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Tag team crappie



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February is prime time for Louisiana Crappie. We've got the tips you need to catch them. Photo by Andy Crawford.



Louisiana **SPORTSMAN**

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 Saturday & Sunday, 8 am - 5 pm CST

LOUISIANA SPORTSMAN (USPS665390) is published monthly by Louisiana Publishing, Inc., Allen J. Lottinger, President, 14236 Highway 90, P.O. Box 1199, Boutte, LA 70039. Mailed at periodicals postage rates and paid at Baton Rouge, La., and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Louisiana Sportsman, P.O. Box 433294, Palm Coast, FL 32143. All rights reserved. Reproduction of contents is strictly prohibited without permission of Louisiana Sportsman. **EDITORIAL:** Louisiana Sportsman uses free-lance writers throughout the state. Call (985) 758-7217 for information on submitting articles and photos. Louisiana Sportsman is not responsible for the loss of queries, manuscripts or other materials.

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During a mild, wet winter, many species of waterfowl stay as far north as habitat conditions allow.

WHAT HAPPENED TO ALL THE DUCKS?

WARM, WET WINTER PRODUCED WEAK MIGRATION, BIOLOGISTS SAY *By Patrick Bonin*

If you follow any Louisiana duck hunters on social media, you likely didn't see too many glowing reports from the field this season featuring pictures of full straps and plentiful limits of birds.

In fact, you may have seen just the opposite: Lots of complaining and frustration over what many consider another disappointing duck season in Sportsman's Paradise.

So exactly where are the birds? Are the flyways shifting? Has coastal erosion made Louisiana a less desirable wintering ground? Are changing agricultural practices in the midwest to blame?

To get some answers, we reached out to Tom Moorman, chief scientist with Ducks Unlimited, who addressed this season's tough hunting conditions in a DU

newsletter.

Mostly, a warm, wet winter was likely the culprit, according to Moorman. But things looked promising in November, when cold fronts and snowstorms in the northern part of the flyways created optimism for the season ahead.

"However, nature occasionally throws a curveball to duck hunters, and that certainly has been the case for many of us this season," Moorman wrote in mid-January, indicating that predictions for a mild winter for much of the eastern half of North America seemed to be on the mark. "Open water and little snow cover are present across most of the United States. Wetlands and related food resources for waterfowl are available essentially from Nebraska east through Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, southern Michigan,

Pennsylvania, southern New York and Massachusetts. As of Jan. 7, the snow and ice line was located at approximately 40 degrees north latitude. Such conditions make it a challenge to pinpoint waterfowl distribution, but it is reasonable to conclude that waterfowl are widely scattered across a very large area in the Central, Mississippi and Atlantic Flyways."

During a mild, wet winter like the one Louisiana experienced through mid-January, Moorman said many species of waterfowl stay as far north as habitat conditions allow.

"This 'strategy' theoretically enables the birds to minimize risk associated with migration and allows them to return to breeding areas as soon as possible in spring. For species like mallards and northern pintails, research suggests

that females that return to the breeding grounds and establish nests earlier are more successful at hatching a clutch of eggs," he wrote. "Thus, the birds themselves appear to be 'wired' to migrate only when necessary. This year, mild winter weather—and especially a lack of ice and snow cover—is enabling waterfowl to sit tight in more northern latitudes."

Even in locations where birds are more plentiful, Moorman said hunter success hasn't really been consistent.

"This likely reflects mild temperatures that do not require birds to move much in search of food, and may also reflect widespread habitat availability associated with frequent precipitation," he said in the article.

That jives with observations by Larry Reynolds, the waterfowl study leader for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, who noted that January's aerial survey estimated 2.05 million birds in the state — 31 percent below the long-term average.

For duck hunters wondering about specifics as to why the season was poor, Reynolds shared his thoughts.

"Why is that? Because of above-average temperatures and an extreme amount of water on the landscape up and down the Flyway," he said. "It's pretty much exactly what you would expect."

He pointed out how mallard band recovery patterns reflect how weather patterns impact migration.

"What we see in mallard band recoveries is that when it's cold and dry, the recovery distribution shifts to the south," he said. "When it's warm and wet, the recovery distribution shifts to the north.

"So we've had a warm, wet year and so what we would expect is a weaker migration (for Louisiana hunters)." ■

Louisiana duck hunters could be looking at a four-teal limit next September, if a proposal made at January's meeting of the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission is ultimately approved in April.



COMMISSIONERS PROPOSE REDUCING TEAL LIMIT FROM SIX TO FOUR BIRDS IN SEPTEMBER

DEPARTMENT SEEKING PUBLIC COMMENT ON SUGGESTED HUNTING REGS, SEASON DATES

By Patrick Bonin

Louisiana duck hunters might be shooting fewer teal next September, after the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission proposed the possibility at its January meeting of reducing the daily bag limit next fall from six birds back down to four.

Commissioner Bart Yakupczak made the motion to amend the notice of intent and reduce the teal limit after biologists with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries proposed hunting regulations and season dates to the Commission for 2019-20 — and recommended the daily bag limit for teal remain at six birds.

"There's no biological justification for it. We proposed a bag limit of six during the teal season," Larry Reynolds, the state's waterfowl study leader, said after the meeting. "But he said he's talked to a number of hunters who wondered why we ever increased the bag limit because it's ruined our teal hunting."

"So he made a motion that we reduce the bag limit during teal season from six to four, and five of the other six commissioners agreed with him — so that actually amended the notice of intent so it currently has a reduction in the bag limit during teal season from six to four."

"That's what's going to be presented at the public meetings right now."

The final vote on the measure won't be held until the April 4 Commission meeting, but the Department will be holding public meetings across the state seeking input on the amended notice of intent beginning in late February and early March.

Commissioners Al Sunseri, Bill Hogan, Robert Samanie, Joe McPherson and Jerri Smitko voted in favor of amending the NOI and reducing the teal limit. Commissioner Chad



Courville opposed it.

Yakupczak did not reply to a voicemail message seeking comment on his motion for this story.

If Commission members had asked Reynolds for his input on the motion, he said he would have spoken against it.

"We recommended a bag limit of six because although the blue-winged teal population in the U.S. has declined over the last four or five years, it's still well above long-term average," Reynolds said. "I was part of the national group that did the Teal Harvest Potential Assessment a few years ago, and there's absolutely no reason ... In fact, based on that Harvest Potential Assessment, we could have increased the limit larger — higher than

continues >

The dates and locations of the six public meetings across the state to comment on the notice of intent are:

- **MONDAY, FEB. 25** at 6 p.m. at the Ponchatoula High School Library, 19452 Highway 22, Ponchatoula.
- **TUESDAY, FEB. 26** at 6 p.m. at the LDWF Lafayette Field Office, 200 Dulles Drive, Lafayette.
- **WEDNESDAY, FEB. 27** at 6 p.m. at the LDWF Minden Field Office, 9961 Highway 80, Minden.
- **THURSDAY, FEB. 28** at 6 p.m. at the LDWF Monroe Field Office, 368 Century Link Drive, Monroe.
- **FRIDAY, MARCH 1** at 6 p.m. at the Alexandria Convention Hall, 915 3rd Street, Alexandria.
- **SATURDAY, MARCH 2** at 10 a.m. at the LSU Ag Center Building, 7101 Gulf Highway, Lake Charles.

TEAL LIMIT CONTINUED

six — and still been fine. So, I would have recommended against it. There is no biological evidence, and there was no hunter opinion data presented to support that proposal. All he said was that he had talked with hunters, and the teal hunting had been negatively affected.”

In addition to amending the NOI regarding the teal limit, Yakupczak is also interested in exploring the possibility of reducing the speckled-belly goose season from 88 to 60 days, and requested that Reynolds come up with some shortened season dates reflecting that change for the next Commission meeting on Feb. 7.

The Commission also voted to amend the NOI by advancing the Coastal Zone duck hunting season dates proposed by the Department by one week. The initial proposal opened the season on Nov. 16 next fall, with the first split running through Dec. 8, and the second split going from Dec. 21 to Jan. 26.

Commissioners opted to start the Coastal Zone season a week earlier, so current dates for the first split up for public comment are now Nov. 9 - Dec. 8, with the second split running Dec. 21 to Jan. 19.

Public comment will be accepted at LWFC monthly meetings from February through March, and can also be submitted in writing by mail to: Tommy Tuma, LDWF Wildlife Division, P.O. Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898-9000, or via email to ttuma@wlf.la.gov until 9 a.m., March 7, 2019.

To view the full notice of intent and all proposed hunting season dates and regulations changes for the upcoming hunting seasons, please visit <http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/action-items>. ■

FLYWAY FEDERATION: **‘HOT-CROPPING’ A BIG REASON FOR POOR LOUISIANA DUCK SEASONS**

NEW ORGANIZATION
WORKING TO BRING ABOUT
CHANGE IN THE FLYWAYS

By Patrick Bonin

By most accounts, Louisiana waterfowl hunters just wrapped up yet another disappointing duck season— and Josh Goins thinks he knows the reason.

The 38-year-old Deridder native founded the Flyway Federation in 2018, which got its start innocently enough after he posted a comment on LouisianaSportsman.com’s waterfowl section last January.

“I was trying to find out what was going on, and if everyone was having as bad a year hunting as I was,” said Goins, who lives in Dequincy. “I saw all the young guys arguing over things I knew wasn’t the problem. So I laid out facts for them, and I think there were 32,000 views with almost 2,000 comments ...

“I could see no one was going to step up and do anything, so I said, ‘You know what? I’m going to create it.’”

The Flyway Federation, a 501(c) non-profit, was born — and now has more than 8,000 Facebook followers from multiple states, including Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Idaho, California and more - even reaching into Canada.

In a nutshell, Goins believes the duck migration game has changed because a loophole in the Migratory Bird Treaty Reform Act in 1998 now allows some farmers in northern states to legally attract and hold birds by flooding fields of unharvested corn, a practice known as ‘hot-cropping.’

“The issue facing us is we’re at the bottom of the Flyway, and you have people that are manipulating the law in northern states by concentrating birds,” he said. “They commercialized conservation programs in 1998 ... and that’s when every Tom, Dick and Harry



Most Louisiana duck hunters didn’t exactly have a banner season in 2018-19, and according to Josh Goins, at least part of the reason is a change in agricultural practices in the northern part of the flyways that concentrate birds and keep ducks from migrating south until after the season is over.

up the Flyway became a farmer.

“But they’re just farming for ducks. They grow a cornfield with no intent to harvest it, then flood it, which is not a normal agricultural practice. It’s strictly for duck hunting. Some are actually getting paid through CRP, WRP and other conservation programs. Some have even made insurance claims on the crops, and all that is funded by United States taxpayer dollars.

“So we’re actually paying for what’s killing our hunting. The more land they farm for ducks, the less ducks we get here.”

Goins said just 1 acre of unharvested corn can create about 200 bushels, or 10- to 13,000 pounds, of corn kernels. Many farmers in the upper-Flyway grow dwarf corn, which he said only grows about 3 feet high and features very symmetrical ear growth.

“They flood the fields to the ears, and whenever they start to run out of corn on those ears, they flood it to the next set of ears,” Goins explained. “The ducks never run out

Josh Goins founded the Flyway Federation in 2018 to bring about change in the flyways and get more birds down to Louisiana.

of food, and they never run out of water because they're keeping the water open utilizing the pumps the federal government provided for the conservation programs to keep the water circulating.

"So the birds have no reason to migrate. The only reason for a migration is a lack of food source, or snow and ice — that's when they move."

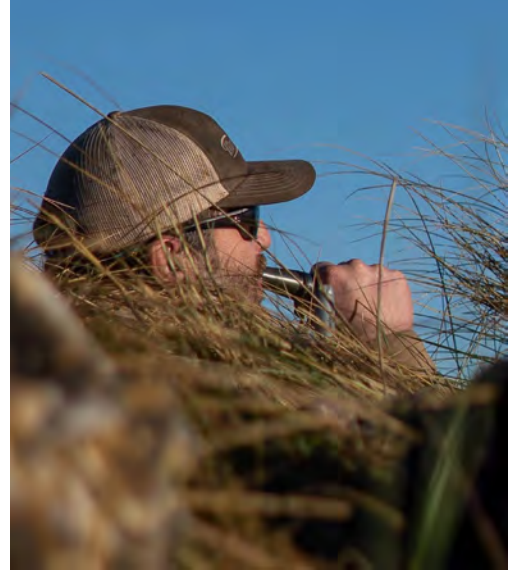
Goins, who recently traveled up to Arkansas for meetings and a hunt with members of that state's Game and Fish Commission, is planning meetings with Louisiana's congressional delegation to discuss the possibilities of federal legislation to remedy the issue. He's also been in contact with Attorney General Jeff Landry's office to explore a different kind of relief.

"The only way to fix this is to file a class action lawsuit over the loss of the natural resource and manipulation of the law though our Attorney General," said Goins, who works nationwide on water systems for refineries and chemical plants.

"Because we can prove both of those things: That we've had a loss of the natural resource, and there was manipulation of the law due to the Cooperative Extension Services controlling a federally protected bird at the state level."

And from his perspective, organizations like Ducks Unlimited and Delta Waterfowl are part of the current problem.

"I do not support them as of right now. I'm not saying I'll never support them again, because they did good things in the past, but right now I don't support them — and until they see and recognize that we actually have a problem that's going to end up hurting this sport and hurting North American waterfowl, that's my stance," said Goins, who described himself as just a country boy from Deridder who's come along and is raising hell. "They need to quit using all the excuses — global warming to hunting pressure to mud motors — and support what the real



problem is and quit looking at the money."

For more info on the Flyway Federation and agricultural processes up north, Goins said Louisiana hunters can keep up with the organization via its three Facebook pages, or visit www.flyfwayederationusa.com for more information, additional fact sheets, merchandise and the organization's mission statement. ■



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Effective Jan. 1, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries advised all boat owners in the state that motorboat registration fees increased by \$9 for each length category.

The table below illustrates the old and new fees for boats ranging from under 14 feet to more than 38 feet. Motorboat

registrations are valid for a three-year period, according to the department.

The additional fees are a result of Act 698 of the 2018 Regular Legislative Session and will be dedicated to LDWF's Aquatic Plant Control Fund and will be used to fight aquatic plants and invasive aquatic species across the state. ■

Length	Old Fee	New Fee
14' or less	23	32
14'1" - 17'11"	28	37
18'	33	42
18'1" - 19'0"	35	44
19'1" - 20'0"	37	46
20'1" - 21'0"	39	48
21'1" - 22'0"	41	50
22'1" - 23'0"	43	52
23'1" - 24'0"	45	54
24'1" - 25'0"	47	56
25'1" - 26'0"	49	58
26'1" - 27'0"	51	60
27'1" - 28'0"	53	62
28'1" - 29'0"	55	64
29'1" - 30'0"	57	66
30'1" - 31'0"	59	68
31'1" - 32'0"	61	70
32'1" - 33'0"	63	72
33'1" - 34'0"	65	74
34'1" - 35'0"	67	76
35'1" - 36'0"	69	78
36'1" - 37'0"	71	80
37'1" - 38'0"	73	82
For each foot greater than 38'	add \$2 per foot	add \$2 per foot



IT'S PRIME WAHOO TIME

Capt. William Wall, with Pelagic Charters (225-454-5365), said now through about April is prime time for catching some impressive wahoo out of Venice.

"They are not here year-round, and some years are better than others, but when they are here, they're big," Wall said. "There are very few places around the U.S. where they get this size. Venice is a trophy wahoo spot."

The big wahoo pictured here weighed more than 90 pounds, and was caught

in early January. Last year, Wall's clients reeled in a 105-pounder, as well as a 116-pounder in 2017.

He's a fan of the Rapala X-Rap Magnum deep-diving trolling lure when targeting big wahoo.

"For me, fishing for wahoo this time of the year is kind of like hunting for world-class deer — you can't kill a trophy buck everywhere you hunt," Wall said. "Fishing wahoo is one of my specialties. I get real goofy about big wahoo — this is my deal."

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RARE WHITE WOOD DUCK DOWNED IN ALLEN PARISH

TOUGH TO TELL FROM PICS IF WOODIE IS TRUE ALBINO OR LEUCISTIC, BIOLOGIST SAYS

By John Manion

It didn't come close to snowing this year in South Louisiana, but Greg Willis and his grandson got a 'white Christmas' just the same.

In late December, Willis and his 7-year-old grandson Grayson, along with a few other hunters, got quite a surprise duck hunting off the Calcasieu River in Allen Parish when a woodie as white as the pure driven snow paid them a visit.

"We weren't expecting very much with all the rains this year," Willis said. "The cypress brake we hunt is flooded, and the birds can go anywhere they want."

With a slow morning on the horizon, Grayson sat with his grandfather patiently

waiting on the day's first birds when, without warning, a group of wood ducks appeared.

"I spotted a band of wood ducks swinging in toward our blind," Willis said. "And I immediately noticed a white duck in the group. I only had enough time to say 'Look at that' when we all rose up to shoot."

Willis dropped the bright white UFO, along with a few other woodies taken by the group.

The hunters were all amazed at the stark white duck that fell from the sky.

"We had never seen that bird before. No one had any idea he was flying around," Willis said.

And none of the duck hunters he's communicated with have seen or heard about anyone taking an albino wood duck in the area before.

After reviewing a few photos of the bird, Paul Link, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan Coordinator with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, said he couldn't definitively say what caused the duck's distinct appearance.

Greg Willis downed this rare white wood duck during a hunting trip with his grandson, Grayson, in late-December off the Calcasieu River in Allen Parish.



Photos courtesy of Greg Willis

"It's tough to tell from pictures whether it's a true albino, leucistic, or some other variant of a mutation," Link said, noting that for whatever reason, wood ducks are particularly prone to color mutations.

Leucism is a genetic mutation that more commonly affects only sections of an animal, preventing the melanin pigment from being deposited normally. A 'piebald' whitetail is a more common example hunters might be familiar with regarding leucism.

Albinism, on the other hand, affects all of the animal's melanin pigment, which in the case of a duck, results in pale pink eyes, legs and bill.

"These animals often have poor vision and depth perception as compared to normal bird's eyes," Link said. "It's pretty amazing that thing could survive that long in the wild."

Despite a below-average duck season, Willis said Grayson's already gotten in on a hunt that he'll likely never forget.

As for the white woodie, as you might expect, it's headed for a place of honor in the Willis household.

"I've never mounted any ducks before, but I'm going to put this one on the wall," he said. ■



A close-up of the white wood duck shot by Greg Willis in Allen Parish. Paul Link, with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, couldn't confirm from photos if the bird was a true albino or leucistic.



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ANGLER BOATS POTENTIAL TOP 10 SHEEPSHEAD

By Todd Masson

Slidell angler Christian Orfanello caught the ninth-largest sheepshead ever brought to the scales, and he has a good friend to thank for his elevation to legendary Louisiana angler status.

Orfanello lives on the water and fishes far more than most anglers, so he rarely keeps sheepshead, but buddy Chas Champagne loves the spiny fish, and he just so happened to remind Orfanello of that fact when he was heading out on the water.

"(Champagne) had been texting and asking me to keep any big sheepshead I caught so he could grill them," Orfanello said.

The day wasn't windy, but Orfanello still opted to duck into the series of canals that service Lakeshore Estates, knowing they tend to hold big trout this time of year. He settled on a favorite ledge that falls off to 20 feet of depth, and threw out live shrimp on a drop-shot rig.

It proved to be a popular setup for a variety of fish. Orfanello had five trout and a bass in the boat, and had thrown back several sheepshead that he didn't figure were quite big enough for Champagne's grill.

Then destiny struck.

"I was watching my line," he said. "A lot of times with a big trout, that's the only way you know you got a fish. My line started swimming at me, so I regained as much line as I could and set the hook.

"First, I thought it was a big trout, but then he took too much drag too many times, so I started thinking redfish, and

then I got a glimpse of him and thought it was a big drum.

"Then my buddy Mike (Moran) netted him and threw him on the floor. That's when I realized he was a big sheepshead. I started laughing. I said, 'Oh, Chas will definitely want that one.'"

They chucked the fish in the cooler, and just a cast or two later, Orfanello had another bruiser sheepshead on — this one only slightly smaller than the first.

The anglers continued fishing, and put several more speckled trout in the box before calling it a day and running the boat to Champagne's house in Eden Isles.

"When I got to Chas's and pulled them out," Orfanello said, "he was like, 'Hold on a second, dude. Let me weigh these real quick.' He weighed them on a handheld scale, and he was like, 'You need to go weigh these on the certified scale at the Rigolets.'"

Orfanello did just that, and the first

Christian Orfanello shows off two big sheepshead he reeled in on Jan. 6 in the Lakeshore Estates canal system in Slidell. One of the fish pictured tipped certified scales at 11.82 pounds, which should qualify it as the new No. 9-ranked sheepshead in the state record books.

fish pushed the digital readout to 11.82 pounds, barely edging out an 11.81-pound fish caught by George Bourg in August of 1972.

Though Orfanello's fish was a beast, it was almost 10 pounds lighter than the heaviest sheepshead ever brought to scales in the Bayou State. That 21-pound, 4-ounce fish was caught by Wayne Desselle in 1982.

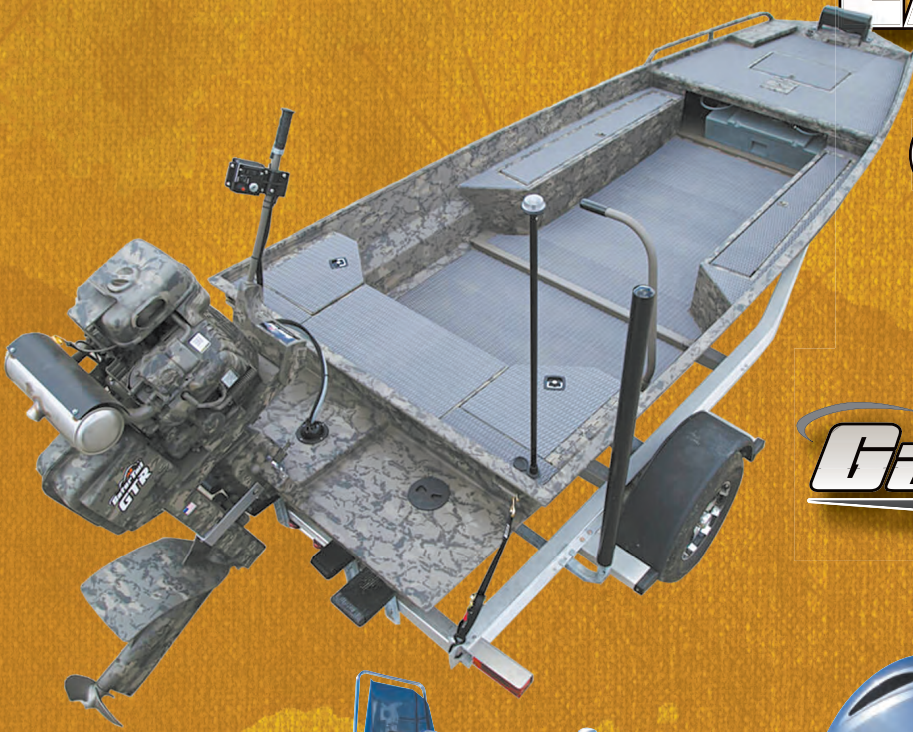
Desselle's fish is also recognized as the world record by the International Game Fish Association.

Orfanello's big sheepshead is currently pending certification from the Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association. ■



Photo courtesy of Christian Orfanello

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We are looking for Louisiana sportsmen and women who love to hunt and/or fish, and have pictures doing what they love. If you have good pictures -- we want to see them.



Randall E. Davis III caught some nice rainy day specks fishing the L&N train bridge in Lake Borgne.



Kerci Champagne with a very impressive 212-pound, 12-point buck she killed in Columbia with a 263-yard shot.

We will feature the best pictures we get each month on our website. And that's not all ... we'll choose several photos each month to appear in Louisiana Sportsman magazine's scrapbook section.

Just email your best pictures in the largest file size you have available, with a description of who, what and where, to: images@louisianasportsman.com

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But that's not all — we are also expanding our reader-generated news coverage because we value your input and want to see what you're up to in the swamps and bayous of the Sportsman's Paradise.

It's never been easier to have your trip featured in the Sportsman: Just submit your photo or photos and a detailed fishing/hunting report to: images@louisianasportsman.com.

Send us a description of your trip and be sure to include where, when, how, what bait or lures were used and the conditions you experienced. Stories should range from 3- to 500 words, but can't exceed 600. And we're not only interested in

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Not only will we publish the best reports we receive on our website, but we will feature our editor's top picks on the front page of the site and in social media posts, as well as the magazine. Be sure to include your name and your social media handles so we can tag you.

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If you're into shooting videos, make sure you talk about where you are fishing or hunting, and also try to show baits and conditions. If you don't narrate, then please send us a written description of the trip. Videos taken in horizontal format are best for the web, and if the subject matter is time-sensitive, it's best to send it in as soon as possible. Please include all information about the video in captions or with your commentary. Sorry, absolutely no copyrighted music can be accepted.

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PUBLIC ACCESS TO CATAHOULA LAKE IN JEOPARDY

APPEALS COURT UPHOLDS DECISION THAT SITE IS ACTUALLY PRIVATE LAND

By Kinny Haddox

The Third Circuit Court of Appeals ruled on Dec. 28, 2018 in favor of landowners, meaning public access to legendary Catahoula Lake could be in jeopardy.

Catahoula Lake, a nationally recognized duck hunting spot long known as one of Louisiana's most legendary waterfowling locations, might not remain open for public hunting following a late-December ruling from the state's Third Circuit Court of Appeals.

The next step to potentially maintain public access would be for the case to be appealed to the Louisiana Supreme Court, but it's unknown now if that court would even agree to hear it.

Louisiana Sportsman understands the state Attorney General's Office could

decide in about the next month whether or not to appeal the ruling that was handed down on Dec. 28 in favor of the property owners.

Right now, it's unclear when public access to the area might be restricted, pending the state's decision to potentially

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appeal the ruling.

The area in question, located in between the Red and Ouachita Rivers near Jonesville, covers 46 square miles when flooded.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began managing water levels in and around the Catahoula Basin in 1972 after it was permanently flooded by a weir constructed on Little River — and it's that very river that's at the center of the case.

Plaintiffs successfully argued that although it's been referred to as a lake for decades, the area known as Catahoula Lake is actually Little River. Therefore, since it is a river and not a lake, it could be owned by property owners in accordance with Louisiana's laws of riparian ownership.

Those laws state the banks of navigable rivers or streams are private things that are subject to public use. (The bank of a navigable river or stream is the land lying between the ordinary low and high stage of the water.)

The December ruling, which upheld an earlier one by the Judicial District Court in Rapides Parish in 2017, not only potentially affects public hunting access — but it could prove costly for Louisiana taxpayers.

The original court ruling in 2017 said the state now owes landowners \$38 million in damages, as well as \$4.5 million in royalties for oil and gas taken from the area the state held as public.

More than a decade ago, landowners Steve and Era Crooks filed the class action lawsuit against Louisiana, claiming landowners surrounding the lake are the actual owners.

The Judicial Court agreed in 2017 and ruled in favor of the Crooks, saying the state had unlawfully expropriated the river banks. That ruling was just confirmed by the Appeals Court on Dec. 28, 2018.

Attorney General Jeff Landry's office couldn't comment on ongoing litigation,

but said the appeals court's decision was under review and it was weighing options to determine the best interests of the state moving forward.

Larry Reynolds, the waterfowl study leader for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, said effects on waterfowl if the court decision is finalized — and water levels aren't managed as they are currently — are unknown right now.

"Catahoula Lake is one of the most important early-season migratory bird habitats in the Mississippi Flyway, and it is a high priority habitat for LDWF. Counts of waterfowl there are included in the

long-term aerial survey monitoring, and it attracts thousands of hunters from across the country. I can't think of a more important habitat for ducks throughout the season in the Central Louisiana region, as it provides both an outstanding food resource in most years, and roost sites for birds using adjacent habitats," Reynolds said. "We have no firm estimates of how many unique hunters utilize Catahoula Lake each year, but in general, there are about 500 blinds on the lake.

"So I would guess 500 to 2,000 hunters will be affected in one way or another by the recent ruling if it becomes final." ■

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Tensas Parish deer hunters removed gear from their campers as flood waters rose in January. Even mobile camps like these got flooded because before water rose quickly, and roads went under and were closed.



Photo courtesy of Chris Hogan

WINTERTIME FLOODING IMPACTS NORTH LOUISIANA HUNTING AND FISHING

By Kinny Haddox

EXCESS WATER MAKES FISHING TOUGH, SCATTERS DUCKS, FLOODS LOW-LYING CAMPS

Excessive fall and early-winter rainfall frustrated North Louisiana sportsmen, scattering ducks, making deer hunting tough and forcing the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to close major roads leading to popular wildlife management areas.

Lakes and rivers were out of their banks, some low-lying hunting camps were flooded and too much water pretty much ruined an already tough duck season. From Thanksgiving into the new year, things got worse — and it has lot of folks worried about this spring.

“We haven’t had as many ducks as usual this year, and even though we started getting them toward the end of the season, there is just so much water that they scattered out and there were no concentrations,” said Jeff Simmons, with Simmons’ Sporting Goods in Bastrop. “This is one of the worst duck seasons I can remember, with low numbers of ducks and thousands of acres of water everywhere. The water just had no where to go.”

The end of the 2018-19 deer season also was frustrating for many hunters, not only because they couldn’t hunt, but because many of the low-lying woods flooded during the latter part of the season, with some people losing their camps to the high water. For much of the season, woods in some areas were impassible because of standing water.

“We hunt in Tensas not far from the Yucatan, and we got up there in time to get most of our gear out by boat when this started, but we could not save our camper trailers and other equipment,” said Chris Hogan of Hahnville, one of many from South Louisiana who travel north to hunt and fish. “It just came up too fast. The roads went under and were closed. We aren’t the only ones that happened to.

“I’ve been hunting up there nearly 25 years and I’ve never seen it where the river has been this high this early and stayed backed up in the woods that long and that deep. It’s crazy.”

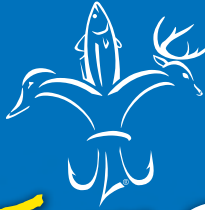
Peyton McKinnie of Tiger Bend Outdoors

in Marion has seen flooding both on Lake D’Arbonne and in the woods of Union Parish.

“The lake has been up several times and hurt fishing. The lower deer hunting areas are pretty much all under water,” he said. “The whole Upper Ouachita National Refuge is flooded. There are some folks that it helped. People deer hunting on higher ground started seeing a lot more deer because they were having to leave the bottoms. Our lakes and rivers are backed up, too. They opened floodgates on Lake D’Arbonne all the way, and it kept the lake from having major flooding, but that caused Bayou D’Arbonne down to the Ouachita River to rise even more.”

The conditions also affected other areas: The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries closed roads and blocked access to parts of several prime wildlife management areas during hunting season, including Grassy Lake, Attakapas, Russell Sage, Richard K. Yancey, Pearl River and Dewey Wills. ■

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MARCH 14-17 EVENT BETTER THAN EVER; HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH 40TH LOUISIANA SPORTSMAN SHOW

The latest offerings in boats will once again pack the Louisiana Sportsman Boat Show, and you'll be find even more reasons to spend time browsing the incredible selection because the size of the boat show has grown once again.

The boat bonanza is being held in conjunction with the 40th annual Louisiana Sportsman Show March 14-17 at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales, offering two-for-one show value.

While you're looking over this year's boat lines, you can chat directly with factory reps to get the scoop on all the latest features for each model line.

"We now have more boats from more

dealers — you won't find a better opportunity to comparison shop for a new boat," show director Jack Fisher said.

"Every major boat line and outboard manufacturer will be in the show, so you don't have to drive all over the place to look at different lines — you can just walk across the aisle. We have dealers in the show from the Baton Rouge area, the Lake Pontchartrain Northshore, Houma and Thibodaux.

"And the special show pricing makes this the best opportunity to compare and save."

The show will include offerings for both fresh and saltwater fishing applications, and lots more.

"We'll also have a full range of

duck-hunting boats, along with kayaks and the ever-popular pontoon boats," Fisher said.

And the best part is that entry to the Louisiana Sportsman Boat Show is included in the \$12 general admission price of the Louisiana Sportsman Show.

"This way, you can check out all the boats but move back and forth to the main show to see what fishing tackle and hunting accessories are available," Fisher said. "You also can check out all the special events, like the Louisiana Sportsman Big Buck Contest, Splash Dogs, the Fetch-N-Fish demo tank and much more.

"And it's all available for one great price." ■



Find all the newest boats at special prices during the 2019 Louisiana Sportsman Boat Show March 14-17 at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales.

The Big Buck Contest is a hallmark of the Louisiana Sportsman Show, and will be held this year March 15-17 in Gonzales.

RACKS RETURN: BIG BUCK CONTEST DETAILS

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BIG BUCK CONTEST RULES

The last of the deer zones might be closing this month, but that doesn't mean it's time to forget about the season. Instead, make plans to bring your bucks to the Louisiana Sportsman Big Buck Contest sponsored by Bowie Outfitters, to be held March 15-17 in conjunction with the Louisiana Sportsman Show at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales.

And even if your deer mount isn't complete, you can make arrangements with your taxidermist to bring the antlers to the contest, which is hosted by Quality Deer Management Association Louisiana.

Deer may be dropped off beginning Friday, March 15, but must be entered no later than 6 p.m. Saturday, March 16. Antlers must remain at the show's Big Buck Wall until Sunday afternoon.

And it's free to enter — just bring your unscored deer from the 2018-19 or 2017-18 seasons to the show. (Admission to the show is free if you're bringing a mount or antlers for the contest.)

Winners will be named in the following categories, with great prizes provided by Bowie Outfitters:

- Best Louisiana Gun
- Best Louisiana Bow
- Best Out-of-state Gun
- Best Out-of-state Bow
- Best Ladies
- Best Youth

- Best Muzzleloader/Crossbow
- Contest head scorer Dave Moreland has developed a unique system by which all deer — typical and non-typical — within a category can objectively be compared.

Each deer is scored on the Boone & Crockett or Pope & Young system, and then compared to the minimum score for inclusion in those record books. The difference between the minimum score of each deer is then used to decide category winners.

That means a typical deer could beat out a higher-scoring non-typical.

Bucks entered in any previous Louisiana Sportsman Big Buck Contest are not eligible for the contest.

Bucks killed in seasons before the 2017-18 hunting season can be entered for scoring, but are not eligible for contest prizes.

All entries will be displayed on the Big Buck Contest wall until shortly before winners are announced March 17. ■



- All legally killed bucks shot during the 2018-19 season and those deer from the 2017-18 season that have not been officially scored or previously entered in this contest are eligible for entry in any of the seven categories: Best Louisiana Gun, Best Louisiana Bow, Best Out-of-State Gun, Best Out-of-State Bow, Ladies, Youth and Muzzleloader/Crossbow.
- All bucks beyond the 60-day drying period will receive an official Boone & Crockett or Pope & Young score.
- Any buck killed within the previous 60 days will be scored and entered in the contest, but the score will not be official.
- Only free-range whitetails from any of the 50 U.S. states are eligible.
- Bucks killed with primitive arms that aren't true muzzleloaders will be entered in the gun categories.
- Youth-category entrants must have been 15 or younger at the time of the kill.
- Bucks killed before the contest period may still be brought in for scoring, but will not be eligible for the contest or any random drawings for prizes.
- Bucks must be brought in during show hours Friday or before 6 p.m. Saturday to be eligible for the contest.
- Racks must remain at the show until 2 p.m. Sunday, and may not be removed before that time.
- Louisiana Sportsman reserves the right to add or alter rules at its discretion.



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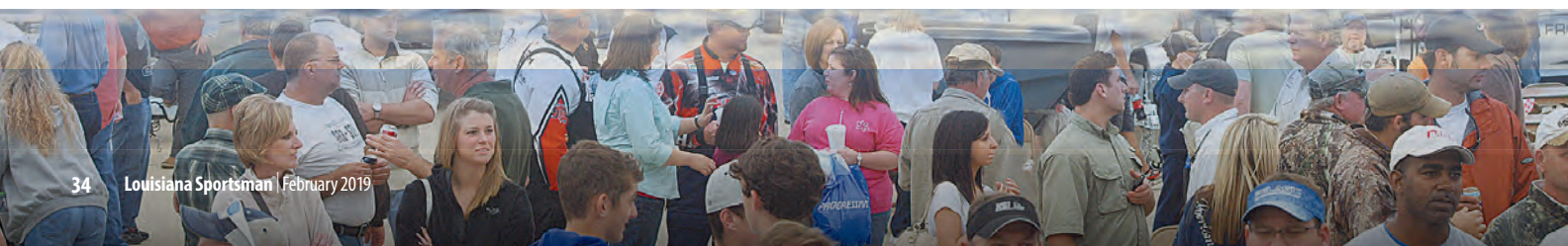
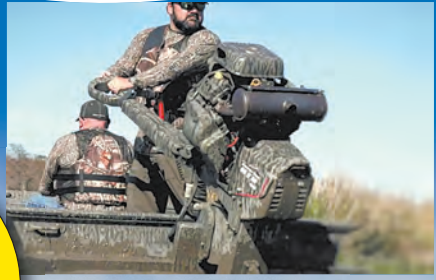


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- Muzzleloader or Crossbow
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2018-19

DEER OF THE YEAR

Since deer season cranked up last fall, Louisiana Sportsman has written up almost 50 stories about big buck harvested all across the Bayou State.

As expected, some real monsters fell over the last couple of months, including a potential new typical state record buck by Joe McPherson in Avoyelles Parish, an amazing 200-class non-typical beast downed by Malcolm Hilburn in Caddo Parish and a true public land hammer taken by Andrew Beach on Boeuf Wildlife Management Area in Caldwell Parish.

Of the 48 deer covered by the *Sportsman*, 39 cracked the 150-inch barrier, and of those bucks, 14 eclipsed the 170-inch mark.

We reviewed all of the big buck stories, and submit the following 10 bucks for your consideration as the cream of this season's crop — the true 2018-19 Deer of the Year.

- » #1 TYPICAL BUCK
- » #1 NON-TYPICAL BUCK
- » #1 PUBLIC LANDS BUCK
- » #2 PUBLIC LANDS BUCK
- » #3 PUBLIC LANDS BUCK
- » THE BEST OF THE REST
- » BEST BOW BUCK
- » BIG BUCK GALLERY

#1 TYPICAL BUCK

MCPHERSON'S MONSTER GROSSES 200 INCHES PLUS

BUT WILL AVOYELLES PARISH BUCK BE A NEW STATE RECORD?

By Patrick Bonin

Since 1943, Don Broadway's Madison Parish giant has stood atop the Louisiana Big Game Records as the state's largest typical buck ever harvested with a gun, coming in with a score of 184 6/8 inches of sheer antler perfection.

In the 75 long years since, thousands and thousands of hunters have ventured into the woods and marshes of the state and killed thousands and thousands and thousands of deer — and no one has beaten the Broadway buck (Ernest McCoy's Bossier Parish deer came within a whisker in 1961, and claimed the No. 2 spot at 184 4/8 inches).

Every couple of years a big buck is taken that get folks talking about a new potential record — Charlie Lusco's big Diamond Island white-tail in 2016 netted out at 173 3/8 and came in at No. 24 on the all-time list.

This season, potential typical state record rumors are swirling around a giant Avoyelles Parish 17-pointer killed by Joe McPherson on Sunday, Dec. 9, on the South Farm of the old Louisiana Delta Plantation near Effie.

The deer was scored by McPherson's taxidermist, and at Spotted Dog Sporting Goods in Columbia and Simmons' Sporting Goods in Bastrop, with gross numbers ranging from 196 1/8 at



Joe McPherson
Dec. 9
Avoyelles Parish
196 1/8 to 202 3/8

Simmons to about 200 by his taxidermist to 202 3/8 at Spotted Dog.

"It's the most symmetrical deer I've ever seen," said McPherson, 68, of Woodworth, a real estate developer who also served as a Louisiana state senator from 1984 to 1996 and again from 2000 to 2012.

"He's a mainframe 14-point with two brow guards and 17 scoreable points. Sixteen of the points are almost as symmetrical as if you were building it out of clay ...

"It's so few deductions on this deer. We'll have to wait and see."

The deer was scored at 86 2/8 on each side at Simmons, and 83 1/8 and 83 3/8 at Spotted Dog. Main beams were 28 1/8 and 27 3/8, with bases right at 5 inches each. The buck weighed 223 pounds, and had an inside spread of 23 3/8 inches, McPherson said.

He hadn't gotten a jawbone age on the buck, but is a bit concerned that it's only 3 1/2 years old, and perhaps might have

been harvested a year too soon.

"I actually would have liked to pass him again this year, and maybe if he turns out to be 4 1/2 I'll be real glad I shot him. But if he turns out to be 3 1/2, it's going to be bittersweet," he said. "But I'm in an informal cooperative, and everybody else that I showed a picture of the deer to said they would shoot it if they saw it.

"It's hard to pass a deer when everybody else says they wouldn't."

McPherson said the buck was a symmetrical 10-pointer last season, with roughly a 20-inch spread that likely was in the 150- to 160-inch range. He didn't know if the deer was still bedding down on his section of the lease this season until he checked his trail cams the weekend before his hunt.

"No one indicated they had ever seen this deer this year or last year, except for me. I didn't know if he had survived from last year or was even back on my property," he said, noting the area flooded last spring. "I looked at game camera



pics and pulled my SD cards that Friday and he had showed up. That was the first time I was aware this year that he was still out there.”

McPherson headed to his box stand overlooking an oak flat full of acorns that Sunday afternoon around 3, and saw the big buck step out quartering from his right side about two hours later as the sun was about to set. He fired his 7 Mag from about 100 yards, and just like that, the big buck went down where it stood.

“It was kind of bittersweet,” McPherson said, describing walking up on the big deer. “I was still questioning if he would have been a better deer next year, and did I make the right decision to go ahead and take him.”

McPherson is no stranger to big bucks: He has a non-typical mounted that’s never been officially scored that he suspects could top 200 inches. This buck will be displayed along with that one.

“I’ve got a comfortable camp, and he’ll go on the wall with his brethren,” he said.

Now the waiting game continues for the 60-day drying period to pass, so an official Boone & Crockett score can be taken. McPherson said his plan is to have the deer scored at the Louisiana Sportsman Show and Festival’s Big Buck Contest at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales March 14-17.

In the meantime, though, he kept on hunting throughout the season.

“This buck’s right ear was all torn up,” he said with a chuckle. “So I’m going to go and hunt for the deer that whipped him.”

#1 NON-TYPICAL BUCK >

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200-CLASS CADDO PARISH MONSTER GOES DOWN

BLOOD-TRAILING DOG HELPS HILBURN RECOVER TROPHY BUCK

By Glynn Harris

Like the old song says, sometimes you need a little help from your friends.

In Malcolm Hilburn's case, he needed the help of a blood dog named Lyla to recover the monster Caddo Parish buck he shot on the morning of Nov. 18



Malcolm Hilburn
Nov. 18
Caddo Parish
204 4/8

#1 NON-TYPICAL BUCK

"My son, Cavitt and I had met up with my brother Jake at the community store early that morning with plans to hunt. Jake and Cavitt were going duck hunting and wanted me to come along," said Hilburn, 40. "I told them no, I was going to the property we have leased to try for that big buck we had seen on camera — a buck everybody in the area had been talking about."

So as his brother and son headed for the duck blind, Hilburn, of Benton, struck out for the small 27-acre plot they lease in north Caddo Parish.

"As I walked in and took a seat on the ground with my back against a tree along an old logging road, it began to rain steadily," he said. "Along about 9:30, I hadn't seen a thing and I sent a text to my brother telling him I'd about had enough sitting and getting soaking wet and was ready to call it quits."

But he decided to wait another half hour before heading out of the woods, and thankfully he did: Just before he was about to leave, a doe came trotting out 50 yards in front of him — and right on her heels was a big buck with its head

down, solely focused on the female deer. "I knew it was a good buck, but had no idea it was the one we had on camera, one that everybody had been talking about," he said. "I just knew it was a good one I wanted to shoot."

Quickly shouldering his Browning .270 short mag, he tracked the moving deer until he found a small opening, put the crosshairs on what he thought was the shoulder and squeezed off a shot. The buck reared up, turned around and took off.

"I called my brother and told him I had shot a good deer and told him I was going to where he was when I shot to see if I could find blood," Hilburn said. "After about 50 yards, I found some blood so I knew I had hit him. When my brother and son got there, they joined me in the search, we found a blood trail for about 300 yards and then the trail abruptly ended.

"We looked all over the area without finding more blood, so Jake suggested we try and find someone with a blood-

trailing dog"

That's when help from friends came in the form of the Louisiana Blood Trailing Network, a group of volunteer blood dog owners statewide who put Hilburn in touch with Clint Strother and his dog, Lyla Gene.

"Clint and his dog got there around 2 that afternoon," Hilburn said. "When Lyla got on the trail, we followed her for probably a mile where we found the deer."

And what a recovery it was: The rack had 18 scoreable points, and the 6 ½-year-old buck ultimately stretched the tape at Simmons Sporting Goods in Bastrop to a whopping 204 4/8 inches of bone.

"It was the suspense that got me," Hilburn said. "Following Clint and his dog up to the buck with my brother and son tagging along with me — and not knowing what it was until we saw it lying there — was overwhelming."

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#1 PUBLIC LANDS BUCK

PUBLIC LAND GIANT GOES DOWN ON BOEUF WMA

BEACH'S DEER STRETCHED THE TAPE TO 186 INCHES

By Glynn Harris

Andrew Beach downed a monster on the Boeuf Wildlife Management Area, but credited his friend Glenn Lee for helping him scout the area where he waylaid the giant 20-pointer on Dec. 10.

"I want to give credit to Glenn who lives near the Boeuf and who took me under his wing and taught me the area," he said. "I would have never gotten this buck without him being my mentor."

The Boeuf WMA is bisected by Caldwell and Catahoula Parishes, with its 51,000 acres subject to periodic flooding from



Andrew Beach
Dec. 10
Boeuf WMA
186 6/8

the Bouef River and Bayou Lafourche. To reach the Caldwell Parish portion where Lee and Beach scouted is a 45-minute drive from Beach's home in Wisner.

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"I got to the area that morning well before daylight and using my flashlight, I made my way back to where we had scouted," said Beach, 30. "I found a deer trail, followed it back in the woods to where I found some buck sign and other trails. That is where I decided to hunt that morning."

Finding a downed tree with vines intertwined, Beach placed his three-legged stool among the branches, which kept him hidden and gave him a somewhat limited view of the thick area he was hunting. Soon after daylight, some hogs filtered through — and since the thought of sausage and ham appealed to him, Beach downed one of the pigs.

"Not long after shooting the hog and scattering the herd, I heard something walking through standing water in the thick brush. Here came a doe, and she was moving leisurely along, occasionally stopping to browse and to pick up acorns that littered the ground," he said. "I was watching her when I saw another bigger deer following along some 50 yards behind her. He didn't seem to be too interested in her as he was slowly browsing along himself. At first all I could see was the body, but when he moved through a small opening, I got a glimpse of a big rack.

"My first thought was that I had never seen a deer with a rack like that, so I looked for an opening the way he was heading."

As the buck moved along at about 75 yards, Beach saw a tiny opening, put the scope there and squeezed the trigger on his Remington Model 700 .308. At the shot, the buck took off.

"He didn't look like he had been hit; he just took off. I sat back down assuming I'd missed, but when I stood up with the sun at my back, I saw the buck go down on his knees and hit the ground

about 60 yards away. When I got to him, I couldn't believe what I had," Beach said.

"My first thought was that I had never seen a deer with a rack like that, so I looked for an opening the way he was heading."

Not wanting to disturb others who may have been hunting in the area, Beach sat for a couple of hours before retrieving his prize.

He found the buck had 20 scoreable points with, as he said, "lots of trash" on the G2s and G3s. The inside spread was 17 ½ inches, with heavy mass throughout. The buck weighed 170 pounds, and when Buckmaster official scorer Cecil Reddick put the tape on it, he measured 186 1/8 inches of antler. At Simmons' Sporting Goods in Bastrop, the measurement was 186 6/8 inches.

#2 PUBLIC LANDS BUCK >

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#2 PUBLIC LANDS BUCK

IMPRESSIVE 13-POINTER GOES DOWN ON BOEUF WMA

CULPEPPER'S PUBLIC LAND STUD MEASURES 180 1/8 INCHES

By Glynn Harris

Even though he wasn't holding the rifle, Roy Withers was given all the credit for downing a huge Caldwell Parish buck on the Boeuf Wildlife Management Area.

Cody Culpepper was the man who actually fired the kill shot on Nov. 23, and even though Withers was in a stand about 200 yards away, Culpepper gave his hunting mentor all the credit for putting him in the right place at the right time to take down the big buck.

"I didn't grow up in a family that hunts," said Culpepper, 26. "My dad didn't hunt, and although I wanted to become a hunter, it wasn't until my friend Roy took me under his wing and helped me get into hunting."

Culpepper, who resides in Hebert in Caldwell Parish, lives only 6 miles from Boeuf WMA.

"Roy and I started scouting the area a few days before I got a chance at the buck. We had found sign where a big buck was just tearing up the bushes and making scrapes," he said. "We didn't know how big he was, but knew he had to be a good one by all the sign."

Withers instructed Culpepper on the importance of finding trails deer were using, and four days before the successful hunt they walked a well-used trail and came to where that trail intersected another. That was the spot where Withers suggested Culpepper set up a blind on the ground.

"We pulled in some logs and limbs to give cover where I had a good view of both trails," he said. "I got in behind the blind as Roy moved on down to hunt about 200 yards from me."

Before settling in behind his makeshift blind, Culpepper applied Tink's 69 doe-in-heat scent on bushes all around — then he sat down and waited.

"I had sat there awhile without seeing anything so I got out my grunt call, and made a grunt or two," Culpepper said. "Five minutes after making the call, I heard something coming through the woods and here came this big buck with a doe following him."



Cody Culpepper
Nov. 23
Boeuf WMA
180 1/8

A favorable wind appeared to take the Tink's scent to the buck, and it apparently abandoned the doe it was working to check out the aroma.

"I watched the buck working his way to me through the thicket, and since we hadn't cut any shooting lanes, I had to look ahead of the deer to find an opening. I found just a small clear spot in the bushes and when the buck stepped into the opening at 50 yards, I hit the trigger on my .270 short mag," Culpepper said. "The buck stumbled and took off and I thought I heard him crash. I jumped up and headed to where I heard him fall and found him — he only traveled about 10 yards after I shot."

"I assumed it was an 8-point when I first saw him but as I got closer, I began to see more and more points. When Roy got there after I texted him, I don't know who was more excited — him or me."

The buck was impressive indeed: Culpepper lifted a rack containing 13 points and realized he couldn't reach around the bases with thumb and finger — the circumferences measured more than 6 inches each. The buck's main beams were 24 inches, with an inside spread of 18 inches.

The 208-pound buck was aged at 5 1/2 years and because of all the mass that included some palmation, scored an astounding 180 1/8 inches of bone.

#3 PUBLIC LANDS BUCK >

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#3 PUBLIC LANDS BUCK



Jeffrey Stallings
Dec. 8
Tensas NWR
176

PUBLIC LAND LOTTERY HUNT PRODUCES 176-INCH BUCK

By Glynn Harris

RAINY DAY YIELDS TENSAS NWR MONSTER

Jeffrey Stallings usually does his deer hunting on public areas near his home in Colfax. However, he and a group of kin and friends were selected for a lottery hunt on Tensas National Wildlife Refuge in early December.

“We got up there that Wednesday to do some scouting and find spots for all of us to hunt the coming weekend; this was my first time to ever hunt Tensas,” said Stallings, 30. “After getting set up at the campground, we began scouting. We also had a couple of boats with us as we were next to the Tensas River, and after about a 10-mile boat ride, a cousin and I started looking for a good spot to hunt.”

That Friday, Dec. 7, Stallings set up his Summit Viper climbing stand in an area he liked. There were deer trails, and rubs and scrapes next to a creek that fed into the river. Everyone was ready for the Saturday morning hunt — except Mother Nature: The party woke up to flooding rains.

“Nobody even tried to go out early Saturday because of the heavy rain,” he said. “However, as the rain started tapering off late in the morning, my cousin and I got in the boat, I dropped him off to a spot he’d found and I continued on up the river another 2 miles to my spot, where I tied the boat up and got in my climber where I had left it the day before.”

All the rain had created a shallow lake around his stand, and the trails Stallings had found the day before were under 6 inches of water — but he felt like he was in a good spot.

“I’d been in my stand 30 minutes or so when I saw two does coming through the water. I could have shot one but that would probably have ended my hunt having to fool with it, so I passed up the opportunity. Five minutes after watching the does move on off, I saw something coming through the water behind the does,” he said. “It was a racked buck, but I couldn’t tell much about him.

“I just knew he was one I wanted to shoot.”

Finding a small opening through the timber in the direction the buck was headed, Stallings put the crosshairs of the scope of his Remington .30-06 on the spot and when he saw brown, he fired. But the buck just stood there, so Stallings fired again. There was no movement from the deer, but on the third shot, the buck took off. Marking where he last saw the deer with his GPS, Stallings went to the spot — not having any clue as to if he had actually hit the deer.

“With all the water, it’s hard to find a blood trail if there was one, so I marked his direction of travel with my GPS and headed that way,” Stallings said. “After traveling some 200 yards in the water, the buck jumped up from a little knoll he was laying on dry ground and I found blood. This is the first time I realized I had actually hit the deer.”

Following the blood trail the buck left on palmettos as it ran, Stallings finally caught up with the big deer just before it took its final breath.

“Once I got to him, I wanted to make sure he didn’t get away again. So I took off my belt, and put it around his neck and a small tree so he wouldn’t get up again while I was gone back to the boat for my deer dolly,” he said.

After retrieving the dolly and getting the big-bodied deer loaded up, Stallings realized he needed help so he motored 2 miles and picked up his cousin — but the retrieval was a bear. Their dolly wound up losing a wheel, but they eventually were able to get the buck in the boat and back to camp.

“I shot the deer at 1:30 p.m. and when we finally got him back to camp and cleaned, it was 1:30 a.m. the next morning,” he said.

The buck, which weighed-in at 240 pounds, was a 13-pointer with heavy mass and long tines. The inside spread was 18 7/8 inches, main beams were in the 25-inch range and the buck was green-scored at an even 176 inches of bone.



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THE BEST OF THE REST...

SCRABBLE GAME INTERRUPTED BY BIG 14-POINT CATAHOULA PARISH BUCK

By Glynn Harris

CATER'S MONSTER GREEN-SCORES
185 3/8 INCHES

Jacob Cater was engrossed in a game of smart phone Scrabble with his wife when a huge Catahoula Parish buck interrupted the fun.

"My wife likes to deer hunt and I have taken her with me several times and she has killed several deer," said Cater, 22, a senior majoring in agri-business at the University of Louisiana-Monroe. "On the afternoon of Dec. 22, we had planned a hunt to my stand where we have to cross a bayou in a boat to get to there. She wasn't feeling well, so we decided to stay home instead of doing all that had to be done to hunt that afternoon."

The area they hunt is the family's 2,500-acre farm in Catahoula Parish. As the afternoon wore on, his wife Tiffany started feeling better, so they decided to go sit in a shed on the farm rather than make the long trek to the stand across the bayou.

"We left home around 4:30, stopped by a store for snacks and got set up in the shed, eating chips and playing Scrabble. Just before dark, we saw some does come out of the 800-acre block of woods next to the field," he said. "A few minutes later, a group of 10 does came to the field. I used my rangefinder to determine the distance: 536 yards."

Deciding to click the scope on his custom-built 6.5 Winchester Short Mag to allow for that distance, he had just finished his adjustments when he saw a big-bodied buck step out into the field. His rangefinder read 500 yards from where he sat in the shed out to the buck.

"I told Tiffany that I was looking at a nice buck and if she wanted to shoot it, she could. She didn't feel comfortable with the 500-yard distance and passed on the chance to shoot. I got my rifle up,

got the scope on him and fired," he said. "The buck hit the ground, obviously broken down in the back end."

There was a 15 mph cross wind blowing, and the next two shots were off the mark: Cater didn't allow for the effect of wind at that distance.

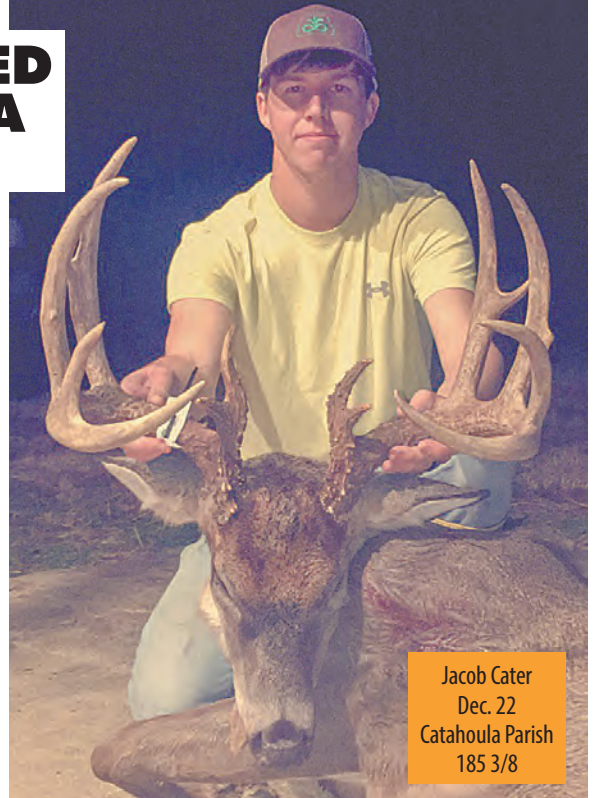
"I told her I was going to go to the deer to finish him off before he got away, so I walked to within 75 yards of him and shot, killing the buck. As I walked up to him, I had no idea that this was such an amazing animal; I knew I had killed a giant," he said.

"Nobody on our farm or on neighboring lands had ever seen this deer, nor had trail cam photos of him. He just came out of nowhere, apparently attracted by the does."

The buck carried a rack of 14 symmetrical points featuring long main beams and tines. The main beams were around 24 inches each, G2s and G3s were 12 and 13 inches each, with bases at 5 1/2 inches. The deer weighed 220 pounds.

Cecil Reddick, official scorer for Buckmaster, put the tape on the buck and gave it a green score of 185 3/8 inches. The deer was no older than 4 1/2 years, with Cater's taxidermist thinking it may have only been 3 1/2.

"My dad has hunted deer for 45 years and has killed some good ones," Cater said. "But he told me this deer I killed beat his biggest buck by at least 20 inches. And incidentally, Tiffany claims she won the game of Scrabble — but I didn't mind one bit."



Jacob Cater
Dec. 22
Catahoula Parish
185 3/8

MONROE HUNTER SNEAKS GIANT DAVIS ISLAND 10-POINTER

By Glynn Harris

HEAVY-HORNED RACK
GREEN SCORES NORTH
OF 183 INCHES

Bill Harvey dislikes sitting still in a deer stand waiting on a buck, so the 62-year-old Monroe hunter has taken up a "sneak and sit approach."

On Nov. 29 while hunting on Davis Island in Madison Parish, Harvey's method paid off in spades when the biggest buck he had ever seen came strolling by.

"I just don't like sitting still in a deer stand and I have adopted a method with

which I am more comfortable,” Harvey said. “I’ll find a ridge and determine wind direction and sneak along, periodically sitting and waiting with the wind in my face.”

Davis Island is shared jointly by Warren County in Mississippi and Madison Parish in Louisiana. Harvey, who retired after a 34-year career with State Farm Insurance, has for the past 20 years been invited by a friend who holds a membership in this attractive plot of real estate. He and his son Matt are both invitees to hunt the island.

“Matt and I have both shot some good bucks over the years, bucks measuring in the 140-range. On this day, my son was helping debone several does we had taken,” he said. “Even though we hunt using Louisiana licenses, we have to abide by Mississippi regulations, which includes the new strict guidelines on handling of harvested deer related to chronic wasting disease which had been identified in the state.”

Packing his Thompson Center 7-mag rifle, his shooting stick and the stool he uses for dove hunting, Harvey headed for a ridge where he knew the wind would favor his style of hunting. Two days earlier, he had spotted a really big buck there, and Matt suggested he head back to the same area.

“I got on the ridge I wanted that was in the area of a big acorn flat, and deer were really working on the acorns,” he said. “I slipped along and found a ‘lay down’ tree, set down on my stool and waited. It didn’t take long before deer began coming out to scarf up the acorns.”

Not long after taking a seat, Harvey watched a good 9-point buck in the 140-inch range come into the flat along with some spikes and yearlings.

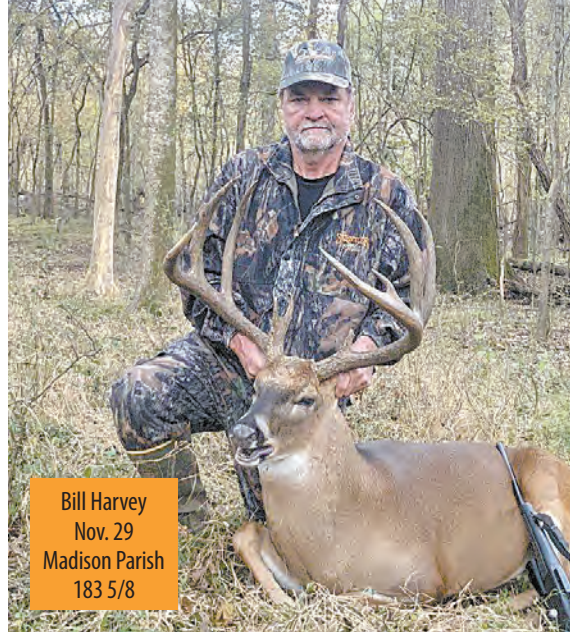
“Right around 8, I saw another deer coming from my right. He gets to about 75 yards from me and I can see the left side of his rack. I assumed it was probably a nice 8-point; we see lots

of deer like that here. All of a sudden at 50 yards, I could see that this was way more than a nice 8-point,” he said. “He starts walking my way, turns and I can see a split brow tine and five points on the other side. I decided this was one I wanted to take so I put the crosshairs on him, shot and he fell on the spot.”

Walking up to the fallen buck, Harvey was more astonished with each step he took. He knew he was looking at the biggest buck he had ever seen.

“I called Matt and told him I needed help. I told him this was no ordinary buck — but a gigantic one,” he said. “When Matt got there and got within 50 yards of the downed buck, he looked at me and said ‘Dad, you have just killed a monster.’”

Matt was right: The buck, which weighed a whopping 249 pounds, sported a main-frame 8-point rack with



Bill Harvey
Nov. 29
Madison Parish
183 5/8

a split brow tine plus a kicker. The inside spread was a whisker shy of 22 inches, and bases measured 5 ½ inches with mass throughout the rack. The buck’s main beams measured between 27 and 28 inches.

The rack was taken to Simmons Sporting Goods in Bastrop for entry into that store’s Big Buck Contest, where it measured 183 5/8 inches of bone.

MORE BUCKS >

An advertisement for Hughes Manufacturing. The top part features a background of ducks and a large stainless steel boiler on wheels. The boiler has a lid that is open, revealing a perforated interior. To the right of the boiler is a pit blind, which is a metal structure with a slanted top and a small opening. The text "Boiling Pots, Pit Blinds & more!" is written in a bold, italicized font at the top. A starburst graphic contains the text "CALL US TODAY! 337-824-2176". At the bottom, the Hughes Manufacturing logo is displayed, along with the text "5min FASTEST BOILER ON THE MARKET!". The background of the bottom part of the ad is a close-up of a large, cooked crayfish.

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THE BEST OF THE REST...

A NEW YEAR'S DAY BUCK — WITH ITS OWN TYPICAL STATE RECORD ASPIRATIONS

ANOTHER AVOYELLES PARISH
MONSTER WENT DOWN ON JAN. 1

By Patrick Bonin

Scotty Smith rang in 2019 with friends at a New Year's Eve party until around 2 a.m., but still made it to his deer stand in Avoyelles Parish around 4:25 on the afternoon of Jan. 1.

You might say that's when the real fireworks started for him this year.

The 36-year-old hunter was in his tripod overlooking the edge of an oxbow on the old Red River when a giant buck he'd been watching for years finally gave him the opportunity for a shot.

Smith took it from only 50 yards with his 6.5 Creedmoor — and now yet another Avoyelles Parish hammer is in talks about potentially breaking the state's typical big buck record. (Joe McPherson's 200-inch-class 17-pointer was shot only about 3 miles away on Dec. 9, and also is in typical state record talks.)

"I can't lie to you," Smith said about his big buck, with a chuckle. "I got so excited over that deer my eyes went blurry on me when I went to shoot him."

But he's definitely no stranger to monster deer.

He routinely lets 160-inch deer walk on the 6 acres he hunts, and shot a 180-class buck when he was just 17. And his wife, Amanda, knocked down the 25-point 'Rougarou buck' on the exact same property last January 13, which wound up at No. 5 in the state's non-typical record books with a final score of 226 2/8 inches of bone.

He said it's obvious his buck and the Rougarou come from the same blood line. His New Year's Day 14-point typical, which pushed 300 pounds, green-scored 190 3/4 at Simmons' Sporting Goods in Bastrop, with split brow tines, a 20

1/2-inch inside spread and 8-inch-plus bases.

"He didn't have all the inside stuff the Rougarou did, but you tell it's the same genes," Smith said. "He just wasn't as old. Amanda's big deer ended up being 10 1/2 with the biologists."

Smith said the wily old buck had actually patterned him — until he turned the tables on it on New Year's Day.

"I had been hunting a box stand for him, and I'd get off my stand and 10 minutes later he was eating. He was coming around me to get to the food plot, so I cut him off," he said. "I had that tripod out for two years and hadn't hunted it, and Amanda told me, 'You ought to go get on that tripod.' Thirty minutes after I was out there, I killed him."

Shortly before 5 p.m., Smith saw the buck in the distance crossing the oxbow.

"I watched him come across the end of the oxbow for about 300 yards through some chest-deep water," he said. "He came up on the bank. I watch him shake off the water and everything."

When Smith shot, the big buck went down on its front legs and managed to make it only 20 yards before piling up.

Walking up on the monster was special after watching it all those years.

"I was excited," he said. "I guessed him at about 200 inches all year with the pic-



Scotty Smith
Jan. 1
Avoyelles Parish
190-class

Photo courtesy of Scotty Smith

tures, and I hit it pretty close."

Eventually the big buck will wind up on Smith's living room wall with the Rougarou and a host of other big deer. After the mandatory 60-day drying period, Smith plans on taking the buck to the Louisiana Sportsman Show and Festival's Big Buck Contest at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales March 14-17 to get its official score.

Until then, we'll all have to wait and wonder if this is the year Don Broadway's 1943 record buck that scored 184 6/8 finally gets beaten.

Coincidentally, he and his wife saw this buck the same day she downed the Rougarou last January, he said.

"We were loading her deer on the 4-wheeler, and he was standing in the food plot waiting on us to get out the way," Smith said. "He was about a 160- or 170-inch deer last year."

TALLULAH TEEN DOWNS MADISON PARISH MONSTER

BLACK'S BIG BUCK
GREEN-SCORES NORTH
OF 183 INCHES

By Glynn Harris

Davis Black is a high school freshman who plays cornerback and wide receiver for his football team at St. Aloysius across the river in Vicksburg, Mississippi.

But on the afternoon of Dec. 30, he experienced a thrill greater than if he had intercepted a pass for a pick six or caught a long bomb for a touchdown.

While sitting in a box stand on his family's property in Madison Parish, he put the scope of his 6.5 Creedmoor on the vitals of a big buck, squeezed the trigger and watched the big deer fall in its tracks.

continues >



Davis Black
Dec. 30
Madison Parish
183 5/8

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TALLULAH CONTINUES

"I was checking my phone and texting a friend when I happened to look up to see the body of a big deer," said Black, 15, of Tallulah. "I got my gun up, looked through the scope and could tell it was a good deer — I guessed maybe an 8- or 9 point."

He hunts on about 170 acres of what was formerly farmland in Madison Parish, but about 15 years ago the land was converted to WRP land with trees planted that are now about 25 feet tall. His dad, Todd, had dropped his son off at the stand about 2:30 that afternoon and proceeded to another stand some 350 yards

"I got my gun up, looked through the scope and could tell it was a good deer"

away. Davis' stand overlooked a food plot with a trough feeder filled with rice bran.

"About 3:45, I got a call from Davis and he told me that a monster buck had just stepped out 150 yards in front of him," Todd Black said. "We're selective on the bucks we shoot, and I asked him if it was bigger than any buck he had ever shot."

"He assured me he had never killed anything this big, so I told him to go ahead."

Upon hearing Davis shoot, Todd called to see if the shot was true. He got two words from his excited son: "He's down."

Telling Davis to stay in the stand until he got there, Todd hopped in his side-by-side and headed that way.

"Before I got there, I noticed that Davis had already gotten down," Todd said. "He called me

and as he got closer to the fallen buck, I could tell his excitement level was increasing — so I knew he had shot a special buck."

Two does had walked out with the buck, and they had begun to attract its attention.

"I put the crosshairs on his shoulder but as he turned quartering toward me, my shot hit him in the neck instead of the shoulder," Davis said. "It didn't matter that my shot was a little bit off because he fell in his tracks when I shot."

"When I first saw the deer, I thought it might be a nice 8- or 9-point but had no idea it was that big."

Todd had a similar reaction as he drove up next to his son, who has jumping up and down with excitement.

"I just about fell out when I saw this buck," Todd said. "We hugged and probably shed a few tears we were so happy."

The buck carried 15 points on a very heavy rack. Bases were over 5 inches each, with mass that carried out to the tips. The inside spread was just shy of 20 inches, and the buck weighed 240 pounds.

The rack was measured by Buckmaster scorer Cecil Reddick, who came up with a total of 183 5/8. The deer was taken to Simmons' Sporting Goods in Bastrop, where it measured 183 7/8 inches of antler.

BEST BOW >

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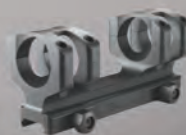
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BEST BOW BUCK

BOWHUNTER ARROWS BIG EAST FELICIANA 11-POINTER

HIGH, TIGHT RACK GROSSES
173 4/8 INCHES

By Glynn Harris

After his wife passed up a big 160-inch buck in early December, Michael Guillory had a better chance two days later when the deer presented itself broadside to him at 23 yards — and made the most of his opportunity when his arrow found the mark.

“This is a buck I’ve been after for several years,” said Guillory, 51, who lives near Clinton. “In fact, I have had trail cam photos of him for the past three years. As I had to work (that) Wednesday, I suggested to my wife that she go throw out some corn and bran and hunt my stand if she wanted. She has bowhunted for the past eight years and has taken a couple of deer with her bow.”

Guillory’s wife did as he suggested and that afternoon, the buck walked out on her but she never felt comfortable taking a shot. Since he was off work the end of that week, it was his turn to try for the buck with the high, tight rack.

“We hunt on a friend’s land in East Feliciana Parish, and have had a few trail cam photos of the deer off and on for the past three years. In 2016, I had photos of him in September but no more until in January,” he said. “Last year, I had to take my lock-on stand out of the area where I had been hunting because a timber thinning operation was going on. The thing that concerned me is that this is also the area where the buck had been hanging out.”

Setting his stand up in a new area, Guillory was encouraged when he found the buck’s image on trail cameras, with two of the photos revealing the big deer was moving during daylight hours.

“One thing that was intriguing to me was the rack, and it had changed little over the three years I have had photos of him,” he said. “The rack was rather narrow but extremely tall, with long tines and tips of the main beams actually crossing.”

Early on the morning of Dec. 7, he tossed out some loose corn and rice bran and settled into his stand.

“Right at daylight I had a spike walk out, and half an hour later another spike appeared. Along about 7:45, I could hear another deer walking down a little drain in the pines,” Guillory said. “I couldn’t see him at first but when he moved a bit closer and got to about 45 to 50 yards, I could see his rack and knew it was him.”

He was able to watch the buck rub its rack on a bush, and what was interesting was that because of the main beams touching, Guillory said the buck turned its head sideways to



Michael Guillory
Dec. 7
East Feliciana Parish
173 4/8

rub with the outside of its antlers.

“After watching him work on the bush for maybe five minutes, he started to move and finally came in to about 30 yards and started eating the loose corn I had put out. Although I’m comfortable with my bow at that range, the buck was easing closer as it fed on the corn so I held off,” he continued. “He made it to a pile of rice bran I had out and turned broadside at 23 yards and I drew my PSE bow and released the arrow with a Striker broadhead. He ran about 40 yards and I watched him pile up.”

The 11-point weighed only 165 pounds, but was estimated to be 6 ½ years old. Guillory and a friend put a tape on the rack and measured the inside spread at a mere 14 inches. However, the main beams were long and one G-2 was split. Circumference at the widest point near the bases was 6 2/8 inches. His taxidermist measured the rack at 173 4/8 inches gross, and 159 4/8 inches net.

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BIG BUCK GALLERY

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Oct. 3
Zack Buckner
Claiborne Parish
142



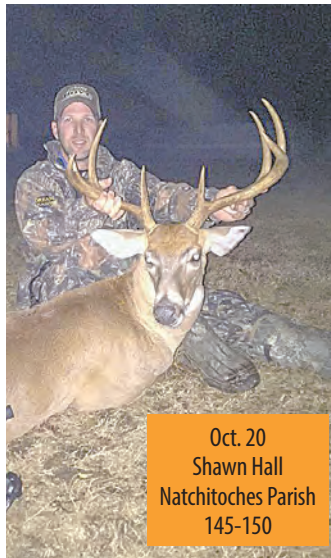
Oct. 4
Robert Lane
East Carroll Parish
167 3/8



Oct. 5
Landon York
East Carroll Parish
163 3/8



Oct. 16
Brandon Roshong
Fort Polk WMA
140



Oct. 20
Shawn Hall
Natchitoches Parish
145-150



Oct. 20
Nicholas Olden
Grant Parish
176



Oct. 21
Vicki Husted
Tensas Parish
150



Oct. 22
Brandon Bailey
Beauregard Parish
144



Oct. 24
Trip Taylor
Desoto Parish
155-160



Oct. 26
Eric Williams
Jackson Parish
148 5/8



Oct. 26
Kenneth Miller
Sabine Parish
154



Oct. 27
Randy Simpson
Union Parish
143 7/8



Oct. 27
Britt Buller
Jeff Davis Parish
146



Oct. 29
Todd Risinger
Union Parish
145 4/8



Nov. 4
Chas Farrell
Calcasieu Parish
141



Nov. 7
Keith Suire
Beauregard Parish
150 3/8



Nov. 7
Zach Shovan
Natchitoches Parish
163

BIG BUCK GALLERY CONTINUES



Nov. 10
Brandon Kirby
Caldwell Parish
153 7/8



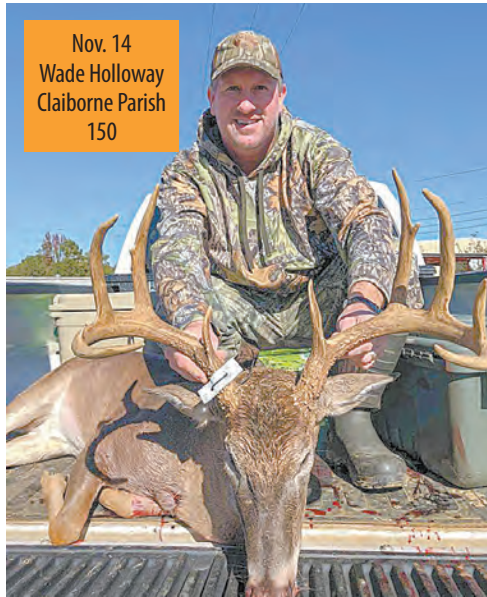
Nov. 10
Zach Jones
Ashbrook Island
164 7/8



Nov. 10
Brantley Ray
Madison Parish
165 6/8



Nov. 12
Daniel Colvin
Union Parish
151 3/8



Nov. 14
Wade Holloway
Claiborne Parish
150



Nov. 14
Chet Bolton
Sabine Parish
162 5/8



Nov. 18
Ben Brallier
Concordia Parish
172 2/8



Nov. 18
Larry Bringol
Natchitoches Parish
173



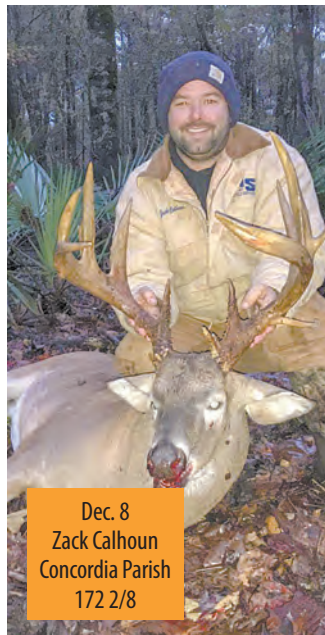
Nov. 24
Billy Bergeron
Tensas NWR
165 1/8



Dec. 4
Shayne Williams
Tensas Parish
154 5/8



Dec. 6
Brent Smart
Richland Parish
160 1/8



Dec. 8
Zack Calhoun
Concordia Parish
172 2/8



Dec. 9
Kim Adams
Lincoln Parish
162



Dec. 11
Bethany Gunter
Kisatchie NF
156 4/8



Dec. 15
Larry Louviere
Bienville Parish
150 5/8

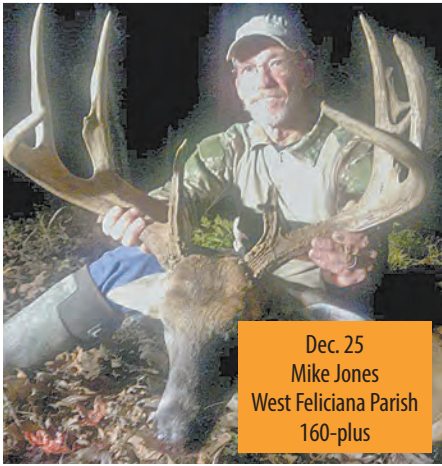


Dec. 21
Matthew Weems
Tensas Parish
170 5/8



Dec. 21
John Lejeune
Point Coupee Parish
173

BIG BUCK GALLERY CONTINUES



Dec. 25
Mike Jones
West Feliciana Parish
160-plus



Jan. 1, 2019
Beau Chenevert
Avoyelles Parish
166 5/8



Jan. 1, 2019
Helene Blanchard
Iberville Parish
152 2/8



Dec. 31, 2018
Robert Anderson
Dewey Wills WMA
157 7/8



Jan. 4
Aaron McCready
Morehouse Parish
159 6/8



Jan. 18
Shannon Harper
Lincoln Parish
161 1/8

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Jay team crappie

■ By Kinny Haddox

THIS SLAB-SLAYING FAMILY'S TEAM APPROACH MEANS THE OVERALLS ARE ON, THE LIVEWELL IS FULL — AND THE FISH FRYER IS BUSY.

Behind every successful crappie fishermen is a ... *good set of overalls?*

Blue jean bib overalls, to be exact. Apparently, fashion does play a part in crappie fishing success, especially if you are on 'Team Overalls' like brothers Joshua and Justin Maxwell and their dad, Pastor Warren Maxwell.

This trio of anglers take on crappie almost every week, putting their heads together to help them reel in stacks of tasty crappie fillets.

They fish wherever the crappie call them up in North Louisiana, from the Red River to Grand Bayou to Lake D'Arbonne and all points in between.

Like most families, their day-to-day paths

are pretty diverse. Brother Warren is pastor at Columbia Heights Baptist Church, Josh is a paramedic for Advanced EMS in Winfield and Justin is a chief electronic technician working on an offshore drilling rig halfway around the world for Ensco.

And while their everyday lives are extremely different, when they get in a boat together to go fishing, they all key on the same thing — catching crappie. There are common threads in their crappie fishing techniques — beyond their overalls — that can help others catch fish.

"I'd say there are about four things that are the same no matter where you are crappie fishing in North Louisiana," Josh said. "They are the keys to success."





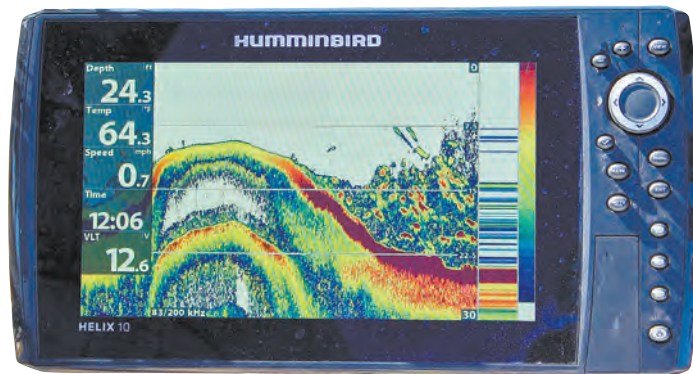
First, find the right depth.

Usually that means finding balls of shad on your electronics. Then look around on your graph. Sometimes you may see crappie; other times, they may be hard to find. But regardless, they are close by. Fish a couple of different depths until you find them, then put all your rigs at that depth. It's important to keep your bait above the fish, not below them. Crappie always feed up. A foot too low and you aren't going to get bit unless one hits it on the way down.

Second, be patient but not stubborn. When you find fish, stay on them. Sooner or later, they should bite. But at some point, don't bet your whole trip on them. Try something different, or somewhere else different. On a recent trip, they were fishing on Lake D'Arbonne and were on fish, but the wind was blowing so hard they wouldn't bite. So they loaded up and moved below the spillway to Bayou D'Arbonne, and ultimately found fish and caught a mess.

Third, pick the right bait. Find a couple of your favorites and fish them. Confidence is about as good as color, so have some options. Blue thunder, electric chicken, baby shad, popsicle, Cajun cricket, glitter critter and lights out are some of the best. And this time of year, tip that jig with a shiner. Plain shiners work well, too. It doesn't hurt to talk to other crappie fishermen, either. Believe it or not, they are usually willing to share information, which can give you a good head start.

And fourth, when all else fails, watch other crappie fishermen. If they are mostly on the edge of the channel, the middle of the channel or along the trees, there's a good bet that's where the crappie are. If they are trolling or sitting still, try what they are



This is an example of what wads of baitfish and crappie look like on the edge of a drop-off on today's electronics.

doing. And while all the crappie aren't in one spot, it's a good way to start. Then, find some other areas that offer the same type of structure and depth. You'll find in most of the North Louisiana lakes that there are very popular areas where somebody is always fishing. Just know crappie can be caught from one end of the lake to the other.

And, there's a fifth tip, not about how to catch them, but what to do with them when you do (see the Fish Fry sidebar.)

Now, for the rest of the story. While the previous points are all agreed on 100 percent by these three anglers, each of them has some favorite tactics as well. Here's a quick look at their top North Louisiana lakes, baits and fishing tips:

'Team Overalls' GETS ITS START

Wearing overalls has been a Maxwell family tradition way back to Josh and Justin's grandpa. But combining it with fishing really came from a matter of convenience.

"I just got tired of having to pull up my pants all the time," Josh said. "When you are fishing you are getting up and down, up and down, moving around all the time. It's just a matter of comfort and convenience.

"I wear them everywhere now, except for at work."

Team Overalls got its official fishing related-start on social media. A friend, fellow crappie fisherman and another overalls wearer, Jimmy Watt, did it.

"We had posted a photo on Facebook with us holding up some big crappie and wearing our overalls," Josh recalled. "Jimmy Watt just simply posted a reply: #teamoveralls."

The nickname stuck, and the Maxwells liked it, so they started using it everywhere. Now they have lots of followers: At the recent crappie.com gathering on Lake D'Arbonne, there were even crappie visitors from Michigan who call themselves #teamoveralls#north." ■

— Kinny Haddock



Team Overalls, from left, Justin, Josh and Warren Maxwell with three good crappie.



Justin Maxwell shows his favorite plastic tail bait, Southern Pro Popsicle, and one of the day's catch.

JUSTIN PICKS GRAND BAYOU

There's a reason this spot near Coushatta is his favorite — Justin lives there. But the fact it's chocked full of big, thick-sided crappie helps, too.

"This is my favorite time of the year, when it's cold and the fish are staging to spawn. I like to spider rig and find the fish on the flats next to the channel," he said. "Unlike most reservoirs, the fish hang on the flats at the channel, not in it. There is basically no structure in the lake, unless it's brush piles that somebody put there.



Southern Pro Stinger Shad in popsicle

"The wind can be a big problem, so it's important to keep up with the weather this time of year. And one other thing, the fish here are mostly black crappie. There just aren't many white crappie."

It's critical here to use your electronics to find the shad, as well as the flats. When you find wads of baitfish, the crappie are usually close. But you most likely will find them a foot or so off the bottom under the schools of bait.

Justin fishes with a lot of lures, but if he could only have one for the rest of his life it would be Southern Pro's 1/8-ounce Stinger Shad in popsicle with a pink head.

"It's just the best performing jig I've ever fished with," he said.

WARREN GOES WITH BLACK LAKE UP NEXT ➔

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BRO. WARREN GOES WITH BLACK LAKE

Bro. Warren has been after crappie since he used to go with his Aunt Cora fishing with a cane pole and shiners. They never fished more than 9 feet deep — because that was as deep as the line would go.

Today, he uses all the modern electronics and the latest tackle. If he had to name a favorite place to fish this time of year it would be Black Lake near Campti.

“It has so many cypress trees lining the channels and it’s just such a pretty place to fish,” he said. “It’s got curves in it, so you can go around the curve and get out of the wind and still be in the channel. I fish a lot up on an area called ‘The Stretch.’ It’s a long straight area, like a runway for crappie fishermen. You can troll about 14 feet deep and wear them out.”

He does spider rig, but he also loves it when the fish move up to the cypress where he can single-pole and “feel the thump.” His favorite baits are Black Lake hair jigs, or Gray Ghost hair jigs with a plain head. He also fishes an orange head with a Bobby Garland Baby Shad in lights out and black/chartreuse.

His best tip: Use a heavy weight up to a pegged 1-ounce bell weight to make sure your bait stays down where the fish are. When you troll, even at slow speeds, your bait will rise more than you think it will.



Black Lake hair jig in black/chartreuse



A Black Lake hair jig is Warren Maxwell's go-to bait. As you can see, he has a whole box of hair jigs for big crappie like this one.

Fish fry!

“I fillet my fish with an electric knife. I use vegetable oil because its cheaper and as long as you don’t burn it at higher temps, it will last multiple fries. I rinse the fillets off and then shake any excess water off. I shake the fillet in seasoned Louisiana Fish Fry (the blue bag). I use a two-basket, 4-gallon RV Works fryer and drop fillets in the basket (usually 10 per basket) and fry them for four minutes. Drain and place them in a paper towel-lined pan, add some fries and hushpuppies — and they are ready to eat.” ■

— Josh Maxwell



Fried crappie, french fries and hushpuppies... the real treat of a successful day on the water for Team Overalls.

A big weight helps keep your bait in the crappie strike zone in deep water.



LAKE BISTINEAU IS BEST FOR JOSH

There are a lot of good looking places to fish on Lake Bistineau near Sibley. But before Josh Maxwell wets a line, he spends some time making even more good places.

“One of the keys to our success is that we put out tops in the deeper water,” he said. “We get sweet gum or willow tree branches and tie them up good. We put a big weight in the bottom of the top, tie a sealed empty plastic soda bottle in the middle to hold the top up and drop it in. Fish will get on the tops faster than you think.”

If you don't have tops, that's OK, too.



Bobby Garland Baby Shad Cajun cricket

The fish congregate in the channel,

and you can find them near the baitfish, just like most other reservoirs in late-January and February. The difference is the channel isn't very wide and the fish really stack up.

“I fish a lot of crappie jigs, but my favorite is the Bobby Garland Baby Shad in Cajun cricket with a pink head. I'm a big fan of pink heads. And I never ever put a hook in the water without a chartreuse Crappie Nibble.”

Unlike most places they fish, Josh doesn't stick with the fish on Bistineau to the end of March when they move shallow. There are just too many cypress flats that you can't get a boat up into — and that's where the fish go to spawn.

When you start seeing fewer and fewer fish on your electronics out deep, you know that's where they are headed. ■

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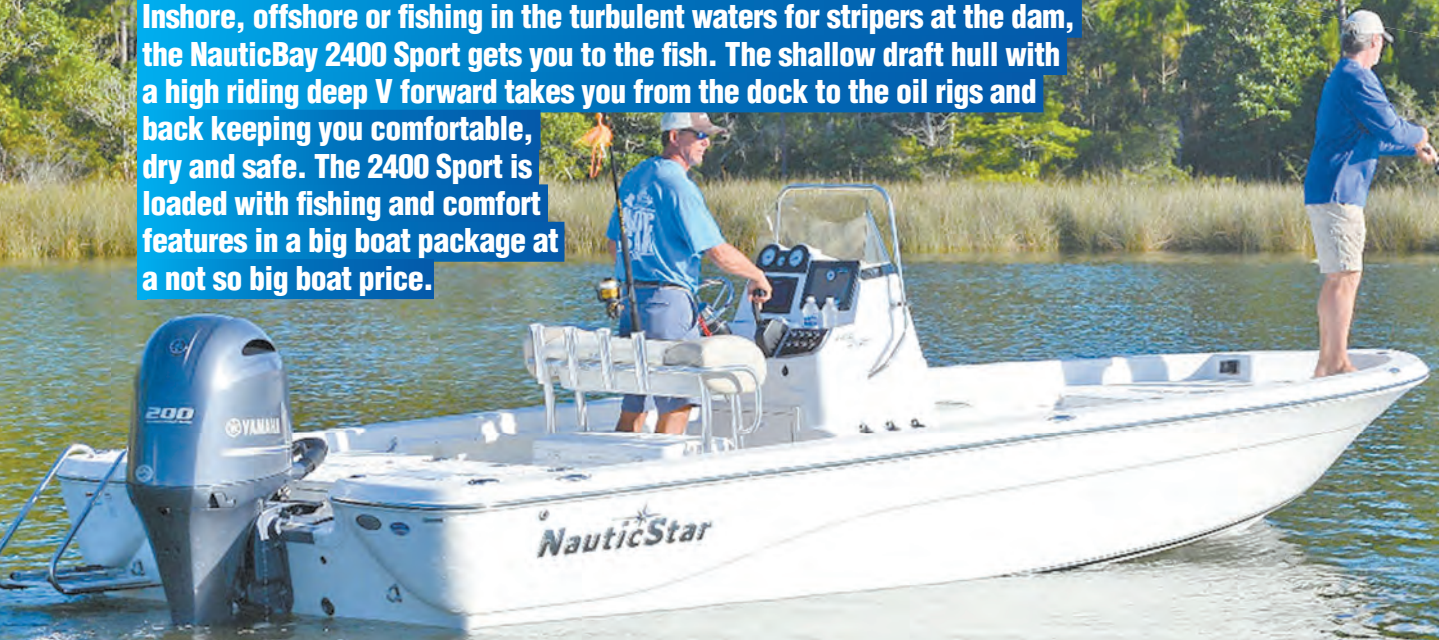
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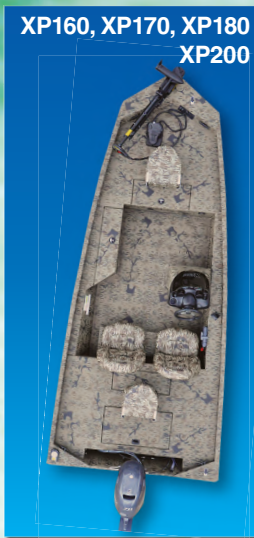


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A nice mess of crappie taken at a recent crappie.com gathering by, from left, Justin, Warren and Josh Maxwell with Bud Wilson and David Bartlett.



ONLINE CRAPPIE GROUP PUSHES *learning, fun*

Josh Maxwell and his family spend a lot of time crappie fishing, but they also give back to the sport, promoting crappie fishing learning, fun and family time through the annual Crappie.com gathering at Lake D'Arbonne every fall.

This past year, more than 60 people gathered at the state park for a three-day fishing adventure — where catching fish is only part of the fun.

"Crappie.com is a free, online group that shares information, gives tips and just gives people a great forum to keep in touch,"

Josh said. "Ed Moes created the website and has thousands of followers. Each state even has their own group, so you don't have to weed through a lot of information you may not be looking for."

Perhaps the highlight of the annual gathering is the eating, where a potluck supper is held on Friday night, with a fish fry on Saturday. The group will be having its 2019 gathering Nov. 7 - 9, and you can sign up online or get in contact with Josh through Facebook for more information.

"If I could only tell someone who wanted to learn to crappie fish one thing, it would be to find somebody that knows what they are doing and ask them a million questions," he said. "I tell you, crappie fishermen are the most giving and sharing cordial fishermen in the world. That's how I learned, by chatting with others on Crappie.com and by meeting and going with other crappie fishermen."

"Tag along in the backseat of their boat, or ask if you can trail them on the lake. Watch what they are doing — that's the best way to learn." ■

— Kinny Haddox

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THREE HELPFUL TIPS FOR *more crappie*

1. Managing those pesky little Crappie Nibbles without dropping them everywhere is always a chore, but Warren Maxwell found an easy solution. He mounted a simple sink stopper on top of his rod holder. The holes are just small enough to keep the nibbles contained, but big enough to drain any moisture that might gum them up. He also keeps a couple of spare crappie tails in his favorite color in the stopper for easy change outs.

2. Keeping your bait down where the crappie are is of utmost importance. A lot of times, fishermen are moving slowly and think their bait is at one level — when it is really drifting a foot or 2 above the target zone. Team Overalls uses pegged 1-ounce sinkers to make sure that doesn't happen, especially when fishing 10 feet deep or deeper. It holds the bait down, but doesn't affect the fish hitting the lure, or your ability to feel the strike.

3. When you are spider-rigging, keeping poles rigged and baited takes a lot of time. To make sure they are ready, these fishermen always keep some extra rigs ready to go. If they



A simple sink stopper is a great crappie nibble holder.

are fishing four poles, they keep at least seven ready and baited up, sometimes more. ■

– Kinny Haddox



Kinny Haddox has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 40 years. He also publishes a daily website, lakedarbonnelife.com. He and his wife, DiAnne, live on Lake D'Arbonne in Farmerville.

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FIND THIS PATTERN FOR TCHEFUNCTE SLABS

FEBRUARY TYPICALLY MEANS PRESPAWN BEGINS

Author Joel Masson shows off a sac-a-lait he caught from a cut off the Tchefuncte last spring. **INSET:** Bruhl fishes cypress trees or laydowns on a bank going into a pocket. Staging areas like this one can hold pre-spawn sac-a-lait.

Todd Masson

There's no better tasting fish than sac-a-lait, and this month, the Tchefuncte River is typically full of them.

Avid angler Jeff Bruhl starts fishing them this month in the pre-spawn period.

"They'll start getting together in (January) and then February they'll start moving to spawn," he said. "Usually it's March before they get a real hard spawn."

When he's fishing them in this early phase of the spawn, Bruhl focuses on structure close to the bank in the cuts off the main river.

"Most of the time, I'm looking out in front of the big cypress trees or laydowns on a bank going into a pocket somewhere," he said. "I'm hunting the staging areas that time of year."

To target these fish, Bruhl throws 1/16-ounce crappie jigs tipped with Berkley Crappie Nibbles at the base of trees.

"I'll go down to a 1/32-ounce if I'm fishing

kind of shallow or slow," he said. "You can use an 1/8, but I find unless you're fishing really deep, it falls too fast."

Bruhl also throws Roadrunner baits in front of the cypress trees and laydowns.

"That Roadrunner is pretty weedless," he said. "It'll go through those trees well."

Bruhl also said not to neglect fishing a little further off the bank.

"I've caught them 6 to 8 foot off those ledges where they're not tight up to the tree, but they're coming in," he said. "Sometimes when you find them like that, you can catch a lot."

Like many sac-a-lait anglers, Bruhl likes jigging poles. He uses a C-Series by Berkley, but he likes a shorter length than most guys.

"I don't like the big long ones," he said. "I like the 8-foot ones because I'm kind of flipping and pitching up under the trees."



Bruhl uses 8- or 10-pound monofilament on his reels, unless he's fishing with live bait.

"If I'm using a cork with shiners, I might use 20-pound with a leader on a swivel that is 8-pound test because if I get hung up, I just break the hook off with the leader and tie another one on instead of having to rig the whole cork up," he said. ■

- Joel Masson



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'SMALL-LAKE MENTALITY' KEY FOR SUCCESS

If there was an A-list of the most celebrated and sought-after slab crappie lakes in Louisiana, the Saline-Larto Complex in central Louisiana probably wouldn't make the cut.

But now is a good time to consider changing that.

Saline-Larto can be the life of the party, despite its lack of glamor shots and a PR department. The lake complex is a large, natural backwater area of lakes, bayous and cuts covering part of

Catahoula, LaSalle, Avoyelles and Rapides Parishes.

"One reason that Saline-Larto isn't more heavily fished is that it is not like a normal lake you just ride up to, back down the ramp and go fishing. It can scare some folks off because it is a maze of about 8,000 acres of lakes, bayous and backwater," said Larto

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“When you find shad, you’ll find fish.”

Lake guide Tony Fuqua. “The key is just to stick to the basics and approach the complex with a small-lake mentality. By that I mean just fish one portion of it, find the fish and enjoy yourself. You can’t cover the whole thing.”

A good place to do that in February is to hit the deep channels near Larto Lake, Saline Lake, Shad Lake or Larto Bayou, some of the most popular spots in the waterway.

There are a lot of 15- to 20-foot-deep channels, and like many other spots this time of year, the fish will follow the bait balls — big wads of shad that you can see on your electronics.

Bends of the channels, cuts and bayous are good spots to start. Some days, the fish will move up on the edge of the channel and you can even catch them 4 to 5 feet deep on hair jigs and a slip cork.

“When you find shad, you’ll find fish,” he said.

While a cold front may shut off the bite on big reservoirs, it actually seems to bunch up the crappie on Saline-Larto. You may have to fish a little slower and present your bait with a smaller weight to slow the fall, but you can literally mop up when that happens.

Fuqua likes black and chartreuse or brown and orange jigs, and doesn’t have an out-right favorite brand. He even uses big 2-inch tube jigs and large shiners. (You can get an up-to-date fishing report by calling Tony at 318-446-4943.)

You can access the complex located east of Alexandria and south of Jonesville at nearly a dozen concrete ramps and landings, including Youngblood’s, Saline and Muddy Bayou campgrounds, Big Creek and Woodson’s.

Be cautious because in the rainy winter season, roads can be in disrepair this time of year. ■

- Kinny Haddox



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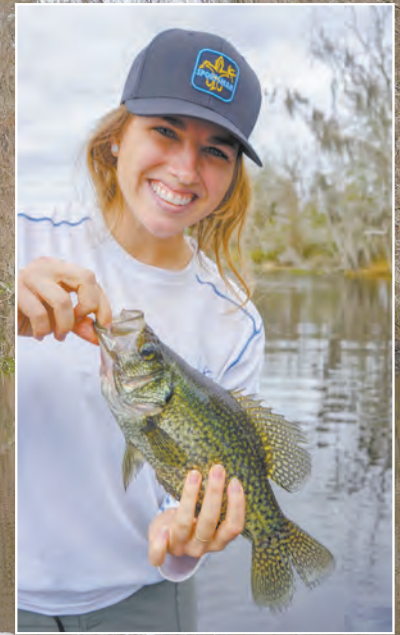
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IS SAC-A-LAIT SPAWN ALREADY ON?



In January, water temperatures in the Humble Canals hit 59 degrees and sac-a-lait were already staging to spawn.

WARM JANUARY WEATHER MIGHT HAVE PUSHED SOUTH LOUISIANA'S TASTIEST PANFISH TO MOVE UP EARLY

Word was out. The sac-a-lait were staging to spawn and anglers were catching plenty the first week

of January. But by that Sunday, the action had cooled down considerably and good catches were few and far between.

"I hate the spawn" said Luling angler Tim Bye as we fished the Humble Canals off of Lac Des Allemands — and didn't get a bite. "It's so hit or miss."

The main deal is the water has to be pretty. Look for clear water where you can see the bait 18 to 24 inches down. A couple days of warm weather is all you need there — pretty water warms up quickly.

Bye normally starts fishing sac-a-lait in the scenic Humble canals off of Bayou and Lac Des Allemands. If those areas are getting too much pressure, he'll head on over to Bayou Bouef and the bayous and canals that flow into it. (Anglers can get to Bayou Bouef either by boat through Lac Des Allemands or by launching out of Larousse Boat Launch off of Highway 307 in Raceland.

After a hard rain, Bye fishes dead-end canals. "It takes a few days for the water to settle down," Bye said. "Muddy water will push fish out of the bayous into the dead-ends."

Sac-a-lait start getting into spawning mode when the water temperature reaches the upper-50s, Bye said, noting they start spawning earlier than bass — but they don't all spawn at the same time.

Water temperatures in the Humble and Bouef canals had already climbed to 59 degrees by Jan. 7, so barring any major cold fronts we could see sac-a-lait spawning much earlier this year than normal.

Cool and cold fronts will certainly come and drop water temps, but Bye said it's just a matter of adjusting your depth to continue catching fish.

"They aren't going to go far," he said. "They'll just pull out and wait on the water to warm up again."

And if there's a prolonged warm-up, the bite could get frenetic by February - or even before.

"If that water hits 60 degrees, they're going to move closer to spawning — and

when it hits 65 degrees, they're doing it," Bye said. "If you go in a canal and the water temp is 65 degrees and you don't catch any fish, there are not fish in the canal; they didn't show up."

Until that happens, he recommended looking for those cut banks where sac-a-lait will spawn and working in 2 to 5 feet of water.

Another good lure for fishing spawn and pre-spawn sac-a-lait is a small beetlespin.



If you don't get any takers, be certain to work all depths before moving spots because crappie won't move a lot to eat. "They won't go down (to feed)," Bye said.

"If they're feeding, they might go up a little, but they'll never go down."

So this month he starts deep, and then works his way up to be certain he isn't missing fish.

Once you get a bite, the odds are pretty good you'll catch a few fish without moving.

"Wherever they're at, they're all together," he said. "You can catch two or three, and if they stop biting you can come back later and there'll probably be more fish there."

If the water warms up enough to kick off spawning action, Bye said it's not a prolonged affair.

"When they move up, they'll spawn quick: Two or three days, and then they move back out," he said.

So if you find fish right up on the bank one day and return and zero, just pull out and start working the depths.

Bye only fishes artificials, with his go-to being Panfish Assassin jigs.

"I don't think color makes a difference," he said.

His choice of poles is a 10-foot B'n'M

Bye's favorite sac-a-lait set up is a small spincast reel / tube jig/ cork combo that he fishes anywhere from 2 to 4 feet deep to find where the fish are staging.



crappie pole paired with the company's West Point Trigger Reels.

"It allows you to get tight to cover. I can reach out and drop the bait right where I want it," Bye said of the long rod. "But with that reel, I can also flip if I need to. It's long enough you can go either way."

He never uses a shorter casting rig.

"I'll catch three fish to your one because you're too busy reeling in," he said.

NEXT STOP, MORGAN CITY

Further west, Bill McCarty of Morgan City is ready to make a well-placed cast, set the hook and pull in slab after slab when February rolls around in South Central Louisiana.

McCarty, an all-around outdoorsman from Morgan City, knows just the area to

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CRAPPY HOTSPOTS
continued

work on putting sac-a-lait in the ice chest during the second month of the year, weather and water conditions permitting.

He'll point the bow of his boat east to fish the dead end and dogleg canals along Bayou Penchant and Bayou Copasaw, including the Bluebird Canal and canals off the Hooch.

McCarty said to look for canals with clear water and with scattered grass. The sac-a-lait, which average 1/2 to 1 1/2 pounds, could be 3 inches off the bank to 20 feet out, and in depths of 3 feet or less, to 6 feet.

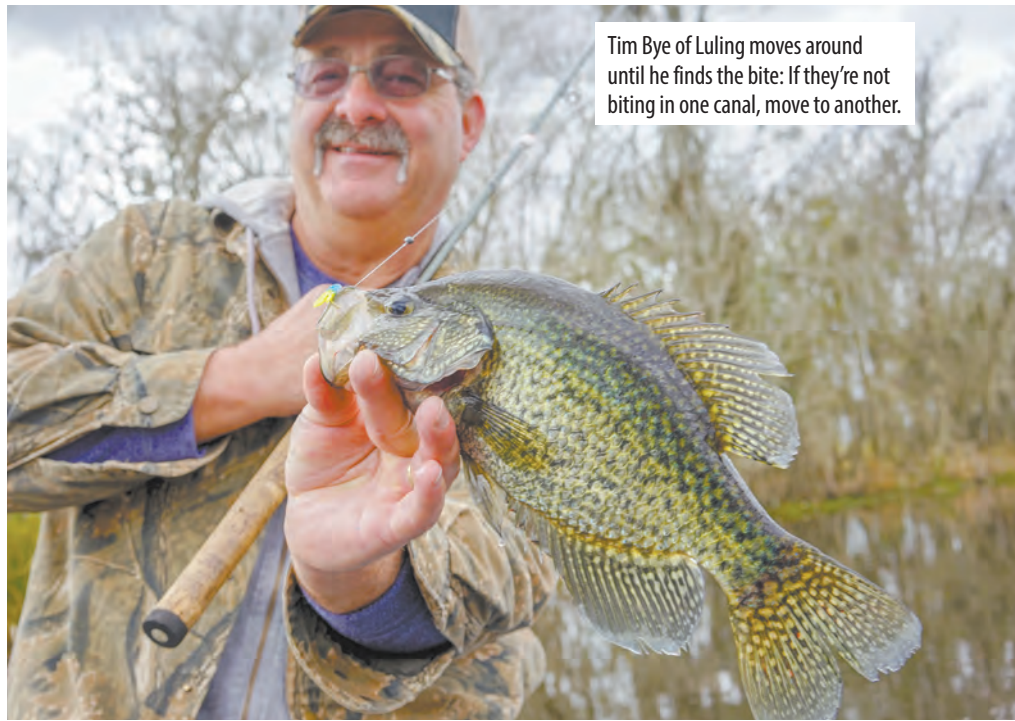
"The Bluebird's really good ... just any of the dead ends off Bayou Penchant, or doglegs where you can get out of the wind and fish the back end.

"Sometimes you catch them feeding. Sometimes when you filet them, they're full of minnows," he said.

He catches many sac-a-lait along undercut banks, he added.

For sure, he'll have tied on a 1/16-ounce jighead with a blue/white or blue/black/chartreuse colored tube jig with a chartreuse crappie nibble on it.

McCarty likes to fish under a very small,



Tim Bye of Luling moves around until he finds the bite: If they're not biting in one canal, move to another.

oblong Styrofoam orange/white cork — "the little bitty ones," he said.

That way, when a sac-a-lait bites, there is as little resistance as possible.

He fishes for sac-a-lait with 6-pound line

loaded on a spinning reel seated on a 5 1/2-foot light action casting rod.

"It's hard to beat a Zebco Delta 2," he said about his reel choice. ■

- Andy Crawford and Don Shoopman

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Identifying the types of habitat in which bass feed and spawn is key to lake break down.

HOW TO CATCH BASS ON ANY LAKE

By David A. Brown

So how do tournament anglers catch winning sacks of fish, with only a few days of on-site practice? Darold Gleason and Tyler Carriere share some tricks of the trade.

Ever watch competitive cooking shows and think, “I have no interest in becoming a professional chef, but I just learned something I can use for the next family dinner?” I do it all the time — picking up pointers on ingredient selection, preparation and cooking methods from folks who do professionally what I enjoy as a hobby.

The same logic applies to fishing; specifically the notion of learning how to dial in the most promising areas of a water body by tapping into the mental processes employed by folks who make a living with a rod and reel in their hands.

No doubt, tournament anglers and professional guides owe their livelihoods to their ability to determine where they’re most likely to find fish.

For those of us who love a bent rod, but spend far less time on the water, their strategies and disciplines can help us make the most of our days on the water.

SEASONAL PATTERNS

Toledo Bend guide Darold Gleason suggests starting with general seasonal patterns, as spawning cycles put fish in decidedly different areas than the dog days of summer. From there, he considers where the fish will drop their bags.

“Learn the kind of cover the fish are going to use (in a given season) because a bass is always going to use cover for ambush feeding,” Gleason said. “Do some Internet research and you’ll learn that Toledo Bend has timber and grass. Then you figure out what season you’ll be here, and you’ll know from your research whether you should be looking to begin with grass or begin with wood.

“For example, if you’re here in the spring, you’re looking more for the shoreline grasses, the hay grass and maybe the shallow milfoil. If you’re coming late summer to fall, you might be looking for hydrilla. As far as wood, you’re fishing brush piles and things like that

and in the spring, you’re fishing stumpy flats, buck brush and cypress trees.”

In a big lake like the Bend, the sheer vastness of habitat can be overwhelming; but Gleason encourages anglers to dispel the notion of trying to fish everything.

Matching seasonal patterns with available cover is the way to go.

“When I’m traveling for tournaments, the pre-visit research with Google Earth helps me find banks that have grass and banks that have docks so I have a head start on it,” Gleason said. “But don’t be afraid to cover water. Usually, when we have our best days is when we cover water until we figure something out.

“So, if you haven’t had a bite in 30 minutes, don’t be afraid to pull up that trolling motor and go try something different — or go try the same thing somewhere else.”



Wading birds know where the baitfish are, so consider them bass arrows.

KEEP IT MOVING

Much of the lake breakdown process can be crystallized into a simple concept: Forget about catching limits, and focus on amassing as many options as possible.

“I used to try and get a few bites in an area; now, I just run and try to get one bite in as many places as I can and then come back in a tournament and work on it from there,” Bassmaster Elite pro Tyler Carriere said. “With 2 1/2 days of practice (for an Elite event), you don’t have time to just fish one stretch and find out where the sweet spot is — you have to figure that out in a tournament.

“Like if you’re fishing a hydrilla point and you get a bite, don’t keep on going to see where else you can get a bite; you just want to run way across the lake and see if you can find another place like it and get a bite there. Then, in the tournament, you come back and work it over to find where your better places are.”

While Gleason definitely wants to catch fish in practice, he says his main objective is input. He wants to learn as much as he can, so his tournament can take a well-focused course.

“A lot of times, practice is culling water,” Gleason said. “So, if I go into

an area and get a bite on a bait and run to another area and get a bite on the same bait or in the same depth of water, I may drop back completely and go try something completely different for a little while.

“What that does for me on tournament day is it keeps it fresh. I don’t want to wear myself out throwing one bait all the time, but have all these other lures and options on my mind. Along with culling water, I like to cull a lot of techniques in practice and get them out of my mind. Even if they don’t work in practice, I’m still learning what is working.”

SIGNS OF HOPE

SOMETHING DIFFERENT — Carriere knows he may catch a bass along a boring, straight bank; but his chances rise considerably when he targets the anomalies.

“I like cypress points that reach into the main lake; that’s your high-percentage areas,” he said. “Instead of just fishing down a straightaway, you want to find where the cypress trees make a point. You just want something different; it doesn’t have to be trees, it could be hydrilla, logs, anything that breaks up a straight bank.”

Points often factor into the bass’ seasonal movements, so give them a fair look.



When bass are spawning, consider that their strike zone shrinks, so keep your presentations tightly focused.

A bladed jig, in this case Z-Man's Jack Hammer ChatterBait, is one of Darold Gleason's favorite lures to cover water when he's scouting for a tournament.



FIND THE FOOD — Bass will move for seasonal needs, but wherever they go, they will not wander far from their forage. Bream beds, docks and seawalls hosting shad spawns and free-roaming bait schools — these are key details to note when breaking down a lake.

"If you ever see those white cranes and egrets standing on the shoreline, you always want to fish over there because that means there's a bunch of shad pushed up on the shore, so the bass will be up there eating," he said. "Back home (the Atchafalaya Basin area), I'm fishing in 3 feet or less most of the time, so electronics don't do you much good. So you have to rely on Mother Nature."

TURN-OFFS

Lack of cover is Gleason's clearest clue that he's in the wrong area. Also, a general lack of activity — no bait, no birds, no fish busting. This is a trust-your-gut kinda deal, so if it doesn't feel right based on logical inputs, wave goodbye.

For Carriere, snagging his baits and pulling up brown, dead grass vs. crisp, green vegetation tells him he's in a lifeless area. Another sign simply requires the occasional afterward glance.

"Back home, we get a lot of dead water pulling out of the woods and when you go through it, the bubbles stay behind your boat forever," Carriere said. "So, if you get that bad water with bubbles (in the prop wash) and that smell, you definitely want to evacuate that area immediately."

GAUGING THE MOOD


Explaining how fish's aggression level translates into bite intensity, Carriere says: "I definitely want to find the ones that are choking the bait, because those are the ones up

there eating, whether it's crawfish or shad. Whereas, if they're just nipping at the bait, there might not be enough bait in the area to keep them ganged up and ready to eat. That's why I try to find areas where the bait's piled up, because that's where your active fish are going to be."

Gleason agreed and notes: "Generally, when you get around the fish, they'll let you know. You'll get some bites and you'll see some activity. Whereas, if you run in


a creek in the springtime and fish for an hour and you haven't had a bite, you haven't seen anyone around you catch one, you haven't seen fish jumping or bait in the area; then it's obviously time to change.

continued on page 86 >




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SPRING SLOW-DOWN

Power fishing to cover water versus targeted presentations — both can serve valuable roles for your lake breakdown efforts. Toledo Bend guide Darold Gleason notes that, while covering water is usually the preference most of the year, spring may shift the emphasis.

"If we're talking about spawning time, a lot of times you do have to slow down and pick apart your areas to see what's there because the fish's bite radius isn't as big when they're spawning. They're chasing not out of hunger, but out of anger, so that shrinks their strike zone.

"If the spawn is a part of the equation, I'm probably going to do a little more flipping or casting with a V&M flipping jig or a Texas-rigged V&M J Bug. But even then, I'll have a spinnerbait or bladed jig tied on and I'll mix in covering some water if I can."

Just consider that breaking down a lake several days before a tournament — or weekend to weekend, for casual anglers — might mean fishing drastically different conditions than those in which you found the fish. That means a

healthy dose of flexibility will serve you well.

"You may be throwing crankbaits in practice to cover water, but it seems like every time we have a tournament, a front hits and we have to slow it down," Bassmaster Elite pro Tyler Carriere said. "I've had it happen numerous times when we were cranking in practice and then in the tournament, you had to do a 180 and use a dropshot or a jig."

The takeaway: Finding areas with fish is the number one goal of lake breakdown, so catch 'em however you can get bit. If the weather changes, the fish won't completely abandon an area; they'll simply adjust with the conditions. Knowing where they are enables you to make the key changes necessary to earning those bites.

"Most of the time, if you find them one weekend and you go back the next weekend and it's different, you just have to change up a little bit," Carriere said. "If you were fishing on an 80-degree day the week before and it's in the 40s the next weekend, they're probably still there; you just have to slow down." ■

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LAKE BREAKDOWN EXPLAINED

continued from page 83 >

"But there are exceptions to this and if you go somewhere where it's fishing very tough, you may have to change things up a bit more. Instead of running so much new water, you may have to change tactics by downsizing to smaller lures."

Other considerations:

WIND — Prudent trip planning should always include an awareness of running conditions throughout the day. Monitoring wind speed and direction will help you block off portions of the lake that will be not only unfishable — but unreachable.

At Toledo Bend, for example; you really don't want to cross that big lake when stiff winds whip it into bow-slapping nastiness. Therefore, if you know the afternoon's gonna get ugly, you'll be wise to launch on the side you plan on fishing later in the day. Even if that means trailering across in the morning, that

extra road mileage will save you a tooth-rattling ride when the wind puts a lot of angry water between the two states.

INFLOWS — Rains tend to wash muddy water into a lake, and that can work for or against you. Right after a heavy rain, the backs of creeks or anywhere storm water empties will often be too dirty to fish. However, after the inflow works its way into an area, the staining affect may pull fish shallow to feed aggressively.

Elsewhere, Carriere notes how a lake's inflows can serve as positioning elements. Using Lake Verret near Morgan City as an example, he explains how to target the fish's natural setup spots.

"You want to go to the north end where all the little bayous dump into the lake and fish the outer edges," Carriere said. "Fish the cypress trees within a few hundred yards on each side of where the bayou comes into the lake.

"Even on the smaller lakes, I do the same thing. Try to go where you have the



most water coming out of the river into the lake. The fish are going to come out of the river and go to the edges."

RECREATIONAL TRAFFIC — Do your homework and get to know a lake's user groups. Everyone has equal rights to the resource, but heavy boat traffic muddies shorelines and makes certain offshore targets unfishable. Check local schedules for boat races or fishing tournaments, and identify where the weekend "party coves" are located (local tourism offices can help here).

Regardless of where you fish, a lake's potential is best unlocked with a well-founded game plan and a disciplined search. Put in your time, pay attention to the signs and before long, you'll have a clear picture of where and when to fish the key areas. ■



A full-time freelance writer specializing in sport fishing, David A. Brown splits his time between journalism and marketing communications (www.tightwords.com).

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HIGH WATER CONDITIONS AT TOLEDO BEND

A POOL LEVEL NORTH OF 173 COULD BE A BOON FOR SIGHT-FISHING BEDS

Rain, rain and more rain in January pushed the pool stage up at Toledo Bend to about 173.5, so I'm expecting water still in the bushes come February — which is why I believe there will be some sight-fishing success for double-digit bass.

With the deluge of rain, long gone is the plan to keep the lake level at 168 to facilitate work below the dam on the other side. The contractors were told a while back to pick up their gear and get everything out from the site.

Couple the high water with the fact water temperatures haven't dipped below the mid-40s, and you get an idea why sight fishermen are licking their chops to get at bedding bass early in February, which does happen.

Remember, conditions don't have to be perfect for the sows with developed egg sacks to lay their eggs. The January full moon was on the 5th, and the February full moon is on the 6th. When February rolls around, you can bet with the biological development going on in many females - that some will move up the first part of the month.

Keep in mind the back end of many creeks are getting stained from the rain. The farther south you fish, though, the cleaner some of those will be.

Some prime areas this month should be Housen, Six Mile and Indian Mounds.

The key is to find the warmest water you can, even if it's 1 or 2 degrees warmer — and warming water happens as more minutes of daylight become the norm in February. The clearer the water, the better of course.

For sight-fishing success, the best window will be the mid-day hours from 11 a.m. to about 4 p.m.

Wear polarized sunglasses and look for areas inside the grass line, which would be — as high as the water should be in February — in 3- to 5-foot depths inside the grass line, behind secondary points and on flats. Find telltale dirt spots and chances are great you'll find a big girl.

The full moon on February 6 will push some females on the flats the first half of the month.



Many bass anglers, especially bass tournament pros, just turn the trolling motor on and look for bass on beds. They put the fishing rod down and mark way points at each sighting.

Whenever you decide to target the bedding bass you find, tantalize them with soft plastics. More and more anglers are using spinning rod and reel combinations loaded with 20-pound braided line: Deadsticking is the dominant technique.

What soft plastics and what color? You can't beat watermelon/red and green pumpkin/red, but in the dirtier water black often produces more often.

Any of the following soft plastics will get the desired result, it's just a matter of when the females are ready to bite: Plastic lizards, plastic worms, tubes, creature baits, wacky worms, Flukes and Senkos. (I'm partial to Flukes.)

Later in February, warmer water conditions are more prevalent. More bass move up, as do the baitfish, and moving baits will pick off more and more fish in transition from deep to shallow.

That's a time when red-hued Rat-L-Traps, gold/orange Rogues, square bill crankbaits and shad-colored chatterbait-type artificial lures shine on this lake.

My No. 1 favorite, though, at that time is a Carolina-rigged shad-colored, watermelon/red or green pumpkin/red Fluke. The C-rig is very effective on flats, points and ditches as the bass storm the beaches.

I've been guiding on this lake most of my life and you're always welcome in my boat. Give me a call at (936) 404-2688. ■

- John Dean



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No, 'new dynamics' is not a hot new bass lure — it's the newest set of forces stimulating bass catching up at Caney Lake near Jonesboro.

The new dynamics mainly center around the continued growth of various aquatic grasses in places where they haven't been

in years, even on the big lake.

"I'll tell you, the resurgence in grass is giving us more places to successfully fish, and more bass as well," said veteran lake fisherman Jeff Glover of West Monroe.

"And right now is a good time to take advantage of that."

The grassy areas are improving the entire

food chain on the lake, giving baitfish a place to thrive and hide and giving bass not only more feeding areas, but places closer to shallow water to stage for the spawn.

"Changing dynamics are giving us some new places to fish and the old spots are still good," Glover said. "But all the new grass will be less pressured, where we



Chunky largemouth bass like these are why Jeff Glover is high on Caney Lake's February bass prospects.

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have the opportunity to not only catch numbers of bass — but big Caney Lake specials as well.”

The new spots, however, will take some looking for. A good place to start this month is in 10 feet of water or less. Those areas may be on shallow humps, extended underwater points or even at the ends of long boat docks and piers.

When you find the grass, Glover recommended starting with a Rat-L-Trap in crawfish color or chartreuse shad. He uses it as a search bait, covering a lot of water trying to locate spots where bass have gathered. Glover fishes the Trap just above the grass, then rips it when he feels it bump. Most times if a bass sees it, they’ll bump you back.

After you find them with that bait, try a bladed jig like the Z-Man Jack Hammer Chatter-Bait — it’s been a hot item on the lake.

If the grass gets too thick or the bite slows, try a Senko in watermelon or green pumpkin color. Fish it slowly over the grass for best results. Many fishermen using it early in the year also rig it Texas style with a slip sinker. That allows the bait to get down into the grass to the fish easier.

When the fish get more shallow, the traditional weightless style works best.

“A lot of things are changing on the lake and most of it is good,” Glover said. “But one thing that isn’t changing is the large number of big bass in this lake.”

Previous slot limits on Caney were removed by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries last year and replaced with statewide regulations for the species. The daily limit is 10 fish with no length restrictions to enhance recreational opportunities. ■

- Kinny Haddox



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IT'S HAMMER TIME ON CHICOT LAKE

PRESPAWN SHOULD BE ON THIS MONTH

Chicot Lake's bass — big and bigger — are ripe for the picking when the second month of the year rolls around.

That's why Mike "Pickle" Fontenot of Ville Platte is itching to get out on his home lake in February, as are so many other bass anglers in south central Louisiana.

Chicot Lake, the 2,000-acre manmade lake in Evangeline Parish, has a well-deserved reputation for giving up double-digit bass any time of the year.

"Oh, I'm ready. I'm ready, man," said Fontenot, who has pulled out a 10-2, a 10-6 and a 10-13 all on jigs, as well as "a bunch of 9s and 8s" in his 30 years fishing the lake nestled in the hills of Lake Chicot State Park.

Tie on a ¼-ounce V&M black/blue/purple jig with a Zoom Speed Craw, or a black/red flake Brush Hog, and head to the "second line" of cypress trees nearest the shoreline in coves if the water temperature's still on the cool side, Fontenot said — and get ready to set the hook on a hawg.

During that prespawn time, dark-colored Senkos, such as watermelon/red or green pumpkin/red also put bass in the boat.

"Those three baits, that's what I go to," he said.

Fontenot, 54, and others target the second line of cypress trees -- those generally in 4- to 5-foot depths -- before the water warms well into the 60s. That's where they find staging bass, those that are on the verge of moving into the shallows to spawn.

The coves on the north end, in the Spillway area, can be very productive under those conditions.

"A lot of those trees sitting in 4 feet of water, I've caught good



Mike "Pickle" Fontenot of Ville Platte holds one of the hawgs he has caught fishing Chicot Lake.

fish there," he said. "It all depends on the water temperature."

As the water warms into the 60s and the spawn gets going full speed, Fontenot said he heads to the back of the numerous coves on the upper end and in the mid-lake area, concentrating on the many points and shorelines 2 feet deep and skinnier.

Clusters of cypress trees often pay big dividends then, he said.

Later in the spring, he has had plenty success on the south end, fishing the coves in the Blue Springs area. Another one of his favorite springtime targets are the coves and their many points behind the state park's rental cabins.

The prime time for bassin' success, especially for hawgs on Chicot Lake, is on the full moon in January, February, March and April.

The bigger bass move up to spawn on those full moons, he confided, adding that each of his double-digit bass from the lake was caught on a full moon; one in September, one in December and one in January.

The biggest, the 10-13, came on a full moon in late January. ■

- Don Shoopman

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LAKE FAUSSE POINTE BORROW PIT HAWGS

LAST FEBRUARY SAW LAKES BIGGEST BASS

Lake Dauterive/Fausse Pointe has been known for giving up bragging-size bass for decades, especially since the late 2000s. Starting in February, it's time to hook them while the hooking's good.

After 43 years fishing the lake system almost in my back yard, the perennial hotspots each year at this time are engraved in the memory banks; places like Sandy Cove, Texaco Field and, at least



Zachary Brazda of Arnaudville caught a 9.4-pound beauty, while fishing a Carencro Bass Club tournament.

Courtesy The Daily Iberian

until a few years ago, Coon Slough.

More and more hawks, though, are coming from the borrow pits along the West Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee from Lake

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Consider going light in high pressured areas. Brazda used a weightless Cajun Lures Baton on a spinning reel to catch his lunker.



Fausse Pointe State Park south along what is locally known as the Borrow Pit Canal.

There are a series of borrow pits, the deepest water in the lake system, starting across from the lower part of the state park's RV pads and stretching for miles until it ends in the last deep borrow pit, where a strip of land separates it from another borrow pit that parallels the levee.

Those borrow pits, including one on the west side of the Borrow Pit Canal, gave up the lake's biggest bass of the year, both in February 2018.

Zachary Brazda of Arnaudville hit on a winning tactic last Feb. 17 while reeling in a giant from one of those borrow pits while fishing a Carencro Bass Club tournament out of Lake Fausse Pointe State Park, which has a boat ramp right at the Borrow Pit Canal.

Considering the amount of pressure in the popular spot that day, Brazda decided to go light. He picked up a Cajun Lures Baton tied to 10-pound test line on a spinning rod and reel combo and pitched it near a tree in the water where five boats had fished already.

Brazda got the bite and, after an exciting fight, he got the bass: a 9.4-pounder, which was released at the boat ramp after the weigh-in.

On Feb. 25 of last year, Albert Vincent of Parks was fishing the last borrow pit in the series while participating in the annual Big Bass Classic, a local fundraising event patterned after the Sealy Big Bass Splash contests on Toledo Bend, Lake Fork and Lake Sam Rayburn.

His 5.84-pounder bit after a heavy rain mid-morning, and was the biggest of the one-day event held out of Marsh Field Boat Landing near Loreauville.

Vincent got the lunker bass, which also was released, to bite on a Strike King Rage Tail Bug.

There are enough shallow areas in those borrow pits to bring amorous females closer to the shoreline to spawn in February, an early occurrence

here compared to other parts of the state.

The last borrow pit also has another feature — two sets of stump fields (boaters are advised to navigate the area carefully).

The borrow pit nearest the state park usually stays muddy the longest. However, unless there are extreme conditions, the others are clear or, at least, fishable.

Besides soft plastic jerkbaits and jig-n-pig combinations, gold/orange Rogues, black/blue, watermelon/red and green pumpkin/red creature baits, similarly colored long plastic worms and soft plastic swimbaits, and double-bladed chartreuse/white spinnerbaits also are productive in those borrow pits.

Also, when the water temperature warms to where it's consistently in the middle-60s and higher, topwaters, including buzzbaits, trigger strikes. ■

- Don Shoopman



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Prespawn fish are moving and looking for food, so crankbaits allow you to effectively cover water to find the hot spots.

CRANK UP CRANKBAITS FOR THE PRESPAWN

By David A. Brown

TIPS TO HELP COVER
MORE WATER



Winter's finally releasing its icy grip and bass are making their move toward the shallow flats where they'll soon begin their annual spawning activity. Once they settle into this reproductive ritual, they'll be more concerned with perpetuating the species than filling their bellies; but during the critical prespawn period, when the fish are feeding heavily, anglers slinging crankbaits will find their offerings well received. No doubt, this early-season feeding focus ensures that you'll catch prespawners on a variety of presentations. However, reaction baits typically fare best for a couple of reasons: 1) You can pinpoint promising areas by covering a lot of water quickly and efficiently and 2) Power fishing with moving baits often enables you to trigger bites from fish that might otherwise ignore a slower presentation.

WHAT TO THROW

For general prespawners tactics, you'll want to keep handy a selection of crankbaits in three main categories:

DEEP DIVERS — Greg Hackney likes a Strike King Series 4 when he needs to reach fish as deep as 8 feet. For early pre-spawners staging on deeper spots, Toledo Bend guide Darold Gleason reaches for a 6th Sense Cloud 9 C15 or a 300 DD.

SHALLOW RUNNERS — Squarebills like the KVD 1.5 are the usual choice here, as their design keeps them deflecting off solid cover like stumps, laydowns and riprap.

LIPLESS — Ideal for rapid-fire presentations, baits like the original Bill Lewis Rat-L-Trap or a Yo-Zuri Rattlin'Vibe are highly effective at burning through the water column with lots of vibration and sonic appeal. (Silent versions aren't the worst choice, but you typically want to create maximum disturbance this time of year.)



Squarebills excel for bumping along hard cover to trigger bites. BELOW: Rapid fire casts with a lipless crankbait will appeal to hungry prespawners.



WHERE TO FIND THEM

The prespawn is generally considered the best period of the year to catch the fish of a lifetime because bass are at their heaviest and there's a bunch of 'em. However, the buzzkill comes by way of one simple truth: These transitioning fish aren't parking anywhere for very long. Now, the better areas will see group after group of fish utilizing these feeding stations, but it's no gimme — you gotta put in the time to find them.

Gleason focuses much of his attention on the contour lines just off a spawning flat. These final breaks before the shallow zone give fish a waiting room where they can feed up until the right combination of temperature and moon phase ushers them onward.

continued >

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crankbaits continued >

Other likely prespawn staging spots include:

POINTS — A stretch of shoreline extending off the bank and tapering into progressively deeper water presents an ideal area for migrating fish to rise up and feed. The shallower water on top of the point makes it easy for fish to round up their meals, while allowing quick access to the safety of deeper water. Think of these points like highway rest stops.

OUTSIDE GRASS EDGES — Blast around the lipless crankbait to probe the lanes within the grass, but don't fret if your bait hangs in the vegetation. Snagging and ripping a lipless bait free often triggers some of your better bites.

Also, keep that squarebill on standby for more targeted work. Specifically, this bait's floating design works wonders when you kill it and let it float up in a grass hole. If it doesn't get smashed on the way up, it usually will when you resume the retrieve.

THE DITCH — Creeks and pockets typically have a distinct channel leading into their spawning shallows. Fish instinctively follow these well-established travel lanes, which are often studded with logs, laydowns and stumps — all great targets for those prespawn crankbaits.

CANALS — Dead-ends, as well as the connecting waterways linking residential waterfronts to the lake, can be prespawn cranking gold. Likewise, old logging canals with lots of stumps deserve plenty of attention.

Wherever you fish your prespawn crankbaits, give your targets thorough coverage. Often, there's a particular angle that triggers bites, so clock around whenever possible and you may be rewarded with a flurry. ■



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by Captain Paul

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SWIMBAITS KEY FOR PRESPAWN SUCCESS

By David A. Brown

Medium swimbaits make highly effective search tools for finding big fish.

We all want to swing on a big one — and if you're not integrating swimbaits into your bass plan, you're limiting your opportunities. This category includes a range of sizes from the small stuff in that 3-inch range to the heavy-weights of 8 inches or more. For general use in the prespawn, you'll do well with a midsize swimbait of 4 ½ to 5 inches.

Some prefer the ultra flexible models like the Strike King Shadacious or the Berkley Hollow Belly swimbait; while others go with solid swimmers like a Reaction Innovations Skinny Dipper, YUM Pulse or Berkley Havoc Grass Pig. For open water scenarios, a jighead's open hook design can increase your hook-ups, but around grass, wood or any snag-prone habitat, keep it weedless with a screw lock style wide gap swimbait hook. (Belly-weighted

hooks lengthen casts and reach deeper.)

Whatever your choice, these versatile baits serve you well in the spring months with two main applications:

PRESPAWN SEARCH: When ripe females depart their winter haunts and start making their way toward the shallow, protected spawning flats, they'll basically eat their way into the spawn. With these hefty bass seeking even more heft, bait-fish imitations are an easy sell. Crankbaits get a lot of play this time of year, but balancing that look with a soft paddletail swimbait gives target fish an appealing look.

Slow rolling is usually a good place to start, but don't hesitate to pepper the gumbo with a little razzle-dazzle. The simplest adjustment is speeding up the retrieve for short bursts to mimic a shad

or bream that just noticed a follower. Another one: Give the bait a few sharp cranks on the reel to make it dart upward and then kill it for a tantalizing free-fall.

BED FISH IRRITATION: As spring progresses and warming water ushers fish into the spawning areas, you have a settling in period when the fish become highly territorial. Knowing that their eggs will immediately become the target of marauding bream and other nest-raiders, the bass will chase off anything that ventures too close to the nursery. They're not necessarily looking to eat everything they attack; rather, they're more interested in running off intruders.

Those medium swimbaits will definitely catch spawners, but that generally results from a blind cast tracking right over a bed. Most days, the swimbait will show you

fish that reveal their positions with defensive bluffs. As long as a bait is moving away from the bed, a bass will typically make a menacing charge and quickly circle back home. However, spotting one of these swirls or actually glimpsing the fish will allow you to concentrate your efforts.

RIGGING TIPS

Consider these tips for optimal swimbait performance:

ROOM TO MOVE: Hollow belly swimbaits rigged on jigheads present a time-consuming liability, as the force of a thrashing fish can rip the hook through the bait's body. A simple fix involves cutting an inch-long slit in the bait's back to allow more space for the hook to move, thereby reducing the damage done by a hooked fish.

EXTRA BITE: If the fish are finicky, perhaps from heavy fishing pressure or post-frontal conditions; or if you're dealing with early bed fish that are only nipping at your bait, you may want to increase your bait's biting ability with a stinger hook.

Owner Stinger Harnesses facilitate the task, but do-it-yourselfers may want to run the point of the swimbait hook through the eye of a treble hook and pin one arm of the latter into the bait's underside. This arrangement keeps the extra points riding close to minimize snagging in grassy or woody scenarios, but for open water, let the stinger dangle on the swimbait hook's shank for maximum grabbing power. ■



Cutting a slit in the back of a hollow body swimbait allows more hook movement and prevents ripping.

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SULPHUR MINE SPECKS

By Chris Ginn

This Lafourche Parish winter hole can seem more like a gold mine for trout anglers. Here's one local guide's **TOP 10 HOTSPOTS** for the area — and a detailed map with GPS coordinates to get you there.

Saltwater anglers have long been at the mercy of the wind more so than freshwater anglers. The very nature of fishing sprawling bays and open lagoons along a wide-open coast means wind direction and strength must be taken into account before and during every trip.

"The wind affects the fishermen more than the fish," said Capt. T-Man Cheramie, who guides out of Bayou Blue in Larose. "... Wind is a good thing. It stirs everything up and puts more oxygen in the water. It mixes up the water and moves the bait around."

But even if the wind is blowing, the Sulphur Mine — a famous winter trout hole just to the west of Galliano in Lafourche Parish — is still doable.

And the entire area is located inside the Point-aux-Chenes Wildlife Management Area, which makes it one of the last places in the parish where anglers don't have to worry about getting ticketed for fishing private water.

If you haven't fished the Sulphur Mine in a while, or you base your

knowledge of it from articles published years ago, you probably think catching trout is as easy as tying up to one of the pipes sticking up in the deep water and tossing out your bait.

"That's all gone," Cheramie said. "The 25-foot hole is now 14 at its deepest. We've lost 6 or 7 feet of water from it silting in, and the storms have done a number on the Sulphur Mine. You used to catch fish by tying up and sitting still. Nobody would move around. Now, you've got to bounce around a little bit"

And it's that bouncing around that really makes the Sulphur Mine shine in the wind. Because it's a relatively protected section of marsh, anglers can always find a productive area without having to cross miles of open water to get somewhere. On windy days, Cheramie simply finds a lee shore and fishes.

the hotspots >







T-MAN'S TOP 10 TROUT HOTSPOTS

Capt. T-Man Cheramie, who guides out of Larose, is a veteran of catching specks in the Sulphur Mine.

NO. 1: DAM COVE ONE

(N29 27 13.83 X W90 23 8.10)

What defines this cove are three things that used to be here that are now long gone. Over the years, hurricanes have broken apart a long point that extended into the old mine, some islands just inside the eastern levee and a shallow flat in the back of the cove. However, the storms may have left better fishing in their wakes.

"I like to come into this cove and start on the levee to the east," Cheramie explained. "I follow that side to the back and come around, then fish back up the western levee. I make about three different passes at different distances off the bank, and just keep circling around and working out until I find where they're hanging out."

It used to be that Cheramie couldn't fish all the way to the back of the cove because of a shallow flat, but storms washed all that out and left a hump about 70 feet off the back bank that has a little dip on the other side. Trout like to hang out in both places.

"A south wind is best for fishing here because it's protected," Cheramie added. "But I do like a little breeze blowing in here. I like throwing the Top Dog Jr. in here, but you can also bump the purple/chartreuse and black/chartreuse on the bottom."

NO. 2: DAM COVE TWO

(N29 27 13.40 X W90 22 50.34)

The eastern levee of Dam Cove One used to run all the way across what Cheramie calls Dam Cove Two, essentially blocking it off. Erosion has scoured this levee enough that boaters can pass into the cove now, and it offers a good mix of trout and redfish.

"This one's got some big, shallow flats in the corners to the east and

southwest," Cheramie said. "Some grass grows in those two corners, and it's more redfish up in them. Some trout, too, but you'll mainly find them back out in the deeper water closer to the mine."

During high tide, Cheramie likes to push back into the grass flats and sightfish for cruising redfish. With a southeast wind, the combination of slick, clear water and a mirror surface makes the big bulls easy to spot.

"For the trout, fish around the one leaning power line pole out in the middle toward the mine," Cheramie said. "There aren't many oysters in the mine, but that pole is one spot that has them. Fish cocahoes about 2 ½ feet under a cork."

NO. 3: POWER LINE COVE

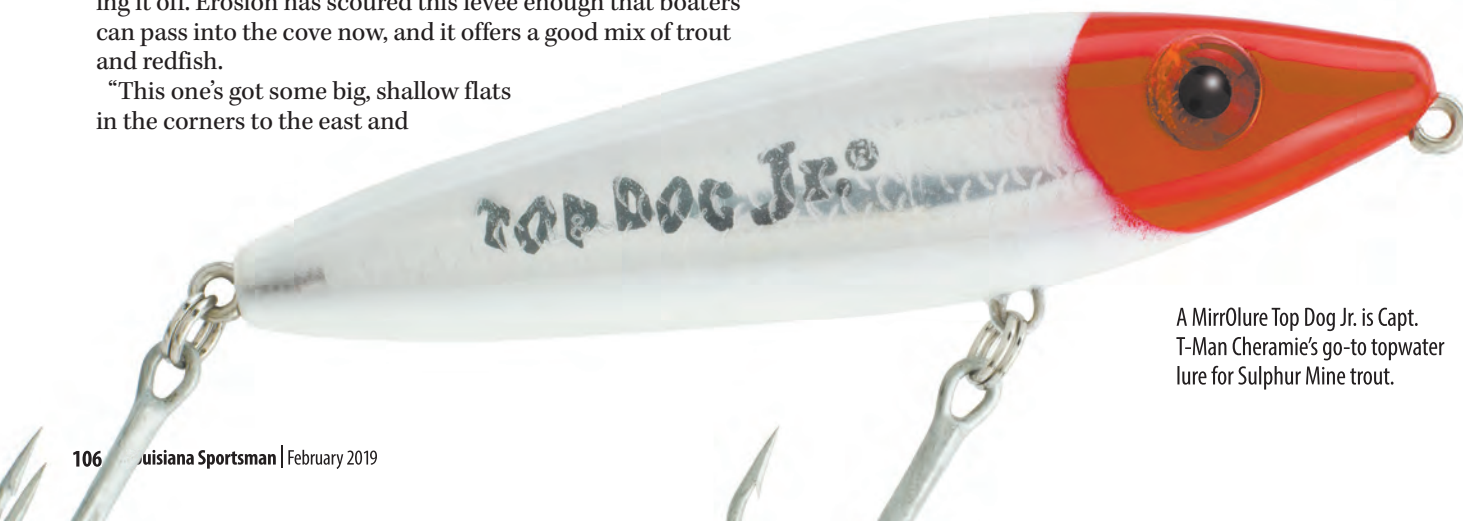
(N29 27 29.80 X W90 22 33.30)

What Cheramie likes most about this cove is that it is the only one in the mine where the grass starts to grow early. He says it will grow from the back to about 100 yards from the bank. As you enter the cove, look for the point to your right. That is about as far out as the grass grows.

"Trout like to stage out in front of the grass, and those big, lazy specks like to hang out on top of it," he said. "I like to throw a Top Dog Jr. over the grass, but if they don't eat on the surface, I'll switch to bait I call the Ghost (a soft-plastic suspending lure), but you could also throw soft jerkbaits."

Redfish tend to get farther back in Power Line Cove, and Cheramie says there is one little cut in the back corner to the right, or south, that attracts most of them. One of Cheramie's

continues >



A MirrOlure Top Dog Jr. is Capt. T-Man Cheramie's go-to topwater lure for Sulphur Mine trout.

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NO. 3 CONTINUED

best redfish techniques around the grassy cut is flashing a gold spoon above the grass.

“The good thing about this cove, besides the grass growing early, is that it won’t be matted out on the surface (now),” Cheramie said. “I like to start at the point and just kind of drift across it for trout. The best winds for fishing here would be south, southeast and east.”

NO. 4: ANCHOR COVE

(N29 28 3.94 X W90 23 6.00)

Cheramie jokingly called this spot Anchor Cove because, “It’s got about four or five of my anchors here and quite a few of other people’s anchors, too.”

A few old pipelines that cross the bottom here are what claims the anchors, but it is the pipeline and surrounding oysters that attract the fish.

“This spot has the most oysters of any spot in the mine,” he said. “You got a couple canals that drain in here, and it’s got good current flow when the water is moving. Trout stack up on top of the oysters and eat the bait pulling out of the cuts.”

Since this is a spot to catch numbers of trout with an occasional big fish or two, Cheramie likes to throw a cocahoe under a cork for the keepers and a Top Dog Jr. for the wall hangers. And because of the shells on bottom, it’s perfect for bumping a soft plastic.



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“This spot is on the northwest side of the mine, so it’s a great place with north or northwest winds,” Cheramie said. “I’ve targeted the wells a lot, but I don’t catch much around them. The pipelines really aren’t that important for trout, but they do get a lot of sheepshead around them.”

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NO. 5: HORSESHOE ISLAND

(N29 27 54.97 X W90 22 26.75)

Another spot that has been eroded to the point of no longer being visible from the surface are the remains of what Cheramie called Horseshoe Island, which still attract lots of keeper trout below. The pipelines, oysters and cuts that attracted fish while the islands were visible still attract fish today as long as you can find the subtle hump on your depth finder. It should come up from 5 to 3 feet.

“If you can get on it, it’s a spot that holds a lot of fish,” Cheramie said. “There are a couple wood signs on the bank to the northwest, and if you line that up with the point of land to the southeast, you should be close. The only problem here, though, is all the boat traffic coming out of that cut that goes up into Bason’s Marina.”

Since the spot does get so many passing boats, Cheramie explained that the best thing to do is to try to get there early. Once a couple boats anchor and fish the islands, all the passing boats have to navigate around the island. He also favors fishing this spot later in the afternoon after most of the boat traffic has died down.

“The best way to fish this underwater island is with a cork,” Cheramie added. “You can fish plastics or minnows, but they like it under a cork here. If I’m after a wall hanger, I’ll try topwater. It will also get a big pile of reds on it every now and then.”

NO. 6: EIGHT-POUND COVE

(N29 26 51.54 X W90 24 26.45)

The Sulphur Mine can get jammed up with boats when the fish are biting, so Cheramie has a few close spots that he can run to and fish to get out of the crowd. The first of these spots is a nondescript cove in the back of Bully Camp Lake where Cheramie and his customers have landed and lost many giant trout.

“Not a lot of trout come in here, but the ones that do come in are really nice,” he said. “They like to stack up right at the mouth of this cove, but they’ll also get back there in really shallow water. It grasses up in here, and the water gets really clear — almost like an aquarium — so you’ve got to be really quiet coming in.”

If the tide is high, Cheramie likes to throw plastics or minnows under corks, but he admits he has trouble putting down his topwater in this cove because of all the big fish he’s caught on it here before. As it gets closer to April, Cheramie says this spot becomes more of a numbers hole.

“Reds come in here, too,” he added. “There is some broken marsh to your left as you go into the cove, and the reds get around that stuff. I fish them with a spoon, and it’s a great spot for sight-fishing because the water is so clear. And for some reason, the grass seems to grow best to your right as you go in. Reds like that, too.”

continues >

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NO. 7: BULLY POINT

(N29 26 31.03 X W90 24 8.60)

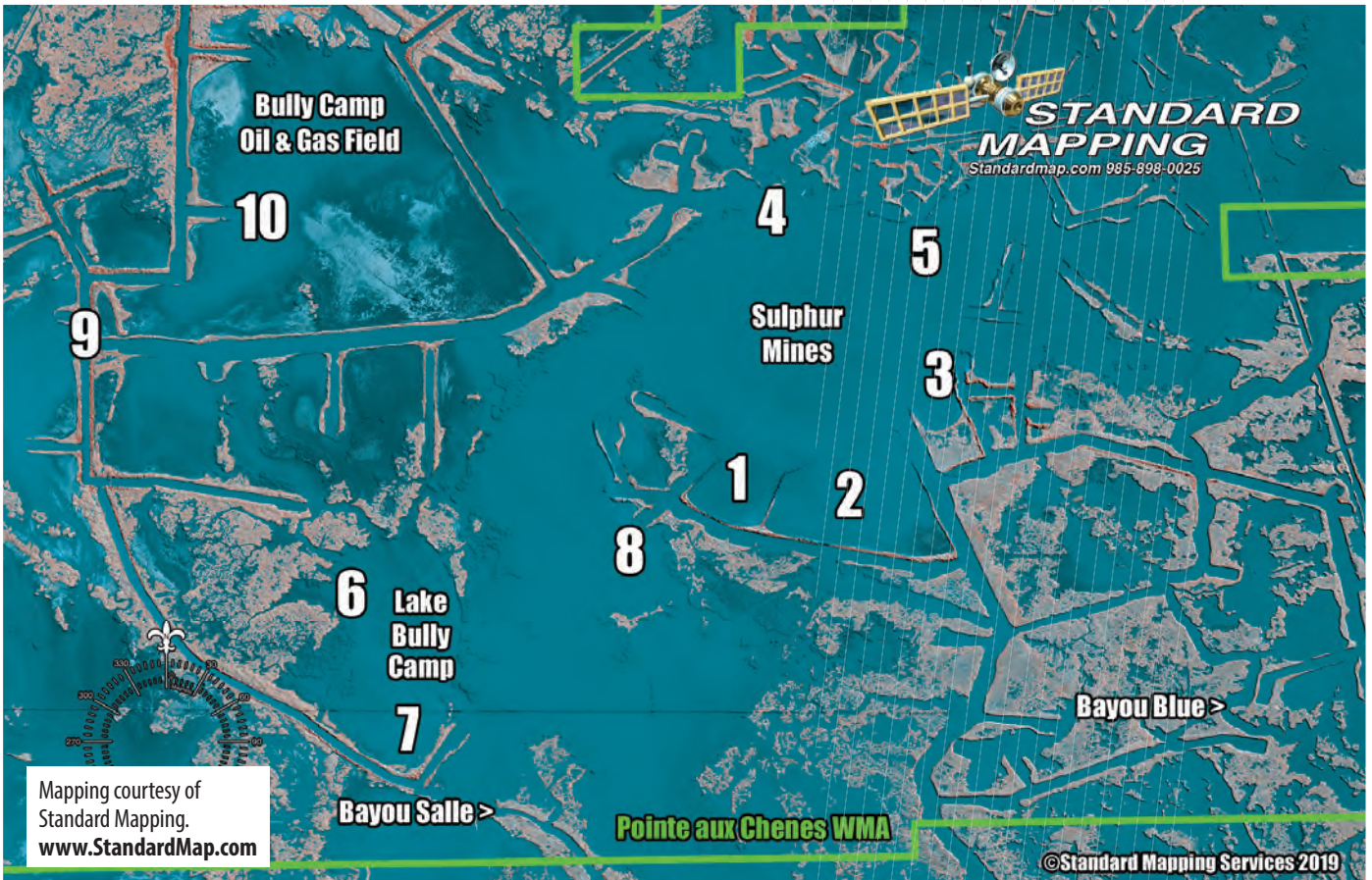
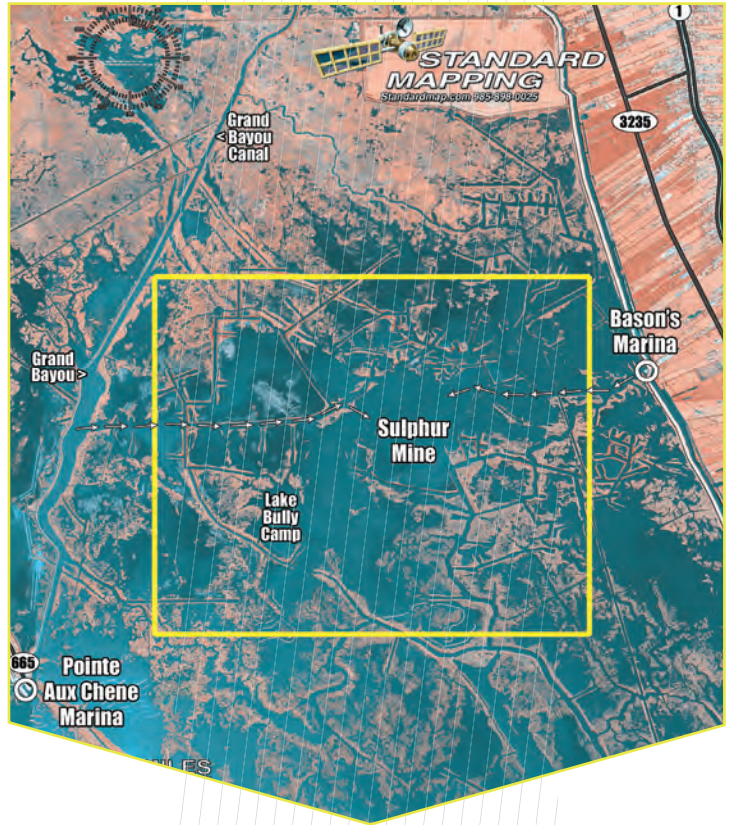
This is the point on your right as you enter Bully Camp Lake from the cut to its southeast. Rather than Bully Point being the spot, it marks the beginning of one of the best redfish banks around the Sulphur Mine. Cheramie likes to start at the point and work his way south toward the broken marsh in the back corner.

“The reds can’t pass it up with all that broken marsh and the grass that grows in here,” said Cheramie. “I like to throw the spoon, me, but you can also catch a lot of reds just bumping the bottom with plastics or throwing a spinner-bait. If I don’t get any bites between the point and the back corner, I just keep fishing around the shore to the west.”

Although it’s better known for redfish, the water behind Bully Point also attracts lots of keeper trout when the juvenile shrimp start showing up. The trout get away from the bank, though, and Cheramie typically catches them out in open water.

“You can start drifting at the point and just work to the far point to the west,” he said. “There are some old islands scattered along that drift line, and the water gets deeper out that way. Throw plastics or minnows under a cork, but you can throw something on top if you hit the right conditions.”

continues >



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NO. 8: POLE CUT

(N29 27 3.26 X W90 23 30.14)

This spot really shines as long as the water is moving one way or the other. Cheramie really likes it when the water is falling out, thus pulling a lot of water out of the Sulphur Mine. As the water exits the cut, it spreads out and creates all kinds of current lines in the open pond just to the southeast.

“The boat traffic gets a little bad right in the cut,” Cheramie explained, “so you got to catch your fish and wait it out after somebody passes. The key is to not fish just the cut, though. Back off and drift toward the islands to the southwest that would be over your left shoulder if you’re fishing the cut itself.”

Cheramie targets the big schools of shad that work the current lines in the pond, and he says the trout seem to get bigger the closer he gets to the islands. Since the water always seems to be clear here, Cheramie prefers throwing topwaters with silver sides and white bellies.

“Anything flashy will work here because the trout are used to eating shad in the clear water. This spot gets really good as the trout start to leave the Sulphur Mine about the middle of April because most of them come right through this cut,” he said.

This spot really shines as the trout start to leave the Sulphur Mine in spring.



NO. 9: FOUR CORNERS

(N29 27 39.68 X W90 25 15.06)

Cheramie calls the canal that runs from Bayou Blue to the Sulphur Mine April Canal. About a third of the way into the canal past the two dams is an intersection that creates four

points. This spot is relatively deep compared to surrounding water, and there are some old pipelines and a bunch of trash on the bottom. The high volume of water that passes here makes it a great spot.

“Trout love to come out in here, but there are a lot of reds and drum, too,” Cheramie said. “They get in here because of all the

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Trout and redfish will get in the Sunken Island Pond during March and April.



bait. Like a couple of the other spots, you've to fight the boat traffic here, but most people will idle through if they see people catching fish. Every March and April, this canal turns on, and this is one of the best spots along the entire stretch."

Cheramie likes the northeast corner because of an old pipeline and its quick drop off. As the water moves through, it swirls around this point and creates eddies. But he doesn't stop after fishing the point. Rather, Cheramie fishes the entire area and the open water between all the points.

"I like to fish the bottom with Carolina-rigged cocahoe minnows," he said. "You could throw a cork if you think the trout want a little noise, but the Carolina rig will catch anything that swims through here. Sometimes you get some on topwater, but not too often."

NO. 10: SUNKEN ISLAND POND

(N29 28 2.02 X W90 24 43.23)

On most updated maps, you won't see the old island that used to be about 100 yards straight in front of the cut as you enter this pond. However, on some older ones, you'll see a large area of land that's just not there anymore. That's why Cheramie calls this spot Sunken Island Pond.

"Trout and redfish will get in here during March and April," he said. "I like to troll the banks immediately to your right as you exit the canal that leads into the pond. I like a west wind here, and this is one of my favorite banks to fish on this side of the mine."

Cheramie said the open water to the right is full of little islands out in the middle that just shift around from year to year. The only thing that might reveal them to you may be a little stick or tuft of grass. Trout stick to the open water, and the redfish can be along the bank or around the little islands.

"I throw a lot of topwaters for trout in here because it's so shallow," Cheramie said. "You just never know what fish around here are going to bite." ■

Contact Capt. T-Man Cheramie at 985-693-6828.



Chris Ginn has been covering hunting and fishing in Louisiana since 1998. He lives with his wife Jennifer and children Matthew and Rebecca along the Bogue Chitto River in rural Washington Parish. His blog can be found at chrisginn.com.

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A person wearing a light-colored t-shirt is holding a large, fresh trout. The background is a warm, golden-brown color, suggesting an indoor setting with soft lighting. The fish is the central focus, with its scales and fins clearly visible. The person's hands are visible at the bottom of the frame, supporting the fish.

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During some recent cold fronts, Scott Toups fished the bayous around Catfish Lake in Golden Meadow. "There's a lot of fish close to the public launch, and they can easily be reached by kayak or a small boat. We focused on deep, dead-end bayou fishing with a variety of soft plastics."

TARGET SHALLOW OR DEEP AS THE TEMPERATURE DICTATES

Water depth is a critical element to any type of fishing across Southeast Louisiana, and right now, it's particularly crucial to pay attention to in Catfish Lake.

Golden Meadow guide Capt. Aaron Pierce has been finding lots of speckled trout lately in the deeper sections of Catfish Lake.

"I've been looking for the deeper canals and any point that has wind driven current or tide driven current," he said. "Anything shallower than 4 feet I found hasn't been that good in those canals."

Once Pierce gets in those canals, he tries different techniques until he figures out what the fish want.

"It's weird because some days the cork's tearing it up -- some days tight-line," he

said. "You need to try both techniques to see how they're biting that day."

When tight-lining, Pierce has been using a surprisingly light 1/8-ounce jighead teamed with a lemon head Matrix Shad.

"They want it a lot slower," he said. "You throw it out there, let it sink and slowly reel and bump it back in."

When fishing under a cork, Pierce likes an 1/8-ounce jighead with a Matrix Shad or Vudu Shrimp.

Pierce said the size of fish has been all over the place. He's been catching fish up to 20 inches, but on a recent trip with Vermilion Bay guide Capt. Scott Toups, the fish were considerably smaller.

"We caught over 150 fish, and out of that, like 40 kept," Toups said.

Another key to the bite, according to Pierce, has been water movement.

"It's more about movement than outgoing or incoming," he said.

When warmer days come around, Pierce likes to switch to fishing oyster reefs in shallower water.

"I'll just fan cast around the boat over some oyster reefs, and as soon as I catch one, I'll put my Talons down and stay there, and if I don't catch anything I'll move on," he said.

Pierce throws Four Horseman popping corks with Matrix Shads underneath them on the oyster reefs.

And one good thing about fishing the area is a big bay boat is not required, Toups said.

"There's a lot of fish close to the public launch, and they easily be reached by kayak, or a small boat," he said. ■

- Joel Masson

TOP 5 TIPS FOR COLD WATER SUCCESS



The Guillotine Floodgate at Bayou Bienvenue, above, is just one of the landmarks Wayne Ferry targets when fishing for cold-weather Chalmette specks like these.

TEN MINUTE TROUT CHALMETTE

My old friend Wayne Ferry loves to fish Chalmette waters in the colder months whenever he's not working or away hunting down some poor four-legged critter.

Ferry says a 10-minute (or so) run from the dock to find trout is a definite possibility this month, along with some reds, bass, sheepshead and black drum in the mix.

"All you need is a small boat and a decent enough day," he said.

Just so you know, both Friendly Fisherman Bait Shop at the Gulf Outlet Marina and Bait, Inc. at the marina at Bayou Bienvenue generally close all month in February, so no live bait will be available (unless Eddie's Boat Launch at the foot of the big bridge has it, or you get it from one of the bait shops in the Rigolets area).

Ferry just goes armed with some H&H soft plastic beetles on a bottom rig, and he always brings at least one pole rigged with a plastic under a cork.

"February is a fickle month," Ferry said. "It can be cold, like bone-chilling cold, or it can be unseasonably warm with high temperatures in the 70s, or it can be anywhere in between. So nowadays I pick the days I want to fish; days with better weather so I don't have to deal with the adverse conditions."

FERRY'S FIVE TIPS FOR FEBRUARY SUCCESS ARE:

- 1.** "Pick the better days between the fronts, calmer days preferably with some tide — but not too much. That way you can fish a wider variety of places, both deeper water and shallower water, on the bottom and under a cork. In my thinking you maximize your chance for success that way."
- 2.** Head through the big Guillotine Floodgate at Bayou Bienvenue and fish along the back side of the Wall. "Usually we anchor and fish the bottom with a Carolina rig and a sparkle beetle. Use a heavy sinker to get to the bottom, and a light 1/8- or 1/16-ounce jig on your H&H beetle. Try several colors: I like the clear fleck, avocado, smoke, white and chartreuse. You can fish anywhere along the Wall from the Guillotine to the MRGO. Just remember: When it's cold, fish slow, and be sure your bait gets to the bottom."
- 3.** Fish the deeper channel near the old Castle (now merely a rockpile). Go through the opening into Lake Borgne at Violet and anchor off maybe 50 feet from the bulkhead wall that runs down the left side. The channel is deeper,

and trout and reds hide down there. Use the same bait on a bottom rig and see if you can pull out some fish.

4. On milder days run just past the cut to the Castle in the MRGO and fish Horseshoe Bayou. Some maps call it the Shell Beach Bayou (though it's at least fifteen minutes away from Shell Beach), others call it Lankers. It's just a horseshoe-shape that goes into the marsh from the MRGO and comes back out into the MRGO. It's fairly deep in some places — maybe 6 feet, and shallow — maybe 3 feet — in others, and that's on a normal tide. On winter-time low tides, be careful. Fish back there on milder days under a cork with the same sparkle beetles for bait, and you'll likely pull out some reds, maybe some bass and hopefully some trout.

5. Also on milder days I like to fish around the old Gun Battery Fort in Bayou Bienvenue, under a cork, with a sparkle beetle or a Vudu shrimp in white or natural colors. ■

- Rusty Tardo

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Capt. Nick Poe didn't hesitate when asked about a winter-time speckled trout location on Big Lake within a short ride of the boat launch.

"Your best bet is probably going to be Turner's Bay," said Poe, a long-time captain with Big Lake Guide Service who noted the cove northeast of Cut-off Point was convenient to all three of Big Lake's launches: Spicer-Hughes Marina and Motel in Hackberry, Calcasieu Point Landing and Hebert's Marina.

"The whole thing is pretty much a reef, so it's really not that difficult to fish. But you're definitely looking for an out-going tide," Poe said. "It's more tide-driven than anything — I've caught fish over every square inch of it, seems like."

"If you're targeting a big trout, obviously you'd want to be a little closer to the bank in shallower water. If you just want to catch a bunch of trout and probably some redfish mixed in, drifting any of those reefs out in 5 feet water or so are good."



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OPPOSITE PAGE: Try throwing big suspending baits such as Corky's and Mirrodines for big fish near the bank.

Poe's go-to artificial bait is a tight-lined MirrOlure Lil John. He fishes with 20-pound braid, tipped with about a 6-foot piece of 20-pound fluorocarbon.

"Usually we're tight-lining because most of your fish are going to be oriented toward the bottom at that time of year. But we will use a lighter jighead to get that slower sink rate, an 1/8-ounce or even as small as a 1/16 ounce," he said. "If we're fishing for big fish on the bank, we're going to be throwing big suspending baits: Corky's and MirrODines."

In his experience, this month isn't particularly a great time to throw topwater lures.

"They may hit at a topwater, but they usually don't eat it in February," Poe said. "I've seen it, but your chances are better on a suspended bait."

If the water is stained, Poe suggested Lil Johns in glow or chartreuse, or a pearl Fat Boy with a chartreuse back if you want to throw a suspending bait. If the water is better, he suggested Lil Johns in opening night and watermelon red, or an opening night Fat Boy.

Part of the bay is open to the Ship Channel, he said.

"It's got a big flow of water, and bait coming out of the north, along with a few bayous leading into it — and it's got an island," he said. "So it's got some visible structure that somebody can pull up to and say, 'Hey, this looks like there should be a fish here.'"

Another variable to keep in mind is water temperature.

"I pay close attention to water temperature in the wintertime," Poe said. "Two degrees can make all the difference in the world. I don't like fishing in anything under 50, but it can be done."

"We get a lot of days in February when it's in the 70s and foggy — those are the days you want to be out there at daylight. But if it's blowing 15 to 20 out of the north and it's 35 degrees, you may want to wait and go in the late-afternoon." ■

-Patrick Bonin

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LAKE DECADE IS A HOTSPOT THIS MONTH

The month of February can harbor some brutally cold weather conditions, and nobody wants to run around and look for fish when it's freezing.

A convenient and easy area to target this month is Dularge's Lake DeCade, which is located about 3.5 miles from Falgout Canal Marina. Local guide Capt. Marty LaCoste said it's a great lake for drifting and catching fish.

"You drift, catch a fish, put your Power Poles down, fish all around the boat, catch as many as you can and then keep drifting until you catch another one," he said.

Dularge is known for many fish falling for double-rigged soft plastics, but LaCoste switches it up to a single,

¼-ounce jighead this month. "In the winter time, it's a little slower, and it's usually cold when the fish are in that lake, so it's usually more of a single-rig, slow action," he said.

LaCoste teams his jighead with ultra-violet (opening night) and green hornet (avocado/glow) Matrix Shads.

The veteran guide said the fish can roam the entire lake, but his favorite areas are the west and south sides.

"There's kind of known areas where fish usually always are and basically I'll just start in that area and start drifting until I find them," he said. "For the most part, I don't usually see bait when I'm over there."

One of the keys to having success in the area is to have water movement.

"A lot of times if we're fishing



Capt. Marty LaCoste says the fish can roam the entire lake, but his favorite areas include the west and south sides.

Photo courtesy of Capt. Marty LaCoste

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like the mouth of a bayou, incoming or outgoing could matter, but when you're just in the middle of a lake, as long as the tide is moving, I don't really see a difference," LaCoste said.

The fish, according to LaCoste, can vary in size throughout the lake.

"You could be fishing on the south bank somewhere catching a bunch of big ones, and then you could move over to the west side and you could get on some school trout," he said. ■

- Joel Masson

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TEN MINUTE TROUT DELACROIX

WINTER WEATHER, RIVER DICTATE SPECK POTENTIAL

Where can you launch in February and be on trout in a mere 10 minutes?

To answer that question I called the Bearded One, the old hobo and fish-finding guru, Brian Epstein. Up until Hurricane Katrina, Epstein was a Delacroix area charter guide, but has since become a professional wanderer who fishes a wide variety of species all over the country. But he still calls New Orleans home, speckled trout his favorite target and Delacroix his favorite waters.

Epstein said he will focus his efforts from now until the spring warm-up in three particular Delacroix lakes, all a mere 10 minutes from the dock.

But his tips come with a caveat: "Everything, and I mean everything, will depend on the weather and the river. If our winter stays moderate, you'll do great in these areas, providing the river doesn't rise and inundate us with muddy fresh water. Even if it's cold these areas will produce if the river behaves and stays between the banks," he said.

That said, he offered these three tips for 10-minute trout:

1. LITTLE LAKE. "It's often overlooked, but Little Lake produces plenty speckled trout in the colder months. The key is water temperature. This is when a water temperature gauge becomes a huge asset because wherever you fish you want to find water that is a minimum of 53 to 54 degrees, and usually higher is better. Get into Little Lake and start drifting anywhere between the mouth of Bayou Gentilly and Alligator Pass. I like to fish a good Vudu

shrimp under a cork, which has been very successful, or tandem-rigged H&H glass minnows, which have produced a lot of trout for me also. Smaller baits seem to work best in the colder months," he said.

Epstein says to drift until you bump into some fish then stick your Cajun Anchor and see if you can put some numbers in the boat.

"Sometimes when you drop anchor it kills the bite and you have to keep drifting to keep catching, but you can try it and see," he said.

2. SHRIMP LAGOON

"This is a great area to drift around the mouths of the various bayous, and on chilly days tight-line your soft plastics slower off the bottom. On milder days fish the same area with your plastics under a cork," he said.

When bottom jiggling, the Hobo likes to toss shrimp worms, a short ribbed worm with either a wobble tail or a curl tail in a green or white color on a ¼-ounce jig.

3. GRAND LAKE "Grand Lake can be great or terrible, depending on the river. If you find decent water you should also find fish. Again, the key is to drift and cast your soft



Brian Epstein with a nice Delacroix speck.

plastics under a cork. I like to start around the mouth of Sun Lagoon or Engineers and see what I can bump into. In all these areas you're likely to pull out some redfish and maybe a few bass, as well as some decent sized trout. And you always want to fish moving water, whether the tide is rising or falling, as long as its decent and moving." ■

- Rusty Tardo

Redfish can be caught also in all of the Ten Minute Trout areas this month. Patrick Lottinger of New Orleans worked hard to get this Delacroix redfish photo-ready!



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SPECKS STILL ON THE COAST

FAT SPECKS LIKE THESE NEVER LEFT THEIR SUMMER HOMES ALONG GRAND ISLE AND PORT FOURCHON

Tommy Vidrine is catching speckled trout in places you would never dream of fishing in the winter. But the proof is in the pudding – and during the last three months, the Sportsman's field reporter has been hammering specks along the coast in areas he normally fishes in the spring and summer.

Have the specks actually been in these spots all along, and it's just that nobody ever fished for them? Who knows, but Vidrine decided to make a move when fishing along Highway 1 went south.

Maybe they were there all along. Maybe the loss of habitat in

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Tommy Vidrine caught fish like these all winter long.

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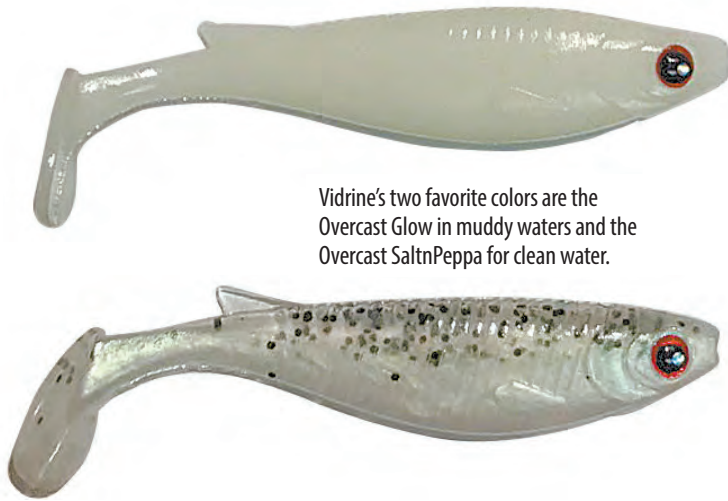
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the Barataria Basin is pushing them out to the Gulf in the winter. Or maybe it's global warming We don't know — but the fact is Vidrine is reeling in big specks from places he usually reserves for spring and summer – and lots of 'em.

"I've caught more limits of trout this winter than I do in the summer," he said. "It's unbelievable."

And it's not just limits — Vidrine is consistently reeling in big, healthy fish in the 2- to 3-pound range. Most of the catches are coming on artificial swimbaits, but he keeps some live shrimp on standby just in case.



Vidrine's two favorite colors are the Overcast Glow in muddy waters and the Overcast SaltnPeppa for clean water.

"It seems like when the water clears, up they prefer live bait," he said.

He's not sure why they will hit artificials one day and won't touch them the next, but when they do hit on plastics, he's been catching them on an Overcast Lure's Swimmin' Shad

on an 1/8-ounce jighead.

"My favorite colors are the salt-n-peppa for clean water, and the glow dog for muddy water," he said, noting he uses a weedless jighead to help prevent getting stuck in the rocks. ■

VIDRINE'S FOUR KEYS TO WINTERTIME FISHING SUCCESS

- **Fish right on the rocks.** Vidrine's been finding fish at the Caminada Pass rocks, Bayou Rigaud rocks and the Fourchon barges. "The rocks hold heat, especially when the sun's out, and the fish stay real close to them," he said.
- **The lighter the better.** Vidrine doesn't use any weight when he's free-lining live bait. He rigs a live shrimp on a No. 1 kahle hook and casts it out. "They want it slow," he emphasized. "I cast out right over the rocks, let it sink and reel it back real slow. They usually hit at about 2 feet off the rocks."
- **Fish four hours into the incoming tide.** This winter, with unusually high rainfall and river levels, Vidrine has been catching most of his fish after the tide has a chance to move cleaner, saltier water in.
- **Pick your days.** Vidrine waits till the wind dies down and the water clears up to fish. On a north wind, he'll fish in the Gulf and on a south wind he'll fish the back side of Grand Isle.

- Ann Taylor

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CREATURE FEATURE

Jerald Horst

CRAWFISH: IT'S WHAT'S FOR DINNER

MUDBUGS PLAY VITAL ROLE FOR
MOST BASIN FISH SPECIES

Many moons ago, when I was a grad student at LSU Fisheries, I would often pitch in to help other grad students, as well as graduate associates, with their field projects. One of the big projects that put many students through grad school was on the Atchafalaya Basin.

Students and assistants studied everything about the Basin's biology; from its water chemistry (boring), to plankton (boring) to benthos, the critters that live in the mud (boring), to crawfish and river shrimp (pretty cool), to fish (really cool). I liked helping out on the fish projects.

We killed (the term we used was "sacrificed") a lot of fish to study them. Dugan Sabins, a research associate who I occasionally assisted, always checked the stomach contents of any fish he collected. I remember being amazed at the predominance of crawfish in the stomachs of those Atchafalaya Basin fish.

The sheer numbers of crawfish in the Basin (known as the "Spillway" to those who love to eat crawfish) is amazing, if only for the reason that Louisiana has the lowest number (39) of species of crawfish

of all the southeastern states in the U.S.

Some time ago, I had the privilege of hearing a presentation on the subject of crawfish in the diet of Atchafalaya Basin fishes at a meeting of the Louisiana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society. The presenter, Dr. Chris Bonvillain, now on the faculty of the Department of Biological Sciences at Nicholls State University, was a grad student in the same department at LSU when he gathered the data he presented.

Crawfish are important to the Atchafalaya Basin ecosystem for a number of reasons, said Bonvillain. Naturally, they serve directly as food for fish of the Basin, but they do more.

Most importantly, they cycle nutrients from detritus, the remains of plants and animals, mainly plant matter, from the soil (after flooding) and water bottoms up higher into the food chain. This includes not just crawfish, but the fish that sport and commercial fishermen love to catch.

They eat some of the detrital material themselves, but they also shred the detritus, making it easier for decomposers to

break the material down, making it available to other creatures.

Crawfish are abundant and serve their role both at high-water periods, typically mid-winter to late spring when crawfish harvests in the Basin by humans are at their highest, and at low-water periods the rest of the year.

The purpose of Bonvillain's study was to examine the stomach contents of fishes in the southeastern part of the Basin to determine how many species of fish relied on crawfish in their diets. He collected the fish for the study by electrofishing, essentially shocking them up.

The table shows the results of his work. Invertebrates are animals without backbones, so the category "Non-Crawfish Invertebrates" includes insects, as well as creatures such as grass shrimp and river shrimp.

Bowfin (choupique) had the highest percentage of crawfish in their diet at 95 percent, followed by spotted gar at 74 percent.

Crawfish and fish were found equally in 46 percent of largemouth bass stomachs, and a surprising 50 percent of bluegill

MUDBUG 411:

People obviously aren't the only ones who love mudbugs. The table below illustrates how important a role crawfish play in just about every fish species in the Atchafalaya Basin.

stomachs contained mudbugs.

For fish-eating fish, 64 percent of them ate crawfish, and 47 percent of insect-eating fish had crawfish in their stomachs, too. Black crappie, notorious fish-eaters, contained crawfish in only 24 percent of their stomachs, much less than for bass or bluegill; but still a surprisingly large number.

What was surprising for black crappie was that nearly the same percentage of stomachs, about 50 percent, had non-crawfish invertebrates as had fish. Crappie are known for feeding

SPECIES	FOOD ITEMS PRESENT		
	Crawfish	Fish	Non-Crawfish Invertebrates
Fish-Eating Species			
Black Crappie	Yes	Yes	Yes
Blue Catfish	Yes	Yes	No
Bowfin	Yes	Yes	Yes
Channel Catfish	Yes	Yes	Yes
Largemouth Bass	Yes	Yes	Yes
Longnose Gar	No	Yes	No
Spotted Gar	Yes	Yes	Yes
White Bass	No	Yes	No
Yellow Bass	Yes	No	No
Insect-Eating Species			
Bluegill	Yes	No	Yes
Freshwater Drum	Yes	No	Yes
Redear Sunfish	Yes	No	Yes
Spotted Sunfish	No	No	Yes

heavily on the larvae of small flies called midges.

Because crawfish populations are known to strongly spike during periods of high water, it would be easy to incorrectly assume that most, if not all the crawfish consumed by fish were

continues on page 130

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CREATURE FEATURE

continued

Red swamp crawfish (top) and white river crawfish are the predominant mudbug species in the Atchafalaya Basin.

eaten during high water.

During spring high water flood periods, 79 percent of the fish collected had crawfish in their stomachs. But during low water periods, crawfish were still found in 58 percent of the samples.

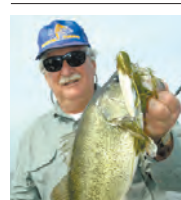
Bonvillain credits the role that crawfish play in the Atchafalaya Basin to the powerful spring river floods it receives annually. He compared it to the Barataria Basin, which stretches from Lake Des Allemands in the north down through Barataria Bay.

Long cut off from the Mississippi River, it now depends (except for a couple of man-made diversions) totally on rainfall as a source of freshwater into the system. As a result, it does not experience the strong flood pulse of water each year



that the Atchafalaya does — and it has very few crawfish.

The dominance of crawfish in the diet of Atchafalaya Basin largemouth bass may partially explain the success of crawfish imitating jigs and soft plastic lures. ■



Jerald Horst is a retired Louisiana State University professor of fisheries. He is an active writer, book author and outdoorsman. Jerald may be reached at jerald@rockinghorst.com.

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LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

Dusty Anders used Rat-L-Trap's new MR-6 crankbait on a successful December trip at Toledo Bend.

RAT-L-TRAP'S NEW MR-6 CRANKBAIT

CASTING DISTANCE, ACTION AND VIBRATION ARE KEY FEATURES FOR NEW 6-FOOT MODEL

Mark Daniels Jr. knows what he wants in a crankbait — and he got it from Rat-L-Trap, the artificial lure manufacturer located in Alexandria.

The personable Fairfield, California pro bass angler hooked up with Rat-L-Trap a few years ago and rose to the top with the help of crankbaits, an ascent sure to continue now that he has the new MR-6, a departure from the legendary lipless crankbait series made by Rat-L-Trap.

Wes Higgins, 37-year-old president of Rat-L-Trap, is proud of Daniels and proud of the MR-6.

"It was purely driven by the pro staff. Certain pros kept coming to me and saying, 'Wes, if we could build us a 6-foot range crankbait, we could really use it. A 6-foot crankbait is what we have tied on across the country,'" Higgins said.

All Rat-L-Trap pro staffers had input in

the design of the MR-6. Daniels, though, was the "main guy."

"This is his baby. It's been great working with Mark," Higgins said about the former FLW and Bassmaster Elite bass angler who has now joined Major League Fishing's Bass Pro Tour.

"It's a high-performance pro design that's got everything in it our anglers wanted," he said, including a low-pitched knocking sound unlike the rattle of a Rat-L-Trap.

The focus was on key features of crankbaits fished effectively at that depth. Those features included casting distance, action and vibration.

Retired Alexandria firefighter Dusty Anders attested to those features after fishing trips on Toledo Bend and Lake Sam Rayburn. Anders, who retired in November, will turn his part-time bass fishing guide business to a full time venture — and he'll have an ample supply

of MR-6s.

On a late-December trip, he caught about 30 bass that trip, including 25 on the MR-6 with the others coming on a jerkbait. Water temperature was 57 degrees.

Because he was retrieving the crankbait over grass, ticking it at times, the bites came as he pulled away from the grass. The design of the crankbait, which is less buoyant than others, kept it a few inches off the grass — and that's where the bass targeted it that day.

"It's like a Rat-L-Trap. When you pull it out of the grass, they hit it. It (MR-6) doesn't hang up in the grass like a square-bill," he said.

According to Higgins, the MR-6's creation began in the fall of 2017. The body shape accounts for the vibration and action, he said.

"There's a lot of distance between the bottom of the belly and the top. Look at

the shape. It goes from being tall at the back of the belly to tapered at the tail. The real fast taper at the tail gives us the wiggle. The big flat side moves a lot of water," he said. "It's a pretty compact lure that gets after it."

As for the action, Anders said, "This is in between a real tight wiggle and a wobble. It's not quite as wide a wobble (as a square-bill crankbait)."

There are other things to like about the MR-6, he said.

"For one thing, I like the way it throws. This little bait throws excellent. It throws like a bullet," he said.

The 2 ¼-inch, ½-ounce crankbait has an internal weight transfer system that enhances its castability, Higgins said.

And Rat-L-Trap armed the MR-6 with Mustad Triple Grip Size 4 treble hooks because, he said, "We wanted to make sure we had that action, but still had big hooks. Those guys don't like missing fish. In fact, that's one of the things

Boyd Duckett was really impressed with when he tested it — that it had such good action and vibration with such large hooks on it."

Anders agreed.

"The thing I like about it is the big hooks. They're real sharp. You don't have to change them out of the box," he said.

And there are plenty of color options.

"I think we have the best colors," Higgins said about the 16 different offerings.

Remembering that day on Toledo Bend, Anders said, "Once I got tuned in to the right color, they had it in the back of their throat."

He started the day with a dark-colored MR-6, a Rayburn red craw, and caught some — but as the sun got up a majority of the bass got on a shad-colored crankbait, silverado.

For more information about Rat-L-Trap's MR-6 and other Rat-L-Trap products, call (318) 445-8301 or go to www.rat-l-trap.com. ■



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Don Shoopman fishes for freshwater and saltwater species mostly in and around the Atchafalaya Basin and Vermilion Bay. He moved to the Sportsman's Paradise in 1976, and he and his wife June live in New Iberia. They have two grown sons.

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SPECKLED TRUTH

Chris Bush



NEW SPECKLED TROUT COLUMN DEBUTS

BUSH TO DISCUSS TROPHY TROUT TACTICS EVERY MONTH

I love big speckled trout. And now as an author of a monthly trout column for *Louisiana Sportsman*, I think it's important for readers to know that simple fact.

To begin this endeavor, I also want to give you some context as to who I am as an angler. Like most fisherman in Louisiana, the affection toward catching trout started in the marshes surrounding the Louisiana Delta.

Claiming Port Sulphur as my home waters, my dad and I combed every stretch of the estuary in search of hungry fish. Fueled by subtle taps and iconic head shakes, every cast we made as artificial-only anglers fed the addiction.

As every trout flipped over the gunnel, the fuel met the fire, and my passion for these fish became insatiable. What started out as simple father-and-son family outings turned into a lifelong study of not only catching more fish, but becoming more consistent — until I caught a 27-inch, 7.2-pound trout wade-fishing Chaland Pass in May of 2005.

The deep appreciation I had for the fishery up to that point grew by a magnitude of 10 by simply landing and holding that one fish. I no longer launched the boat to catch a limit. Instead, I completely shifted my mind set to target larger bites — with bigger being better.

What I found through the refining process is that those subtle nuances my dad

taught me to become a more consistent angler provided the foundation to targeting and catching big fish.

Having now fished for big trout in seven different states and a myriad of estuaries, I continue to learn new techniques, explore new situations and develop angling experience, which I intend to share with you in these pages.

My approach will be simple but informational. In each issue, I intend to cover specific topics ranging from moon phase to solunar activity, to other environmental conditions. In addition, I also will discuss certain lures or specific styles, and use detailed pictures to inform you about things to consider if you decide to target bigger fish.

Regarding the calendar of topics, we will start from the bottom of the water column and work our way to the top with each passing month.

After the summer, we'll begin our descent back down the water column and discuss the most productive and efficient fall lures. This approach is two-fold: Not only will this allow us insight to the application of new techniques, but it also allows us to explore lures that are 'in season,' or on the fringes of high productivity.

My goals for this column are also fairly simple — to open your angling aperture and give you confidence to fish new techniques. In other words, become a more well-rounded speckled trout fisherman.

While daunting at first, I think fishing for big trout is the most rewarding experience possible for inshore anglers.

The fixated gaze and intense focus an angler displays when a big fish surfaces, to the joyful raw emotion of a successfully landing a big fish adds fuel to my fire. And I'm hoping this little monthly column provides that gentle spark.



Next month we'll start by discussing lippered and lipless jerkbaits, and hope you join the conversation.

Lastly — and always — take what you need, and release the rest. The resource will thank you. Tight lines. ■

— Chris



Chris Bush is an Air Force officer and a licensed charter captain, husband and father. He spends his time targeting big speckled trout and sharing knowledge on his website, Speckled Truth.

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GAME WARDEN

Keith LaCaze

The heads of two big bucks taken in violation of the daily limit on Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge last November.



BAD BOYS, BAD BOYS

THIS SEASON'S MOST NOTEWORTHY
POACHING VIOLATIONS

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QUESTION FOR
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From time to time I like to go by the office or meet up for coffee with some of the wildlife enforcement agents who are still on active duty. It's an opportunity to catch up on the latest goings-on, and the direction in which conservation law enforcement is headed. I've found out as time and technology march on, the ways violators go about breaking laws change, as well as their motivations for doing so.

More and more we see serious wildlife violations committed in pursuit of a trophy deer, as retaliation against landowners on private property, or simply for the thrill of killing.

And social media is all the rage for letting your 'friends' know all about it, so wildlife agents now routinely view social media sites for clues.

While agents may see shifts in violation trends, some things never change. In

certain circles, the spotlight and small caliber rifle used to poach at night are handed down through generations like family heirlooms. The guys who can't resist putting out bait for migratory game birds are still doing business with the feed store. People who view the daily limit as just a suggestion are still around — and still get caught on occasion.

Let's take a look at some wildlife violation cases from this previous fall, along

with sentencing in a baiting case. All are well worth mentioning, and are a reminder that protecting wildlife resources is a never-ending job.

DOUBLE DOWN

In early November, wildlife enforcement Sergeants Gabe Guidry and Chad Watts, along with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge Officer John Tarver, cited Keith Carmouche, 34, of Marksville for allegedly taking over the limit of antlered deer, possession of illegally taken deer and failure to comply with deer tagging and harvest card requirements.

The agents received several reports that Carmouche had allegedly taken two big bucks on Nov. 1 in Lake Ophelia Wildlife Refuge. (The daily limit is one antlered deer per day.)

Carmouche was contacted at his residence. During questioning, he admitted to harvesting two bucks on Nov. 1, then tagging and transporting only a 6-point on that day. He returned to tag and transport a 14-point non-typical buck on Nov. 2; both bucks are trophy class deer.

The two deer heads along with quartered venison were seized in the case. If found guilty of all offenses, he faces total fines ranging from \$750 to \$1,800, jail for up to 230 days, loss of hunting privileges and restitution totaling \$2,033.

The venison was donated to the needy, and the heads are currently being held as evidence. A court date is undetermined as of now.

A PILE OF DEER: A BIGGER PILE OF CITATIONS

A nighttime deer killing spree led to the apprehension of two Avoyelles Parish men for multiple alleged deer violations on Nov. 19.

Brice Rodgers, 19, of Plaucheville, and Brandon Prothro, 39, of Simmesport, were cited for allegedly taking over the limit of deer, taking deer from a moving vehicle, taking deer during illegal hours, taking deer with an illegal weapon, possession of illegally taken deer and intentional concealment of wildlife. Rodgers was also cited for failure to comply with deer tagging requirements.

Agents received a report that five freshly killed deer had been dumped under a bridge in Plaucheville. Lt. John Volentine, Sergeants Gabe Guidry and Byron Cammack, Cpl. Doug Anderson, Jr. and Senior Agent Cameron Densmore investigated, and discovered information leading to the suspects.

While questioning Rodgers at his residence, agents allegedly found two more untagged deer in ice chests. Rodgers said he had killed those two deer during primitive weapons deer season, but had not tagged them as required by law.

The investigation revealed that on Nov. 16, Rodgers and Prothro allegedly went hunting at night, killing four deer with a .17-caliber rifle and one with a crossbow. The "hunting" had been conducted on public roads from a truck. The agents also learned the two men had decided to dump the deer at the bridge when they began to fear LDWF agents might be looking into their activities.

Total fines for the two range from \$2,750 to \$4,450 and up to 510 days in jail, plus loss of hunting privileges. Since this case

continues on page 138



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GAME WARDEN

continued



Five illegally taken deer were dumped from a bridge by two poachers who suspected wildlife agents were pursuing them.

involves multiple counts of some offenses, penalties may run even higher. In addition, both men face civil restitution of up to \$8,123. Rodgers also has a restitution assessment of \$3,249 for his alleged primitive weapons season accomplishments. This case awaits a court date as well.

EXPENSIVE DUCK HUNT

A Dec. 16, 2017 duck hunt proved expensive for two men pleading guilty to placing bait to take ducks and hunting ducks

over a baited area.

On Sept. 26, 2018, Logan A. Blanchard, 25, of Oscar, pleaded guilty to those charges before U.S. Magistrate Judge Joseph H.L. Perez-Montes. The plea was accepted, and Blanchard was ordered to pay a \$3,540 fine and his hunting privileges were suspended for three years.

On Nov. 7, the other offender, Tyler W. Smith, 33, of St. Francisville, also pleaded guilty to those charges, plus hunting ducks without a state duck license and a basic hunting license.

Judge Perez-Montes sentenced Smith to pay a fine of \$3,610 and took away his hunting privileges for two years. Agents making the case were Sergeants Lee Tarver and Charlie Ferrington, and Cpl. Eric Little.

Remember to report violations: Call Operation Game Thief at 800-442-2511, or text tip 411 at 847411. You can remain anonymous and collect a cash reward. ■



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Retired Wildlife Enforcement Lieutenant Colonel **Keith LaCaze** spent 34 years with the LDWF beginning in 1977. LaCaze is happily married to wife Mitzi and the father of two children.

AMERICAN FASTBACKS

If you're looking for a loaded out Jeep Wrangler with features like 35-inch tires, custom tops, a Mopar lift kit, Fox shocks, LED light bars, electric running boards, custom bumpers, electric winch and much more — look no further than the American Fastbacks models at Miller's RV in Baton Rouge.

The vehicles, which are brand new 4-door Jeep Wranglers, come fully customized by American Fastbacks and are sold as a complete package.

"Most people buy a Jeep then have to come out pocket for all of the upgrades they want to make" said Jeff Hilliard, with Miller's RV in Baton Rouge. "With American Fastbacks all of the upgrades are included in the payment and because it's an RV we can get better terms. That means an amazing, loaded out Jeep at a really, really low payment - much lower than people expect!"

And if you choose to go off-road and do some camping, a Jeep RV is definitely the way to go.

"The back two seats lay down and have an integrated mattress that sleeps 2 people comfortably," Hilliard said. "One model even comes with a tent mounted to the roof that sets up at the touch of a button to sleep an additional two people. There is also a portable kitchen that comes with every unit. If you want to go camping it's there for you to use but it is easily removed for everyday use."

The good news for your peace of mind is a full warranty on the vehicle, and the accessories.

"Because the customization is done by an RV manufacturer, it doesn't void any of the warranty on the chassis," Hilliard



"All of the upgrades are included and because it's an RV we can get better terms," says Miller's RV.

said. "Often when you add accessories to a vehicle, you can mess up the warranty with the original manufacturer, but this doesn't.

"So your full Jeep warranty is still in effect. And American Fastbacks warranty

all of the hardware and the upgrade, so you get full warranty on both."

For more information on American Fastbacks Jeep RVs, call or text Miller's RV on Florida Boulevard in Baton Rouge at 225-275-2940, or visit millersrv.com.

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SHHHHHH, IT'S A SECRET ...

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, FEBRUARY CAN BE A GREAT MONTH TO KAYAK FISH: HERE ARE THE TOP 5 SPOTS TO TARGET IN YOUR 'YAK

February may be the best kept secret in kayak fishing. Yes, it can be bitter cold. Yes, it can be extremely windy. And yes, it can have low and/or dirty water. But, if you pick the right days and conditions, the fishing can be absolutely fantastic.

The South Louisiana marsh in February can be a lonely place. Duck season is closed, shrimp season is closed, and many fair-weather recreational anglers have parked their boats waiting for warmer weather. But for the last of the trappers, a few commercial guides and a few diehard crabbers, the marsh will be relatively quiet.

Understand, it makes no sense to go out on miserable days in conjunction with the passage of strong cold fronts. However, if you time it right, you'll find days with bearable conditions and lots of hungry fish. You can often find reds and trout stacked in deeper areas, and have a one- or two-stop trip.

One key piece of equipment recommended for successful winter 'yak fishing is a depth finder. Even an inexpensive model will help locate holes, deep turns and ledges that are critical to locating concentrated winter fish.

We've selected five areas that regularly provide great February kayak action.

1. HOPEDALE

The deep bayous, oyster-filled lagoons, rock jetties and MRGO channel provide a unique variety of habitat and water depths that allow fish to adapt to virtually any winter fishing condition.

Within easy paddle reach of Hopedale Marina, kayakers can find water depths up to 40 feet. Just across from the launch is a spoil canal and adjacent marsh that have shallow lagoons and deep bayous with scoured-out bends. The fish transition between the varying depths in these areas depending on water and weather conditions.

CONTINUES >





Chris Holmes has kayak fished in the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and many places in between. He can be reached at cholmes@att.net.

Some days it is best to stay home and organize your gear. But if you choose your days carefully, you can find some excellent kayak fishing during February.

PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

continued

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The nearby MRGO has a huge rock dam where the tidal flow through the rocks concentrates baitfish. The rocks also warm in the sun and can provide a few-degree increase in water temps to help spur feeding activity.

The center of the channel is 40 feet, and provides a large area for the fish to concentrate when the water gets really cold. When fishing the MRGO, jig plastics up and down near, but not on the bottom, to avoid rocky snags. Launching further up the road at the old Pip's Place provides easy access to Hopedale Lagoon, which is best known for trolling and drifting speckled trout back and forth across the oyster-filled bottom. Reds also pile up near the mouth of the many marsh canals and drains in the area.

Launch at Hopedale Marina for the MRGO and spoil marsh area; a specialty floating kayak dock makes launching a breeze. For the Hopedale Lagoon area, the old Pip's Place on the right side of Hopedale Highway is a great spot. There is a concrete ramp there with an honor box. There is a \$5 fee at both launches.

2. BIG LAKE

If you are looking for big winter trout, check out West Cove. The area is not a secret, but still under-fished in February. It is popular for boat anglers that wear waders and hop out, but many areas are kayak-accessible. You can choose to wade or remain in the kayak, but stealth is the key. If it is windy and there is a lot of hull slap, it is best to park the 'yak and slowly wade away from it. If there are other fishermen in the area, don't get too close.

The area has lots of reefs, and the key is slowly fishing mullet and pogie imitation lures in and around the schools of bait. Broken-back Corky's, MirrODines and Vudu Mulletts will get the job done. If you're fishing following a warm spell, don't rule out walking your favorite topwater plug.

Launch: West Cove Recreation Unit on Highway 27 south of Hackberry. *Note that the Sabine National Wildlife Refuge is closed until March 15, but you can use the launch and canal as passage into the lake



Redfish and trout can be caught all through the winter. This red was holding in deep water along the MRGO in Hopedale.

only. Just don't stop and fish any of the canals or marsh area in between. Launch is free.

3. POINTE-AUX-CHENES (PAC)

PAC is comprised of mostly marsh, but is interspersed with numerous ponds, bayous and canals. This variation from shallow to relatively deep-water provides a good range of habitat for winter conditions. Launching from PAC Kayak Rentals and Marina, fishing can begin within minutes. They have a large, specially-designed kayak launch. A good place to start is at the intersection of nearby canals and pipelines that have ledges and drop-offs that hold fish on cold days. There are tons of sheltered bayous to get out of the wind.

Plastics and Gulp lures slowly worked under a popping cork are an area favorite. Also, slow trolling plastic tails in the straight canals rigged with a 1/16- to 1/8-ounce jighead are productive for trout. Suspending baits like a Rapala ShadowRap produce near ledges and deeper holes. On days when the water is a little

dirty, don't overlook using fresh shrimp to get that extra advantage.

Launch: PAC Kayak Rentals. Fee is \$5 for a specially-designed multi-bay kayak launch that is simple to use. It's located at 179 Paw Paw Court in Montegut.

4. THE SULPHUR MINE

This perennial favorite is within reasonable reach for kayakers. The core of the mine area in about an hour paddle or less, but there are many other productive areas along the way. The mine is an old industrial site strewn with metal debris, deep holes and lots of fish-holding habitat.

The area is fishable in nearly any conditions, and good fishing is often found without ever reaching the mine. But like many wintertime spots, the good fishing is often concentrated in small areas. And being popular, the mine is usually crowded, and boats and kayakers will often be fishing the same spots. Tight-lined plastics or a jig and plastic tail under a popping cork are usually all that is necessary. However, a small bait bucket can easily carry enough live coahoes for a

Kenneth Dominique of White Castle caught his personal best speckled trout in Pointe-aux-Chenes. This whopper weighed 6.74 pounds and was 27 inches long.



day's trip. The mine itself has lots of debris and snags on the bottom, so a sliding cork can be used to get your lure near, but not on, the bottom. Drifting the mine is a productive, but often overlooked technique. Use the wind to your advantage and fan cast as you slowly move across. If you locate a concentration of fish, quietly deploy a stake-out pole or anchor to thoroughly fish the area before continuing on. For those days when the wind makes kayaking in the open waters of the mine difficult, don't abandon your trip. Turn your attention to the surrounding marsh where you can get out of the wind and comfortably fish. Look for the dead-end canals and areas where tall marsh and tree-lined ridges act as great wind blocks.

Launch: Gator Cove (formerly Bason's Marina), 542 W. 107th St. in Galliano. Launch fee is \$5.

5. GEOGHEGAN CANAL

Close, deep and filled with fish is the best way to describe this long-time favorite

of local kayakers. Located near the intersection of US Highway 90 and Highway 433 (Old Spanish Trail) in eastern St. Tammany Parish, kayakers can launch and be fishing in mere minutes.

The canal is deep and is known for stacking trout during the winter months. Although not very long, the canal has a variety of deep holes and ledges that hold fish almost anywhere along the way. Bounce and jig tight-lined plastics out from the bank towards the drops and ledges. If it's not too crowded, trolling the canal is a great tactic that often goes overlooked.

Nearby bayous and lagoons also produce great winter fishing. On warmer days, the fish may disperse along the shoreline of nearby Rigolets Pass.

Launch: Rigolets Bait and Seafood

(Marina), 52250 Highway 90 in Slidell. \$6 to launch one kayak, \$8 for two (one vehicle).

TOP 5 LURES UP NEXT >

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TOP FIVE FEBRUARY 'YAK LURES

**FOR EITHER TROUT OR REDS, THIS
WINTER MIX WILL GET THE JOB DONE:**

• GULP SWIMMING MULLET

Whether under a popping cork, tight-lined or slow trolled, the Swimming Mullet provides great tail-curling action at even the slightest movement. And the fish-attracting Gulp scent gives that extra advantage that may be necessary to induce lethargic fish. There are no shrimp in the marsh, and this bait mimics a variety of small baitfish the fish are feeding on.

• RAPALA SHADOW RAP

This stick style jerkbait has a slow suspending/falling action that perfectly reproduces the motions of a struggling minnow. Cast and allow it to slowly sink while imparting short twitches that make the bait spring back to life. It can be fished almost stationary, and just hangs in their face - triggering a strike.

• MIRRODINE SKIN SERIES

The lure is wrapped with a life-like skin that perfectly replicates a small shad. The slow suspending action can be fished with a variety of twitches and retrieves. The bites almost always come when the lure is stopped, so hang on tight and be ready.

• BROKEN-BACK CORKY

If you want big winter trout, this is the go-to lure across the Gulf Coast. The stocky, soft body has a hinged tail to impart just a little flash and movement to entice a lethargic fish to strike. The lure takes patience to learn and fish, as it is best worked with an ultra-slow, do-little action. The lure hangs in the water, and the object is to keep it in front of a fish for as long as it takes to entice a strike. It is almost impossible to fish it too slow if the water is cold.

• BERKLEY CHOPPO 90

Always have a topwater lure available, no matter the time of the year. During a February warm spell, you'll be amazed at the



These five lures are proven producers for trout and redfish all across the Louisiana coast for winter fishing trips. Beneath the VersaMaxx cork is a Gulp Swimming Mullet, a Rapala Shadow Wrap jerkbait, the Mirrodine Skin Series shad, a broken-back Corky and finally a Berkley Choppo 90.

fish you can catch on top. This medium-sized topwater combines rattles with a unique cupped prop near the tail. It can cause quite a commotion either straight retrieved, walked or twitched in place. The gurgling tail sound combined with the low-pitched rattles may just be the ticket to entice a strike.

HOPEDALE NEWS UP NEXT>

KAYAK LAUNCH AND TRAVEL LANE IN HOPEDALE



This specialty kayak launch at Hopedale Marina features two floating bays that make putting in and picking up safe and easy. INSET: A newly-designated kayak lane across Bayou la Loutre from Hopedale Marina gives 'yakers a dedicated paddle area from the spoil canal out to the MRGO. This is an added level of safety that aids both the kayaks and powerboats.

Several months ago, Hopedale Marina opened a specialty floating kayak launch. Dock mounted rollers, anti-slip decking and the constant level of two floating launch bays make putting in and picking up safe and easy. A large rocked area provides easy vehicle and trailer access, and

secure parking is just across the street. Also, a new "kayak lane" has been established in Bayou la Loutre across from the launch. Several large PVC poles with reflective signs and tape designate the area along the east shoreline of the bayou from the spoil canal out to the MRGO for kayak travel only. The combination of the launch and travel lane

helps separate paddle craft from the powerboats, and alleviates congestion for both parties. The folks at Hopedale Marina are dedicated to making the area a kayak fishing destination by providing friendly service and great amenities. Hopedale Marina is located at 7600 Hopedale Highway in St. Bernard. (504) 676-3474. \$5 launch fee. ■

SEAFOOD BIBLE

Jerald & Glenda Horst

CAMP CHEF COOKS CREOLE SEAFOOD CLASSICS

David Rouse pursues his passion for cooking at a Louisiana fishing guide camp.

And Southern Exposure Inland Fishing Charters is as well-known for its food as its fishing.

A recent customer was heard to exclaim, "This isn't a fishing charter with great food — it's a food charter with great fishing."

David is responsible for the kitchen. But he received his professional training in a roundabout way.



Barbecue shrimp and sweet potato grits offers the contrasting tastes of spicy and sweet. **INSET:** David Rouse's personal love of cooking received the benefit of professional training in culinary school.

"I was a longtime landscape contractor who got burned out after Hurricane Katrina. I already had my B.S., but three years after the storm, I went back to school at John Folse Culinary Institute at Nicholls State University. I attended for two years, while I was married with three kids and still running my landscape contracting business."

He worked for fine dining restaurants in New Orleans for a period of time. "TV glamorizes chef life. When you do it full time, it's not that glamorous—long hours, employee problems and less money than people think it is."

"I got out of restaurants and did small catering for a while. Then Creighton Ward, one of the owners of Southern Exposure Inland Fishing Charters, approached me."

"All we cook here is seafood. That's what everyone likes. In the evening before clients' charter trips, I cook six courses and hors d'oeuvres. Next morning, I make a full breakfast and pack a lunch for on the boat."

BARBECUE SHRIMP AND SWEET POTATO GRITS

"The idea of putting sweet potatoes in grits came to me while I was playing with ideas in the culinary school kitchen," David said. "Sweet potatoes add a little sweetness to the hot taste of the barbecue. I like to add sweetness to pepper."

"I use a lot of butter in this dish — a lot," he said, arching his eyebrows. "This isn't low-calorie. And I add Gruyère cheese to make the dish creamier."

Without a doubt, we found that the sweet potatoes added a dimension to the dish that we hadn't tasted before — and the shrimp were divine.

PREPARATION: Serves 6-8.

Wrap sweet potatoes in foil and perforate each several times with a fork. Bake at 350 degrees for one hour or until soft. Wash the shrimp and place them in a large pan. Sprinkle them generously with Creole seasoning and mix. Set aside in a refrigerator. Shred the cheese and set aside. In a small bowl, combine Creole seasoning, cracked red pepper, rosemary and thyme and mix thoroughly to make a barbecue seasoning mix. Melt 3 ½ sticks of butter in a large sauce pan. Add Worcestershire, wine, hot sauce and beer. Salt to taste. Simmer 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in the barbecue seasoning. Add



salt if needed. Pour the sauce over the shrimp and bake at 450 degrees for 20-30 minutes, until the shrimp are opaque and pink. Turn every 10 minutes. Do not overcook. In a separate pot, melt 2 tbsp. butter. Add grits and chicken stock. Cook 5 minutes, stirring often, until the grits

begin to tighten up. Peel and mash the sweet potatoes and then fold them into the grits. Stir in the grated cheese and mix well. Add salt and white pepper to taste. Ladle shrimp over the grits in bowls. Serve with French bread to sop up the juices. ■

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 medium sweet potatoes
- 4 lb. head-on large shrimp
- Creole seasoning to taste
- 1/2 cup grated Gruyère cheese
- 2 tbsp. Creole Seasoning
- 3 1/2 tsp. cracked red pepper
- 3 1/2 tsp. dried rosemary
- 3 1/2 tsp. dried thyme
- 3 1/2 sticks + 2 tbsp. butter
- 2 oz. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 oz. dry white wine
- 2 tbsp. hot sauce
- 14 oz. Abita Amber beer (drink the rest)
- Salt to taste
- 1 cup quick grits
- 12 oz. chicken stock
- Salt and white pepper to taste
- French bread

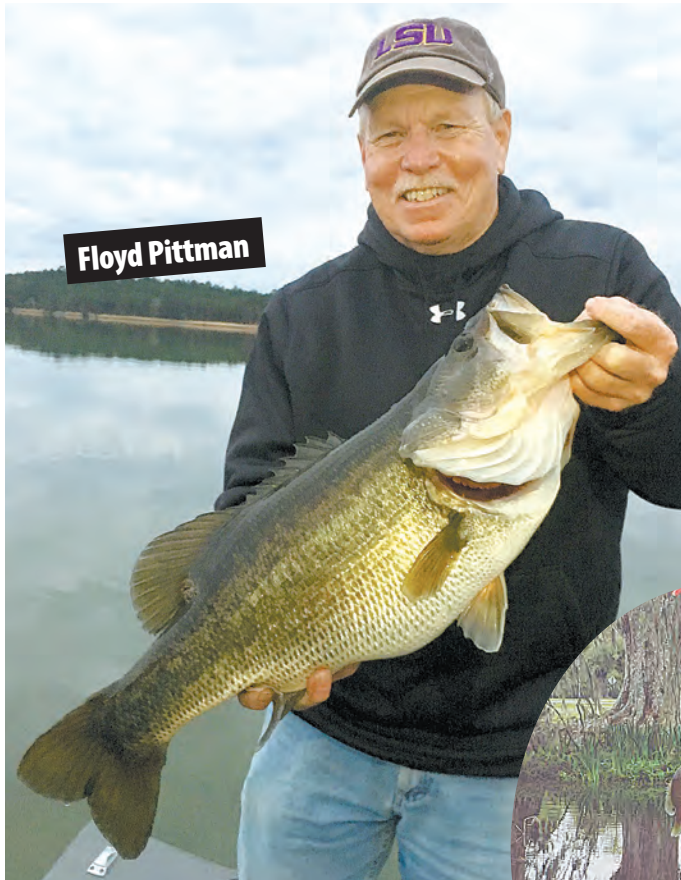
TIP!

Spray your grater with non-stick spray before using to prevent the cheese from sticking. It will also be much easier to wash.



Jerald and Glenda Horst are the authors of six excellent books on Louisiana seafood—*The Seafood Bible: Shrimp*, *The Seafood Bible: Crawfish*, *The Seafood Bible: Crabs*, *The Seafood Bible: Oysters*, *The Seafood Bible: Fish: Volume 1* and *The Seafood Bible: Fish: Volume 2*. Jerald and Glenda may be contacted at jerald@rockinghorst.com.





Floyd Pittman

Floyd Pittman caught this hammer while fishing with a ½-ounce red Rat-L-Trap in a private lake in Northwest Louisiana. Before the day was over he and his son Jason documented a five-bass limit that weighed a staggering 41.9 pounds.



Brandt Dufrene III

Brandt Dufrene III of Metairie caught this 26-inch red that had a 15-inch girth on his first-ever redfish trip on Jan. 4.



Julian Hidalgo

Julian Hidalgo, 6, landed this one in his cousin Brandt's pond while fishing with his PawPaw.



Marlon K. Ardoin

Marlon K. Ardoin took this old boar on W. Fork Hunting Club near Mamou during a deer primitive weapons hunt in Area 2.



Ryan Schaefer

Ryan Schaefer with a nice Area 6 rut buck.



Mathew Miranda

Mathew Miranda with two nice trout caught in Delacroix while fishing with Matrix Shad lures.

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**DIXIE
DISCOUNT
\$48,563!**

**2019 Jayco
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Planting and cultivating a buffer of thick trees or bushes around a popular feeding area for deer can give animals a little more security to venture into the picture during daylight hours.

MAKE DEER FEEL MORE SECURE

By Jeff Burleson



Jeff Burleson

PLANT BUFFERS GIVE WHITETAILS A SENSE OF PROTECTION

With long seasons in most southeastern states, deer hunters have an extended period to target trophy bucks, which makes consistent disturbance from hunting pressure and other factors a real issue.

Hunters can improve their chances with a little buffering and protection around attractive sites on their properties, and winter is a perfect time to beef up buffers around ag fields or food plots to provide a better sense of security.

Care should be taken to shield these areas from unnecessary disturbance; that will promote their use by deer any time of day, when often, they are more likely to use them after dark.

Many agriculture fields are located along highways, and many food plots are created from existing agriculture fields. While deer may become adapted to the constant traffic, a traveling motorist will frequently pull off to take a peek, flushing the deer back into the forest cover.

Even when food plots are miles away from a public highway, they will frequently be created adjacent to a heavily-traveled woods road, which usually lacks significant cover to shield grazing wildlife from curious onlookers passing by.

Security is the key to keep deer on food sources during daylight hours. Planting forested buffers along any travel corridors will significantly improve the productivity

of food plots and prime agriculture fields during hunting season.

The width of buffers should be directly related to the level of disturbance expected along the travel corridor. Highly traveled roadways need wider buffer strips than a small dirt road bordering a food plot deep in the wilds. Buffers should be at least 25 feet wide, but 75 to 125 feet is ideal to fully protect these animals from unnatural disturbances.

BUFFERING PLANTS

The best buffers have a combination of trees, shrubs and brushy materials. The intent of any buffer is to provide 100-percent visual blockage and as much sound protection as possible.

The preferred way to establish these buffers is from a combination of planting and volunteer recruitment. Unfortunately, buffer establishment can be a lengthy process. Tree plantings should be the start of these buffers, with volunteer shrub and brushy species following afterwards. Pines and other evergreen species susceptible to rapid growth should be selected to jumpstart these buffers. Selecting evergreen trees also prevents any period of leaf fall compromising the buffer's integrity as well.

continued >

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SECURE DEER CONTINUED

On most sites, loblolly pine is the choice for rapid height growth. On sites that feature particularly dry conditions, longleaf pines should replace loblolly plantings for a higher survival rate. Planting a combination of loblolly and shortleaf or Virginia pine will accelerate the coverage. While loblolly is known for growing tall quickly, the shortleaf and Virginia pine will have more lateral growth to cover the lower stratum.

Loblolly pines should be planted a minimum of three to five rows deep. Trees should be spaced 6 to 8 feet apart along rows, and rows should be 10 feet apart. Shortleaf or Virginia pine should be planted along the roadway or in

the interior of the buffer in their own rows, but in voids of the loblolly pine to complete buffer coverage. As the trees grow, other volunteer species will contribute to the buffer. In addition to planting trees, shrubs such as wax myrtle can be planted to jump-start the lower stratum.

While buffers can be created any time of year, all plantings in these buffers should be confined to the December-through-March period. To further encourage buffer growth, seasonal fertilization can be helpful. A balanced fertilizer of equal parts phosphate, nitrogen and potash can be broadcasted over the buffers in the spring and summer. ■

CLEAN AT LAST

HERE'S HOW TO PUT THAT GUN AWAY UNTIL NEXT SEASON

By Gordon Hutchinson



Brushing out the barrel of a bolt-action rifle is one of the first steps in an end-of-season cleaning job. **INSET:** Automotive brake cleaner makes a great cleaning agent.

A buddy with a new shotgun still in the box stored it in the trunk of a vehicle for a week or two, and when he retrieved it, found a thin pantina of rust on the metal parts, perhaps the result of humid conditions in the trunk.

That brought up the subject of giving guns a good cleaning before you put them away for a while — like the end of deer, duck, squirrel, rabbit or bird season.

First off, no WD-40!

Countless gunsmiths say, to a man, do not put

WD-40 on your guns. Some jokingly say don't even have it in the same room with your guns, so you won't be tempted.

A gun coated with WD-40 instead of a good oil will rust — in an amazingly quick time. Yet duck hunters and other outdoorsmen who shoot in wet environments will spray their guns down with WD-40 and forget about them. And days later, they will be shocked at the amount of surface rust they find on their fine firearms.

An excellent start to cleaning any firearm is to spray it down with a cleanser that removes



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After cleaning all grease, oils, powder and gunk from your gun, wipe metal surfaces with a lightly oiled rag.

GUN CLEANING CONTINUED

oils, grease, burned powders, etc. In the military, rifles and parts were often cleaned with lighter fluid. Once the fluid washed the steel clean, it evaporated, leaving a clean, unprotected surface. Then, everything would be wiped down with an oily rag, with a lightly oiled patch run through the bore.

Nowadays, aerosol cans from gun stores do just that for you — with the ease of a powerful stream of cleanser shooting



out of the can, knocking the filth, oils and greases off the surface of your guns. These products are extremely effective and costly.

An excellent substitute is plain automotive brake parts cleaner, inexpensively obtained at any auto parts counter. It works exactly the same way at considerably less cost. Be warned; do not use carburetor cleaners for this job. These petroleum distillates will eat finishes on wooden grips and stocks, and they may melt plastic hand-gun grips.

Once you have cleaned the burnt powder and accumulated gunk trapped with the old grease and oils, wipe the gun down with an oily rag soaked with a good firearms protectant/lubricant, run a lightly-oiled rag through the bore and put your baby to rest for the long sleep until next hunting season. ■



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FISHING REGULATIONS

2019

These regulations are unofficial. For official regulations, always check the Department of Wildlife & Fisheries pamphlet and/or the federal pamphlet. www.wf.louisiana.gov



SALTWATER

STATE REGULATIONS (0-10.357 miles^Δ)

FISH Species	Minimum Length	Bag Limit (per person)
Greater Amberjack*~	34" FL	1/day*
Lesser Amberjack, Banded Rudderfish*	14-22" FL	5/day (aggregate)
Yellowfin Tuna	27" CFL	3/day
Bluefin Tuna	73" CFL	1 per vessel per year*
Bigeye Tuna	27" CFL	None
Blue Marlin	99" LJFL	None
White Marlin	66" LJFL	None
Sailfish	63" LJFL	None
Swordfish*	29" CL or 33 lbs. DW	5 per vessel per trip
Cobia (ling or lemon fish)	33" FL	2/day
Drum, Black	16" TL	5/day#
Drum, Red (redfish)	16" TL	5/day#
Flounder, Southern	None	10/day
Groupers* Gag ^Δ & Black ^Δ	24" TL	4/day (aggregate)*
Scamp ^Δ	16" TL	
Nassau & Goliath	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
Yellowfin ^Δ	20" TL	
Red ^Δ	20" TL	2 of 4 grouper total
Atlantic Sharpnose & Bonnethead shark@	None	1/day
Other sharks (except prohibited species)@	54" FL	1/day/vessel/aggregate
King Mackerel*	24" FL	3/day
Spanish Mackerel*	12" FL	15/day
Striped mullet	None	100 pounds/day
Black seabass	None	None
Hogfish	14" FL	5/day
Seatrout, Spotted (Speckled Trout)	12" TL*	25/day*
Red Snapper*	16" TL	2/day*
Other Snapper		5 mutton in 10 snapper aggregate
Mutton Snapper	18" TL	
Cubera, Yellowtail, Gray (mangrove)	12" TL	10 in aggregate*
Queen, Blackfin, Silk, Wenchman	None	
Vermilion Snapper	10" TL	
Schoolmaster, Dog, Mahogany	None	None
Gray Triggerfish*	15" FL	1/day in aggregate
Lane Snapper	8" TL	
Almaco Jack, Goldface Tilefish, & Blueline Tilefish	None	20/person/day in aggregate*
Blackline Tilefish, Anchor Tilefish	None	
Tripletail	18" TL	5/day

CFL = curved fork length

LJFL = lower jaw fork length

CL = carcass length

DW = dressed weight

LJTF = lower jaw to tail fork

FL = fork length

FRESHWATER

FISH Species	Minimum Size Limit	Bag Limit (per person)
Crappie	None	50/day*
Buffalo Fish	16" TL	25/day
Freshwater Drum (Gaspergou)	12" TL	25/day
Channel Catfish	11" TL*	***
Blue Catfish	12" TL*	***
Bowfin	16" TL	None
Flathead Catfish	14" TL*	***
Crawfish	None	150 lbs./day
Paddlefish	30" max LJFL	2*
Shad	None	50 lbs./day
Black Bass (largemouth & spotted)	None*	10/day*
Striped Bass or Hybrid Striped Bass	**	5/day*
Sturgeon	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
White Bass	None	50/day*
Yellow Bass	None	50/day*

* see exceptions in pamphlet.

** no more than two may exceed 30 inches.

*** catfish limit is 100 in aggregate; however, 25 fish in aggregate may be undersized.

only one fish may exceed 27 inches.

@ Shark season is closed between April 1 and June 30.

Δ Closed season for gag grouper Jan. 1 - May 31. Closed season for black, red, yellowfin,

yellowmouth & scamp grouper from Feb. 1 - March 31. ~ Greater amberjack season is open May 1-31 and Aug. 1 - Oct. 31. * Closed season on gray triggerfish Jan. 1 - Feb. 28 and June 1- July 31.

ASTRO TABLES

Astro Tables is far more effective than "moon tables," because it takes into account critical solar energies as well as lunar.

The "Best Days" column is based on the ever-changing positions of the sun and the moon, rating each day on a scale of 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more solar/lunar influence that day is experiencing (see "Value" column or corresponding black bars). The two Primary periods (Moon Overhead and Moon Underfoot) vary in length from one hour to three-and-one-half hours, depending on a number of important lunar cycles, such as how close the moon is to the earth that day and how high its orbit is. The solar symbols alert you to when a Primary period overlaps a major solar period (eg: Dawn, High-Noon, and Dusk). The secondary periods of Moonrise and Moonset last about one hour each... 30 minutes before and after the listed time. (See key at bottom of each month for more detail.)

Astro Tables is a quick-reference version of its parent publication, the **PrimeTimes Wall Calendar**, which is recommended for those wishing more complete data on the best days and times to go fishing and hunting for the entire year (see "Available Products" below).

PrimeTimes forecasts are based on solar/lunar research at a leading college of astrophysics and our own research pond/wildlife area. Annual data is supplied by the U.S. Naval Observatory. All times are adjusted to the center of your time zone and for Daylight Saving Time.

AVAILABLE PRODUCTS:

The 2019 PrimeTimes Wall Calendar. \$13.95 (plus \$4 s&h). Know the best days, best times, and their relative strengths for all of 2019 with this information-packed, full-color, 11-inch by 17-inch, graphic peaks

and-valleys forecaster. Includes rise and set times for the sun and moon, space to log your catches, "Timely Tips," plus fish and game symbols showing you each month's don't-miss periods. Also includes exclusive summary charts revealing the best and worst days of 2019, the year's best periods, a look ahead at 2020, and more. Comes with FREE 2019 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for \$8.95, plus \$3 s&h. **Book: "How to Know When to Go" by Rick Taylor.** \$14.95 (plus \$4 s&h). 100 pages, 43 illustrations. A comprehensive look at the main factors influencing fish and game activity periods, plus how to devise an effective when-to-go game plan using any year's PrimeTimes calendars. Individual assessments of bass, panfish, deer, turkey, and more.

2019 Ultimate PrimeTimes software for PCs. \$29.95 (plus \$3 s&h, or no s&h if downloaded from web). The world's best forecaster allows you to fine-tune the peak times to your exact location, quarry, and even weather. Too many features to list here, including making your own App. For more details, please call us or visit our web site (see below).

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- #3: **Same as #2, minus book...** \$38.95 (plus \$5 s&h).

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2019 FEB		BEST DAYS			VALUE
POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL		
Fri 1	█	█	█	█	23
Sat 2	█	█	█	█	34
Sun 3	█	█	█	█	43
Mon 4	█	█	█	█	49
Tue 5	█	█	█	█	41
Wed 6	█	█	█	█	33
Thu 7	█	█	█	█	26
Fri 8	█	█	█	█	24
Sat 9	█	█	█	█	28
Sun 10	█	█	█	█	31
Mon 11	█	█	█	█	40
Tue 12	█	█	█	█	53
Wed 13	█	█	█	█	46
Thu 14	█	█	█	█	43
Fri 15	█	█	█	█	45
Sat 16	█	█	█	█	57
Sun 17	█	█	█	█	67
Mon 18	█	█	█	█	77
Tue 19	█	█	█	█	82
Wed 20	█	█	█	█	68
Thu 21	█	█	█	█	54
Fri 22	█	█	█	█	40
Sat 23	█	█	█	█	33
Sun 24	█	█	█	█	29
Mon 25	█	█	█	█	31
Tue 26	█	█	█	█	38
Wed 27	█	█	█	█	26
Thu 28	█	█	█	█	20
25 50 75 AVERAGE					

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LUNAR PERIODS					
TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED					
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT		
4:53 am	9:30 am - 10:28 am	3:04 pm	9:55 pm - 10:53 pm	●	LOW
5:42 am	10:17 am - 11:19 am	3:54 pm	10:42 pm - 11:44 pm	●	
6:27 am	11:03 am - 12:09 pm ☀	4:47 pm	11:28 pm - Midnight	●	
7:08 am	11:47 am - 12:59 pm ☀	5:42 pm	Midnight - 12:34 am	●	NEW
7:45 am	12:27 pm - 1:49 pm	6:37 pm	12:12 am - 1:24 am	●	Apogee
8:18 am	1:04 pm - 2:40 pm	7:32 pm	12:52 am - 2:14 am	●	
8:50 am	1:41 pm - 3:29 pm	8:27 pm	1:29 am - 3:05 am	●	
9:19 am	2:16 pm - 4:18 pm	9:22 pm	2:06 am - 3:54 am	●	
9:48 am	2:51 pm - 5:09 pm	10:17 pm	2:41 am - 4:43 am	●	
10:18 am	3:27 pm - 5:59 pm	11:14 pm	3:16 am - 5:34 am	●	
10:50 am	4:03 pm - 6:53 pm ☀		3:52 am - 6:24 am	●	
11:24 am	4:45 pm - 7:47 pm ☀	12:13 am	4:28 am - 7:18 am	●	HALF
12:03 pm	5:31 pm - 8:43 pm	1:14 am	5:10 am - 8:12 am ☀	●	
12:49 pm	6:22 pm - 9:44 pm	2:17 am	5:56 am - 9:08 am ☀	●	
1:42 pm	7:19 pm - 10:45 pm	3:21 am	6:47 am - 10:09 am	●	HIGH
2:42 pm	8:21 pm - 11:47 pm	4:23 am	7:44 am - 11:10 am	●	
3:50 pm	9:26 pm - 12:46 am	5:22 am	8:46 am - 12:12 pm	●	
5:02 pm	10:34 pm - 1:40 am	6:16 am	9:51 am - 1:11 pm	●	
6:15 pm	11:40 pm - Midnight	7:04 am	10:59 am - 2:05 pm ☀	●	FULL PERIOD
7:27 pm	Midnight - 2:30 am	7:47 am	12:05 pm - 2:55 pm	●	
8:38 pm	12:45 am - 3:17 am	8:26 am	1:10 pm - 3:42 pm	●	
9:45 pm	1:48 am - 4:00 am	9:03 am	2:13 pm - 4:25 pm	●	
10:51 pm	2:47 am - 4:43 am	9:38 am	3:12 pm - 5:08 pm	●	
11:54 pm	3:47 am - 5:25 am	10:14 am	4:12 pm - 5:50 pm	●	
	4:44 am - 6:06 am	10:52 am	5:09 pm - 6:31 pm ☀	●	
12:55 am	5:39 am - 6:51 am	11:31 am	6:04 pm - 7:16 pm	●	HALF
1:54 am	6:32 am - 7:38 am ☀	12:14 pm	6:57 pm - 8:03 pm	●	
2:49 am	7:24 am - 8:26 am ☀	1:01 pm	7:49 pm - 8:51 pm	●	

ANY LUNAR PERIOD IS ENHANCED WHEN IT OVERLAPS A KEY SOLAR PERIOD. THE BEST OF THESE OVERLAPS ARE DESIGNATED BY THE SUN SYMBOLS: ☀ = DAWN ☀ = HIGH NOON ☀ = DUSK
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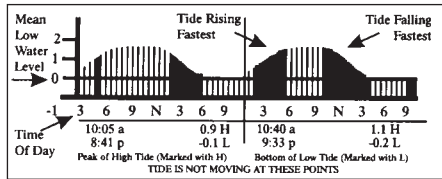
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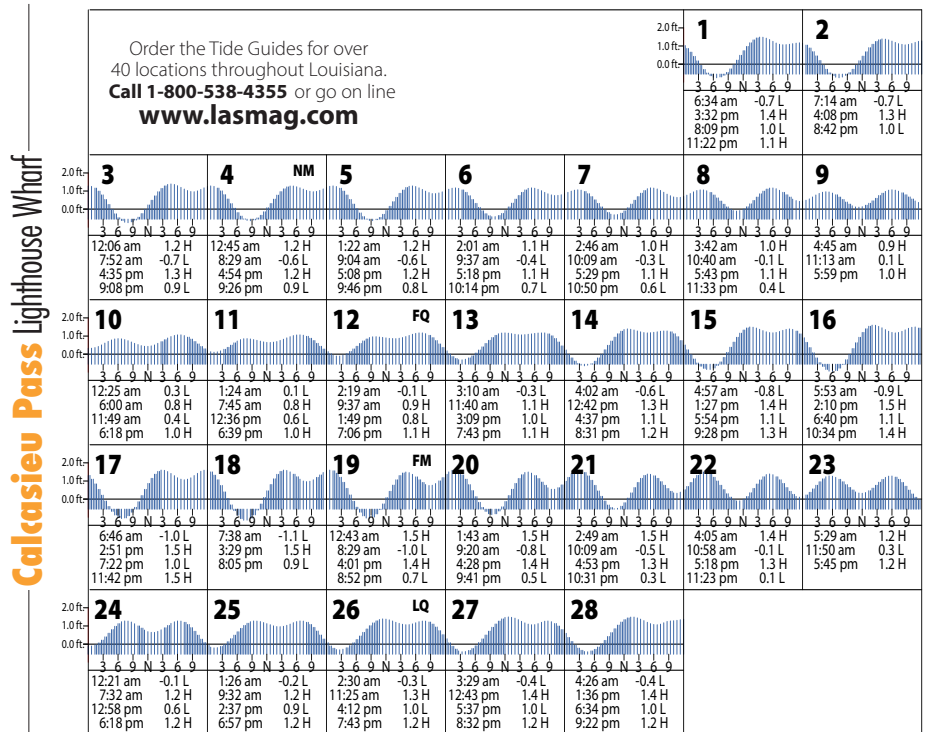
Tide Corrections

East Point, Grand Isle HIGH LOW

Barataria Pass	+1:00	-0:10
Bastian Island	+0:41	+0:12
Bay Gardene	+2:51	+2:44
Bayou BonFouca	+9:59	+10:11
Breton Islands	+0:54	+0:48
Caillou Boca	+0:40	+0:48
Caminada Pass	+0:20	+0:12
Chandeleur Light	+0:37	+0:34
Chef Pass	+5:17	+5:07
Cocodrie	+1:22	+1:33
Comfort Island	+1:34	+0:54
Delacroix Island	+3:42	+3:31
Empire Jetty	-1:03	-1:45
Four Bayou Pass	+2:18	+0:17
Gardner Island	+0:40	+0:47
Grand Pass	+1:48	+1:16
Head of Passes	-0:48	+0:00
Hopedale	+4:17	+4:56
Independence Island	+2:29	+1:59
Jack Bay	+1:59	+1:28
Joseph Bayou	-0:36	-1:37
Lafitte	+1:45	+2:51
Long Point, Lake Borgne	+2:28	+2:11
Manila Village	+2:32	+3:13
Michoud Substation	+5:24	+5:02
New Canal (Bucktown)	+10:34	+10:49
North Pass	-0:31	-0:37
Paris Road Bridge	+5:53	+5:58
Pelican Islands	+2:26	+2:26
Pointe a la Hache	+3:12	+3:01
Port Eads	-0:17	-1:37
Raccoon Point	-0:03	-0:20
Shell Beach	+4:32	+4:25
Ship Shoal Light	-1:54	-1:50
South Pass, Miss. R.	-1:13	-1:20
Southwest Pass, Miss. R.	-0:38	-1:33
Tchefuncte River	+10:23	+11:01
Timbalier Island	+0:19	+0:23
Wine Island	+1:08	+1:02

Calcasieu Pass, Lighthouse Wharf HIGH LOW

Cote Blanche Island	+4:33	+3:40
Eugene Island	+1:49	-0:39
Lighthouse Point	+0:58	-0:53
Mermentau River ent.	+0:20	+0:25
Point Au Fer	+1:53	-1:02
Point Chevreul	+3:16	+0:30
Rabbit Island	+2:01	-0:36
Shell Island	+3:08	+0:45
South Point	+1:55	-0:33
Southwest Pass, Vermillion Bay	+1:42	+0:51
Weeks Bay	+3:58	+3:56



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