

DIVERSITY FISHING CONTEST: 2021 RESULTS AND INVITATION TO COMPETE IN 2022

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The results have been finalized for the 2021 Diversity Fishing Contest! This contest is hosted each year by Brian Zimmerman. The entry fee is low, and all fees received are paid out to the top three contestants. The 2021 contest ran from February 1 to December 31, and we plan to run the 2022 contest for the same time period. The contest is restricted to angling and includes 24 categories: 12 are entered with what we call “bag limits” of fish all caught on the same outing and 12 are diversity-based and can be added to all year long. See all 24 category descriptions below. For the bag/creel limit categories, all fish must be captured in one day from the same water body, but contestants can replace a limit with a better one if a better day happens. Points are awarded for filling the categories as photos are submitted. Length categories are scored at one point per inch, and diversity categories have set point values per species caught.

The top three finishers were all NANFA members: champion Guy Eroh, with a score of 2,207, Brian Zimmerman in second place with 1,900, and Michael Berg in third with 1,438. Other NANFA members who participated included Josh Hug, Mike Austin, Zach Alley, and Paul DeRolf.

There were bonus points awarded for the largest individual fish captured in each of the first five length-based categories (*Micropterus*, *Lepomis*, *Esox*, *Sander*, and catfish), as well as for the longest (a 46-inch Lake Sturgeon, a Bonnethead Shark of about 40 inches, and a 37.25-inch Muskellunge) and smallest (a 1.125-inch Saffron Shiner, a 1.5-inch Eastern Mosquitofish, and several 3-inch fishes) of all fishes caught.

Overall, the group caught 44 families, 103 genera, and 206 species of fish from 24 states, Washington D.C., and even a few from Africa! The African fishes didn’t truly qualify, but Brian decided



Alivia Zimmerman with a Porkfish. Bow Channel, Cudjoe Key, FL.



Julie Zimmerman with a 10-inch Warmouth Sunfish from a private pond near Bethlehem, WV.

to allow Michael Berg credit for catching some additional species on his trip to Africa.

Each species caught is worth three points. Guy Eroh captured the most species (110, for 330 points), followed by Michael Berg (70 species, 210 points), and Brian Zimmerman (69 species, 207 points).

Some of the most impressive fishes were Brendan Nee's two Lake Sturgeon, one of which he got a measurement on qualifying it as the longest fish captured this year. Michael Berg submitted a very nice catch of a Blue Sucker from the Tippecanoe River in Indiana along with several photos of swarms of Blue Suckers with their dorsal fins sticking out of the water like little sharks during their spawning migration. Bob Gable turned in the only actual shark, a Bonnethead caught in Florida.

Most of the contest is oriented to fresh water, but there is a category where contestants can earn points for catching up to 20 different saltwater fishes. Alivia Zimmerman won this category by turning in 17 species (narrowly beating out her father, Brian, who had 16, and Guy Eroh, who had 14).

There were also several people with entries to the category for native salmonids (stocked/introduced trout or salmon didn't count for this category) submitted by Josh Hug, David Sneddon, and Guy Eroh.

INFORMATION AND RULES

To enter the contest, read the rules below and pay the \$10 entry fee via PayPal to smbass444@yahoo.com (send as Friends and Family to avoid fees). Be sure to include your full name. Then go fishing! At the end of the contest, points are tallied and winners determined. All the entry fees are given out to the first (50%), second (30%), and third (20%) place finishers.

This is an ongoing, season-long tournament. Contestants can submit catches any time from February 1 to December 31, 2022.

Catches must be from North American waters (with the exception that species caught while on a trip outside of North America will count in Category 13's overall species list). This is mainly geared toward freshwater fishing, but saltwater fishing is allowed.

Each fish entered can be applied to as many categories as it qualifies for.

In addition to the following categories, the biggest and smallest fish of the year (which can be from fresh or salt water in North America) will be awarded 50 bonus points at the end of the contest.



Guy Eroh's Rio Grande Cichlid from Waller Creek, TX.

Total Length Categories

For each category there is a set number of fish (a "bag" or creel limit) to be caught in a single day from a single body of water. The lengths of the fish in the "bag" are added up and the contestant receives one point per inch (measurements can be to the quarter-inch for partial points [.25 points for each quarter of an inch]). If a contestant has a better day later in the year, a "bag" can be replaced, but the whole bag is replaced—not just certain fish.

In addition, contestants may enter their largest individual fish of the year in each category. This one fish does not have to be part of the "bag" entry for the category. At the end of the year a biggest fish bonus of 25 points for each category will be awarded and added to the total score.

1. **Black Basses:** The five longest *Micropterus* caught. Includes Largemouth, Smallmouth, Spotted, Alabama, Shoal, Guadeloupe, Suwanee, Coosa, Bartram's, Tallapoosa, Warrior, Cahaba, Chattahoochee, Altamaha, and Choctaw bass, or hybrids.
2. **Sunfishes:** The 12 longest typical *Lepomis* species caught. Includes Bluegill, Redear, Redbreast, Warmouth, Pumpkinseed, Green, Northern, Longear, Dollar, Redspotted, Blackspotted, Bantam, and Orangespotted Sunfish, or hybrids.
3. **Pikes:** The three longest *Esox* species caught. Includes Northern Pike, Muskellunge, Grass Pickerel, Redfin Pickerel, Chain Pickerel, or hybrids.
4. **Sander species:** The four longest Walleye, Sauger, or hybrids.
5. **Catfishes:** The four longest Flathead, Channel, or Blue catfish, bullheads, and even coastal species (like Hardhead and Gafftopsail catfish), or hybrids.
6. **Minnows:** The 10 longest North American Leuciscidae. There are too many to list, but good options for length include Creek Chub, Fallfish, Striped Shiner, or River Chub in the East, or the big Pikeminnows in the West.
7. **Suckers:** The four longest Catostomids. Includes "regular" suckers, like White Sucker, as well as redhorses, carpsuckers, buffalos, hog suckers, etc.
8. **Mixed Bag:** The eight longest *Pomoxis* (White or Black crappie), Yellow Perch, or *Ambloplites* (Rock, Shadow, Ozark, or Roanoke bass), or hybrids.
9. **Temperate Basses:** The six longest *Morone*. Includes Striped Bass, White Bass, Yellow Bass, White Perch, or hybrids.
10. **Drums:** The four longest Sciaenidae. Includes Freshwater Drum or any of the many coastal species in this group.
11. **Primitive fishes:** The three longest individual primitive fishes. Includes all gars or sturgeons, Bowfin, Paddlefish, or hybrids.
12. **Salmonids:** The longest trout, salmon, char, whitefish, or hybrids.

Diversity Categories

Species can be added all season. Length does not matter; the goal is to encourage contestants to broaden the variety of species they pursue on hook and line. For these categories, fish photos do not need to include measuring boards. They must be clear enough for identification of the species. For small species not often caught hook and line, the fish should still have the hook in its mouth.

13. **Total number of species caught on hook and line:** Every species counts here, including non-native, exotic, or invasive species, and even fishes caught outside of North America. Hybrids DO NOT count. Three points per species.



Brendan Nee with a Lake Sturgeon from the Rainy River.



Nate Tessler and a Vermillion River (OH) Silver Redhorse.

14. **Black Bass/*Micropterus* challenge:** Land 12 different *Micropterus* species (see species list in Category 1). 10 points per species or 150 for 12 or more.
15. **Sunfish/*Lepomis* challenge:** Land all 13 recognized *Lepomis* species (see species list in Category 2). The 20 different forms of Longears will not count separately until the papers are published and accepted. Ten points per species or 150 for all 13.
16. **Esox challenge:** Land all five North American *Esox* taxa (see species list in Category 3). 25 points each or 150 if for all five.
17. **Perch/*Percidae* challenge:** Land 12 or more members of this family of over 200 North American species! There are three large ones (Sauger, Walleye, and Yellow Perch) and hundreds of small ones known as darters (*Percina*, *Etheostoma*, *Ammocrypta*, *Crystallaria*). Ten points each or 150 for 12 or more.
18. **Catfish/*Ictaluridae* and *Ariidae* challenge:** Land five or more species. 25 points each or 150 for five or more.
19. **North American Minnows/*Leuciscidae* challenge:** Land 20 minnow species. There are hundreds of possibilities, but the invasive ones (all still considered *Cyprinidae*, not *Leuciscidae*) **DO NOT** count! Ten points per species or 200 for 20 or more.
20. **Sucker/*Catostomidae* challenge:** Land eight or more of the 80–100 species in North America. No snagging; fish must be hooked in the mouth! These are challenging but great sport. So 20 points per species or 200 for eight or more.
21. **Primitive Fishes challenge:** land four or more gar (any of the five US species), Bowfin, Sturgeon (nine possible species), or Paddlefish. 30 points for each species or 150 for four or more.
22. **Shads and Herrings (*Clupeidae*) and Mooneyes (*Hiodontidae*) challenge:** Land four or more species (there are two possible *Hiodon* and six *Alosa*, and maybe even a *Dorosoma* will bite). Thirty points per species or 150 for four or more.
23. **Trout, Salmon, Char, or Whitefish (*Salmonidae*) challenge:** Land six or more species. 20 points per species or 150 for six or more.
24. **Saltwater/Coastal species challenge:** Land 20 or more species that don't fit in the rest of these categories and enjoy more salt in their water. This is primarily a freshwater contest, but this category will accommodate family vacations to the beach. Ten points per species or 200 points for 20 or more.

Submitting Entries

Entries have to be texted or emailed to the judges (Brian Zimmerman, Guy Eroh, and Michael Berg) for scoring and ID confirmation. Every submission must include the contestant's name, a single, clear photo of each fish (which must include the entire fish on a measuring board for length categories and must have the hook in the fish's mouth for small species that are not typically caught on hook and line), and the name of the water body.

It is important that a measuring board have clear markings. Ideally, there will be marks at many fractions of an inch up to at least six inches to handle the *Lepomis*, mixed bag, and minnow/*Leuciscid* categories. The board should go up to at least 30 inches.