

STEELHEAD NEWS

A Publication of the Lake Superior Steelhead Association

www.steelheaders.org

Jan/Feb 2018: Issue 397



Andrew Landsem with 31" Brown from Maytag

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News and Notes

Compiled by Scott Thorpe



Lake Superior Steelhead Association

PO Box 16034
Duluth, MN 55816-0034

LSSA's Mission:

For these reasons and more, the Lake Superior Steelhead Association exists: to protect our rivers and fish; to help preserve Lake Superior and its bounty; to learn more about the resources we enjoy and foster discussion, research and sound fisheries management practices; to educate anglers and the public about all these things. The LSSA has taken all these tasks upon its shoulders. These issues are too important to leave to chance or the vagaries of bureaucracies and politics. Our mission is to protect and improve the cold water fishery of the Lake Superior region and to bring various groups of anglers together in an atmosphere of friendship, so they can work for their and the resources common good.

Board of Directors:

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Gary Siverson*
Jeff Somrock*
Randy Fjoser

Newsletter Editor: Scott Thorpe

*Past LSSA Presidents

Youth Mentoring Program

Planning is underway for our annual youth steelhead mentoring program. Please call Gary Siverson if you are interested in lending a hand at 218-390-3916. We are also organizing a fly fishing program for graduates of our youth mentoring. Contact Keith Behn at 218-269-7400 if you can help or have ideas.

2018 Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo

The schedule for the 2018 Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo is now filling up, and it looks like its going to be a great show. Nick Peterson, Fisheries Specialist, Lake Superior Area Fisheries MN DNR will be presenting on steelhead. His previous presentations have been very informative. Be there to learn about the management of our fishery. The LSSA needs more volunteers to staff our booth. The site will again be Hamline University in St. Paul, centrally located with lots of free parking. Call or text Scott Thorpe if you can help at 612-669-9601.

LSSA Membership

As you know by now, the 2018 membership renewal has begun in earnest. If you did not get a renewal notice, that means that our records indicate you had previously paid your dues for 2018. The best way to answer any question when your last dues have been paid is to look at the newsletter cover and specifically, the imprinted mailing label. There should be a date imprinted and if it shows any date and letter prior to 2018A, that means our records indicate that we have not received the 2018 dues.

We try our best to update the mailing list immediately prior to the next Steelhead News being mailed so that the labels are totally up to date. But mistakes do happen. If the label on

your newsletter indicates that you have not paid current dues and you feel that you have, please contact the LSSA and let us know. We will look into it and if indeed are records are not correct, we will rectify the mistake immediately.

The *2018 Lake Superior Angler* is quite close to going to the printer. All current members will receive a copy of the 2018 edition so please get your 2018 dues in as quick as possible and we can have a mailing of the magazine earlier than in years past.

Thank you for your support. Enjoy the rest of our winter.

Fly Fishing Film Tour

It's that time of year again, the annual Fly Fishing Film Tour is passing thru the Midwest. The trailers are visually stunning and really get you excited about fishing. The atmosphere is almost crazy, you will think you are are a teenager again.

28 January- Clyde Iron, Duluth.
Tickets from Great Lakes Fly Shop,
Superior Fly Angler.

9 March-Park Theatre, Hayward.
Tickets from Hayward Fly Fishing Co.

9 March-UW River Fall, River Falls.
Tickets from Lunds Fly Shop.

10 March-The Machine Shop,
Minneapolis. Tickets from Mend
Provisions, The Fly Angler and Bob
Mitchell's Fly Shop.

Regulation Changes

Catch-and-release regulations on trout in Kraut, Peanut, North Shady, Squash and Tomato lakes in Cook County will be dropped 1 March. Additionally, the ban on winter fishing and special tackle restrictions for these lakes will go away. Special regulations will continue on Thompson, Thrush and Turnip lakes. *Source MN DNR website.*

From the Editor

Member Jason Kopp has volunteered to become the next editor for the Steelhead News. He will be assuming his responsibilities next Fall. Jason is an avid steelheader and you have seen photos and articles from him frequently in this newsletter. Jason's role will be primarily formatting and publishing. Assisting him will be two co-editors: David Olson and Nik Wilson. David and Nik will be responsible for ensuring a steady flow of material to the editor. Dave and his father Dennis have been very active in conservation efforts on the Nemadji River, and their articles about that work have appeared here. Nik is of the next generation of anglers, and hopefully will be able to attract new contributors. I met Nik when he participated as a student in our mentoring program,

at least five years ago. I have also been given commitments from several writers to provide at least two articles a year: Jeff Donegan, Tom Cawcutt and Andy Selvig. We will need many more writers. Please let me know if you are willing to commit to be a regular contributor.

In this issue, I am pleased to include a story by Dave Emery, which comes to us via Jim Holden. Jim is just getting ready to publish a book of short stories and was kind enough to share one of his chapters with us. His book is titled "Heron Thieves, A Bat out of Hell, and other Fly Fishing Stories and Essays." Thanks also to Jeff Donegan and Mike Pitan, who supplied me with a large batch of photos for the Photo Gallery. Text me at 612-669-9601 or e-mail me with articles and photos at scott@scottthorpeflyfishing.com.

Upcoming Events

Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo
March 16, 17, 18, 2018
Hamline University, St. Paul, MN

LSSA Youth Mentoring Classroom Sessions
March 10, 17, 2018
Hartley Nature Center, Duluth, MN

LSSA Youth Mentoring Field Session
Date to be determined 2018

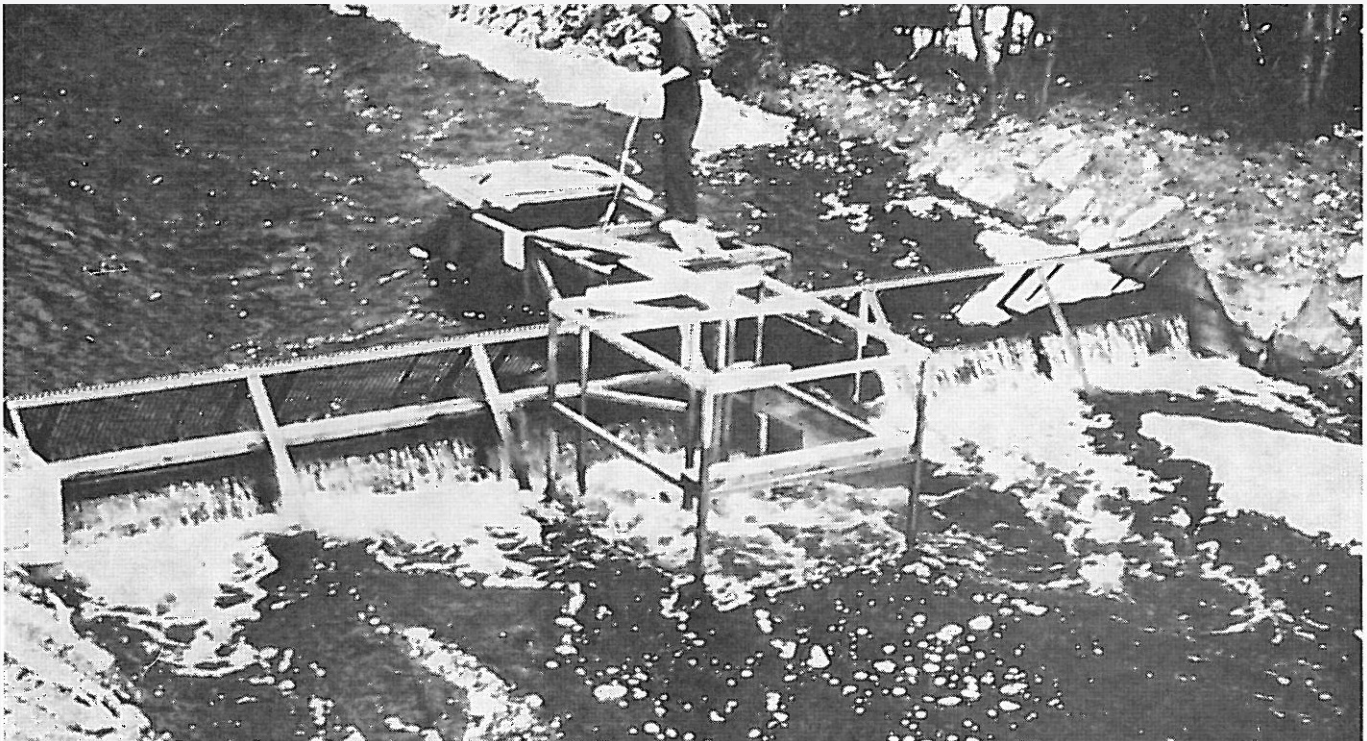
LSSA Spring Banquet
April 21, 2018
Clearwater Grille, Duluth, MN

Knife River Clean UP
June TBD

LSSA Planking Party
June 30, 2018
Brighton Beach Rd, Duluth, MN

Brule Spey Day
September 8, 2018
McNeil's on the Brule, Brule River, WI

*Fish Trap on Kimbell Creek 1962-1964. A similar trap was set on Kadunce Creek 1962-1965. Combined upstream trap counts: 1962-123, 1963-213.
Photo from MN DNR*



Post Card From The Past.

My First Steelhead

By Dave Emery

I got into steelhead fishing the hard way. Well, upon reflection, maybe every way one gets into steelhead fishing is hard unless you come from a family of steelhead fishermen. My steelhead fishing started obliquely. My son came home from a high school swimming practice one day and announced that he had a new coach who had just moved to town. He didn't know anyone, he was a fisherman, and he was looking for someone to fish with him. My son volunteered me and said, "Here is his name and phone number. Call him." I must have looked a bit skeptical about the arrangement, because my son said again, "Please call him. I think he's a good guy."

So I called the coach and offered my fishing availability, apologizing for the fact that I was a bass fisherman rather than a walleye fisherman, like everyone else in Minnesota. But I said I was willing to try walleye fishing if that was what the guy wanted to do. He listened politely and then said, "I don't want to fish for bass or walleye or anything in a lake. I want to fish the North Shore rivers for salmon and steelhead."

Obviously this guy was not one of us. He came from Wisconsin. I explained that I had never fished for salmon or steelhead, nor had I fished the North Shore. The guy said that was OK, he just liked having someone to share driving and the expenses and to fish with him. He would give me a call in the spring when it was time for steelhead to move into the rivers.

The call came in March. I had read a couple articles on steelhead fishing in the interval, and I described some of the tackle I had purchased. "Sounds good," my new friend said, "and we'll stop at a bait shop and buy whatever else we need."

We headed north early in the morning

and, once on the way, I said, "OK, now tell me how you fish for steelhead? What techniques? What type of water? Give me a quick lesson."

My friend's response was unexpected. "How should I know? I've never fished for steelhead." I knew at that moment that my steelhead fishing was going to be on a very slow learning curve.

So we tried different rivers up and down the North Shore. We fished; we watched other fishermen; we talked to fishermen; we mimicked other fishermen; we tried spawn, yarn, spinners, etc. The outcome was always the same that spring. We never hooked a steelhead. We caught some small fish on spawn bags and we had hits that "might have been a steelhead," but we didn't get a hookup. I thought we were making progress until our last trip to the Shore that spring. I was fishing near the mouth of the Sucker River on a Saturday morning in a crowd. Two fishermen occupied what looked to my untrained eye to be the most promising spot in the area, so I chose to fish a spot others had bypassed. The two guys had no luck and eventually left the hole. I was getting ready to

move downstream into the vacated hole when another fisherman beat me to it. He not only beat me to the hole, he quickly proceeded to hook two fish and land one of them. How could that be? The first two guys had fished the hole, top, middle, and bottom without a strike; but this guy hooked two fish.

This expert saw me standing upstream watching him, and he asked if I wanted to fish the hole. "Sure," I said. So I walked down and started fishing the "good water" while the expert walked back and started casting in the water I had vacated. Again the guy quickly hooked a steelhead in the water I had just fished. I couldn't stand it. Not only was I inept, I had been conned! I walked up and watched him land another steelhead and asked him for his secret. "Technique," the expert replied, "and blue yarn. You want your fly to touch bottom occasionally, but you don't want it dragging along the bottom. It should look natural. You have too much weight on for this water."

Point taken. Next I looked at his fly. He had a worm-like piece of blue yarn on his hook. Blue? And not tied to

Andy Landsem cradles a steelhead, Photo by Jeff Donegan.



look like an egg? That wasn't in the book, but it obviously worked. At that point I started having doubts about ever becoming a steelhead fisherman.

Despite our lack of success that first year, my friend and I were back fishing the North Shore the next spring. This was clearly proof that for some anglers there is more to fishing than catching fish. I have a few memories from that year. The first is the glow of cigarettes dotting the stream banks in the pitch black before sunrise. We tried to get up early and get to the good spots on the rivers before the local anglers, but only once did we accomplish it. When did those guys sleep? Another related memory is coming out of the motel in Two Harbors in the dark of night and seeing scroll-work northern lights. The night sky looked like God was playing with an Etch-a-Sketch and inscribed squiggly lines going every which way across the sky. Amazing! I had never seen this type of northern lights display before.

One morning we got to a prime spot on the Sucker River before the locals--there were no cigarette glows when we arrived. We hunkered down on the island in the darkness and waited for the first hint of daylight. This created a problem since neither my friend nor I smoked, and fishermen kept coming to claim the dark island. We heard a lot of grumbling. From our island spots we each hooked a fish. My hookup was brief, but my friend fought his fish for a few minutes before it dived into heavy current and was gone. We counted these hookups as victories. Yes! But there was more to come. We fished downstream later in the morning and I hooked another fish. As I was easing the fish upstream toward me, the hook popped out. The fish was gone and my line was tangled in a bush. When I raced to untangle it, two guys fishing upstream and on the other side of the river came down



Split Rock River. Photo by Scott Thorpe.

to where I had been fishing. They had seen the hookup, and in a display of the best Sunday morning North Shore etiquette, they barged into my spot. One guy had a strike, and the other hooked a fish while I frantically sought to untangle my line. That interloper landed what could have been my first steelhead, and he walked away in triumph. My friend and I continued to flog the water, but my treasure trove of fish had been emptied. Still, a day

with two hookups was a huge success. The tug was the drug. I would be back on the river next spring.

I knew year three was destined to be successful. After all, I had two hookups in one day the previous year, and I had a secret weapon this year. I had stopped to buy tackle at one of the many small bait and tackle shops that dotted the North Shore back in the 1980s. I needed hooks, and when I asked the owner for a recommendation,

he said there was only one hook to use for North Shore steelhead--Eagle Claw L-042, size 8. He asked if I had lost steelhead last year, and when I said "yes" he assured me that I would have landed the fish if I had been using the proper hook. Now I had it.

However, life waylaid our good intentions; and we started year three late on a Saturday morning in March. The parking lots and the rivers were crowded from Duluth north. We finally stopped looking for a parking lot with open spaces and decided to fish the Baptism River. As we walked upriver, there were fishermen in all the likely looking spots--and even in the "maybe" spots. But we were able to walk into a big hole just as two guys, unsuccessful in their efforts, left this spot. We fished the spot for a while, without success of course. My friend decided he was going to head upriver looking for a better location but asked me to stay and "hold the hole" in case there wasn't an open spot upriver.

I fished through the hole a couple more times, top to bottom, with different baits but with no luck. I was back at the top of the hole when a guy walked in and asked if he could fish the tail end of the hole. I figured he wasn't going to find anyplace else to fish, so I said "OK," but my friend might be coming back. The guy rigged a yarn fly, cast it, snagged it, and broke it off. Then he repeated the process, and still a third time. I told the guy that the hole was plenty big and he could move up toward the middle. I had enough room; he didn't need to keep snagging his line. To my surprise he declined the offer, said he was in a good spot. He broke off a couple more times. As he started to re-tie, he said, "I need to open a new box of hooks. I've lost 300 hooks so far this season."

Wow! This intrigued me. Imagine losing 300 hooks and the season had just begun. Granted, the guy's fishing

technique was very hook-intensive, but still, 300 hooks? "You must fish a lot," I said.

"I've been out every morning since the run started," he replied. "I slept in this morning. It's my sister-in-law's birthday today, and my wife and I are driving down to the Cities to be with her. I promised I would bring a steelhead for the grill. So here I am. I won't be here long. As soon as I catch a fish, I'm leaving. My wife is waiting in the car down in the parking lot."

Talk about hubris! I was stunned. If I had promised someone a steelhead dinner, I would have started fishing a week ago. This guy slept in. The guy then continued repeating his routine--tie, cast, snag, break off--a couple more times. "I'm having a tough time this morning," he said. And then he hooked and landed a nice steelhead.

As he cleaned the fish, he thanked me for letting him into the hole; and then he asked me, "Would you like to catch a steelhead?" I assured him I would and so he directed me. "Stand by the flat rock, cast about one foot short of the bush on the far bank, and let your line drift down into the slot. Seven out of eight times you are going to snag on the rocks you see down there, but if your fly goes through the slot, a steelhead will hit it. You will scare the fish if you try to free your fly, so just quickly break off and re-tie." With that advice, he left.

So I did as directed, at first with predictable results. I snagged and I broke off--tie, cast, snag, and break off--several times. And then, I hooked a steelhead. I played it very carefully and finally landed it. I have a deal with my wife; I never bring fish home, so I carefully released the fish after admiring it while it swam in my net. The fish was bright silver and about 24 inches long. A nice fish!

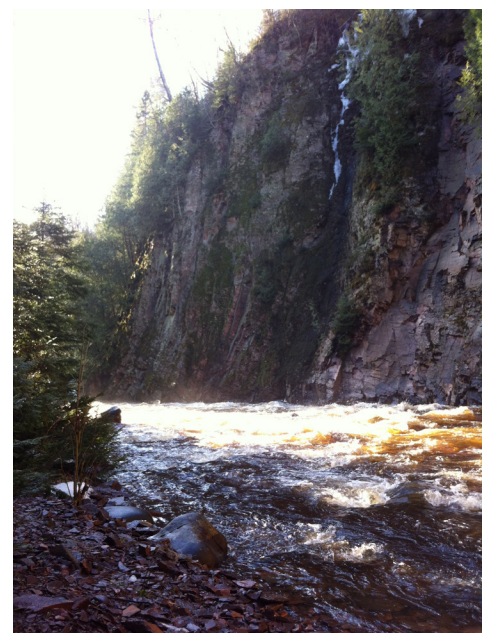
I was still sitting by the edge of the

river and savoring my experience when my friend returned. I told him the story, which he only partially believed. But then I asked him if he would like to catch a steelhead. Silly question. So I positioned him and we he started the tie, cast, snag, break off routine again. My friend was understandably suspicious of my story, and he became more so with every snag and break off; but he kept at it. Then he too hooked and landed a nice steelhead. His first as well! We both sat on the banks for a moment and savored the experience, wondering why one of us didn't have an uncle like the guy who showed me how to do it. Steelhead fishing could have been much simpler and more rewarding. We also figured out that neither of us was ever going to be a match for the local steelhead fisherman.

Yes, we fed the rocks a whole bunch more hooks and we did get a few drifts through the slot, but we didn't hook another steelhead in that hole on that trip. But I wouldn't dream of fishing the Baptism River without fishing that spot again.



Early morning sun floods the Devil Track canyon. Photo by Scott Thorpe



LSSA 2018

Spring Banquet

dinner, raffle & silent auction



**Saturday
April 21st, 2018**

Banquet open to LSSA members & guests
Pre-Registration Required - No walk-ups

Raffle and auction items include fishing rods, reels, tackle, clothing, pottery, carvings, restaurant and hotel gift certificates, custom crafted cedar furniture and artwork.

Menu:

Swedish Meatballs with Mushroom Gravy
Herb Roasted Chicken
Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans
Assorted Dinner Rolls
Deluxe House Salad with assorted dressings
Sheet Cake Dessert, Coffee Station
Full Cash Bar

- Clearwater Grille
5135 North Shore Drive,
Duluth, MN 55804
- 5:00 pm
Registration & social hour
- 7:00 pm
Annual meeting & elections
- 7:15 pm
Full dinner buffet
- 8:30 pm
Raffle winners announced

Please RSVP before April 14th

By phone: 218.525.5960
By e-mail: Kevin Bovee outriderduluth@msn.com
Or by mail: LSSA, P.O.Box 16034, Duluth, MN 55816



LSSA Member Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

of tickets: _____ @ \$30. Total enclosed: \$ _____

✓ **CLEAN**

✓ **DRAIN**

✓ **DRY**

STOP INVASIVE SPECIES

- Inspect and clean your gear when moving fishing locations
- Avoid felt or porous-soled waders
- Use a soft brush to clean waders and boot seams
- Rinse waders, hip boots and gear with hot water, or soak in 5% salt (2 cup/3 gal) or 2% bleach solution for 30 minutes followed by a tap water rinse AND/OR
- Dry out waders and gear completely (5 days)

CONTACT Lake County SWCD at (218) 834-8370
with additional questions about invasive species
infestations along the North Shore.



Didymo (Rock Snot)



Spiny Water Flea



New Zealand Mud Snail





Top, Jason Kopp, incoming Steelhead News Editor. Middle, Dave Olson, incoming co-editor. Sorry, no photo of Nik Wilson at publication time. Bottom, President Mike Pitan.

LSSA BOD/Membership meeting
December 13, 2017
MINUTES

BOD Present: M. Pitan, C. Wistrom, K. Behn, R. Fjoser, J. Somrock, G. Siverson & K. Bovee. Others present: P. Sandstrom.

1. Gambling Report: All required monthly reports were submitted for review, discussion and approval by BOD. Motion by Siverson to accept the report as presented. Motion seconded by Behn and motion passed. Reef management has decided not to pursue electronic pull-tabs at this time. Finally, we will be interviewing a possible new employee.
2. Mentoring Update: Advanced mentoring-looking at a possible date of February 17 at the Reef. There will be one river session with the advanced class and possible wienie roast also.
3. Grants Update: Phase II-bills have been paid via Reim. Req. #14 and everything is totally current to this point. Work slowing down as the grant winds down. Official sunset date for PH II is June 30, 2019 but will probably occur prior to that. Some fieldwork to be done next spring/summer (planting trees, installing signs, etc); Coastal grant-LSSA applied for a \$ 50000 LS Coastal Program grant. This grant is funded by NOAA and administered by MN DNR.
4. Newsletter Update: Still looking for hard commitment on a new editor and staff. M Couple options out there but nothing confirmed as of yet.
5. WI LSMP: Pitan has been attending with occasional help from Behn. This process is in the early stages of discussion and presently looking at the broader view. Specifics yet to come. So far the process/involvement has been constructive.
6. Club Schedules: The Knife River clean up will occur in early June. Will set the date later.
7. Website: Board talked about putting past issue of the newsletter on the website. Sandstrom just needs the electronic files to do that. All agreed that this would be a great idea.
8. Old/New/Other Business: New-the 2018 Round Table in the metro coming up in early January. We will check on the various group agendas to see if much pertains to the coldwater fishery. Old: The LSSA will host a booth/table/display at the Arrowhead Fly Fishers movie day on January 28 out at Clyde Iron. Sandstrom and a couple others to host the booth. Will work on photos for the display.

Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kevin J. Bovee, Secretary



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- The best fishing is normally between June 19th and August 22nd.

Fishing will be aboard The Leprechaun – a 28' 2004 Wellcraft Coastal – from the Port of Sturgeon Bay, Door County, WI, with Captain Don Oberg, who is U.S. Coast Guard and State of Wisconsin Licensed, a native of Duluth, MN and long time LSSA member.

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Mag Lip is the hottest trolling plug going. Available in 5 sizes from 2.5" to 5", the Mag Lip dives deep and features a unique "skip beat" action that incites fish to strike with reckless abandon. Mag Lip can be fished on planer boards, flat-lined, fished on downriggers or with divers --- fish can't resist its incredible action!



Pat Kalmerton



Dan Hassevoort

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SAVE
the DATE

JUNE 16, 2018
7am-5pm

- **FREE BAR-B-QUE WITH BRATS, CHIPS & WATER** from 10a.m.-2p.m. (while supplies last)
- **SPECIAL GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE** from 10a.m.- 3p.m. **INCLUDING:** Joe Bucher, "Fishing With Joe Bucher" Television Show, **PLUS** Members of the Lindner's Angling Edge Team
- **SIGN UP TO WIN ONE OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS IN PRIZES, PLUS ALL-DAY TENT SALE WITH SPECIAL PRICING!**

Need not be present to win drawing. Winners will be notified the week of 6/18/18. Special pricing is only available in Park Falls and not on web site or by phone.

