



*Wild* **Ohio**

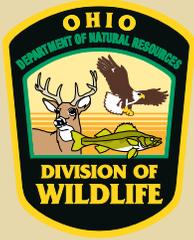
Spring 2005

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Ohio Department of Natural Resources

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

SPECIAL • LAKE ERIE • ISSUE



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**Division of Wildlife Mission Statement**

*We are dedicated to conserving and improving the fish and wildlife resources and their habitats, and promoting their use and appreciation by the people so that these resources continue to enhance the quality of life for all Ohioans.*

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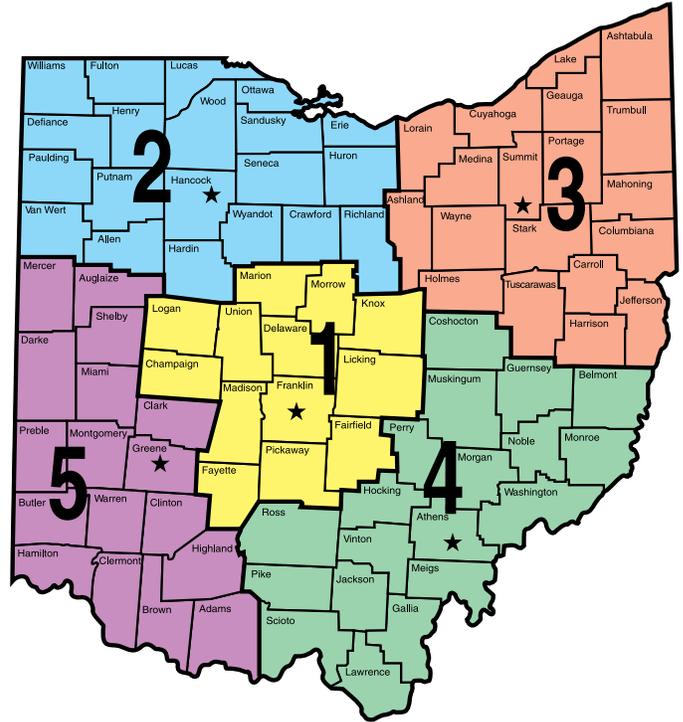
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**On the Spring Wildlife Calendar . . .**

**April 8–10 Lake Erie Wing Watch;** Hikes and seminars for beginning to advanced birders, Port Clinton, Contact Ottawa County Visitors Bureau, 1-800-441-1271.

**May 7–8 Free Fishing Days,** all state residents are invited to experience Ohio's fantastic fishing without having to purchase a fishing license for these two days.

**May 14 International Migratory Bird Day,** activities at Magee Marsh Wildlife Area, Ottawa County, (419) 898-0960, ext. 31; 9 a.m.–5 p.m.





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*Lake Erie's coastal wetlands attract a kaleidoscope of feathered jewels creating a Mecca for birders and avian researchers.*



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### Interagency Management Equals a World-Class Fishery

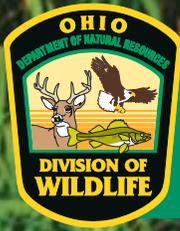
*Despite being the smallest of the Great Lakes, Lake Erie supports one of the most diverse and productive freshwater fisheries in the world, thanks to a cooperative interagency management program.*

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### On the Cover...

For decades the walleye has reigned as king to Lake Erie sport anglers. Photo by Vicki Mountz.



# Ohio's watchable wildlife



Great blue heron



## Watchable Wildlife • Ohio's

### *story and photos by Tim Daniel*

The next time you are in the vicinity of the Lake Erie coastal wetlands or an inland lake, stream, or marsh, take some time to appreciate the wading birds that we know as herons, egrets, and bitterns. Nine species nest in the state, but at least 11 species can be found here stalking shallow waterways.

Most commonly observed are great blue herons and great egrets. The tall and lanky great blue herons stand 46 inches high. Their slate blue coloration and statue-like presence help them to blend in with their surroundings. Great egrets stand about three feet tall and are more easily noticed because of their pure white plumage.

Both species are best known for their classic hunting stance: standing in shallow water quietly watching for fish, frogs, or crayfish to swim by. These supreme hunters are equipped with sharp, strong beaks and long necks that uncoil to deliver a quick, powerful thrust. You will be amazed at their lightning-fast movement and accuracy when they plunge their

head underwater to stab or grab their prey. Though best suited for hunting in water, herons and egrets can sometimes be seen in open fields stalking mice, voles, or even an unsuspecting frog. These birds are voracious hunters and will eat about any animal big enough to see, but small enough to swallow.

They fly with necks pulled back onto the shoulders, legs stretched out beyond their short tails, and broad wings flapping slowly.

Great blue herons and great egrets nest in the tops of tall trees in colonies with several nests in the same tree. Over time colonies can grow to a great many nests. Nesting high in trees helps protect the nest from predators. They build a nest platform from large sticks and generally lay three to four eggs in early spring.

The green heron is the smallest heron measuring in at only 18 inches long with a small, stocky body. It is a regular visitor to slow moving water, and recently has become more acclimated to hunting water retention ponds even in urban



Black-crowned night heron

areas. Green herons usually nest in isolated pairs in dense shrubbery or small trees near water.

More difficult to find and observe are yellow-crowned and black-crowned night-herons. As their name implies they are nocturnal, spending their day roosting in trees. Other herons that can be found in Ohio include little blue and tri-colored herons. Besides the great egret, other egrets include cattle and snowy egrets. Difficult to encounter are the bitterns (least bittern and American bittern). These birds are very secretive and highly camouflaged to help conceal their frames in dense marsh grass. ■



Great egret



Green heron

## Wading Birds

### Viewing Opportunities

Heron and egret are great subjects to watch for both beginner and experienced birders. Their size, abundance, and interesting behaviors will provide many hours of enjoyable viewing.

Look for herons and egrets stalking prey along urban and rural ponds, stream banks, and shallow areas of inland lakes. Along Lake Erie where they are very common, look for herons and egrets in coastal marshes, as well as in ditches along roadsides such as State Route 2 in Ottawa and Lucas counties. Some of the wetland wildlife areas managed by the Division of Wildlife that provide excellent viewing opportunities include Big Island (Marion County), Grand River (Trumbull County), Killbuck Marsh (Wayne and Holmes counties), Magee Marsh (Ottawa County), Metzger Marsh (Lucas County), Pickerel Creek (Sandusky County), and Spring Valley (Greene County).

If you are patient and watch closely you will notice that different species have different hunting styles. Some lie in wait for unsuspecting prey to come within reach. Others are more active and may stir up the muddy bottom to scare up some aquatic morsel.

Because of their sensitivity to people during the breeding season, most nesting occurs in areas far from humans where disturbance is minimal. Forty percent of all nesting herons and egrets in the Great Lakes region nest on West Sister Island in

Lake Erie. Public access is not permitted on this designated federal wilderness area, but viewing can be done from a boat using a high-powered viewing scope.



Cattle egret

# The Lake Erie Marshes – A Wildlife Legacy

by Melissa Hathaway

Even before Ohio statehood, wildlife has historically lured people to Lake Erie's mystical marshes. Aquatic, terrestrial, and feathered species alike contribute to the cornucopia of fauna found in the marsh region rimming southwestern Lake Erie. Whether utilized for survival or recreation, the lake's wildlife-rich wetlands have historically provided a venue for trapping, hunting, fishing, birding, and other wildlife-related ventures.



**Native Americans and French fur trappers used the marshes for their rich fur resources including beaver.**

Tim Daniel

like malaria and cholera were an added threat to anyone who slogged their way through this inhospitable wilderness. However, the region's Native Americans and French fur traders from Canada avidly used the great swamp for its rich fur resources that included beaver, muskrat, raccoon, fox, bear, otter, and mink.

The French who eventually settled in the region were later referred to as the "Muskrat French," and known for their custom of "ratting" in the rivers and marshes. They were also hunters as accounts from the Toledo Blade in 1844 tell how French hunters supplied ducks and geese from the marshes at 30 cents a dozen for wild game dinners in Toledo.

These early French roots are still evident across the Lake Erie marsh region today with place names like the Toussaint River, La Carpe Creek, Tettau Road, and the village of La Carne, and family surnames like St. Clair and Reau. Very few descendents of the early inhabitants remain, but they have carried down through generations the early traditions and lore of the region by trapping, hunting, guiding duck hunters, and managing marshes.

## From Swampland to Cropland

After the War of 1812, with the British and Native Americans stripped of power, more settlers gradually began to move into the region. By the 1840s, Germans and other immigrants came to establish farms, and most of the landscape underwent

## Ohio's Last Frontier

The northwest corner of Ohio was the last region of the state to be settled because of the impenetrable Great Black Swamp that stretched 300,000 acres from present day Vermilion to the mouth of the Detroit River. Thick swamp forests, expansive marshes, and deep mud covered the region making travel by foot, horseback, or covered wagon often impossible. Swarms of mosquitoes that transmitted diseases

a tremendous change with the clearing of the land. Logging companies also sprang up to profit from the thick swamp forest. By 1875 most of the entire swamp forest and marshes had been cleared, drained, and diked for croplands. However, farming here was expensive and laborious because changing lake levels periodically washed out dikes and ruined entire crops. Eventually housing developments and lakeside vacation communities sprang up, and these residents would also have to reckon with Lake Erie's destructive forces.

As early as the 1820s the marshes of Lake Erie and Sandusky Bay were already famous for some of the best waterfowl hunting in the country. Because few prime marshes remained, interest in securing hunting rights on these quality waterfowl areas grew, and the first duck club was chartered in 1838. Waterfowl hunting became a fashionable sport for the wealthy, and some of the lakeshore properties were purchased by sportsmen and reverted back to marshes and managed to attract waterfowl. Hunters from as far as Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, and points down state came by train to Rocky Ridge, then traveled by horse and buggy to hunt clubs.



**Magee Marsh Hunt Club trapper with the day's catch of muskrats.**



Division of Wildlife photos

**"Punters" took hunters to their blinds in "punt" boats.**

One elite hunt club was the Winous Point Shooting Club on Sandusky Bay established in 1856, which today is the oldest actively chartered duck hunting club in the United States. Through sponsorship of numerous master's and doctorate research projects conducted at Winous Point (today referred to as Winous Point Marsh Conservancy), critical research findings about wetland habitat have contributed to the preservation and management of wetlands.

Some of the other early shooting clubs included: Cedar Point, Navarre, La Carpe, Crane Creek (later to become Magee Marsh), Rocky Ridge, and the Toussaint shooting clubs along the lakeshore, and Ottawa and De Mars shooting clubs on Sandusky Bay.

Muskrat trapping also became lucrative and encouraged marsh restoration and management. It was also a way to offset high marsh maintenance costs. From 1940 to 1950, 99,000 muskrats were trapped on Magee Marsh alone. Instead of pumping water off diked marshes for agriculture, some land-owners were pumping water onto them and controlling water levels to create waterfowl and muskrat habitat. The sportsmen opened up their marshes by dredging channels for easier access to interior areas via flat-bottomed "punt boats." The water level manipulation promoted the growth of plants preferred

by waterfowl, and also created habitat for other wildlife such as water birds, frogs, reptiles, amphibians, and insects.

These sportsmen's marshes were spared the fate that befell the rest of the Black Swamp. Still, like the area farmers, developers, and cottage owners, some of the hunt clubs could not keep up with the high costs of labor and maintenance associated with flooding from changing lake levels and dike erosion from the lake's wave action. Fortunately, many duck clubs that were financially unable to continue sold their marshlands to conservation agencies.

### Managing the Lake Erie Marshes

Today most of the remaining 35,000 acres of marshlands are being managed by the Division of Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and a number of duck hunting clubs still in existence. These marshes along Lake Erie and Sandusky Bay are the only properties that have remained relatively unchanged since the beginning of settlement, allowing for some of Ohio's highest quality wetlands.

The long heritage of waterfowl hunting in the Lake Erie marshes continues today. Many public and private lands throughout the region are considered some of the best in the Midwest for hunting waterfowl. Hunters and trappers continue to play a vital role in preserving these wetlands with their license fees, duck stamps, and excise taxes on equipment that provide monies to state and federal agencies to purchase and manage wetlands. (See sidebar on page 8 for Lake Erie marshes managed by the Division of Wildlife.)

### Magee Marsh Hunt Club hunters with a bag of ducks.

Division of Wildlife photo



Tim Daniel



Blanding's turtle



Tim Daniel



### The original clubhouse at the Winous Point Shooting Club (shown in 1864) still serves as the nucleus for the club's activity.

Division of Wildlife photo



Melissa Hathaway

The Division of Wildlife began to acquire Lake Erie marshlands beginning with the purchase of land for the 2,000-acre Magee Marsh Wildlife Area in eastern Lucas and western Ottawa counties in 1951. The property was formerly the Crane Creek

*continued on next page*

## The Lake Erie Marshes – A Wildlife Legacy *continued*

Shooting Club, then owned by the John Magee family, and later rented by a private club as the Magee Marsh Hunt Club. John Magee used his marshes for profit by trapping muskrats and raccoons for the fur market, and selling waterfowl, turtles, and frogs for food. But perhaps more importantly, John Magee provided, for a small fee, the first duck hunting lands accessible to the “Average Joe” who could not afford to belong to one of the expensive, private hunt clubs. This tradition continues at Magee Marsh with public waterfowl hunting by permits obtained through a statewide lottery. An article in the November 2004 issue of *Field and Stream* magazine recognized Magee Marsh Wildlife Area as one of the “25 Public Land Hotspots Where the Good Old Days of Waterfowling are Right Here, Right Now.”

Magee Marsh is managed to protect a variety of wetland species and their habitat, while also providing recreation for waterfowl hunters, birders, photographers, and other wildlife enthusiasts. Used for both research and recreation, it is most likely the most accessible marsh for the public in the Lake Erie Marsh Region today. Here visitors can see a remnant of an original marsh, observe a myriad of wildlife species, and feel the mystique and wonder of a wetland. The Magee Marsh Boardwalk Bird Trail sits on a remnant forested beach ridge, and provides critical resting and feeding habitat for thousands of migrating bird species. The Sportsman’s Migratory Bird Center at Magee Marsh is preserving

Steven A. Gray



**Magee Marsh Manager Denis Franklin guides a group of waterfowl hunters to their blinds.**

### Sportsman’s Migratory Bird Center

Tim Daniel



the local heritage and folklore with a habitat display of wildlife species found on the marsh, historic waterfowl decoys and a punt boat, trapping gear, and other historical display items.

Marshes are referred to as “cradles of wildlife” and for good reason—they support many diverse wet habitats that support more wildlife than any other habitat type. They serve as shelter, feeding, and breeding areas for many species of terrestrial and aquatic resident wildlife, as well as rest stops for migrating birds. A Division of Wildlife goal is to acquire, restore, and protect Ohio’s remaining wetlands and enhance the diversity of wetland wildlife in Ohio. Many of the Lake Erie-based restoration, reintroduction, and management projects have expanded wetland wildlife throughout the state. These

## Lake Wetlands Managed by the Division of Wildlife

- Little Portage Wildlife Area (Ottawa County)
- Magee Marsh Wildlife Area (Ottawa and Lucas counties)
- Mallard Club Marsh Wildlife Area (Lucas County)
- Metzger Marsh Wildlife Area (Lucas County)
- Pickerel Creek Wildlife Area (Sandusky County)
- Pipe Creek Wildlife Area (Erie County)
- Toussaint Wildlife Area (Ottawa County)

map by Gene Whitten



**Marshes of the western Lake Erie region**



Tim Daniel

programs have included efforts to expand populations of the bald eagle, Canada goose, black duck and other duck species, beaver, trumpeter swan, common tern, river otter, snowy egret, black-crowned night heron and other wading birds, and many species of songbirds.

The Lake Erie marshes were the magnet that drew the first European settlers to Lake Erie’s southwestern shores. Today and for generations to come, the remaining marshes are still important in the state’s ecological, cultural, and economic picture by luring millions of Ohioans to visit and marvel at each year.

*Lake Erie’s finned species have also contributed greatly to the history, culture, and economics of the Lake Erie shoreline. See articles about Lake Erie’s fisheries on pages 9 through 14 of this issue.*

# Interagency Management Equals A World-Class Fishery

by Jeff Tyson, Travis Hartman, and Mark Turner

Lake Erie is the smallest and most southerly of the Great Lakes. However, despite its small stature, the lake has historically supported one of the most diverse and productive freshwater fisheries in the world. More than 20 different kinds of fish have been important commercially or recreationally in the 150 years of recorded fishing on the lake.

The continued productivity of the fishery in Lake Erie is a product of the cooperative, inter-jurisdictional fisheries management programs that are currently in place. This has not always been the case. Many of the fisheries collapsed during the early 1900s due, in part, to overharvest. In the next few pages, we will trace the history of fisheries management on Lake Erie and the resulting changes in the fish community, as well as describe the fisheries management programs in place today.

## The Early Years

Prior to settlement, fishing on Lake Erie was important for many Native Americans; however, the fishing pressure was light and likely did not affect the fish community. With the settlement of the Great Lakes basin in the early 1800s, many settlers saw the Great Lakes, and Lake Erie in particular, as having a never-ending supply of fish. Fish initially provided subsistence to settlers and soon became items for barter or sale at local markets around the lake.

As the century wore on, commercial fisheries developed on Lake Erie, particularly in Maumee Bay, and the Detroit area. Many different kinds of nets were used to harvest fish during the early years. By the 1840s, the commercial fishery was expanding rapidly with large market and distribution centers for lake whitefish, lake herring, and lake sturgeon developing in Toledo, Sandusky, Huron, and Cleveland. The mid- to late-1800s were considered the heyday of commercial fishing on Lake Erie, but signs were indicating that the resource was not unlimited.



Part of a 30-ton catch, Lake Erie, November 1918; many of Lake Erie's fisheries collapsed during the early 1900s due, in part, to overharvest.

## The Beginnings of Fish Management

In 1872, James Milner, a biologist with the U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries, made the first attempt to document the commercial fishery in the Great Lakes, and raised the specter of a vanishing resource. Milner estimated that more than 39 million pounds of fish were harvested from the Great Lakes annually. Milner's work would serve as the foundation for fisheries management in the Great Lakes, although in Ohio, fisheries regulation—the regulation of catches to allow for the remainder to reproduce and replenish numbers—was not fully implemented for another decade.

In 1873, the Ohio Fish Commission was established to deal with declining fish populations on Lake Erie and inland waters. The commission relied primarily on the federal government for studies of the status of fish populations in Lake Erie. The early management programs were mainly propagation and restocking programs, although additional regulations included the protection of young fish, and regulation of mesh size and placement of nets.

## The Downward Spiral

Through the mid-1900s, each state and province around the Great Lakes ran their own fisheries management program that consisted of mostly ineffective commercial regulations and stocking programs. The fish resources in Lake Erie continued to be heavily harvested. This overharvest resulted in changes in the dominant species and subsequent declines. By the early 1900s lake sturgeon were considered extinct from the Lake Erie system. The lake herring and lake whitefish fisheries continued to hold out through the early 20th century despite heavy harvest, habitat destruction, and pollution. However, by the late 1950s neither whitefish nor lake herring were viable commercial species. These two species have yet to return to their former glory.

During the mid-1900s, the fishery went through a series of changes and the fisheries managers responded. Up until the turn of the century, commercial fishing interests were king on Lake Erie. However, by the early 1900s sport fishing interests were beginning to exert some pressure on fisheries management agencies around the lake. Lake Erie was known among the sport fishing community as a hotspot for walleye

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Lake sturgeon were considered extinct from Lake Erie by the early 1900s.

## Interagency Management Equals A World-Class Fishery *continued*

and black bass fishing as early as the 1850s. After the collapse of the whitefish and herring fisheries, the commercial fishing industry switched to targeting different species, including walleye, blue pike, and yellow perch. From 1925-1960, walleye, blue pike, and yellow perch reigned as kings, until a combination of overharvest, habitat degradation, pollution, and exotic species caused the blue pike to disappear from Lake Erie and the walleye population to collapse.

### A New Era of Management

Several attempts to develop international agreements for coordinated fisheries management had been unsuccessful until the creation of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) in 1955. The GLFC is responsible for the coordination of fisheries research and management programs on the Great Lakes and development of the sea lamprey eradication program. The creation of the GLFC and interagency cooperation in fisheries management on Lake Erie signaled the coming of modern fisheries management and is responsible for many fisheries management successes.



By the 1960s, blue pike were extinct and walleye harvest had declined to record low levels. Mercury contamination of walleye by industrial pollution led to closures of the walleye fisheries from 1970-1972. Recognizing an opportunity to establish a coordinated fisheries management program on Lake Erie, the GLFC, state, and provincial fisheries management agencies established a framework to estimate fish harvest from the lake. This framework remains in place today as the single most important aspect of fisheries management on Lake Erie.

Catch quotas, the number of walleye and yellow perch that can be harvested from the lake, are established annually by the Lake Erie Committee of the GLFC and quotas are then allocated to each jurisdiction and fishery (sport or commercial). These catch quotas ensure that harvest does not exceed sustainable levels, so that the fish population crashes typical of the early 1900s do not occur again. Interagency management and establishing harvest quotas require many fisheries management programs be administered across the lake.

In Ohio, Lake Erie fisheries management consists of several programs including estimating sport and commercial harvest, population assessment, habitat restoration, plankton assessment, and other related research. All of these programs are a part of the broader Lake Erie interagency fisheries management program.

### Fish Harvest Monitoring

One of the most important programs of the Division's two Lake Erie Fisheries Units

is to estimate annual fish harvest, including harvests from commercial fisherman and sport anglers. Over the last five years nearly 8.5 million pounds of fish have been harvested annually by sport and commercial fishermen, with walleye and yellow perch making up the majority of the harvest.

Ohio's commercial fishery consists primarily of a yellow perch trapnet fishery, although other species, including white bass, sheepshead, white perch, carp, buffalo, and channel catfish, are also harvested. All commercial fishermen are required to hold a commercial fishing license, which allows them to use specialized fishing gear (trap nets and seines), and permits them to sell their catch. They must report all fish harvested on monthly catch reports. Catch reports are used to total monthly harvest across the fishing season. Once commercial fishermen have achieved their catch quota, they must stop harvesting fish. Along with catch reports, sampling takes place at fish cleaning houses along Lake Erie's shoreline to monitor length, weight, and age of the fish being commercially harvested.

To estimate the sport angling harvest, creel clerks work the lake shore from March through October counting boats returning to harbors and interviewing anglers. The data collected are used to estimate the number of hours spent sportfishing and the number of fish kept while fishing Lake Erie. Biological data are also collected.

### Population Assessment

Because the number and size of fish in Lake Erie changes annually, fisheries managers must sample the lake every year to stay on top of the fish community. Sound management requires an understanding of the population status of many of the fishes as well as the status of forage species (prey fish) in the lake. Fisheries managers conduct population assessment surveys to appraise the status of fish using several methods including trawling and gill netting surveys.

Trawling surveys are conducted to assess the annual hatches of many Lake Erie fishes. Fish hatched in the spring and summer will make up the future sport, commercial, and forage fish populations, and are important to monitor for



R.V. Explorer, stationed at Sandusky.

Melissa Hathaway

fisheries managers. A trawl is a large cone-shaped net that is towed through the water behind one of the Division's two research vessels, the R.V. Explorer or R.V. Grandon. The net collects small fish, which are sorted by species and age-group, counted, and measured. This information is important for the interagency management of these species. Other fish are returned to the laboratory to find out their eating preferences, among other things.

A fall gill net survey collects information on the larger, older fish, including walleye, white bass, yellow perch, and

**Trawling surveys provide information about annual hatches of many Lake Erie fishes such as yellow perch. Fish collected in a trawl are sorted by species and age-group, counted, and measured.**



Melissa Hathaway

Travis Hartman



Chris Vandergoot



Melissa Hathaway

**Interagency management programs are ensuring the continued productivity of Lake Erie's fishery.**



Melissa Hathaway

white perch. Gill nets are anchored in the lake for a fixed amount of time, usually overnight. Then biologists remove the fish that have been caught in the net and take them back to the laboratory for processing. The fish are measured, weighed, their sex and maturity are determined, and their stomachs examined for food. Lastly, an otolith (an inner ear bone), scale, or spine is removed to age the fish. Scales, otoliths, and spines all grow with the fish, and alternating patterns in fast growth (summer) and slow growth (winter) are recorded on the bony structure. Biologists can tell how old a fish is by counting the rings on the bony structure, much like tree rings. Fall survey data allows fisheries managers to monitor changes in the population, growth rate of fishes, and eating habits, which are all valuable to the interagency management of the fishery.

Because of the modern fisheries management programs in place on Lake Erie, the fisheries collapses of the early- to mid-1900s have not occurred. In fact, the recovery of the walleye and yellow perch populations in Lake Erie are a result of the successful interagency fisheries management programs. Other fish in Lake Erie, including lake sturgeon and Northern pike, likely will recover through concerted fisheries management efforts.

Fisheries management on Lake Erie has indeed come a long way and continues to be important in developing, recovering, and maintaining sustainable fisheries.

Kevin Kayle

R.V. Grandon stationed at Fairport Harbor.



# Four Seasons of Lake Erie Sportfishing

by Travis Hartman

**I**t is no secret that Lake Erie is a world-class walleye fishery with the Western Basin being recognized as “The Walleye Capital of the World.” However, there are many more sportfishing opportunities beyond the renowned walleye fishery. Whether you fish from shore, trailer a small boat, or own a large boat, opportunities abound throughout the entire calendar year to catch something new and exciting in areas that you may not realize are full of hard-fighting, great tasting fish.

## The Spring Bite

Spring fishing on Lake Erie can produce the fish of a lifetime when weather and fish cooperate. During March and

April, the majority of Lake Erie’s 20 million plus walleye congregate in the Western Basin on main lake reef areas, as well as large tributaries, to lay their eggs. A limit of walleye can be easy to come by when this many fish are concentrated into such a relatively small space. In addition, the chance of catching a real trophy well in excess of 10 pounds is a possibility this time of year. Generally, most anglers use casting techniques on both the main lake reef complex and in the tributaries to entice walleye. Popular spring-time lures include both leaded and floating jigs. Additionally, jigging blade baits such as Cicadas and Heddon Sonars can produce good catches when conditions are right.

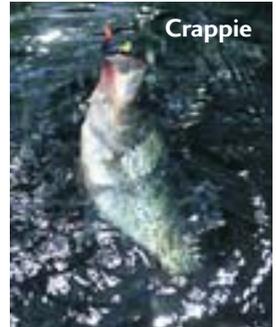
In addition to the excellent walleye fishing, nearshore anglers can expect to find great fishing for

jumbo yellow perch and smallmouth bass. The most popular technique for catching yellow perch includes fishing with either perch spreaders or crappie rigs baited with shiners. Springtime smallmouth bass fishing can be phenomenal, with most fish being hooked while casting tube jigs in shallow reef areas.

One of the best-kept spring fishing secrets on Lake Erie is the crappie fishery. Many of Lake Erie’s bays and harbors are teeming with good-eating crappie. Crappie fishing is most productive around docks, old vegetation, fallen tree branches, or other structure using slip bobbers and crappie jigs tipped with shiners.

Northern pike are commonly caught in shallow weedy areas of East Harbor, Sandusky Bay, and numerous other harbors shortly after ice out through early summer.

Spring is also a great time for tributary and shoreline anglers. In addition to walleye, steelhead trout frequent many of the tributaries from Vermilion to Conneaut through the end of April. Known for their acrobatic jumps, 10-pound plus steelhead offer exciting shallow water battles. White bass also make tributary migrations and provide fast action in April and May for anglers in the Maumee, Portage, and Sandusky rivers.



Crappie

Tim Daniel



Walleye



Yellow perch

Jonathan Smith

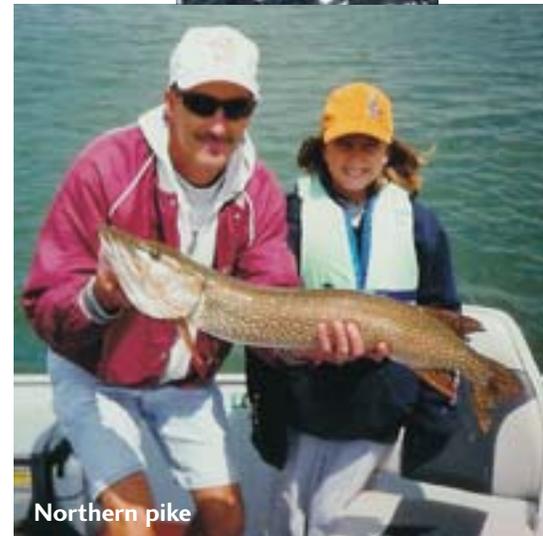


Smallmouth bass

Tim Daniel



Tim Daniel



Northern pike



Steelhead

Travis Hartman

# Walleye



Walleye

Tim Daniel



Smallmouth bass

Travis Hartman



Walleye chasing crankbait

Tim Daniel



White bass

Tim Daniel

## Summer Smorgasbord

Summer brings warmer temperatures and friendlier weather for all anglers to enjoy. The majority of walleye moves offshore with opportunities to catch fish from Toledo to Conneaut throughout the summer months. Generally, walleye move offshore by June, and disperse throughout the Western Basin, with some beginning their long migration eastward. Many of the fish that spawn in the Western Basin spend their summer months in the cooler waters of the Central Basin, or as far east as New York.

Casting weight forward spinners, dragging crawler harnesses, and trolling with spoons or crankbaits can all produce good catches of walleye throughout the summer. One unique feature of the Lake Erie walleye fishery is the size of the schools of walleye. In some cases, walleye schools will extend for 10 to 15 miles in all directions, with packs of 100 or more boats working the smaller pods of actively feeding fish.

In addition to walleye, summer brings the excitement of hard-fighting steelhead for offshore trollers. Trolling for steelhead with spoons leads to hard hits followed by impressive jumps and fast runs.

For nearshore anglers, yellow perch fishing can be good throughout the summer. Limit catches may take a little more time during the doldrums of summer, but when conditions are right perch fishing can still be fast and furious.



Yellow perch

Melissa Hathaway

Summer also means smallmouth bass in the islands area and shoreline and harbors from Port Clinton to Conneaut. One of Lake Erie's better-kept secrets is the expanding largemouth bass population. Anglers can find largemouth bass in weedy harbors all along the Erie shoreline. Look for harbors and bays that have docks and weeds to catch some of Lake Erie's overlooked footballs.

Last, but certainly not least, catfishing heats up during the summer months at most shoreline access points throughout the lake and offers great night fishing opportunities for our whiskered friends.

*continued on next page*

## Four Seasons of Lake Erie Sportfishing continued

### Fall Feeding Frenzy

When fall comes around it brings cooler temperatures and bright colors; however, the Lake Erie nearshore fishery really heats up. On the main lake walleye, smallmouth bass, and yellow perch begin feeding heavily in the warmer nearshore waters to prepare for winter.



Walleye

Migratory walleye that have spent the summer in the Central and Eastern basins of the lake move back to the Huron and island areas as they continue their trek towards spring spawning grounds. Trolling with crankbaits is the preferred method to target walleye that are gorging on gizzard shad.

Smallmouth bass move up onto rocky flats and are caught on tube jigs or crayfish. Yellow perch school up and can be caught on emerald shiners. Night fishing for walleye is popular in the fall for nearshore trollers and pier anglers. Shore anglers can again hit the tributaries of eastern Ohio as steelhead trout return from the lake to the streams where they were stocked.



Yellow perch

photos by Tim Daniel



Smallmouth bass



Stream steelhead



Chip Gross

### Hard Water Action

The cold of winter brings ice fishing for those "hard water" anglers that are equipped to handle the conditions. The safest ice usually develops around the Bass islands in areas protected from winter's winds. A short flight to South Bass Island to meet up with an ice guide can provide for a great fishing trip.

On the mainland, protected bays and harbors can produce bluegill, crappie, yellow perch, and walleye. Additionally, as long as the rivers remain ice-free, anglers can fish for steelhead in Central Basin tributaries.

Lake Erie provides excellent opportunities for a diversity of fish throughout the year. With the return of clearer water and aquatic vegetation, more species of fish are present in places not normally fished in the past. Boat ramps, marinas, and piers scattered along the Ohio shoreline offer exceptional access wherever you plan to fish. If you haven't fished Lake Erie in recent years, you're missing the boat to one of North America's top year-round fisheries



Chip Gross



# Ohio's Giant Aviary

by Melissa Hathaway

**W**here do birding enthusiasts go to observe birds? Naturally, they go where the birds are. The wetlands that rim Lake Erie's shores are like giant magnets that attract a kaleidoscope of feathered jewels, especially during the spring and fall migrations.

Thousands of birds representing more than 300 species descend upon the coastal marshes for resting and feeding habitat. Some stay to nest, while most use the marshes as rest stops to refuel with the nutrient-rich food supplies of aquatic plants and invertebrates while on migration routes to and from northern breeding grounds. While these refueling stops are essential to the birds' survival, they also provide a wealth of birding opportunities to experience the magic and color of migration.



## Waterfowl

The Lake Erie marsh region along the southwestern shoreline contains the state's largest tracts of wetlands and attracts larger numbers of waterfowl and more waterfowl species than anywhere else in the state. "Location, location, location" is very relevant for the thousands of migrating ducks and geese attracted to Sandusky Bay and the surrounding marshlands. Waterfowl descend upon these marshes because of the abundant food supplies and geographic location. At an intersection of two major waterfowl migration routes (the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways), the marshes serve as important resting and staging areas.

Besides the high populations of invertebrates in the marsh vegetation, zebra mussels and increasing vegetation in Lake Erie, and shallow, flooded agricultural fields provide nutritious food supplies to store up fat and energy for long migration journeys. In the winter months, the region's open water and waste grain in fields provide for a wintering waterfowl population as well.



Green-wing teal



Greater yellowlegs



Great egret



Semi-palmated plover

Twenty-nine species of ducks and four species of geese can be seen during the year. Muddy Creek Bay in the upper reaches of Sandusky Bay is the largest staging area for black ducks in North America. More than 40,000 black ducks have been seen at one time. The 2,400-acre Muddy Creek Bay is part of the Winous Point March Conservancy and managed as a waterfowl refuge through a cooperative venture with the Division of Wildlife.



Canada geese

## The Water Birds

photos by Tim Daniel

During the warm season, over 50 species of long- and short-legged water birds add to the beauty of the marsh landscape. These birds provide an added bonus to a birder's observation entertainment with the various feeding methods used by the different species. Herons and egrets are seen silently and gracefully stalking their prey in shallow wetlands and roadside ditches. Other wading birds present, but more elusive are bitterns, rails, moorhens, and coots. The probing and skimming feeding habits of the various shorebirds are a delight to observers. Shorebirds observed in the region include the sandpipers, dowitchers, dunlin, American avocet, phalaropes, plovers, and yellowlegs.

The marshes provide the ideal setting for migrating wading birds and shorebirds as some of the most-used stopovers are in

*continued on next page*

## Ohio's Giant Aviary *continued*

managed marshes where water levels are manipulated to create the abundant food supply of aquatic insects.

### Raptors

Many raptors are observed in the Lake Erie marsh region year-round, but large numbers can be seen in the region during migration periods. Ten thousand to 20,000 raptors can be observed during the spring migration. Migrating raptors depend on southwest winds and thermals created along the coast to make the long flight around the lake less energy-consuming. Raptors often seen along Lake Erie include bald eagles, red-tailed hawks, Northern harriers, American kestrels, osprey, peregrine falcons, and great horned owls.

### Songbirds

No birder's visit to the Lake Erie marsh region is complete without a stop at Magee Marsh Wildlife Area in Ottawa County, managed by the Division of Wildlife. *Birder's World* designates Magee Marsh as one of the top 10 birding locations in the North America. Magee's visitors come for the wading birds, shorebirds, gulls, terns, waterfowl, raptors, and songbirds, but it is the 37 species of migrating warblers that attract the most attention during the spring migration from mid-April through May.



Palm warbler

Tim Daniel

When a warm front moves into Ohio with good southwest winds, migrating songbirds move through the state and concentrate

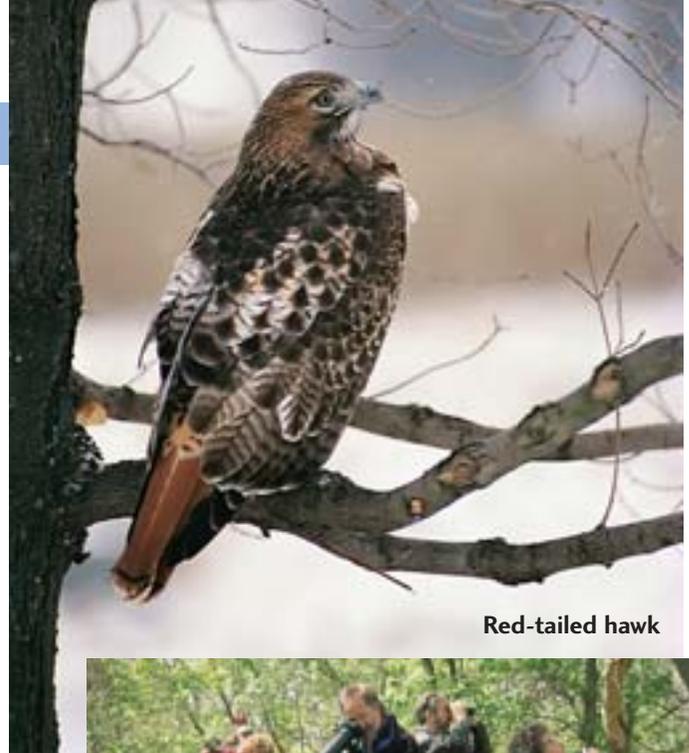
on remnant forested beach ridges along the shore. They rest and refuel here before making their journey around the large lake. Magee's Boardwalk Bird Trail is situated in one of only four beach ridges along Lake Erie's southern shore providing spectacular, up-close observation of the warblers. The wildlife area's deep and shallow water, open marsh, sedge meadow, and blue joint grass provide vital habitat with high energy food supplies for the warblers and other migrating species.

The annual International Migratory Bird Day will be celebrated at Magee Marsh May 14 with continuous activities from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information on this and other scheduled birding activities call the Sportsman's Migratory Bird Center at Magee Marsh at (419) 898-0960, ext. 31.



Mark Shieldcastle

Young egrets in a nest on West Sister Island, photographed during a banding project.



Red-tailed hawk

Tim Daniel



Melissa Hathaway

Magee Marsh boardwalk

### Avian Research

An abundance of birds in the Lake Erie marsh region not only provides a premier birdwatching Mecca, but also a naturally-equipped laboratory for avian researchers. The Division of Wildlife's avian research is conducted by staff at the Crane Creek Wildlife Research Station at Magee Marsh in Ottawa County. The staff, often in conjunction with other research agencies, conducts research on wetland bird species at Magee Marsh and other Division-managed wetlands, as well as West Sister Island. Managed by the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, the 82-acre West Sister Island in Lake Erie is a designated national wilderness area and is off limits to the public. Forty percent of all nesting herons and egrets in the Great Lakes region nest on this critical piece of wildlife habitat.

Partnering agencies in avian research include Ducks Unlimited, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, and the Black Swamp Bird Observatory. Some of the current avian research includes numerous waterfowl surveys, the reintroduction and management of trumpeter swans, and research projects involving bald eagles, common terns, black-crowned night herons, great egrets, snowy egrets, double-crested cormorants, sandhill cranes, and osprey. Division of Wildlife staff also compile the Wetland Breeding Bird Survey with the help of volunteer recorders.

### Badger Research Underway

The Division's Olentangy Wildlife Research Station will be working with The Ohio State University in an assessment of the population status and distribution of badgers in Ohio. The research will include placing radio collars on badgers that researchers may be able to capture. Any sightings or evidence of badgers should be reported to the Olentangy Wildlife Research Station at (740) 747-2525.



Ron Keil

### Print Donated by NWTF

The Blanchard Valley Longbeards Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) presented the print *Fan-tastic Suitors* to the District Two office in Findlay in recognition of "the outstanding partnership between the NWTF chapter and the Division of Wildlife." Pictured with the Hancock County Wildlife Officer Kirk



Tim Plageman

Kiefer are (left to right) Walter Shindeldecker, Harold Spence, and Carl Stuard of the Longbeards Chapter.

### Hands Needed to Rid Nuisance at Magee Marsh

Volunteer hands are needed at the Magee Marsh Wildlife Area in Ottawa County in a garlic mustard "pulling party" April 23 beginning at 10 a.m. Garlic mustard, a non-native, biennial herb that aggressively out-competes native species, is becoming a nuisance along the popular Magee Marsh Boardwalk Bird Trail. RSVP to Mary Warren at 419-898-0969, ext. 31 or via e-mail to [mary.warren@dnr.state.oh.us](mailto:mary.warren@dnr.state.oh.us). Free lunch provided by the Friends of Magee Marsh.



Jennifer Windus

### Brook Trout Meets Water Snake

Aquatic Biologist Andy Burt was giving a talk on native brook trout in a Medina County stream (Cleveland Metroparks property) last fall. Just as he was explaining to the listeners that brook trout are at the top of the food chain in the stream, a brook trout darted for cover and mistakenly thought the motionless water snake was a refuge area.



Robert McCall



Dan Smith

### Hunting Trailer Donated

The Division recently received a mobile blind from the Paralyzed Veterans of America in Washington, D.C. for use by handicapped hunters. The \$2,500 "Illusion Trailer" will be available

for participants with disabilities at controlled hunts and special events statewide.

### Fish Passage Program

by Craig Springer, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Salmon migrations in the Pacific Northwest are storied as an epic struggle, big fish facing stiff currents headlong to get to upstream spawning habitats. Other epics are played out in Ohio streams as fish make long-distance runs to fulfill the needs to reproduce or to just survive the seasons.

Steelhead respond to nature's cues and head up the Chagrin, Grand, and Vermilion rivers every autumn through the spring. Lake Erie walleye head up the Maumee and Sandusky rivers to spawn in the spring. Nearly all species of fish have the need at some point in their life cycle to move to different habitats for different reasons. Non-game fishes like darters and dace, minnows, and redhorse suckers, play out their entire lives in short reaches of streams, but they can swim headlong into barriers too, like small dams and perched road culverts, when they seek out deep pools to ride out extremes of summer or winter, or find a place to spawn.

Remedies may lie in the Fish Passage Program, a cost-share program of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The Division of Wildlife partnered with the Service to reconnect fish to habitat in a pilot project in northeast Ohio. Largemouth bass and Northern pike are swimming to spawning habitats in Metzger Marsh on Lake Erie thanks, in part, to the program. And the program holds promise for future, high-priority fisheries. For more information, see <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/water/dsafety/lowhead%5Fdams/> or <http://fisheries.fws.gov>.



Melissa Hathaway

Fish passage structure at Metzger Marsh Wildlife Area on Lake Erie.



## The Aquatic Visitors Center— A South Bass Icon

by Marc Sommer

The waves lap against the shoreline as the lake dances in the breeze. Senses come alive to give clarity to the sounds of the gulls overhead and anglers' motorboats in the distance. The smell of early morning mist and the taste of what is yet to come beckons the traveler to take in all Lake Erie has to offer, and what better place to accept its offerings than at the Put-in-Bay Aquatic Visitors Center.

The variety of attractions in the historic hatchery building are enough to tickle all of your senses from a look into the historic hatchery's past, to interactive displays, to fish aquariums filled with many of the state's fish species. Outside on the center's large pier visitors can get a hands-on fishing experience with equipment and bait provided free of charge to licensed anglers or those 15 and under.

In the yesteryear of the hatchery there was still plenty to see, but by tourist standards it may have seemed more like work than educational playtime, and work is exactly what it was. For the employees at the hatchery it wasn't the quietest place to work. The sound of constantly flowing water being pumped by two coal burning generators to the second floor of the hatchery and then back down to the first floor, where it was used in the hatching process, was enough to keep casual conversation almost



Melissa Hathaway



Put-in-Bay Aquatic Visitors Center

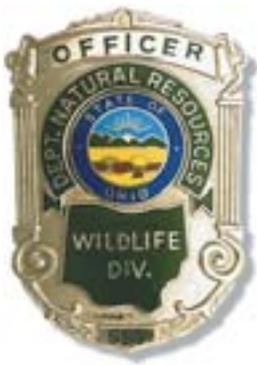
inaudible. Days consisted of long hours, both on the lake and in the hatchery, collecting eggs from females and later fertilizing them and rearing them until they were big enough to stock. Temperatures ranged from smoldering hot summer days to the frigid weeks of a Lake Erie winter.

The Put-In-Bay State Fish Hatchery was one of the oldest hatcheries in the United States until operations ceased in 1991 due to the establishment of modern and less costly hatcheries on the mainland. It was established in 1890 in Sandusky and later moved to Put-In-Bay in 1907. The original building, a wood frame structure, was destroyed by fire in May 1914 and the present two-story brick building was built in its place the same year. The hatchery produced many species of fish including walleye, sauger, whitefish, herring, yellow perch, and rainbow trout.

Despite the less than glamorous accommodations, the men and women that lived and worked at the hatchery did so willingly because they believed in providing Ohioans with an opportunity to enjoy angling. In the last 100 years this philosophy has not changed for the Division of Wildlife. Despite weather, long days, and an ever-changing landscape, the agency still believes in providing Ohioans the opportunity to let go of the everyday grind, kick back, and enjoy life with a fishing rod in hand.

The historic hatchery continues to play an important role in Ohio fisheries today by educating visitors about Ohio's aquatic resources. The next time you find yourself in the Lake Erie region, plan a side excursion to the Put-In-Bay Visitors Center, located at 1 Peach Point at the west end of Put-In-Bay Harbor. Admission is free. Take advantage of the opportunity to re-visit the past, interact with the present, and envision what the future holds for Ohio's fisheries management. While there, remember to catch a memory, and turn that memory into a reality that truly excites the senses. 

photos by Melissa Hathaway



## Wildlife Law Enforcement

# Field Notes

### “Operation Overbag” Hooks 12 Poachers

“Operation Overbag,” an undercover investigation conducted by Division of Wildlife officers, resulted in the arrests of 12 suspected poachers last October. Officers also executed a search warrant on a fish cleaning and retail seafood store in Lorain County.

The individuals are accused of a variety of wildlife offenses including: taking more than the legal limit of yellow perch, walleye, and steelhead trout; taking more than the legal limit of deer; failure to legally tag and check deer; hunting deer by illegal methods; and failure to obtain licenses and permits. The bulk of the illegal activity, occurred in Lorain County, but some violations occurred in southeastern Ohio, including Athens, and Jackson counties.

“We believe the alleged poachers in this case have stolen thousands of wild animals from the people of Ohio,” said Steven A. Gray, chief of the Division of Wildlife. “It is because of conscientious hunters and anglers of our state, and their willingness to get involved, that this illegal activity has now been stopped.”

The 12 suspected poachers have been charged with 43 third- and fourth-degree misdemeanor counts of violating Ohio’s wildlife laws. Additional individuals may be charged pending further investigation. Each fourth-degree misdemeanor conviction can carry a maximum fine of \$250 and 30 days jail. Third-degree misdemeanors can carry a maximum fine of \$500 and 60 days in jail. Additionally, hunting and fishing licenses may be revoked and equipment may be forfeited.

In addition to the arrests, wildlife officers conducted a search of Ardick Seafood in Lorain County where they seized business records and 112 pounds of yellow perch.

### Officer Awards

**Ron Ollis, Special Operations Supervisor, Central Office, Columbus (not pictured): Ohio Wildlife Officer of the Year, Mississippi Flyway Council**

**Jim Quinlivan, Law Enforcement Supervisor, District One, Columbus: Ohio Officer of the Year, International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

Lindsay Deering



### Big Fish Nets Man A Big Fine

**by Jeff Collingwood, Huron County Wildlife Officer**

The annual walleye spawning runs in the Maumee and Sandusky rivers in northwest Ohio offer great potential for big fish. It was no different in the spring of 2004.

A Fremont man, fishing in the Sandusky River, landed a 30-inch female walleye that weighed just under 16 pounds. The current Ohio State record is 16.19 pounds. This big fish, however, was caught illegally by snagging, and wildlife officers were there to make sure it didn’t go unnoticed.

Snagging is an illegal method of catching fish by hooking them somewhere in the body other than inside of the mouth. Any walleye that is caught by snagging must be immediately returned to the water unharmed.

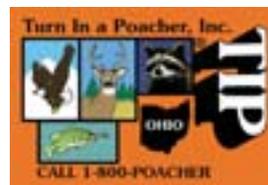
Anglers who snag a walleye aren’t actually breaking a law until they decide not to toss the fish back into the water. Special regulations apply to the main areas these fish congregate to spawn. The Fishing Regulations Digest spells this out very clearly, and the vast majority of anglers understand and respect these laws.

The violator, who had four previous fishing violations, was fined \$200 and lost the privilege to fish in Ohio waters for three years.

During March and April, the peak period of walleye spawning activity, anglers from all over Ohio and surrounding states converge on the two rivers, known for their outstanding fishing. Wildlife officers from 20 northwest Ohio counties also cruise the shorelines, usually staying just out of sight, to be sure anglers comply with the special regulations. While snagging walleye is the most common violation others include fishing without a license, overlimits, and stream litter.

The walleye snagged was forfeited to the Division, and aquatic biologists estimated it to be between 15 and 20 years old.

Report wildlife violations by calling the TIP hotline: 1-800-POACHER (1-800-762-2437), or online at <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/wildlife/contact/tipform.htm>.



Donations to the TIP fund are needed and appreciated. Those wishing to donate can send a contribution to TIP Headquarters, ODNR Division of Wildlife, 2045 Morse Rd., Columbus OH 43229-6693.



# Backyards for Wildlife Q & A

by Donna Daniel

Do you have a question that you've always wondered about concerning wildlife in your backyard? If so, send your questions to: **Wild Ohio Magazine, Attention: Melissa Hathaway, Editor, 305 E. Shoreline Drive, Sandusky, OH 44870, or e-mail melissa.hathaway@dnr.state.oh.us.** Due to space limitations, we regret that not all questions submitted may be answered. If you need a quick response to a question, please contact your nearest wildlife district office.



**Q: Is this a butterfly feeding on the flower in the photo?**

— Tina Kissinger, Uhrichsville, Ohio

**A:** No, it is not a butterfly; it is actually a type of moth generally referred to as a hummingbird moth. It belongs to the Sphinx moth family. This particular species is named the “hummingbird clearwing.” Its caterpillar feeds on honeysuckle, hawthorns, cherry, and plum tree leaves. As an adult the moth is active during the day (unlike most moths that fly at night) feeding on the same flowers as butterflies.

**Q: I would like to know what kind of caterpillar this is and what it eats.**

— Justin Napier, (age six) Lockbourne, Ohio

**A:** This is a “hickory horned devil.” It is the larva of the regal or royal walnut moth. As the name indicates the caterpillar feeds on the leaves of hickory and walnut trees, but also sweet gum, persimmon and sumac. The caterpillars can be found July through October. The “horns” and spines look intimidating, but they are harmless and probably keep the caterpillars from being eaten by predators. By the end of summer when they have grown to almost six inches long they burrow into the ground where they spin a cocoon in the soil. The adult moth will hatch the next summer and has a wingspan of four to six inches.



Tim Daniel

**Q: Do we have golden eagles in Ohio?**

— L. Keck, Brook Park, Ohio

**A:** Golden eagles do not nest in Ohio, but each spring and fall a small number of migrants pass through the state. Also, one or two golden eagles have been regular winter visitors at The Wilds in southeastern Ohio in recent years. These birds are probably straying into Ohio as a result of re-introduction programs in the Smokey Mountains. Golden eagles are large, dark raptors with a golden nape and wingspan of over 6 feet. Their primary prey in Ohio is likely groundhogs and rabbits. Immature bald eagles look very similar to golden eagles so any eagle spotted should be examined closely to be sure of species.



photo courtesy of Steve Messick © 2003



C. South

**Q: Why are there so many dead skunks on the road in February and March?**

— Sheila Adelsberger, Ostrander, Ohio

**A:** Skunks don't truly hibernate, but they do spend most of winter in dens. They become more active with milder conditions in late winter, which also coincides with skunk breeding season. Many skunks are on the move in February and March, especially males seeking females to mate with. Consequently there is a noticeable increase in numbers (and smell!) of skunks dead on the road at that time of the year. 



## How Old are You in Fish Years?

by Jen Dennison

How do you know how old you are? For many, the day you were born is celebrated every year with a party. But what if people didn't celebrate birthdays? How would someone keep track of how old they were? It's pretty easy for humans, we can just subtract the year we were born from what year it is now. So how old are you?

### 2005 This year

— \_\_\_\_\_ What year were you born?

= \_\_\_\_\_ Your age on your birthday this year

But what about wildlife? How do we know how old animals are? Biologists use a variety of different methods to determine the ages of different animals. For bears and deer, they look at the teeth. For some birds, their feather colors and patterns change with age. For example, a bald eagle doesn't get its white head until it is five to six years old.

How can you tell the age of a fish? Biologists can look at a scale taken from the fish's back. When put under a microscope, you can tell the age of a fish by counting the rings on the scale, similar to rings in a tree. A fish scale produces a new ring every year. This is a pretty accurate way to age a fish until they get to be more than five years old. By then, the rings are often too close together to count. So biologists then use a bone in the ear of the fish called an otolith.

This scale was removed in 2004 when the fish was seven years old. Draw in the correct number of rings. Mark the year for each ring and write when important things happened in your life. For example: 1) What year did you take a great vacation? 2) What year did you meet a best friend? 3) What year did you get your first bike? You and your friends can make your own personal timelines with the fish scale. Compare yours with your friends and see what you have in common.



2004 \_\_\_\_\_

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Lake Erie Walleyes can live for more than 20 years, if they can avoid being caught for a tasty fish sandwich. Walleyes can also reach lengths of 33 inches and up to 16 pounds.



Tim Daniel



Mike Matta



Take a look at this drawing of a walleye fish scale. Count the rings and figure out how old it was when this scale was taken. The spacing between the rings shows how well the fish grew. Widely spaced rings show that the fish grew a lot. Closely spaced rings show that the fish grew slowly. The older a fish is, the slower it grows.

# WILD GAME GOURMET

## r e c i p e s

### Grilled Fish in Aluminum Foil

Walleye, perch, or other fish fillets  
Butter  
Juice from a lemon or lemon concentrate  
Your favorite spices such as lemon pepper, cajun seasoning, dill, parsley, etc.  
Aluminum foil; sheets large enough to wrap each fillet to make a pouch

Place each fillet on sheet of aluminum foil. Spread butter on top of fillets. Sprinkle on spices and drizzle with lemon juice. Flip fillets and repeat with butter, spices, and lemon juice. Wrap fillets in foil, folding top and ends to make a pouch. Grill four to five minutes per side. The amount of cooking time will vary with thickness of fillets, but they are done when fillets flake easily.

*(Contributed by Jim Schott)*

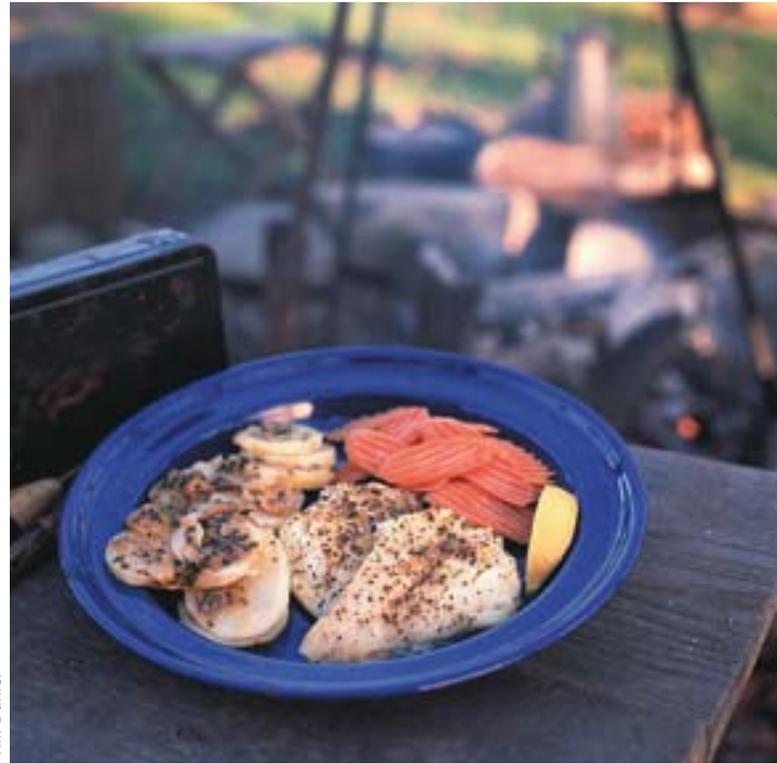
### Cheesy Potatoes

5 medium potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced  
1 medium onion, sliced  
6 tablespoons butter or margarine  
1/3 cup shredded cheddar cheese  
2 tablespoons parsley  
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce  
salt and pepper to taste  
1/3 cup chicken broth  
Aluminum foil, about 20 inches by 20 inches

Place potatoes and onions on foil sheet; dot with butter. Combine cheese, parsley, Worcestershire sauce, salt and pepper; sprinkle over potatoes. Fold foil up around potatoes and add broth. Seal edges of foil tightly. Grill over medium coals for 35-40 minutes or until potatoes are tender. (Serves 4 to 6.)

*(Contributed by Kim Johnston)*

*Aluminum foil and a grill provide a convenient, no-fuss way to prepare dinner with your catch of the day while at the cottage, campground, or at home. The potato recipe provides an easy to prepare, tasty side dish.*



Tim Daniel



Tim Daniel / photo illustration—Gene Whitten

# WILDLIFE Reflections

## Wildlife Constellations of Spring

by Jen Dennison

This issue's "Wildlife Reflections" is the second in a four-part series of articles exploring the legends and mythology related to constellations that are named for wildlife.

Constellations have long been a source of fascination and stories for many different cultures. Greeks, Romans, Native Americans, ancient Egyptians, and more all have stories of the different constellations. What is remarkable is how similar the stories are from culture to culture. The following constellations can be observed year-round, but are especially easy to see in the spring.

### The Great Bear

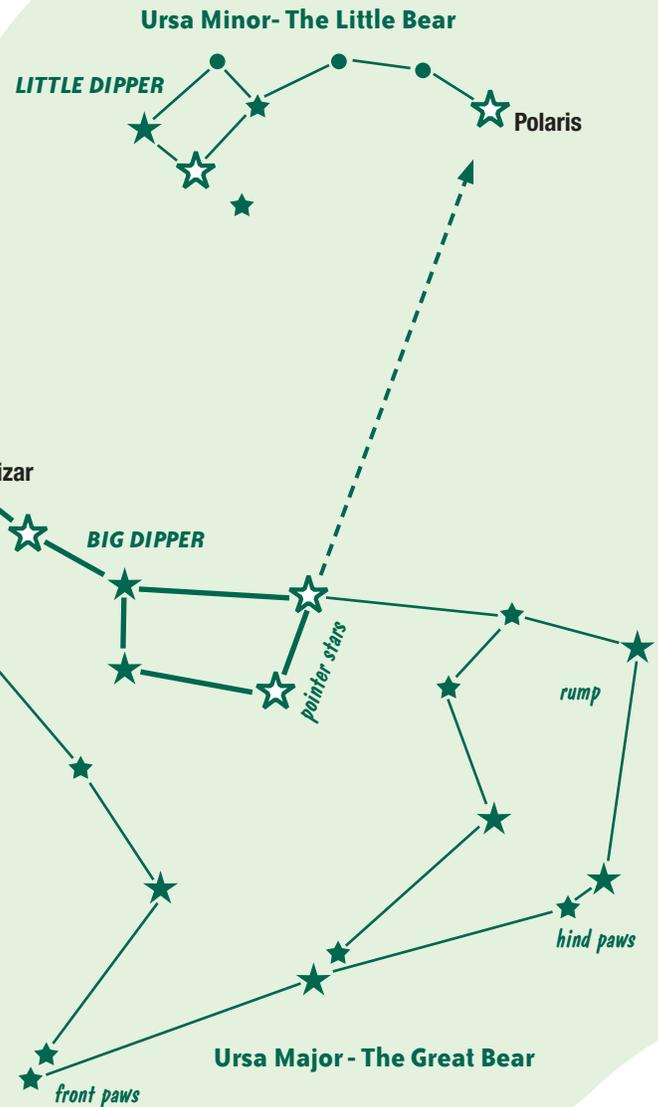
Ursa Major, or the Great Bear, is a very large constellation best known for containing the Big Dipper. This cup-shaped portion of the constellation is one of the best known sights in the sky. Many ancient cultures identified this constellation as a bear including the Greeks who called it Arctos or Artic, which means bearish. This was associated with the great bears of the northern part of the world, which is where you can see this constellation year-round. In Latin, Ursa Major means large bear. Many North American native tribes also called it the bear, including the Algonquin, Iroquois, Illinois, and Narragansett, among others.

The Big Dipper is what is called an *asterism*, which is basically a group of stars that is not officially a constellation. The Big Dipper forms the shoulder and top of the head of the bear. The star called Mizar that forms the crown of the bear's head has another smaller star right beside it named Alcor. These two stars were used as an eyesight test before glasses were invented. If you could see Alcor, you were said to have perfect vision.

### Ursa Minor

Ursa Minor, or the Little Bear, doesn't look like a bear at all. It is actually the constellation that makes up the Little Dipper. The Little Dipper is not as bright in the sky as the Big Dipper, but it does contain one of the most important stars, Polaris or the North Star. This star, also referred to as the Pole Star, marks the celestial north pole and always remains in the same spot while all the other stars and constellations circle around it throughout the night. Polaris is the last star in the tail or handle of the Little Dipper. This star, because of its constant position was and remains important in navigation by humans and it is even thought to be used by migratory birds. If you are lost in the woods at night, you can use Polaris as an indicator of north on a map. To find Polaris, use the Big Dipper. The two stars that make up the wall of the cup of the Big Dipper are called "pointer stars" and point right to Polaris in the handle of the Little Dipper.

The constellations, shown in a new graphic way, are based on those shown in *The Stars, A New Way to See Them* by H. A. Rey.



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