

## 2022 Skillful Angler Program Winners

This year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the New Jersey Fish and Wildlife's Skillful Angler Program. For four decades Fish and Wildlife has been recognizing anglers who catch fish of "not quite record" size but large enough to have tested the angler's skill and be worthy of recognition in each of the freshwater and marine species categories.

The **Skillful Angler Program** is designed to supplement the New Jersey State Record Fish Program. Significant changes were made in January of 2015. Although the program's three divisions remained the same (Adult, Junior, and Catch and Release), there are now categories creating more opportunities for qualifying fish to earn the angler a series of personalized certificates:

- **Specialist Angler** – catch five qualifying fish of the same species within one calendar year
- **Master Angler** – catch five qualifying fish of five different species (saltwater and/or freshwater) within one calendar year
- **Elite Angler** – catch ten or more qualifying fish (saltwater and/or freshwater) within one calendar year
- **First Fish** – catch your first fish ever of any species

Three additional categories (the **Slam Series**) include:

### Freshwater

- **Trout Slam** – catch one each of a qualifying Rainbow, Brook, and Brown Trout within one calendar year
- **Bass Slam** – catch one each of a qualifying Smallmouth and Largemouth Bass within one calendar year
- **Panfish Slam** – catch one each of a qualifying Sunfish, Crappie, and Yellow Perch within one calendar year

### Saltwater

- **Inshore Slam I** – catch one each of a qualifying Striped Bass, Bluefish, and Fluke within one calendar year
- **Inshore Slam II** – catch one each of a qualifying Black Sea Bass, Tautog, and Weakfish within one calendar year
- **Offshore Pelagic Slam** – catch one each of a qualifying Bluefin Tuna, Bigeye Tuna, Yellowfin Tuna, and Dolphin within one calendar year
- **Marlin Slam** – catch one each of a qualifying White and Blue Marlin within one calendar year

In 1983, the program began with 31 applicants and in 2022, 176 applications representing 21 different species from 78 individuals were officially processed. Since the program's modest beginning, Fish and Wildlife has granted Skillful Angler status to 4,326 anglers.

## **Skillful Angler Summary/Facts**

The total number of applications received in 2022 was 176 applications which is a 1.15% increase from 2021 which had 174 applications. The most frequently entered species by skillful anglers in 2022 (junior, adult, and catch and release categories combined) were Crappie with 24 applications, followed by Chain Pickerel with 21 applications. Christopher Pereira led anglers with 24 applications submitted followed by both Duane Chapman and Joseph Santiago with 12 applications submitted. Duane Chapman, Christopher Pereira, and Joseph Santiago all led anglers with 7 different species submitted followed by Frank Ruczynski submitting 5 different species.

The following is a breakdown of applications received per species (by categories):

### **Freshwater**

#### **Adult**

Bullhead Catfish (1), Largemouth Bass (1), Rainbow Trout (1)

#### **Catch and Release**

Atlantic Landlocked Salmon (3), Bowfin (1), Brown Trout (3), Bullhead Catfish (16), Chain Pickerel (21), Channel Catfish (1), Crappie (24), Hybrid Striped Bass (13), Lake Trout (1), Largemouth Bass (7), Northern Pike (6), Rainbow Trout (1), Smallmouth Bass (15), Sunfish (12), Walleye (20), Yellow Perch (20)

### **Saltwater**

#### **Catch and Release**

Black Sea Bass (1), Bluefish (1), Kingfish (1), Striped Bass (7)

The Catch and Release Category (both Freshwater and Saltwater) had the greatest number of entries with 173 applications, followed by the Adult Category with 3 applications. Freshwater applications remain the most popular with 166 applications while Saltwater only received 10 applications.

**Specialist Angler:** Rick Hess (Chain Pickerel), George Horvath (Bullhead Catfish), Alex Lowe (Walleye), Christopher Pereira (Crappie, Striped Bass, Yellow Perch), Joseph Santiago (Crappie), John Vojt (Smallmouth Bass)

**Master Angler:** Duane Chapman, Christopher Pereira, Frank Ruczynski, Joseph Santiago

**Elite Angler:** Duane Chapman, Alexander Lowe, Christopher Pereira, Joseph Santiago

**Panfish Slam:** Christopher Pereira, Frank Ruczynski, Joseph Santiago

## **The 2022 Skillful Angler Winners are as follows:**

### **Freshwater**

#### **Adult Category**

**Bullhead Catfish:** 2lbs 5oz. caught by George Horvath of Bordentown, New Jersey on September 26<sup>th</sup>. George was fishing Colonial Lake from shore when he landed the fish at 6:00 PM. Twelve-pound test was used with a 6' Quantum spinning rod paired with a Mitchell 3000 spinning reel while fishing with corn as bait. The catfish measured 16.50 inches in length with a girth of 10.50 inches.

**Largemouth Bass:** 6lbs 2oz. caught by Andrew Mattern of Ocean City, New Jersey on April 11<sup>th</sup>. Andrew was fishing Tuckahoe Lake from his boat when he landed the fish at 5:48 AM. Fifteen-pound test was used with a 6'10" Lews Mach Smash rod paired with a Lew Mach Smash reel while fishing with a topwater jitterbug. The bass measured 21.50 inches in length with a girth of 16.50 inches.

**Rainbow Trout:** 6lbs 9oz. caught by David Deinhardt of Howell, New Jersey on March 4<sup>th</sup>. David was fishing the South Branch of the Raritan River from his boat when he landed the fish at 7:30 AM. Four-pound test was used with a 4.5' ultralight spinning rod paired with a spinning reel while fishing with a night crawler as bait. The trout measured 24 inches in length with a girth of 14.5 inches.

#### **Catch and Release Category**

**Bowfin:** 26 inches in length caught by Kevin Kennedy of Mount Ephraim, New Jersey on May 15<sup>th</sup>. Kevin was fishing Racoon Creek from shore when he landed the fish at 9:00 AM. Twenty-pound test braid was used with a medium spinning rod paired with a spinning reel while fishing with a swimbait.

**Brown Trout:** 29 inches in length caught by Justin Lerner of Warren, New Jersey on May 7<sup>th</sup>. Justin was fishing the Raritan River from shore when he landed the fish at 7:00 AM. Six-pound test was used with a St. Croix rod paired with a Pflueger reel while fishing with a plug.

**Bullhead Catfish:** 16.5 inches in length caught by Cliff Kearns of Columbus, New Jersey on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Cliff was fishing Mercer Lake from his boat when he landed the fish at 7:15 AM. Ten-pound test was used while fishing with a night crawler as bait.

**Chain Pickerel:** 28 inches in length caught by Matthew Coll of Perkasio, Pennsylvania on December 10<sup>th</sup>. Matthew was fishing Round Valley Reservoir from his boat when he landed the fish at 9:30 AM. Eight-pound test line was used with a conventional rod paired with a conventional reel while fishing with a Rapala lure.

**Channel Catfish:** 29.25 inches in length caught by Gary Winter of West Deptford, New Jersey on October 7<sup>th</sup>. Gary was fishing Lake Narraticon from his boat when he landed the fish at 6:30 PM. Thirty-pound braid was used with a 7' Mitchell casting rod paired with a TSSD 3000L casting reel while fishing with a hotdog as bait.

**Crappie:** 16 inches in length caught by Carl Kozub of Summit, New Jersey on April 8<sup>th</sup>. Carl was fishing Splitrock Reservoir from his boat when he landed the fish at 7:55 PM. Forty-pound braid and a fifteen-pound leader was used with a Falcon Lowrider XD Cranker casting rod paired with a Daiwa Zillion casting reel while fishing with a "Red Top Worms" waging bluegill.

AND

**Crappie:** 16 inches in length caught by Christopher Pereira of Lebanon, New Jersey on February 19<sup>th</sup>. Chris was ice fishing Lake Shawnee when he landed the fish at 12:00 PM. Six-pound test was used with a tip-up and a shiner as bait.

AND

**Crappie:** 16 inches in length caught by David Ricigliano of Columbus, New Jersey on July 7<sup>th</sup>. David was fishing Assunpink Lake from his boat when he landed the fish at 12:15 AM. Ten-pound test was used with a spinning rod paired with a spinning reel while fishing with a night crawler as bait.

**Lake Trout:** 31 inches in length caught by Joseph Santiago of Moonachie, New Jersey on May 14<sup>th</sup>. Joseph was fishing Round Valley Reservoir from his boat when he landed the fish at 7:15 PM. Ten-pound test was used with a St. Croix casting rod paired with an Okuma casting reel while fishing with a spoon.

**Largemouth Bass:** 23.75 inches in length caught by Thomas Begoss of Randolph, New Jersey on August 17<sup>th</sup>. Thomas was fishing Heigtein Pond (Randolph) from shore when he landed the fish at 7:40 AM. Eight-pound test was used with a 5'6" medium action rod paired with a Quantum Kinetic reel while fishing with night crawlers as bait.

**Northern Pike:** 38.25 inches in length caught by Christopher Pereira of Lebanon, New Jersey on August 17<sup>th</sup>. Chris was fishing the Passaic River from shore when he landed the fish at 4:30 PM. Forty-pound braid was used with a Tsunami rod paired with a Penn reel while fishing with a swimbait.

**Rainbow Trout:** 23.25 inches in length caught by John Vojt of Pohatcong, New Jersey on June 5<sup>th</sup>. John was fishing Swartwood Lake from his kayak when he landed the fish at 8:07 AM. Six-pound test fluro was used with an G. Loomis spinning rod paired with a Shimano spinning reel while fishing with a drop-shot.

**Salmon, Atlantic Landlocked:** 22.875 inches in length caught by Harry Kuebler of Washington, New Jersey on September 3<sup>rd</sup>. Harry was fishing Merrill Creek Reservoir from his boat when he landed the fish at 8:30 AM. Eight-pound test was used with a conventional rod paired with a conventional reel while fishing with a spoon.

**Smallmouth Bass:** 21.75 inches in length caught by John Vojt of Pohatcong, New Jersey on June 21<sup>st</sup>. John was fishing Spruce Run Reservoir from his kayak when he landed the fish at 1:18 PM. Six-pound test fluro was used with a G. Loomis spinning rod paired with a Shimano spinning reel while fishing with a drop-shot.

**Striped Bass Hybrid:** 25.75 inches in length caught by Christopher Pereira of Lebanon, New Jersey on April 15<sup>th</sup>. Chris was fishing Lake Hopatcong from his boat when he landed the fish at 9:46 PM. Twelve-pound test was used with a Fitzgerald rod paired with a Pflueger reel while fishing with a jerkbait.

**Sunfish:** 10.25 inches in length caught by Joseph Santiago of Moonachie, New Jersey on May 4<sup>th</sup>. Joseph was fishing Shongum Lake from his boat when he landed the fish at 3:00 PM. Four-pound test was used with a St. Croix spinning rod paired with a Shimano spinning reel while fishing with a Gulp lure.

**Walleye:** 28 inches in length caught by Luke LeDrappier of Berkeley Heights, New Jersey on March 26<sup>th</sup>. Luke was fishing the Raritan River from shore when he landed the fish at 10:45 AM. Ten-pound test was used with a Medium spinning rod paired with a Penn Battle spinning reel while fishing with a 5-inch white paddle tail soft plastic rigged on a 1/4oz jig head.

**Yellow Perch:** 14 inches in length caught by Richard Laky of Clifton, New Jersey on June 7<sup>th</sup>. Richard was fishing a pond in Green Township from shore when he landed the fish at 10:00 AM. Ten-pound test was used with an Ugly Stick spinning rod paired with a Shimano spinning reel while fishing with a gold #4 Blue Fox.

## **Saltwater**

### **Catch and Release Category**

**Black Sea Bass:** 20 inches in length caught by Colin Whitchurch of Washington Township, New Jersey on August 7<sup>th</sup>. Colin was fishing the Atlantic Ocean from his boat when he landed the fish at 8:45 AM. Thirty-pound test was used with a conventional rod paired with a conventional reel while fishing with squid and killifish as bait.

**Kingfish:** 13 inches in length caught by George Horvath of Bordentown, New Jersey on May 16<sup>th</sup>. George was fishing Manasquan Inlet from his boat when he landed the fish at 3:10 PM. Thirty-pound braid was used with a spinning rod paired with a spinning reel while fishing with a A-17 Ava diamond jig.

**Striped Bass:** 54 inches in length caught by Christopher Pereira of Lebanon, New Jersey on May 28<sup>th</sup>. Chris was fishing the Atlantic Ocean from his boat when he landed the fish at 11:00 AM. Thirty-pound braid was used with a Shimano conventional rod paired with a Shimano conventional reel while fishing with a flutter spoon.

**Congratulations to all our winners!**