

Monkey Around with Greater Niagara Fish Odyssey Sept. 17-25

You'll go bananas over the 2005 version of the Greater Niagara Fish Odyssey - especially if you're a kid. This 29th annual Fall Classic Derby - set for September 17-25 out of the counties of Erie, Niagara and Orleans - will be bringing back the honorary chairchimp, Charlie, to serve as a fun-filled challenger for every youth entered in the Junior Division. All kids 15 and under can register for the Junior Division for free, with six specie categories for the kids that include salmon, bass, walleye, trout, carp and panfish. Prizes are being sponsored by the New York Power Authority and Shakespeare-Pflueger fishing tackle in the Junior Division.

In the Adult Division, it's business as usual as far as the catching and categories are concerned. However, during a time when everything else is going up money-wise, the derby registration will be going DOWN in 2005. This year, a derby registration will be just \$20. Every dollar brought in will be distributed right back out again as far as the prize structure is concerned. The base prize structure that will be guaranteed will be \$3,000 for the Grand Prize, \$500 for first place, \$250 for second place and \$125 for third place in each category based on 250 registrations. Anything more than that will increase the prize structure all the way around.

The Grand Prize is not always for the largest fish overall, either. The first place winners are all placed into a hat on awards night, set once again to coincide with the NYPA Wildlife Festival in Lewiston. The Wildlife Festival will attract 20,000 people to help celebrate National Hunting and Fishing Day. It's also the perfect stage as a conclusion to the Fish Odyssey. This year's Wildlife Festival -- slated for September 24-25 -- will be something special, with NYPA celebrating 20 years of this popular family festival.

This year's derby will once again bring Charlie the Chimp in as the chimp to beat, courtesy The Primate Sanctuary. Carmen Presti of Niagara Falls, an avid outdoorsman himself, was quick to assist in this event. A small portion of each registration will be earmarked for The Primate Sanctuary in an effort to raise the level of awareness for this important project, while at the same time assist with some much-needed funding. Charlie's challenges to beat will be: salmon - 20 pounds; bass - four pounds; walleye - seven pounds; trout - 10 pounds; carp - 20 pounds; panfish - one pound.

Weigh stations for the event will be: Niagara - Niagara Outdoors, North Tonawanda; Down River Bait and Tackle, Lewiston; The Boat Doctors, Olcott. Orleans - Narby's Superette and Tackle, Kent. Erie - Gander Mountain, Tonawanda; Big Catch, Buffalo. For a complete list of registration outlets or to register on-line, visit www.FishOdyssey.net for more information. If you've got a question, call (877) FALLS US and dial in extension 303. Registrations will be available after Labor Day.