

Opinion

EHD update: not good, not all bad

When news broke earlier this summer about another outbreak of epizootic hemorrhagic disease, we all thought, "Here we go again."

We're trying to keep up on the EHD situation in between issues of NYON and the bad news obviously is that there is another outbreak in southeastern New York.

According to one of our press contacts at DEC, the agency had received reports of about 65 suspected deer (alive or dead) through late-August. These were primarily in Ulster and Dutchess counties. The current known outbreak spans from New Paltz to Saugerties (south to north) and from High Falls to Red Hook (west to east). DEC was testing four additional deer at press time.



Dan Ladd
Editor

In general, reports from the public slowed down after the initial outbreak, so DEC said they were "cautiously optimistic" that the outbreak was subsiding. However, they pointed out that the midges that spread EHD remain active and breed right up until the first hard killing frost of the season.

We haven't seen how this all affects the forecast for the upcoming deer season, but as DEC Big Game Unit Leader Jeremy Hurst pointed out previously, most of the damage from last year's outbreak was localized, but at the same time, was in many localities.

Like harmful algal blooms, we're starting to wonder if EHD is going to become a regular summer occurrence, and if it does, will deer eventually become less susceptible to it as they have in southern states? Time will tell.

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It's good to see that DEC forest rangers are cracking down on campground misbehavior this summer. The forest ranger reports we receive, some of which find their way into our Cuffs & Collars section, have included instances where out-of-line campers suffered the consequences.

At Mongaup Pond Campground, in Sullivan County, campground staff recently called in the rangers who evicted two groups of problem campers. This, after the staff had issued several warnings about disturbing other campers. And up at Lincoln Pond Campground in the Adirondacks, forest rangers were recently called in at 4:30 a.m. to deal with, and eventually ticketed, a group of underage drinkers raising a ruckus.

I've been known to be a little loud around the campfire myself, but it's primarily with a guitar in my hands and we strive not to disturb others. I also understand that folks sometimes need to blow off a little steam. Earlier this summer a few guys and myself spent a long weekend on a fishing/camping trip at a lesser-used state campground in the Adirondacks. Four guys a few campsites over were having a small, but loud, bachelor party for one of their crew. They were up at all hours of the night blasting music, hollering and using foul language. We, and other nearby campers, laughed at them and pretty much brushed it off. But had we been with our wives and families I can tell you things would've been handled differently.

Again, I'm glad DEC is cracking down on such behavior, but the reality is, they shouldn't have to. People just need to be more considerate of others no matter what you're doing outdoors.



COCHRAN!
"Last year, after the season was over, I found three teal under his tongue."

Commentary

Trout Power: How a beautiful, small, beloved fish motivates anglers

By Keith G. Tidball, PhD

Over the past six years, a collaboration between Trout Power, Trout Unlimited, the New York State Conservation Council members, Great Camp Sagamore, and Cornell University has been engaged in citizen science and conservation in the Adirondacks.

The Adirondack Park has a long history of holding legendary fishing spots, for both lure and fly-fishing enthusiasts. From trout, bass, and wall-eyes to northern pike, popular fish are found throughout Adirondack waters.

Brook trout are an iconic fish in the Adirondack Park. Brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*), known as "brookies," often rank right up there with loons in terms of symbols of the pristine and wild waters of the Adirondack region.

Over the years brook trout populations have faced declines due to both introductions of

non-native fish species, as well as acid rain. A new threat is the gradual warming of waters that brook trout call home. New York, the Cornell scientists, Cooperative extension experts, and DEC in particular, has several restoration programs active to counteract these threats.

The state programs remain effective, but there are many ways in which the general public, passionate about brook trout, can contribute to these efforts.

The contribution of one such group of passionate people is the Trout Power initiative. Founded by Jordan Ross of JP Ross Fly-rods, Trout Power's mission is to "enlist the power of anglers to protect, restore and enhance heritage brook trout populations and their habitats across their native range, through citizen science, advocacy and stewardship."

Their vision of "educating and inspiring people to steward our

rivers and streams; honoring clean water not by its' clarity, but by the wild trout that live in it" resonates with many anglers and non-anglers alike.

In cooperation with its scientific partners at Cornell University and the University of Albany, Trout Power works year-round to collect the scientific data that is necessary to help wild trout conservation and population growth efforts so that we can move away from stocking as a necessity.

Citizen science efforts seek to identify, map, monitor and advocate for protection of wild and genetically unique brook trout populations in the Adirondacks and wherever they are found throughout New York. Spawning trout are an indication of a sustainable and healthy riverine ecosystem, so to see wild brook trout populations growing in Adirondack waters would mean a return

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Letters to the Editor

Commentaries and letters are the opinion of the writers, not necessarily that of *New York Outdoor News*.

Responsible hunters do not need to wear blaze orange

I am writing to state my opinion on wearing blaze orange or similar bright colors during the big game hunting seasons. It is not needed by responsible hunters, and it won't make irresponsible hunters into responsible hunters.

Responsible hunters still need to be very sure of their target, taking note of what could be behind the target. If in doubt, don't shoot.

The requirement to wear blaze colors could make careless hunters assume that everything that moves without a blaze color is OK to be shot at. Also, if the blaze color is only from the waste up, will no hunter shoot at another's legs in situations where the upper body is obscured?

Attention Readers

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Adding new regulations always creates some confusion and increases the cost to the hunter. In an era of declining numbers of hunters, creating more confusion and increasing costs is not the path to promote the future of hunting.

The proposed change to increase hunting hours might raise safety issues for irresponsible hunters and give them an excuse for taking an unsafe shot. Have there been any documented studies on safety under the proposed changes in other states?

Lastly, the movement to ban lead shot is either misguided environmentalism or another effort to add headwinds and costs to shooters, and needs to be opposed.

Instead of arguing about crossbows, sportspersons should be working to promote all types of hunting/shooting, or otherwise, not be surprised when it is all (gradually) regulated out of existence.

Keith Mayne
Bayport
(See Letters Page 7)

Online Opinions

This issue's question -----
If it happens, will you hunt the nine-day antlerless deer season in parts of the Southern Zone?
Yes No

Online results from last issue's question -----
Will you hunt the early bear season, and where?
Northern Zone 29% Southern Zone 24% Both zones 12%
I don't bear hunt 35%

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Clarkson finishes fourth in college bass championship

By Dan Ladd
Editor

Waddington, N.Y. — A pair of Clarkson University anglers took advantage of their home waters by finishing fourth at the Bassmaster College Series National Championship, held Aug. 12-14 on the St. Lawrence River.

Fishing partners James Gillis and Craig Beucler, of the Clarkson team, finished with a total of 58 pounds, 7 ounces, topped only by three other teams including the Adrian College team of Griffin Fernandes and Hayden Scott, of Michigan, who had a three-day bag of 63-10, thus taking the title.

Gillis and Beucler, who are both from New Hampshire, focused solely on smallmouths and mixed up their strategy throughout the three-day tournament.

“We were doing a little bit of a mix of shallow to deep water, drifting a

lot of steep contour edges,” Gillis said. “It ranged anywhere from 15 to 30 feet deep where we were drifting. Other than that, we’d go shallow. We would fish them a little faster with more reaction baits and that would trigger them.”

Gillis said their go-to baits were a Megabass Vision ONETEN jerkbait and a black Marabou hair jig.

“When we were out deep we were drop-shooting a Berkley Maxscent Flatworm,” Gillis said.

For Adrian College, Scott and Fernandes were one of the most consistent teams in the field. Throughout the week, Scott and Fernandes focused on transitional areas around Eel Bay. They said the shallow areas of the bay are where the smallmouth spawned several weeks ago and have started moving towards their summer holes.

The top three teams, Adrian, Bethel and Auburn, will now



James Gillis (l) and Craig Beucler, of Clarkson University, hold up a few trophy smallmouth bass that helped them finish fourth in the Bassmaster College Series National Championship held in August on the St. Lawrence River Photo courtesy of Clarkson University

prepare for the College Classic Bracket, the location of which will be released at a later date.

Clarkson nearly had a second team make the top ten. Dante Piraino and Hunter Stone finished

thirteenth overall with a weight of 39-0, and missed fishing the final day because of a tie-breaker.

“We may have moved up a few spots, but I dropped two fish at the end of Day 2,” Piraino, said. “But,

that’s all part of the game. It hurt to be that close on your home water.”

Piraino, Hunter and Beuceler are all seniors who graduated in May, making this their last tournament. Gillis is heading into his sophomore year this fall and hopes to have continued success on the college bass fishing scene, including another chance to compete for a national championship.

“It really is incredible, the aura and hype it gets,” Gillis said of the experience. “It’s awesome and everything I dreamed about participating in. I wish everybody could experience that in their lifetime. I’m going to keep trying to fish the national events and maybe make that Classic bracket.”

Clarkson University and SUNY Buffalo are two New York schools with active bass fishing clubs. Gillis said Clarkson’s club has approximately 40 anglers.

Commentary

(From Page 2)

to suitable conditions in certain watersheds. However, much is yet to be learned about these particular strains of brook trout and their resilience; information that is critical for conserving brook trout in the future.

Since 2016, Trout Power and partners have been working to better understand and help protect the waters in the Historic Great Camp Special Management Area. An exciting “discovery” was made based on the citizen science efforts of the Trout Power 2016 efforts based at Great Camp Sagamore. Based on microsatellite genetic analysis, a new Heritage strain was identified. This Sagamore strain shows unique genetic qualities and resilient character-

istics that are of great interest to fisheries scientists and experts.

Evidence of the Sagamore strain has been found in the Marion River, Brown’s Tract, and in other tributaries, suggesting a historically extensive range for this brook trout strain. But increasingly, the locus of the Sagamore strain today seems to be intertwined with the three lakes associated with the Great Camps and their feeder and outlet streams.

In 2020, we speculated on the possibilities of the Sagamore strain and its potentially large historical range. Given that genetic evidence of the strain was found in the headwaters of the Raquette River system, it’s possible that this Strain could have been found all along the 146 miles of the Raquette River, raising a possibility of a historical (likely pre-human) connection to the St. Lawrence River and

therefore the Atlantic Ocean.

It is also possible that the Sagamore strain could have also been found in the tributaries that flow south from the Great Camp area, into the Moose River, which is a significant tributary of the Black River, which empties into Lake Ontario. The Sagamore Strain may be an “uber” strain of heritage brook trout, not confined or isolated in kettle holes or remote ponds, but transient and resilient, hiding out in periods of threat and danger in pools of persistence.

In June, a Trout Power expedition in the Moose River Plains found 12 anglers at a base camp in the Sumner Stream area. The goal was to sample the entirety of Sumner Stream and neighboring streams, as well as the South Branch of the Moose River itself. To do this, Trout

Power anglers bushwhacked deep into remote areas to locate and catch fish, obtain a fin clip sample, and record the location with GPS. We met our goal and collected more than 60 fin clip samples from wild brook trout in these waters, which will be analyzed in the laboratory of Trout Power’s genetic scientist, Dr. Spencer Bruce.

The analysis will tell us whether or not the Sagamore strain currently exists in the south flowing tributaries of the Great Camp area, but won’t tell us with certainty whether or not it did historically. That mystery will likely keep Trout Power intrigued for years to come.

Dr. Keith Tidball is a scientist at Cornell University’s Department of Natural Resources and Environment, and is an avid naturalist and angler.