Progress with Warmwater Fishing Programs

Since the introduction of the trout/salmon permit in 1991, the Commission has often been asked, “What are you doing for warmwater fishing since you received extra funds for trout and salmon programs?” The answer is simple. The Commission has made significant progress in all statewide warmwater fishing programs.

Just as many people mistakenly believe good trout fishing is totally dependent on the “Great White Fleet,” some warmwater fishermen mistakenly believe the Commission can increase their warmwater fishing success with the wave of a magic wand. Wise and well-informed anglers know better. They also know that it is physically and financially impractical to rear and stock most adult-sized warmwater species.

Warmwater fish are dependent on preservation of healthy habitats, favorable weather, sound fishway management practices and regulations, and anglers’ lawful and ethical behavior. Another important need for increased warmwater fishing opportunities is increased public access to waters of the Commonwealth.

Let me review the progress made in the past three years with these important areas.

- Warmwater habitat enhancement, protection. The Commission has expanded its Adopt-a-Stream program to include many lake habitat improvement projects during the past three years. We have developed new kinds of attraction devices and a specially equipped workboat to install devices in lakes in many areas of the Commonwealth. Nearly 2,300 structures have been placed in warmwater impoundments.

- American shad restoration efforts have been especially successful since 1991. Operation of the Van Dyke shad production facility and construction of the Conowingo Dam fish lift, together with the June 1993 agreement to complete the fish passage facilities at Holtwood, Safe Harbor and York Haven dams by the year 2000, are milestone accomplishments.

- Two new fishways on the Lehigh River are now complete, and major fish migration into the Lehigh River should begin in 1994. American shad, striped bass and other species of gamefish and forage fish will soon be benefiting from the Commission’s fishway development efforts.

- The Commission’s active role on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and the Delaware Basin Fish and Wildlife Management Cooperative has resulted in an “explosion” of striped bass in the Delaware River system, which is providing thousands of hours of new, quality warmwater fishing opportunities.

- Our Division of Environmental Services has increased its review efforts to protect our waterways from adverse development activities, and has battled the Corps of Engineers and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on many hydropower and recreational lake management activities that are detrimental to warmwater fisheries.

- In 1992 we expanded our permanent waterways conservation officer (WCO) cadre from 72 to 82 field officers, and have stepped up efforts to enlist additional deputy WCOs. All officers are receiving more advanced training and are increasing enforcement efforts to protect our warmwater resources.

- Warmwater fisheries management. Increased emphasis has been placed on warmwater management activities as our area fisheries managers now spend the majority of their efforts on lake and warmwater stream and angler-opinion surveys. New statewide bass regulations were implemented in 1992, and special lake regulations have been placed on many waters to enhance fishing opportunities with excellent results. Greater emphasis has been placed on reducing angler mortality, balancing predator/prey populations and habitat preservation. A major walleye stocking survival project has been implemented across the state to determine the best fish size and habitat conditions for successful stocking.

- Introduction of paddlefish and sauger to the Ohio River system has been successful. Many warmwater hatchery improvements have been completed at Linesville, Tionesta, Corry, Union City, Huntsdale, Pleasant Mount, and other warmwater production facilities. Improvements include waste treatment facilities, new warmwater production tanks, production pond liners, updated water treatment equipment and stocking vehicles. These improvements, together with new pond fertilization, fish spawning and rearing techniques has led to record production and stocking of more than 330 million warmwater gamefish (fry and fingerling) in the past three years.

- Expenditures for operating the warmwater production stations were increased by more than $2.3 million during the past three years.

- Improved access to warmwater fishing opportunities. The Commission worked with a private developer to install a $4 million harbor of refuge, marina and public access area on Lake Erie at North East in Erie County, and acquired a 57-acre tract of land for future Lake Erie development at Elk Creek in western Erie County. Both projects are important for expansion of warmwater and coldwater fishing opportunities on Lake Erie. New warmwater fishing opportunities will be provided in the future through purchases of land along the Delaware River near Riegelsville and Aquebogue Lake near New Hope.

- New access areas have been constructed on the Monongahela River in Elizabeth and East Fredericktown, Schuylkill River near Pottstown, Susquehanna River in Marietta, and Lake LeBoeuf in Erie County, and improvements have been made on dozens of access areas on warmwater lakes and streams across the Commonwealth.

- By any measure, the warmwater fishing program has moved ahead these past few years, and even greater progress is planned in the near future.

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44 Ice Fishing Tips by Tom Fegely
Let these ideas help you raise your ice fishing score

Rx for Winter: Panfish on Ice by Darl Black
Fish location, presentation and baits are all part of this prescription

The Black-Nose Dace by Chauncy K. Lively
This pattern is a trout finder because it imitates minnows that trout seek

The Kiski's Comeback by Sam Hossler
The Kiski's success story shows how grossly polluted waters aren't dead forever, and that we shouldn't give up on waterways that seem to be beyond reclamation

All I Want for Christmas is a 50-Inch Musky by Mike Bleech
To grant this wish, Santa would probably consult Herb Wagner, expert Pennsylvania angler and musky specialist

Pennsylvania Angler Subject Index to Volume 62
compiled by Charlene Seifert
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Wintertime fishing at Pennsylvania's Warmwater Discharges by Jeff Knapp
Tour some of Pennsylvania's best open-water wintertime hotspots

On the Water with Julie Lalo
Fishing for memories

The cover
Angler art director Ted Walke’s front cover shows the prospects for enhancing family ties by giving a 1994 fishing license as a gift. A fishing license application appears on page 29. This issue can help you tie into some of Pennsylvania’s best ice fishing and open-water fishing. On page 8, Darl Black offers specifics on how to tempt panfish, and on page 22, Jeff Knapp offers a guided tour of some of Pennsylvania’s best open-water wintertime fishing spots. On page 16, Mike Bleech explains how one expert scores each winter on Allegheny River muskies, with ideas on other places in Pennsylvania to lure a young angler. Check out page 4, where Tom Fegely offers 44 heads-up ice fishing ideas. For an uplifting story on a river’s “comeback,” please turn to page 14.
Crappies are notorious in their preference for small baits. A small minnow impaled on a size 6 hook is arguably the number one winter morsel. Close behind are tiny jigs or “ice flies,” embellished with mealies or waxworms.

Some anglers insist that icebound crappies can only be caught to depths in which light can penetrate. If snow cover exists, they shovel a large oval around each hole so that light can enter.

An alligator clip, available at electronic and hardware stores, molded into a heavy lead sinker is the perfect depth-sounder. Simply attach the clip’s toothed jaw at the top of the hook to sound the bottom quickly. Mark the line at the water level with a small button strung through two holes onto the line. A waterproof marker can also be used to ensure dropping the bait the same depth after each catch.

Never knot a line to mark depth. Not only does it weaken monofilament line, but after several changes of depth the line will look like a sewing project.

Anyone who’s ever spent a day jigging through ice holes for yellow perch knows they can be finicky nibblers. A simple addition to your jigging stick can tip the scales in your favor by serving as an early warning device. A firm wire spring taped just ahead of the second guide (from the tip) and topped with a marble-size bobber is all that’s needed. Run the line through the guide and out the top of the spring, then into the tip guide. Even the slightest nibble makes the spring vibrate and the bobber “bob.” This setup can even be used when an angler isn’t directly attending the rig. The bouncing bobber signals interest in the submerged bait.

Chumming is a standard fishing ploy and ice anglers can benefit from making the waters beneath a hole more enticing. Crushed egg shells, oatmeal, canned corn, fish scales and even finely chopped innards of a previous catch can be used. Dead minnows that a pickerel or pike may have scaled can also be cut into small chunks and tossed into an ice hole.

When walking on a lake, avoid spots where rocks, dead falls or vegetation can be seen above or below the ice line. Ice—especially early and late ice—isn’t as thick in such places.

Unlike summer angling, in winter it’s necessary to keep your bait warm, not cold. Use your body heat for keeping grubs and other insect larvae baits warm and active. A plastic petri dish (the device you used to grow cultures in high school biology classes) fits in a large shirt pocket. You can also use a small zip-type bag, although it won’t offer the protection against pressure and may damage soft baits. Add a bit of sawdust for extra protection. Plastic snuff cans or 35mm film containers can also be used to store waxies and mealies while readily fitting in a trouser or coat pocket.

Douse the feathers or hair on ice jigs with the same fish scents you use for summer angling. Such baits are seldom moved very far when submerged through an ice hole, so the scent has a longer “life” than it would on a wooden or plastic plug reeled through warm water.

For a few dollars you can pick up a heavy plastic 5-gallon bucket from a donut shop, bakery or restaurant. Remove the lid and cut a circular piece of plywood slightly larger than the plastic lid. Then cut a second piece slightly smaller than the bucket top and glue both pieces together. Notch out a semicircle on the edge. The “bucket seat” doubles as a convenient way to carry jigging rods (which stick through the opening), bait, tackle and your lunch.
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The “big bait catches big fish idea” is as valid in winter as in summer. If you’re after truly big bass, shiners exceeding six inches will yield the most consistent results.

Monofilament line stored on tip-up and jigging stick reels since last season has taken a severe set by now. Either buy new line or pull the old line off the reels and wind it in a circular wash pan. Then add warm water and let it soak.

When you wind the line back onto the reel, pull it through a folded piece of inner tube or an old phone book to add tension.

In unfamiliar waters, locating a channel or abrupt dropoff is often the key to success. Initial drillings should be made in a straight line, about 10 yards apart. Sound the bottom to determine the deepest waters. Or bait-up all the openings and then drill additional holes in the area getting the most action.

A 30-foot or longer coil of rope should always be included in an array of ice fishing gear. Should someone break through, it can be used to push a sled or toss a line to the potential drowning victim.

Polarized sunglasses aren’t only for use in summer. Glare off snow and ice can cause eye strain and headaches on bright days.

If you’re in the market for a foam-type minnow bucket, choose one on which the lid is attached to the bucket with a cord. Otherwise you’ll spend some of your fishing time chasing the lid across a windy lake.

On especially cold days, fish tossed onto the ice to be taken home can quickly freeze. Biding the time between bites can best be spent filleting or field dressing and scaling the catch. It also saves time at the end of a long day of fishing. Place the offal in a plastic bag and take it with you when you leave.

Don’t throw away those old rubber floor mats from your car or truck. Carry one onto the ice to use as a base when cleaning fish. It saves wear and tear on a knife edge and provides traction while cutting.

Ice creepers can save your neck and elbows when walking on hard water, especially if the surface is free of snow and more slippery than a freshly waxed floor. Take your boots along when shopping for creepers to make certain they fit tightly without slipping off the sole. Some creepers have inferior straps and buckles and cause more frustration than comfort and safety.

A friend of mine fashioned an old, wide leather belt into a gear carrier. He punched several holes in the belt and then attached snap-clips as found on a dog leash to hold a small towel, ice skimmer and hook disgorger—which he always has with him when he visits each ice hole. The net is fastened around the waist over coveralls, saving many trips back to the sled to retrieve a needed tool.

Your most important ice fishing garb is a warm hat. More than 50 percent of a body’s heat is lost through the head.

Several pairs of gloves are necessary on any icy outing because it’s nearly impossible to keep one pair from getting wet. A small towel to dry your hands after a catch also helps keep your hands warm.

Some ice anglers cut the finger tips off old gloves to facilitate tying on jigs, snaring baits and performing other chores.

Slush can quickly freeze into sharp-edged pieces. Following the boring of an ice hole, clear away all chips and slush from around the opening. That clears snags from the immediate area when pulling in a tipup-caught fish.
Enhance your day on the water with a hot meal cooked on a portable gas stove. All you need is a skillet. Some pre-sliced potatoes, cooking oil, bread and butter and fresh walleye or perch fillets hit the spot on a cold afternoon.

A small, square aquarium net makes it easier to catch frenzied minnows in a bait bucket while keeping your hands dry.

If there's any doubt about ice safety, especially early and late in the season, consider wearing a PFD. Not only are today's PFDs (personal flotation devices) colorful and comfortable, but their buoyant fill helps trap body heat.

Toss several roofing shingles in the trunk or truck at the beginning of winter. Should you get stuck while traveling to your favorite lake, they can be placed under the rear tires, grit side down, for traction.

In general, the best depth for any icy offering—jigs, minnows or grubs—is about a foot off the bottom. Use only enough splitshot to take your bait slowly to the bottom. Too heavy a rig impedes the detection of strikes and makes fish more finicky as they grab a hook.

A walk in an overgrown field of goldenrod will turn up some free-for-the-taking ice bait. Watch for the oval galls on the stems of the plants that hold a tiny grub—unless a downy woodpecker or chickadee found them first.

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A flask of wine might warm the spirits when fishing in cold weather, but that's about all it does. Contrary to traditional belief, alcohol does nothing to warm the body. Instead, carry a thermos of hot coffee, tea, chocolate, or soup.

Have you ever been frustrated by a jammed zipper on a winter coat? Before heading onto the ice, rub candle wax, mink oil or petroleum jelly on the track. The zipper will "zip" more readily.

Open-face spinning reels are often used on jigging sticks, but many anglers prefer inexpensive or "retired" baitcasting reels. Line stiffened by low temperature is less likely to tangle.

Female perch and walleyes taken late in the season are often full of eggs. They make great chum. Or save them, and after boiling, mix with your cat's or dog's food. Some people also like the roe, although it retains a very fishy taste, even after cooking.

Your feet stay warmer and drier with silk or light cotton socks next to the skin followed by heavier wool socks.

Too bad that ice-time blue gills are ignored on most lakes. Their small mouths make it necessary to use equally small baits and light lines (2- to 4-pound test). A 2 1/2-foot jigging rod and size 10 hook should do the trick.

If you're in the market for some new ice fishing gear, consider investing a bit more for magnetic tip-ups. They're less prone to being triggered by the wind and require fewer false runs to check out the errant flag than traditional tip-ups.

Garage sales may yield a myriad of inexpensive useful gear for hardwater anglers. Colanders like mom uses to drain spaghetti or wash lettuce are perfect for dipping ice chips from a freshly augered hole. Old fishing rods can be cut off to make jigging sticks and old tools such as long-nose pliers (for freeing hooks from the tooth-studded jaws of pickerel) and rubber gloves all have use atop the winter water. Retired sleds or toboggans can also be adapted for use on hard water.

On slow days it always pays to check tip-ups every 30 to 40 minutes or so. Some fish, including largemouth bass and pickerel, sometimes swallow a bait and "mark time" in the same area, without pulling off sufficient line to trip the tip-up flag.

A free-for-the-taking winter bait is the waterworm. Find it in slow-flowing streams and runoffs where it lives in submerged muck and leaves.

Taking a kid or friend ice fishing for the first time? The key to a memorable day is catching fish, of course. And the best way to ensure that is to find a pond or lake with a plentiful supply of chain pickerel. Although a 15-inch hammer-handle may not be exciting for an adult, kids love to pull them through the ice. Shiners in the 2-inch to 4-inch range are tops for these "snakes," as some fishermen call them.
In unfamiliar waters, locating a channel or a dropoff is often the key to success.

After you bore an ice hole, clear away chips and slush from the opening. This removes jagged edges from the immediate area that could make you lose a nice fish.
Rx for Winter Panfish on Ice

by Darl Black

Follow this advice to raise your score this season.
It's the middle of winter.

Usually cold. Sometimes snowy. Ice covers the reservoirs, lakes and ponds. The forecast is for more of the same.

Boredom sets in, especially on weekends. Every movie at the local video rental shop has been viewed. You complain about feelings of anxiety and not finding anything to hold your interest. There is a sense of being trapped, waiting for the first open water of spring and the opportunity to wet a line. Diagnosis: Winter blues.

There are several ways to treat this common ailment, according to John Galida, DA (Doctor of Angling). Dr. John should know. His credentials include two decades as a professional tournament angler, owner of a tackle shop, and life-long ice fisherman.

The first option is to take a fishing vacation to Florida. But this offers only short-term relief. Two weeks later you are suffering from the same symptoms.

You could take up bowling. However, this is regarded as a remedy of last resort, and recommended only when all other treatments fail.

The preferred remedy, according to Dr. John, is ice fishing for panfish. It's a cheaper fix than a trip and does not have the long-lasting side effects of bowling.

"There's not much expense involved in ice fishing," says Galida. "The first piece of equipment needed is an auger to cut through the ice. Either a manual auger or a gas-powered one gets the job done. It's best to borrow one the first few times before buying one—to make sure this cure for the winter blues is going to take hold."

Most anglers can get by with a manual auger—at least in the beginning. It's cheaper and your doctor would say the exercise is good for you. But if you move from cure to addiction, a power auger should be part of your long-term treatment plan.

Dr. John points out that proper clothing is vital for your health. If not dressed for the weather, ice fishing is a very unpleasant experience, or perhaps even life-threatening. Novices tend to
I like meal worms best because they are large and seem to milk more. Milking of larva body juices is very important.

bundle up in heavy clothing and head out on the ice. However, trudging across the frozen water this way results in overheating. Then when you stop, chills set in. Depending on the weather, it's usually a good idea to remove at least one insulating layer until you reach your destination.

Dressing in layers is important, especially if air temperatures are expected to rise or fall during your time on the ice. Multiple insulating layers and separate wind/waterproof shell clothing is a better way to prepare for moderate to mild winter conditions.

If you choose a heavy one-piece snowmobile suit, it's important the suit has two-way zippers on arms, legs and torso to permit venting. Footwear should be waterproof with thick well-insulated soles, yet large enough to allow your toes to wiggle even with heavy socks. Tight-fitting boots that constrict toe movement lead quickly to cold feet. A pair of strap-on cleats provides traction for your boots, even on the slickest ice. Always wear a warm hat because about 50 percent of body heat is lost through an uncovered head. A pair of neoprene gloves are great for working around the holes and handling fish, but they result in sweaty hands if worn constantly. Include a couple of pairs of wool or fleece gloves in your gear. Inevitably, at least one pair gets wet.

Dr. John says if you restrict your ice fishing to mild weather, a shelter or ice hut is not necessary. Actually, for most panfishermen, a shelter merely interferes with mobility. However, on crisp, breezy days, some sort of wind break is needed.

Some anglers make their own ice shelters—although often awkward and hard to pull. Compact, easy-to-pull one-or two-man self-contained wind-break shelters are commercially available, too. Dr. John recommends a portable unit for the serious ice angler who intends to go regardless of the weather.

Fish location
Where to fish depends substantially on the characteristics of the water and the species you want to catch. This requires some study on your part. Don't expect to go out anywhere on the ice, cut a hole and begin to catch fish.

Imagine you need an operation to remove your appendix. Are things more likely to turn out successfully with a surgeon who is very knowledgeable about the location of organs and makes a precise incision, or with someone who haphazardly makes random cuts not really knowing what he is looking for?
Galida stresses you must understand the habits of the fish you seek. “The most popular winter panfish are crappies, bluegills and yellow perch. These fish may be found in all kinds of waters, from small farm ponds to large impoundments. It is sometimes possible to take all three from one location on identical baits, but the angler who targets a particular species with a specialized presentation is generally more successful.”

Perch are typically found in the deepest water, removed from the crappies and bluegills. Sometimes they may be near cover or bottom structure breaks, but they also can be found on relatively barren flats. On large impoundments and natural lakes, perch are typically in the deeper basin areas by mid-winter. If available, water in the 30- to 40- or even 50-foot range may not be too deep.

Perch are sometimes found in shallow ponds and lakes, although they rarely offer a quality fishery in this environment. In this instance, perch can be near other panfish.

Bluegills are the shallowest of the panfish. Typical winter depth range for ‘gills is 5 to 10 feet, or perhaps as deep as 15 feet. If weedbeds are present in the lake, that is always a good starting point for bluegills. Otherwise, check wood or rock cover in the depth range prescribed above.

This leaves crappies as the in-between fish. Not only is it possible to find crappies near the bottom at depths from 6 to 20 feet, but crappies also suspend in the water column more frequently than bluegills or perch. It’s not uncommon to catch crappies only a few feet under the ice, although the bottom may be considerably deeper. When relating to the bottom, crappies often share cover with bluegills, but crappies are more prone to be located near brushpiles, stumps and creek channels.

The depthfinder is an instrument as critical to the ice fisherman as the x-ray is to the medical profession.

“A depthfinder is a precision tool for the ice angler, just as it is for the open-water angler,” says Galida. “It is necessary equipment to locate edges, humps, channels and weedbeds on large waterways. On small ponds, it may not be as important if you made some triangulation readings during open water and don’t mind drilling a few extra holes to isolate the key areas.”

The flasher unit is preferred by ice anglers. Many fishermen simply use the units from their boats, connecting them to smaller motorcycle batteries for portable use. However, if you’re looking to purchase a new flasher, you should know that all manufacturers except Vexilar have ceased production of flashers. Vexilar makes the model FL-8 with ice anglers in mind.

“To get a reading through ice, spill a cup of water on the ice and place the transducer in the pool of water,” Galida says. “This gives you a good reading. There is no need to mix antifreeze with the water as some individuals may claim. Keep the antifreeze out of the environment.”

presentation

Jigging is a more efficient and effective method of taking panfish through the ice than tip-ups. The equipment is simple. “Some people attempt to get by with any old rod sitting in the garage. But going this route is like seeing an eye doctor for a toothache—it doesn’t work out very well. Long rods are tough to control because you are fishing in a 6- to 10-inch hole. Setting the hook and getting the fish out is difficult. Instead, invest in a few ice rods that are 18 to 30 inches long.”

The plastic reels on these short sticks are not intended to function as anything more than line holders. With this kind of rod, panfish are landed by hauling line in hand over hand.

Galida usually spools his ice rods with 4-pound test. When facing tight-lipped fish in very clear water, he may drop to 2-pound. If the panfish are exceptionally large and aggressive, he may opt for 6-pound to prevent breakoffs.

Galida uses two different strike detectors, depending on the situation—a foam float and a “spring” bobber. The foam float is a small sliding bobber with a removable toothpick-like stem that pegs the float to the line. A spring bobber is a short, flexible wire extension at the rod tip through which the line passes after leaving the tip-top guide. Most ice fishing sticks come with a spring bobber. If not, one may be added.

“I generally prefer the foam bobber because it permits easy changing of the depth setting,” Galida says. “And depth adjustment is very important because panfish often suspend, particularly late in the afternoon.

“When fish are in a non-aggressive mood, which typically happens in mid-winter, the resistance of a foam bobber causes panfish to drop the bait. It becomes very difficult to detect strikes, especially from bluegills, which can suck in and expel a bait in the blink of an eye. However, the spring bobber requires less pressure to signal a strike. You catch more neutral or slow-biting fish with a spring bobber.”

Baits

Dr. John has a diversified practice when it comes to ice fishing. His black bag contains prepared baits like Berkley’s Crappie Power Bait and Uncle Josh’s Ice Flecks, as well as live bait including meal worms, wax worms, maggots and mousies. Sometimes he uses minnows, too.

“I like meal worms best because they are large and seem to milk more. Milking of larva body juices is very important. That is one of the benefits of Crappie Power Bait. It dissolves slowly with a milking action.”

Fish any of these baits on a small ice jig, ice fly or ice spoon. If you’re using small maggots, stick two or three on one hook. Hook size should be 10 or 12, maybe an 8 when dealing with big crappies. A size 14 isn’t too small for bluegills.

When fishing in water that has crappies or perch, Dr. John prescribes that at least one ice jig be tipped with a small fathead minnow. The minnow is more attractive to crappies and perch, and discourages small bluegills.

Color makes a difference. “When fishing for crappies, I start with a chartreuse or pearl-colored ice jig. Those two colors seem to work equally well,” says Galida. “When in a perch lake, orange or pink is dynamic—however, these colors are only so-so on bluegills and crappies. Of course, if these colors aren’t working, it’s a good idea to experiment.”

Dr. John says it is not a good strategy to wait for panfish to come to you. Instead, you must make house calls. Drill several holes, fish them for 20 minutes, and if no action, change locations. Even small shifts of 5 to 10 feet can make the difference.

Galida tells of several times viewing brushpiles through a fishing hole in about 10 feet of water. No fish could be seen hovering near the brush and nothing came to the bait suspended there. However, when he placed a bait-tipped ice jig right down through the brush, he started catching crappies.

“In ice fishing, just being close isn’t good enough,” Galida says. “You must be right on top of the fish.”

There is no guarantee that panfish on ice is the right prescription for your blues. But this home remedy is better than sitting in the house waiting for a winter nervous breakdown.
The Black-Nose Dace

by Chauncy K. Lively

photos by the author

Streamers are dressed to represent minnows or forage fish, and many fly fishermen think they are as important as dry flies, wet flies, and nymphs. Dressed long and slim, they simulate baitfish in both form and action. It is believed that around 1880 Theodore Gordon tied the first streamers in America. Dressed in several styles, he called them all “Bumblepuppies” and fished them with great success for large trout, salmon, bass, and pike. Maine guides and anglers heard of the new flies and quickly saw their potential for the trout and landlocked salmon fisheries of Maine. Such famous tiers as Herb Welch and Carrie Stevens designed new streamer patterns to represent smelt and other forage fishes, and these flies are regarded as classic patterns today.

These flies were dressed with a variety of materials, and early on, a distinction was made between those with a wing of hackle feathers or marabou, and those with a hair wing. The former were called streamers and the latter, bucktails. Sensibly, the differentiation was eventually dropped and the term streamer (or streamer fly) was adopted to cover all the minnow-like flies.

Black-nose daces are small minnows common to many of our trout streams. They prefer well-oxygenated moving water, and although they rarely exceed three inches in length, they are popular

Dressing: Black-Nose Dace

Hook: Size 12 to 4, 3X long.
Thread: Black 6/0 prewaxed.
Tail: Red yarn.
Body: Medium mylar silver tinsel.
Wing: Brown bucktail hair, black skunk or bear hair and white bucktail hair.
with both trout and baitfishermen. They commonly have a dark stripe extending along their sides. However, during spawning the stripe often takes on a bright-orange hue. Unlike forage fish, which hide under rocks, dace minnows swim about openly and are widely available as prey.

When Art Flick set out to design a streamer, he chose the black-nose dace minnows as a living prototype because of the frequency with which he had found them in the stomachs of trout caught by him and fellow anglers. The pattern has a three-tiered wing of hair—brown on top, black underneath to simulate the stripe, and a white belly. Flick originally used polar bear hair as belly hair because of its sheen and sparkle. However, this hair is no longer available because of restrictions on its sale, and thin, white bucktail hair is used instead.

There appears to be a diversion of opinion among fly dressers as to which style of hook works best for streamers. Many prefer long-shanked hooks—sometimes as long as 8X—to overcome a perceived threat of short strikes to the long flies. Others favor regular-shank hooks a nominal size or two larger than a comparative long-shank.

For example, in a streamer 1 1/2 inches long, instead of a size 8, 3X long hook, a regular-shank size 6 or 4 would be substituted. Theoretically, the wider gape of the latter provides more weight underneath the body, acting as a keel to allow the streamer to swim more naturally. In addition, the hook's bend is now positioned underneath the wing's mid-point.

Both factions have their strong points and I have used each satisfactorily. However, I don't care for hooks longer than 4XL except for special situations.

The careful selection of hair for the Black-Nose Dace is an important preliminary step in its construction. The thinnest brown bucktail hair should be chosen for the wing's top layer. Avoid crinkled hair or hair that doesn't lie straight. Above all, don't be tempted to use deer body hair, even if it appears to be thin, because of its hollow construction. Such hair tends to flare when bound to a hook, and this causes an ill-shaped wing. The middle layer of hair, representing the black stripe, should be much sparser than the top layer and slightly shorter. Art Flick suggests skunk or black bear hair for the middle layer. The belly hair, or bottom layer, should be sparser than the top layer (and of the same length) but fuller than the black mid-layer.

The aim of streamer fishing is to make the fly act like a minnow in the water, and the angler has several ways to accomplish this. The most common is casting across-current, allowing the fly to drift downstream in an arc while stripping line in short strokes to make the fly dart like a small fish fleeing from a predator. In pocket water, the angler may take a position upstream from a likely pocket and play out line until the fly hangs in the upstream end of the pocket. Here the current gives the streamer minimal action, but by angling the rod to the right or left and twitching the tip, the fly fidgets and flutters in a nervous, insecure manner. Releasing a short length of line and drawing it back makes the fly appear like an injured minnow trying to keep abreast of the current. If there is a trout in the pocket, these tactics can often goad him into striking, regardless of whether he's hungry.

An often-overlooked ploy—but particularly effective in low, clear water—is casting upstream and allowing the streamer to dead-drift with the current like a nymph. Here a strike probably will not be felt and the angler must rely on his vision. Polarized glasses are an important aid. A subsurface flash in the vicinity of the fly or a hesitation of the drifting line should be treated as a strike.

Anglers often use streamers to locate fish in unfamiliar waters. A first-timer to a given stretch of stream may work his streamer through likely spots and make note when fish flash at his fly—even when they don't actually take it. The Black-Nose Dace does a good job of pin-pointing trouty locations because it looks like a minnow trout watch for.

4 Tie in a sparse bunch of black hair over the white, with tips extending only to the end of the yarn tail.

5 Tie in the brown top wing fuller than the white belly hair with tips matching the tips of white.

6 Trim the excess hair on a bevel, as shown, and work cement into the hair butts with the bodkin point. Then wind over and whip-finish. After applying several coats of head cement, the Black-Nose Dace is finished.
Many family mines dotted the hillsides above the streams that drained into both the Conemaugh and the Loyalhanna. It is easy to see that not only the two main stream's flow of highly acid water contributed to the killing of the aquatic life, but that all the little tributaries flowing down from the hills carried this acid as well. These tributaries drain areas as far away as the towns of Indiana in Indiana County, Ebensburg in Cambria County, and Berlin in Somerset County.

Mine drainage

The spoil dumps found near all old mines were a major source of sulfuric acid. These mounds of poor grade and unsalable products from the mines contained iron pyrite, better known as fools gold. When exposed to the air, oxidation takes place and sulfuric acid along with iron is leached into the water system. The iron tends to drop out of solution as the pH improves. This causes the orange or yellow brown iron oxide deposits seen on stream bottoms. These deposits inhibit algae, benthic invertebrates (bottom insects), and fish life in the stream.

According to data compiled by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Environmental Protection Agency investigated 165 mining sites for the Loyalhanna Creek basin in 1966. An estimated 65,407 pounds per day of acid loading was seeping into this watershed. Interestingly, 75 percent came from three abandoned underground mines. The Crabtree Mine, Saxman Run Mine and Monk or St. Vincent Mine were the culprits and the main source not only of acid but iron, manganese, sulfate and aluminum.

In the same year the EPA conducted a survey of the Conemaugh watershed and found 669 sources of acid mine drainage. Blacklick Creek water drainage area accounted for 335 of these. According to the Corps report, the water quality was so bad that no fish or other aquatic life could survive.

During the EPA survey in 1966, a pH of 3 was registered in the Blacklick Creek basin. In surveying the Loyalhanna Creek in 1952, the Corps found a pH of less than 3. These figures show that through man’s carelessness and unconcern for the environment, major watersheds were lost not only to fishing but to all aquatic life.

The Federal Flood Control Act of 1936 authorized both the Loyalhanna and Conemaugh dams. The lakes these bodies of water create would be nothing more than giant pools of acid and iron water polluting everything the water touched. The Loyalhanna Dam was completed in 1951 and the Conemaugh Dam in 1953 and for years the waters were unusable for recreation.

In any polluted watershed, progress can be made through the efforts of private citizens, watershed associations, industry and resource agencies. Furthermore, water quality can be protected this way in less affected watersheds.
The Kiskiminetas River watershed is one example of how even grossly polluted waters aren't "forever dead." And even though the Kiski water quality is still marginal, aquatic life can survive and could increase with additional cleanup efforts.

In the 1970s the Department of Environmental Resources initiated a number of successful mine reclamation projects in the Loyalhanna Lake tributary basin. The Corps reports show that as a result of these efforts the lake is now only intermittently acid-degraded and then usually only moderately.

Sealing of mines and natural cave-ins of abandoned mines have helped reduce the acid drainage into the water systems, but there is still a long way to go. Today, even the Conemaugh River and Lake harbor some aquatic life with limited fishing opportunities.

With both of these waterways improving before, joining to produce the Kiskiminetas River, it would be natural to assume that this river, once called the worst in the world with mind acid pollution, is on the path of recovery.

That may be true. Some 10 years ago a Fish & Boat Commission survey of the Kiski found only one frog. In 1990, the Commission performed another electrofishing and netting survey and found an unbelievable improvement.

Commission biologists found some 19 fish species. Bluegills up to five years old and eight inches long, smallmouth bass up to 11 inches, and saugers and freshwater drum in the 14-inch range were found. Large-mouth bass up to 12 inches, rock bass, pumpkinseed sunfish, walleyes and yellow perch along with channel cats, carp up to 22 inches and various minnows, suckers and panfish were surveyed all in 75 minutes of electrofishing.

The pH at the time of the survey was 6.9, which is mostly the result of the buffering effect of the Loyalhanna. The reclamation of the spoil pile at Crabtree will improve the water quality even further. However, the Corps points out that Getty Run, which enters the Loyalhanna Creek between the dam and the mouth at Saltsburg, is still highly acid.

On the other side of the coin, Blackleg Creek has been cleaned and actually supports a co-op trout nursery with water from a Rochester and Pittsburgh Coal Company mine. The water is pumped from the mine into holding ponds. Then it's treated and sent through the Blackleg Co-op Trout Nursery.

Do not confuse this Blackleg Creek with Blacklick Creek. Blacklick Creek is still polluted and a major source of acid and iron drainage in the Conemaugh.

The Roaring Run Watershed Association's work in the drainage area and the group's volunteer angler log program are fine examples of how sportsmen's groups can help reclaim a waterway. The Association's work is also an example of how we shouldn't just give up on a waterway that's grossly polluted.

There is still industrial pollution dumped into the Kiskiminetas, and because the river is not considered a recreational body of water, no one involved with discharge regulation seems to care. Perhaps as more and more fishermen use this water, stronger controls may be applied. A few dedicated anglers have been fishing these waters for the past several years. Although they don't talk about it openly, the catches have been outstanding considering the past water quality.

Wouldn't it be thrilling someday to float the Kiski from Saltsburg to the Allegheny River and catch fish the whole trip? It may happen someday.

The author thanks Area 8 Fisheries Manager Rick Lorson for his help in preparing this article.

December 1993 Pennsylvania Angler
Herb scrambled down the steep river bank and pulled what first appeared to be a large piece of trash from the water. He turned toward me and with a sly grin said, “This is where I keep my minnows.”

If he had tried to keep live minnows in any container that looked as if it held bait so close to town, it would not last long. Not that the kids are bad, but something like that falls awfully close to “lost and found” when left in the brush along the river bank.

Light snow had begun to fall when we slid his 14-foot aluminum boat off its trailer at the Kinzua Dam tailwaters. The temperature was in the mid-20s, seasonal for late December. Dressed appropriately, it was a comfortable day for fishing, thanks to the calm air.

The first thing I did while Herb was warming up the 10 hp outboard—one I sold him a few years before—was pour a cup of hot tea. I warmed my fingers on the cup before rigging my line with a needle-sharp size 1 hook and a small splitshot. My plan for the day was primarily to watch Herb, one of the most successful anglers in the state, and learn. Our target for the day was muskies. Herb had his sights on a 50-incher to adorn his wall.

As musky fishing is prone to be, we found no takers for a while. Yet, with so many fishing tales to swap, the time slid by quickly. We talked about boyhood days, about adventures to Canada, about other days on the river.

Surprisingly, we did not have the river to ourselves. A few fishermen, looking for trout, I suspect, from the places they fished, passed us going downriver. They waved as they passed, and we waved back, shrugging our shoulders to indicate that we hadn’t done any good. They did likewise.

A few others passed going upriver in a jet boat. They were after walleyes, they said. One of the anglers in the jet boat recognized us, and stopped a polite distance away to chat. Anglers on the river during winter are prone to be secretive. They asked questions and we asked questions, but all of our answers were like a politician’s answers. The questions were answered without giving out any actual information. Still, it was a friendly visit.

The day’s first musky

We encountered our first musky of the day a few minutes after parting company with the jet boat. I saw Herb’s body language intensify. One hand manipulated the electric motor to maintain our position in the current. The other hand pointed the rod at whatever was eating the large chub he used as bait. His eyes were fixed on the place where the line entered the water.
For a long time the musky was completely out of control. Even though it did not move fast, it moved as it pleased. Upriver, then down, back and forth parallel to the shoreline, with the line stretched all the way across the river.
Several times Herb began to say something, but he cut himself short. Most of the best anglers I have observed put their minds at the end of their lines. That requires a lot of concentration.

I could tell when the hook set was imminent. Herb released the electric motor handle, closed the bail of his spinning reel, and leaned toward the fish. The fish slowly pulled the line tight, then Herb pulled the rod back sharply, but with respect because he was trying to catch a big, toothy fish on 8-pound-test line.

"Run the motor," Herb asked, carefully crawling from the rear seat to the middle seat. "Get us out to the middle of the river."

His strategy had been fishing live minnows patiently in the calmer pockets along the shoreline. During winter the water passing through the gates of the Kinzua Dam might be just 33 degrees. At such a low temperature, muskies are not inclined to fight any more current than they must. But calm water is relatively scarce because winter flow is generally high. Calm water decreases as flow increases. This makes muskies comparatively easy to find during periods of high winter flow.

The best places are where there is cover and depth in the calm pockets of water. Boulders along the shoreline broke the current in the area where Herb made contact with the first musky of the day. The depth was 4 to 6 feet against a bank littered with logs and clumps of brush. Herb wanted me to use the electric motor to get the boat into the middle of the river to help him coax the musky away from the shoreline cover. There he could handle even a big musky with light line—as long as the musky did not cut the line.

Not much to do about that but hope. Herb's face showed a strained grin. "It's a good one," he said softly.

He instructed me to take the boat all the way to the other side of the river. He did not want the musky to get close to the boat until it was played out. A musky is tough to handle on a short line. Stretch in a longer amount of line would absorb some of the shock.
The musky continued to run back and forth. Each time, though, Herb gained line. When the musky got a look at the boat, the runs were faster but shorter.

I lost track of time during the fray. It might have lasted 20 minutes, maybe 40 minutes, maybe an hour or longer. I don't know.

"Will you net it for me?" Herb asked when he finally worked the exhausted musky close to the boat—as if anything else were on my mind.

The boat rested against the bank on the opposite side from where the musky took the bait. On its side, the huge fish still struggled. All it could manage was one thrust at a time with its broad tail, not enough to reach the current just a few yards farther out. I was poised to slip the net under it as soon as it was within reach. These were the most tense moments of the battle. A small mistake either by Herb or me could end the battle in the musky's favor.

It was in the bag of the big net on my first try. I pinned the net against the side of the boat so it could not escape. Its power was still impressive.

"Leave it in the water until it has time to recover," Herb said.

Herb wanted to measure the fish, to see if it was his 50-incher. I could not imagine it not being big enough to qualify as his wall-hanger. I am sure it weighed more than 35 pounds. Herb is from the old school, though, measuring his fish trophies by length rather than by weight. The Fish and Boat Commission was the last major fish record-keeping agency to switch from length to weight, in the early 1970s, and many Keystone State anglers still cling to the length standard.

Catch-and-release philosophy
Herb has a delightful balance of old and new in his fishing philosophy. While we allowed time for the musky to recover enough to be handled without hurting it seriously, Herb related how he became a catch-and-release angler. Like most of us who are at least middle-aged, he was raised in a time when most fish that went into the net also went into the kitchen.

As a five-time winner of the "King of Pennsylvania Anglers" crown, Herb Wagner's fishing philosophy is a fine example for other anglers to follow. He clings to old values, like cherishing his time in the outdoors not just for the fish he catches, but also for the tranquility, the communion with nature, and for testing his skills. Equally importantly, he learns and adopts new conservation practices.

Satisfied that the fish had regained enough strength to be measured, Herb pulled the musky from the water and laid it on the snow-covered river bank. The musky was unusually fat. Its lower jaw had a distinct deformity. Maybe it was a bone caught and released years before. Herb held one end of his measuring tape at the end of the tail and handed me the other end. I extended the tape to the end of the musky's protruding jaw.

"How long?" he asked.

I stared at the tape, trying to squeeze another half-inch. I knew Herb wanted the exact measurement. Reluctantly I answered him.

"Forty-nine and a half inches..."

"Okay, let's put it back," he said without emotion, without hesitation.

I asked him to wait for a few photos, and he obliged, but not long enough to risk harming the awesome fish.

After gently sliding the musky back into the river and watching it slowly sink out of sight, he turned and said, "Well, let's go get another one."

And he did. It seems a shame that his next musky was not the highlight of the day. For most anglers it would have been the highlight of the season, at least. Conservatively, I estimated it to weigh 18 pounds, maybe 20.

Even though it fought a more exciting battle than the bigger musky, running faster, wallowing at the surface more, thrashing close to the boat so that netting it was difficult, Herb knew seconds after hooking it that it was smaller.

Smaller? A 40-inch musky?

My score for the day was one run missed.

Herb's Christmas wish for a 50-inch musky did not come true on that outing. But I did not hear him complain.

A Winter Musky Fishing Pattern
Herb Wagner's winter musky fishing pattern centers on the musky's tendency to avoid current in cold water. Another important factor is water flow. Current increases with river flow, and the portion of calm water decreases.

Most of the calmer water is located below sharp bends in the river, below shoreline projections, and below islands. Three elements make a particular calm water area good musky holding water. One is depth. Four feet of water is good. Five is better. Water color is also important. Muskies use shallower water if it has some color. Cloudy water does not deter musky feeding activity. Cover is the third element. Muskies ambush their prey from a concealed position.

Herb's terminal rig is about as simple as it gets—just a hook and a Cd-lead sinker. Sometimes he adds a splitshot just big enough to get the bait in front of the muskies. He does not use any extra weight.

Patience is important, though Herb usually does not linger in any spot for more than a few minutes. The object is to cover the good-looking water thoroughly, looking for active muskies.

Where to Fish for River Muskies
Most of the rivers and larger creeks in the state hold muskies. But for this pattern to be most useful, the river or creek must have enough current to force muskies into calm pockets, and there should not be too many calm pockets.

A few places worth trying are the Susquehanna River upriver from Wilkes-Barre, the West Branch of the Susquehanna downriver from Williamsport, the Juniata River, the Allegheny River upriver from Oil City, and French Creek.
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Smart anglers make the best of a situation. They pay attention to details, and they recognize when a unique situation creates good fishing.

So it is with the open-water fishing offered near warmwater discharges. Adjacent to several of Pennsylvania's major rivers are power generating stations that discharge heated water into the river. These power plants are either coal-fired or nuclear-powered.

Even though the environmental effect of thermal discharges may be a question itself, there's no doubt that during the winter months such places create a hotbed of fishing action in an otherwise cold-weather scenario. The species of fish caught around warmwater discharges are as varied as the life within the rivers.

In Pennsylvania, such power stations are on the Susquehanna, Allegheny and Monongahela rivers. In some cases the thermal discharge is huge, affecting river temperatures for miles. In others, the thermal plume is neutralized to ambient river temperature within a few hundred yards. Variables include the volume of the discharge, and just how much warmer the "used" water is than that of the river.

Power plants are licensed individually. Some power plants may release water 40 degrees warmer than the river's. Another may be only 10 degrees warmer than the river's water. Part of this water use has to do with when the plant was licensed. Older plants tend to get by with hotter discharges.

Area Fisheries Manager (AFM) Rick Lorson manages much of the waters of the Ohio River drainage, including the Ohio River, Monongahela River and a significant chunk of the Allegheny River. Within these miles of river are several warmwater discharges. Even though Lorson is familiar with the action these sites can create, he says fishing reports coming from such areas are sometimes spotty.

"I think some of why we don't hear much about fishing in those warmwater discharges is because people just aren't out fishing them much," says Lorson. "Anglers are not as familiar yet, I don't think, with the fishing potential of those plants during the winter."

On the other side of the state, the Susquehanna River's warmwater discharges aren't such a well-kept secret. There are at least three separate power stations where bundled-up anglers brave the wintertime weather to cash in on the action. With that in mind, let's take a sweep across the state, starting with the Susquehanna River, and look at the specifics of the fishing created by the thermal discharges of the state's major power generating stations.

**Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station**

Southeast of York, Philadelphia Electric Company's Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station sits on the upper portion of Conowingo Lake, that portion of the Susquehanna River impounded by Conowingo Dam. It produces a large thermal discharge, and the fishing that produces can be very productive.

According to Carl Richardson, a former Philadelphia Electric Company employee who now serves as the Fish & Boat Commission Aquatic Resource Education Coordinator, striped bass (and hybrid striped bass remaining from previous Fish & Boat Commission stockings) are the most sought-after gamefish that congregate within the waters heated by Peach Bottom.

"Everything that's in the pond seeks refuge in that warm water, but the attention is directed at striped bass and leftover hybrids," says Richardson. The Fish & Boat Commission now stocks only purebred stripers in Conowingo Pond.

The action at Peach Bottom falls in line with more of what Rick Lorson says about warmwater discharges.

"Striped bass and hybrid stripers congregate in these areas in the wintertime," Lorson says. "This is known not only in Pennsylvania, but from other states as well."

According to Richardson, this is strictly a boat-fishing affair. The discharge's thermal plume, which can be as much as 20 degrees warmer than river temperature, extends 100 to 200 yards out into the river, and affects river water temperatures for some 2.5 miles downriver.

Besides the attractiveness of warmer water, the discharge's 3,500 cfs (cubic feet per second) flow creates some current, which can be another drawing card for gamefish.

In addition to the striped bass, anglers target smallmouth bass and largemouth bass, walleyes, channel catfish and panfish, and especially yellow perch.

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**During a three-day period in the winter of 1991-92 at the Elrama Power Station, Johnson and his fishing partners boated 500 to 600 hybrid striped bass. Most of the fish were over 15 inches, with the largest ones going to about 24 inches.**
Shad-imitating lures are effective on stripers, particularly during years when many gizzard shad are in the river, which is the case this year. Reproduction of this forage species was great during the spring of 1993. Lure examples include Rat-L-Traps and Shad Raps.

Fishing patterns for bass include throwing spinnerbaits or inline spinners. Jig-type presentations account for most of the walleyes and panfish.

**Brunner Island Power Station**

Pennsylvania Power & Light’s coal-fired Brunner Island facility is located south of Harrisburg on the Susquehanna River. Brunner Island furnishes another good boat fishery, but it also provides plenty of shoreline fishing.

**Hazards**

Certain hazards are inherent in fishing near warmwater discharges beyond the obvious risks of fishing during the winter.

Warmwater discharges, in many cases, include a significant amount of current. Even though it may seem tempting to cast right into the "white water," be sure you stay back a safe distance. This applies to both shore and boat anglers.

Shore anglers need to be careful of footing. Icy rocks along the shoreline can lead to a potentially lethal fall into the river. Boat fishermen should remember that during the winter, things afloat are much different. Watch out for slippery boat ramps, ice in the river, and equipment freezing, such as livewell pumps, bilge pumps, and outboard motor water pumps.—JK.
Anglers also catch plenty of smallmouth bass and walleyes. Jig-and-minnow combos, and undressed brown bucktail jigs account for many smallies and 'eyes.

There are several parking areas along the road paralleling the river for shoreline access. Boat access is accomplished by way of the Falmouth and Marietta access areas. Falmouth is closer to the plant, and the river there is suitable for larger boats. The river is shallow and rocky in the Marietta area.

**Sunbury Power Station**

PP&L's Sunbury Power Station is located near the town of Shamokin Dam, a few miles downriver of where the West Branch joins the Susquehanna River. Like Brunner Island, this plant is coal-fired.

According to Bob Domermuth, project scientist for PP&L's Environmental Management Division, the Sunbury plant's warm-water plume affects river water temperatures as far as three miles below the plant. The thermal discharge takes place at one single point.

Sought-after species at the Sunbury plant include smallmouth bass and crappies. Both shore and boat fishermen can gain adequate access to Sunbury's fishing.

For boaters, PP&L provides the Shadynook Access Area, located at Hummel's Wharf on routes 11 and 15. The utility company also graciously accepts shore-bound anglers.

"Anglers can come into the plant itself," says Domermuth. "But first, they must stop at the guard house. There's a special area where fishermen can sign in and out. The reason we want them to do that is in case we need to spread some type of warning. We also learn how many fishermen come and go."

According to Domermuth, there's a parking lot near the shoreline area at the thermal discharge.

**Armstrong Power Station**

West Penn Power Company is the operator of the coal-fired power plant located on the west bank of the Allegheny River's Pool 8, across the river from Templeton. Even though this plant doesn't discharge as much water as the Susquehanna River plants, but the Armstrong operation still creates a cold-weather hotspot.

According to West Penn Power's Ed Matheny, temperatures from the plant during the wintertime tend to be 10 to 20 degrees warmer than the river. The discharge water flows down a concrete trough and enters the river only at this point. The river is about 15 feet deep near the discharge.

Indiana County WCO Emil Svetahor, who was formerly the
Armstrong County officer, says that every species in the river tends to congregate below the discharge during the winter. Plenty of what’s caught are “bottom feeders” such as carp and catfish. Other species include walleyes, saugers and smallmouth bass.

Mike Fye, who operates the Sportsman’s Cove Sporting Goods store in Clarion, says he catches walleyes in the 15-inch to 20-inch range throwing crankbaits intended for bass. Recently, Fye lost a walleye he estimated to be in the 8- or 9-pound range. He uses Fat Raps and Shad Raps in crawfish patterns.

Shoreline fishing is unavailable because the area is bordered by private land and no access is provided at the power plant. For those with boats, the Game Commission has an access area just downstream of the station at Templeton.

Mitchell Power Station

Two coal-fired power plants are located on Pool 2 of the Monongahela River. One is West Penn’s Mitchell Power Station, located near New Eagle.

According to Ed Matheny, Mitchell’s physical characteristics are similar to those of the company’s Allegheny facility. Water temperature is raised about 10 degrees above that of the river.

Hybrid stripers, which are locally dubbed “sunshine bass” in the southwestern part of the state, are one of the main attractions at the Mitchell plant. Their appearance, however, is often a feast-or-famine affair. During the winter of 1991-92, hybrid fishing was outstanding. Last year it was poor. Perhaps this could be related to a lack of baitfish in the Mon river last season. Shad production rebounded in the spring of 1993, so if the poor hybrid fishing was related to a lack of food, the fishing should improve this winter.

Shore anglers can access the Mitchell plant by following the railroad tracks that parallel the river. Boats can be launched at the New Eagle Borough Public Ramp, and at the Fish & Boat Commission’s Monogahela Access, in the town of Monogahela off Route 837.

Elrama Power Station

Just downriver from the Mitchell plant is Duquesne Light Company’s Elrama station, located near the town of the same name. The warmwater discharge heats the river for about 200 yards.

According to Mon River fishing expert Bill Johnson, the wintertime fishing provided by the Elrama Power Station is a bit superior to that found at Mitchell. During a three-day period during the winter of 1991-92, Johnson and his fishing partners boated 500 to 600 hybrid striped bass. Most of the fish were over 15 inches, with the largest ones going to about 24 inches.

Johnson says the stripers schooled quite close to where the current of the discharge empties into the river. He uses a heavy jighead—1/2-ounce or so—to get his presentation to the bottom in the heavy current. He mentions plastic action-tail bodies in white and smoke as a productive dressing. Bill also scores on white bucktail jigs with a red band wound around the front of the jig.

For more Information

• Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station, Fishing Hotline at (410) 457-4076.
• An excellent brochure on the recreational opportunities at Conowingo Pond is available by calling Muddy Run Information Center at (717) 284-2538.
• For up-to-date information on Brunn Island Power Station fishing, call Stamric Sporting Goods, Goldsboro, at (717) 938-8876.
• For up-to-date information on fishing at Armstrong Power Station, call The Sportsman’s Cave at (814) 226-6272.
• For information on the fishing at the Mitchell and Elrama powers stations, call Mon River Adventures at (412) 929-3675. —JK.

December 1993 Pennsylvania Angler
What is cheaper than Nintendo, has almost as many parts as a Lego set, has more stickers than the Crash Dummies, and is more fun than getting coal in your stocking?

P.L.A.Y.!

You won’t see advertisements for the Pennsylvania League of Angling Youth on Saturday morning television or get samples in boxes of Fruit-Loops, but kids do like it. Why?

Maybe because P.L.A.Y. is about what many children are interested in and may not get anywhere else. Fun things like fishing, boating, frogs, snakes and turtles. And serious things, too, like how to protect clean water and endangered animals, being safe around the water, and using good outdoor manners.

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The cost of a one-year membership for P.L.A.Y. is $3.00. Check or money orders only, please, made out to: Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission.

Name ________ Age ________

Address ________

City ________ State ________ Zip ________

You may photocopy this application if you don’t wish to cut your magazine.
The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission has taken steps toward creating a regulation that would establish a minimum age for the operation of motorboats in the Commonwealth. Under proposed rulemaking tentatively approved at the Commission's October 25 meeting, no person under the age of 12 will be permitted to operate a boat with a motor of more than 10 hp, unless accompanied by a person age 16 or older. The regulations would also apply to youths ages 12 to 15 unless they first obtain a Boating Safety Certificate.

The Commission is currently seeking public comment on the proposed ruling before taking final action. Comments and requests for additional information should be directed to the Executive Director, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.

If given final approval at a later Commission meeting, the regulation would take effect January 1, 1995.

In other Commission action at the October 25 meeting, final approval was given to the clarification of regulations concerning the need for a trout/salmon permit. The updated regulations, enforceable beginning in 1994, stress that all anglers fishing in an approved trout water from the opening day of trout season (the first Saturday after April 11) until the opening day of muskellunge, pickerel, pike and walleye season (the first Saturday in May) will need to purchase and display a trout/salmon permit even if they do not take, kill, or possess trout or salmon. The rule will be waived for lakes, where only anglers seeking, taking or possessing trout need the trout/salmon stamp.

In addition, after the first Saturday in May, anglers may fish for other non-trout species on some approved waters without a trout/salmon permit. Permits will always be required for anglers fishing in wilderness trout streams and Class A wild trout waters.

Even though angler compliance with the trout/salmon permit regulations has been very good, the clarifications should make understanding the ruling easier for anglers uncertain whether they must possess the stamp.

Trout/salmon stamps were introduced by the Commission in 1991 and must be purchased by any angler taking, killing or possessing trout.

Commissioners also tentatively approved a proposal that would eliminate Type IV personal flotation devices (PFDs such as flotation cushions and ring buoys) as the primary lifesaving units on boats under 16 feet in length. That change would mean that all boats-regardless of length or type—would be required to carry a wearable PFD for each person on board. Boats 16 feet and longer, except for canoes and kayaks, would continue to be required to have at least one throwable flotation device on board as well.

The changes would bring state regulations in line with recent federal regulations set by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Commission seeks public comment on the proposed ruling before final adoption at a later meeting. If adopted into final form, the change will take effect May 1, 1995. Livery boat owners would have an additional year to comply with their unpowered boats.

A comprehensive update of all boating regulations was given final approval. The update does not make major changes in the boating code but updates the language and scope of rules to assist boaters and improve enforcement. The complete update text is published in the September 25 edition of Pennsylvania Bulletin. This publication is available at public libraries and state offices.

A proposal to increase the number of trophy trout stocked was approved. The Commission voted to hold 50,000 trout for two years of growth before release. The first stocking of the fish, all of which will be in the 14-inch range, will begin in 1995.

Several miscellaneous regulations were addressed. A proposal was approved to create two new refuge areas on the Little Schuylkill River. Final approval was given to remove special regulations prohibiting the use of live fish as bait on Upper Woods Pond, Wayne County. Final approval was given to an amendment making Pine Township Park Pond, Allegheny County, a catch-and-release fishing area.

The eastern mud salamander, the northern riffleshell mussel and the clubshell mussel were given final approval as additions to the Pennsylvania endangered species list.

Regulations that would bring the state guidelines in line with federal rules in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area were adopted. The rules prohibit the use of eel chutes, eel pots and fyke nets; the taking of crayfish, crabs, mussels, clams, nymphs and larvae as fish bait; and the taking of any reptile or amphibian.

Proposed rulemaking was tentatively approved that would establish or change speed regulations on several waters including Harveys Lake, Luzerne County, where slow, minimum-height-swell speed may be set for boats between sunset and sunrise, and Lake Winola in Wyoming County, where a daytime boat speed of 35 mph may be set on weekends and holidays.

Other miscellaneous rulemaking was proposed for Allegheny Reservoir, Warren County, and Tioga and Hammond lakes, Tioga County. Public comment will be accepted on all proposed rulemaking before final rulemaking.

A proposed regulation that would establish a slow, minimum-height-swell speed in Franklin Cove on the Delaware River, Bucks County, was tentatively approved. Boats in that area would also be prohibited from mooring within 100 feet of marine docks.

The Commission acted to clarify the current prohibition on kite sailing and parasailing on Beltzville Lake, Carbon County.

The Commission tentatively approved a proposal to limit the use of inflatable boats on Lake Chillisquaque, Monroe County, to only those seven feet or more in length with at least two buoyancy chambers.

The Commission took steps to turn over to Slocum Township a small amount of land and access road near Lilly Lake, Luzerne County.

Commissioners also voted to support House Bill 490, which calls for the banning of gill nets on Commonwealth waters and House Bill 2079, which proposes the establishment of a mandatory education for the operators of personal watercraft. The legislation would also prohibit the operation of personal watercraft by anyone under the age of 15.—Dan Tredinnick.
Dennis DeSantis, of Harrisburg, was fishing on the Susquehanna River when this walleye attacked his lure. The fish measured 27 inches in length and weighed 9 pounds, 2 ounces.

Bethlehem resident Ken Peoples caught and released this smallmouth bass while fishing on Beltzville Lake last September. The 19-inch fish was caught on a leech in 22 feet of water. Great job, Ken!

Bethlehem resident Robert Kozlowski, Sr., pulled this nice musky through the nice while fishing on Ontelaunee Reservoir. The fish, caught on a minnow, weighed 17 1/2 pounds and was 41 1/2 inches long.

Harrisburg resident Jeannine Markowski was fishing on Pinchot Lake, York County, when she caught this catfish. The fish measured 29 inches in length.

This Delaware River American shad was caught by Daniel Pattison last May. The fish weighed 5 pounds, 12 ounces and was 24 inches long.

Lancaster resident Markus Kramer, age 12, used a nightcrawler to nail this striped bass. The fish, caught in the Susquehanna River, weighed 10 pounds, 3 ounces and measured 34 inches in length. Nice fish, Markus!

West Pittston resident Clem Paradis was fishing Mehoopany Creek in Wyoming County when he reeled in this brown trout. The fish, caught with a minnow, weighed 8 pounds, 7 ounces and was 27 inches long.

Bruce Bowers, of Ridgway, caught and released this nice muskie while ice fishing last February. The Kinzua Dam fish was 42 inches long.

David Johnson, of Moscow, was fishing on Upper Woods Pond last July when this brown trout grabbed his nightcrawler. The 18-inch fish weighed 4 1/2 pounds. Nice job, David!

John Burner, of Zelienople, was fishing on Lake Erie when he caught this brown trout. The fish measured 28 inches in length and weighed 9 pounds, 8 ounces.
Ten-year-old Chad Lausberg, of Butler, is proud of the steelhead trout he caught while fishing on Lake Erie. The fish was 23 inches long and weighed 4 1/2 pounds. Nice job, Chad!

New State Record Landlocked Lake Striped Bass

Randy L. Koontz, of Greencastle, shows off the new state record landlocked lake striped bass. The 49-inch monster weighed 50 pounds, 8 ounces, beating the old state record by 4 pounds, 15 ounces. Koontz and a friend were bottom fishing on Raystown Lake, Huntingdon County, when the fish attacked his bait. The action took place on October 2, 1993.

FISHING LICENSE APPLICATION

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

DATE __________________________ FISHING LICENSE NO. __________________________

NAME __________________________

ADDRESS __________________________ STATE _______ ZIP _______

CITY __________________________

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

□ Trout/Salmon Stamp 5.50

□ 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.
Safe-Harbor Protection

The Commission on October 13 began the transfer of roughly 10,000 cubic yards of sand and cobble to the east side of Safe Harbor, Erie County. This material will "beef up" the eastern beach front and provide additional protection in the wake of winter storms that traditionally strafe the area.

The work, which will be performed under the supervision of the Commission’s Bureau of Property and Facilities Management, will cost the agency an estimated $50,000.

In September, the Commission accepted the transfer of necessary permits related to the upkeep of the marina area from the U.S. Corps of Army Engineers and the Department of Environmental Resources (DER). The transfer of those permits, among other things, cleared the way for the Commission to assume responsibility for maintenance of an already existing breakwall that extends into the lake. The breakwall affords a buffer for the Safe Harbor and public launch area.

The Safe Harbor facilities have proven to be very popular and are used by thousands of boaters. Additionally, the harbor provides a place of refuge for other boats when sudden storms blow through. By taking the initiative in this massive project, the Commission hopes to ensure the long-term future of Safe Harbor.—Dan Tredinnick.

Angler’s Notebook by Jeff Bryan

The jig and pig is a deadly coldwater bass lure. Use a lifting technique in heavy cover and retrieve the lure slowly.

Tying your own flies is fun and a productive way to spend winter days indoors. A beginning fly-tying kit should include these basic tools: Vise, scissors, hackle pliers, thread bobbin, bodkin and a hair stacker.

When fishing a spoon or a spinner, vary your retrieve instead of just reeling as fast as you can. Let the lure fall to the bottom, jerk it up a few feet, and let it fall again. Watch your line for any sudden movement caused by a fish striking, especially while the lure is falling.

Fly lines can catch many things besides fish. Tree limbs included, when float-fishing. Make sure to stow your rods so that your lines don’t become tangled.

Filleting a catfish can be slippery business. Lay the fish on an old towel keeps it from sliding, and you can wipe your hands on it so the knife won’t slip from your hand.

When fishing a stream during the fall and winter months, seek out the warmer water created by hidden springs. A pocket stream thermometer comes in handy, and might turn an otherwise unsuccessful trip into a memorable one.

When fishing hoppers, ants, beetles and other terrestrials, don’t be afraid to ‘plop’ the fly on the water. The natural insects often disturb the water when they land, and a little splash might cause that wary brown trout to strike.
The sun was in my favor. It was low and behind me, and shadowed everything in front of me with that perfect orange glow. The temperature was just right for open windows. It was a pleasure to leisurely drive the rural Centre County two-laner.

I slowed when I spotted a car on the side of the road. At first, all I saw was the young girl standing next to the open trunk. She couldn't be alone, I thought. And of course, she wasn't.

A man walked around the corner of the car, carrying two fishing rods he had just retrieved from the back seat. Father and daughter shared a happy word, and although I couldn't hear what they said, I felt as if I'd been eavesdropping. The man gave a neighborly wave.

I'm sure they had no idea they caused me, less than a mile later, to be so misty-eyed I had to pull my own car off the road to re-find my composure. In one inconsequential incident, that parked car took me back more than three decades. I was that young girl. Our family shared its happiest, softest, most gleeful moments along the rivers and ponds of eastern Pennsylvania.

The snapshot no camera ever caught was us on a state game land in Lehigh County—Dad, Mom, a couple of the daughters and their son, each outfitted with a rod, fighting off deer flies and mosquitoes, trying hard to be quiet, baiting hooks with worms, probably maiming a mountain of bluegills before throwing them back.

There were no such things as ultralights in our family of rods. My Zebco was big and bulky and in a constant state of tangle. If I still had it, it would probably be a collector's item. And nobody wanted to be caught dead using the bamboo rod. That was for babies.

When uncles and cousins came along, the expeditions ended a feast on the grill. Funny, I see us fishing, I remember eating trout and panfish, but the cleaning and filleting isn't even a vague blur. Poor Mom.

When we got bored with quietly holding a rod, our fathers would send us to look for worms (despite the full coffee can of nightcrawlers judiciously plucked the night before). We kids would turn over rocks and watch the thousand-leggers and insect larvae scatter, try to catch crayfish with flimsy paper cups and chase after water striders.

My father and my Uncle Andy didn't just take us fishing. They identified fish species, pointed out breathing mechanisms and probably without thinking about it, taught us outdoor ethics to heed the rest of our lives.

My father just baited his hook and kept me there until he checked his watch and said, "OK, let's go." I'm sure I said something awful, like "Finally." He brought me back to a house full of girlfriends and a surprise party.

Thankfully, I found my way back to the stream during my college days, when I began dating my future husband. He's no angling obsessive, but we spend our own wonderful hours on stream banks and pond edges. The rods are thinner and the equipment is far more high-tech, but the allure remains the same.

My dad and uncle are gone now. I hope they're fishing together. And I hope they'll wait for me.

Never was this done within earshot or water disturbance range of the adults. We learned early on to go to the other side of the pond, or upstream or downstream to engage in non-fishing aquatic activities. Alarm the fish and you could just about make out the gateway to hell. The punishment was pure pain—you had to sit in the car.

It might have been for as long as five minutes, but on the youthful clock, the entire afternoon was gone while you contemplated the error of alerting wily trout to the presence of non-native salmon eggs camouflaging barbed hooks.

Until that moment on the road, I had no idea of the scope of my outdoor classroom. Those days, spent so carefree on the banks of the Little Lehigh and the Coplay and at the Copeechan, had shaped my future. My father and my Uncle Andy didn't just take us fishing. They identified fish species, pointed out breathing mechanisms and probably without thinking about it, taught us outdoor ethics to heed the rest of our lives.

Sadly, I tossed away the rod when the end of the 1960s, and puberty, caught up to us. My last clear angling moment with my Dad makes me flinch every time I think of it. It was my 15th birthday, and my father insisted he and I go alone to a game land reach.

I spent the entire time grousing about what I didn't want to do—fish—and how none of my friends wanted to share my important day. I was downright ugly.

My father just baited his hook and kept me there until he checked his watch and said, "OK, let's go." I'm sure I said something awful, like "Finally." He brought me back to a house full of girlfriends and a surprise party.

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My dad and uncle are gone now. I hope they're fishing together. And I hope they'll wait for me.
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