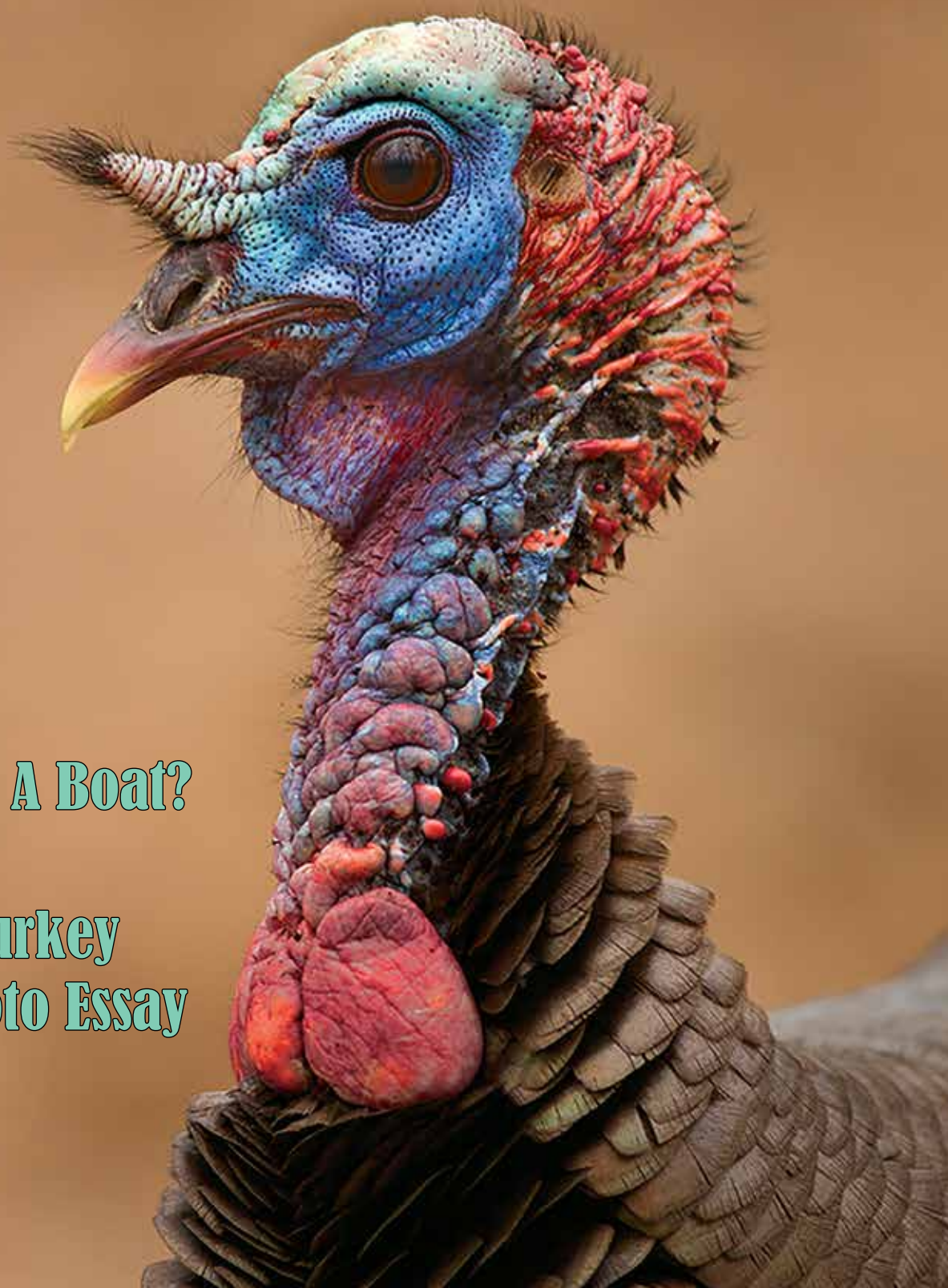


# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

MARCH/APRIL 2020

FOUR DOLLARS

Inside:  
Who Needs A Boat?  
&  
A Spring Turkey  
Woods Photo Essay



In 1930, DGIF began a trout-stocking program that is still going strong today. Want to learn more? Plan on visiting one of our coldwater hatcheries during our Open House on May 30 from 10am-2pm! For more info, see page 22.







# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

MARCH/APRIL 2020

VOL. 81, NO. 2

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By Ken Perrotte

With so many fishing piers around the state, Virginia offers numerous opportunities for anglers without needing a boat!

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By Mike Roberts

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She might be young but this lady has it going on! The One Shot Turkey Hunt brings this teenager a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

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**Cover:** Writer and photographer Mike Roberts' striking portrait of a wild turkey was the perfect choice for the cover of this issue, which also features his photo essay of the spring turkey woods. Of the cover shot, Roberts says: "When it comes to photographing wildlife, few species capture my attention more than the wild turkey—especially mature gobblers during the springtime. Photography of these super wary birds requires the same stealth utilized by successful hunters—except such is performed from the interior of a camouflaged blind. This Bedford County gobbler paraded around the set-up, at less than five paces, underscoring the importance of attention to detail. The March/April cover portrait reveals the ear opening and stone-cold eye of this flustered gobbler attempting to locate the invisible hen." Page 16. © Mike Roberts

**Left:** DGIF has a long history of stocking Virginia waters for the sportsman. This photograph was taken at one of our first coldwater hatcheries. Page 22. From the DGIF historic archives

**Back Cover:** One of the first flowers to light up the spring woods is the Virginia springbeauty. © Mike Roberts



**RYAN J. BROWN**

Executive Director

**H**appy spring! As winter fades and the days lengthen, I'm sure you're just as eager to get on the water or back in the woods as I am. It's always great to see the ways the woods come alive this time of year. Mike Roberts' fantastic photo essay of the spring turkey woods on page 16 of this issue evokes the vision of a

crisp, misty spring morning that makes us all ready to enjoy the outdoors.

Make sure you read about Samantha McInteer, the winner of the 2019 Old Dominion One Shot Turkey Hunt, on page 34 of this issue. Sam comes from a family tradition of hunting, and at age 14 she's an excellent ambassador. The One Shot Turkey Hunt is a remarkable event that has shared the thrill of a day in the woods in pursuit of gobblers with youth, first responders, and Wounded Warriors. It also raises funds to support access to land by the Wildlife Foundation of Virginia and to help connect youth to the outdoors through the Virginia Wildlife Grant Program. This year's hunt, on April 18, will also include Gold Star Family members.

It's essential that we support and inspire the next generation of hunters, anglers, and wildlife enthusiasts. For the hunting community, I encourage you to mentor a young or novice hunter this year. Get them out into the woods, teach them ethical practices, and show them how rewarding a day of hunting can be. For anglers, if you know someone who's never been fishing before, there's ample opportunity to expose them to that sport as well. On page 6 of this issue there's a great story on some of Virginia's best fishing piers, where any angler can experience the thrill of catching a great fish. There's such a sense of camaraderie on a fishing pier among people from all kinds of different backgrounds. You can learn a lot from watching and talking to other anglers, and the stories are always entertaining! If your child catches a fish that makes them grin, make sure to snap a photo and submit it to our Kids 'N Fishing photo contest (see the 2019 winners and learn more on page 45).

Another great educational opportunity is to visit one of DGIF's fish hatcheries (see page 22) and learn what goes into raising and stocking a wide variety of game fish in our state. Or, take a walk in the woods and search for edible mushrooms (page 28) and then try chef Wade Truong's great mushroom miso soup recipe from page 41.

Part of the fun of enjoying the great outdoors is finding ways to share the experience and knowledge with others, so this spring, get outside and take someone with you!

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### MISSION STATEMENT

Conserve and manage wildlife populations and habitat for the benefit of present and future generations. Connect people to Virginia's outdoors through boating, education, fishing, hunting, trapping, wildlife viewing and other wildlife-related activities. Protect people and property by promoting safe outdoor experiences and managing human-wildlife conflicts.



# From Our Readers

## Perfect Timing

I believe, and I know you do as well, that communication with your readership is your principal function. How well you communicate is best measured by feedback. One primarily quantitative facet of feedback for the magazine is the rise/fall/plateauing of subscriptions. Another is direct response from your readers in the form of letters to the editor. I subscribe to several states' [wildlife agency] magazines and yours is the only one lacking a Letters to the Editor section. I strongly suggest that you consider initiating this.

*Trentwell White, Catlett*

*Trentwell, your letter was impeccably timed as it arrived just as we were putting together this, the first of the new "From Our Readers" section for letters to the editor and other reader submissions. We're always eager to hear from readers, so thank you for sharing your thoughts!*

*– Molly Kirk, Editor*

## A Good Day

I've included a photo of my grandson, Matt Plotner, with his dog Jesse and the ducks they harvested on a duck hunt in the Shenandoah Valley. Matt is from Swoope, Virginia, and attends Mary Baldwin University. He is captain of the men's baseball team there and is studying criminal justice with the hope of becoming a conservation police officer.

*Gordon Barlow, Staunton*

*Gordon, thanks so much for sharing the photo of Matt enjoying duck season. We*



Matt Plotner and his dog, Jesse, pose with mallards harvested on a hunt in the Shenandoah Valley.

*wish him the best in his studies and are thrilled that he's interested in a career as a conservation police officer.*

## Nice Catch!

Wow! Never heard of mummichogs before reading the "Warm Up to Yellow Perch!" article in the January/February 2020 issue. Now I know what to name my next punk rock band.

Seriously, you will find that the New River eventually drains into the Gulf of Mexico, not the Chesapeake Bay. Otherwise, an informative article on a spiny ray fish of Virginia Waters.

*Brian Kreowski, Hillsville*

*Brian, thanks so much for the correction! You are right, the New River flows northwest into West Virginia, where it joins with the Gauley River to form the Kanawha River, a tributary of the Ohio River. And the Ohio River joins the Mississippi River, which drains into the Gulf of Mexico. Nice catch!*

## Kudos to Luke

I have followed Luke since he was a pup, and the latest article of "Off the Leash" may be the most entertaining ever. Clarke and Luke are quite the pair, and a good addition to your magazine.

*Chuck Bradshaw, Franklin*

*Chuck, thanks for the note! Luke and Clarke's adventures have been part of Virginia Wildlife since 2009 and are always a reader favorite.*

## On Our Website...

### Meet the K9s!

We're following along with the potential K9 Conservation Police Officers training this spring with bi-weekly emails full of updates, exclusive photos, and more. Read more about DGIF's K9 program and sign up here: [dgif.virginia.gov/blog/the-dg-if-conservation-police-k9-program](https://dgif.virginia.gov/blog/the-dg-if-conservation-police-k9-program)



### A Year in the Life of a Young Great Horned Owl.

When a pair of great horned owls took over an osprey nest in her yard, Lisa Deaton kept a journal of their chick's progress from hatching to fledging to adulthood, complete with fascinating photos. Read it: [dgif.virginia.gov/blog/a-year-in-the-life-of-a-young-great-horned-owl](https://dgif.virginia.gov/blog/a-year-in-the-life-of-a-young-great-horned-owl)



**We want to hear from you!** We welcome letters to the editor, questions for our staff, photos you capture of wildlife, and experiences you want to share. Please include your name and address when you send correspondence to [editor@dgif.virginia.gov](mailto:editor@dgif.virginia.gov) via email or by mail to Editor, Virginia Wildlife magazine, P.O. Box 90778, Henrico, VA 23228-0778. Correspondence chosen for publication may be edited for clarity and/or length.

Connect with Us!



# WHO NEEDS A BOAT?



Story and photos by Ken Perrotte

It's a myth that if you want to have a great fishing experience, you need a boat. There are quite a few ways to enjoy fishing without floating, and one of the most enjoyable and interactive is to check out one of Virginia's many productive fresh and saltwater fishing piers, where you can find the true American "melting pot" experience. Piers are also an excellent option for persons with disabilities or wheelchair users, making them an extremely accessible all-around option when it comes to fishing destinations.

A visit to a fishing pier, especially in the summer when schools are out and families are on vacation, reveals a glorious mix of young and old, rural and urban, and just about every color, creed, and ethnicity found in the American experience.

Most times, a pier has a laid-back vibe, although there are days when the deck boards are densely packed on weekends and holidays. Then, competition can transcend the normally placid conversation, storytelling, and relationship-building that relaxed fishing in a tightly defined space promotes.

A "pier group" is definitely a blend of unique people from all walks of life bonded by a love for feeling a tug at the end of a line.

Wondering where you can find a great pier to experience the camaraderie and great fishing it offers? Here are some locations of Virginia's eastern saltwater and brackish water fishing piers to check out:

## Virginia Beach Fishing Pier ●

*Virginia Beach*

Located at 17th Street and Atlantic Avenue in the heart of Virginia Beach's oceanfront strip, the large pier is superb on many fronts. First, anglers can catch croaker, kingfish, trout, red drum, Spanish mackerel, bluefish, rays, and more. The pier also gets a lot of pedestrian traffic. It can be one of the best locations, short of taking a boat, to view dolphins.

Wendy Fulton enjoys a successful day of crabbing from the Virginia Beach Fishing Pier.











Mekhi Storey, age 4, checks out the spot he caught.

A local Head Start program was staging a Daddy/Daughter Fishing Day during our visit. Several dads and their young children were trying to catch fish. One dad, Jay Roche, had brought a couple of rods and reels, including a pint-sized children's combo with a two-hook bottom rig tied on. The trouble was, he forgot to bring hooks.

No worries, a quick check of the anglers at the end of the pier found fisherman Moonilal "Moon" Ramdhan. He reached into his tackle box and pulled out a full bottom rig, complete with hooks, and within minutes young Khloe Roche, age 4, was smiling and in business.

Ramdhan is a regular at the pier, often fishing alongside Mike Mahan, who moved to Virginia Beach from Italy five years ago. The duo likes to pop jerk baits off the pier's end, looking for bluefish, Spanish mackerel, and speckled trout. Flounder can sometimes be caught on the bottom at the portion of the pier where the surf breaks.

Wendy Fulton, a computer coding teacher who recently moved to the Hampton Roads area from Brooklyn, New York, was steadily moving from one side of the pier to the other. While she had a line in the water on the pier's north side, her primary attention was on the crab pots she placed on the south side. "They sure seem to like turkey necks," she said of the crabs. "If I catch enough, I'll take them home and steam them up for a great meal."



Mike Mahan, left, and Moonilal "Moon" Ramdhan clean their catch of bluefish after a day of fishing on the Virginia Beach Fishing Pier.



Jay Roche teaches daughter Khloe about fishing during Daddy/Daughter Fishing Day.

Fishing is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children under 12, while spectators and pedestrians are \$2; passes are good all day. Nearby parking is \$15 per day. The pier is open for 24 hours, seven days a week, from Memorial Day weekend through the annual Neptune Festival at the end of September. Off-season hours (April through late May and also in October) are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The pier includes a restaurant, a nicely stocked bait and tackle shop, and a fish-cleaning station.

Find it: 1413 Atlantic Ave., Virginia Beach, VA 23451

Learn more: Call 757-428-2333



## Sandbridge Little Island Fishing Pier

Virginia Beach

The Little Island Fishing Pier at Sandbridge is located at Little Island District Park. This 400-foot pier fronts the Atlantic Ocean, just north of the Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and False Cape State Park. The park has a 775-foot beach north of the pier for surfing and a 2,000-foot beach for swimming and surf-fishing south of the pier. Anglers there can catch a wide variety of fish, ranging from spot to croaker and trout, red and black drum, flounder, kingfish, puffers, cobia, Spanish mackerel, king mackerel, sharks, and more.

The pier is open from April 15 to October 31 from 5:30 a.m. to 9 p.m., daily. From November 1 to April 14, it opens at 7 a.m. with closing times posted on location. Fishing costs \$8 for Virginia Beach residents and \$10 for non-residents. Weekly and annual passes are available. Children under age 9 are free with a paying adult. Daily parking is \$3 for Virginia Beach residents, \$5 for non-residents, and \$10 for buses and RVs.

Find it: 3820 South Sandpiper Rd., Virginia Beach, VA 23456

Learn more: Call 757-385-4461 or visit [www.vbgov.com/government/departments/parks-recreation/parks-trails/city-parks/Pages/little-island-park.aspx](http://www.vbgov.com/government/departments/parks-recreation/parks-trails/city-parks/Pages/little-island-park.aspx)



Lee Walker / DGIF

Spanish mackerel are one of the many species of fish you can catch from the Sandbridge Little Island Fishing Pier.

## Gloucester Point Fishing Pier

Gloucester Point

This York River pier is just off U.S. Route 17 south, at Gloucester Point Landing, just before you get to the Coleman Bridge. The property borders the campus of William & Mary College and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Gloucester Point Beach Park, and the highly popular Gloucester Point Boat Ramp. It is also just across the river from the historic Yorktown National Battlefield.

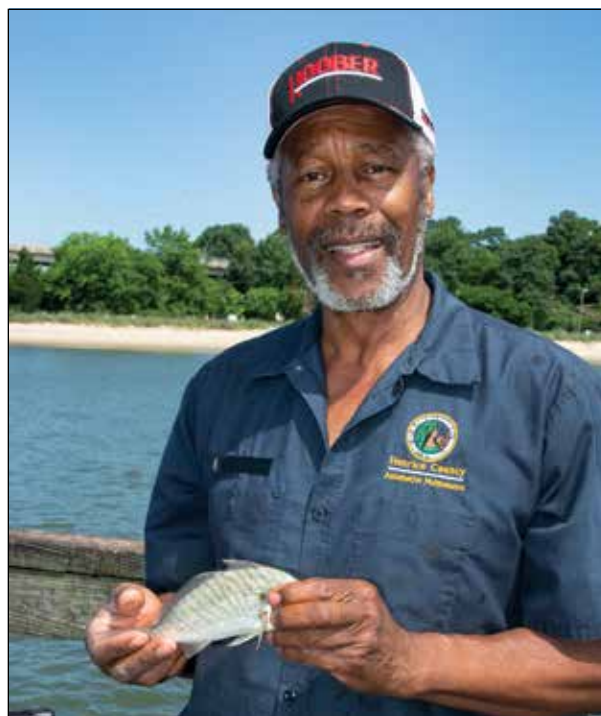
It's a substantial pier, with a large "T head" to let anglers spread out as they access deeper water. Anglers catch croaker, spot, flounder, striped bass, drum, seatrout, mullet, blue crabs, and an occasional catfish. Thomas Parris, a regular from Williamsburg, said, "This pier can get crowded, especially on weekends and holidays, but I like it."

Nicole Codekas, a local living in nearby Hayes, said she likes to visit the pier "just to see what friends are up to. Plus, I always run into friends on the beach right next to the pier."

There is ample free parking and a beautiful beach, but come prepared as there are no readily available bait, tackle, or food options close by. No fishing license is required. Night fishing is allowed. The park, however, closes at 11 p.m., and re-opens at 5 a.m.

Find it: 1255 Greate Rd., Gloucester Point, VA 23062. The pier is on the left.

Learn more: Contact Gloucester County Parks, Recreation and Tourism at 804-693-2355 or visit [www.gloucesterva.info/Facilities/Facility/Details/Gloucester-Point-Beach-Park%20-9](http://www.gloucesterva.info/Facilities/Facility/Details/Gloucester-Point-Beach-Park%20-9)



Eldridge Smith caught spot from the Gloucester Fishing Pier.



The James River Fishing Pier is one of the longest fishing piers on the East Coast.

## James T. Wilson Fishing Pier (formerly Buckroe Fishing Pier)

Hampton

This 709-foot pier is a destination for many anglers, with visitors traveling considerable distances to fish for a day or a week. On Nov. 17, 2019, a portion of the James T. Wilson Fishing Pier at Buckroe Beach collapsed after being struck by a loose barge. The pier will remain closed until repairs are complete; check its status on Facebook at Buckroe Fishing Pier or call 757-727-1486 before planning to travel there.

The pier is especially popular with military veterans. During a visit in the summer of

## James River Bridge Fishing Pier

Newport News

The new pier, which replaced an old bridge with deteriorating metal beams, is made entirely of concrete. At  $\frac{1}{10}$  of a mile, it's one of the longest fishing piers on the East Coast. The pier extends out from the Crab Shack Restaurant, adjacent to Huntington Park. It is open from April through November. Croaker, spot, and catfish are the main catches here, along with striped bass, flounder, seatrout, and an occasional puppy drum. New LED lights not only light up the pier in the evening hours, but also do a great job of attracting feeding fish in the waters around the pier.

Donald Moore, a transplanted New Yorker who came to Williamsburg from New Rochelle, had the end of the pier all to himself during a midweek visit. "I fish here every Tuesday," he said. "I'm usually lucky down here. This is a comfortable, big pier, and it's not too crowded."

The Webb family travels from Raleigh, North Carolina, just to fish this pier. They've been visiting the pier for eight years, and usually make three or four trips in the spring or fall. "We've got some places in North Carolina that are so crowded, by the time you re-bait your hook, someone has slipped into your place. This pier is long enough that you don't have people way up on you," said Edward Webb.

No fishing license is required, but there is a fee to fish. Adults are \$9, with seniors and children age 6-12 at \$7. The pier is closed from December 31 until April 15. Operating hours are 9 a.m. – 11 p.m., on Mondays, Tuesdays and Sundays, with the pier open 24 hours from 9 a.m., on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. There is a bait shop on the premises with a limited amount of basic tackle.

Find it: 7601 River Rd., Newport News, VA 23607

Learn more: Call 757-247-0364 or go to [www.crabshackon-james.com/james-river-fishing-pier](http://www.crabshackon-james.com/james-river-fishing-pier)



Memories captured fishing off of the James T. Wilson Fishing Pier!

2019, we quit counting after reaching more than 1,000 years of service represented on the pier. "Just about the entire pier is military," said Leo Judge, who retired from the Army and is a native of Copperas Cove, Texas. A nearby friend of his, fellow Army veteran Robert Garrett, is originally from Guam and is the pier's gaffing expert.

When operational, the pier is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week from April 1 until December 31, except during severe weather. It is closed January through March. Fronting the lower Chesapeake Bay, it's one of the few piers where anglers have a chance to hook into hard-fighting cobia during the late spring and summer.

The pier actually has a large red stripe painted down the center of the platform at its T section terminus. That line denotes where cobia fishermen can operate with some



exclusivity at certain times. But the waters around the pier host a bonanza of other species, including bluefish, spot, croaker, Spanish mackerel, speckled trout, rays, crabs, and more.

Young anglers, fishing with family and friends, are common in the summer. Addison Ainsworth, age 11, was fishing next to her grandmother, Judy Ainsworth. She and her father had traveled from Oklahoma to join Judy on the pier. "I always catch fish," said Addison with a smile. Sure enough, minutes later she was swinging a bluefish over the rail with obvious delight.

Down at the end of the pier, Samantha Dortch was fishing with her three children and fiancé. "I love the smell of the salt-water and seeing all the cobia caught," she said.

The pier, which was also rebuilt in 2009 after incurring damage from Hurricane Isabel, is lighted and has excellent facilities, including rest rooms, a snack bar, fish-cleaning stations, and a bait and tackle shop that offers rod rentals. Parking is free. Fishing prices vary, with seasonal passes available. Daily passes range from \$6 to \$8 for anglers, and no license is needed. Non-fishing visitors with an angler are \$4. Sightseers can visit for one hour for \$1.

Find it: 330 South Resort Blvd., Hampton, VA 23664

Learn more: Call 757-727-1486 or visit [www.hampton.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/47](http://www.hampton.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/47)

## Colonial Beach Municipal Pier ●

*Colonial Beach*

This pier is a gem of this quaint tourist and retirement town located on the Potomac River close to the Westmoreland and King George County boundary. The spacious pier has lots of fans, mainly because of its easy accessibility from areas of

northern Virginia. Situated on big water, it's a location featuring glorious summer sunrises and the opportunity to catch a variety of fish ranging from rockfish to croaker to perch. When salinity levels are low, it can also be a catfish hotspot. There is no bait or tackle shop available at the pier, but many small restaurants and snack bars are nearby. Inexpensive parking (\$2 per hour) is available close to the pier.

This is also a great destination for campers and history buffs alike as Westmoreland State Park, Caledon State Park and Natural Area, and Stratford Hall historic house are just a short distance from Colonial Beach.

Find it: Hawthorn St., Colonial Beach, VA 22443

Learn more: [www.colonial-beach-virginia-attractions.com](http://www.colonial-beach-virginia-attractions.com)

## West Point (Glass Island Landing) Fishing Pier ●

*West Point*

This small pier in brackish water used to be a croaker hotspot that drew considerable crowds, but that action has slowed in recent years. Anglers say catfish are the current mainstay, with the occasional croaker still taking the bait.

Situated along the Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail Mattaponi Loop, the pier also provides a platform for birdwatching and other activities

Fishing is free, and there is a state boat ramp adjacent to the pier; the facility is owned and managed by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The pier extends 85 feet into the Mattaponi River and has a 70-foot T section at the end.

Find it: Glass Island Rd., West Point, VA 23181

Learn more: [www.west-point.va.us/pages/visitors/visitors.php](http://www.west-point.va.us/pages/visitors/visitors.php)

## King & Queen County Fishing Pier ●

*Mattaponi*

This pier, located off Route 33, is almost directly across the river from the West Point Pier and a short distance from the Lord Delaware Bridge. The pier was built largely via a grant from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission. The 65-foot pier has a 15-foot by 30-foot T section at the end. Individuals do not need a saltwater fishing license to fish there. Interestingly, this pier is considered to be in saltwater because the line marking the break between freshwater and saltwater is the northern edge of the original Route 33 bridge abutments. This places the West Point pier in a freshwater status, although the water is actually brackish.

Find it: When traveling west on Route 33 from the Route 33 and Salem Farm Lane inter-



A busy fishing day at the James T. Wilson Fishing Pier!



Wheelchair accessible, as all of the piers are, the spacious Colonial Beach Municipal Pier is a popular destination.

section, go  $\frac{3}{10}$  of a mile west, then take a right onto the pier access road. Pier is  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile from Route 33 on the access road.

Learn more: Call the King & Queen County office at 804-785-5975

## Chincoteague Island Pier at Robert N. Reed ● Waterfront Park

*Chincoteague*

This 155-foot-long, 8-foot-wide pier is just a few years old and is situated at the southwest end of Robert N. Reed Park in historic downtown Chincoteague. It's a popular place for watching sunsets, crabbing, and catching fish, including flounder, striped bass, spot, croaker, pigfish, black sea bass, puffers, and more.

Stylishly lighted, it extends into the main channel, and many fish migrate through the area. The pier is made of wood and constructed over an existing concrete bridge fender that was left after the old swing drawbridge was demolished. The town purchases a fishing license for this pier and the nearby 250-foot pier at Veteran's Memorial Park. With its downtown location, the pier is close to the historic shopping district, with many specialty stores and some of the best seafood restaurants to be found on the Eastern Shore.

Find it: The closest intersection to the pier at Robert N. Reed Park is at Church and Main Streets. A parking lot is nearby.

Learn more: Call 757-336-6519 or visit [www.chincoteague-va.gov/recreation](http://www.chincoteague-va.gov/recreation)

## Westmoreland State Park ● Fishing Pier

*Montross*

The Westmoreland State Park Fishing Pier is 100 feet long and situated between two rip-rap breakwaters in the Potomac River. Access to this handicapped-accessible pier is free after you have paid for admission to the park (\$10 on weekends during April

through October; \$7 all other times). Anglers 16 and older must have a valid saltwater fishing license (either Maryland, Virginia, or Potomac River Fisheries Commission).

The pier has been a good place to catch croaker, spot, white perch, and striped bass. It's also a good location for crabbing. The park has restroom facilities and a seasonal snack bar. The State Park encompasses 1,321 acres and also offers campgrounds, miles of trails, boats rentals, a swimming pool and bathhouse, and more.

Find it: 145 Cliff Rd., Montross, VA 22520

Learn more: Call 808-493-8821 or visit [www.dcr.virginia.gov/state\\_parks/wes.shtml](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/wes.shtml)


## Ocean View Fishing Pier ●

*Norfolk*

The large Ocean View Pier fronts the Chesapeake Bay and is just a short distance from Willoughby Spit. It is open all day, every day (weather permitting) and is one of the best spots in the Tidewater area for viewing some of the U.S. Navy's fleet of battleships that call the Port of Norfolk home. Anglers say they catch a variety of species, including bluefish, spot, croaker, Spanish mackerel, rays, and more. The pier can get crowded at times. A restaurant on the pier is open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. on weekdays and to midnight on weekends.

The pier offers rod/reel rentals and has a decently stocked bait and tackle shop. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$8 for seniors and military members. Kids under age 5 are free. Monthly and seasonal passes are available. For two weeks during the summer, they host a very popular kid's fishing camp.

Find it: 400 West Ocean Ave., Norfolk, VA 23503

Learn more: Call 757-583-6000 or visit [www.oceanview-fishingpier.com](http://www.oceanview-fishingpier.com) 

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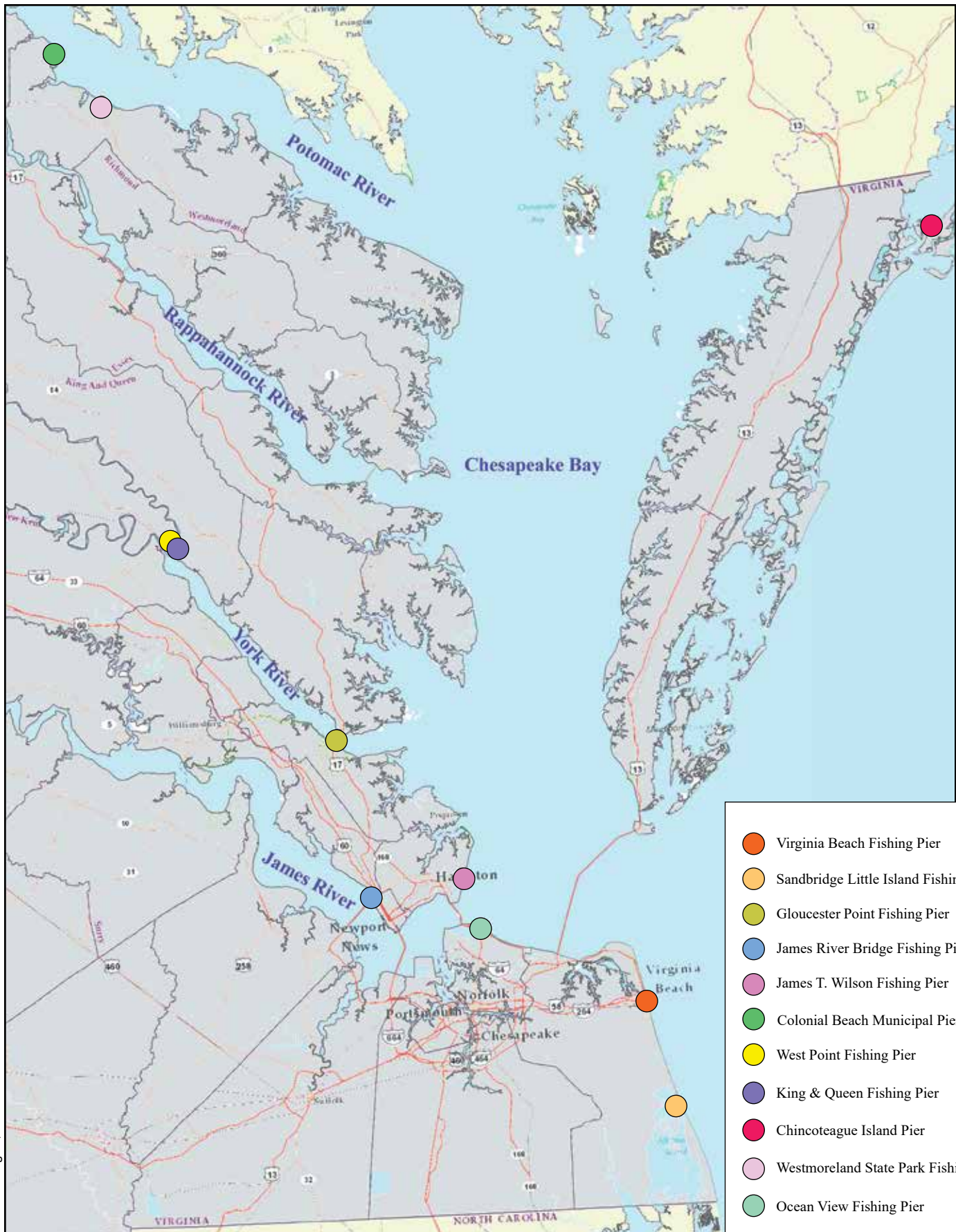
*Ken Perrotte is a King George County resident and the outdoors columnist for Fredericksburg's Free Lance-Star newspaper. Contact him at [Kmunicate@gmail.com](mailto:Kmunicate@gmail.com).*



A leisurely day fishing from the popular Chincoteague Island Pier.

© Nancy Brackett Wood







# EXPLORE FEATHERFIN WILDLIFE



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The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries maintains 46 management areas totaling more than 225,000 acres for a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities. For more information on how you can visit our wildlife management areas, go to: [www.dgif.virginia.gov/wma](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wma).



# ENJOY

# MANAGEMENT AREA



Meghan Marchetti / DGIF

Featherfin covers 3,084 acres in Prince Edward, Appomattox, and Buckingham counties with 10 miles of river frontage on the Appomattox River. Diverse wetlands border the Appomattox River, including 125 acres of low-ground fields, and there are forested ridges of hardwood and pine forests. It is home to black bear, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, wood ducks, woodcock, and neo-tropical migratory songbirds. Activities include bird watching, camping, hiking, hunting, and fishing. There is quota hunting for spring gobblers, and antler point restrictions are in place for deer hunting.

# Spring Turkey Woods

Photo essay by Mike Roberts

To that fraternity of sportsmen and women who revel in the pursuit of wild turkeys, springtime is hallowed. The vernal season that gradually awakens nature from its winter's nap unleashes a multitude of refreshing sights, sounds, and fragrances—a stimulating reward for those willing to rise from a comfortable bed while the stars are still shining.

Whether warm breezes therapeutic to the soul, the ambrosial perfume of honeysuckle and wild azalea hanging heavy in the air, colorful trilliums sprouting up from a drab forest floor, a male prairie warbler's morning anthem, or that initial thundering gobble, there is no comparison within the field of consumptive conservation.

The sport itself is defined by a shotgun true to feel, one's favorite call, a full moon, and glorious sunrises. For sure, the ultimate goal is outwitting the wariest of all upland game birds, but if the truth be told, those who venture into the spring turkey woods prefer the engagement over pulling the trigger.

Having declared such, the intent of this photo gallery is to provide a glimpse into the window of a sport that revolves around a bird that once teetered on the brink of being lost forever. Thankfully, and just in the nick of time, a handful of dedicated conservationists laid the historical foundation for resource restoration and, equally important, passed the stewardship torch to subsequent generations.









Wild azaleas bloom throughout the forest.



Luna moths emerge from fall spun cocoons.



Bird's foot violets push up from the pine straw.  
Right: Two gobblers size one another up.











A prairie warbler sings to claim his territory.



A clutch of turkey eggs hidden in the leaf litter.



A female cardinal perched on redbud blossoms.  
Right: Large-flowering trillium arrive in spring.









# Hatcheries

By Dr. Peter Brookes

Photos by Meghan Marchetti



ou've got to hatch 'em to catch 'em! The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) maintains a robust network of fish hatcheries to keep Virginia's waters teeming with rainbow, brook, and brown trout in addition to bluegill, redear sunfish, walleye, musky, crappie, saugeye, and striped bass. Over the last eight years, DGIF stocked Virginia waters with nearly 15,000,000 freshwater fish. Annually, DGIF stocks approximately 1 million catchable-size trout in some 180 waters around the state.

"What we're concentrating on is the production of game fish for re-stocking, for creation of sport-fishing opportunities, or perhaps to rebuild populations because of natural conditions," said Brendan Delbos, DGIF State Aquaculture Coordinator. Many fish populations in the major sport fisheries in Virginia either rely on annual stockings from hatcheries to maintain their numbers or were started with hatchery fish and then sustained by natural reproduction.

DGIF operates four warmwater hatcheries (King and Queen, Front Royal, Buller, and Vic Thomas) where hatchery technicians and biologists rear and stock a wide variety of species. There are also five coldwater hatcheries devoted to raising and releasing trout at the Marion, Paint Bank, Wytheville, Coursey Springs, and Montebello hatcheries. "On the trout side, we're producing and releasing a catchable-size fish, generally 10 inches and larger. You need a trout license to participate in the put-and-take trout program. On the warmwater side, we're raising and stocking juvenile fish, fingerlings," Delbos said.

If you're interested in discovering what goes into raising and releasing fish, plan a trip to visit a DGIF hatchery. The hatcheries are open to the public between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m., with the coldwater hatcheries welcoming visitors seven days a week and the warmwater facilities available to visit Monday through Friday. Please call ahead to the hatchery to coordinate a visit.

The coldwater trout hatcheries will be hosting an open house on May 30. The open houses are great opportunities to meet with DGIF hatchery specialists, tour the facilities,



Fat, homegrown rainbow trout are scooped up for transport to a stocking location.

Lynda Richardson / DGIF

and see specialized equipment, such as a stocking truck. You might even get to throw some fish food at a holding pond brimming with trout.

Warmwater hatcheries use brood stock from the wild. When fish in the wild are ready to spawn, they're collected and brought back to the hatchery. Coldwater hatcheries rely on resident brood stock. Once the fish spawn, their fertilized eggs are incubated using specialized equipment and techniques. Once hatched and large enough, the fish are transferred to spacious, fertilized outdoor ponds. The fish grow in the ponds anywhere from 30 to 90 days until hatchery staff determine they're of an appropriate size for release, which depends on the species.



# Make Fish Happen



Hatchery stockings create fantastic opportunities for catching beautiful brown trout like this one.

“It’s a fine line,” said Delbos. “We don’t want the fish to be too small when we harvest them, but if they’re too large, they compete with each other in the pond. Finding that balance is when the experience of our staff really comes into play.” The fish are netted from the ponds, transferred to a stocking truck, and transported to the water where they’re released.

Hatching and raising fish in a hatchery is “trying to re-create nature,” Delbos said. “It’s very labor-intensive. We’re monitoring the ponds constantly for water quality, temperature, oxygen levels, algae levels, and more. Additionally, we’re monitoring the growth and health of the fish. It’s a very dynamic field. Someone who’s successful in this field knows

about biology, chemistry, and physics. They put all that knowledge together to grow fish. We’re also always trying to refine these techniques.”

Hatchery staff work closely with DGIF aquatic biologists to determine fish-stocking needs in various waters. “Biologists use various techniques to sample the fish to identify not only the species that are in the water, but also the general health of the various populations,” said Delbos. “They might go to Kerr Reservoir and conduct their sampling and have a low return for striped bass. They’ll tell us, ‘The population really needs some help; let’s bump up our stocking activities for the coming year.’ There’s a lot of interaction and back and forth between the hatcheries and our aquatic biologists.”

The ultimate goal for those involved in raising fish is to have healthy, plentiful fish populations for anglers to enjoy. Whether it’s a beautiful rainbow trout caught on a fly in southwest Virginia or a striped bass reeled in from a lake in eastern Virginia, there’s a good chance that fish spent time growing in a DGIF hatchery. 🐟

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*Dr. Peter Brookes is a part-time, Virginia outdoor writer with a full-time job in Washington, D.C. in foreign policy. [BrookesOutdoors@gmail.com](mailto:BrookesOutdoors@gmail.com)*

## Join us for our coldwater trout hatcheries





# DGIF Fish Hatcheries

Find out more at <https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/fish-stocking/state-hatcheries>

## Warmwater

### **King and Queen Hatchery – Stevensville in King and Queen County**

The King and Queen location hatches and rears walleye, saugeye, fathead minnows, crappie, redear, and bluegill. Marine striped bass hatched at this facility are from fish captured from the Pamunkey and Mattaponi rivers, and they are used to stock lakes in the Chesapeake drainage. The freshwater strain of striped bass produced here are from landlocked fish captured in the Roanoke River drainage.

The hatchery also collaborates with academic institutions to promote research in natural resource management. Primary production activities are in April through July.

### **Front Royal Fish Hatchery Station – Strasburg in Warren County**

The Front Royal Fish Hatchery is primarily used for the production of walleye fingerlings. The hatchery also serves as a distribution point for trout, catfish, and other species to the waters of northern and northwestern Virginia.

### **Buller Fish Hatchery – Marion in Smyth County**

The Buller Fish Hatchery annually produces northern pike, muskellunge, and walleyes, as well as 50,000 trout. Trout used to stock Clinch Mountain WMA (Big Tumbling Creek) and Crooked Creek fee-fishing areas are produced year-round. Intensive rearing of muskellunge and northern pike is underway from April through June.

### **Vic Thomas Striped Bass Hatchery – Brookneal in Campbell County**

The Vic Thomas Hatchery annually spawns and hatches millions of striped bass. The striped bass produced here are from landlocked fish captured in the Roanoke River drainage. Walleye fingerlings are also reared here, primarily for stocking of lakes in south central Virginia. A visit to the hatchery is best planned for April or May during the striped bass run on the Roanoke River.

**For a look at the daily trout  
stocking schedule check out:**

[www.dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/trout-stocking-schedule](https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/trout-stocking-schedule)



A bird's-eye view of King & Queen Hatchery shot from a drone.



Biologists prepare to transfer juvenile walleye from hatchery to outdoor ponds at Buller Fish Hatchery.



A hatchery technician checks development of walleye embryos in incubators at the Vic Thomas Striped Bass Hatchery.



# Coldwater

## **Marion Trout Hatchery – Marion in Smyth County**

Marion Trout Hatchery annually produces rainbow, brown, and brook trout. The total production of trout is around 400,000 per year. Annually, the hatchery stocks 33 rivers and five lakes throughout southwest Virginia. The stocking covers 10 counties in southwest Virginia. These stockings include seven kids' fishing day events throughout the stocking season.

## **Montebello Fish Cultural Station – Montebello in Nelson County**

Montebello Fish Cultural Station hosts numerous visitors and school group tours throughout the year. In addition to trout, there is a nature trail and pollinator plots located on the property. Three species of trout (brook, brown, and rainbow) are grown at Montebello until they are large enough to be stocked into waters on the east side of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Montebello stocks 23 rivers and lakes from Amherst County northward to Fairfax County. Montebello also stocks six lakes/ponds and one stream in urban localities. Montebello normally stocks between 100,000 and 150,000 trout per year.

## **Coursey Springs Fish Cultural Station – Millboro in Bath County**

Coursey Springs is responsible for stocking 72 waters in 11 counties as well as two waters in the Urban Trout program in the Cities of Hampton and Chesapeake respectively. No spawning occurs at the facility. The facility is one of two "grow-out" facilities in the system. Fingerlings are received from Wytheville, Marion, and Paint Bank hatcheries.

## **Wytheville Fish Hatchery – Max Meadows in Wythe County**

In a typical year more than 150,000 trout (75% rainbow, 25% brown) are stocked from the Wytheville facility at an average length of 12-14 inches and an average weight of just under a pound each. These fish are released into almost 40 different bodies of water including streams, lakes, and rivers across 10 counties in southwest Virginia. The hatchery also releases close to 100,000 brown and rainbow fingerlings into special regulation and other waters in several area counties in a typical year.

## **Paint Bank Fish Hatchery – Paint Bank in Craig County**

Paint Bank hatches and rears all three species of trout for stocking in Virginia waters in the Roanoke area, and it is a participating hatchery in the National Broodstock Program. It stocks approximately 100,000 catchable trout in 10 counties and 27 different waters each year. The hatchery also stocks approximately 5,000 fingerlings (2-3 inches) and 5,000 advanced fingerlings (6-8 inches) in five counties.



Montebello Fish Cultural Station is a popular location to watch trout rearing.



Coursey Springs Fish Cultural Station is one of two "grow-out" facilities for trout.



Paint Bank Hatchery raises three species of trout for Roanoke-area waters.





# Working Together

By Ron Messina ♦ Photos by Meghan Marchetti



**A** conservation organization that's all about fun, fellowship, and giving back is something special. The Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA) accomplished all of those things and more when members of their Washington D.C.-based Capital Chapter visited the popular C. F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Sumerduck, Virginia, to assist with much-needed improvements to the Hogue Tract area of the WMA.

The hard-working volunteers restored hunting blinds for the mobility impaired, removed mud and silt that had washed up on the canoe launch, picked up trash, and spruced up the WMA's hiking trails. Fittingly, the day began with a four-mile hike and ended with a cookout.

Access opportunity and improving the quality of America's wild public lands is the BHA's focus, says Josh Veverka,

Co-Chair of BHA's Capital Region Chapter, which includes Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C.

"Not everyone has 100 acres they can go to hunt or fish on. But everyone can come out and recreate on America's public lands whether they hunt, fish, hike or ride bikes. You name it, public lands are there for you to enjoy," Veverka noted.

The BHA also hosted a clean-up event at the Cavalier WMA in Chesapeake, Virginia, and plans to partner with DGIF on more projects in the future, including hunter recruitment efforts. Veverka says the BHA is one of the fastest growing conservation organizations in the country, and he welcomes anyone with a passion for the outdoors to visit their website and consider joining. [www.backcountryhunters.org](http://www.backcountryhunters.org)













# There's More to MUSHROOMS Than Morels

By Bruce Ingram

Photos by Ann and Rob Simpson

**C**hances are you've walked past a fantastic food source in the woods more times than you know. They don't gobble or grow antlers, but edible mushrooms are a wonderful ingredient to hunt!

You can even multi-task and gather mushrooms while you're out hunting game. Once you learn what to look for, you can keep your eyes peeled for mushroom varieties emerging from the forest duff or growing on downed trees. Last April, I was rambling through the woods toward a tom that had repeatedly gobbled. Just as I was about to cross a creek, I saw them—two black morels poking up through the leaves.

I immediately stopped, gathered the mushrooms, deposited them in a bag concealed in my daypack, and resumed my pursuit of the longbeard. Later that day, after I had arrived home and field-dressed the tom, my wife Elaine and I dined on an omelet made from those black morels and eggs from our chickens. I think—no, I definitely know—that day was my favorite one afield all spring.

Many Virginians passionately search for black and yellow morels, which are very common in Virginia and typically appear in our state from late March to early May, depending on region and elevation. But few folks forage for fungi after that. That's a mistake because there are a number of other varieties that can warrant our attention and excite our taste buds. Noted sportsman and Trebark® Camouflage inventor Jim Crumley is one of those folks who pursue mushrooms throughout the year.

"Besides morels, there are five other mushrooms that I really concentrate on," said Crumley, a Botetourt County, Virginia, resident. "Among them, the oyster, which can be found just about year-round, is my favorite. The texture reminds me of a portabello—meaty with a lot of substance. My wife Sherry and I especially like them ground up with venison or wild turkey and made into burgers. Of course, merely sautéing them and adding them to just about any meal is wonderful, too."

Jim's other favorite edibles are puffballs, chanterelles, hen of the woods, and chicken of the woods.

"The neat thing about puffballs is that they grow in people's lawns just about anywhere in the state," continues Jim. "I gather them in the summer and well into the fall."

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White-pored sulphur shelf, or chicken mushrooms, are popular fungi for beginners to collect, prepare, and eat.





Oyster mushrooms, like many fungi, have a saprophytic relationship with decomposing trees.



Cinnabar Red Chanterelle mushrooms can be found along the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Oysters, hen of the woods, and chicken of the woods (*Laetiporus sulfureus* or *Laetiporus cincinnatus* are the main varieties in our state) typically grow mostly on living or dead hardwoods. Sometimes these fungi have a saprophytic (living off something dead) and/or parasitic lifestyle with their tree hosts. Chanterelles grow on the ground in a mycorrhiza (symbiotic or interdependent) relationship with everything from trees to suburban lawns. However, when it comes to mushrooms, it is often unpredictable when and where these fungi will appear.

“On one hand, moisture and temperature seem to be crucial,” said Crumley. “Sometimes a cool, summer rain will take place, and you’d expect that in a day or

two mushrooms will be everywhere. But, then, you can’t find them anywhere. Mushrooms popping up is one of those things that happen when it happens—there’s just no telling sometimes.”

### Gather Wisely

Rebecca Rader, president of the New River Valley Mushroom Club (NRVMC), is obviously a fungi fancier.

“What brings most people to join our club or go on our walks is the culinary aspect,” she said. “People really enjoy foraging for food. But I also find mushrooms themselves fascinating, regardless of whether they are edible. Why is a certain mushroom growing somewhere? How does it fit into the ecosystem? Is that particular mushroom a parasite, a decomposer, or does it have a symbiotic relationship with plants? There’s always something fascinating to learn when you’re out looking for mushrooms.”

Like Crumley, Rader likes to look for various puffball species. Her favorite edible of this family is the giant puffball (*Calvatia gigantea*).

“It often grows as large as a softball and sometimes as big as a soccer ball,” she said. “Cut a fresh, giant puffball open, and it will be perfectly white inside. If you cut one open and it is not perfectly white inside, don’t eat it.”

Like the smaller puffballs, the giant species will sometimes flourish in yards, but they also grow in meadows, fields, and other openings, and in forests as well. Again, though, as is usually true with these fungi, it’s often hard to make definitive statements in terms of where we can find them. Morels, for example, often appear in the spring in poplar stands as well as around ashes and within old apple orchards. Crumley says he often finds oysters growing on downed hardwoods along streams.

“In the mixed hardwood forests of our region, different species within any given group, like chanterelles or chicken of the woods, might be generalists or have specific species of trees they



associate with or somewhere in-between. It's complicated," Rader said.

Here are some important caveats about puffballs as well as mushrooms in general.

"There are lookalikes of the smaller puffballs and many other edible mushroom varieties as well that can make people really sick and send them to the emergency room, or worse," said Rader.

Both Rader and Crumley recommend that before people gather any species of mushroom new to them, they first go foraging with someone who can positively identify it. Field guides also can be a very valuable resource, as can mushroom clubs and classes. Wild mushrooms also should never be eaten raw, as even uncooked edible ones can cause stomach distress. Rader adds that cooking mushrooms brings out more of their nutrients as well.

## A Bounty in the Forest

To increase our knowledge of mushrooms, Elaine and I went on a mid-June expedition for chanterelles with the NRVMC. We met about 10 members at a parking lot within the George Washington and Jefferson National Forest and were immediately impressed with how serious these folks are about fungi. People arrived with field guides, paper bags and wicker baskets to store their day's bounty. Field trip leader Jeff Huffman of Roanoke even brought cooking gear so that edibles could be consumed as the day's culminating activity... and then we were off into the woods.

I actually found the first mushroom of the day and excitedly asked what it was.

"It looks like a member of the amanita family," Huffman said. "That family has some deadly varieties. The odds are that that particular variety is poisonous."

Several members then emphasized the traits that poisonous mushrooms like amanitas (which can also cause hallucinations) often have. It is wise, they said, to avoid mushrooms with white gills, skirts or rings on the stem, and a bulbous base called a volva. The volva is



Colorful sulphur shelf, or chicken mushrooms, can be found on living or dead tree hosts.



Warted puffballs, also known as common puffballs, are commonly available edibles.

often underground. It's true that some mushrooms with these traits are edible; many, however, are deadly. Also, mushrooms with red caps or stalks are often poisonous or hallucinogenic.

Those revelations are reason enough for people not to go off by themselves on their first mushroom excursion. It's also why participating with a club is such a prudent decision, as Elaine and I quickly learned.

About 90 minutes passed and club members found numerous varieties, all poisonous or non-edible. Then up ahead we heard Elly Hoinowski of Blacksburg shout out, "Smooth chanterelles!"

Smooth chanterelles (*Cantharellus lateritius*) often grow within oak groves, having a symbiotic relationship with these hardwoods. The wavy, egg yolk-colored





© Bruce Ingram

Jeff Huffman spots a poisonous mushroom of the amanita family.

cap with an irregular margin is a prime identification trait, but there are color variations as is often the case with mushrooms. The stem is a paler version of the cap.

Huffman walked over and sniffed the fungi. “Smell the fruity odor,” he said. “That’s a trait of the smooth chanterelle.”

Indeed, the mushroom gave off a smell similar to apricots. When Hoinowski offered to give us her chanterelles, we gladly accepted them.

Later, club members came upon another variety of chanterelle, the black trumpet (*Craterellus fallax*) and these too were given to us. Like the smooth variety, trumpets emit a fruity smell. These were growing under an oak; trumpets also thrive in beech groves. Black trumpets feature a dark brown or black vase-like cap with a wavy margin. They are often only an inch or two tall, and their dark color makes them easy to miss.

Excited with our bounty, Elaine and I headed home. We couldn’t wait to dine on the two varieties of chanterelles (see below for a recipe). Huffman offered these final words of fungi wisdom.

“It’s a good idea to start with eating small portions of edible mushrooms. Edible wild mushrooms affect people’s digestive tracts differently,” he said. In fact, while the chicken of the woods variety are a popular choice, some people experience gastrointestinal distress from eating them. “Also, it’s smart to save a portion of the mushroom. This will allow professionals the ability to identify the mushroom if you consumed something that made you visit a doctor.” 🍄

Bruce Ingram’s latest book is *Living the Locavore Lifestyle*; for more information on this work and his river fishing and floating guides, go to <https://sites.google.com/site/bruceingramoutdoors>.



© Bruce Ingram

Jim Crumley harvests oyster mushrooms from a log along a creek.

## Try This Mushroom Recipe

### Mushroom Venison Burgers

- 1 lb. ground venison (or burger meat of your choice)
- 1 Tbsp. prepared mustard
- 2 tsp. steak sauce
- 3 Tbsp. finely chopped onions
- 2 Tbsp. finely chopped wild mushrooms (we used smooth chanterelles)

Soak the mushrooms in enough water to cover and to which ½ tsp. of salt has been added. This will eliminate any insects as well as getting rid of dirt. After soaking 15 minutes or so, rinse until water appears clear.

Chop mushrooms and onions and add to ground meat along with mustard and steak sauce. Form into four patties.

Place on parchment-covered baking sheet and bake at 400° for 20 minutes.





Giant puffballs are commonly found in meadows, fields, and deciduous forests, normally appearing in late summer and early fall.

Also see our **Fare Game** recipe for Wild Mushroom Miso Soup on page 41.



© Bruce Ingram

Here, hen of the woods is being prepared for an egg dish.

## RESOURCES

- ◆ *Mushrooms of West Virginia and the Central Appalachians* by William Roody
- ◆ *National Audubon Society Field Guide to North America Mushrooms*
- ◆ New River Valley Mushroom Club: <https://sites.google.com/site/newrivervalley-mushroomclub>
- ◆ North American Mycological Association (NAMA): [www.namyco.org](http://www.namyco.org). Rader says this site offers info about people and pet poisonings as well as emergency identifiers. "Because of my work with NAMA, I am much more aware of how many mushroom poisonings there are every year," she says. "I believe that as long as there is accuracy in reporting and no oversimplification, people can learn more on their own and stay safe."
- ◆ Good info about chanterelles: <https://www.mushroomexpert.com/cantharellaceae.html>.
- ◆ Good info about puffballs: <https://www.mushroomexpert.com/puffballs.html>.
- ◆ To find morels: <https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/blog/the-morel-virginias-favorite-mushroom>





# ONESHOT



## Brings Samantha McInteer Full Circle

By Emily George



Samantha McInteer with her father, James McInteer, and her winning gobbler harvested during the 2019 One Shot competition.

**S**amantha “Sam” McInteer has a lucky hunting hat. It’s cheetah print with a pink Browning white-tailed buck symbol in the middle. She’s worn it on every hunt since she was 4 years old. Now at age 14, she has a turkey mounted in her bedroom along with a nine-point buck she took herself with a muzzleloader. She’s harvested ducks, turkeys, and deer, all while wearing that lucky hat, and she was wearing it on the morning of the fifth annual One Shot Turkey Hunt.

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF), in partnership with the Wildlife Foundation of Virginia (WFOV), established the One Shot Turkey Hunt in 2014. Proceeds from the event go toward the Virginia Wildlife Grant Program, which brings youth to the outdoors through a variety of programs and activities throughout the year. Proceeds also help provide more sustainable funding for the WFOV, which acquires land across the state to help conserve valuable wildlife habitat and to expand access to the outdoors for youth and other sportsmen and sportswomen. The event connects youth, wounded warriors, first responders, and others with the outdoors. Youth contestants are required to submit an essay in order to enter for the opportunity to be guided on a turkey hunt on a piece of land donated for the day by landowners.

“I love how the event brings first responders, wounded warriors, and young hunters together. There’s great diversity in the program, which is what DGIF and the Wildlife Foundation of Virginia are trying to achieve,” said Bob



Duncan, retired Executive Director of DGIF. “It’s a great partnership with the Foundation.”

Sam submitted her essay the night before it was due while she was battling strep throat, but a few weeks later she found herself traipsing into the woods before dawn with Duncan.

Growing up in King William County, Sam developed a passion for hunting. Nearly every weekend of the season, she can be found in the woods with her father. She’s an ambassador for the King William County 4-H Shooting Club, and she’s participated in the DGIF Hunter Education Challenge shoot.

“I love hunting because I enjoy being in nature and seeing how every little thing in an ecosystem impacts everything else,” Sam said. “Also, I love seeing animals. It’s a special kind of



Samantha carries her big gobbler from the field.

feeling to know that you are quiet enough and can blend in well enough to get so close to them. Hunting isn’t always about harvesting an animal, but seeing them and enjoying the wonders that nature has to offer. I also enjoy observing when the game is dressed out; it teaches me how animals work from the inside. I love the biology that comes with hunting.”

Sam is advanced by two math grades, by one year in science, and is a junior Beta at her middle school. Sam has also won some Virginia State Fair awards for her photography and cake decorating. She’s got a renowned reputation, but she’s humble and kind, and she gets giddy when the conversation turns to hunting.

### A Family Legacy

Uniquely enough, Sam is the great-granddaughter of James McInteer, who served as Executive Director of DGIF from 1979

to 1981. Ironically, it was McInteer who ultimately inspired Duncan to join DGIF in his early years as a wildlife biologist.

“I choose to make hunting a big part of my life because it is a family tradition that I was born into, and something I’ve grown to love,” Sam said. “It is also something I get to do with my father and grandfather. Just being in nature puts me in a good mood.”

Duncan serves as a volunteer guide for the One Shot event each year, but he didn’t know that he’d be guiding the great-granddaughter of his former boss until guides were paired with the hunters.

“It was an honor and a privilege to take the great-granddaughter of my former boss,” said Duncan. “Sam is a delightful, talented young lady.”

Neither Duncan nor Sam could decide who was more excited to get to hunt together. “There was no moping or dragging around to get ready that morning,” Sam said. “I said to myself, ‘Something is going to happen today—I can feel it.’”

They hunted Retreat Farm in Hanover County, which had been donated for the day by the Wallace family. Duncan didn’t have much opportunity to scout the property prior to the hunt. “It’s always challenging to hunt a new place in the dark, but that doesn’t mean you can’t have luck when going somewhere you’ve never been,” Duncan said. “It was a magnificent morning. There were gobbling birds everywhere.”

The turkeys pitched from a tree behind them and eased their way into the field where the decoys were set up. The turkeys were on a mission and were quick to answer Duncan’s calls. Strutting in plain sight, one of the larger gobblers rushed over and began attacking a strategically placed decoy. After the dust had settled, Sam finally had an opportunity to take careful aim. With a deep breath, she slowly squeezed the trigger, taking down the biggest gobbler in the flock with a single shot.

Duncan knew it was a high quality bird, but he didn’t want to get Sam’s hopes too high. There were other hunters from all over the state participating in the One Shot; any one of them could have harvested a bigger bird that morning. Still, they were both overwhelmed with joy.

“Excited wouldn’t hardly cover it,” Duncan said. “We were thrilled! When someone has that kind of success, it’s a great feeling.”

“I just couldn’t believe what had just happened,” said Sam. “It was just a simply amazing feeling. It’s like something you’d see on TV. I don’t know how else to describe it.”

### The Future Is Bright

Before noon, they were on their way to the local Bass Pro Shops in Ashland, Virginia, to check in and measure Sam’s bird. Throughout the day, competitors in the One Shot Hunt trickled into Bass Pro Shops to do the same. Sam wasn’t concerned about having the winning bird; she cherished the memories she made that morning more than anything.



Bass Pro Shops also hosted the One Shot reception dinner and an awards ceremony for all participants and their families that evening. In keeping with the outdoor theme, the fare celebrated hunting traditions with wild game delicacies such as deer lasagna, jalapeño duck poppers, and fresh fish dips. Families gathered around the restaurant inside the store, sharing their stories from the day in the field and anxiously waiting to find out who claimed the win.

Since the late 1990s, hunter numbers have been declining, and today only about four percent of the population nationwide participates in hunting activities. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Hunting License Data records that Virginia had a total of 268,300 paid hunting license holders in 2019, down from the 2006 paid hunting license holder number of 317,239. The money generated from these hunting and fishing license purchases are allocated to DGIF for the management of all wildlife species, including the wild turkey, and to preserve the habitat that they rely on to survive.

Virginia, like other states across the country, needs to recruit new hunters in order to maintain and conserve our wildlife and natural resources. The One Shot program aims to encourage people young and old to take up hunting. To see an abundance of new hunters at the One Shot reception celebrating their day afield was encouraging.

“I’ve learned so much from hunting,” Sam noted. “I learned how to appreciate what we have in nature, and that we have to do all we can to protect it. I’ve also learned that being an ethical hunter is important—being sure of your target and what’s beyond, always keeping the barrel of your firearm pointed in a safe direction, and treating every firearm as if it were loaded, even if you have a bad case of buck fever or you’re looking down the barrel at a triple-bearded turkey.”

During the awards ceremony, winners were named from third place to first, and birds were scored according to weight and length of beard and spurs. As the results were announced, Sam sat with her parents, grinning with anticipation. All of her attention was on Duncan, who was announcing the winners.

When Duncan came to the first-placed hunter, he began to speak of the hunt that morning and his passion for sharing his favorite sport with a young person. It became evident that Sam had harvested the first-place bird.

With tears welling up in her eyes, Sam walked onto the stage and embraced Duncan with a big hug. For her accomplishment, she received a lifetime hunting license and a certificate. She was also gifted with an original painting of a magnificent gobbler in full strut by



Samantha McInteer poses with an original Guy Crittenden painting that was awarded to her by a very proud Bob Duncan.

renowned wildlife artist Guy Crittenden. That painting now hangs proudly on the wall above Sam’s bed, and her mounted One Shot turkey stands next to it. But Sam’s lucky day didn’t end there.

At every One Shot reception, a raffle drawing takes place. The final raffle ticket that Duncan drew that evening had Sam’s name on it, and Sam walked up to the stage again, this time to claim a new shotgun.

“It’s a great feeling introducing someone to this sport,” Duncan said. “To be able to share that moment with people is so special. That’s the fun of it.”

This year, Sam hopes to volunteer as a guide for another youth participating in the One Shot Hunt. “I want to give back,” she said. “I want someone else to experience the thrill of the hunt.”

Sam credits her successful One Shot experience to Duncan, Jenny West, Jim McVey, Kip Campbell, and her seventh grade English teacher, Mrs. Unser, who taught her how to write a winning essay.

Sam also has big plans for her future. When asked what she wants to be when she grows up, she smiles. “I want to be Executive Director of DGIF someday,” she said. “It’s my dream.”



Samantha McInteer enjoys introducing others, like her friend Maggie Garthright, to the sport.

*Emily George is an outdoor journalist and Virginia Tech alum who loves to hunt turkeys in the eastern woodland and fly fish. She currently resides in Caroline County.*





**Dear Luke,**  
**My 90 lb. retriever and I go everywhere together. However, we both have gotten older. He is not able to jump into his crate in the back of my SUV or pickup truck as easily as he used to, and I am having a hard time lifting him into my vehicles. When it is time to enter or exit the car or truck, I grab him around the waist, lift him a bit, and help him up or down as best I can. We both express a grunt or two, but so far it works to some degree. Any suggestions?**

**Bill B., Powhatan, VA**

**Dear Bill,**  
As Ol' Jones has gotten older, he does some grunting himself when he gets in and out of his truck. Mrs. Lucky first thought he was in pain until he explained that no, he was not—it is just that sometimes it feels good for older men to grunt when doing strenuous exercises like getting in and out of a pickup truck, removing 50 lb. bags of lawn fertilizer from said truck, or standing up from a soft sofa after watching a football game.

There are a number of dog ladders and ramps on the market that can help you and your aging buddy. Dog ramps have been around for a while and work well. Ramps are good for young dogs, too. I have heard many veterinarians explain that even though your young pup looks energetic and capable of jumping into and out of your vehicle, its owner must

remember that a young dog's bones are still growing and excessive jumping—even though it looks impressive to see your dog leap in and out of your pickup or SUV—could create joint problems for the dog in the future.

**Dear Luke,**  
**My English setter and I are both getting on in years. After a long day of grouse hunting, we usually arrive home sore and a bit stiff. I take an aspirin or another pain reliever to ease the aching muscles. Can I give my setter the same pill to lessen her pain as well?**

**Clem P., Mingo, WV**

**Dear Clem,**  
Although Ol' Jones treats me like family, he draws the line when it comes to administering medicine without the advice of his veterinarian. Remember, the internal workings of dogs and humans are different. Medicines that are beneficial to humans may attack important enzymes in a dog that assist in the dog's bodily functions—or they could cause internal bleeding.

There are dietary supplements that target joint health and claim to have therapeutic properties for joints and connective tissues. They include products with ingredients such as glucosamine, chondroitin sulfate, methylsulfonylmethane (MSM), omega-3 fatty acids, or hyaluronic acid. Ask your vet

which ingredient he or she thinks might help your dog, and keep in mind that it usually takes a few weeks to see results.

Simple common sense measures, such as drying off your dog before returning home after a day of making coldwater retrieves or hunting in wet weather, are good ways to help prevent future joint problems. Let your dog ride inside your heated vehicle, or at least place an insulated cover over your kennel carrier if your dog must ride outside in cold weather. It would not hurt if you gave your dog, which has traveled a lot more miles than you on your hunt, a little food and water before the drive home.

Regularly exercising your dog, so that it does not become overweight, also helps lessen the load on its joints. Note that if your dog is overweight, you may want to stand on your scale a little more often as well. Your dog may not be the only one who needs more exercise! When exercising your dog, it is probably best not to have him jog along with you on hard surfaces like concrete. You, more than likely, are not running barefoot on concrete or asphalt, but instead wearing running shoes that cushion the pounding on your feet and ankles.

Just because your favorite hunting partner is a dog doesn't mean it has to be treated like one. Remember: Unless you have the capital letters, DVM or VMD (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine) behind your name, always seek advice from a trusted veterinarian before giving your dog medicine.

**Keep a leg up,  
Luke**

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*Luke spent many sunrises hunting up good stories with Clarke C. Jones, and thankfully, left us a cache of colorful tales. You can learn more about Clarke and Luke at [www.clarkecjones.com](http://www.clarkecjones.com).*





# A Walk in the Woods

Column and photograph by Mike Roberts

Imagine sitting in the darkness in a dusty, stiflingly hot hayloft while keeping an eye peeled on the loft's back wall, which is barely visible in the spooky ambiance. Without notice, a silent, winged shadow sails onto the tier pole inches overhead and releases a shrill, blood-curdling scream.

Whenever reminiscing a lifetime of walking in the woods, one adventure comes to mind that had absolutely nothing to do with walking or the woods.

Through the years, I had seen very few barn owls in the wild and greatly desired an opportunity to observe and photograph their behavior. One afternoon while talking with an Appomattox dairy farmer, he mentioned owls that nested in his barn every year. That happenstance conversation triggered one of my most rewarding outdoor experiences ever—nearly three months of studying the ghost-like birds.

Owls have mystified humans throughout recorded history, and even before, which is made evident by prehistoric images of the nightbirds etched on cave walls and ancient petroglyphs painted across rock faces. Worldwide, they have been linked to practically every aspect of life, including wisdom, witchcraft, and death.

Geographically, barn owls are the world's most widely distributed owls. They range across parts of every continent except Antarctica. Their scientific name, "*Tyto alba pratincola*," truly defines this creature: a white owl that inhabits meadows. Although the feathers on its back, and down the back of the head and neck, are a spectacular combination of golds and grays, its undersides range from pure white to white with a smattering of speckles. Still, when flying, the colloquial "monkey-faced" owl appears to be a snowy white. Undulating, moth-like flight is another means of identifying the barn owl, as are its unusually long, feathered legs, heart-shaped face, and small, dark eyes.

Owls have an amazing physiological adaptation that allows them to rotate their heads upside down and 270 degrees to the left and right, which allows for a 360-degree field of vision. This flexibility is due to the large number of vertebrae in their necks—many more than most other vertebrates. Oversized openings in these cervical bones permit blood to be pumped through arteries even when the owl's head is turned; without these, constricted arteries and inadequate blood flow would result in a stroke.



As nocturnal predators, owls can effectively locate prey with eyes designed to absorb whatever ambient light is available. They also have exceptional hearing. Barn owls, like several other species, have asymmetrical ear placement, meaning one ear opening is positioned slightly higher than the other. This adaptation increases their ability to pinpoint locations from which sounds originate. As an added benefit, concave facial discs funnel acoustic waves to the ears.

Equally important, owl feathers are billowy and soft, which reduces noise and prevents rodents from detecting approach. Barn owls prefer hunting on the wing. Flying close to the ground over open fields, they utilize long legs and needle-sharp talons to pluck rats, mice, voles, frogs, and small birds from the grass and weeds.

In Virginia, barn owls begin nesting in March. The breeding pair selects hay barns, silos, vacant buildings, tree cavities, and even elevated deer blinds as site locations. The nest can be a depression in hay or straw, or nothing more than a bed of regurgitated pellets. The female lays one egg every other day in a clutch that eventually totals between four and 10 eggs. Incubation commences immediately after the first egg is laid. By the time the last owlet hatches, nearly a month later, the first ones are weeks old.

If food supplies are adequate, most will survive. If not, chances are some of the youngest birds will be on the menu of their older siblings. During egg laying and incubation, the male supplies food to his mate and any young already hatched. Once the entire brood hatches out and the down-covered juveniles no longer require brooding, the female joins in on the nightly hunting excursions.

My night-time sojourn to the hayloft blind resulted in a remarkable experience, as I was able to see a pair of barn owls bring in 17 voles and mice and one unlucky white-throated sparrow. It was truly remarkable, and proof that sometimes the most unforgettable "walks in the woods" can happen when sitting still!

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*A lifelong naturalist and accomplished wildlife photographer, Mike Roberts enjoys sharing his knowledge and photographs with others. You can contact him at: [return2nature@aol.com](mailto:return2nature@aol.com).*





# PHOTO TIPS

Column and photograph by Lynda Richardson

## Experiment with Your Phone Camera!

With today's expanding advances in the mobile phone camera market, there are more and more people taking more and more amazing pictures. If you would like to improve your mobile phone photography skills too, here are some tips to assist you along the way!

One of the most important tips is to read your mobile phone manual. Even if you don't read anything except how the camera works, it will be a huge eye-opener to what your phone camera can do. Normally, detailed instruction manuals are not included with your phone purchase, but those manuals can be found online from the manufacturer and/or at a bookstore. I personally like to have a hard copy for easy access.

Once you are familiar with what the camera can do, just play with it! Don't be afraid to try out the still and video features. Since you have now read the instructions (right?) practice turning different features on and off and shooting with those features. Here are a few tips to get you focused on phone photography.

- 1) Always be careful to keep your fingers away from the lens while shooting. After a shot or two, check to make sure a fuzzy blur isn't showing up in the corner of your shots. If so, that's your finger!
- 2) Depending on what you are trying to achieve, shoot as if you were using a "real" camera. Always consider composition, lighting, backgrounds, and whether an image should be horizontal, vertical, or both.



Experimenting with my new camera phone I was able to hold Flash's leash with my right hand while leaning forward with the camera in my left. Moving slightly ahead of the pup I triggered the shutter with my thumb. I was shooting blindly but it was fun to see what I could capture. Flash concentrated on his walk, ignoring me as he was used to having cameras stuck in his handsome face. Apple iPhone 11 Pro Max camera, 26mm lens, ISO 32, 1/750, f/1.8.

- 3) Put some thought into how the photo will be composed. If you do not know what the rule of thirds is, look it up! It is a great guide for creating aesthetically pleasing images.
- 4) Be aware of the light on your subject. Overcast days mean soft, even light where you don't have to worry about shadows covering someone's face. Bright sun means harsh, contrasty light, resulting in shadows that will make a more dramatic image but can also obscure facial features and other details. Aim for light falling on your subject as opposed to light shining from behind your subject.
- 5) If faced with harsh, bright light, consider turning your flash to ON not AUTO. If you're close enough to your subject, the flash could rescue facial details.
- 6) Be aware of your backgrounds. If a background is too bright or busy, it can distract from your subject. Pick a background that compliments your subject, if you can.
- 7) Make sure your camera focuses where you want it to focus. These cameras are programmed to focus on the foreground, but you can

override that by tapping the viewfinder screen where you want it to focus.

- 8) Experiment shooting images that fill the frame and then shooting to allow for negative space.
- 9) Go for unusual perspectives. Hold your phone camera in front of your dog during a walk. (See above) Think about how you can capture a scene in a different way. Experiment!
- 10) Try to get closer to your subject instead of zooming in. Zooming in just makes a photograph appear blurry or pixelated.
- 11) Hunt for cool close-ups and details of your surroundings.
- 12) Shoot to tell a story!
- 13) Consider buying a mobile tripod to capture longer exposures.
- 14) Explore online for different lens attachments that you can get for your mobile phone camera as well as numerous apps for filters and processing.

Today's mobile phone cameras will only get better. They will never replace good old 35mm cameras but at least they are light to carry and fun to use.





# LET'S GROW Native

Column and photograph  
by Carol A. Heiser

A water feature in the home landscape can be a tranquil oasis of natural beauty. Small water gardens are a wonderful way to accent your existing habitat with native vegetation that will provide food or protective cover to frogs, salamanders, dragonflies, and other wildlife species that depend on water for survival. Water features are even more beneficial if they're not stocked with goldfish, koi or other fish, because fish prey on frog eggs and tadpoles, and fish compete with wildlife for aquatic food sources like insect larvae.

There are a variety of native plants you can place in or around an aquatic feature. At the water's edge, where the soil stays consistently moist (and assuming the water garden will get several hours of sunlight), you could use Virginia blue flag (*Iris virginica*), white turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*), cardinal flower (*Lobelia*

*cardinalis*), orange jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*), sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*), square-stemmed monkey flower (*Mimulus ringens*), fox sedge (*Carex vulpinoidea*), and mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*).

Some water features are designed like a big bathtub with shelves at different levels, where you can weigh down potted plants to keep their roots under water and their leaves above water. Soft rush (*Juncus effusus*), pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*), and duck potato, also known as broad-leaved arrowhead (*Sagittaria latifolia*), are good choices here.

Other plants require complete submersion, where their roots can grow in the soil (or pots) at the very bottom of the water feature, and their stems grow up through the water so that leaves and flowers float on the surface. These include fragrant white water lily (*Nymphaea odorata*) and yellow pond lily (*Nuphar advena*).

Unfortunately, many garden centers and aquatic suppliers continue to sell invasive aquatic plant species. These vendors are apparently unaware of or unconcerned about the environmental consequence that invasive species can have in displacing native plant communities. Before you purchase any aquatic plants, familiarize yourself with the names of common non-natives that are known to be invasive, such as the following:

## MAKE SURE TO WATCH



"How to Add a Frog Pond to Your Landscape" on the VDGIF YouTube channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhRiUqjhxk4>

yellow floating heart (*Nymphoides peltata*), which looks like a yellow water lily; parrot-feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*); water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*); water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*); and yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*).

Likewise, be sure to avoid moving plants from one body of water to another, whether the plants are found in your local neighborhood or another region of the state, because introductions increase the likelihood of spreading non-native species as well as potential pathogens from one ecosystem to another. Those beautiful pinkish-purple flowers you see growing all around someone else's pond might very well be purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), a highly aggressive invasive that's listed as a Tier 2 Noxious Weed by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Carol A. Heiser is Education Section Manager and Habitat Education Coordinator at the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

## RESOURCES

- ♦ *Purchasing Aquatic Plants Fact Sheet*, Virginia Cooperative Extension, 2015 at [https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs\\_ext\\_vt\\_edu/426/426-044/426-044-pdf.pdf](https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/426/426-044/426-044-pdf.pdf)
- ♦ *10 Native Wetland Plants*, U.S. Botanic Garden (scroll down for PDF) at <https://www.usbg.gov/national-garden-native-plant-recommendations>
- ♦ *Adding a Frog Pond to Your Landscape* at <https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/virginia-is-for-frogs>





## Fare Game with...

### MASTER CHEF WADE TRUONG



Mushroom foraging can be pretty hit or miss. Last season after a morning duck hunt with only one wood duck to come home with, we came across a blowdown covered in oyster mushrooms. We were able to fill our decoy bag, the gear bag, and our hats with one of our favorite mushrooms.

We've also had days where we strike out toward the mountains with the sole mission of finding mushrooms, find one or two, throw them in the basket in the anticipation of more, and then come home at the end of the day without enough to make an appetizer. In either scenario, feast or famine, we often break out the dehydrator to preserve our find.

This is a simple and quick cure-all soup for when we feel a bit under the weather or are feeling down that hunting season is at an end. Rich, woody, mushroom flavors enhance the deep umami of the dashi and miso for a dish that is both warming and light.

Rehydrate your dried, non-choice edible mushrooms, like tough pheasant backs or shiitake stems, for a flavorful broth, and strain them out. Then add other choice (dried or fresh) mushrooms to the soup for body and texture. For this batch, we used a mix of dehydrated comb tooth (*Hericium coralloides*) and oyster mushrooms, but use whatever you have in the kitchen or have foraged from the woods.



## Wild Mushroom Miso Soup

Prep time: 20-30 minutes ♦ Serves: 2-4

### INGREDIENTS

- 5 cups water
- 2 oz dried, non-choice mushrooms (pheasant back, shiitake stems)
- 2 oz dried, choice mushrooms (comb tooth, oyster mushroom, maitake, wood ear, puffballs)
- 1 ½ tsp dashi granules
- 3 Tbsp miso (red for an earthier broth, white for a lighter broth)
- ½ sheet nori, cut into small pieces
- ½ piece tofu, cut into small cubes

### METHOD

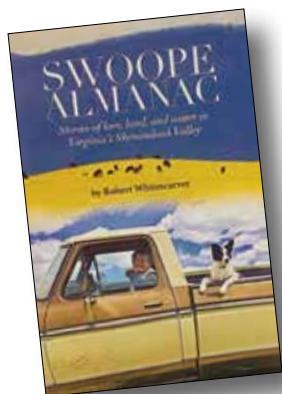
Heat the water to a boil in a saucepan and stir in non-choice mushrooms. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer covered for 10-20 minutes. Strain out the mushrooms, reserving the stock. Return stock to saucepan, bring back to a simmer, and add in the dried choice mushrooms. Cook, covered, until the mushrooms are tender. This may take more or less time depending on the species and size of your dried mushrooms. When tender, add miso, stirring until dissolved. Add dashi, stir and adjust seasoning as needed. Add cubed tofu and simmer for 2-3 more minutes, stir in nori and serve. Garnish with chives or spring onions.

Interested in more recipes? Go to **Fare Game** at: [www.dgif.virginia.gov/recipes](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/recipes) and [www.elevatedwild.com](http://www.elevatedwild.com).





# OUT & ABOUT



## GOOD READS

by  
Beth Hester

### **Swoope Almanac**

By Robert Whitescarver

2019 Lot's Wife Publishing/Mid Valley Press

Illustrations

[www.SwoopeAlmanac.org](http://www.SwoopeAlmanac.org)

*"The current disconnects people have between the land and the soil, where their food comes from, and the table where they eat are as wide as the Grand Canyon and they're getting wider. How can people love the land without feeling it? We must do more."* – The Author

Drawing inspiration from Aldo Leopold's conservation classic *A Sand County Almanac*, Bobby Whitescarver's engaging collection of essays, blog posts, articles, and journal entries about life on a cattle farm in Virginia's Augusta County shows the connections between good farming practices and ecological stewardship. He works the land and cattle alongside his wife Jeanne, who is a ninth-generation farmer. Painfully aware of the derogatory way in which the term "tree hugger" has been used to profile environmentalists, Whitescarver likes to refer to himself as an "environmental campaigner."

Whitescarver has a lot of street cred. A 30-year veteran of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, he started his own environmental consulting business and regularly networks with

numerous environmental organizations to raise awareness of how every Virginia landowner, large or small, can reduce the strain on Mother Nature. Understanding that we all live downstream, Whitescarver has consistently implemented best management practices on his family's land, and he thoughtfully deploys increasingly affordable technologies like solar power. He emphasizes how techniques such as creating riparian buffers and farmscapes, fencing off streams to livestock, rotational grazing, and establishing conservation easements all work together to produce clean water, pollinator corridors and food. His rural mantra is: "We cannot have clean water without healthy farmland." His keywords are habitat, hope, and persistence.

Whitescarver's gripping reflections upon the seasonal nature of life on a calf and cattle operation make the book hard to put down. There is joy when a short-eared owl or a sandhill crane is spotted on the property, and grief when a newborn calf fails to thrive, or is taken by unusually frigid weather. There is optimism behind his initiatives to re-establish quail populations, and there is hope that the brook trout that once thrived in the Middle River will be restored as the water quality improves.

Most of all, Whitescarver illustrates the interconnected nature of all things in the universe through the microcosm of farm life. He shows us that we all have the power and resources to embrace sustainability—all we need is the will.

## 2020 Great Dismal Swamp Migration Celebration



April 25

Suffolk, Virginia

For more information and to register:  
[www.fws.gov/refuge/great\\_dismal\\_swamp](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/great_dismal_swamp)

## Want to Learn More About Reptiles & Amphibians?



Join us for the  
Spring Survey at  
Pocahontas  
State Park  
MAY 1-3, 2020

[www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/news/index.html](http://www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/news/index.html)

## FREE FISHING DAYS IN VIRGINIA



JUNE 5-7, 2020

[WWW.DGIF.VIRGINIA.GOV/  
FISHING/FREE-FISHING-DAYS](http://WWW.DGIF.VIRGINIA.GOV/FISHING/FREE-FISHING-DAYS)



## I lost my card

Have you lost your  
Virginia Hunter or Boater Safety  
Certification Card?

FOR A REPLACEMENT GO TO: [www.ilstomycard.com](http://www.ilstomycard.com)



12<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL  
Virginia NASP State Tournament

**MARCH 14, 2020**

Meadow Event Park,  
Doswell, Va.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
[www.dgif.virginia.gov/events/virginia-nasp-tournament](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/events/virginia-nasp-tournament)



TROUT HERITAGE DAY

**APRIL 4, 2020**

Graves Mountain Lodge

Fly tying and casting demonstrations, fishing for trout and more! Come join the fun!

[www.dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/trout/trout-heritage-day](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/trout/trout-heritage-day)  
[www.gravesmountain.com/events-calendar/heritage-day](http://www.gravesmountain.com/events-calendar/heritage-day)

## MASTER ANGLER V - UPDATE



Final Count for 2019

**Stephen  
Miklandric**

- ▶ Caught 1,644 fish of 26 different species
- ▶ 728 were citations of 20 different species.
- ▶ As of the end of September, 19th, the 728 citations were "Angler of the Month" titles.
- ▶ Every fish was released.

## STEM Springs to Life with Dominion Energy's Project Plant It!



Many statewide educators are enrolled in Dominion Energy's Project Plant It! program to teach students about trees and give them a free redbud seedling to plant for Arbor Day. This year's program features a STEM Lesson Plan Contest. Educators can submit an original, creative, STEM-based lesson plan about trees and their benefits to the environment by March 27. The winning lesson plan will be included in the Educator's Guide in 2021. For details, rules and prizes, visit [projectplantit.com](http://projectplantit.com), where you also can find educational games, activities and resources for classroom and outdoor learning.





## Due a Tax Refund? Want to help Wildlife?



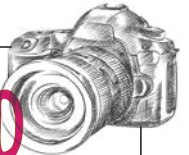
Please consider supporting essential research and management of Virginia's native birds, fishes, and non-game animals.

If you are due a tax refund from the Commonwealth of Virginia, simply mark the appropriate place on this year's tax check-off on the Virginia State Income Tax form.

To make a cash donation directly to the Non-game Program, visit the Department's website or mail a check made payable to Virginia Non-game Program. Send to: DGIF Non-game Program, P.O. Box 90778, Henrico, VA 23228-0778.



## PICS FROM THE FIELD



Congratulations to **Tracy Foertsch** of Manassas for her photograph of a large-flowered trillium photographed at the G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area in Fauquier County. The Thompson WMA is famous for its display of trillium, which bloom there by the thousands from late April to early May. It is considered the largest stand of large-flowered trillium on the East Coast. Check it out at: [www.dgif.virginia.gov/wma/thompson](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wma/thompson)

Tracy captured the moment with a Mamiya 645DF+ medium format camera and Mamiya Leaf Credo 40 back with a Schneider Kreuznach LS 80mm f/2.8 lens, ISO 100, 1/6, f/22. Awesome Tracy!

You are invited to submit up to five of your best photographs for possible publication in *Pics from the Field*. Please include contact information and send only high-resolution (300ppi, 8X10 min size) jpeg, tiff, or raw files on a CD, DVD, or flash drive and mail to: *Pics from the Field*, Virginia Wildlife magazine, P.O. Box 90778, Henrico, VA 23228-0778.

We look forward to seeing and sharing your best work!

# Kids 'n Fishing Photo Contest

A BIG  
THANK YOU  
to all who entered!

## 2019 Winners



Ages 1-5



**1** FIRST PLACE  
Myra, age 4



**2** SECOND PLACE  
Clay, age 5



**3** THIRD PLACE  
Jarret, age 5

Ages 6-10



**1** FIRST PLACE  
Cali, age 6



**2** SECOND PLACE  
Lydia, age 8



**3** THIRD PLACE  
Colton, age 9

Capture your child's big smile as they show off a great fish! Make sure to take a picture of your child's excitement while fishing and enter the photo in DGIF and Green Top Sporting Goods' annual Kids 'n Fishing Contest. The winning photos are those that best capture the theme of "kids enjoying fishing." Each winner receives a rod and reel fishing combo and a lure and tackle assortment courtesy of Green Top Sporting Goods. So, join the fun!

Photo Contest sponsored by Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and Green Top Sporting Goods.

For contest rules and requirements go to: [www.dgif.virginia.gov/kidsnfishing](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/kidsnfishing)

**DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 4, 2020**





# TRAINING BIRD DOGS WITH RICK SMITH

**R**ick Smith has brought his knowledge of bird dog training to Virginia for 20 years, as the Brittany Hall of Fame trainer has conducted annual seminars in the state. Smith's goal for his foundation seminar is to get the dog (any dog, not just bird dogs) to stand still or "whoa," go with you, and come to you. These basics are expanded to pointing birds, backing other dogs on point, whoa, heel commands, the proper use of an e-collar, and finally even steady to wing and shot.

During the seminars, Smith teaches a group of approximately 12 owners and their dogs over a two-day period.

"First of all, it's important to recognize and acknowledge the intelligence of our dogs," Smith said. "Every one of them is born with the ability to hunt, and the sire and dam genetically provide the amounts of hunting desire and style available in each puppy. Hunting requires the ability to scent game, stalk it, run, walk, and stand/sit still and retrieve it after the kill.

"All dogs have the ability to do all of these things," said Smith, who looks to develop each dog's potential with his Silent Command System.

"Training a bird dog requires the ability to communicate with our dogs in order for them to work for us and hunt with us, instead of for themselves," he said. "This requires only one thing—our dogs must acknowledge us as the undisputed leader of their pack. In order to facilitate this, we need to use and understand the instinctive level our dogs function with. The key to this is to



© Peter Easter

Rick Smith demonstrates training techniques with a participant's dog during a seminar.

understand that our dogs don't speak English. They will, as training progresses, learn a few words and phrases, but in the initial stages of training, using words only confuses the dog.

"Speaking English to our dogs is like someone speaking Latin to us," explained Smith. "If we use a word to get a response

and the dog doesn't respond, we assume (incorrectly) that the dog just didn't hear us, and we speak louder, with our frustration increasingly in direct proportion to our dog's lack of response. This eventually results in an angry handler and a confused and perhaps even frightened or intimidated dog."

In Smith's system, the dog trainer sets up situations and allows a dog to choose their response, via trial and error, until it learns what we are asking. This is accomplished by making the right thing easy and the wrong thing difficult. Often we find that the most difficult thing for an owner to do is allow the dog to choose without interfering, but it's the best way for a dog to learn. If we jump in and do it for the dog it's much like doing our child's homework for them, and then wondering why they failed the test in the classroom."

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## Rick Smith's Dog Training Tips



- ◆ Allow your dog to learn by making choices
- ◆ A dog that maintains a steady pull on a lead, checkcord, or chain is not learning. Instead, the focus is on resistance.
- ◆ Rough handling feeds resistance and hinders training.
- ◆ If you are inconsistent, your dog will be inconsistent. If you are confused, your dog will be confused.
- ◆ You can't make a mistake by going too slow.
- ◆ If behavior is anticipated, learning is accelerated and bad habits are prevented.
- ◆ End each workout on a positive note. The end of each training session sets the tone for the next session.
- ◆ Verbal praise hinders learning.
- ◆ There must be a clear line between work and play.



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