The General Assembly, in the 1973-74 session, enacted a statute giving the Fish Commission purview over all coldblooded creatures in Pennsylvania. That was redefined in the Fish and Boat Code of 1980 to include all fish, amphibians, reptiles, and aquatic organisms. This was authority that the Fish Commission sought not only on its own sense of responsibility, but as mandated under the Federal Rare and Endangered Species Act of 1973, which requires that all forms of life must be protected by each state or be preempted by the federal establishment.

Following receipt of that authority, we appointed a Herpetological Advisory Committee of the acknowledged experts in amphibians and reptiles across the Commonwealth. They meet from time to time to advise the Commission of the status of various species, and make recommendations.

Thus, the eastern timber rattlesnake, which still has the status of "indeterminate" and is still the target of a number of organized hunts, became the subject of a regulation adopted by the Commission at the April 1984 meeting, to be effective January 1, 1985, including the following language: "Sacking contests, as defined in subsection (a) are prohibited. Reptiles and amphibians may not be confined without water or shade or otherwise physically abused or handled roughly. Free-handling of venomous reptiles is prohibited."

In recent years we've become aware of a number of persons suffering snakebites as the result of such contests. In one case, a hospital contacted us to find out who was going to pay the medical bills from someone's having been bitten.

We believe that these contests are inappropriate for the protection and management of the reptiles. Manipulation of these animals in sacking contests does nothing to further their protection, and it fosters attitudes and uses of these animals that is contrary to the sound management of these wildlife resources.

Although the sponsors of some of the snake hunts claim that these are educational to the public, we maintain that most of these events do not do much more than provide sources of funds for the local fire company, church or Scout troop, but also provide a forum for the masochistic traits for which some contestants need an outlet.

We continue to study the status of these venomous snakes with limited resources for such research; although most will agree that the populations are dangerously low, we have not yet been able to call them "threatened" or "endangered." We do not believe we should take the chance of extirpating any species by permitting the activities which we are now about to prohibit.

Consider the epilogue from a wonderful book, *The Great Auk*, by Allan W. Eckert:

"On June 3, 1844, on the island of Eldey, off the southwest coast of Iceland, the species of a large penguin-like bird, known as the great auk, became extinct from the face of the earth. This occurred when the last two living specimens were killed by Jon Brandsson and Sigouror Isleffson and the egg of these two birds was smashed by Ketil Ketilsson.

Sixty-two years later, William Beebe, the great naturalist and explorer, wrote: "The beauty and genius of a work of art may be reconceived, though its first material expression be destroyed; a vanished harmony may yet inspire the composer; BUT when the last individual of a race of living things breathes no more, another heaven and another earth must pass before such a one can be again."
November offers some trout action, but you have to apply special smarts to fool the fish. An expert offers some success secrets.

Don’t just leave your gear heaped in the trunk or piled in a corner. Use these storage tips so your gear is in tip-top shape come spring.

Wedge heads, bullet heads, or round heads? How much do you really know about selecting the right jig? The author clears the air and provides some ideas to help you tie on the right jig.

Increasing your stock and saving money are the bottom line in making your own, and the author shows you step-by-step how to create masterpieces in lead.

Tying this common mayfly can give you some fine trout fishing action next spring.

When you use a boat for hunting, you also become a boater, so here are some safety tips that can save your life in an emergency.

September 22 marked the very first “Fish-for-Free Day” in America, and thousands of first-time anglers participated in the unique event.

Fall fishing opportunities are golden as winter slowly grips the Commonwealth. Turn to page 4 for tips on cashing in on some last-chance angling, and for a head start on organizing some winter projects, turn to page 13. When you’re ready to store your tackle, read the article on page 8. Competitive types won’t want to miss the information on page 24 concerning the second Pennsylvania Angler lure-making contest.
November trout fishing success is best possible when you use some of the author's ideas.

Last-Chance Trout by Fred Johnson

The sun had arisen in the southeast hours before, but the trees still cast long shadows, and in their shade, the fallen foliage which matted the forest floor was still pasted white with frost. The only sound reaching the lone angler was that of a triangle of geese far above, noisily speeding south to escape the approaching frigid northern winter. An hour of casting an imitation ant had been rewarded by only a flash or two beneath the surface, or was it only his imagination? He'd waited for one last warm day before putting his fishing equipment away, and the promising forecast of the previous evening convinced him this was that day.

The stream came bounding toward him over the boulders, which created mysterious pockets and short moving pools that held the angler as if in a trance. The brook, no wider than two lengths of his fly rod, had risen somewhat from its late summer lethargy, and its temperature chilled the man's feet enough that he was thankful he'd patched the tiny hole in his boot the night before. He paused to reflect on the beauty of his surroundings—the sparkling stream surrounded by the forest floor of frosted reds, oranges, and yellows, highlighted by the sun slashing through the remaining foliage which clung to the oaks and maples, interspersed by verdant hemlocks.

His gaze was drawn to the widening circle in the miniature pool ahead. Was it a fallen leaf, or could it have been a rising trout? The glimpse of a tiny mayfly rising clumsily from the water made the appealing second choice seem more logical. He crouched lower and slowly eased closer to the vanishing circle, twisted the ant from his leader, and replaced it with a small Blue Wing Olive dry fly. His casts lengthened until one just above and to the side of the circle's center was allowed to glide gently to the water. Slowly, confidently, the fish appeared beneath the fly and inhaled it.

The trout was strong and fought well, reaching toward the large rock and log in the pool that had sheltered it from danger before, but was denied these sanctuaries by the leader's invisible force. As the brown was brought to hand, the angler noted the bright, profuse colored spots, yellow belly, and fully developed, sharp fins. Most would have mistaken it for a wild fish, but the large number and randomness of the red spots, and the telltale hint of an outgrown stump on a pectoral fin, convinced him that this was a stocked fish, to which it now bore little resemblance. The rounded snout of this firm 12-inch beauty told him it was a female, which had probably added two inches length and doubled in weight since released six to eight months before.

A slightly twisted lower mandible added to the story: the fish had either broken loose or had been returned by another fisherman. He silently thanked the angler whose generosity may have made this catch possible, and as she slowly swam toward cover, promised himself to try for her again the following spring when the brown caddis emerged anew.

Fishing in November? Oh, maybe for muskies, walleye, or tarpon in Florida. But trout — why waste good grouse hunting time when everyone knows that the trout have either been caught out, spawned out, or are ready to hibernate?

Yes, I know that most of us stash our trout fishing stuff away by Labor Day, start getting better acquainted with our bird dogs, and cut firewood for the deer camp. That's fine, but you might just be missing out on some pretty fine fall fishing.

Tradition and change

There isn't a very long local tradition for this aspect of the sport. The trout season in Pennsylvania closed at the end of July, except for a few special regulated waters, until 1957, when it was extended to Labor Day for approved trout waters. Except for a few died-in-the-wool fly fishermen who frequented the special regulation waters (and still do), there was no fall trout fishing in Pennsylvania before 1970. It was the “Rods of Spring” and the “Guns of Autumn,” pure and simple. In 1970 selected streams remained open for an extended season (3 trout) until the end of October; in 1975, all approved waters were open to this date. In 1978, the season for approved (stocked) waters was further extended to February 28.

So now there is unlimited choice. Turkeys in spring and bass, muskies, walleye, or trout in the fall.

Contrary to popular misconceptions, many of our trout streams do contain significant populations in the autumn. Of course, there are about 3 million fewer
catchable fish than at any one time in the first month of the season, but there are also a million fewer anglers pursuing them, which means that if you select the right water, there are many more fish per angler in the fall than in the spring.

In addition, when the leaves turn, an angler's philosophy has mellowed. The autumn angler usually isn't intent on killing "his" limit of trout before someone else catches them. He's alone, competing with no one, able to obtain a great deal of pleasure from his outing—more aware of his surroundings—and the fish he may catch, and will probably release, are not the sole reason for his being there, but rather an excuse for devoting one more shortening day in the outdoors along a favorite stream before the snow falls.

Revealing experiences

Last October, I had worked into a weekend in Monroe County and decided to accomplish a rod and reel survey of the Big Bushkill Creek fly-fishing-only section while enroute back to Harrisburg. The stretch I selected was around Ressica Falls. The low, clear water made locating trout a simple task. Every pool contained several cruising (feeding) brown trout. All were holdovers; there is no evidence of brown trout reproduction in this section of the Bushkill. If a careful approach was made, the trout readily took either wet or dry flies. They were obviously hungry. Most had suffered notable weight loss, and although 11-14 inches in length, I doubt that many would survive the winter. Here is a heavily fished stream, close to the nation's largest metropolitan area, which is still loaded each fall with stocked trout, most of which have probably been caught and released at least once.

Another example: Every fall, I fish a small stocked stream that flows alongside a heavily traveled state highway, minutes away from a densely populated area. My log reveals that the last time I fished this stream in 1983 was on election day. I reached the water at eleven—a.m. before I saw the first rise form, but for the next two hours; only a streamer fly would move an occasional fish, and I managed to hook only a few of them. It was 1 p.m. before I saw the first rise form, but for the next four hours I was kept busy catching fish that were steadily rising to a small brown caddis. The fish were stocked rainbows and mixed stocked and wild browns, which somehow had evaded capture by the spring hordes.

All were firm, well-colored, and considerably larger than they would have been in May. The air temperature on this lovely fall afternoon registered 66° F; water, 55° F. Best of all, as the cars whizzed by, I did not encounter another angler, where in May or June I might have met a dozen. As these fish were in such good condition, it is probable that unlike in the Big Bushkill, many would survive to the next spring, given a favorable winter.

Operation FUTURE

These are not isolated examples of November trout fishing. Under Operation FUTURE, it is likely that even more streams will retain good populations of wild and holdover trout into November and through the winter. This is because under the new concept, we are stocking “smarter,” both getting a better return on stocked and wild trout and also wasting fewer fish. Delayed harvest regulations are a good example of this idea.

This offshoot of “no-kill” permits recycling (catch and release) of stocked fish in early season, and creeling them later in waters where few if any stocked fish are expected to carry over (survive until the following spring).

If you are convinced that some trout do remain in November, here are a few tips on late-season angling that may improve your chances of connecting with a few of them.

Where

All approved trout waters are open from mid-April to March 1. This includes waters stocked by the Fish Commission and those under special regulation. After Labor Day, just three trout may be taken daily from these waters, while special regulation creel and size limits are as listed in the summary of fishing regulations booklet. No trout may be taken from “wild” or “wilderness” streams after Labor Day. The latter are, for the most part, smaller tributary and headwater streams that are closed in part to protect spawning fish in the autumn.

Suggested waters, in addition to special regulation waters, include limestone spring creeks and streams with bottom discharges below reservoirs. Also try large streams that may have been too warm during the summer months for good trout fishing. These streams’ remaining populations, which may have taken sabbaticals to cooler locales during the dog days, should be back at their regular posts by November.

Do not expect to catch many stocked brook trout in November. Most are taken within two weeks of planting in the spring. Rainbows also tend to disappear before summer. During exceptionally warm November weather, simply try any favorite stocked stream that supports a carry-over or wild population of trout. Except for small unstocked headwater streams, this usually means brown trout.

When

I've had exceptional fall angling into the middle of November, and I've observed angler success at Thanksgiving. A pleasant, sunny day with the temperature in the mid-50s are my minimum criteria. You'll have the most success if the water temperature is at least 50° F. The best action on flies usually occurs from 11 to 5 where the sun is on the water.

How

Fall is fly fishing time. Use the terrestrial imitations such as hoppers, ants, and crickets. If a late-season hatch is on the water, such as the Blue Wing Olive, caddis, or stone flies, there should be rising trout. A number of caddis flies have revived hatches in the autumn. Wet flies seem to work well on the large streams, but be prepared to change patterns until you discover what's taking fish, and don't forget nymphs fished deep in pocket water. They are always around, as are minnows, which can be imitated by streamers or spinners. Be sure to try the latter if the water is up a bit or slightly off color.
Fall fishing may mean low water, even in November, so it's advisable to keep low and distant from the fish, and move extremely slowly to avoid detection. The fish don't come to your hand looking for food as they did in the spring. Keep close tabs on water temperature; if it starts to fall in the late afternoon, it probably means you might as well go home and catch the tail end of the football game. For the best of both worlds, hunt until lunch, and then try a few hours with your rod.

One more point. You may see spawning brown trout in November. (Except in some spring creeks, most brookies spawn earlier than this.) These fish are involved with romance, not food, but have been known to strike a lure that impinges into their spawning arena. A real sportsman will never kill such a trout, which is one of the fortunate, mature fish to escape the hazards of a full season on a stocked stream and is now prepared to perform its most important function: perpetuation of the species. Kill him or her and it may just ruin your winter, too.

That's about it: the beauty, solitude, and serenity of a lovely fall day spent in the outdoors on a favorite trout stream. It will restore the soul and be yours to recall through those long winter nights as you await the first buds of spring (or is it the white trucks?), harbinger of another trout season.

Fred Johnson, Fish Commission water resources coordinator, has been fishing Keystone State waterways for 45 years. He'd rather fish for trout with fly rod gear than any other method.
Caring for your tackle now can help ensure its smooth operation next spring.
Winter Tackle Storage

by Gary Diamond

If you're like most anglers, 24 hours before the opening day of trout season you'll be anxiously searching closets, the attic, and any other hiding place for your fishing gear. In desperation you open the trunk of the family car and discover that your two-piece rod is now a three-piece model. The reel is covered with dirt, cracker crumbs, and rust, and the handle doesn't have a chance of turning without sounding like a corn grinder.

If all this sounds familiar, don't be surprised. The department stores and tackle shops are loaded with individuals each spring who experience these same problems. Yet, most of those difficulties could have been prevented and you could save a lot of money come spring by spending just a single evening in preparing your tackle for winter storage.

Reels

If there's any single item that suffers from pure neglect, it's your reel. In many ways, you can compare it to your wristwatch. When it works, everything is OK, but when it stops working, you're in real trouble.

The day after you decide that it's too cold to go fishing, gather all your fishing reels from their hiding places and methodically take them apart one at a time, clean all the parts in WD-40 or a similar agent, and lubricate them with silicon grease. If you don't have a parts breakdown sheet or schematic diagram of the reel, be sure to place the parts in a row in the order they were removed, or you'll end up with a few screws left over when you're finished. Re-assemble the reel, check its operation, and store it in a clean, dry place. This task is life insurance for your reels—in fact, they'll last 10 times longer and perform better than you ever thought possible.

Rods

When was the last time you looked down your fishing rod? Notice how it makes a left turn or how it corkscrews? No, this isn't a new design for casting around trees; it's from leaning the rod in the corner over an extended period—the entire winter. Although this particular problem is difficult to correct, it can be easily prevented by building yourself a rod rack—nothing fancy, just a strip of wood and a few coffee cup hooks.

Hang the strip of wood about five feet above the floor and screw in the coffee cup hooks at about 4-inch intervals. A 4-foot length of a 1x3 furring strip is good for about 10 rods up to eight feet in length. Before storing your rods be sure to wash them with soap and water using a soft scrub brush or sponge to remove the stubborn debris. After cleaning, check the guides and wraps for wear. Worn guides cut line faster than a hot knife goes through soft butter, resulting in many lost fish. If everything looks good, lubricate the reel seat with WD-40 and hang it on the rack. Do not hang the rods with the reels attached. This puts a lot of pressure on the back side of the rod, causing a set to form those crazy looking curves in the blank—especially on the lighter glass sticks. If the wraps are frayed, a good coat of slow-drying epoxy cures the problem and prevents future episodes of entanglement with the line as it passes through the guides.

Waders and boots

Most of the newer hip boots and chest-high waders are manufactured with a chemical to keep them soft and pliable—ozone. Unfortunately, the product evaporates, causing the rubber component of the boot to become brittle, and cracking may occur if the waders aren't properly stored. Many years ago, when most boots were made of gum rubber, all boots were stored on hangers in the closet and they were ready for use at any time. Manufacturers now recommend that the boots be stored in a tightly sealed plastic bag and powdered with talc on the inside to prevent ozone cracking. The sealed bag prevents the ozone from leeching out of the rubber, keeping your boots or waders soft and pliable.

Line

There's not much you can do to prevent monofilament line from deteriorating—it's one of those products that goes bad every day you own it. Remove the line at the end of the season and replace it with fresh line at the beginning of the new season and you'll have little or no problems with losing the big ones. Dacron, however, is usually good for several seasons and need not be replaced more than every two or three years.

November 1984
A few hand tools are all you need to take apart any reel.

Fly line should be cleaned before storage or it could develop flat spots and crack. Simply spread toothpaste or powder on a damp cloth and draw the line through it a few times until the line returns to its natural color. Rinse thoroughly with warm water, dry and rewind it loosely on your reel. If the line appears rough, it may be lubricated with a suitable fly line lubricant, but use this product sparingly—it collects dirt and grime quickly.

Lures, hooks, and rigs

Most hooks are attached to lures with split rings and are easily removed with the aid of a pair of split ring pliers. If the hooks are rusty, replace them with new ones that are nickel-plated or cadmium-plated, but be sure to sharpen them first. More fish are lost to dull hooks than any other reason I know. To check a hook for sharpness, draw the point lightly across your thumbnail at a slight angle. If it digs in with little pressure, the hook is sharp enough to penetrate the bony mouth of any fish.

The best method to sharpen hooks is to use a small Mill file. Place the hook in a fly tying vise with the open side facing up. Then rest the file along the hook at a 45-degree angle and file toward the bend of the hook, not the point. Repeat the operation on the opposite side of the hook and you'll have a cutting edge that will penetrate the toughest mouth with the least amount of hook-setting pressure.

Spinners and spoons should be polished with fine steel wool or metal polish and then coated with WD-40 to restore their luster. Be sure to remove the hooks before polishing or you could end up with those newly sharpened hooks sticking in your hand. Most plugs and poppers are coated with acrylic lacquer or epoxy and need a little elbow grease with detergent and water to remove the grime. If they need repainting, model paints that come in one-ounce bottles usually match the color or come close enough so that the fish won’t know the difference.

Finally, remember that your fishing tackle is a lot like your car—if you take care of it, there’s a good chance it will last much longer than you think.
Picture a lead-head jig in your mind.

If all you see is a simple lure that you hop across the bottom, you are selling short one of the angler’s top tools! The lead-head jig works with any retrieve speed, from extra-fast to sitting still on the bottom. You can swim them, crawl them, or hop them. By altering the shape of the head they sink fast or slowly, and they can be as snag-resistant as any lure.

The round head, I suspect, was the first lead-head jig style. About 25 years ago, I pinched a splitshot onto a bucktail streamer and did my first jigging in the Allegheny River. The first jig was likely invented in the same manner.

Round heads are the most common jig-head style, and they are made in a wide variety of sizes. They are the general-use head, offering no particular advantage, but suitable for most jigging situations.

Bullet heads, as the name says, are bullet-shaped. They are fast sinking and stable in a current, so they are good for river use. On the negative side, they are very susceptible to getting hung on the bottom. Oval heads fit into this same category.

Wedge heads, or walleye heads, share most of the same characteristics with the bullet heads. The primary difference is that the leading edge is wedge-shaped, instead of rounded. This gives them a slight side-to-side wiggle, making them a top choice for a swimming retrieve. They are perfect for any of the action-tail plastic bodies. They are poor bottom-bouncers, though, because they are prone to snag, and they fall on their sides when at rest on the bottom.
Bottom-bouncers are much better off with a banana-head jig. Because the most forward part of the head is the hook eye, they are relatively snug-proof. For this reason, most of the jig-and-pig heads are this style, or a modification of it, with a built-in weed guard.

The banana style may be the most useful for walleye anglers. With a screw tail or other buoyant plastic body, the hook rides up when the jig is hopped or crawled across the bottom.

Stand-up heads are even better at keeping the hook riding up. The head is designed so that it always sits on the bottom in the same position, with the hook pointing up at about a 45-degree angle. This makes it the perfect live bait head for bottom fishing.

The big disadvantage with most stand-up heads is that they snag easily. Some stand-up heads are just modified banana heads that are reasonably snag free.

Another special purpose head is the shad dart. As the name implies, they dart about in the current in hopes of enticing a shad. They are frequently trolled or just fished straight behind a boat anchored in a current.

Equally specialized is the slider head, also called the slider or coin head. It was designed for use in still water, and it sinks slowly. The flat shape makes it glide through the water. Sliders are at their best in quarter-ounce sizes and smaller, rigged with a plastic bait, such as a 4-inch plastic worm on an eighth-ounce slider head. A smoke-colored grub on a slider head is a favorite among the most successful Pennsylvania bass anglers.

The slider's counterpart is the flat jig, which may also be called the coin head. They are vertically flat, rather than horizontally flat. Flat jigs sink fast and cast like bullets, and are used primarily in salt water. They are not suitable as freshwater bottom contact lures, and they sink too fast for most freshwater-speed retrieves.

This is by no means a complete list of jig-head styles, and new ones are frequently invented. Most styles fit into one of these categories. After all, there are only so many things you can do with a jig head! Changing the shape of the head only makes limited variations in the way the jig behaves.

Collars

A secondary jig head design variable is the collar. The collar's purpose is for the attachment of the body. There are collars designed specially for hair bodies, and others for plastic bodies.

The universal style is the straight collar. It works fine for tying on a bucktail body, or impaling a plastic body.

Flared collars are for hair bodies. The main purpose is to flare out the body hairs, but they also secure the hairs more firmly than a straight collar. The flared hairs undulate, or breathe, as the jig is retrieved.

Barbed collars are for use with plastic bodies. They are basically straight collars with a built-in hook, which keeps the plastic body from slipping off. Straight collars can be converted with pliers. Just pinch a small portion of the collar, creating a burr.

There are jig heads with no collars. These are tops for fishing live bait on a bare jig head, and they are the best choice for doll fly jigs (Doll flies have a body wrapped around the shank of the hook and a tail starting near the bend of the hook). In the smaller sizes they are a good choice for use with plastic bodies, because barbed collars are difficult to mold in small sizes, such as panfish jigs.

Other considerations

Jig head size has two variables. First, the size of the head and hook must be appropriate for the species and size of fish you are seeking. Second, the weight must be increased as the water depth increases. Matching jig size to fish size is visually apparent. Matching jig weight to water depth is best determined by experimenting.

Many things affect your ability to fish a jig at any given depth. It takes more weight, for example, to pull down a large-diameter line than a small-diameter line. Other important factors are head style, buoyancy of the jig body, and retrieve speed. Current is a factor in stream fishing, as are waves in any water. Even the wind can be a factor!

You must make your best guess at the proper head size in each situation, and work from there. That guess becomes more accurate as you gain experience. Charts that suggest jig weights for various depths are only vague generalizations, unless they specify head style, line brand and size, and other fishing and climatic conditions!

Regardless of the multitude of variables facing the jigger, most anglers do not need to carry every type of head. I use three basic types for nearly all of my jigging: banana, walleye, and slider, and about 90 percent of my jigging is done with a banana head!

Still, it is important to know that there are specialized jig heads available when the need arises. For the average angler, this may amount only to a day or two per year when the right jig head will make it a big day. Big days, though, can be tremendously worthwhile, so it pays to know what's available in jigs and make an informed choice from this versatile arsenal.

Mike Bleech edits Drop Off, the newsletter of the Pennsylvania B.A.S.S. Chapter Federation. He's fished in Canada, Vietnam, West Germany, and all over the United States, and he's been fishing Pennsylvania waterways for 32 years.
Mold Your Own Jigs and Bucktails

by C. Boyd Pfeiffer

Jigs and bucktails are among the easiest of all lures to use, and they rate highly for all species of freshwater gamefish. Fortunately, they are also among the easiest to make, and they are dirt cheap to turn out in quantity. With the right mold, a few hooks, some tail material, thread, and some paint, you can make jigs whose quality rivals, if not surpasses, commercially available models.

The low cost of making your own lures has other benefits. You fish jigs in places where you would not ordinarily try for fear of losing an expensive lure. The result is more fish from those impossible places that everyone else ignores.

There are two ways to make your own jigs. First, you can buy the molded jig heads of the shape, size, and hook style you want. This avoids the molding process because all you have to do is tie in a tail and paint the finished lure.

The second method is to buy a mold and hooks, mold the lead heads, and then tie in a tail and finish the lures. This method is far more economical if you are making quantities of lures; the cost is only

photos by the author
3. Pouring the lead into the mold sprue holes from a ladle.

4. Examples of casting in which the lead or mold or both were too cold and the lead did not fill the mold cavity. Note that the collar area on each of the castings is not complete. Some of these castings, however, could be used, while others would have to be discarded.

5. Examples of good castings in an Erie-style walleye bucktail mold.

6. Excess lead from the sprue opening is cut off with wire cutters. Usually on a good mold, this is the only trimming required.

the expense of the hook and scrap lead. The price of the mold is amortized in time. One way to cut the cost of molds, if you make more than one type of jig, is to get together with several fishing friends. Each buys a different mold and loans the molds to others as required.

Molds
Molds are available from a number of different suppliers, including both tackle shops and mail order outfits. Generally, it helps to get the best-quality mold, even though it might cost a little more, because the fit of the mold's two halves is critical to prevent any leakage of lead at the seam (called flash), which requires filing and trimming after molding.

Good multiple-cavity molds are available for about $20 to $25. Most molds have from four to eight cavities and make several sizes of the same style bucktail. ("Commercial" or "production" molds are also available with identical size cavities.) Styles include the gamut of jig heads available, including shad dart, banana head, arrow head, bullet head, lima bean, round head, boxing glove, and so forth.

Better molds have wood handles for easy handling and also list the size and style of Mustad or Wright and McGill hook to use in the mold. Be sure to use only recommended jig hooks; others will not fit properly or mold well.

For economy, buy jig hooks in boxes of 100. In addition to the mold and hooks, you also need lead. For jigs and bucktails, use pure lead, although you can get by with scrap lead from junk yards, plumber's lead, wheel weights from garages (these are greasy and should be cleaned before melting), and other lead alloys.

The problem with these other lead products is that they are alloys or mixtures of both lead and tin or...
10. Wrapping the tail material down involves holding the material on and over the collar and wrapping lightly with the thread for several turns. After several turns, pull tightly to flare and spread the tail material around the collar.

7. Examples of both molded and bought jig heads, ready to be finished with tail material and a coat of paint.

8. Examples of castings made from a poor mold or made under poor conditions. Note the incomplete bodies and the large amount of flash around the body area.

9. Beginning to wrap the tail on a jig head. Note that the thread is wrapped around the collar a few times and then crossed over the previous wraps to hold the thread in place.

11. Examples of castings made from a poor mold or made under poor conditions. Note the incomplete bodies and the large amount of flash around the body area.

antimony, which makes them both harder, more difficult to get good castings in finely detailed molds. They require higher heat to melt properly. They also don't pour as readily, so molds may have to be modified by enlarging the sprue hole (the funnel-shaped hole where the lead is pouring in) for quicker pouring.

Begin by laying out all the necessary tools and materials, along with gloves to hold the mold handles and pliers to help remove the cast heads. If possible, work with a partner and with several molds. That way, one of you can pour while the other fills the molds with hooks and removes castings from the molds. This “mini assembly line” works great and allows the maximum number of pourings in the shortest time.

Safety considerations

Before beginning, open the windows or turn on the kitchen fan if you are working indoors, because melted lead gives off fumes. Maintain ventilation during and shortly after the molding time. Wear an appropriate mask to avoid breathing the vapors.

Heat the mold slightly to warm the inside of the mold but not enough to damage the mold. Next, fill each mold with hooks, carefully close the mold, and begin pouring. The lead should be molten with a slight purplish sheen to indicate that it’s at the correct temperature. Any slag or impurities float to the top and should be skimmed off before molding. Pour carefully, working over a thick layer of old newspaper or a scrap of plywood for protection of counter surfaces. If the mold is not warm enough, the first few moldings might be incomplete. If you continue to have trouble with this process, you might have to enlarge the sprue hole for faster pouring, or you may want to blacken the mold cavities with a
11. Material spread around the collar with the forward part of the tail material trimmed off and the wrapping almost complete. Thread must be wrapped around until all tail material is covered.

12. Completed wrap with half hitch being tied to hold the thread in place. Use several half hitches or a whip finish to secure the thread.

13. Getting ready to dip the completed bucktail in paint. The entire jig head plus wrapped collar area is dipped to protect the threads while covering the head.

candle flame, which aids in complete cavity filling.

It takes time to bring the mold and lead to the right heat, so the best process is to pour several hundred or more jig heads at one time, to make up a selection of heads that will last you and your buddies a full season.

Once the castings are cool, use wire cutters to remove the sprue (that part of the lead attached to the jig head at the sprue opening). This lead can be remelted for future moldings. If necessary, use a file to smooth this mold mark or any flash that may have occurred along the seam lines.

**Oxidation**

When the cast heads are ready to use, give them a coat of white base paint, unless you are planning to finish all of them in a few days. Oxidation begins on the lead heads in a few days or weeks from the molding, and no paint adheres well to oxidized lead. The white paint protects the jig head and lets you finish the lures at your leisure.

Finishing the jigs is no different from very simple fly tying. Clamp the hook in a fly tying vise and use regular fly tying or light rod building thread. Begin by wrapping twice around the jig and then bring the thread over the previous wraps to secure the thread. Then pick the tail material—marabou, feathers, bucktail, FishHair, living rubber, impala, etc. Cut strands that are about the length of the jig, so that the tail extends about a half to one hook length beyond the bend of the hook. Hold the tail material in place and loop several turns around the jig and tail. Pull tightly.

With small jigs you can usually manipulate the tail material so that it surrounds the hook shank. With larger jigs, you might have to place tail material on in several batches to position it evenly around the hook shank. While many jigs are made with only one tail material, you can also combine them by using different colors of bucktail such as a white base and red or black top.

Furthermore, when using feathers for a tail, be sure to tie them with most of the feathers flared out for maximum action in the water as you retrieve the lure.

After the tail material is tied down, maintain tension on the thread or tie in a half hitch to keep the thread from loosening. Trim the tail material forward of the wrapping. Trim closely, then wrap the collar area completely with thread. When the wrap is even and smooth, use a whip finish or several half hitches to finish off the wrap. Cut the thread, and your jig is ready for painting.

**Painting**

The easiest way to finish the jig is to paint it, covering both the head and the thread wrap with paint. The result is a uniform color while the paint soaks into the thread to protect it and keep it from fraying.

There are several methods of painting, including dipping, brushing, and spraying. Spraying usually wastes paint. It’s also necessary to use a “guard” or shield to protect the tail and hook from the paint. Brushing is satisfactory, but dipping in a slightly thinner paint works best. Thinning is necessary to prevent drips of paint from adhering to the head of the jig while it hangs to dry. The best paints are those specifically designed...
15. Eyes on jig heads can be made easily with different-sized nail heads. Use large head for the eye and small head for the pupil.

16. Drying rack made of bead chain to prevent heads from sliding.

17. Examples of completed jigs with both fur and plastic tails.

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14. Painted head, dipped a second time in a contrasting color of paint. Note the drop of paint on the end of the head, which will have to be removed by blotting, or allowed to drip clean.

and sold for jigs, although a fine substitute is automotive touch-up paint, which is available in all colors. It adheres well to metal and comes in small one-ounce to four-ounce bottles for minimum expense and waste.

When you have a finished coat of paint, you can dip the jig a second time in a different color to create a two-color lure. In addition, it is easy to paint eyes on your jigs by using different-sized nail heads. Use a large nail head dipped in paint for the eye and a smaller head for the pupil. Hang the jig heads after each painting on a special rack. One easy way to make a rack that prevents the jigs from sliding together (this happens from the weight of the jigs on any wire or cord) is to use a hanger of bead chain, available in any hardware store.

The beads keep each jig separate and allow them to dry. Once completely dry, the jigs are ready to use or to store in your tackle box until needed. For long storage, use individual poly plastic envelopes to prevent any scarring that occurs with painted jig heads when they rattle around in a tackle box.

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**Jigs and Senior Angler’s Awards**

Need a little inspiration for making those jigs this winter? Records of last year’s Fish Commission Senior Angler’s Awards Program reveal that jigs account for a surprising number of award-winning fish, including two state records.

- For both largemouth bass and smallmouth bass, about one in 10 hawgs was fooled with jigs. These include simple jigs and wiggling plastic tails and jig combinations with other offerings, like pork rind, pork frog, bucktail jigs, and so forth.
- Of the nine entries last year for striped bass awards, four were taken on jigs, including the 27-pound, 13-ounce 4'7/4-inch state record that George D. Krause dredged up from Raystown Lake.
- A total of 11 walleye awards were registered at Fish Commission headquarters, and three of those fish, 27 percent, ambush jigs. Similarly, three Senior Angler’s Awards were made for saugers, the newest fish added to the program, and two of them were caught on jigs. All three saugers were nailed in the Allegheny River in Allegheny County.

- In the crappie category, the Fish Commission made 50 awards, nine of which were taken on jigs (18 percent).
- Three out of 13 muskies, about 23 percent, took jigs, too.
- Finally, there were 18 American shad awards made last year, and 15, or about 83 percent, were caught on shad darts—jigs, of course, including the current state record. Anthony Fortebuono caught the 9-pound, 7-ounce state record American shad, which jumped on a shad dart in the Delaware on April 30, 1984.

Considering the great variety of lures and baits with which anglers take Pennsylvania’s largest fish, jigs are just about the most reliable fish-getters.—*Sam Everett*
Mayflies of the genus *Potamanthus* are among the prettiest and most graceful of all the upwings. In Pennsylvania *P. distinctus* is prevalent in many of our larger trout streams, where the nymphs live in accumulated detritus and silt on the bottom of slow-water stretches. They are large mayflies with three tails and range in color from pale cream to yellow, and the wings generally have weak markings.

Hatches of *Potamanthus* usually occur from late June to late July, but it is not uncommon to find a few stragglers emerging in August. Emergence generally begins in late evening and extends into darkness; however, on dark, cloudy days they may appear in late afternoon. It is unfortunate that they emerge during hot weather when some of our big freestone streams become warm and the trout find refuge in the cool tributaries. Still, on streams whose temperatures remain tolerable they may furnish fine dry fly fishing.

To those of us who become bleary-eyed from squinting at dusk to follow a midge on the water, the appearance of the big, easy-to-see duns is a welcome sight. They generally ride the water for good

1. Clamp a size 12 dry fly hook in the vise and tie in yellow 6/0 prewaxed thread at the bend. For tails, select six pale guard hairs and tie them in as a bundle. Then separate the hairs into three pairs and bring the thread between them to angle the outer hairs outward and upward. Wind the thread forward to the wing position, one-third the shank length behind the eye.

2. Dress a pair of Loyalsock Wings shaped from two matched cream hen back feathers. Bind them in position by their stems taking care to achieve proper wing alignment. Then apply a drop of model airplane cement to the base of the wings.

3. Select two cream hackles with barbules as long as 1½ to 2 times the hook gap length, and strip off the lower webby barbs. Tie in both hackles together in front of the wings, at right angles to the shank, on edge and with the dull sides facing the eye. Then bind the stems back along the shank and trim the excess. Wind the thread forward to the eye.

photos by the author
distances before flying off, and trout make the most of this opportunity. Their twilight emergence sometimes sounds the dinner bell for some of the big, night-feeding browns that one rarely sees in broad daylight.

Tall, sail-like wings are the mayfly’s most dominant feature, and fly tyers have attempted to represent them in many ways. Early in the history of the dry fly, English anglers tried to fashion realistic wings from large fish scales. Subsequently, such materials as quill sections, flank feathers, breast feathers, hackle tips, hair, synthetic fibers, and sheet plastic have been used to suggest mayfly wings. In the past decade or so, realistic wings cut or burnt to shape from webby feathers have appeared prominently. Dressed correctly, they are quite effective. There have been critics of cut or burnt wings who claim they cause leader twist, but in almost every such instance this fault is caused by the wing not set in perfect alignment or mismatched in size or texture.

In the Palmer Potamanthus Dun we use a relatively new type of shaped wing called the Loyalsock Wing. Devised by John Igoe of Monroeville, and named for his favorite trout stream, it is a departure from the usual-shaped feather wing. In dressing Loyalsock Wings, two matched webby feathers are selected and each of the fibers is stripped from one side of the rib. The fibers should be stripped from opposite sides of the feathers, resulting in a right and a left wing. Then the desired shape is achieved by trimming or burning. In the finished wing the rib is the leading edge and a perfect airfoil is formed. The design is aerodynamically sound, and it is more tolerant of slight misalignment than most large, shaped wings.

In our Potamanthus pattern the wings are shaped from two cream hen back feathers, matched for size. Wing burners do a fine job of shaping the feathers, and I particularly like the Wing Thing, a set of burners in several sizes manufactured by Bob Shoup. They are versatile tools; by varying the angle of the feather, the shape of virtually any kind of insect wing may be achieved.

The spread of the tails in the Potamanthus Dun is important because it furnishes the necessary air resistance to ensure upright delivery on the water. Six pale guard hairs (from muskrat, mink, or beaver) are first tied in as a bundle, conventional-style, and separated into three pairs by windings between them, causing the outer pairs to angle outward and slightly upward. Cream hackle barbules may also be used for tails, but they are not as tough and resilient as guard hairs.

The rest of the pattern is the typical reverse-palmer dressing, with the body dubbing wound from front to rear and the hackles wound open-palmer in a similar reverse direction. The whip finish is made at the top of the bend, underneath the base of the tails, and an inverted “V” is trimmed from the hackle underneath the body.

On some of our mountain streams Potamanthus is one of the season’s final hatches of large mayflies. Coming at a time when hot weather has generally set in, it is a bonus hatch for the diehard fly fishermen who have stuck it out after their buddies have migrated to the golf course.

4. Wax a length of thread next to the hook and apply a tapered dubbing of pale yellow fur or synthetic. Wind the dubbing from front to rear to form a tapered body ending at the base of the tails.

5. Clamp hackle pliers to the tip of the rear hackle and make one full turn in front of the wings. Then wind it to the rear in spaced turns and tie it off over the base of the tails. Repeat with the second hackle, following the path of the first. Trim the excess hackle tips and whip finish the thread under the base of the tails. Apply lacquer to the whip finish.

6. With fine-pointed scissors, trim an inverted “V” from the underside of the hackle.

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ANGLERS CURRENTS

Ralph W. Abele, Fish Commission executive director, accepts the deed for some 33 44 acres of Centre County land from William Seaton, Nittany Division manager of the West Penn Power Company. The land includes about 1 5 miles of Spring Creek, including McCoy Dam. The company offered to donate the land to the Commission because it no longer used it to protect the water supply for its retired Milesburg station. Commission plans for the tract include opening the land to public fishing.

Acid Precip Article

Fred Johnson, Fish Commission Water Resources Coordinator, wrote a two-page article in the July/August issue of Pennsylvania Forests, titled “Will Pennsylvania Mountain Ranges Support Forests and Trout in the Twenty-First Century?” This thought-provoking piece summarizes the effects of acid precipitation on the state’s trout fisheries (which have appeared in previous issues of Pennsylvania Angler) and also provides considerable evidence of the increasing effects of acid precipitation on Eastern forests. Angler readers interested in this perspective can send for a free photocopy of the article. Contact the Editor, Pennsylvania Forests, 410 E. Main Street, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055. Include a business-sized self-addressed, stamped envelope with requests.

Where's the Hybrids?

For the last few months, there’s been a mystery brewing in the Susquehanna River between Shickshinny and Wilkes-Barre. Seems like anglers there are catching white bass/striped bass hybrids, all right, but the only stocking of the hybrid occurred in the lower Susquehanna River.

The riddle was recently solved by Rick Hoopes, the Commission’s Warmwater Unit leader, who determined the source of the white bass/striped bass hybrids: Whitney Point Reservoir in New York. This waterway was stocked by New York’s Department of Environmental Conservation in 1983 and again this year. The reservoir’s high flow-through rate brings the fish into the Susquehanna, of which it’s a tributary.

In any case, if you tie into one of these fish, remember that the fish must be 15 inches in length before they are legal to keep.

Accident Stats

Boating Statistics 1983, the U.S. Coast Guard’s publication that provides the details on recreational boating accidents, reveals the facts and figures of Pennsylvania boating mishaps. First, boating accidents can be expensive. Of the total number of 79 accidents reported in 1983, the amount of damage was estimated at $180,200. Some 95 vessels were involved in reported accidents, 36 of which were involved in collisions with another vessel. This number, about 38 percent, is the single most common accident in Pennsylvania.
The Pennsylvania Fish Commission announces

The Second Pennsylvania ANGLER Lure Making Contest

Prizes worth more than $200

A spinner, surface plug, diving crankbait, cork panfish popper, and a deer hair bass bug are the categories in the second Pennsylvania Angler Contest. This opportunity lets you match your skills against other tackle makers and contribute to a worthy cause—all submissions will be used in the Fish Commission’s P.L.A.Y. (Pennsylvania League of Angling Youth) Program. This year’s contest will be judged by a well-known angling expert. Here are the rules and how to participate:

1. You don’t have to be a current Pennsylvania Angler subscriber, like last year’s contest—anyone is eligible. However, if you grossed more than $300 in calendar year 1983 making lures professionally, you are ineligible.
2. Each category entry must consist of one of the lures listed below. You may submit an entry in any or all categories, but send only one entry per category.

3. Each category entry must include the name, address, phone number, and age of the entrant, sealed in a plain white envelope.
4. Submit lures in small, protective containers. Pennsylvania Angler will handle all submissions carefully, but is not responsible for entries lost or damaged in transit or in its possession.
5. Entries must be postmarked by January 4, 1985. Winners will be announced by February 1, 1985, and will be notified by mail. The judge’s decisions are final.
6. Prizes for this year’s contest were graciously donated by Pennsylvania’s own Fenwick/Woodstream Corporation, of Lititz. The winner of the spinner category will receive a Fenwick one-piece glass, medium-light-action spinning rod of 63 inches. Winners of the diving crankbait and surface plug categories will each receive Fenwick 5 1/2-foot one-piece graphite 5-power casting rods. The winner of the panfish popper category will receive a 7-foot, 8-inch 2-piece glass Fenwick fly rod, and the deer hair bug category winner will receive a Woodstream 2-piece, 8 1/2-foot fly rod for 8-weight line, made of glass/graphite composite.
7. Prizes will be awarded by mail immediately after notification, and winning entries will be displayed at the Fish Commission exhibit of the Harrisburg Sport Show, February 9-17, 1985.
8. Judging will be based on consistency, neatness, overall appearance, workmanship, and creativity.

Categories

1. Spinner (2 1/2-inch length limit, 1/4-ounce maximum weight)
2. Surface plug (wood, plastic, or cork body; 3 1/2-inch length limit; must have two size 8 or size 6 treble hooks; bodies must be hand-shaped)
3. Diving crankbait (hand-shaped wood, plastic, or cork body; 3 1/2-inch length limit; must have two size 8 or size 6 treble hooks)
4. Panfish popper on a size 8 hook (cork, plastic, or wood)
5. Deer hair bass bug on a size 1/0 hook

Mail all entries to: LURE MAKING CONTEST, Pennsylvania Angler, P.O. Box 1673, Harrisburg, PA 17105-1673. Remember—entries must be postmarked no later than January 4, 1985.
Two duck hunters lost their lives in the cold waters of the Susquehanna River. The pair had been hunting from a shoreside blind using a small john boat to retrieve their kill. What caused the boat to capsize is unknown. Perhaps one of the men reached too far over the side and with the current working on the bottom of the craft it flipped. Perhaps someone stood up to shoot. In any case, their bodies were recovered several weeks later. Neither was knowledgeable of boating or water safety.

This story is all too true and occurs too often. However, the prevention is simple: boating and water safety awareness.

The boater who hunts from his craft may rarely take the time to familiarize himself with boating and water safety practices. Typically, he uses the craft during the hunting season as a means of transportation, although a brief review of what to do in case of a capsizing or fall overboard would be invaluable.

Survival in the water depends on two factors: the condition of the water (is it high, moving, or cold?) and the behavior of the victim. There is little you can do about the condition of the water, but the behavior of the victim can be controlled.

There is an old tale that says the first thing to do if you find yourself suddenly and unexpectedly in water over your head is to remove your clothing because it will drag you to the bottom. The person who started this myth apparently never fell into the water with his clothes on, or if he did, he thrashed helplessly in the water exhausting himself without knowing what to do.

Most clothing floats because air trapped under it provides both protection from the cold and buoyancy. In fact, the more clothing you have on, the better you float. The important thing to remember is that if you do fall into the water try to stay calm, and assume a position on your back. Clothing can help, and will, if you refrain from struggling or trying to swim conventionally (crawls stroke). Quickly but carefully get on your back and hand paddle. Disrobing in the water is an exhausting practice as well as a needless technique.

Keep in mind that heavy clothing is nor a substitute for a life jacket (personal flotation device), but with the knowledge of proper survival behavior, clothing left on can save your life.

If you capsize or fall overboard in cold water, all efforts should be directed to getting out of the water. With practice, most small boats can be righted and re-entered. Most boats even filled with water will support the weight of their occupants. If at all possible right your boat, re-enter it, and bail the water out. If the boat has capsized and cannot be made right, climb on top of it.

Leave the boat only if it improves your personal safety: if rescue is not imminent, or on moving water if a low head dam or set of rapids is approaching, strike out for the nearest shore.

Should you capsize in moving water, keep upstream of the craft (keep the boat in front of you). A 15-foot boat hurled against a rock by the current in even a slow-moving river can have a holding force in excess of several tons. It would be like closing a vise on the capsized boater who allowed himself to be trapped in this situation.

It is important not to attempt to stand in moving water at knee deep levels and deeper. The possibility of foot entrapment is great, even in slow-moving water. Drownings have occurred when a capsized boater has had a foot or leg caught between rocks or under a log in a current. Force of the water will keep you submerged. Again, the thing to do is to assume a position on your back with your feet at the surface of the water pointed down river. This will help you fend off rocks or other river obstructions and keep you from trying to stand. When you reach deep or very shallow water, get to the river bank.

Proper preparation is important when using a boat while hunting. By following these suggestions, your chances of survival in an emergency increase:

- Always tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return. When hunting (or fishing) form a small group and take several boats along.
- Always dress properly for the cold. Several layers of light clothing offer better protection than a single heavy layer. Next to the diver's wet suit, wool clothing offers the best protection.
- Always wear a personal flotation device (PFD) when on the water. It is extremely difficult to put on a PFD in cold water.

Should you be so unfortunate to find yourself suddenly and unexpectedly in the water, think survival. Try to keep calm and don't thrash about. If you do have to tread water, do it slowly while remaining on your back. This will reduce heat loss and aid retention of air trapped inside your clothing, which can provide buoyancy and insulation. Slowly hand paddle to safety.

Enjoy the excitement of hunting from a boat, but know the risk and prepare yourself accordingly. Remember that a successful hunting trip is the result of good planning, good company, good hunting skills, and attention to safety, both in the field and on the water.

Virgil Chambers is chief of the Fish Commission Bureau of Waterways Boating Education Section. He serves as chairman of the Boat Pennsylvania Editorial Advisory Committee.
If you capsize or fall overboard in cold water, direct all your efforts to getting out of the water. With practice, most small boats can be righted and re-entered. If the boat capsizes and you cannot right it, climb on top of it. Leave the boat only if it improves your personal safety—if rescue is not immediate, or on moving water if a low-head dam or set of rapids is threatening.

Always wear your PFD when on the water, because putting a life vest on while treading water is very difficult, especially when the water is cold and when you suddenly and unexpectedly capsize, or if you fall overboard.
"All in all we were really pleased with our first Fish-for-Free Day," stated the Commission’s executive director, Ralph W. Abele. "We had excellent crowds at most seminar sites and we achieved our goal of reaching large numbers of non-fishermen."

"We talked to a lot of people, handed out a lot of material, and at some sites we had more requests for loaner rods and reels than we had available," said Mike Bickler, director of Information. "I'm ready to retire and just wanted to see if I would like fishing," the gray-haired woman said. "I caught three today, and I know I will be giving the sport a try." The woman, a first-time angler, was one of the participants last September 22 in the Pennsylvania Fish Commission’s first-ever Fish-for-Free Day.

Thousands of anglers participated in the nation’s inaugural free fishing day. Many of the Commission’s 25 seminar sites scattered across the Commonwealth were crowded, and reports indicated that most of the state’s waterways received heavier fishing pressure than usual. Everything from carp and bowfin to bass and bluegills were creeled as Keystone State residents and visitors took advantage of the lifting of license requirements for the Commission’s big day.

In addition to fishing and casting demonstrations and seminars, anglers at many sites were treated to fish filleting and cooking demonstrations. All these activities were conducted by the Commission waterways conservation officers, Office of Information personnel, Volunteer Information and Education Corps members, and a host of other Fish Commission people, of the Commission’s Office of Information. Bickler complimented the national tackle manufacturers for their participation. "Garcia, Daiwa, Zebo, and Shimano donated hundreds of rods and reels for the use of novice anglers, and along with Mr. Twister and Gaines Popper Company, which donated panfish jigs and poppers, the tackle manufacturers went a long way in helping make Fish-for-Free Day such a success," Bickler said.

What may have impressed Commission officials most was the wide variety of individuals who participated in Fish-for-Free Day. Participants ranged from a 74-year-old woman at the Crooked Creek seminar site in Armstrong County, who caught the first fish of her life, to a family from New Jersey that had never before fished anything but salt water, but got their first taste of freshwater angling at Springton Reservoir in Delaware County.

According to Bickler, one large audience the Commission hadn’t really anticipated was single parents and their children. "Fish-for-Free Day saw a lot of single mothers bringing their youngsters to the Commission’s seminar sites," Bickler said. "Our waterways conservation officers heard the same story from many single moms—'My children have been bugging me to take them fishing, but I didn't know how or where.' Fish-for-Free Day was the perfect opportunity."

Because of the success of the first Fish-for-Free Day, the Commission plans to do it again next spring with an expansion of the number of seminar sites throughout the state. "We are already planning next year’s day," said Abele. "and we expect to announce the date in the near future."
Commission law enforcement personnel, Office of Information people, and other Fish Commission employees conducted fish filleting and cooking demonstrations. Talk about "hands-on" work! Here Bill Hartle, Northcentral Region assistant supervisor, assists a first-time fish cook in the delicate technique of filleting.

The Mulranens—Joe, Linda, and their two children, Joey and Jennifer—tried their luck at Blue Marsh Lake in Berks County, one of 25 Commission seminar sites. Many families like the Mulranens, non-licensed and first-time anglers, took advantage of Fish-for-Free Day.

Fish-for-Free Day offered many father-son teams the chance to try a new sport together. Fish Commission personnel provided expert advice and assistance.

Daiwa and Garcia contributed many lunker rod-and-reel combos, and their use was great at seminar sites.
Guarded on the east by the scenic West Branch of the Susquehanna, Union County narrows to the west to a "tight end" where the fabled Penns Creek enters.

**Penns Creek**

Named for John Penn, this mighty limestone stream is characterized by long pools and heavy riffles from the bridge at Glen Iron to the Mifflin County line—a distance of 10 miles.

Penns Creek has a good population of stream-bred brown trout, and there are approximately nine miles of stocked water from Glen Iron upstream to the special regulation water.

About 3 1/2 miles west of the village of Weikert begins the 3.9-mile catch and release section (one mile in Union County). This stretch of Penns Creek is the widest Class A stream in the Commonwealth. There is no stocking in this area; it supports an excellent population of stream-bred brown trout—many in the 12-inch to 16-inch class.

Because Penns is essentially limestone brown trout water, catching fish is usually a challenge. In the "open" water, bait fishing with light-action spinning outfits is popular. Minnows are the top fish-getter, with worms and salmon eggs a close second during the early season.

Fly fishing is good on Penns. From the Caddis flies and Hendrickson in late April and early May to the renowned Shad Fly (Green Drake) hatch around the first of June, there are few Eastern waters that can match Penns for the richness and variety of its insect life.

Access and parking can be a problem. The land bordering Penns Creek in Union County is privately owned, which makes it advisable to ask permission before parking or entering on private land for fishing. Once access is gained, however, Penns Creek in this area is all public water.

Legislative Route 59002 parallels the stream all the way up from Glen Iron to Legislative Route 59001, leading from Laurelton to Cherry Run. Either road can be reached leading east or west from state highway Route 45. There are bridges at Glen Iron, Trails End, and at Weikert. At the Weikert bridge is a state forest bureau parking area. From here, you can fish either up or downstream.

Up in the catch-and-release area is a Fish Commission parking area above which is 2.6 miles of walk-in-only fishing. An abandoned railroad grade, restricted to non-motorized travel, follows the creek to Coburn and beyond.

In Union County, however, access is usually by private drives cutting out toward the creek, where ingress should be by permission only. Happily, most landowners do permit access when they are asked.

There is no public camping along the creek, but there are two private campgrounds—Hoffman's Riverside Campground, 3 miles west of Glen Iron, and Penns Creek Campground, a few miles farther west at Trails End.

Except for the water from Coburn in Centre County to Weikert, Penns and its major tributaries flow through farm country; consequently, after heavy rains, fishing conditions can turn sour for days from high, muddy water. Anglers are advised to inquire of water conditions before setting out for Penns Creek.

**White Deer Creek, Rapid Run**

As part of Operation FUTURE, trout stocking allotments have been revised. Two streams for which quotas have risen sharply are White Deer Creek and Rapid Run.

The angler who wishes to cast over lots of trout, stocked browns and brooks with some natives and holdovers, should try White Deer. It's lovely water, and with 19 miles of fishing in Union County, there's plenty of elbow room despite heavy pressure opening day weekend and immediately following each in-season stocking.

Reach White Deer Creek by taking Route 15 to the village of White Deer, then going up Legislative Routes 629 and 59031, or hit it farther upstream off I-80 at the Mile Run exit.

There's a 2 1/2-mile fly-fishing-only stretch about 10 miles upstream, starting where the Cooper Mill Road joins the White Deer Creek Road.

Another good bet, heavily stocked with browns and brookies, Rapid Run boasts a good population of carryover trout, plus some natives in the more inaccessible stretches. As its name implies, Rapid is a swift-flowing stream, characterized by deep pocket water and heavy riffles capable of holding some bragging-sized trout.

Take Route 192 out of Lewisburg to the village of Cowen where Rapid joins Buffalo Creek. The stream parallels the highway for 11 miles to R. B. Winter Dam.

Coming east, pick up 192 at Centre Hall, going to the R. B. Winter State Park. From there down is good fishing.
R. B. Winter (Halfway) Lake  
Well-stocked Halfway Lake is a mecca for the fisherman who chooses still-water angling. This 6-acre impoundment is stocked by the Fish Commission with rainbow trout, though occasional wild browns show up, some of them trophies. Boats aren’t allowed, but shoreline fishing is good with worms, salmon eggs, and live minnows. Wet flies and nymphs fished below a bobber are sometimes deadly when all other methods fail.

Buffalo and Spring creeks  
Buffalo and Spring creeks are meadow-like streams flowing through farm country. Both are good early season bets.

There is a .85-mile stretch in the Borough of Mifflinburg restricted to the use of persons 12 years and younger and persons deprived of the full use of a leg. 
Reach Buffalo Creek off Route 45 at Mifflinburg or up from the village of Cowan where Route 192 crosses. Route 44, off Route 15 at Allenwood, hits Spring Creek several miles west of the town and parallels it for several miles.

Smaller streams  
Several waterways are stocked by the Commission and all, except Little Buffalo Creek, flow chiefly through the Bald Eagle State Forest. The angler seeking a little solitude should discover it here.

In addition to hatchery trout, these streams provide fair natural recruitment—largely brown trout supporting some native brook trout in the upper reaches. Water levels in these streams may be unacceptable in July and later during dry years.

Most are reached via state forest roads, so a public use map of the Bald Eagle State Forest is helpful. Maps are available through the district forest headquarters in Mifflinburg.

Approved streams include Bear Run (very small), Little Buffalo Creek, North Branch of Buffalo Creek, Laurel Run, Spruce Run and Weikert Run.

The West Branch  
Warmwater fishing in Centre County means bass fishing to most, and for bass it’s the West Branch of the Susquehanna River.

For 20 miles along the county’s eastern boundary there’s first-rate smallmouth water, thanks to improved water quality in the past decade. June through October is prime time, when both bait and artificials produce strikes.

Favored baits are live minnows, hellgrammites, stonecats, and crawfish. These can be fished with a medium-action spinning outfit or on an 8½-foot or 9-foot fly rod. You either float fish or find a hotspot and drop the anchor.

Proven artificials are eighth-ounce to quarter-ounce jigs, with twister tails in either white, chartreuse, or motor oil color. Rooster Tails are another favorite on the river, as are silver-and-black-back Rebels and Rapalas.

When the river stage isn’t high, fly rodders raise smallmouths with poppers. A 9-foot or 9½-foot rod for an 8-weight or 9-weight line is preferred by locals.

The river here is a fair walleye stream, particularly in the fall. Large shiners are good bait, fished deep and slow, around stream mouths, backwater areas, and shoals. Effective artificials are Rebels, Rapalas, and jig-and-twister, and jig-and-minnow combinations.

The West Branch carries a few largemouth bass. You’ll also find panfish—sunnies and rock bass—along with some crappies, recently introduced by the Fish Commission. Bullheads and big channel cats are available, as are suckers, carp, and fallfish in good numbers. There are muskies—not a lot, though their numbers appear to be on the rise.

Unfortunately for the boat fishermen (that’s the favored way to go on the West Branch) there is no public access nor boat ramp on either the Union County or the Northumberland County shore. A small boat can be carried down the bank to the river most anywhere, but when the river is low, maneuvering one can be a real challenge.

When conditions are right, there is access at the eastern end of St. George Street in the borough of Lewistown. The Winfield River Edge Campground along Route 15 below Lewisburg has a launching ramp available to campers. This stretch of river is top-quality bass water.

The best bet may be to enter from Shikellamy State Park and Marina at the southern tip of the county, across from Northumberland where there is easy launching for all boats of all sizes. (The Fabridam at Sunbury raises the water level in Lake Augusta, backing up to Winfield, about 3 miles upriver from the Marina). North of Winfield during periods of low water powerboating of any kind is risky. Canoes or john boats put the angler where the fish are.

Penns Creek from Glen Iron downstream to New Berlin is bass water, too. Mostly you wade, though small boats are sometimes used on the larger pools. Minnows are great bait, but crawfish, stonecats, hellgrammites, and night crawlers are all used.

Popping bugs can be a lot of fun with the fly rod—particularly at dusk—and you’ll catch fish on most of the spinning lures, including jig-and-twister combinations, Rooster Tails, and the Mepps spinner and squirrel tail combinations.

Penns flows through private land in this area, and anglers should ask permission to park and enter the stream.

Buffalo Creek from the village of Cowan downstream to the junction with the Susquehanna is smallmouth water, with pickerel an added attraction. The best bass water is from Mazeppa to the mouth. White Deer Hole Creek, near Allenwood and Route 15, has smallmouths in the lower few miles, and there are channel cats and pickerel toward the mouth.

Centre County  
by Paul Antolosky  
Centre County is officially the center of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and is deeply steeped in angler tradition. It is home to such
streams as Spring Creek, long known by many anglers as the "home of the big trout"; Penns Creek, once rated as one of the 10 best trout streams in the United States; Spruce Creek, with its headwaters located in Centre County and which attracted former presidents Eisenhower and Carter to its unique, productive waters; Elk Creek, a classic trout stream with wild trout and a picturesque setting; and Logan Branch, with a good population of wild trout found in various stream surveys that also included some large trout in numbers that even amazed Commission fisheries people.

There are many more streams that provide good fishing for stocked trout and an ample number of smaller streams that provide a genuine native brook trout fishing experience for those who choose to pursue that type of angling. Sound interesting? It is, considering that the Fish Commission's Operation FUTURE revealed that Centre and Potter counties were rated as the top two counties in the state for quality waters and wild trout population.

**Spring Creek**

Spring Creek, a limestoner, long-time famous and still very popular, affords fishing from the village of Oak Hall, located about three miles from Boalsburg on Route 322, downstream for a distance of 14 miles to its junction with Bald Eagle Creek at Milesburg on Route 150. This waterway is a dramatic example of the recovery ability of some streams. For many years it was claimed as the best. Then it was polluted with Kepone, and its derivative, Mirex. Although the chemicals did not kill the fish, they were contaminated, and in 1976 Spring Creek was designated as a "caution consumption" stream.

Later, in 1983, it was changed to a "no-kill" stream, which is in effect today. During the early 1970s aquatic life was practically non-existent on most of Spring Creek. Highway construction, sewage systems that were overloaded, and other pollution problems all contributed to the detriment of the once abundant aquatic life. Those factors were then reversed, and with some transplants of nymphs, caddises, and mayflies, the aquatic life now flourishes, along with the fish.

Although the fish cannot be eaten or killed, there is an abundant population of wild trout, which provide excellent fishing. During the mayfly hatch, mid-May to mid-June, using size 14s to 18s, an adept angler can expect a productive and enjoyable fishing experience. Most fish will be 10 to 12 inches, but there are some larger fish, and the chances are good that they will break you up when using the 5X and 6X leaders that are required. Caddis flies in April and May, mayflies from mid-May to mid-June, and terrestrials and some "tricos" into the fall offer a real fishing challenge on Spring Creek. Although the current regulations permit any type of lures or live bait on Spring Creek, few bait fishermen are angling there. "Fishermen's Paradise" and the "Exhibition" area in Bellefonte are two separate regulated areas and are well posted to that effect. Roads parallel most of the stream, and access, parking, and non-posted water is not a problem. If you desire to catch and not kill fish, Spring Creek's fly fishing only is it.

**Penns Creek**

Next, consider Penns Creek, a supreme limestone stream. Fishing is permitted from Spring Mills on Route 45 downstream. Turn off at Spring Mills via a township road that parallels the stream to the village of Coburn. Three areas are posted in this stretch, comprising about three miles. From Spring Mills downstream to Coburn the water is slow-moving, but it has adequate riffles and pools. From Coburn, with the junction of Pine Creek, Penns Creek becomes twice as large and requires a different wading and fishing approach. A dirt road from Coburn to an old railroad tunnel comes to a dead end. From there to the county line is approximately three miles, and walking the old railroad bed is necessary.
The extreme lower end in Centre County can also be reached by going to Poe Valley State Park, and numerous signs can easily direct you there.

Penns Creek has received much publicity. It's a beautiful stream and it does have a good population of wild fish. It is good fishing for bait fishermen, who, using minnows, nightcrawlers, and spinners, have accounted for some 20-inch fish over the years; fly fishermen have good luck with the caddises, Sulphurs, and light Cahills along with some March Browns.

But the famed green drake hatch that continues to draw hundreds of fishermen anticipating the “big catch” probably causes more frustration and crushed eggs than any other hatch. I have fished this hatch for over 25 years and have had exceptional fishing only four or five times. I suppose that’s what keeps them coming back, but the thrilling experience of just seeing this phenomenon is something all fly fishermen should experience at least once. Trout are rising all around you, thousands of naturals are on the water, and you cast your artificial among them, hoping and praying, but you get refusal after refusal. This puts a lot of things about fly fishing into proper perspective. If you hit it right, you’ll never forget it. If you don’t, you’ll still remember it for a long time—it’s just that kind of happening.

Penns Creek—it can be moody, fantastic, just so-so, and at times, very humbling. If there is such a thing as the ideal trout stream, one that has it all, Penns Creek could very well be that stream.

Elk Creek

Elk Creek is located on Route 45 near the town of Millheim. Turn left or right at the only red light in town, and the stream is readily accessible and easy to fish. Now classified as a wild trout stream, Elk Creek is a gem. It holds a good population of wild brown trout, sometimes difficult to catch, but their sheer beauty makes it well worth the effort. Minnows, worms, and spinners produce on this stream. It offers early and late fly fishing, starting in early April with the Blue Quill in 16s and 18s, then to Sulphurs and light Cahills from mid-May to mid-June, with terrestrials following that into fall. Most fish are in the 10-inch to 12-inch size, but don’t discount a surprising 16-inch to 18-inch brownie. Best of all, you’ll have very little pressure from other fishermen.

“Logan Branch. Logan Branch,” and I say that twice because it does that to me. So many times I have checked fishermen on Logan Branch and I say, “You caught that fish out of Logan Branch?” and he replies, “Logan Branch.” This stream parallels Route 144 between Bellefonte and Pleasant Gap and is approximately four miles long—not a big stream, and in fact, wading should be avoided. It is heavily fished and is the most fascinating stream in my assigned district of 1,200 square miles. I have personally checked more large fish, from 20 inches and up, from this stream than any other stream in Centre County. The largest was a 29½-inch brown pushing 11 pounds. Electroshocking surveys revealed plenty of wild trout, and it is not stocked heavily with hatchery fish. The pressure is more than normal for a stream this size, yet the fish continue to be there to be caught. It has a bountiful supply of sow bugs and sculpins, good water temperature, and a steady flow. Perhaps the angling pressure makes the wild trout wilder, and if night fishing is your bag, perhaps one of those biggies could be yours.

If you are the kind of fisherman who likes to roll out of your car and be 10 feet away from the stream, this waterway is for you—access is easy. Most fish are caught on bait such as nightcrawlers, minnows, salmon eggs, and sculpins. Fly fishing is fair with Sulphurs and Cahills in May and June and terrestrials thereafter.

Bald Eagle Creek

If wild trout fishing does not appeal to you, there is an alternative. Bald Eagle Creek, starting just above the town of Port Matilda, located at the junction of Routes 322 and 150, flows downstream 24 miles to Sayers Dam. This stream parallels the road the entire distance and you are never more than a five-minute walk away. Heavily stocked with browns and rainbows, it is an easy and pleasant stream to fish. Some fish in the 20-inch category are taken from Bald Eagle Creek every year. Most fish are caught on bait, but some fly fishing is available until mid-June.

Sixmile Run is a smaller stream reached from Philipsburg on Route 504. The stream crosses the road approximately 7 miles from Philipsburg, and a dirt road up and downstream parallels the entire stream. It is fished mostly with bait such as worms, minnows, salmon eggs, and crickets and hoppers in the summer. It has some fly activity, but is difficult to fish in some areas.

Black Moshannon Creek, located at Black Moshannon State Park on Route 504, flows out of Black Moshannon dam downstream for 14 miles. This stream offers fishing in a wild setting and is stocked with some 12,600 fish, except for the lower two miles due to inaccessibility. The upper end is reached from Route 504 and the lower end is reached from the town of Moshannon on Route 144.

Sinking Creek

At the other end of Centre County is Sinking Creek with its slow-moving, placid water. Some deep pools are the home of some brown trout that could exceed five pounds. Its headwaters, located in the Bear Meadows area near Boalsburg off Route 322, afford some native trout fishing. It then flows into Colyer Lake and is well stocked from there downstream for 9½ miles to its junction with Penns Creek at Spring Mills. It crosses Route 322 near Tusseyville and Route 45 near Potters Mills. Using a map you will find that township roads put you next to the stream for its entire distance.

Most fish are caught on standard types of bait, but for the larger fish, minnows and nightcrawlers are the best producers. It affords a limited amount of fly activity with Sulphurs and Cahills in May and June.

Centre County also offers native brook trout fishing mostly in the northern end. Route 144 from Moshannon to Renovo puts you in a good overall location. Heading north on Route 144, on your left you will find Bougher and Spruce runs, located on Game Lands 100. Farther out you have Fields, Burns, and Fish Dam runs. Most of these are walk-in streams in rugged terrain. On your right off Route 144 you can find Panther, Sandy, Two Rock, and Walker branches. You’ll need topo maps for these streams, but the opportunity is there if you like fishing for the smaller brook trout—action that can be good to fabulous.
Much of Centre County's trout fishing action occurs on small streams, so you may want to check out the following: Beech Creek—South Fork, Black Bear Run, Boy Scout Dam, Cold Stream Run, Dicks Run, Eddylick Run, Little Fishing Creek, Laurel Run (Flat Rock Creek), Marsh Creek, Moshannon Creek—Mountain Branch, Pine Creek, Poe Creek, Wallace Run, and Wolf Run.

Colyer Lake
Like lake fishing? Colyer Lake, comprising 77 acres, is reached from Route 322 near Tusseyville and is stocked with brook trout—a pretty lake and perfect for the family outing. Fish from shore or bring your boat, but only electric motors are permitted. Most fish are caught on salmon eggs, worms, cheese, and spinners.

Colyer Lake is stocked with trout but also supports warmwater fish. This past season it produced a 10-pound and 9-pound walleye. These are nice fish from any impoundment. Occasional muskies are taken, and it also supports some panfishing.

Poe Valley Lake, located in Poe Valley State Park, can be reached via ten miles of dirt road off Route 322 near Potters Mills. It is stocked with brooks and rainbows, has a swimming area that opens after Memorial Day, and rowboats can be rented then. This setting is beautiful, and Poe Creek, flowing out of the lake, is also stocked to where it joins Penns Creek three miles downstream. Camping arrangements can be made with park officials.

Enough warmwater fishing can also be found in Centre County to make that type of fishing effort more than worthwhile. Black Moshannon Lake, 237 acres, reached from Philipsburg on Route 504, is a pleasant, non-crowded lake that offers pickerel, crappies, panfish, largemouth bass, and muskies. This lake is shallow, averaging about six feet deep and has a multitude of cover that includes plenty of stumps, water lilies, and assorted grasses that provide ideal cover for fish in those areas. Electroshocking surveys revealed a 12-pound-plus largemouth bass living there. Electric motors only are permitted on the lake, and cabin facilities, boat rentals, and a swimming beach make it an ideal vacation spot for the entire family. Try fishing the top end of the lake in the deep cover and you may be pleasantly surprised. This spot is a beautiful setting and the fish are there.

Sayers Dam
Sayers Dam, 1,730 acres, is near Howard off Route 150. It provides muskies, largemouth and smallmouth bass, exceptional crappie fishing, bluegills, brown bullheads, some walleye, and tiger muskies. This lake is a U. S. Army Corps of Engineers lake, but it is also the Bald Eagle State Park. A primitive camping area, plenty of picnic facilities, boat rentals, and a swimming area provide all the ingredients for the complete family fishing outing. Several past bass fishing tournaments have confirmed that there is an excellent supply of both largemouth and smallmouth bass to make the fishing for these species worthwhile. Standard baits and lures that apply in other areas all get results on any of these Centre County warmwater areas.

Centre County can provide a lot of varied fishing opportunities. Draw a circle within a 50-mile radius of Bellefonte or State College and you could spend a lifetime exploring the fishing available—and that's just for trout. An abundance of quality waters plus wild trout, stocked trout, easy access, walk-in and wilderness areas, and very few posted waters all help to provide the ultimate trout fishing experience.

Warmwater fishing is interesting enough to provide a change-of-pace fishing from too many ventures. Over 80 percent of Centre County is forested and provides spectacular scenery, and we have good roads to get you to the many different fishing areas available. Penn State University offers a multitude of attractions that can be combined as a fishing trip for dad and something else for mom and the kids. The fabulous flower gardens in July and August, and football games in the fall, all can be made into combination trips of fishing and doing something else. Centre County, the center of the Commonwealth, has it all for fishing enthusiasts.

Paul Antolosky is the waterways conservation officer of Centre County.

Centre and Union counties are deeply steeped in angling tradition, from the superior-quality trout fishing experience through the gamut of warmwater action.

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You’ve got a fishing friend in Pennsylvania