

Beaver River



by Charles N. Cantella

photos by the author

In western Pennsylvania, almost halfway between Erie, Erie County, and Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, flows the Beaver River. It flows from north to south without many significant changes in its course. Originating near New Castle, Lawrence County, where the Mahoning River and Shenango River meet, the Beaver River flows south for 21 miles where it joins the Ohio River between the towns of Rochester, Beaver County, and Bridgewater, Beaver County. As it winds its way south, it flows through many of the historical coal and steel towns of Lawrence and Beaver counties. Along the way, many other streams feed the Beaver River including Bradys Run, McKinley Run, Crows Run and Connoquenessing Creek to name a few. While there are fish throughout the river, I focus on the section from the New Brighton Dam (a.k.a. Townsend Dam) downstream to its confluence with the Ohio River.

The area in and around the Beaver River was settled by Native Americans long before Europeans set foot on the continent. After the Europeans settled, the Native Americans from the east began to move west, joining tribes already here, creating a large settlement near present-day Rochester. According to local historian Bernie Catalucci of the Beaver County Historical Research & Landmarks Foundation, the local Native American community was given the English name of “Logstown” (some sources refer to it as Logans Town). Logstown consisted of up to 10 different tribes who joined together as they slowly moved west to avoid the European wave from the east. These

tribes included: Seneca, Mohawk and Delaware, among others. They were farmers, hunters and trappers who led a relatively stationary lifestyle with more permanent settlements than the more well-known and wide ranging tribes of the West.

The Beaver River is a tale of two different waterways. Where you go depends on what you want to experience. From the New Brighton Dam in New Brighton, Beaver County, down to the Ohio River, you will find ample access for parking, launching or fishing from shore. Above the New Brighton Dam, river access and parking is harder to find. Despite rolling through some major population centers and through some serious industrial areas, the Beaver River yielded some tremendous fish. In 2013, Ronald Krachinsky pulled a 42-pound Flathead Catfish out of the river. It was the second largest Flathead Catfish caught in Pennsylvania that year. Local angler Tim Reddington confirmed that he regularly sees Flathead



Beaver River, Beaver County.

Catfish in the 40-pound range. As the proprietor of the Reddi Bait bait and tackle shop, Bridgewater, Reddington is in regular contact with anglers coming off of or heading to the river. In March of this year, I met with Reddington at his shop. We talked about the river, the fish and getting the word out to people to realize how great the fishing is in Beaver River. Reddi Bait sponsors a catfish tournament yearly.

Ideally, an angler should have access to a boat. At various points, the riverbed has boulders of varying sizes, which makes wading difficult. Other areas have softer, mud bottoms, which may also cause trouble for wading anglers. Wading is possible, just be cautious. Reddington recommends that new anglers to Beaver River try the fishing park, just below the New Brighton Dam. It has an Americans with Disabilities Act accessible ramp, a boat ramp and a long, cement fishing boardwalk that allows several anglers to cast from shore. When I stopped by to check out the fishing boardwalk, I met Dan and Samantha. They were fishing cold (mid 40-degree F) and high water following two days of rain. They told me that they generally do well at New Brighton Dam, with the best fishing being in the morning and at dusk during the summer. Last summer, Dan caught his personal best catfish. While it is not in the 40-pound range, he was excited and has seen bigger fish taken from the river, which makes him want to fish more.

Beaver River also hosts hybrid striped bass, Common Carp, Freshwater Drum, Northern Pike, Saugers, Smallmouth Bass and Walleyes. But, catfish, in general, and Flathead Catfish, in particular, are the main attraction.

What makes this area such a hotspot? To start with, the mighty Ohio River provides a huge buffet for fish to gorge on. When fish want to get out of the current of the Ohio River, Beaver River offers slower currents. For migratory fish such as Walleyes, the New Brighton Dam presents the farthest upriver migration location, effectively creating a pod of fish of various species.

When the sun starts dipping, grab some rods and head to the Beaver River for some big fish action. ☐



This catfish was caught from the Beaver River, Beaver County.



The New Brighton Fishing Park has an Americans with Disabilities Act accessible ramp.

Beaver County Historical Research & Landmarks Foundation

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Beaver River Water Trail

A helpful map for anglers, boaters and kayakers is available at www.water.ohiorivertrail.org/index.php/en/beaver-river-water-trail