



NYSOWA Awards

May 2023



Inside...

- Eleven categories of writing and photographic awards

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Excellence in Craft writing awards Judges:



MAGAZINE FEATURE

⊕ Chris Batin

Chris Batin is the long-time Alaska Editor for TravelAge West magazine and has worked as founding Editor and Publisher of Alaska Angler/Alaska Hunter Publications for 47 years. He has written 10 books, filmed and produced six DVDs and has won in excess of 200 national and regional awards for writing and photography. During the last 10 years he has won five Column of the Year awards from the Northwest Outdoor Writers Association and one from OWAA, and during his career has won 11 OWAA EIC first-place awards for magazine features. Chris received the Enos Bradner Award from NOWA based on lifetime achievement and upholding the high professional standards of outdoor journalism. A chapter of Doug Kelly's book, "Alaska's Greatest Outdoor Legends," is devoted to him. His latest book is "Advanced Alaska Fly Fishing Techniques."

⊕ Jack Burnett

Jack Burnett is managing editor of The Old Farmer's Almanac, a publication for which he has worked for 23 of the 48 years he has been a writer and editor. A New Hampshire resident now, Jack grew up in New York State, where he learned to hunt, fish and trap amidst the forests, fields and streams of Rensselaer County.

⊕ Bob Mitchell

Bob Mitchell, now retired, worked for the Pennsylvania Game Commission for more than 30 years. His primary responsibility was serving as Editor of the agency's Pennsylvania Game News magazine, but he also produced several books, countless brochures and reports and many other handouts.

MAGAZINE COLUMN

⊕ Jay Cassell

Jay Cassell most recently served as Editorial Consultant for Skyhorse Publishing. Recipient of the Excellence in Craft Award from OWAA in 2009, Cassell has been published in Time, Business Week, Popular Mechanics, and most major outdoor magazines, and has written or edited seven books. He has served on the editorial staffs of Field & Stream, Outdoor Life and Sports Afield magazines. He graduated from Syracuse University with an MA in communications and has lived in New York State his entire life.

⊕ Steve Waters

Steve Waters is the Outdoors Writer for the Miami Herald and also contributes features to Salt Water Sportsman magazine, SportFishingMag.com, The Parklander and JAKES Country. He has written and produced online videos about the outdoors for the South Florida Sun Sentinel newspaper. He was the co-host of The Weekly Fisherman radio show for 14 ½ years on Miami's WINZ 940-AM. Steve served as the assistant sports director for WCFT-TV, where he produced numerous outdoors features for the CBS affiliate in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and

worked on a local outdoors TV show as a producer, writer and cameraman.

⊕ Slaton White

Slaton White is the Editor of SHOT Business magazine, the largest-circulated trade magazine in the shooting industry. He was formerly the Editor of Field & Stream magazine

NEWSPAPER FEATURE

⊕ Bill Monroe

Bill Monroe is the retired Outdoor Writer for The Oregonian and continues contributing to that newspaper as a contract freelancer. He is a past president of both the Outdoor Writers Association of America and Northwest Outdoor Writers Association and has won numerous writing and photography awards.

⊕ Tom Wharton

Tom Wharton is a semi-retired writer for the Salt Lake Tribune, after a long career as that newspaper's Outdoor Editor. He is a past president of the Outdoor Writers Association of America.

NEWSPAPER COLUMN

⊕ Jeff Davis

Jeff Davis, recently retired, had been the editor of Whitetails Unlimited Magazine for more than 20 years. He previously worked as a freelance photojournalist for 25 years, producing images for more than 300 newspapers, magazines, and corporations. He is a member of the Professional Outdoor Media Association and has served as president of the Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers.

⊕ Ben Moyer

Ben Moyer is Outdoors Columnist for the Pittsburgh (Pa.) Post-Gazette and a columnist for both Pennsylvania Game News and Pennsylvania Outdoor News. His articles have appeared in prestigious publications, such as Gray's Sporting Journal. He served as the longtime Editor of Pennsylvania Sportsman Magazine. His communication skills have been recognized by OWAA with its lifetime Excellence in Craft Award.

⊕ Mark Taylor

Mark Taylor is Eastern Communications Director for Trout Unlimited. He was formerly the Outdoors Editor of The Roanoke (Va.) Times. He is past president of the Outdoor Writers Association of America and former chair of its Newspaper Section.

ONLINE

⊕ Brett Prettyman

Brett Prettyman served as Intermountain Communications

Director for Trout Unlimited. He previously was the outdoor editor and environmental writer for the Salt Lake (Utah) Tribune and covered outdoor-related issues for that newspaper for 25 years. He has written three outdoor-related books and has received two Emmys for his work as producer, writer and host of the "Utah Bucket List" television show. Brett is a past president of the Outdoor Writers Association of America.

⊕ Vin T. Sparano

Vin T. Sparano has been an outdoor editor and writer for more than 50 years. He is Editor Emeritus of Outdoor Life magazine, having served as Editor-in-Chief in 1990-1995 and as Executive Editor for more than 10 years prior to that appointment. His professional experience includes syndicated features for USA Today and Gannett Newspapers. He has written 20 books, including his Complete Outdoors Encyclopedia, winner of the Professional Outdoor Media Association Pinnacle Book Award in 2015. In fact, his books have won Pinnacle Awards for three consecutive years. Vin is listed in Who's Who in America

TV, RADIO, VIDEO, AUDIO

⊕ John L. Beath

John Beath's YouTube channel, Let's Talk Outdoors (www.youtube.com/jbeath), has had more than 3.5 million video views. His primary online writing sites are halibutchronicles.com and salmonchronicles.com. He has served as an editor of Western Outdoors, has syndicated newspaper outdoor and travel columns and hosted a syndicated radio program. He also was the Editor of GoFishMagazine.com. He is a past president of the Outdoor Writers Association of America

⊕ Steve Griffin

Freelancer Steve Griffin was for more than four decades the outdoor columnist for the Midland (Mich.) Daily News and is a field editor and columnist for Michigan Outdoor News, as well as a regular contributor to Boating magazine. Steve has also crafted museum text and taught courses in newspaper/magazine feature writing at the college level as an adjunct instructor. He is a member of the Outdoor Writers Association of America, the Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers and the Michigan Outdoor Writers Association.

⊕ Tim Lesmeister

Tim Lesmeister is a full-time freelance outdoor writer, photographer and radio host. He began writing about outdoor pursuits in 1977 and made it a full-time career in 1987. Tim was President of the Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers (AGLOW) and was the 2013 recipient of AGLOW's highest honor, its lifetime achievement Golden Glow Excellence in Craft Award. He is currently a columnist for Outdoor News and host of Outdoor News Radio and was inducted into the 2020 class of the Minnesota Fishing Hall of Fame. Tim is the Chairman of the International Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame Selection Committee and is a member of the Southeast Outdoor Press Association.



A message from our PRESIDENT

Chris Paparo

It is my pleasure to congratulate the winners of the 2023 New York State Outdoor Writers Association's Excellence in Craft Awards and the Janice M. Keesler Memorial Photo Awards. This annual competition gives NYSOWA members a chance to showcase their work by competing against some of the best writers and photographers in New York and beyond.

We would have no competition if it were not for the numerous entries submitted by our membership. Thank you for continuing to raise the bar each year. These contests push each

of us to become better at our craft. Many of the judges remarked on the high quality of this year's entries.

Organizing these awards is no easy feat, and Glenn Sapir and Deborah Brosen have done an outstanding job chairing these awards. Overseeing each entry, sending them off to the judges for review and organizing the awards for each of the winners takes a ton of work, and I want to thank them for making this year's awards a success.

I would also like to thank the many judges who volunteered their time to judge each of the entries. As we all know, time is extremely valuable, and we are deeply grateful to these exceptional professionals for taking the time out of their busy schedules to decide which entries are the best of the best.

Each of the awards presented to the winners are of world-class quality and I would like to thank our sponsors, Redding Reloading Equipment and The Outdoor Sportsman Group, for providing the support needed to present such high-level awards. I would also like to thank The National Shooting Sports Foundation for sponsoring the awards dinner at our annual conference.

Again, congratulations to each of the winners of the 2023 New York State Outdoor Writers Association's Excellence in Craft Awards and the Janice M. Keesler Memorial Photo Awards and a big thank you to everyone who made this event possible.

Chris Paparo, President, NYSOWA

Award winners for work published in 2022 (TV, Radio, Video and Audio produced in 2021 and 2022)

Magazine Feature

First place (Tie)

John Jarzynski
The Call of Autumn
Hounds and Hunting, Nov. 2022



There's a bite in the air this morning. The first crisp, cool morning of late summer. Like many of you, it is welcome. My old man body welcomes a pair of jeans and a hoodie and to the delight of the local maidenhood I am showing less skin. Autumn is a few weeks away and with that the most glorious time of year for beaglers and their hounds.

With the cooler temps comes some moments to reminisce. For me, it will often be those cool mornings some forty-five years ago, waiting for Dad to get his thermos of coffee and his boots tied.

"Load the dogs in the car" he would order.

"Already done Dad," I replied.

"Did you put my gun in too?" he asked.

"Yep".

And off we went. Many of my friends were still sleeping or off to football practice but at fourteen I was where I wanted to be. Dad wore his customary red flannel shirt and stained canvas hunting pants, convinced he could still fit into them once he stretched them out a little.

"Honestly, I wish your mother would stop trying to wash my hunting clothes" he whined.

No cell phones, tracking collars or gps (though Dad thought he was all that with adding bells to the dog collars this year.)

These were simpler times.

My older brother (Jeff) and I would sit in the back seat while my Dad's longtime hunting partner (Uncle Walter) would join us. "If he ever gets here" Dad complained.

I did not realize it at the time of course but as I look back I realize what Dad was teaching me: it wasn't so much the hunting part as much as the relationships. My father and Walter would bicker back and forth while Jeff and I listened. Jeff and I grew anxious while Uncle Walter's goal was finding "that breakfast special for 99 cents".

"Miss, can I have another cup of coffee? Walter beckoned to the harried waitress as the smell of bacon sizzled on the grill and the sun now peaking over the trees. Smoke billowed

through the restaurant and I checked out the songs on the mini jukebox roll at our booth. Bobby Vinton: "Melody of Love"?

"When are we gonna get to hunt?" asked my brother.

"Take it easy kid" chided Uncle Walter. "I need to get a slice of pie to go. Excuse me, Miss...."

Finally, we arrived at a favorite hunting spot. Dad unlocked the trunk of his old Buick and our two beagles leaped out, tails wagging with anticipation. (It seems surreal today to think that we drove with dogs in the trunk but it was not uncommon practice then)

Dad handed me my gun: an ancient Fox Sterlingworth side by side double barreled sixteen gauge.

"Be careful with this gun. It's worth a lot of money," he repeated. He didn't seem overly concerned with being safe, just "don't scratch the gun".

Ripper and Red were both registered hounds and compatible. They hit the spruce trees and within a few minutes barked and headed up the hill. My brother was much more experienced than me and ambled off to find a spot to harvest the cottontail.

"Remember: let the dogs run. John, why don't you stay with me? said Dad. It was in the form of a question but his tone implied there were no options.

"Yeah but..."

"Stay with me" he repeated.

I walked dolefully behind my Dad as we slowly and methodically made our way into the woods.

"These are turkey scratchings," he pointed out of the rustled areas on the forest floor. I grew more anxious as the sound of the baying dogs grew distant. I just knew that my brother was sneaking way back in the woods near the hounds and anticipated the bang of his gun.

"Dad," I pleaded, "Can we please move? The dogs are running way back in the woods."

"Do you think you need to run way back there?" asked Dad.

"Yes. Or Jeff is gonna shoot it" I answered.

"Ok. Go ahead, but remember..."

"I know. Don't scratch the gun" I replied.

I put my head down and navigated through the arrow wood bushes and briars. I could hear the barking of the dogs coming back toward me but then they veered around and closer to the road where Dad had stayed. A few minutes later.. "Bang, bang" Two shots rang out from Dad.

As I meandered through the brush I came upon Uncle Walter sitting on a log.

"Beautiful morning, eh Johnny?" he bellowed. "Would ya like some of my hot tea?" To this day I don't know what was in that tea, but I won't soon forget its sweet deliciousness. I do know that Dad got in trouble from Mom later that night when she found out from my brother that I had drunk "some of Walter's special tea".

Together, we headed back toward Dad's location where he was admiring his harvest as the two dogs jumped high in the air for a chance at a hind leg of the rabbit. I had erred in trying to move ahead of the dogs. I should have stayed with my father and let the dogs circle but as an impetuous kid I was wrong. Dad could have chosen to reprimand me but he didn't. A simple smile under his red hunting hat was all it took.

Our morning continued and I traipsed around the woods in an effort to outdo my older brother but with little success. By day's end we had taken a few rabbits to be used for Sunday dinner. Two worn out beagles had to be picked up and placed in the trunk and we were headed home.

"Johnny, you ought to try this pie. I think it's a dutch apple" said Uncle Walter.

Thanks Uncle Walter.

May your hunting season be filled with such memories. ■



Jeff Jarzynski and the author

Magazine Feature

First place (Tie)

Angelo Peluso
Long Bassland
On The Water Magazine, Jan. 2022



It is quite possible—even likely—that the next New York state record bass will come from the waters of Long Island. No, not the highly coveted striped bass record, but the record for largemouth bass.

Surprised? Don't be. Long Island is home to a vibrant freshwater bass fishery, and the fish grow to sizeable proportions.

Long Island is fortuitously positioned between the Long Island Sound and the Atlantic Ocean. These aquatic environments collectively support one of the finest saltwater sport fisheries in the world, but the Island's fishing potential goes well beyond its saltwater boundaries.

If you examine a map of Long Island, you will notice that quite a number of freshwater lakes and ponds dot the landscape. Most are relatively small bodies of water that range in size from less than an acre to more than 240 acres. Many contain bass; Others do not. Some have big bass reputations while others harbor numerous small bass populations. A surprising number of Long Island waters are "sleepers," known to have just a few, waiting for an angler's lure to wake up a lunker largemouth and disprove the often-believed misconception that "This old pond is fished out." And, there are those hidden, out-of-the-way gems that beckon the adventurous bass angler to come forth and enjoy the bounty, and perhaps even see a piece of Long Island the way it used to be.

Bass in the Island's lakes and ponds grow large and grow quickly, thanks to the unique conditions present on the island. One of the most significant factors affecting the growth rates of Long Island bass is the influence of coastal water on climatic conditions. On an island, the surrounding salt water creates a moderate and consistent climate for the land mass it influences. In a nutshell, the mild temperatures allow the Island's freshwater bass to extend their feeding cycles deeper into the year than would otherwise be possible in the Northeast. And, the more a bass eats, the faster and bigger it grows.

Trophy northern largemouth catches—bass weighing five pounds or more—are a reasonably common occurrence from Long Island waters. Despite increased angling pressure, well embraced catch-and-release practices and enhanced conservation management techniques have kept the fishery healthy. Although not on par with the peak years of the 1970s and 1980s, the current fishery is quite viable and offers many bass fishing opportunities. Measures of that viability are represented with healthy year-class fish and substantial numbers of trophy bass from many of the Island's ponds and lakes.

Examples of Long Island's bass-fishing potential exist in the island's freshwater folklore. The venerable statesman, Daniel Webster, wasn't the only one entangled in a tale of a monstrous freshwater fish taken from the waters of Long Island. While that story is about a huge brook trout caught from the Carmans River, another extremely popular tale describes the capture of a 14-pound largemouth from the Peconic River. As the story goes, an elderly Riverhead woman fishing from shore with live bait hooked into an exceptionally large fish.



This 7-pound, 14-ounce largemouth was caught by the author in a pond on the east end of Long Island.

After what was described as a gargantuan struggle, she landed the bass, weighed it, showed it off to a few folks, and then dragged it home for the dinner table. Many reject the event as being improbable and far-fetched—there are always going to be skeptics—but the thought of such a prize is more than enough to get any bass angler's adrenaline flowing.

Those new to freshwater bass fishing on Long Island usually ask the question, “How do I fish for Long Island bass?” The short answer is: No differently than you do anywhere else. Yet, considering the size of Long Island's bass waters, you may have to adjust your approach to these ponds. Small aluminum bass boats work well for a number of the Island's largest waters, but jon boats, canoes, and kayaks are more practical and easier to launch and maneuver.

Easy launching is important since access to many of the more productive waters is limited and informal, and the ponds are rather small. Add a small electric motor and you have a fishing combination that can't be beat. On smaller ponds the game is sometimes, “Round and 'round you go; where you stop no one knows...” That is, you may be lapping the pond's shoreline until you find active bass.

Shoreline access is sometimes the only method of entry, so wading is yet another angling option. Whether you choose to fish from a boat or wade, always remember to use a personal floatation device.

THE LONG ISLAND BASS SEASON

Bass habits and habitats, as well as seasonal considerations, govern the techniques of my fishing and the type of equipment I use.

When bass move into shallow water early in the season, topwaters and hard baits perform well, as do spinnerbaits and a wide variety of soft baits. As the season progresses, worming techniques become increasingly effective, as does fishing crankbaits and jig-and-trailer combinations. Wacky worms, shaky heads, and dropshot and Ned rigs are also very productive. For potentially explosive bass action, try some

power-fishing baits like buzzbaits, chatterbaits, wake baits and glide baits.

Subtle shoreline structure is the place to focus your attention during the spring. As the weather warms into July, the bass move toward deeper or cooler summer holding areas. They also enter weed- and lily-pad-infested areas. This is a good time to start fishing a variety of soft plastics and frog baits.

During the hottest days of summer, reaction baits like buzzbaits and chatterbaits become very productive. For these sweltering days, fish the shallow shoreline structure during the dawn and dusk hours. Concentrate on finding fish in deeper water come late morning and afternoon hours. If you are able to locate the deep-water bass haunts, attempt to track movements to and from these locations. Gaining knowledge of these migration patterns will enable you to catch bass throughout the entire range of their daily movements.

The late fall is a period of fishing transition, and it can be a time of feast or famine for Long Island bass anglers. Bass adjust their behavior to the changing weather patterns and water temperatures. At times, they may be found feeding voraciously in anticipation of the coming colder weather; other times, a strong case of lockjaw will set in. While these habits are also evident in the spring and summer seasons, it appears that they are often magnified in the fall, especially with rapidly declining water temperatures. Deep lakes that experience fall turnover can be the most challenging.

Brendan Cucinello is one of Long Island's brightest bass-fishing stars, both as a tournament and big bass angler. His name is synonymous with sizable largemouth and smallmouth bass, and he thoroughly enjoys fishing throughout the entirety of the fall months. Brendan offers the following advice for fishing late-season bass: “When those fall flurries of bass caught in typical locations pass by and the bites seem fewer and farther between, don't give up. One of the best-kept secrets of Long Island lunger hunters is timing. While most sportsmen shift their attention towards hunting deer and turkey, diehard bass fishermen bundle up and get out on the water. On Long Island, this typically occurs in November when the air and water temps begin to drop below 60 degrees. Shallow cover with a drop-off nearby is one of your best options. I stick with a compact jig and craw trailer in black, but I always keep a micro jig combo tied on as the water temps cool. If you are willing to put in the time, the rewards can be great.”



A tournament-winning 17-pound bag of Long Island smallmouth bass caught by anglers Greg Bottomley and Brian Sharkey proves that the island has smallmouth potential too.

The reference to “deep” water is totally relative to the nature of the lake or pond you are fishing. Many of the Island's waters are predominantly shallow. On these lakes, any water depth below five feet may be considered deep. Lakes such as Ronkonkoma, and other local kettle lakes offer greater depth variations and, at times, water deeper than 60 feet. Despite the shallow-water nature of many Long Island lakes and ponds, structure-fishing techniques have significant implications. Structure not only relates to bottom contour changes but also whatever happens to be on or around those contour changes. Structure can be subtle or easy to identify like a fallen tree sitting at the edge of the shoreline. It can also be a stump or break between two different depths of water, a weed bed on a shoal, lily pads positioned at the point of a cove, or brush at the edge of shallow water where it breaks to deeper water. Learning how to fish the structure in your favorite bodies of water can only help increase your odds for success.

LONG ISLAND BASS TACKLE

Whatever tackle you use on other bass waters will work well on Long Island, but here's a brief rundown of some basic options.

Most of Long Island bass fishing can be adequately handled with either light to medium-heavy spinning or conventional baitcasting tackle. Many smaller ponds are also ideal places to wield the long rod with bass bugs and poppers. Casting outfits are efficient for pitching and flipping, while spinning and lighter lines work well for finesse-fishing some of the more subtle baits.

When using spinning tackle, select rods measuring between 6 and 7 feet in length with a blank rating of either medium or medium/heavy. This type of action can effectively handle a wide range of bass baits including topwater plugs, spinnerbaits, crank baits, jig variations, and plastic/soft baits. My preference is a rod with a two-handed grip. That additional leverage is helpful in fighting fish and can be beneficial when casting light lures.

Matching a reel to this rod is an easy proposition since there are many excellent models on the market today. The reel should accommodate 8- to 12-pound-test diameter lines. With some of the newer hybrid and braided lines, you can upscale the pound-test while maintaining the same diameter of the smaller lines. Flipping outfits and associated techniques also work nicely in and around shoreline structure. Big bass in tough places often require sturdy gear, so medium to medium-heavy outfits with braided line can be the ticket to landing trophy bass.

Should you choose to fish for Long Island bass, please bear in mind that the attraction of this gamefish is its unique existence. Unlike trout, bass populations on Long Island are not sustained by stocking efforts. These bass are wild, existing and perpetuating by instinct alone. It is this quality that earns the “bass without stripes” the respect of Long Island's fishing minority. Please practice catch and release and respect the fishery. ■

Third Place



Angelo Peluso

The Angler's Raw Bar

The Fisherman Magazine, Aug. 2022

Magazine Column

First place
(Tie)

Angelo Peluso

How To:

Step Up to the Raw Bar

Hook & Barrel Magazine, May/June 2022

Having grown up in an ethnically diverse section of New York, my base of childhood friends was somewhat a microcosm of the United Nations. As a result, I gained an early appreciation for different cultures and different foods. Add to that an upbringing in an Italian-American family where food was the social binding agent, and it was no surprise that my palate became refined at an early age. My paternal grandmother exerted the greatest influence over my appreciation for good cuisine, and she was the guiding light for expanding a willingness to at least sample just about any food type. Now it's

time to Step Up to the Raw Bar: sashimi, sushi & crudo.

Like most anglers, I enjoy frequent meals of fish and other seafood. Yet, the first time I was introduced to raw fish in the form of Japanese sushi, I was hesitant to give it a try. But grandma's wisdom prevailed as did the tag line of that old 1970's TV commercial: “Try it, you'll like it.” And like it I did. Over time, I have grown to make some variety of raw fish a staple food of my weekly diet. For many years, this fish fix was satisfied by dining at Asian restaurants. However, a much broader interest in raw fish preparation developed about a dozen years ago with me trying my hand at homemade sushi.

Some may classify all sliced, uncooked fish as sushi. That is absolutely incorrect. Sushi is indeed made with raw fish or other seafood as a primary component. But that fish is placed atop a small molded bed of cooked and seasoned short-grain rice. The rice is typically seasoned with vinegar, salt, and sugar or Mirin, an umami-rich rice wine used as a food flavoring. The combination of the sliced fish and rice are together referred to as nigiri sushi. Raw fish served without the rice accompaniment is considered sashimi, and the Italian form of raw fish cuisine is crudo. Although similar to sashimi, crudo differs in that a sparing amount of olive oil and Italian condiments are added to complement the flavor of the fish.

Japanese sushi dates back to the eighth century when it was developed as a means to preserve fish in rice that had been blended with fermented vinegar. When it was time to consume the fish, the rice was discarded and the fish eaten. Eventually, someone determined that rice enhanced the flavor of the fish, and as a result, the earliest form of sushi originated. Pressed sushi, made in wooden presses, followed as a form of “lunch box” food for workers, and over time that evolved into the popular and recognizable sushi that we enjoy today. The most common fish species used in the preparation of raw cuisine are of the saltwater variety. Bluefin and yellowfin tuna, mackerel, yellowtail, eel, salmon, shrimp, squid, sea urchin, octopus, scallops, bonito, and fluke are a few of the more popular examples.

Freshness of flesh is of utmost importance, but “sushi-grade” quality has less to do with just-out-of-the-water freshness and more to do with the amount of high-intensity freezing the fish undergoes to kill parasites. The probabilities of encountering parasites in raw fish vary with the species. Ocean roaming pelagic species akin to those in the tuna and mackerel families carry the least risk of parasites, while bottom-dwelling fish have higher risks. Shellfish are eaten regularly at raw bars but can also come with some jeopardy of bacteria. Anadromous species of fish like salmon and striped bass that spend

some of their lives in saltwater and spawn in freshwater also hold the potential for parasites. The caveat for anyone who contemplates preparing and eating any form of raw fish at home is to make certain that the fish has been previously frozen consistent with the recommendations of the FDA to kill parasites, worms, or bacteria.



While choices of fish and other selected seafood are obviously an important element in the overall sushi-making process, the ability to make good rice is equally as important. Making a batch of sushi rice is well within reach of the amateur angler-chef. Whether using a rice maker or a pot filled with water, following a few simple guidelines can do wonders for your rice. It's best to use short-grain rice and rinse it under cold water to remove excess starch. Wash the rice until the water runs clear. A good rule of thumb for cooking sushi rice is 1 1/2 cups of rice to 2 cups of water. Once the rice is cooked, mix in a combination of rice vinegar, sugar or mirin, and salt. The rice takes on a tacky consistency and can then be molded into the form upon which the sliced fish is placed.

Proper handling will ensure suitability of fish destined for the table. Tuna, bonito, and mackerel need to be bled immediately once caught, then packed in ice. When preparing fish for slicing, limit the amount of handling time. The warmer the fish, the more conducive the conditions become for bacteria to develop. Always use a clean surface when filleting or slicing fish, and wipe any bits of flesh from the cutting board. And never slice fish that are to be eaten on any surface used to cut bait, since that is an environment that supports the rapid growth of bacteria.



There are a few other things the home chef needs to transform fish into a delectable portion of sushi, sashimi, or crudo. A sharp knife is essential for slicing fish into the desired size and shape. The knife typically used by Japanese sushi chefs is a yanagiba. This willow-leaf-shaped blade has a single beveled edge that enables the knife to efficiently slice through fish. A double-beveled western-style chef's knife or slicing knife can also be used. Always pull the blade through the slice rather than saw the fish as one would when slicing bread. Sashimi is typically sliced straight down while cuts for nigiri sushi are done on an angled bias against the grain of the fish. Other items that the angler-chef might want to have in his or her kitchen are: a fillet knife; fish scaler; cutting board; bamboo rolling mat for sushi rolls; and a wooden bowl for preparing the sushi rice. It also pays to read a good book or two about sushi preparation and recipes and to check out some of the numerous Internet videos on the subject. Fishing and sushi are both addictive pursuits. Combine them, and you'll broaden the pleasures of both your angling and dining experiences. ■

Magazine Column

First place (Tie)

Angelo Peluso

Happy Hour: Fishy Brews

Hook & Barrel Magazine, May/June 2022



A number of years back, I experienced a surprising change of pace that involved the enjoyment of craft beers produced by microbreweries. These brews matched perfectly to my appetite for fresh seafood. For me, this journey began with sushi and sashimi. The prevailing wisdom for pairing that Japanese cuisine with an alcoholic beverage has typically focused on sake and light white or sparkling wines. Diners would often match that cuisine to a Champagne, a Prosecco-style wine, a Sauvignon Blanc, or Chardonnay. I too found that to be the perceived perfect pairing of seafood and beverage. That is, until I was exposed to artisan brews. Although "country of origin" beers don't always match best with foods from their region, conventional wisdom suggests pairing traditional Japanese lagers like Sapporo, Kirin Ichiban, and Asahi. But a waitress at a local Long Island sushi establishment suggested I try a Japanese microbrew. That was an enlightening experience, for it opened a new window for matchmaking seafood with beer.

Beer can be classified as either ales or lagers with subcategories within each group. In general terms, the styles to pair with seafood are ambers, dark ales, light or pale ales, pilsners, lagers, stouts, and wheat grain beer. Variations in beer variety derive from the choice of yeast, the additives, and the brewing and fermentation process. Like wine, beer also benefits from different methods of casking. Originally aged in wooden barrels, modern beers are now mostly casked in aluminum or stainless steel containers. Some specialty breweries will age beers in wooden wine barrels for 12 to 24 months. That process adds different layers of taste to beer. If one were to compare the body of a wine to similar qualities in beer, lagers and pilsners would be classified as light-bodied; ales would be considered medium-bodied; and stout and porter would be heavy-bodied beer. Yet, there can be surprises within those categories as well. Some dark beer brews can be deceptively light in taste. Let your taste buds—not your eyes—be your guide.

Within those classifications are a few principles to get you started on the path to finding the perfect marriage of seafood and beer. There is some crossover between different fish and seafood dishes and different varieties of beer. A discriminating palate is always the final judge of which pairings are best. Seafood like smoked fish, grilled or barbecued fish, and well seasoned shellfish will complement a dark ale. Dishes with strong spice flavoring like paella, seafood pots, fried fish, lobster, and crab will match nicely to a pale ale. Lagers will also pair well with fish on the barbecue or grilled and deep-fried fish chunks like halibut, cod, and haddock, as well as many of the raw local shellfish species. A crisp and citrus-infused summer ale will highlight the flavors of seafood salads and lightly seasoned fish. India Pale Ales (IPAs) go well with full flavored and seasoned seafood like crabs, prawns, shrimp, lobster, mussels, clams, oysters, as well as poached, steamed, and baked fish. Heavily seasoned and spicy seafood dishes will enjoy a marriage with the heartiness of a stout. Lagers and pilsners are versatile beers and combine well with a wide array of fish dishes: grilled, poached, steamed, and baked fish, as well as fried, barbecued, and smoked fish. Wheat beer, brewed with wheat and malted barley, is especially good with grilled shrimp, prawns, crawfish, and grilled, baked, or fried fish. Remember, you are not only matching the taste of a fish species to a particular beer but also pairing to the way in which the seafood is prepared.

Beer may actually be a more versatile drink than wine for matching with food, especially seafood. The primary ingredient in



A light ale pairs well with lighter fare like shrimp.

wine is a grape varietal or a blend of grape types, but with beer, you can mix and match grains, hops, and other flavorful adjuncts like spices and the rinds of various fruits. When comparing beer to wine for purposes of pairing with food, lagers compare favorably with lighter white wines while ales tend to display many of the tendencies of heavier reds. A broad rule of thumb is to match a beer's intensity to the strength of the seafood. Light table fare often pairs well to lighter beers, while more complex fish dishes require a heartier brew. The flavors of the beer should interact in a way that balances and emphasizes the tastes and preparation of the seafood. Heavy and hearty food preparations tend to do best matched to beers with higher levels of bitterness from hops. For well seasoned fish, like those blackened or barbecued, a more robust beer should be selected. A dark ale or an IPA would be an excellent match for heavily seasoned seafood. You might want to try matching a more complex beer with similarly intricate seafood preparation, or try sweeter grained beers with fish seasoned with sweet condiments, herbs, and spices. For beers with bitter hops, try pairing them to seafood with a sharp or tangy edge.

When marrying beer to seafood, either go with the grain to balance the respective flavors, or cause a little conflict and clashing with the palate and go against the grain. Beer can be a complex beverage. Brewmasters have a variety of options at their disposal to alter the taste of the final product by managing the formula of ingredients: grains, barley, hops, malt, yeast, and an almost unlimited variety of other additives like fruits, rinds, vegetables, and spices. So when you're munching on that fried calamari with a tangy Asian dipping sauce, any number of full-bodied beers like an IPA might match well with those flavors. Conversely, for a delicate preparation of steamed fluke, a light pale ale might do the trick.

As with wine, you can also ladder beers during a meal, matching to each food course from appetizers to dessert. This typically means moving from lighter beers to darker, more robust beers. A light beer like a blonde ale can be enjoyed with appetizers and seafood salads, while more intense beers such as IPAs and full-bodied ambers and lagers would pair well to Cajun shrimp; specialty beers can also pair well with dessert. The trick is one of balancing the intensity of food tastes with the complementary flavors of the beer. Neither the seafood nor the beer should be an overpowering influence on the palate. Vary the selection of beer until you hit upon a combination of flavors that works for you. When it comes to one's taste buds, nothing beats experimentation, and no choice is a bad choice. ■

Third Place



Steve Piatt

Outdoor Adventures: Opening Day

PennLines Magazine, Nov. 2022

Newspaper Feature

First place

Steve Featherstone

For These CNY

Hunters, Coyote

Hunting Is a Public

Service, Not a Sport

Syracuse Post-Standard, March 13, 2022



The coyote materialized out of nowhere, a lithe shadow floating over the snow about 100 yards from our post in a forest somewhere near Mexico, N.Y. Mesmerized, I watched it slip through the trees.

My guide, Jim Snell, whispered over my shoulder. "Aren't you going to take a picture?"

I fumbled with my camera. The coyote was 50 yards away now, weaving in and out of focus. It was like trying to photograph a ghost.

At 30 yards, Snell clicked off the safety on his 12-gauge shotgun.

"Plug your ears," he said, "and duck."

The coyote flanked us on the left, putting me smack between it and a load of No. 4 buckshot.

"Duck!" Snell shouted.

I crouched—BOOM!

Snell, 44, is a member of the Toad Harbor Rod & Gun Club, which recently hosted a coyote hunting contest. In the roughly 10 hours I'd spent tracking coyotes with Snell and his Walker foxhounds, we saw just one coyote. And thanks to my bout of buck fever, Snell missed it.

Or so we thought.

As it happened, Snell's shot clipped the coyote, which then ran into a creek about a mile away. That's where Brooke Birmingham, a 17-year old with red hair and freckles, finished it off. It was her second coyote that day, giving her two contest entries.

Birmingham stood beaming over the

dead coyotes laid out in her uncle's driveway. Snell congratulated her.

"Thanks for slowing it down for her," Birmingham's uncle said.

"Only way she'd get it," Snell joked.

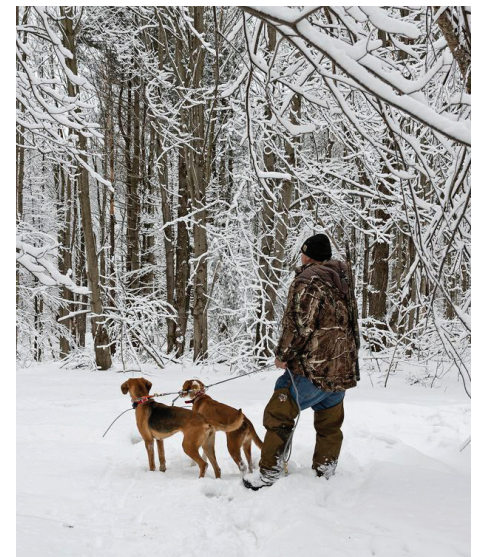
Snell drove the carcasses back to the club for weigh in. He didn't mind going home empty handed. The contest wasn't just about killing coyotes, he said. It was about raising money for the club, letting the dogs work, and having fun.

"People look at these contests like it's a blood sport, it's really not," Snell said. "We're not a bunch of savages."

A PUBLIC SERVICE

New York's coyote hunting season runs from the beginning of October to the end of March, according to the Department of Environmental Conservation. Licensed hunters can take coyotes day or night, over bait, or with dogs. There's no bag limit.

DEC estimates 30,000 New Yorkers participate in coyote hunting each year, a niche sport compared to deer hunting (more than 500,000 hunters annually), or even turkey hunting (90,000 for the spring season alone).



It snowed heavily the night before the contest, creating ideal conditions for finding coyote tracks. Here, Jim Snell listens for the other dogs running in the woods before unleashing his foxhounds, Camaro and Brownie.

Toad Harbor Rod & Gun Club is located in Central Square, surrounded by swampy woodlands—prime coyote habitat. Many club members have been hunting coyotes for decades, oftentimes with hounds.

As hound sports go, coyote hunting is the most popular pastime in New York, according to Mike Obey, vice president of the New York Houndsmen Conservation Association, club board member, and Jim Snell's father-in-law.

Coyotes get a bad rap among hunters. Many blame coyotes for gobbling up their favorite game. Stories, often apocryphal, abound about coyotes snatching pets from yards. In the sportsman community, coyote hunting is considered a public service.

Jim Snell saw it that way too, but he didn't view coyotes as creatures unworthy of the same respect that hunters showed to other game.

"You get these people that say, 'Kill em all!' Why?" Snell said. "They serve their purpose just like everything else."

For houndsmen like Snell and Obey, coyotes serve one purpose in particular: they were tireless, clever adversaries for their dogs. A hunt might go from dawn to dusk, ranging across miles of countryside, and result in nothing more than a pack of exhausted foxhounds with bloodied paws.

"Their range is unbelievable," Obey said. One winter, Obey's dogs "jumped" a coyote in Central Square, he said, and ended up chasing it across Oneida Lake all the way down to the UPS facility in East Syracuse, a distance of 16 miles by car.

"They're a funny animal," Obey said. "You never know what they're going to do."

‘SOMETIMES YOU WIN, SOMETIMES YOU LOSE’

A week before the contest, Snell, Obey, eight other hunters, and six dogs, went coyote hunting in the Klondike State Forest, a few miles from the club. Many of the hunters were loggers. Some worked seasonal construction jobs. Snell had taken the day off from his job at Syracuse Utilities.



Jim Snell races down the road while checking his GPS after his dogs "turned" a coyote somewhere in the woods, requiring him, and all the other hunters in his crew, to reposition themselves.

They divided into two groups: road crew and watch. The road crew patrolled the edges of the woods to prevent coyotes and dogs alike from crossing roads or entering posted property. The watch crew patrolled the woods on foot. Each group was in constant radio contact with the other.

The dogs did most of the work: rousting coyotes out of their bedding areas, chasing them through snow-covered woods. Radio collars transmitted the dogs' locations to every hunter equipped with a GPS device.

Depending on how "hot" the track was, the dogs could be right on the coyote's heels, or lagging half a mile behind it. Hunters followed the pursuit both virtually, as icons on GPS screens, or the old fashioned way, by stalking through the woods, listening for the echo of barking dogs.

The coyote could change direction at any moment, and frequently did. Coyote hunters call this moment a "turn." When the turn came, everybody shifted positions to put themselves in front of the invisible coyote. If dogs got tired or confused, they were reoriented or replaced with fresh dogs. Radios crackled with the latest intel.

Aside from their almost limitless endurance, coyotes have a few tricks to throw dogs off their trail, Snell said. They might run inside a deer track, or jump onto a fallen log, or crawl beneath a brush pile, then double back after the dogs had passed.

Mainly what coyotes do is "circle, circle, circle," Snell said, pointing to color-coded loops on his GPS screen. Then they'll suddenly "line out," he said, leaving the dogs running in confused circles. This is what Snell enjoyed most about the sport, watching—and hearing—his dogs try to figure it all out.

"It's all in how different people like to hunt," Snell said. "I don't have to kill a coyote. If the dog don't deserve it, I don't kill them."

The dogs probably jumped three or four coyotes that day, but the hunters managed to kill only one. The rest escaped. For this reason, not in spite of it, the hunters were in good spirits.

While waiting for the last hunter to come out of the woods, they stood at the side of the road, replaying details of the day's events and cracking jokes.

Doug Potter, a veteran coyote hunter, sat on a tailgate, shaking his head in amazement at a 20-yard shot he'd inexplicably missed.

"I shot twice at him!" Potter groaned. "Obey seen the whole thing."

"I could've shot it right out from underneath him," Obey boasted. "I told him if he opens his truck door it's going to go right in the truck."

"Well that's coyote hunting," Snell said. "Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose."

WOODS-TO-TABLE COOKIN'

On the day of the contest, Snell unloaded the coyote carcasses at the club and warmed himself by the wood-burning stove. His wife, Amy, who organized the contest, sat nearby stuffing cash into envelopes for the prize winners.

The club awarded prizes to Tanner Smith of Madison for the biggest coyote (40.6-pound female); Mike Donegan of Central Square for the biggest coyote of the opposite sex (37.4-pound

male); and Brooke Birmingham of Mexico for both the smallest coyote (26.2 pounds), and the biggest coyote in the youth category (29.2 pounds).

Thirty-five hunters entered the contest, about half the number that had participated in the club's first contest in January. Total take was 14 coyotes compared to only 3 taken in January's contest. Between both contests, the club brought in \$1,400.

Hunters and their families arrived for the potluck dinner with steaming casserole dishes to pass around. In an unheated back room, Brian Cole, who owned a construction company in Parish, sliced into a coyote hanging from the rafters. Later, he planned to skin all 14 coyotes, stretch the hides, and sell them at auction for about \$50 apiece.

"There ain't much to 'em," Cole said, removing one of the coyote's slender backstraps.

In the kitchen, Tonya Harris, Amy Snell's sister, kneaded the ruby-red backstraps with her fingers, plucking off stray hairs. Then she sliced the straps into medallions, gave them a dash of Buck's seasoning, sautéed them in butter, skewered them with toothpicks, and voilà—coyote hors d'oeuvres, from woods to table in six hours.

Nobody hunts coyote to fill their freezer, it's true. Coyote meat would challenge the palate of the most committed locavore, let alone a room full of houndsmen and dog lovers. Coyotes are, after all, dogs.

There were jokes—"You're gonna wake up howling at the moon!"—accompanied by reactions that ranged from hand-waving disgust to genuine surprise. But one by one, the skewers disappeared.

Even Doug Potter, who vowed only hours earlier that he'd never eat a coyote, submitted to the ritual. He chewed, swallowed, and gamely held up his empty toothpick with a shrug. No big deal.

For the record, coyote meat—fresh coyote meat—tastes like venison, a bit chewier maybe. When I mentioned this to Jim Snell, he raised his eyebrow.

"I'll take your word for it," he said. ■

Second Place

⊕

Tom Schlichter
Fishing's 'Fall Blitz'
Newsday, Nov. 26, 2022

Third Place

⊕

Paula Piatt
Feed Up Your Hunting Dog
New York Outdoor News, July 15, 2022

Newspaper Column

First place

Bill Hilts, Jr.
*Hunting: Local
Bowdealer Remembers
Legendary Fred Bear*
The Buffalo News, Feb. 13, 2022

"Oh, Fred Bear, walk with me down the trails again
Take me back, back where I belong
Oh, Fred Bear, I'm glad to have you at my side, my friend
And I'll join you in the big hunt before too long
Before too long" – "Fred Bear" by Ted Nugent

Fred Bear was a legend in the world of bow hunting. Even though he passed away in 1988, he continues to make his mark as a manufac-turer (Bear Archery), author and television show host as he became the poster guy for all things archery hunting.

Born in Waynesboro, Pa., on March 5, 1902, he didn't start bowhunting until he was 29. From that point forward, he made a monumen-tal ascent. His vehicle was the bow and arrow. Bear was a game-changer in every sense of the word.

I had an opportunity to meet him when the National Wild Turkey Federation held its annual convention in Niagara Falls in 1980 when the Buffalo Convention Center was not completed in time. The late John Long Sr. of Lewiston and my father, Bill Sr., shared a TV show called "Outdoor World" and they asked me to interview Fred Bear and Ben Rodgers Lee (one of the icons in the turkey hunting world). I didn't realize the importance of those unique encounters and I should have captured them on my own film. There were no cell phones back then.

One local outdoorsman who did capture a Fred Bear

encounter is Joe Famiglietti, of Lancaster. The former Pro Archery Service owner was associated with Bear Archery as a service center and a retail equipment outlet. He remembered his special time with Bear a few months before he passed on to those happy hunting grounds in the sky.

"During the summer of 1987, I was invited by Bear Archery to hunt at their deer camp near Rose City, Mich.," reflected Famiglietti.

"Their camp and leased hunting area was called Grousehaven and this was where Bear Archery field tested their equipment while hunting whitetail deer. Naturally, I accepted the invitation and drove to Michigan during October for a week of bowhunting. During the five-hour drive, I could hardly believe I would be hunting and hanging out with Fred Bear, my childhood hero. He had taken numerous big-game animals with his bow throughout the world, including bear, moose, lion, elephant, tiger and much more. He held world records for several of the species he harvested."

"After entering the Grousehaven grounds, I located the main lodge," continued Famiglietti. "I could hear voices in the building, and I knocked on the door. I was shocked by who opened the door and greeted me. It was Fred Bear. He was wearing a flannel shirt and was eating a piece of venison that he held in his fingers. After introducing myself and shaking hands, he invited me in. I could not believe this was the person I had seen on television years back who shot a grizzly bear while on a hunt with the actor Fess Parker, star of Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone."

The other people in the lodge included NASA astronaut Joe Engle, Ben Rodgers Lee (world class turkey caller), various Bear archery staff members along with several archery dealers and distributors. Ted Nugent had been in camp and had left just prior to the group's arrival.

"I was amazed that I had been invited to hunt with such an elite and interesting group of people," Famiglietti said. "Fred almost immediately started talking and explaining to us what to expect during the hunt. At various times during the week, he told us stories about some of his hunting adventures, even some tales about the 'one that got away.' I found him to be very funny and always spoke respectfully about the people he

had hunted with.

"At times, he would speak with each of the guests about our hunting experiences with genuine interest on what the person had to say. Fred impressed me as being just a 'regular guy,' who just happened to be famous, but he didn't seem to know he was all that special. Ted Nugent later described Fred as being very kind, cordial, funny and always interesting."

Famiglietti took a 9-point buck with a single arrow during the hunt. The animal was trans-ported to the lodge with help from Bear staff.

"Fred came out to see the buck and was very happy," he said. "He was kind enough to pose with me for pictures of us with the trophy. As it turned out this was the only buck taken that week by one of their invited guests.



Joe Famiglietti of Lancaster and archery legend Fred Bear pose with a 9-point buck tagged by Joe, possibly the last deer hunting photo taken by Bear before he died.

“After dinner that evening, Fred asked me to sit down with him in private. At first, I thought I had done something wrong, but he asked me to tell him the story about how I got my deer. I thought to myself, imagine me telling Fred bear a hunting story when I would have rather listened to more of his personal stories. He struck me as being very interested in what I had to say and asked a lot of questions.

“I enjoyed the time I spent with Fred and will always remember him as a kind person who was interested in the people around him offering everyone his best advice and encouragement.

“During the hunt someone in the group complimented him on his achievements as an outdoor pioneer. Fred was quick to mention there were other people out there who also contributed to the growth of the sport of archery, such as Howard Hill and Ben Pearson. Fred made it clear to us that he would not take all the credit. But, in later years, the archery industry acknowledged Fred’s achievements as well as his love for the sport by referring to him as the ‘Father of

Modern Bowhunting.’

Fred died in 1988, the following year after my hunt with him. It was my honor to have spent time with him and witness firsthand his willingness to teach other hunters how to do it the Fred Bear Way.”

The legend of Fred Bear will be around for many more years to come, long after we are gone. Famiglietti also pointed out Bear is cred-ited for numerous inventions he made through the years, including the modern shooting glove, fiberglass bow backings, the bow quiver, and the legendary Bear Razorhead. He also developed the Converta Arrow System, which allowed both field points and broadheads to be screwed into the same arrow.

*“Because of Fred Bear
I’ll walk down these trails again
Take me back where I belong
Oh, Fred Bear, I’m glad to have you at my side my friend
And I’ll join you in the big hunt before too long” ■*

Online Publication

First place
(Tie)

Angelo Peluso

Flying on Land

The Fisherman Online, Sept. 2022

Fly fishing is not the complex and mystical fishing method that some folks believe it to be. Many tend to overthink the process and techniques, and often simply scare themselves back to using more conventional equipment. If you can hit a beach ball with a tennis racket, you can cast a fly rod; and if you are proficient at manipulating artificial baits, learning to do the same with flies is not rocket science.

The best surf fly anglers I know are also exceptional all-around anglers. They fully comprehend the dynamics of fishing and use the fly rod as another tool in their arsenal. Those folks also have an intimate understanding of the relationship between bait and game fish, and their specific behaviors.

Many surf and wade fly anglers also have a desire to explore, seeking out their quarry, rather than waiting for fish to come to them. There is immense satisfaction in the journey of discovery. Sure, there will be times when you hit the beach to find fish on the move all around you, but those are often exceptions to the rule. Most of the season is not like the concentrated spring and fall runs. Hoofing it to get to productive areas works much better in my book than standing in one spot and waiting for fish to arrive. I will often hike a beach for miles before finally encountering striped bass willing to eat flies.

And when you venture forth to an unfamiliar stretch of sand or backwater you never know what you might discover; perhaps your own honey hole and a slice of seclusion. But that “walkabout” is not just a serendipitous stroll in the park. The watchful and alert fly angler is the one who bags the most fish from the beach. Being aware of your surroundings and taking your cues from nature yields big rewards and the fulfillment that comes from finding your own fish.

Over the years I have had countless flyfishing experiences that have broadened my understanding and appreciation of the environments bordered by land and sea. I have also learned much from the experiences of others. The principles and practices that follow have served me well during my time on the beach and perhaps they might offer you some insight into your own brand of surf fly fishing.

1. SELECT THE RIGHT GEAR

First, you want to find gear suitable to the task, the conditions and the species targeted. This includes rods, reels lines and leaders. For most Northeast surf applications, 9-foot fly rods of 9 and 10 weight will meet most surf conditions, especially for striped bass, bluefish and false albacore. Downsizing to 7

and 8 weight for backwaters and smaller fish like hickory shad or smaller stripers would also be appropriate. And a heavier 11 weight rod might serve you well if you’re into casting big full-size bunker-style patterns. One-hand, switch and spey rods are all options for the surf. Large arbor or wide spool reels with solid drag systems are the models of choice. For most surf situations, an intermediate sink tip line will get the job done. A spare spool or spare reel loaded with an alternate fly line, like a high-density sink tip or floater will give you more versatility when fishing the beach. And always use a stripping basket to assist with line management. Leaders can be simple; varying lengths of 12-, 16- and 20-pound fluorocarbon will cover many bases. My favored length is 6 feet.

2. USE WIND TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

Wind is a consistent reality when fishing the surf, and is often viewed as the number one nemesis of saltwater fly anglers. But wind can be an ally. Winds coming off the water and onto the beach will often push baitfish into the surf zone where gamefish will follow. While extreme winds certainly present challenging and often overwhelming fly-casting conditions, moderate wind can be a surf angler’s friend. Practice sidearm casting that will often enable you push the fly line under and through wind better than an overhead cast. And cast low to the surface of the water. One of the reasons pelicans fly low is to take advantage of reduced drag just above the surface. Also, orient your casting position to take as much advantage of the effects of the wind on your forward or back cast; become proficient at employing the double haul. And add a few “lee” locations to your list of favorite fly fishing spots. Be diligent in using your fly fishing tackle. New fly anglers often get frustrated by less-than-ideal conditions and tend to revert back to spinning or conventional gear. Stay vigilant and fly fish through the difficult periods. And while on the subject of casting, practice, practice and practice.



Take note of the bait present for the best fly match during your fishing.

3. LEARN TO READ WATER

Gain a thorough understanding of the environment within the close-to-shore surf zone, especially the behavioral patterns and interactions of predators and prey. Learn as much about the habits of baitfish and other forms of fish food as you do about the fish you chase. Visualize what is going on beneath the water. Have an open mind and pay attention to the lessons that nature teaches. I recall one situation when I hit the beach early one morning to find just one solitary sea gull there to join me. I started to walk east but the bird flew west and by its demeanor and attitude something told me to follow. Within minutes, false albacore began to break the surface close enough to the beach to make some casts with the fly rod. Perhaps it was luck but I believe the gull knew something I didn’t.

4. STUDY NEAR-SHORE STRUCTURE

This is especially relevant with surf fly fishing since bait and fish proximity to shore or within at least a flycaster’s reach is an imperative. Be aware of anything out of the ordinary along a stretch of beach or backwater area. Even a slight bend or depression in a shoreline could be enough of a difference to affect your fly fishing outcome. Some of the more classic forms of fish attracting and holding areas include boulder fields, channels, cuts, docks, sunken barges, boats and rock piles. One of my most productive fly fishing beach spots is an area that holds a bunch of large concrete blocks that fell from a barge close to shore. The gradient of land masses often holds clues to how land slopes once it meets and merges with water. On more than one occasion I have followed sloping terrain to find a hole or depression immediately off the beach that either held or attracted bait and fish, well within range of a fly rod cast. The best time to explore the potential of a near-shore area is at low time and the more extreme the low tide, the better; neap and spring tides are great for this sort of observation.

5. UNIQUENESS OF THE SCENARIO

Adapt your fly fishing strategies and approaches to suit these circumstances. Some fly fishing situations that you will encounter wade fishing in our region include sand and cobble beaches, inlets, jetties, flats, harbors, bays, back country, river mouths, tidal creeks and ponds. Each scenario presents its own challenges and opportunities. For example, during the early spring and then again during the fall run, sand beaches that attract sand eels and or whitebait will often be the most productive places to fish. Likewise a favorite wading flat might light up during that transition period between spring and summer. Jetties and inlets might just be the ticket to some great late summer fishing when pelagic visitors like Atlantic bonito and little tunny are around. The lesson here is that not one size fits all and to be candid, the best teacher for helping an angler best understand opportunity is time on the water. And at night, bass will often be right at your feet.

6. TIME OF DAY

Regardless of where you fish along the Atlantic coast there are three universally

Second Place



Bill Hiltz, Jr.

Outdoors: Remembering ‘Big Bill’

The Buffalo News, Dec. 18, 2022

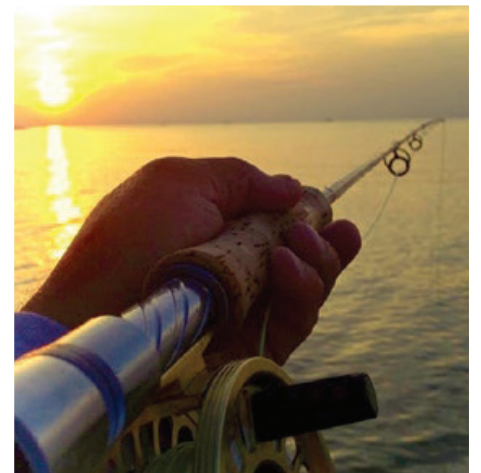
Third Place



Steve Piatt

*Still Out There: Challenging the Mountain,
and the Calendar*

Morning Times, Aug. 18, 2022



Time of day can play a big role in catching when it comes to fly fishing.

accepted prime times for fly-fishing the surf: pre-dawn into the early morning hours; the time period immediately before and after dusk; and during the dark hours of the night. Fishing at these times will often offer some of the best fishing windows. But don’t neglect other times as well. Learn the relationship between time and tide at several local fishing hole and fish them often. Some of the best beach surprises come at the most unexpected times.

7. SEASONS

In the Northeast, both spring and fall months will see quarry moving to and from the near surf zone in search of a meal. These can be highly productive periods for the flyrodder. No matter where one fishes along the East Coast, spring and fall months are prime periods for the surf fly angler. Most gamefish will exhibit heightened activity at these times, whether the result of pre or post spawning activity or due to the abundance of baitfish and ideal water conditions. The hotter summer months can either be boom or bust depending on where the fishing occurs.

8. MOON PHASES

Much has been written about the best moon phases for fish the surf. In the final analysis new moon and full moon phases both have their advocates. Some anglers will fish religiously for two or three days on either side of a new moon while others will totally ignore the new moon and concentrate all their efforts around the big tides of a full moon.

9. TIDES AND CURRENTS

One of the most important factors for successful surf fishing is an understanding of tides and currents and their interrelationship. In many respects they are mutually dependent. Both forms of water flow influence movements and feeding behaviors of bait and game fish. Fish will transition deeper into inter-tidal areas on the flood and follow bait with retreating water. For example, striped bass will often move on and off flats with flooding and ebbing tides. Fish will also feed deeper into marshes, grass lines, mangroves, harbors and back country areas on high water, and again move out with falling water. Gamefish naturally gravitate toward areas of current where vulnerable prey can be ambushed.



The use of a stripping basket allows for better line management in the surf.

10. TACTICAL WADING AND SAFETY

Some surf anglers prefer to stay put in one known productive spot while others are constantly on the move, opting to seek fish out rather than wait for them to come to me. That approach is not one of aimlessly walking about but rather part of a strategy that embraces many of the elements previously discussed - season and time of day, tide phase, current flow, and bait movements. How, where and when one fishes is determined through assimilation of that knowledge and projecting where the bite is most likely to occur.

11. FLY SELECTION

When it comes to fly patterns, the most important considerations are profile, size and movement in the water. A fly need not be a precise, realistic replica of a food source. Color or color combinations are very often a secondary consideration. Match the fly to the general size and shape of prevalent baitfish, and manipulate the fly during the retrieve to mimic the natural movements of vulnerable prey.

12. TAKE CAUTION

Pay attention to the surroundings. Shifting sands from storms can create new hazards and jetties can be especially dangerous. Wade cautiously and rather than plodding ahead, take it slow. Shuffle your feet laterally as you move instead of taking big blind steps. This will help prevent you from falling into a pot hole, tripping over an unexpected rock or stepping on something that could cause harm, like the stinger of a ray. Plus, you'll spook less fish. In the final analysis just be prepared and have fun. There is nothing more frustrating than being on a beach or on some expansive sand flat only to realize you left a critical piece of angling gear back in your vehicle, or at home. If you plan on spending an entire day on the water to take advantage of both tide cycles, pack some extra gear and essential in backpack or fanny pack.

And if need, be bring a lunch, snack and something to drink. You don't want hunger or thirst to hamper your efforts when the fish turn on. ■

Online Publication

First place (Tie)

Charles Witek III
*Christmas Came Early
for Shortfin Sharks*

Marine Fish Conservation Network, Jan. 5, 2022

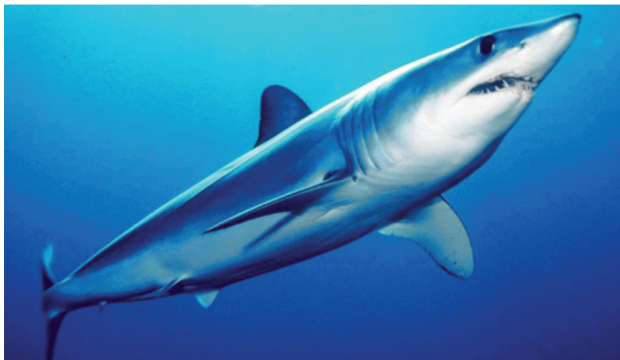


Perhaps no one ever captured the essence of the shortfin mako as well as Ernest Hemingway:

He was a very big Mako shark, built to swim as fast as the fastest fish in the sea and everything about him was beautiful except his jaws. His back was as blue as a swordfish's and his belly was silver and his hide was smooth and handsome. He was built as a swordfish except for his huge jaws which were tight shut now as he swam fast, just under the surface with his high dorsal fin knifing through the water without wavering. Inside the closed double lip of his jaws all of his eight rows of teeth were slanted inwards. They were not the ordinary pyramid-shaped teeth of most sharks. They were shaped like a man's fingers when they are crisped like claws. They were nearly as long as the fingers of the old man and they had razor-sharp cutting edges on both sides. This was a fish built to feed on all the fishes in the sea, that were so fast and strong and well armed that they had no other enemy. Now he speeded up as he smelled the fresher scent and his blue dorsal fin cut the water.

When the old man saw him coming he knew that this was a shark that had no fear at all and would do exactly what he wished.

Unfortunately, while makos had little to fear in the sea, the people who came from the land posed a real threat. Some were anglers, who looked at the mako's size, strength, and speed and saw an adversary they sought to vanquish and kill. Others were commercial fishermen who competed with the big sharks for the tuna and billfish on which they both fed, and who were always ready to harvest and sell any makos that they happened to catch on their lines.



For many years, such threats didn't appear to have much of an impact on the mako population, but in 2017, scientists at the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), an organization that manages not only tunas, but sharks and billfish as well, determined that the shortfin mako population in the North Atlantic Ocean had become badly overfished, and was experiencing an unsustainable level of fishing mortality.

The scientists advised that, in order to merely halt that population's decline, fishing mortality would have to be reduced by at least 80%. Even such a large reduction would not be enough to rebuild the mako population, but it would probably prevent that population from getting too much smaller.

Another stock assessment, released in 2019, found that "the number of pups produced in each year will continue to decline until approximately 2035 even with no fishing, because the

cohorts that have been depleted in the past will age into the mature population over the next few decades (the median age at maturity is 21 years)." It further stated that, "Given the vulnerable biological characteristics of this stock and the pessimistic findings of the projections, to accelerate the rate of recovery and to increase the probability of success the [stock assessment] Group recommends that the Commission adopt a non-retention policy as it has already done with other shark species."

That recommendation didn't go over well with three of the nations most responsible for the shortfin mako's decline, Spain, Portugal and the United States.

Spain has historically been responsible for the largest share of shortfin mako fishing mortality, catching many of the sharks on pelagic longlines set for swordfish and tuna; Portugal's longline fishery is second only to Spain's with respect to the number of makos killed. Both nations are members of the European Union (EU), and exert significant influence on its fishery policies.

The United States is the fourth-largest contributor to shortfin mako mortality; it is unique among the major mako fishing nations in that the greater part of its mako landings are attributable to its recreational fishermen, and not to its pelagic longline fleet.

Recreational mako shark fishing has long been a big part of the offshore angling scene in New England and the mid-Atlantic, supporting charter boats, fishing tournaments, and those who sell fuel, bait and tackle to the private boat fleet. Thus, many in the recreational fishing industry opposed the proposed ban on mako harvest. An editorial that appeared in the November 2019 edition of *The Fisherman magazine* set out their position.

...I know we can expect our U.S. advisors to fight hard for reasonable access; the truth is, non-retention of makos by American anglers will have minimum impact on the state of the world fishery. As is often the case, other ICCAT member nations could do so much more in terms of accurately reporting their landings and implementing new gear requirements (circle hooks and mono leaders) in their longline fleets to promote better mako release success, as has already been done in the United States by our fishermen.

The environmental community seems to be blindly working in overdrive to completely shut down our fishery; at the very least, one would hope these folks could bend a bit in favor of existing, historical tournaments, all of which already require permits and boats reporting requirements for 100% monitoring within the shark fishery. One would argue that a limited harvest exemption for our recreational mako contests would have a de minimus effect on the global fishery while positively contributing to the scientific understanding of this species at the same time.

The United States heeded such arguments, and joined the EU in staunch opposition to a no-retention proposal sponsored by Senegal, which was later co-sponsored by Canada and the United Kingdom. From 2017 through 2020, the EU and U.S. delegations successfully fought against the ICCAT scientists' recommended landings ban, and maintained their fishermen's ability to harvest at least some of the makos that they caught.

In 2021, that changed. The United States had a new president, who installed new leadership at the Department of Commerce, at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and at the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), giving conservation advocates hope that the U.S. ICCAT delegation might adopt a new position on the proposed mako harvest ban.

Additional hope was kindled after NMFS issued a "90-day finding" on a petition seeking to list shortfin makos under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). While such finding didn't guarantee that the shark would be listed, it did say that "the petition presents substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that [listing] may be warranted. Therefore, we are initiating a status review of the species to determine whether listing under the ESA is warranted."

It would seem logically inconsistent for the United States to support continued shortfin mako harvest at the same time that it was considering listing the species as either

"threatened" or "endangered." Yet in July, at an intercessional meeting, called by ICCAT, to address the shortfin mako issue, the United States again opposed a no-retention proposal introduced by Canada and supported by ten other ICCAT members.

The U.S. position on mako conservation was not at all clear.

Thus, supporters of shark conservation were both elated and relieved when, at the November 2021 ICCAT meeting, the United States delegation agreed to support a compromise proposal that would completely prohibit the retention of shortfin makos in 2022 and 2023 but, at the insistence of the EU, might permit a small harvest beginning in 2024, provided that overall fishing mortality, including dead discards, could be kept below 250 metric tons (551,156 pounds).

The proposal adopted by ICCAT wasn't perfect.

Sonja Fordham of Shark Advocates International, while pleased that ICCAT has finally adopted meaningful mako conservation measures, observed that "the two year time horizon is totally inadequate for rebuilding this depleted and still declining population...We will keep fighting to extend the ban long-term to give the makos the break they need to recover, while also pressing for additional measures to maximize the survival of makos caught incidentally and released."

Ali Hood, director of conservation at the Shark Trust, deemed the ICCAT decision a "critical breakthrough," but noted that "it won't be successful if we take our eyes off the EU and their egregious intent to resume fishing a decade before rebuilding is predicted to begin."

That view was effectively echoed by Shannon Arnold, the Marine Program Coordinator for the Ecology Action Centre, who said, "We celebrate this critical step today, mindful that the fight to bolster it begins tomorrow. It is crystal clear from these negotiations that the EU remains focused on reviving exploitation as soon as possible. To prevent shenanigans and backsliding in 2004, we need even more countries at the table fighting back with equal vigour to rebuild the population."

In the United States, NMFS acknowledged that there was more work ahead.

Despite this important step forward, ICCAT's work to end overfishing and rebuild North Atlantic shortfin mako is far from done. "The United States looks forward to advancing additional conservation measures through future ICCAT negotiations to further reduce total fishing mortality and fully rebuild this stock," said [Alexa] Cole [U.S. Commissioner to ICCAT and Director of NOAA Fisheries Office of International Affairs and Seafood Inspection]. "The use of modified fishing gear, including circle hooks to reduce bycatch mortality, is an important element we want to discuss further in ICCAT."

Those are encouraging words from an agency that is still considering whether the shortfin mako should be listed under the ESA. One of the criteria for an ESA listing is whether a species is threatened or endangered because of "the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms," so it is even possible that ICCAT's recent action will tip the scales against listing, and the problems that listing would cause for fishermen targeting other species, in favor of an ICCAT-approved rebuilding plan.

Whether or not listing occurs, ICCAT's recent action provides hope that the shortfin mako stock might be restored over the next 50 years, and that future generations might have the chance to see the "high dorsal fin" of that beautiful shark "knifing through the water without wavering," even as this 21st century winds down, and a new century waits to be born. ■

Third Place



Angelo Peluso

The Best Saltwater Flies You Never Heard Of

The Fisherman Online, July 2022

TV, Radio, Video and Audio

First place

Terry Belke
2 The Outdoors: Young bald eagle flying free once again
WGRZ.com, September 19, 2021



After hitting a downtown building in May, the eagle has since recovered and was recently released.

The video can be viewed on WGRZ.com [here](#).

Second Place

Joseph Gary Crance
The Last Coon Hunter, Fifth Anniversary Edition
ACX, Oct. 7, 2022

Third Place (Tie)

Terry Belke
The Outdoors: Gifts from Nature
WGRZ.com, Dec. 26, 2021

Third Place (Tie)

Dan Ladd
Buck Talk with Todd Mead
Great Northeast Podcast, Episode 5, Nov. 10, 2022



Janice M. Keesler Memorial Photo Awards winners Judges:

Mark Bowie

Mark Bowie is a professional nature photographer, writer and much sought-after public speaker. He is a frequent contributor to Adirondack Life magazine and his work has been published internationally in books, on calendars and posters and in advertising media. His first two coffee table books, Adirondack Waters: Spirit of the Mountains and In Stoddard's Footsteps: The Adirondacks Then & Now, have become landmark regional publications. They were followed by The Adirondacks: In Celebration of the Seasons. He is an expert on night photography and has written two comprehensive e-books on

the subject: The Light of Midnight: Photographing the Landscape at Night; and After Midnight: Night Photography by Example. Mark is a staff instructor for the Adirondack Photography Institute, leading digital photography workshops and tours.

Chris Murray

Chris Murray is a photographic artist, instructor and writer working primarily in the woods, lakes, mountains and streams of his home state of New York. His work has appeared in several magazines, including On Landscape, Popular Photography, Shutterbug, Adirondack Life, New York State Conservationist and Thousand Islands Life, among others. Chris leads photography workshops through the Adirondack Photography Institute and teaches classes at the Thousand Islands Arts Center.

Greg Craybas

Greg Craybas is a nature and wildlife photographer based in Syracuse. His photographs of snowy owls recently have been published in Audubon Magazine.



The photo award winners

Outdoor Scenic



First Place (Pictured)

⊕ Dave Figura

Second Place

⊕ Chris Paparo

Third Place

⊕ Chris Paparo

Outdoor Action



First Place (Pictured)

⊕ Susan Kiesel

Second Place

⊕ Susan Kiesel

Third Place

⊕ Angelo Peluso

Hunting & Fishing



First Place (Pictured)

⊕ Chris Paparo

Second Place

⊕ Angelo Peluso

Third Place

⊕ John Murray

People



First Place (Pictured)

⊕ Susan Kiesel

Second Place

⊕ Susan Kiesel

Third Place

⊕ Megan Postol

Wildlife



First Place (Pictured)

⊕ Chris Paparo

Second Place

⊕ Susan Kiesel

Third Place

⊕ Dave Figura

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