

Best steelhead season ahead

Michigan anglers may well remember the spring of '77 as the best steelhead season ever as a predicted record number of fish pour into Great Lakes tributaries, according to Automobile Club of Michigan.

Peak runs of mature, 3-year-old steelheads averaging 10 pounds, as well as four-pound spawners will make Lower Michigan spawning runs in March and April. Best Upper Peninsula stream fishing should be in April and May.

The more than two million fish available to anglers this spring equal past years, but the higher water levels expected in rivers mean record spawning runs.

Water levels of virtually all prime streams listed on the accompanying map were extremely low last fall. This forced all but a few steelhead to winter in the Great Lakes rather than rivers.

Because much of Michigan received heavy snowfall this winter, the spring thaw should trigger heavy runs into all spawning streams.

The state's 2-year-old steelhead record of 36 pounds, eight ounces set in Lake Michigan near St. Joseph could be broken this spring.

It may have been broken last year by anglers mistaking giant steelhead for salmon. A steelhead can be identified by its all-white mouth, spotted tail and pink gill plates and side stripes.

Anglers who think they have snagged a record fish should take them to the nearest DNR office, or they may weigh the fish using certified scales at any grocery, and then submit results to the DNR along with statements by two witnesses.

SINCE THE START of heavy Michigan steelhead plantings in the 1960s, many angling techniques have been tried. The most popular has been the spawn bag, fished in river deep spots or along harbor breakwaters. Fishermen use either a sinker or a bobber.

Wading rivers and working spinners or flies in deep spots or across occupied spawning beds are other produc-

tive methods, according to the AAA. Some steelheaders prefer to troll wobbling lures or spinners off river mouths and in lakes formed by rivers in West Michigan.

Steelhead are fickle fish. Fish protecting beds during spawning or resting under logs or in deep holes will often charge flies or lures from several feet away. Other times, however, the same fish will ignore every attempt to provoke a strike.

Lower Michigan waters draw the most fishing pressure while Upper Peninsula streams often are deserted during major runs which occur a month after downstate fishing has ended. Southeast Michigan anglers have a bonus in the St. Clair River's

North Channel, which has become an excellent steelhead fishery.

ANGLERS SHOULD learn all regulations applying to rivers they fish. Sections of some rivers are open for fly fishing only, while other parts open when general trout season starts April 30.

DNR officials note that Lake Michigan steelhead may contain excessive amounts of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and anglers should eat no more than one-half pound of fish per week. Women of childbearing age should not eat any fish containing high PCB levels.

For further information on stream limitations and PCB dangers, anglers should consult the DNR's Michigan Fishing Guide.



Dear Doctor:
My 7-month-old cockapoo sometimes sits on the carpet and scoots herself along on her bottom. Does this mean she has worms?
J.T., Royal Oak

Dear J. T.:

A dog that scoots her bottom across a rough surface is trying to tell us that her anal area is itching. This sensation can be caused by a number of things.

A shaggy dog like a cocker-poodle mix may have some fecal matter caught in the hair in this area causing irritation of the underlying skin. Dogs have two small sacs just inside the anus called anal glands that can fill up with secretion. This causes

an uncomfortably full feeling for the dog. She might scoot to try to relieve that.

If a pet has diarrhea, this can cause a raw feeling at the anus. Last, but not least, if she is passing intestinal parasites like tapeworm segments, this will cause a similar discomfort.

Check your dog to see if she has a hair mat that should be removed and if that is not the problem, have your veterinarian examine her.

For kids:
Did you know that cats are the only animals that purr? Purring is a very strange sound that comes from vibration of the voice box in the back of a cat's mouth. Most of the time, purring tells us the kitty is quite contented.

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