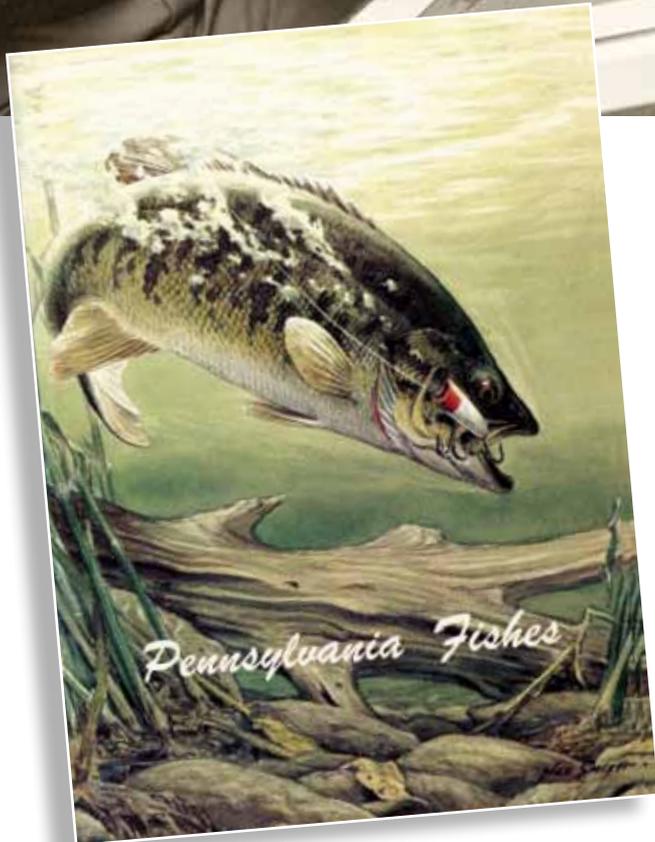


Ned Smith and
his wife, Marie.



photo-courtesy of Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art



The cover of the first edition of the
Pennsylvania Fishes identification guide.

Ned Smith

Wildlife Artist and Illustrator

by Scott Weidensaul and
Alexis Dow Campbell

The late Ned Smith—a Pennsylvanian often ranked among the greatest American wildlife artists—is most often associated with gamebirds and mammals, especially grouse and deer, which this Dauphin County native loved to hunt as well as paint.

Smith—who died in 1985 and whose work continues to generate interest among both collectors and outdoors enthusiasts—was equally adept at painting fish. In fact, his first professional job, the beginning of a 45-year career as a wildlife artist and illustrator, was a cover painting in January 1940 for what was then *Pennsylvania Angler*, depicting common streamside birds.

In the 1960s, he wrote and illustrated a long-running column for the magazine called “School’s Out” about fishing and aquatic life, aimed at kids. And in 1981, his painting of a leaping brook trout with a bucktail streamer in its mouth graced the magazine in honor of its 50th anniversary—one of many covers he created. This painting was also used as the cover of the November/December 2006 issue of *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* in celebration of the magazine’s 75th anniversary.

In between, Ned Smith painted fish, reptiles and amphibians for the Commission countless times, including the first edition of the *Pennsylvania Fishes* identification guide, as well as for national periodicals like *Field & Stream* and *Sports Afield*, books by angling authors like the legendary A. J. McClane and private commissions for fellow anglers and writers like Sam Slaymaker.

Smith’s approach to painting fish was the same as his approach to painting any form of wildlife—a fidelity to the subject born of endless observation. His friend and colleague Jim Bashline recalled Ned catching his first Atlantic salmon in New Brunswick.

“Before we went to sleep that night, I remember him saying ‘Say, did you notice that the maxillary bone on that fish did not extend as far to the rear as on most other salmon? You know, I’ve never seen that pointed out in reference books before.’”

Smith’s journals—which he maintained almost daily for more than 50 years, and which formed the basis for his beloved book *Gone for the Day*—are full of accounts of his fishing and fish watching, especially fly casting the streams of central Pennsylvania with his wife Marie and floating the Susquehanna River that flowed not far from his studio.



photo-Art Michaels



April 25, 1962: Quite a few sooty mayflies emerging along White Deer Creek—looked like Black Quills, about size 12. No fish rising, but I caught two, and another angler [caught] five on dry flies. Neither Marie nor I could do anything with wets or nymphs.

Much of the year, Ned was content to pull all-nighters in the studio, if needed, to keep up with the endless deadlines of a working illustrator. But, when the fish were biting, he had no problem putting down his brush and heading to the water. He never left home without his attention to detail, however.

May 13, 1962: Hordes of small (#12-14) mottled dirty-brown caddisflies emerging on Penn's Creek. Underside of wings and body sooty, egg sack dirty greenish. Lots of small trout rising. Caught five but missed 15 or more.

No body of water meant as much to Ned (and Marie, who was, Ned would be the first to admit, his equal when it came to fishing) as the Susquehanna River near their hometown of Millersburg—and no fish made their rod hands as twitchy as smallmouth bass. Smith's journals are studded with entries about bass-filled days on the river and give plenty of evidence of his fishing ability.

September 27, 1962: Today, I caught a 19¼ inch, four-pound bass from a brushpile above Inglenook Falls on a trip with Lefty Kreh. We were drifting along, two canoes hooked together while eating lunch, Lefty casting lazily. He missed the brushpile by eight feet, so I threw one a few feet closer. The bass hit the plug as soon as it touched the water, and I had a heck of a time keeping him out of the brush.

That entry was followed by a list of 12 smallmouth bass he and Marie caught that summer in the 15- to 21-inch range, including a 21¼ inch smallmouth bass that weighed 4 pounds, 13 ounces—evidence of how seriously the Smiths took their bass fishing.

Today, the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art in Millersburg includes, within its \$2.5 million collection of

The Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art in Millersburg includes many examples of Ned Smith's fish and fishing art.

original artwork, many examples of Ned's fish and fishing art, a small part of which is a permanent, rotating exhibit in the Center's newest gallery.

The Center also sits less than a mile from the Susquehanna River and boasts 500 acres of forest through which flows Wiconisco Creek, an approved trout water, making it a good destination for anglers as well as art lovers.

The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's Delayed-Harvest, Artificial-Lures-Only section of Wiconisco Creek begins right behind the Ned Smith Center. Anglers are welcome to park in the Center's parking lot and walk down to the creek for a satisfying day of fishing in scenic central Pennsylvania.

For additional information on the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art, visit www.nedsmithcenter.org. The Center's website includes a current program schedule and an online store featuring Ned Smith prints and other merchandise. Also, follow the Center on Facebook ([facebook.com/nedsmithcenter](https://www.facebook.com/nedsmithcenter)) and on Twitter (@nedsmithcenter). ☐

Scott Weidensaul is a member of the Ned Smith Center Board, and Alexis Dow Campbell is the director of creative programming for the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art.

