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Fishing and Outdoors in WNY: Everything is pointing to an early spring

BY CAPT. FRANK CAMPBELL
Director, Outdoor Promotions
Destination Niagara USA

It sure has been a mild winter, and all indicators are pointing to an early spring.

Whether you believe in global warming or not, things are not what they used to be when it comes to our winters and Mother Nature. A truly short ice fishing season, birds already are starting to move into their migration patterns. The gamefish have been able to feed longer into the season, and the baitfish numbers should continue in an upward trend as it relates to their biomass in Lake Ontario.

The above-average temperatures should send local anglers out onto area waterways much sooner than normal, and they will be greeted by great fishing opportunities. I can envision the marinas starting to get calls about getting boats out of storage sooner than later.

As far as I'm concerned, my winter season on the lower Niagara River was the first one I ever remember in 30-plus years of chartering that my bottle of deicer never came out. I also never saw a single ice chunk floating by. All these great conditions enabled many anglers to sample what winter fishing is all about on the Niagara.

This year also marked the most boats I've seen enjoying the tug of the many trout the river holds in the winter. It was good to see.

Greater Niagara Fishing Expo

If you missed the Greater Niagara Fishing Expo in February, you missed an opportunity to advance your angling knowledge in a big way. More than 250 seminars were taken in by attendees, and a lot of positive fishing feedback was received. Some of the best anglers in our region offered tips and tactics to improve your fishing experience this coming season. I am going to follow up with some of the seminar attendees to see if spending time in these seminars helped out their fishing game.

A big thanks has to go out to the seminar instructors as they offered their expertise with little or no compensation. One fisherman helping another fisherman is awesome to see.

I was able to sit in on a small segment of the Walleye School, and I was extremely impressed with the portion of the presentation in which I partook. I was able



A mild winter has allowed more anglers to sample the fantastic fishing in the lower Niagara River. (Submitted photo)

to chat with some of the attendees afterward, and their feedback was nothing short of great. In speaking with three gentlemen, I learned they had traveled from Tennessee to take in the school, and came in two days early to enjoy some extra seminars on Thursday and Friday of the expo.

Talk about dedication and taking advantage of an opportunity to learn. Oh yeah, they will be making the same trek again next year, as they said there is no fishing expo that offers the learning opportunities afforded right here in our backyard.

Also impressive was the kids' clinic presented by several groups, including the Niagara River Anglers Association, the Newfane Outdoors Club, the state Department of Environmental Conservation and some involved charter captains, along with local anglers. A group of 60 kids who attended the clinic was broken down into five stations. Offered was casting; where to fish in WNY; the basics of fishing; and lure making in addition to fish handling; identification as well as rules and regulations. Each instructor took the time to really involve the kids and keep their attention, while sharing their knowledge and love of fishing.

Kudos to each adult who took the time to attend with the young future anglers.

A shout-out needs to be given to the Niagara Falls Convention Cen-

ter and its staff for another job well done. I heard nothing but rave reviews for the facility and its staff.

A final big thanks must be offered from the fishing community to Mayor Robert Restaino and the City of Niagara Falls for stepping up and offering free parking in the city lots.

If you missed out this year, please make plans to attend next year's event. You won't be disappointed. Dates are Feb. 13-16.

Eclipse

The Niagara Frontier will take center stage in early April for a once-in-a-lifetime event, as a total solar eclipse will occur and create total darkness for a brief time in the area skies. On April 8 at approximately 3:18 p.m., nightfall will seem to overcome WNY in the middle of the day.

The last time this type of event occurred was in 1925, and it won't be viewed again until 2144. This is your chance – so get yourself a pair of those eclipse glasses and head outdoors to join the estimated 1 million other sun gazers who will be in our area to take part in this rare opportunity.

I hope to see you enjoying the local outdoors. Every week, I produce a fishing report: Niagara County Fishing Hotline. You can access it online at www.niagarafallsusa.com or by simply calling 716-282-8992, Ext. 4, to hear what's up in the world of fishing. It is updated every Wednesday.



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