



# Relax & Go Fishing in Mills County

By Steven Bridges

Over the summer, I have acted as fishing guide for kids, friends and family wanting to wet a line. The pressures of being the guide for the family can make the experience a little like a soap opera. Following these simple tips can help make your fishing and guiding trips a little easier, more productive and more memorable.

## Taking Kids and Newbies Fishing

Introducing children and fishing newbies on their first fishing trip can be a rewarding experience. To ensure a positive experience, here are a few simple tips to keep in mind:

**HAVE FUN.** Seeing a child, relative or friend new to fishing enjoy reeling in their first fish is rewarding. Don't forget to take photos. (More about photos later)

**TARGET AREAS WITH A HIGH LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS.** Most fishing newbies are satisfied catching lots of smaller fish such as bluegills rather than catching fewer, bigger fish such as bass and catfish. Catching multiple fish on the first few outings will peak their interest and make them look forward to the next trip.

**PICK A PLACE THAT IS EASY TO GET TO, COMFORTABLE, AND SAFE.** Don't forget to bring snacks, sunscreen, insect repellent and first aid basics. This will make your trip comfortable for everyone.

**PROVIDE SIMPLE TACKLE IN WORKING ORDER.** Nothing can be more discouraging to a child than complicated equipment or equipment that doesn't work. Consider giving the child their own fishing outfit. This gesture is practical because short rods are easier for kids to handle. Better yet, let the child pick out their outfit from a variety of kids tackle at the store.

**ABOVE ALL ELSE, HAVE PATIENCE.** You will be unsnagging lines, baiting hooks, and landing fish for them. On your fishing trips with youngsters, they will get dirty, fall down or even get a little wet.

**RELAX.** Don't start fishing for yourself until everyone else is up and fishing. In fact, I don't expect to fish at all if I am taking kids fishing. For new adults, I leave my rod in the truck until the an-



Steven Bridges and his son Flint pose for a photo to show off a nice Mills County bass they caught during a slow dove hunt.

gler catches a fish or two. Then, I leave them to learn a little fishing on their own. But, I never go too far. They usually have lots of questions.

**FIGHTING BOREDOM.** When the kids get bored and want to throw rocks, chase butterflies or simply goof off, let them. There are few things worse than being forced to fish.

By taking time to introduce children and newbies to fishing, you may end up with a fishing buddy for life.

## FISHING PHOTO TIPS

It is best to fish with another person at all times, not only for safety, but also

so you have someone there to back up your fish stories. However, many cameras offer timer-rigged photo options to help capture the moment while you are by yourself. If you are fishing alone, make sure you know the workings of your camera and the timer function and consider bringing a tripod to hold the camera.

When using a camera, especially a digital model, it is important that everyone knows how the device works. The best idea is to snap a few photos before fishing, or use it on smaller fish that you plan to keep. This way the person using the camera becomes familiar with

it and can react quickly once a big fish has been landed.

The person taking the picture should make certain that the sun is shining on the front of the subject, as photos where the sun is behind the subject result in pictures where the fish is dark and hidden in shadow. The photographer should take at least one picture (more if time allows) and the fish should be returned to the water.

Try taking the photo with the flash on even in bright sunlight. The flash will light up under the bill of a cap and take care of any harsh shadows.

Having a pleasant scene in the background is nice, but not as important as a clean release. If there are some trees or vegetation that compliments the picture, the photographer should take a second or two to line up a shot and direct the angler where to stand.

While holding the fish, an angler should keep the fish away from his body. This makes the fish look bigger in relation to the angler.

I'm a smiler. Half of the time I'm laughing, shouting and carrying on after landing a big fish, so there's usually an ear-to-ear grin for my pictures this time of year. Some people don't smile even when holding the biggest fish of their lives; I call them "serious" outdoorsmen. If you have the time, take two pictures - one smiling and one serious. See which one looks better.

Once the photo session is complete, the fish should be gently returned to the water. Don't toss or heave the fish back. While releasing the fish, inspect it closely for injury, be certain it can swim under its own power and be make sure it has a good chance of survival.

Don't just take photos of the fish you catch. Take photos of the act of fishing, the fight while the fish is on the line and more. You might be surprised at the photos that turn out. You might just get lucky and land a keeper photo!

By following these simple tips and tricks, you can make a lifetime of quality photo memories. It is quite possible that you or another angler will have the same chance to stand smiling with that same fish on your next fishing trip.

*And take a kid fishing... They'll remember it for the rest of their lives!*