This past January, sportsmen and conservationists representing the angling and boating public met as a “Roundtable for Pennsylvania Sportsmen” and discussed the future direction of your Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Seventy-two guests with diversified backgrounds from 25 counties shared their views and expertise with 42 staff members. Four important issues were considered. Participants focused on their ideas on how the Commission and the public should work together to: 1) provide boating opportunities, 2) provide fishing opportunities, 3) protect and manage aquatic resources, and 4) identify ways to obtain public input into the Commission’s planning efforts.

For an entire afternoon a friendly but inquisitive dialogue addressed the Commission’s future direction. At times discussions became heated, but a sincere attitude of “how we can do things better” prevailed. As the session progressed, it became obvious that the Commission needs to continue to reach out to the non-traditional public to obtain a broader perspective and develop a closer working relationship in providing service to the public. Overall feedback from the participants was positive and included specific suggestions for consideration in future gatherings of this kind.

Suggestions for providing boating opportunities concentrated on three general areas. One area frequently cited was to improve and upgrade boat launch, parking and mooring sites. Quality of a particular access site was more important than quantity of accesses. Establishing priorities of work and allocation of resources was considered essential in developing new and repairing old accesses. The idea of entering into cooperative partnership agreements with private and public landowners was emphasized. A second area cited was establishing more effective communications and providing timely information about boating opportunities. Many comments focused on regional dissemination of news and publicizing opportunities. The last area of importance was the need to increase the number of boater education courses, coupled with the thought of making operator education and licensing mandatory.

Fishing opportunity suggestions ranged from more aggressive fisheries management, especially in warmwater and coolwater resource areas, to expanding opportunities through various regulation changes and incorporating new initiatives. Additional suggestions included more outreach efforts and partnerships to offer fishing and environmental education programs and expand general awareness of what is currently available. Closer and more supportive efforts of the cooperative nursery program were also cited.

Resource protection and management suggestions focused on expanding the Commission’s involvement with local governments, and private and public interest groups. Suggestions included involving a larger variety of people in management, education, protection and improvement of aquatic resources. Water quality and quantity was addressed as a concern. The Commission needs to involve a larger group of citizens in promoting its motto of “Resource First—Protect, Conserve and Enhance.” A greater Commission commitment to hold meaningful public involvement sessions throughout the Commonwealth and to be more active in surveying user needs is a means to do so.

Lastly, suggestions regarding public involvement and input into the agency’s comprehensive planning effort resulted in a desire to hold regional meetings, workshops and information sessions and conducting public surveys to address future efforts. Emphasis was placed on the use of multi-media to get the word out to the public. Regional dissemination of information was highly supported.

Considering all these ideas, the question is, where do we go from here? The Commission is totally aware and dedicated to the idea that public input and involvement is instrumental in successfully establishing the future direction of the agency. Therefore, consideration is under way to conduct regional meetings to receive additional public input regarding the Commission’s future direction. Announcements concerning locations and dates of these gatherings will be forthcoming. Your participation in this most worthwhile venture is encouraged and needed.
A little goes a long way
Do you think that raising children these days is tougher for you than it was for your parents or grandparents? I recently talked with parents who are frustrated and angry because they believe that the values they are trying to teach their children are increasingly more difficult to reinforce.

On the other hand, I've received letters from Angler readers and I've talked to anglers who say things like, "my son and I enjoy fishing and your magazine," or "our whole family loves to fish and read the Angler," or "the kids enjoy fishing and the Angler as much as I do."

So as I prepared this issue, I pictured families fishing—parents with children, and grandparents with grandchildren, even though this idea isn't the focus of the material. I realized that influencing our children is like using garlic in cooking: A little goes a long way. I vowed to continue to take my own children fishing this season—if I didn't, the kids would think that going fishing is uncool.

This issue's front cover shows Pennsylvania's 1994 trout/salmon stamp, painted by Pennsylvania artist Robert Clement Kray.
Opening day 1994—what will it have in store for us? Will it be anything like the opening day of the 1993 season, April 17? What a beginning, last year’s opening day. Bryan Meek, Ken Rictor and I planned to fly fish on Bald Eagle Creek near Unionville in Centre County. A few weeks before opening day the blizzard of the century clobbered the central part of the state. In late March and early April rain fell and fell—10 inches of it. The Bald Eagle went way over its bank the Friday night before opening day.

Even with the dismal outlook we agreed to continue our annual opening day tradition and fly fish Bald Eagle Creek. When we arrived at the stream I knew it was hopeless—the stream seemed at least three feet above normal and still filled many farmers’ fields bordering the stream. I looked in several puddles now shut off from the stream and saw trout in these isolated pools—trout that attempted to stay out of the flood waters. Bryan, Ken and I hiked downstream for a mile and saw several small pools in a farmer’s field that now held trout. In those floodwaters Bryan Meek caught the only trout of the day—in a slow eddy next to shore. An hour later we left the stream, lacking many of the pleasant opening day memories stuffed away and rechewed occasionally.

By the next day the stream level had dropped almost a foot and I returned to the same spot. Now more trout showed up in isolated puddles in the field. I tied on a pattern that has become an opening day tradition, a heavily weighted Green Weenie. By the time the morning had ended, that size 10 Weenie had helped me land a dozen trout—in waters that still flowed two feet above normal and that just the day before surrendered no trout.

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Back in 1988 several of us experienced a completely different kind of opening day. I planned to fish the Lackawaxen River in northeastern Pennsylvania with Lee Eckert, John Chumetski and Carl Laurer. Each year Jerry Lewis hosts these opening day anglers at his Rowland home. While traveling to the river early opening day morning, a freak 2-inch snowstorm greeted us. As Lee and John continued to fly fish in the morning, several heavy snow squalls filled the leaden skies with huge flakes. Snow continued to fall intermittently until noon. By the time we quit for the lunch hour for a traditional first day turkey dinner hosted by Jerry Lewis, the gray clouds disappeared and a bright-blue sky replaced them. At dinner all of us complained about the terrible, inclement weather and our inability to catch trout.

We continued our fishing after our noon meal. Shortly after we arrived back on the Lackawaxen for our afternoon excursion, we began to see a few hendricksons appear. Within a half-hour thousands of hendricksons floated on the river in front of us. A few of the recently planted trout began feeding on the surface on this new food. Some frustrated anglers cast spinners over the rising trout in an attempt to catch them. Cold water temperatures supported my convictions that few trout would take dry flies. The four of us caught only a few trout on dry flies that opening day, but the hendrickson hatch saved the day.

Or is this more typical of your opening day? You arrive at the stream shortly before the season begins, looking for a place
Early in the season trout seem to hit in spurts. You might go for an hour or two without any strikes and then have a half-dozen in a short period. Don't quit too soon.

with room enough to cast. You note that the stream is clear but a foot or two above normal. You plunge your thermometer into the cold water and get a reading of 44 degrees. You see no mayflies, stoneflies or caddisflies—it's too cold for any to emerge. The opening time arrives and dozens of anglers around you toss in spinners, salmon eggs, worms, minnows, cheese and marshmallows. If you use flies, what chance do you have of catching trout in these less than ideal conditions? How can you compete with anglers using a myriad of baits? To succeed you have to think of tactics, strategies and patterns that work in opening day settings.

Tactics

The last example typifies the most common kind of opening day you'll experience. You'll usually see water temperatures around 40 to 45; water level about one to two feet above normal; few, if any, insects on the water; and you're flanked by a large number of anglers on both sides of you. The things I remember most about opening day include high water, cold temperatures and crowds—these often make up part of the challenge of early season fly fishing. Let's look at some strategies you might use in these less than ideal early spring conditions.

1. Get the pattern on or near the bottom. When the water temperature stays below 50 degrees, trout most often stay on or near the bottom. Add weight to the pattern and fish it deep. Sure, you're going to lose some flies if you fish on the bottom.

   You can add weight in several ways. I most often add weight to the body of the fly when I'm tying it. I use .015 or .020 lead wire and wrap it around the hook shank. I color code patterns with different colored thread on the head of the fly to distinguish how much weight I have added.

   If you add lead shot, place it approximately 6 to 12 inches above the pattern. I dislike casting patterns with lead shot, so add weight to the leader as a last resort.

   Use a sinking tip fly line. This line gets your pattern down to the trout quickly. I often use a sinking tip fly line opening day with a 6-foot leader.

2. Vary your retrieve. Don Bastian guides and teaches fly fishing to many Pennsylvania anglers. He teaches all anglers he guides to vary the retrieve. Cast the pattern almost directly upstream and let the fly drift downstream, stripping the line as the fly drifts downstream. Cast the pattern across and slightly upstream. On some of the casts let the fly drift naturally—on others twitch the fly. See which method seems to work best on opening day.

3. Often a slow, deep retrieve works best in cold water. Remember that in cold water the trout's metabolism has also slowed. When water temperatures range in the high 30s or low 40s trout react slowly. So in addition to getting the pattern where the trout are, it's important to move it slowly.

4. Change patterns. If one fly doesn't work, use another. We'll look at some of the patterns that have worked well for me over the years. If you feel comfortable using a dropper, then you can use two patterns and increase your chances of success.

5. Don't give up too soon. On many early season excursions I've been surrounded by dozens of anglers for the first hour or two only to find the stream almost void of anglers by noon. Early in the season trout seem to hit in spurts. You might go for an hour or two without any strikes and then have a half-dozen in a short period. Don't quit too soon. The water temperature might rise and angler commotion might die down, and trout might respond by feeding. I've often seen streams come alive with action after many of the anglers have left.

6. If you encounter muddy conditions, try a brightly colored pattern like the Mickey Finn. I often resort to more brightly colored patterns in off-color water.

Patterns

In the April 1991 Pennsylvania Angler I wrote an article called "Muddlers, Buggers, Weenies and Ghosts." I extolled the virtues of using Muddler Minnows, Woolly Buggers, Green Weenies and Gray Ghosts as opening day selections destined to catch trout. To that list I have since added a Bead Head Pheasant Tail Nymph and the Woven Stonefly Nymph as great early season selections. Let's look at a few of the patterns.

• Green Weenie. For the first week of the trout fishing sea-
I landed one 24-inch rainbow on the pattern the first week of the 1993 season. Make certain you carry plenty of these with you. This could be the most effective pattern you use on opening day.

The Green Weenie continues to produce trout throughout the season. I've found it especially effective in April and also from July through October.

I add a loop to the tail of the pattern made of chartreuse chenille. This loop makes the Green Weenie wiggle as it moves downstream.

- **Woolly Bugger.** The Woolly Bugger is an old standby that I rely on heavily in the spring and fall. I prefer this pattern tied with a dark-olive or black body. Lots of anglers wonder why this pattern works so well. If you take a close look at almost any stream in the Commonwealth, you find many fish fly larvae. Look at a fish fly larva and see how much it resembles a Woolly Bugger.

Don Bastian also ties Woolly Buggers with orange and green bodies and has had great success with these colors.

- **Bead Head Pheasant Nymph.** Walt Young first introduced this pattern to me. Don't go on any fishing trip without this bead head, especially in spring and fall. In a period of two weeks on the lower Bald Eagle, I caught two 16-inch, two 19-inch and one 23-inch brown trout. As with all of the early season patterns, fish it slow and deep.

- **Woven Stonefly Nymph.** Gregory Hoover, a noted entomologist and writer, prefers this pattern over any other in April. Several years ago on opening day, Gregory caught a 5-pound brook trout on Loyalsock Creek on the Woven Stonefly Nymph. This pattern includes some heavy lead on either side of the hook shank, which gets the fly to the bottom quickly.

**Opening day hatches**

Even with crowded conditions and cold water temperatures, you might see a hatch on some of Pennsylvania's finest waters. Most hatches in mid-April appear from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

If you want to see hatches on opening day, hit narrow sections of Fishing Creek in Clinton County. On the trophy trout section of this stream I've already witnessed five hatches on the same day in mid-April. On any April day you might see mayflies like the little blue-winged olive duns, quill gordon, blue quill, hendrickson and a caddisfly, the grannom.

You can also see plenty of hatches on many northcentral freestone streams. Loyalsock and Kettle creeks can also sport hendricksons and blue quills on opening day. Here are some of the more common hatches you might see on opening day.

- **Little Blue-Winged Olive Dun.** This small mayfly can appear as early as early March. Hatches on many streams are well under way when the season opens. A size 18 Hare's Ear copies the nymph. Hatches appear on the Little Juniata River, Spring, Fishing, Bald Eagle (below Milesburg), Bushkill and Little Pine creeks.

- **Blue Quill.** I've seen great opening day hatches of blue quills on Cedar Run and Fishing Creek just upstream from Lamar. Most of the northcentral freestone streams like Kettle, Loyalsock and First Fork hold good hatches. The Bald Eagle near Tyrone has a first class hatch of blue quills. One of the most spectacular blue quill emergences occurs on Oil Creek shortly after the season begins.

- **Hendrickson.** One of the most common hatches in the state, the hendrickson appears in good numbers on the Lehigh, Lackawaxen and Delaware rivers in the northeast. The hendrickson emerges in early April on Codorus Creek near Hanover, York County.

- **Quill Gordon.** The quill gordon is the largest early mayfly to appear. You'll find this hatch on opening day on some of our better northcentral streams. The Loyalsock above Williamsport holds a good first week hatch as do Slate and Cedar runs. A wet fly copying the emerging dun works well.

- **Grannom.** The grannom appears on many limestone streams on opening day. Spruce Creek, the Little Juniata River and Penns Creek have hatches of this downwing caddisfly near opening day.

Some streams also hold early season stonefly hatches like the early brown stonefly and little black stonefly. Often the latter stonefly hatch has begun in mid-March. Ridley Creek in the southeast and Oil Creek in the northwest boast great little black stonefly hatches.

Do you have a ritual to start off the trout season? Even though conditions are less than acceptable, do you still plan to fly fish? Then follow some simple rules like keeping the pattern deep and retrieve it slowly. Along with these simple rules, try some of the patterns I've recommended. Even though it's opening day, be on the lookout for hatches. And above all, enjoy the experience—it's opening day and you have a whole season of fly fishing ahead of you.
Pennsylvania's opening day trout bounty is like a buffet that stretches away into infinity. Be sure to sample all you can.
Southeast

Southeastern Pennsylvania boasts a good number of choices for the angler planning to spend opening day in this history-rich portion of the state.

**Tulpehocken Creek.** Best known for its special reg area below Blue Marsh Dam near Reading, the upper sections of this Berks County limestone have been less publicized and can offer an excellent opening day experience.

Commission Area 6 Fisheries Manager Mike Kaufmann has responsibility for the lower Delaware River watershed, which includes the Tulpehocken. He rates the stream as a good bet for opening day because of heavy preseason stocking of brown trout and rainbow trout. The 12-mile length of this section helps spread out the crowds, according to Kaufmann.

The upper Tulpehocken winds through west-central Berks County. Several state routes that branch off of U.S. Route 422 from Myersdale in Lebanon County downstream beyond Womelsdorf in Berks County provide the best stream access points. The “Tully” flows for the most part through private lands that are open to fishing. Visiting anglers can help keep the stream open by exercising good manners on the water.

**West Branch, Octoraro Creek.** The beautiful rushing waters of the West Branch of the Octoraro were also high on Mike Kaufmann’s list of opening day possibilities. Flowing through an open valley in southern Lancaster County, the West Branch enjoys designation under the state Scenic Rivers program. Stocked preseason with brown trout and rainbow trout, the West Branch is a very popular opening day destination over its seven miles of open water. The best access to the West Branch of the Octoraro is via Route 472 south out of Quarryville.

**Skippack Creek.** Seven miles of this gently flowing Montgomery County stream within the confines of Evansburg State Park are stocked with brown trout and rainbow trout before opening day. The park provides a recreational and angling oasis in the middle of densely populated Montgomery County. U.S. Route 422 east of Collegeville bisects the state park section.

Be persistent. If a pool or pocket looks like it just has to have a fish in it, it probably does. Try different drifts and approaches until you score.
of Skippack Creek at Evansburg and provides the primary points of stream access. Additionally, throughout Evansburg Park, numerous roads parallel or come near the stream to provide access. Above the park, State Route 73 leads to an additional two miles of stocked water.

Northeast

Commission Area 4 Fisheries Manager Robert Moase is responsible for monitoring the streams of the upper Susquehanna watershed in northeast Pennsylvania. He recommends the following pair of trout waters to anglers looking for a new place to spend the season opener.

Schrader Creek. Thought by many to be the best trout stream in Bradford County, Schrader Creek flows through the wild setting of State Game Lands 12 and 36 in the southern portion of the county. Ten miles of the stream in the game lands are stocked preseason with brook trout and brown trout.

Schrader Creek can offer excellent, uncrowded opening day fishing to the angler willing to take the time to hike in. The game lands portion of the stream is paralleled by an access road that is gated at both ends. Motorized vehicles are not permitted beyond these gates.

Access to the upstream game lands gate on Schrader Creek is via Route 154 south out of Canton. The lower gated parking area is best reached by taking State Route 3006 off of Route 414 near Franklinville. To explore the best that Schrader Creek has to offer, pack a lunch and plan to spend the day in the remote walk-in section of the stream.

Starrucca Creek. This medium-sized freestone tucked away in a remote corner of northeast Susquehanna County may actually be a stream that doesn’t see enough angler pressure, according to Area 4 Fisheries Manager Bob Moase. He notes that recent inseason surveys of Starrucca Creek have turned up higher-than-expected numbers of stocked trout left over from preseason stockings.

Starrucca Creek flows over a rocky, boulder-strewn bed throughout its slightly more than five miles of stocked water. All three species of trout are stocked here before opening day.

Starrucca Creek is best reached by taking Route 171 to the village of Lanesboro. Here a huge stone railroad viaduct spans the stream near the point where it enters the Susquehanna River. From Lanesboro upstream, Township Road 296 (Viaduct Street) parallels the Starrucca, and offers numerous points of access.

Jordan Creek. This Lehigh County limestone stream was recommended by Commission Area 5 Fisheries Manager Dave Arnold as a good opening day selection for anglers looking to try somewhere different.

Jordan Creek features two distinct sections within its 15 miles of stocked water. Both sections receive ample preseason plants of brown trout and rainbow trout. The upper section of the stream from the Route 100 bridge downstream to the vicinity of Kernville flows through a rural setting and the confines of State Game Lands 206. Route 309 north out of Kernville provides access to this portion of the stream.

The lower section of Jordan Creek from Kernville downstream to the mouth in Allentown loses its rural feel as it flows through a heavily developed area. However, the opening day fishing here can still be very good. Access to this lower section of Jordan Creek is via Main Boulevard off Route 309 near the town of Guthville.

Southcentral

Southcentral Pennsylvania is blessed with some of the finest trout water our state has to offer. Here are just a few of the options available to the opening day angler.

East Licking Creek. This southcentral freestone stream offers approximately 20 miles of stocked trout water on its journey through Mifflin and Juniata counties. The stream has two distinct sections, each with its own particular opening day appeal.

The 10 miles of stocked water from the headwaters in the Tuscarora State Forest downstream to Clearview Reservoir is small, classic mountain trout water. Brown trout and brook trout are stocked here before opening day.

Below Clearview Reservoir, East Licking offers another 10 miles of larger stocked water as it meanders through the farmlands of Juniata County. The lower section of East Licking travels through privately held property. However, general access remains good.

Licking Creek Drive (SR 4002) turns off of Route 333 at the village of Mifflin and provides good access to most of the stream. The lower sections are bridged by State Routes 3011 and 3010, off Route 333 south of Mifflin.

Raystown Branch, Juniata River. This branch of one of Pennsylvania’s largest and best-loved rivers is a fine trout stream in its upper reaches. It wanders through the mountain valleys and farmlands of southern Bedford County.

The Raystown Branch is stocked with brown trout and rainbow trout over a 20-mile stretch that begins near New Baltimore in Somerset County, and continues downstream almost to downtown Bedford. This is big water, averaging more than 70 feet wide in some places.

Route 31 parallels the majority of the stocked section of the Raystown Branch, and provides good access to the stream. Most of the Raystown Branch flows through privately owned land that is open to anglers through the courtesy of local landowners.

Cove Creek. Also known locally as Big Cove Creek, this waterway is one of the major trout streams of mountainous Fulton County, with about 14 miles of stocked water that flow ever southward through the small crescent of Pennsylvania drained by the Potomac River.

The stocked section of Cove Creek begins near McConnellsburg in west-central Fulton County. These upper reaches are easily accessed from Route 522. The stream picks up several high-quality cold-water tributaries as it winds south past Webster’s Mills and Big Cove Tannery. Below Big Cove Tannery, Cove Creek flows through a more isolated wooded area where anglers must walk in to reach the water. The newly formed Fulton County Chapter of Trout Unlimited assists in float-stocking this portion of the stream. Access to the lower reaches of Cove Creek...
is via Route 928 near the village of Potts Mills.

Northcentral

Northcentral Pennsylvania, with its abundance of fine trout water and vast tracts of state forest land, is one of the best choices for the opening day angler seeking new water to explore.

Hyner Run. This small Clinton County freestone joins the West Branch of the Susquehanna River about six miles east of Renovo along Route 120. There are slightly more than four miles of stocked water here, the upper reaches of which flow through Hyner Run State Park. Access is excellent from a state forest road that parallels the stream in the park. Hyner Run’s rhododendron-clad runs and pools are well-stocked with brown trout and brook trout before opening day. A pair of additional bonuses for the opening day angler is the stream’s Right and Left Branches. Both are stocked with brook trout before the season opener. They offer a small-stream getaway from the main stem of Hyner.

White Deer Creek. A major trout stream of its region, White Deer Creek flows for over 20 miles across northern Union County to meet the Susquehanna at the village of White Deer. The stream travels for the most part through the wooded confines of the Bald Eagle State Forest, and overall access is very good. Access to the upper reaches of White Deer Creek is via a dirt road that leads west from the picnic area at McCall Dam State Park. The stream is small and brushy in this section, but is well worth fishing. Farther downstream, a larger White Deer emerges from a three-mile delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only section to offer another 10 plus miles of stocked water. The upper portion of this stretch is paralleled by White Deer Creek Road, which joins State Route 1010 to follow the stream to its mouth.

Southwest

From the urban sprawl of greater Pittsburgh to the rugged ridges of Somerset County, southwest Pennsylvania is a region of sharp contrasts. Commission Area 8 Fisheries Manager Rick Lorson oversees the waterways of this area. He recommends the following pair of area streams to opening day anglers seeking someplace new.

Clear Shade Creek. Clear Shade Creek is a moderate-size stream that flows through a remote, beautiful section of northwest Somerset County. A 6.7-mile section of the stream from Pine Lake, north of Ogelton, downstream to one mile above Windber Reservoir is well stocked with brook trout before opening day.

Much of this section of Clear Shade flows through the Gallitzin State Forest, and access is excellent. Crumb Road (T1816) bisects this portion of the stream, providing bridge access. State Route 56 crosses Clear Shade farther upstream at Ogelton. The stream is float-stocked in the section between these crossings.

Deer Creek. Deer Creek is a surprisingly good trout stream that flows along the eastern edge of Pittsburgh to meet the Allegheny River near Harmarville. Area Fisheries Manager Lorson says that the entire eight-mile stocked stretch of Deer creek has good water quality and abundant trout habitat. Indeed, Lorson notes that recent surveys indicate some brown trout reproduction is taking place in the stream.

Deer Creek is stocked preseason with brown and rainbow trout for 1.7 miles upstream from the junction of State Route 910 and T-678 near Indianola. From this road junction downstream for 2.1 miles, Deer Creek is under delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only regulations. Another 4.4 miles of open water lie below the special reg area, and this section is easily accessible from Route 910. The New Kensington-based Tri-County Trout Club helps float-stock this portion of Deer Creek.

Northwest

In Pennsylvania’s “Great Northwest,” there are many excellent opening day destinations for the angler looking for someplace new.

Thompson Run. The small size of this Warren County freestone stream belies the quality of the stream’s stocked trout fishery. Not to be confused with Thompson Creek, its better known sister stream in Crawford County, Thompson Run falls off the ridges along the west bank of the Allegheny River about seven miles north of Tidioute at the village of Althom.

The stocked section of Thompson Run cuts a narrow valley through State Game Lands 86. The stream is stocked pre-season with brook trout and brown trout from the mouth upstream two miles. Thompson Run may be reached by taking State Route 3007 north out of Tidioute to Althom, where the stream is bridged. Just beyond this bridge, a dirt spur to the left leads to a game lands parking area. Vehicles are prohibited beyond this point. You may park here and explore as far upstream as you wish on foot.

East Branch, Sugar Creek. A good portion of this moderate-sized Venango County stream near Cooperstown flows through the wooded bottomlands of State Game Land 96, and is stocked with all three species of trout before opening day.

The East Branch is born with the junction of Little Sugar Creek and Prather Creek along Route 428 near Wallaceville. Both these streams are also stocked and offer good opening day angling. The six miles of the East Branch from the junction to the mouth near Cooperstown are stocked and are for the most part open to fishing.

Access to the East Branch is via Township Road 598 (Davis Road), which parallels the stream from the mouth along Route 427 north of Cooperstown up into the game lands, and offers numerous parking spots.

Remember that tactics and techniques can be just as critical to opening day success as stream selection. The cold waters of April call for you to fish your bait slowly and deeply through the pools, and near obstructions like log jams and boulders. In high water, pay particular attention to places where trout can rest away from the full force of the current. Be persistent. If a particular pool or pocket looks like it just has to have a fish in it, it probably does. Try different drifts and approaches until you score.

Minnows, red worms and salmon eggs are the tried-and-true opening day staples, but don’t be afraid to give unconventional baits like small crayfish and wood grubs a try. You might be pleasantly surprised at the results.

Above all, enjoy your opening day experience. Give some serious thought to trying a new spot. Pennsylvania’s opening day trout bounty is like a buffet that stretches away into infinity. Be sure to sample all you can.
He said choice of flies is very important if you fish for trout in small streams, and then he said he used only one. Because he had a reputation for both successful angling and honesty, I sought more information, and he said the only fly he used was a wet Grizzly King, but that he was particular about it. He said he didn’t tie flies himself but that he did alter all of his flies a little. He said they came with red tails that were too long and he explained he always cut off about a sixteenth of an inch.

After solitary contemplation of an unaltered Grizzly King, I concluded that my friend just didn’t feel right about using a completely standard fly, and I even whispered the word ego to myself. But the artist who tied the flies probably wouldn’t mind if the red tail came up a little short as long as his flies caught an unusual number of trout. Now the Grizzly King certainly looks like something alive in the water, although I am a little uncertain as to just what, and my friend the expert wasn’t sure, either. Anyway, I suppose it is a comfort to look at neat rows of duplicate flies in your box and contemplate that probably no other angler has any exactly like them.

For years I fished with a fine fly fisherman who tied his own flies, and on one stream with small but eager trout he set himself a special task. He said he was determined to produce a fly of about the size seemingly preferred by the grabby brookies but of some design they wouldn’t strike. He said that by producing a fly that would turn them off, he would be using an established procedure of scientists—the process of elimination. He said that if the wild-eyed little brookies of the test stream found something they wouldn’t eat, he’d figure out what feature turned them off and future generations of fly tiers could avoid it. For all I know, he’s still working on it.

For years I fished with an angler who was so far ahead of me in trout knowledge that I listened to his pronouncements almost with reverence. Then one day I happened to dig out a pattern that some picky brown trout were willing to take—when my friend Hugh, for once, wasn’t accomplishing much. I slogged across a patch of swamp to give him one of the winners, and he was profusely appreciative. I felt pretty important, but a little later I noticed he wasn’t using the fly I’d given him. Was he a little uppity despite his friendliness?

The next day Hugh appeared to be using the fly I’d given him and it seemed to work better than when I was using it. When this sort of thing happened on another trip, it occurred to me that Hugh had a secret pride and policy. He wouldn’t use a trout fly he hadn’t tied himself. I figured that out a long time ago, and although it was never mentioned, I realized it was part of his game. Using somebody else’s fly was a shortcut that simply took part of the fun from Hugh’s trout. It would be like having someone else do his casting, I guess.

I have my own little streak of sentiment toward flies, involving the person who tied them. Most of the really old ties have somehow gravitated to a couple of old-fashioned fly boxes, and I can think of some of the people I knew who tied them. I’ve lost track of most of them.

I guess we can say all flies are handmade, even though some of them go through some production shortcuts. And when I use an imported fly, probably tied by a nimble-fingered lady in Columbia, I wonder if she knows what it’s used for. I’ve known great American fly makers who had never seen a fly used in fishing. I was flattered when one lady who produced flies in a sort of blur of educated fingers asked me to explain just how fishermen used the things.

Everybody has favorites, and when it comes to dry flies, visibility for the caster becomes increasingly important with age (they tell me). I don’t want to be one of those stubborn veterans who always tends to start out with a favorite, even though an ongoing hatch doesn’t look like it at all. But if nothing recognizable flies between me and the water on fairly “technical” streams, I tend to tie on a small caddis pattern with the thought that a real caddis is apt to show up almost anywhere.

Science.
Another Look at Damselfly Nymphs

by Chauncy K. Lively

photos by the author

A peek into the fly boxes of most fly fishermen reveals an imposing variety of nymphs, designed to meet just about any angling situation. There are unweighted, shallow-running nymphs and floating nymphs. And there are weighted, deep-running nymphs and emergers. Apply appropriate styles to patterns representing the nymphs of various mayflies, caddisflies and stoneflies—the big three of trout stream aquatics—and you have an impressive array of nymph patterns.

Despite thoroughness in anticipating daily stream requirements, many of us overlook damselfly nymphs as a source of subaquatic food. Not so with stillwater anglers, however. In the past two decades, fly fishers who pursue trout in ponds and lakes—in float tubes, canoes or by wading the edges—have recognized damselflies as a significant staple in aquatic pantries, and they have made the most of this knowledge.

Damselfly nymphs inhabit most of our trout streams, and they are often present in great numbers in waterways with significant weed growth. Like dragonfly nymphs, they live in muck and detritus on the stream bottom. They are predaceous on nearly any kind of nymphs or larvae small enough to capture and eat. They also share with dragonfly nymphs an enormous appetite for mosquito larvae, which they consume in great num-

1 First make a thorax platform by cementing the monofil strips to opposite sides of the hook shank. Tie in the thread behind the thorax platform and wind it back to the bend. Tie in the gills at the bend and wind between to separate. Tie in ribbing at the bend.

2 Wax about 3 inches of working thread, apply dubbing to the thread and wind to the thorax platform. Wind the ribbing counterclockwise in spaced turns, tie off and trim the excess.

3 For legs, tie in three lengths of prepared Kevlar thread over the thorax area, spaced as shown. Wax the thread, apply more dubbing and wind to form the thorax. Tie off behind the eye.
bers. Ironically, when they leave their sanctuary to pursue prey, they are most vulnerable to becoming prey themselves. They are also available to trout and other fish when they emerge to the adult stage by climbing weed stalks to reach air.

These nymphs are generally about an inch long, with slender abdomens and fairly large heads bearing prominent eyes. They are usually olive, brownish-olive or gray. At first glance they appear to have three short tails. However, these appendages are actually leaflike gills positioned at the posterior of the abdomen. Damselflies emerge from early spring until fall. In fact, some species are known to emerge as late as November. Thus, these nymphs are available as trout food during most of the typical angling year.

In the December 1969 Angler I described the dressing of the Blackwing Nymph, representing the nymph of the common blackwing damselfly. Over the years I’ve tried to monitor new fly tying materials as they appear on the scene, mainly to find more durable substitutes for fragile materials. We are increasingly finding uses for new synthetics that add considerably to the longevity of our flies without reducing their effectiveness. Our Blackwing Nymph II is a reworking of the original pattern with new legs, eyes and wing case—the parts most vulnerable to damage from sharp teeth.

Since its entry into the market a few years ago, I’ve been experimenting with Kevlar thread for nymph legs, and it has proven the toughest material I’ve yet found for this purpose. It is stocked by most material dealers and is now used extensively in dressing large spun-hair bass bugs and saltwater flies. But a word of warning: Don’t try to cut this thread with delicate scissors—Kevlar is the material used in bullet-proof vests. You can cut it with a sharp blade, or if you use heavy scissors, cut with the throat of the scissors—not the tip.

I prepare the legs first by cutting a length of thread slightly longer than needed overall. If I want barred legs I mark the thread at intervals with a black or dark-brown marking pen. To prevent fraying I apply a drop of Flexament to one end of the cut thread and spread it with my fingertips. Then the treated thread is cut into three equal lengths, each of which is bound at its middle as legs in the thorax area.

Replacing the original pattern’s chenille eyes, I now use the popular monofilament eyes, made by holding the middle of a half-inch length of heavy monofil with tweezers and applying heat from a match or lighter to each end. This melts the monofil to form a ball at each end, producing a unit resembling a miniature barbell.

Originally, I dressed the wing case from a duck or goose wing quill section. A material used for this purpose by many fly dressers of that day. But it is a notoriously fragile material, and even with the drastic measure of coating it on both sides its durability improved only a little. I became interested in the properties of polyethylene film, convinced that it had many applications in fly making, but I was frustrated that I couldn’t tint it with marking pens. The color simply wiped off the slick surface onto anything it touched. Then I talked with John Betts of Denver, who knows more about synthetic fly materials than anyone, and he had the solution. Simply rub the film gently with ultrafine sandpaper, using a circular motion, until the film becomes whitish and opaque. Then turn the film over and repeat the procedure. Now it will accept tinting by a permanent marker, and it will last practically forever.

Poly film has become my favorite material for wing cases because of its toughness and ease of dressing. It is stocked in rolls by hardware stores. Or in a slightly thinner gauge, a plastic storage bag will furnish sufficient film for dozens of flies.

I’ve fished damselfly nymphs successfully in a variety of waterways, but working them along the edges of weed beds in spring creeks is one of my favorite ways to present them.

If you should be lucky enough to come upon a large brown trout standing on its nose, grubbing in the bottom muck, drift your damselfly nymph close by. Chances are it’s what he’s looking for.

## Dressing: Blackwing Nymph II

**Hook:** Size 10 or 12 (preferred), 4X long.

**Thorax platform:** 2 each, .020-inch monofil strips, one-third the shank length long, glued to the opposite sides of the fore end of the shank.

**Thread:** 6/0 olive pre waxed.

**Posterior gills:** 3 grizzly hackle tips.

**Ribbing:** Brown buttonhole twist thread.

**Abdomen and thorax dubbing:** Olive natural or synthetic fur.

**Legs:** Tan Kevlar thread.

**Wing case:** Polyethylene film, tinted dark gray.

**Eyes:** Heavy monofilament, tinted black.

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**4** For the wing case, prepare a strip of polyethylene film 5/32-inch wide and taper one end to a point. Bind the pointed end to the top of the shank behind the hook eye. Prepare monofil eyes and tie them in over the pointed end of the wing case.

**5** Pull the wing case back over the eye shaft and bind it down behind the eyes with two turns. Bring the thread forward and whip finish behind the hook eye. Cut the wing case even with the rear of the thorax and cut a notch in the trailing edge.
Located in the beautiful and pristine northcentral mountains, Pine Creek is one of Pennsylvania's most famous and heralded attractions. Starting out as a small mountain trickle and ending at a size many people consider a river, Pine Creek offers a wide variety of outdoor recreation including rafting, canoeing, camping, and most notably, trout fishing. Thousands of trout fishermen make the trek upstate each year to enjoy opening day on this fabulous creek while simultaneously enjoying some of the best scenery Pennsylvania has to offer, including the state's "Grand Canyon."

Whether you enjoy fishing for wild trout in a mountain stream, casting for lunker browns in "big water," or having a mixed selection of smallmouth bass and trout, Pine Creek certainly accommodates your angling needs.

Of Pine Creek's 86 miles, roughly 50 miles are stocked. From the confluence of the West Branch downstream to Little Pine Creek, 22,000 brown trout, 32,000 rainbow trout, and 90 palomino trout are stocked each year. In addition to the 50 miles of stocked water, Pine Creek has 8.5 miles of Class A Wild Trout Water, which is not currently governed by special regulations.

Because of Pine Creek's extensive length, it is difficult to describe it as a whole. It is better to dissect this mammoth-sized creek into sections to describe the kind of trout fishing each section offers.

**Headwaters to Genesee Forks (West Pike)**

Pine Creek begins as a mere mountain trickle near Brookland, Potter County. At this point, the creek has the looks of a common mountain brook, making it difficult to believe that the creek actually reaches widths of 200 feet after flowing through Potter, Tioga and Lycoming counties.

From the headwaters to the confluence of the Genesee Forks, the stream offers 8.5 miles of Class A Wild Trout Water that has a mixed bag of wild brook and brown trout. For those anglers who are wild trout enthusiasts, this is definitely the section you want to fish.

Fishing this stretch is quite different from the remainder of the creek. The wild trout don't tolerate noisy wading and sloppy casting. If you approach quietly with a low profile and execute a delicate and accurate cast, your chances of catching trout increase.

If you enjoy having some feisty smallmouth bass mixed in with your trout weekend, you're in the right place.
Fishing the Grand Canyon is best via float trip. However, for those anglers who would like to fish the canyon on foot, there are access points in Ansonia, Tiadaghton and Blackwell. The Ansonia access point can be reached from Route 6, and the Blackwell access from Route 414.

The Tiadaghton access, which is located midway between the two, is difficult to locate. The best way is from the town of Wellsboro. Take S.R. 3007 into Stoney Fork, and then into Draper. Once in Draper, stay on the main road. The road bears to the right and then goes over a hill and across some farmland. It then drops down, and the road makes a sharp right followed by a sharp left and then goes over a small stream. The road then makes a sharp bend to the right. At this point, you do not want to follow the main road. At the sharp bend, continue straight on the small mountain road. This road leads you to the Tiadaghton Access Point.

Do not attempt to go to Tiadaghton unless you have a four-wheel-drive vehicle.

I suggest that those anglers who plan to travel to the Tiadaghton access point stop in at Slate Run Tackle Shop or other local sporting goods stores to obtain a road map of the area or to acquire more detailed instructions to find the Tiadaghton access.

Babb Creek (Blackwell) to Little Pine Creek (Waterville)

This area provides good trout fishing in the spring, but what separates this section from the others is that this lower portion of Pine Creek has an excellent population of smallmouth bass. If you enjoy having some feisty smallmouth mixed in with your "trout weekend," you cannot be in a better place.

This section also stands out because of its terrific access, which makes it easier to get around and fish different places. Routes 414 and 44 parallel the creek from Blackwell downstream to the mouth of Pine Creek. There are access points in Blackwell, near Gamble Run, by the bridge above the village of Slate Run, in the village of Slate Run, near Naval Run, Callahan Run, Bonnell Run, and Ross Run, near Jersey Mills, Browns Run, and in Waterville.

When visiting this section, try a productive side trip of fishing either Slate Run or Cedar Run, which are two of the most notable freestone streams in the state.

Although many trout fishermen visit Pine Creek on opening day, it does not necessarily mean that the fishing will be elbow to elbow as it is on many other trout waters.

Paul Swanson, the Commission Northcentral Regional Law Enforcement Manager, says, "Fishing pressure is high, but not excessive as you find in other parts of the state. This is mainly because Pine Creek is very long and the access is excellent along the entire waterway, so the fishing pressure is evenly distributed."

Swanson also notes that the success rate of trout fishermen on Pine Creek, when the conditions are right, is very high. However, when the stream conditions are not favorable, it can be difficult to catch fish."

Swanson believes Pine Creek is a great asset to Pennsylvania trout fishing because the creek is surrounded by a large tract of public and state-owned land. This ensures that the Pine Creek Valley will remain beautiful and pristine for generations to come. He also notes that Pine Creek is very unique for three reasons. First, the size of the creek is so large that it can readily handle a lot of fishing pressure. Second, there are many trout in the
Of Pine Creek’s 86 miles, roughly 50 miles are stocked. From the confluence of the West Branch downstream to Little Pine Creek, 22,000 brown trout, 32,000 rainbow trout, and 90 palomino trout are stocked each year.

stream, wild and stocked. And third, Pine Creek is floatable, and there aren’t many streams in Pennsylvania where you can plan a trout fishing float trip.

Bruce Hollender, Commission Area 3 Fisheries Manager, says, “The entire length of Pine Creek, excluding the portion below Waterville that is not stocked, provides excellent trout fishing in the spring. However, when the water temperatures warm, many trout migrate to the tributaries or other areas to find cooler water. The best overall section, as far as trout conditions are concerned, is above Galeton, before the confluence of the West Branch. The upper reaches of Pine Creek have good water quality, habitat and an excellent population of wild brown trout.”

Tackle

Although fly fishermen are usually not as successful on Pine Creek in April as some of the other fishermen, it can still be an exciting and productive way of taking trout.

If you plan to fly fish early in the season, use rods from 8 to 9 feet in weights of 5 to 7. Weight-forward lines are best, but if the water is high as it was in the spring following the blizzard of ‘93, you may want to use an intermediate sink-tip line. Because a majority of your fly fishing early in the season includes using large flies in discolored water, hefty leaders in the length of 7 1/2 and 9 feet are best. Strike indicators are also a big help when fishing the high water. Make sure you bring an ample supply of splitshot in several sizes so you can put your offering down where the fish are.

Some nymphs that are usually productive during the early season on Pine Creek are brown and black stone flies, tan, green, olive and black caddisfly nymphs, Quill Gordon nymphs, Hendrickson nymphs, and Blue Quill nymphs.

Hatches

Because of the pristine nature of Pine Creek’s water, it is no surprise that Pine Creek boasts some terrific aquatic hatches for the fly fisherman to enjoy. Because of the diverse weather and stream conditions you encounter in the spring, the hatches can be erratic and unpredictable. However, when the time is right, and the insects are popping off the water, the trout waste no time taking advantage of these winged morsels.
Here are the hatches and appropriate sizes of imitations early in the season.

- **Mid-April.** Blue Quill 18, Quill Gordon 14.
- **Late April.** Dark Olive Caddis 16, Green-Sac Caddis 16.
- **Early May.** Tan Caddis 16, Hendrickson 14, Little Black Caddis 18.

In addition to fly patterns mimicking specific aquatic insects, fly fishermen should also carry a wide variety of streamers and attractor flies. Some patterns that I have had success with on Pine Creek are Royal Wulffs in sizes 10 and 12, Woolly Buggers in 4 to 8, Gold Ribbed Hare’s Ear in 8 to 14, Royal Coachman streamers in 8 and 10, and an assortment of Glo-Bugs.

Bait fishermen are usually the most successful on Pine Creek during April. In the high, murky water, sometimes a big nightcrawler bounced along the stream bottom is the only method that produces. Minnows also do the trick. Be sure not to retrieve too quickly because the trout are cold and lethargic this time of year and they do not want to travel a lot or expend a lot of energy to capture their meals.

Salmon eggs, cheese, marshmallows and various other egg-mimicking baits produce the usual good number of trout in April. The trick is when baitfishing early in the season, to maintain control over your offering and be able to put it where it needs to be on the stream bottom. Adding splitshot is the best method. When drifting, you should be able to feel your bait bouncing on the bottom. If you do not feel this, add a few more splitshot until you get the right feel. On the other hand, if you are constantly getting hung up on the stream bottom, try eliminating a few shot from your line and see how that works.

Fishing spinners and other lures is also popular on Pine Creek. The same rule of keeping the offering low and retrieving it at a snail’s pace applies the same for lure-tossers as it does for fly and bait fishermen.

My grandfather, Chris Hershey, who has fished Pine Creek for a half-century, swears by gold and silver spinners. He contends that these are such good producers because the trout can see these lustrous lures much better than the darker-toned ones. White Rooster Tails are also popular. On my first opening day weekend, everyone was catching trout on these lures. Desperate to catch my first trout, I headed to the tackle shop to cash in on the action. To my dismay, they were sold out. Without the White Rooster Tail, I did not catch a single fish that weekend.

Regardless of which fraternity of trout fishermen you come from, you will enjoy catching trout and fishing on Pine Creek. To make your weekend more enjoyable, heed the advice of the Boy Scouts—"Be Prepared." Be ready to encounter the variety of weather from snow to bright, sunny days and stream conditions ranging from raging, high murky water to just right for drifting a delicate dry fly. If the weather and stream conditions do not cooperate, or if it just wasn’t your weekend to catch fish, at least you got “skunked” while fishing one of the most beautiful areas of Pennsylvania.
If I Had Only ONE Fly

by Jeff Bryan

One bright, beautiful day early last spring, I convinced a friend to come along and find out for himself what all the fuss is about fly fishing and why it has been such a large part of my life for the last 20 years. With the temperature nudging into the 70s and a few white, fluffy clouds in the sky, I figured that even if the fishing were slow, we'd still have an enjoyable day outdoors. I needn't have worried.

Once in the water, after rigging the rods and donning our waders, I got him positioned at the top of a long riffle that had produced well for me in the past, and I helped him tie an olive Woolly Bugger to the tippet. With very little instruction, he made a decent straight-line cast toward the far bank and promptly got the line wrapped around the reel and the rod handle. With his head down, concentrating on the tangle of line, the river gradually worked its magic, straightening the leader and tippet so that the fly swam gently in the current below him. Suddenly, the rod tip shot toward the surface, causing both of us to jump in surprise.

I'm still not sure who was more astonished, my friend or the pretty little 12-inch rainbow that he managed to bring to hand, but that olive Woolly Bugger showed him, in less time than it took me to write this, why I rented "A River Runs Through It" six times. My apologies to Norman Maclean, but if fly fishing were a religion, then surely the first song in the hymnal would sing the praises of the Woolly Bugger.

This fly, so simple to tie and fish, is certain to be found near the top of any fly angler's list of most popular flies. Created by Russ Blessing of Harrisburg, PA, the Woolly Bugger, in any of its many forms, catches trout and smallmouth bass from north to south and east to west. It is as versatile a fly as you can find, and it deserves a special place all its own in your fly box.

Even though I have yet to find a "wrong" way to fish the Woolly Bugger, over the years I have stumbled across some very "right" ways to use this fly to fool...
many large trout and smallmouth bass. Usually categorized as a streamer, the Woolly Bugger effectively becomes a nymph with one mend of your fly line, and combining both streamer and nymph tactics lets you cover a large stretch of water very efficiently. The Woolly Bugger is arguably the greatest of all searching patterns, and when I step into a river with no fish visibly rising, I inevitably reach for my bugger box.

There are two main tactics I use when fishing the Woolly Bugger—the dead drift and the streamer swing. Each method presents the fly to the fish differently and you should try them both each time you step into the river, changing tactics frequently throughout the day.

Dead drift

Dead-drifting a Woolly Bugger does not mean that you simply chuck it out into the river and let it float downstream unattended. It is very important to stay in touch with your fly at all times, constantly aware of its position in the water, to have a chance at recognizing a strike and setting the hook. Yanking your rod tip into the air, only to drag many feet of slack line off the water, does not make for good hook sets.

Fishing a Woolly Bugger with a dead drift directly upstream is my favorite method for working pocket water and deep riffles. This tactic puts you close to the fish while using relatively short casts, and quickly gets the fly moving along the stream bottom with a natural drift. However, staying in touch with your fly can be difficult. One way to ensure that you maintain control over your fly, and can detect the strike, is to keep your rod tip at a 45-degree angle to the water while stripping line just fast enough to keep the fly moving at the same speed as the current. You probably will not “feel” the take, so you must pay strict attention to the point where your fly line or leader enters the water. Any sudden line movement, darting upstream or side to side, can signal a strike. Set the hook. When in doubt, set the hook. I can’t count the number of times that I’ve seen a fisherman lift the rod tip, preparing to make another cast, only to discover a wildly bucking fish at the end of his line. It’s certainly happened to me. Set the hook.

The second dead-drift technique that I use is called the “outrigger method.” It was popularized on the South Platte in Colorado. Drag is the enemy when fishing a fly in this manner. This drift is accomplished by quartering a fairly short cast upstream and immediately tossing an upstream mend when the fly hits the water. As the fly floats toward you, raise the rod tip so that the slack line is lifted off the water, letting the fly line drop straight from the rod tip to the surface of the stream, on down to your fly. Continue to follow the fly with your rod as it floats past you, lowering the tip as needed to keep that straight line, yet not interfere with the drift. Just move the rod at the same speed as the current. This ensures a drag-free drift, and because there is no slack line between you and the fly, hook-setting is easier.

When the fly reaches the end of the dead drift, stop your rod and let the current push the Woolly Bugger to the surface of the water. This upward fly movement simulates a nymph struggling off the river bottom, and many of your strikes will come at this point. Pennsylvanian James Leisenring perfected this deadly technique, known as the “Leisenring lift.” If you do not get a take after trying the “lift,” retrieve your fly with varying strips of line before making another cast.

You might think that a strike indicator would come in handy during a dead drift. The answer is “yes,” but many “corky,” or bobber-style, indicators can be a disadvantage when fishing a Woolly Bugger. These kinds of indicators...
If I Had Only ONE Fly

I tend to hold the fly at a static depth, so they hinder your ability to use streamer techniques. I like to use many different tactics while fishing a Woolly Bugger, and I hate to mess continually with my tackle, so I don't use them. Make the point at which your fly line enters the water your "indicator." It works very well and allows you to fish the Woolly Bugger in different ways with little fuss.

Streamer swing

Very simple to master, the streamer swing is an exciting way to fish. It is an active method that covers a great deal of water and often produces jarring strikes. Make your cast across and a little downstream, and then throw a downstream mend, creating a big belly in the fly line. Turn so that you are facing downstream, hold your rod at a 45-degree angle to the water, and retrieve the fly with strips of the fly line. Many experts teach to point the rod at the fly during the retrieve. I don't agree with this because there is no "give" in the rod, and a hard-hitting fish will often break off. Holding the rod at a 45-degree angle lets the rod act as a shock absorber and results in more hookups.

The downstream belly of line forces the Woolly Bugger to swim directly across the current, presenting its profile to the fish. This is the key to using the streamer swing. Vary the speed and length of your strips during the retrieve until you discover the style that produces strikes. If you can stand near the middle of a stream and cast to both banks, you can cover most of the water and show your fly to a great number of fish. Take care to guide your fly next to, under and around structure such as rocks and logs.

Combining methods

One big factor contributing to the Woolly Bugger's effectiveness, and the reason why I like it so much, is its flexibility. Not only can it be fished as a nymph or a streamer, but it can be manipulated to do both during the same drift.

Picture yourself standing in the middle of a stream. You are in a beautiful run of broken water with a rock ledge on the far side of the run that has created a small dropoff into slower water. The seam created by this ledge is prime holding water, and is tailor-made for a dead drift. The faster water of the bordering run, however, calls for streamer techniques. If you are fishing a Woolly Bugger, preferably one with lead eyes, you can do both.

Make a fairly long, straight-line cast well into the slower water. Then quickly mend the line upstream, dead-drifting the fly along the ledge. Following the fly with your rod at a 45-degree angle, let the line belly downstream and then start the streamer swing. Strikes often come just as the fly crosses the seam and begins to swim across the current. Besides varying your retrieve during this cast, try gently "pumping" the rod to impart a little different action to the fly.

Cast the fly to the slow water behind the ledge at A and upstream mend to B. Continue to dead-drift the fly to C. When the fly begins to belly downstream at D, start the streamer swing and strip the fly to E to finish the cast.

Throughout all seasons, in rivers, ponds and lakes, the Woolly Bugger is a deadly fly for bass, trout and other gamefish. Tell me that I can have only one fly pattern, and no matter if I'm after bonefish in the Florida Keys, brown trout in the Yellow Breeches, or smallmouth in the Susquehanna, I'd pick the Woolly Bugger.

The Lead-Eyed Woolly Bugger

There are as many ways to tie a Woolly Bugger as there are people to tie them. My favorite pattern is one that I settled on a few years ago. The key ingredient, I think, is the addition of lead eyes to the top of the hook shank.

The purpose of the lead eyes is twofold. First, they add crucial weight to the fly, which helps when probing pockets and holes as it forces the fly deeper and faster. The longer your fly drifts at the level of the fish, the better your chance for a hookup. Second, with the lead eyes strapped to the top of the hook-shank, the fly rides upside down, effectively making it snagless.

The Woolly Bugger can, of course, be tied in many different colors, depending on the species of fish you are after. For instance, crawfish colors of tan/brown/orange/yellow work great for smallmouth bass. My favorite colors for trout happen to be black and olive.

Some of the largest stripers fall victim to live bait. This involves fishing shiners or bluegills with a slip bobber.

Moonlight illuminated the water and sky with a soft, eerie glow. Shoreline trees looked like an army of silent giants standing guard over a special treasure.

With angling accomplice Sam Hossler vigilant in the bow, I steered the boat slowly past ominous Nealy Point. Small spots of harsh white light dotted the lake. The large number of boat lights was proof positive that stripers had been hitting the previous nights.

Earlier that evening our first stop had been a location provided to me by a reliable source. Reportedly several good fish had been taken there two days ago. However, for us that bank remained quiet well after dark with no sign of baitfish or striper activity. We decided to move to a backup spot. As I approached the point leading to "no-fail" bay, I cut the motor and listened.

The steady splish-splash of jumping alewives was clear. So was the loud, deep splat of larger fish feeding on the alewives.

"Stripers or largemouths—I don't know which, but my gosh it sounds like a massacre going on there," I blurted out to Sam. "Let's get those lines wet! This is going to be a night to remember!"
It was a night to remember. But not in the way I had hoped. The moonlight let us see black holes open on the surface as hungry gamefish engulfed alewives. We feverishly worked a variety of lures to imitate the surface-cruising baitfish. At times the water right beside the boat exploded as an alewife skipped the surface with a predator right on its tail. Yet, 45 minutes later we had not landed a single fish of any species. Heck, neither of us had a strike or even a bump.

Under another full moon, John Galida and I had enjoyed a successful night of Lake Arthur largemouth and striped fishing. However, this time, Sam and I were victims of too bright a night. The difference was cloud cover. Hossler and I fished under very clear skies with the full moon shining brightly. Galida and I fished under solid cloud cover that created a black night. I had been warned of the bright-moon syndrome by experienced Lake Arthur fishermen, but only halfheartedly believed it. It was like trout feeding exclusively on a particular hatch. Only in this case, the predator fish could seemingly tell the difference between alewives and lures under the moonlight. Sometimes it takes personal experience to bring a point home.

Arthur’s treasure

Lake Arthur is the shimmering gem of Moraine State Park in Butler County. The 3,200-acre lake is one of the best warmwater fisheries in the state, drawing large numbers of anglers from all over Pennsylvania as well as neighboring states. Species in the lake include channel cats, crappies, bluegills, walleyes, muskies and basses. The basses—black bass and striped bass—are the main success story and the chief reason for Lake Arthur’s popularity with anglers.

The term black bass covers both largemouth and smallmouth bass, the two largest members of the sunfish family. Fifteen years ago, if a Lake Arthur angler mentioned bass, it was automatically assumed he was talking about largemouth bass because it was the only “bass” in the lake. However, in recent years anglers have caught smallmouth bass, too.

“The smallmouth population is growing slowly but steadily,” says Craig Billingsley, Commission Area Fisheries Manager. “I have been very surprised at the numbers and sizes of smallmouths that are turning up in our electrofishing during spring surveys.”

Through the years largemouth bass have done exceptionally well in Arthur, so fisheries biologists saw no reason to spoil a good thing. Smallmouths were never stocked by the Commission. They just mysteriously appeared, probably the result of unauthorized and therefore illegal introduction by anglers.

Lake Arthur has consistently led all waters in the state with Angler’s Awards for largemouth bass. An award is given for a bass weighing at least 5 pounds, legally caught by a fisherman. The individual submits a special application form to the Fish & Boat Commission, and in turn receives an Angler’s Award certificate.

To protect Arthur’s outstanding largemouth fishery, the lake has undergone regulation changes. During the mid-1980s, it was placed in the Conservation Lake category, which, along with other special panfish and gamefish regulations, permitted a daily harvest only of two black bass over 15 inches in length. Then in 1992, Arthur was moved into the newly created Big Bass Program, which allowed a daily creel limit of four bass at least 15 inches in length.

“Since we have gone from Conservation Lake to Big Bass regulations, that is, from a two-bass to four-bass creel regulation, I have not seen a change in the status of the bass fishery based on our electrofishing surveys,” says Billingsley. “Perhaps this means more people are practicing catch and release on the lake. There is always the possibility of another regulation change in the future to maintain a quality bass fishery.”

Growth rates on Arthur’s largemouth remain above average compared to other lakes in the state. Largemouth growth is believed to be spurred by the abundance of alewives in the lake, although there is no hard data to support this.

“It’s apparent that the largemouth feed on the alewives because the bass we captures at night electrofishing spit up alewives,” says Billingsley. “Furthermore, it appears someone thought they were giving us a helping hand again because gizzard shad showed up in our fall sampling for the first time. I don’t know how this will affect the lake’s dynamics.”

Besides being illegal, biologists frown on angler introduction of non-native fish species into a lake because it is likely to upset the balance. Already loaded with plankton-feeding alewives, the appearance of gizzard shad may further complicate an already complex fishery.

Arthur’s other bass species, the striper, was introduced by biologists to help control the alewife population. Although locals use the term “stripers,” the Lake Arthur fish are actually hybrid stripers. Hybrids are a cross between striped bass and white bass, and they cannot reproduce in the wild. They don’t reach the proportions of a pure striper, but hybrids grow faster and fight harder than their bigger cousins.

“The current striper population in Lake Arthur is outstanding,” says Billingsley. “This past spring’s trap nets yielded our best sampling ever. All of these fish were between 18 and 23 inches. It appeared they were all a single year class, three-year-olds to be exact. Evidently, we had excellent survival of stocked fingerlings that year.”

With no chance for natural reproduction, the lake’s hybrid population depends on the success of stocking.

Striper techniques

“There have been several hybrids caught that hit 17 1/2 pounds,” says John Galida, a former area tackle shop owner and now, in his spare time, a Lake Arthur fishing guide. “There are reliable reports of big fish breaking heavy lines. It has happened to me—it’s like having your line tied to a freight train and trying to stop it. There is a good chance that a hybrid over 20 pounds is swimming around the lake.”

According to Galida, patterns for Lake Arthur stripers can be narrowed down to three or four presentations.

Some of the largest stripers fall victim to live bait. This involves fishing shiners or bluegills with a slip bobber. During daylight hours in the summer, anglers target the deep water off points. They drift with the breeze or use the electric motor to troll slowly, rather than anchor in one spot.

A second productive presentation is casting soft-plastic grubs on the flats when stripers move up to chase bait during evening and morning hours. A white, pearl or baitfish-colored grub is preferred, rather than either a dark or gaudy colored grub.

“There is no substitute for the Chug Bug, says Galida. “Use a stickbait, such as a Rapala, Redfin, or Bomber Long A, and retrieve it slowly within two feet of the surface. Or try the surface disturber approach with a Chug Bug, Spook, or Woodchopper.”

“Night fishing is the most exciting way to pursue stripers, but as you well know from personal experience, Darl, it can be very frustrating, too. Some nights there is activity going on all around, but you can’t put a single fish in the boat.”
Lake Arthur's Bass

Lake Arthur's Other Fish

Area Fisheries Manager Craig Billingsley briefly summarizes his 1993 surveys on the other species in Lake Arthur.

- **Muskies.** We found Arthur to be one of our better musky fisheries. One net had 7 legal fish in it. That is unusual.
- **Channel catfish.** Beautiful fishery. We find numbers of cats in excess of 40 inches. Those are monsters.
- **Panfish.** Since dropping the restrictive Conservation Regulations of 15 panfish, the crappies and bluegills seem to be improving in size. This may be caused by anglers harvesting more panfish, thereby allowing better growth of these prolific fish.
- **Walleyes.** We didn't find a large population, but we did find fish in all sizes from 10 to 33 inches. That range of sizes is an excellent sign of various year-class survival.
- **Northern pike.** We had one in a trap net this year. We rarely see pike any more. They don't compete well for forage with the other species in Lake Arthur.-DB.
The prime night fishing for stripers occurs in the spring and early summer while alewives are shallow. This lasts until late June or perhaps early July, with striped night activity slowing in the late summer because baitfish patterns change.

"In the fall, striped feeding activity picks up again, but it’s the old story about Pennsylvania anglers putting the rods away too soon and getting the gun or bow out,” says Galida. “There are fewer guys out there fishing, so fewer fish are caught than during the spring. Hybrid catches slow when the water temperature drops below 50 degrees.’’

How do you go about finding stripers at Arthur? What kind of habitat do they prefer? "Close to deep water—that is where you will find them,” says Billingsley. “Hybrids may turn anywhere in the lake, as long as they are not far from deep water. But at night they may move right up to the shoreline.”

Galida concurs. “Arthur is only a 3,200-acre lake. It’s not a big TVA lake with a river system, and it’s not real deep. The hybrid schools can’t go anywhere. So each day it’s a matter of eliminating water to find the right pattern. If the stripers are not on the points, they may be on flats. If not on points or flats, they must be suspended over creek channels or on mid-lake humps.”

Black bass bonanza

Lake Arthur’s largemouth fishing has changed over the years. When I first started fishing the lake, the majority of summer largemouth bass came from deep structure. There was very little shallow vegetation.

“Today, probably 25 percent of Arthur is in weed cover,” says Galida. “This provides a lot of shallow-water bass habitat. But the lake still has a lot of deep cover, too. And the major baitfish, alewife, can be found in the shallows at certain times, and in the open waters at other times.

“During the summer there are lily pads in 15 inches of water, on the deep weed edge in 6 to 7 feet of water, and on mid-lake structures that may top off at 14 feet. Largemouths are to be found everywhere. It’s just a matter of getting them to hit. Often that is no small task because of the abundance of natural baitfish.”

To be prepared to fish largemouths on Arthur, it’s a good idea to have topwater baits for the early morning action—spinners, crankbaits, and weedless spoons for the dense vegetation; jig-and-pig for wood cover; plus crankbaits, worms, jigging spoons, and grubs for deeper, open-water fish. Galida says that Arthur is a lake for everyone because you can catch largemouth bass doing what you like to do best.

Jerry Swidzinski, a frequent fishing companion of Galida, likes to fish Arthur’s deep cover.

“My favorite style is fishing plastic worms and grubs on brushpiles and offshore structure. I like the warmer water of summer when many bass have moved deep. Time of day does not matter to me. It can be early morning or the middle of the day. Actually, the sun high in the sky seems to be better for my style of fishing.”

Watching Jerry and John fish deep structure is like observing a military operation. Using landmarks that they have pinpointed over years on the lake, they crisscross a small area while minding the depthfinder screen. When the sonar shows the desired channel, bridge abutment, roadbed, hump or brush pile, they drop a small floating structure quietly over the side.

As one positions the boat up wind, the other drops the anchor off the bow. Both take up position in the stern and fan cast to the structure. Each uses a different lure presentation until they identify exactly what the bass are hitting that day. Some days it’s a crankbait; other times it’s a worm or grub. After covering the structure thoroughly from one position, they pull the anchor and reposition the boat or move to a different structure. All this happens smoothly and quickly with a minimum of conversation.

Even though it is apparent this angling team thoroughly enjoys fishing deep, Galida’s advice also includes checking the shallower vegetation. “Buzzbaits are often effective in the very shallow grass in the early morning. By mid-morning, anglers should be running spinners, crankbaits through coontail clumps or pitching Texas-rigged worms to milfoil weedbeds,” Galida says.

Future directions

Smallmouths make up a small segment of the black bass population. Many casual anglers have fished the lake for years without catching one. The best pattern for smallies is topwater baits on main-lake points during the early morning.

Some fishermen may ponder the possibility of a new record largemouth cruising the forage-rich waters of Lake Arthur. However, few hard-core local anglers believe a bass can make it to 10 pounds in the lake.

Fishing pressure on Arthur is very intense. The forage and habitat is capable of growing exceptionally large bass, but angler harvest of significant numbers of 4-, 5-, and 6-pound fish appears to limit the chance of Arthur becoming a true “hawg” lake under present regulations. The largest verified Arthur largemouth weighed 8 1/2 pounds.

On the other hand, local anglers are expecting a 20-pound striped any day now. A hybrid of that size would be twice as heavy as Commission biologists anticipated when they began striped stocking in Arthur a decade ago.

If bass fishing—either stripers or black bass—is your cup of tea, then Lake Arthur is one place not to pass by. The treasures of Arthur await.
Commission Proposes Two Changes for Stripers

The Fish and Boat Commission is proposing two different changes in the size restrictions regulating striped bass angling in the Commonwealth. The first suggested change, which could raise the minimum size limit on striped bass and striped hybrids five inches beginning in 1995, would affect all inland waters, including the Youghiogheny and Conowingo reservoirs. Another initiative would slightly lower the standard now in effect on the Delaware River.

Striped bass regulations for inland waters have remained virtually unchanged since the species was introduced in the early 1970s. At that time, the true growth potential of the species was not yet fully known. Subsequent information gathered on growth rates and angler harvest of striped bass and hybrids has prompted the Commission to consider a stricter 20-inch minimum size regulation.

According to Del Graff, Director of the Bureau of Fisheries, the proposed restriction would provide two main benefits. In waters that contain true striped bass—such as Raystown Lake—the higher minimum size should reduce harvest of young fish and contribute to increased catches of larger fish. Secondly, in those waters with striped bass hybrids, the higher size limit would allow the stripers to take better advantage of plentiful baitfish populations. Overabundance of baitfish such as gizzard shad and alewife has been shown to have negative effects on panfish and gamefish populations in some areas.

At the same time, the Commission is proposing to lower the size restriction currently in place on the Delaware River. There, no fish smaller than 36 inches may be harvested. That rule could be eased to 34 inches under the Commission’s new plan. Such an alteration would bring Pennsylvania regulations in line with New Jersey plans to implement on the river.

The easing of regulations by both states has been prompted by increases in striped bass populations in the Delaware River and Bay. “These increases have been brought about by collective conservation management measures instituted in 1985, when coastal striped bass populations were at low levels,” said Graff.

The various closed season restrictions downstream from Trenton Falls in Morrisville will remain in effect. The closed season regulations are designed to protect concentrations of adults wintering in the bay during January and February, allow some harvest in March and then protect spawning fish in April and May.

Both proposals were given tentative approval at the Commission’s quarterly meeting in Harrisburg last January. Public comment on the suggested regulations is currently being accepted and a final vote on the items will be taken later this year. Comments may be sent to: Executive Director, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.

In other action at the January 24 meeting:

• Two new stretches of Big Bass waters were created for 1995. A total of 9.7 miles of the Allegheny River in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties was added to the Big Bass Program, as was an 18.5-mile stretch of the Juniata River in Juniata and Perry counties. In the Allegheny, water between Lock and Dam 3 at Acmetonia and Lock and Dam 4, Natrona, would be affected. The Juniata between Port Royal and Newport would also be managed under Big Bass regulations.

Big Bass regulations involve a 15-inch minimum size restriction, with a four fish (combined species) creel limit. All other conventional regulations would remain in effect.

• The state’s first catch-and-release bass fishery was proposed. A 4.2-mile section of Dunkard Creek, Greene County, from Shannon Run to the SR 209 bridge, will be the site for the experimental program in 1995 if final approval is granted. Under the proposed regulations, only “no-kill” angling would be permitted for all bass species in that section.

The waters would be closely monitored for a five-year period to determine the program’s effect on the fish population. Public comment on the proposal is being solicited.


• Commissioners endorsed prompt enactment of legislation that would clarify workers compensation rights for board members.

• Guidelines for handling requests for regulations and public comment periods were approved.

• A $1,000 grant to Photography by Michelson, Inc., for support of a video production on striped bass was awarded.

• Four trout refuge areas in Cameron County were eliminated.

Because of a decline in the habitat from beaver activity, the areas were considered ineffective.

• A 1.2-mile section of Laurel Hill Creek, Somerset County, from State Game Land 111 to Paddytown was approved as a delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only site. The regulations will go into place beginning January 1, 1995.

• A proposed creel limit for American shad in the Lehigh River gained tentative approval. If after a public comment period—the measure is given final OK, only one fish per day could be creel. The current creel limit is six.

The proposed regulation is designed to help boost the restoration of shad to the Lehigh basin in conjunction with the opening of fish passageways at dams on the river.

• The Commission also authorized the staff to take steps toward acquisition of two parcels of land. A 5.5-acre parcel in Wayne Twp., Erie County, and a 21.58-acre area along the Schuylkill River, Berks County, are under consideration.

The land in Erie County borders the Commission’s Corry Fish Hatchery. The Wildlands Conservancy has made a verbal commitment to assist with the purchase of the land in Perry Twp., Berks County.—Dan Tredinnick.
Frank Hetler, of Horsham, used a minnow to convince this chain pickerel to strike. The 26-inch fish was caught out of Tohickon Creek, Bucks County, last November.

Central City resident Dwight Shaffer hefts the muskellunge he caught and released while fishing last year. The 50-inch fish was one of many muskies Dwight has caught and released over the past few years. Great job, Dwight!

Newburg resident Curtis Carbaugh, age 12, caught this largemouth bass while fishing in a local pond. The fish weighed 2 pounds and measured 19 inches in length.

West Hazleton resident Tom Marx caught this largemouth bass while fishing on Briar Creek Lake, Columbia County. The fish, fooled by a surface lure, was 21 inches long and weighed 6 pounds.

Charlie Bowen, of Middletown, used a minnow to fool this channel catfish. The seven-year-old angler was fishing on the Susquehanna River when he hooked the 27-inch, 6 1/2-pound fish. Nice going, Charlie!

Dan Valasek, of Freeport, shows off the brown trout he caught while jigging in Elk Creek, Erie County. The fish weighed 6 pounds, 3 ounces and was 23 inches long.

Laureldale resident Kevin Long was fishing the Schuylkill River, Berks County, when this northern pike attacked his minnow. The fish was 33 1/2 inches long and weighed 11 pounds, 8 ounces.

Scott McClure, Linglestown, shows the 17 1/2-inch brook trout he caught in Stony Creek, Dauphin County. Nice brookie, Scott!
Bronson Fox, of Elverson, was fishing in a friend’s pond when this largemouth bass attacked his bait. The fish was 16 1/2 inches long. Nice fish, Bronson!

Scott Smullin, Hellertown, was fishing in Monocacy Creek near Bethlehem when he hooked this brown trout. The 19-inch fish was caught on a spinner.

FISHING LICENSE APPLICATION

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Attn: License Division
P.O. Box 67000
Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000

PRINT CLEARLY

DATE __________________________ FISHING LICENSE NO. __________________________

NAME __________________________

ADDRESS __________________________

CITY _______________ STATE _______ ZIP _______________

BIRTHDAY mo. _____, day _____, year _______ HEIGHT _______ WEIGHT _______

AGE _____ SEX _______ EYES _______ HAIR _______

OPTIONAL: For survey purposes, what is your HOME PHONE NUMBER?

Resident of Pennsylvania? ☐Yes ☐No

CHECK THE LICENSE DESIRED

☐ Resident . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . $12.50

☐ Senior Resident . . . . . . . . . . . . 2.50

☐ Non-Resident . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 25.50

☐ 5-Day Tourist . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 20.50

Valid from _______ to _______

☐ Trout/Salmon Stamp . . . . . . . . . . . . 5.50

Total __________________________ $ _______

☐ Resident Disabled War Veteran Claim No. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Free

*Available only from County Treasurers

Applicant must establish identity, age, and the fact that he or she is a bona fide resident of this Commonwealth to the satisfaction of the issuing agent.

Type of ID __________________________

I certify the above to be a true and accurate statement.

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE __________________________

Cost of License and Trout/Salmon stamp includes 50 cent Issuing Agent Fee for each.

Agents Please Note: Persons buying only a Trout/Salmon stamp or stamps are not required to complete this application.

Sign up for a year's worth of fishing.

1994 Fishing License Application

Makes a great gift, too!

Note: Include a copy of your birth certificate or driver’s license when you apply by mail for any kind of resident license.
Notes from the Streams

He came in through the hatch house window

On December 13, 1993, an unexpected visitor dropped into the Pleasant Gap Fish Culture Station. The visitor had four legs instead of two, and he came into the hatch house through the window and screen, instead of the door. The young button buck gave fish culturist Bob Peese quite a tussle when Bob tried to remove the deer from between the fiberglass troughs and lead him to the door. With the assistance of station manager Ken Fiedler and fisheries technician Mike Heitsenrether, the deer was finally carried out, but not before he assaulted the stairs to the second floor, almost reaching the break room. The deer probably would have made it through the break room door, but Ken Fiedler grabbed him by the tail and pulled the other way.

Some people speculate that the deer was just trying to get to the Christmas tree, which was in the break room, but when he was released outside, the deer bounded away. Damage from the visit included one window, one screen, some clumps of deer hair in the hatching troughs, and a small trace of deer blood in various places. The deer appeared to be otherwise unhurt.

We all know that litter is loathsome and expensive to clean up, but what are the alternatives and solutions? The first is very obvious: Don’t litter! Keep that trash in your pocket, bag, car or boat. If you see litter in your immediate area, please pick it up. It’s really not demeaning, degrading or humiliating to bend over and pocket some litter as you walk to or from your favorite fishing hole. Who knows—if you do it, maybe others who see you will, too.

Secondly, educate. It is common for me to patrol, checking licenses and conversing with people, while holding retrieved handfuls of twisted and tangled monofilament line. After being questioned about my actions, anglers usually say, “Wow, I never thought about doing that.”

Take time to teach our children about litter. They, too, will use the resources we now enjoy.

Education and stewardship go hand in hand. Give the owner of the property on which you fish a helping hand picking up litter. The owner may reciprocate.

Another alternative is to organize and participate in a community, stream or road cleanup. The Fish and Boat Commission administers the “Adopt-a-Stream” program, in which you can ensure that a stretch of your preferred waterway remains clean and free of debris. PennDOT has a similar “Adopt-a-Highway” program.

Many materials that are collected can be recycled. Aluminum cans, plastic bottles, milk jugs and glass are probably the most popular items for recycling, and they are easily collected. Some monofilament line manufacturers accept waste mono line and remove this silent killer from the environment by recycling.

Lastly, a very strong option of litter control is enforcement. The Fish and Boat Code enables waterways conservation officers and their deputies to levy a $25 fine, plus $10 for each item dumped, by citing any person who litters near Commonwealth waters. In certain cases, this could include a jail term. The Code also provides a more costly penalty for disposal of household trash, usually illegally discarded in bags, boxes or containers.

If you see (or have seen) this type of activity taking place, note the date, time, location, material dumped and any identification of vehicles (color, type, license plate numbers, etc.) and/or persons. Then contact your WCO, DWCO or local or state police agency for enforcement action. However, you may possibly be needed to testify at a hearing.

It is everybody’s responsibility to stop the litterbug, because somehow, directly or indirectly, the litterbug affects all of us.—DWCO Don Benczewski.

Are you serious?

While checking anglers on the North Branch of the Susquehanna River one day last summer, I approached an angler who was packing his equipment in his vehicle. I inquired how his luck had been. “Not too good. I only caught two small perch,” he said. I agreed with him about his luck, and our conversation continued for several more minutes. As I turned to leave, he asked this final question, “How long does it take for a perch to grow into a walleye?” I paused for a moment, and then replied with a smile. “The same amount of time it takes for a whitetail deer to grow into an elk!”—Warren Singer, WCO, Bradford and Sullivan counties.

Progressive bass anglers

While at a meeting of the Nittany Bassmasters, I was pleasantly surprised to find that all but one club member had previously viewed Judgement on the Water, the boating safety video I was about to present. I was informed that their club requires all members to obtain certification through attendance at a Commission basic boating safety course. This not only shows the success of the Commission’s boating safety education efforts, but it speaks well of the positive attitude of a responsible organization.—Brian Burger, WCO, Centre County.

Keeping it clean

DWCO Tony Winters has adopted a 10.5-mile section of Route 6 in Pike County. On a day off, I went with DWCO Winters to do some litter clean-up. We were sifting through some discarded boxes of household refuse looking for information that might lead to a prosecution when Tony

snowmobiler. After a 25-mile ride back to his truck and bewildered comrades, I think he finally agreed that law enforcement officers really are “the good guys.”—Brian Burger, WCO, Centre County.

Our disgrace

Litter is our national disgrace. Everyone discards nearly five pounds of trash per day, most of which is legally placed in permitted landfills. In Pennsylvania alone we generate almost 10 million tons of garbage a year. The few people who toss litter while they drive, park, boat or fish give us all a bad name.

We all know that litter is loathsome and expensive to clean up, but what are the alternatives and solutions? The first is very obvious: Don’t litter! Keep that trash in your pocket, bag, car or boat. If you see litter in your immediate area, please pick it up. It’s really not demeaning, degrading or humiliating to bend over and pocket some litter as you walk to or from your favorite fishing hole. Who knows—if you do it, maybe others who see you will, too.

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As I came up the bank, I saw a pick-up truck parked beside one of our trash piles. There was a woman at the rear of the truck taking old tires out of her vehicle and stacking them with our collected trash. In the bed of the truck were various other items—including an old microwave oven—all meant to join the tires on the pile.

Deputy Winters approached the would-be litterbug, showed her his badge and introduced himself as a DWCO. After giving us her reasons for dumping the trash, she settled her violation on a field acknowledgement of guilt. While DWCO Winters completed the necessary documentation, I loaded the trash back on her truck.

After we went back to the discarded trash we had been working on, we located a name and address of the person responsible for the litter. After backtracking the address through the post office, we located the residence. We also had a tip that the items had been tossed out of a U-Haul truck seen at the site the previous weekend.

When I arrived at the address, I was met outside by a man and woman. I introduced myself and tried the most direct approach: "Who was driving the U-Haul last weekend when you dumped all the trash over the side of the highway?" To my surprise, the man happily replied: "That was me!" Of course, he was not so happy when I informed him of the fines he would have to pay. And they, too, had an excuse: "We thought it was a landfill."

In fact, they claimed that the woman DWCO Winters had cited previously told them they could leave the trash there. When I informed them that it was not her property and that she had been fined, they opted to settle their fines with the Fish and Boat Commission. Along with the monetary settlement, they were required to pick up all the trash they had dumped—and I am pleased to say that they have done so.

The "Adopt-a-Highway" project is alive and well in this district, even if it does take three tries to get the same spot cleaned up!—WCO William Carey, Pike County.

Rare treat

While attending annual training at the H. R. Stackhouse School of Waterways Conservation and Watercraft Safety, my fellow officers and I were treated to a sight most people see only on television.

While outside on our lunch break, we heard a screech from far above Spring Creek. Looking up, we were thrilled to see a mature bald eagle lazily soaring overhead. Suddenly, from above and behind the eagle, we spotted an osprey preparing to attack. The eagle apparently sensed the attacker and rolled on its back just as the osprey closed in. The osprey dived away in the nick of time as the eagle continued its barrel roll.

The aerial show continued for nearly 20 minutes before the birds flew out of sight. We counted a total of four ospreys chasing and diving at the tormented eagle.

Maybe the osprey had plans to keep all the trout at the nearby Bellefonte Fish Culture Station for themselves, but I think the hatchery workers have other ideas.—WCO William Carey, Pike County.

EXCUSES, EXCUSES

Commission law enforcement personnel often hear various reasons why an angler or boater has broken the law. These are a few of the excuses told to Northeast Region deputy waterways conservation officers.

Why did the angler keep a largemouth bass during the closed season?

"I hooked it deep. I was told you only have to release them if they were hooked in the lip."

Why were the two New Jersey men trout fishing without licenses or trout stamps?

"We had only $200 between us, and we spent $190 on all this new equipment. We needed the rest of the money for gas to get home."

Why was a man from West Virginia fishing without a license and harassing other anglers at Lake Wallenpaupack?

"I'm a traveling salesman." (He was attempting to sell his homemade lures to other anglers.)

Why were two unlicensed anglers fishing from a rowboat on Lake Wallenpaupack?

"Why aren't you arresting the real violators with the big boats?"

The comment from the young man who drove his four-wheel-drive truck over the grass at an access, doing quite a bit of damage in the process.

"Oh, you saw that."

The rationale used by the unlicensed woman on the dock who was casting and retrieving (and even catching some fish).

"This is my husband's pole—he has a license."

An angler's answer when asked his date of birth.

"What did I put on there?" (He was cited for fishing with a borrowed license.)

Why three unlicensed men were fishing in a lake 1 1/4 miles from the nearest road.

"We were just out for a hike—we didn't intend to go fishing."

Why were two men fishing without licenses on Labor Day?

"Since when do you guys work on holidays?"

Why the unlicensed angler ran into the woods with his fishing pole after seeing a uniformed deputy. (He was found over an hour later, hiding in a pile of leaves.)

"I'm not fishing. See, no pole."

Why was the properly licensed fisherman using three poles? (Two poles had live bait, the third was rigged with a lure.)

"I was just checking the action of the lure."

The reason an 18-year-old woman had tossed her beer can in the woods.

"I was going to pick it up tomorrow. I recycle, you know." (Her parents didn't buy that excuse, either.)

Why, on the opening day of trout season, an angler had a six-inch native brook trout in his creel.

"That was the first fish I caught this morning. Everyone knows it's bad luck to throw back your first fish."

Why the fisherman dammed up a small pool in the stream beside him and had just put his tenth trout in the pool.

"I'm only going to keep the eight biggest ones."

The reason an angler had 10 trout on his stringer.

"I believe in each and release—I'm going to let them all go later."

Why were two ice fishermen (who had already set up five tip-ups each) also using jigging rods equipped with teardrop spoons and mousies?

"We're just checking the depth."

The excuse given by two local ice fishermen who were using five tip-ups and a jigging rod each.

"That's right, we're in Pennsylvania. We thought we were in New York."

Why did the two ice fishermen have 15 tip-ups set out?

"We always bring a spare in case one breaks. It's right here in the box...Oops!"—WCO William Carey, Pike County.
Conservation Officers of PA Publishes Best of the Field

What’s sure to be welcome news to PA Angler readers is that a hardcover 275-page collection of Angler “Notes from the Streams” and PA Game News “Field Notes” is now available. The Conservation Officers of Pennsylvania, an organization of Fish & Boat Commission and Game Commission officers, has published Best of the Field, a collection of the most interesting and humorous “Notes from the Streams” and “Field Notes” that have appeared in Game News since 1932 and in PA Angler since 1931.

Copies cost $11.95 plus 6 percent sales tax and $1.95 for shipping and handling. To order Best of the Field, send a check or money order to: Conservation Officers of PA, P.O. Box 3304, Williamsport, PA 17701.

Angler’s Notebook by Jeff Bryan

Trout feed most often on sub-surface insects. Therefore, you should concentrate the majority of your efforts on fishing flies and lures near the bottom of a stream. If you do not occasionally hang up, or feel the fly “ticking” along the bottom of the stream, you are probably not fishing deep enough.

Felt soles on your waders can improve your traction on slippery stream bottoms. Sometimes, however, this is not enough to keep you from slipping and sliding on dangerously slick rocks. Chains that strap to your wader boots are available from many suppliers and act much like the chains you put on your tires in the winter. Another option is to use aluminum screws, and actually screw a few of these into the soles of your wader boots.

Many fly tiers have a problem with crowding the front of the hook with material, only to find that they do not have enough room left to finish the fly. A simple rule of thumb to remember is to stop the body of the fly at the two-thirds point on the hook shank. This will give your flies the proper proportions most every time, and should allow you plenty of room to finish the fly without covering the eye of the hook with thread.

When casting to rising fish, make sure to cast well upstream of where you see the rise. The circle on the water made by the fish moves with the current, and the fish is often farther upstream than where you actually see the ring. Give the fish plenty of time to see the fly and to react, because your quarry might float with the fly for a time before taking.

While double-hauling a fly line 90 feet is fun, it is not practical on most Pennsylvania streams. The roll cast is the most important cast you can learn, and you should practice until you can execute this cast in many circumstances. Learn to roll cast backhanded, in the wind, with weighted flies and with trees at your back. There are many times when the roll cast is your only option.

A shock-butt leader can often help when fishing with very fine tippets and small flies. This leader should be tied to your fly line at one end and your monofilament leader at the other. It acts much like a rubber band and can help keep you from breaking your tippet while setting the hook.
Care of the Catch: Trout for the Skillet

There is no better way to end a day of trout fishing than to enjoy a baked or pan-fried trout. Catch and release is OK, but it doesn’t do much to fill the stomach. Remember that there is nothing wrong with killing a few fish for a meal or two. Remember also to take only what you know you’ll use and return the rest unharmed.

To ensure the flavor of trout, take care of each fish intended for the skillet right away. Either kill the fish immediately or try to keep it alive. To kill the fish, give it a knock on the head, right behind the eyes. Use pliers or a knife handle. Prepare the trout for home by field-dressing it or putting it on ice. Field-dress fish by cutting from the anal vent to the throat, removing the entrails. Wash the body cavity out and put it on ice. There is no need to scale because trout have small scales. Remove the head and tail at home or at camp.

Trout can be kept alive by placing them in a bucket of water or on a stringer until they can be filleted or field-dressed. Trout on a stringer will die quickly and some flavor will be lost. Killing and cleaning the fish right away is more humane and protects the quality of the meat.

Fillet larger trout by making a cut along the back, near the dorsal fin. Cut the length of the trout, working toward the tail and belly. Don’t cut into the belly. Let the rib bones guide the knife blade—you get the fullest fillets that way. At the tail, don’t cut the fillet off. Guide the knife blade between the skin and flesh. Flip the fish over and repeat. Red meat around the lateral line can be removed from each fillet.

Fillet

Large field-dressed trout can also be steaked. Just cut down through the body. Make the cuts at one-inch to two-inch intervals.

Trout not prepared within a couple of days should be frozen. Place the fillets or fish in a plastic container and freeze. Filling the container with water helps some. Fillets in plastic bags don’t keep as long. Mark them with the date and species name.

PA law requires that you keep the head and tail on fish with a minimum size, like trout. These species may be field-dressed. Other species may be filleted in the field, but the skin must remain on the fillet. This provision lets a waterways conservation officer or other official identify the fish species.
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