



photo-Marilyn Black

Do you dream about catching a phenomenal new Pennsylvania State-Record Fish? It could happen. Prepare now, so when you land that beauty, you promptly take the required steps to ensure its registration.

As outdoor writers, my husband, Darl, and I are often called upon to assist anglers who believe they have caught a potential new state record. We have enjoyed photographing and chatting with the anglers to share in their excitement.

Tips provided by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) staff and by the anglers (some became state-record holders; some did not) are gathered here, so you may use wintertime to acquaint yourself with the rules and people involved in the process.

## **Pennsylvania State-Record Fish lists and rules**

The PFBC website, **FishandBoat.com**, includes information, instructions, and a list of current Pennsylvania State-Record Fish as well as information on the Angler Awards program. According to Carl Richardson, the record fish program coordinator, “We recommend that a

person pursuing a record should learn the qualifying weights and the current rules. For instance, recent rule modifications include that the candidate fish now must be at least 2 ounces heavier than the standing state record.” Having a packet in your vehicle or boat containing the current record list, application forms, and detailed instructions will come in handy and help you avoid errors.

The most time-sensitive period is from when you land the trophy fish until the official weight is printed from a scale that is certified legal for trade. The briefer that time interval, the less fish weight loss will occur.

But, just because a nearby grocery store or market has a certified scale does not necessarily mean they will be open, have scales large enough, or be willing to perform this unusual task. Fish such as Common Carp, Channel

# *Be Prepared to Register a Pennsylvania State-Record Fish*

*by Marilyn Black*

photo-courtesy of Kirk Rudzinski



Kirk Rudzinski, Erie, caught this 3-pound Yellow Perch while fishing in Lake Erie, Erie County, in 2021.

Catfish, Flathead Catfish, Lake Trout, Muskellunge, and Northern Pike may be large for such scales. If these fish are what you want to bring to the scales, it would be wise to visit businesses like feed stores or bulk material suppliers to explore such possibilities.

“After the weight is definite, the angler should carefully store the fish in a freezer without removing any of its organs. The next phone call is to your Law

photo-courtesy of Richard Nicholson



Richard Nicholson, Fayette County, was fishing from the bank of the Youghiogheny River with his son, Richard Nicholson Jr., when he caught this 18-pound, 1-ounce Walleye.



photo-courtesy of Jonathan Pierce

In 2020, Jonathan Pierce, Philadelphia, caught this 56-pound, 3-ounce Flathead Catfish from the Schuylkill River. The catch set a new Pennsylvania record.

Enforcement Region Office, so they can arrange for a representative of the PFBC to inspect the fish in person; that is who makes its species identification,” said Richardson.

“The bottom line is, if you anticipate catching a record-breaking fish, have a game plan—know the form, know the rules, and know where you will take it to get it weighed,” said Richardson.

Anglers who have been successful at obtaining state-record certification for fish have planned ahead, took appropriate steps, and followed the procedures. They figured out how to promptly obtain witnessed weight measurements and photos, and they retained the fish intact for examination by agency staff. By planning ahead, you can carry the current lists, rules, and forms with you and know where to find people willing to put huge fish on their certified scales when the fish of your dreams is in your hands. ☐