

Wildlife Afield

BY JIM DEAN

Many bass fishermen make a big mistake every spring by waiting until mid-April to begin their bass fishing. The month of March is one of the best bass-fishing months in the year. In fact, it may well be the best time of the year to tangle with a really big fish.

Throughout this past winter, I have been fishing some medium-sized lakes in the mid-section of the state. During January and February, most of the fish caught were chain pickerel, or jacks, as many people call them. But almost every trip yielded at least one or two bass.

Late in February, the bass finally begin to outnumber the pickerel, and some of them were not bad. One, in fact, was a three-and-a-half pounder that took a streamer fly fished on a flyrod. Of course, fly rods are not the best tool for winter bass, but if bass will take streamers, they'll take plugs.

During February and early March, my angling companions and I have not been skunked a single time, and our largest bass tipped the scales at five pounds. During the remainder of March, we'll do even better.

Several years ago, while I was working as outdoor editor for a Piedmont newspaper, I kept a casual record of all the big bass over six pounds that were brought in for pictures.

The results were surprising. Despite the fact that there were very few fishermen on the water, most of the really big fish—eight pounds and up—were caught in March and early April. The catch slackened off in May and June, but was still good. The next best time for lunkers proved to be in late summer—the traditional dog days. Fall was the least successful time to hang a lunker largemouth, a finding that seems to fly in the face of what I've always been told.

I think I know why the dog days proved good. Often, the big bass are schooled in deep water, and once they are located, it is possible to make a good catch. As for the fall fishing, I suspect that it has always been over-rated.

Anyway, the point of all this is that for the next month or so, the odds say that you have your best chance of getting a "wall" fish.

It has been my experience that early season bass fishing requires some special technique. Many bass are not—as you might expect—in deep holes. Instead, some run out of the cold water into the warmer

Coast Line

BY JIM TYLER

N.C. Dept. of Commercial Fisheries

The new law enforcement officer for N.C. marine fisheries was on the job only a week when he had the chance to make his first case.

Fisheries inspectors had been trying for some time to catch a man selling oysters without a dealer's license. Because Gary Harris was new to the coast the man made the mistake of selling him a bushel.

Gary, 24, moved from Mebane, Alamance County, to Wilmington and became an inspector February 1. Fresh from the Piedmont, he has had to learn the easy things, such as differences between clams and oysters, and is in the process of learning things that take time, such as how to navigate a boat in shallow, tidal creeks. He finds the work exciting, a complete change of pace.

The marine fisheries division began statewide recruiting for new inspectors in 1961. According to the chief of law enforcement men from inland counties have developed into inspectors as good as those recruited along the coast.

Gary will be assigned soon to patrol New Hanover County by himself. Presently, he and his teacher, inspector Benjamin Rivenbark, Wilmington, work New Hanover and Pender Counties. The two men will work together until the recruit is ready to do it alone.

Fisheries law enforcement is a lot of looking. Looking from auto and boat the two men cover many miles in a day. Besides enforcing coastal fishing regulations, they have responsibility to see that the State dredge and fill permit system for shoreline development is followed. Inspectors also watch over some phases of selling and transporting seafood.

Recruit and teacher were driving recently a rough New Hanover road parallel to polluted water closed to shellfishing. The sandy road weaved in and out of woods and there were mud-holes from rains. The veteran, much to his chagrin, stuck the car in one of them. Gary got out to help dig the car free, and as he pulled his brand new hip boots from the trunk he commented, "The first time I get to wear these hip boots is to dig a car out of a ditch in the woods."

shallows, particularly during mid-afternoon on sunny days. I have found big fish in water that would barely cover their backs.

Although later in the season bass are often found along deep banks, in March they seem to like the shallow banks and coves where they "sunbathe" and prowl for "passing bait."

Your choice of lure is also important. Plastic worms have never worked well for me early in the season. Instead, I prefer a shallow-running, minnow imitation, preferably one of the floating-diving types. My friends and I have also had excellent luck using spinners and vibration lures such as the Hotspot or Sonic. On occasion, winter and early spring bass in shallow waters will even bite a surface lure.

The only problem, if indeed it is one, is the weather and muddy water. I don't like to fish when it is really cold, but there are plenty of days when the temperature hovers in the high 50's and 60's during March, and some days are even hot. Spring rains create muddy water in many lakes and ponds, but unless the water is so turbid that your line leaves "tracks" you should be able to catch fish.

Race Coming Up

MARTINSVILLE — Being a NASCAR track champion is quite an honor but even one with such an impressive record likely won't attract too much attention prior to the \$41,000 Dogwood 500 Classic on Sunday, March 25 at Martinsville Speedway.

You see, 23 track champions appear on the entry list and a driver who has to be at least a state champion to draw even an interested glance from the fans. And there are seven of them on the roster at the moment as well as the two national champs



WAITING FOR FINE WEATHER—Boats, as well as people, are waiting for warm weather and clear skies to get back into boating on beautiful Perquimans River. The fog and drizzle of the last week, made one think they were living in London, England. Weathermen promises clearer skies and warmer temperatures for the remaining week. (Staff Photo By Francine Sawyer)

as the annual NASCAR National Championship double-header, 250 laps for Modifieds and 250 laps for Late Model Sportman cars, takes shape.

Heading the Modified field is national champion Jerry Coon of Rome, N.Y. And among the state champs entered are Fred De Sarro (Connecticut) and Lou Luzzaro (New York).

Topping the Late Model Sportsman field is national champion Jack Ingram of Asheville, N.C., and he's joined by state champions John Rosati (Canada), Bob Dragon (New York), Benny Kerley (North Carolina), Don Miller (South Carolina) and Leslie Pond (Virginia).

Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, West Virginia, New York, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Delaware.

Time trials on Thursday, March 22 and Friday, March 23 will determine the top 20 starting positions for each race.

With the deadline not yet reached, the entry list has soared past the 150 mark and the field shows drivers from Canada, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, South

Horse Club Elects Officer

Perquimans Horse and Pony Club held their business meeting to elect officers for 1973. Elected were President, Ed Nixon; Vice President, Erie Haste, Jr.; Secretary, Thelma

Rogerson; and Treasurer, Lib Thach. Other important positions and committees were elected.

The club planned their first show for the year Sunday, April 1, 1973 at 1:30 p.m.

Hunt Changes Proposed

Tar Heel hunters will have chance to comment on a series of changes proposed for the 1973-74 hunting regulations in April. The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission has set up nine public hearing across the state where the proposals will be aired.

The proposed changes will be publicized late in March, after the Wildlife Commission has decided which ones to present for consideration at the hearings.

"We hope that hunters will look for these proposals in the newspapers, and then plan to attend the hearing nearest them so that we can hear what they think of the suggested changes."

GRADUATES
GREAT LAKES, ILL. — Navy Seaman Recruit Raymond H. Cartwright, son of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond H. Cartwright of Rt. 3, Hertford, graduated from recruit training at the Naval Training Center here.

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1971 Chevrolet Impala 4 dr., hdt., fully equipped incl. factory air and vinyl roof. A real nice car and only 2695.	1971 Ford Galaxie 500, 4 dr., hdt., fully equipped incl. V8, AT, PS, factory air and vinyl roof. A very nice car and only 2595.
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