

Whether here or Wisconsin, now's the time for good fishing

Smallmouth bass and trout are the catches of choice

Glenn Sapor

Special to The Journal News

Jake LaPenter was at the helm of the flats boat he runs for the family's guiding service on Chequamegon Bay, an offshoot of Lake Superior, with Ashland, Wis., as the home base. Jake's dad, Roger, is the dean of local guides in this northern Wisconsin sporting haven, and he's done well passing along his knowledge to his son.

With rain threatening, we wanted to make every second count, and on this fall day, it didn't take long to get into the action.

After dropping over the side a 4-inch sucker minnow, impaled on a circle hook and weighted with one split shot on the line, and letting it sink near the bottom, I was rewarded quickly. The hefty fish put up a fight typical of smallmouth bass, jumping a few

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times. As I brought him up toward the waiting net, I could see even 10 feet down in the clear water that this might have been the largest smallmouth I'd ever hooked.

"He's a beast," LaPenter said.

He was somewhere close to 5 pounds, and as thrilled as I was with this fish, I was shocked when the guide said that it was actually about average for this time of year.

In following hours we fished before the rains seriously threatened, I brought to net three more large smallies, an oxymoron if I ever wrote one.

Yet another highlight of the outing, despite a dream morning of four fat smallmouth bass, was when LaPenter removed the split shot and suggested I cast toward the next ring created by a nearby occasionally surfacing fish.

Seconds later I did that, and the minnow was immediately attached to a high jumper that looked me square

in the eyes. The fish made three more circus-like jumps before it came to net. We admired a 6-to-7 pound rainbow trout before releasing it, too.

Trout and smallmouth bass also are in local waters now, and as a result, this is the time to get into some of the best smallmouth fishing the area has to offer. In the fall, brown and brook trout stage for spawning, and as they begin their run from large reservoirs to tributary streams, smallmouth bass set up an ambush. The smallmouths, feeding ravenously as they fatten for a winter of relative dormancy, are big and concentrated.

"I was trout fishing in Kensico Reservoir on Sunday," said Jack Stewart of Carmel. "I didn't get a single trout, but I caught eight smallmouths on sawbellies, and the biggest was 3 pounds, 7 ounces and measured 19 inches."

Stewart, the director of the Southern New York Fishing Derby, is wired into local action.

"Cross River, Amawalk, Bog Brook and Croton Falls

have been hot producers over the years, from September through November," Stewart said. "Most fishermen fish live sawbellies (alewives) near the bottom in 15 to 30 feet of water, but lure anglers, especially jig fishermen, do well also."

I have vowed to fish with LaPenter and his Anglers All Guide Service, (715) 682-5754, again. If you are traveling to the northern heartland from mid-May through October, you might do the same. In the meantime, however, try some late fall smallmouth bass fishing much closer to home.

Local teen inspires

The bow season has begun, and local deer hunters have taken to the woods, hoping to put their tag on a buck like Ray Ferrieri did last December. In a summer edition of New York Outdoor News, on its Reader Shots page, which displays proud hunters and anglers with their fish and game, the young hunter posed with his deer and a snowy forest as the background. The caption reads,

"Ray Ferrieri, age 16, of Mahopac Falls, harvested this 8-point buck near Mahopac on Dec. 7."

Master plan reviewed?

A few years ago, Steve Cook of Ossining, a retired conservation officer and accomplished deer hunter, predicted that Clarence Fahnestock Memorial State Park would become the next great deer-hunting area in the Hudson Valley. Many have since echoed his sentiments. The park also offers fishing in lakes and streams, hiking on many trails, including the Appalachian Trail, winter recreation, spring turkey hunting and camping and swimming opportunities.

That park and Hudson Highlands State Park are expansive woodlands in Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess counties that are now the subject of a proposed master plan for their management and use. The Draft Master Plan and Environmental Impact Statement are available for review at the parks' office on Route 301 west of

the Taconic State Parkway, as well as libraries in Cold Spring, Beacon and Kent. The online version is available at <http://www.nysparks.state.ny.us/inside-our-agency/master-plans.aspx>. Two public hearings have been held, and the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation invites public input until Nov. 2. Comments may be e-mailed to HH.Plan@oprhp.state.ny.us.

Fly-fishing show

The Arts of the Angler Show annually presents fine contemporary and collectible fly fishing tackle, accessories, fly-tying materials, books, destinations, instructions and guide services under one roof. That roof will be over the Danbury Ethan Allen Inn, off of Exit 4 of I-84, in Danbury, Conn., on Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 6 and 7.

A live auction will take place on Saturday evening and free seminars will be given both days. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Nov. 6 and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Nov. 7.