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Woods 'n' Water: Vince Opalewski



'Dog Days' Of August Find Activity At Dawn

These are the "dog days" of August. If you wander about in the midday sun, you will notice that everything is extremely still. The only other time of the year that things are this quiet in the field is during mid-winter.

The interesting thing is that there is more life out there now than at any other time of the year. The animals that lived through the winter, plus all of the young born during late spring and early summer, are out there hidden in the grass and brush.

The time to observe this profusion of animals is at dawn or shortly thereafter. This is the period of their peak activity in the continuing scramble for food. As the sun begins to burn up the dew, the animal life heads for cover. They find a shady spot, plop down and aren't about to move in that heat unless someone steps on them.

On a recent jouney during the cool of the day, I spotted four deer within a distance of 300 yards. The only thing surprising about that was that they were four bucks. Not a doe was in sight. Just four bucks in velvet, ranging from an eight-pointer down to a spike, spread along a wood line.

I can't positively remember if that is the greatest number of bucks I've ever seen at one time. But, I can state with confidence that it is a heck of a lot more than I see during an average deer hunting season.

By the way, these early morning hous are perfect to start working you hunting dogs. Game is plentiful and the dew holds the scent well. During the day, with the sun beating down, there is nothing to hold the scent. Besides, it is just too hot for the dog and human alike.

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The Lakeland Bassmasters, recognizing the broiling capacity of the sun on the brain, held their 5th bass tounament of the year on a Saturday night. This time the fish in Swartzwood Lake were the object of their efforts.

Lee Orr of Flanders took first place honors with a five-pound, three-ounce largemouth. The fish was taken in the area of a 20-foot dropoff and it hit a "super george" lure (whatever that is).

Other club members who placed in the tounament are: Charles McNear, Herb Miller, Joe Ruppert and Mary Going (that's right, Mary).

This club holds 10 tournaments a year. The top six anglers are eligible to fish in the N.J. State Tournament. Winners of the State Tourament then fish in the nationals. The present leaders in the club are Charlie McNear, Lee Orr, Mary Going, Benny Hill, Tony Going and Joe Ruppert.

All the fish caught in these tournaments are released back into the lake. The BASS policy is "limit your kill, don't kill your limit." This is backed up with a tournament point penalty for all fish killed.

The mortality rate on these released bass is much, much lower than it used to be. They are put in live wells with dissolved anti-biotics to eliminate the chance of fungus development because of handling.

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It is time to learn a new set of initials, PCB. They stand for polychlorinated biphenyls.

According to a New York press release, the commissioner of environmental conservation, Ogden Reid, advised against eating fish taken from the Hudson River, particularly long-lived fish such as striped bass or largemouth bass (it depends on which end of the river you are fishing).

The reason for this advice is PCB's. The National Food and Drug Administration policy forbids sale of fish containing more than five parts per million PCB.

Some of the testing on fish showed 11 to 14 parts per million on largemouths from the Cornwall area. Striped bass from the Tappan Zee area averaged six parts per million with one instance at 37 ppm. One rock was tested which contained 350 ppm.

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