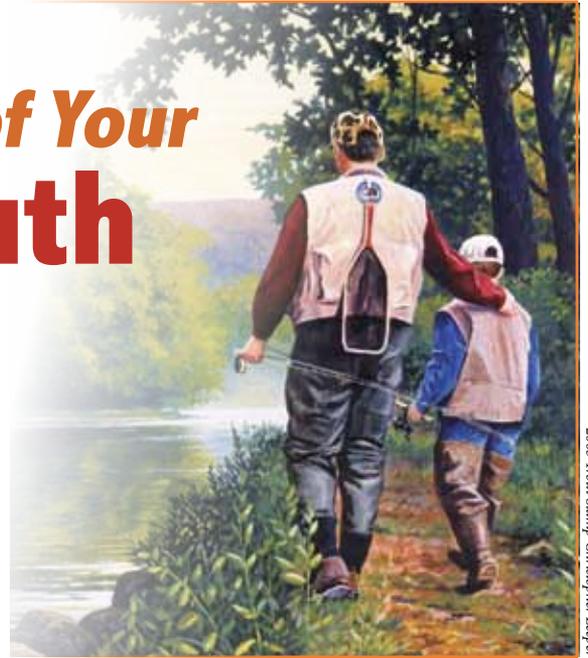


# Getting the Most out of Your Mentored Youth Fishing Days Experience

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2003 Trout Stamp-Christopher Leeper



photo-Arnida Daniel

On a Saturday in March 2013, the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission held its first Mentored Youth Trout Fishing Day in the southcentral and south-eastern regions of Pennsylvania. The event was held at 11 lakes and a section of the Lehigh Canal on a mostly sunny but windy

and chilly day. Such weather is to be expected in late March, but this did not dampen the spirits of most attendees. Many fish were caught, memories were made and children and their mentors enjoyed the day together fishing and learning.

The Commission had numerous staff engaged to perform onsite registrations, assist as needed and collect observations of this pilot event. For 2014, two Mentored Youth Fishing Days are being held, one on March 22 and the other on April 5. For more information, see page 64.

For a successful experience, we offer the following suggestions based on some tried and true practices and our observations of the 2013 event.

- Prepare for the weather.
  - ✓ Bring extra clothes including a windbreaker or rain jacket (even if it is not raining), warm footwear and winter boots for the kids.

- ✓ Wear warm hats, gloves and include disposable hand warmers in each pocket.
- ✓ Carry an extra pair of shoes and dry socks in case a little one steps into the water by accident.
- Bring snacks.
- Take a warm beverage like hot chocolate to stay warm and bottled water to stay hydrated.
- Remember something to sit on such as a bucket, folding chair, hot seat or cushion.
- Bring along simple rod holders (forked sticks from downed wood, not live trees).
- Get baits such as paste baits, wax worms, meal worms and salmon eggs.
- Include lures such as small spoons and spinners. These can work well in certain lakes if water temperatures are warm enough, greater than 50-degrees F. Otherwise, stick with paste baits.
- Use a spinning or baitcast rod that is 6 to 7 feet long, paired with a reel with 4- to 10-pound-test line.
- Use size 8 or 10 baitholder hooks and splitshot in sizes BB and B.
- Take along small, round floats (1 inch or less in diameter) or weighted, elongated floats (1½ to 2½ inches long).
- Don't forget old hand towels to dry hands after handling fish. If you plan to release the fish, don't grab it with a towel. This removes the necessary mucus coating from the fish's skin.
- Be patient.
- Remember a camera or camera phone. Photos of the day and the day's catch will help young anglers tell their fishing tales to family and friends and can be a treasured keepsake.
- Observe where and how fish are being caught and attempt to duplicate that approach. Match the bait, color, depth, distance from shore and other factors of those catching fish. Don't be afraid to ask others what they are catching fish on.
- Move around and look for pockets of biting fish.

photo-Amidea Daniel



photo-Andrew L. Shiels



photo-Amidea Daniel



photo-Amidea Daniel

- Wait until later in the day. On a sunny day, the water often warms up a few degrees. The water reaches its warmest temperature in the afternoon. This is a prime time for the trout to start biting and was observed at a number of lakes in 2013. Crowds naturally lessen later in the day as well, which may allow a little more room to spread out and search for fish.
- Provide lots of positive praise and reinforcement for a good cast, being patient or learning how to bait the hook.
- Take the time to briefly explain the “how” and “why” of rigging up and casting.
- Model good fishing behavior and manners.
- Remember that this is a day for the kids to experience the fun of fishing, the strengthening of bonds between friends and family and the possible start of a pastime for life. Observe your young angler and know when the time has come to call it a day to ensure the experience

is a positive one rather than an endurance challenge. Everyone will be happier.

Put these tips into action, and you will maximize your chances of catching some fish, having fun, creating a positive experience for your mentored youth and making memories. ☑



photo-Dave Mikko

**To participate, anglers 16 years of age or older (adult anglers) must possess a valid Pennsylvania fishing license and current trout/salmon permit and be accompanied by a youth (less than 16 years of age) who has obtained a permit or voluntary license from the Commission.**