

More fishing guides to check out

Let's continue on with the list of fishing guides I started last week. I present the names in no particular order. These are the next batch of guides I recommend that operate in or near northern Illinois.

Doug Becker of JD Guide Service is one heck of a tournament fisherman and usually scores nice limits on Geneva. He is the guy who invented the Defender jig that has taken area bass fishing by storm. He does really well for his bass fishing clients. Doug knows how to catch the muskies that have been stocked on Geneva. These fish already have grown quite large, so be ready for some hot action. Doug's number is 847-502-3419.

Mark O'Neill of www.structure-fishing.com is the best around when it comes to explaining and teaching all of the intricacies of working with sonar and GPS. He also is one heck of a fisherman and catches huge bass on southern Wisconsin lakes. You can hire Mark to go out in your own boat and he will instruct you in ways of using your sonar unit that you had no idea that it could do. He also can guide you to some prime bass spots. Mark's number is 773-330-9702.

Capt. Bob Rossa is back again at beautiful North Point Marina for his base of operations. He is a consummate professional and almost always sends his clients home with a cooler of tasty salmon fillets. How can you not want to go out with a guy who is so good that we let him furnish the Lake Michigan fishing report that you find here every week? Capt. Bob can be found at www.migratorfishhunt.com or 815-575-4665.

Steve Everetts was my "go-to guy" for Lake Delavan fishing information, and he still does well there. Lately, he's been catching plenty of big fish on the Madison Chain. I never have been skunked when out with Steve, and the results usually are better than my expectations, which are high to begin with. Steve is a great guy to spend a day with. Call Steve at 847-707-1827 or go to www.finseekers.com.

Jim Tostrud is part guide/part fish artist. The incredibly talented Tostrud has a good handle on what's hot on Geneva. Unknown to many people, Geneva is home to some of the largest crappies and bluegills you'll find anywhere, and Tostrud knows where they hang out and how to catch them. Jim is no slouch at chasing bass or pike, too. Jim is the perfect guy to hit the water with for a dad taking out a kid or two. Find Jim at www.wildlifevisions.com or call him at 262-496-5178.

If you are looking for something a little different, then check out Capt. Ralph Steiger. Ralph is out of the southern end of Lake Michi-



OUTDOORS

Steve Sarley

gan. Ralph is a smallmouth master, and his clients often catch 3-, 4- and even 5-pound smallies. He also goes for salmon and trout, but he's not a troller. He gets these beasts by casting and jigging. A Capt. Ralph Steiger trip deserves a place on your bucket list. Check him out at www.captsteiger.com or call 219-688-3593.

Capt. Walt Koch of Red Rock Guiding Service states its mission as: Assist you in catching fish; educate you about the latest fishing techniques; improve your fishing, finding and catching skills; help you enjoy your day on the water. A day spent with Walt certainly will accomplish all of that. Walt is at www.redrockguiding-service.com or 847-710-5453.

Shabbona Lake, near DeKalb, is a hot spot for many different species of fish. Its muskie population is as good as it gets for lakes in Illinois. I think this is the place to hit for your first muskie, if that is something you'd like to accomplish. Ron Fulk is just the guy to put you on that first ski. If you already have had that experience, I still would say that a day on the water with Ron is worth the price. Ron is a really nice guy, and your day will be truly enjoyable. Contact Ron Fulk at www.midwestmuskies.com or call 847-697-1951.

Speaking of Shabbona, the Sands family knows it best. Denny Sands owns the concession there and virtually built the fishery beginning on Day 1. His son, Aaron Sands, is a master all-species guide. Find Aaron at www.shabbonalake.com/fishing/fishing-guides/ or call 847-815-7652. If you are interested in Shabbona's tremendous crappie population, I'd suggest "The Crappie Professor," Jim Kopjo, at 708-601-1962.

FISHING REPORT

Northern Illinois: Dave Kranz from Dave's Bait, Tackle and Taxidermy in Crystal Lake reports: "River levels are at their winter lows, but some wall-eyes are being caught at the McHenry Dam on jigs tipped with either minnows or half-nightcrawlers. Many of our small ponds and lakes are ice free and the fish have turned on. I have had reports of bass hitting jigs, stick baits and Rat-L-Traps." Call 815-455-2040 for an updated report.

Fox Chain and Lake Michigan: Chris Taurisano of T-Bone Guide Service (www.tboneguideservice.com - 630-330-0090) sends word, "The Fox Chain and Fox River are pretty much free of ice. There have been some walleyes caught recently on jig and minnows. With the

thaw, the panfish will be good here soon. I have been fishing all winter on Lake Michigan, and the bite has been outstanding, for the most part. We have taken lots of browns, some steelhead and coho, as well. I am booking trips right now and have some open dates."

As of Wednesday, the Upper Fox River, Lower Fox River and the Fox Chain all were deemed to be open for boating by the Fox Waterway Agency. With our unpredictable weather, you should always get up-to-the-minute water conditions on the Fox Chain and Fox River. Go to www.foxwaterway.state.il.us or call 847-587-8540.

Wisconsin: You can call Wisconsin's Lake Michigan Fishing Hotline at 414-382-7920 to hear the latest fishing information for Lake Michigan and its tributaries. Excellent Wisconsin Lake Michigan fishing is posted at dnr.wi.gov/topic/Fishing/lakemichigan/OutdoorReport.html.

Illinois: The Illinois Department of Natural Resources offers fishing reports on a number of waterways across the state. The fishing reports for lakes, rivers and streams are updated weekly at www.ifishillinois.org/fishing_reports/fishing_report_selector.php.

NEWS AND NOTES

'A Season to Remember' viewing party: Join Billy Kats for a private screening of his documentary film, "A Season to Remember," at 7 p.m. Friday at Muggs-N-Manor at 437 S. Addison Road in Addison. Tickets cost \$25 and include a viewing, a Blu-ray copy of "A Season to Remember," Real Russian Vodka cocktails from 7:30 to 9:30 and appetizers. Loud Lucy Karaoke will perform after the film screening. Tickets are available at www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=KDVSR7GS7N5BL. Sounds like a heck of a party to me.

Indoor Fishing Flea Market: The Chicagoland Muskie Hunters fishing club holds its 18th annual Indoor Fishing Flea Market from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. March 4 at the Rolling Meadows High School. It's an excellent place to buy, sell and barter for new and used fishing and boating equipment. In the past, it has had vendors with new inventory, inventory overruns and inventory closeouts. It also has vendors who sell antique and collectible lures. Just about everything related to fishing and boating is sold - rods, reels, line, lures, tackle boxes, nets, motors, etc.

The market also has an eventlong raffle, and serves delicious food and refreshments. It also has a slate of seminar speakers. The schedule is: 10 a.m. - Capt. Pat Harrison will be talking about fishing the Chicago River, the lakefront and other with local hot spots; 11 a.m. - Capt. Chris

Taurisano from T-Bone Guide Service will be talking about muskie fishing; Noon - Dave VanDoorn, the director of Pro Staff for Take A Vet Fishing, will discuss muskie fishing in Illinois and Wisconsin and the great events that Take A Vet Fishing puts on.

Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors and students. Children younger than 10 are free. Parking is free.

Vendor tables are sold out. However, they might be able to fit a couple more in. You can get an application at www.chicagolandmuskiehunters.org/VendorApp2017.pdf to be put on the wait list. You also can call 847-769-4061, or email zacharyarnold2000@yahoo.com.

Rolling Meadows High School is located at 2901 W. Central Road in Rolling Meadows.

Lake County Water Sports open house: Lake County Water Sports is hosting an open house combined with a full slate of seminars staged by six of its pro staff members Saturday. My friend, Pat Harrison, is a main presenter. There will be seminars on bass, walleye, crappie, Lake Michigan trout, salmon and more. It also will have a few tackle vendors. The U.S. Coast Guard Power Squadron will be there doing boat safety checks and issuing stickers, so bring your boat. Lake County Water Sports is located at 530 S. Rand Road in Wauconda. For information, call 847-526-2211.

Fishing seminar: This is late notice, but definitely recommended and worth the drive. Capt. Ralph Steiger is holding a seminar based on one of the best fisheries in the Midwest. Capt. Ralph specializes in huge smallmouth as well as steelhead, lake trout and salmon, usually fished by jigging and casting, not trolling.

The event is March 4 at Knights of Columbus Hall located at 3916 173rd St. in Hammond, Indiana. The salmon/trout morning seminar starts at 10 a.m. and runs until 2 p.m. Doors will open at 9 a.m. The smallmouth bass seminar starts at 4 p.m. and runs until 8. The cost is \$40 a person for the salmon/trout seminar, and \$40 a person for the smallmouth seminar.

There will be tackle giveaways and raffles. Coffee, juice and doughnuts will be available in the morning, and at 5 p.m., a dinner of fried chicken, Italian beef, mostaccioli, garlic mashed potatoes, green beans and salad will be served.

For information or to register, go to www.captainsteiger.com.

• Steve Sarley writes about the outdoors for Shaw Media. Write to him at sarfishing@yahoo.com. Steve does a weekly podcast about fishing called "WeFishASA." You can find it at www.wefishasa.com. You can follow Steve on Twitter @stevesarley.