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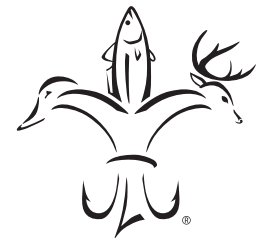
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ON THE COVER:



Malcolm Hilburn's Caddo Parish monster buck stretched the tape to more than 200 inches gross. Check out big deer from all over the state - including a new potential typical Louisiana record - starting on page 22.

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CORRECTION ON SABINE RIVER LAUNCH SITES/LIMITS

EDITOR:

I just read the article about bass fishing on the Sabine River in the November, 2018 issue of Louisiana Sportsman. It's a nice article with lots of good info in it, but the part about keeping limits for the state where you launched your boat is wrong. I always launch at Burnout on the Louisiana side. Texas Parks and Wildlife stopped me fishing along the bank on the Texas side - not interior Texas waters - and told me no matter where you launch, if you're fishing Texas waters, you must follow their rules. They assume all fish onboard were caught where they stop you.

VANCE BARLOW
Starks, La.

Editor's Note: Vance is correct. According to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, no matter where you launch your boat, if you are actively fishing west of the imaginary boundary line bisecting the Sabine River, you must be in compliance with Texas rules, which are a five-fish daily creel limit and a 14-inch minimum for bass. In Louisiana waters on the Sabine, there is no minimum size requirement and a 10-fish daily creel limit. The Sabine is considered border water, and Louisiana and Texas do have a reciprocal licensing agreement in place for the lower river and Sabine Lake.

The Sportsman regrets the error.

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TOP 10

STORIES OF 2018

Louisiana's outdoor scene certainly wasn't lacking in newsworthy stories throughout the past year. It seemed like a month didn't go by without something of great interest to hunters and fishermen taking place — some good news, some bad news and some just plain interesting.

So we researched the archives of LouisianaSportsman.com and came up with the 10 most compelling stories of the year.

Hope you enjoy looking back at last year's recap of some impressive deer, big-time bass and other interesting stories.

1 WATER-ACCESS BILL PASSES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE

House Bill 391 that would guarantee public access to tidal waterways received approval by the House of Representatives' Committee on Civil Law and Procedure, setting up a hearing on the floor of the House.

And no one was more shocked than Louisiana Sportsmen's Coalition board member Darryl Carpenter.

"I have spent so many days in the Capitol, and have heard the conversations and the lobby that's opposing it — so, yes, I am surprised it passed the committee," Carpenter said.

There remains a lot of ground to cover before the bill becomes law: It must first be approved by the full House, move to a Senate committee, receive approval by the full Senate and then be signed by Gov. John Bel Edwards.

"Each one of these (steps) has the ability to kill (the bill)," Carpenter said.

But he said today's events give him great hope.

"If nothing else, if this doesn't continue forward ... I think it has brought the issue to light enough that maybe it'll bring the opposition to the table," Carpenter said. "At this point, the attitude of the landowners has been, 'We have it, you want it, you don't have anything to bargain with.'"

"They're starting to see public opinion is turning."

He also said this should be a wake-up call to anglers who want to change the way water access is handled in Louisiana.

EDITOR'S NOTE: One week later, on April 17, 2018, HB 391 failed on the floor of the House by a vote of 39 in favor and 59 against. It should be interesting to see what happens on this topic in 2019.



2 240-INCH 'ROUGAROU' BUCK BITES THE DUST

When Amanda Smith departed for her deer stand on Jan. 13 in Avoyelles Parish, her husband Scotty jokingly told her not to come home unless she was bringing back some fresh venison.

Smith, 33, of Brouillette, accomplished that — and a whole lot more — when she dropped a jaw-dropping 25-point non-typical buck that stretched the tape to more than 240 inches Boone and Crockett.



EDITOR'S NOTE: The Rougarou Buck didn't disappoint: its final score measured 226 2/8 inches, good enough for No. 5 in the state's all-time non-typical record books for gun kills.

3 HUGE BOBCAT GOES DOWN

On Monday, Feb. 5, 48-year-old pharmaceutical salesman Troy Borill dropped a giant trophy in Acadia Parish — but it didn't have a gnarly rack or a huge inside spread.

It did, however, have a wicked set of teeth — it was a massive male bobcat that tipped the scales at a whopping 38 pounds, and no one he talked to — including a couple of biologists with the



Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries — had seen one that big in a long time.

4 CANEY LAKE GIVES UP 36-POUND STRINGER

In the span of about 30 minutes on a dreary, drizzly morning on Caney Lake, Hunter Freeman and Corey Harris experienced a bite so epic most bass anglers' wildest dreams probably wouldn't even come close to what actually happened out on the water.

Try to wrap your head around just a few of the mind-blowing stats from their trip on Feb. 26: Freeman's second cast netted a 7-pounder. The biggest fish of the day weighed 9.68 pounds, and they had about 30 pounds in their livewell by 7:05 a.m. — after less than 30 minutes of fishing. Of the more than 25 total bass caught, every last one weighed more than 5 pounds, with the exception of just three or four fish.



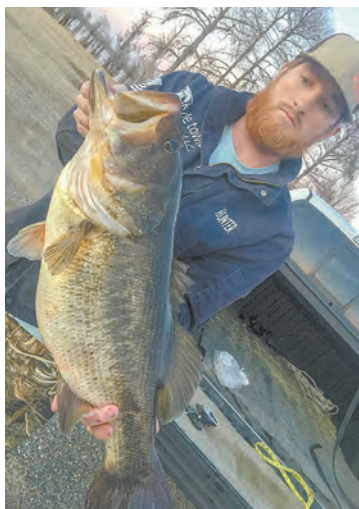
When the dust settled by about 9:20, they headed to Hook's Marina and weighed in a five-fish bag that tipped the certified scales there at 36.3 pounds.

5 BISTINEAU ANGLER CATCHES, RELEASES 12-POUND MONSTER

On Jan. 24, Hunter Vaughn and his grandpa Jack Elkins decided to make a quick late-afternoon fishing trip on Lake Bistineau. Neither knew it at the time, but they were about one hour from encountering the biggest bass they'd ever seen.

The pair put the bass in the livewell, and headed out to quickly get measurements. It tipped the scales at a whopping 12 pounds, 5 ounces, with a 27-inch length and a massive 20 1/4-inch girth.

Vaughn released the bass — his biggest ever — back into Bistineau, and ordered a replica mount to commemorate a day on the water he and his grandpa won't ever forget.



6 FARMERVILLE MAN ARRESTED FOR BATTERY, HARASSMENT OF LAKE D'ARBONNE FISHERMEN

Enforcement agents with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries arrested a 64-year-old Farmerville man after he allegedly confronted fishermen legally fishing in front of his property and dock on Lake D'Arbonne — and allegedly poured gasoline on them in an attempt to

get them to leave. Agents arrested Vincent Ditta for simple battery and harassment of fishermen, according to a press release.

EDITOR'S NOTE: According to the LDWF, Ditta is slated to go to trial to face the battery and harassment charges on Feb. 6, 2019.

7 DRAGON-LIKE CATCH SHOCKS LOUISIANA GUIDE

Nothing prepared Capt. Jamie Gaspard of Pure Adrenalin Fishing Charters for the odd-looking creature that hit his deck about 3 p.m. on Aug. 15.

It actually looked like something more at home in Jurassic Park.

"The only thing it was missing was a hissing noise," said Gaspard, who was fishing 2,000 feet down in about 5,000 feet of water 120 miles out of Fourchon in the Green Canyon.

The strange-looking creature actually was a lancetfish, or *Alepisaurus*, which means scaleless lizard. This vicious-looking predator has a long slinky body, huge eyes, teeth larger than a barracuda, holographic coloring and a large, sailfish-like iridescent fin.



8-10 >

TOP 10 CONTINUED

8 GUIDE CATCHES BEAUTIFUL LEOPARD RED OUT OF COCODRIE

Capt. Eric Pellegrin was in the midst of a hot trout bite near Wine Island Pass out of Cocodrie when a redfish crashed the party.

"I was like, 'Oh my gosh!' I couldn't believe it. With all the fish I've caught and seen in my life ... I never would have expected to catch something like that," he said. "To me, that's a once-in-a-lifetime

fish that's more precious to me than my nice buck on the wall."

The spotted redfish was 26 inches long with a 14-inch girth, and tipped the scales at 5.5 pounds.

Catching it was the easy part — counting its spots wasn't.

"The best I can say with a good accurate count is it's right at 400 spots total!"



9 DUCK HUNTERS CITED FOR HARVESTING MASSIVE EVANGELINE PARISH 18-POINT BUCK

Two duck hunters were cited for deer violations in Evangeline Parish after allegedly admitting to LDWF agents that they shot and killed an 18-point non-typical buck with bird shot.

Agents cited Jordan Richard, 23, of Mamou, and Dylan Santoro, 25, of Ville

Platte, for possession of an illegally taken deer, hunting deer using illegal methods and failing to wear hunter's orange. Agents also cited Richard for failing to comply with deer tagging requirements and failing to possess a big game hunting license, the release states.

Agents received a tip about the two men illegally harvesting a deer while they were duck hunting on Grand Marais Bayou near Mamou. With a shotgun, deer can only be harvested with a slug or buckshot.



10 200-CLASS CADDO PARISH MONSTER GOES DOWN

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-trailing dog named Lyla to recover a monster Caddo Parish buck he shot on the morning of Nov. 18.

And what a recovery it was: The rack had 18 scoreable points, and the 6 1/2-year-old buck ultimately stretched the tape at Simmons Sporting Goods in Bastrop to a whopping 204 4/8 inches of bone.



For full details on these stories, as well as all the latest outdoor news — plus tips and tactics to make you more successful out in the field — visit

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POTENTIAL NEW TYPICAL STATE RECORD BUCK DOWNED IN AVOYELLES PARISH

By Patrick Bonin

MCPHERSON'S MONSTER 17-POINT GROSSES 200 INCHES-PLUS

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 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 ...

Joe McPherson, of Woodworth, poses with the giant 17-point Avoyelles Parish buck he shot Dec. 9 on the South Farm of the old Louisiana Delta Plantation near Effie. The buck was green-scored three times, and grossed between 196 and 202 inches of bone. He's planning on bringing the deer to Louisiana Sportsman's Big Buck Contest at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales March 14-17 to get its official score.

"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 5/8, with bases right at 5 inches each. The buck weighed 223 pounds, and had an inside spread of 23 7/8 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 begins 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, McPherson is heading back to his stand.

"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." ■



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ON THE COVER

200-CLASS CADDO PARISH MONSTER GOES DOWN

By Glynn Harris

BLOOD-TRAILING DOG HELPS HILBURN RECOVER TROPHY BUCK

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 a monster Caddo Parish buck he shot on the morning of Nov. 18

"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 6½-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." ■



Malcolm Hilburn downed this 200-class 20-pointer in Caddo Parish on Nov. 18.

Photo courtesy of Malcolm Hilburn

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HUGE MAGNOLIA STATE BUCK

HODGES RATTLES
IN STUNNING
217-INCH
20-POINT

By Glynn Harris

Heath Hodges won something akin to a big buck lottery on the afternoon of Dec. 3 when a huge 20-point brute chose his trail to walk down.

One shot from the Itta Bena, Mississippi hunter's .35 Whelen, and the monster buck was on the ground.

"At least five other hunters had been after this big buck for the past few seasons," Hodges, 38, said. "I guess it was like I won the lottery because the buck came walking right down the trail I was set up on and I got him."

One of those five after the buck, a bowhunter, had the big deer at 35 yards last season but held off because he couldn't get the shot he wanted. Others have seen trail cam photos of the buck and, like Hodges, the big non-typical deer eluded all of them. It's not like it was all pure luck on Hodges' part, though: He and a hunting buddy had been watching for the deer, and had it patterned for the previous four weeks. He had actually seen the deer three times this fall, but never had the right situation for a shot.

"I actually saw the buck the day before I shot him, and this was the third time I'd seen him during daylight hours," Hodges said. "We had trail cam photos of him for the past few years and he just kept getting more impressive each year. After I saw the buck the day before, I moved my stand a little closer to where I'd seen him, hoping that it would pay off."

The area around Itta Bena in Leflore County is farmland in the central part of

the state, and Hodges family owns about 1,000 acres of cotton, soybeans and corn on the family farm. On this day, he was actually hunting an adjoining 80-acre plot a friend allows him to hunt.

"I got on my stand around 2:30 that afternoon and after getting settled in, I picked up my grunt call and rattling horns and periodically called and rattled. Before long, two does came by me, walked past and actually bedded down 25 yards from me. They stayed there about 30 minutes," he said.

Hodges continued to hit his grunt call and rattling horns, and when he looked down the trail he had been watching, the big buck was heading straight to him.

"I guess he was responding to my rattling and grunting because he was headed right to where he'd heard it, which put him right in front of me at 25 yards. I eased my gun up, squeezed the

trigger and he ran about 20 yards before piling up," Hodges said.

"I decided to shoot my .35 Whelen because I knew if I had a shot it would be fairly close, and that gun can do the trick on a buck that close," he added.

As soon as he shot and watched the buck fall, he sent a text to his buddy hunting on another site to give him the news.

"All I texted to him was 'He's down.' My buddy texted back 'No way.' I answered, 'Yes.'"

The buck was a sight to behold, with 20 scoreable points and a long drop tine. The inside spread was 19 3/8 inches, with 26- and 27-inch main beams and heavy mass throughout the rack. The giant green-scored a whopping 217 5/8 inches of antler bone. Estimated to be 5 1/2 to 6 1/2 years old, the big old buck tipped the scales between 250 and 260 pounds. ■



Heath Hodges poses with the massive 20-point Mississippi buck he shot on Dec. 3 in Leflore County.

Photo courtesy of Heath Hodges

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Michael Guillory stuck this big East Feliciana 11-point on Dec. 7 from 23 yards. The deer's rack grossed more than 173 inches of bone.

BOWHUNTER ARROWS BIG EAST FELICIANA 11-POINTER

By Glynn Harris

HIGH, TIGHT RACK GROSSES 173 4/8 INCHES

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."



Photo courtesy of Michael Guillory

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 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 1/2 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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Cody Culpepper celebrates with his big public land buck taken on Boeuf Wildlife Management Area on Nov. 23. The big 13-point green-scored more than 180 inches of antler.



GIANT 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.

Photo courtesy of Cody Culpepper

"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 had 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."

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

because of all the mass that included some palmation, scored an astounding 180 1/8 inches of bone. ■



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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



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TENSAS NWR GIVES UP BIG 11-POINT PUBLIC LAND BUCK

By Glynn Harris

BERGERON'S TROPHY STRETCHES THE TAPE TO 165-PLUS INCHES

Billy Bergeron believes that to kill a mature buck, you have to get away from the crowds.

And on Saturday, Nov. 24, the 53-year-old Lake Charles hunter hiked over a mile into the heart of the Tensas National Wildlife Refuge — and came out with a heavy-antlered 11-point buck.

"I love to hunt public land, and have killed lots of deer in areas like Peason Ridge, Thistlethwaite, Lake Ophelia, Buckhorn and Tensas. I had driven to near the Tensas and camped with some friends nearby," Bergeron said. "On Friday morning, I walked way back into the heart of the refuge where I had found the oaks dropping acorns and deer trails in the area. I hooked my Summit climbing stand to a tree to see what might walk out."

His long walk that day produced nothing except sighting a small spike and some feral pigs.

The next morning, the weather had cleared and Bergeron headed back into the middle of the refuge to the area he hunted the day before. Again, the morning hunt produced nothing he wanted to shoot so he climbed down and left.

"I am only interested in shooting

something big and mature, and I've let a bunch of deer walk this season," he said. "After climbing down, I noticed that all the trails were headed for the same area, so I went in and found acorns falling like rain ..."

Up 20 feet in his climber, Bergeron sat and waited. As dusk approached, he still hadn't seen anything — until he heard something walking behind him.

"I eased my head around and there was this big buck not 10 yards behind me and to my right. I couldn't move my gun or anything but when he moved his head, I eased my Remington .270 around just a little," Bergeron said. "He turned to walk away and when he did, I stood up, pivoted around just as he gave me a broadside look and I shot. The deer ran and I heard him crash about 60 yards away."

About that time, Bergeron became a bit concerned because it was getting dark, and he was over a mile from his truck amidst a healthy population of black

bears on Tensas. (He shot an 8-point in the area last year and when he recovered the buck, a bear had beaten him to it and was beginning to gnaw on his deer).

But with no bears around this time, Bergeron was able to successfully get the deer on his cart and make it back to his truck after dark.

The buck weighed 210 pounds, and sported a massive rack of 11 points with antler circumference measuring 5 inches at the bases, and increasing to 6 ½ further up the rack. A taxidermist put the tape to it and gave it a gross green score of 165 1/8 inches of antler. ■



Photo courtesy of Billy Bergeron

Billy Bergeron ventured deep into the heart of the Tensas National Wildlife Refuge for this nice 11-pointer, which green-scored more than 165 inches.

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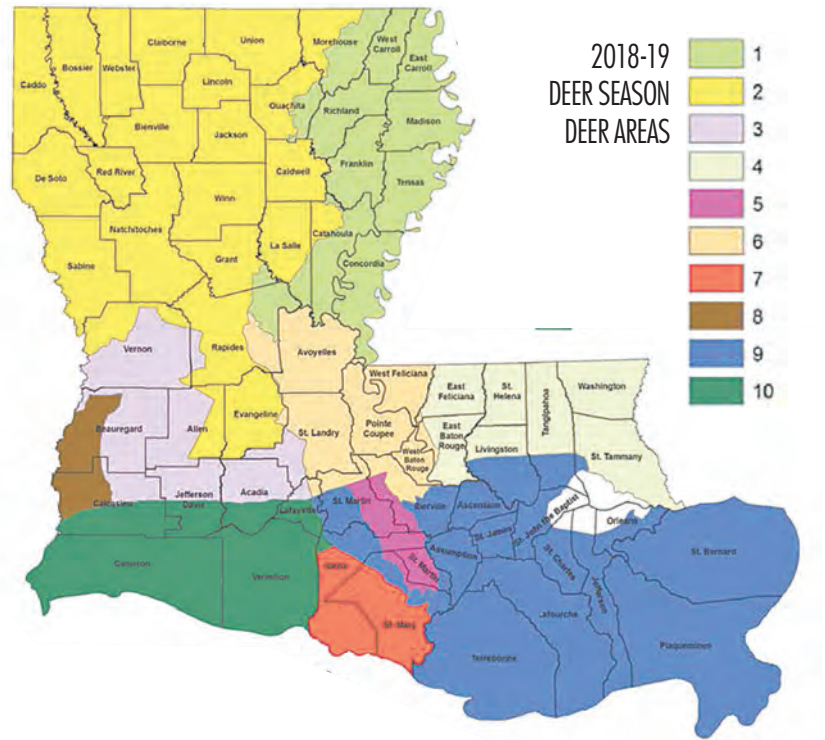
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JANUARY RUT CALENDARS

As long as it takes deer season to get here, it sure doesn't seem to last ... January marks the end of the road for most hunters, and rutting activity is pretty much limited to the eastern half of Louisiana.

In Areas 1, 5 and 6 in the Mississippi Delta and the upper-Basin parishes, 2019 kicks off during the first breeding period of the season, which is scheduled to wrap up on Jan. 4. The second scraping period is set to crank up Jan. 5 - 19, followed by the second rut from Jan. 20 - Feb. 3.

Deer in Areas 4 and 9 in Southeast Louisiana are predicted to be wrapping up their second and final rut as the new year ushers in: Their second breeding period was slated to run from Dec. 22 through Jan. 4.



JANUARY 2019							Areas 4 & 9
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	
		1	2	3	4	5	
					Second Breeding Period Ends		
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
27	28	29	30	31			

JANUARY 2019							Areas 1, 5 & 6
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	
		1	2	3	4	5	
					First Breeding Period Ends	Second Scraping Period Starts	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
						Second Scraping Period Ends	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
Second Breeding Period Starts							
27	28	29	30	31			

FOURTH CWD CASE SUSPECTED IN MISSISSIPPI

A 1 1/2-year-old buck collected in late November in Marshall County, Mississippi has initially tested positive for chronic wasting disease.

According to news reports, samples from that buck will be

sent to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Iowa for further testing. Two previous CWD cases have been confirmed in Issaquena County, and a third one was confirmed recently in Pontotoc County.

The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks has set up more than 20 CWD sample collection stations statewide, and is encouraging hunters to voluntarily submit deer heads for testing.

For specific sample collection locations, visit www.mdwfp.com.

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The Central Gulf Coast Boat, Sport & RV Show kicks things off Jan. 18-20 at the Lake Charles Civic Center, then the Southern Louisiana Boat, Sport & RV Show will take place Jan. 25-27 at the Houma Terrebonne Civic Center.

In February, the Mercedes-Benz Superdome will host the New Orleans Boat Show Feb. 8-10.

Finally, in March, Louisiana Sportsman's own Boat Show & Festival will take place March 14-17 at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales, and later that month the Acadiana RV, Sport & Boat Show is slated for March 29-31 at Cajun Field in Lafayette.

SPRING BOAT SHOW DATES

- **Central Gulf Coast Boat, Sport & RV Show**
Jan. 18-20, Lake Charles Civic Center
- **Southern Louisiana Boat, Sport & RV Show**
Jan. 25-27, Houma Terrebonne Civic Center
- **New Orleans Boat Show**
Feb. 8-10, Mercedes-Benz Superdome
- **Louisiana Sportsman Show & Festival,**
March 14-17, Lamar-Dixon Expo Center, Gonzales
- **Acadiana RV, Sport & Boat Show,**
March 29-31, Cajun Field in Lafayette



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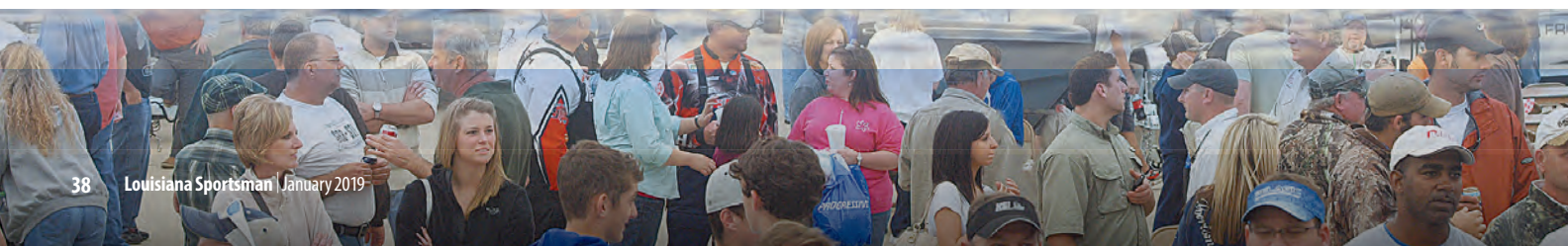


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A family affair



From left, William, Lionel and Jenni Washington show off some of the family's recent Louisiana whitetail trophies.

The Washingtons spends lots of time working and playing in the woods of Union Parish — which puts plenty of deer squarely in their crosshairs.

■ **BY KINNY HADDOX**



William Washington was just 17 years old back on Nov. 24, 1978, when his grandfather took him on a deer hunt where he killed his first buck.

It was a pretty nondescript 5-point that looks a little out of place today among all the Washington family's impressive trophies — but that buck changed William's life. >

“Pawpaw paid to have that deer mounted,” he said. “I’ve never taken it down.”

And he hasn’t forgotten that day 40 years ago. His grandpa took him with the older men, and he took up a position with his shotgun on a big pipeline.

In those days, they ran dogs —and it wasn’t long until he heard them coming his way. Well in front of the sound of the barking dogs, the 5-point started to cross the pipeline.

William took aim and fired. And fired, and fired. He had only one shell left, so he started praying.

He fired again, and the buck fell not too far from where he was standing. In those days, any deer was a trophy — and William was as excited as if it were a 12-point.

“I always loved to go to the woods and dreamed of killing a big deer. That day sealed the deal,” he said. “Since then, I’ve spent every minute I can hunting deer. I just love it. Not just the hunting, but being in the woods. It’s so relaxing and it’s not like when I’m out here working. I

“It’s a whole different world when I’m on the hunt.”

Many years before that day, William’s grandfather was making a living in the woods, working in the timber industry so far back that he remembered hauling logs on wagons pulled by mules. Today, William’s family continue both those traditions, running Washington Brothers Logging — and passionately pursuing deer hunting.



Spending so much time in the woods with his brothers Lionel and Stephon is the key to their family’s hunting success. And now his wife, Jenni, has joined the club — and took her first 10-pointer last season.



“There is no question that the more time you can spend in the woods, the better,” William said. “You can’t just go to the woods for a month or two. To be really successful, to get the most out of hunting, you need to keep up with the deer all year long.”

HAPPY TRAILS

Getting to both work and play in the woods gives him a distinct advantage, but others can do the same thing on a more limited basis.

“The first thing you can do is figure out where the deer are traveling,” he said. “You can find trails easy after it rains or when the woods are green, but even when it is dry, you can see the paths deer regularly take — if it’s no more than a trail where the dirt is stirred up and the leaves are missing.”

Deciding where to hunt along that trail is important, too. The best hunting will be along the trail between where the deer beds down, and where the nearest easy food source is. Set up right off the trail where you can be hidden, but still have several good openings for a clear shot.

And if you’re hunting anywhere near where the deer are laying up, it’s best to walk in as far as you can.

William said hunters shouldn’t kid themselves: Deer hear and understand every sound out there that could be a threat, including the sound of your ATV.

FIND THE FOOD

Understanding food sources is critical for successful deer hunting.

Deer eat a lot of green browse, but they are drawn to acorns in the fall like most people are drawn to a big steak, so keep watch on acorns all year long.

If there is a big crop growing on the trees, you know the deer will feed on them as long as they last. Washington said for the most part, putting out corn

William and Jenni Washington follow a deer trail, investigating a good place to locate a stand. INSET: The 5-point that started it all for William Washington 40 years ago.

>



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Beauty berries, officially French mulberry, are a favorite natural food of Louisiana deer.

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and rice bran will only feed other animals if deer still have acorns.

There is another treat that attracts deer that most hunters call 'beauty berries,' tiny clusters of small purple berries found dotted along the edges of openings in the woods.

"The thing is, deer act totally different around acorn flats and beauty berry bushes and other natural food than they do corn or rice bran," William said. "They are still wary, but they are more comfortable coming to the natural stuff."

"It's a totally different thing when you are hunting artificially placed food piles. They are nervous all the time."

As proof, William recalled a hunt from last season when he got off work about an hour before dark and went to the woods in his work clothes.

He climbed a lean-to stand at the intersection of two 4-wheeler trails that had lots of beauty berry (French mulberry) plants on them.

It wasn't long before a nice doe came out and started eating berries. There was a big deer behind her that hung in the woods for about five minutes, but eventually stepped out.

It was a big 10-point, and William downed it on the spot. If the buck hadn't felt at ease, it never would have stepped out there until after dark, he said.

As you watch beauty berry patches over time, you'll notice



the lower berries disappearing first, then as winter moves in, the higher ones get eaten. Deer have been seen on their hind legs reaching up for higher berries when food sources diminish.

Lionel takes a bit of a different approach to hunting than William: He likes deer hunting and spending time in the woods, but he isn't quite as crazy about deer hunting.

"I do it for the competition," he said. "Somebody has to go and

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give them some competition. I'm not as serious about having to shoot deer. In fact, the more relaxed I am and not pressing, the better I do. That might work for other hunters, too."

Lionel added another natural food source for other hunters to be aware of.

"Deer love persimmons," he said. "When the persimmons are getting ripe and falling, you can bet deer are coming to them. You need to know if you've got any of those trees, because they are great places to hunt."

While timber harvesting isn't always viewed as a friend of deer hunters, the Washington's see it as a way of life and say deer hunters — themselves included — have to adjust. If there was no value to timber, there probably wouldn't be much. So it's important to replenish that renewable resource.

An 'uh-oh' moment

When they found out about his magazine interview, William Washington's brothers started giving him a hard time and were going to tattle on him — so he beat them to the punch.

"Nobody does everything right every time," he said. "One day I went out and spent all afternoon and didn't see a thing. I was complaining and all when I realized, I didn't even have a bullet with me."

That also reminded him of another good deer hunting tip.

"Don't ever think you've got them totally figured out," he said.

"Because you don't. Never settle into such a pattern that you don't change. Hunt a different spot. Go in a different way. Do everything you can to find the deer.

"Because they are doing everything they can to keep you from finding them." ■

"Harvesting timber definitely changes deer hunting areas, but when we cut an area, those deer are going to find another good spot and they will eventually come back in the cutovers," he said. "That usually happens quicker than people think. It isn't long until there is plenty of young browse growing back in there to eat, and later, as the brush gets thicker, deer lay up in cutovers near their food sources.

"Some of the biggest deer people kill are taken coming out of the thick stuff growing in areas that have been thinned, but still have big pine trees. The undergrowth is thick and deer lay up there," he said. "You just have to find the trails where they come and go out of the thick stuff."

It's obvious that the Washington family pays attention in the woods.

continues >



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“My Momma told me one time that I was just like a deer, spending all my time in the woods,” William said. “It’s taught me a lot about life and deer hunting. I think one of the most important things is patience. A deer has a lot of it, and they are looking for you as much as you are looking for them. Know that and you’ll be a better hunter for it.”



When you find wild persimmon trees in the woods, rest assured the deer will, too.

That approach has led William to learn something about the biggest deer in the woods: It seems like one of the best places to find them is in a thicket not too far from someone’s back door.

“The big deer will lay up right by where people live,” he said. “Laying up near houses gives them a feeling of safety. They can pattern everything that is going on, and sense there is no threat most of the time. You see that brush right out there behind the house? There’s a big one out there right now, looking at us.”

“He’ll step out at night every once in a while, but not often. Big deer will lay up right under your nose. They can tell if you see them or not. If you don’t, you’ll walk right past them.” ■



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.

A little more from the Washingtons >

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Legend in the Outdoors



William Washington was named an Outdoor Legend in Union Parish, and with some wall-hangers like this one, it's easy to see why.

Union Parish is a hotbed for outdoor activity and outdoor enthusiasts in North Louisiana. Each year the local Farmerville Gazette newspaper recognizes that by naming "Outdoor Legends" of Union Parish.

Two years ago, William Washington was chosen as one of those legends because of his deer hunting prowess. Local

outdoor writer, deer hunter and sheriff's deputy Peyton McKinnie manages that program and explained why. "We've got a lot of great deer hunters in this neck of the woods, but none are any better or spend more time in the woods than William Washington — or his family, for that matter," McKinnie says. "They have killed some huge deer and have success every year. And they are good people. That's important, too." ■

Weapons of choice

The Washington's choice of weapons are as varied as their approaches to the woods. And you couldn't get them to change for love or money. William shoots a .308 Remington, Lionel shoots a Remington .30-06 automatic and, even though she has other

guns, Jenni sticks with her trusty .30-30 Winchester. They do say there is one thing in common about their gun selections — confidence. You have to be confident that when you pull the trigger, you'll get your deer. ■



Jenni Washington, a.k.a. 'Annie Oakley,' shows what she packs for a long day in the deer stand.

Jenni get your gun

Jenni Washington is nicknamed 'Annie Oakley' for the famed Wild West sharpshooter. But she gets more than her guns when she heads to the stand for a day in the woods. She has a backpack which the men in the family make fun of because "it weighs about 30 pounds." But she doesn't care. When she goes to set up on a deer, she's prepared — and she'll stay all day long. So what's in the bag? Some basic deer hunting necessities and a few extra things: There's a flashlight, extra batteries, mosquito spray, doe urine, her own special homemade "fruit" attractant, a cell phone,

crochet materials (yes, she often crochets while waiting on deer), paper and pencils for drawing, gloves, a knife, extra shells, an extra cap, a rain slicker and some snacks — among other things. "If I think I need it, I'm going to take it with me," she said. "That's one thing I'd tell other women that might like to hunt. Don't stay home and let the men have all the fun. "Get out there and go with them. But make sure you have something to keep you from getting bored. And make sure you take the things to help make you comfortable." ■



From the left, Lionel, William and Jenni Washington illustrate that time spent in the woods working can definitely lead to success in the deer stand.

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David Moreland

Whitney Defelice downed her first deer — a doe near Cypremort Point — earlier this fall. Her brother Ethan coached her through the shot — and helped drag it out of the marsh.



THE LATE SEASON IS HERE: IT'S TIME TO MAKE A MEMORY

JANUARY MARKS THE LAST HURRAH FOR DEER HUNTERS

Dessert marks the end of an appetizing meal, and often makes a person exclaim, “The best was saved for last.”

Likewise, January marks the end of the 2018-2019 deer season, and in Areas 1 and 6 the rut is at its peak. It is the time for real wall-hangers to be chasing does, and the best time for a hunter to connect with one.

Most of my hunting is in Area 4, and December was our peak month of breeding. On areas that have a good buck age structure with older, mature bucks in the population, it can be a time for the Area 4 hunter to get a second chance at a trophy. A couple of years ago I was hunting on such an area; I had been doing some loud bleating and around 5 p.m. a fine piney woods 8-pointer stepped out looking for a doe. I wound up connecting with a 130-class B&C buck. This was, and remains, a wonderful deer-hunting memory that is etched in the corner of my brain — and one that I can recall in an instant. If you have not had any

success with your deer hunting, now is the time to head to these two areas and make a memory.

NOVEMBER DEER ARE BONUS DEER FOR ME

Because the rut in Area 4 generally begins in December and runs through January, most of my deer harvesting in Area 4 over the last 40-plus years has been during those months. I consider the deer that I harvest in November as bonus deer.

For many years now I have made a couple of November hunts in Area 2, and have often been blessed with a deer or two. This year I hunted with my friend Ken on his lease in Bossier Parish, and with several retired wildlife biologists during our Old Farts hunt in Union Parish. I had a great hunt with Ken during the first three days of November and saw plenty of deer, even a fine 8-pointer chasing a doe, but did not fire a shot. I was hopeful to connect with a buck because the Moreland freezer was empty of deer sausage. But a week later I was fortunate to kill a nice

young 4-pointer during the Old Farts hunt. (We may be old, but us oldsters can still get the job done — three out of five went home with meat.)

I mentioned in the November issue of that I would be hunting the managed deer hunts on Pearl River near a cow oak tree that was loaded with acorns. I was in position the morning of the 23rd and connected with a 3-year-old crab claw 4-point. That buck was following a doe heading in the direction of the cow oak. The 23rd was my predicted date for the start of the first breeding period in Area 4. Examination of the buck's stomach indeed revealed large cow oak acorns in the rumen, along with swamp black gum fruit and green browse. This deer also went to the butcher shop and yielded

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more sausage, along with some ground deer meat. While November is typically a bonus month for me, the reality is it was an important month for me this season. In fact, I passed up a few shots on deer in Area 4 during its final days. Since I am writing this column prior to December, I cannot say anything about how the Area 4 deer hunting was that month but if it's anything like November, it will be great.

IT'S TROPHY TIME

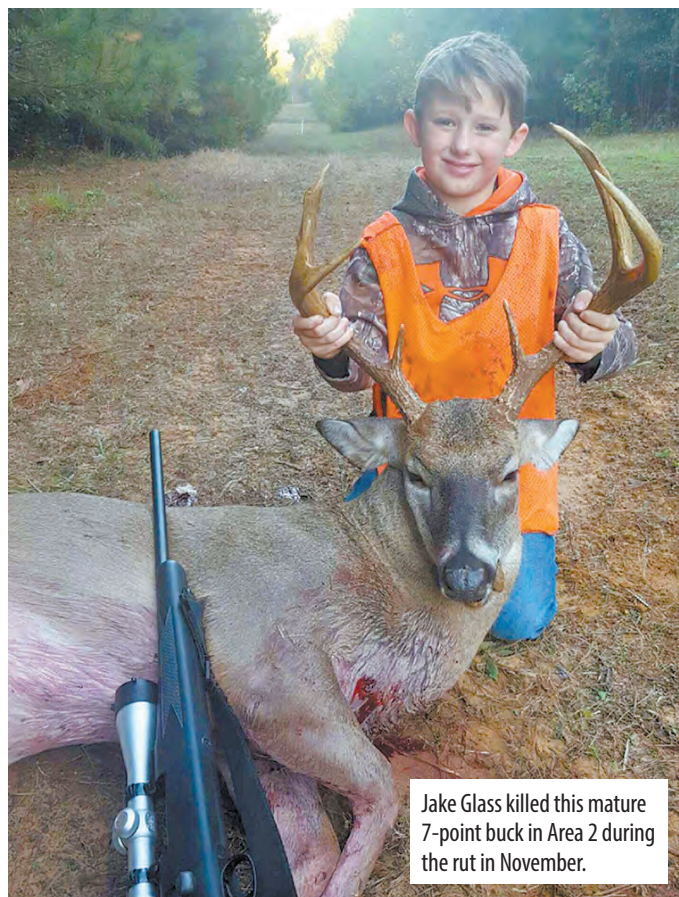
Areas 1 and 6 have a late rut, with the peak is January and the second round of breeding in February. This season the first two weeks of January should be good. These areas also have the best habitat in the state due to bottomland hardwood forests and agriculture. Nutrition is the key to growing big bucks, and these areas have the food to do it. This is quite evident during the Sportsman Show in Gonzales: Most of the winners in this big buck contest kill their winning deer in one of these two areas, and most are killed during the month of January.

The true trophies from these areas generally will score 150 or better, and there are usually one or two that make the B&C record book along with many that qualify for the Pope and Young records. About one-third of the measured bucks will score above 140, with the rest scoring 130 and less. There is a clear line of demarcation that separates the bottomland bucks from the piney woods bucks.

While harvesting a true trophy buck is certainly a memory-making event, a trophy isn't required for fantastic memories.

The 3-year-old crab claw buck that I killed on Pearl River was a great hunt; this fair chase hunt on public land where I had scouted a month earlier with my grandsons is etched forever in the deer files of my mind. Jimmy Stafford hunted with his 85-year-old father on their family land in St. Helena Parish, and Jimmy killed a nice 6-pointer. That's tough to beat. And my sister's grandson, Jake Glass, harvested a mature 7-pointer in Area 2, his best buck to date. While Jake may one year kill a bigger buck, right now it doesn't get any better than that.

So here it is, the last month of deer hunting — get out there and make a memory. ■



Jake Glass killed this mature 7-point buck in Area 2 during the rut in November.

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Dave Moreland is the author of the new book *Louisiana Whitetails*, which explains how to grow big deer and where to hunt them. The book is available at www.SportsmanGear.com and at Amazon.com.



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ROADSIDE WARRIOR

Highway 1 near Grand Isle is a great spot to target cold-weather trout — and Tommy Vidrine shares his Top 5 tips to help you catch more specks this winter.

By Patrick Bonin

Up well before dawn on a chilly January morning, Tommy Vidrine looked more like he was dressed to target specklebelly geese — not speckled trout.

But he definitely wasn't headed to a rice field in Southwest Louisiana with a shotgun.

Nope, he was leaving Grand Isle in the early-morning darkness dressed in waders, a camo multi-layer duck hunting jacket and a knit cap — armed only with a couple of fishing rods, a handful of his favorite artificial lures and his trusty roadside 5-gallon bucket. >



SPECKLED TROUT STACKED IN DEEP WATER

along Louisiana Highway 1 in spots like the Forbidden Hole and the Snake Pit were what he was after.

And Vidrine, 55, who splits time between his home in Baton Rouge and his new camp in Queen Bess Bay on Grand Isle, is a trout-fishing fanatic no matter the time of year. Whether he's yanking 6-pounders from the Caminada Pass jetties in the spring, fishing the surf at Elmer's Island during the summer or hitting the Fourchon barges in the fall, Vidrine *never* stops pursuing trout.

So brisk winds from the northeast and temps in the upper-40s that morning were ideal conditions for him to launch long casts to fish positioned in the deeper, slightly warmer water on the south side of the highway.

For Vidrine, the colder the weather is over consecutive days in the winter, the better the trout fishing along Highway 1.

"These holes on the side of the road are like a sanctuary for trout," he said. "If it gets real warm and the bait goes out, they'll follow the bait. But when it gets

real cold, the bait comes in and the trout stay in there, and when we fish with our swimbaits or twitchbaits or topwaters or whatever we try to entice them with, they're going to eat. They've got to eat."

Much of the marsh might be only 2 to 3 feet in most spots, but Vidrine said some holes are probably 15 feet deep along the highway, making them attractive to fish seeking out slightly warmer water.

"That water at the bottom of the 10-foot hole might be 55 degrees," he said. "The water at the top might be 35 degrees, so guess where they're going to be. They're going to find the warmest water they can find with some bait in it.

"If it gets too warm, you have to move to the small bridges you cross as you head onto Grand Isle," he said. "The trout are going to get out of those holes and get in the marsh and get where that current will bring them bait.

"If it's not too cold and the water is com-

fortable, they'll stay there instead of having to go in the pits to chase bait."

Over the course of a chilly morning, we put more than 30 fish in the bucket by about 9:30, and had released at least 20 more smaller specks that had started biting as the day wore on.

As always, Vidrine was open to sharing his methods and tactics to help everyone enjoy the "park and fish" bite.

Here's his Top 5 tips to become a successful roadside warrior:

1. CHOOSE THE RIGHT ROD AND REEL

"If you're going to fish the side of the road, you better find the best reel and rod for you to be able to throw far out, because only 20 or 30 yards is probably not going to give you much production. For most people, that probably means going to a spinning reel," Vidrine said. "I see people doing that all the time — I'm



Tommy Vidrine looked more like a duck hunter than a trout fisherman as he casts south of Highway 1 near Grand Isle in pursuit of roadside specks. Inset: Vidrine's go-to swimbaits this winter are Overcast Lures' Swim Shad in salt and peppa (top) and marsh bass. Vidrine rigs them on 1/8-ounce jigheads for a slow fall.

TARGETING REDS AND SPECKS IN DELACROIX

Guide hoping for a milder winter this year

out there throwing 40 or 50 yards, and I'm catching and they're not. You really have to get it out there."

2. BRING THE RIGHT LURES

"Out there, the most popular bait is probably your favorite swimbait, whether it be an Overcast Lures or a LiveTarget — a lot of them will work," he said. "In January, you need a swimbait that looks like a mullet. All that's left in there for them to eat — and they're eating them — is finger mullet. So if you imitate the finger mullet, that would be the way to go."

And Vidrine, who uses 12-pound mono line in the wintertime, advised not to forget about topwaters, either.

"You can't do it on a sunny bright day in most cases, but when it's cloudy or overcast where you can work the bait — I've caught some of my biggest roadside trout on topwaters," he said. "Bring your favorite one, as long as it walks the dog. It can be pink or chartreuse — I don't think the color matters. I think it's the movement in the water. And topwaters equal big fish."

A slow-sinking, suspending twitchbait is also one of Vidrine's go-to roadside lures. When we fished, he was using a 3 1/2-inch long chartreuse Yo-Zuri twitchbait with a 3D prism finish.

"You have to let it sink. Lots of people start twitching it back right away, but you need to let it sink for 10 or 15 seconds so you know it's close to the bottom," he said. "And when it's really cold, you want slow twitches, nothing big or real fast. When the water is 35 degrees, they're blood is close to 35. Remember, they're moving slow right now."

Typically in colder weather, Vidrine said the trout are suspended about 2 feet off the bottom down in the pits. He favors suspending baits with only two treble hooks, believing ones with three sink too fast and dive to the bottom where redfish are lurking.

"Remember, they still have to eat, regardless of the weather. You just have to be in the right spot at the right time with the right bait when they're eating," he said. "If you are, then you're going to be successful."

3. KEEP IT SLOW

One of the biggest mistakes Vidrine sees other roadside anglers making is retrieving their lures too fast.

"Fish can't physically move that fast because of the cold," he said. "You have to move it fast enough to make it look alive, but slow enough for them to be able to catch it. Just imagine what that artificial bait looks like to the fish — a swimbait, a topwater or a

Capt. Chad Dufrene of Dufrene's Guide Service in Delacroix Island (985-637-6357) said if the weather doesn't get too cold, he expects the redfish bite to be phenomenal this winter — and he hopes the trout action will become consistent.

"Last year we had that bitter cold, sub-freezing weather that played havoc with our fishing. It darn near wrecked us for awhile," he said. "But the redfish action the past months has been nothing short of phenomenal, and that will continue and even get better if we don't get frozen out. A couple years ago we had such a mild winter we caught fish under popping corks throughout the whole season. I'd really like to see that happen again."



Capt. Chad Dufrene expects the redfish bite to remain consistent out of Delacroix - if Mother Nature cooperates.

Unfortunately, the weather prognosticators predict a colder-than-average winter for us in the Deep South. Here's hoping their normal trend of being wrong will continue to be true.

Dufrene said on colder days you'll have to head to deeper bayous and canals to find fish.

"Oak River will be the best place, between Orange Bayou and the Pencil Canal," he said. "Anywhere there's a cut or stumps... try it. The reds huddle by the stumps, and naturally at points and cuts. Anchor off to the side of Oak River and cast into the middle, get your bait to the bottom and bounce it slow. If it warms up, then you can try the ledges and nearby shallower bays like Pointe Fienne and the bays around it, Little Crevasse and Four Horse Lake, and hopefully you'll find both specks and reds. Just remember the fish won't wander far from the deeper water."

Dufrene said finding the reds shouldn't pose much of a problem because the bite has been so consistent.

"Specks, however, are another matter," he said. "We'll have a great day in Four Horse or Amedee or the Twin Pipeline, and then nothing at all the next day. Very inconsistent. But this month we usually find trout in Little Lake and Grand Lake and Alligator Pass, as well as the areas I've already mentioned.

"Here's a tip that'll pay off if you're observant: Look for glass minnows. Shrimp will be scarce, so the trout will feast on glass minnows wherever they find them. Fish there, under a cork."

Dufrene said dead shrimp are by far the best bait to entice reds, and soft plastics or live shrimp work for targeting trout. ■

- Rusty Tardo

continues >>>

V

twitchbait. You have to continuously move it, because if it stops, it's useless because they'll see it's fake.

"But if you move it too fast, they can't catch up to it because they're too cold. So it's got to be just right — and when you find out that pace, you can become very successful."

This winter Vidrine's favorite swimbait is Overcast Lures' Swim Shad, in both salt and peppa and marsh bass colors, rigged on an 1/8-ounce jighead. He typically goes with a steady "lift and drop" retrieve.

"And they usually catch it on the drop," he said. "Sometimes they want it faster and sometimes they just want a straight retrieve. Try different ways until it works, then duplicate it again."

And when you do get a bite, you might have to wait to set the hook, he said.

"That's hard stuff to do for most anglers — when they feel pressure, they want to pull," Vidrine said. "But in the winter, when it's cold, you have to wait. Those trout are lethargic because of the cold water, and might not have the whole bait in their mouth.

"Sometimes you have to wait three, four or five seconds to set the hook in the winter. It's crazy."

4. WEAR WADERS, AND DRESS APPROPRIATELY

"A big key to being successful is being able to walk out in the water," Vidrine said. "Sometimes they're close early in the morning, but after the sun comes up, you have to get in that deeper water to catch them."

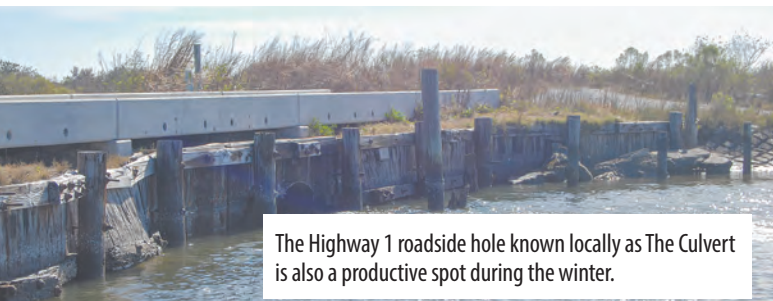
Hip boots are OK, but you might end up cold and wet if you accidentally step into a hole.

"The waders are the most safe, and the neoprene helps keep you warm," Vidrine said. "Waders give you some extra casting distance. They also get you away from the rocks and the bushes in the Snake Pit — it gets you away from all the obstructions.

"With waders, you can step out a little bit and really swing it hard to get your bait out there. Remember with those longer casts that you have to wait longer for your lure to go down. But your chances go way up on getting hit on the retrieve."

In addition to waders, make sure you're bundled up to withstand the chilly temps and potentially a brisk north wind.

"Roadside fishing ain't for the faint of heart," Vidrine said. "If



The Highway 1 roadside hole known locally as The Culvert is also a productive spot during the winter.

you don't like cold weather, it's probably not for you. You have to dress like you're going duck hunting. It's usually cold and the north wind kicks you, so you need a nice thick hat over your ears, a good jacket and some warm socks.

"If you're cold-natured, you might be better off waiting for the spring or summer."

continues >>>

MAKE CHALMETTE YOUR NEW YEAR'S SPECK RESOLUTION

Trout and reds in the depths and shallows

My old friend Capt. Mike Gallo (504-259-3474) has been making winter treks across the lake to fish the deep waters around Chalmette for many years, and 2019 will be no exception.

"The deeper waters of the ICW and the MRGO, their proximity to Lake Borgne and a mixture of marsh, bayous and canals makes the whole area an ideal haunt for fish seeking cold weather retreats," Gallo said.

"Of course, the sheer number and variety of fish that hide here attracts myriads of anglers who are doing their best to find them," he said. "This place gets crowded, especially on weekends. Last Sunday I counted 69 boats, and I know I missed a few."

Gallo said when the water temperature is below 55 degrees, he fishes the bottom with a drop-shot rig.

"Live bait is always a bonus, but plastics usually do the trick this time of year," he said. "The key is to get your bait all the way to the bottom, so add as much weight as you need to get it there. Then fish slow, just slight lifts with the rod and let it settle to the bottom again.

"Once the sun warms it up a bit and on warmer days when the water temperatures climb above 55 degrees toward 60, start fishing ledges, drop-offs and even the shallower 2-to-3-foot-of-water areas nearby. It definitely helps to have a depth finder to locate the drop-offs because that's where you want to fish on milder days. Try both a drop-shot rig and under a popping cork."

Gallo said the choice deeper areas to fish your drop-shot rig this month and in February include along the ICW, the MRGO, the Air Products Canal and Michoud Slip, and along the Wall by Bayou Bienvenue.

Gallo offered a couple extra free tips to help you catch more fish on these colder days of winter:

1.) Get out of the current on the colder days when you are fishing the bottom. Find a corner someplace where the water isn't moving much: That's where they'll stack up in the cold.

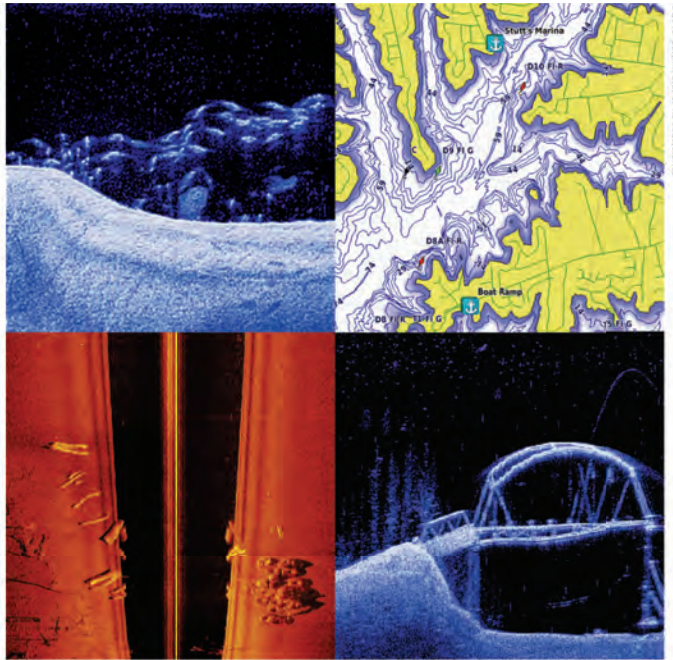
2.) Use 10- or 12-pound fluorocarbon line. Gallo said it makes a difference. "I keep a couple reels spooled up with it just for use on colder days. It's more expensive than mono or braid, but I've proven you can catch more with it so that makes it worth it." ■

- Rusty Tardo



Capta. Mike Gallo likes to switch to fluorocarbon line on colder days when he's targeting wintertime speckled trout.

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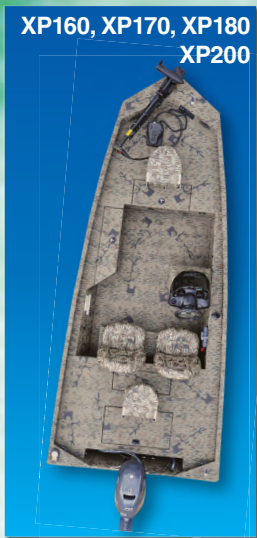


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5. STAY MOBILE

When selecting a roadside fishing spot right now, a couple of keys to look for are the presence of baitfish and cormorants, Vidrine said.

“Look and see if there are mullet flipping, and most of the time you’ll see cormorants diving down,” he said. “If the bait is in there, the cormorants are in there diving and eating.”

“When you see that, the bait is there, and if the bait’s there, trout or redfish will be in there, too.”

Be aware, however, that some areas are private property along Highway 1, even if there are no signs. If redfish are what you’re after, you have lots of options.

“Most of it is public, but there are a few places where they might kick you off,” Vidrine said. “But the bridges all the way from Grand Isle to Fourchon are good for redfish. You can put some dead shrimp on a jighead and throw it on the bottom and catch redfish almost all the time, anywhere.”

And just like he recommends at the

height of the summer trout bite, Vidrine said to be prepared to stay mobile to catch more fish in the winter.

“In the winter-time, you’ve got to stick and move,” he said. “It’s just like when you’re in your boat, but now you’re in a car. Park and fish, try a little bit and then move to another spot.

“Once you do it a lot, over the years, you learn the spots so you can move with the conditions.”

And remember, either side of the road can hold abundant fish, he said.

“If it’s a south wind, you want to fish the north side of the highway,” Vidrine said. “If it’s a north wind, you want to fish the south side of the highway. The road blocks the wind and keeps the water



The bridges heading onto Grand Isle are still under construction now, but can be prime wintertime fishing locations. When he’s fishing one, Vidrine prefers an outgoing tide.

clean. Those trout eat by vision, and if the water is muddy, they might move to a clearer spot.” ■



Patrick Bonin is the editor for Louisiana Sportsman magazine.

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Matrix Shad's Chas Champagne said trolling is one of the most effective ways to target speckled trout right now simply because you can cover so much area with the technique.



Photo courtesy Chas Champagne

TROLLING FOR NORTH SHORE SPECKS

Matrix Shad owner Chas Champagne is far more in love with jigging for speckled trout than the average person. In fact, he does it almost every single day -- except this time of year.

For the past couple of winters, instead of jigging, Champagne has been dragging baits behind his boat to entice bites from speckled trout. Champagne normally trolls around the manmade canals on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain, but he said any area that is straight with hard ledges works great.

"You're covering so much more water trolling," he said. "If I'm catching like 10 fish in a two-hour period of time, and it's over like a 500 yard area, then that's a lot of casts you have to make if you're jigging."

Champagne drags jigheads from 5/16 all the way up to 1/2-ounce, and although hardcore trollers like to use lead-core line, Champagne uses 14-pound Matrix line, a monofilament his company manufactures. (Anglers just need to keep in mind

they must let out more line when using mono.)

"The lead line makes you do it more efficiently. You get the bait down faster and you don't have to let out as much line," he said.

Champagne said it's critical to stay in a consistent depth of water when trolling.

"Some of those (ledges) in Lakeshore (canal) and Geoghegan (canal) go from like 6-foot down to 25-foot pretty sharp," he said. "I'm constantly watching my depth finder when I'm doing something like that trying to stay in that ledge."

"Whatever line you decide to pick — whether its 10 feet or 14 feet — you want to make a drag in that line."

And finding the right speed to troll is critical: Champagne usually goes around 1.5 mph, but it changes a lot.

"Last year when we had that good run and the Spillway opened, I was going 2.2 mph and using the big motor," he said. "Right now in the heart of the winter, I've

been using the trolling motor going 1.6 mph."

Champagne likes using the big motor when he can so he can look at his depth finder for not only the depth, but other info on the screen.

"You'll go from just a straight blank bottom to stuff going on down there," he said. "You very rarely get bites when it's just a straight blank bottom. I never get into them if the screen is blank."

Champagne concluded that this is his favorite time of year to troll.

"From December to the middle of March, it is a fantastic technique to have in your arsenal," he said. ■

- Joel Masson

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LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

Vudu's new Weedless Shrimp is as tough as the original, with nylon mesh woven into the tail for superior durability.

VUDU'S NEW WEEDLESS SHRIMP

NEW MODEL — PERFECT FOR SHALLOW WATER APPLICATIONS — HITS SHELVES IN JANUARY

Going weedless with arguably one of the most popular soft plastic shrimp imitations on the market seemed to be the most logical next step for Egret Baits.

And owner Ken Chaumont has made it happen — and the rollout is underway to another successor of the Vudu Shrimp.

“We’re well known for our shrimp. And we now have a new weedless version of that shrimp. It has what we call a ‘belly hook’ that sits on top and gives you a weedless configuration,” Chaumont said.

“People have been asking for a weedless version. We’ve had a lot of requests from guys who throw it in the marshes. I know the redfish guys are going to go crazy,” he said. “With the hook in the body you can pull it in grass and it won’t get hung up. It’s going to be deadly in shallow water. It’ll be extremely effective to shallow water fish.

“This looks very, very natural, so it’s not only going to work in the marshes but in the open because of its gliding action. It just glides in the water.”

Most importantly, the Vudu Weedless Shrimp, like the Vudu Shrimp, also is

made with TPE, a mix of rubber and plastic synthetic materials and thermoplastic elastomers that stretch and return to their original shape. As every angler who’s tried it knows, the nylon netting fabric woven into the tail section like a mesh gives it unbelievable durability.

Chaumont, 64, a 35-year veteran in the artificial lure manufacturing business, started tinkering with a weedless version late in 2017.

“We started playing with it. We had to pre-form the TPE. I said, ‘We need a different mold.’ It’s not like we took an ‘old’ shrimp,” he said. “We had to figure out how to put the hook in the mold (so that it did its job efficiently and was weedless).”

Mission accomplished.

“When the fish bites down on it, you have plenty of hook to stick him,” he said.

Three dozen of each color were made and a handful of anglers, including charter boat captains in Florida like Terry Shaughnessy, started to test it.

“I knew we had a hit on our hands,”

Chaumont said. “I wanted to see if everybody else did.”

So far, response has been tremendous.

The Vudu Weedless Shrimp will be in stores in January, he said.

“It’s going to be a big hit. It’s being produced now and it will be ready to roll,” he said.



Take away the new hook position and the Vudu Weedless Shrimp looks just like the most popular version since Egret Baits came out with the original Vudu in 2013. Other versions followed, bigger and smaller.

The Vudu Weedless Shrimp, just like the original Vudu Shrimp, also is 3 1/2 inches long, weighs 1/8-ounce and is armed with a wide gap, "super sharp coated black nickel" 3/0 hook.

There's a reason the new weedless model is the same weight and length of the original Vudu.

"The 3 1/2 is the No. 1 killer along the Louisiana coast, all along the Gulf Coast. Yes, there will be different sizes down the line. People weigh in on that," he said, referring to the Vudu Weedless Shrimp.

The new weedless soft plastic glides in the water and falls through the water column naturally. It's all in the tail.

"This tail, even though it has a wide foot on it, still has an up and down motion in the water. It's very lifelike with the eyes on top. The redfish are going to love it," he said.

"You can add weight to it but we don't recommend that so it'll glide. We extended the tail. We made the tail wider to give it a gliding feature. It sinks very evenly in the water column," he said, noting some other soft plastic shrimp imitations sink head first.

The Vudu Weedless Shrimp, two to a pack, will be available in the most popular colors and patterns of the Vudu Shrimp, including glow and brown shrimp.

For more information about Egret Baits Vudu Weedless Shrimp and some of their other products, go to egret-baits.com. ■



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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SLOW IS THE WAY TO GO FOR JANUARY SPECKS

By Patrick Bonin

AND MATCHING THE HATCH IS ALWAYS KEY

With less and less daylight and cooler water temperatures settling in, slowing down your presentation is often key to catching January speckled trout.

"I'm always telling my customers, 'Slow is the way to go,'" said Capt. Mike Gallo of Angling Adventures of Louisiana. "And if you're not catching anything, go even slower."

Trout move deeper as the water cools, so Gallo likes to target shorelines with easy deepwater access that also feature flats with clear, moving water and signs of baitfish activity.

"If the water temperature is 55 and above, they like shallow water close to deep water," he said. "That way, if we get a cold front, they'll just drop down into that deep water without having to go very far."

But this time of year, especially, he takes his fishing cues from clues provided by the first trout he catches each day.

"If he comes straight to the surface and shakes his head, he's not cold," Gallo said. "But if you hook a fish and he's fighting but it's a lethargic fight and he never comes to the surface and never shakes his head, he's cold."

"So if I change my technique, I need to change in a slower direction, not in a faster direction. Lots of things can be determined by catching one fish."

To that end, Gallo's first speck of the day doesn't end up on ice. Instead, it goes into the livewell to see if it will provide more clues that might turn an average day of fishing into a really good one.

"Every 10 or 15 minutes, I go and check the

This time of year, Capt. Mike Gallo puts the first trout he catches into a livewell to see if it will provide any clues as to what they're feeding on that day, then he adjusts his lure selection accordingly.

livewell, and I'm hoping he pukes something up: a crab, a shrimp or a baby fish," Gallo said. "Then I get a clue on what he's feeding on, and I can mimic that."

If the guide is fishing with a 3-inch Sparkle Beetle but sees the trout in his livewell just spit up a 2-inch minnow, Gallo typically downsizes his lures.

"I'm going to go more in that 2-inch range because that may be what's down there on the bottom," he said. "I happened to catch one, but if my lure really mimics what's down there I have a better chance of catching more."

"That's just matching the hatch. And if you can actually make out what it is they spit up — let's say it's a pogie — then salt-and-pepper is a great imitation for matching a pogie."

He also pays particular attention to his electronics this time of year to identify the good, hard bottom trout prefer. Being able to differentiate the bottom types is a matter of learning how the images display on the screen.

"Let's say you have one line showing the bottom that's an 1/8-inch thick," Gallo said. "What that's telling you is the signal going down from your transducer and bouncing back up is bouncing back up quickly because that bottom is firm."

"But when it draws a bottom that's 1 1/2 inches thick and real fuzzy, it's telling you that's a soft, mushy bottom and it takes a while for the signal to bounce back."

"So there are clues that you can see on your depth finder. Areas with a hard bottom and a gradual slope are gold mines for trout to hang out in." ■

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'SPECKS' IN THEIR EYES

By Jerald Horst

Southwest Louisiana is the epicenter for specklebelly goose hunting in the state, and some champion callers and seasoned hunters share their tips to make you more successful.

Grant Henning, Lee Daughdrill, Cade Eskridge and Bill Daniels have a passion for specklebelly goose hunting that can only be described as an addiction.



“Hey Jerald, I have some folks that you are really going to want to talk to,” the voice on the other end of the line said. “It’s about specklebellies.”

It was Cade Eskridge, the owner of Duce Rods LLC, builder of high-end fishing rods for speckled trout, redfish and largemouth bass. But this call wasn’t about fishing, but greater white-fronted geese, better known as specklebelly geese or just plain “specks.”

>

'SPECKS' IN THEIR EYES

Eskridge has two passions: his rods, and fishing and hunting specklebellies. "I call these guys 'the Riceland Boys' — the best in the business."

The day before we hunted, Eskridge had arranged for the group to meet around a big table in the Riceland Custom Calls shop in Hayes.

PERSPECTIVES

Eskridge, as the organizer of the round table, opened the discussion. "South Louisiana has the best specklebelly callers and hunters in the world," he said. Bill Daniels quickly refined the statement, "The area from Kaplan to Lake Charles — an area 100 miles long and 4 miles wide."

Lee Daughdrill agreed: Southwest Louisiana is the epicenter of specklebelly hunting.

"In the past, specklebellies have mostly been hunted in Louisiana, Texas and California," said Daniels. "Now we have specklebelly hunters throughout the Mississippi, Central and Pacific Flyways. Where they wintered used to be more localized. Now it's the fastest growing segment of waterfowl hunting."

"That means," said Michael Miller, "that the birds are a lot smarter than

they used to be. They are being educated; they are being pressured. And on top of that we have a lot less birds than we used to in Louisiana."

Daniels spoke again. "The number of birds in Louisiana has declined dramatically since the mid-90s. I'm basing this on information from Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries biologists."

"We have fewer birds in Louisiana," agreed Eskridge, "and they are being hunted by the best of the best, and every year they are getting harder to kill, in my opinion."

Heads nodded all around the table in agreement.

REFINING SPECKLEBELLY HUNTING

It's an arms race: The birds get smarter. The hunters get better. So the birds get smarter. The point that waterfowl are a lot smarter than most people realize was brought home some years ago.

When spinning wing decoys entered the hunting scene, it was like hunters dropped a nuclear bomb. Ducks ate it up. It made them dumb.

Some hunters (and biologists) fretted that the new technology might be too

BILL DANIELS ON SPECKLEBELLY CALLS

Bill Daniels makes waterfowl calls for a living, so he knows a lot about them. "It helps to carry more than one call because each day, the geese will respond to different calls in different ways."

Riceland Custom Calls, the company he co-owns, makes three sizes of specklebelly calls. In the foreground of the accompanying photograph are their 1/2-inch, 5/8-inch and 3/4-inch calls.

Behind them are three blanks of call



Bill Daniels says that call sizes and materials matter.

material: acrylic, wood and delrin. Each will have a different tone.

Acrylic is the densest material and produces the crispest sound.

Wood, depending on the wood used, is most mellow. Riceland produces calls in cocobolo, blackwood and hedge (Osage orange) for resale in stores, but carries more than 20 types of custom wood blanks to be sold by special order.

Delrin is an extremely tough abrasion-resistant plastic made by DuPont. Its sound qualities are between acrylic and wood.

Riceland's speck calls are typically single reed, but they will produce double-reeds on special order.

Waterfowl calls are more than a business to Daniels, probably closer to a passion.

"I will spend all day with anyone who will come to Hayes (337-884-6890) to teach them how to blow a call or how to improve their calling," he smiled. ■

The best specklebelly goose callers in the world are in South Louisiana, claimed the quintet.

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'SPECKS' IN THEIR EYES

effective. The birds would never learn, at least in time, and increased kills would endanger continental duck populations.

But learn they did. Many duck hunters now feel that the motion decoys hurt as much as help their hunting success.

As specklebelly geese have experienced more pressure throughout the length of the flyways, they too have become smarter, leaving less and less room for hunter error or carelessness.

The assembled roundtable discussed how hunters can improve their success.

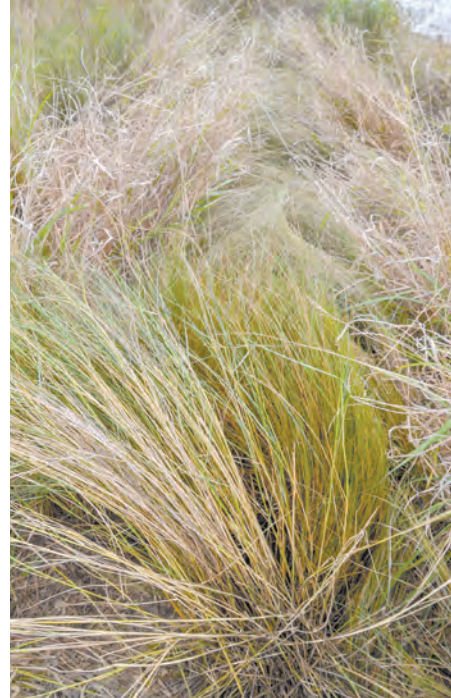
CONCEALMENT

"Perfect concealment wasn't as critical 30 years ago as now," said Daniels. "The top of the blind could be open. Not now.

"The biggest thing over here now is brushing your goose blind overhead," concurred Eskridge.

"Not hiding your bike properly will also affect the hunt," added Daughdrill. "Same with the dog. And no bags on the levee; no cooler on the levee." (Waterfowl blinds in rice fields are constructed

A completed goose blind should blend in naturally with the natural vegetation on the levee. Can you spot the blind?



on interior field levees built to control water.)

"It's best, when possible, not to drive your bike in the field because it leaves tracks. Leave no imprint that you were there."

"Something that's important is to communicate to landowners and farmers to leave levees as natural as possible," stressed Miller. "If they burn, mow or plow them down, your blind just sticks out."

"I want my blind to be better than the next guy's," grunted Grant Henning. "Geese see so many blinds in a day."

CALLING

Daughdrill opened the discussion about calling. "Specklebelly geese are less responsive to calling than they were 10 years ago."

"...five years ago," Daniels upped the ante.

"Four years ago," Henning jumped in. "You have to finesse them now," said Daughdrill. "And you can't make a mis-

take," added Henning. "Right," agreed Daughdrill. "One mistake and they are gone."

"The calling does need to be better nowadays than 10 years ago," agreed Daniels, the veteran call-maker. "Now with YouTube and Facebook, anyone can click on a video and learn calling.

"They don't have to spend 20 years

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Storing decoys individually in slotted bags provides maximum protection to their surfaces between hunts.

learning by hunting. Everyone has become better callers and the geese hear it all the way down the flyway.”

“Knowing when to call and reading birds have become critical,” said Daughdrill.

“That comes with experience,” added Miller. “Yeah, you can’t just hit a button to learn that,” agreed Daughdrill.

“Just because you are a good specklebelly caller doesn’t mean that you are a good specklebelly hunter,” said Miller with a faint twinge of sarcasm.

“We are going to smaller calls, with less volume and more finesse,” said Daughdrill.

“The other calls still work,” noted Daniels, “but the smaller calls give you another weapon.”

“Calling styles have changed in the last 10 years. It used to be simpler. All everybody used to do was yodel. Now you have to cluck, blow two- and three-note yodels and murmur.”

Murmuring is meant to imitate birds on the ground talking to other birds.

“Mix the three calls, doing mainly clucks and yodels, until you see what the birds are responding to, then concentrate on that.”

“If you can get it done here, you can call anywhere,” summed up Eskridge. “I go to Arkansas every year and the specks are significantly easier to call there. In Texas, guides don’t even carry a speck call. Here geese get blown at every day by great callers.”

DECOYS

“Realism is important,” quipped Eskridge to open the discussion.

“Buy the highest-quality decoy you can afford,” urged Daniels.

“Protect the paint,” added Henning.

“Use individual and slotted bags to keep the paint intact.”

“Pick them up every hunt,” instructed Miller. “If you leave them out between hunts, the birds get used to seeing them in the same place. And picking up decoys allows you to set them up with the day’s wind.”

“It increases your opportunity. You only get a few chances and you want to maximize them.”



“Setting specklebelly goose decoys is entirely different than with duck hunting, where you want your decoys right in front of you,” began Daughdrill. “I put goose decoys 40 to 60 yards, even 100 yards if they are wary, from the blind.”

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"And set them upwind, not downwind. You are not trying to get specks to land in the decoys, but rather to go over the blind."

"And if the birds aren't working the way you want, you got to get out of the blind and move the decoys," Daniels said.

"That goes to work ethic," said Daughdrill softly.

Miller talked about decoy numbers. "When I started 10 years ago, if I had a dozen decoys, I had a bunch. By myself, I hunted with six. Now you have to have three dozen.

"That being said, late in the season, when the birds are wary, I may only use one or two (individual decoys.)"

"Decoy selection as to what mixture of sentry and feeder decoys to use is not real sensitive, except that you don't want all sentry decoys," opined Eskridge.

"Once the birds approach close enough for it to make a difference,

three-cornered grass, wild millet, wild rice and volunteer agricultural rice.

"If fields are plowed under in early summer in preparation for next year, it destroys all the natural food in the field," he said with disgust. "The best thing to do is let the plants mature and make seeds, then plow once, rather than three or four times.

"Or you can flood the field and roll the grasses flat with a water buffalo. Back in the old days you could water buffalo a small bullseye around the blind."

"Now they pick that out," interjected Henning.

"The whole field needs to be uniform now," agreed Miller.

"My perspective is that I prefer plowing rather than water buffaloing," ventured Henning, which drew objection by Miller to "too much plowing."

Rice farmers typically get two cuttings from one planting, with the second, naturally enough

Water buffaloing is the process of smashing native grasses flat in a flooded field. It can be considered good or bad for goose hunters, depending on when it is done and individual opinion. It is done mostly to enhance hunting.



it is too late for them," agreed Daughdrill. "But I agree about not wanting all sentries. Those signify nervous birds — ones about to jump."

FIELD MANAGEMENT

Miller began the discourse on goose field habitats by explaining that their area has three kinds of fields: soybean, rice and set-aside fields (those that farmers allow to lie fallow without a crop in alternating years as part of normal agricultural practices.)

Set-aside fields grow native annual plants such as nut grass,

being called "second crop rice." Daughdrill noted that fields with second crop rice, water buffaloing and other manipulating is limited because it is a cash crop and because of possible infringement on waterfowl baiting rules.

He went on to speak in broader terms. "You need to keep the farmers in mind when looking for a blind."

Miller added, "There's a whole lot of money wasted with poor communication."

"Twenty years ago, farming was different," Daniels stepped in.

"Now you have to work with the

A BIOLOGIST'S VIEW

Bill Daniels and Michael Miller hold a strong belief that the number of specklebelly geese overwintering in Louisiana has declined in recent years.

Paul Link, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan Coordinator for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, is three years into a radio collaring project designed to study what is happening in the winter ecology of greater white-fronted geese

The table below, supplied by Link, seems to support Daniels and Miller. The abbreviation "MF" stands for "Mississippi Flyway" of which Louisiana is a part. "LA," of course, is Louisiana.

Although Link cautions that the numbers are an index rather than a counting of every individual bird, they show a very clear decline over time in the percentage of the flyway's specklebellies that winter in Louisiana.

What's not in shown in the table is the number of specks in Louisiana peaks in October now — and then declines through the hunting season.

	LA	MF	%
1996-2000	105,000	132,000	80
2001-2005	70,000	127,000	56
2006-2010	103,000	225,000	46
2011-2015	98,000	309,000	32
2015	59,000	386,000	15
2016	142,000	481,000	29
2017	89,000	444,000	v

Link feels that the trend is driven by a "big messy combination of factors."

Agriculture has changed in Louisiana, he said. Less rice wastage occurs during harvest. Acreage devoted to rice planting has declined, with acreage in crawfish production increasing. South Louisiana has become more urbanized and industrialized.

"Eighty-five percent of our radio collar relocations last year were on agricultural lands," he said.

Add to this the increase in waterfowl hunter numbers, which Link said have doubled in the last decade to reach an all-time high. "More hunters seem to be targeting white-fronted geese, as well," he observed.

"And technology — now we have \$250 acrylic calls, more realistic decoys, calling contests, layout blinds and better ATVs.

"Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky and Missouri are all seeing white-fronts where they never saw them before — birds that have gone back up from Louisiana. We went from wintering the majority of the mid-continent GWFG population in Louisiana to the minority.

"However, overall the population is doing incredibly well in the Mississippi Flyway." ■

farmer,” finished Miller. “Fields can also be manipulated with just water level management,” Daughdrill went on. “Drawing water levels down can cause a lot of plants to germinate. Shallow flooding can produce a lot of invertebrates.”

HUNTING TACTICS

This is a catch-all category of short tips and suggestions. Daughdrill, not being bashful, opened first.

“We try not shooting into big groups to avoid educating a lot birds — if possible.”

“Only shoot at birds that are committed to decoys,” stressed Miller. “Don’t sky bust,” echoed Daniels and Henning. “Some hunters don’t have the ability to bring geese close enough, so they take a chance,” Daughdrill said sourly. “I would also suggest resting and rotating use of blinds

if you have enough blinds.” “Consider the use of layout blinds late in the season” suggested Miller. “Geese get used to being shot at from pit blinds and go to unused fields in late season. Camouflage them with whatever grass is in the field.” “You have to blend in,” emphasized Daughdrill. “Don’t haul grass that doesn’t blend in from another area.”

“Another thing is that sun can be a critical part of the hunt. Guides have to hunt every day, but hunters should prioritize sunny days. Specklebellies definitely commit better on a sunny day.” ■

how to hide a blind >



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 gerald@rockinghorst.com.

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HOW TO HIDE A BLIND

After the group's big emphasis on hunter concealment, Lee Daughdrill treated me to a step-by-step viewing of how to properly camouflage a pit blind on a rice field levee.

1. Salt grass is cut by hand and strapped into bundles with wire ties.



2. One end of each bundle is cut square with a machete.



3. Switch grass clumps with roots intact are dug by hand with shovels. Both the salt grass and switch grass is taken from areas away from the blind and transported to the blind.



4. Short 2 X 4 stakes are driven around the perimeter of the pit blind. Livestock panels are split lengthways into 16-inch-wide strips with a bolt cutter. The panels are stapled to the wooden stakes (or wire-tied to driven lengths of rebar) at a 45 degree angle, inward and upward over the blind. Rubber tarp bungees are stretched in place on the outside of the wire panels all around the blind.



5. Bundles of salt grass are placed within reach of the man working inside the blind. Note the location of the wooden stakes and the livestock panel strips.



6. Working from inside the blind to preserve as much natural vegetation as possible, salt grass bundles are inserted between the stretched bungees and the livestock panels.



7. Any naturally occurring grass around the blind is folded over it. Then small holes are dug with a shovel near the perimeter of the blind and the clumps of switch grass are planted in them.



8. Daughdrill inspects the finished blind from its interior.



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Amidst your self-focused resolutions, consider adding a dose of courtesy and respect for fellow anglers. **INSET:** When he wants to shake things up, Greg Hackney will fish Strike King's RageTail Menace on a dropshot rather than just a jig trailer.

MAKING NEW YEAR'S

By David A. Brown

BASS RESOLUTIONS

BECAUSE VOWING TO CATCH MORE FISH IN 2019 IS A LOT MORE FUN THAN ATTEMPTING THE LATEST 30-DAY MAIL-ORDER DIET PLAN...

Sure, losing weight and vowing to workout more are admirable goals to shoot for in 2019.

But suffice it to say that most bass anglers' New Year's resolutions will include something about catching more fish, being more productive on the water or somehow upping their game.

And just like shedding a few pounds and committing to hit the gym, it's nice to talk the talk this month — but how do you actually make it happen all year long?

Well, you'll find Bigfoot standing in his own footprints sooner than you'll find a list of bass-fishing resolutions everyone can agree on; but we've rounded up some insightful points that'll help anyone looking to put a few more in the boat.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND

Major League Fishing pro Greg Hackney has seen most of the nation's top fisheries, so it's pretty hard to sur-

prise him. Nevertheless, one of his key notions for the 2019 season will be to treat each fishing day like a new experience. He advises anglers of all levels to do likewise.

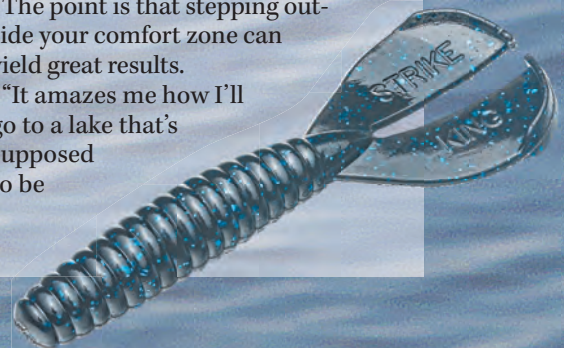
"Never rule out anything," he said. "Fish like you've never been there."

Complementing the theoretical approach with prudent practices turns idea into action. Specifically, Hackney suggests employing baits and techniques in scenarios where you don't normally use them.

For example: Drop-shotting by cypress trees. That's probably not the first bait you'd think of there, nor is it the most common scenario for the classic finesse rig.

The point is that stepping outside your comfort zone can yield great results.

"It amazes me how I'll go to a lake that's supposed to be





highly pressured and I'll catch fish like they've never been fished before," Hackney said of his open-minded strategies.

EXPANSION, QUALITY & APPRECIATION

Heading into his rookie season on the FLW Tour, Bossier City pro Nick Lebrun shared a few thoughts on his focal points for 2019:

"My New year's resolutions are: 1. Cover more water during practice," Lebrun said. "In the past I've always just picked an area of the lake and stuck with it and I have found success with that; but now I'll be fishing more unfamiliar lakes, so I'll need to branch out and explore more.

"Number 2. I need to fish for the right five bites. It seems that in my most successful events, I'm only getting a handful of bites a day but they are the right ones; whereas,

the tournaments where I'm catching 20 fish a day always seem to be marginal for me. Finally, number 3: Have fun and don't get distracted. I'm going to take time to realize the blessings of fishing for a living while having my loving family traveling with me."

GO FOR IT

You don't make it as a professional angler as long as Shaw Grigsby has by being timid. However, the MLF pro believes he can step on the gas even more often in 2019.

"You have to fish fearlessly; don't be afraid to change what you're doing," Grigsby said. "There's a lot to be said for sticking with something long enough to make it work, but sometimes, you have to be able to drop what you're doing and go do something totally different. You might strike out, but sometimes, you're going to hit a home run.

"I think in the past, I've been afraid to change. I've had about 11 second places and that could have something to do with it."

ADDRESSING VULNERABILITIES

Toledo Bend guide Darold Gleason also competes on the Costa FLW Series, the

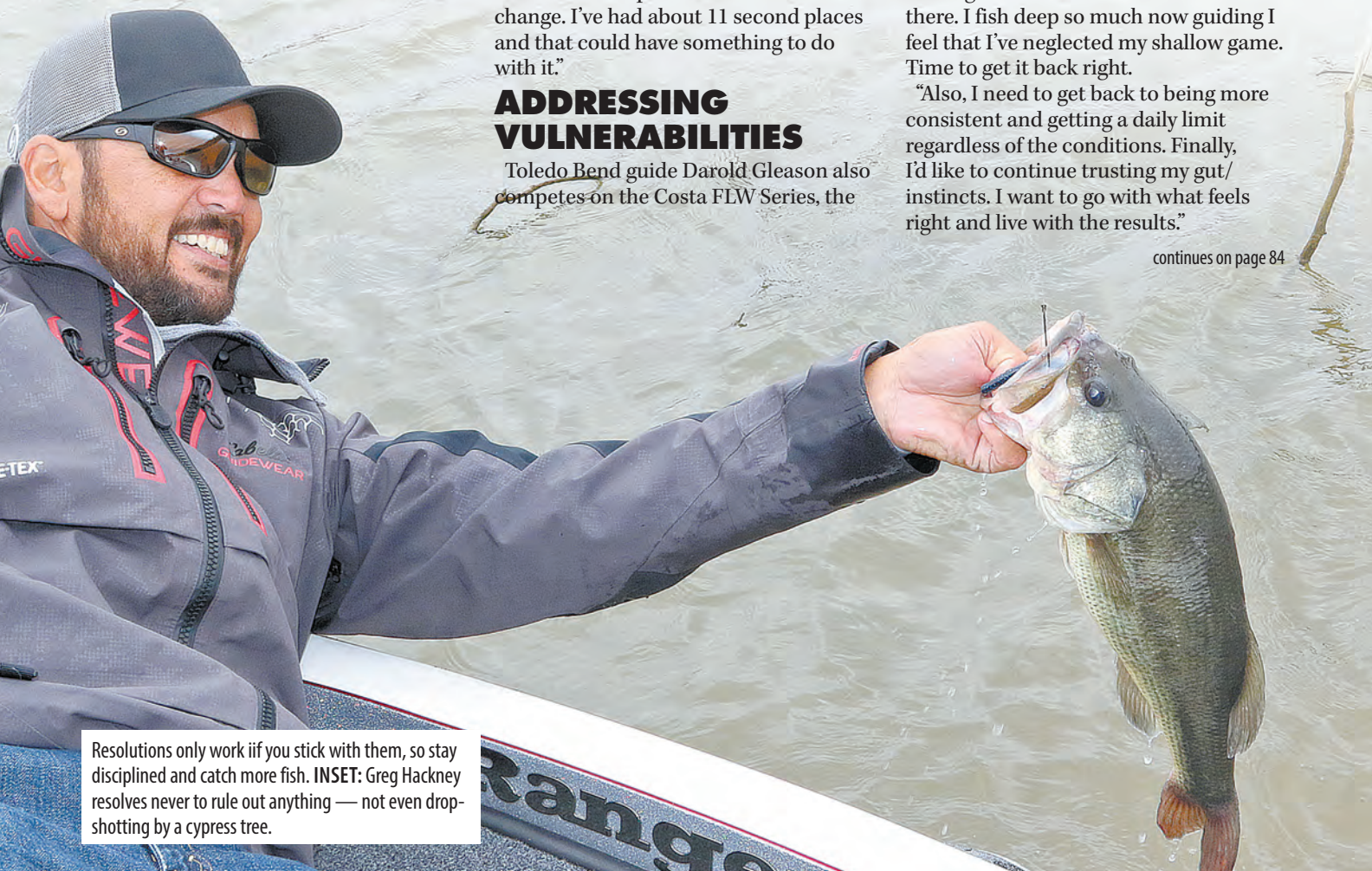


Texas Team Trail and other local events. He's resolving to have a more successful 2019 by taking an honest look at his game and tightening the loose laces.

"I need to improve my biggest weaknesses and No. 1 is fishing shallow for more isolated fish," Gleason said. "Where I live and guide, it seems like fish are grouped up most of the year. As I travel around for tournaments it seems like there are a bunch of situations where I'm not covering enough water and targets, looking for the individual fish here and there. I fish deep so much now guiding I feel that I've neglected my shallow game. Time to get it back right.

"Also, I need to get back to being more consistent and getting a daily limit regardless of the conditions. Finally, I'd like to continue trusting my gut/instincts. I want to go with what feels right and live with the results."

continues on page 84



Resolutions only work if you stick with them, so stay disciplined and catch more fish. **INSET:** Greg Hackney resolves never to rule out anything — not even drop-shotting by a cypress tree.

BASS HOTSPOT

CLAIBORNE GETS HOT OFF THE DEEP DOCKS

And less pressure can make for good trips

Like most bass, the largemouths on Lake Claiborne near Homer just like to find a good spot to hang out in January while waiting for warmer weather and the spawn.

But you can heat up those bass in a hurry if you follow some simple advice from Greg Terzia of Ruston.

"Head down to the main lake, find some deep docks and drop a Carolina rig on the brush at the end of the dock," he said. "It works every year. You'd think the fishing is a bit slow in January, but it isn't. It's just a matter of hitting the right spots with the right bait."

For Terzia, that means finding docks that drop of to 10 to 12 feet, instead of the usual 4 to 6 feet of water on Claiborne. Most docks have some brush around them, and you can work it with a Carolina rig finesse worm or a 6-inch Zoom lizard. Terzia's favorite colors are cotton candy chartreuse or tilapia magic with a touch of chartreuse on the end. Christmas tree red

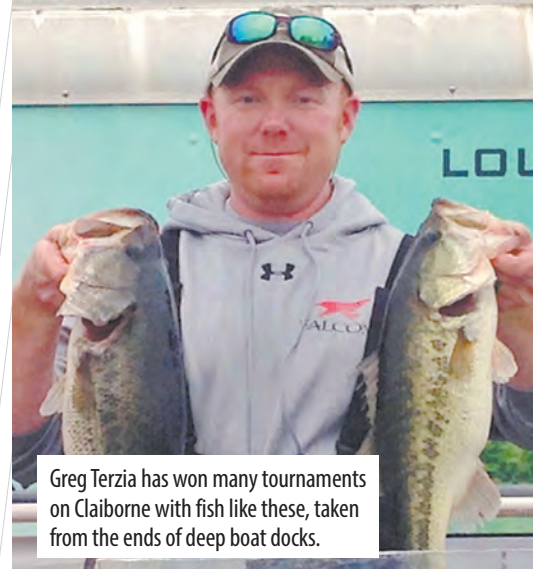
also is a favorite.

"If you are cruising around in 4 to 6 feet of water and you come to a dock with 10 feet or more in depth, that's where you need to fish," he said. "And when you start getting bit, work that dock over. A lot of times you'll catch one or two on the worm or lizard, but you can back off and hit them with a shaky head jig and start getting into numbers. I've caught as many as 15 off one dock doing that."

Two other lures that produce are the Bandit Flat Max, or a Bomber Flat A in shad colors. That tighter wobble seems to work best in cold water.

Another good thing this time of year is that a lot of folks bypass fishing in January: Less pressure means better fishing for those that do go. One thing to watch out for, though, is when the water temperature dips below 50 degrees after big cold fronts. Fishing gets pretty tough then.

"If you want bigger fish, stay in those same-type areas but throw a black and



Greg Terzia has won many tournaments on Claiborne with fish like these, taken from the ends of deep boat docks.

blue pepper jig," he said. "You get more quality fish on a jig, but more action on the other lures. I like a quarter-ounce jig. Most people throw bigger ones, but I think the slow fall turns the fish on this time of year. I've won a lot of tournaments doing that."

The 6,400-acre lake has several good landings, private marinas and a big full-service Louisiana state park that give anglers good facilities to choose from while fishing the reservoir. ■

— Kinny Haddox

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A FEW MORE...

Everyone has their own priorities and perspectives, but here are a few resolution ideas that most anglers can embrace.

• **THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX:** Tried-and-true baits that never let us down are a double-edged sword in that their often moderate level performance may subtly rob us of the potential for discovering options with even greater impact. Some say a bird in hand is worth two in the bush, but you'll never know how big those two bush birds are unless you let go of the sure thing long enough to make a run at something different.

Example: Hackney often uses the Strike King Rage Tail Menace for a jig trailer and a Texas-rig; but when he wants to shake things up, he'll fish it on a dropshot. Elsewhere, Bassmaster Elite Pro Chris Groh targets winter fish by rumbling a big spinnerbait along the bottom of creek channel turns similar to a jig presentation.



Toledo Bend guide Darold Gleason resolves to do a better job of fishing for shallow, isolated fish.

• **EXPAND YOUR SKILLS:** This one has broad potential, but we'll focus on one important suggestion from Gleason. Learn to pitch with both hands so you never miss a bite when passing the reel from one hand to the next. Not only does it eliminate the need to buy left-handed reels, it also enables you to hit targets regardless of boat positioning.

• **MAKE YOUR OWN OPPORTUNITIES:** Planting brush along a bridge causeway or some other heavily trafficked area can be your ace in the hole when the main deal takes a pounding.

The key point to remember is that resolutions only matter

when you apply them. In other words, take every chance to hit the water and improve your bass game.

continues on page 86

BASS HOTSPOT

TAKE A BITE OUT OF CRACKERHEAD

There's a network of canals due east across Lake Verret from the Shell Beach area where the bass fishing turns on in January.

The Crackerhead area gives up bass at this time of year as many of them leave the lake looking for warmer waters in the maze of deadend location canals. The big girls get in there with spawning intentions in a region that boasts some of the earliest prespawn and spawning action in the country.

No one knows that better than Bill McCarty of Morgan City, who has caught his share of 5-plus pounders in the Crackerhead.

"Bigger fish get into the Crackerhead canals off Lake Verret. There'll probably be some good ones caught up there this year," he said. "There's a lot more pressure than there used to be, but it still produces."

Some access points include Attakapas Boat Landing on Highway 41 in Assumption Parish, the Spunky Monkey Boat Ramp on the western side of Lake Verret, the Bayou Corne Boat Landing and Doiron's Boat Landing off Highway 69. Boaters are advised that strong south or north winds make the lake very rough, so caution is necessary.

McCarty, an all-around outdoorsman who owns WHM Services LLC, said the key to getting on the fish is to find the prettiest, warmest water possible — and then fish with a variety of proven artificial lures in the Crackerhead.

"When it's 56, 57 degrees, they usually start eating pretty good," he said, noting often the water warms up in the midday hours, which means it isn't imperative to get out there in the first few hours of the day.

Most of the canals, he said, have ledges that the bass move up

on. On a warm day, they can be caught from the surface to 3 feet on those ledges. After a cold front, or if the water temperature is in the lower-50s or upper-40s, bass move deeper and can be caught away from the ledges.

His go-to artificial lures start with a watermelon/red or june bug Zoom Brush Hog or, if the bass are being pressured heavily, a similarly colored Speed Craw. With a lot of fishing pressure, he said, bass often pass up big baits.

His other favorites are 3/8- or 1/2-ounce jig-n-pig combinations in black/blue or black/blue/chartreuse. He uses Lucky Strike Jigs if he can find them, or else ties on a Strike King Hack Attack jig.

Another top producer is the popular gold/orange Rogue or Redfin.

And McCarty always has a follow-up bait handy for those swings and misses, a june bug Yumdinger, which he said works well.

He said he'll definitely be in one or more of those canals this month.

"It's a really good place for a kicker fish in a tournament. Some 18-pound bags come out of there," he said. ■

— Don Shoopman



Barry Henry smiles as he holds a nice-sized bass caught on a cold winter's day in the Crackerhead area of Lake Verret while fishing with Bill McCarty of Morgan City.

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PRACTICE APPRECIATION, COURTESY AND SAFETY

So, we make resolutions and the majority of times, the focus or objective involves some personal benefit, improvement or self-serving goal. Two things: 1) I'm guilty, I do this. You probably do as well. 2) It's okay — resolutions and their intentions are the right and privilege of their maker.

That being said, how 'bout we all agree to season the gumbo of our goals with a little selfless consideration. Need some ideas? Funny you should ask; I just happen to have a few. (And if I step on any toes, remember — I'm also stomping on mine.)

• **BOAT RAMP SENSIBILITY:** How many shouting matches/MMA auditions have we seen on a busy morning? Notwithstanding the wisdom of personal restraint and reasonable patience on the part of those waiting in line, the unwritten rule we all should follow says this: Load your gear before backing down. Once you line up that trailer, it should be an in-and-out deal. Making everyone sit there and watch you unload rods, tackle bags and coolers is really testing the crowd's tolerance.

On the flip side, the next time the boater ahead of you is having trouble backing down or trailering, rather than honking or shouting impatient, rude or otherwise non-family-friendly thoughts, try offering some simple direction — like “turn the wheel the other way.”

Fact: Performance anxiety plus harassment rarely equals a positive outcome, whereas a calm word of encouraging assistance can save everyone a lot of grief. And if a man's wife or child is helping with the launch — c'mon, be respectful. (Picture your loved one behind that steering wheel or holding that bow line.)

• **FIND YOUR OWN FISH:** Do we need to explain this one? Okay, here it is: Idling up to another boat and clearly dropping a waypoint defines “uncool.” And if you hire a guide and then show up on his best spots, ditto. These head-shakers may sound obvious to those bound by



Watching a big fish thrashing boat side is a goal we all share for the new year.

integrity, but it seems that common sense and common decency have both become painfully less common.

• **SAFETY:** We all want to maximize that daylight bite and on derby day, it's first-come-first-served on the juice. But cutting across points, ignoring hazard signs and overlooking those white poles can spell disaster. On a good day, that might just be an expensive repair, but don't tempt fate and risk the horror of someone's family getting “the call.”

To that latter point, wear your PFD. Think of any excuse; go ahead, we'll wait. The bottom line remains the same: Wear it.

• **FISH CARE:** The vast majority of tournament anglers I've encountered put forth exemplary efforts in caring for

their catch. Summer events will test your live wells, so check on 'em frequently and add ice as needed to keep the water cool. Dumping bagged ice is fine, but savvy pros use frozen water bottles, as this method does not risk any chemical intrusion.

Okay, soap box sermon's over. Happy New Year, everyone. ■



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

PRESPAWN TCHFUNCTE BASS

The winter is a fantastic time to throw jerkbaits and twitch-baits in the marsh and along structure for speckled trout, and it's no different for the bass world.

Avid angler Jeff Bruhl throws Lucky Craft suspending jerkbaits in the Tchefuncte River this time of year while hunting down prespawners.

"You have to remember that the Tchefuncte and Bogue Falaya have a lot of spring-fed water in them, and they stay a little bit cooler than some of the other rivers," Bruhl said. "The bass don't usually spawn until late January or February."

With that in mind, tantalizing jerkbaits are super-effective for



Jeff Bruhl likes to throw jerkbaits for January prespawners in the Tchefuncte River.

cold water bass, and there are certain locations the nuclear pharmacist likes to throw them.

"Throw that on the points and around the bridges," Bruhl said. "When you get those days where you get a little bit of tide movement and kind of bluebird, you can get out there with a suspending jerkbait and catch fish off deep points and curves."

Bruhl likes to fish the jerkbaits with the boat sitting in deep water, where he can make a long cast toward the bank.

"You're basically fishing where it comes from the drop off into the river channel," he said. "You're sitting out in 15-, 20-, 30-foot of water, but you're working it down right off that ledge."

Bruhl throws his jerkbaits on 10-pound fluorocarbon, but if you have a jerkbait that runs too deep or too shallow, line size and rod position can help control the depth. Lighter line gets the bait deeper, and heavier line will make it run shallower.

"You just want something that suspends about 4 to 6

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feet down," he said.

Additionally, Bruhl keeps a black-and-blue-colored jig handy in January.

"That's when the crawfish start showing up," he said. "You throw those around any kind of wood."

He varies his weight size, but almost never throws a jig bigger than a 1/2-ounce this time of year on the Tchefuncte.

"If you were going in a pocket fishing around laydowns, you might just want to use a little 1/4-ounce," he said. ■

– Joel Masson

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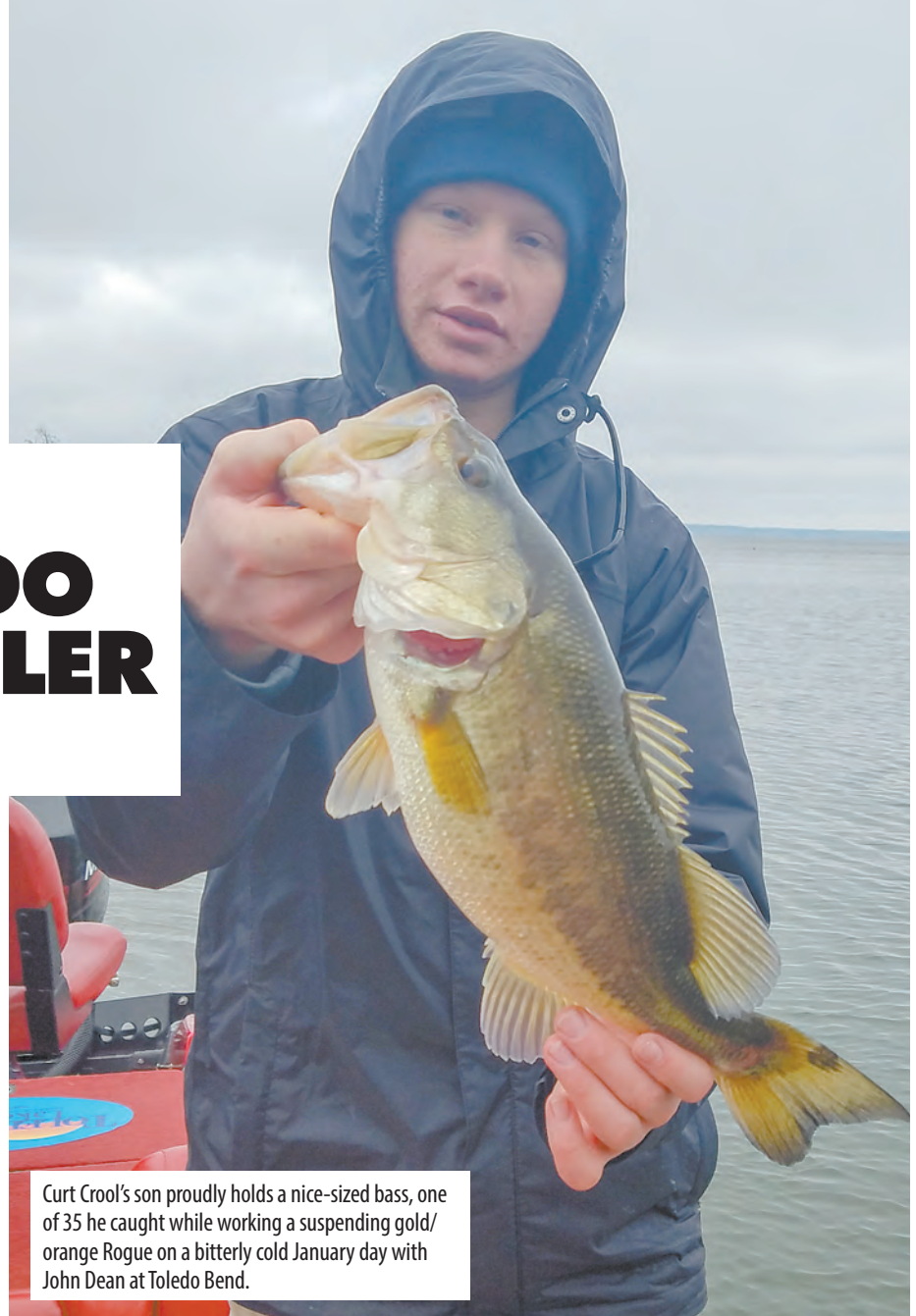
Expect higher water as prespawn approaches

It looks like we'll have more of a winter than we usually do after all, and it's apparent we'll have more water than what predicted a few months ago as the calendar turns to January here at Toledo Bend.

By early December, there had been a couple of major cold fronts already, with more on the way. Those recent fronts have brought excessive rainfall that raised the water level, which had risen above 170 feet.

It had been reported that officials would hold the lake steady at 168 feet through next April to work on the other side of the dam, where huge boulders weighing a ton are being trucked in two at a time from Kentucky. But they are limited to how much water they can let out now and still get the job done efficiently and safely — so here we are, 1 foot and 5 inches from full pool at Toledo Bend, which I really didn't anticipate going into the New Year.

But I enjoy the water being this high. A lot of people do. And it bodes well for fishing in the bushes this spring. Heck, I wouldn't be surprised if bass are caught out of the bushes up north in January. The water level should warrant some bush



Curt Crool's son proudly holds a nice-sized bass, one of 35 he caught while working a suspending gold/orange Rogue on a bitterly cold January day with John Dean at Toledo Bend.

activity shortly if not now, as more rain-makers hit the region.

Surprisingly, it was in the 70s for quite a few days late this fall, but we've already had some stretches of temperatures in the 30s. I believe that's what we're going to have the rest of the winter, and January should be a roller coaster month if the weather patterns continue. Pick the warmer days and fish late-morning on, and you should be able to catch bass shallow as well as deep. Yes, I said shallow, shallow in the heat of the day.

January will be a roll-the-dice situation. Bass can be shallow from midday on in the back ends of shotgun pockets and creeks, especially the last two or three weeks of the month when the lake should have some bass move up and sit on beds.

As we get closer to the prespawn period on this great lake, don't be surprised to see double-digit bass caught. Those big girls don't require optimum water temperatures to lay their eggs: When they're ready to go, they go.

Bass will be caught deep, too, on jig-n-pig combinations, dropshots, tailspinners, jigging spoons and whatever your favorite deep go-getter might be while relying on marine electronics. There probably is more consistency on larger bass, finding them in and around the deep brushpiles deep in the winter, but remember they don't always eat.

I've been catching bass consistently the past few weeks in the back of creeks and coves, where it's darned picturesque and the men, women and children are awed

by the beauty. With more water in the pond, we can get back to those scenic areas. The bass have been there in 5- to 7-foot depths and willing to bite black and watermelon Flukes (I've been dead-sticking them for best results) and, especially, gold/orange Rogues. Both should continue to be major players in January. I remember one rewarding trip on a cold January day with Curt Crool and his son, who caught 35 bass averaging 2 1/2 to 3 pounds while letting a suspending gold/orange Rogue do just that, with long pauses during the retrieve. That young man was locked in.

Top colors for soft plastics like the Flukes eventually will change predominantly to watermelon/red and green pumpkin/red.

During the latter part of January, another top artificial lure for getting bass to bite is a 1/2-ounce Rat-L-Trap. Reds are the top colors the closer it gets to the spawn, but until then you can mix it up with some shad-colored Traps and see what they prefer on your trip.

White perch fishing has been fair at best, with catches of 20 to 25 common on shiners over brushpiles in 20- to 25-foot depths. They will be caught on both shiners and jigs in January.

If you want to catch bass this month, when the bassin' should be fair to good despite some cold spells, 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



John Dean has been guiding on Toledo Bend most of his life. If you'd like to join him on a trip, give him a call at (936) 404-2688.

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Examine every bait you want to fish with in the coming year, checking hooks and looking for rust and any other imperfections. **INSET:** Organize your smaller tackle boxes by lure type and by size and color.

ORGANIZE THOSE TACKLE BOXES

By Dustin Wilks

GET LURES IN PLACE, READY TO TIE ON

Sometimes, there's just nothing better to do than roll around in your tackle and dream of the great fishing that's ahead.

There may be a little drool involved that results from thinking about how nice that new rod is going to be, or how that new crankbait is going to run.

Here's how I approach organizing my tackle for the upcoming fishing season — a great way to spend a January afternoon.

Every angler should have several goals in mind while organizing tackle: eliminate waste and add backups of your favorites to improve efficiency.

The hardest of these to do is eliminate waste and determine what has become junk. It's really hard to get rid of baits and part with stuff.

We have a limited amount of space in our boats and tackle boxes. I want to make sure every square inch of space my tackle takes up is worthwhile. I want every bait to run right, every hook to be new, and every bait to have a purpose.

I use several sizes and styles of boxes to organize things into categories. It's a good idea to replace most of your boxes every year or two to avoid rust contamination. From experience, once it starts, you can't stop it. I use the Z-rust anti-rust tackle boxes from Flambeau as much as I can. They really work wonderfully. I even put the Z-rust dividers into my other box styles to cut down on the rust in those, and I have not had any rust in those boxes.

GET BAITs READY

When it comes to jigs, I want every bait ready to be tied on. The only thing I wait to do when I'm on the water is trim the skirt. I let the water conditions dictate the thickness and length of the skirt. I eliminate a lot of colors and baits I don't use and clean out any with even a hint of rust on them. Any bait that carries a little rust will contaminate the other lures in that box, leading to a big, nasty, rusted-up box. It's better to eliminate a few to save the rest.

Now I've got crankbaits, spinnerbaits, soft plastics (about 15 styles I routinely use), topwaters, buzzbaits, swimbaits, spoons and other specialty items to organize. I replace hooks, throw away torn baits and fix any that have gotten dinged up.

ADD BACKUPS

The easiest and by far most fun of my three goals is to add backups of my favorites. While I'm organizing, I'm also looking to see what I have available. Of baits I use frequently, it's not uncommon to see five or more duplicates in my tackle box. I once lost eight spinnerbaits during a single day, so I'm quite paranoid about having backup lures in my boat. With soft plastics, I want enough in the boat of every type to last me at least two days.

Improve efficiency. Once you have restocked and eliminated useless junk that has accumulated, it's time to think about placement. Everything needs a place. ■



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“**M**id-January to mid-February is the toughest time of the year to catch sac-a-lait,” said the dapper 68-year-old retired drug store manager. “The weather gets real cold. I think they may be staging before spawning. “I wished I knew the answer about why they are so tough to catch.”

Murphy Royer speaks with authority. In the six years since he retired, he fishes four days a week. And he has a specific routine: He fishes for two days, cleans fish on the third, fishes two more days, cleans fish again on the sixth day and then goes to church on Sunday.

This is the routine, 12 months a year. All of it is for crappie, the fish he calls sac-a-lait. And all of it is done with a jig pole — not a rod and reel, and certainly not with a spider rig.

Based from his home in Duson, he concentrates on Henderson Lake, Miller’s Lake, Chicot Lake, Lake Verret, the Bayou Pigeon area of the Atchafalaya Basin, Duck Lake, the Mermentau River and Old River.

His list is a South Louisiana list, which is part of the cold weather problem. North Louisiana reservoirs are noted for having deeper waters that serve as thermal refuges for crappie.

Every winter, the fish head to the same deep holes. Often the water is so deep that when they are reeled up, their air bladders inflate, pushing their stomachs into their mouths and preventing them from submerging, even if released.

The dependability of North Louisiana crappie retreating to deep holes in the dead of winter makes them easy to locate — at least compared to the locations Royer usually targets.

“In South Louisiana, 10 to 15 feet is deep for us.

Fish go deep here in the winter, but not always,” he said.

“I’ve caught fish here in January jigging trees in 6 feet of water. >





Sac-a-lait in South Louisiana don't have the luxury of retreating to deep holes to ride out colder temps — but that doesn't stop Murphy Royer from catching them all winter long.

STONE-COLD CRAPPIE

By Jerald Horst

“In South Louisiana, fish don’t get deep and stay deep.”

Here, they move as shallow as 2 or 3 feet when we get 60- or 70-degree weather for a number of days.

“Things seem to be changing the last four or five years. It used to be that the fishing was so hard in January that you didn’t fish for sac-a-lait. Recently, I caught some males in spawning colors at railroad bridge pilings in December in 14 feet of water,” he said, still baffled.

“It’s hard to believe that they are spawning there.

“Of course,” he admitted, “it may be that I’m seeing these things because I now fish four days a week since I retired.

“Here’s my seasonal theory for South Louisiana sac-a-lait: They feed heavily in October, November and December to fatten up for the spawn.

“Then in January and early February, they move deeper to stage up before the spawn. In later February and in March, they spawn next to trees in 3 feet of

water. The males will be fat at the beginning of the spawn, and skinny at the end.”

FINDING THEM

Catching fish that aren’t there is impossible. Without the deepwater refuges that exist in North Louisiana reservoirs, finding mid-winter crappie in South Louisiana definitely can be challenging.

Although Royer caught all his crappie on trees standing in water on the miserably cold, dreary winter day we went, he was quick to recommend that finding pilings in deep water is “the key.” (Deep water to him is 8 feet or deeper.)

“Most of the time I will tight-line them, but I have caught them on pilings under a cork in warmer (for mid-winter) weather.”

There is nothing magical about railroad or bridge pilings for Royer. He simply hits them because in many places, trees are seldom found standing in water. Royer

likes wood best, but will readily fish concrete pilings.

Brush piles in deep water are productive, he quickly admits, but you need electronics to find them. “I don’t build them myself. They are too much work, and anyone else with electronics can easily find and fish them.”

But even in winter, he will occasionally hit lay-downs. Strangely, he will begin working on one near the bank and fish the trunk out into deeper water.

And his most important rule: “I always try live cypress trees that stand in the water out from the bank. I mean trees, not stumps.”

As for defining deep — “It’s entirely relevant to the lake,” he said a little impatiently, as if his message hadn’t already gotten across. “I love to fish Miller’s Lake (in Avoyelles Parish) and I go as often as I can when the lake opens to fishing about mid-January. It deepest spot is only 5 ½ feet deep.”

ROYER’S TACTICAL TIPS UP NEXT >



Live cypress trees standing in water are prime targets for Royer in the winter.

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ROYER'S TACTICAL TIPS FOR WINTER FISHING

Murphy Royer is part of a charmed fraternity of South Louisiana crappie tournament fishermen. Operating out of a custom-welded-for-crappie aluminum boat, Royer scours South-Central Louisiana for the delicious table fish. Everyone in the fraternity knows everyone else. All have opinions built on years of success.

These are Royer's:

- 1** When fishing bridge pilings, fish as close as possible to each piling. Royer will often semi-wrap his line around the piling and jig it so that it drags on the piling's surface.
- 2** Royer doesn't change the tempo at which he works his jigs to adjust for the fish reacting slower in cold water. "I jig just as fast as in the spring or summer," he stated confidently.
- 3** Simply because it is awkward to use a cork at depths over 4 feet and because the fish are generally deeper in the winter, Royer tight-lines more now than at other times of the year. It is slower, he cautioned, and demands a lot of feel, since there is no cork to provide visual cues.
- 4** His color tactics are the same as in the summer, but he stressed that color is very important when the fish are feeding slowly in the winter. Dominant colors in his hair jigs are olive, chartreuse, orange, red, silver and blue. "Try colors until you find the color they like that day, then use it," he urged.
- 5** Although Royer uses both 1/16- and 1/32-ounce jigheads year round, he uses more 1/32 in the winter because the weight isn't needed to penetrate the grass mats commonly found in summer.
- 6** Royer pushes to get on the water early, even on the coldest of days. And surprisingly, he doesn't believe that warming water temperatures that come with the rising sun produce better fishing in the winter. "I always do best early and mid-morning," he said firmly.
- 7** While Royer doesn't use live shiners himself, he recommends them to others for winter fishing. "They have a lot of ability to attract fish because they stay lively so long in cold weather."



Murphy Royer fishes with nothing but hair jigs and ties them himself.

- 8** Royer emphasized that electronics are not needed to fish South Louisiana's shallow waters successfully for crappie. "Electronics cost a lot," he said. "You can spend \$10,000 — and they break a lot. If I was dropped in a strange place to sac-a-lait fish, the first thing I would look for is visible structure," which he defined as trees, stumps and pilings of any sort. "I did a personal count two years ago and caught 5,000 fish in one year — all without electronics."



Murphy Royer likes to be on the water fishing at the crack of dawn, even in the depths of winter.

- 9** "Change your expectations as to water color," Royer said. "In the summer, you need clarity. I prefer to be able to see my jig 6 to 8 inches down. In the winter, I can catch fish in waters where my jig is only visible 2 or 3 inches down."
- 10** As for attractants like crappie nibbles, Royer claims to be "old school." He cracked dryly, "A ton of people believe in them, but I think they are not worth the trouble."

With his long-handled dip net, Royer can scoop up every fish hooked — without having to move from his seat.



11

Royer is a stickler for setting up a boat for maximum efficiency. He sits on a low pedestal seat on the bow with a hole built into the bow deck to accommodate an ice chest. He can open the chest without moving from his seat or even stooping. At his fingertips he has a very long-handled dip net that he can grab without moving. Beside the dip net, he always carries eight pre-rigged jig poles. Changing jig colors or going from tight-line to cork fishing is simply a matter of grabbing another rod, rather than having to stop and re-rig.

12

Preferred barometric conditions are between 29.30 and 29.24 inches. His preference is for it to be moving: Either rising or falling is good.

13

"South winds are the best for sac-a-lait fishing; north winds are the worst," he clipped. "Water temperatures of 60° F and above are best. For air temperatures, the warmer, the better." ■



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.

D'ARBONNE BRIDGES
UP NEXT >

TIP OF THE DAY

Murphy Royer strongly believes that individual trees will consistently attract crappie at the same time of year, while trees nearby never hold fish.

Good crappie fishermen need to have a good memory.

"For some reason, the same individual tree will hold sac-a-lait at the same time of the year — every year. I don't know if it's the smell or what," Royer laughed. "But remember those trees."



Murphy Royer strongly believes that individual trees will attract crappie at the same time of year, every year, while trees nearby never hold fish.

D'ARBONNE BRIDGES ARE CRAPPIE MAGNETS

There are three 'magnetic' bridges across Lake D'Arbonne: Their forces draw both crappie — and crappie fishermen — in bunches this time of year.

One of those is Sam Roberson of West Monroe.

"The areas around the bridges are always a good place to start for crappie in January," the veteran angler said. "The fish go to deeper water, and there is something about the funneling effect at the bridges. Crappie seem to congregate there in the channel and around the deeper pilings. The pilings stay a little warmer and that has an effect. It's an obvious place to fish.

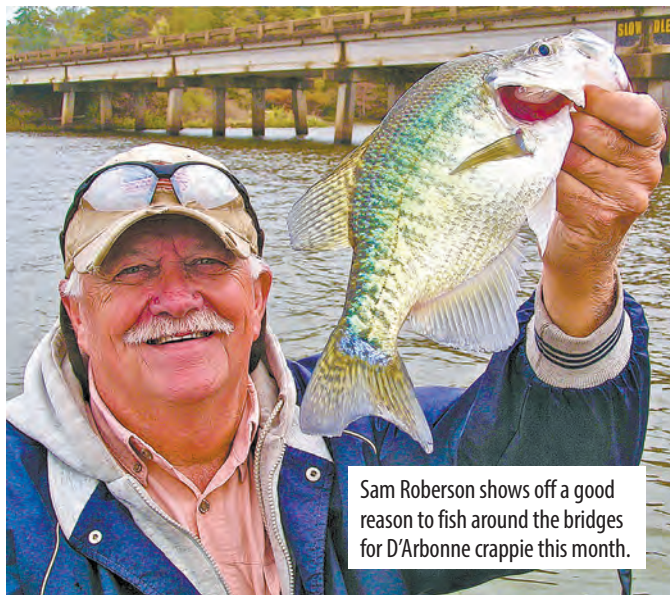
"But when a few fishermen start fishing there, it attracts even more. On a pretty day, sometimes it looks like a boat show."

The three bridges are the large main lake bridge at Jake's on the Ruston highway; the Highway 2 bridge on the Bernice

highway and the Stowe Creek bridge on Highway 15. All three have launching ramps right beside them.

If you can get some 'alone' time at one of the bridges, which isn't very often, you can catch a mess of crappie pretty quickly. But if there are 50 boats within a hundred yards, and 300 fish are caught on any given day, just do the math. That's six per boat.

Roberson had some good suggestions to help you get your share: He only fishes jigs, and his favorite colors are Bobby Garland blue grass, monkey milk, glitter critter and penny back. He uses 1/16th ounce jigheads so he can get his lure down to



Sam Roberson shows off a good reason to fish around the bridges for D'Arbonne crappie this month.

the fish. To make sure it stays down, he uses a No. 2 split shot for extra weight. He often uses unpainted heads, but also uses pink. He ties loop knots on the jigs so they can swim freely, and he fishes his bait as still as possible.

He sets out two to three poles with spinning reels in holders, and also holds one or two in his hands. He varies the depth on each one until he catches a fish, then he adjusts them all to that depth.

But the bridges aren't the only place to catch fish this month. There are actually crappie from one end of the lake to the other in the deeper parts of the river and creek channels.

You can catch fish simply by staying in the edge of the channel — but to do that, you need electronics. You can even catch more fish if you have modern electronics that let you really key in on the bait balls: Feeding fish usually stay pretty close to the schools of shad.

Most crappie fishermen don't even mind you asking for help, especially when fish are in the channels.

"Crappie fishermen are a different breed," he said. "They aren't that secretive because when you are really on the crappie, there are usually quite a few of them to be caught. Second, that's just the way they are." ■

— Kinny Haddox

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CREATURE FEATURE

Jerald Horst

The prominent extensions of the pelvic fins called “claspers” mark this bonnethead shark as an obvious male. **BELOW:** This blacktip shark is a female because she lacks claspers on her pelvic fins.



SHARK BIOLOGY 1001

SOME LAY EGGS, SOME BEAR LIVE YOUNG

The word “shark” covers a lot of ground, with 55 individual species in the Gulf and Atlantic.

For decades, most thoughts that sportsmen had of sharks were negative: they “stole catches off of their lines,” they damaged their tackle and they were dangerous.

Just when their (mostly) delicious table qualities came to be recognized, the federal government, spurred by environmental groups, stepped in and decreed that most sharks were overfished and needed massive protection.

The resulting rules declared a bunch of species as completely protected, lowered the bag limit on most of the rest to one per boat and put big minimum sizes on almost all of what could be caught.

Finding most sharks difficult to identify, with the risk of keeping a protected

species and getting a ticket, most sportsmen simply threw their hands in the air and went back to lumping them all together as nuisance species, releasing them after whacking them on the head to pacify them.

But sharks are interesting and complex creatures. Take for example how they reproduce. Most of the over 20,000 species of bony fish (sharks have no bones) on earth spawn tens of thousands to millions of tiny eggs, counting on the sheer numbers of their eggs to produce enough survivors to replace them.

But sharks are different. They produce small numbers of large, well-developed young that can fend for themselves and therefore have a high survival rate. Depending on the species, the number of sharks produced per litter is small, ranging from two to 25, although large

females of a few species like tiger sharks can produce litters of 100 or more pups.

BOYS AND GIRLS AT A GLANCE

Gender in sharks is easy to identify. Males have a pair of very noticeable tube-like extensions of their anal fins called claspers. Connected to the claspers inside a male’s body is a pair of siphon sacs, essentially contractible bags filled with sea water.

Males store sperm in sacs in their bodies. Then, during mating, the male turns his claspers forward and inserts one into the female. Contraction of the siphon sac blasts sperm sacs through the clasper and into the female.

This mating procedure is pretty standard for all sharks. What happens next is highly variable depending on the species

and family of shark, but their mode of reproduction falls under oviparity, ovoviviparity or viviparity.

WHAT IS OVIPARITY?

Oviparity is the biological term for "egg-laying," and is the most primitive method of reproduction in sharks. Unlike bony fish, which lay delicate, shell-less eggs in large numbers, oviparous sharks protect their eggs with a shell of sorts.

The eggs are large, with enough yolk to nourish embryos until they are fully formed. The tough leathery-shelled eggs, sometimes called "mermaid's purses," are deposited on the sea floor, often attached to plants or bottom debris.

They are not guarded by the female and may take several months to hatch. Compared to other shark pups, those from oviparous sharks are smaller because their growth before hatching is limited by the amount of yolk in the egg.

Oviparity is only found in four shark families: some nurse sharks, bullhead sharks, catsharks and whale sharks.

OVOVIVIPARITY IS DIFFERENT

Female ovoviviparous sharks also produce eggs, but rather than lay them, they hold them inside their bodies until they hatch. After hatching, the embryos continue to grow, using the yolk from their attached yolk sac. Both the yolk sac and the yolk stalk are completely absorbed before the pup is born.

continues on page 106

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YAMAHA

CREATURE FEATURE

continued

It is thought that in some sharks, like the tiger shark, the lining of the female's uterus produces liquid foods that are absorbed by the embryos after they deplete the yolk sac.

In species like the sand tiger shark, the young use up their yolk very early. After that, they continue to grow by practicing cannibalism, feeding on unhatched eggs and smaller pups in the litter. Such sharks are called "oviphagus" or "oophagus," and often have huge, swollen stomachs from eating other yolks. Usually, only two pups survive to hatching, one in each uterus.

Ovoviviparous sharks include the white shark, mako sharks, thresher sharks, sand tiger sharks, and some dogfish, nurse and catsharks.

VIVIPARITY IS MOST ADVANCED

The most advanced form of reproduction in sharks is viviparity. In these sharks, the embryos start out dependent

upon a yolk supply, but the yolk sac develops early into a placenta and the yolk stalk into an umbilical cord.

The placenta taps into the mother shark's bloodstream to feed the embryo. In some viviparous species, the mother produces liquid nutrients (often called "uterine milk") that bathe the embryos. The pups are born alive and ready to feed and defend themselves.

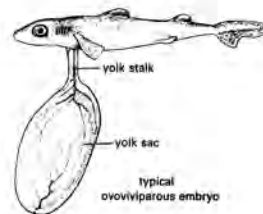
Viviparity is found in many shark species, including, but not limited to hammerhead sharks, bull sharks, blue sharks, blacktip sharks and smooth dogfish sharks. ■



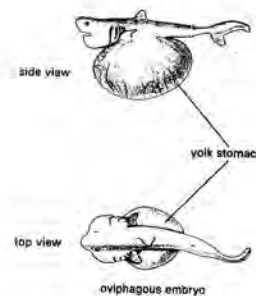
Jerald Horst is a retired Louisiana State University professor of fisheries. He is an active writer, book author and outdoorsman. Jerald may be reached at jerald@rockinghorst.com.



egg cases of oviparous sharks



typical ovoviviparous embryo



Courtesy of The Sharks of North American Waters. José I. Castro. Texas A & M University Press. 1983



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GAME WARDEN

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IT'S TIME TO DOG THE HOGS

FILL THE UPCOMING VOID IN HUNTING SEASONS BY HOG-DOGGING

Hog hunter Jeffery Rachal and Bullet after a good morning's work along Red River.

As deer seasons start to wind down and come to a close, we always look for a way to fill the void between chasing bucks and spring gobbler hunting, or fishing for spawning bass. We've talked before about using this time to reduce the overabundant feral hog numbers, and put some pork in the freezer at the same time.

For most folks, the two most common and effective methods for thinning the herd are shooting and trapping. But some of us with unusual ideas about what we call fun eagerly look forward to late-winter and early-spring for one rea-

son: It's prime time for hog dogs.

I was lured into the sport many years ago after a relative and long-time hunting partner turned to hunting hogs with dogs as the popularity of running deer with hounds sharply declined. It didn't take much time to get hooked on the roar of bayed dogs echoing through the woods, and by spring I was raising cur dog pups.

A SOUTHERN TRADITION

Hunting hogs with dogs evolved from the days of early settlers, when domestic hogs roamed freely throughout the

South. Those hogs were not wild by any stretch. They primarily stayed close to home, ranging only as far as needed to feed, water or find a cool place to spend hot days. Dogs were used to locate the hogs and drive them home, or keep the adult sows and boars at bay while smaller pigs were sorted, neutered and marked with the owner's distinctive ear mark. Read Fred Gipson's "Old Yeller" for more on how hogs were worked with dogs.

Over time (and for reasons not entirely understood), the woods hog evolved from recognizable domestic breeds to the feral and destructive hogs over-running wildlife habitat today. As the

feral hog has evolved and changed, so too has the hog dog and the way it does its job.

NOT YOUR GRANDAD'S COLLIE

I often heard my granddad and dad tell stories about the dogs they had on the farm. Some of the best were collies trained to herd and handle cows and hogs. My granddad kept a collie long after he no longer needed one for cattle or hogs. They were smart, gentle dogs that could herd stock, and knew better than to bite or injure pigs or calves.

Today's hog dog is different. Most, but not all, are curs, and while most people think of Catahoula curs as encompassing all cur dogs, they do not.

The short explanation is that all Catahoulas are curs, but not all curs are Catahoulas. But cur or not, a good hog dog has a keen nose and will stay on a

track until finding and baying the hog. If the hog won't hold and tries to run or drift away, the dog will use his teeth to stop the hog — but won't maul it to death. And it will keep the hog at bay until the hunters arrive with the catch dogs.

Catch dogs have a different role. They are held on a leash, wear body armor, and walk up to the bay with the hunters. Most are some breed of bulldog. When released they run in and latch onto the hog, usually grabbing an ear. They hang on while the hunters run in, catch the hog, and throw and tie it. Thus, the

name "catch-and-tie hunting" — and yes, it's a hoot.

BENEFITS OF DOGGING HOGS

Why, one might ask, would anyone want to hunt hogs with dogs? Well, there are benefits to both the landowner and wildlife. Hogs are smart, and they don't like dogs. One thing we know for sure is not bothering to return to an area where dogs found hogs for a while. The hogs will be long gone, having packed up and moved

continues on page 110



These three dogs have a big boar bayed. They trailed it to where the hog had bedded for the day.

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GAME WARDEN

continued

to quieter surroundings.

That fact is of particular benefit to farmers and ranchers dealing with crop- and pasture-raiding hogs, and wildlife managers who prefer deer to hogs. Hog dogs move the problem, at least temporarily, but far more effectively than trapping and shooting. I have landowner friends who call, on average, four to five times a year when hogs show up on their property. We will make a hunt or two and give them some relief for a couple of months, or more.

The downside is dogs frequently end up on adjoining property, and reputable hog hunters (the kind you want) won't trespass. So, anyone considering inviting hog hunters to hunt their land may want to talk with neighboring landowners to see how they feel about hunters entering the property to pick up dogs and dispatch hogs. Most welcome the help, so long as they get asked first.

If dogging hogs sounds like it could help your hog problem, ask around and locate a hog hunter. Be sure to check references, and know beforehand how many are coming and who they are.

Consider going along to see some great working dogs: Fun is almost guaranteed. ■



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.

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PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

Chris Holmes

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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.



When the temperature and the water levels drop, look for reds packed into tight schools in deeper cuts and dead end canals. Position yourself in the middle, and slowly work your bait up the ledges to find where they are holding.



For Louisiana's kayak fishermen, January and February are generally the most dreaded months of the year. It's miserable outside, the wind is blowing and your significant other is looking to cash in on those long-delayed honey-dos. The cold, dreary days and low expectations keep most fishermen off the water, and make excuses to put off odd jobs around the house harder to come by.

However, by closely watching the weather, kayak anglers can pick their days and actually still have a safe and productive trip. First and foremost is safety. Being cold and wet is a recipe for disaster. Make sure to dress appropriately and keep your PFD on.

Delacroix, while generally known for good bass and redfish action close to the launches, can also

provide fantastic cold-weather trout bites once specks have moved deep into the marsh. The fish are more predictable, and what many consider a slow time can really produce some good fishing.

Delacroix has a mix of shallow lakes, bays and ponds that are interconnected with deep natural bayous, man-made pipelines and dead-end canals. This diverse habitat provides areas for fish to congregate and feed — no matter the water temperature.

Like many areas of Southeast Louisiana, winter cold fronts driven by strong northwest winds send water racing out of the Delacroix marsh. But the shallow draft of a kayak still allows you to get to the deeper areas where fish necessarily have to congregate.

In addition to the uncomfortably cold conditions and low water, you

CONTINUES >

PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

continued

>

may also have to deal with howling winds and water the color of chocolate milk. Frequent cold fronts interspersed with days of sunshine and warming temperatures have the fish moving back and forth between deeper and shallower areas. It only takes a small change of two to four degrees of water temperature to move the fish and turn on their feeding instinct.

DEPTH FINDER IS BENEFICIAL

A depth finder with a water temp gauge can be an invaluable tool for winter kayak fishing. The mistake many fishermen make is leaving an area that is seemingly devoid of fish. If you are not catching anything in the middle of a canal, move closer to the bank or more toward the mouth. Subtle changes in temperature, level of sunshine or water movement can be the difference between a skunk and a full bag.

Delacroix is a vast area that provides

fishing opportunities under almost any conditions, however, kayak anglers are somewhat limited by range. So you need to interpret and adapt to the conditions presented on any given day. When the water temperature is between 50 and 55 degrees, fish will likely be staged on the ledge of a drop off. When it drops below 50 degrees, they will be a little deeper — toward the bottom. Use the depth finder to find these ledges and deeper holes.

The fish generally stage where they can easily move deeper if the temperature plummets, or where they can head for the surface if it warms up. Fish an area thoroughly because you can literally miss the bite by a difference of only several feet. If the day warms, the fish are likely to work their way onto nearby flats.

PLASTICS PREVAIL

The only live bait usually available in winter is cocahoe minnows, and they are

productive for trout, reds and bass. However, one hallmark of winter fishing is that plastics typically shine. No matter what bait you choose, fish it slowly and be cognizant of subtle winter bites. The slightest change in feeling may actually be a bite, so when in doubt always set the hook.

The cold water slows the fish, and you need to do the same with your bait. Even subtle rod movements can pull the bait away from lethargic wintertime fish. If the fish are settled into deeper water, tight-line the bait along the bottom, or drift with a line out the back of the 'yak. If they are staged a bit shallower or have moved onto the flats, dangle your bait under a popping cork as the bite will be a bit more aggressive.

One good thing about winter fishing is that there is generally no need to head out at the crack of dawn. Let the water warm a bit, and don't shy away from mid-day trips.

Delacroix offers an easy mixed bag of trout, reds and bass — all in the same area, using the same lure. When anglers in other parts of the country have put away their kayaks for the winter because the season is closed or the lake is a block of ice, Louisiana 'yakers can still safely enjoy some hot fishing action. ■



Spinnerbaits are effective for bass in the winter when slow-rolled along deeper edges and cover.

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NEW GEAR REVIEWS



ST. CROIX'S MOJO YAK RODS

Obviously, most fishing gear is not craft specific. However, there are several unique aspects to kayak fishing that lend themselves to gear designed specifically for those anglers. That's why legendary rod manufacturer St. Croix developed a full line of rods with saltwater kayak-specific characteristics.

Enter the Mojo Yak.

Kayak cockpits are tight quarters and casting and fighting fish often leads to rods getting banged around or hitting the sides or deck. St. Croix incorporated Kigan Master Hand 3D guides with slim, strong aluminum-oxide rings and black frames to provide extra durability and easy casting. The shorter split-grip handles are covered with top-of-the-line Winn polymer grips, which provide a comfortable, tacky hold even if your hands are wet or cold. A unique rounded butt keeps the rod from snagging clothing when you're switching back and forth across your chest when

fighting a fish. "It's like waving a magic wand," said Benton Parrott, four-time IFA Kayak Tour champion, speaking of the Mojo Yak's special fishability in the kayak. "I've never had a rod move so effortlessly or grip as well, wet or dry."

The high-modulus graphite blanks in the Mojo Yak's incorporate St. Croix's Integrated Poly Curve engineered mandrel, allowing the rods to serve many fishing styles and techniques all in one. Tip weight is reduced, giving these tough but sensitive rods great balance.

The Mojo Yak took home the industry's coveted Best of Show award for saltwater rods when it was introduced at the 2018 ICAST convention. Pick up a Mojo Yak, and

you'll instantly feel the difference. Light but tough, they are perfectly balanced and simply feel like a precision kayak-fishing tool. With eight different models in the lineup (two casting and six spinning), you can find one or two that perfectly suit your style of kayak fishing.

The Mojo Yak comes with a five-year warranty backed by St. Croix Superstar Service.

MSRP: \$150. **For more information:** www.stcroixrods.com



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PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

continued

*January can be a tough month to kayak fish. However, if you pick your days right, it can be safe, fun and successful. Use the bad weather days to do some rigging and tackle organizing to prepare for the better days to come. As always, due to the lag time in printing, weather conditions can change the bite so check in regularly with LouisianaSportsman.com for the latest updates.

JANUARY'S 'YAKIN BEST BETS

FRESHWATER

WHERE: Chicot Lake (Chicot State Park)

WHAT: Bass, sac-a-lait

HOW: This decades-old lake within the state park is nearly 2,000 acres, and has three different boat launches that provide kayak anglers easy access to all sections of the lake. The man-made lake was impounded in late 1942. And while Chicot is not known for abundant catches, large bass are regularly taken — and this time of year sees less angling pressure. The lake record is more than 13 pounds. The park can be used for day access, but cabins, lodges and both improved and primitive camping sites are available for rent. Rat-L-Traps or other silver crankbaits worked slowly near the mouths of creeks can entice lethargic bass. Plastic worms rigged Texas- or wacky-style are also a good bet. Live shiners are great for dropping into tightly bunched schools of white perch, which will be holding in deeper water. Use a depth finder to find where and what depths they prefer that day. Chicot is a beautiful lake for 'yakin and catching, with many areas of

flooded timber. With good weather and a few days exploring, you should be able to locate where the bass are holding.

LAUNCH: There are three launches within the park that provide access to the myriad of coves, fingers and open water areas. Park Entrance: 3469 Chicot Park Road, Ville Platte, La.

INSIDER TIP: Talk to friendly locals at the ramps to get pointed in the right direction.

www.crt.state.la.us/louisiana-state-parks/parks/chicot-state-park/

SALTWATER

WHERE: Delacroix Island

WHAT: Speckled trout, redfish, bass

HOW: The area offers a blend of shallow marsh for action on warmer days when the fish move up, and deeper bayous and pipelines where they seek refuge when it is bitterly cold. The thick grass of summer has subsided, and the trout have moved into the marsh during their winter pattern. Live bait may be



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available at the local marinas, but usually isn't necessary. Plastics tight-lined or popped under a cork generally do the trick. If it is cold, look for the deep canals and dead-end pipelines not far from the launches. Slowly work jigheads/plastics on the ledges. Position the kayak where you can work the bait down off or up onto the ledge, depending on where they are holding. Spinnerbaits and plastic worms are also effective if worked slowly. Any cast is likely to yield a trout, red or bass — all in the same spot, and all on the same lure.

LAUNCH: Two commercial launches offer concrete ramps and secure parking. Both have small stores and sell live and dead bait when available. Good fishing can be found within sight of the launches, so fish your way out and you may not have to paddle very far.

Serigne's Marina: 5933 Delacroix Highway, St. Bernard, La. (504)265-0007, \$5 launch fee.

Sweetwater Marina: 6205 Delacroix Highway, St. Bernard, La. (504)342-2368, \$10 launch fee per kayak.

INSIDER TIP: Duck season is open in the area through Jan. 20. Delacroix is a popular duck hunting area, so keep a watchful eye out for duck boats and give the hunters a wide berth if you come across them set up in a pond. Camps, rooms and cabins are available throughout the area — just ask the marina owners for recommendations.



Pick good weather days in January, and Delacroix can provide plenty of action close to the launches.

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'TOWING THE LINE' IN THE KITCHEN

SLIDELL COOKS ARE MASTERS OF THE UNEXPECTED

Colleen and Christian Orfanello do have day jobs. They own Sea Tow New Orleans, essentially a wrecker service on the water. "When you run out of gas in your boat, break down and need a tow or run aground, you call us," explained Christian. "It's free for members."

Their lives revolve around the water. They keep a boat on a hoist over the canal in the backyard of their Eden Isles home in Slidell, and another boat at "Camp Always," their fishing camp at Hopedale.

"We probably fish three days a week," said Christian. "We live on the water and work from our phone, so all we have to do is push a button and the boat is in the water. We have full-time captains who do the on-water responses for Sea Tow." >



Bull turtle soup has the taste of classic New Orleans turtle soup, but with much more meat in it. **INSET:** Christian and Colleen Orfanello create original, unique dishes.



Predictably, their food is also water-influenced.

"We eat at home five or six nights a week," stated Christian. "Fishing is our grocery store."

"The best restaurant in town is right here, in our kitchen," said Colleen. "I've cooked all my life, but I don't like to cook by myself. I love to cook with Christian. It's how we unwind. We plan how we are going

to cook it when we catch it."

They even met through cooking. Colleen was hosting a friend's birthday party, and was in the kitchen when Christian came in and offered to help. "My heart fluttered," she said. "When I found out that he fishes, I asked him to marry me."

"One of our first dates was fishing in Grand Isle for three days," added Christian. ■

BULL TURTLE SOUP

The name of this dish doesn't come from using "bull" turtles, but rather from using the meat of bull redfish as well as turtle meat in its preparation. Large redfish, often called "bulls," are not a table fish favored by the couple.

"For the holidays a few years ago, I planned to make a turtle soup," said Colleen. "After I cleaned the turtle meat, I didn't have enough of it. We said, 'What are we going to do?'"

"We always have fresh redfish in

the fridge. Christian said, 'We got redfish — let's try it.'

"It was magical — an experiment gone right."

"The redfish adds a little chunkiness," said Christian. "I like to find pieces of meat in my soup. Turtle is expensive. And here, the redfish doesn't taste like redfish anymore."

"Everybody in the family loved it," laughed Colleen. "They all wanted the recipe." ■

PREPARATION: Serves 6.

Remove all fat and connective tissue from the meat. Cut into bite-size pieces. Place the turtle meat in a colander and place the colander in a pot with the beef stock, and simmer over low heat to tenderize. While the meat is simmering, microwave the Wondra flour in a glass bowl on high for 45 seconds. Stir the flour and continue microwaving and stirring in 45 second increments until the desired color for a blonde roux is achieved. Set aside. Melt the butter in a heavy pot. Add the onion, celery, ½ cup green onions and ½ cup parsley, and sauté until the onions are translucent. Dip the turtle meat from the broth and add it to the pot with the sautéed vegetables. Add the oregano, thyme and garlic. Reserve ½ cup of stock for later use. Briskly whisk the roux into the remaining

stock until it is well incorporated, then add it to the pot. Cover and bring to a boil over medium heat. Stir in the pureed tomatoes. Add tomato paste, Worcestershire, and salt and pepper and stir well. Add lemon juice and bay leaves. Cover and simmer over low heat for 40 minutes. If soup is too thick add some of the reserved stock. Turn heat to medium, add redfish and cover. When redfish is opaque and cooked, (approximately 10 minutes) reduce heat to low, stir in the sherry. Add the eggs, if desired. Serve warm with a sprinkle of parsley and green onions on each bowl and an extra splash of sherry, if desired. ■

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 lb. boneless turtle meat
- 3 qt. beef stock
- ¾ cup Wondra Quick-Mixing Flour
- 1 stick salted butter
- 1 cup chopped yellow onion
- ½ cup chopped celery
- ½ cup chopped green onions + ¼ cup for garnishing soup
- ½ cup Italian parsley + ¼ cup for garnishing soup
- 1/3 tsp. minced fresh oregano
- ½ tsp. minced fresh thyme leaves (discard the stems)
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 28-oz. can Cento peeled tomatoes, pureed
- 1½ tbsp. tomato paste
- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce
- Sea or kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper, to taste
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 3-4 bay leaves
- 2 ½ lb. redfish fillets, trimmed of red meat and cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- ½ cup dry sherry
- 2 hardboiled eggs, sliced (optional)



Colleen is careful to remove all fat from her turtle meat.

Authors' note: Many of our readers are collectors of our Seafood Bible series of cookbooks in six titles: Shrimp, Crawfish, Crabs, Oysters, Fish 1 and Fish 2. We have just been informed that our publisher, Pelican Press, will begin printing all new editions in a softcover format rather than hardcover, beginning with the Crab volume this year. Anyone interested in completing their set in hardcover may want to consider doing so in the near future, as only limited numbers of hardcover Crab volumes are still available.



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.



SMOKY SOFT-SHELL CRABS

INGREDIENTS:

6 medium to large soft-shell crabs
2 eggs
2 1/2 cups milk
6 drops hot sauce
10 oz. Louisiana brand New Orleans Style Lemon Fish Fry
10 oz. flour
2 tbsp. paprika
1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper
1 tsp. Creole seasoning
Oil for frying

Christian explained that this recipe came about when Colleen bought a Traeger Pellet Smoker for him. "Since we get a lot of soft-shell crabs in Hopedale, I said, 'Let me try smoking them.'

"It wasn't good right off the grill. It was missing something. I wanted to crisp it up. We figured that we could get that texture from frying them and keep the smoky flavor. The combination of the two is good."

"It's heaven," Colleen said. ■



Smoky soft-shell crabs are great alone, or on po-boy bread as sandwiches.

PREPARATION: Serves 6.

Use scissors to cut the face off each crab just behind the eyes, then snip off the gills located beneath the shell. Remove the apron from beneath the body. Heat a smoker to 170 degrees. Place the crabs in the smoker for 20 minutes. Remove and

set aside to cool. Beat the eggs in a large bowl. Add the milk and hot sauce and whisk until well mixed. In a separate pan, mix the fish fry, flour, paprika, cayenne pepper and Creole seasoning. Dredge the crabs in the egg batter, then through

the fish fry mixture. Repeat the steps to double-batter each crab. Heat the oil to 350 degrees and fry the crabs on each side until golden brown. Remove from oil and drain on paper towels. ■

The 2018-2019

DONATE A DEER

Campaign has Arrived!



Hunters for the Hungry's annual "Donate a Deer" campaign is officially under way. Hunters can donate all or part of their harvest from the field to a designated HFH processor on the list. Deer must be field dressed upon donation, and are processed AT NO COST to the hunter. All protein is donated to area charities and food pantries. Thank you for joining us in our mission to help families in need!



For more information call Jimmy Anthony at 225-412-4993 or email HFH at hfh@wlf.la.gov. You can also find a map of our processors online at www.hunters4hungrylouisiana.org.



DESIGNATED HFH PROCESSORS

PARISH/COUNTY	NAME
Adams	Pedro's Butcher Shop
Adams	Dunn's Processing
Adams	Natchez Deer Processors
Avoyelles	Juneaus Meat
Beauregard	Brown's Slaughterhouse
Beauregard	Unruh Processing
Bienville	Wild Thang Cusom Meats
Bossier	Bellevue Meat Processing
Caddo	Cotton's Grocery
Calcasieu	Roy's Meat Market
Calcasieu	Hackett's Cajun Kitchen
Calcasieu	Gillis' Grocery
Calcasieu	Holliers Cajun Kitchen
Concordia	Pooles Processing
Concordia	Raley Processing
East Baton Rouge	Kelly's Food Market
East Baton Rouge	Tramonte's Meat and Seafood
Franklin	PoBoy Farm Meats
Franklin	Hatton Meats
Iberville	Roucher's Meat Market
Iberia	G & M Processing
Jefferson	Badeaux Wild Game
Jefferson	Pat Givenco's Deer Depot
Lafayette	Little Veron's
Lafayette	Southern Deer Processing
Lafourche	Bourgeois Meat Market
Livingston	Caitoir's Whitetail Smokehouse
Madison	2 Bucks Meat Processing
Madison	Powers Processing
Morehouse	Hammond's Deer Processing
Natchitoches	Dietrich's Processing
Natchitoches	M & M Grocery
Natchitoches	Troy's Butcher Shop
Ouachita Parish	Whetstone's Deer Processing
Point Coupee	Bayou Shack Café
Point Coupee	Kelly's Cajun Specialties
Rapides	Martin Meats
Tangipahoa	Tangi Meats
Tensas	Laurel Oak Smokehouse
Union	Dean's Slaughterhouse
Vermillion	Circle V Meat Processing
Webster	Payne Farm Processing
West Feliciana	Feliciana Seafood & Deli

WORLD CHAMP'S CALLING RECIPE

By Todd Masson

KNOW WHAT CALLS TO MAKE AND WHEN TO ENTICE DUCKS TO COME INTO VIEW

World-champion duck caller Mike Smith, who spends nearly every day of duck season hunkered in a marsh blind, is an aggressive caller, and he makes no apologies for it.

"I call from the moment I see them until I pull the trigger," he said.

But before he ever blows a call, Smith tries to gauge the mood of the birds he sees.

"First, you have to learn how to read the birds, whether they've just been shot at or are heading somewhere far away, or whether they're looking for somewhere to land," he said. "I've got customers who want me to call at every duck in the sky. You're really just wasting your time when you do that."

Once Smith determines that a far-off duck or flock is looking for a place to land or otherwise callable, he sets up a progression of calls.

| SOUND 'RIDICULOUS'

Smith's first effort is a 20-note hail call, which he admits "sounds ridiculous."

But there's a method to his madness.

"If it's windy, those ducks are only picking up pieces of that long string of notes," he said. "It's like if you were on one side of the Superdome and I was on the other, and I screamed 20 words to you. You might only hear two or three words."

| GREETER STATUS

If his first call elicits some interest, Smith will hit them with another hail call if the birds are far off, or if they're closer, blow five-note greeting calls.

"The closer they get, the more natural you have to sound," he said.

| KEEP THEM INTERESTED

Once it's obvious the birds have seen the decoys and are showing strong interest, Smith will hit them with repeated three- to five-note greeting calls. These calls are short in duration, and are intended to make the ducks feel very welcome.

"I really get excited with the call," he said. "It's constant 'quack-quack-quack, quack-quack-quack, quack-quack-quack.' I used to stop calling when the birds got that close, but now I find it's better to keep them interested."

| TWEET, WHISTLE

If the ducks pass the blind, Smith continues with the fast series of greeting calls, especially if the birds continue to look interested.

When they're just about ready to commit, Smith will mix in some tweets on his pintail/widgeon whistle, even if there are no pintails or widgeon in the flock.

"It gives the birds confidence that those are real ducks down there," he said. "Especially late in the season, that's important. Those birds have heard hard calling for months."

The only time Smith lays off the call is if the birds circle directly over the blind.

"If they're above us, I want everybody looking down, and I'm not going to call," he said. "I don't want to draw attention to the blind."

| PLEASE, COME BACK!

If the birds at any point turn tail and begin heading away from the pond with a sense of purpose, Smith will blow a long, plaintive comeback call.

"Usually when that happens, they've seen something they didn't like," he said. "You can sometimes call them back, but they're usually heading somewhere else by that point."



Plan your calling series and run calls that match the mood of passing ducks

STAY WARM DURING WINTER FISHING TRIPS

MOST BODY HEAT IS LOST ABOVE THE NECK

By John Flores

No matter what the mercury actually reads, it definitely always feels chillier out on the water.

The average winter temperature range in the Bayou State is 61 to 41 degrees in January.

Of course, Louisiana definitely has its share of winter fronts that drive temperatures below freezing, and allow daytime highs to hover only in the 30s and 40s.

So wind chills can be brutal when fishing early morning hours, and while running in boats even at moderate speeds.

When winter fishing, wear layered clothing like you would when hunting. You can always peel clothing off

when daytime temperatures warm up.

Winter fishing gear should include a hooded jacket of some sort, a stocking cap and possibly a face mask to break the wind. Most of a person's body heat is lost above the neck, so by keeping your head warm, it often helps to keep the rest of your body warm.

Remember, it's illegal to drink and operate a watercraft and foolish to think alcohol actually warms you. In fact, it does just the opposite. Instead, bring a thermos of your favorite hot beverage to heat up your inner-core. ■



Most body heat is lost above the neck, so keeping your head warm will help warm up the rest of your body.

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WINTERIZE YOUR BOAT NOW FOR SPRING

By Patrick Bonin

A little TLC before putting up your boat for the winter will ensure you're set to go next spring.

SIX TIPS TO PREVENT MAINTENANCE PROBLEMS

Only the most diehard anglers typically venture out in December and January, so now is the time to take care of some key outboard maintenance to make sure your boat cranks up and is ready to go next spring.

Mercury Marine's Eric Reilly and Dale Witkowski suggested six winterization tips that will not only keep your boat protected during the winter but make sure it's ready to hit the water next year.

1. CHANGE THE OIL AND OIL FILTER ON INBOARDS AND FOUR-STROKES

Most owner's manuals recommend at least an annual oil and filter change, and Witkowski said doing it before storing your boat for the winter makes sense.

"I would suggest doing it before you put

it away," he said. "Run it and get it warm so that it drains out, and then fill it with fresh oil so that any contaminants like water, dirt or anything that's in the crankcase that's not supposed to be there gets cleaned out.

"Then let fresh oil run through the engine before you put it up."

2. EXAMINE YOUR WATER PUMP AND THE WATER PUMP IMPELLER

"Most guys just look back to see if the pee tube is flowing water, and they think the water pump impeller is fine," Witkowski said. "But if you're dealing with saltwater, brackish water and shallow water — where things might get sucked up into your engine — on an annual basis it wouldn't hurt to make sure your engine is getting all the water that it needs to

keep cool."

Reilly also said the rubber veins of the impeller can set, which can cause water flow issues.

"They can conform to the shape they've been used in because the rubber is stiffening," he explained. "The diameter of the rubber just gets hard and brittle, and it can just freeze in that state."

3. STABILIZE YOUR FUEL AND CHANGE YOUR FUEL FILTERS

Witkowski and Reilly recommended a three-step approach for year-round fuel maintenance.

First, use a product like Mercury's Quick-are to stabilize the fuel and prevent water from being attracted to it inside your tanks. And once a month, use Quickleen that will get into your combustion chambers and clean up any carbon deposits

that might be built up after running, especially under low-rpm conditions. Finally, Quickstor should be added to your tank to protect internal fuel systems during the winter storage period.

"We do recommend having the fuel tank full, with a stabilizing product in it," Witkowski said. "And we suggest that they run the engine after they put the Quickstor in it so the fuel circulates throughout the fuel system."

4. CHECK YOUR ANODES

"They're called sacrificial anodes for a reason," Witkowski said. "The rule of thumb is when they're 50-percent gone they need to be changed.

"Saltwater eats up everything. (Anodes) give up their lives to save the more-expensive components on the engine."

5. CHECK YOUR GEAR LUBE OR DRIVE LUBRICANTS

"One of the main things we recommend is to drain this to get out any emulsification that might have happened or water that might have gotten in," Reilley said. "If you don't drain it before winterization, what happens is — if it freezes — the water expands and it could burst your gear case or drive."

6. Disconnect your battery until the spring

"Just make sure it's not touching anything," Witkowski said. "That way there's not the chance of anything drawing it down, so on the off chance if you do hook the boat up and go down to the dock, you'll have juice." ■

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- Bayou Bienvenu
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- Calcasieu Lake
- Myrtle Grove-Lake Hermitage
- Empire to Buras
- Pearl River WMA
- Lafitte
- The Rigolets
- Vermillion Bay
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HOW TO READ THE ASTRO TABLES

By Andy Crawford

SCHEDULE TRIPS AROUND MAJOR AND MINOR FEEDING TIMES

Some people live and die by astro charts, swearing all they have to do to be more successful is time their trips to coincide with the listed major and minor feeding periods.

Others don't give the charts a second look.

But anecdotal evidence indicates the info is valid — that's why you'll find them in each and every issue of this magazine.

But the trick is learning how to read them — and the creator of the chart shared how it's done.

First, you can just look at the "Best Days"

column to get a feel for when you should expect the most action. Simply put, the longer the shaded bar the better the hunting or fishing should be.

If you want to figure out when during a particular day you should focus your attention, just move to the right.

The major feeding times are listed on our charts as "Primary, moon overhead" and "Primary, moon underfoot."

These two periods happen every day, and vary from an hour to 3 ½ hours long. These are the times when fish and game

can be expected to feed the heaviest.

Unfortunately, you can't always count on the solunar cycle to work out so major feeding times fall during daylight hours.

That's when minor feeding times come into play.

No, you won't see those words on our astro charts. But that doesn't mean they aren't listed.

Just look under the "Moon rise" and "Moon set" columns to find out the peak times of the minor feeding periods. Just as with the primary feeding times, there are



You can identify when deer are most likely to be moving by understanding how to read the astro guides.

two minors per day.

Now, the minor periods are shorter, usually lasting only an hour or so.

That means that if, say, moon set is at 11:30 a.m., the minor feeding period will run from about 11 a.m. through about 12:30 p.m.

That's not the only information available. You also can identify with a glance when a major or minor period overlaps dawn, noon or dusk.

Such overlaps are marked with small sun symbols on the applicable primary times, with overlapping moon sets/rises being marked with bold type.

So now you can flip to the astro table each month and plan out your vacation time to ensure you have the best possible chance of success. ■



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- **190 acres in Jefferson Co.** South of Lorman on Hwy 552 near RedLick area, border Coles Creek. This property can be split into smaller tracts. Excellent hunting and timber with utilities available. \$3,200/acre.
- **60 acres and Camp in Copiah Co.** is a great "turn key" property/ Perfect setup for the family or serious hunter. Tract is groomed with several food plots, numerous fruit trees, interior trails and lots of tall timber! There is also a 2bd/1ba cabin already in place under a huge pole barn. Great deer and turkey hunting in this area. \$249,250. This is a must see, call Todd Case at 601-408-5621.
- **700 Acres +/- in Concordia Parish, LA.** The tract is West of the MS River (Glasscock Island). This property has been extremely well developed and maintained and offers an excellent interior road system, shooting lanes, 15 large food plots, 12-4X6 Dixie Deer Blind box stands and Boss Buck Feeders. The tract needs nothing but someone to hunt it! The property also has approx. 100 acres +/- of low water areas with control structures and offers excellent duck hunting. This property is truly a sportsman paradise! Utilities are available! This tract is priced at only \$2,950/acre!



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Hunter Puglia

Hunter Puglia had a very successful opening weekend in Scarsdale.



Capt. Joey Davis with Relentless Sportfishing enjoyed a day with the Marsh Madness crew chumming up yellowfin behind shrimp boats about 20 miles out of Red Pass. These two 100-pounders bit on live pogies in early October.



Noah Vincent

Noah Vincent, 10, of Kaplan, hooked this lunker bass on a Yamamoto swimbait at Lacassine Pool near Lake Arthur.



Viola Cosgrove

Viola Cosgrove of Marrero was fishing with family and friends when she landed this 29 1/2-pound red snapper in 360 feet of water on Aug. 20 out of Southeast Pass.



Jason Rodrigue

Jason Rodrigue holds up the mouflon ram he shot in Medina, Texas, on March 15, 2018.



Pete Camardelle

Pete Camardelle shows off a 6-pound redfish caught in Lafitte with Capt. Phil Robichaux Fishing Charters. He was using a black/chartreuse grub and shrimp under a cork.

This 40-pound drum was caught by Robert Ward of Newnan, Georgia, while fishing in Myrtle Grove.



Robert Ward

GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

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Digital images must be at least 200KB and in jpeg format.



Sarah Walker

Sarah Walker got her first deer with a clean kill from a .308 at 75 yards at the Tall Tines Hunting Club in Lorman, Miss.



Elissa Edmonds

This was the first bass for 9-year-old Elissa Edmonds, who was fishing at Lake Sam Rayburn in Texas.



Mike Lovelace Jr.

Mike Lovelace Jr. was hunting in Avoyelles Parish when he took this 210-pound 8-point in November.



Samuel Lafleur

On his first offshore fishing trip, Samuel Lafleur, 10, caught this red snapper that had a \$150 reward tag on it from Auburn University's Marine Fish Lab. He was 70 miles offshore in the Vermilion blocks out of Cypremort Point.



Harli Melancon

Harli Melancon poses with the STAR speckled trout she caught in June.



Peyton Hawkes

Peyton Hawkes had fun catching trout on clear Lil Johns in Turner's Bay on Lake Calcasieu.



Lane Maxwell

Lane Maxwell, 5, killed his first alligator on Sept. 24, 2018 while hunting on private land in Morehouse Parish with his parents, papaw and older brother. His gator measured 7 feet, 10 inches.



Jace Martin

Jace Martin of Paulina was 12 years old when he took this heavy-horned 220-pound 11-point with double main beams in West Feliciana Parish on Dec. 27, 2017.

Vincent Chatelain smoked his biggest gobbler to date at the Kisatchie National Forest in Rapides Parish last April. It was 40 degrees with a 20 mph wind, but perseverance paid off.



Vincent Chatelain



Eli Vercher



Eli Vercher, 12, of Port Barre caught this 43-inch, 38-pound bull red while surf-fishing in Grand Isle over Thanksgiving break.

Colston Savoie caught his first bass at Lacassine Refuge while fishing with his paw paw Keith Bergeron on March 16, 2018.



Mike Guidry

This 42-inch redfish was caught by Mike Guidry in Bayou Dularge.



Seth Tate

Seth Tate with a 21-inch flounder caught at Big Lake on Oct. 20, 2017.



Brody Gilbert & Jay Warren

Brody Gilbert and his grandpa, Jay Warren of Ponchatoula, pose with an 8-pointer taken in Carrollton, Mississippi.

Not an official document. Refer to LDWF's official hunting regulations pamphlet or www.wlf.louisiana.gov

HUNTING SEASONS

SPECIES	SEASON DATES	BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT
DOVES+	(South Zone) Sept. 1 - 9 Oct. 6 - Nov. 25 Dec. 16 - Jan. 14	(North Zone) Sept. 1 - 23 Oct. 6 - Nov. 11 Dec. 16 - Jan. 14	45
		15	45
WOODCOCK^	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31	3	9
TEAL (blue-winged, green-winged, cinnamon)	Sept. 15 - Sept. 30	6	18
RAILS* King & Clapper Sora & Virginia	Sept. 15 - 30	Nov. 10 - Jan. 2	45
	Sept. 15 - 30	Nov. 10 - Jan. 2	75
GALLINULES*	Sept. 15 - 30	Nov. 10 - Jan. 2	45
SNIPE	Nov. 2 - Dec. 2 Dec. 15 - Feb. 28	8	24
QUAIL	Nov. 17 - Feb. 28	10	30
RABBIT	Oct. 6 - Feb. 28	8	24
SQUIRREL	Oct. 6 - Feb. 28	8	24
	May 4 - 26**	3	9

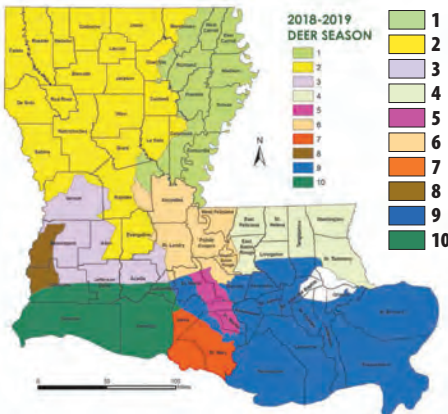
*An extended falconry season for ducks, rails and gallinules will take place from Nov. 3 - Jan. 31. ^An extended falconry season for woodcock will be Nov. 2 - Jan. 31. +An extended falconry season for mourning doves will be Sept. 15 - Oct. 1. **Spring squirrel season is CLOSED on the Kisatchie National Forest, National Wildlife Refuges, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property and some Wildlife Management Areas.

WATERFOWL SEASONS

	EAST ZONE	WEST ZONE	COASTAL ZONE
DUCKS*, COOTS & MERGANSERS	Nov. 17 - Dec. 2 Dec. 15 - Jan. 27	Nov. 10 - Dec. 2 Dec. 15 - Jan. 20	Nov. 10 - Dec. 2 Dec. 15 - Jan. 20
The daily bag limit for ducks is six and may include no more than four mallards (no more than two of which may be females), two canvasback, one mottled duck, one black duck, three wood ducks, three scaups, two redheads and two pintails. Daily bag limit for coots is 15. Daily bag limit for mergansers is five, only two of which may be a hooded mergansers. The merganser limits are in addition to the daily bag limit for ducks. Possession limits for ducks, coots and mergansers is three times the daily bag limit. Youth waterfowl hunts will be held Nov. 3 and Jan. 26 in the West Zone, Nov. 10 and Feb. 2 in the East Zone, and Nov. 3-4 in the Coastal Zone.			
GEESE (snow, blue, Ross & white-fronted [specklebelly])	(Statewide) Nov. 3 - Dec. 2 Dec. 15 - Feb. 10	Daily bag limit for light geese (snow, blue, Ross') is 20, with no possession limit. The daily bag limit for white-fronted geese is two, with a possession limit of six.	
CANADA GOOSE SEASON	(Statewide) Nov. 3 - Dec. 2 Dec. 15 - Jan. 31	The daily limit for Canada geese is one per day, with a possession limit of three.	
CONSERVATION ORDER FOR LIGHT GEESE	(Statewide) Dec. 3 - 14 Feb. 11 - March 10	Only snow, blue and Ross geese may be taken under the terms of the conservation order, which allows the use of electronic calls and unplugged shotguns, and eliminates the daily bag and possession limits. Shooting hours begin one-half hour before sunrise and extends until one-half hour after sunset.	

DEER SEASONS

2018 - 2019 Deer Hunting Areas



AREA	ARCHERY (Either-sex)	PRIMITIVE FIREARMS (All either-sex, except as noted)	STILL HUNT (No dogs allowed) (All either-sex, except as noted)	WITH/WITHOUT DOGS (All either-sex, except as noted)
1	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Nov. 10-16 Jan. 21 - 31	Nov. 17 - Dec. 7 Jan. 7 - 20	Dec. 8 - Jan. 6
2	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Oct. 20 - 26 Jan. 14 - 20	Oct. 27 - Dec. 5	Dec. 6 - Jan. 13
3	Sept. 15 - Jan. 15	Oct. 13 - 19, Nov. 26 - 30	Oct. 20 - Nov. 25	Dec. 1 - Jan. 6 (certain areas)
4	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Nov. 10 - 16 Jan. 21 - 31	Nov. 17 - Dec. 7 Jan. 7 - 20	Dec. 8 - Jan. 6
5	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 10-16 (either-sex) Jan. 21 - 31 (bucks only)	Nov. 17-18, Nov. 23 - 25 (either-sex) Nov. 19-22, Nov. 26 - Dec. 7 (bucks only)	Dec. 8-9, Dec. 22-23 (either-sex) Dec. 10-21 (bucks only) Dec. 24 - Jan. 20 (bucks only)
6	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 10 - 16 Jan. 21 - 31	Nov. 17 - Dec. 7	Dec. 8 - Jan. 20
7	Sept. 15 - Jan. 15	Oct. 13 - 19 Nov. 3 - 9	Oct. 20 - Nov. 2 Nov. 10 - 25	Nov. 26 - Dec. 30
8	Sept. 15 - Jan. 15	Oct. 13 - 19, Nov. 26 - 30	Oct. 20 - Nov. 25	Dec. 1 - Jan. 6
9	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 10-16 (either-sex) Jan. 21 - 31 (bucks only)	Nov. 17-18, Nov. 23 - 25 (either-sex) Nov. 19-22, Nov. 26 - Dec. 7 (bucks only)	Dec. 8-9, Dec. 22-23 (either-sex) Dec. 10-21 (bucks only) Dec. 24 - Jan. 20 (bucks only)
10	Sept. 15 - Jan. 15	Oct. 13 - 19, Nov. 26 - 30	Oct. 20 - Nov. 25, Dec. 1 - Jan. 6	



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FISH MONKEY GUIDE GLOVES

If fishing is tough on any particular body part, it's your hands, which are in constant contact with the handle of your reel and lines of various size and materials — not to mention the toothy mouths of fish and the hooks that catch them.

That's where Fish Monkey comes in. Based in Destin, Florida, this manufacturer has come out with a line of gloves designed for comfort and protection for anglers of all stripes, whether you're regularly grabbing the leader and lining in heavyweights like wahoo, tuna and billfish, or tying on lures and hooks for bass, redfish or speckled trout.

The company debuted its Half Finger Guide Glove and its Pro 365 Guide Glove this past spring, designed for fishermen who need to keep a good grip on things while protecting their hands.

The Guide Gloves come in a variety of colors and retail for \$29.95.

For more info, visit: fishmonkeygloves.com



OTTOLOCK CINCH LOCK

My son and I faced a problem this fall when trying to make sure we could securely store an ATV in a barn on our hunting lease. A big chain and lock would be fine, but an Ottolock might be even better.

Made from a durable plastic with multiple layers of steel and Kevlar bands, the Ottolock works like an indestructible ratchet strap, but there's no ratchet — just a lock instead. A three-dial combination lock holds the strap in place when it's cinched down to secure something; in our case, part of the ATV frame to a beam in the barn. Other uses include locking up bicycles, canoes and kayaks, and even locking boxes down onto the front or back rack of an ATV. We're already looking at it as a tool to secure a canoe while shuttling vehicles around after a float trip for ducks.

Ottolocks come in three sizes: 18, 30 and 60 inches and a handful of colors — including camouflage — with a price range from \$60 to \$85.

For more info, visit: ottodesignworks.com

LIVETARGET'S HOLLOW BODY CRAW

When it comes to realistic-looking lures, nobody beats LiveTarget — and this time they've turned their attention to anatomical precision to a staple food for bass, with the introduction of the new hollow body craw. I got the chance to see it in action last summer, shortly after it won Best of Show at ICAST 2018 for the Freshwater Soft Lure category. And let me tell you, this hollow body/jig combo is something to behold. The lure comes in three sizes (1 ½-inch, 3/8-ounce; 1 ¾-inch, ½-ounce and 2-inch, 3/8-ounce) and eight colors, but the beauty of this craw is that its skirt and pincers trap tiny air bubbles, which create tantalizingly realistic movement — even



when the lure is sitting still on the bottom. And to top it off, it moves in reverse, like a fleeing crawfish. (Just don't bring it to a boil, because it looks so real someone might get hooked.) MSRP is \$9.99 - \$11.49, and each lure comes with a pair of replacement pincers.

For more info, visit: livetargetlures.com

New product submissions can be emailed to

Mark Boyd at products@CarolinaSportsman.com or call 601-829-8080.

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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).

SPECIAL PACKAGE OFFERS:

- #1: **Wall Calendar, Astro Tables and "How to Know..." book...** \$19.95 (plus \$5 s&h).
- #2: **Same as #1, plus Software...** \$47.95 (plus \$6 s&h).
- #3: **Same as #2, minus book...** \$38.95 (plus \$5 s&h).

Send to: PrimeTimes 2019 - Dept. LS - 2487 NW 75th Ave., Ste. 100 - Ankeny, IA 50023

For credit/debit card orders, call 515-964-5516, or go online to primetimes2.com and click **Catalog**.

2019 JAN	BEST DAYS				VALUE
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	
Tue 1	■	■	■	■	17
Wed 2	■	■	■	■	24
Thu 3	■	■	■	■	32
Fri 4	■	■	■	■	40
Sat 5	■	■	■	■	44
Sun 6	■	■	■	■	34
Mon 7	■	■	■	■	24
Tue 8	■	■	■	■	16
Wed 9	■	■	■	■	13
Thu 10	■	■	■	■	16
Fri 11	■	■	■	■	19
Sat 12	■	■	■	■	24

Sun 13	■	■	■	■	32
Mon 14	■	■	■	■	45
Tue 15	■	■	■	■	38
Wed 16	■	■	■	■	37
Thu 17	■	■	■	■	50
Fri 18	■	■	■	■	62
Sat 19	■	■	■	■	74

Sun 20	■	■	■	■	79
Mon 21	■	■	■	■	70
Tue 22	■	■	■	■	58
Wed 23	■	■	■	■	44
Thu 24	■	■	■	■	36
Fri 25	■	■	■	■	32
Sat 26	■	■	■	■	34

Sun 27	■	■	■	■	41
Mon 28	■	■	■	■	27
Tue 29	■	■	■	■	19
Wed 30	■	■	■	■	17
Thu 31	■	■	■	■	15

25 50 75
AVERAGE

For more, visit primetimes2.com

MOON RISE	LUNAR PERIODS				MOON SET	MOON UNDERFOOT	
	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD		PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT				
	TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED						
3:10 am	8:01 am - 9:29 am		2:15 pm		8:26 pm - 9:54 pm		●
4:09 am	8:55 am - 10:11 am		2:53 pm		9:20 pm - 10:36 pm		●
5:08 am	9:48 am - 10:56 am		3:34 pm		10:13 pm - 11:21 pm		●
6:04 am	10:41 am - 11:43 am		4:19 pm		11:06 pm - 12:08 am		● LOW
6:57 am	11:33 am - 12:31 pm ☀		5:08 pm		11:58 pm - Midnight		● NEW
7:45 am	12:21 pm - 1:23 pm ☀		5:59 pm		Midnight - 12:56 am		●
8:29 am	1:07 pm - 2:13 pm		6:53 pm		12:46 am - 1:48 am		●
9:09 am	1:48 pm - 3:04 pm		7:48 pm		1:32 am - 2:38 am		● Apogee
9:44 am	2:28 pm - 3:54 pm		8:43 pm		2:13 am - 3:29 am		●
10:17 am	3:05 pm - 4:43 pm		9:37 pm		2:53 am - 4:19 am		●
10:47 am	3:41 pm - 5:33 pm ☀		10:32 pm		3:30 am - 5:08 am		●
11:17 am	4:15 pm - 6:23 pm ☀		11:28 pm		4:06 am - 5:58 am		●
11:46 am	4:51 pm - 7:13 pm		12:25 am		4:40 am - 6:48 am		●
12:17 pm	5:27 pm - 8:07 pm		1:24 am		5:16 am - 7:38 am		● HALF
12:51 pm	6:08 pm - 9:00 pm		2:25 am		5:52 am - 8:32 am ☀		●
1:28 pm	6:53 pm - 9:59 pm		3:30 am		6:33 am - 9:25 am ☀		●
2:12 pm	7:41 pm - 11:01 pm		4:36 am		7:18 am - 10:24 am		●
3:02 pm	8:38 pm - 12:04 am		5:41 am		8:06 am - 11:26 am		●
4:01 pm	9:40 pm - 1:06 am		6:44 am		9:03 am - 12:29 pm		● HIGH
5:07 pm	10:45 pm - 2:07 am		7:41 am		10:05 am - 1:31 pm ☀		● FULL
6:18 pm	11:53 pm - Midnight		8:32 am		11:10 am - 2:32 pm ☀		● Perigee
7:31 pm	Midnight - 3:05 am		9:16 am		12:18 pm - 3:30 pm		●
8:42 pm	12:58 am - 3:58 am		10:05 am		1:23 pm - 4:23 pm		●
9:51 pm	2:02 am - 4:44 am		10:57 am		2:27 pm - 5:09 pm		●
10:57 pm	3:05 am - 5:27 am		11:07 am		3:30 pm - 5:52 pm ☀		●
12:01 am	5:01 am - 6:49 am		12:01 am		4:28 pm - 6:34 pm ☀		●
1:03 am	5:57 am - 7:29 am		12:16 pm		5:26 pm - 7:14 pm		● HALF
2:04 am	6:52 am - 8:10 am ☀		12:53 pm		6:22 pm - 7:54 pm		●
3:03 am	7:46 am - 8:54 am ☀		1:33 pm		7:17 pm - 8:35 pm		●
3:59 am	8:38 am - 9:40 am		2:17 pm		8:11 pm - 9:19 pm		●
					9:03 pm - 10:05 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
 WHILE THE LESSER MOONRISE AND -SET OVERLAPS (ABOUT 30 MIN. BEFORE AND AFTER THE LISTED TIME) ARE DESIGNATED BY BOLD BLACK TYPE.

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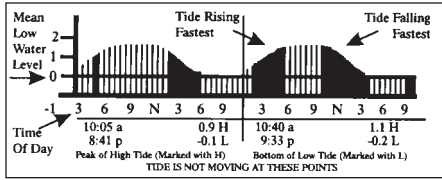




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How to use the SPORTSMAN Tide Guide



Fish feed most actively when the tide is moving. Louisiana Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most-active feeding periods each day in the Tide Guide. Just fish those times indicated in black. To find the best time to fish your favorite honeyhole, find the spot under Tide Corrections that is closest to the area, and add or subtract the time from the corresponding daily prediction.

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

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
East Point Grand Isle	1	2	3	4	5	NM	
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	27	28	29	30	31	Order the Tide Guides for over 40 locations throughout Louisiana. Call 1-800-538-4355 or go on line www.lasmag.com	

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Calcasieu Pass Lighthouse Wharf	1	2	3	4	5	NM	
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	27	28	29	30	31	Order the Tide Guides for over 40 locations throughout Louisiana. Call 1-800-538-4355 or go on line www.lasmag.com	

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TARGET REDS OFF THE BANK IN HOPEDALE

Lower water moves fish away from shoreline

Marsh Redfishing 101 says to throw baits tight to the bank for reds that are hugging the shoreline. However, that tactic doesn't apply this time of year, according to Bayou Charters owner Capt. Charlie Thomason.

In fact, the Hopedale guide finds most of his redfish away from the shoreline this time of year.

"The majority of the time in January the water is going to be kind of low, so primarily all the fish are going to be at least 30 to 60 feet off the bank," he said. "You're going to place your boat very close to the bank and you're going to throw out."

"There will be some fish that are kind of close to the bank. There might be 50 fish in a whole pond that are close to the bank, whereas there are 500 fish that are off the bank. That's where they're holding."

Thomason throws either live shrimp or Gulp under a cork for reds this month.

"If I can get live shrimp, then I'll get it," he said. "I always carry live shrimp with me, even if my customers just want to do artificial."

Thomason uses the Versamaxx Bolt popping cork, as well as the Hybrid Versamaxx, and he's very particular about his leader length when targeting the redfish.

"I always want to make sure my cork

(leader) is about 6 to 8 inches deeper than the water I'm fishing," Thomason said. "You want the bait to stay on the bottom."

To help it stay put down there, Thomason uses a 3/8-ounce jighead under the cork.

"It's usually windy, and I want the cork to

stay stationary," he said. "I don't want it to move. When I'm popping that cork, I want that thing to stay within a 3-foot area because I'm calling the fish to the sound of the cork." ■

- Joel Masson



Capt. Charlie Thomason said low water conditions in January typically move redfish further away from the shoreline, so position your boat closer to the bank and cast away from it.

Photo courtesy Charlie Thomason

REDS PLENTIFUL OUT OF VERMILION BAY

Slot reds and bull reds by the box-full can be caught in January in a couple areas around Vermilion Bay, depending on how the weather man treats us.

Many Acadiana saltwater fishermen know some fair to good fishing for redfish can still be had along the bay shore and in the deep holes of bayous in Marsh Island.

One of them is veteran charter boat captain Brian Romero of Lydia, who along with his wife owns Smokin' Reels Charters. They started the business in 2008 and their son Drew came on board five years ago as a charter captain.

Despite successes in the past this month, Romero said January can be pretty tough.

"You've got to hit them at just the right time," he said. "You've got to try."

In early December, they were catching plentiful redfish on soft plastics under a popping cork using purple haze, lemon-head and green hornet Matrix Shad. That will be the same plan they use in January.

"We've been fishing them under a cork and had good trips along the bay shore. This time of year, it's going to get a lot cooler and when the water warms up and the sun comes out, the redfish move to the shallows along the bay shore," he said, noting two of his favorite bay shore areas are from Avery Island to Four Mile Cut, and around Boston Canal. He also favors the northern shoreline of Marsh Island.

But the Romeros don't just use any popping cork. They swear by the one from 4 Horsemen Tackle, based on the results since they started using them early in 2018.

"It's awesome. You can't ask for anything better," Romero said. "It's probably the noisiest cork anyone makes. We've just been wearing them out with the 4 Horsemen."

They fish the soft plastic or shrimp (in murky water) about 2 feet under the cork, he said.

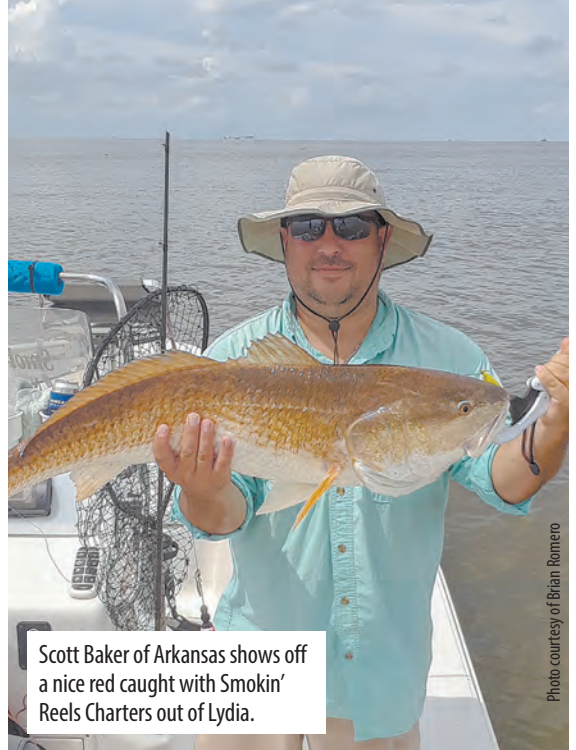
Fishing the bay shore is his preference. But when the

north wind blows and the frigid air chills the water even more, redfish leave the lakes and duck ponds and sit down in deep holes inside Marsh Island, namely along Bird Island Bayou and Bayou Blanc, Romero said.

"It's my last resort. I try my favorites first," he said.

The deep holes can be found "at just about every curve" of the bayous. Those deeper areas, which are prime winter hangouts for bull reds, also have freshwater catfish — particularly large blue cats, which were biting big time in early December and should continue through the winter.

He fishes the deep holes with Carolina-rigged cut mullet or shrimp with the bait at the end of a 2-foot leader. He uses a ½-ounce weight, or two ½-ounce



Scott Baker of Arkansas shows off a nice red caught with Smokin' Reels Charters out of Lydia.

Photo courtesy of Brian Romero

weights, to keep the natural bait from drifting with the current.

"We try to use something to hold it in one spot, to hold in place for a long time," he said.

Other deep holes to fish include Boxcar Reef and in Southwest Pass. ■

- Don Shoopman

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SEEING 'RED' IN DULARGE

Specks have been somewhat hit or miss, but redfish action so far this winter has been fantastic out of Dularge.

Marshes north of two popular lakes in the Dularge area have been giving up redfish consistently for several months, and that shouldn't stop in January. Dozens of saltwater fishermen are counting on it, including Brady Giroir of Houma. In fact, Giroir can't wait to keep pulling redfish off the shallow flats or the deeper ditches and channels in the marsh north of Lake Mechant and Sister Lake, also known as Caillou Lake.

"The redfishing's been phenomenal, incredible all summer, all year, even now. We're still killing them," Giroir said in early December.

An engineer technician for the state Department of Transportation and Development, Giroir is a veteran charter boat captain who has owned Cajun Waters Fishing Charters since 2011.

The saltwater fishing guide isn't writing off speckled trout action in January yet,

but he knows the speck bite vanishes once the water temperature dips below about 47 degrees. So he plans to target and catch redfish averaging 18 to 24 inches, and he won't be alone — even though it's the middle of winter.

"We've been fishing up in the marshes," he said, noting saltwater fishermen should probe those areas again this month, namely the Little Deuce area above Lake Mechant, and the Bayou Seveur area above Sister Lake.

In those areas, there are two options to put redfish after redfish in the ice chest, depending on the weather and water conditions. The best time to be wetting a line, he said, is when the water's high, but just beginning to fall with the tide.

On balmy days as it gets warmer, redfish like to get up on the shallow flats and start feeding, Giroir said. When that's the case, they are suckers for a green hornet or shrimp creole Matrix Shad on a ¼-ounce

jighead about 14 to 16 inches under a popping cork. Tip the soft plastic with shrimp, and it's game on.

Anglers also can try fishing along the grassline in many areas. Redfish love to roam the grass in search of food.

But if the water's cold and getting colder, redfish still can be found in ditches and channels — many of them about 6 feet deep — in those aforementioned areas, where they can be caught on the highly popular 3-inch Tsunami swimbaits. The most productive color is bunker, but Giroir said if the redfish aren't interested in that, try blue back or mullet.

And keep your retrieve slow along the bottom because the redfish are lethargic this time of year, but don't be surprised to catch sheepshead this month, too. ■

- Don Shoopman

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Photo courtesy of Chas Champagne

6-POUND SPECK CAUGHT ON THE NORTH SHORE

Matrix Shad's Chas Champagne reeled in this beautiful 6-pound, 25 ½-inch speckled trout in the Lakeshore Estates canal system on Dec. 12.

CHAMPAGNE USED TIGER BAIT MATRIX SHAD TO CATCH 25 ½-INCH FISH

By Patrick Bonin

It was all about quality — not quantity — for Matrix Shad's Chas Champagne, as he fished the canals in Lakeshore Estates on Dec. 12 for speckled trout.

He wound up catching only one, lone-some speck — but it happened to be 25 ½ inches long and pegged 6 pounds on his Boga Grip.

"We caught one fish," Champagne said with a chuckle. "But it was the biggest trout I've caught probably since I had that

run on the Highway 11 Bridge two years ago."

Champagne was fishing with buddy Timmy Gennusa, and the two were trolling with tiger bait Matrix Shad on 3/8-ounce Black Platinum Goldeneye jigheads. Champagne said he was using his trolling motor to keep a steady speed of about 1.6 mph on the chilly morning.

"We were trolling back in the canals, and we weren't doing much until we went around a rounded point, and both of the

poles in the pole holders doubled over. I mean, they were folded over hard," he said.

Champagne reeled in a nice 27-inch red, but the second fish spooled the other rod before it could be reeled in because so much line was already out behind the boat. So anticipating a tightly-packed school of reds, Champagne headed back to the spot where he estimated the fish bit, and the two started jiggling.

Action was slow at first, but Gennusa caught a red, and then Champagne

caught one, too.

His next bite of the day felt a bit different, though.

"I felt the fish come right up to the top, and I could feel it had some serious weight to it, but I was like, 'Man, this is acting like a big trout, but there's no way — we just caught three reds in a row, and I hadn't caught a big trout all year.'

"Then I got some pressure on him and he goes running under the boat and he rips drag like three times, and I was like, 'That's a red, no doubt.' But I just kept feeling his head shaking vigorously, and I was like, 'Timmy, this is a trout.'"

Champagne finally saw the big speck flash near the boat and called for Gennusa to get the net, and the 6-pounder was quickly aboard. After a photo session and a Matrix Shad tag, the big speck was released unharmed back into the water.

"He's alive and free in Lakeshore canals," Champagne said. "He swam off with all kinds of energy."

In addition to the three reds and the big trout, Champagne said he also reeled in a flounder for the first time in practically a year — a nice 3 1/2-pound doormat.

He typically jigs for specks, but this time of year, he's a big fan of trolling because the fish are relatively spread out.

"You can either fish from daylight to noon making a thousand casts, or fish from daylight to noon trolling, and catch the same eight or 10," he said.

Champagne expects the bite, as it is, to remain relatively consistent through about March, and trolling should remain an effective technique.

"If it's a warmer day, focus on

the bridges. If it's a colder week like this week, focus on the man-made canals. But if you're going to try Lakeshore, Geoghegan and Eden Isles for trolling, don't be expecting to catch more than five or

10," he said. "We do, but go in with the approach to catch five, but they're all 2 pounds or better.

"If you want to catch a lot, go to the Chalmette Wall." ■



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14-POINTER NICKNAMED 'PICKET FENCE' GOES DOWN IN CONCORDIA PARISH

By Patrick Bonin

BRALLIER'S BIG BUCK SURVIVES CROSSBOW SHOT IN OCTOBER; HARVESTED BY RIFLE IN NOVEMBER — WITH THE BROADHEAD STILL IN ITS CHEST CAVITY

Ben Brallier celebrated Thanksgiving early this year, in more ways than one. A motorman in the oilfield industry, the 33-year-old from Jonesville celebrated turkey day with his mom the Sunday before the actual holiday because he had to work that week. Then late that same afternoon on Nov. 18, he got a rare second chance and killed a big 14-point buck nicknamed 'Picket Fence' that he had been watching on his family's 3,050 acres of land in Concordia Parish since 2014.

"The first time I saw him in pictures, I didn't give him much thought," Brallier said, commenting on the buck's 9-point rack back then. "But the first time he walked under me in the stand, I was like, 'That deer is going to be big one day.' And I named him Picket Fence just as soon as he walked under the stand. He looked like a picket fence, or was going to one day. "And he actually turned into one."

But the story of Picket Fence is more than just about that November day it finally was shot. Incredibly, Brallier got a crack at the buck on Oct. 20 while armed

with his Horton crossbow and a bolt tipped with a 100-grain Rage broadhead.

Brallier was in his 22-foot ladder stand in some hard woods with the Black River behind him when he stuck the buck from just 22 yards.

"I shot him through the right shoulder, it went through his chest cavity and embedded right behind his left shoulder where the ribs start," Brallier said. "Where it went through him, it should have hit lungs and arteries and all kinds of stuff. So I don't know what happened there."

What happened was the deer took off, and Brallier found only a piece of the bolt, but couldn't locate the buck — even with the help of a blood-trailing dog. The

Ben Brallier, of Jonesville, poses with a big Concordia Parish 14-pointer he named "Picket Fence." The buck green-scored more than 172 inches of bone at Spotted Dog Sporting Goods in Columbia.

Photo courtesy of Ben Brallier



next day, they located where the deer had bedded down, but couldn't find the elusive animal. Incredibly, that very next night - Oct. 21 - old Picket Fence was back on camera, eating corn and rice bran just 24 hours after being drilled in the shoulder.

Fast forward to Nov. 13, the first time the buck made a daytime appearance after being stuck. That was the incentive Brallier needed to get back into the stand, which setup their encounter on the Sunday Brallier was celebrating Thanksgiving.

About 4:50 that afternoon, he saw a big deer coming out of some thick stuff about 100 yards straight in front of his stand, but he wasn't sure it was Picket Fence until he got a better look.

"When he stepped out from behind that tree, my heart went to thumping, and it's been a long time since I've had a deer make me feel that way," Brallier said. "He got me excited."

This time Brallier had his .444 Marlin with him, and shot the buck at 85 yards. He heard the deer splash into a bottom full from recent rains, and after waiting about 30 minutes, went down and found Picket Fence dead in the water.

"It was bittersweet, I guess," he said. "Special to shoot a deer like that, but I had the feeling that I won't have anymore pictures of him or be able to watch him grow anymore. It's all over with. He was a regular. "I wanted to shoot him, but I hated to have to shoot him."

The 4 1/2-year-old buck was a mainframe 11 this year, with four kickers (one broke off sometime after Brallier shot the buck with the crossbow in October.) Main beams stretched more than 25 inches, with 5-inch bases and an inside spread of 16 3/8 inches. Picket Fence green-scored 172 2/8 at Spotted Dog Sporting Goods in Columbia.

When he cleaned the buck, Brallier found the broadhead and 3 inches of the bolt embedded right behind the buck's left shoulder. The broadhead's entrance wound had healed up.

Although that big buck is gone, Brallier said he's already got his eye on two up-and-comers on the property that he's looking forward to watching grow over the next couple of years.

"Their nicknames are PF-2 and PF-3," he said with a laugh. "And they carry the same characteristics as him." ■

TWO PLEAD GUILTY TO BAITING DUCKS

Two hunters who pleaded guilty to placing cracked corn out to lure in ducks last season were sentenced earlier this fall in the U.S. District Court's Western District in Alexandria.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Joseph H.L. Perez-Montes accepted the guilty pleas of Tyler W. Smith, 33, of St. Francisville, and Logan A. Blanchard, 25, of Oscar, for placing bait to take migratory game birds and hunting migratory game birds over a baited area. Smith also pleaded guilty to hunting without a state duck or basic hunting license, according to a release from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

On Nov. 7, Perez-Montes sentenced Smith to pay a \$3,610 fine and suspended his hunting privileges for two years. On Sept. 26, Perez-Montes ordered Blanchard to pay a \$3,540 fine and suspended his hunting privileges for three years, the release states.

Enforcement agents with the LDWF cited the pair on Dec. 16 last year near Harrisonburg in Catahoula Parish for shooting five wood ducks over a baited area, according to department spokesman Adam Einck. ■





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CALDWELL PARISH 13-POINTER INTERRUPTS COFFEE BREAK

By Glynn Harris

PUBLIC LANDS BUCK GREEN-SCORES 153 7/8 INCHES

Moments after Brandon Kirby downed a doe on the Boeuf River Wildlife Management Area last weekend, he sat back to relax and pour a cup of coffee from his thermos.

But before he took the first sip, a big 13-point buck stepped out at 45 yards — which caused Kirby to drop his cup, pick up his H&R .444 and sight-in the deer.

"I live in Kelly in Caldwell Parish, and my favorite place to hunt is not far from home, the Boeuf Wildlife Management Area in Caldwell Parish," he said. "This is the only place I deer hunt, and have for a number of years."

On the morning of Nov. 10, which was opening day for primitive firearms season on Boeuf, he headed for his favorite location on the area.

"There is one particular spot on Boeuf I like to hunt where I have killed a few deer, but I have to walk three-quarters of a mile to get in there. The area I hunt is right along the edge of a thicket with open woods behind me," he said. "I have tried hunting from elevated stands in there, but I can't see as far as I can if I sit near the

ground. I bought a Millennium Tree Seat which attaches to the base of a tree where I sit comfortably with my back resting against the tree with my feet on the ground."

That morning, Kirby made the long hike back into the bowels of the 51,000-acre management area and settled in. A little after 8, he spotted a doe slipping through the open woods. He waited until he was sure there was no buck following, got the deer in his scope and dropped it.

"Since you can kill a doe and a buck the same day, I made sure my doe was down, kicked back and opened my thermos. I had just poured a cup of coffee and settled down to enjoy it," he said. "Before I was able to take my first sip, something caught my eye out front, something that caused me to drop the cup and pick up my rifle. I was looking at a huge buck that was walking toward me.

"The wind was blowing from him to me and he hadn't seen my movement.



On Nov. 10, Brandon Kirby busted this big Caldwell Parish 13-pointer on Boeuf River WMA. The buck green-scored north of 153 inches.

Photo courtesy of Brandon Kirby

So luckily, I was able to get on him at 45 yards before he ever knew I was there. I squeezed the trigger and he hit the ground," Kirby said. "I was so excited I left my rifle on my seat and ran to him, grabbing him by the horns. Only then did I realize he still had life left as he tried to get up. I ran back to get my rifle, loaded it and got ready to finish him off.

"But thankfully he died without me having to shoot again."

The buck sported 13 points on antlers with heavy mass, featuring 24-inch main beams, 5-inch bases and a 17 1/2 inch inside spread. Estimated to be 4 1/2 years old, the big buck weighed-in at 240 pounds and green-scored 153 7/8 inches.

His coffee break may have gotten interrupted, but Kirby was OK with it.

"I'll trade a cup of coffee for a buck like that any day of the week." ■

'WRONG GUN' DOWNS BIG LINCOLN PARISH 10-POINTER

By Glynn Harris

ADAMS ACCIDENTALLY GRABS HER HUSBAND'S RIFLE, BUT STILL CONNECTS FROM 200 YARDS

When a big buck stepped out at 200 yards, Kim Adams raised her rifle and reached for the safety.

It was only then the Ruston housewife realized she had accidentally picked up her husband's Remington .30-06 instead of her Browning .30-06. Fortunately it didn't matter: Her shot was true and the buck fell dead in its tracks.

"I hunt on a 125-acre lease in north Lincoln Parish with three other families who also

hunt the property," she said. "I climbed into my stand Sunday afternoon Dec. 9; the weather was cloudy and cool."

Sitting in her box stand on a pipeline, Adams looked out at a pasture on the right with pine timber and a creek on her left. She had arrived at her stand around 2:30 that afternoon, with plans to put out more corn for the hunt.

"I realized there was still plenty of corn already out, so I chose to not mess the area



Kim Adams nailed this big Lincoln Parish 10-pointer from 200 yards with her husband's .30-06. The buck green-scored 162 inches at Simmons' Sporting Goods in Bastrop.

Photo courtesy of Kim Adams

up by leaving my scent and I decided to hunt over what was already there," Adams said.

She's a serious deer hunter: She got into hunting some 20 years ago because she decided if she wanted to see her husband, she might as well learn to hunt, too. Her husband now works out of town and seldom gets to hunt, so she goes it alone for the most part. She already has one good deer — a 146-inch 8-point she got two years ago, so she is no novice when it comes to going after big bucks.

"I hadn't seen anything and was texting my cousin who was working on one of my heaters when I happened to look down the line and all I could see was horns. There was this big buck standing and eating at my corn pile about 200 yards down the line," Adams said.

The first thing she did was drop her phone on the floor of the stand and pick up her rifle. That's when she discovered a big slip-up.

"After throwing down the phone, I picked up the rifle and when I tried to push the safety off, I realized I had made a mistake. The safety on a Remington is different from my Browning," she said. "The thing that really bothered me is that my husband had dropped his rifle, and we hadn't taken the time to check and see if the scope had been knocked out of line — so here I was with a big buck standing down there and I'm holding a rifle that I was afraid would not be accurate."

Adams decided to proceed, and after a quick prayer the gun would be accurate, put the crosshairs of the scope on the deer's neck.

"I knew if the gun was on, I'd drop him and if it wasn't I'd miss, so I squeezed the trigger," she said. "To my relief, the buck dropped right there."

Calling a friend to help her load up the deer, she walked down and realized the buck

she had just shot was not the big one she had on her camera.

"I assume after all the rain we've had, the high water may have pushed him out, or he just came from somewhere cruising for a hot doe," she said.

The buck carried a 10-point rack, with a 17 3/8-inch inside spread with 24-inch

main beams and 4 1/2-inch bases. At Simmons' Sporting Goods in Bastrop, the antlers were measured at an even 162 inches. ■

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WINN PARISH HUNTER DOWNS PUBLIC LANDS 12-POINTER ON KISATCHIE

By Patrick Bonin

GUNTER'S BIG BUCK GREEN SCORES 156 4/8 INCHES OF BONE



Bethany Gunter and her 2-year-old daughter Malia pose with the big Kisatchie 12-point buck Gunter shot on Dec. 11 in Winn Parish.

Photo courtesy of Bethany Gunter

While gun season was closed on the Kisatchie National Forest in early December, Bethany Gunter and her father had a very successful scouting trip in a section of the public land he wanted to check out.

She and her dad, Troy Carpenter, ventured in on Dec. 2, and found plenty of deer sign indicating a good buck was in the area. Little did she know it at the time, but only nine days later she'd get up close and personal with the big deer likely responsible for the rubs they saw.

"There was a holly tree in there about as big around as a basketball he had torn up," Gunter said.

So on Tuesday, Dec. 11, while her dad babysat her 2-year-old daughter Malia, Gunter ventured in alone about 1:30 that afternoon and climbed into the ladder stand they had positioned during their scouting mission.

Gunter, 28, of Dodson, was positioned on the side of a hill overlooking a creek and a thicket, and didn't see much — until deer activity picked up about 4:30.

"I had two does and a yearling come from my right that went all the way down to the side of the creek, and up to the thicket on my left," she said. "And I had a spike trailing them coming exactly from where they came. But he wasn't in a hurry — he was still in front of me when the does and yearling came running out of the thicket.

"They had their tails up and they were getting the heck out of there."

Shortly after that, she heard something walking to her left and scoped a spike, then hit her can call a couple of times.

"Then I heard a deer grunt to my right

coming out of the thicket, and when I turned and looked there he was," she said. "Nothing but horns. He was trotting very fast looking for that doe."

With her 7mm-08 already up from checking out the spike, she scoped the buck at 80 yards and fired as soon as it stopped. The biggest buck she had ever seen instantly made a beeline for the thicket it had just exited.

She picked up the phone to call her dad, only to discover the battery was dead. So she scrambled about 300 yards back to her truck, plugged in and got reception, and contacted her father to come and help her look for the big deer. In only 10 minutes, he and her uncle, David Hailey, arrived to assist her.

They found a good blood trail, and Hailey saw the buck first, about 100 yards from where it was hit.

"My dad thought it was bushes at first because of how tall the horns were sticking up," she said.

Walking up on the biggest deer she or her dad had ever shot before was a special moment father and daughter won't soon forget, she said.

"Oh my gosh, I cried for 10 minutes. He cried, and about squeezed the breath out of me," she said with a chuckle.

The big buck was a true public lands brute, with 12 points and a 16-inch-plus inside spread and bases approaching 5 inches. At Spotted Dog in Columbia, the 170-pound deer green-scored 156 4/8 inches of bone.

Gunter, who's been hunting alone since she was about 10, said her previous best deer was only a 6-point. And she's already got a place of honor picked out for this big

buck when the taxidermist finishes his work.

"He's going up on my wall above the fireplace," she said. "He's going to be the first one there." ■

MADISON PARISH 13-POINTER MAKES FATAL DAYTIME APPEARANCE

By Glynn Harris

RAY'S BUCK STRETCHES THE TAPE NORTH OF 165 INCHES

Brantley Ray sticks with the phases of the moon to give him the best chance to encounter a big buck, and his strategy worked to perfection in early November when a big Madison Parish 13-pointer that had been nocturnal decided to make a rare afternoon appearance.

"I keep up with the way deer move during different moon phases, and with a waxing moon appearing in early November headed for a full moon on Nov. 22, I felt my chances at seeing the big buck would improve as primitive firearms season opened Nov. 10," he said. "Camera images began showing him making a move closer and closer to daylight, so I felt pretty good about my chances at seeing him."

His family owns a 2,500-acre farm in Madison Parish that includes quite a bit of WRP land. Ray hunted his box stand that

Brantley Ray shot this big Madison Parish buck on Nov. 10 at 200 yards. It was green-scored at just over 165 inches.



Photo courtesy of Brantley Ray

morning and saw about 30 deer come out to feed on the wheat planted on a lane that featured WRP land on one side, and hardwoods and sloughs on the other.

"A couple of buddies and I went back that afternoon. They were on stands nearby while I hunted my box stand. I got on my stand about 3:30 and got settled in," said Ray, 31, of Mound. "After awhile, deer started showing up. I saw some does, spikes and a small 8-point that came out to feed on the wheat in the lane."

About 5:15, Ray said he was looking down the lane watching the deer when a big buck stepped out some 300 yards away. He knew it was a big buck, but it wasn't until he put his scope on the buck that he saw the familiar brow tines of the deer he'd been after.

"The buck began walking toward me as I kept my scope on him, making sure it was the big one I was after. To help settle my nerves, I had to take my focus off the rack and concentrate on his body," he said. "Once he turned broadside at 200 yards, I was sure that was him so I hit the trigger on my Whelen .35. At the shot, the buck took off running.

"I tried to calm down, waited awhile, texted one of my buddies near enough to hear me shoot, and asked him if it sounded like a hit. He said it did."

Climbing down, Ray walked over to where the buck was standing when he shot and there was no sign of a hit — no blood, no hair, nothing.

"After my friends joined me to look, it was dark and we fanned out in the direction the deer had run after the shot," Ray said. "After a few minutes, my buddy called out, 'I found him, and he's a lot bigger than we thought he was.'"

The buck which, which only ran 30 yards, weighed 250 pounds and sported 13 points, including a drop tine. The inside spread on the rack was 18 4/8 inches, with 25-inch main beams and circumference at the bases at 5 1/2 inches.

Ray took the buck to Simmons Sporting Goods, and the rack was measured at 165 6/8 inches. ■

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YOUNGSVILLE HUNTER DROPS BIG NATCHITOCHEES PARISH 10-POINTER

By Patrick Bonin

THIRD TIME WAS THE CHARM FOR LARRY BRINGOL'S 173-INCH BUCK



Larry Bringol made the most of his third opportunity with this big buck, and dropped the 10-pointer from 200 yards on Nov. 18 near Provençal.

Photo courtesy of Larry Bringol

Larry Bringol had a lengthy history with a big 10-point Natchitoches Parish buck, that until Nov. 18 at least, was filled with heartache and despair.

Just two weeks prior, the 58-year-old Youngsville hunter missed a crack at the high-antlered buck when it showed up unexpectedly in the cutover he was watching from his box stand on his lease near Provençal.

"The doe came out and she kept looking back, and I thought she was waiting on her yearlings because I had a bunch of pictures of a doe and two yearlings," Bringol said. "She went on across and I didn't even pick my gun up — and then he came across. By the time I picked my gun up, I could just see his head inside the right-hand wood line.

"That was a bad feeling. I thought I'd never see him again."

And back in 2015, what he thinks was the same buck eluded him from just 90

yards when he had scope issues.

"The screws had backed off on the base of my scope and it was shooting 5 inches to the right at 50 yards," he said with a chuckle. "So at 90 yards, I probably missed him by 10 inches. He just stood there, and I was shooting a single-shot .444 then, so I didn't have time to reload — and he just walked off."

But on Nov. 18 around 7:30 a.m., Bringol was on high alert when what he suspected was the same big doe he had seen two weeks earlier appeared about 200 yards down the power line.

"As soon as I saw her, I raised my gun up and turned my scope up to seven to make sure I could get a shot if he came out," he said.

About 15 seconds later, the buck appeared — and this time Bringol fired his .30-06 and the big deer fell where it stood. When he eventually got down and saw the heavy-horned, symmetrical

10-point rack up-close in person, that's when he got a little nervous.

"I started shaking a little bit," Bringol said. "Fortunately it all happened quick, and I didn't have much time to think about the shot."

The big 10's rack features tall tines, with about 5-inch circumference bases, and was green-scored by his taxidermist at 173 inches. The buck weighed 201 pounds, and was estimated to be between 4 ½ and 5 ½ years old.

Last year, Bringol knocked down an 8-pointer that stretched the tape to 142 inches on the same lease, and figured that was his buck of a lifetime.

But the 10-pointer definitely raised the bar.

"That's probably the last biggest one," Bringol said with a laugh. "I can't imagine getting one bigger than that." ■

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RARE DUCK TURNS UP IN EARLY-SEASON BAGS

BLACK SCOTERS TYPICALLY SEEN MUCH LATER, LDWF SAYS

By Patrick Bonin

A sea duck more commonly found on the East and West Coasts started turning up on Louisiana duck hunters' straps early this season — likely because of the strong, fast-moving cold front that barreled into the state just before the Coastal Zone opened in early November.

Larry Reynolds, waterfowl study leader for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, said he's gotten reports and pictures of several black scoters taken from spots including Caddo Lake, Johnson's Bayou, Des Allemands, the Biloxi Wildlife Management Area and even Henderson Swamp.

"Typically these are coastal birds, common on the East Coast or the West Coast or the Great Lakes," Reynolds said. "Every year I get a few reports, but usually it's late in the season and usually it's on one of the big reservoirs, like Caddo Lake or Bistineau or a place like that."

"I see a handful of them on the January (aerial) survey on Breton Sound, and Paul Link sees a few of them every year on Lake Pontchartrain. So there are a few of them that winter here, but they're not common at all; certainly nowhere near the numbers that have already been killed in November

suggest."

Reynolds didn't have a definitive answer on why so many of the sea ducks were seen here — but ventured a guess that the strong cold front that blew into the state right before opening weekend likely played a part in the birds' appearance this month.

"That really big, fast cold snap right before the Coastal Zone season opened was a fast-moving really cold, cold front, and I guess it blew some this way," he said. "That's really the only thing I can think of — some of those birds just picked up and moved here."

It didn't end well in late November for four black scoter drakes when they headed for James Wheat's blind in Caernarvon. He and Jake Bernard needed four more ducks to finish up their two-man limit, and they wound up knocking down all four.

"When they came in, I thought they were redheads because of how dark they were and they were low-flying," Wheat said. "But when they got close, I could see that orange spot on their nose."



Photo courtesy of James Wheat

James Wheat poses with the four black scoter drakes he and Jake Bernard shot in Caernarvon. All four birds are being mounted, he said.

"We got down, and the first shot he shot he dropped two. He got so excited, he didn't pull the trigger again. I knocked down one and the other one looped around and tried landing back in the decoys, and I shot that one. It was crazy!"

Wheat, who owns Wheat's Custom Calls in St. Bernard, said he's mounting the two birds he shot, and Bernard is mounting the two he knocked down to commemorate a morning they won't soon forget.

"That's a rare occasion," he said. "It was definitely the hunt of a lifetime, that's for sure. ■"

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MONROE HUNTER SNEAKS GIANT DAVIS ISLAND 10-POINTER

By Glynn Harris

HEAVY-HORNED RACK GREEN SCORES 183 5/8 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 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



Bill Harvey snuck onto an oak flat on Davis Island, and shot the biggest deer he’d ever seen — this giant main-frame 8-point that green-scored 183 5/8 inches.

Photo courtesy of Bill Harvey

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. ■

SHORT WALK PRODUCES BIG BEAUREGARD PARISH 10-POINT

By Glynn Harris

SUIRE’S BUCK NETS OUT AT MORE THAN 150 INCHES

For Keith Suire, it’s only a short walk from his home in Beauregard Parish to his deer stand on the 35 acres of land he manages near Deridder. And in early November, that short walk paid big dividends when the buck he’d been watching closely for three years finally gave him a shot.

“I hunt on some land I manage, plus there is an adjoining 40 acres the property owner allows me to hunt,” Suire said. “I hunt from a box stand on the 35 acres. I had hunted that morning and saw several does and that afternoon, it was raining off and on, but I noticed on the

After a three-year wait, Keith Suire finally got a crack at this Beauregard Parish 10-point, and took full advantage of his opportunity on Nov. 7. The big buck green-scored north of 150 inches.



Photo courtesy of Keith Suire

weather report that rains were supposed to end by late afternoon.

"I figured as soon as the rain stopped would be a good time for the buck to move."

For the past two seasons, Suire had bowhunted with his eye out for the buck. He spotted the deer on several occasions, but never had the right distance for a shot with his bow.

"After studying trail cam photos of the deer, I decided this was the year to get him because he had gotten impressive," he said. "I decided to lay aside my bow and go after him with my 6.5 Creed-moor rifle."

Suire hunts out of a box stand that overlooks a food plot where wheat and winter peas are planted. On one side of the lane, mature pines grow with a hardwood drain running through the area. On the other side is a rough clear cut where young pines have been planted — an area Suire had determined was where deer were bedding up.

"When I got on my stand, it was still showering off and on, but by around 5, the rain stopped and I felt like this would be a good time for the buck to step out. Shortly after the rain stopped, there he came walking across the plot headed for the bedding area," Suire said. "What was ironic is that he was broadside 20 yards from me, a perfect distance for my bow — and here I am with a rifle zeroed in at 200 yards."

Getting his rifle to his shoulder, Suire shot and the buck buckled, then took off into the thick clear cut. By then, it was getting dark and Suire was not at all comfortable with his shot placement given his scope and how close the

deer actually appeared.

"I waited an hour before going to look for the deer," he said. "I contacted a friend with a blood trailing dog, and the dog went right to the buck, which only traveled 75 yards."

The 10-point rack was really symmetrical, with an inside spread of 16 5/8 inches, main beams that measured 21 inches and circumferences at the bases at 4 1/2 inches. The antlers grossed 152 2/8 inches, with only a 1 7/8-inch difference between the two sides, for a net score of 150 3/8.

"This was the biggest buck I ever killed," Suire said. "The feeling I had when I realized I had him was a lot like the one I felt when I caught a 10-pound bass."

"It's hard to describe how you really feel." ■

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HOT DOE SPELLS DOOM FOR BIG TENSAS PARISH 8-POINTER

By Glynn Harris

WILLIAMS' HEAVY BUCK GREEN-SCORES 154 5/8 INCHES

Shayne Williams works in the oil and gas fields in West Texas, but when he's home he gets to hunt his uncle's property in Tensas Parish. It's a long drive from his home in Walker, but on the morning of Dec. 4 it was well worth it when he settled his scope on the shoulder of a hammer 8-point.

"This 80-acre piece of property is owned by my uncle, and it's about the only area I like to hunt," Williams said. "I hadn't killed anything so far this season, so I drove up the night before and was in a box stand well before daylight."

The property is mostly a 15-year-old WRP, and is thick with bayous and canals. As daylight came, Williams was looking at a food plot that ended at the bank of one of the canals when a doe stepped out.

"Almost immediately after the doe walked out, I spotted the tips of antlers right behind her coming through the

grass," he said. "When he stepped out, my reaction was I was looking at the biggest buck I had ever seen."

Williams said it all happened so fast that he didn't have time to rest his H&R .444 on the window of the blind, but took a free-hand shot at the buck.

"I knew that he'd be across the lane and gone in a matter of seconds, so I got him in my scope and pulled the trigger. He hit the ground but then got up and took off toward the bayou at the end of the plot," Williams said. "I knew I had hit him good, but with the water he was heading toward, I also knew that could present a problem."

Walking down to where the buck was standing, Williams looked down toward the canal and saw the deer lying on the far bank with the doe standing next to

Shayne Williams, of Walker, shot this big Tensas Parish 8-pointer on Dec. 4. It weighed a whopping 283 pounds, and green-scored 154 5/8 inches.



Photo courtesy of Shayne Williams

it. The buck had apparently managed to swim the canal, but had collapsed on the opposite bank.

"We keep a boat at the head of the property because when the water gets high, that's the only way we can get to the side where my stand was," he said. "I went and got the boat, paddled it up to the buck and it was all I could do to get him rolled into the boat."

Hooking the boat with the buck inside to the back of his 4-wheeler, he dragged the load through the woods to his uncle's house.

"There was no way I could get that deer on the back of my 4-wheeler; it ended up weighing 283 pounds," he said. "It was probably quite a sight to see me on my 4-wheeler pulling a boat with a big buck in it. I had to cross a black-top road and had to go down a gravel road."

The buck's antlers were as impressive as the big deer's weight. With eight symmetrical points, the inside spread measured 19 1/8 inches, main beams were 26 inches each, G2s were 13 inches and the circumference at the bases was about 6 inches. He had his taxidermist put a tape to the rack, and it measured a whopping 154 5/8 inches. ■

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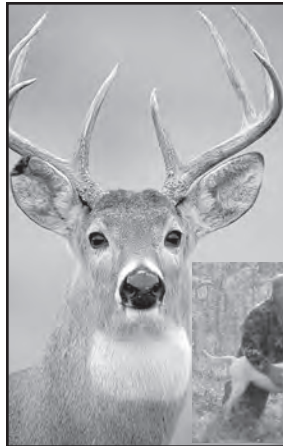
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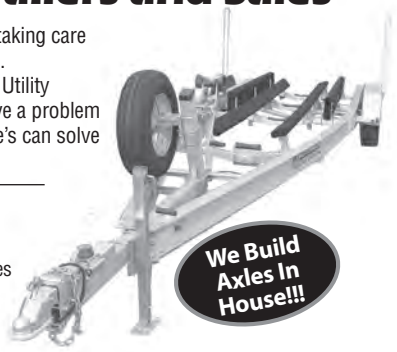
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NEXT LEVEL: XCITEMENT INTRODUCING 2019 APPEARANCE PACKAGE

Xpress Boats has been the leader in manufacturing the finest all-welded aluminum boats on the market, for over 51 years now. Our hunger for innovation is evident from the all-welded longitudinal rib system to the revolutionary Hyper-Lift[®] Hull. Generations have trusted us for providing the finest high performance fishing solutions on the water, which we don't take lightly.

It's with this responsibility that we enthusiastically announce the introduction of the **2019 Appearance Package!** Stand out from the pack with custom SeaDek floor liner, matching seat trim and complimentary graphics.

The Appearance Package is available on select bass and bay models in 5 distinct colors: Bahama blue, red, green, orange and Bimini blue.

Please contact your local Xpress Boats dealer to be part of this great legacy.



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