

# The NEW Skillful Angler Program

By Cindy Kuenstner, Wildlife Biologist

You can be a part of the totally NEW Skillful Angler Program recognizing anglers' talents (and luck) at catching remarkable fish in New Jersey!

Anglers take notice: New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife has kicked off exciting changes to the Skillful Angler Program that you want to know about! This program is sure to please everyone from the newest angler— young or old—to seasoned anglers with decades of experience.

Although the program's three divisions remain the same (Adult, Junior and Catch and Release), now there are many new categories creating more opportunities for qualifying fish to earn the angler a series of personalized certificates suitable for framing to commemorate your outstanding catch!

**Specialist Angler**—catch five qualifying fish of the same species

**Master Angler**—catch five qualifying fish of different species

**Elite Angler**—catch 10 or more qualifying fish within one year

**First Fish**—catch your first fish of any size or species

Three additional categories may bring out your competitive nature. Personalized certificates are awarded for the Slam Series which includes:

**Trout Slam**—catch one each qualifying rainbow, brook and brown trout

**Bass Slam**—catch one each qualifying small and largemouth bass

**Panfish Slam**—catch one each qualifying sunfish, crappie and yellow perch

*(See table on page 13 for all minimum size qualifications.)*

Special recognition isn't the only program benefit. When anglers submit their entries, data of interest to Fish and Wildlife's biologists (such as the fish's weight, length, girth and the date, time and catch location) becomes available which may reveal insights about the waterbody from where the fish was hooked or as an indicator of the condition of a particular fishery. Combined data from many anglers can create a meaningful freshwater fisheries data set.

Every month the leader of each division/category for all species will be posted on our Skillful Angler Leader Board web page. At the end of the year, special recognition is given to anglers who catch the largest fish in each species category. The winner of each category is sent a customized certificate recognizing his or her accomplishment as the best of New Jersey's Skillful Anglers.

Through the new Skillful Angler Program, anglers statewide can commemorate their catch while supporting Fish and Wildlife's continuing fisheries monitoring efforts. This annual program starts fresh every January so be sure to enter your qualifying catches each year.

For more information and program details including what fish will qualify, see the *Skillful Angler Program*, page 13 or visit our website at <http://www.NJFishandWildlife.com/skflang.htm>.

## BIG Fish Lurk in Waters Throughout the Garden State.



The Skillful Angler Program is designed both to supplement the New Jersey Record Fish Program and to acknowledge that many anglers catch freshwater and marine fish that are not record size, but are still worthy of recognition because the size and weight of the fish sufficiently tested the angler's skill. Open to resident and non-resident anglers. All fish must be caught in New Jersey waters using a hook and line during legally open seasons. It is comprised of three categories: Adult (for anglers age 16 and older), Junior (under age 16) and Catch and Release (based on length). A clear, side-view photo that allows accurate species identification must be included with each application.

Anglers qualifying for a Skillful Angler award receive a certificate with an artistic rendering of the fish species they caught as a testament to their achievement.

The Skillful Angler Program now recognizes different levels of fishing expertise. An angler who submits five applications of qualifying size for the same species will receive a Specialist Certificate. An angler who submits five applications of qualifying fish of different species will receive a Master Certificate. Catch 10 or more qualifying species of fish within the year, and the angler will earn an Elite Angler Certificate. The Program also now recognizes the first fish caught no matter the age of the fisherman; qualified anglers will receive a First Fish Certificate.

Also new this year, the program is introducing three freshwater "Slam" categories—a Trout Slam, a Bass Slam and a Panfish Slam. For the Trout Slam, an angler must submit qualifying applications for a rainbow, brook and brown trout. For the Bass Slam, an angler must submit qualifying applications for both large and smallmouth bass. The Panfish Slam will be obtained if an angler submits qualifying applications for yellow perch, sunfish and crappie.

Each month, the leaders of each category and species will be posted on our Skillful Angler Leader Board web page. At the end of the year, special recognition is given to anglers who catch the largest fish in each species category. The winner of each category is sent a special certificate recognizing his/her accomplishment as the best of New Jersey's Skillful Anglers.

Fish must be measured from the tip of the nose (with mouth closed) to the tip of the tail. For catch and release categories, the fish must be measured alongside a ruler. For Adult/Junior categories, fish must be weighed and measured by fishing license agents, tackle shops or authorized Fish and Wildlife fisheries biologists.

Anglers must submit two photographs of the fish you caught, one at the site of the catch and one with the fish alongside a ruler for clear identification and measurements. Take time to compose good quality (and high resolution) photos to submit with your application. The best photo may be selected for publication in this Digest next year! Include your e-mail address on back of the photo so we may contact you for a digital copy of your print.

**Apply online at: [NJFishandWildlife.com/pdf/skflang-appform.pdf](http://NJFishandWildlife.com/pdf/skflang-appform.pdf)**

### MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR EACH FRESHWATER SPECIES

Species	Adult Weight (lbs., oz.)	Junior Weight (lbs., oz.)	Catch & Release (inches)
Largemouth Bass	6	4	21
Smallmouth Bass	4	3	19
Striped Bass Hybrid	8	6	24
Striped Bass	30	25	40
Bullhead	2	1 lb., 8 oz.	14
Carp	25	20	35
Channel Catfish	10	8	29
Crappie	2	1 lb., 8 oz.	14
Muskellunge	20	15	40
Yellow Perch	1 lb., 8 oz.	1	13
Chain Pickerel	4	3	24
Northern Pike	10	8	34
American Shad	7	5	24
Brook Trout	3	2	19
Brown Trout	8	5	25
Lake Trout	12	8	31
Rainbow Trout	5	3 lbs., 8 oz.	23
Salmon, Atlantic Landlocked	4	3	20
Sunfish	1	12 oz.	9
Walleye	6	4 lbs., 8 oz.	24

The New Jersey State Record Fish Program requires a separate application from this Skillful Angler Program and is based on weight alone. Scale certification documentation and a weighmaster's signature are necessary. Other rules apply. Visit Fish and Wildlife's website at [NJFishandWildlife.com](http://NJFishandWildlife.com) for a complete list of current state records.

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# The Lure of

# BIG FISH

**By Scott A. Collenburg,** Assistant Fisheries Biologist

Every year New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries staff conducts hundreds of surveys statewide to gather data for a variety of recreational and resource management needs and in response to emerging fisheries issues. These featured waterbodies were surveyed by Fish and Wildlife biologists over the past year and include well-known and more heavily-fished destinations as well as some potentially under-utilized spots or fisheries that are worthy of more attention from anglers. *Try wetting your line in one of these productive fishing locales.*



## Dunnfield Creek

Wild Trout Streams such as this often produce numerous wild trout, like this wild **Brown Trout** caught in Fish and Wildlife's stream electrofishing survey this summer.



## Monksville Reservoir

Recent surveys, historical data and angler reports indicate this reservoir produces good numbers of large **Muskellunge** and **Walleye** but surprisingly still retains the name 'Skunksville.'



## Pompton Lake

Largemouth Bass and Northern Pike flourish here. Spring trap netting and angler reports indicate big numbers and large catches of both species. Two Largemouth Bass pictured above were 4.5 pounds and 5 pounds respectively.



## Lake Hopatcong

Walleye and Muskellunge populations are consistently found here in high numbers and large sizes. Walleye over 4-5 pounds were consistently captured in trap nets; some were over 8 pounds. Muskellunge captured were of trophy-size quality (> 40 inches) which is consistent with reports from many anglers in the area.

## South Branch of the Raritan River

Excited anglers (and electrofishing crews!) encounter the rare wild **Tiger Trout** in several New Jersey streams such as the South Branch of the Raritan River upstream of Lake Solitude. Although tigers are more commonly created at private fish hatcheries, they can hybridize naturally in locations where their parental species (brook and brown trout) spawn successfully.



## Parvin Lake

Parvin Lake is a 95-acre state park lake in Pittsgrove, Salem County managed as a Lunken Bass Lake with a minimum size of 15 inches and a three fish daily creel limit. This electric-only lake is one of the most popular waterbodies in southern New Jersey. **Largemouth bass** in excess of 6 pounds (as pictured here) are caught regularly.



## Round Valley Reservoir

Lake Trout populations are monitored every fall by means of gillnet surveys. Multiple trophy lakers from 15 to 32 pounds are captured annually. Harvest of medium-sized lakers from 15 to 24 inches is *encouraged*, as they are very abundant here.



## Assumpink Lake

Assumpink Lake (225 acres) is the largest lake within the Assumpink Wildlife Management Area in Monmouth County. The lake is managed as a Lunken Bass Lake, with a size limit of 15 inches and a three fish daily creel limit. Assumpink Lake is one of the two most popular WMA lakes for fishing tournaments. **Largemouth Bass** in excess of 5 pounds are quite common.

## Lake Lenape

Lake Lenape is not only one of South Jersey's premier **Largemouth Bass** fisheries but also has a great **Chain Pickerel** and **Black Crappie** population. Growth rates are excellent here due to an abundant forage base from migratory fish utilizing the fish ladder. A boat electrofishing survey was completed on July 30 at Lake Lenape to evaluate the largemouth bass population. Four fish exceeded four pounds; the two largest were 6.15 and 5.44 pounds.

