

syracuse.com

New rule: Taking photos of fish caught out of season could cost you \$250

bigfish.2014.add - Copy.JPG

Devon Scholl, of Brewerton, caught this 33-inch walleye during the spring of 2014 on Owasco Lake a week prior to the walleye season starting . He quickly released the fish after this photo was taken. Under a new DEC regulation that took effect April 1, he would not been allowed to take this picture with his fish.

(Submitted photo)

David Figura | dfigura@syracuse.com By **David Figura | dfigura@syracuse.com**

Follow on Twitter

on May 14, 2015 at 3:06 PM, updated May 14, 2015 at 4:09 PM

Due to the increasing trend of fishermen catching "out-of-season" fish and posting pictures of their catches on Facebook and other social media, the state Department of Environmental Conservation has put a new fishing regulation in effect that makes the practice a "ticketable offense."

The new regulation, which took effect April 1, is listed in the new DEC fishing guide that one gets when he or she buys a fishing license. It's listed on page 52 under the "General Take and Possession" heading.

According to the fishing guide:

"A person may not fish for a species (even if immediately released) during the closed season for that species on a given water. Fish caught during the closed season must be unhooked and released immediately. ***They may not be handled for any other purpose, including taking a picture.***"

Taking a picture of an out-of-season fish can result in a ticket from an environmental conservation officer. The resulting penalty can be a fine of up to \$250 fine, and/or 15 days in jail.

"It's a ticketable offense. It's all because of the social media thing and people posing with the fish for pictures. They often spend too much time dilly- dallying and don't return the fish immediately to the water," according to Lori Severino, a DEC spokeswoman. "This was designed to protect the fish species."

Bottom line: one can't take an out-of-season fish out of the water for any reason other than to take the hook out and release it. The penalty for holding that fish up quickly or leisurely (it doesn't matter) for a picture is no longer allowed.

Situations where new law would apply include:

*Catching and photographing an out-of-season bass on the St. Lawrence River or on a Lake Ontario tributary in Jefferson County, where unlike the most of the state there is no off-season catch and release fishing allowed outside of the regular bass fishing season.

*Photographing an out-of season walleye caught on Oneida Lake or elsewhere.

*Catching and photographing an angler holding up a sturgeon he or she "accidentally" landed. (Sturgeon are endangered species and there is no open season in this state to fish for them.)

And needless to say, Severino added, "intentionally angling for threatened or endangered fish, or for fish during the closed season for that species" is also prohibited.

In situations where "catch and release" angling is allowed (such as for bass during the off-season in most parts of the state, or for trout in a stream designated as a no-kill waterway), the DEC fishing regulations state:

"Measuring, weighing and photographing the fish are permitted as long as the fish is not removed from the water for an extended period or handled in a manner that could cause harm. Fish may not be held on a string, or placed in a bucket, tub, livewell, or any other holding device."

© 2015 syracuse.com. All rights reserved.