

OUTDOORS

Tickets for Salmon Stakes tourney on sale

OUTDOOR
INSIGHTSBILL
PARKER

Seems a little early to start thinking about salmon fishing on the Great Lakes. Heck, many of the bays are still covered with ice and ice anglers searching for perch and walleyes. But when the ice finally melts away and the waters warm into the low 40s salmon anglers will be out in force trolling the old familiar haunts of southern Lake Huron in search of a chinook or coho salmon, steelhead or brown trout.

Because of the shallow water

in southern Lake Huron, the water there warms a little earlier than in other areas of the Great Lakes and the baitfish, alewives and smelt come storming into the warm water. Trout and salmon soon follow and provide us with one of the earliest salmon fisheries of the year.

As spring turns to summer and the rest of the Great Lakes warm, the fish begin to scatter as they move north. Decent fishing remains around the Thumb area, but nothing like it is early in the season.

Fishing clubs and civic organizations hold a number of fishing tournaments around the Great Lakes throughout the summer months that lure anglers from near and far. One of the earliest and most respected tournaments

is the River Crab Salmon Stakes, which is slated for Saturday, April 23, and based at the River Crab Restaurant in St. Clair.

While many anglers from the Observer & Eccentric coverage area annually fish in the tournament, thousands of others support the tournament and its cause by purchasing \$10 raffle/entry tickets.

Unlike many tournaments that pay back entry fees to the fishermen, the River Crab pays back only a small portion. The rest of the money — raised through ticket sales and corporate sponsorship — is donated to charity and used to support family mental health and counseling agencies statewide. To date, the tournament has raised over \$1

million since its inception 23 years ago.

While the \$10 tickets are good for entry into the tournament, they also enter the bearer in a raffle, which will be held at the River Crab at the conclusion of the fish weigh-in on April 28. Raffle prizes include a grand prize of a five day, four night family getaway to Walt Disney World including hotel, airfare, park passes and \$300 in "fun money." Other prizes include a four day, three night getaway for a family of four to the Best Western Wheats Inn in Chatham, Ontario; Pistons tickets, Tigers tickets; \$500 in Chuck Muir gift certificates; and a sightseeing cruise for 10 aboard the Huron Lady followed by dinner at Chuck Muir's River Crab.

And that's not all. Each ticket is also redeemable for \$10 off dinner for two at any Chuck Muir Restaurant. Tickets are available at any Chuck Muir Restaurant including Muir's Seafood Tavern in West Bloomfield, Charley's Crab in Troy, Moriwethers in Southfield, Gandy Dancer in Ann Arbor, Big Fish in Dearborn, Big Fish Too in Madison Heights, or by calling 1-800-468-3727.

Fishermen can win big, too. A prize of \$500 will be awarded to the anglers who catch the biggest chinook, coho, steelhead and brown trout on tournament day. In addition, a specially tagged King salmon, dubbed "Slippery Charlie" will be released in the waters of southern Lake Huron in the week

leading up to the tournament and if an angler registered with the tournament catches "Slippery Charlie" they will earn a \$1,000 cash stipend. The skipper of the boat with the heaviest catch will also win \$500, and \$5,000 will be awarded to the fishing club with the heaviest catch.

It may be a little early to start getting ready to fish, but it's not too early to support this worthy cause.

(Bill Parker writes a weekly outdoor column for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. Hunters and anglers are urged to report their successes. Questions and comments are also encouraged. Send information to: Bill Parker, c/o Outdoors, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009)

Skunks on move this time of year

NATURE
NOTESBILL
PARKER

It was cold.

While skunks are resting in dens they may have dug themselves but more likely confiscated from a woodchuck, they may have company. Cobabiting the den may be the woodchuck that actually excavated the site. Typically, the skunk and the woodchuck are in two different sections.

In other cases, any number of skunks may be wintering together. Some congregations included females and young she raised during the year; other groups included several males and a batch of youngsters; another had 10 females and two or three males. Most of the time there is just one male and several females in the den.

As warm temperatures arrive in late February and early March, the sexual drive of the male and the warmth stimulates him to awake and leave the den in search of mates. Those females in the den may not be awake or receptive yet. The individuals I saw roaming the yards were probably males.

In late winter grubs are not readily available in the cold, if not frozen ground, so skunks

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males will sometimes encounter other males. These encounters can result in fights over areas in which to search for females. Males are promiscuous and will mate with as many females as they can find. Gestation for a female skunk is about 64 days.

Baby skunks are born with wrinkled skin that is practically hairless, though the striped pattern can be identified at this time; they are blind and toothless. In eight weeks they will be following the female on hunting trips.

Many people become aware of skunks only when they discover small holes in their lawn that were not there when they went to bed the night before.

Skunks eat a variety of foods; one summer tidbit are grubs of June beetles that live in lawns.

Each hole in the lawn was probably where a grub got buried.

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readily available in the cold, if not frozen ground, so skunks

ACTIVITIES

OAKLAND COUNTY SPORTFISHING
ASSOCIATION

The Oakland County Sportfishing Association meets at 7:30 p.m. the third Wednesday of each month at Sam's Hall, 10850 Cass Lake Road, Keego Harbor. Call (248) 693-4289 or visit the club's web site at <http://go.octsfa.org> for information.

SALAR

The School for Outdoor Leadership, Adventure and Recreation (SOLAR), a non-profit organization interested in promoting the appreciation of outdoor activities, meets at 7:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at the Colony Hall in Southfield. Call (248) 958-6658 for more information.

DETROIT AREA STEELHEADERS

Metro-West Steelheaders, Inc. membership meetings are held the last Tuesday of each month at Knights of Columbus, St. Pius X, 6177 Chicago Road, in Warren. The public is welcome. More information can be obtained by calling Ed Wilczek at (610) 767-7365 or club president Ray Bantur at (610) 598-0310.

METRO-WEST STEELHEADERS

Metro-West Steelheaders meets at 7:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month in the cafeteria at Garden City High School. Call Dominic Liparoto at (248) 476-5027 for more information.

MICHIGAN FLY FISHING

The Michigan Fly Fishing Club meets at 7:30 p.m. the first and third Wednesdays of each month in Ligonier, Clarenceville Middle School, located on Middlefield Road between Seven and Eight Mile roads. Call (248) 478-1494 for more information.

FOUR SEASONS

The Four Seasons Fishing Club meets 7:30-9:30 p.m. the first Wednesday of each month at the Civic Park Senior Center, 16218 Farmington Road, in Livonia. Call Jim Kudej at (734) 591-0843 for information.

HURON VALLEY STEELHEADERS

The Huron Valley Steelheaders meets the third Thursday of each

OUTDOOR CALENDAR

TRAVELS WITH A NATURALIST

Karen Bates, SOLAR Club member and outdoor enthusiast, traveled the mighty Colorado River by raft. Her photographic journey will take you through ancient rock layers revealing mysterious American Indian pictographs, fossils, canyon wildlife and spectacular natural beauty. This program is at 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 9 at the Nature Center of Stony Creek Metropark near Rochester. For more information, call (810) 781-4621.

CREEK FESTIVAL

Come and take a peek at what's living in the creek. See how a river cuts a channel, learn your creekbed address, watch live indoor demonstrations, and learn how the critters in the creek predict your future during this program scheduled for Sunday, March 11 from 1 p.m.-4 p.m. at the Nature Center of Kensington Metropark near Milford/Brighton. For more information, contact the Kensington Metropark Nature Center at 1-800-477-3176.

OAKLAND PARKS

COUNTY PARK REQUIREMENTS

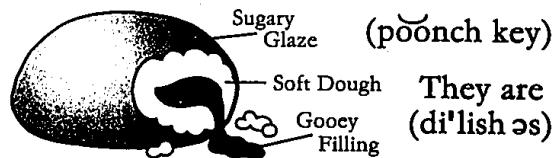
Advanced registration and a motor vehicle permit are required for all nature programs at Oakland County Parks. Call (810) 625-6473 to register.

PERMITS

The 2001 Oakland County parks motor vehicle permits are now on sale at all county park offices and many parks and recreation and township offices. Cost is \$20 through April 30, 2001. After May 1, 2001, the permit cost will be \$25.

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