

# It's good time to go fishing for blue gill

## OUTDOOR INSIGHTS



BILL PARKER

After setting the hook with a quick snap of my wrist a truculent battle ensued with a fat, feisty blue gill.

With warm weather infiltrating southeastern Michigan, the water temperature on local inland lakes is rising. The best blue gill bite of the season appears to be hitting stride.

Throughout the months of May and June, depending on the weather, the bluegill, the nearly all inland lake gets over-run with nesting (bedding) blue gills. The males show up first and each will fan out a circular nest (bed) in the sand or gravel bottom.

After making the nest the male waits around in anticipation of the arrival of a female, who will deposit eggs in the nest then disappear back into deeper water. The aggressive male then fertilizes the eggs and stands watchful guard over the nest for the next few weeks.

### Heavy concentrations

With so many fish concentrated in the shallows they are especially vulnerable to anglers during this period.

Blue gill are the bread and butter fish of most inland lakes in the state.

Some lakes are so over-run with them that the fish are actually stunted and never reach more than five or six inches in length. In other lakes, with a healthy predator/prey ratio, gills can reach in excess of 10 inches in length and sometimes weigh over a pound.

The secret to catching spawning blue gills is to be cautious in your approach. Gills are easily spooked while bedding in the shallows. Whether fishing from shore or from a boat, be exceptionally quiet and light-footed as you approach the shoreline.

Don't cast your shadow on the water either, as it will surely scare the fish.

Small rubber spiders, flies, poppers and the old reliable hook

and worm are top producers at this time of year.

If you're surface fishing, let your offering rest for a minute then begin a slow, jerky retrieve. This lively action on the surface of the water is irresistible to a hungry blue gill.

Hook and worm anglers can let their bait float to the bottom, then drag it through the nesting area.

If the fish seem reluctant to bite, drop your worm right in the middle of a nest. The male standing guard will immediately remove the intruder. Tear drops tipped with a wiggler or a wax worm are also deadly in the spring.

### Big fish, little fish

The smaller fish will bed in shallow water (two to four feet) while the bigger fish will be bed-

ded in slightly deeper water (four to eight feet).

If you've had a nation to pick up the sport of fly fishing, but haven't quite taken the plunge, this spring fishery provides a great opportunity to give it a try.

It's also a great time to take a child fishing. Action is often sizzling and you don't need any fancy, special equipment. Any medium to light - or better yet ultra light - spinning combo will work.

A long cane pole is even effective at this time of year as long as the angler using it can remain quiet and not spook the fish while getting bait into the water. The lighter the line the better. Four-pound test will work, but I prefer two-pound test so I don't spook the fish.

A rubric of mine awards by one-pound test, which isn't much

more than sewing thread, and always catches his fill.

I prefer to tie my hook directly to the line, bypassing a snap swivel. This allows me to offer my bait with a more natural presentation.

Although the daily creel limit is 25 you don't have to fill your bucket each time you go out. Don't overharvest the fish. You'll only hurt the fishery for years to come. Instead, keep just enough fish for a meal or two and return the rest to swim another day, especially if you catch a fat, spawning female.

(Questions and comments are encouraged. Send to: Outdoors, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, 48009. Fax information to (248) 644-1914, send e-mail to bpark@home.com or call Bill Parker at (248) 901-2573.)

## Trees, birds appear in unexpected areas



TIM NOWICKI

As more and more people explore the natural world, new species will be discovered, new populations of a rare or extirpated species may be found, or new behaviors may be noted.

In order to know what is new, we have to know what is usual, or common.

Our information oriented world has allowed more people to become familiar with species of plants or animals that may be encountered in a particular area. Field guides and local lists generated by special interest groups can be very helpful.

What adds more excitement to discoveries is that they can be made in familiar areas, like Belle Isle.

Not long ago a naturalist on the island was exploring the wet woods and discovered a healthy population of pumpkin ash trees.

According to Edward Voss, it was not until 1992 that this tree was first discovered in Michigan.

The first population was found in Hillsdale County and later another population was discovered in Berrien County. Wet woods are difficult to explore, so these trees went unnoticed until just recently.

Michigan is north of where pumpkin ash usually grows.

Typically found along the Atlantic and gulf coasts, and in the southern Illinois area, Belle Isle is not where naturalists would have expected to find pumpkin ash.

That is one feature that makes it an exciting discovery, while widespread and common oak to the south, the Shumard oak was also discovered

on the island.

It, too, prefers to grow in wet woods and was not discovered because of its inaccessibility, though it had been growing for an estimated 200 years.

This species hybridizes with other oaks and may have been easily dismissed as another red oak. Qualified botanists have verified the identification of both tree species.

In the birding community there is a committee that rules on the validity of rare bird sightings.

Since birds are mobile and infrequently caught, allowing close, careful verification, photos, videos and written descriptions of the circumstances which are all used in the judges' determination.

Without material documentation it is harder for the judges to decide if the sighting is valid.

Recently, two new birds were added to the list of birds seen in the state throughout the year.

The boat-tailed/grunt-tailed grackle was added to the list after review by the committee.

They were not able to distinguish if it was the boat-tailed grackle, or the great-tailed grackle because they are so similar, but they acknowledged that the bird seen at Whitefish Point in the Upper Peninsula was one of these two species.

A Brewer's sparrow, also seen at Whitefish Point, was another new species for the state.

After these two additions, the state list stands at 409 different species of birds.

Undoubtedly more new birds will be seen in the state, as well as, new species of plants, insects, fish, snails and other groups.

It will continue as long as observant people look carefully while enjoying the natural world.

## OUTDOOR CALENDAR

### TOURNAMENT

#### ST. CLAIR OPEN

The Backlashers Bass Club will hold its 12th annual Lake St. Clair Open two-person bass tournament beginning at 6 a.m. Saturday, June 19. Team entry fee is \$80 if paid by May 20, \$90 at the boat launch. To register and for more information call Roger Hayvalp at (734) 753-5341, Steve Tarnasiewicz at (313) 538-1202 or Jeff Mangrum at (313) 937-2190.

### CLASSES

#### BACKPACKING ESSENTIALS I

The first of a two-part course introducing beginner backpackers to the joys and essentials of backpacking, begins at 7 p.m. Wednesday, June 2, at REI in Northville. Participants will learn how to plan a trip and how to choose the right gear. Call (248) 347-2100 for more information.

#### FLY FISHING SCHOOL

The Riverbend Sports Shop in Southfield is sponsoring several fly fishing schools in the upcoming months. Held at the Huntsman Hunt Club in Dryden and Hunters Creek Hunt Club in Metamora, the schools include lessons in basic fly fishing techniques including casting, knot tying, reading the water, playing, landing and releasing fish, entomology and fly selection and more. Classes are scheduled for June 6 and 19, July 11 and 25.

Aug. 16 and 29, and Sept. 12. Class size is limited. Call (248) 350-8484 or (248) 681-3474 to register and for information.

#### CLIMBING CLASS

An introductory climbing course for the novice and first-time climber is offered at various times at REI in Northville. The class covers basic indoor climbing safety, technique, equipment and terminology. The course is free and available to adults and children. Call (248) 847-2100 for current schedules and additional information.

### ACTIVITIES

#### COMMUNITY CLEANUP

REI is recruiting volunteers for the ninth annual National Trails Day community service project. Volunteers will maintain the hiking trails at Maybury State Park beginning at 10 a.m. Saturday, June 5. Call (248) 347-2100 for details and to volunteer.

### SEASON/DATES

#### BASS SEASON

The season opens Saturday, June 19, on Lake St. Clair and the St. Clair and Detroit rivers.

#### FREE FISHING

Michigan's annual Free Fishing Weekend will be June 12-13.

### COUNTY PARKS

COUNTY PARK REQUIREMENTS Advanced registration is

required for all nature programs at Oakland County Parks. Call (810) 625-6473 to register or for more information.

**WONDROUS WATERSHEDS** Take a "stomp in the swamp" and discover the Clinton River watershed in celebration of River Day 99, during this program, which begins at 10 a.m. Saturday, June 5, at Independence Oaks.

#### AMAZING ANTS

Search for ants on the trail and learn more about this amazing insect during this program at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, June 12, at Independence Oaks.

### STATE PARKS

#### STATE PARK REQUIREMENTS

Maybury State Park, Proud Lake Recreation Area, Bald Mountain Recreation Area, Highland Recreation Area, and Island Lake Recreation Area offer nature interpretive programs throughout the year. A state park motor vehicle permit is required for entry into all state parks and state recreation areas. For registration and additional information on the programs at Maybury call (810) 349-8399. For programs at Bald Mountain call (810) 683-6767.

For programs at Proud Lake and Highland call (810) 685-2187. For programs at Island Lake call (810) 229-7067.

### PRETTY TILE, UGLY GROUT?

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### BIRD IDENTIFICATION

A naturalist-led hike in search of resident birds begins at 8 a.m. Wednesday, June 2, at Maybury.

#### FARM STORIES

Join a park naturalist for a session of farm stories during this program, which begins at 11 a.m. Saturday, June 5, and at 3 p.m. Sunday, June 6, at Maybury.

#### TRAIL DAY

In association with SOLAR and REI, volunteers are needed to maintain the hiking trails at Maybury State Park beginning at 10 a.m. Saturday, June 5.

### METROPARKS

#### METROPARK REQUIREMENTS

Most Metropark programs are free while some require a nominal fee. Advanced registration and a motor vehicle permit are required for all programs. Call the respective parks toll free at the following numbers: Stony Creek, 1-800-477-7766; Indian Springs, 1-800-477-3192; Kensington, 1-800-477-3178.

#### 1999 PERMITS

The 1999 Huron-Clinton Metroparks annual vehicle entry permits and boat launching permits are on sale at all Metropark offices. Vehicle entry permits are \$15 (\$5 for senior citizens). The annual boat launching permits are \$15 (\$5 for senior citizens). Call 1-800-47-PARKS.

**Correction Notice**

In our May 30th insert, we advertised a Memorial Day sale which pictured a Topcon side-by-side refrigerator (model RT180KXHW) for \$379.92. The pictured item and brand name are incorrect.

The offered product is actually a Roper top-mount refrigerator for \$379.92. All other advertised information about this product is correct.

We apologize for any confusion or inconvenience this may have caused.

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