

WRS Upgrades Trout Hatcheries

This past summer, the Wildlife Resources Section upgraded and made repairs at two of the state's seven trout hatcheries. Major work was done at Spring Run Hatchery in Grant County which was built in 1952. In those days people really didn't think about the need to treat wastewater from a hatchery. For many years leftover fish food and fish wastes flowed directly into Spring Run, a beautiful limestone trout stream. At hatcheries built in later years, including Reeds Creek and Tate Lohr, the wastewater flows into settling ponds, before entering the receiving streams.

DNR officials spent approximately \$3 million to correct the problem. A "batch clarifier" was built which allows the wastewater to be piped to a tank where the waste settles out. The clear water is then drained off. The waste sludge which settles out is pumped into a storage tank. Periodically, the sludge is loaded into tanker trucks and is sprayed onto fields as fertilizer. As a result of the construction, the effluent from the hatchery now meets state water discharge standards.

Besides solving the wastewater problem, DNR officials also built 12 new raceways to help improve production efficiency at the hatchery. The 80-foot-long raceways will be a marked improvement over the old square concrete ponds for raising trout. In addition, numerous cracks in the old raceways were repaired.

Raceway improvements were also completed last fall at Reeds Creek Hatchery in Pendleton County. Workers replaced the lower sections of all eight raceways to repair leaks caused by ground subsidence. The leaks were causing the amount of water available for recirculation through the hatchery to decrease. That problem is now fixed.

The state's trout hatcheries were constructed in the 1930s, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. All of them need improvements to continue producing trout for West Virginia's anglers. For this reason a statewide study of all DNR hatcheries will begin this year to look at infrastructure needs, effluent treatment requirements, and the potential to increase trout production.



New raceways at Spring Run Hatchery.



Spring Run Hatchery: before (left) and after improvements.



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Channel catfish

Catfishing - State Park Style

In an effort to highlight fishing opportunities in West Virginia's state parks, the Division of Natural Resources has initiated a catfish stocking program for selected state parks. The stockings are intended to provide family-based fishing opportunities for catchable-sized channel catfish during the late spring and mid-summer, especially highlighting National Fishing and Boating Week and West Virginia's Free Fishing Days on June 7 and June 8 this year. Catfish will be stocked in lakes at Cacapon, North Bend, Pipestem, Blackwater Falls, Watoga and Chief Logan state parks.

Fisheries biologists will insert a green spaghetti-like tag close to the dorsal fin of the catfish. Anglers catching a tagged fish are asked to remove the tag and return it to the DNR Parkersburg Office (2311 Ohio Ave Parkersburg, WV 26101) by mail, call in the catch information (304-420-4550), or report the catch via e-mail (fishtags@wvdnr.gov). DNR personnel want to know your name and address, the tag number, date of catch, and if the fish was released or kept. A reward will be given for all returned tags.

As part of a pilot study in 2007, DNR personnel stocked tagged catfish into ponds at Cacapon, North Bend and Pipestem state parks. Anglers reported catching more than 25 percent of the catfish. Successful anglers kept over 50 percent of the fish they caught. More than 60 percent of the anglers who reported catching a tagged catfish were fishing as a family group. Most anglers also reported participating in several other state park-based activities during their fishing trip.

Calendar of Events

April

- 18-20 **BOW Weekend**
North Bend State Park
Full weekend of Becoming an Outdoors-Woman activities. Thirty different classes to choose from. Contact Billie Shearer, 304-558-2771, billieshearer@wvdnr.gov or go online.
- 19 **Spring Bird Walk**
Prickett's Fort State Park
Celebrate the joys of spring with a morning bird walk. DNR staff will lead the public. Programs begin at 8 am. Wear sturdy walking shoes and bring binoculars. Call 304-363-3030 or email info@prickettsfort.org.

May

- 8-10 **47th Annual Wildflower Pilgrimage**
Blackwater Falls State Park
Activities include bird walks, wildflower tours, nature programs, beginner wildflower and bird identification workshops, craft exhibits and sales. Call 304-259-5216 for more information.
- 10 **Migration Celebration**
Little Beaver State Park
Three Rivers Avian Center presents a festival of WV natural heritage and birds. Featuring live birds, wildlife displays, kids' activities, door prizes and more. Begins at 9 am. Call 304-763-2494 for more information.
- 10 **Spring Migration Bird Count**
Pipestem Resort State Park
Novice and experienced birders alike search for 100 species of birds in one day. Bring lunch and binoculars. Contact Jim Phillips at 304-466-1800 Ext. 344 for more information.

June

- 6-8 **2nd Annual Southern Boreal Bird Festival**
Canaan Valley State Park
Canaan Valley is ideal habitat for many species of birds found further north in North America, including the Northern saw-whet owl, yellow-bellied sapsucker, alder flycatcher and bobolink. Includes daily walks, workshops and guest speakers. Call 304-866-9126 for more information.
- 7 **Kid's Fishing Derby**
Little Beaver State Park
Bring out the kids during the state's free fishing days. Begins at 9 am. All participants receive lunch, t-shirts and prizes. Call 304-763-2494 for more information.

Hunters Harvest 145,577 Deer in 2007

Bowhunters took 26,965 deer during the archery season which runs from mid-October until December 31. This represented a seven percent increase over 2006. The top 10 counties were: Preston - 1,167; Randolph - 989; McDowell - 941; Greenbrier - 894; Wyoming - 871; Nicholas - 850; Fayette - 826; Mason 792; Raleigh - 778 and Wood - 703.

The two-week-long traditional firearms season saw hunters kill 67,505 deer throughout the state. Twenty-nine counties reported an increase while the other 22 counties open to firearms hunting reported a decrease. The decline in those northern and western counties may be related to an outbreak of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease that occurred last fall, killing numerous deer. The bucks taken around the state appeared to be in good health and had larger antlers, evidence that the deer population is more in line with the carrying capacity of the habitat. The top 10 counties were: Preston - 2,323; Hampshire - 2,235; Greenbrier - 2,215; Hardy - 2,104; Mason - 2,083; Jackson - 2,070; Braxton - 1,986; Randolph - 1,960; Monroe - 1,952, and Roane - 1,903.

The 2007 antlerless deer season, which includes the youth deer hunts, was 11 percent above 2006 due to the



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increase in bag limits and the number of counties open to antlerless deer hunting. The top 10 counties were: Preston - 2,171; Mason - 2,171; Monroe - 2,123; Jackson - 2,000; Ritchie - 1,914; Wood - 1,789; Harrison - 1,615; Lewis - 1,450; Upshur - 1,371 and Wetzel - 1,363.

Muzzleloader hunters killed 7,423 deer during the one-week season. This represented an eight percent increase over the 2006 harvest. The increase is attributed in part to the increased number of counties open to either-sex muzzleloader hunting. The top 10 counties were: Braxton - 394; Lewis - 354; Preston - 320; Greenbrier - 307; Monroe - 304; Upshur - 270; Fayette - 264; Jackson - 246; Grant - 239 and Mason - 232.

Wildlife biologists will analyze data from the combined 2007 deer seasons for each of the state's 55 counties before making recommendations for this fall's deer seasons.

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