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The Lunker

Just Plain Non-Scents

By Fred Metarko

The skunk is in hibernation for the winter, but will appear again at the first Tioga County Bass Angler's tournament in the spring. The furry little critter that looks like an empty skin from roadkill is the dreaded skunk. He is eagerly given to an angler that had the bad luck to zero out for the day—that is, to catch no fish.

The first angler to receive the little stinker last season was Philip Bruce, with a zero on Hammond Lake. He accepted graciously and displayed it proudly by hanging it on his vehicle's rearview mirror.

A week later on Keuka Lake, Philip eagerly slapped the black-and-white skin into Skip Bastian's hands, saying, "Take good care of him, Skip."

"Why me? Nine other guys had a zero, too," Skip replied as he held his trophy by the tail.

Thirteen days later on Cowanesque Lake, Skip struck out and could not pass the stink kitty on. A week later on Waneta/Lamoka Lakes it happened again: another washout. Skip was getting attached to his little buddy. After twenty-seven days Skip finally caught a fish on Conesus Lake. At weigh-in he eyed each of the anglers as they brought fish to the scales. Then one guy was left, Junior Fye; he was fishless. I think it was a reluctant exchange of pet ownership on both sides.

The skunk was now in Junior's gentle care. After fourteen days he took it to Cowanesque Lake, and after a bad day on the water he still had his striped companion. A week later his fate was the same on Honeoye Lake. I kidded Junior about taking good care of the little feller. He replied, "Oh, I'm taking good care of him. Whoever gets him next will really appreciate him. I put trapping scent on him, put him in a plastic zip bag and laid it on the dash of the truck. Oh, they'll love it."

The next tournament on Canandaigua

Lake was cancelled due to bad weather. That meant the pelt was marinating on the dash, in Junior's special sauce, for fifty-seven days prior to the next tournament on Cowanesque Lake.

On Cowanesque Lake nine anglers caught fish, leaving fifteen striking out. Junior was delighted, as he got everyone's attention, and announced



Fred Metarko receiving the skunk award: Jr. looks happy—the stink was that he didn't really smell up that skunk—he just waited a long time to give it back to the original owner.

that I was the new recipient of the now dreaded skunk. He handed me the zip bag with its contents. Holding the bag with outstretched arms, I slowly opened it, asking others to take a whiff. To our surprise and relief it did not smell like trapping scent.

The next tournament on Waneta/Lamoka Lakes, I lucked out. Ten people zeroed out; I had a lot of choices. After some thought and discussion a decision was made. Since Junior took such great care of (wow! we need to give him a name), it was decided to keep him in the family. Bob Fye is the new caretaker through the winter...until our first tournament. Bob, if you need help I'm sure Junior will gladly assist you.



The Lunker is a member of the Tioga County Bass Anglers (www.tiogacountybassanglers.com). Contact him at lunker@mountainhomemag.com.