

OUTDOORSUPDATE

OF THE OUTDOORS:

Believe It Or Not, It's Walleye Time

BY GARY HOWEY
Hartington, Neb.

It's that time of the year again, we've changed over to daylight savings time, the suns come up a little earlier and sets a little later.

This is the time of the year, when our calendars says that spring will be here soon.

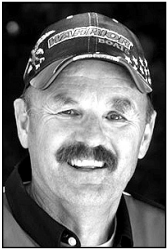
As water temperatures start to warm, walleyes will continue their migration up below the dams into the gravel and rock areas in preparation for the spawn.

This move isn't something that happens all at once, as it has been going on since early winter when many of the smaller males made their move towards

their spawning grounds.

The larger females, which will be the last to arrive, are hanging out in deeper water until water temperatures are ideal for the spawning.

When water temperatures reach the 48-degree mark, which in our area is in May the spawning ritual will begin.



Gary Howey

The smaller more aggressive males will make up the majority of the catch this time of the year.

A week or so after the spawn, fishing can be slow as this is when the fish recuperate after the rituals of the spawn.

Generally after the spawning and the recuperation period, walleyes will go on a feeding binge, which can last up to a month.

As eating during the spawn wasn't one of their highest priorities.

This can be some of the best walleye fishing there is. This is the time of the year when food supplies are at there lowest.

The smaller fish that hatched out last year have either have grown up or have become lunch for the predator fish.

In the spring, look for walleyes to be on the prowl in shallower water, usually 15 foot or less looking for their next meal.

One thing you'll need to remember is, just because the walleyes are on a feeding



SUBMITTED PHOTO

By using the methods mentioned in Gary Howey's latest column, you'll have a good chance of taking a walleye for the wall this spring.

binge doesn't mean they'll be dashing/darting here and there gobbling everything in sight.

Walleyes, like all fish are cold blooded and their metabolism is in direct relation to the water temperature, so their dashing and darting will be more of a slow motion dashing.

Everything in the aquatic world will be moving at this speed, so your bait should match their speed.

The ticket for walleyes at this time of year will be jigs or live bait rigs tipped with minnows.

Jig fishermen using 1/8 to 1/4 ounce jigs in the shallow water of a lake or in the river where there isn't a whole lot current can do very well this time of the year.

River fishermen and anglers that fish deeper water might want to go to a heavier 3/8-ounce jig so you're able to fish vertically, keeping their bait just off or in contact with the bottom.

Live bait anglers using open face spin-

ning gear will need to stay in contact with their line at all times as spring walleyes aren't exactly gobbiers when it comes to taking the bait.

I've found that it works best if I fish with an open bail with the line across your finger and when you detect a bite simply drop the line while moving the rod tip towards the fish.

After a short count, a couple of seconds or so reel up the slack line and set the hook.

Sauger, the walleye's smaller cousin are notorious for grabbing the tail of the minnow or the tail of your grub, holding on to it, only to spit it out when they reach the surface.

There are a couple of things you can do to prevent the sauger spitting the hook.

One is to install a stinger or trailer hook to your jig, which lies along the minnow's back, hooking into its tail. These can either be a single or treble hook, depending on the bottom conditions.

If you're fishing an area with a lot of snags, go with a single hook and on a clean bottom, it's safe to use a treble hook.

Another thing will help to hook these short biters is to feed the fish line a little longer once you detect the bite!

Instead of feeding them line for a couple of seconds, make it 5 to 10 seconds. Many times an additional second or two will give the sauger enough time to get the bait and hook into his mouth.

I mentioned earlier that the walleyes would be in shallower water, usually 15 foot or less.

In the summer month's walleyes will move shallow in low light periods and back out into deeper water as the sun starts to rise. During the spring, the low light angle of the sunrises doesn't really affect the walleye's sensitive eyes, so they may remain shallow throughout much of the day.

Locating fish is the key to catching fish! In the spring, you'll want to look for warmer water and these areas are usually along the north shoreline.

This is the part of the river or lake getting the most sunshine during the day.

Another spot to look for walleyes would be areas where water flows in from a creek or stream.

These areas are productive because they're shallower, warming up more quickly, the warmer incoming water attracts both prey and predator fish.

Rocky areas along a north shoreline are also a good bet. The sun's rays warm the rocks, which retain the heat throughout the day and into the night.

These warm areas will attract both the walleye and the critters that they feed on.

Spring fishing may be a little slow at times, but some of the fish you'll catch will be decent while others might be that wall hanger you've been fishing for.

There's no better way to spend a nice warm day than by spending a few hours fishing and enjoying the great outdoors.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is the president of Outdoorsmen Productions LLC. For more information on the outdoors, live outdoor video and photos go to www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

OUTDOOR REPORT

S.D. GF&P To Host Open House In Yankton March 24

The South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Department will be hosting an open house on Wednesday, March 24 at the National Field Archery Association Headquarters in Yankton.

The open house will give the public the opportunity to converse with Department employees from 5-7 p.m. with a short presentation at 5:15 p.m.

The presentation will consist of a general overview of game, fish and land issues in Yankton County, paddlefish management goals, recent land acquisitions, SD Parks and summarizing with waterfowl management in the respective area. If there are questions regarding this open house, please call Wildlife Conservation Officer Sam Schelhaas at 605-668-2985.

Following the open house, a discussion on mountain lion management will be conducted from 7-9 p.m. at the same location.

The discussion will begin with a presentation by John Kanta, Regional Wildlife Manager for the western part of SD. He will discuss some of the findings from research conducted in the Black Hills. Kanta will also outline the Department's mountain lion management plan and solicit input from attendees as to what they feel should be included in the plan and how they feel mountain lions should be managed in SD.

Trout To Be Stocked Below Fort Randall Dam In Charles Mix

PIERRE — Anglers looking for unique fishing opportunities over the next few weeks will find them in southeastern South Dakota.

The Game, Fish and Parks Department is planning to stock approximately 10,000 rainbow trout and 5,000 brown trout below Fort Randall Dam in southern Charles Mix County. The trout will be released over the next couple of weeks in the boat basin downstream from the dam.

"In efforts to provide additional fishing opportunities, trout are stocked each spring below Fort Randall Dam" said Jason Sorensen, a GFP fisheries biologist in Chamberlain.

Weather permitting, crews from McNenny State Fish Hatchery in Spearfish and Cleghorn Springs State Fish Hatchery in Rapid City will deliver the first loads of trout on March 18-19. Remaining trout will be transferred to Fort Randall the following week.

There is ample shoreline access immediately below Fort Randall Dam, giving both shore anglers and boat anglers good opportunities to catch trout.

Proposed Changes To 2010 Antelope Season

PIERRE — The South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Commission has proposed two changes to the 2010 Firearms Antelope Hunting Season.

The first change would no longer allow hunters to fill antelope tags during the west river deer season.

The Commission also has proposed that all unsold or unfilled tags at the conclusion of the Firearms Antelope Season be converted to "doe/kid" tags and be valid for nine consecutive days, beginning on the Saturday after Christmas.

Although the 2010 Firearms Antelope Season has been set for Oct. 2-17, license allocations will be considered at the June Commission meeting.

The GFP Commission will take final action on the Firearms Antelope Season at its April 8-9 meeting at the Crossroads Hotel in Huron.

Information on the proposal is available at the GFP Web site at www.sdgamefish.com under the headings "About Game, Fish and Parks" and "GFP Commission."

Residents who wish to provide written comments on the proposal may do so up until 5 p.m. Wednesday, April 7. Those comments may be mailed to Game, Fish and Parks Commission, 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, S.D., 57501, or e-mailed to wildinfo@state.sd.us. All comments must have the sender's full name and address in order to be included in the public record.

TROPHY SPOTLIGHT



TOP LEFT: Jason Storgaard (left) caught this big head carp below Gavins Point Dam on Feb. 27.

BOTTOM LEFT: Charlie Schmer caught this 7-pound, 4-ounce walleye below Gavins Point Dam on Feb. 27.

LEFT: Lary Vellek of Scotland caught this 16-pound, 6-ounce Northern Pike at Lewis & Clark Lake on Jan. 29.

TOP: Wes and Brett Goeden caught this six walleye, ranging in length from 17-19 inches, below Gavins Point Dam on Feb. 16.

PHOTOS: CAPTAIN NORM'S

Hunting For A Job? There's Always Alligator Wrestling In Fla.

BY DANIEL CHANG
(c) 2010, The Miami Herald

MIAMI — Until now, alligator wrestling might have been considered a poor career choice. The pay is not steady, the travel is exhausting, and the occupational hazards are apparent.

Now a group of alligator wrestlers say they want to change all that, except for the hazardous part, which they say isn't so scary at all, by forming the Freestyle Alligator Wrestling Competitions (FAWC) — a professional organization, with annual meets, that promotes the activity as a legitimate sport.

To help get the point across — and to promote an alligator wrestling competition at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino this weekend — James Holt dove into a pool with an 8-foot-long alligator on Tuesday afternoon.

Holt, who said he is 6-foot-1-inch tall and weighs 350 pounds, made the point that size does not give him an advantage. Mental acuteness does.

"The hardest part is making sure you're in the right frame of mind," he said. "You gotta be in the moment."

Then he pointed out that the alligator's body is made up of more than 50 percent muscle, while guessing his body is probably closer to 15 percent muscle.

"That alligator is a lot



LILLY ECHEVERRIA/MIAMI HERALD/MCT

Professional alligator wrestler James Holt gives a demonstration on how to handle an alligator on March 8 at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Hollywood, Fla.

stronger than I am," Holt said.

Minutes later, Holt dove head first into the pool, still wearing his green cargo shorts and yellow button-down shirt.

The alligator, lying at the bottom of the pool, hardly budged.

Holt, 31, waded slowly toward the gator, explaining that he always approaches one face first. Then he jabbed at the water, and grabbed the reptile by a flap of skin under its jaw. The gator splashed around, rolled free of Holt's grip and sidled away to a corner of the pool.

Holt then approached the gator from behind, grabbing it by the tail. The gator didn't react as

Holt pulled it toward him and slowly slid his hand under its jaw, where he once again grabbed the flap of skin, then the top of the gator's mouth, and pried it open.

Holt poked his head into the gator's mouth, and then pulled out.

After a few more tricks, Holt broke down the art of alligator wrangling and anticipating the reptile's sudden movements.

"You have to feel the body," Holt said, "and feel when they're going to explode."

He urged gentle handling — "The gator won't feel you as a threat," he said — and anticipat-

ed great potential for professional alligator wrestling.

"This is going to be a sport that hopefully goes to a global level," he said.

Holt's worldwide aspirations begin with this weekend's competition, the first one sanctioned under the FAWC.

Organizers expect at least 10 alligator wrestlers, though registration closes Thursday, and prospective wrestlers must demonstrate experience handling gators. Wrestlers will compete for more than \$10,000 in prizes, including a \$5,000 first prize pot.

Wrestlers will compete in 10-minute timed events and be judged in six categories: aggressiveness of the gator, difficulty of the move, style, appearance, showmanship and water wrangling.

Wrestlers will draw straws for gators, which will range in size from 8- to 9-feet-long and weigh about 200 pounds each.

Jimmy Riffle, 24, of Fort Lauderdale plans to compete this weekend, and hinted that he has a few "secret tricks" up his sleeve. He offered prospective reptile wranglers some tips.

Number one rule, he said: "You cannot be afraid to get bit."

Austin Billie, 27, of Hollywood said he learned how to wrestle alligators about two years ago.

The most important lesson he's learned, he said: "Know your

limits." Billie said wrestlers are trained to be vigilant of the gator's "areas of danger," which is pretty much anywhere near its mouth.

Billie also envisioned bigger things for alligator wrestling. He said he found on the Internet a website for an alligator wrestling school, "someplace where it snows," and guessed that must reflect a growing popular interest.

For now, he said of alligator wrestling, "you can make a living at it, but it takes a lot of travel."

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