

The Lure of Fishing

by Nathan Bradford

Why do I fish? Is it getting up before the normal person's eyelids flutter open? Is it watching the fog slowly dissipate from the water's gleaming surface? Or maybe, it's that one fish that draws me back every day. For me, the lure of fishing is the level of uncertainty and the mystery of what lurks beneath the surface. Getting outdoors and fishing is everything. It is what consumes all of my free time. I am thankful to live on the Eastern Shore of Virginia which offers an array of both freshwater and saltwater fishing opportunities. In my five years of fishing, I have had a plethora of experiences on the water, some incredible and others not so much. One experience last December that created a lasting memory, began early one morning...

BZZZ, BZZZ, BZZZ! My alarm frantically sounds at 6:00 a.m. waking me from a deep sleep. The sun has yet to rise. I clad myself with layer upon layer of clothing. My first step outside tries to convince me to go back inside and stay warm. Every breath clouds in front of me like smoke from a chimney. Every step creates a "slurp" sound as my boots sink nearly to the top in the seemingly bottomless mud. Struggling to convince my hands to work in the cold, I fumble in the dark with the tattered rope that attaches my 12-foot yellow kayak to an old tree. I strain as I pull my kayak loaded down with gear through the marsh to the placid creek.

As I grip my paddle, my hands feel as if they have frozen to it. My paddle pierces the water like a hook into a fish's mouth. While I journey out to my favorite spot, the sun starts to peek its sleepy head above the towering pines at the creek's edge. Counting the feet to my favorite spot, I imagine the countless numbers of striped bass that lurk beneath the stained water. Finally, I am here! I grab my light action fishing rod and quickly whip the lure out several dozen

yards. As I crank in the slightly taut line, the rod tip is suddenly jerked down towards the water. After a relatively quick fight, I net the fish. Even though out of the water, the striped bass refuses to give up the fight, violently sending his sharp spines into my thigh. Although this grind sounds like misery to the average person, what keeps me going is optimistically looking forward to tomorrow and the thought of yesterday's catch.

That day turned out to be my best day of the year. I ended up catching one hundred twenty-eight striped bass. This giant number of fish did not happen in an hour, or even two. This pleasure-filled experience lasted six and a half hours. At one point during this extremely productive day, I landed twelve fish in twelve casts. Reflecting on moments like this makes me realize just how many outdoor adventures there are to be had.

Replaying scenes like this in my mind gets me up when its freezing outside. I love how fishing gets your adrenaline pumping. Although most fishing days are not nearly as fantastic as this one was, if I did not fish almost every day, I could have missed that amazing opportunity. I often hike miles to try a new spot in an attempt to catch more fish. This "addiction" to fishing and being outdoors runs so deep that I fish seemingly endlessly from the time the water thaws out until it freezes over. Being outdoors daily allows me to enjoy creation and see anomalies which would otherwise be missed, such as catching a tailless fish. The uncertainty of fishing drives me to go back out to the water over and over. This particular type of mystery enchants me and gets me through even the unproductive days. I can never know what I will catch on a given day, and that uncertainty brings me back time and time again.

Fishing has taught me perseverance and patience, which shows that this sport is more than bent fishing rods. It is also an incredible learning experience. The outdoors has an array of

lessons to be learned and is looking for eager pupils. It draws me in and shows me amazing sights. Even those days when I catch nothing, it is significantly better than being stuck inside. As I reflect on fishing, I realize it is much more than the thrill of catching. It is the entire outdoor experience that has left a lasting mark on my life that will be with me forever.

Word count: 777