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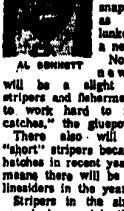
Outdoor Life

by Al Bennett

Each March, Hal Lyman, publisher of the Salt Water Sportsman magazine, looks into his crystal gluepot and envisions what the fish will be doing along the Atlantic coastline this year. His predictions usually are "on the nose."

For the two species sought most often by Bridgeport area fishermen—bluefish and stripers—Hal has good news and bad news.

First, the good news. Bass will be plentiful, the publisher says, with lots of them in the eight-pound class and a big supply of 16 to 18 pounders. There also will be plenty of snappers as well as some real lunkers "to set a new record."



AL BENNETT

Now, the bad news. There will be a slight decline in stripers and fishermen will have to work hard to make good catches," the gluepot tells Hal.

There also will be fewer "short" stripers because of poor hatches in recent years and that means there will be less bigger linesiders in the years to come.

Stripers in the six to eight-pound class and in the 16 to 20-pound class will predominate and there will be a limited supply of lunkers.

It will be a good year for weakfish, Hal stated. Ten-pound specimens will not be uncommon and there also will be a good supply of youngsters.

Quotas established by law on bluefin tuna will keep total catches down, yet the "high school" fish of about 30 pounds will be more plentiful than last season. There also will be a larger quantity of "footballs" than many anticipate, plus a few real monsters. For the future of the stocks, Hal emphasized that sportsmen should tag and release as many fish as possible.

"Once again, the white marlin fishery will prosper—as good as, or even better than, last season," Lyman predicted. The same holds true for sailfish, and they will be found north of their usual range. Blue marlin will be about the same as last year with two major groups: those of about 150 pounds and those in the close to record bracket. Broadbills also will be up in numbers from last year with more small fish showing."

For bottom fishermen, it will be a banner year for blackfish. Fluke fishing will change little from 1975, but the outlook for winter flounder is not as bright. The gluepot reveals a decline.

DRIVE: Petitions calling for a Connecticut split bow and arrow deer hunting season may be signed at two Bridgeport locations—J and H Archery Lanes, 2929 Fairfield avenue, and The Sportsmen's Den, Boston avenue.

ACTION: Members of the Advisory Council to the Connecticut Department of Environ.....tal Protection (DEP) are not satisfied with the meagerness of tests to determine if highly toxic PCBs exist in stripers caught along the State's coastline.

At a meeting last week in Hartford, the Council voted to send a letter to DEP Commissioner Joseph N. Gill, expressing deep concern and urging that additional and thorough testing be launched immediately.

Despite the fact that some stripers have been found to contain more than five ppm—which the U.S. says is a danger level—Connecticut's State Health commissioner has said "it's safe" to eat these fish.

PCB'S: Those interested in efforts to halt the contamination of the Hudson river with PCBs should attend a meeting to take place March 19 at 12:30 p.m. in the Planning Building auditorium, County Center, Veterans' Memorial highway, Hauppauge, N.Y.

U.S. Rep. Thomas J. Downey, N.Y., says the featured speaker will be K. Saito of Japan. Mr. Saito had much experience with PCBs during the 1968-1972 period when many Japanese people died as a result of PCB contamination of rice oil. In 1972, the Japanese government banned all production and imports of PCBs and instituted stringent disposal methods for all products containing this toxic substance.

Dangerous levels of PCBs have been found in tissues of fish taken from the Hudson river and all commercial fishing in the lower Hudson, other than shad fishing, has been prohibited.

AWARDS: Winners of awards in the 1975 fishing contest of the Bridgeport Salt Water Sports association include:

Stripers—from boat, Pete Sizensky, 46 pounds, four ounces; from shore, Walt Burr, 30 pounds, eight ounces.

Blackfish — John Filo, nine pounds, 14 ounces.

Flatfish—Charles Waddell, two pounds, five ounces.

Bluefish — from boat, Skip Blackman, 16 pounds, four ounces; from shore, George Markatos, 17 pounds.

Weakfish—George Markatos, six pounds, three ounces.

Ed Sabo was contest chairman.

TV: "The American Sportsman" show today at 3:30 p.m. over the ABC-TV network will take viewers into the domain of the Great White Shark—Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

Peter Benchley, author of the novel "Jaws," will be the program's host.

OFFERING: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is offering for sale a portrait of the bald eagle, the symbol of the American ideals of freedom.

It may be obtained by sending $1.85 to the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, and requesting the "Symbol of Our Nation" portrait, stock #024-010-00408-8.

It's a full color, heavy paper reproduction, 6½ by 11 inches on a mat 11½ by 15 inches, of an oil painting by artist Bob Hines

BILLS: Legislation introduced in the Connecticut General Assembly and not previously reported here includes:

HB 5592—would permit access by snowmobiles to State parks and forests from private lands.

HB 5691—would eliminate the provision allowing the commissioner of motor vehicles to issue a limited driver's license to a person convicted of jaclighting.

HB 5682—would permit peraplegics to hunt from all terrain vehicles.

HB 5683—would permit the sport of falconry.

HB 5684—would permit ice fishing for pike on Bantam lake.

HB 5687—would permit the operation of snowmobiles on State-owned property on Monday through Thursday from sunrise to 8 p.m. and on Friday through Sunday from sunrise to 11 p.m.

HB 5688—would allow State residents to participate in certain fishing derbies without possessing a valid sport fishing license.

SB 342—would provide for a comprehensive, long range and coordinated State program for the management, beneficial use, protection and development of the land and water resources of the State's coastal zones.

SUMMARY: Pachaug forest in Voluntown was the hottest State property location for taking deer during the 1975 Connecticut archery, muzzleloader and shotgun seasons, a summary just compiled shows.

The State Department of Environmental Protection says of the 280 whitetails taken on State lands 34 were harvested in Pachaug. Next in line was the Housatonic forest in Sharon with 33, followed by Tunxis forest in Hartland with 26.

For private lands, East Haddam and Sherman were the best spots with 13 deer each, followed by Cornwall and Griswold, 11 each, and East Hampton, Lyme and Salisbury, 10 each. A total of 256 deer was felled on private lands.

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SESSION: The Fairfield County League of Sportsmen's Clubs will meet tomorrow at 8 p.m. in the Stamford Museum, with the Stamford Fish and Game club as host.

BOOK: Braniff International is offering its 1976 edition of "Outdoor Adventures with Flying Colors," a 96-page where-to-go guide covering the Western Hemisphere. The 50 outdoor adventures range from trout fishing on Alaska's remote Wood river and white water rafting in Utah, to a camera cruise of the Galapogos Islands, a houseboat safari on a jungle river in Brazil, and deep sea fishing off Hawaii. A copy may be obtained through Braniff sales offices and its travel agents.

DINNER: The Bridgeport Boat Owners association will conduct its 19th annual fishing awards dinner March 26 at 7 p.m. in Liedle's, Stratford. Tickets may be obtained from John Fasulo, 380 Benham avenue, Bridgeport.

BIGGEST: A 281-pound field dressed deer was the largest of 397 whitetails weighing over 200 pounds which qualified for the Biggest Bucks in Maine Club in 1975.

Shot by David Cochran, of Caribou, Maine, in Allagash on Nov. 15, it is estimated that the live weight of the animal was 366 pounds.

HARVEST: Big game hunters harvested 548 black bears in New York state during 1975, or 102 more than the 1974 total. The Adirondack region, which contains more than 75 per cent of New York's bear range, produced a total take of 489 brutes.

THANKS: The column extends its thanks to all members of the Fairfield County Fish and Game Protective association for the 1976 honorary membership.

COMPETITION: National champions from around the world will meet in St. Louis, Missouri, from Sept. 24 to Oct. 2 to compete in the 1976 version of the World Casting Championships, sponsored by the American Fishing Tackle Manufacturers association.

Incidentally, the association put up the money to produce an exciting filmstrip, "Our Outdoor Heritage," which has been released under the sponsorship of the Boy Scouts of America, as part of its contribution to the Bicentennial.

The 13-minute movie tells the story of the gradual degradation of the environment in the U.S., and how the efforts of a wide assortment of people and organizations have begun to recover it for the use and enjoyment of all the people of the nation.

Prints are available on a free-loan basis by writing: Film Comm. 208 S. LaSalle street, Chicago, Ill. 60604.

SHOW: An International In-Water Boat Show will take place Sept. 16-19 at the Norwalk Cove Marina, East Norwalk, under the direction of the National Association of Engine and Boat Manufacturers.

Both sail and power craft, as well as equipment and accessories, will be exhibited.

The Marina is a 400-slip facility with 2,000 auto parking spaces.

CONTROL: Members of the House Judiciary committee, in recommitting the gun control bill to a subcommittee, probably had in mind a recent public opinion survey, conducted by Decision Making Information (DMI), of Santa Ana, Calif. That poll showed that an overwhelming majority of the American people fully understand and believe in the right of the individual citizen to keep and bear arms and that a majority of Americans believe that the answer to rising crime is not found in gun control schemes, but in dealing with criminals.

The DMI survey challenged the much publicized "conclusions" drawn by Harris and Gallup polls on gun control.

The DMI survey clearly demonstrates that deeper and more extensive probing into public attitudes on the issue of gun control reveals that the public is unwilling to accept when anti-gunners and the anti-gun press are pushing as "moderate" gun control proposals.

A summary of the major findings of the DMI survey is as follows:

82 per cent of the American people believe that they as citizens, have a right to own firearms.

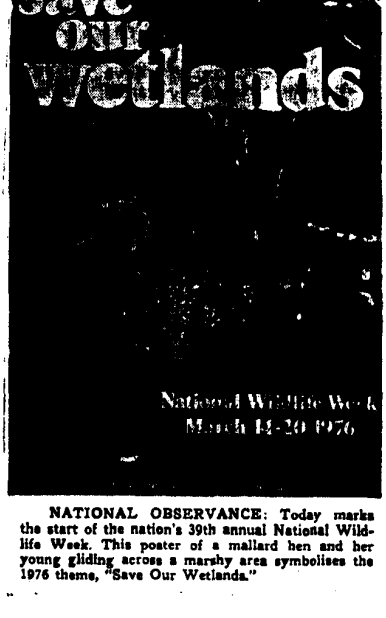
By a margin of 78 per cent against 24 per cent, Americans decisively reject a ban on private ownership of handguns.

Fully half the public thinks a national gun registration program would lead eventually to confiscation of guns by the government.

78 per cent believe that the U.S. Constitution gives them "the right to keep and bear arms," and 73 per cent reject the notion that this right pertains only to the national guard.

Americans overwhelmingly reject (71 per cent) any law which would give police authority to decide who may or may not own a gun.

Of those surveyed, 46 per cent had at least one firearm in the home. In 62 per cent of the firearms-owning households, the firearm was owned by the person actually interviewed; thus, the overall percentage of firearms owners in the adult population was about 29 per cent.



NATIONAL OBSERVANCE: Today marks the start of the nation's 39th annual National Wildlife Week. This poster of a mallard hen and her young gliding across a marshy area symbolizes the 1976 theme, "Save Our Wetlands."

together the private ownership of handguns.

55 per cent of those in firearms-owning households cited self-defense as one of the reasons they owned a gun.

73 per cent of the public does not believe that a federal law requiring all guns to be turned in would be effective in reducing crime.

When asked to indicate what it felt was the most important national problem, and the most important community problem, the public gave gun control practically no attention — less than one half per cent mentioned it.

When asked to suggest ways to reduce crime, only 11 per cent volunteered gun control as a solution. In contrast, by far the most popular suggestion was more severe punishment of criminals (33 per cent). Only 1 per cent mentioned registration of firearms, and less than one half per cent suggested a ban on so-called "Saturday Night Specials."

The public foresees immense difficulties in enforcing on a national scale either a gun registration or a confiscation law, if such were to be passed. Only 23 per cent of the public believes most gun owners would register their guns; only nine per cent of the public believe that more than half of the gun owners would turn in their guns.

MEETING: The Bridgeport Boat Owners association will meet March 18 at 8 p.m. in Port Five.

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