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Cashton Record

HUNTING & FISHING



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No boat? Try these 5 tips for successful shore fishing!



No boat? No problem! Shore fishing offers a rewarding alternative for anglers without access to a boat. Maximize your success with these five tips:

1. Pick the best spot. Research and choose fishing spots with accessible shorelines. Consider factors like water depth, structures and potential fish habitats. Parks, docks and riverbanks are promising locations.

2. Get the timing down. Fish are often more active during specific times of the day. Early mornings and late evenings tend to be the most promising times because fish are closer to the shore in search of food.

3. Use the right bait and lures. Tailor your bait and lures to the local fish species and their feeding habits. Experiment with a variety of options, including live bait, soft plastics and crankbaits.

4. Stay mobile. If the fish aren't biting in one spot, move along the shoreline to find more promising areas. Be observant of changes in water conditions and adapt your strategy accordingly.

5. Mind the weather. Fish tend to be more active before a front moves in. Overcast days can also be advantageous, as fish often venture closer to the shore in these conditions.

Additionally, fishing on the windward side of a body of water can increase your chances of finding active feeding areas and improve your overall success.

By implementing these tips, you can make the most of spring shore fishing and enjoy a successful and gratifying experience without needing a boat.

Fishing photography tips:

Capturing the thrill of your fishing adventures through photography adds an extra layer of joy to your memorable catches. Follow these tips to take stunning and ethical fishing photos:

1. Handle the fish gently. Be gentle when holding the fish to minimize stress and potential harm. Wet your hands before touching the fish to protect its delicate slime layer. Avoid squeezing it tightly and support its weight evenly. Have your camera ready as you don't want to have the fish out of the water for more than three or four seconds at a time.

2. Use the proper holding technique. For smaller fish, use a one-handed grip, keeping your fingers away from the gills. Larger fish can be supported with two hands, one near the head and the other at the tail. This not only showcases the fish but also ensures its safety.

3. Make sure you're in focus. Focus your camera on the fish's eyes. The eyes are the focal point of any living subject. If the eyes aren't in focus, chances are the rest of the fish will be blurry as well.

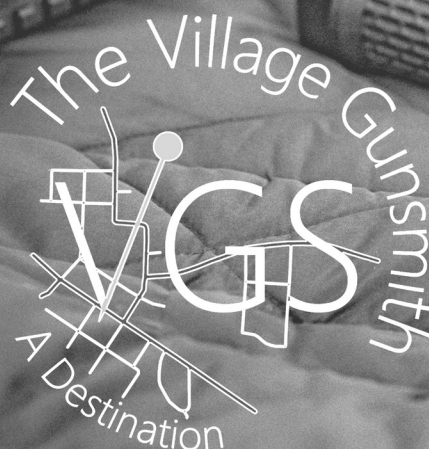


4. Avoid selfies. Taking a selfie with your catch is difficult and can be stressful for the fish. Ask a friend to help you get the best shot.

With these fishing photography tips, you can immortalize your best catches while respecting the well-being of the fish you release. Say cheese!

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Hunting and fishing energies flow through local sportsman

By BENNY MAILMAN *Monroe County Herald Editor*

*Dog Piper
fills role of
companion &
fellow hunter*



Wisconsin may be known as the Dairy State, but statistics bear out that it sits comfortably within the top 10 spots of both fishing and hunting as well. Monroe County is stocked with hunters and fishermen and women, who put a strong focus and concentration on this high-valued endeavor. The stronger enthusiast will fish and hunt, with some even carrying on the tradition of trapping. One such nature enthusiast is Brian Joyner, of Little Falls.

For Joyner, his love for the outdoors is a never-ending stream of energy that flows into the lives of other people, whether it be helping a friend to track a deer for three miles, mentoring young shootists and fishermen, or hosting special needs guests for a turkey hunt. When it comes to the great outdoors, Joyner is in all in.

An interesting note along the timeline for Joyner's hunting, was that although

growing up in the country, his family was not a hunting family. "I was hounding my parents for a BB gun when I was 5-years old. My dad finally pacified me with a 35-pound recurve bow. Then when I was 10-years old, my brother came home on leave and was hard-up for money, so sold me his Remington bolt-action .22 for five dollars. As soon as I finished hunter safety, my dad just let me go."

Joyner grew up near Oregon, Wisconsin. Joyner told the Herald that he has always been drawn to hunting, as far back as he can remember. He had a friend, whose family were not hunters either, so the boys hunted together. He told the story of how it started out with him, as far as hunting, and the story may have quite a few readers nodding in agreement, whether they themselves have been hunters, or they grew up in a family with young hunters. "It starts out with squirrels and rabbits. It always starts with squirrels and rabbits. The hill that I grew up on was 2/3 surrounded by wetlands, so as soon as I got a single-shot shotgun, I started hunting ducks. I shot at geese, but they're tough to get."

Joyner continued, "In the days when I was growing up, if you saw a whitetail deer, you called everyone you knew. Down south of Madison, they were almost nonexistent. That was because every square inch of land was pastured by the dairy farmers. Then they started the food lot system, and everything started to get wild.

Hunter's Engines Start with Snow Melt

If you live with a hunter or have one within some aspect of your family or immediate circle of friends, you know better than most that the seasons may be paused, but the conversations and preparations flow from a never-ending well. Hunting seasons mirror the National Football League, where it may be the off season, but that just offers an open time period for scouting, looking at trail cameras, and preparing mentally and physically for opening day, as well as the stretch of time that encompasses the season.

For many hunters, like Brian Joyner of Little Falls, hunting is about more than the hunt. The venture involves a communing with nature, soulful connections with fellow hunters, and an honoring of tradition through all aspects of approach and

'BRIAN JOYNER'

Continued on page 4

Brian Joyner

Continued from page 3

endeavor. “Everything slows down quite a bit in January and February,” Joyner stated. “When the snow melts, that gives us the opportunity to go out and look for sheds, for deer antlers. Then when it starts warming up, we start going for walleyes on the Black River and the Mississippi. Then turkey seasons starts, with more season popping up a month into that. Everything starts coming real fast, after the dormancy that follows gun season.”

Joyner elaborated on morels. “Truthfully, when we are turkey hunting, we are scanning the countryside for morels.” Joyner informed the Herald that every morel he has ever retrieved has gone into personal consumption, for him and his wife.

The Great Turkey/Roughed Grouse Swap

Brian Joyner served as a policeman in Mount Horeb for ten years, and the first indication he had that he had a dislike for criminals was at age 16. “I was duck hunting on Hook Lake, when I witnessed a couple of guys shoot a Great Blue Heron. I called into the game warden, who said he would meet me out there the next morning. This Warden, Carl Bath, was instrumental in doing the swap for our Roughed Grouse for Missouri’s turkeys. That’s how we got our first turkeys. It is always interesting, the paths that you cross throughout the years.”

There is no pressure to go out turkey hunting according to Joyner. “The season goes from mid-September to January, and you can only bag one, so there is no sense of urgency.”

One of the patterns that Joyner has noticed is that with the warming temperatures each year, the migratory patterns are changing. Usually when it freezes up North it pushes a lot of the birds south, towards

Monroe County. Now because of the warming temperatures the birds are staying longer, sometimes not migrating until after the season is over. It’s screwy.”

Joyner has also shot 6 elk, 2 antelope, and went moose hunting up in northern Canada.

“I saw some cows (female moose) but I never saw a bull. I have been successful in everything except moose hunting.”

Joyner admits that he likes shooting from great distances. “I will shoot from as far as 700 yards,” Joyner remarked.

Elk Outsmarted by Whitetail

Joyner informed the Herald that elk are not quite as smart as the whitetail deer. “You can get a lot closer to elk. I have shot mine as close as 50 to 60 yards. The only thing they really see is movement. So, if you stand still and the wind is right, they will walk within 10 yards of you, and not even know you’re there.”

The Dogs and Hunting People

Another fascinating feather in Joyner’s cap is his adoration for his dogs, and he showers them with high praise. “As soon as I was discharged from the Navy, I got married and my wife said that I could have one dog. I chose a lab, so that I could duck hunt and pheasant hunt. Then, 9 months later, I got my first bloodhound because I ended up in law enforcement. German Shepherds are just not great tracking dogs. Nobody hunts with them for a reason.”



“Truthfully, when we are turkey hunting, we are scanning the countryside for morels.”

- Brian Joyner

When Joyner was in law enforcement, he found himself hunting, well tracking may be a more appropriate verb, humans. “Basically I was hunting people year-round, and I enjoyed that too because the bloodhounds were really good at that. I worked as a police

officer in Mount Horeb for ten years, and we did not have a homicide unit there, but I ended up working 77 homicides because I had bloodhounds. I was also associated with the FBI’s search and rescue team. So, one time I went from working in a town of 5,500, to tracking America’s most wanted man, Eric Rudolph, down in North Carolina. So, the bloodhounds opened a lot of experience for me.” Rudolph was a criminal convicted of a series of bombings. He set off a bomb in 1996, at Centennial Olympic Park, and was apprehended in 2003.

Dispelling a Hollywood Myth

In talking with Brian Joyner, the Herald learned that a common happening in Hollywood movies, where escapees fleeing the law jump into a river to throw off the pursuing dogs, is an incorrect detail. “What the bloodhound follows is skin cells. 50 to 100 million skin cells come off our bodies each day. Everywhere we go, we leave a cloud of skin cells, like Pig Pen, in the Charlie Brown shows. We liked when criminals did this because it slowed them up quite a bit.”

The day after Joyner retired from police work, his bloodhound died. He would go six years without a faithful canine by his side. Then one day, his wife asked him to go get another dog, with the only stipulation being that it would be a house dog. “The mayor in Mount Horeb used to have these Water Spaniels. I used to duck hunt with him. It was the perfect house dog that I could still utilize for hunting.”

Joyner has used Piper for everything, from finding antler sheds to assisting him in turkey hunting. “I cannot hear that great anymore, so when Piper sees a turkey, he’ll go on point. I have to leave the door of the blind open 3 feet because after I shoot, Piper goes from being totally calm to being a rocket ship, in the span of one second. So, he is going out of the blind whether that door is open or not.”

Piper has also helped to track deer. He has tracked deer for three miles before, and never misses his mark.

Military Background, Kind Heart

Brian Joyner served in the United States Navy, from February of 1985 to February of 1989. “I circumnavigated the globe at about 13 miles per hour,” Joyner quipped. “I spent 6 months in the Persian Gulf, 10 years as policeman, 14 as an instructor at WTC, after which, I retired.”

Joyner also takes people out on hunts that may not be that familiar with the proper way or places to hunt. As well, he has also taken physically challenged young adults out on hunts, where a parent will come along and they will set up in a blind. “I get more joy out of them bagging a turkey or deer than when I do it myself,” Joyner remarked. “It is the pure joy of being outdoors and sharing the experience with as many people as I can.”





Youth Hunts for wild turkey, white-tailed deer and waterfowl offer valuable experience and time to safely hunt.

DNR seeks volunteers with hunting skills to instruct students of all ages

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is looking for individuals to volunteer to help others enjoy safe and ethical hunts. There are fun options to share your hunting expertise, enthusiasm, and stories with novices of all ages, who are interested in this activity. You could become a mentor, lead a learn-to-hunt outing, or hold a workshop to teach new hunters how to cook meat from harvested deer. Opportunities abound. Here are the fulfilling and satisfying ways you can share your skills with others.

Mentor A Novice

If you prefer a one-on-one opportunity, consider becoming a mentor. Learn about the Mentored Hunting Law on the DNR's website. This program allows novice hunters to hunt within arm's reach of a qualified mentor without first completing a Hunter Education course.

Classroom Instructor: Teach Or Assist

Consider joining the roster of Learn to Hunt volunteer instructors. The Learn To Hunt program has learning in the classroom, coupled with time in the field, followed by a hunt with a mentor. Local groups usually

host a program. You could ask to lead an educational hunt outside of the regular hunting season.

Hunter Education covers ways to help your community by teaching injury-prevention and lifesaving actions while positively influencing the attitudes and actions of other resource users.

Many Skills In Your Toolbox

If you are eager to share a wide variety of knowledge, this is likely your option. Outdoor Skills Workshops offer deer-processing skills, safe firearm handling techniques, shooting basics and tips for cooking wild game.

Help The Next Generation

Special Youth Hunts for wild turkey, white-tailed deer and waterfowl offer valuable experience and time to safely hunt. These are held outside the normal hunting season. Residents and non-residents ages 15 years and younger are welcome.

For more information on these opportunities, contact Emily Iehl, at Emily.Iehl@wisconsin.gov or Logan Planer at Logan.Planer@wisconsin.gov.

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Fishing rod buying guide:

Key factors to consider



Whether you're buying your first fishing rod or making an upgrade, here are the key factors to consider when shopping for a rod.

Size

Fishing rods come in a variety of sizes. Shorter ones don't cast as far and are designed to be used with lightweight lures. They have the advantage of giving you greater control when fighting with a fish. In addition, they're more powerful, which makes them a better option for big-game fishing.

Longer rods cast farther and are needed for fly fishing or if you want to use heavier lures. In addition, they're the best option for surfcasting, which is when you fish from the shore rather than a boat or pier.

Material

The most common materials for rods are graphite, fiberglass and composite, which is a combination of both materials. Graphite rods are lighter, stiffer and more sensitive than fiberglass rods. As a result, they allow you to detect lighter bites. Fiberglass rods, in turn, are heavier, more flexible and less sensitive. However, they have the advantage of lasting longer and costing less.

Composite rods offer the best of both worlds. However, they're also the most expensive option.

Action

Another factor to consider is the ease with which a rod flexes. This is referred to as its action, which can be categorized as light, medium or heavy. When deciding on a rod, keep in mind the following:

- Light or slow-action rods bend near the butt of the rod. They're ideal for fishing smaller species.
- Heavy or fast-action rods have a stiffer backbone and bend near the tip. They're ideal for hunting bass and other large species of fish.
- Medium-action rods represent a middle-of-the-road option and are a good pick if you intend to fish a wide variety of species.

Reel type

There are two types of reels: spinning and casting. Spinning reels are the best option for beginners, as they're easier to use and control. However, many seasoned anglers prefer casting reels as they allow for more precise casting.

For more personalized advice, talk to a pro at your local tackle shop.



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A-lure-ing CHOICES

Walking through the fishing aisle of a store can be intimidating – that's why we asked local fishing equipment experts at Triggers N' Tackle in Cashton what kind of lures a beginner could use when casting in the area waters

By Logan Everson | Record Editor



Fish can be fickle. They can also be predictable. The fun, and sometimes frustrating part, of fishing is figuring it out through experience.

"A lot of fishing is trial and error," said Brad Mellen. "You're never guaranteed to catch something."

Mellen is co-owner with Jason Bohnert of Triggers N' Tackle in Cashton. As the name suggests, the two know their fair share about fishing and fishing accessories.

The local waterways offer a variety of fish species – trout, bluegill, sunfish, etc. A variety of fish means a variety of tastes, and the right lure will bring the fish you're looking for. But which lure for which fish?

That's the question Mellen and Bohnert tackle on an almost daily basis.

THE ALL-AROUND JIG

According to the duo at Triggers N' Tackle, a jig-type lure is one of the most popular for catching an array of local fish due to the many color options.

"Jigs are the most popular. We sell a lot of these. They come in a variety of colors," said Bohnert. "I know a lot of guys will have pretty much almost one of every color."

Jigs are known for the way that they jump or jive as they move through water. The construction of a jig makes this possible, which involves a weighted head with an attached hook that is covered with a soft or feather-like decoration. They come in all shapes and sizes.

And the term 'jig' will cover or be attached to a variety of different type of lures such as bladed jigs, vibrating jigs, swim jigs, football jigs, punch jigs, and flipping jigs. Yes, those are real types of jigs. Their looks will vary, but it's how you fish with them that makes all the difference.



“
A lot of
fishing is
trial and error.
You're never guaranteed
to catch something.

– Brad Mellen

Co-owner of Triggers N' Tackle

Page Artwork by Logan Everson

Fishing Lure Recommendations for Local Fishing*

*Disclaimer: These are merely suggestions. Every angler should experiment and try new things.

Jig



Brand & Type: Cubby Mini-Mite Jig-In-A-Tube
Price & Weight: 1 for \$1.49, 3/\$3.99, 6/\$7.59; 1/32 oz.
Suggested for: crappie, bluegill, perch, and trout

Buzzbait



Brand & Type: Booyah Bait Co. Booyah Buzz
Price & Weight: \$6.99; 1/4 oz.
Suggested for: bass, northern pike, and muskie

Crankbait



Brand & Type: Lake Effect Lure Co. Eye Catcher Blue Darter GLOW
Price & Weight: \$4.80; 1/4 oz.
Suggested for: walleye, crappie, and perch

Fly



Brand & Type: South Bend Asst. Flies (25-pack)
Price: \$7.99
Suggested for: trout

Inline Spinner



Brand & Type: Panther Martin® Fly Spinner (Silver & Yellow)
Price & Weight: \$4.99; 1/8 oz.
Suggested for: crappie, trout

‘CHOICES’ cont. from pg. 7

Despite all the varieties, the goal remains the same – catch a fish. And the jerky movements that a jig invokes will do just that. Bohnert’s recommended jig is good for catching crappie, bluegill, perch, and trout. The most popular jig at Triggers N’ Tackle is the Cubby® Mini-Mite® Jig-In-A-Tube® (1 for \$1.49, 3/\$3.99, 6/\$7.59, 1/32 oz.). It’s a simple, no-frills jig that comes in a myriad of colors. Color choice will depend on the desired fish, weather and cloud coverage, and water clarity.

This is when the trial-and-error part of fishing comes into play, but Bohnert suggested that the more brightly colored lures should be used for darker water.

Jigs can be used in almost any body of water, just be prepared to catch anything.

HIT IT BIG WITH A BUZZBAIT

For those bigger catches, Bohnert picked out a buzzbait - which is a type of bladed – or vibrating – jig (depending on who you talk to). They are suitable for bass, northern pike, and muskellunges (‘muskies’ for short).

These bladed or vibrating types of jigs could also be called spinnerbaits, buzzbait or ‘ChatterBaits’.

In this instance, buzzbait refers to a noise-making bladed jig, and ChatterBait® is a trade-marked brand. Spinnerbaits, while not designed specifically for noise, do create vibrations in the water to simulate a minnow in distress.

The biggest difference between a buzzbait and a ‘ChatterBait’ is that buzzbaits are meant for top-water fishing. They create a buzzing sound and a wake when dragged across the water.

A ChatterBait® is typically used at mid-depth and produces a strong vibration when moved horizontally underwater. They are known to be useful in heavy vegetation and dark waters with success, but can also catch on weeds easily. Spinnerbaits can also be used in those situations, but a weight should be added to help sink it down.

All offer an alluring flash to grab any predator fish’s attention in murky conditions.

Bohnert selected a Booyah Bait Co.® Booyah Buzz® (\$6.99, 1/4 oz.) for local fishing. It features an aluminum buzz blade with clacker.

A CLASSIC: CRANKBAIT

By definition, a crankbait is a hard-body fishing lure that’s painted to mimic small baitfish or other creatures that game fish feed on.

When retrieved, the lip or bill on the head of the lure causes

the lure to dive which is the crankbait’s unique feature. They also sway from side to side to realistically imitate a small fish.

Crankbait, just like most fishing lures, come in a multitude of colors, shapes, and sizes.

For local fishing, Bohnert picked out Lake Effect Lure Co.® Eye Catcher® Blue Darter GLOW (\$4.80, 1/4 oz.), which specifically targets walleye, crappie, and perch.

FLY AWAY

Fly fishing lures come in many colors and material combinations – also known as patterns. They include emergers, streamers, nymphs, and dry flies. Within each of those types are hundreds of different combinations that could be crafted from thread and feathers. They are all trying to achieve the same purpose – mimic a real insect.

Figuring out which combination of colors and materials works will depend on what the local fish population is hungry for, and that’s what the angler will have to figure out.

“Don’t be afraid to ask someone else what they’re fishing with,” said Mellen. “Be nosy.”

The topographical nature (a.k.a “driftless”) of Monroe and Vernon counties provide some of the best habitats for fly-fishing trout due to the spring-fed streams that keep cool water flowing.

Trout species brook, brown, rainbow (and the brook-and-brown hybrid known as tiger trout) can all be found in Driftless-area streams – and much like an insect attracts a trout to the surface, the natural streams attract fly fisherman from all over to their banks.

While fly fishing is the recommended option for the local streams, it’s not the easiest way to fish. Casting a fly-fishing rod and reel can seem daunting compared to a conventional casting set-up. Due to the lightweight nature of the fly lure compared to the typically weighted conventional lure, it requires an amount of finesse. Practice makes perfect.

For local fishes’ tastes, Bohnert and Mellen agreed on a 25-piece fly kit from South Bend® (\$7.99). It includes a variety of colors and patterns, as well as a fly that resembles a bumblebee. The kit is good for beginners, as the hobby of fly fishing, and fishing in general, can lead you down a rabbit hole of lures and lure construction.

OOH, SHINY INLINE SPINNERS

Similar to a spinnerbait, the inline spinner is a bit more simple and constructed in a singular plane with blade, lure, and hook all in a row versus the more complicated spinnerbait that is in a V-shape with lure and hook on one end and shiny

blades on the other.

Inline spinners are typically used for crappie and trout while spinnerbaits are for bass or pike, but it doesn’t hurt to try and use an inline spinner in any situation.

Bohnert suggested a feathery red and yellow fly with silver metal [inline] spinner (\$4.99, 1/8 oz.) from Panther Martin®, a well-known brand that’s been around since 1958.

FISHING IN SPRING

Currently, trout fishing is limited to catch-and-release until Wisconsin’s general inland season begins in May.

Mellen and Bohnert suggest using barb-less hooks in the meantime. Barbs can make removing a fish off of a hook more difficult. Taking care to reduce the stress of local trout is key to maintaining strong fishing holes.

Trout fishing in the local area is also limited to artificial lures only, and different streams have different catch quantity limits and size minimums. The most recent rules, and an interactive trout fishing map “Trout Regulations And Opportunities User Tool” (a.k.a. T.R.O.U.T), can be found at the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources website: wi.dnr.gov.



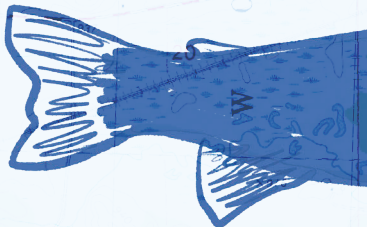
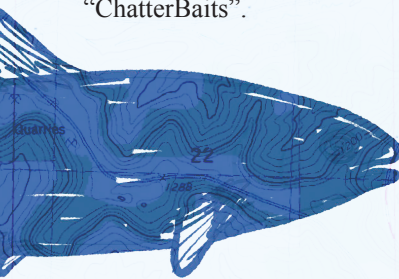
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Want to help grow the sport?

To support youth fishing, Triggers N’ Tackle is offering the five fishing lures featured in this article to a local kid angler. Share this article and opportunity with a young fisherman.

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Get your tackle box ready for fishing season

Are you getting eager for your first day on the lake? As you gather your rods and reels, use these lists to get your tackle box fully stocked for your first fishing trip.

FISHING ESSENTIALS

Get these items from a local fishing outfitter:

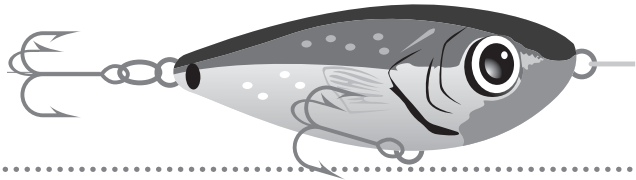
- Hooks of varying sizes
- Lures and flies
- Floaters
- Weights
- Fishing line
- Line swivels
- Leaders
- Stringer
- Ruler
- Scale
- Needle nose pliers
- Utility knife

LITTLE EXTRAS

A successful fishing trip depends on catching fish, having a good time and staying safe. Look for these items at a nearby department store, craft shop or drug store:

- Flashlight. Don't forget the extra batteries.
- First-aid kit. If you already have one, ensure it's well stocked with Band-Aids and alcohol pads.
- Insect repellent. Try a portable ultrasonic mosquito-repelling gadget if you don't want to apply chemical repellent.
- Sunscreen. Add a lip balm for complete sun protection.
- Craft scissors. You'll need these — or nail clippers — to cut your fishing line.
- Unscented soap. It's best to handle bait with clean, fragrance-free hands.
- Multi-surface glue. It'll come in handy if your rod breaks.

Don't forget to keep a photocopy of your fishing license in your tackle box for easy access.



Scan to purchase your fishing license through GoWild



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2025 WISCONSIN SPRING HUNTING SEASON


Get your regulations up to one month before they’re available in print at dnr.wisconsin.gov!

Seasons may be subject to change. Consult the hunting regulations or dnr.wisconsin.gov before hunting.


Special Reminder: Registration for the Spring Turkey Season is due on Dec. 10 each year.

TURKEY


Youth Turkey Hunt		Apr. 12-13
Open Zones		
Spring	Period A	Apr. 16-22
	Period B	Apr. 23-29
	Period C	Apr. 30-May 6
	Period D	May 7-13
	Period E	May 14-20
	Period F	May 21-27
Fall	Statewide	Sept. 13-Nov. 21
	Zones 1-5	Nov. 22, 2025-Jan. 4 2026



WDNR Hunting Page



WDNR Turkey Hunting Page



Purchase Your License

Since March 2019, Fort McCoy hunting and fishing permits are no longer available through Go Wild. Instead, hunters should use Fort McCoy’s license system, iSportsman, for on-base hunting and fishing privileges.

GET IN THE GAME!

Mentored Hunting Licenses

Adults and youth who have not completed hunter education may hunt through the Mentored Hunting Program. Visit dnr.wisconsin.gov and search “mentored hunting” for more information.

Reduced License Fees

Youth ages 11 and younger, first-time hunters and those who have not hunted in the preceding 10 years are eligible to purchase hunting licenses at a reduced fee. Resident hunters who recruit three first-time hunters, trappers or anglers are also eligible for reduced fees.

Find More Information

Visit dnr.wisconsin.gov and search “Hunt” and “Trap” for season dates, regulations, license and permit requirements, finding a place to hunt or trap and more. Additional questions? Call the DNR Call Center toll-free: 1-888-WDNR INFO (1-888-936-7463) • local 608-266-2621 TTY Access via relay - 711

2025 WISCONSIN SPRING FISHING SEASON

Opening day for Wisconsin fishing is traditionally the first Saturday in May. Season dates often vary by species and waterbody. Check the QR code for The Guide To Hook And Line Fishing Season Dates, 2025-2026, below for specifics of where you plan to fish.

2025-2026 Fishing Season Dates (Effective Date: April 1, 2025; Dates Inclusive)

Early Inland Trout (catch and release)
January 4, 2025 (5 a.m.) - May 2, 2025

General Inland Trout
May 3, 2025 (5 a.m.) - Oct. 15, 2025

General Inland Fishing
May 3, 2025 - March 1, 2026

Largemouth Bass Northern Zone Harvest
May 3, 2025 - March 1, 2026

Smallmouth Bass Northern Zone Harvest
June 21, 2025 - March 1, 2026

Large And Smallmouth Bass Southern Zone Harvest
May 3, 2025 - March 1, 2026

Large And Smallmouth Bass Catch And Release

At all other times of the year.

Musky Northern Zone Harvest
May 24, 2025 - Dec. 31, 2025

Musky Southern Zone Harvest
May 3, 2025 - Dec. 31, 2025

Northern Pike
May 3, 2025 - March 1, 2026

Walleye
May 3, 2025 - March 1, 2026

Lake Sturgeon
Feb. 8 - Feb. 23 (Winnebago System spearing)
Sept. 6 - Sept. 30 (hook-and-line)

Free Fishing Weekends
June 7-8, 2025
Jan. 17-18, 2026

Not sure which zone you’re fishing in? Have other questions? Refer to the Wisconsin Fishing Season Definitions QR Code Below for specifics.



FISHING LICENSES

In Wisconsin, kids 15 and under fish without a license every day and anglers born before 1927. For everybody else, various license options can get you out on the water quickly and easily.

Resident And Nonresident Fishing Licenses

Unless otherwise noted, all licenses are available for purchase through Go Wild, sales locations or at one of our DNR Service Centers. A valid driver’s license or social security number will be needed to purchase your license online through GoWild.

Scan to purchase your fishing license through GoWild



The Guide To Hook And Line Fishing Season Dates, 2025-2026



Wisconsin Fishing Season Definitions

Exceptions

Exceptions do exist. Not all Wisconsin waters follow the general dates for the hook and line or trout season. You must still consult the current regulations’ particular county or boundary waters tables to determine if any special season dates exist for the specific waters you plan to fish with hook and line.

Cast your line at Wildcat Mountain State Park



By NICOLETTE NAUMAN
Sentry-Enterprise Editor

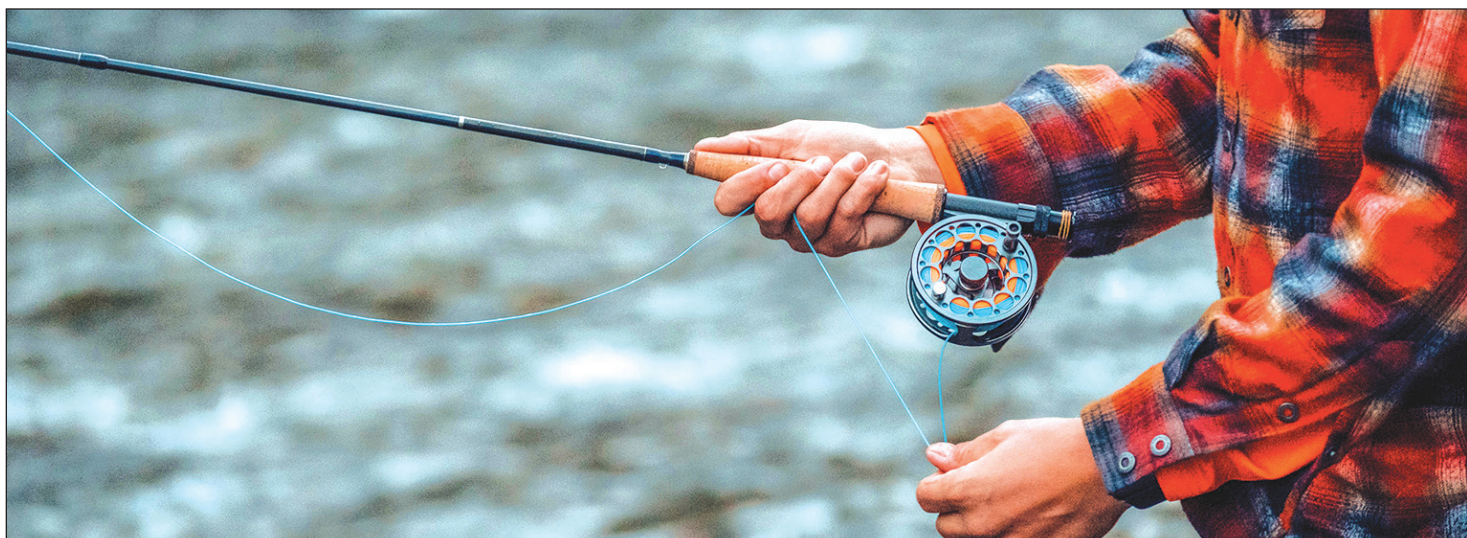
The weather is beginning to warm, shaking off the chill of winter as we move forward towards the summer months. We've officially passed the spring equinox, and the daylight hours will now begin to officially outnumber the nighttime ones.

The warmer weather and longer days also mean we can spend more time enjoying the Great Outdoors, and we're fortunate enough to live in a state that has taken seriously its responsibilities to conserve and protect its natural resources. In particular, Wisconsin has no shortage of state parks, trails, and other recreational areas for residents and visitors alike to explore.

Locally, there's Wildcat Mountain State Park. This park, located right outside of the village of Ontario, had its beginnings as a state park in a 1938 donation of 20 acres, made by Amos Theodore Saunders. Saunders donated the land to the state in the hopes that other Wisconsinites would be able to experience the beauty of the Upper Kickapoo. Over the next decade, the park grew into a 60-acre county park, until a vote by the state legislature in 1947 put in motion the formation of the property into a proper state park. Wildcat Mountain State Park was officially established in 1948, taking the initial 60 acres of county land and expanding the park to hundreds of acres.

Today, Wildcat Mountain State Park encompasses some 3,643 acres of wilderness. The park's name is said to come from an incident in the 1800s, in which local farmers formed a hunting party to track down a bobcat (also known at the time as a wildcat) that had allegedly killed a few of the farmers' sheep. According to local legend, the farmers tracked down the bobcat and shot it near the area that today serves as the park's main overlook. Locals began to call the area Wildcat Hill, which changed to Wildcat Mountain when the park was officially established as a state park in 1948.

Visitors to the park can spend their time wandering along the park's multiple hiking trails, perhaps even catching a glimpse of some of the wildlife that calls the park home. Wildcat Mountain is an official Wisconsin Watchable Wildlife site, and the park supports a variety of fish, deer, and other animals. One of the more common



residents is the red squirrel; you'll likely hear these little guys chattering as they scurry about the treetops.

There's not much to be had for Wisconsin hunters in the spring—aside from turkey season, the majority of Wisconsin's hunting seasons won't begin again until September. However, while Wildcat Mountain is home to wild turkeys, the park is also home to plenty of fish! The Kickapoo River is home to upwards of 46 different species of fish, and the stretch of river between Ontario and Gays Mills, which runs through Wildcat Mountain, has been listed as a Class II trout stream thanks to its abundance of brown trout.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, trout like to use this portion of the Kickapoo for both food and shelter, though they likely also spawn in the river's tributary streams. For example, Billings Creek, which is a Kickapoo River tributary, is well-known for its population of brown trout.

Wildcat Mountain welcomes anglers of any age, and even has some basic fishing equipment available for rent free of charge at the park's main office. The equipment, which was donated to the park by the Tackle Loaner Program, helps to making fishing more accessible to those who either don't have equipment of their own or who would like to explore fishing as a hobby before committing to purchasing the equipment themselves. You can give the park office a call prior to your visit to see what equipment

is available for check-out.

However, anglers and hunters of all kinds should be aware that state hunting and fishing regulations still apply in Wildcat Mountain State Park, and relevant licenses will be needed in order to hunt or fish within the park. At the moment, the annual spring turkey hunt is the only hunting season coming up. The 2025 Spring Turkey Youth Hunt is scheduled to take place on April 12 and 13, with the hunting season proper set to begin on April 16. Further information on the spring turkey hunting season can be found online at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' website.

For those more interested in catching fish, early inland trout fishing is currently where it's at for catch-and-release. Early inland trout fishing began back in January and is set to continue until the regular fishing

season kicks off in May, with early trout fishing ending on May 2. General inland fishing will begin on May 3 of this year, with the season continuing until March 1 of next year.

Regardless of whether you're an experienced angler or someone looking to try out a new outdoor hobby, you might want to take some time this spring to pay a visit to Wildcat Mountain State Park. You can get a feel for the park's offerings before the general fishing season begins, giving you a better idea of where in the park you might want to set up your tackle box and cast your line. The park will also be celebrating the 125th anniversary of the Wisconsin State Park System this year! If you've never paid a visit to your local state park, this would be the year to do it.

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