Catfish Conference 2016 will highlight an emerging sport

January 30, 2016
2:04 PM MST

Interest in the sport of catfishing has exploded in 2016. The phenomenon got an early start in 2016 with Winter Blues on Wheeler. The January 2 tournament event saw 80 boats from 11 different states competing to see who could catch the biggest catfish. Cold weather and windy conditions was no deterrent for the hardy soles that competed on that cold winter day. All you really need to do is be around some of these dedicated catfish anglers and you will soon know that catfishing is going to grow.
Further interest in the whiskered fish is evidenced by numerous announcements of 2016 tournament schedules. Catfish fanatic, George Young, has announced a first time tournament, Mississippi River Monsters. It is not scheduled until September, 2016 and it already has over 100 boats registered to compete in the Memphis based event.

Aaron Wheatley produces a popular tournament out of Owensboro, KY. The Monsters on the Ohio Tournament has grown steadily since its inception in 2010. As of this writing there are over 60 boats registered for the October 8, 2016 event. It is quite possible that it will top 200 boats this year. Last year saw 182 boats, 383 men, women and children, coming from 23 States, to search for ole Mr. Whiskers on the Ohio River.

In addition to single date tournaments there are numerous regional tournament trails announcing their 2016 Schedules. Cabela’s King Kat Tournament Trail has scheduled 20 events across the county including a northern and a southern championship. Bass Pro Shops Big Cat Quest (BCQ) has 17 tournaments scheduled. The BCQ trail visits numerous states during the year, ending up in Richmond, VA for their Classic.

Then there are the state tournament trails like the Alabama Catfish Trail and the Bass Pro West Tennessee Catfish Anglers Trail, to name just two. Every weekend beginning in March catfish anglers will be choosing which tournament they want to fish, but before that, they can choose to attend the Catfish Conference 2016.

Billed as a “catfish get-together” the conference idea comes from “The Catfish Dude,” Steve Douglas. Douglas has been chasing the whiskered critters around rivers and reservoirs for many years. Douglas regularly shares his knowledge of catfishing through his videos aimed at teaching others about catfishing.

On-again, off-again discussions between Douglas and Jim Hopper had been taking place for a couple years. The discussions evolved around the idea of encouraging the sport of catfishing and helping to grow the catfishing community in a positive way.

In 2015 a decision was made and Jeff Jones Marine and Monster Rod Holders will host the first ever Catfish Conference. Douglas is owner of Monster Rod Holders, a popular rod holder manufacturer. Jim Hopper is General Manager at Jeff Jones Marine.

The event is intended as a pre-season event where attendees can come talk catfishing in an environment created especially for them. They can come visit with other catfish anglers, see new products and learn from the pros in the catfish industry. Booths from various manufacturers will welcome guests with displays and demonstrations of catfish related products.
One firm that will be on hand is **B’n’M Poles** of West Point, MS. “Our primary reason for joining this conference is to help promote and grow the sport of catfishing,” declared Jason McDuffie from B’n’M. “All companies associated with catfishing will grow if we all work to promote the sport.”

Seminars will educate attendees on everything from tips and techniques to how to start your own tournament trail. Carl Morris Jr. is one of several experts giving seminars. Morris is considered one of the best catfish fish anglers in the nation with many national titles to his credit. Carl will focus on pre tournament preparations including mapping, bait collection, tackle, pre fishing and more.

Other seminars include, Catfishing 101 with Aaron Wheatley; Proven Tactics to Catch the Big Ones with Larry Muse; Draggin’ Baits for Channel Cats with Mark Blauvelt and Ryan Lawrence; Locating and Targeting Trophy Catfish with David Shipman and Brooke Wilbanks; Keeping Tournament Fish Alive with Dave Hart. Any one of these seminars would make the trip to the conference worthwhile.

Booth space has been filled and talk is already centered on finding a bigger venue for 2017. “The response has been tremendous,” Douglas said. “We have product manufacturers, tournament trails, pro anglers and hundreds of recreational catfishing enthusiasts coming. We also just confirmed that the Kentucky Department Of Fish and Wildlife will be attending. They will be from the fisheries division and will be available to answer questions and concerns.”

Comments praising the conference have come from various segments of the catfish world as folks from 23 states have been documented as coming.

“We have all watch catfishing as a sport grow over the last few years,” proclaimed Lyle Stokes, co-host of the online TV show, **Catfish Weekly**. “I don’t think we have touched the tip of the iceberg yet, as long as everybody tries to get a long and make it grow. I think this conference is the beginning of some great things to come in catfishing.”

The conference will be held on February 27, 2016 at Jeff Jones Marine located at 176 Frankfort Street, Versailles, Kentucky

Keep up with new information by visiting the Catfish Conference website at [https://catfishconference.com](https://catfishconference.com). Updates are also posted on their Facebook Page. Douglas can be emailed at catfishinginfo@gmail.com or phoned at 502-510-0275. Hopper can be emailed at jim@jeffjonesmarine.com or phoned at 859-873-3116.
SUGGESTED LINKS

- Catfish Conference 2016 offers free how-to seminars
- Strouth, Strouth and Lawson take Winner Blues on Wheeler
- Two national catfish trails post 2016 schedules
- Why we catfish

Capt. Ron Presley
Fishing Examiner

© 2006-2015 AXS Digital Group LLC d/b/a Examiner.com