

Event Casts Light on Fish, Fun, Learning about Deer Ticks

East Aurora Fish & Game 2018 Teach-Me-To-Fish

151 Kids; 273 in Attendance; 14 Volunteers; Fun in the Outdoors through Fishing!

June 2, 2018; East Aurora, NY - As the 10AM horn sounded to start the derby, little Lucas Smering fishing with his dad and brother, had cast his bobber and worm just beyond the weeds along the pond shoreline. It no sooner hit the water and the bobber acted like a sinker was attached. "Hey dad, hey dad! I think I have a snag. Pond fishing expert, Don Kocherberger, was nearby and ran to help out. When Don pulled on the rod tip, the rod dipped down and the line swam the other way with the drag screaming! Don told little Lucas, "You've got a big one on there, keep reeling!" A few minutes later, Lucas and his dad brought a 16-inch largemouth bass to derby weighmasters, Jim Smith and Carl Leas. That was the big fish for the day and an instant prize winner for a free rod/reel and gear rig. Nice going Lucas!



Lucas Smering, big fish of the day!

stations to be eligible for a free rod/reel raffle at the end of the session, at noon.

At the first learning station, Russ John and Bob Carlson demonstrated the technique for tying a good fishing knot. Even 3-year olds had that technique down pat for this strong, yet simple knot.

At the Plastic Bait learning station, retired Environmental Conservation Officer, Jeff Jondle, and his son, Jeff Jr., talked about fish life, fish forage, nature and the critters that fish eat for breakfast. Then the kids learned how to hook up plastic baits, "These baits catch fish, lots of fish - some big un's, some little un's. Go try 'em out." Each youth left with a free plastic bait sample, a smile and a sense of

In the meantime, some 273 folks (kids and adults) came to visit the East Aurora Fish Game club grounds to attend the annual Teach-Me-To-Fish event, running now for more than 20 years.

Susan Gould and staff provided a registration form, name tag, complimentary "lucky fish beads" (Norby Antonik Foundation), a Fish NYS Handbook, news of

understanding about how to do this fishing thing.

Next was the casting station where the kids learned to toss a light rubber lure from where they stood to a target hula hoop in the distance. It didn't take long. Experts were born every two minutes or so. Again,



Jeff Jondle Talks Fish, Fauna and Plastic Baits.



Russ Johnson and Bob Carlson talk Fish'n Knots.

big smiles, a sense of fun and an eagerness to go fish was now embedded, it was plain to see.

At this point, some folks ran to the pond, but there was still one more important learning station, "Lyme Awareness." Sheri Voss, representing the WNY Lyme Association with handouts and a program presentation on a 48-inch TV monitor, skits with play dolls and more, provided an explanation of how to stay safe and

the free Sahlen's hot dog lunch and instructions to visitors that they needed to complete the four learning



Sheri Voss shares facts about Deer Ticks & Lyme disease.

be aware of a new plague in our regional outdoors (northeast USA), called Lyme disease. It comes to people from deer ticks that catch the disease from white-footed mice. They learned that Permethrin spray for clothes and Picaridin for skin can help keep folks protected, but that kids and parents need to stay aware at all times, even on local beaches. Deer ticks seem to everywhere these days! Over the next hour or so, parents reported finding 4 deer ticks on their clothes, but they knew what to do. The lessons were well learned. In all, seven parents later shared that their child or a friend, had contracted Lyme in the last 12 months locally.



54 rods/reels were raffled off for local kids!

The sun poked out every now and then, but the 65 degree weather was just perfect for a nice suntan without a jacket.

Over the next two hours, the kids fished and enjoyed a ton of fun catching a reported 307 fish! One

youngster, Maxwell Wendiebaugh, caught 17 fish! The biggest fish was the 16" largemouth bass by Lucas Smering; the biggest crappie was caught by Owen Miller and tied by his sister, Emma, both at 10-1/4". The smallest crappie was caught by James Smith at 9-1/2", a pretty nice smallest crappie! Each of these kids won a free rod/reel/gear package of their choice. There were 54 rods/reel rigs raffled off for free to our youth



Weighmasters Jim Smith and Carl Leas...how big?

attendees. Kids that didn't win in the rod/reel rig raffle went to the Tackle Treasure Chest and lined-up shortest to tallest. Everyone caught a nice fishing prize for later. It was big treasure chest!

The kitchen staff of Master Chef Ron Cecala, Mary Hubbard, Butch Betz and John Borngaber made sure everyone was hydrated and well fed.

This special youth outreach event was sponsored and coordinated by the East Aurora Fish & Game Club with special thanks to Cabela's, Sahlen's Meat Packing, the Norby Antonik Foundation, Erie County Federation of Sportsmen, Weekley's Bait, East Aurora Moose Lodge 370, Simon Manka and 14 EAFG dedicated volunteers who donated their time to help our youth and their families learn more about the outdoors through the fun of fishing! Thanks EAFG/Moose TEAM! 2018 Program Chairpersons: Dave Barus and Jim Smith



151 kids enjoyed the sunshine and pond shoreline during a wonderful day outdoors, catching 307 fish in less than 2 hrs!