



2026 Summer Tennessee Chapter Newsletter

Greetings from the Tennessee Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers!

As summer gets underway, we're excited to bring together hunters, anglers, and public land advocates from across the Volunteer State. Whether you're a longtime member or joining us for the first time, thank you for being part of a community dedicated to conserving our wild places and ensuring our outdoor traditions remain strong for future generations.

We look forward to seeing you at upcoming events and working together to keep Tennessee's public lands and waters wild and accessible.

-Tennessee BHA Chapter Board

Upcoming Events - Mark Your Calendars!

[Purchase Tickets HERE!](#)



Presented by Backcountry Hunters and Anglers &
Sitka, Knoxville, TN

Tight Lines & Tall Tales

Join us for an evening of fly fishing stories, art, tips, and community.

Featuring:

Neil Norman, author of *Tight Lines & Tall Tales*
Ian Rutter, Renowned fly fishing guide & wildlife artist

 **SITKA KNOXVILLE** 

TICKET INCLUDES:

- Food and Drinks
- Featured Presentation
- Door Prize Drawing (75L Sitka Duffle Bag)
- 25% In-Store Discount
- Exclusive shopping experience

Scan QR Code for Event Info & Tickets
Sitka Store, Knoxville
July 9, 2026
6-8 pm



[A Video From Our Presenters](#)

Join us on the evening of July 9 from 6-8pm. Backcountry Hunters and Anglers of Tennessee is hosting author Neil Norman and fly fishing guide and artist Ian Rutter of [R & R Fly Fishing](#) and [Ian Rutter Art](#) for an evening of Southern Appalachian fly fishing culture, tactics and art.

The event will be held at [SITKA Gear](#) Knoxville with food and drinks and lots of socializing. There will be a door prize plus everyone in attendance can get 25% off purchases in the store during the event. Attendance is limited so get your tickets now at the link in the comments

Middle TN Pint Night at TailGate Brewery Headquarters

Date: July 21, 6-8pm Central



**Location: TailGate Brewery Headquarters 7300 Charlotte Pike,
Nashville, TN 37209**

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information and to RSVP!

 **The TN BHA Conservation Raffle is Officially LIVE!** 

TENNESSEE BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS

WIN YOUR NEXT HUNTING RIFLE

3 WINNERS • 3 SAVAGE ARMS FIREARMS

- **SAVAGE AXIS 2 PRO**
- **SAVAGE AXIS XP**
- **SAVAGE 320 TURKEY**

Winner selects caliber of choice (where applicable)

MSRP VALUE OVER \$2,000!

 **ONLY 400 TICKETS AVAILABLE** | **\$20 PER TICKET** |  **DRAWING SEPTEMBER 26, 2026**

NEED NOT BE PRESENT TO WIN

 **EVERY TICKET HELPS PROTECT TENNESSEE'S PUBLIC LANDS, WATERS, AND WILDLIFE HABITAT.**

Tickets can be purchased at any of our events this summer or by emailing us at Tennessee@backcountryhunters.org.

From The Board

Introducing Our Newest Board Member Sawyer Eggleston - West TN District Manager



Sawyer developed a deep appreciation for the outdoors as a child in Western New York. This appreciation has only grown stronger after moving to Tennessee where he now resides in Memphis. Each winter, Sawyer travels to East Tennessee to hunt for black bear and deer, embracing the challenge and tradition of backcountry hunting. In the summer, he spends his time camping and fishing across Tennessee and neighboring states,

and every other year he heads west in pursuit of western big game.

He dedicates his free time to defending public lands because he believes in the adventure, experiences, and opportunities they provide for all Americans. He stands firm in his belief that public lands and public land access need to be protected and preserved for future generations.

TN BHA Member Survey-We want to hear from you!

Please click below to take our survey

[Click here to take our Member Survey!](#)

Young Archers Take Aim: A Beginner's Guide for Families

By Chad Love

Archery is experiencing a quiet resurgence among young people, fueled by school programs, outdoor clubs, and families looking for screen free activities that build confidence and discipline. For many kids, the sport offers something rare: a chance to slow down, focus, and feel the satisfaction of watching an arrow fly true.

Outdoor educators say that introducing children to archery doesn't require expensive equipment or specialized training — just patience, encouragement, and a thoughtful approach.

Starting With Curiosity

Experts recommend beginning with the story of archery rather than the gear. Children often connect first with the history and meaning behind the bow — from Indigenous traditions to Olympic competition — before they ever pick one up. That early spark of imagination can make the first lesson far more engaging.

Parents who want help craft an introduction can explore **kid friendly archery stories** to set the tone.

Choosing the Right Equipment

Instructors emphasize that the most common barrier for beginners is using a bow that's too heavy or too powerful. A properly sized bow allows kids to experience early success without strain — and early success is what keeps them excited.

Recommended Bow Sizes and Draw Weights by Age

- **Ages 4–7** — *48–54 inch recurve*, **8–12 lb draw weight**
- **Ages 7–10** — *54–58 inch recurve*, **10–15 lb draw weight**
- **Ages 10–14** — *58–62 inch recurve*, **15–25 lb draw weight**

- **Ages 14+** — *62–66 inch recurve*, **20–30 lb draw weight**, depending on strength and experience

Arrows should always be matched to a child’s draw length to ensure safe and accurate shooting. Families comparing options can review **youth bow recommendations** before purchasing.

Keeping Early Sessions Short and Positive

Coaches say the first shooting session should be fun, brief, and focused on success. Standing just a few feet from a large target helps children feel confident from the start. Sessions of 15 to 20 minutes are ideal for maintaining enthusiasm without fatigue.

Celebrating small wins — even a single arrow hitting foam — helps build momentum.

Safety as a Skill, Not a Rulebook

Archery ranges operate on strict safety protocols, but instructors note that children respond best when safety is framed as a point of pride. Phrases like “archers protect each other” or “archers check their surroundings” help kids internalize responsibility.

Families can use a **kid friendly safety script** to reinforce these habits at home.

Bringing Archery Into Everyday Life

From backyard targets to summer camps, there are many ways to keep young archers engaged. The National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP), active in many Tennessee schools, provides structure and community for students who want to develop their skills.

Simple activities — such as balloon targets or friendly family competitions — can make practice feel like play.

Encouraging Progress Over Perfection

Archery teaches patience, focus, and emotional control, but experts caution against overcorrecting young shooters. Praising effort,

celebrating improvement, and allowing kids to set their own goals helps them stay motivated.

Short, positive sessions are more effective than long, technical ones.

Finding Local Mentors

Local archery shops, 4H clubs, and community programs often offer youth instruction. A supportive mentor can help children develop proper form, stay safe, and enjoy the sport at their own pace.

A Sport That Meets Kids Where They Are

Whether a child is drawn to the quiet focus of target shooting, the excitement of competition, or the connection to the outdoors, archery offers a path that fits their personality. Instructors say there is no single “right” way to enjoy the sport — only the joy of discovering what feels meaningful.

For many families, introducing a child to archery becomes more than a hobby. It becomes a shared experience, a confidence builder, and a doorway into the natural world.

Tennessee Public Waters Fishing Report: July Brings Prime Summer Opportunities

As summer settles across Tennessee, anglers can expect some of the year's most predictable fishing patterns. July's heat pushes fish into deeper water, heavier cover, and current-rich areas, creating opportunities for those willing to adjust their tactics. While midday temperatures can make fishing challenging, early mornings, evenings, and nighttime hours often provide excellent action across the state's lakes, rivers, and streams.

Whether you're targeting trophy bass on a deep ledge, chasing trout in cool mountain waters, or filling a cooler with catfish after

dark, July offers outstanding opportunities throughout Tennessee's public waters.

Bass Fishing Shifts to Summer Structure

Largemouth and smallmouth bass are firmly in their summer patterns by July. As water temperatures climb into the upper 70s and 80s, bass move away from shallow spawning areas and concentrate on deeper structure where they can find cooler water and abundant forage.

Anglers should focus on main lake ledges, deep brush piles, dock shade, river current breaks, and rocky points. Early morning remains the best time to capitalize on aggressive feeding activity.

Walking topwater baits, buzzbaits, and poppers can produce explosive strikes during the first hour and a half after sunrise. Once the sun rises higher, bass typically move deeper and become less active. This is when deep-diving crankbaits, Carolina rigs, football jigs, and large ribbon-tail worms become effective tools for reaching fish holding on offshore structure.

Night fishing can be particularly productive during July. Black spinnerbaits, dark-colored jigs, and large worms often entice some of the biggest bass of the season after sunset.

Among Tennessee's top public bass fisheries this month are Old Hickory Lake, Percy Priest Lake, Chickamauga Lake, and Dale Hollow Lake.

Cool Water Keeps Trout Active

While much of Tennessee heats up in July, East Tennessee's trout fisheries continue to provide excellent opportunities. Success depends on finding cold, oxygen-rich water where trout can remain comfortable despite summer temperatures.

High-elevation streams in the mountains remain productive, as do tailwaters below dams that release cold water throughout the

summer. Fast riffles, pocket water, and shaded runs can all hold active trout.

Fly anglers should keep Elk Hair Caddis, Stimulators, Pheasant Tail Nymphs, and Zebra Midges close at hand. Conventional anglers can find success with small inline spinners and tiny spoons.

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park, South Holston River, and Clinch River continue to rank among Tennessee's premier trout destinations. Fishing is generally best from sunrise through mid-morning and again during the final hour before dark.

Catfish Enter Their Prime Season

For anglers looking for steady action and the possibility of a trophy fish, July may be the best catfish month of the year.

Warm water temperatures increase feeding activity, and catfish can be found along river channel edges, deep holes, current seams, and riprap shorelines. Cut shad, skipjack, chicken liver, and dip baits all remain reliable producers. Anglers targeting flathead catfish often have success with live bluegill where regulations allow.

Many experienced catfish anglers consider nighttime the premier period during July. As temperatures cool and baitfish become active, catfish frequently move shallower and feed aggressively.

Crappie Hold Deep Around Cover

Crappie fishing can still be productive during the summer heat, though fish tend to concentrate around deeper structure. Brush piles in 15 to 25 feet of water, bridge pilings, and marina docks often attract schools of fish seeking shade and security.

Vertical presentations are typically most effective. Minnows and small jigs continue to catch fish throughout the month, especially when presented slowly around cover.

Midday shade beneath docks can hold some surprisingly large crappie, making these areas worth investigating when other patterns slow down.

Stripers and Hybrids Chase Open-Water Bait

Striped bass and hybrid bass provide some of Tennessee's most exciting summer fishing. These fish spend much of July roaming open water in pursuit of schools of baitfish.

Successful anglers rely heavily on electronics to locate fish and watch for diving birds that often reveal feeding activity on the surface. Live shad remains a top producer, while swimbaits, spoons, umbrella rigs, and topwater lures can all generate strikes when fish are actively feeding.

Center Hill Lake and Watts Bar Lake are two of Tennessee's best destinations for anglers seeking summer stripers and hybrids.

Adjusting to Summer Conditions

Water temperatures across Tennessee will generally range from 78 to 88 degrees during July. Because of these warm conditions, anglers should focus their efforts during the most productive feeding windows.

The hours between sunrise and 9 a.m. consistently produce some of the best fishing of the day. The final two hours before sunset can also provide excellent action, while nighttime fishing often shines for bass and catfish.

When fishing lakes, topwaters early and deeper presentations later in the day tend to produce the best results. River anglers should focus on current-oriented techniques such as spinnerbaits, tube jigs, Ned rigs, and swimbaits.

Families introducing children to fishing can find steady action with bluegill under a bobber, catfish on prepared baits, or crappie around marina docks.

Final Cast

July rewards anglers who understand summer patterns and adapt accordingly. Rather than fighting the heat, successful fishermen embrace it by fishing early, following shade, targeting current, and moving deeper as the day progresses.

For those willing to adjust their approach, Tennessee's public waters can deliver outstanding summer fishing, from explosive top water bass strikes at dawn to trophy catfish after dark. With a little planning and an early alarm clock, July may provide some of the most memorable fishing opportunities of the year.



Stewardship Spotlight

Tennessee BHA teamed up with TWRA to host a trash clean up day at the Dyson Ditch Refuge. BHA volunteers worked for four hours and removed hundreds of pounds of trash and debris from the area. Just a few hours of work made the area along the banks of Cheatham Lake look completely different. Thanks to everyone that showed up and worked hard!



Stewardship In Action

TN BHA is in the processes of developing a volunteer program that works along side USFS Wildlife Biologist and Techs on day to day operations in Cherokee National Forest. This summer BHA volunteer and board member Chris Lennon is assisting in field habitat work on Cherokee National Forest - Watauga District. Recently one of the work sessions was using old logging platforms, back in the national forest and creating nesting and fawning habitat for Eastern Wild Turkey and White-tailed deer. Herbicide was used to treat exotic or undesirable species removal in these fields.

Autumn Olive, Tree of Heaven, maples, locust and other early successional/exotic species were removed to allow wild raspberry and native pollinators to allow food sources to become the dominant species. There will be more volunteer workdays throughout the rest of the year and hopefully will be able to expand to have more volunteer opportunities in 2027. So when you're out in CNF and wondering why that field back in woods is all grown up and not planted like a "food plot" now you know...its both.



Check our socials and website for future stewardship project volunteer days!

JOIN. UPGRADE. RENEW. GIFT. A BHA MEMBERSHIP



BE ENTERED TO

NOW - SEPT 30

WIN



WWW.BACKCOUNTRYHUNTERS.ORG

Chapter Fun!

A fun filled June Pint night at Tailgate Brewery - Headquarters in West Nashville. Check our website and socials for future pint nights near you!

