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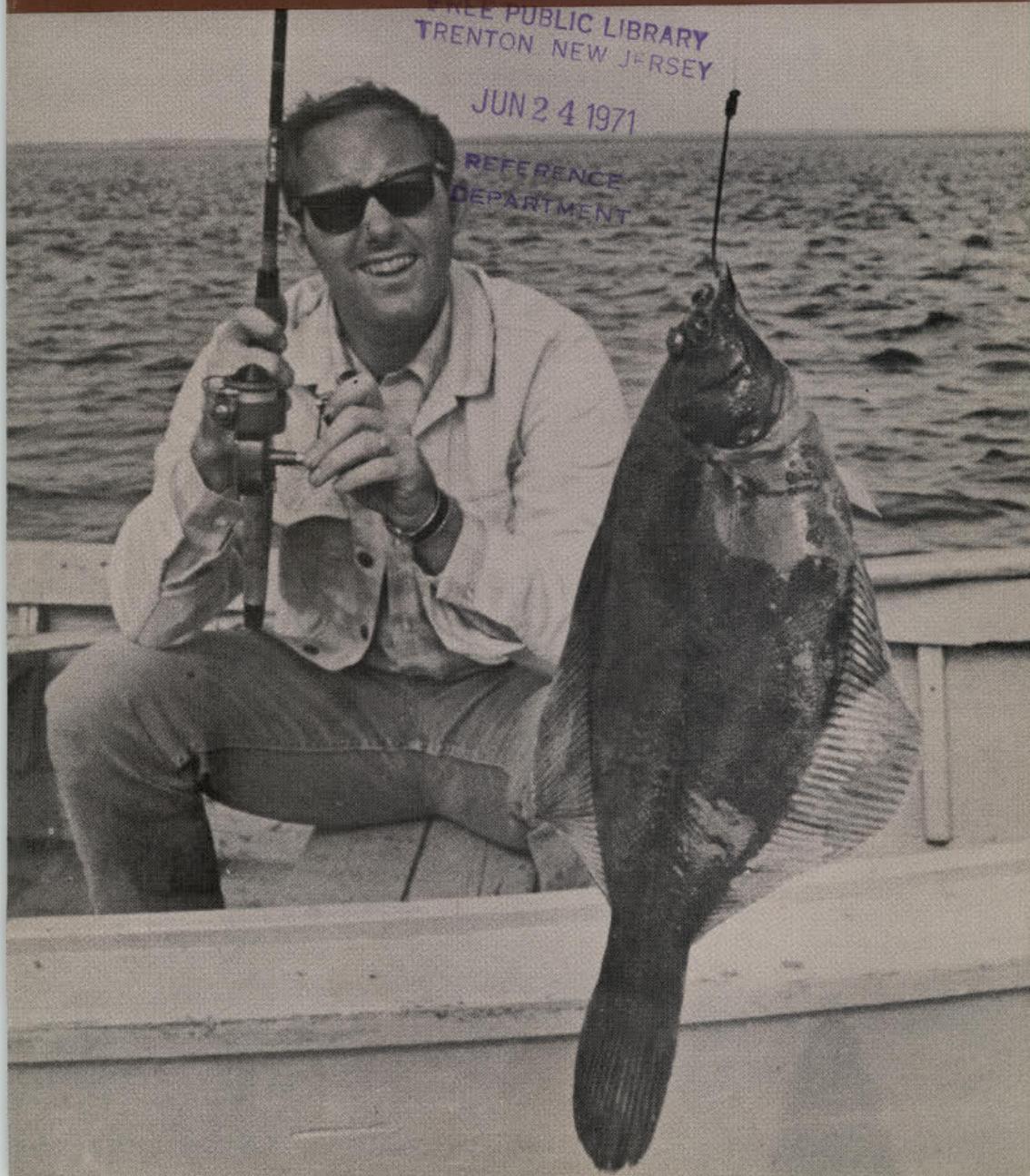
# New Jersey Outdoors

March 1971

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# *Outlook*

## **At The Local Level**

*By Ernest Swift*

It has often been said, "Repeat a statement enough times and people will believe it." There are certain instances where this has proven true, but indulging in old adages it has also been stated, "You can't fool all the people all of the time." Many people with perception are beginning to wonder where resource husbandry fits between these two rather opposing observations.

My own experiences have ranged from years as a field man in conservation to administration at the state and federal level, and then back to the community atmosphere of a small town where collectively logging, small farms, the summer resort business, and a few small industries sustain the economic base.

I have tried to take advantage of my experiences all along the way, and I now look upon this return, after many years, as a complete cycle in my conservation education. I recommend this refresher course to conservation leadership in general.

The rural areas are not quite the same as when I left them, they are far more sophisticated, but still with remnants of individualism of a passing era. I find the people still much preoccupied with local problems, but there are also issues of an insidious nature which

they tend to ignore. The problems are not too big to overcome, but it is easier to brush them aside. Some attitudes on conservation are little different than when I left the field, but underneath there is more of an awareness of potential difficulties.

Now federal and state planners have moved in on the country folk in every respect of living as never before. Too many of these planners have only a metropolitan background and assume that country folk are not capable of running their own business. They must be brainwashed and regimented into the larger scheme of national existence.

As of now the planners seem to have the whip hand because people are busy with their own affairs, but their individualism is being chiseled away in small fragments. If they allow this they are in great part responsible for not facing up to the things which need to be done.

While the planners, with the power of law and lots of money, advance their land-use schemes for forestry, recreation, and farming for the benefit of a bucolic public, the local rod and gun clubs continue their monthly meetings.

Summer resort areas have many problems vital to that business, and the general attitude is what

*Continued on page 28*

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# **New Jersey Outdoors**

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*Cover—"Winter Flounder Fishing"—Harry Grosch*

Fishing for winter flounders along the Jersey shore is surely one of the favorite cold weather activities of Garden State anglers who ply the briny waters. The winter flounder, such as Skip Todd has caught, not only is a relatively available species that requires little in the way of special and expensive tackle, but it also is one of our most toothsome fish when brought to the table. For more on flounders see page 3.

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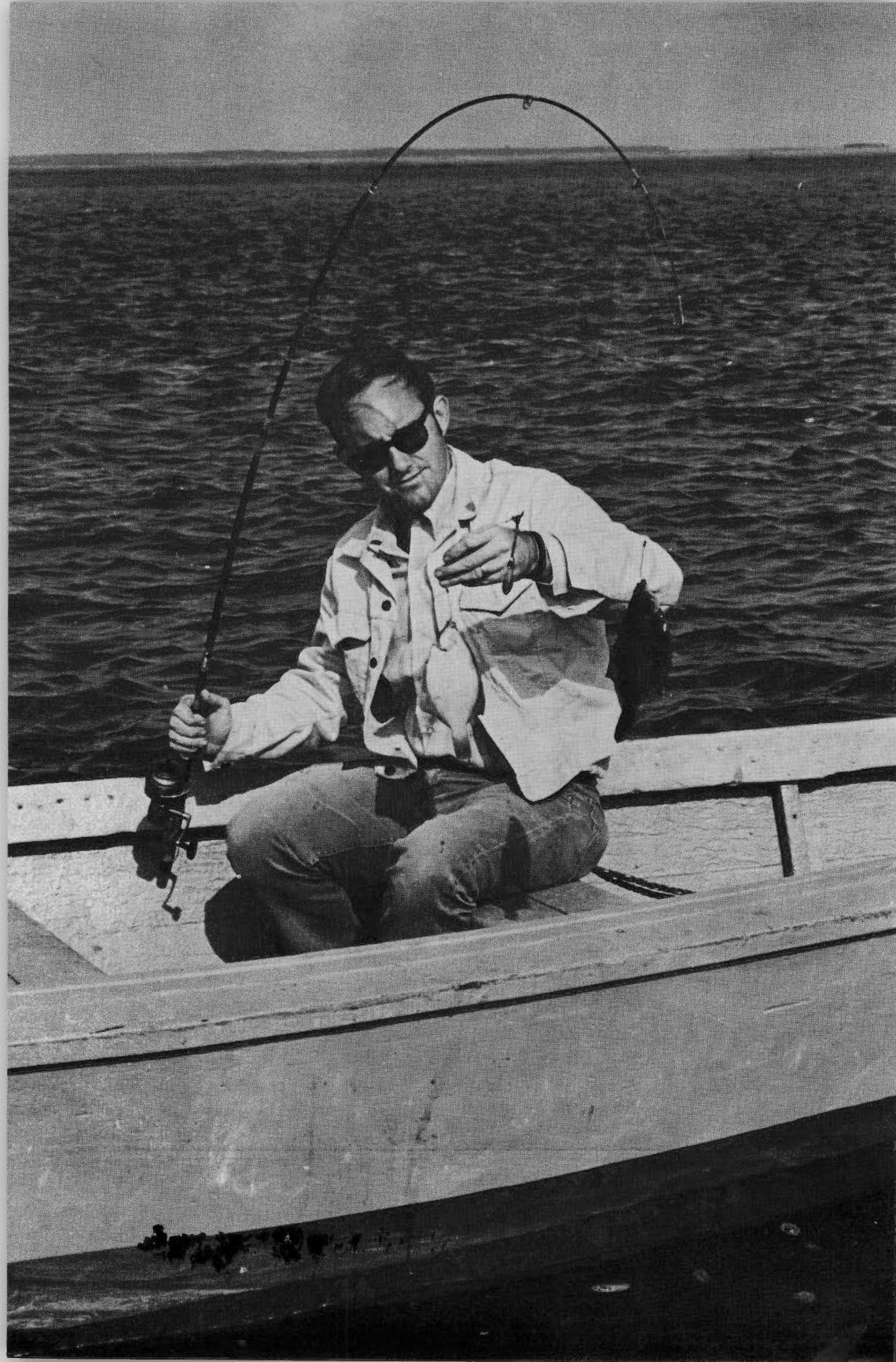
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# R for Winter Weary Trout Fishermen . . .

## *Pseudopleuronectes americanus*

By Robert A. Bartnett

Photographs by Harry Grosch

**T**here was a faint touch of spring in the chill March air. It was the kind of sunny, late winter day that makes you itch for the opening of the trout season.

I stared glumly through the living room's big picture window at the still barren hills of Northwest Jersey. My thoughts strayed to sparkling rushing mountain streams, with deep pools in which hungry rainbows, browns, and brookies lurked furtively beneath the surface.

The incessant jangling of the telephone sharply brought me back to reality.

A cheerful voice at the other end boomed: "Ol' Doc Reynolds here, with a cure for the late winter blues."

"The winter flounder are in, Man! How about it?"

Without waiting for a reply, he continued: "Grab your light spinning rig; some warm clothes, and come on down. I'll take care of the rest."

That's how I, an avid freshwater

fisherman, got hooked on annual pre-trout season excursions in quest of those delicious and plentiful "flatties," which range the Atlantic Coastal waters from Labrador to Georgia.

Pete, a New York public relations executive and dedicated saltwater angler of pretty fair standing, lists my conversion as one of his major accomplishments.

We fished out of Ship Bottom on the Jersey coast, working both lower Barnegat Bay and Little Egg Harbor. It proved to be a sure but breezy cure for any winter-weary housebound trout angler.

Not only are winter flounder a load of fun to catch, but they require no additional tackle investment for the average freshwater enthusiast, and are found in abundance from Newfoundland to the Chesapeake Bay.

This species, sometimes referred to as a "right-handed fish" because its pigmentation generally is found only on the right side of its body,

← Flounders are fun to catch. Require little special tackle

## . . . Flounder

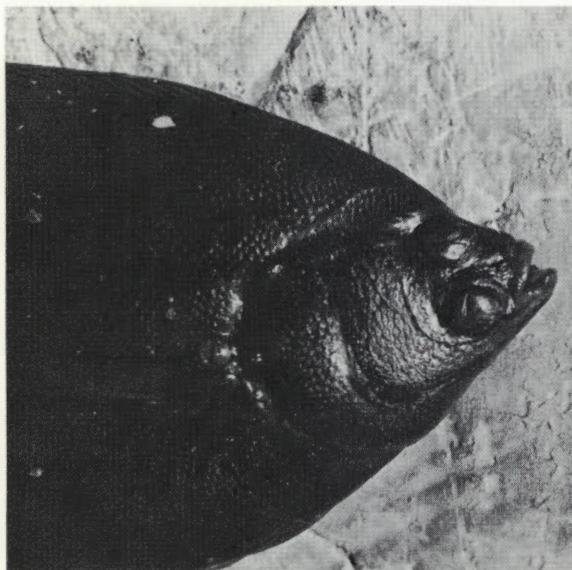
has many regional aliases—flatties, flatfish, mud daub, black flounder, and blue or blackback, to mention but a few.

The winter flounder's one-sided coloring varies from a shade of pale rust (a light reddish brown) to slate gray and the darker hues

20 inches or more, and a weight of five pounds.

This basically shallow water fish can be found in depths of one to 400 feet. Usually, the larger winter flounder are taken in the deeper waters, but this is far from a hard and fast rule.

Spawning generally occurs between January and May over a



*The winter flounder is referred to as a "right-handed fish" because its color and its both eyes are on its right side*

of green. The fish's opposite (left) or blind side generally is a snowy white.

Like its cousin, the yellowtail flounder, it has a small soft mouth, and takes a bait ever so gently, requiring the angler to display a light touch and avoid line slack at all times.

A bottom feeder averaging 12 to 16 inches in length, the winter flounder generally weighs in between one-half and two pounds. On occasion, however, some will attain

sandy stretch of ocean floor at depths varying from six to 240 feet. The fertilized eggs cling together, sinking to the bottom rapidly.

During a rapid period of metamorphosis, the larva's left eye moves around to the right side of its head. Within a span of about three to four months, the fledgling flattie has attained a length of only one-third of an inch, but its pigmentation is complete.

By the end of its first year of

life, it has grown to be six inches long.

The young winter flounder first feed on small plants and crustaceans, switching to worms, small crabs, and shrimp as they grow larger. Although the winter flounder moves about a great deal in its quest for food, it usually doesn't migrate too far from its birth place.

Highly sensitive to thermal variations, the fish is finicky about water temperatures of either extreme. It leaves the in-shore shallows in both summer and winter to seek relief from the temperature extremes, moving back into the shoal areas in late winter or early spring, and again in the fall.

Depending upon the geographic area to be fished, the first run of the season will occur between late February and mid-March, reaching a high point in April or May, when the winter flounder again start moving out to deeper and cooler water.

As the shallows begin to cool between September and October, the flatties return, usually remaining until about mid-November.

They populate the tidal areas, ranging from in-shore coastal stretches and shallow bay outward to the off-shore banks. The greatest concentrations are found in the coastal waters from Massachusetts to Cape May, New Jersey.

Winter flounder prefer a muddy sand bottom for their in-shore feeding. Their second best choices

are for sand, gravel, and clay bottoms. In the more off-shore reaches, they may be located on either hard or soft bottoms.

In addition, these fish won't hesitate to enter brackish stretches of estuarial waters.

When a run begins, word gets around fast. Jetties, causeways, piers, canal banks, docks, saltwater creeks, the mouths of inlets, bays, harbors, sounds, and all in-shore ocean areas come alive with anglers. Some are bank and bridge fishermen; others employ everything from rowboats to head (party) boats and fancy cruisers to pursue these tasty fish. Nearly everyone with a modicum of know-how scores adequately.

However, before you toss your gear into the old bus and head for the coast in quest of the flatties, be certain to take along warm clothing, complete with thermal sox and underwear. Gloves and a warm parka, as well as proper head and footwear, are a must too.

Sea breezes, although bracing and invigorating, can create quite a chill factor from late February through early April. Being cold spoils all the fun!

For the greatest sport, many old-timers recommend the use of either freshwater or bay-type light spinning tackle. Still others hold out for a small revolving spool reel of the bait casting variety.

In short, whatever you have will suffice, as long as it's in the medium to light category.



*When the flounders are running, good fishing may be had from the shore in suitable locations as well as from boats*

### . . . Flounder

Heavy gear not only limits the fun but will cost you many a lost fish. This light nibbling flounder will have a banquet feasting on bait presented at the terminal end of a heavy outfit.

My preference is a six-and-a-half foot spinning rod of medium to light action, with about 50 yards (that's all you really need!) of six or eight pound test monofilament line.

For the novice, terminal tackle is best purchased from a sporting goods or bait store catering to flounder fishermen in the area to be worked.

Two hook rigs are most popular, and it's not unusual to land two flatties at a time, when the run is good.

The most common rig consists of wire spreader, which is slightly curved and has a loop at each outer end. A swivel is located at the wire's midpoint with an eye above and below.

The swivel's upper eye attaches directly to your line, and a sinker to keep the entire rig on bottom (usually one to three ounces in shoal waters) is clipped to the bottom eye.

A flounder hook, ranging in size from a No. 6 to a No. 10 (it's best to keep on the small side), is attached to each of the wire's outer loops. These hooks have long shanks to accommodate the deep gulping action of the feeding flounder, and facilitate easy removal.

Flounder hooks also should have an attached snell of not more than six inches, since it is imperative to

keep your bait on bottom where the flatties feed.

The best method of determining adequate sinker weight is to bounce the entire leaded terminal rig on bottom. If you can't feel it bump, add weight. But, no more than necessary. Too much lead detracts from the fish's ability to fight.

Typical baits are small segments of bloodworm, clam's foot, the lip of larger surf clams, squid, sand-worms, and mussels.

One effective trick to determine the flounder's current dining preference is to bait each hook with a different type morsel — a small piece of bloodworm on one hook; a bit of clam on the other. When you determine which is most effective, stay with it!

Another method is to put a combination of two different baits on each hook.

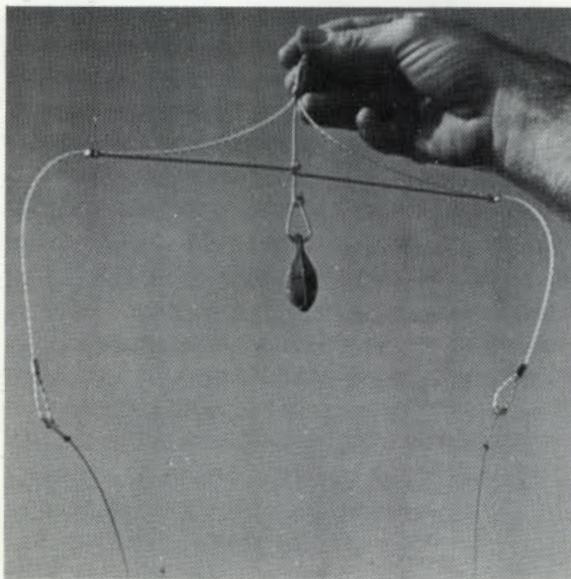
But always, keep in mind the flounder's small mouth!

Bait chunks should be just large enough to cover the hook's barb and bend.

Since flounder may be feeding only a few yards from your fishing location and never give your bait a tumble, a few tricks-of-the-trade will help insure a successful catch.

When fishing from a rowboat or other small craft, drop anchor briefly; then haul it in and check the bottom sample that clings to it. If it's a good, soft, rich, black, mud, and sand composition, with some eel grass to boot, you've found a likely feeding area that probably contains the small shelled creatures on which winter flounder feed.

Foul-smelling lighter colored mud bottoms are best avoided. A good second bet is the water area



*The most common flounder rig consists of a wire spreader for two hooks and a sinker*

## . . . Flounder

with a pebbly bed, or one of clean white sand or gravel.

The mouths of estuaries are good spots in times of in-coming and out-going tides, with channels and



*Mussels, as well as clams and squid, make good bait*

deeper holes more likely to prove productive in in-shore areas at low tide.

A good rule of thumb to remember is that winter flounder tend to feed most actively at high tide; bunching up at the mouths of inlets at either the beginning or end of a seasonal run, when preparing to move in or out.

Although would be purists tend to scoff at the use of any device to periodically stir-up the bottom, dislodging the food on which flat-ties feed, this definitely attracts the fish to the area where your bait is waiting. The most successful

winter flounder anglers swear by the method, and you can't fight success.

The contraptions they use are numerous—a length of chain tied to an anchor rope, a long pole with a plumber's friend (rubber plunger) affixed at one end, a clam rake, an oar, a boat hook, or even an anchor.

Chum is also important, although not essential. However, it has been my experience that it makes the difference between a fair day's flounder fishing and a very good one.

My personal vote is for a strong mesh bag, or a well ventilated and



*Worms are good. With all baits, keep the piece small*

perforated one gallon paint can, containing crushed mussels and clams. Either of these is then closed securely and tied to a sturdy line; lowered to the bottom, and bounced at intervals of a few min-



*Flounder fishing on a party boat on a shiveringly cold day. But, most such boats have warm, heated cabins and plenty of hot coffee*

utes each. If the fish are anywhere around, it will bring them to your bait.

Other flounder men prefer to crack the shells of a few clams, mussels, or oysters and drop them over the side. This is done very sparingly for obvious reasons.

If you aren't able or don't care to go to this much trouble in the chumming operation, I've even seen canned whole kernel corn used as a chum. It works, too, although not as effectively as the other methods.

Don't be afraid to move around when fishing for winter flounder, after giving a spot a fair try. One area may be alive with flatties,

while a few yards away, anglers are getting nothing.

If you use a boat, try drift fishing when other methods fail to produce.

If the run is in progress and you employ the methods outlined, you can't help but have success, and a fine flounder dinner to top off your day.

Row boat liveries, party boats, canal banks, causeways—they're all waiting; so are the flatties. A couple of hours of driving, at most, is well worth the effort.

In my book, it won't replace trout fishing, but it's a great way to spend a day until the real thing comes along.

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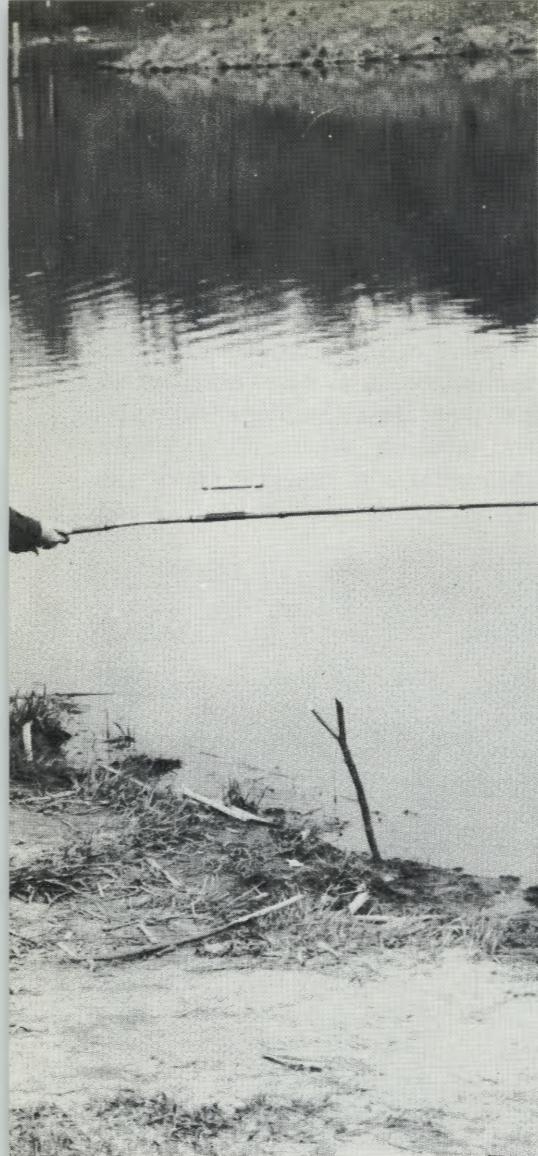
# Ponds

## For All Seasons

*By Claude J. Price, Assistant State Conservationist*

U. S. Soil Conservation Service

*Photographs by U. S. Soil Conservation Service*



*A father, son, and daughter prepare to take advantage of the fishing in a sediment control reservoir in the Stony Brook Watershed project*

**Freckling the face of New Jersey** are 5,300 very special bodies of water. Long-gone Indians and early settlers wouldn't recognize them. They're late-comers to the scene, built in the past two decades by landowners cooperating with 15 Soil Conservation Districts.

Right now, ponds are popping up at the rate of 200-300 a year, representing one of the bigger pieces of business for USDA's Soil Conservation Service. SCS furnishes technical assistance, working on priorities set up by locally directed district boards.

Fishing and wildlife are an interest of most pond owners. Management advice and stock-fish are available to owners of qualified ponds from the Division of Fish, Game, and Shell Fisheries in collaboration with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. License-free fishing is restricted to pond owners and their immediate families. All other fish laws apply.

The price tag of a sample  $\frac{3}{4}$ -acre pond, 8 feet at the deepest, holding 1 million gallons of water, runs about \$2,500. Thus the program is one of New Jersey's heavier investments in conservation. Statisticians figure that the total combined volume of all ponds is

## . . . Ponds

something like 6 billion gallons, far more than enough to float a fleet of battlewagons.

Owners are more inclined to express their enthusiasm in terms of personal benefits. Anecdotes they tell cover the entire spectrum of water usage, from the farm to citified neighborhoods. Stories of crops and livestock saved or improved by handy pond water are

Hunterdon County pond owners, for instance, will assure you that largemouth bass stocked as fingerlings will grow to 18-or 20-inch lunkers in four years or less. In fact, where fathead minnows were stocked a year ahead, bass put on 6 inches in three months. Anglers in Hunterdon, as elsewhere, attest that pond bass challenge the craftiest methods with rod and lure while many a bluegill make the trip to the frying pan via an old



*Mrs. R. P. Smith receiving allotment of bluegill sunfish fingerlings, from Department of the Interior fish truck, to stock a quarter-acre pond.  
Mercer County*

matched by other accounts of fabulous fishing, waterfowl sightings, and the beauty of ponds etched into suburban scenes.

Outdoor recreation interests are paramount, and for good reason.

stick with hand line, small hook and worm on one end and small boy on the other.

Biologists of the Division report that, strange as it may seem, most ponds are not fished heavily

enough. Over population as a common problem.

Even though stocked bluegills come a-running to any fly-fisherman, they, too, get out of hand.

Rats curbs the number of holes punched in pond dams. Rural youngsters are aware of the \$1.25 each being paid for good, large muskrat pelts. A recent winter



*Plastic container used for mailing fingerling fish destined for farm ponds.  
John Gillies, left, Walter Cinkowski, and Stephanie Parker.  
Burlington County*

Trapping, for which a permit is required, has had occasionally prodigious results. Recently the owner of a small, 8-year-old pond at Ringoes trapped more than 6,000 tasty little specimens in three weeks. His barn cats were in seventh heaven for days on end.

Other forms of trapping—for muskrats and snapping turtles—combine outdoor sport and profit. The activities directly benefit ponds. Removing turtles protects fish. Similarly, riddance of musk-

day's trapping produced 40 prime furs from a farm pond near Clinton.

Hunters and nature-lovers are taking advantage of the magnetism for waterfowl of the myriad new ponds throughout the state. A notable example among Salem County's 385 ponds is a 655-acre impoundment for irrigation at Mankin Causeway. Wild fowl traffic on its surface is often heavy and nearby blinds offer excellent shooting in season.

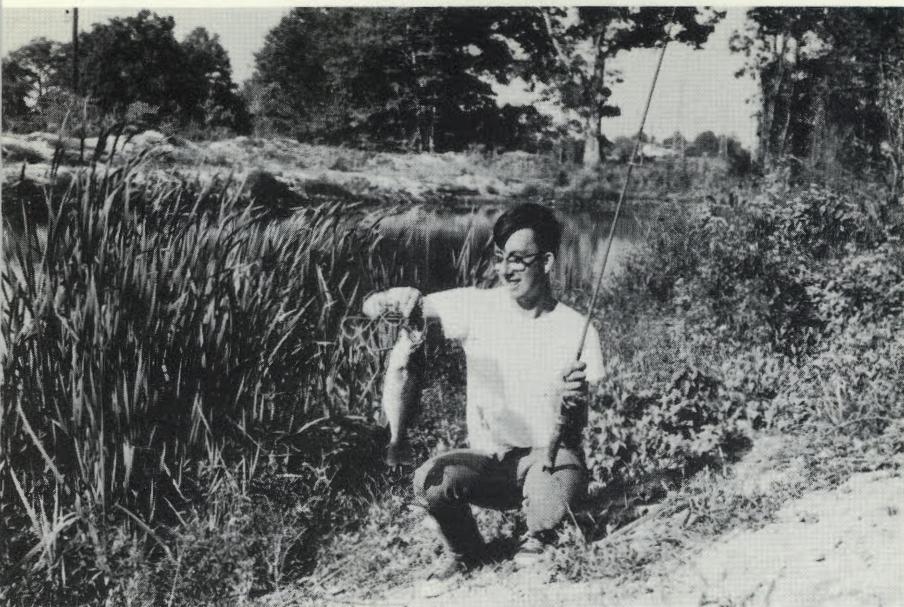
... Ponds



*Wildlife in the form of ducks and geese make use of a pond. Mercer County*



*A sanded beach area being utilized by several families.  
Monmouth County*



*Largemouth bass caught by Fred Barron from quarter-acre irrigation pond. Mercer County*

*Ted Kendall and his catch of two trout and one bass from a fish pond. Sussex County*



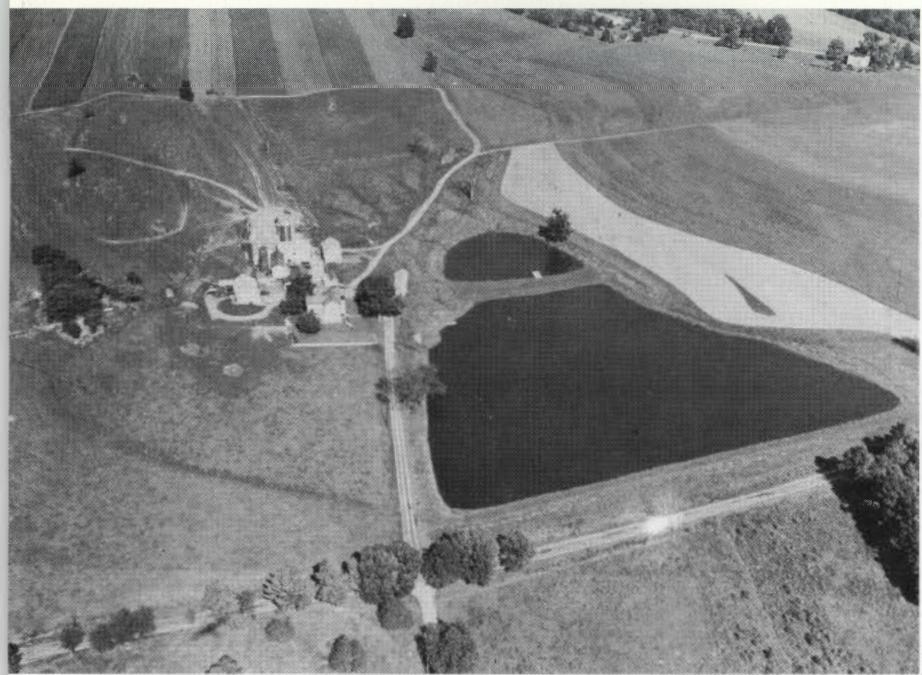


*Three bypass ponds that provide irrigation water for the graceful contour strip cropland that remains productive even under severe drought conditions. Hunterdon County*

### . . . Ponds

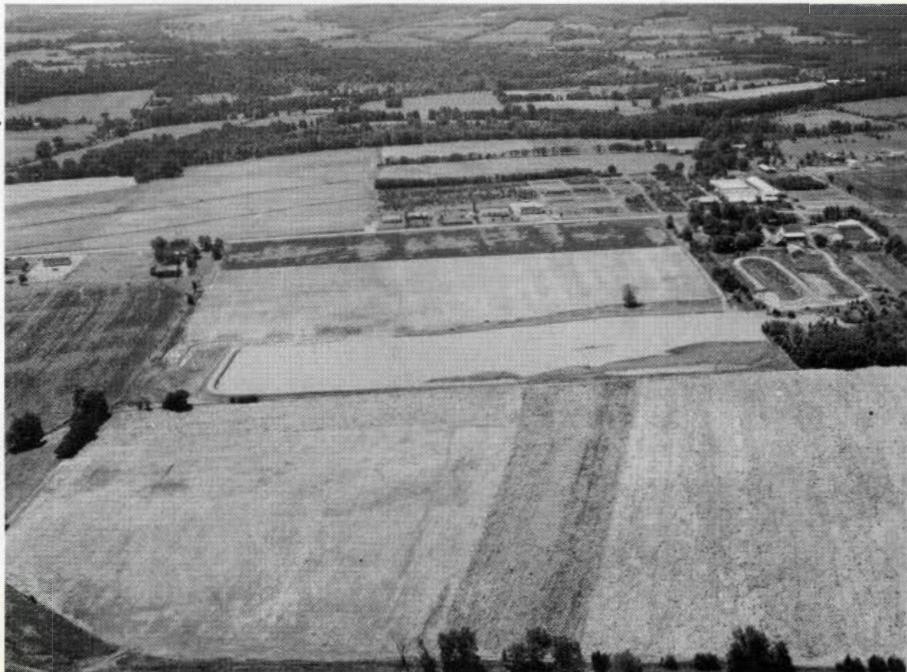


*A one-acre farm pond stocked with bass and bluegills. Hunterdon County*



*Well-planned and maintained ponds on homestead.  
Warren County*

*Ponds constructed for irrigation water supply for a nursery  
operation. Hunterdon County*



## . . . Ponds

Practically everywhere that ponds have been installed, owners are soon gratified by the sight of nesting, resting, and feeding birds, plus regular visits of other species of New Jersey's teeming wildlife. Here and there, ever-busy beavers have arrived to "re-engineer" a pond to their own specifications.

Man-made as they may be, ponds are quickly adopted by Nature's own designs. Each installation creates its own environment, even as it adds to the total natural setting.

Ponds as potent laboratories for learning about the world we live in have not been overlooked. A number of the state's top industries now use ponds to trap wastes from research and production lines as a safeguard for local watersheds. Fish behavior is observed as an indicator of pollution.

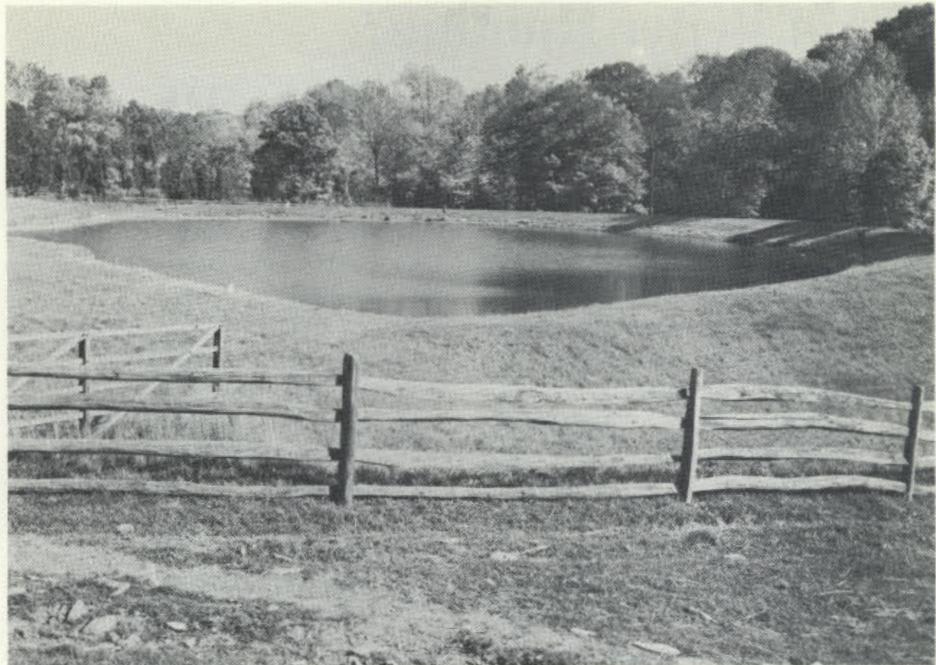
As "tools" for school teachers, constructed ponds are moving into a hey-day of popularity. Soil Districts report increasing requests for ponds as integral parts of new school plants. The water is part of "outdoor conservation classrooms" that educators say are needed to help youth become aware of and understand their environment crisis of the '70's.

Older, urbanized school districts are acquiring rural properties to provide outdoor experience so often denied the modern child. This trend, sooner or later, usually adds to the state's pond count. A good example is a 4-acre pond for study and recreation highlighting an area maintained just outside of Flemington by the Irvington Board of Education.

As thousands of happy owners testify, good ponds—whatever their purpose—are a joy and asset

*These two local residents know the fish must be there*





*Pond fanciers highly value a pond's natural beauty*

to the communities around them. Their proper design and construction call for considerable expertise. A poorly built impoundment may threaten an area with flood damage, pollution, or worse.

That is why soil, water, wildlife, and engineering specialists work as a team in the Garden State's pond-building operations. Prospective pond sites are checked to be sure they'll really hold water. Sources of water must be reliable and clean. Specifications must be drawn up to enable contractors to arrive at the right shape, size, depth, and water level — with due regard for the pond owner's pocketbook.

Custom "tailoring" of designs is frequent. Irrigation ponds are dug uniformly deep to provide a good

rate of water recharge. For fish management, special outlets may be installed to remove "dead" layers of water. If wildlife are considered, selected vegetation is planted for pond-side cover and feed. Shallows and beach areas are created if swimming is desired.

Artificial islands are built for nesting waterfowl, with plantings of flowering wildlife shrubs to add a touch of beauty. Sometimes it's possible to locate a pond for good visibility from its owner's picture window.

Ponds do need annual, inexpensive maintenance, such as mowing around the banks and removing debris from spillways. The consensus among pond fanciers is that these chores are well worth it. #

# Want Better Hunting?

## Then Plant It!

By J. P. Linduska

If you want to have better hunting next fall, get in on the farmer's spring planting program since the best way to have good hunting in the fall is to plant it in the spring.

I do not mean the planting of pen-raised birds, but rather the planting of natural food stuffs which will attract and hold wild game and allow the increase from the present breeding stock to reach maturity in good condition.

Restocking areas with pen-raised game is worth-while under certain conditions, but the releasing of breeding stock on ground which offers an insufficient supply of food and protective cover is simply a waste of time, effort, and money. You might as well release game on city streets as to turn it loose in a rural section which offers insufficient feed, or none at all, and where lack of cover makes it easy prey to all kinds of predators.

With the spring planting season soon under way, now is the time to lay the ground work and plan. The sportsman has the best opportunity of the year to insure better hunting through food and cover planting. The best approach is to talk to the farmer himself, tell him you'd like to help him increase his game supply and ask him if he will allow you to do so without interfering with his normal agricultural practices.

Once the farmer is convinced that you're serious about helping, it's a pretty sure thing that you've got yourself a partner in your enterprise. For the farmer likes to see game on his own land, and he likes the friendship of the sportsmen. The next step is to walk over the land with the farmer to get an over-all picture of the land use. Locate the grazing lands, the woodlots, the old orchard, slopes, gullies, stream banks, patches of overgrown cover, etc. All of these make good areas in which, or near which, to plant food patches. These unproductive areas can be made veritable havens for game.

Now that you have sized up your area, don't go off half-cocked and start a food and cover planting program without thinking the matter through. Consult the local conservation officer listed in the compendiums of New Jersey fish laws and game laws, the district game manager or the soil conservation man. They've all had training in this sort of activity and to help you is part of their job. They know what type of food to plant and where it should be planted. The Division may be able to furnish free seeds or plants just for this purpose. These have all been tested and proved highly beneficial to wildlife in the localities in which they are available.

Many food plants also provide splendid protective cover. A number of small food patches scattered in the proper places over a farm are generally better than two or three large plantings. The patches should never be less than one-eighth of an acre. Such a patch will produce enough food to carry a covey of quail or a number of pheasants through the winter. It is best to mix in some annuals with the perennials, for it requires two years

for many perennials to produce. When these plants have taken hold, no reseeding is necessary and you will have a permanent food patch.

Once you have feed patches staked out and have procured the seed or plants, a couple of weekends of actual planting on the farm will do the trick. Not only are you planting good hunting, but you are also sowing seeds of friendship with the farmer that will bear fruit in many ways for years to come. #

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## Time to Check Tackle Boxes

A well-stocked and well-kept tackle box is every bit as important to the angler as a nicely-appointed home is to his wife. Both keep the individual happy and more successful in doing what they set out to do.

A good tackle box is the angler's suitcase. Although he will replace small items from time to time there are essentials that he will need wherever he is fishing.

A well-stocked box will carry many items other than plugs and extra hooks. It should have a place for a pair of sunglasses, a real eye-saver on days when the sun is glinting off the water.

An unbreakable tube of suntan oil should be included, for those days when no shade can be found and yet the fisherman wants to stay out and keep catching fish. Also an unbreakable container of mosquito repellent can be invaluable when the little pesky ones get rough.

Another small item that we hope never to use but still carry for insurance is a snake bite kit. A bite from a poisonous snake is almost as rare as elephantiasis, but it pays to be prepared.

A small pocket compass is an item that will take up little space in the tackle box, but can be a life saver when it is needed. If possible get one with a lid on it, the lid will protect the compass cover and dial from injury.

Most anglers include a pair of long-nosed pliers in their box, as handy as a pocket in a shirt when it comes to getting a hook out of a fish's mouth. Choose a pair with side cutters on them, so if the occasion arises you could cut off a hook, were one imbedded in someone's epidermis. A light plastic raincoat will fit in most boxes, and can save a day ruined by rain.

Oh, yes, carry some lures, too. You might get to do some fishing. #

# Richkus-

## *the Pied Piper of Crowdom*

By Howard Brant,

Outdoor Editor, Newark Star Ledger

If someone decided to elect a state crow hunting champion, Joe Richkus of Hillside would undoubtedly be the prime candidate and win the title against all comers, for in the 30-odd years he has pried Jersey coverts waging his personal campaign against the crow kingdom he has tumbled an average of 600-700 birds a year!

Back during the 40's and 50's when crows (considered as wary as any high-flying black duck and as unpredictable as the four winds) literally blackened the skies, especially in the Hunterdon county area, Joe set about waging war against these predators with a vengeance and his carefully planned strategy paid off with some of the finest wing-shooting sport imaginable.

Joe will be the first to admit that crow hunting in the Garden State isn't like it used to be back immediately following World War II and he further stated that the last 'good' year for crows was in 1960. But for those who wish to seek

some wing-shooting sport, especially when all other hunting seasons are closed, crow hunting is a logical choice.

Why this decline in the Jersey crow populations? Crows, and particularly the wintering concentrations display a certain fondness for eating carrion and discarded farm offal. Back during the peak crow years birds swarmed statewide covers by the thousands in areas surrounding farms where landowners tossed offal including the carcasses of chickens, turkeys, pig entrails, etc., in their fields.

But in the late 50's the State Board of Health slapped a ban of this type of farm disposal requiring farmers to bury this offal daily and the prime food source of the crow disappeared and so did the abundant concentrations of these birds. Then too, as farming daily continues to diminish as our urban society and civilization continues to encompass our little state, the succulent farm crops of yesterday are diminishing as well and again

*A good blind is essential to crow hunting success, states Richkus. Here an early spring blind has been constructed in a small woodlot which perfectly conceals the hunter and insures against detection by the uncanny eyes of the crow*



## ... Richkus

the gradual disappearance of another prime food source for the crow.

Crows are migratory birds with the peak migrations pouring into Garden State covers in late fall; consequently peak shooting continues from late fall and especially through the winter months from late December to early March. "We used to gun two roost areas in Hunterdon County, near Flemington that harbored close to 200,000 birds each," said Joe, "and we shot near these locations for some five years before the crow's food supply in the area was eliminated by the Board of Health ban, consequently these large concentrations sought greener pastures."

Richkus became interested in crow hunting many years ago when the late Tom Tingley of Westfield took him on a crow shooting junket one day. When I saw how fast the action was, I was sold and took up crow hunting in earnest," added Joe who in more recent years still averages some 400 crows per season.

His best tally was 225 birds in a single afternoon bagged several years ago while gunning a flyway in the dead of winter near Baptis-town! In years past one of the finest crow roosts was located but  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from Flemington and offered fantastic gunning for several months of the year. Although this roost has passed into oblivion, there are still a few small roosting areas

currently to be found in this area.

"I usually limit myself to four or five boxes of shells per day and don't spend more than the afternoon hours afield," continued Richkus. "That's when crow hunting is usually at its best. From 3 o'clock in the afternoon 'til dark crows begin to filter toward their roost and if you locate one of their flyways leading to the roosting area, gunning can be fast and furious."

Joe concedes that the best shooting is through the winter months, but also remarked good crow shooting can further be found during the spring and summer months in small woodlot patches which usually harbor several families of birds. "While you won't find the large numbers of crows centered in a given area during the spring and summer months, you can find some interesting gunning in these small woodlots," says Joe.

According to Richkus one must be meticulous in selecting the proper equipment if he wishes to be a successful crow hunter. During the spring, summer, and fall seasons Joe utilizes a camouflage suit and face mask since crows have uncanny eyesight and can easily detect gunners if they do not blend into the surrounding landscape.

During the winter season when the ground is blanketed with snow Joe then employs a white parka and further tapes his gun barrel with adhesive tape. A quality crow call is also an absolutely essential item too.



*A taxidermist of sorts, Joe Richkus mounts his own crow decoys. Here his mounted specimens are displayed simulating eating chicken eggs on a farm plot in Hunterdon county*

Although Richkus smirks at the new electronic crows calls, for he prefers to "talk" crow using a mouth call, he will readily admit these electronic callers might produce a few more crows in the bag. But he has always used a hand call with considerable success claiming that he gets far more satisfaction attempting to outwit these wary birds by his own guile.

We personally know of several incidents when Joe was "working over" a screaming and pitching flock of crows and ran out of shells. What did he do? He simply continued his calling and slowly walked back to his car, enticing the excited birds to follow. He continued calling and the birds followed 'til he reached his car where he obtained more shells and continued to tumble birds!

Joe further employs crow decoys in the same fashion as the duck gunner utilizes decoys to bring waterfowl into scattergun range and he prefers to use only crow decoys instead of the traditional owl decoy utilized by many crow hunters. A trained taxidermist, Joe mounts his own crow decoys too. "A spread of two or three dozen of these stuffed birds work wonders, so why should I argue with success," smilingly added Joe.

A well-concealed blind is also essential for optimum success and Joe explains that extreme care must be taken to construct a blind utilizing exact cover as the background. In a corn field he constructs a blind of corn-shucks; in a hedge-row or woodlot he prepares one of brush and tree branches. "Perfect camouflage is abso-

### . . . Richkus

lutely essential to crow hunting success and no minute detail should be avoided in its construction," he said.

While crows are still relatively prevalent throughout the state, Joe's first choice of location is still Hunterdon county. But good crow hunting can also be found in the Sussex County area in the fall and in Morris county during the summer season.

Joe further remarked that while crow hunting is not like it used to be, the enterprising hunter can still find good sport if he takes the time and patience to seek it out. "Simply take a drive along back-country roads during the late afternoon hours and watch for strings of crows heading toward their roost. Follow them and if you are successful you will ultimately locate their roosting areas. Return the following day and prepare a blind some  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from the roost and your success is insured."

Joe is also emphatic about not gunning within a roost proper. He warns that gunners should hunt some distance from the roosting area. "Shooting directly into a crow roost will quickly drive the birds from the area. Arrive on the flight path by 3 o'clock during the winter months," says Joe, "and you will experience fine gunning right up to dark.

"Actually there are three basic types of crow hunting," continued Richkus. "Pass shooting in an area

on the flight path to the roosting area, blind shooting in a feeding area, and roost shooting. Although roost shooting is popular in the mid-western states, here in Jersey where the crow concentrations number far less, this type of gunning should be avoided at all cost."

Pure white albino crows are a rarity indeed and Joe has only seen one in his entire lifetime spent afield. "That white bird was something," said Joe. "I first saw it in the Three Bridges area in Hunterdon county and chased it for almost a month during every spare moment I had, but I never did get close enough to it to get a shot."

Joe relates another crow hunting escapade that had him shaking for quite a spell thereafter. It seems he was hunting one summer day near Paulinskill Lake. He positioned himself in a small woodlot and began calling. Soon a crow flitted into a nearby tree top at the exact instant Joe fired—but instead of tumbling to the ground the crow leaped from its perch and darted directly at Joe's face. "I was astounded," he exclaimed. "In that instant I placed my arm over my eyes as the crow slammed into my wrist and began clawing and pecking at my arm and hand. I dropped my gun and finally managed to kill this bird. It was the only time that I've ever witnessed such an attack by one of these birds."

Another time Joe was gunning the same area in late summer. Moving through a woodlot he ap-

proached a barbed-wire fence and as he knelt to crawl under it he came face to face with a hornet's nest. In seconds the hornets were swarming over his face and body.

"I began to run, believing I could shake off most of the stinging hornets as I scrambled through the lush summer foliage," he said. "But as I continued to run pell mell through the brush I ran into another wire fence and was knocked to the ground. On the other side of this fence was a huge flat rock and directly on top of it was a rattlesnake sunning itself. It started buzzing immediately and I quickly backed off, preferring the hornets to the rattler."

Richkus has hunted extensively throughout the U. S. and Canada and has bagged a number of North American big-game trophies. He is also active in various sporting groups throughout the state. He is a past president of the Union County Federation of Sportsmen Clubs, a former deputy Fish and Game Warden, and scout master. He has further lectured extensively on many outdoor activities to numerous groups in an effort to instill his love of the great outdoors to others.

But of all Joe's experiences he loves his crow hunting foremost and when the winds belch from the north and crows begin to filter into Jersey covers in numbers, you'll surely find Joe afield, crow call in mouth, carefully nestled in a blind with decoys spread before him. And don't be startled if you see



*While Richkus has most success utilizing crow decoys only, the great horned owl is the crows natural enemy and often times they can be attracted into scatter-gun range with an owl perched high in a tree top*

a camouflage suited individual stalk from a woodlot during the spring and summer months when you are trout fishing on your favorite stream—it's probably only Joe looking to tumble a few crows—"Crow hunting presents one of the finest of wing-targets and one of the greatest hunting challenges—best of all the crow is present in goodly numbers when all other outdoor activity is at a standstill," concluded Richkus.

Prospective crow hunters are cautioned that a state firearm hunting license is required to hunt crows and when no other hunting season is open, a crow gunner will further require a Predatory Control Permit (vermin permit) obtained from the Division of Fish, Game, and Shell Fisheries. #

## . . . Outlook

*Continued from Inside Front Cover*

is good for the resort business is good for conservation. Seasonally they argue the merits of deer season, and someone invariably attacks the unholy alliance that would shoot does. The grouse season is debated in the light of the tourist dollar; and because the bird population was down the previous year a bounty should be placed on fox. Fishing regulations are a priority subject; fish are bread and butter for resorts. Strangely enough, their recommendations in many instances are cautious and conservative. They struggle, rather ineptly, with the ecological factors of wildlife management while attempting to gain an economic advantage.

Other matters are given some attention. A power dam is rumored for a certain river. Some oppose the idea until some sage comments, "You can't stop progress, and for all we know, the reservoir might produce good fishing," so the matter is dropped.

Another member has read where one of their local streams was to be set aside as a wild river. At this point a real estate dealer takes the floor and opposes the idea because it will affect the tax base; but more important, he has river lots for sale and the government probably wouldn't give him his asking price. A resort man gets up and states that canoeists don't leave any money in the country. The matter drifts off into a vague

mist of indecision so as not to offend anyone.

The subject of lake and stream pollution may be brought up with circumspection. Resort and cottage owners are not famous for tackling this job. Industry is a safe target providing there are no mills in the area; if there are mills, members who are employees have no stomach for biting the hand that feeds them. Someone will finally solve this embarrassing problem by profoundly stating that, "The government ought to do something about it."

Of course the picture varies by shade and degrees from community to community and state to state. But still the much loved subject close to the hearts of all gun clubs is game and fish seasons.

After years of attending this type of meeting I have yet to see any interest in tax formulas for private forest lands or public recreational areas. There is also a growing demand for public development of recreational land, but the term soon becomes faceless and meaningless with discussion.

All of these attitudes of local self-interest are as natural as death and taxes. They are common to us all. What I wish to emphasize is the seemingly impossible task of bringing the interests of federal and state planners and those which occupy so much local concern to a point of balance; a blending of purposes where both are looking down the same gun barrel through the same sights.

This undertaking of coordination begins with understanding people. There are planners with a farm and rural background who have great proficiency in this art of public relations.

Rural people are far from ignorant, the mill-run are highly intelligent, but their interests community-wise are far more important to them than what is happening on the other side of the mountain.

Furthermore, they have to live with their neighbors, and do not wish to be cataloged as chronic crusaders.

Planners must learn about people, their ways of life and environment. A diploma in land-husbandry or sociology is not enough; and if they tend to look down their noses at rural attitudes they will find themselves bested by some country shrewdness.

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## Tangling with Trout

While bass fishermen reportedly outnumber the anglers who seek trout, the cold water products of mountain streams and lakes are a main reason for the annual trout fishing fever in New Jersey.

And, this is the time of year to lay plans for the season's outings and to learn something about the fish that almost always plays an important role in spring fishing.

In general, most Jersey anglers will find browns, rainbows, or brook trout filling their creels. Lake trout might be considered, except that this fish inhabits extreme depths usually and is not generally taken in New Jersey, although a few have been reported.

The other trout, however, follow a similar pattern in their habits and are more accessible to everyone. They frequent undercut banks, root tangles, shaded pools, and feed on rocky bottoms that harbor aquatic insects, as well as cool ponds and lakes. Trout less than one-half pound prefer flies, worms, small minnows, and small crustaceans while larger fish add crayfish, mollusks, frogs, and small fish to their diet.

Water temperature is of vital concern. When surface water is between 33 and 50 degrees, they lie in the depths. Spring holes will usually be warmer than surrounding water during the early season and cooler during the warm days of summer—always good spots to look for trout. When the water warms above 50 degrees, fish become more active and aquatic insects start hatching, the clue to use artificial wet flies. Temperatures between 55 and 68 degrees are best for dry flies—fish in shallow riffles and around cover. Above this temperature most trout get uncomfortable, stay deep, and feed at night on natural baits.

These are only tips; when you deal with fish, no one can guarantee results!

#

# How Old Do Fish Grow?

The problems of senility may bother fishermen, but apparently seldom enters into the affairs of fish.

While much is known about dozens of freshwater species, maximum ages seem to have eluded those who record such information. In researching available data, fishing authorities have turned up both legends and facts, as well as scientific guesses on this subject.

According to stories, one carp lived "several hundred" years; a pike in Europe which had been tagged is reputed to have struggled through some 260-odd seasons. But, in reality, the average life span of most game fishes is in the four to five-year range. Some minnows and other small species last less than two; while stripers may go to 30 and sturgeon may attain the century mark.

Largemouth bass have been known to reach the ripe old age of 16, and the landlocked salmon record is 13 years (a female, incidentally). A pike in the 20-pound class usually is 8 to 10. Muskies that achieve prize-winning proportions generally are 18 to 20 years of age (and, again, invariably are females).

Though fish continue to grow throughout their lifetimes, they—like humans—tend to slow down and turn paunchy as the years progress. However, it's a rare specimen that lives long enough to reach this stage.

Old age in the world of fishes is such an unusual occurrence that it's unlikely the average angler will ever crank in a senile bass.

Those big, "old" lunkers we keep hearing about are usually hungry fish in the prime of life that simply have the opportunity to eat well over a lengthy growing season.

Fish may get big, but they seldom grow old. Fishermen see to that. #

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# The Sharp-shinned Hawk

## Species:

The Sharp-shinned Hawk—*Accipiter striatus*

## General Characteristics:

This is the smallest of the three bird hawks, the accipiters; 10-14 inches; called a "blue darter" because it is blue-gray, with a rusty barred breast, and because of its flight habits—it darts along, with several rapid wing-beats, followed by a glide. It surprises most of its prey, but also gives speedy chase to small birds. The immature plumage is streaked brownish, with a lighter breast. The tail is notched, or square, while the somewhat larger cooper's hawk has a rounded tail. The sharp-shinned hawk has rather short, rounded wings and a long tail.

## Range:

Breeds in most of the United States and southern Canada; winters in the United States. This bird is becoming far less abundant than it was just a decade or two ago.

## Life History:

Just a few years ago, the sharp-shinned hawk was a fairly common breeding bird, with its nest to be found, usually in a grove of evergreens, especially white pine, but occasionally in other trees. Most nests are found between 30 and 35 feet from the ground, but sometimes from 15 to as high as 55 feet. The nest itself is about 18 inches to two feet wide, and 6 or 7 inches deep, with a definite cavity. It is composed of small sticks and twigs, and may have some pieces of pine bark lining the nest cavity. There may or may not be some feathers and down in the nest. The usual number of eggs are four or five, often only three, and rarely six, seven, or eight. The incubation period is said to last about three weeks (21-24 days), and is shared by both sexes. The set of eggs hatches about the same time. The young are fledged in about three to four weeks. The food of the sharp-shinned hawk is mostly composed of smaller birds, but occasionally small chickens or game birds such as bobwhite quail are taken. Other food includes red squirrels, rats and mice, young rabbits, bats, frogs, locusts, grasshoppers, and other insects. This little hawk is quite aggressive in its pursuit of prey, even to the extent of following it on foot through dense vegetation or under obstructions. These hawks used to migrate southward in large numbers, and many were shot, especially at Cape May, which is a concentration point for many southward migrating birds. This hawk should not be killed. #

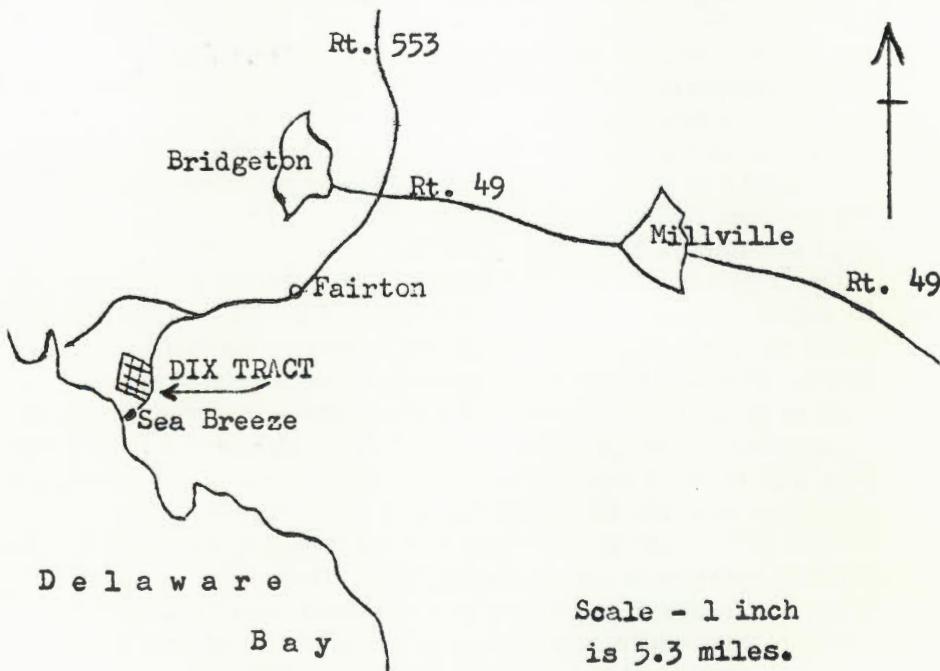
# Dix Tract

The Dix Fish and Wildlife Management Area is located in Cumberland County and comprises about 2,114 acres of marsh and upland. This tract is located adjacent to the Delaware Bay and is bounded on the south by the Delaware Bay and Kauldery Creek, on the west by Middle Marsh Creek, and on the east by Sea Breeze Road.

This tract boasts one of the finest tidal marshes for waterfowl hunting in the state. Upland hunting is excellent for quail on the several old farms which make up the tract. Muskrat trapping is permitted during the regular trapping season.

The Bureau of Wildlife Management manages this tract for upland game by planting food and cover crops and through rotation of farming practices to maintain a natural succession of food and cover plants.

To reach the Dix Tract from the town of Millville, take Route 49 west out of Millville about nine miles to the intersection of Route 553. Turn left on Route 553 and proceed toward Fairton. From Fairton take the Sea Breeze Road for about four miles to a sharp bend and then take the left fork about two miles to the entrance to the tract. #

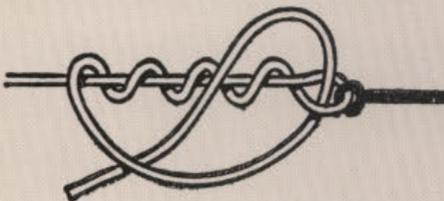


# *Fur, Fin and Campfire*

By BILL BERO

## HERE ARE A FEW BASIC KNOTS FOR THE ANGLER.

**IMPROVED CLINCH KNOT:**  
WILL NOT SLIP WHEN TIED TO  
A LURE, HOOK OR SWIVEL.



**BARREL KNOT:**  
IS USED TO JOIN TWO PIECES  
OF MONOFILAMENT LINE.



**TURLÈ KNOT:**  
THIS KNOT IS BEST FOR TYING  
LEADER TO FLIES WITH EYES  
THAT ARE TURNED DOWN.



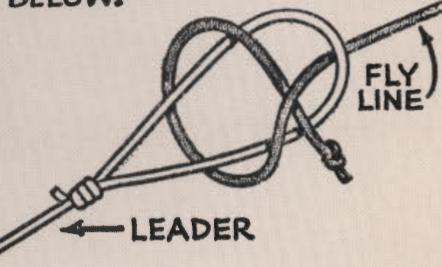
**PERFECTION END LOOP:**  
USED IN FLY-FISHING TO JOIN  
THE LINE TO THE LEADER.



**DROPPER KNOT:**  
THIS ONE FORMS A LOOP IN  
THE LINE TO ATTACH EXTRA  
FLIES OR HOOKS.



**JAM KNOT:**  
IS USED TO ATTACH A FLY-  
LINE TO LEADER AS SHOWN  
BELOW.



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**Sure sign of Spring**

**Counting the trout at the hatchery**