

OUTDOORS

Pond fishing is getting back to basics

Recently I heard from my brother, Charles, telling me about a pond fishing outing he enjoyed with his 3 young grandsons, Ben, Sam, and Charlie in Maryland. It got me to thinking about my pond fishing days, and I decided to do something about it.

Having grown up in Prince Georges County, Maryland, I cut my fishing teeth on Greenbelt Lake. I was squat'n in tall cotton when I could catch a ride to Greenbelt Lake. A very special treat was to fish the Chesapeake & Ohio (C & O) Canal and the Potomac River, usually at Great Falls. Caught my fair share of bream, catfish, and carp in those prolific waters.

It is probably fortunate we did not live closer, because I never would have gone to school had it been convenient to fish, fish, fish every day! Even then, I was obsessed with all types of fishing. Anything tugging on the end of the line suited me just fine. If asked what's my favorite fish? That's easy. It's the last one I caught.

My self-diagnosed and prescribed solution for "pond fever" in Edgecombe County is 27-acre Etheridge Pond. Interesting story how the pond was formed and developed, and it is one of three Robert E. Barnhill, Sr. Public Fishing Access areas in Edgecombe County.

Sometimes highway construction limits or destroys ponds and lakes in its path. Etheridge Pond was dug as a sandpit for 4-lane US 64, the overpasses, and elevating the roadway above the average flood stage. So progress in this case resulted in a much needed highway and some nice fishing ponds.

Bank fishing is allowed around the entire pond at all points. A fishing pier is conveniently located with

paved parking and handicapped access. NC Inland fishing license is required, if applicable.

Etheridge Pond yields largemouth bass, catfish, and a variety of bream.

North Carolina's Wildlife Resources Commission manages Etheridge Pond, and stocks it with channel catfish, and grass carp to control the vegetation. Popular baits are worms and crickets on small hooks fished under a cork.

A word of caution. Your primary bait stealers will be turtles. These are NOT Bubba The Box Turtle you kept in the garage and fed leafy greens and Skippy Peanut Butter. These are snapping turtles and are very capable of putting a nasty bite on you. If you happen to hook one, cut the line. Not worth messing with. A 15-cent hook is not worth the trouble and pain the turtle could cause you.

Some of the snakes in and around Etheridge pond are serious vipers. They are poisonous and can definitely cause you harm. Look where you step and reach. They are bold and brazen and not really spooked by humans. Too much auto and foot traffic around the pond has removed their natural fear. I've got some good Etheridge Pond snake stories for you, I will relate them in a future article.

Don't mean to scare you off with talk of snapping turtles and snakes, but I want you to be alert and aware out there. Go and enjoy, but be careful. Better safe than sorry.

It was upsetting to see all the trash and litter strewn about at the pond. Bring back more trash than you took, and maybe we can offset these thoughtless jerks that insist on littering and leaving their trash behind. Shame on all you litterbugs!

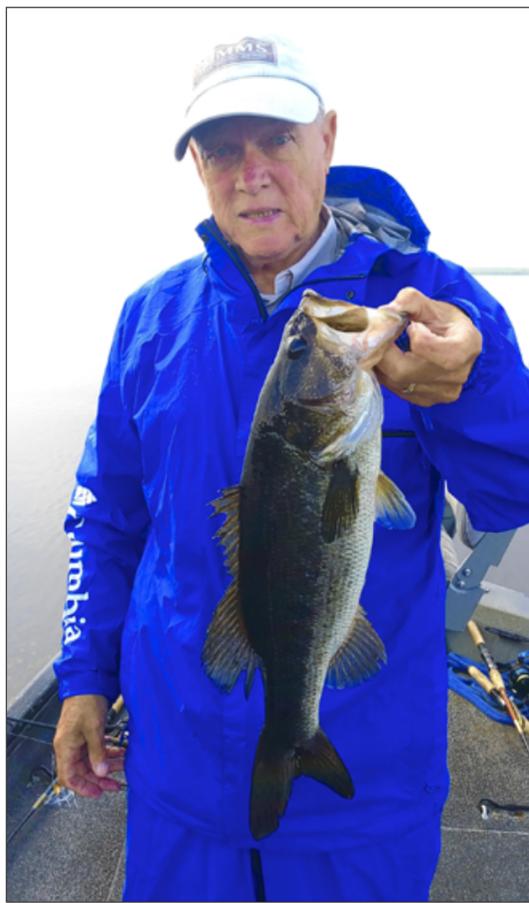
Shad'n – Like most anglers, I had pretty much given up on shad fishing for the season. I think our usual "peak" season kind of got caught up in unfishable flood waters, and sort of passed us by.

Several factors impact shad fishing greatly: water temperature and water level, yet unfortunately, anglers have no control over either one. The best we can do is monitor those data numbers, and act accordingly. I keep a keen eye on the online U. S. Department of the Interior U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) water levels in the Tar River. Last week I saw that we had 3-4 days of unfishable flood stage waters. I knew when the water started to drop, that IF any shad were left in the river, they would bite.

Shad usually bite well on falling water levels. And they did. I love it when a plan comes together. Not big numbers, but enough action to keep you awake and alert. Caught 14 one day and 10 a few days later. Like my pal Wayne Harrell is fond of saying, "Even catching just a few fish is better than pushing a cart in Walmart." Absolutely!

My plan is to keep pursuing shad until I am skunked, at which time I will hang up my Custom Jimmy D shad rigs until next year. The crazy cat at our house thinks my shad rigs are his play toy. I doubt he will like it much if he gets a hook in his furry paw.

Rick's Soapbox – In researching and writing an article about Sweet Water Lake for North Carolina's Eastern Living Magazine that is scheduled to hit the streets the end of May, I learned that the lake owner, Dennis Woodruff, actually named it Susan's Sweet Water Lake, after his deceased wife. He said she supported all his business endeavors, and credits her with the business success he enjoys today. So, readers, from now on I will



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Wayne Harrell with one of the many bass he has been catching lately. His catch numbers have been fantastic this spring, as 30-40-50 fish days are not uncommon. Harrell plays it close to the vest on "where" he is catching these fish. "Downeast" is as specific as he likes to get sometimes. Catch and release is the way Harrell rolls, and that is certainly an admirable trait.

refer to it by its right name, Susan's Sweet Water Lake.

Woodruff hails from Charles County, Maryland, my old stomping grounds. I fished and hunted in that area as a young man. I also consumed a truckload of blue crabs over the years in his neck of the woods. THAT is the heart of delicious Southern Maryland crab country, folks! My fat mouth is watering just

thinking of my beloved tasty blue crabs.

Woodruff is an interesting guy, and an entrepreneur of several businesses that are fishing related, and should be of interest to Tight Lines readers. Check out his website at www.maryland-select.com. This man is all about fish and fishing. My kind of guy!

White Shad Limits? Don't know about you,

but the white shad "bite" at Battle Park in Rocky Mount has been a major disappointment this year. Years past, it was always very productive and the closest thing to a sure bet in my fishing world. It was nothing to sit at the boat ramp, and catch 12-15 fish or more most days. Not so this year. Why?

I wish I had a good answer for you. Have we overfished that area? Maybe. Is it time to take a hard look at that 10-fish daily limit, and consider cutting it back? Possibly. Consider this compromise: stagger keeper days to Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday with all others being catch & release days. ANY change in current status would not be popular among some of my fishing friends that stockpile those mighty whites to use for rockfish bait. However, I know they are smart enough to realize SOMETHING needs to be done to preserve and improve this fantastic Tar River shad fishery.

Marine biologists, much smarter than moi, need to give the white shad problem some attention. Something isn't right, and I would be in favor of any regulatory action that might enhance the future of the white shad. We need to think long term, not just next season, but 3-4-5 seasons down the road. Simply put, what is good for the white shad's future will eventually be good for those of us that enjoy pursuing and catching them.

Catching Fish? Mazel tov! Tell us all about it and include those large file, high resolution happy snaps at carolinaangler@gmail.com.

See you on the water, my friend!

ECC students capture eight awards at SkillsUSA competition

From Contributed Reports

Edgecombe Community College students brought home four individual awards and four team awards from the SkillsUSA state competition held April 19-20.

Twenty-two students and ten faculty advisers traveled to Greensboro to participate in the competition. Founded in 1965, SkillsUSA offers a contest program for students to demonstrate their career and technical skills.

The ECC chapter, called SkillsECC, provides leadership-building activities for students enrolled in vocational, trade and industrial, technical, and health occupations curriculum and continuing education programs.

Two SkillsECC teams placed 1st in the Career Pathways Showcase at the state competition. Students Janice Carter, Elizabeth Cross and Tarfee Hines placed first with their Career Pathways Showcase: Human Services Cluster. Their adviser was Rick Basile, chair of criminal justice.

Students Jilianne Leary, Christopher Nalepka, and Patrick Philips placed 1st with their Career Pathways Showcase: Industrial and Engineering Technical Cluster. Their adviser was Rebecca Stamilio Ehret, physics/industrial trades instructor.

Students Darnell Harrison, Juan "TJ" Johnson, and Jacob Turner placed second in Crime Scene Investigation. They were advised by



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Edgecombe Community College team of (left to right) Christopher Nalepka, Jilianne Leary and Patrick Philips placed first in the Career Pathways Showcase: Industrial and Engineering Technology Cluster in the state SkillsUSA competition.

Gerald Pipkins, part-time criminal justice instructor.

The four-person team of Sylvester Hanson, Kevin Mitchell, Greg Ricks, and Dan Stroud placed second in the Teamworks category. Dave Rummel, facility maintenance instructor, served as the team adviser.

Individual students honored were:

■ Darlene Batts, second place, Information Technology Services, advisers Teresa Jeffries and Tim Boyd

■ William Becker, fourth place, Information Technology Services, advisers Teresa Jeffries and Tim Boyd

■ Taylor Colgett, fifth place, Hair Coloring, adviser Carolyn Sherrill

■ Bobby Mitchell, fifth place, Automotive Refinishing Technology, adviser Bud Speight

Other students who competed at the SkillsUSA state event were cosmetology students Amber Beach and Bridget Lancaster, advised by Carolyn Sherrill; and carpentry students Keadre Mitchell and Devon Weathersbe, advised by Doug Parrish.

"Our students represented Edgecombe Community College and themselves with professionalism and considerable competence at the state competition," said Sheila Hoskins, adviser to the SkillsECC organization and director of institutional effectiveness at the college.

"This is just the second year of the SkillsUSA organization on the Edgecombe Community College campus. We are so very proud of our students and their accomplishments."



**Charm
night out**

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Advance tickets now on sale!




The 2016 Charm Night Out event is set for Tuesday, June 28th from 4 to 8 p.m. at Dunn Center for the Performing Arts on the campus of NC Wesleyan.

Don't miss all the fun, including:

- Nearly 50 door prizes with a combined total value of over \$800!
- Great selection of food
- Expanded fashion show... two different showtimes!
- One lucky lady will be drawn for our Grand Prize!

TICKET PRICES

Advance \$12.00

For group ticket pricing, call (252) 407-9936

Advance ticket pricing ends at 5 p.m. Friday, June 24.

Tickets at the door... \$15.00

Tickets can be purchased at the Rocky Mount Telegram, 1000 Hunter Hill Road, Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., or by mailing in the form below:

CHARM NIGHT OUT TICKET ORDER

Complete form, include payment or credit card information, and mail to:
CNO Tickets, PO Box 1080, Rocky Mount, NC 27802

Once order is processed, tickets will be mailed to you.

Name _____

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Number of tickets: _____ Bill Credit Card _____

\$ _____ Advance @ \$12.00 each _____ Visa _____ MC _____ Discover _____ AMEX _____

\$ _____ Group @ \$10.00 each _____ Card Number _____

(call for details) _____ 3-Digit Security Code _____

\$ _____ Total _____ Expiration _____

_____ Payment Enclosed _____

Name on Card _____

Order request must be sent by 5 p.m. Monday, June 20th.

Questions? Call 252-407-9936.