

155 Kids Brave Rain at Chestnut Ridge Lake Fishing Event

June 25, 2011; 155 kids; 16 volunteers; 421 Total Attendance! Fishing Fun is Highlight

At 8 AM, senior rod/reel coordinator, Tom Fischer, and event coordinator, Dave Barus, stood in picnic shelter #10 as a torrential downpour forced muddy runoff to drain across the concrete shelter floor. Barus said, "mom's won't like the muddy sneakers, should we cancel it?" It would be the first time in 20 years. Fischer replied, "maybe with the rain, parents won't be able to cut grass today, they'll have some time...it should clear up, maybe we'll have a great turnout!?" Exactly what happened!

With an all-time high attendance of 155, excited kids waited their turn to "sign-in" and get started in the educational outreach clinic-style event. Registration administrators Antoinette Grote and Rose Barus provided each youth and parent with instructions on where to go and what to do, as they presented an official nametag, ID card and fish bead necklace for each youth.

Despite the 65-degree wet weather, everyone enjoyed the special summer day, learning about fun in the outdoors through fishing at the annual Chestnut Ridge Park Lake family event.

The kids absorbed "how-to" fishing expertise with Russ

Johnson and Bob Carlson, as they learned how to craft the strong, but easy-to-tie, Palomar knot.

Joe Jemiolo and Will Elliott demonstrated how to rig a plastic worm, a plastic jig tail and how to



Mike Huffer w/big bass

fish with these no-fuss baits. Young mom's especially enjoyed learning these option!

Ron and Jared Smith (father & son team) worked with expert local angler, Paul Stoos, helping kids learn "How-To-Fish".

Step-by-step skill-forming lessons continued as kids quickly learned how to cast with small hookless plugs aimed toward hula-hoop targets at the casting station. Even first time casters tossed 45 to 60 feet with apparent expertise. "Kids learn quickly," said Ted Malota, famous local Lake Erie angler.

Perhaps the most

educational stop on the 5-learning station tour for kids and parents was NYS-DEC "Fish and Fauna". Fishery biologists Mike Wilkinson, Mike Todd and DEC intern, Josh Berry, explained the "Circle of Life" for several fish species. They demonstrated with crayfish, frogs, salamanders, dragonflies and other pond critters. Mike Todd said, "the kids were surprised to learn that carp are the biggest minnow from the minnow family in New York."

After completing the 5 skill development learning stations, kids could rent (free), a rod/reel rig all set up with new slip-bobber rigs for immediate fishing fun. Tom Fischer and Don Nikischer made sure the rigs



were “ready to fish” as the kids all seemed to arrive at the same time. Over 110 rental rods were provided and returned.

Immediately adjacent was the “Bait Station”



where kids received a fresh supply of night-crawlers. Over 1,000 nightcrawlers were donated by Weekley’s Bait Shop located in Hamburg, New York. Kids also received plenty of bait-rigging and fish-catching

instructions at that station!

The busiest place at the lake may have been the kids “Lunker Pool”. A 6-foot swimming pool filled with pond water, complete with a battery-operated aerator pump, allowed kids competing in the contest for biggest and smallest fish to watch the assorted finny critters swim after they were “weighed in”.

After the event, all of the fish were released alive back into the pond by kids that did not catch a fish. Conservation at every level!

Weighmaster Pete Quagliana recorded over 157 fish brought to the measurement board by the kids, though over 300 fish were estimated to be caught in the fishing event. Winner of the big-fish contest was Mike Huffer, with a 17-inch largemouth bass, though this youngster also caught two other fish that were 2nd and 3rd largest bass. He knows how to fish! The smallest fish was caught by a happy Elizabeth Tytko, with a four-inch sunfish. The “big and little” winners were each awarded a premium rod/reel outfit for their trophy efforts.

Over the course of the fishing day, Joe Fischer and Spencer Schofield offered on-site fishing

lessons as families fished on the lake trails.

Ray Gwarek supervised Hawkeye bowmen chefs as they charcoal-grilled Sahlen’s hot dogs and kept the food station moving. Willie Sieber of Bison City shared, “the kids keep coming back for succulent seconds, kids just love hot dogs!

Some 105 Shakespeare and Mitchell rods/reels were awarded by random raffle to kids that successfully completed the expanded 5-Learning Station program. Applause rang through the air, as the crowd thanked volunteers for the fun-day.



Donation sponsors included Pure Fishing, the Elma Wonderbread Store, Musky Joe lures, Weekley’s Wholesale Bait, Will Elliott of the Buffalo news, the Springville Walmart, the Erie County Federation of Sportsmen and Erie County Fish Advisory Board volunteers.

Special official thanks to Legislator John Mills who visited the special park event and is assisting the Erie County Federation of Sportsmen in identifying funding sources for similar events next year. This year, all events were funded by the Federation.

Thanks TEAM!

Dave Barus 2009 Federation coordinator

Mike Todd 2009 NYSDEC coordinator

