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Angler Catches State-Record Skipjack Herring

MAY 31ST 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Missouri - The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) reports that Steve Wengler of St. Louis became the most recent record-breaking angler in Missouri when he hooked a skipjack herring on the Mississippi River using a rod and reel.

The new “pole and line” record skipjack herring caught by Wengler on April 17 weighed 2-pounds, 5-ounces. It broke the previous state-record of 1-pound, 14-ounces. Wengler was using two 1/8-ounce white and chartreuse jigs to catch the skipjack herring. MDC staff verified the record-weight fish using a certified scale in Defiance.

“The skipjack put up a pretty good fight, but I got it in as fast as I could because I didn’t want to lose the nice fish,” he said. “Once I got it in, I had an idea that I had caught the state record, but wasn’t sure until I put it on the scale.”

Anglers often catch skipjack herring to use for bait. The fish is boney, lacking in flavor, and is seldom used as food. But it fights spectacularly when hooked and can provide considerable sport on light tackle. The oil present in its flesh is said by fishermen to attract catfish. Skipjacks can usually be found in swift water below dams and around the ends of wing dikes.

“2016 is shaping up to be a big year for state record fish in Missouri,” MDC Fisheries Programs Specialist Andrew Branson said. “We have already had nine new records so far, which is more than an entire year sometimes. The mild weather we have had so far this

year means more anglers are fishing, and catching big fish.”

Wengler added that he intentionally tried catching a state-record skipjack herring.

“I’m really thrilled to have caught a fish like this,” he said. “I’m really glad I was able to get my name in the record books. My plan now is to get back on the water and go after many more records.”

Missouri state-record fish are recognized in two categories: pole-and-line and alternative methods. Alternative methods include: throwlines, trotlines, limb lines, bank lines, jug lines, spearfishing, snagging, snaring, gigging, grabbing, archery, and atlatl.

James Lucas of O’Fallon recently snagged a state-record skipjack herring under the “alternative methods” category on the Mississippi River on April 8 that weighed 1 pound, 10-ounces with a length of 16 1/2 inches.

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