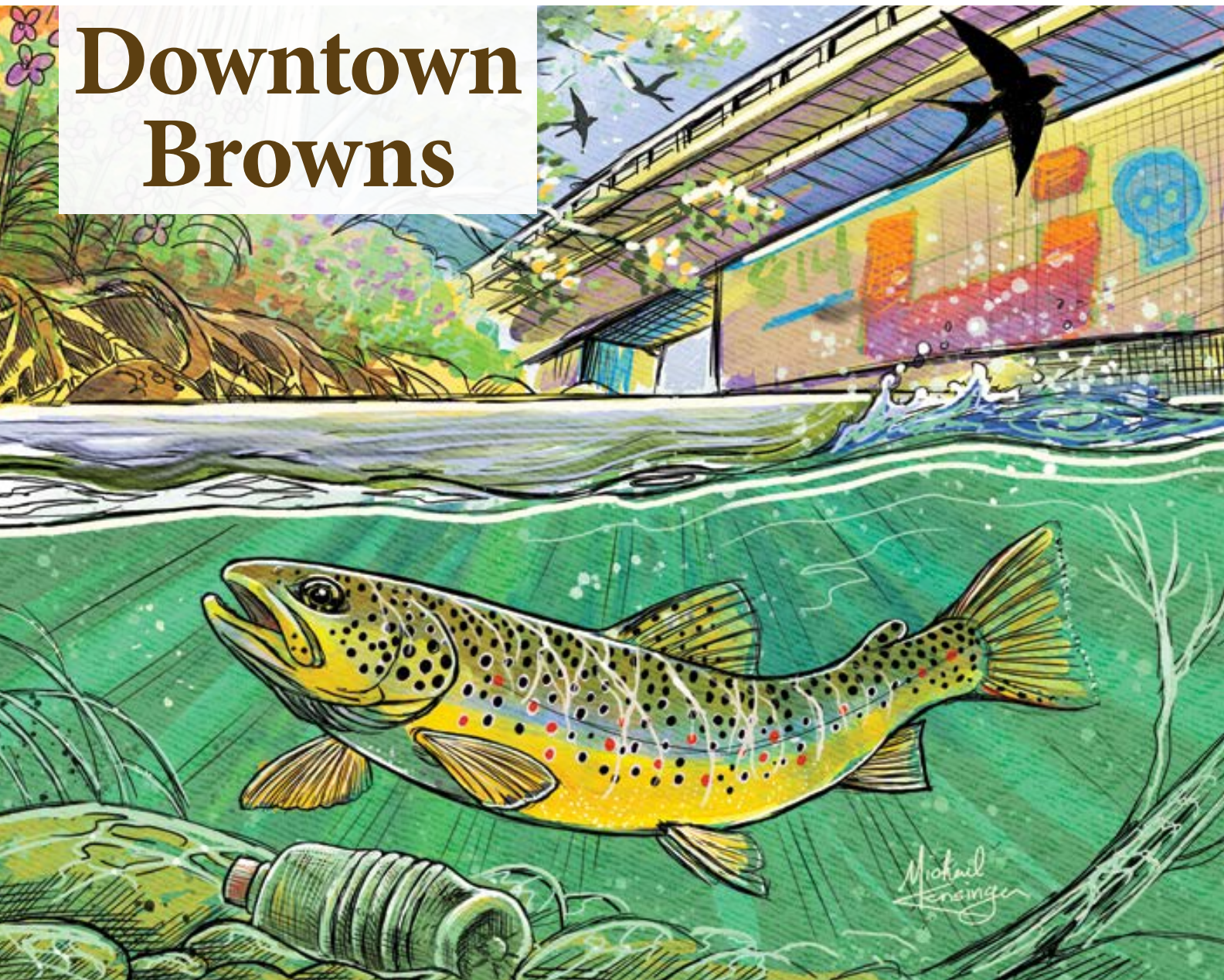


Wehrle's Salamander
Plethodon wehrlei

Learn More:



Downtown Browns



artwork-Michael Kensinger,

by Michael Kensinger

As I pulled into Texas Hot Dogs, I parked my car and popped my trunk for my chest waders. All the while, taking in the tantalizing smell of what would be lunch for many people in town. The smell of grilled food, laced with marinated onions and locally made chili, permeated the parking lot as I adjusted my fishing vest. The thought of those world-famous hot dogs and a chilled pint of chocolate milk made my stomach grumble. But, I was following my hunger for catching trout. And, frankly, any other fish that may reside in this stream, which I'd driven over thousands of times thinking, "I wonder if there are fish in there?"

A quick drop into the stream and I found there were several nice pools 100 yards or so downstream. Since I fish upstream, that meant I'd need to get back out of the water and make my way further downstream so as not to startle fish. I went back up onto the bank, and trod through what seemed like an endless

barricade of invasive Japanese knotweed. Luckily, the knotweed was easily felled by kicks and chops that would've made my old karate teacher proud. And, after several minutes of front snap kicks, I found myself back at the crystal clear stream.

By the third or fourth cast of my black-bead silver spinner, I caught my first fish—a small wild Brown Trout the size of my hand.

With a backdrop of houses, businesses and a hub cap, this was hardly the kind of water you'd dream about fishing in. But, here I was so close to home and Texas Hot Dogs catching trout.

I shifted forward in the water, navigating carefully at deceptively deep pools, where I startled several fish. Around me, birds sang merrily as the last breezes of May sifted through the freshly unfurled canopy of trees. Chickadees, wood thrushes, robins, blue jays and eastern phoebes all chimed in. But, it seemed as though the black-capped chickadees were following me. Perhaps, I was eliciting insects to take flight as I shuffled through the water. After all, I could

see some small brown mayflies flitting through the air, up into the arching canopy of trees. Feeding their newly fledged young, the chickadees made quick use of the mayflies as they permeated the foliage. Of course, I love the birds, but there were a few birds that made themselves quite the annoyance as I moved up to the next hole—mallards.

When I fish for wild trout, I generally fish upstream. Wild trout are extremely wary and critical of the slightest bits of sediment churned up by my boots. So, if I want to catch fish—and I always do—I fish upstream. I wasn't the only one on the water. Several bachelor mallard drakes had taken shelter along the stream.

I was enamored by their beauty, and anyone who knows me knows I'm a "duck guy." But, when the mallards refused to flush and instead just moved up to the next great fishing hole, I got a little frustrated. I threw my hands up in the air, hoping to inspire flight. But, they knew I was bluffing. Perhaps, they knew I had a duck rescue of my own or the work I've done for duck conservation. Regardless, I eventually gave up and just continued to fish, mumbling under my breath about them.

As if they understood me and aimed to make things worse, one of the mallard drakes drifted into a deep clear pool (undoubtedly loaded with fish), where he began slapping his wings off the water and bathing. And, in typical duck fashion, when one duck does something, others follow. Instantly, the second bachelor mallard began slapping his wings and slamming his neck and face into the water.

It was so ridiculous that I had to find humor in it.

Somehow though, I managed to pull out another wild Brown Trout—the fattest-bellied wild Brown Trout I'd ever caught. Despite the fact it was only 11 inches long, the belly was swelled with food. This fish had been eating well. If I didn't know better, I would've thought it swallowed a whole golf ball. Its yellow flanks bulged in my palm as I slipped it back into the shimmering water.

So, despite the mallards' presence, I somehow managed to catch more fish in that quarter of a mile. Even bright sun, crystal clear water and fish-scattering fowl couldn't ruin the day. I caught not just Brown Trout, but Fallfish, Rock Bass and Green Sunfish.

Fallfish struck with the enthusiasm of trout, while Rock Bass pursued the spinner with surprising determination. The Green Sunfish were perhaps the most colorful fish of the day, their turquoise markings and orange-edged fins looking more at home on a coral reef than in an Altoona stream.



artwork-Michael Kensinger

I heard loud music playing, cars revving their engines and children playing in a nearby yard. Walls of shrubs and trees separated me from the human world, but a basketball tirelessly spun on the water's surface, under some tree roots, reminding me of my urban location.

Oddly enough, I counted several Kmart shopping carts along my excursion. In fact, the largest trout of the day—somewhere around 15 inches long—chased my lure from behind one that lay partially buried in the silt. The fish startled before I could hook it. I chuckled, knowing I had a trout painting in the works and thinking that perhaps a painting of a trout rising from a shopping cart would be...interesting, to say the least.

As I continued fishing, I came to a large bridge near the shopping mall. The clear stream cut under it, and the walls were lined with graffiti and a colony of newly arrived barn swallows. The colorful graffiti made for an odd backdrop for sure, but that seems to be the theme for this run of water, and the birds didn't seem to mind.

The tunnel under the bridge was long, dark and a little scary. I stared into it, a long dark tunnel probably 100 yards or more to the other end. It felt like the kind of place you may get mugged, or worse. And yet, I could see to the other side where the glint of green and sunlight may lead me to my next big trout.

Making my way under the bridge, my surroundings grew darker. I saw a pile of blankets laying along the bank, a pair of underwear, litter—and who knows what else? I wasn't taking time to examine it. My imagination started running wild wondering if I'd find a body or some hidden coven



artwork-Michael Kensinger

of Altoona vampires that stowed themselves in this darkness. “I need a light,” I whispered to myself, fumbling to grab my phone.

Much to my relief, my iPhone camera lit up the stones at my feet as I pressed ahead to reach another fishable section of stream. It was interesting to see how deep the barn swallows flew under the bridge, building a nest in almost cave-like darkness. They rasped at me and swooped by me with scissor-tails and elegant wings in strong disapproval of my presence.

At long last, I made my way into daylight again, looking behind me to assure myself that zombies had not been following me. Yet again, I was greeted by an army of barn swallows that were annoyed by my presence. I made haste in moving out of the nest zone to the next fishing hole, where deep clear water churned under gnarled roots of a maple tree.

The water was deep here, so deep in fact that I realized my waders were taking on water—and fast. With each step they grew heavy, and I quickly made my way to the shallows.

“Great,” I thought. “A tear in my waders.”

This was where I found another Kmart shopping cart and just missed another large trout that had been lurking beside it. But, another cast revealed a pair of Green Sunfish, with cadmium orange fin edges and turquoise marbling on the face. It was as though this shopping cart had provided a haven for the fish in this bend of the stream, as if, human recklessness had come full circle from eyesore to safe haven for fish from predation.

I guess since Altoona doesn’t have a Great Barrier Reef, the best we can do is a Kmart shopping cart submerged in a creek bed.

Eventually, the stream got so deep I had to stop. I couldn’t believe I didn’t catch a fish in this massive and deep hole, but I think the fish were held lower than my spinner was reaching. Also, the presence of herons, kingfishers and other avian predators in such clear water conditions had driven the fish downward. So, I just stood there—breathing. The soft sound of car tires, the occasional beep of a horn and the smell of Altoona’s many restaurants drifting over the water.

The water held some expected diversity, with schools of Fallfish, the occasional panfish and a large White Sucker, which I observed swimming up a shallow riffle, back and fin exposed like a scaled torpedo. I saw Creek Chubs and one male River Chub with spawning tubercles. I also thought I saw another species, but I’ll save that for another day. Let me see if I can prove it first.

Graffiti? Shopping carts? Traffic? The fish didn’t notice. They simply lived where clean water flowed, insects hatched and deep pools offered refuge. Beneath bridges, beside restaurants and behind shopping centers, wild trout continued to thrive in a place most people never think to look. The next time I’m craving a few hours of fishing close to home, I’ll know exactly where to find some downtown browns. ☐



artwork-Michael Kensinger



Meet the Artist: Discover more about Michael Kensinger’s artistic process and what inspires and influences his artwork by scanning the “Video Story” QR code.

Video Story:



THE ADVENTURE DOESN'T STOP
WITH A FISHING LICENSE

Keep going.

The fall scenery is breathtaking in Pennsylvania, so get out there and breathe it in. Buy your launch permit, registration renewal or fishing license today at HuntFish.PA.gov.

ExplorePAWaters.com

photo-Linda Stager



photo-PFBC archives

Take the family camping and fishing to create lasting memories.



photo-Linda Stäger

Visiting Elk, Cameron, Clinton, Clearfield and Potter counties may provide opportunities to see elk.



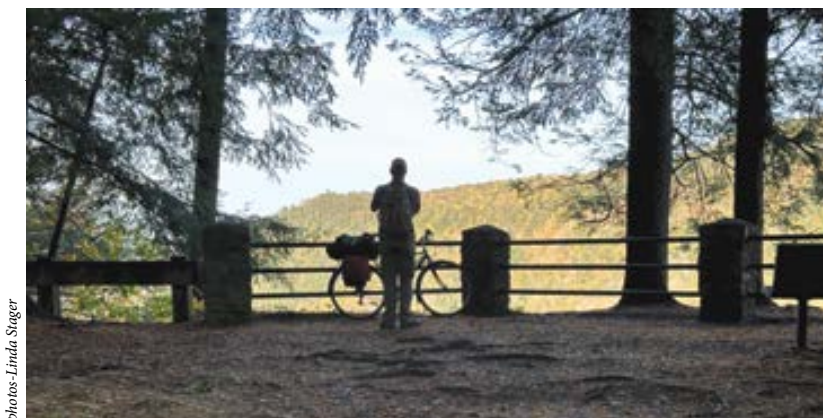
photo-Linda Stäger

Visit a waterfall on a fishing trip this fall.



photo-Linda Stäger

Exploring the outdoors can lead to memorable photography or video opportunities.



photos-Linda Slinger



Assembling the Ultimate Live Bait Fishing Kit

by **Darl Black**

photos by the author

Whether you routinely or occasionally use live bait, a complete live bait kit puts everything at your fingertips. Include hooks of proper size and style based on the target species, sinkers, an assortment of floats and rigging accessories. Packed into a 14-inch x 9-inch tackle utility box with adjustable dividers, you're prepared for all popular species. ☐

Hooks

Leave hooks in their 3-inch x 4-inch labeled packets, stacking packets in a larger compartment.

- Trout: #12 salmon egg hooks for eggs and larvae; #10 long-shank Aberdeen hooks for threading worms and grasshoppers; #6 circle hooks for large creek minnows directed at big Brown Trout
- Sunfish, crappies, perch: #8 through #4 Aberdeen hooks
- Walleyes, White Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Largemouth Bass: #4 through #1/0 freshwater standard-wire circle hooks when baiting with large Fathead Minnows, creek baitfish, crayfish or hellgrammites
- Northern Pike, hybrid Striped Bass, Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, Bowfin: #1/0 through #5/0 stout wire circle hooks paired with large shiners, chubs, frozen shrimp or cut bait
- Carp: #6 or #4 standard bait hooks (not circle hooks) when using corn kernels, crayfish tails, crawlers or dough balls





Sinkers

- Container of assorted splitshot (mine are in a 35mm film canister)
- Assortment of egg sinkers up to 1 ounce for bottom rigs
- Assortment of bell-style sinkers ¼- to ¾-ounce for drifting, backtrolling and river current rigs

Floats

- Variety of floats including weighted clip-ons, slip floats and super-sensitive waggler style slip floats

Live Bait Jigs

- ¼-ounce stand up lead heads for ripping live bait along a weedline; colorful floating jig heads used to position live bait above bottom-hugging chara or similar short vegetation carpet

Accessories

- Roller swivels, interlocking snap swivels, 3-way swivels and bobber stops/beads to construct various rigs in a 2.5-inch x 3-inch utility, tucked in the larger utility



A Brown Trout caught on a minnow fished on a #6 circle hook.

⬅ The ultimate live bait fishing kit has everything you need in one stowaway utility case.



Corry State Fish Hatchery Celebrates 150 Years

photo-PFBC archives

by Mike Parker
Communications Director
Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

It was easy to get caught up in all the recent fanfare surrounding the various America250 celebrations across the country, especially here in Pennsylvania. Home to such landmark historical events as the signing of the Declaration of Independence and United States Constitution, to President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, the eyes of the nation have long been focused on the Keystone State.

While it's hard to compete with the founding of an entire nation, Pennsylvania itself is rich with history within its own borders, and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) is proud when the agency is part of it.

This fall, we are excited to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Corry State Fish Hatchery (SFH), Erie County.

Originally known as the "Western State Fish Hatchery," the later renamed Corry SFH opened in 1876 after Governor John Hartranft and the General Assembly appropriated \$2,000 for its purchase from a local landowner. While a small, private Brook Trout hatchery had already been established on the property by its previous owner, an additional \$3,000 was immediately invested by the Commonwealth for upgrades including a new hatch house. The facility has since become the PFBC's longest continuously operating facility within the SFH system.

"Those were truly humble beginnings in Corry, but it has become an important piece of our hatchery system and its longevity is

historic,” said Brian Niewinski, PFBC Bureau of Hatcheries Director. “Over the course of 150 years, just imagine the tens of millions of fish that have been raised at that facility and stocked into our waterways for the enjoyment of anglers. You’ve got to believe that multiple generations of anglers have made priceless memories and maybe even caught their very first fish, because of the fish production that has occurred at Corry alone.”

According to historical records, in its early years, the Corry SFH produced a variety of coldwater species including Brook Trout, Brown Trout, Rainbow Trout and Lake Trout and several warmwater species including Yellow Perch, Northern Pike, Whitefish and King Salmon. Even frogs were once raised at the hatchery to be used as a meat source for fish food. At the time, Brown Trout were referred to as European trout, and the hatchery received its first batch of 10,000 eggs from Germany in 1886.

In modern day, Corry SFH exclusively raises coldwater species and accounts for approximately 10% of the PFBC’s total adult stocked trout production statewide. In 2026, eight full-time employees and one seasonal employee work to annually produce 330,000 Brown Trout, Rainbow Trout and golden Rainbow Trout, which are stocked into public waterways.

“While many things have changed in 150 years, from the type of fish we raise to the modern equipment we use every day, one thing that has always been consistent is the commitment of our staff,” said Craig Lucas, Corry SFH Manager. “It takes a family-like dedication to operate a hatchery of this size, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. It’s fulfilling to know that the work we do is a direct benefit to the anglers of Pennsylvania, and it’s a piece of history we’re very proud to carry on.”

The Corry SFH is poised to maintain its place in history through continued equipment upgrades and innovation in fish culture techniques. Recent and planned improvements to the facility include enhanced water source circulation systems, wastewater management and biosecurity efforts including bird netting to prevent predation of fish in exterior raceways. □

Corry SFH:



Corry State Fish Hatchery

13365 Route 6, Corry, PA, 16407

Open to visitors daily from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

photos-Pennsylvania Report of State Fish Commissioners of Fisheries 1900



Western State Fish Hatchery in Corry, Erie County.



The interior of the hatchery building at Western State Fish Hatchery.



The trout ponds and hatchery building at Western State Fish Hatchery.



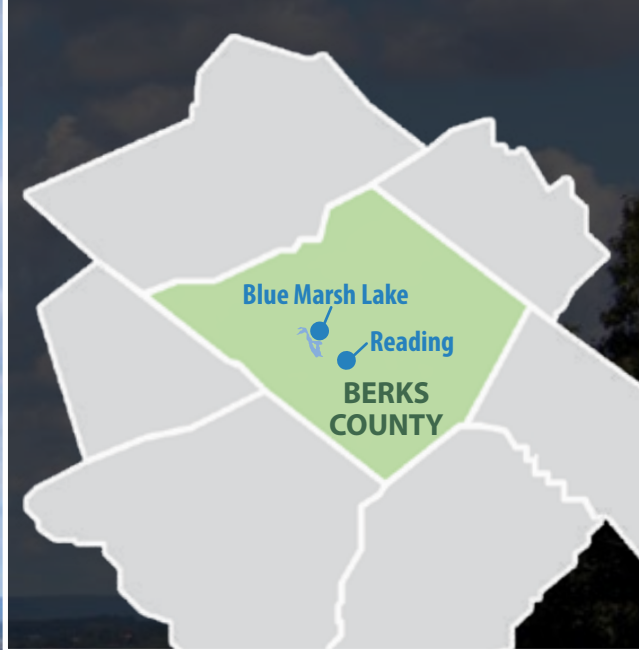
Lake Life— Blue Marsh Lake



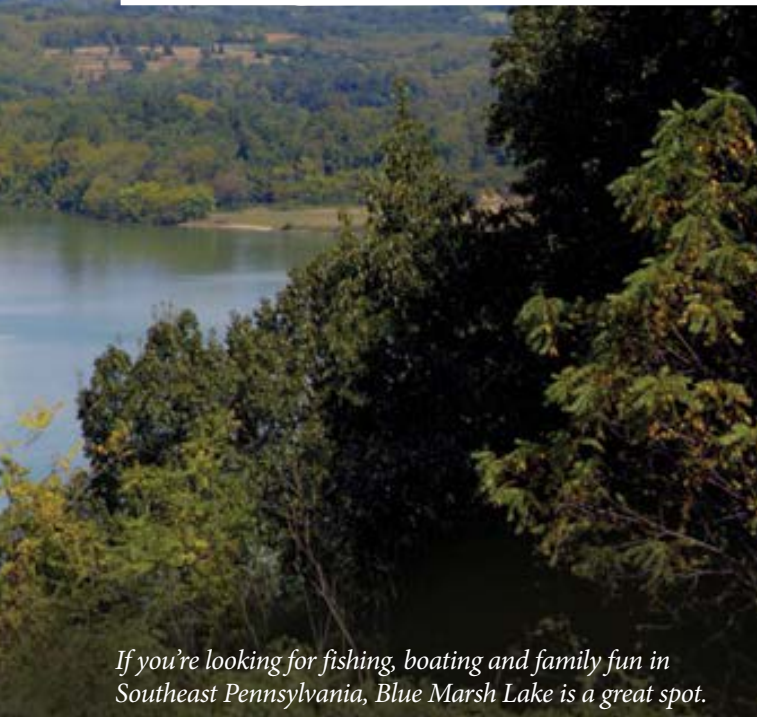
by Carl Haensel

If you're looking for fishing, boating and family fun in Southeast Pennsylvania, Blue Marsh Lake, near Reading, Berks County, is a great spot. From time on the shore and picnics by the water, to pleasure boating or top-notch fishing action, Blue Marsh Lake has it all. Constructed by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) between 1974 and 1979, the lake occupies the upper valley of Tulpehocken Creek, a stream that's a tributary to the Schuylkill River. Large by Pennsylvania standards, it has over 36 miles of trails that run through USACE land, and 2,552 acres of Pennsylvania Game Commission State Game Lands are adjacent, offering ample room to hike, fish, hunt and explore.

Three boat ramps serve the lake, with the lower two, State Hill and Dry Brooks, offering ample parking and easy access to launch boats of all sizes on the water. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC)-owned Sheidy boat launch area is located on the upper end of the lake, and Union Canal Paddle Launch is off Pennsylvania Route 183. All launches are free to use. Both anglers and boaters should note that the upper end of the lake is regulated as a slow, no-wake zone. It's a prime area for fishing, with Largemouth Bass a popular target in this section of the lake. The lake is managed under the Big Bass Program Special Regulations, and both Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass must be at least 15 inches long to keep. The program's success on Blue Marsh Lake is evident with high numbers of bass. Additionally, the lake hosts great fishing for abundant Bluegills



The Dry Brooks launch area is a great place to start your fishing trip on Blue Marsh Lake, near Reading, Berks County. Head out for Largemouth Bass, stripers, panfish and many other species.



If you're looking for fishing, boating and family fun in Southeast Pennsylvania, Blue Marsh Lake is a great spot.



The stilling basin below the Blue Marsh Dam is a popular shore fishing spot at the lake and provides hiking and trail access.

and Channel Catfish. For anglers looking to target large fish, the lake boasts a successful Muskellunge stocking and management program. Fisheries staff have surveyed fish as large as 44 inches long. Walleyes are also stocked in the lake, along with Striped Bass and hybrid Striped Bass. Fishing for stripers is popular and offers shots at some big fish as well. They roam the deeper areas off points and structure on the lower end of the lake around the island and toward the dam. Alewives are a common forage fish in the lake and serve as food for many gamefish. Using lures that imitate them can be a great way to get in on the action.

A large-scale PFBC fish habitat project was completed in 2023, placing approximately 350 wooden lake habitat structures to provide refuge and spawning habitat for Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass and other species. Rock structures were placed along the

shoreline to stabilize more than 1,500 linear feet of shoreline that was severely eroded. This partnership project with the USACE and Berks County Conservation District was funded by a \$134,000 grant from Bass Pro Shops.

Boaters looking for prime recreational opportunities can open up the throttle on larger watercraft on the lower end of the lake, which is a popular playground for water sports all seasons. There is no horsepower restriction on Blue Marsh Lake. Jet skis, ski boats and other watercraft have plenty of room to roam when conditions are good. If you want an easier time launching and parking, plan to arrive early on prime summer and holiday weekends. Peak times can be busy, and it's worth planning ahead. If you're looking to paddle, try exploring the upper end of the lake, where the slow, no-wake restrictions allow

photos-Carl Hansen



photo-Carl Haensel

Paddlers enjoy exploring coves and other hidden areas of Blue Marsh Lake, especially where no boat wakes are allowed, making for a quiet, immersive experience.

for calm, wave-free boating and excellent wildlife viewing. This is a good spot for kayak and canoe anglers to fish. Smaller coves are good for exploring and watching birds and other wildlife. More than 8 miles long, there's space for everyone to have fun at Blue Marsh Lake.

On land, the Dry Brooks Day Use Area is a great area to picnic and swim, with a beach, changing facilities and plenty of space to spread out along the lake. Loaner life jackets are available for safely using the lake. Hikers looking to explore or anglers looking to get away from the crowds can use the lengthy trails around the lake. The Blue Marsh Lake Trail circles the lake and offers 30 miles of paths to explore. More than 30 parking areas allow visitors to spread out and reach sections of the lake that are far from other visitors. Some trails cover significant elevation changes and offer stunning views of the lake. At high points like the entrance area on State Hill, wildlife watchers often watch migrating raptors and other birds. The southwest arm of the lake fed by Spring Creek is one of the more remote areas and can feel removed from the rest of Blue Marsh Lake, especially on busy weekends. Whether on foot or by boat, explore this area to get away from the busy atmosphere of the main lake. ☐



photo-PFBC archives



photo-PFBC archives

A 2023 habitat improvement project placed 350 fish-attracting habitat structures in Blue Marsh Lake.

ROCK & LOG

LEAF PEEPING AND PADDLING!

As tree leaves change colors and air temperatures cool, fall is a great time to paddle in Pennsylvania. Late September through October are often the best times to observe changing foliage. Here are some waterways that provide great paddling and leaf peeping, too.

- Allegheny River
- Bald Eagle Creek
- Clarion River
- Delaware River
- Juniata River
- Pine Creek
- Susquehanna River
- Tionesta Creek
- Yellow Breeches Creek
- Youghiogheny River

PA Water Trails:



Float Plan

Always make a float plan before hitting the water. A float plan is an itinerary for the entire trip. The float plan provides the location of the start and end points, where stops may occur and other trip specific details. Give the completed float plan to a family member or friend before the trip takes place.

Float Plan:



EXPLORE PA WATERS



Rock & Log:

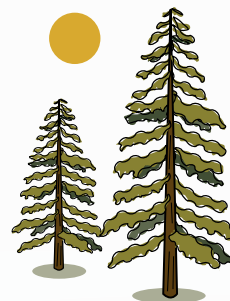


FishandBoat.com

Help Rock find Log along the trail.
Color the picture, in marker.



Trees are vital for our waterways. Trees regulate water temperature, filter out pollution, prevent stream bank erosion and provide habitat and food. Some fish, like trout, require cooler water temperatures to survive. Trout streams rely on the shade from trees to keep the water cool. Our state tree, the eastern hemlock, is especially important, because it provides shade with its dense canopies.



Some water trails offer camping. The Pine Creek Water Trail is one of Pennsylvania's most scenic and historic water trails. Beginning in Ansonia, Pine Creek Water Trail flows through the majestic PA Grand Canyon, eventually entering the West Branch Susquehanna River at its confluence in Jersey Shore. Campgrounds operated by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources can be found along the creek.



OUTDOOR MOMENT

NC
PA!

THE PINE CREEK RAIL TRAIL

**PENNSYLVANIA'S
2026 TRAIL
OF THE YEAR**

photo-Linda Stager

Save the Date!



There's no better time to experience Ligonier, Westmoreland County, than during Fort Ligonier Days on October 9-11, 2026, at the national historic site of Fort Ligonier, with additional activities taking place throughout the town. Fort Ligonier Days commemorates the Battle of Fort Ligonier that took place on October 12, 1758. Watch battle reenactments and enjoy 18th century-inspired artisans. Then, fish Loyalhanna Creek—a 1.55-mile Delayed Harvest Artificial Lure Only, Keystone Select Stocked Trout Water that starts at State Route 711. ☐

photo-Alex Byers

NATURAL CONNECTIONS

WHAT TO LOOK FOR
IN SEPTEMBER AND
OCTOBER THROUGHOUT
PENNSYLVANIA.

photos-PFBC archives



COMMON EASTERN BUMBLEBEE

Bombus impatiens

Bees fill up on pollen and nectar in preparation for their hibernation, called diapause.



COMMON MILKWEED

Asclepias syriaca

Goes to seed in September and October. The fluffy seeds can travel several miles.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER Highlights



NW
PA!

TRAIL FEST

Visit Jakes Rocks Trail Fest in Warren, Warren County, on September 18-19, 2026. This annual celebration brings mountain bikers, hikers and nature lovers together at Jakes Rocks Overlook in Allegheny National Forest. The festival features guided trail rides and runs, music, local vendors and family activities. Wrap up your day with fishing on the Allegheny Reservoir.

Register:



SW
PA!

POTATOFEST

Celebrate potatoes and more on September 26, 2026, at the 35th Annual PotatoFest, Ebensburg, Cambria County—the second largest county in Pennsylvania for potato production. You'll find food, craft and artisan vendors, plus activities and entertainment. Bring your fishing gear to Lake Rowena, the Ebensburg Reservoirs or access Stewart Run on State Game Lands 079 to fish PA Wild Trout Waters just outside of town. Learn more at ebensburgpa.com/potatofest.



Visit PotatoFest.

NC
PA!

FALL FISHING

Roll into Lock Haven, Clinton County, surrounded by fishing and paddling opportunities. Check out good food and boat races at the September 4-7, 2026, Labor Day Regatta. Then, go fishing or paddling at Bald Eagle State Park or Black Moshannon State Park.

Learn More:



SC
PA!

FRUIT AND FISH

Head out to South Mountain Fairgrounds, Biglerville, Adams County, this October for a great Southcentral PA tradition—the National Apple Harvest Festival. The festival will be held on October 3-4, 2026, and October 10-11, 2026. On your way to or from the festival, visit the Huntsdale State Fish Hatchery or Mountain Creek in Pine Grove Furnace State Park, Cumberland County. For more information and to buy tickets, visit appleharvest.com.



NE
PA!

FAIR AND FISHING

Visit the Bloomsburg Fair from September 25-October 3, 2026, and experience Pennsylvania's largest agricultural fair—a tradition dating back to 1855. The fair is known for live entertainment, agricultural exhibits, thrilling rides and food. Beyond the fairgrounds, visitors can enjoy fishing the North Branch Susquehanna River for Channel Catfish, Smallmouth Bass or Walleyes.

Read More:



SE
PA!

FALL SMALLIES

Enjoy a weekend featuring food, music and activities at the Peddler's Village OctoberFeast on October 10-11, 2026. Stroll among larger-than-life scarecrows through October 25, 2026, part of the 47th Annual Scarecrows in the Village. Peddler's Village shops will be open until 8:00 p.m. on Saturday. Admission and parking are free. After the festival, head to the Delaware River and cast around the New Hope area for Channel Catfish, Smallmouth Bass and Walleyes.



Register for Our Upcoming Events!



COMMON PAW PAW

Asimina triloba

Ripens in September and October. It's one of the few native fruit trees in Pennsylvania.



EASTERN AMERICAN JACK-O'-LANTERN

Omphalotus illudens

Fruiting season nears its end in October. These mushrooms are toxic to people and bioluminescent.



ELK

Cervus canadensis

Rut takes place in September and October. Bulls bugle and challenge other males during this time.

PFBC ON PATROL

Waterways Conservation Officers (WCOs) participate in Operation Dry Water every year to bring awareness to the dangers associated with Boating Under the Influence. A safety check is conducted on the Three Rivers in Pittsburgh, Allegheny County.



WCOs in the Southwest Region monitor boating activity during a fireworks display to help ensure safety during the event.



photos-PFBC archives

While on field training, Cadet David J. Derkitis interacts with the owner of an antique boat/car. The vessel was registered and had all the required safety equipment to be operated on the water.

2026 Pennsylvania Envirothon

The 2026 Pennsylvania Envirothon champions are from Penncrest High School, Delaware County. Students from 64 Pennsylvania counties participated in this year's event. Teams represented the best of high school teens who competed at a county level. The state champions represented Pennsylvania at the NCF-Envirothon international competition at Mississippi State University in July. More than 45 teams from the United States, Canada and China competed. ☐

Erratum

In the July/August 2026 Pennsylvania Angler & Boater magazine, the photo credit on page 37 was incorrectly attributed to Linda Stager. The correct photo credit is Annette Haines.



photo-courtesy of PA Envirothon

Front row (left to right): April Kim, Hannah Bowen, Ethan Krall, Sabine Davitt-Weldon and Aaron McAnany. Back row (left to right): Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission staff Matt Truesdale, Robert Caccese, Andrew Desko and Miranda Smith.





➔ **Bellamie Stevens**, age 4, reeled in this large Rainbow Trout while fishing Muncy Creek, Lycoming County. She cast and reeled in the fish all by herself.

Explore PA Waters

Share photos of your fishing and boating adventures. Remember to wear a properly fitting life jacket if you're on the water. And, make sure it's fully zippered and buckled.

Share Your Adventure:



PENNSYLVANIA AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

RED-BELLIED SNAKE

Storeria occipitomaculata

The Red-bellied Snake is secretive and often goes undetected by anglers and outdoor enthusiasts. A small snake, adults rarely exceed 8- to 10-inches long. The Red-bellied Snake is gray, black, brown or rusty red with stripes and a black head. It has a red, orange or yellow belly and prefers forested areas and bogs.



EASTERN FENCE LIZARD

Sceloporus undulatus

The Eastern Fence Lizard is a small lizard (4- to 7-inches long) that spends a lot of time in trees—hunting, resting and seeking safety from predators. Eastern Fence Lizards are gray to brown with a white or pale blue belly and dark, wavy crossbars on the back. Eastern Fence Lizards love sunny areas of grassy or open woodland.



EASTERN MUSK TURTLE

Sternotherus odoratus

The Eastern Musk Turtle is an aquatic turtle common to vegetated ponds, lakes and slow sections of streams and rivers. Eastern Musk Turtles climb trees and logs to bask in the sun but remain mostly hidden. As a defense against threats, musk turtles secrete a foul-smelling fluid when disturbed. The shell is often covered by a mat of algae.



