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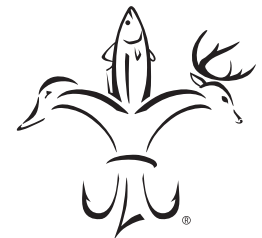
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PARTY



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EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Alicia LaFont
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ASSISTANT PRODUCTION MANAGER: Desiree P. Lewis
ART DIRECTOR: Rodney Anouilh
GRAPHIC DESIGNERS: Jeff Cashio, Kevin Orgeron, Alissa Zeringue
SALES DIRECTOR: Jay Forrest 225.278.0258/jayf@lasmag.com
ADVERTISING SALES: Mark Hilzlim (National Sales), Asa Faulkner, Brent Comardelle, Mark Boyd, Greg Webb, Peter Church, Ron Dorsey and Bret Holten
CONTROLLER: Juanita Guidry
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR: Ricky Naquin 985.859.7744/rickyn@lasmag.com
CIRCULATION FIELD MANAGER: Tim Stiglets 601.434.1526/timstiglets@comcast.net
CREDIT MANAGER: Rachel Champagne
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER: Bruce Mehrtens
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Catch Cormier, Bill Garbo, Chris Ginn, Chris Holmes, Jerald Horst, Keith LaCaze, David Moreland, Don Shoopman, Rusty Tardo, Joel Masson, Capt. Paul Titus, Sammy Romano, Andy Crawford, Kinny Haddox, David A. Brown, Capt. Steve Himel and Josh Chauvin

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ON THE COVER:



Dora Lambert of Lafayette is a frequent visitor to the Grand Isle area on weekends. You can find her fishing along LA 1, the bridge,, Elmers' Island or anywhere the bite is happening. Check out her instagram profile @exploradora_fishing..

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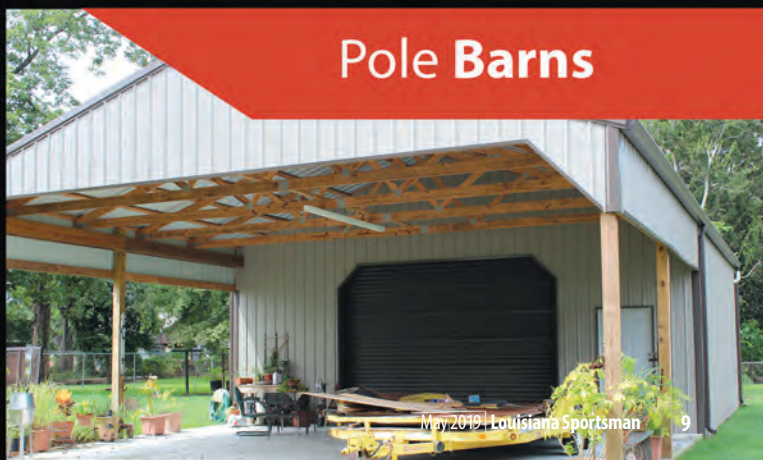
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LDWF REFUSES TO PREDICT SPECKLED TROUT NUMBERS

CURRENT STOCK ASSESSMENT PREVENTS PREDICTIONS, BIOLOGIST SAID

By Patrick Bonin

In mid-March, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries sent out a press release indicating that an internal assessment of the state's speckled trout stock showed it was being overfished, and landings had decreased to their lowest levels in recent years.

But Patrick Banks, assistant secretary for fisheries, said trout limits for 2019 "probably" would not be affected while the results were being reevaluated by department biologists.

"We will have a better sense of where we are when the stock assessment results are compiled, evaluated and finalized," Banks said in the release. "But we do know that the stock's numbers have dropped."

That news perhaps didn't come as a huge surprise to some coastal anglers, who have reported catching fewer and fewer specks over the past several years.

But it did raise lots of questions, like, when exactly did the department start realizing the stock was overfished?

And when will this current assessment be completed? What kind of time frame is the department operating on, and when might anglers know the status of any potential bag and size limit modifications?

If an April interview with an LDWF fisheries biologist is any indication,

don't expect any new information regarding the status of speckled trout anytime soon — or even what kind of trout action anglers might expect in the short term.

"Unfortunately, we really can't make any predictions like that given we're in the process of doing this evaluation, so I'd hesitate to give any predictions," said biologist Jason Adriance, who didn't offer any type of time line for when the assessment would be completed.

"Each one is different," he said. "It comes down to working with the data that's in it, so I can't really give you a time line, unfortunately..."

Once it's rerun, that assessment is going to go out for external peer review after an internal review.

"When we get it back, we've got to consider any comments that were made in that peer review, and then we'll go from there."

Adriance did confirm the finalized assessment would, at some point, be presented to the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, along with the department's management recommendations.

Until then, it appears everyone will just have to wait while the numbers get crunched.

"Once we have answers, we'll have those," Adriance said. "But they'll be science-backed based on the assessment." ■

"We will have a better sense of where we are when the stock assessment results are compiled, evaluated and finalized,"



Cyrus Sloane Jr. hooked his first keeper speckled trout in Grand Chenier.



Mike White caught these two mega-trout while fishing Grand Isle last summer.

FLEEING THE RIVER

IS THE BONNET CARRÉ'S RECORD OPENING STILL AFFECTING OUR FISH, CRABS AND OYSTERS?

By Kinny Haddox

For the first time in history, high water levels in the Mississippi River have forced the opening of the Bonnet Carré Spillway in consecutive years. More than half the gates on the St. Charles Parish spillway were opened on Feb. 27 to relieve pressure on the river levees. It was the third time in four years the gates have been opened, also a first since construction was completed in 1931.

These actions are necessary to try and prevent flooding of populated areas, but they do come at a cost to fisheries resources.

"It takes about two weeks for the water in Lake Pontchartrain to be replaced by water from the Mississippi River during a Bonnet Carré Spillway opening," said biologist Carl Britt of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. "Saltwater gamefish species like spotted seatrout, red drum and black drum will be dislocated from Lake Pontchartrain in response to the introduction of such a large amount of fresh river water in a short period of time. These fish will move towards areas with higher salinity and where water is less turbid."

Britt also said as for blue crabs, we should expect an initial dislocation as well. However as they become acclimated to the lower salinity, they tend to move back into the lake to take advantage of nutrients and new food sources.

"A prolonged opening of the spillway could cause mortality to oyster resources in Lake Borgne and the Mississippi Sound due to overexposure to freshwater and the potential for hypoxic conditions," he said. "The continuation of fresh conditions could negatively impact the recruitment of juvenile brown shrimp into the estuary. A longer duration event also increases the possibility of algae blooms in Lake Pontchartrain." ■



Saltwater gamefish species like spotted seatrout, red drum and black drum will be dislocated for a while. **ABOVE:** Freshwater will initially chase blue crabs out of the lake, but they will return as they become acclimated to the lower salinity to take advantage of nutrients and new food sources.



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IS LETTING THE PUBLIC ON YOUR LAND RISKY BUSINESS?

By John Smith
Smith Shanklin Sosa, LLC
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THE LAW SAYS NO AND VOWS TO PROTECT LARGE LANDOWNERS FROM GETTING SUED.

Jeffery D was riding through a bay in his 16-foot bateau when he hit a cement post. Janie T was walking down a levee and stepped into a hole. Robert R was walking on a wharf when he fell through a hole.

These people have a few things in common. All of them were injured, and all of them filed a lawsuit against

the landowners. But all of their lawsuits were dismissed by a Louisiana judge and/or Louisiana Appellate Court under the Louisiana Recreational Use Immunity Act (see sidebar).

The Immunity Act was adopted to induce owners of large acreages to open expanses of undeveloped lands to the public for recreational use, and it has been

used as a basis for dismissing countless lawsuits.

The Immunity Act grants immunity for recreational activities, including but not limited to the following: hunting, fishing, trapping, swimming, boating, camping, picnicking and hiking.

Implemented by the Louisiana Legislature to eliminate landowner liability while the "recreational" property

§2791. LIABILITY OF OWNER OR OCCUPANT OF PROPERTY NOT USED PRIMARILY FOR COMMERCIAL RECREATIONAL PURPOSES

A. An owner, lessee, or occupant of premises owes no duty of care to keep such premises safe for entry or use by others for hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, sightseeing, or boating or to give warning of any hazardous conditions, use of, structure, or activities on such premises to persons entering for such purposes, whether the hazardous condition or instrumentality causing the harm is one normally encountered in the true outdoors or one created by the placement of structures or conduct of commercial activities on the premises. If such an owner, lessee, or occupant gives permission to another to enter the premises for such recreational purposes he does not thereby extend any assurance that the premises are safe for such purposes or constitute the person to whom permission is granted one to whom a duty of care is owed, or assume responsibility for or incur liability for any injury to persons or property caused by any act of person to whom permission is granted.

is being used by the public, the Louisiana Recreational Immunity Act has done what it was intended to do. Landowners are not responsible for accidents that occur on their property unless it is proven that the landowner was willful or malicious in causing injuries or property damage to others while on their property.

The sole purpose of the statute was to "induce private owners of large acreages to open expanses of undeveloped lands for public outdoor, open land recreational purposes."

The idea is that if landowners are not responsible for damages to people using their property for recreational purposes, then they are more likely to allow access to the property.

There really is no other purpose or intent for the statute. There is no question that the statute has been interpreted and applied by Louisiana courts as intended by the legislature. Landowners can rely on the strength of the statute to provide the protections they were seeking against lawsuits.

The legislature and the courts have upheld the purpose and intent of the law. The question remains: if landowners continue to deny access to recreational properties, particularly navigable waterways and bays, should they continue to obtain the benefits of an immunity statute? ■



John H. Smith is an experienced attorney. Growing up in Houma molded an avid outdoorsman. He lives in St. Amant and works out of his office in Baton Rouge. John's law firm has a superlative record representing those requiring legal assistance, redressing any number of civil wrongs committed against their life, limb or property. His website is www.smithshanklin.com.

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GRAND ISLE APPROVES SPEED CAMERA

UNIT WILL BE ISSUING CIVIL TICKETS

By Patrick Bonin

Getting through Golden Meadow without a speeding ticket was always a good way to start off a fishing trip as you rolled down Highway 1.

But don't let your guard down now if you're heading to Grand Isle: Effective this week, a white Redflex Jeep equipped with radar and cameras is on the island to monitor — and enforce — posted speed limits.

The good news is if it flashes as you zip by, you won't get a ticket in the mail — at least for a few more weeks.

"Right now it's in testing mode," said Laine Landry, Grand Isle's police chief. "Once we finish testing, we'll have a 30-day warning period, and then after that, it will go into enforcement mode."

Landry said a vote by the city council last summer paved the way for the Redflex unit to monitor vehicle speeds across the island. Violators' license plates will be photographed, and they will receive a civil ticket in the mail, he said. Appeals will be heard through Jefferson Parish court.

The size of individual fines will depend on how fast the driver was going, he said.

In testing mode one day recently, Landry said the unit got a workout.

"Because of my limited amount of manpower, we're still getting numerous complaints from residents about speeding," he said. "For instance, in a 24-hour period, I had 171 violations. That means they were going 12 miles-or-greater over the limit. So even right now in the spring, we had 171 speeding violations. What's bad is, I only have one patrolman.

"We're getting a lot of feedback from residents to try to slow the traffic down, so this is another tool we're putting in our

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This Redflex Jeep, outfitted with radar and cameras, is being tested on Grand Isle. Eventually, it will be used to enforce posted speed limits, and violators will receive a civil ticket in the mail, according to Laine Landry, Grand Isle's police chief.



toolbox to help deter speeding.”

Redflex will receive a portion of the fines collected once the unit goes into enforcement mode, the chief said.

“It’s a \$270,000 vehicle parked out there with all the equipment in it,” Landry said. “That’s how they justify it — they get a portion of the ticket.”

Roadside signs are currently being erected to warn motorists about the speed camera, he said.

“We’re in the process now of putting up all the badging and signage throughout the town to where when you enter, you’re going to know video enforcement is possible,” Landry said. “There’ll be like 20 signs total that will be put up.”

Landry reminded golf cart drivers to stay off the roads, and noted they should not be on the shoulders of roads after

sundown. He said an ordinance relating to golf-cart usage is in the process of being tweaked by the city council, which will be voting on some potential changes.

“We have more issues with golf carts than we do anything,” Landry said. “So hopefully, this will be an extra tool to slow people down and try to prevent a fatality or serious accident.”

About three months ago, Landry said several surveillance cameras also were installed in various locations on the island to deter crime. He noted that additional stationary speed camera units could be placed in strategic locations in the future.

His advice to motorists heading to Grand Isle: “Just like always, pay extra attention and be mindful of your speed, and also be aware of golf carts on the side of the road.” Consider yourself warned. ■



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HACKBERRY GUIDE DID THIS TO CATCH HUGE TROUT

By Brian Cope

While fishing in West Cove on March 14, Capt. Brian Windsor of Hackberry caught a 7½-pound speckled trout on a bone-colored Heddon One Knocker Spook topwater lure.

And the fish, said Windsor, wasn't even fat.

"It was as skinny a fish as I've ever seen. The belly was completely empty. It would have weighed a heap more otherwise," he said.

But Windsor isn't complaining. The 27½-inch fish is the kind of trout he likes to see

this time of year.

"From March through May is usually when we see our biggest trout caught. We will see some good ones between 6, 7, 8, and 9 pounds, and this one ranks right up there with them," he said.

Windsor (337-884-9748) was fishing at high tide around 1:30 p.m. when he caught the big speck, which he said was chasing baitfish on the flats when he made a cast. And as he worked the lure in, the fish couldn't resist it.

"I prefer fishing when the tide is moving up to high, but really as long as the tide

is moving at all, it's a good time for trout fishing. These fish definitely bite better when there is some tidal movement. But even when it's all the way high, they are going to be on those flats chasing after baitfish and that's what this fish was doing when it bit," he said.

Along with this big fish, Windsor said the trout bite has been hot, and he expects it to continue to heat up even more as the spring weather stabilizes. This time of year, he likes to wade, drift, or do a combination of both while putting his clients on trout, redfish and flounder. ■

Capt. Brian Windsor of Hackberry caught this 7½-pound speckled trout on a bone-colored Heddon One Knocker Spook topwater lure on March 14.

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D'ARBONNE CRAPPIE WORTH \$137,000

By Kinny Haddox

Throughout the Lucas Oil American Crappie Trail National Championship on Lake D'Arbonne in Farmerville, even in practice, fishermen were all murmuring the same thing: "It's gonna be close. It's gonna be real close."

Nobody could have imagined how right they would be. Second-day leaders Tony Hughes and Jeff Riddle of Hornbeak, Tenn., brought in their third-straight 7-fish limit on the final day, with that last stringer weighing 11.27 for a total of 35.94 pounds.

Daniel Porter and Jeremy Aldridge weighed in the same number of fish, and when the scales had cleared at the end of day three, their total weight was 35.93.

The title came down to one one-hundredth of an ounce of crappie.

The reason was that anglers kept

catching fish between 1.50 and 1.75 pounds everywhere they went. The big, 2-pound-plus females that had been biting the past couple of weeks were spawning out and losing egg weights just before the event.

"It was epic, just epic," said an elated, but exhausted Matt Morgan, the man behind the ACT. "I mean, really, you know. You have a three-day crappie tournament with the best crappie fishermen around and at the end of the day, it's one one-hundredth of an ounce. Oh my. What else could you want? What can I say? It was epic."

It was epic for Hughes and Riddle for sure. They won cash and prizes — including a new, fully rigged Ranger Z518 boat and Evinrude G2 150 motor worth \$50,750. Porter, from Campbell, Mo., and Aldridge, from Batesville, Miss., didn't do

badly, gaining \$8,300 in cash for their runner-up spot.

Riddle summed up pretty simply how he felt about Lake D'Arbonne pretty simply in front of the final day's weigh-in crowd.

"This is simply the best crappie fishing lake I've ever been on in my life," he said.

"It was so exciting and these are just such great guys," Morgan said. "At the end, the guys that lost by such a slim margin were so gracious and so sportsmanship like. It is truly a professional group, and I'm thankful for them. I also thank all the people of the region for the hospitality and the effort they put into making this a great event. It's a fantastic fishery. Thank you."

It was ironic that both teams didn't do well in the first spots they fished on the final day; they went to their secondary area. It just happened to be the same



The Tennessee team of Tony Hughes, left, and Jeff Riddle show off two D'Arbonne slabs that propelled them to the ACT National Championship.

LAKE D'ARBONNE'S famous crappie fishing reached a new level. On March 28-30, the 16,000 acre Union Parish lake hosted Louisiana's first-ever national crappie championship.

The top 100 teams from the American Crappie Trail's 2018 season competed for the championship .

spot, so as, Hughes said, "We just decided we'd shoot it out right there."

Another big title was handed out. Ronnie Capps and Steve Coleman of Tiptonville, Tenn., finished 13th, but it certainly wasn't lucky. They had a great final day and netted their second consecutive B'n'M Angler of the Year award. That was worth a fully rigged Ranger Boat valued at \$25,975. They edged the father-son team of Terry and Cole Stewart of Clinton, Miss., for the AOY award.

The top Louisiana team was Steve Periotti and Stuart Baum from Calhoun. They finished with 35.52 for fifth place. Other Louisiana teams in the top 25 were Matt Saterfiel and Peyton Hemphill in tenth with 34.90; Heath Rogers and Lance Bilberry in 19th and Jason Thomas and Scotty Johnson in 23rd.

A total of \$136,950.00 was handed out at the championship, making it the largest payout in the history of professional crappie fishing. ■

Below: Terry and Cole Stewart of Clinton, Miss., finished second in the Angler of the Year race with fish like these from D'Arbonne.



Ronnie Capps, left, and Steve Coleman of Tiptonville, Tenn., show two whopper D'Arbonne crappie that helped them gain their second consecutive Angler of the Year team title.



Stuart Baum and Steve Periotti of Calhoun were Louisiana's top finishing team in fifth place.



ACT tournament champions Tony Hughes and Jeff Riddle.

FEAR THE FOG: IT'S NO GAME



HOW TO STAY SAFE WHEN OL' MAN RIVER GETS SOCKED IN

By Patrick Bonin

As winter gradually transitions into spring in the Midwest, and the ice and snow that gripped the region over the past several months melts away and mixes with flood waters from the heartland, a lot of that runoff eventually finds its way into the Mississippi River.

And even more than 2,000 miles downriver, that water remains pretty chilly when it finally arrives in places like Baton Rouge, New Orleans and Venice. Despite South Louisiana typically experiencing air temperatures in the 70s and maybe low 80s in late March into April, the river remains cold long after air temperatures here start making it feel like summer.

That creates the perfect setup for a serious blanket of fog to develop, as the warmer air collides with the chilled river water. And as if the Mississippi wasn't already dangerous enough for anglers even under ideal conditions — with the

presence of huge ocean-going vessels, swift currents and obstacles like logs and other debris thrown in the mix — foggy mornings make things even more difficult.

Capt. Jordan Ellis with the Mexican Gulf Fishing Company out of Venice said conditions have been particularly tough this spring. Despite recent improvement because of cooler weather here, Ellis said the fog will likely return once the air warms up a bit.

NO ONE'S COMFORTABLE RUNNING IN THE FOG

"It's been pretty nerve-racking the past couple months," said Ellis, who regularly pilots his 37-foot Freeman, *Kimmi*, up and down the river out of Venice. "It hasn't just been foggy — it's been brutally foggy. You can't even see the front of your bow some mornings."

April, even into May, can make for some treacherous conditions on the river, he said.

"If someone tells you they're comfortable running in the fog, they're lying to you," he said. "No one's comfortable.

"You do it every day, but as soon as you get comfortable, you're probably going to have an accident."

STAY AT HOME IF YOU DON'T HAVE RADAR

Ellis shared a few tips for anglers contemplating making a trip on the river when the fog is socked in. His first suggestion seems like a no-brainer, but it's worth repeating over and over.

"Stay at home if you don't have radar," he said. "It's just a fish — it's not worth it."

Anglers who attempt the trip without radar are putting themselves — and lots of other people — at risk.

"What happens is, it's not just them," he said. "It's dangerous enough even with radar, because you have things like logs in the river that radar doesn't pick up. Having to worry about other boats without radar makes it even worse."

ADJUST YOUR DEPARTURE TIME

If you do have radar and decide to head out in foggy conditions, Ellis said adjusting your departure time can make things easier.

"I would suggest for private guys to either leave an hour before or an hour after daylight — that way you miss the brunt of the traffic," he said. "Most of the

continues >

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continues >

guides are going to leave at daylight, so I always tell guys to leave an hour earlier than most people. Many of the commercial boats aren't running then, and you miss most of the charter boats."

TURN ON YOUR RADIO

Staying in radio contact — and letting others know where you are on the river — also is key to a safe trip.

"When you're in any passes, you need to have your radio on Channel 13," Ellis said. "If you're in the river, it needs to be on 67. If you're coming out of a marina, give a shout out because you can't see what might be coming around a corner. Any time you're going into the river or going into a pass and you can't see around the bend, you want to let somebody know just in case they're coming around the other way. There might be someone coming up behind you, or



Photo by Capt. Chad Reinhardt

somebody cutting across....

Letting someone know where you're heading on the radio is easy. Ellis offered an example of what he might say if he were leaving Cypress Cove Marina on a foggy morning.

"This is fishing vessel *Kimmi* coming out of Cypress Cove, turning into Tiger Pass headed north for the

Jump," he said. "So instead of just seeing a red dot on your radar, it helps when you get a voice and you can say, 'Okay, that's who that is.'"

Trusting your GPS track and radar in disorienting, dense fog can be tough, so Ellis recommended using and practicing with your radar before you actually need to rely on it.

PRACTICE WHEN IT'S CLEAR

"Try turning on your radar when it's not foggy; that way you can get used to what everything looks like," he said.

"Some people just use it when they need it, which can make it even scarier.

"When you know fog season is coming and you're running a pass, turn on your radar and familiarize yourself with it."

Slowing down, knowing the proper rules for passing another vessel and even following another boater to the fishing grounds at a safe distance were additional safety tips Ellis recommended.

"The past couple of weeks haven't been too bad because of this cooler weather, but as soon as it warms back up, it'll be foggy again. Luckily, there haven't been any major accidents that I know of, which is amazing when you think about it," he said. "And it's not even just boats, like I said, there's things like logs in the river...."

"I don't want to speak too soon, but we'll keep our fingers crossed." ■

Anglers heading out in foggy conditions need to rely on their experience, as well as their GPS and radar, when traveling on the Mississippi River in low visibility conditions.



This photo from a foggy morning earlier this spring out of Venice illustrates just how foggy the Mississippi River can get — and why radar is absolutely necessary when heading out in these conditions.

Photo by Capt. Wade Wells

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When agents boarded the vessel they found the men in possession of 54 large coastal sharks.



THREE MEN CITED FOR SHARK VIOLATIONS

From News Reports

Enforcement agents with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries cited three men for alleged shark violations on March 22 in the federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico.

Agents cited Nghia V. Nguyen, 53, Hau Van Dinh, 50, and Toan Huu Nguyen, 50, all from Boothville, for taking over the limit of sharks.

LDWF agents were on a Joint Enforcement Agreement patrol in the Gulf of Mexico with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration when they observed a vessel in federal waters.

When the agents approached the vessel to make contact, they witnessed the captain and crew tossing large coastal sharks off the stern of the vessel. When agents

boarded the vessel, they found the men in possession of 54 large coastal sharks. They were only allowed to possess 45 large coastal sharks.

Agents seized the sharks and sold them to the highest bidder in Venice.

Violations of taking over limit of sharks carries a \$100 to \$350 and up to 60 days in jail. ■

DRAWDOWN SCHEDULED FOR CHICOT LAKE

From News Reports

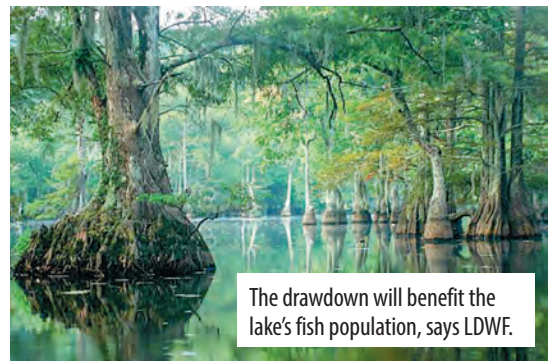
The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has scheduled a drawdown for Chicot Lake in Evangeline Parish as part of its integrated management plan for aquatic vegetation control.

The drawdown will not begin until after Labor Day on Sept. 2, 2019, when water temperatures are lower, reducing the risk for potential fish kills. The lake will lose water at a rate of 3 inches per day until it reaches 3 feet below pool stage, and it will be maintained at this level until January 2020.

In addition to the control of aquatic vegetation, particularly hydrilla and giant salvinia, the drawdown will benefit the lake's fish population by promoting a

balanced predator/prey relationship, where forage fish are more available to predator species. The removal of water will also improve spawning habitat by promoting the decomposition of organic materials such as leaf litter and submerged vegetation.

The department does not solely depend on drawdowns for aquatic vegetation control, but it utilizes an integrated management approach where multiple strategies are implemented to yield the best benefits. Nearly 2,000 triploid grass carp were stocked over the past five years to aid with the control of submerged aquatic plants, and continued



The drawdown will benefit the lake's fish population, says LDWF.

herbicide applications will be conducted throughout the lake, as needed, to control floating and emergent plants.

During the drawdown, the lake will remain open to fishing and other recreational activities but caution is advised for boaters as boat lanes will not provide normal clearance of underwater obstructions. ■

RECORD CATCH?

109-POUND WAHOO MAY RANK SEVENTH IN STATE

George Kendrick from Slidell, La. caught a 109-pound wahoo on March 8 while fishing aboard the 37-foot Freeman *Annabel Lee* out of Cypress Cove Marina in Venice. The fish is currently in the process of being certified as the seventh largest wahoo caught in Louisiana waters.

Kendrick caught the fish on a chartreuse/blue Rapala Stretch 30 while trolling at a speed of 8 knots near the 24-mile rig. He was fishing with a group that caught five wahoo in about two hours.

"We were tuna fishing at The Lump with no luck before moving to the 24-mile rig," said Matthew Daigle,

another angler who was fishing with Kendrick.

Of the five wahoo they caught, the 109-pounder was the biggest, and two others topped the 80-pound mark.

Wahoo can be caught year-round in Louisiana's offshore waters. Winter and early spring is usually the best time for catching them, but plenty of die-hard anglers target them all the way through June and July.

They are often found 15 to 30 miles off the coast of Venice, and it's typical to catch them around oil platforms and weed lines anywhere from a foot to 500 feet below the surface. ■






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After a 20-minute fight, they landed the 80-pound fish.

DOUBLE-HOOKED TUNA MARKS

By Brian Cope

MEMORABLE DAY AT THE LUMP

For many anglers, hooking into a 12-foot hammerhead shark would be the most memorable part of any fishing trip. But for Katie Duplass and Jamie Tucker, that shark was a distant second to their best memory from a recent offshore trip around The Lump.

While drifting with chum, the two anglers hooked an 80-pound yellowfin tuna — the same tuna, in fact. At first, they didn't know they both had the same fish hooked, but before long, they realized they were both fighting the same tuna. After a 20-minute fight, they landed the fish, then went back to drifting again after a short celebration.

"We caught four tuna," Duplass said. "We double-teamed the 80-pounder, then caught another one about the same size. Then we caught two that were about 40 pounds each.

Duplass and Tucker were taking advantage of a last-minute cancellation from anglers who were scheduled to fish with Capt. John Duplass, Katie's husband and a guide for Louisiana Offshore Fishing Charters (504-701-3474). Tucker's husband is a deckhand on the boat, so when their trip got canceled, they decided to make a fun day of it.

"It was a nice Sunday with great weather. It was sunny with just a slight chop on the water, and the temperature was in the high 60s to low 70s. It was just a perfect day so we didn't want it to go to waste," Duplass said.

Aside from the four tuna, the anglers caught a couple of bonita and several sharks, including the big hammerhead.

They were fishing with cut bait on 80-pound line spooled onto Shimano Talica 30W reels and drifting baits about



Katie Duplass and Jamie Tucker were fishing the lump when they both hooked the same tuna..

120 feet down.

The Duplasses also own The Venice Lodge, www.theVeniceLodge.com. ■

SPORTSMAN TIP

FREEZING TUNA

Nothing beats eating fresh fish the day it was caught, but let's face it, you can only eat so much. And one tuna can provide dozens of pounds of meat. So what's the best way to preserve it?

If you ask 20 people, you're likely to get 20 different answers. Brian Bastineau of Gulfport, Miss., has tried about all 20, but he uses one system now and said it provides for the best-tasting tuna.

DO THIS FIRST

"The first thing I do is I cut all the guts out of the tuna as soon as I get it onboard the boat. I carry frozen 2-liter bottles, and I stuff those into the cavity and pack as much ice as I can inside. Depending on where you're fishing, you may have to leave the head connected. But you want to at least cut the spinal cord where it connects to the head. Bleed the fish as much as possible, then cover it in ice," he said

BACK AT THE DOCK

And once back at the dock, Bastineau fillets the fish and wraps the fillets in paper towels.



"You want the fillets to drain as much moisture out before you put them in vacuum bags. I will wrap them in paper towels and place in a refrigerator. I'll eat what I can over the next couple of days, changing the paper towels on the rest of the fillets twice a day. On the third day, I vacuum seal what's left and place them in a deep freezer. And when you take it back out of the freezer, get it out of the bag right away, wrap it in paper towels again, and let it thaw out in the refrigerator. That will keep you in tuna for months that will taste just as good as the day you caught it," he said. ■



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AJS, GRAY TRIGGERS OFF THE LIST FOR NOW

By Joe Macaluso

Now that it appears the red snapper crisis has topped an uphill climb, Louisiana's recreational fishermen face another series of offshore fishing problems.

In a juggling act only the Barnum & Bailey Circus could perform — until now — federal fishery managers are closing seasons on two popular reef fish species.

Briefly, greater amberjack season, scheduled to open May 1 across the Gulf of Mexico, will remain closed.

And the season for gray triggerfish will close at 12:01 a.m., May 11 across the

gulf, and it remain closed until March 1, 2020.

At first glance, it would appear the restriction on amberjack catches came from early-in-the-year catches in the eastern gulf.

Camp Matens, Louisiana's former recreational representative on the Gulf of Mexico, said that's not the case.

"We took steps on the council to change the (greater amberjack) annual season from Aug. 1 to July 31 instead of the

calendar year," Matens said. "That was to give fishermen in the western gulf a chance to catch them.

"Now, with a May 1 opening, we were giving them (eastern gulf fishermen) a chance to catch these wonderful fish during the spawning season."

Matens intimated the closure is for the



Amberjack season will open August 1. Capt. Kevin Beach of Mexican Gulf Fishing Co. shows off a big one.

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good of a species considered to be overfished and undergoing overfishing.

Built into the amberjack model was an automatic June 1-July 31 closure, again to allow for a spawning season, but recent data shows AJs spawn in May, too.

"When the season opens Aug. 1, everyone will have a chance to catch them," Matens said. "We can hope to have a red snapper season open to recreational fishermen then, too."

The recreational amberjack season is on the books to run through Oct. 31.

NOAA Fisheries released information indicating the closure "... is necessary to prevent overfishing of the greater amberjack stock."

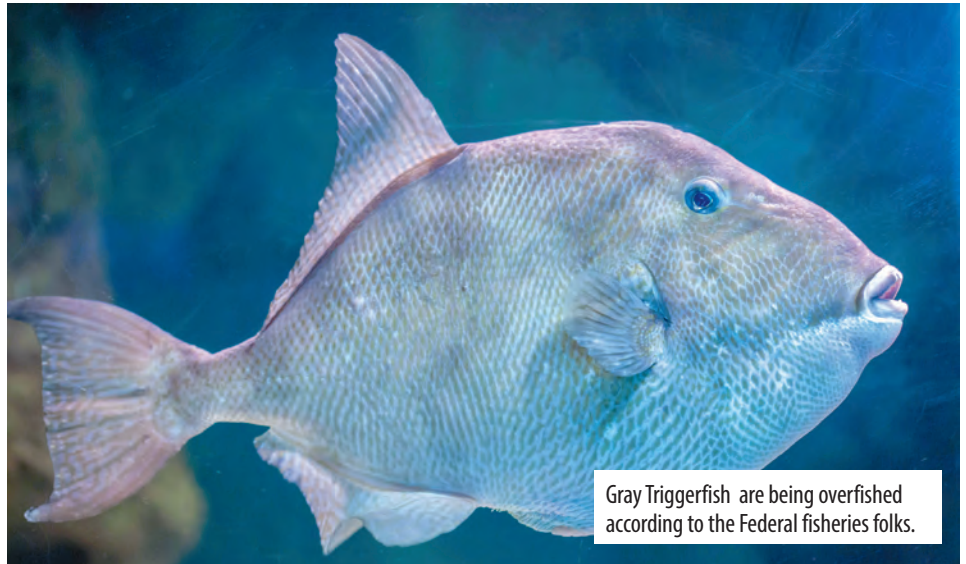
The feds also revealed the annual recreational catch target of 902,185 pounds was met last Oct. 31, and it's presumed the 2019 season will remain with the same closing date.

The gray triggerfish closure is puzzling for most anglers. Matens said, "I never believed there would be a closed season on this species."

Federal fisheries officials said gulf fishermen would reach the annual catch "target" of 217,100 pounds by May 11, and the season would be closed until March 1 next year.

While not in the documentation, it appears Florida fishermen caught most of those fish.

After these announced closures in federal waters, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, through secretary Jack Montoucet, announced state waters would also be closed to taking those two species at the aforementioned dates. ■



Gray Triggerfish are being overfished according to the Federal fisheries folks.

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Hayden Johnson killed this turkey in Jackson Parish.

5-YEAR-OLD CRACK SHOT GETS TURKEY

By Anthony Taylor

Five-year-old Hayden Johnson's grandpa and dad recently brought him turkey hunting on their club in Jackson Parish. And even though it was the first time little Hayden ever went turkey hunting, that didn't stop him from hitting a fully plumed, wily tom squarely in the neck from 25 yards away.

"I told him that we might not get one; you know how it is," Michael Johnson said. "I showed him how to use his 410 that Mark (Hayden's grandfather) got for him. Once he shot the gun enough and knew how to use it, we went out."

Michael Johnson scouted out the area every day the week before the big hunt and found where a big tom was roosting. When the time came, the

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Grandpa Mark Johnson and dad Michael Johnson were both in the blind with Hayden Johnson when he shot the turkey. Watch the video of the hunt on our website LouisianaSportsman.com.



three went out to a blind Michael Johnson had set up 400 to 600 yards from the turkey's roost. Sure enough, at 6 a.m., the gobbler started gobbling and didn't stop as Michael Johnson convinced him to come down from his perch. At this point, the tom became enamored with some hens near his roost.

"He stopped gobbling for about 30 minutes; me and Hayden were just sitting there talking for a while... I told him that it was okay if we didn't get anything," Michael Johnson said.

But soon after, things began moving in the right direction.

"The next time he gobbled, he was 100 yards away," Michael said. "He closed that distance in 30 minutes, so I yelled at him

one more time."

Soon after the last gobble, the tom strutted up to within 25 yards, and Hayden Johnson was told to get ready.

"I was excited, he was gobbling, then he put his neck up when I was about to

shoot, and I shot him in the neck," he said. "My heart was beating."

It was an extremely proud moment for all involved. ■

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Captain Brent and Meredith Ballay found huge snapper fishing a rig just 3 miles off of Southwest Pass.

RED SNAPPER SEASON IS WEEKENDS ONLY

From News Reports

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission announced the 2019 recreational red snapper season will begin on Friday, May 24, in both state and federal waters. The season will run weekends only (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday including the Monday of Memorial Day and the Thursday of Fourth of July), with a daily creel limit of two fish per person and a 16-inch total-length minimum size limit.

The season will remain open until recreational landings approach or reach Louisiana's annual private recreational allocation of 19.1 percent or 816,439 pounds of red snapper according to estimates from LA Creel, a 73,439-pound (9.8-percent) increase from last year.

Louisiana is operating under its second year of an Exempted Fishing Permit, which allows the department to manage the private recreational red

snapper season in state and federal waters. Under the EFP, participating anglers will be allowed to fish red snapper in state territorial seas and the adjoining federal EEZ, from shore to 200 nautical miles, during the season set by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. NOAA Fisheries will continue to regulate federal for-hire charter vessels. >



Pure Shot Outdoors team members (left to right) Isaac Avery, Laramy Barber and Hunter Graham show off their winning catch totaling 600.3 pounds earning them the \$25,000 first place grand prize. The U.S. Open Bowfishing Championship founder, John Paul Morris, holds the first place winning belt above the team.



Photo courtesy Bass Pro

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SPORTSMAN'S

PARADOX

By Todd Masson

Anglers fight to find a solution to the water access crises in Louisiana



Images courtesy Louisiana Sportsmen's Coalition

It's become clear that we have an full-scale epidemic on our hands. Louisiana anglers are becoming outlaws at an unprecedented rate, and no one is immune. Boaters, kayakers and bank fishermen all are increasingly being called out and are unwelcome in areas they have always fished in the past.

Why is this happening? Louisiana's trespass laws allow landowners to lock anglers out of

most coastal marshes. In recent years, more and more landowners are deciding to do just that in an attempt to protect their property rights as they watch their land dissolve into open water.

It's a problem rife with complexities, and it's becoming more problematic every year as landowners flex their muscles and more anglers out for a good time in Sportsman's Paradise are harassed, ticketed, prosecuted and fined.

Landowners and oil companies are trying to find ways to hold on to their precious land and subsequent mineral rights. And many are pouring lots of money into projects to protect and build their land, because if they don't, it's only a matter of time before they will lose it.

Oil companies are no stranger to lawsuits in this sue-happy economy, and for this reason some are leery of allowing the public to access their properties.

>



This wasn't always the case. For years, as oil companies dug canals through our marsh for easier navigation, they welcomed anglers to fish in the newfound habitat. And as time marched on and canals were dredged and re-dredged, these became the highways of the marsh, beating out the bayous as primary waterways.

With limited exceptions, Louisiana considers any water that wasn't mapped at the time of statehood in 1812 to be privately owned, even if those waters ebb and flow with the tides.

That makes it nearly impossible for anyone with a boat to enjoy a day on the water without, at some point, crossing invisible lines separating public and private water.

To craft an analogy of the current tidal-water-access situation in Louisiana, the president and CEO of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Land Tawney, had to reach all the way back to a book written in 1883 by Howard Pyle.

"It's the European model, right? Think about Robin Hood," Tawney quipped. "It was penalty of death if you got caught killing the king's game or hunting the king's forest. We wanted our country to be different."

Certainly no one in Louisiana has been forced to sit in Ol' Sparky for fishing private water — or at least not yet — but that doesn't make the situation any less alarming to men and women who watch the

Anglers come from all over the country to target redfish in Louisiana's legendary backwater tidal marshes. Most don't realize nearly all the water adjacent to those marshes is privately owned.

clocks in their cubicles all week, fantasizing about getting out in the marshes on the weekend.

ANGLER'S WOES

More and more frequently, anglers are getting harassed by landowners or their lessees, who are claiming exclusive rights to tidal water, often in expansive areas with no discernible boundaries or markers. Even worse, waters from Leesville to Lafitte, Dularge to Delacroix are sporting gates at primary access points, allowing the public's fish to enter, but certainly not the public.

In every other coastal state, tidal water, no matter

In Louisiana, many landowners post their private water or block access with dams or gates, but state law doesn't require posting. Anglers are required by law to know whether the water they're accessing is privately owned.



where it flows, belongs to the public, and access to it may not be hindered. That's why Tawney's organization has joined the battle in the Bayou State, to right what he views as a grievous wrong.

"While I'm not from down there, I've definitely got some of that marsh in my fingernails, and I love the culture and the people," he said. "We have plenty of members who are generational down there. They

continues >



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see this as a way (landowners) are trying to push out the small, average man or woman, and we want to make sure we push against that.”

Tawney said there have been court cases in North Carolina, Florida and California in which landowners fight to keep members of the public off the beaches behind their homes, but the laws are so clear, very few landowners even attempt to forbid access to the tidal waters adjacent to their property.

“It’s a problem that’s unique to Louisiana,” he said.

A LANDOWNER’S PERSPECTIVE

Mike Benge runs Delacroix Corp., a land-holding company with property in Plaquemines and St. Bernard parishes. The company’s holdings include Bayou Gentilly, Little Lake (Lake Petit) and Four Horse Lake, as well as most of the marsh ponds anglers typically fish

out of Delacroix.

With limited exceptions, the tidal water flowing through Delacroix Corp. property remains open to public access.

“All this legislation could force a change (to Delacroix Corp.’s open-access policy). There’s no doubt about it,” he said. “I have stockholders and board members who would like me to charge money. They’re stockholders of this corporation for a reason — to make money. Fortunately, we have been able to make enough money in oil and gas, which has been really, really depressed the last five years. We’ve survived on our alligators and our duck leases and our launches that we charge people to use. We have an inherent motive for providing fishery access. We built a couple boat launches, and we make a little bit of money with those.

“I don’t for a minute believe that the issue is as dire as the (Louisiana



Image courtesy Mike Benge

“We’ve survived on our alligators and our duck leases and our launches that we charge people to use,” Mike Benge, Delacroix Corp.

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One of the bills introduced in this year's legislative session is a follow-through on a bill that gained traction last year but ultimately failed. It would grant access to many of the state's tidal waters.

Sportsmen's Coalition makes it out to be.) *Editor's note: Louisiana Sportsmen's Coalition is not affiliated with Louisiana Sportsman magazine.* I've sat through hearings, I've listened to stories of people with AR15s running poor little children off their fishing leases. Nobody I know in the landowner business has anybody riding around the marsh with an AR15, okay? But it sounds really great when you say that in front of (the legislature).

"The narrative that's being played out, I think, is bad for the state. Landowners who don't have as much land as I do, and who depend on whatever income they can generate from their property to continue to maintain (it) or pay the taxes and hold onto what little bit they have, that's their right.

"This is being driven by a small group of commercial guides who are making money using private-property resources. If I go to (the Louisiana Sportsman magazine) website and look at all the guides fishing in Delacroix Island and Shell Beach, everybody's catching fish. Nobody's having trouble catching fish. Everyone's buying into the frenzy that fishing's off-limits in Louisiana, that you can't catch fish anywhere. That people are running around with AR15s running off high-school kids and their bass tournaments.

"Most of the landowners I know who've put (their property off-limits), either it's areas where nobody catches fish or they've allowed people to get a lease. And that was one of the suggestions of the Sea Grant study. I don't think that's an unreasonable solution. It's not my (solution). I've had people call me because of all this foolishness looking to buy a fishing lease, and I don't have fishing leases. About 65,000 acres of my property is open to the public to fish, within reason.

continues >



Images courtesy Louisiana Sportsmen's Coalition

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“It’s a very, very small percentage of people who are whipping this up into far more damaging manner (than it is). The law’s not going to pass, the House bill (HB231). We’ve already been through it. It’s unconstitutional. The state cannot afford to take the private property of its citizens. We have paid for this property. We’ve paid the taxes. The minute the state gets into a taking situation, as they’re finding out with Catahoula Lake — you can only flex your muscles so long, and then the chickens come home to roost.

“People are exercising their rights, and these rights were guaranteed by the constitution of the United States. The right to own property is a fundamental right.”

LOUISIANA SPORTSMEN’S COALITION HOPES THE TIDE IS CHANGING

Daryl Carpenter is hoping the tide, as it were, begins to change in the 2019 session of the Louisiana Legislature, which began on April 8. Carpenter, who serves on the board of the Louisiana Sportsmen’s Coalition, is watching three bills in particular that address different factors of the public access problem.

The most important, in Carpenter’s view, is HB231, a follow-up to the much-discussed HB 391, which was defeated 59-37 by the legislature last year. The new

bill “provides for the public navigation of running waters, including those running waters passing over any privately owned water bottom directly connected to a state-owned water bottom that is subject to the ebb and flow of the tide.”

Carpenter said it’s an improvement over last year’s bill.

“It’s basically the language from 391, except it looks like it wasn’t as rushed when it was put together,” he said. “The language is much more detailed. The reasonable exclusions are already in there, such as ports, sensitive areas such as Homeland Security and Port Fourchon, stuff like that.”

Carpenter is also tracking HB270, which “requires proof of private ownership of immovable property when criminal trespass is upon a river, stream, lake or other waterway,” according to the bill’s digest.

“It’s more of a stopgap in case something doesn’t happen on the access side,” Carpenter said. “It affects the ability to be charged for trespassing on these dual-claim areas where the state claims it, but a private landowner claims it also.

“The bill, as I read it, would stop anyone from being charged with trespassing in those areas because the prosecuting authority would have to prove title. If that title is in dispute, then it would be much more difficult to prove title. That’s the thought behind the bill.”

The third bill on Carpenter’s radar is HB165, which “requires that agreements between an acquiring agency and a landowner for integrated coastal protection projects ensure public recreational access to lands and waterways reclaimed.”

It would apply mostly to projects

[continues opposite page >](#)

LOUISIANA SUPREME COURT RULES IN FAVOR OF RESTRICTING ACCESS TO CANALS

Arlen “Benny” Cenac Jr., sole owner and operator of Golden Ranch Farms, gated at least 4 navigable waterways, including the Company Canal, about 12 years ago.

The Louisiana Supreme Court awarded him the title to the Company Canal in 2003. He closed it for public use in October 2007.



Greens residents argue that the Company canal, in use since the 1800s, should be considered public. Many residents used the canal, dug between Morgan City and New Orleans in the 1830s by slaves, to reach their fishing camps in Lake Salvador. There was even a public boat launch.

At 52,000 acres, Golden Ranch is the state’s largest privately owned refuge according to their website. They now charge people to fish in the canals.

Angler Mike White of Paradis has been fishing Bayou Des Allemands and Salvador for years. In the photo above, he’s fishing at the mouth of the Calfat, a canal gated by Golden Rance Farms, off of the western edge of Lake Salvador. ■



Image courtesy Mike Bengie



Images courtesy Louisiana Sportsmen’s Coalition

headed up by the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, according to Carpenter.

“It requires public access on future CPRA projects in the cases where they acquire title,” he said. “My personal opinion is public money is public money. Public money is being spent on all CPRA projects, so I don’t know why it should be limited to only those in which they acquire title, and I don’t feel like this bill is going to have very much of an effect because, as I’m told by legislators and others, there are very few projects in which CPRA acquires title.”

Still, Carpenter said, he’ll support this bill for the situations in which title is acquired by CPRA.

Carpenter will be a frequent visitor over the next few weeks to the state’s capitol, and he encourages other anglers to do the same.

“This is so important to me, because it’s vital to my employment,” he said. “This is vital to my kids. It’s vital to my grandkids, when it comes to their future enjoyment of the outdoors. This is our heritage. If we don’t start correcting this now, there’s going to be no heritage. It’s strictly going to be a pay-to-play country club.”

Or, as Tawney would put it, it’s going to be Robin Hood. ■



Todd Masson has covered outdoors in Louisiana for a quarter century, and is host of the Marsh Man Masson channel on YouTube.

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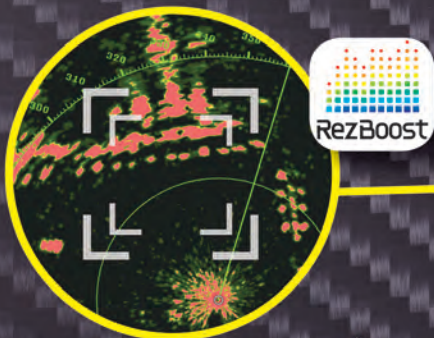
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LOUISIANA'S SICK COAST

Can we find the cure in time?

By Chris Macaluso

Louisiana is facing an ongoing crisis of coastal land loss that threatens coastal communities, a rich culture and one of the most productive fisheries in the world.

Coastal marshes continue to disappear faster than any other landmass, with nearly 2,000 square miles of marshes, swamps, beaches and barrier islands sinking into the

Gulf of Mexico or eroding in the past century.

The primary culprit is a lack of sediment entering the marshes from the Mississippi River on an annual basis. Levees and jetties built in the late 1800s and early 1900s to help prevent flooding and aid navigation cut off the sediment-rich flood waters that built south Louisiana over the last 25,000-plus years. >

WE'RE SINKING

Without sediment spilling over natural levees and into bayous and rivers connected to the Mississippi, marshes and barrier islands that are naturally sinking have struggled to stay above the water. Cutting off the connection to the river and man-made canals have also allowed saltwater to intrude far inland, killing and altering hundreds of thousands of acres of fresh and brackish marshes, leading to more coastal land loss.

To help slow land loss and try to rebuild parts of the coast, the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority developed a 50-year, \$50 billion "Master Plan." The funding is split evenly with \$25 billion for restoration of coastal marshes, natural ridges and barrier islands and \$25 billion for building physical structures like levees and floodwalls, elevating homes and making coastal communities more resilient to sea-level rise and hurricanes.

Efforts to restore coastal wetlands, ridges and barrier islands include dredging and depositing sand and sediments from the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers, the Gulf of Mexico and from lakes and bays, extensive replanting of trees and vegetation, hydrologic restoration and diverting water and sediment from the Mississippi River into coastal wetlands.

LARGE-SCALE DREDGING

Nearly 80 percent of the restoration funds are committed to large-scale barrier islands and wetland restoration through dredging. The bulk of the funding comes from fines levied against BP and other companies stemming from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Other sources include royalties from offshore oil and gas extraction.

In the past decade, some of the largest barrier islands have been built and the largest marsh restoration projects in state history undertaken, including complete restorations of East Grand Terre Island in Plaquemines Parish and Whiskey Island in Terrebonne Parish.

MEGA DIVERSIONS

Sediment diversions are by far the most debated and discussed restoration approach among fishermen and the scientific and engineering community.

• BARATARIA DIVERSION

The Mid-Barataria Diversion will be near Myrtle Grove in Plaquemines Parish and can move as much as 75,000 cubic feet per second of sediment-laden river water into the Barataria Basin west of the river.

• BRETON DIVERSION

The Mid-Breton Diversion will be south of the existing Caernarvon Diversion and will move as much as 75,000 cubic feet per second of sediment-laden water into the marshes east of the river. For some perspective, the maximum flow rate

of Caernarvon is 9,000 CFS. Baptiste Collette Pass is about 200,000 CFS during high river periods and the Mississippi River flows at more than 1.25 million CFS during peak flooding events.

A smaller, 5,000 CFS diversion to help improve water quality in the Maurepas Swamp southeast of the Blind River is set to be built in the next five to 10 years, and a diversion to help restore the swamps the northwest Barataria Basin near Lac Des Allemands is envisioned in the next 20 to 30 years. The CPRA is also working to move more freshwater and sediment from the Atchafalaya Basin into marshes in western Terrebonne Parish to help prevent the widespread loss the eastern parts of the parish has experienced around Cocodrie and Pointe-aux-Chenes.

Construction for the Mid-Barataria Diversion is planned to begin in late 2021, with operations as early as 2026. Construction of Mid-Breton is to start by the end of 2023 and operations by the end of 2028.

WILL THEY WORK?

Both projects are designed to mimic the natural land-building processes of the Mississippi River. Some of the few areas currently building land are ones where levees or other impediments to sediment deposition are not present, like the Wax Lake and Atchafalaya Delta, the West Bay Diversion below Venice and breaks along the east side of the river from the Bohemia Spillway south. Even at the Caernarvon and Davis Pond Diversions — which were designed to regulate salinities and not move sediment — small sub-deltas have formed at the mouths of the outfall channels.

Largemouth bass have become much more widespread in marshes near Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Borgne over the past 10 years due to lower salinities.

An example of how the proposed Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion might be built, which was presented by Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority project engineer Kodi Guillory during the 2018 State of the Coast conference in May.



The Davis Pond diversion has built a freshwater marsh firm enough for trees to root and to walk on from sediment deposited from the Mississippi River. This area was floating, organic marsh and open water a decade ago, but silt and clay deposited by the diversion has converted much of the outflow area into building marsh.



More than 700 acres of freshwater marsh have been built at Caernarvon over the past two decades.

Extensive modeling has been conducted over the past decade to determine the optimal diversion locations and when operations will maximize sediment delivery. Both diversions are planned for sites where there is a "point bar" in the river, an area where sediments are naturally depositing at higher rates.

Tests have also determined that sediment rates are generally higher in the first few weeks of rising river levels, especially during late winter and early spring floods. These tests are helping the CPRA determine how to operate diversions to maximize sediment delivery while attempting to minimize freshwater inundation.

HOW WILL IT AFFECT THE FISHING?

The question for recreational and commercial fishermen is, what will all the freshwater do to saltwater fishing? There is no way to predict with 100-percent certainty how fisheries will change, but computer modelling to determine how water will move from diversions and extensive examinations of areas annually inundated with freshwater like Vermilion Bay, Black Bay, Lost Lake, Four League Bay and the Lake Pontchartrain Basin have been conducted.

They show shifts in fisheries and seasonal fisheries for some brackish-water fish, especially speckled trout, but not a loss of those fisheries.

When diversions are operating at maximum capacity, upper basins will become

too fresh for speckled trout, and the fish will move to saltier waters. However, when flow rates are low or the diversions are closed, generally in late summer and fall, salinities will rise in the lower and middle basins in as little as two weeks,

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Scientists expect changes in water salinity from proposed diversions to affect fish populations in the Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge.

allowing fish to return to those areas. Those areas should have improved habitat conditions because of new wetlands, submerged vegetation and additional food sources created by the diversions.

It is impossible to completely freshen Louisiana's coastal estuaries. The volume of saltwater in the Gulf of Mexico, tides and south and east winds pushing water into the numerous passes in the Breton and Barataria Basin will insure some saltwater in the lower parts of these basins even during diversion operations.

BASS POPULATIONS WILL INCREASE

Many of Louisiana's most-productive, late-summer through early winter speckled trout fisheries are in areas fresh enough for largemouth bass and alligators.

An expansion of largemouth bass habitat and populations is expected, as well as more-suitable conditions and possibly larger populations of redfish, white shrimp, menhaden, blue crabs and mullet.

Also, a more-diverse forage base, including crawfish, juvenile crabs, shad and bluegill will return. Anglers in the Delacroix, Lake Pontchartrain and eastern Terrebonne areas regularly catch speckled trout and redfish that have been eating crawfish, shad and bluegill.

Capt. Lloyd Landry has guided speckled trout and redfish trips out of lower Plaquemines Parish for more than 20 years before recently moving his operations to Dularge in western Terrebonne. He said in both locations, adjusting to freshwater is something he does every day when the rivers are high.

REDFISH WILL FLOURISH

"In Buras, it was the Mississippi River, and in Terrebonne, it's the Atchafalaya, but in both areas some of the most productive places, especially for redfish, are very near the dirty, freshwater," Landry said. "The grass beds and marshes are better in areas where we get water and sediment. You might have to use some



shrimp or go to dark colors like black and chartreuse baits to get bites, but I don't shy away from that dirty water. Usually adjacent to the dirty water are ponds where the water is clean because it gets filtered by the grass. And I definitely fish those same areas for speckled trout in the fall because that's where the shrimp and the pogies are."

OYSTERS AND SHRIMP WILL BE DISPLACED

Less freshwater-tolerant species and ones that can't swim away like oysters and brown shrimp will be displaced to more historic ranges closer to the Gulf of Mexico or be concentrated in areas

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like the western Barataria and eastern Terrebonne basins where diversions have less of an impact or no effect at all. Because optimal oyster conditions are in brackish water with 10 to 15 parts per thousand salt (seawater is about 35 parts per thousand), additional areas closer to the Gulf of Mexico that have become too salty for oyster production will become productive again with diversion operation.

“It’s safe to say that we can look at areas like the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet or Vermilion Bay and get a sense of diversion operation,” said Brian Lezina, CPRA’s deputy chief for planning and research. “Those who fish the MRGO, Lake St. Catherine and Lake Pontchartrain know that salinities have come down a lot in the last 10 years, and there is a lot of submerged grass there now. It has created a year-round bass and redfish fishery, but also one of the best seasonal fall and winter speckled trout fisheries in the state.”

Lezina and other CPRA officials, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and LSU’s Sea Grant are working with commercial and recreational fishermen and charter captains to help predict how estuaries will respond to diversions as well as continued land loss. CPRA will continue to meet with communities across the coast to discuss



project impacts through their Coastal Connections program as well as public meetings for coastal restoration plans and diversions. Since December 2016, 90 meetings have been held.

“Part of fishing Louisiana is about adjusting to changing conditions,” Landry said. “Of course, we deal with high rivers and dirty water sometimes, but these rivers are the lifeblood of our coast. We lost all our marsh west of the river in Buras in the last 10 years. I and a lot of others had to adjust by fishing east of the river or moving to other parts of the state. Hopefully, we’ll be adjusting to new marsh being built soon instead of just marsh being lost.” ■

Grand Isle: Indian Blanket wildflowers grow on the Corps-built levee that protects the island from dissolving into the Gulf of Mexico.

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10 tips to finding **BIG TROUT** in the surf

By Sammy Romano

Stop wasting time surf fishing under hopeless conditions; follow these steps to increase your chances of success.

In south Louisiana, the speckled trout is widely revered as the most sought-after inshore gamefish, and a really big speckled trout is the pinnacle of inshore angling for many anglers. Each spring speckled trout migrate to the barrier islands and beaches along the coastline to feast on the massive schools of baitfish gathering there at the same time. Savvy anglers follow them to the surf. Here are ten tips to help you target speckled trout, especially larger ones, in the surf this May.

continued



Photo by Will Drost

1. PAY ATTENTION TO THE WEATHER

Perhaps no other factor is more important to the success of a surf-fishing trip than the weather. The Gulf of Mexico is a large body of water, and it can easily become so rough that it is unfishable. Fortunately, these days it is easy to check both the marine forecast and real-time buoy reports online. I generally look for seas of less than 3 feet, with a 6-second or longer interval (the timing between the waves) and winds of 10 knots or less. Light, southeasterly winds are ideal because they usually push clean water in towards the beach, as well as baitfish. West winds are usually the kiss of death and should be avoided at all costs.

2. PLAN YOUR TRIP TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TIDAL MOVEMENT

The tide is a key consideration when targeting speckled trout, especially larger

ones. Tidal movement concentrates baitfish, and larger speckled trout, being ambush predators, prefer to lie in wait, allowing the tide to bring their meals to them. Larger trout usually feed best during the last hour of an incoming tide or the first hour of a falling tide, especially during larger tides. This requires them to expend less energy to feed. I prefer a tidal range of .75-1.2 feet, but I've been successful with more or less tide; you merely have to adjust your timing or location to find the fish. My favorite tide is incoming, as it usually brings cleaner water to the beach.

3. FISH LOCATIONS WITH STRUCTURE THAT WILL HOLD FISH

At a casual glance, most beaches seem featureless beneath the water; however, nothing could be farther from the truth. Besides the obvious structures above the surface, such as tips of islands and



A stringer full of big speckled trout is a distinct possibility in May and June.

passes or cuts, sandbars serve as underwater structure to which big trout relate. Being the ambush predators that they are, big speckled trout love to sit on the bottom of slightly deeper holes, out of the main force of the waves and current, allowing baitfish to wash over them and striking them from below. Find these slightly deeper areas, and you will often find the trout.

4. FIND THE BAIT

Fish areas with concentrations of baitfish. Large speckled trout primarily feed on fish, so if you find baitfish, you often find trout. Look for nervous baitfish, such as rafted mullet or flipping pogies. These often indicate the presence of predators such as big trout, whereas relaxed or loafing bait usually means just the opposite. I have had success in dirty water that was full of baitfish, but rarely in clean water with scarce bait.

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5. KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN

Be observant of your surroundings at all times. Watch for diving birds, which can indicate the presence of specks forcing bait to the surface. Oily slicks on the water's surface also often indicates feeding fish below it. Remember that feeding fish are often upcurrent of the slick, as it takes a little while for the oil to rise to the surface of the water. Also, look for wave patterns to identify troughs that might hold fish.

6. FISH WITH THE RIGHT TYPES OF LURES

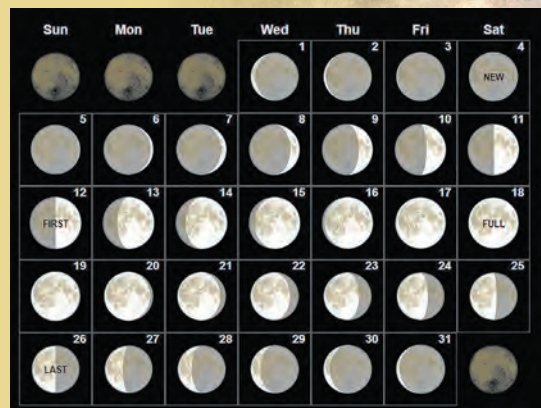
Certain lure types favor catching larger trout. Topwater and suspending hard baits such as MirrOdines, and suspending soft lures like Paul Brown's Corky, Fat Boy and Soft-Dine XL are known big trout producers. These lures have the profile of a larger baitfish, and they suspend in the strike zone longer, often proving irresistible to larger trout.

continued

Fish full and new moon weekends in May to catch bigger trout

Moon phases seem to have a major effect on speckled trout fishing, especially when it comes to catching big trout in the months of April, May and June. Fishing around the two major phases of the moon (full and new) not only increases your chances of catching a trophy fish, but usually leads to a larger average size of the fish on your stringer. The actual day of a full or new moon usually isn't the most productive, but several days before and after each of these two phases, with the full moon being my favorite. There are varying theories as to why this is the case; but from an angler's perspective, the reason doesn't matter as much as the results.

Perhaps it's because the full and new moon phases usually coincide with the strongest tides of the month, and speckled trout typically spawn in strong currents. Trout often feed heavily for several days before and after these two phases, and females producing roe (usually larger than males) make up a larger portion of the catch. The phases of the moon are predictable, and when possible, you should try to schedule your fishing trips during the four or five days leading up to or just after these two moon phases.



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7. FIND CLEAN WATER IF POSSIBLE

While not absolutely necessary for success, clean water certainly helps. That being said, I don't like it to be crystal clear. My favorite water is slightly off-colored or "trout green" water. Super-clean water often brings "gangster" species such as Spanish mackerel and bluefish to the beach. This can be frustrating when they start biting off expensive lures. Besides, speckled trout have keen vision, and slightly off-colored water helps maintain the illusion that your lure is something alive and edible, not a piece of plastic sporting treble hooks.

8. BE STEALTHY

Although they are a vicious predator, speckled trout, especially those in the surf, are not at the top of the food chain. Trout are always "looking over their shoulder," and are very sensitive to noise and vibration. This is one reason wade fishermen have an advantage in the surf, because waves slapping against the hull of a boat or trolling motor noise often spook trout. Big trout often hold close to the beach, using the shoreline to confine baitfish. Always cast from the sand first, slowly working your way out from the shore. Don't wade any deeper than necessary. The deeper you wade, the greater the chance of spooking trout, and the harder it becomes to fish. Be quiet

The first hour of a moving tide, headed up or down, is usually the most productive for trout in the surf.



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and make long casts, wading slowly to avoid making pressure waves in the water. The calmer the seas, the more essential stealth becomes.

9. BE PATIENT

If you are confident in the area you are fishing, whether from past experience or because of appearance, and you have favorable conditions, give it time and have patience. Big trout do not always follow the playbook exactly, and they feed when they are ready. Conditions on the beach change throughout the day and slight changes in water clarity, temperature, or barometric pressure can trigger a trout bite at any time. Remember, you can't catch a big trout if you aren't fishing!

10. BE AWARE OF THE MOON PHASE WHEN PLANNING A TRIP

The phase of the moon has an effect on trout fishing, especially the average size of fish. Keep this in mind when planning a trip to the surf. ■



Sammy Romano is a lifelong hunter who has worked in the archery industry for more than 25 years. His expertise includes compounds and crossbows. He can be reached at samboka31@aol.com.

Snap a pic and set it free

Big speckled trout are elusive, special fish. If you are fortunate enough to catch a trophy trout, consider releasing it after a quick photo. Really large speckled trout aren't nearly as good on the table as smaller ones, and with the quality of today's release mounts, there is no reason to remove such a precious resource from our waters.

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One of the best things about fishing on the beach is the quality of fish you often catch.



FUN AT THE BEACH BEGINS WITH SIGHTSEEING

By Todd Masson

Beaches are among the most productive of summertime destinations for speckled trout anglers, but they can also be the most intimidating. After all, there are more than 200 miles of beachfront along the Louisiana coast, and the vast majority of that stretch is about as productive for speckled trout as Toledo Bend.

So how does an angler find the relatively few areas on a beach that hold fish? It's easier than it sounds.

If every wave hit the Louisiana coast at exactly the same second, and our coast were perfectly linear with no inlets or passes, our beaches would feature straight troughs that rose to straight bars that fell to straight troughs and so on.

Anomalies along the shore provide current breaks, which allow sand to settle in certain areas. These sand ridges force current to race around them at speeds that are greater than the relative velocities of surrounding waters. This causes deep troughs to form, and sets the stage for one of nature's most thrilling shows — at least to trout anglers.

FIND THE BOTTLENECKS

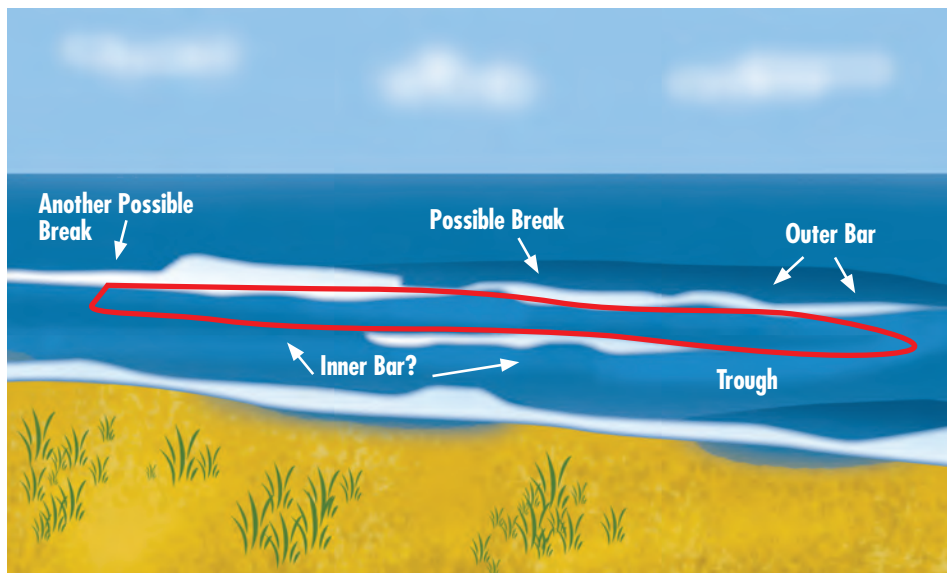
Trout use troughs as passageways to meals, and each anomaly on a beach is like a restaurant with a big neon sign that reads, "Eat at Joe's." Baitfish move along in troughs mostly unmolested because they're not grouped up enough to draw attention, but when they encounter a block in the path — an anomaly — they're forced to go around it, either by choice or by the force of the current.

Specks know it's much more efficient to lie in wait at the trough adjacent to a current break than it is to merely cruise the indistinct troughs looking for a baitfish here and a baitfish there. So that's where they group up.

Anglers who ride around looking through polarized glasses for underwater points that break the flow of relatively straight troughs will have infinitely more success on beaches than those who simply pick a spot

because they threw a dart at a map or liked the color of the birds that were nesting at that particular area.

These underwater points are especially easy to find on low tides, and wise anglers will mark potential hotspots with a GPS and return another day during high tide.



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Jon Miller predicts how the high river water will affect speckled trout movement this month and best areas to find them.

■ By Jon Miller

Inshore fishing around New Orleans is so synonymous with the beloved speckled trout, that I am convinced many south Louisiana fishermen grew up with the three species rule for inshore fish identification. There is the Baitfish, which despite its numerous manifestations has the unifying species characteristic of being food for the speckled trout. Then there is the Speckled Trout and thirdly a rather large species called Trash Fish. Within the Trash Fish species there is a subset, Edible Trash Fish. Catching these fish is described as a “meat haul,” which is code for “the speckled trout weren’t biting.”

Any event that threatens the productivity of speckled trout fishing is worrisome, but nothing strikes more fear in the heart of New Orleans anglers than the prospect of the Bonnet Carré flood control structure opening. On Feb. 27, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers began opening bays in the flood control structure and by March 19, 196 bays were releasing the brown water of the Mississippi River straight into southwestern Lake Pontchartrain at 213,000 cubic ft/second. This is enough water to refill Lake Pontchartrain in just 12 days. The Corp of Engineers closed the diversion on April 11 but the effects of the river water on trout fishing east of the Mississippi River will continue through May.

>

NEW ORLEANS EAST TROUT GUIDE



It's hard to catch speckled trout in brown river water,

and in 2019 the brown water from Bonnet Carré spread through Lake Pontchartrain, Lake Borgne, and into the Mississippi and Chandeleur Sounds.

The river water forces speckled trout in these areas into patterns not typical for the season. Adding hardship to pain, the Mississippi River is by default already pouring brown water from its mouth and numerous diversions into the bays bordering the river reaches south of New Orleans. At its peak, satellite views depicted most inshore waters east of the Mississippi River with a trout bite-killing brown stain.

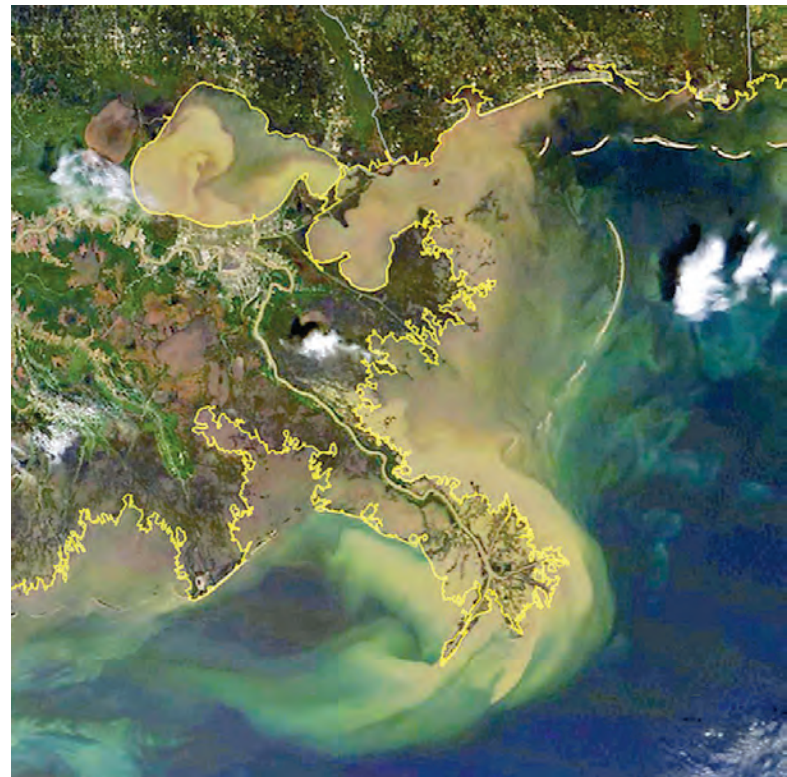
So am I stashing my trout fishing gear until summer? Certainly not, and I think you also will have renewed hope after we look at the facts surrounding river water and speckled trout behavior.

WHY DOES THE RIVER WATER TURN THE ESTUARY BROWN

From a satellite's viewpoint, the brown river water spreads quickly through the estuary, but we are seeing only the top layer of water on a satellite image. It takes time for freshwater, which initially flows on top of the denser brackish and saltwater, to dissolve salt and homogenize with the higher salinity water, so the river water can travel quickly over long distances by remaining on top of the water body.

Mixing of the water by currents and wind accelerates the homogenizing process, so shallow marsh lakes will equalize salinity faster as compared to the deep channels, where it may take a very long time to homogenize the full volume of water. Therefore, deeper channels can provide refuge from the turbidity of the river water onslaught.

The Mighty Mississippi transports silt and sand from many states and gives it to Louisiana at no charge, and it is these particles that turn the river brown and turbid when they are suspended in the water by strong currents. The Corp of Engineers reports that the opening of the Bonnet Carré will



deposit around 9 million cubic yards of sediment onto the spillway alone. Shockingly, this amount of sediment is equivalent to a football field that is 5,000 feet tall! Not all of the particles staining the marsh originated from the river water either. Some are picked up from the marsh sediments by the increased water flow due to the influx of river water.

HOW DOES THE ESTUARY CLEAN ITSELF?

The first point of good news is that the silt and sand particles are only in suspension, which means they can fall out of the water. The typical particles are at least 2.5 times heavier than freshwater or brackish water, and therefore, many particles fall out of suspension where the current slows down. In the picture on the left we can see how few particles actually exist in a sample taken from the riverside in Baton Rouge. I suspect that the abundance of brown particles we see in the marsh are actually entrained, light marsh sediment and not from the river itself.

The dropout of particles is further accelerated where sub-



FACING PAGE, BOTTOM LEFT: Particles are at least 2.5 times heavier than brackish water and many all out of suspension where the current slows down. FACING PAGE: From a satellite's viewpoint, the brown river water spreads quickly through the estuary, but we are seeing only the top layer of water on a satellite image. BELOW: The dropout of particles is further accelerated where submerged vegetation is present.

merged vegetation is present. Here, light particles become trapped on the vegetation as the water passes by and agglomerate with other particles into larger, heavy grains, which are shed and drop to the bottom as sediment. Additionally, where oysters are present, active filtering is happening. A single oyster can filter particles from water at a rate equivalent to a 55 gal. barrel each day. So, in multiple ways, the suspended particles from river water are removed and this returns the estuary water to its typical clarity.



WHY DO TROUT LEAVE BROWN RIVER WATER?

Firstly, speckled trout are a euryhaline fish species, so the negligible salinity in the river water is not a physiological hazard. We do know that large trout stay in high salinity water by preference, but for the majority of our trout population, living in low salinity water is normal for the colder months of the year.

If not the low salinity, what drives the trout away from the river water? A heavy concentration of suspended solids in water will negatively affect the respiration of fish and induce stress leading to greater energy consumption. I imagine that the effect on the fish is similar to the gagging we feel when breathing in dust, and our response is to move out of the dust cloud.



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However, it is my belief that the major factor driving away the trout is the deterioration of their feeding conditions. Speckled trout are primarily an ambush, sight feeding species. And while sight is aided by sound wave receptors in a trout's lateral lines, my experience suggests trout still need at least 6 inches of visibility through the water in order to feed, and the visibility in a heavy concentration of river water can be just a few inches. Light penetration is also reduced by the particles, which further reduces their ability to see food.

All these factors can push the feeding energy balance into the negative range causing trout to move away from river water in search of better water conditions.

HOW TO FISH THE AFTERMATH OF THE SPILLWAY OPENING

The opening of the Bonnet Carré diversion caused the majority of the trout to prematurely leave areas where they would otherwise be in May. Despite the spillway now being closed, the Mississippi River remains high, and a significant volume of river water continues to flow into the marshes along the river and into Breton Sound.

This abundance of river water will not stop you from catching trout but it will force you to adjust your fishing strategy.

I will still search for trout in the same general regions of the estuary east of the river, because telemetry studies on speckled trout from Florida, Louisiana, and Texas have shown that most trout remain in the estuary where they grow up, or within a 30 mile region.

One example are the studies down in Calcasieu Lake from 2007 - 2009, supported by the Louisiana



Jake Bernard (left) and Josh Borchers (right) fishing in Delacroix, Louisiana catching a limit of speckled trout.

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (Sex Differences in Residency of Adult Spotted Seatrout in a Louisiana Estuary). They inserted transmitters in speckled trout and used tracking buoys to observe their movements. The results showed that most trout remained inside the lake or only left temporarily in the summer despite periods of high Calcasieu River flow when the turbidity of the lake was high. This study demonstrated that trout can sustain themselves in an estuary being inundated by fresh, turbid water.



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Based on the telemetry study results, the trout should remain in Louisiana waters on the east side of the river, but they will concentrate in pockets of clearer water and along the leading edge of the river water plume, where they can successfully feed. This creates an advantage for anglers, concentrating the trout in the best water. However, it is important to consider whether the area with clear water is a large enough habitat to retain fish.

To find the pockets of clearer water within an area inundated with river water, look in ponds with submerged grass or in areas where the water flow is slow enough to allow dropout of particles. There will also be clearer water deep in channels like the MRGO.

Be an acute observer when looking for adequately clear water. A subtle increase in the visibility can be enough for trout to feed when bait is present, but do not waste time fishing in opaque water even if it has bait sized finfish.

Some of the cleanest water will be in dead-end canals, so these are worth investigating, but do not invest a lot of time in dead-end canals if there is not any evidence of bait and no response on your line after 15 minutes. Dead-end canals can be low in dissolved oxygen, making them undesirable.

Use the salinity data from the USGS Stream Flow stations to find the edges of the river water plume along with the daily satellite images from sites such as MODIS Today and NASA WORLDVIEW. The edges of the plume can be used as guide-



posts for where the clearer water begins and can even identify large pockets of clear water, which appear dark relative to the brown river water. ■



Jon Miller is an engineer, lifetime fisherman, and host of the YouTube channel Jon Miller Fishing.

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HOW THE RIVER WATER AFFECTS THE 2019 SPAWN

Trout sense when it is time to spawn by rising water temperature and the length of daylight. However, the river has kept affected waters cooler leading up to the 2019 spawn. The river water is colder than the gulf water, dropping inshore water temperatures east of the river below normal.

This colder water counteracts the trout's instincts to leave the marsh in April and May. Therefore in May, don't be surprised to find breeding-sized trout in clearer upper estuary ponds and lakes which are not directly impacted by the influx of river water.

However, by the end of May, the egg development in female trout will instinctively spur them to find higher salinity water in preparation for spawning. Because of the abundance of river water, they will need to adjust where they go either by traveling to areas closer to the Gulf of Mexico or toward areas less inundated by the river water.

BY THE END OF MAY, TROUT WILL MOVE TO HIGH SALINITY WATERS.

The distance they need to travel depends on the strength of May tides, wind speed and wind direction. Strong tides will increase the salinity in inshore waters, and to a lesser degree, strong south and southeast winds will also cause an increase in salinity. Fortunately there are strong tides predicted for the second half of May, and if the winds do not block the tides or if they assist with strong south winds, the trout may not have to travel far to find high salinity water.

From an angler's viewpoint, the best scenario is for high salinity water to be present on the edges of the marsh. Otherwise, anglers will have to travel longer distances across open water to reach spawning trout in June.

Monitoring water salinity using the USGS Stream Flow stations throughout the month of May can help point anglers in the right direction about where to look for pre-spawn trout. Fishery biologists have designated a salinity range of 17 ppt to full salt-water as the typical breeding conditions.

However, I have had epic

days catching limits of larger trout in actual salinity of around 10 ppt in August (See my YouTube video titled Amped Up on Epic Speckled Trout Action), so there is some variance on where spawning trout can be found. Salinity plays a role in effective fertilization of the eggs, because salinity increases water density and provides additional buoyancy to the eggs and sperm, which interact while floating.

Since May is considered to be a pre-spawn month for speckled trout in Louisiana, it is not necessary to target the spawning salinity range. However, we are likely to be most successful targeting either clear water lakes in the upper estuary or lower estuary areas where the Gulf waters have mixed with the river water and provided greater clarity. Use the salinity gauges to look for areas with high concentrations as an indicator of clearer water.

Unfortunately, we are unlikely to find trout on the Lake Ponchartrain bridges, but there will be some trout in the lake where clearer water exists. ■

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JAKAMO SEVEN ROCK

7 TIPS FOR MAY SUCCESS AT THE MRGO ROCKS

In the experience of Capt. Jacques Jakamo Laboureux, speckled trout season always starts up at the Rocks at the end of the MRGO, and this month is when it happens.

EASY PEASY

"If you need reasons to fish the rocks this month, here's a handful" he said. "It's easy to get there even in a smaller boat. To fish the Sound you really need a big boat, but almost anybody with an outboard motor on a decent flatboat can fish the rocks. It provides a long stretch of fishable area and you are protected on just about everything but a southeast wind; you won't burn a whole lot of fuel, and there should be reds and specks to greet you so it's a no-brainer this month."

Laboureux (504-303-1494) said you usually don't have to run all the way to the rocks to find fish, especially early in the month.

SEVEN ROCK SUCCESS

"The action actually starts anywhere along the MRGO on the Breton Sound side of the dam, and we often have our fish before we get as far as the rocks," he said.

His tips for May success:



Capt. Jacques "Jakamo" Laboureux with a beautiful red.

1. FISH THE FLATS ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE MRGO.


Patrol the shoreline from the other side of the dam heading towards the outside waters, and wherever you see a good shallow flat, you want to investigate. Go in very slow so you don't spook the fish.

2. LOOK FOR BAIT IN THE WATER.

Stop and fish wherever you see baitfish activity, especially if you see shrimp jumping. Make sure you have a baitwell stocked with some healthy, live shrimp, and fish them under a popping cork. Put your Power Pole down when you find fish and see if you can put some numbers in the boat. When the action ends, move.

3. DON'T RUSH OFF AND LEAVE A PRODUCTIVE AREA.

Sometimes just a short move using your trolling motor will put you back in the action.



Once you get to the rocks, fish both towards them and out into the channel. Background: Almost anybody with an outboard motor on a decent flatboat can fish the rocks.

4. FISH YOUR WAY TOWARDS THE MRGO ROCKS.

Try several of the flats, repeat what worked. You should pick up trout and reds along the way.

5. ONCE YOU GET TO THE ROCKS, FISH BOTH TOWARDS THEM AND OUT INTO THE CHANNEL.

Here you want to fish your live shrimp 4 to 5 feet deep under a cork.

6. YOU CAN FISH BOTTOM, OR JUST ABOVE IT, BUT NOT WITH A SLIDING SINKER RIG, WHICH WILL SNAG UP EVERY CAST.

Instead, try a couple of split-shots a few inches above your hook, cast it out and let it sink. You can also try a drop shot rig if you use no more than a ¼-ounce sinker, but be prepared to lose some tackle.

7. FISH THE GAPS IN THE ROCKS, THE CUT AND THE PLACES WHERE WATER WASHES OVER THE PARTIALLY SUB-MERGED ROCKS.

You can also try tossing a top-water bait for some explosive action if the conditions allow it, or tight-lining some plastic if you can keep it from snagging in the rocks, but the best and most productive bait is going to be live shrimp under a cork.

Laboureur said any moving current will produce, whether rising or falling, and as for best and worst wind conditions, he says the worst case scenario is to have strong winds blowing in from either the southeast or from the northwest, either of which blows straight down the MRGO and makes for very rough conditions. ■

— Rusty Tardo

Check out Capt. Laboureur's website at jakamosouth.com.

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CALCASIEU LAKE

FISH THE REEFS AND UNDER THE BIRDS THIS MAY FOR EASY LIMITS.

If you aren't catching speckled trout under the birds in May at Calcasieu Lake, you'll want to be on the lower end of the lake system targeting speckled trout roaming around artificial reefs.

Nick Poe, a charter captain in his 11th year of guiding and the son of Jeff and Mary Poe — who own Big Lake Guide Service — said as much on an unseasonably cold morning in late March. At the time, salinity was high and fishing was fair to good for speckled trout, with smaller fish dominating the catches.

FIND THE BIRDS; YOU'LL FIND THE TROUT

Poe was looking forward to fishing in May, knowing full well the bite should be good wherever he finds birds pickin'. And if he's catching small speckled trout on a soft plastic under the birds and there's a chop on the water, he'll switch gears to serve up a chrome/pink, chrome/black or chrome/blue MirrOlure She Pup, a smaller artificial lure, because the bigger speckled trout are suckers for smaller baits, he said.

Much of the time, though, will be spent around artificial reefs on the lake's south end, plus an artificial reef in the mid-lake area, all in 5- to 7-foot depths.

For sure, the rest of the spring future looks bright considering the way the speckled trout have been biting consistently in early spring, he said. He expects more to be caught as they head south.

IF THE BIRDS AREN'T FLYING, FISH THE REEFS

"They start moving south by May, when the water temperature starts getting up. If you're not fishing the birds, fish the reefs on the south end

of the lake," Poe said. "Really and truly, all the artificial reefs, all the numbers, you can find them (speckled trout) anywhere you want to."

Barring torrential rains in the early spring, the salinity ought to be perfect.

"Salinities are real high right now," he said. "It's weird. It's been five, six years since we've had high salinities this time of year."

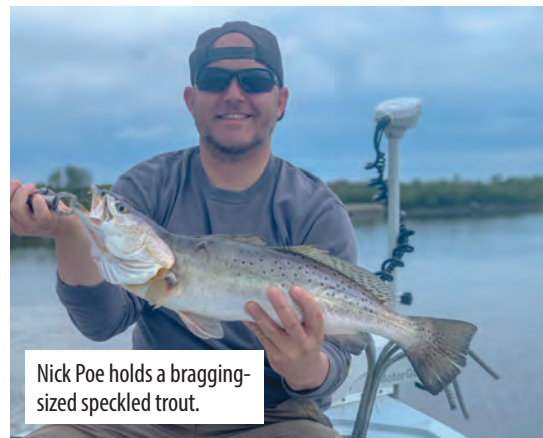
That's how the table's set for hooking and reeling in speckled trout in May. Poe can't wait to head to the artificial reef just east of the Old Jetties or the artificial reef built within the past three years just west of the rock pile.

"The (artificial) reefs really have helped us out a lot," he said. "I wish we could get our regular oysters back."

HOW TO

APPROACH A REEF

"One of the most productive reefs on the lake last year was Jack Lawton (Big Jack's) Reef. It's been really productive the last few years, especially about May," he said. The reef's coordinates are N29 53.248 W93 16.937.



Nick Poe holds a bragging-sized speckled trout.

The key to catching speckled trout on those artificial reefs is in the approach to each site and, later, the method of fishing it. Poe said he gets off plane about a quarter-mile from where he plans to fish, then

continues >



Jeff Poe on a foggy day with a nice speckled trout.

Photos courtesy of Nick Poe



Aerial Photo Map of
Calcasieu Lake
 Post Katrina, Rita, Ike

LA Post Hurricanes
#54b



Speckled trout are on artificial reefs in May.



TROUT HOTSPOTS

idles to within approximately 600 feet, shutting the outboard engine off and putting the trolling motor down.

Try to use everything (weather conditions and tidal movement) to your advantage, he advised. Remember, he said, there is a predominantly south wind in May, so drift downwind and use the trolling motor as sparingly as possible.

Coordinates for other artificial reefs that produce in May on Big Lake:

- Chenire/LSU South: N29 50.979 W93 17.024
- Lambert Reef: N29 50.441 W93 16.850

LURE CHOICE

Ninety-nine percent of the time at artificial reefs, Poe fishes with a soft plastic, specifically a MirrOlure Lil John on a ¼-ounce lead-head. He sticks with about four colors, starting with watermelon/red, he confided. His other favorites are opening night (one of his dad's favorites, too), golden bream and glow.



Nick Poe releases a big redfish.

"Watermelon/red's good pretty much in any situation. It's a decent dirty water bait," he said. "I don't fish with a whole lot of colors. I try to fish with one that works. I tell people all the time, 'It doesn't matter what the color is, if you've got confidence in it, you'll probably catch.'"

Poe's basic rule of thumb for soft plastics is to throw translucent colors when the water's pretty, and gold, black and purple in dirty water.

Also on tap, there's no time like May to catch bull reds in the mid-lake area of Calcasieu Lake, Poe said. The area's close to most access points; you don't have to get natural bait, and you don't have to travel far as you would for slot redfish this time of year.

Bull reds travel in schools there, so it's sometimes challenging to keep up with them day-to-day, he said. To locate them, look for birds — specifically terns — slicks and muddy areas in the lake. Muddy patches in the mid-lake area could mean bull reds or shrimpers, so if you don't see a shrimper around, get ready to bust some bull reds.

Bull reds feed against the current, and the schools move very fast. On an incoming tide, generally they're west, southwest, and on an outgoing tide, moving northeast. Stay ahead of them. Draw a mental picture of where they are and where they're going, anticipate.

They can be caught on anything you've got in your tackle box when they're up and eating, Poe said. If an artificial lands in front of them they're going to eat it. ■

— Don Shoopman

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BIG LAKE FLOUNDER RUN

KAYAK ANGLER SHARES TIPS TO LAND SOME DOORMATS

For kayak anglers fishing a Cajun Slam tournament — where they need to catch a flounder, a speckled trout and a redfish — the always elusive doormat has definitely shattered the dreams of many hoping to finish in the money.

But Mike Malone, president of the Elite Kayak Club out of Big Lake, is a firm believer in Berkley Gulp's chartreuse Swimming Mullet when he needs to find a flounder. It works around Big Lake, and just about any other coastal marsh across the coast, he said.

"If I have money on the line, I'm dragging a Gulp," Malone said with a chuckle. "If anything, I'll change from a chartreuse to a pearl white. From there, I might throw a Mantis Shrimp in nickel penny to change up the profile."

Malone typically

uses an 1/8-ounce jighead in the fairly shallow water he fishes in his kayak.

"I like throwing an 1/8(-ounce), but I know guys who throw 1/4- and 3/8," he said. "If it's a deep hole and you want to get down there fast, just throw a little heavier weight."

THE KEY TO FINDING FLATFISH

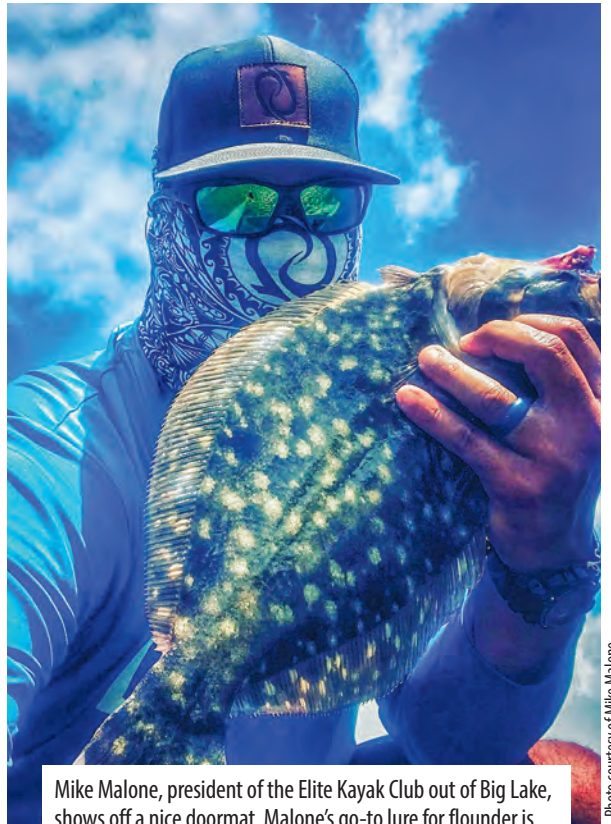
The key, Malone said, is to locate a drop-off, which will give you the best opportunity to catch a flatfish.

"I'm trying to find a cut leading into a marsh that's got a depth difference. So a drop-off of just a couple of feet makes a big difference," he said. "They're sitting in these cuts with water movement in or out, and they'll just be in there gorging."

"Work it down the ledge, so throw it along the grass and let it fall. They're waiting for more baitfish to come over the top of them."

Most of the action happens up and down the Calcasieu Ship Channel from Hackberry to the Cameron Jetties, said Stansel, one of three brothers who co-own the Hackberry Rod and Gun Club. Any nooks or points can harbor the hungry flatfish, or they might be on a ledge in 10-foot depths, he said.

Some of the more likely places to hook up with doormats are at the Older River Washout and the jetties. Look for eddies in



Mike Malone, president of the Elite Kayak Club out of Big Lake, shows off a nice doormat. Malone's go-to lure for flounder is Berkley Gulp's Swimming Mullet in chartreuse or pearl white.

Photo courtesy of Mike Malone



Photo courtesy of Mike Malone

Some of Mike Malone's favorite lures to catch flounder are Berkley Gulp's Swimming Mullet in chartreuse (bottom) or pearl white (center), or Gulp's Mantis Shrimp (top) in pearl white/chartreuse. Malone favors Yellowmouth jigheads from Cajun Lures because of their three-collared barbs that really keep soft plastics in place.

the shallows and fish slowly, dragging the bottom with your presentation, and probe the depths.

Another hotspot that gives up plenty of flounder to anglers in boats as well as wade fishermen is the area around Louisiana 182 between the Gulf of Mexico and the Cameron Ferry.

Malone, 34, of Ragley, had been hammering male trout in the Big Lake area in March that had already returned to the marsh from offshore. The bite isn't exactly subtle, but Malone said doormats are famous for spitting the hook.

"They thump it — they really stop the

bait," he said. "If you're reeling in bumping the bottom on a tight-line, your line will jump. From that point, they have it. They're eating it, so you don't have to rip the lips off of them like you do a bass.

"It's more like reeling down and setting the hook at the same time."

Some additional flounder tips Malone shared: Tie on a fluorocarbon leader, and bring plenty of tackle.



Kendall Mullins shows off a stringer featuring a nice limit of flounder from a recent trip in marshes near Big Lake. If you can find a good cut leading into a marsh featuring a drop-off, that's a great spot to target doormats.

"You are literally just bumping it on the bottom, so you will snag up on oysters if they're present," he said. "Bring a couple bags of baits — know that going in."

The fluorocarbon leader has a couple of advantages, he said. "I throw 50-pound braid, but I tie on a 15-pound fluorocarbon leader to allow a little stretch in that line. I used to tie on straight braid, but I've had problems breaking hooks and bending hooks out because there is no stretch with braid," Malone said. "Plus, it also helps out when you get a little fray — the fluorocarbon is easy to retie." ■

— Patrick Bonin

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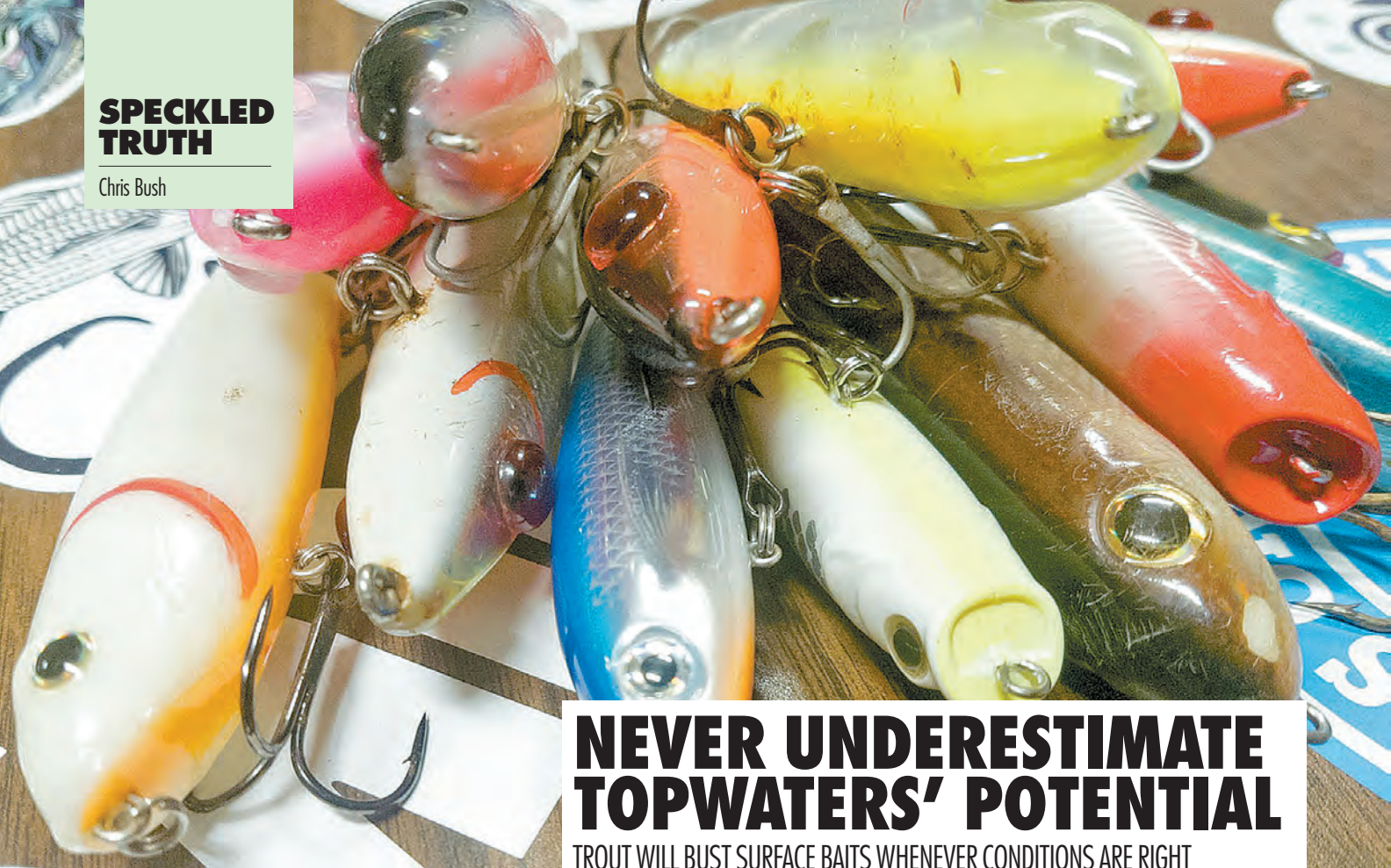
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SPECKLED TRUTH

Chris Bush



NEVER UNDERESTIMATE TOPWATERS' POTENTIAL

TROUT WILL BUST SURFACE BAITS WHENEVER CONDITIONS ARE RIGHT

Before we dive into this month's discussion about topwater plugs, take a step back in time with me.

In May 2014, I reached the pinnacle of my trout-fishing endeavors. With noble intent to learn more about my "new" homewaters of Corpus Christi, Texas, I was covering an area with a MirrOlure She Dog when an 11-pound giant, 30½ inches long and 17¼ inches in girth, rudely interrupted my quest.

The take was subtle. Over the crest of a wave caused by a strong east wind, I saw a noticeable swirl, and my line went tight. What followed was a remarkable head shake I compare to an underwater coffee can and a fight I'll never forget.

Earmarked by shot nerves and a quivering voice, I called and messaged those close to me on my accomplishment. Capstoning the event was even more impressive. Truth be told, I botched the attempt to release the fish, and since her fate was decided, I chose to clean her after I made the 2½-hour trek back to San Antonio. What I found was mind blowing. As I ran the filet knife down her stomach cavity, a 15-inch trout emerged. A world-class fish had what I considered a "nice trout" in her mid-section, yet was still searching

for the dessert to an already healthy meal — fortunately for me it was my topwater!

LIMITLESS POTENTIAL

Now let's fast forward and discuss how that relates to the topic at hand. I reflect on that story to show the true capability topwater baits possess. We all know you give up bites when fishing surface plugs. Heck, if I had a dollar for every time I heard an angler say, "I'd rather catch 'X' quality trout on topwater versus a limit on a jig or live bait," a Powerball ticket would seem secondary.

Instead, I'd suggest fishing topwaters and truly understanding how their limitless upside allows you to fish them confidently.

So how do I know when to fish topwater? The answer is, year-round.

Seasonal trends as well as micro-weather events can determine a good surface bite even if the months don't coincide with fishing literature.

In other words, a warmer-than-normal winter can keep the topwater bite steady, even if it's January or February. Going a step further, more acute weather anomalies can lead to periods — or days — when topwaters can be effective. In short, steady or spikes in water temperature

as a result of rising air temperature can excite big fish in a surface environment.

The other equally important question is, "What plugs should I throw?" Despite limitless options, my encouragement is to keep it simple within the parameters of size, sound, color and profile.

PROFILE AND SIZE

Size and profile go hand-in-hand. A general rule of thumb is to match the lure to the conditions and baitfish in the area.

In clear skies and clear water, I'll choose smaller-profile lures like Heddon Spook Jr, MirrOlure MirrOmullet or MirrOlure Top Pups. In the event, larger finfish are present or conditions become less than perfect, I'll upsize to a Heddon One Knocker, MirrOlure Top Dog Jr. or YoZuri 3DR Series Pencil.

Remember, topwater baits mimic baitfish, primarily mullet, so choose the best combination of size and profile to achieve that result.

SOUND

Of the four characteristics, I believe sound is the most important. I call it audible presence. Lures like MirrOlure She Dogs or He Dogs have a tremendous audible presence. In clear, calm conditions, the

high-pitch presence can be overpowering.

The same can be said when conditions are less than ideal too. Having a bait that "hunts" because of wave action on a pronounced pause can draw just as many ferocious strikes as a consistent walk-the-dog cadence.

Again match the audible presence to the conditions; it can be the difference in success or failure.

COLOR

In my opinion, I find color the least important of the four. The color spectrum varies widely, but keeping in line with our simple approach, basic colors often get the job done.

In colder months, I find nontraditional or brighter patterns more productive. I attribute this to clarity and density. Clarity fluctuates, but trout-green water in the winter looks totally different than trout-green water in the summer. The only thing I can attribute that to is water density as a result of water temperature.

With less substrate in the water column and generally more overcast skies brought about by weather events, the contrast seemingly works well. Outside of that, I stick to natural colors, as well as chartreuse, pearl, bone, gold, silver and pink.

Additionally, custom color patterns are something to consider if you're looking to be different from other anglers on the water.



PICKING A PLUG:

In general, go with smaller topwater baits under clear skies and in clear water; Upsize on overcast days or when water conditions are less than perfect. Similarly, go with brighter colors on overcast days and natural colors on bright-sky days.

Topwaters have limitless upside year-round when looking for that once-in-a-lifetime trout. As a result, remain encouraged and draw confidence from the past that if there is a trophy in your midst, chances are they'll eat your bait.

Until next month, tight lines, God bless, and take what you need and release the rest. ■



Chris Bush is an Air Force officer and a licensed charter captain, husband and father. He spends his time targeting big speckled trout and sharing knowledge on his website, Speckled Trout.

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PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

Chris Holmes

TOWING THE LINE(S)



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.

An often-overlooked but highly successful technique for catching trout from a kayak is trolling. Sure, some folks slow-troll in the winter, but if you don't try this fish-catching magic at this time of the year, you are missing out.

While pedal kayaks make trolling much easier, it can also be done while paddling. To make things easier, a little rigging should be employed. Set up two adjustable rod holders on each side of the cockpit, within easy reach while in your normal, sitting position. Rod holders that adjust forward and back as well as up and down allow you to get the rods in just the correct position to get your trolled lures to run where and how deep you want. Having the reels in easy reach lets you react much faster when a strike occurs.

LIMIT YOUR LINES

Yes, it is possible to troll more than two lines at once, but it is almost certain to end in disaster. Two lines are more manageable and efficient.

With the days heating up and trout leaving the interior marshes on their way towards the outside, you can often intercept them in deeper canals and bayous. A depth finder is invaluable for finding fish and getting a look at the water depths and bottom contours.

Placing your rods in a more horizontal position spreads the lures and helps to avoid tangles. The more line you let out allows the lures to run deeper. This will have to be adjusted to match current conditions and there really is no set formula. However, try to make note of how much line you let out or how far back you cast so that it can reasonably be repeated when you catch a fish and need to get your lines back out.



CONTINUES >

Kayaks are great platforms for trolling for trout. Give this underutilized technique a try to load your stringer with specks any time of the year.

PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

continued

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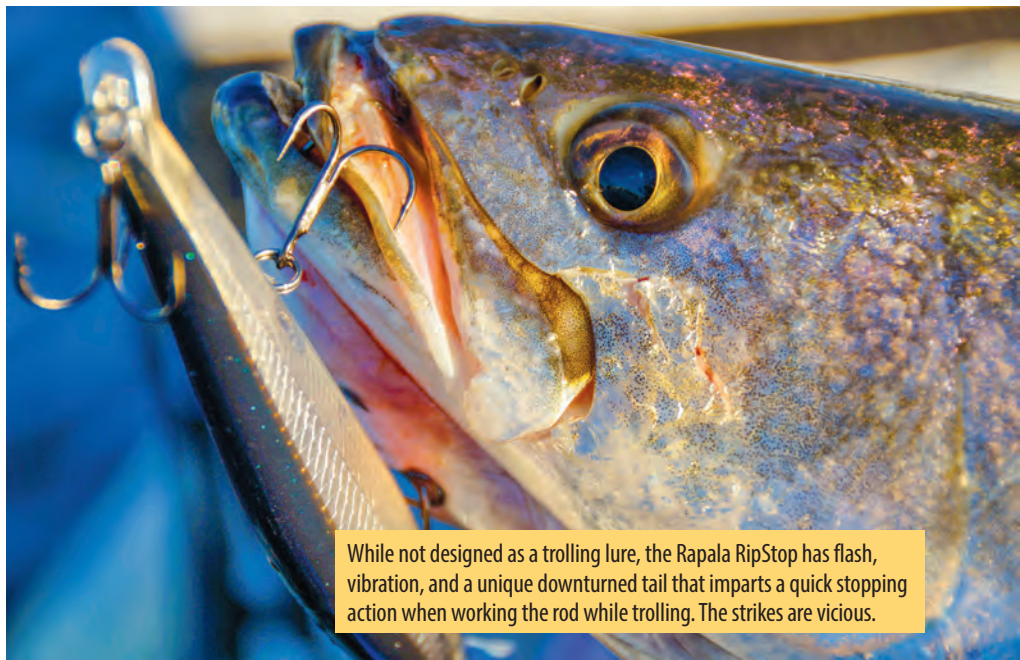
KEEP STEADY PACE

Try to keep a steady pace so the lures stay at a speed between 1.5 and 2.0 miles per hour. This is pretty much normal traveling speed and will be easy to maintain. This is another way a depth finder with GPS comes in handy, as your speed is visible on the screen. Strikes are usually aggressive, and the rod will bend or jerk when a trout hits. Don't immediately grab for the rod. When the strike occurs, give a couple of quick pedals or paddle strokes, to help set the hook before grabbing the rod.

PROVEN PRODUCERS

Almost any lure you can cast and retrieve makes a good trolling bait, but there are a few that are proven producers. The H&H Usual Suspect is an internally weighted, soft-plastic swimbait that works great when trolled. It has a paddletail that gives off constant vibration, and the flat bottom keeps it upright when trolled. While it is great trolled as a single bait, it is even more effective when tied as a double rig. If a fish strikes, wait an extra few seconds before reeling, and you'll often get a double hook-up.

There are a couple baits that aren't designed for trolling but work exceptionally well. The Rapala Shadow Rap, Shadow Rap Shad and the RipStop are all stickbaits with a small lip and lots of flash. They swim with a nice vibration and run upright when trolled at moderate speeds. The Shadow Rap is a suspending bait with a slow sink rate, and the Shadow Rap Shad rises when stopped. The RipStop is great for trolling with one rod in your hand to impart extra action. Pulling the bait with a slow, forward sweep of the rod and then a quick stop gives it an erratic action and flash that draws vicious strikes. Old favorites



While not designed as a trolling lure, the Rapala RipStop has flash, vibration, and a unique downturned tail that imparts a quick stopping action when working the rod while trolling. The strikes are vicious.

like Rat-L-Traps, Sparkle Beetles and Gulp curlytails are also deadly trolling lures.

VARY AMOUNT OF LINE

Start off varying the amount of line you let out so that your baits are running at different depths. Try different style lures and different colors on each rod. Once you see which is working best, you can run the same lures on both rods.

Trolling lures with exposed hooks, especially treble hooks, can be difficult in areas with lots of grass. Just a tiny amount of grass on your lure affects the action and almost never gets a strike. Often you'll notice a difference in the vibration of your

rod tip, but it is a good practice to reel your lines in every few minutes to check them if you are not getting any action. To help with trolling in grassy areas, try using an in-line spinner with the hook imbedded in the soft-plastic tail or a weedless silver spoon. Make sure to attach a swivel to your spoon to avoid line twist.

Trolling is a simple and effective method for catching trout from a kayak. Using nothing more than your normal pedaling/paddling speed and a couple of rods sitting in a rod holder can get the job done. Also, if you're out for a topwater or popping cork day, consider trolling your way from spot to spot. If you have a lure in the water, you have a chance of getting bit. ■



Towing a variety of hard and soft baits behind the kayak is deadly effective for speckled trout.



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By Kinny Haddox

No matter where you bass fish in Louisiana, from the largest reservoir to rivers and natural lakes, bass follow traditional patterns in the spring. Knowing them helps you catch more fish.

When water temperatures begin to rise, the fish move shallow to spawn. They are usually easy to pinpoint around shallow banks, grass beds, boat docks and trees. It's like a party for bass fishermen who don't have to search as hard to get on the fish. But when the spawn ends, many fishermen tend to have a harder time catching them. That doesn't have to be the case.

GO HOME UP NEXT >

THE AFTER PARTY

WHERE DO BASS GO AFTER THEY SPAWN?





GO HOME

Nine times out of 10, after the spawn, bass retrace the path that brought them into shallow water. They return to the areas where they staged before the spawn and hold there. These are places like the edge of a feeder creek, a stump row or a drop-off with a noticeable change in water depth near the spawning grounds.

Bass are usually tough to catch when they first make that move, even if you locate them. They are tired from the spawn and in rough shape. But within a week or so, they recover and start looking for something to eat. That's when the after party starts.

EAT OUT

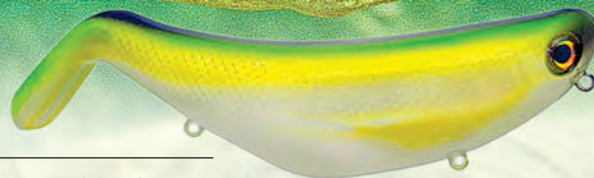
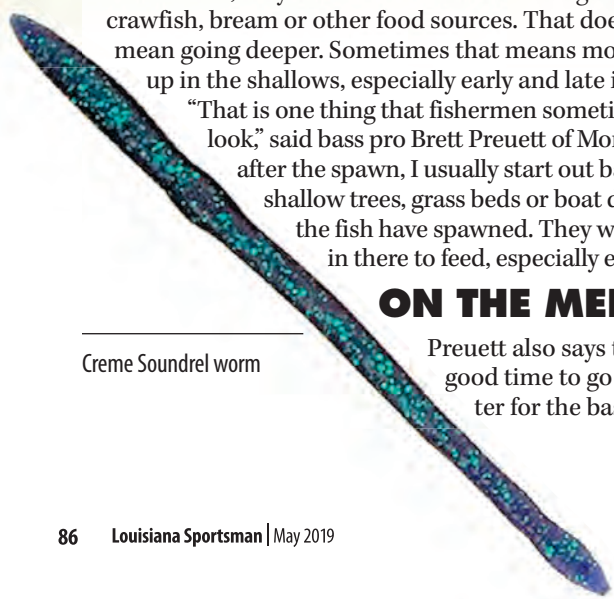
If there are baitfish in those staging areas, they'll stay there. If not, they will be on the move looking for shad, crawfish, bream or other food sources. That doesn't always mean going deeper. Sometimes that means moving back up in the shallows, especially early and late in the day.

"That is one thing that fishermen sometimes overlook," said bass pro Brett Preuett of Monroe. "Even after the spawn, I usually start out back in the shallow trees, grass beds or boat docks where the fish have spawned. They will go back in there to feed, especially early."

ON THE MENU

Preuett also says that is a good time to go topwater for the bass, even

Creme Soundrel worm



Rat-L-Trap StutterStep 4.0

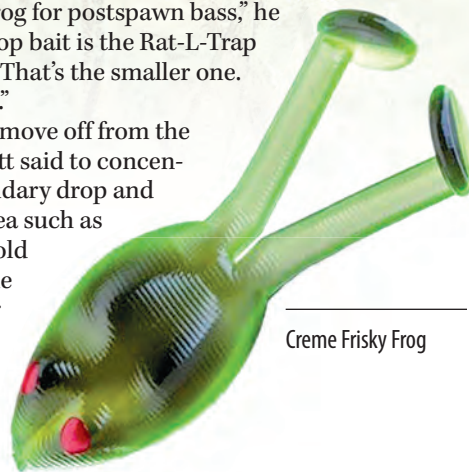
though most people still fish creature baits, jigs or other bottom bumping lures.

"I love a buzzbait like the Boo-Yah Buzz Blade or a Creme Frisky Frog for postspawn bass," he says. "Another top bait is the Rat-L-Trap StutterStep 4.0. That's the smaller one. They'll eat it up."

When the fish move off from the shallows, Preuett said to concentrate on a secondary drop and cover in that area such as a grass bed, an old ditch with a little deeper water or stumps around the bends of the creeks and humps. Again, that's the same places the fish

would have stopped on the way in to spawn.

When they are there, he likes to use a worm like the 8-inch Creme Scoundrel or other big worm.



Creme Frisky Frog

FIND THIS AND YOU'RE GOLDEN UP NEXT ➤

photo credit: Engbretson Underwater Photography.

PREUETT WALKS THE BASS TALK

Brett Preuett qualified for the Bassmaster Classic as a champion on the college tour while a member of the University of Louisiana-Monroe team. He took advantage of that opportunity and is currently a full-time touring pro. Preuett, 28, from Monroe, has fished in 37 BASS tournaments and placed in the money 13 times.

Preuett was headed to college as a scholarship baseball player when a freak accident caused him to lose sight in one eye. He turned that competitive spirit and work ethic towards fishing and, well, the rest is history.

He has written numerous blogs about bass fishing and also has been featured in videos about how to catch more bass. His major sponsors are the U.S. Polo Association, Falcon Boats, Shimano, JPS Ford, JPS Aviation, Lowrance, Creme Lures, Rat-L-Trap, Bob's Shop Jack Plates, Power Pole, Treeshaker Tackle, Bayou Rattler and Gator Guard Keel Shield. ■

Brett Preuett joined the BASS Elite Series after fishing on Louisiana-Monroe's college team.



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FIND THIS AND YOU'RE GOLDEN

“Again, you just have to imagine where the fish were on their way in to spawn and fish those same spots,” he says. “Here’s the deal, too. All the fish don’t spawn at the same time. Sometimes you can catch prespawn and postspawn fish in the same spots. Honestly, if you can find one of those holding areas where the fish move back out to the edge of a creek or drop-off and be one of the first ones to find them, you can really whack them this time of year.”

Preuett said fish on bigger bodies of water move more because, obviously, they have more choices, but they won’t go any further than they have to in order to find food. On rivers and natural lakes, the fish may not move that far, but instead of being on scattered cover, they look for something thick.

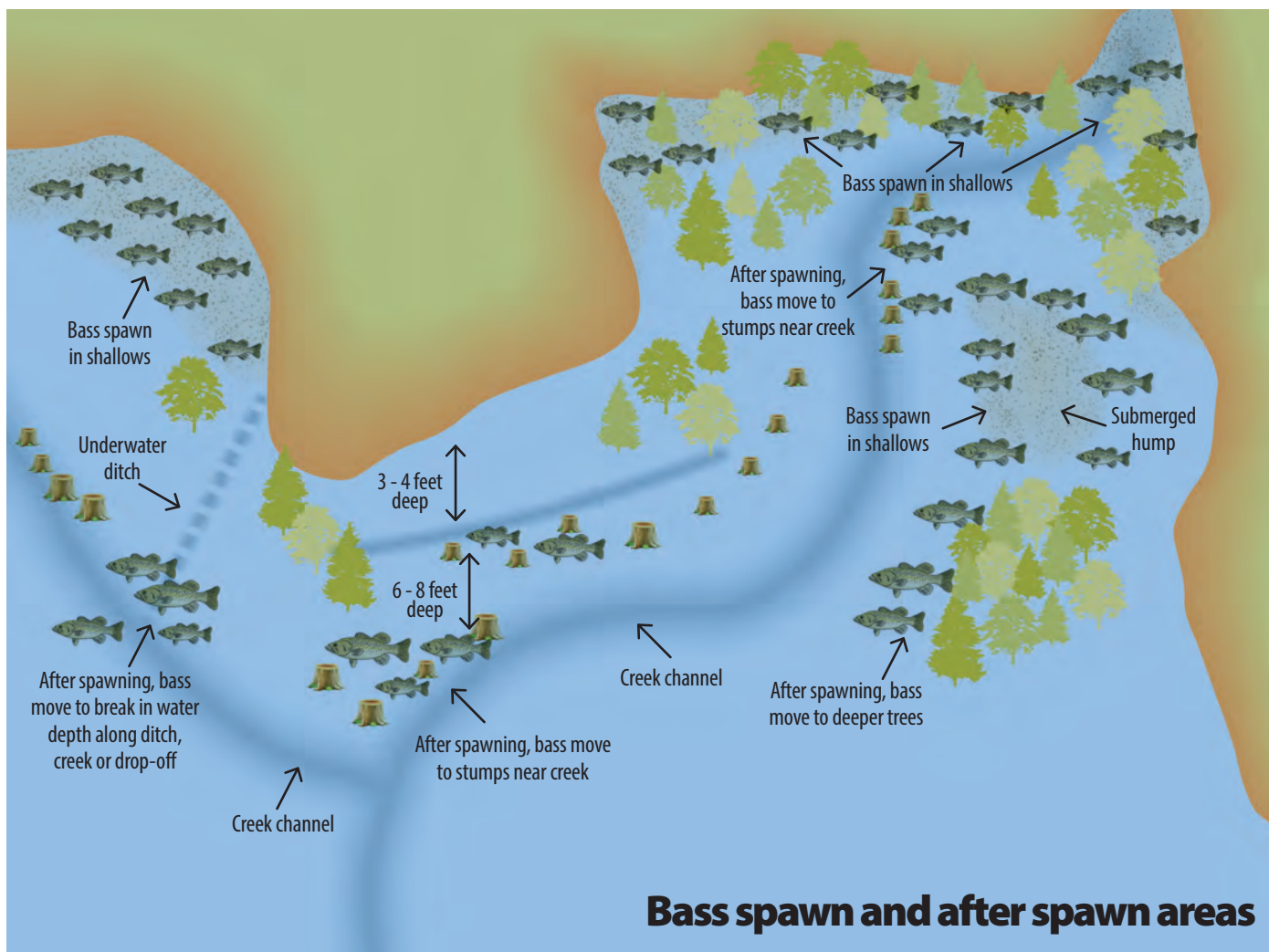
HERE’S THE KEY

“I think that’s a real key to postspawn fish, too,” he said. “If there isn’t a lot of deeper water or noticeable depth change like creeks or ditches, just look for fish in the thickest cover you can find. That’s where they will head after the spawn.”



Kim Lacombe and his son, Tyler, both from Lutcher, busted these great bass from Lake Des Allemands.

WHERE DO YOU FISH? UP NEXT ➤



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Postspawn fish won't necessarily head to deep water immediately. They often stage in heavy cover close to spawning areas.

WHERE DO YOU FISH?

On reservoirs like Toledo Bend, Caney and Claiborne, the fish are more likely to head back down creek channels and look for holding areas where there are shad and other baitfish. If there is deeper grass in those areas, fish love to hang out there. On areas like the Red River and the Ouachita River, the fish will not leave the shallows as long as there is baitfish in the area. But when the bait moves, they move with it. That is usually out to the mouths of the small lakes or to the edges of cuts near the main channel. Or, as Preuett reminds us, to the thickest cover around.

In natural areas like St. John, Concordia and Atchafalaya Basin lakes, Preuett said the "thick cover" strategy becomes even more important.

"Instead of roaming around in the shallows where there might not be much cover, after the spawn, they will look for thick tops, laydowns and thicker bunches of trees or grass. It may be in the same canal or lake," he said. "They are more interested in being in a protected area, but it still has to have a good food source."

MAN-MADE COVER

Preuett said not to discount boathouses, fishing piers and other man-made cover either. That is especially true for those that reach a little deeper water.



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“Fish will suspend around the pilings and crossbeams of boat houses and piers that go out into 6 to 10 feet of water. There aren’t many boathouses or piers that don’t have a bunch of tops and other cover scattered around them, either. That’s because the people that live there like to fish off them without having to put the boat in the water. Bass have cover there, and it enables them to find food in the shallows without going far,” he says.

The main thing you have to do is spend some time on the water and see where the fish are, as well as what they’ll hit. Pay attention to what you are seeing, especially in relation to baitfish popping on the surface or showing up on your electronics. The fish will be close to the food. Year in and year out, the patterns don’t usually change a lot, so keep up with what you did for success at the same time on the same body of water last year. It will pay dividends.


Obviously you don’t catch as many real lunkers after the spawn because the big females have left their eggs behind and the males have been busy protecting the homestead. But that doesn’t mean you can’t still catch some big ones. And Preuett said the postspawn bite is easier in some ways because the fish are hungry and they aren’t as picky. Makes sense.

“Postspawn doesn’t have to mean the party is over,” Preuett said. “You just have to change tactics and keep an open mind.” ■



Pro angler Brett Preuett of Monroe caught this nice post-spawn bass.

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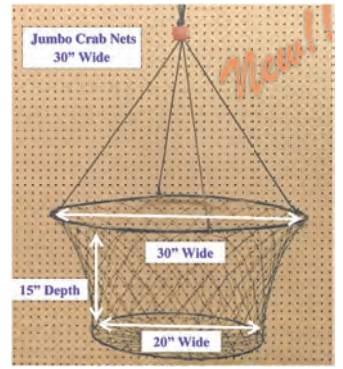
Kinny Haddox has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 40 years. He also publishes a daily website, lakedarboonnellife.com. He and his wife, DiAnne, live on Lake D'Arbonne in Farmerville.

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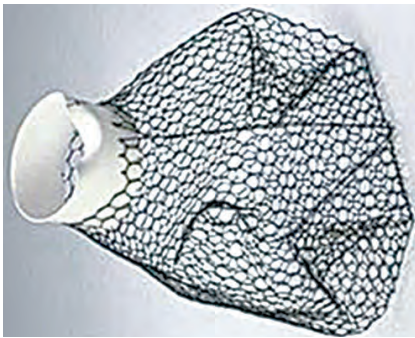


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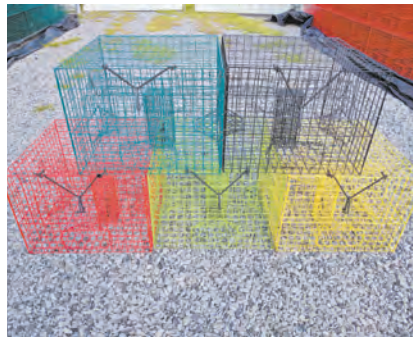
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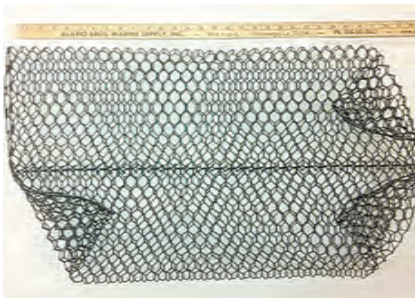
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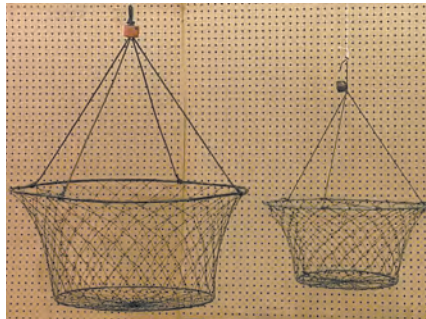
Trawls



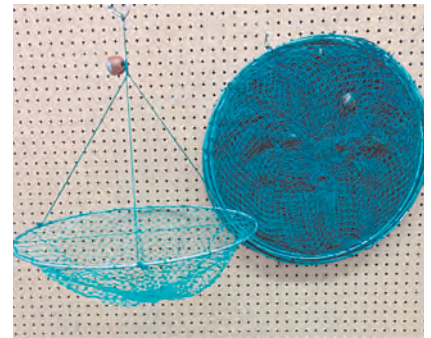
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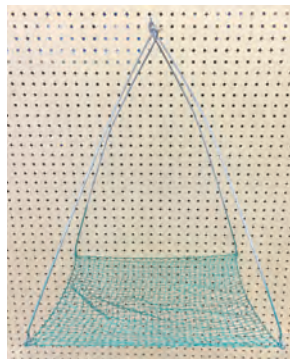
Crawfish Nets



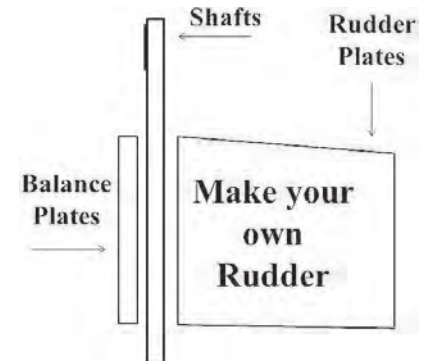
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LAKE CADDO **12 POUNDER REVERSES LEJEUNE'S BAD LUCK TO GOOD**

By Kinny Haddox

Austin LeJeune pounded the shallow-water trees and grass on Caddo Lake for four days in March. And even catching a few good bass his first trip to the Louisiana-Texas border lake north of Shreveport, which is a long trip from his home in Plaquemine, wasn't exactly what he hoped for.

He fished for hours with no bites. During the trip, he broke off six really good bass

and even damaged his trolling motor prop on a stump while helping rescue two people from the cold water after their canoe turned over. He had to drive 30 miles to have it fixed and drove back to the lake, contemplating calling it quits.

Now he's glad he stuck with it. Perseverance paid off, and he landed a 12.02-pound lunker that was 25½ inches long



Austin LeJeune retied his lure just minutes before the big bass hit.

and had a 21-inch girth about 7:45 a.m. on March 15.

He officially weighed the fish at Shady Glades Resort, took photos and videoed its release back into the lake to spawn as part of the BASELINE Trophy Replica program. That bass exactly doubled the size of

This is the bait LeJeune used to catch his 12.02 lunker, a black and blue Missile Bait D Bomb.



the largest bass he had previously caught.

"It was unbelievable now that I look back," he said. "I had a lot of bad luck. The weather was cold, then rainy, and breaking off the big fish was tough. In fact, after I broke my trolling motor Thursday afternoon, I even told my girlfriend that with my luck, I'd never catch a big one."

That big old Caddo bass proved him wrong.

After he landed the sow, the magnitude of what had happened didn't set in for quite a while. He caught the fish, then weighed it on a scale he had just purchased days before at Bass Pro in Bossier. It said 11.09 pounds. He wasn't sure, so he sent a photo to his uncle, who told him it didn't look like the fish quite weighed 10. He put her in the livewell, then about 30 minutes later, took her back out and weighed her. This time it said 11.1 pounds. A man fishing nearby weighed it on his and it read 12.1. He encouraged LeJeune to get it to the resort and weigh it. That's where the official weight hit 12.02.

"I never even thought about keeping the fish," he said. "I'm about conservation and that big bass will lay enough eggs to help raise a lot more huge bass." "But I don't know that fishing will ever be the same. I'm always saying I'm going out for the big one.... Now that I've caught her, I don't know if I can ever top that."

LeJeune landed the fish on a black/blue Missile Bait D-Bomb, fishing around a group of trees where he had caught — and lost — several good fish during the week. He got a solid tap, set the hook

and the fish headed for deeper water. It got stuck in the grass, but he could feel her shaking her head. She broke free from the grass and made a couple of dives before trying to circle to boat.

He never even realized how big she was, even when he lipped her and put her in the boat. He just knew it was the biggest bass he ever caught.

His girlfriend, Casey, had decided to not go that morning, and she couldn't believe what he had caught. It was her dad, a regular at Caddo, who convinced him to make the trip north.

A bit of planning saved the day for Austin. On the morning of March 15, as he went out for a couple of hours before he had to check out, he decided he was not going to lose anymore big fish. He upped his line to 20-pound test. He retied his lure just minutes before the big one hit. He believes that's why he caught her.

"She was just at the right place at the right time. I was just at the right place at the right time," he said. ■



Austin LeJeune officially weighed his bass at Shady Glades Resort and then took photos and video of its release back into the lake to spawn. **BELOW:** "That big bass will lay enough eggs to help raise a lot more huge bass," he said.



FOUR 10-POUND BASS — IN A SINGLE DAY

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20 WAS AN EPIC DAY FOR LUNKERS AT TOLEDO BEND

By Patrick Bonin

Wednesday, March 20, happened to be the first day of spring, as well as the start of the month's full moon.

Turns out, it was also an absolutely epic day for landing lunkers at Toledo Bend Reservoir. Four bass weighing 10 pounds or better were taken to certified scales that

day — three of them were landed after 5 p.m.

Darren Burns of Moss Bluff got the party started about 10 o'clock that morning near Mill's Creek on the Texas side of the reservoir when he landed his personal best, a big bass that officially weighed 10.27 pounds.

Darren Burns, of Moss Bluff, shows off the 10.27-pound lunker bass he landed on March 20 near Mill's Creek — the first of four lunkers landed on what proved to be an epic day at Toledo Bend.



Photo courtesy of Toledo Bend Lake Association

Lunker UPDATE

Aaron Gay, of Princeton, poses with the 10.26-pound bass he caught in Housen Bay on March 20. The big fish bit a Carolina-rigged Zoom Trick Worm in green pumpkin with red flakes.

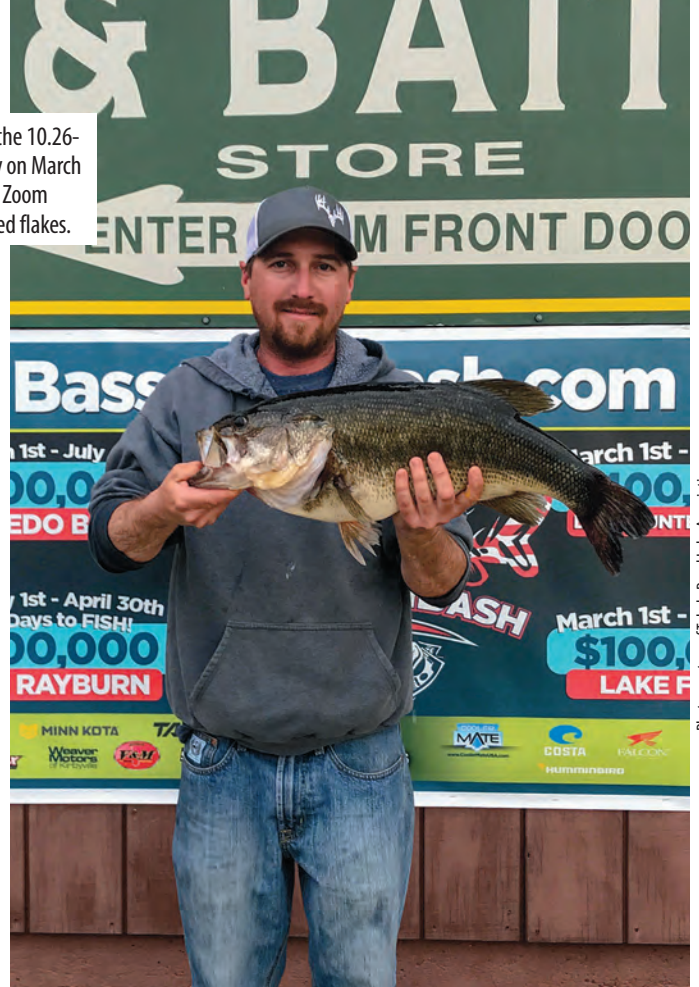


Photo courtesy of Toledo Bend Lake Association

continued >

"I had just got there. I wasn't fishing five minutes when I caught her," Burns said. "I wasn't feeling real good and got there a little later than normal; it was cold that morning. But I went to that spot and was throwing a wacky-rigged, watermelon red Zoom Trick Worm."

Burns' fish, 25 inches long with a girth of 19 inches, was the first lunker to hit the scales at Fin & Feather Resort that day, but it wouldn't be the last.

Aaron Gay, of Princeton, kept things rolling when he landed a 10.26-pound fish about 5 p.m. that afternoon in Housen Bay. Gay's fish also bit a Zoom Trick Worm, this time a Carolina-rigged green pumpkin offering with red flakes. At Fin & Feather, Gay's fish also measured 25 inches, with an 18¾-inch girth.

Richard Gautreaux, 73, of Gonzales, was next in the lunker parade when he caught his biggest bass ever — a 10.07-pounder in "the Vip" across from Holly Park Marina on the Texas side about 5:30 p.m.

Gautreaux fooled his fish with a wacky-rigged, pumpkin/purple flake Yum 6-inch worm in 2½ feet of water. At Holly Park Marina, Gautreaux's fish was 24 ¼ inches long with an 18¼-inch girth.

After more than 60 years of fishing, Gautreaux definitely paid his dues and earned his lunker — even though the whole catch

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probably took 45 seconds or less.

"I just enjoy fishing, period," he said. "But a double-digit fish is something else."

Rob Prejean, of Sulphur, wrapped up the wild day when he landed a certified 10.02-pounder near Sandy Creek about 5:40 p.m. That fish bit a Texas-rigged (no weight) watermelon candy Yum Dinger in about 6 feet of water.

"I was by myself in a borrowed aluminum boat with just an ice chest," Prejean said. "I didn't want to kill her, so I put some lake water in it and went as fast as I could to Fin & Feather, and she made it."

All four will receive complimentary replica mounts from the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program for catching 10-pounders, tagging and releasing them into the reservoir.



Rob Prejean, of Sulphur, poses with the 10.02-pounder he caught near Sandy Creek about 5:40 p.m. on March 20. The big bass bit a Texas-rigged watermelon candy Yum Dinger in about 6 feet of water.



Richard Gautreaux, of Gonzales, shows off his biggest bass ever, a 10.07-pounder he caught on March 20 near Holly Park Marina. The big bass bit a wacky-rigged pumpkin/purple flake Yum 6-inch worm in about 2½ feet of water.

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MISSOURI ANGLER LANDS 11-POUNDER

BIG FISH BIT TEXAS-RIGGED SENKO NEAR HOLLY PARK MARINA By Patrick Bonin

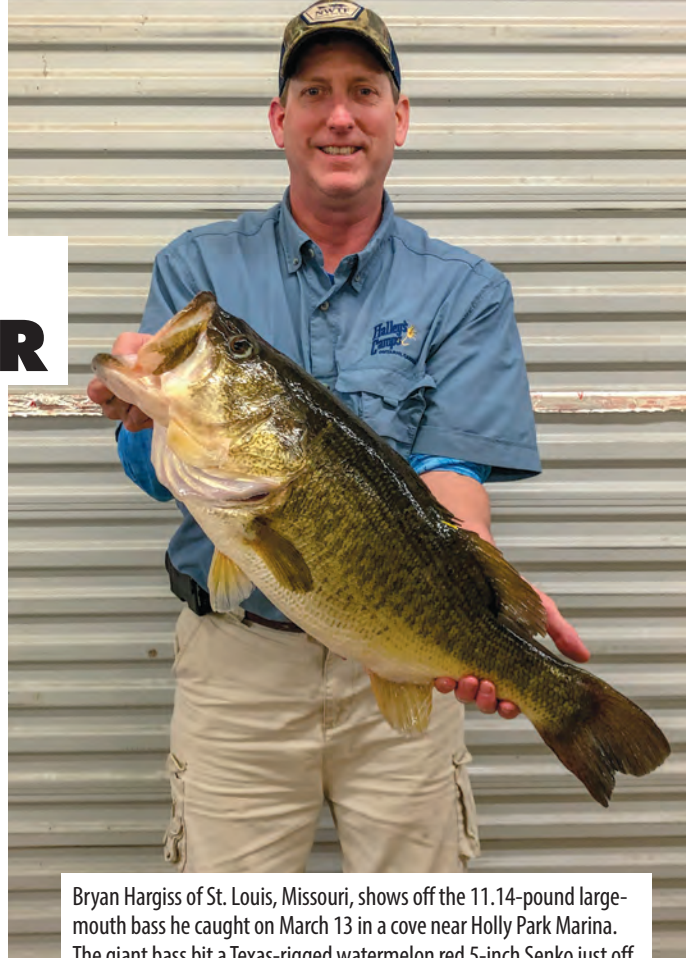
Missouri's unofficial nickname is the "Show Me State" — and St. Louis angler Bryan Hargiss definitely showed everyone how it's done when he landed a giant 11.14-pound largemouth bass at Toledo Bend on March 13.

Hargiss, 52, is one of several Missouri-based anglers who started making an annual springtime trek to the Bend together in the late 80s, and he caught the group's biggest fish ever this year when the giant bass inhaled his watermelon red 5-inch Senko on the Texas side near Holly Park Marina.

"It was windy and overcast, and we were way back in one of the coves fishing an island. It was off of some buck brush," Hargiss said. "Because of the hydrilla and coontail moss, I was just throwing the Senko Texas-rigged with no sinker, so it would just drop through that moss."

The big fish bit in the shallows and started pulling drag before eventually being netted by Andrew Watson, Hargiss' boating partner, who caught an impressive 9-pounder during the trip as well.

"Only half the fish went into the net because it was so long. It was 25¾ inches long with a 20-inch girth," Hargiss said. "What was interesting was it didn't look like she even had eggs yet because



Bryan Hargiss of St. Louis, Missouri, shows off the 11.14-pound largemouth bass he caught on March 13 in a cove near Holly Park Marina. The giant bass bit a Texas-rigged watermelon red 5-inch Senko just off some buck brush in the shallows.

Photo courtesy of Toledo Town & Tackle

she had no girth to her lower belly."

On Toledo Town & Tackle's certified scales, the big fish officially weighed 11.14 pounds, easily qualifying Hargiss for entry into the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program, which awards anglers who return double-digit fish to the reservoir with a complimentary mount. ■

THIRD TIME'S A CHARM

PERKINS' FISH WEIGHS IN AT 10.46 POUNDS, EARNS BASS CASH BASH WINNINGS

By Patrick Bonin

The third time was the charm for Garret Perkins when he targeted a big bedding bass on March 25 in the Negreet area of Toledo Bend.

Perkins, 25, from Mamou, was fishing in about 3 to 4 feet of water on a channel swing next to some buck brush around 9 a.m. when he spotted the big female.

"She bit twice, and the third time was when she held on long enough to where I could set the hook," he said, noting he was fishing with a white Cajun Lures Craw Texas-rigged with a ¾-ounce weight. "I

Garrett Perkins, of Mamou, poses with the big 10.46-pound bass he caught from a bed on March 25 in the Negreet area at Toledo Bend. The big fish bit a Texas-rigged white Cajun Lures Craw after about 25 or 30 flips, he said.

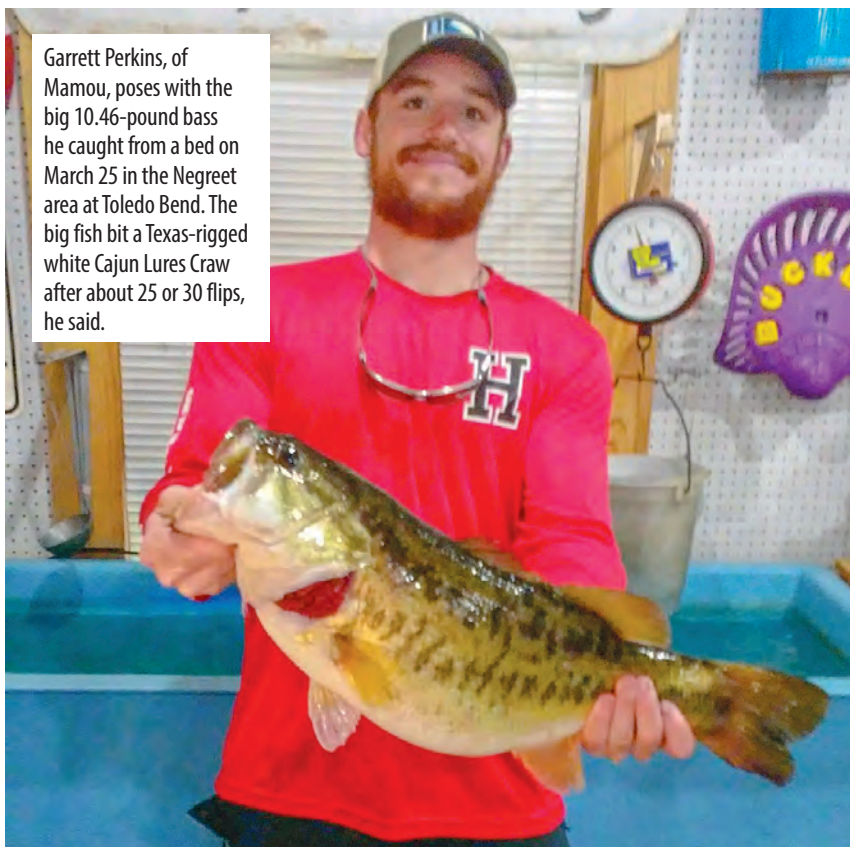


Photo courtesy of Toledo Bend Lake Association

probably made 25 or 30 flips before then."

The huge fish put on an aerial display, jumping six or seven times before Perkins, who was fishing alone, finally lipped it in.

"When I lipped her, I was telling myself, 'This can't be what I think it is.' I thought she was a 5- or 6-pounder on the bed, but I didn't realize it was 3 or 4 feet deep. I was thinking it was 2 feet deep," Perkins said. "When I first hooked her, she came out and shook, and I knew then she was at least a 7- or 8-pounder.

"Once I grabbed her and pulled her in and looked at her, I knew I probably had a 10-plus."

On top of it being his biggest bass ever, Perkins had signed up for the BassCashBash tournament the day before at Toledo Town & Tackle, so he earned a cool \$1,500 for catching a certified 10-pounder with the bonus.

At Buckeye Landing's official scales, the fish weighed 10.46 pounds. It measured 25 1/4 inches long with a 19-inch girth — easily qualifying Perkins for entry into the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program, which awards anglers who return double-digit fish to the reservoir with a complimentary mount. ■

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PRE-FRONT BITE

BOTH LUNKERS CAUGHT ON BEDS *By Patrick Bonin*

With an unseasonably cool cold front arriving early on March 31, March definitely went out like a lion — but pre-front conditions on Saturday, March 30, produced two more nice lunker largemouth bass at Toledo Bend.

Brett Trouille, 40, of Maurice, got things started when he landed a 10.03-pounder in the 12-15 area with a Texas-rigged white Zoom Craw.

Trouille had located the fish on a bed the previous afternoon, and he returned Saturday to see if he could close the deal. Turns out, he wound up with the biggest bass he'd ever caught.

"I told them when I was leaving the camp I was going to catch it," he said. "I didn't think I really would, but..."

The fish was still in position when he arrived around 10 a.m. on March 30.

"When I went back, I caught the male on the first cast and caught her about 10 casts later," Trouille said. "And that was the end of my day. I packed it in and went to Toledo Tackle, and we started partying ... That was the last cast I made all weekend."

The big fish tipped T-Town's certified scales at 10.03 pounds/ It measured 24½ inches long with a 19-inch girth.

About 3½ hours later in the 6 Mile area,

Brayden Cruze landed his personal best when he fooled a 10.72-pounder with a wobble-head rig featuring a green pumpkin Zoom Speed Craw in about 2 feet of water. This fish, like Trouille's, also was bedded down.

The day was mostly cloudy, but the sun appeared briefly that afternoon, and Cruze said he put on his polarized sunglasses — which enabled him to spot the fish.

"I stuck my Costas on and happened to see that bed and saw her on there. I had no idea how big she was, and we threw in there trying to get her to bite, but she wasn't having it," he said.

They pulled a nice male off the bed first, and finally got the big fish to commit after about 45 minutes.

"I guess we ticked her off enough to where she bit. She gave me a fight of a lifetime," said Cruze, of Ragley. "We battled for about five straight minutes. She did a little bit of everything: under the boat, wrapped up in the trolling motor, dove down, came up and shook ... It was a battle."

After landing the fish, Cruze and his partner, who were participating in a Calcasieu



Photo courtesy of Brayden Cruze

Brayden Cruze of Ragley caught this 10.72-pound bass on March 30 in the 6 Mile area. The bass, which was bedded down, finally got aggravated enough to bite a wobble-head rig featuring a green pumpkin Zoom Speed Craw.

Parish Sheriff's Department club tourney, fished for about another half-hour before heading to Buckeye Landing, where the big bass officially weighed 10.72 pounds, with a 25-inch length and 19-inch girth.

"I've been chasing a double-digit my whole life... The stars had to align," Cruze said, noting he won big-bass honors and his team came in second place with slightly more than 22 pounds. "If we wouldn't have had that sun and I wouldn't have put on my glasses just for that minute, I'd have never seen her."

Both big fish qualified for entry into the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program, which awards anglers who return double-digit fish to the reservoir with a complimentary mount. ■



Photo courtesy of Brett Trouille

Brett Trouille of Maurice shows off the 10.03-pound largemouth he caught March 30 in the 12-15 area. The big bass, which was bedded down, bit a white Texas-rigged Zoom Craw.

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APRIL FOOLS MEGA-BASS NO JOKE

BROUSSARD'S BASS FELL
FOR WACKY-RIGGED SENKO
ON THE LOUISIANA SIDE

By Patrick Bonin

April Fool's Day and social media go together like peaches and cream, so you have to definitely be vigilant and keep your guard up so you aren't suckered into believing a tall tale.

If you decide to post a story about a personal best bass that you caught on April 1 — say a 10.41-pounder from the south end of Toledo Bend — then you might expect your story to be met with some degree of skepticism.

But that's exactly what really happened to Craig



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Craig Broussard, of Fulshear, Texas, had the last laugh when he reeled in this 10.41-pound largemouth bass on April Fool's Day. The big fish bit a wacky-rigged Senko in about 7 feet of water on the south end of the reservoir.

Broussard, 57, of Fulshear, Texas, when his first-ever double-digit bass bit a wacky-rigged watermelon/purple flake 5-inch Senko on the Louisiana side of the reservoir about 10 a.m. on April 1.

"She was in about 7 feet of water . . .," Broussard said. "She wasn't even fanning a bed yet, because her tail was clean."

Broussard said he felt his lure get "heavy," and then reacted.

"They've been biting like that a lot where you're dragging it through the grass, and it's hard to tell (if you have a bite)," he said. "Once I felt it get heavy, I set the hook."

Broussard eventually headed to Buckeye Landing with his catch, where the 26-inch fish tipped certified scales at 10.41 pounds, easily qualifying him for entry into the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program, which awards anglers who return double-digit fish to the reservoir with a complimentary mount. ■



Photo courtesy of Toledo Bend Lake Association



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REBER'S TOP TWO FISH TIPPED
SCALES AT MORE THAN 20 POUNDS

By Patrick Bonin

Any time you land a big bass and your net handle breaks off in the process, that's the sign of a pretty good fish.

For John Reber, of Bell City, it meant his new personal best — an 11.14-pound beast that he reeled in Saturday morning, April 6, near Pirate's Cove. And to top it off, it came during a tournament — the Toledo Bend Open Shoot Out.

Reber was fishing in a driving rain about 9:15, when lightning struck literally and figuratively. He couldn't tell if the big bass was on a bed because of water clarity, but assumed it was bedded down when it took a swipe at his topwater frog — but missed it.

"I threw a Texas-rigged, 8-inch Yum black-and-blue stickbait in right after that and just let it sit there, and she ended up grabbing it," Reber said. "I had started off in about 8 feet of water and ended up going as shallow as I could go, about 2 feet."

The fight went pretty well, and Reber could tell the fish was a giant when it approached the boat. He finally netted

it — and then things went a little sideways.

"When I netted her and went to put her in the boat, the handle of my net fell off, so I threw the handle in the bottom of the boat and just grabbed the net," he said. "It was just floating in the water, and she was just laying there like she was dead. She had given up."

"I had one hair of skin left on my hook."

Reber put the big bass in his livewell and checked on it throughout the day. Near the same spot later, he caught a

9½-pounder on a frog, which solidified his bag even further and ultimately earned him first place for his 5-fish, 28.65-pound stringer, along with big-bass honors for the 11-pounder.

Reber weighed-in the big bass at Buckeye Landing, where it officially tipped certified scales at 11.14 pounds, and measured 24½ inches with a 19½-inch girth — easily qualifying him for the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program, which awards anglers who return 10-pound-plus fish to the reservoir with a complimentary mount. ■



John Reber, of Bell City, shows off the 11.14-pound largemouth bass he caught April 6 near Pirate's Cove at Toledo Bend. Reber's new personal best earned him big bass honors in the Toledo Bend Open Shoot Out that day, and anchored his first-place, five-fish bag that weighed-in at 28.65 pounds.

Photo courtesy of John Reber

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By David A. Brown

4 Skills

to improve your

BASS GAME

Most agree that angling success increases with experience; but there's also no denying the impact of mastering the mechanics. Here's a roundup of bass fishing skills that can help improve your game.

1

COOL SPOOLING

Spooling reels is one of the most common angling maintenance tasks, but it's one that can easily go awry, particularly if you don't manage the filler spool. Some hold the spool between their feet to keep it from flopping around and risking a pile of loose line. Another option puts the spool in a plastic tub, like a food storage container, or even a hotel room's ice bucket. In either case, loosely containing the spool allows it to spin freely without becoming unruly.

Lastly, consider the benefit of holding the filler spool in one hand, gripping the rod butt with your knees and reeling with the other hand. This keeps pressure on the spool, while ensuring even distribution across your reel.



Greg Hackney makes longer casts with a longer rod, especially when he releases a little more line before his backcast. **INSET:** Having control of your filler spool while replacing line makes for a cleaner spool on your reel.



David A. Brown

#2

ELIMINATE CLUTTER

Nothing is more frustrating than wasting time and possibly missing opportunities by fidgeting with hook packages. A better option — slide several hooks onto a safety pin for quicker access and secure storage. Group hooks by the sizes and styles you commonly use and keep each set in a tackle tray slot.

Similarly, an efficient way to keep several packages of soft plastics on standby is to group them on a D-ring or metal shower curtain ring. Easily opened, but holding securely, these binders eliminate the disorganized clutter of multiple packages tossed on a deck or console.

Lastly, reaching for small terminal tackle like swivels, split-shots and drop-shot weights can be a burden when your fingertips are too big to retrieve these items. Solution: Cut square/rectangular pieces of high density foam (think yoga mat) and place them in tackle tray slots to raise your smaller tackle for easier reach.

#3

BIG ROD = BIG CAST

“Keep the wind at your back.” We hear that a lot, and it’s not wrong, but it’s not the only consideration for lengthy casts. It can be a complicated topic, but pro Greg Hackney offered a few nuggets for consideration.

- Go with the biggest rod you can handle, but make sure stiffness increases with lure weight.
- Allow a sufficient length of line off your rod tip — enough to facilitate the loading action, but not so much that you risk hooking yourself, the console or your fishing partner on the backcast. Generally, as rod length increases, line off the rod tip should also increase.
- Also, consider that a smaller spool spins faster than a larger one to release the same amount of line. That means braking a spool at the end of a long cast can yield a nasty friction burn with a small spool.
- As far as form, a snappy overhead cast is not necessarily best for long casts. Instead, learn to deliver a lobbing, side-arm cast.



Adding a feather to a topwater bait's treble hook can get you a few more strikes.

#4

LURE DETOUR

Crankbaits, jerkbaits and topwaters are designed to work right out of the package, but key hook changes can favorably affect a lure's action. Consider these options:

SINK RATE: Jerkbait success often depends on getting the bait to move through the water column just right. Well, if you have a bait profile/color the fish like, but you need it to sink a little faster — or maybe you want to convert a suspending bait into a slow sinker — increase your hook size. Two hooks of the same size keeps the bait level, but increasing only the front size creates a nose-down posture that might earn you a little more attention.

ACTION: Upsizing crankbait hooks adds more mass and weight, which can slow a bait and deaden its action. This can prove helpful in colder weather when the fish may like a certain profile, but shy away from too much action.

FEATHERED TREBLE: A “dressed” treble adds lifelike action to the back end of a topwater walker or popper, as the feather contracts and expands with your cadence. Feathers can also add drag and slow a bait's forward motion. When a fish comes up and pushes water behind the bait, that feather can hold it in the strike zone a second longer so the fish gets a clean connection. ■

Both images: David A. Brown



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HENDERSON LAKE BASS RUN IS ON!

VETERAN ANGLER BELIEVES FISHING IS ABOUT TO EXPLODE. HERE'S WHERE

Topwaters of every kind retrieved seductively at choice locations around Henderson Lake fuel the bass fishing — and bass catching — passion of a Lafayette native who has fished the lake for more than five decades and historically has some of his best outings in May.

Chester Begnaud of Breaux Bridge, who teams with his son, Paul Begnaud of Lafayette, to compete in Henderson Lake Dog Fights, takes his topwater arsenal most of the time this time of year to a handful of different places: the Phillips Canal area where the mounds should be underwater, drains in Opelousas Bay where fish come out of the woods, the Five Points area and the shoreline going to Butte La Rose. He also pointed bassers to the Butte La Rose Canal.

The key to finding and catching bass in any of those spots around the lake in St. Martin Parish? Find the shad.

"Follow the shad," Begnaud said from experience.

GO-TO LURES

His go-to artificial lures over the years include, most recently, Whopper Poppers, Chug Bugs and buzzbaits. His son enjoys success with a plastic frog, he said, noting, "He throws that frog quite a bit."

When the bass lay off those surface baits,

Chester Begnaud feeds them deep-diving crankbaits and plastic worms. Another top producer for him is a gold/orange Long-A.

Still, Begnaud can't wait for the topwater season because the bass fishing seems to be ready to bust wide open.

"It'll be good in May. There's a lot of (bass) in the lake this year. We've had high water a long time," Begnaud said. "I think everything will be good in the Basin. I think it'll

be a great year for bream, everything."

If, he said, the water doesn't fall too fast. A slow fall would be ideal, he said.

DOG FIGHT VETERAN

Begnaud, 59, and his son won the first Dog Fight of the year in early March with one bass, but it was a beauty: a 3.90-pounder that also was the mini-bass tournament's biggest bass of the evening.



Paul Begnaud, left, and his father, Chester Begnaud, hold five bass that went 16.89 pounds on the first day of the Henderson Lake Dog Fight Classic in 2018.



Photos of a small hummingbird that Chester Begnaud caught while fishing around lily pads with flowering plants on Henderson Lake.

Chester Begnaud shows a nice bass caught on a black Whopper Plopper at Henderson Lake.



Photos courtesy of Chester Begnaud

That was a good way to start the new season after the Begnauds finished second in the two-day 2018 Dog Fight Classic, highlighted by their 16.78-pound five-fish stringer the first day.

At the time he volunteered his fishing report for *Louisiana Sportsman*, Begnaud, the former owner of Eagle Wholesale Drug Co., who currently works purchasing supplies for the Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Office, said there was a slight topwater bite. But he expected it to get better and better through April and into May.

FAVORITE SPOTS

The Crucifix Canal, one of many canals in the oil field that makes up the Phillips Canal, is where you more than likely find the Begnauds in May. Chester said it's one of his favorite places.

"I'll work those banks and throw in the bushes on top of the canals (mounds)," he said, noting he likes to target any lilies along the way,

specifically 3-foot holes in the lilies where he can drop a bone-colored or black Whopper Plopper or Chug Bug. He also loves to chunk a buzz-bait, a ½-ounce black Lunker Lure, which he still gets at Bass Pro Shops.

"It can get ugly," the elder Begnaud said as he went over vivid images of the many bass, big and small, he has caught in openings like that over the years, blowing up on topwaters.

Henderson Lake's bass apparently love to eat anything on or close to the surface. Last year, during one of the evening tournaments, he was getting bass out of the livewell when he noticed one of the bass had something different in its gullet. It was a hummingbird, which he showed his son and took some photographs. That small bird apparently got too close to the surface in the mix of lily pads and flowering plants. ■

— Don Shoopman

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John Dean caught this 6½-pounder on the next-to-last week of March on a Carolina-rigged Zoom Super Fluke at Toledo Bend.

TOLEDO BEND

BASS ARE TURNING TO TOPWATERS

As the spawn works its way north to south on Toledo Bend in late April and May, bream move up the same way to do their thing, which is key to getting on bass.

For me, it's the time to rely on topwaters like Chug Bugs, Zara Spooks, Yellow Magics, Ribbits and Top Toads, as well as LiveTarget Bream. Yes, topwaters should kick in and be a strong, strong thing in mid-April and, especially May, for bragging-sized bass.

FOLLOW THE BREAM

Fish those artificial lures in and around peppergrass, or other vegetation, in 2- to 5-foot depths, because as the spring goes along, more and more bream will move into those depths and habitats, starting up north. That's something to consider as much as the bass spawn cycling from the upper lake to the mid-lake and, finally, the lower end of Toledo Bend.

You can fish topwaters all day. Those artificials, especially plastic frogs, can get

you a good bite. I'm sure that will be the case for many during the Bob Sealy Big Bass Splash on May 17-19 out of Cypress Bend Park.

TOPWATER BITE HAS STARTED

I'll put a lot of time in starting now seeking the topwater bite, even on sunny days.

For the longest time in late winter and early spring, my go-to bait was a Carolina-rigged soft plastic, namely a Zoom Super Fluke. But a few days ago, in the last week of March, my customers and I nailed seven sizable bass on parrot/white Top Toads. The bass were climbing all over them. Heck, one 2½-pounder went airborne — cleared the water by 5 inches — to eat the bogus frog. What a sight that was.

A few days earlier, with the water temperature averaging 65 degrees, there was a full moon the night before and the fish stormed the beaches, as people around here often say about spawning cycles. I hooked and boated



a 6½-pound bass on a C-rig, and four double-digit bass were caught that day on Toledo Bend. Darren Burns of Moss Bluff weighed a 10.27-pounder; Aaron Gay of Princeton landed a 10.26-pounder; Richard Gautreaux of Gonzales boated a 10.07-pounder, and Rob Prejean of Sulphur got his hands on a 10.02-pounder. The fish caught by Gay, Gautreaux and Prejean all bit after 5 p.m.

Yep, the bass were eating that day. There will be many more like it throughout the spring, in May.

TOP TARGET AREAS

I'm basing that on my 50 years of back history here. I think May will be equally as good in areas like Blue Lake, Housen Bay, Six Mile Creek and Pirate's Cove.

My advice is to start shallow and see what's happening. If they turn their noses up at topwaters, try spinnerbaits and Chatterbait-style artificials. And if there's no taker, then move deeper, to 12- to 15- to 20-foot depths. You can always get on a point or over

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TOLEDO BEND
CONTINUED >

a break, drain or ditch and fish somewhere close to deeper water with plastic worms, jig-trailer combos and Carolina-rigged soft plastics, like Flukes.

I like a 2½- to 3-foot leader under a ¾- or 1-ounce weight on my C-rig. That's been my bread-and-butter. In shallower water (2½- to 3½-foot depths), a ½-ounce will do just fine, and there still should be plenty of bass in that range.

Why? Not everything stays skinny, if you know what I mean. Fishing deeper is so much easier these days because of the advanced technology in marine electronics.

Fish jigs in bream patterns, mostly, with greens and oranges mixed in, as well as black/blue and crawfish-colored. As for soft

plastic worms, top colors this time of year are junebug, redbug, plum apple and, even the tried and true watermelon/red.

I've been guiding on this lake most of my life and you're welcome in my boat. May should offer good bass fishing. Give me a call at 936-404-2688. ■

— John Dean



Toledo Bend Sunset taken by Camp owner and Toledo Bend Lunker club coordinator Dinah Medine.



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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LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

Ott DeFoe, the 2019 Bassmaster Classic Champion and Major League Fishing pro angler, holds up a big bass caught on a Terminator Shuddering Bait.

TERMINATOR'S SHUDDERING BAIT

A new artificial lure on the shelves and in tackleboxes is doing more, much more, than giving lip service to the process of catching bass.

Terminator's Shuddering Bait has a cupped swimming lip that gives it a unique, side-to-side shimmy, especially when used with a soft-plastic trailer, according to Ott DeFoe, the reigning Bassmaster Classic champion. He started praising the bladed jig long before it arrived on the market earlier this year.

A week-and-a-half after winning the Bassmaster Classic on his home waters in Knoxville, Tenn., DeFoe took a few minutes on an off-day to talk about the artificial lure he helped design for Terminator Lures.

The Terminator Shuddering Bait is a game-changer in the world of bladed jigs, DeFoe said.

"It's a different bait, for sure, than anything on the market. It's a bladed jig that everyone should have in their tackle box," he said, adding that he believes no other vibrating swim jig moves as much water on the retrieve as the Shuddering Bait.

"Yeah, I think it could be a player. Yeah, I think it could be," he said.



The new, bladed jig was instrumental in his success in a tournament two years ago at Lake Sam Rayburn, he said, noting that bass bit consistently on a ½-ounce green pumpkin/orange model that was perfect for the off-colored water he was fishing.

Over the past few years, he said, "I've had some 4-pounders on it. I haven't had any giants, but I've had real nice fish."

The artificial lure is innovative from front to back, a combination that includes the blade, jighead, skirt and soft-plastic trailer that make it shimmy like none before it. It is available in ½- and ¾-ounce models in nine baitfish colors and six blade colors.

"The ability to match the blade to the bait is something that, with most bladed jigs, you just don't have. And you can have a matte-finish blade that doesn't have the flash when you don't want it," DeFoe said.

It's also armed with "super sharp" 5/0 VMC hooks to handle big bass, he said, and there are quality components from the snap to the split ring that attaches the body to the blade.

When DeFoe and others got their hands on the early prototypes, they looked closely at the unique, cupped lip and saw room for improvement.

"We thinned it down in a lot of places. There was extra material, and it kind of messed up the action a little bit. Once we thinned it down, that livened it up some, made it more lively," he said.

The idea for the cupped lip was borrowed from a crankbait design the company had tinkered with earlier, DeFoe said. It was a success, particularly after the tweaks were made.

"Most bladed jigs have a really thin, flat metal blade. The Shuddering Bait's blade is very different. It's actually a cupped

continued >

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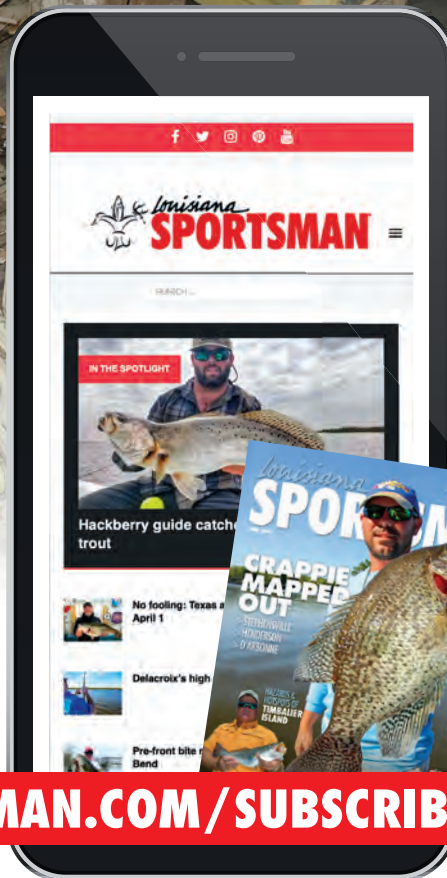
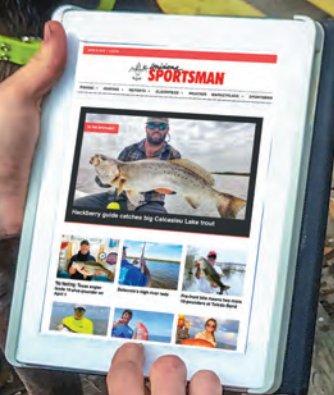
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LURE REVIEW



plastic swimming lip that catches and displaces water ahead of it. It catches water, releases water. Catches water, releases water. Tying that to a jig kind of gives it a unique action," he said.

Defoe, 33, believes the Terminator Shuddering Bait will be effective, very effective in Louisiana and elsewhere in the south, heck, across the U.S.A. A soft-plastic crawfish imitation ought to work lights out as a trailer in and around the Sportsman's Paradise, he said, particularly on the black/blue/purple, aka bruise, model.

About adding soft-plastic trailers: a stainless-steel keeper ensures your favorite soft-plastic trailer stays in place after cast.

"Having a trailer keeper extends the life of that bait and makes more of your casts productive," DeFoe said, "because your trailer's going to stay in place, where it needs to be."

He said the new bladed jig's castability makes it both an open-water bait and a chunk-and-wind bait.

"For me, I find myself going to it in really dirty water when the fish want a moving bait," he said, adding that he uses 50-pound braid and 17-pound fluorocarbon whenever he fishes the bait.

DeFoe likened the slow, methodical, thumping action to



a spinnerbait with two Colorado blades. The thumping vibration is slower than other bladed jigs, an action that is effective in water with limited visibility.

Dave Lefebre, another pro bass fisherman, also favors it in stained water conditions and worse, anywhere.

"There are a lot of different bladed jig-makers, a lot of different styles, but no one ever had one that I felt worked really well in the muddiest of water until I got my hands on this," LeFebre said. "It's just got a really, really good thump to it."

"When you think you can't get a bite — this is one of those baits that will get you a bite," Lefebre said.

For more information about the Terminator Shuddering Bait and other Terminator Lures products, call 888-231-4449 or go to www.rapala.com/terminator-spinnerbaits-jigs/ ■



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.

Canals around Lake Des Allemands and Bayou Gauche produce nice crappie in May and June.



DES ALLEMANDS: CRAPPIE PSYCHIC REVEALS A PATTERN THAT DELIVERS IN LATE SPRING

For many anglers, sac-a-lait are seasonal fish. They may give them a few weeks of the year, and then they're back on to chasing speckled trout, bass, redfish or something else.

But for Clyde Folse, the owner of Crappie Psychic, sac-a-lait are a staple 12 months a year. And the great part is he finds the fish shallow — even in May.

FISH THE CANALS

Early in the month, Folse fishes the man-made, 5- to 10-foot deep canals around Des Allemands and Bayou Gauche. Later in the month, he transitions to the back part of Bayou Black to catch the crappie — still under a cork.

"The depth I set my cork at depends on what time of year I'm fishing. During the spawn, I set it at 6 to 10 inches deep and fish right next to the bank. But this is usually for one or two months out of the year.

The rest of the year, I always start with a cork set at 20 to 24 inches," Folse said.

When he's fishing shallow, Folse looks for cut grass and rouseau along the bank.

"The root structure of those two plants really attracts the sac-a-lait," he said. "I guess there's some loose roots in there, and they can actually get up in those roots real close to the bank, and they can wallow out holes."

Folse said it's imperative to have extremely good casting accuracy.

"I get it as close to the cut grass and the roseaus as I can," he said.

USE SCENTED TRAILERS

His most productive color of tube jig, Folse said, is black/white. The veteran guide manufactures scented trailers that are made to tip tube jigs. He likes the chartreuse-colored Crappie Psychic trailer,

and he uses the same color of Crappie Psychic ammo, which is a small, scented pellet anglers can tip on their tube jigs.

Many crappie anglers like a 1/32-ounce jig-head under their cork for its slow fall rate. Folse, however, prefers a 1/16-ounce head, but his reasoning has nothing to do with the weight.

"I always use a 1/16-ounce because of the hook size," he said. "I don't like a small hook. I like a No. 2 hook — it's bigger. I don't want to catch the perch."

Folse fishes the combo 6 to 10 inches under a cork. During full-blown summer, he'll move the cork up another 10 inches, so he's fishing around 2 feet under the cork.

When anglers think of crappie, they think of light line, but Folse likes a strong, 8-pound-test.

"I'm catching six different species of fish; I'll catch 20-pound (catfish), and I've caught 30-inch redfish," he said. "I want to

fight those fish and land them. That becomes a lot harder to do with 4-pound-test compared to 8-pound-test."

If he gets snagged, it's also a lot easier to get his jig back with heavier line, Folse said. Either the jig will pull free or the hook will bend out, allowing the angler to get the set-up back.

The size of the average sac-a-lait is biggest in December, January and February, Folse said, but in May, you can still catch nice slabs.

DES ALLEMANDS SLABS

"I still catch big ones, but they're more mixed," he said. "Those guys that fish Lake Des Allemands with the jig poles where they're getting up in the trees and they're fishing around those submerged stumps — they catch some huge slabs during the summer."

Folse hates fishing with jig poles, so he sticks to fishing canal areas throughout May and even in the summer.

One of the key things to have, Folse said, is water movement; he mentioned that no matter what time of year it is, the sac-a-lait fishing will always be better with some current.

"Along the Intracoastal (Waterway), you have these huge, triple-decker tugs pushing six or seven barges at a time," he said. "When they pass in the Intracoastal, it sucks water out the side canals, so you'll be in there fishing, and all of a sudden, that water will just start pulling out. It's only a 5-minute bite, but when that water starts pulling out, they'll start biting. They think it's tide movement." ■

— Joel Masson



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BLACK LAKE PERFECT BAIT

LOCAL ANGLER SHARES FAVORITES TO CATCH MAY BASS

By the time May rolls around, most of the spawning action on Black Lake — a 13,800-acre reservoir near Campti connected to the Red River — has wrapped up, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's time to head for greener pastures.

In fact, local angler Donovan Stoner said it's a great time to wet a line.

"May action should be really good, because it will be right after the spawn, and the water won't be real hot like it is in June and July," said Stoner, 28, of Atlanta. "It's normally a pretty good month out there. There might be a few left spawning, but most have done their thing and are moving back to deeper water."

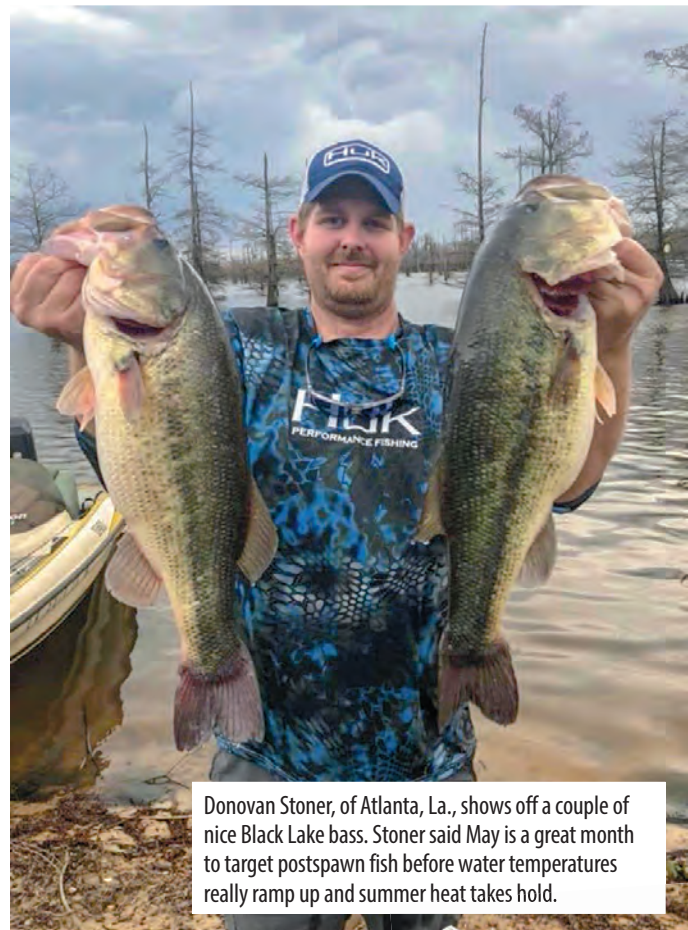
Stoner said he'd focus his attention on the multitude of cypress trees that cover the lake, and offered his Top 3 lures for Black Lake in May:

1. ¾-OUNCE V&M BIG LEBOOM SPINNERBAIT



"The vibration of the spinnerbait is key," Stoner said, noting the V&M model he favors is chartreuse-and-white with a single gold Colorado blade. "Most of the time the water is a little dirty out there, so it's the vibration of that big blade that triggers a lot of the bites."

Stoner said he throws the spinnerbait with 20-pound fluorocarbon line, and focuses around cypress trees in 2 to 5 feet of water between the bank and the channels.



Donovan Stoner, of Atlanta, La., shows off a couple of nice Black Lake bass. Stoner said May is a great month to target postspawn fish before water temperatures really ramp up and summer heat takes hold.

Photo courtesy of Donovan Stoner

2. ½-OUNCE BRYANT'S CUSTOM JIG IN BLACK/BLUE FLASH



"You're imitating a crawfish," he said. "If water happens to be cooler than usual, use a Zoom Super Chunk trailer. In warmer water, use a black-and-blue Strike King Rage Craw trailer."

Conditions dictate which lure he might try first, he said, noting he likes to flip the jig near the bases of cypress trees.

"If it's sunny and bright, I would throw the jig," Stoner said. "If it's cloudy and windy, I'd throw the spinnerbait."

3. RIVER2SEA'S WHOPPER PLOPPER 110



Stoner likes this medium-sized lure, which measures 4.3 inches and weighs ¾-ounce, in bone color.

"It's an early morning deal, the first couple of hours," he said. "It's the action and sound it makes — that's a really good bait out there. I throw the topwater with 60-pound braid, but they pretty much set the hook themselves."

"I've caught a lot of big fish in the 3- to 6-pound range on a Whopper Plopper; the strikes on that lure are some of the most

BAITS, TIPS, TACTICS, AND MORE

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aggressive I've ever had. And if you miss on it, have a Senko rigged up and immediately throw back in the area. Most of the time, that fish will bite again."

He said the north end of the lake is known for larger fish, but he suggested targeting mid-lake locations this month and covering as much water as possible.



Photo courtesy of Donovan Stoner

"If you're by a cypress tree relatively close to the bank, you're pretty much on the fish," he said. "When you find them, you can slow down with a jig and get a few more bites."

Stoner also offered some additional advice in the event May turns out to be a wet one.

"If we get a lot of heavy rain, go really shallow — like 2 feet of water or less if it's rising," he said. "It just seems like when we get a lot of rain, they go really, really shallow."

Finally, he said a Strike King KVD 1.5 crankbait in chili craw color can be effective in the channels when there is current, while a Luck-E-Strike American Original Deep Diver in Poche's perch is a good option in spots 5 to 8 feet deep. ■

— Patrick Bonin

May is primetime to pick off a couple of nice postspawn bass in Black Lake near Campti. Local angler Donovan Stoner said lures including a spinnerbait, a jig and a Whopper Plopper should all be effective this month on the 13,800-acre reservoir.

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1756 CC

F50 Yamaha, battery, running lights, bilge pump, livewell pump, gauges, built in fuel tank, windshield, seats and pedestals, galv. trailer, tie downs & transom saver and non-skid liner.



1650 CC

F50 Yamaha, battery, running lights, bilge pump, livewell pump, gauges, fuel tank, windshield, rail over windshield, seats and pedestal, galv. trailer, tie downs & transom saver



1860 CC BAY

F90 Yamaha w/ SS prop, leaning post, full instrumentation, (2) fishing seats, plus passenger seats, non-skid liner, aluminum trailer w/spare tire



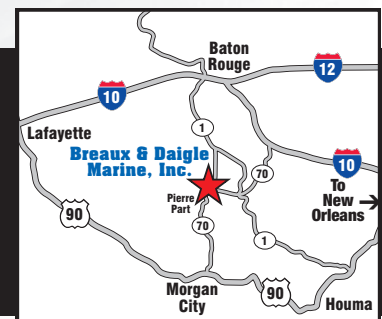
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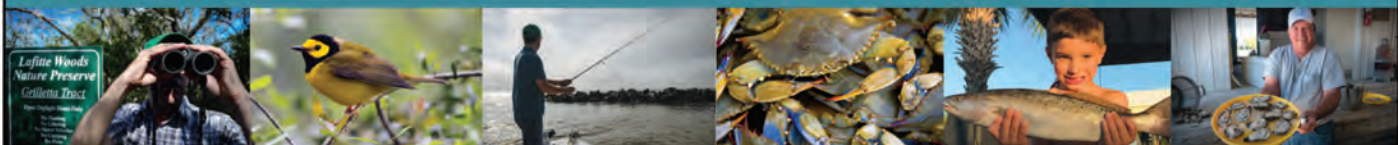
GRAND ISLE SPRING EVENTS:

May

- May 3-5 - Serenity by the Sea, Grand Isle School
- May 4 - 8th Annual Cruising the Beach Car Show @ Tarpon Rodeo Pavilion
- May 4 - Paddle Palooza Kayak Tournament, Bridge Side Marina
- May 17-18 - ABC Rodeo, Sand Dollar Marina
- May 17-18 - Stan Brock Black & Gold Classic, Bridge Side Marina/Wake Side Marina
- May 24-26 - Grand Isle Speckled Trout Rodeo, Bridge Side Marina
- May 25 - Island Wide Garage Sale, GI Community Center
- May 25 - E.D. White Rodeo, Sand Dollar Marina
- May 30-June 1 - New Orleans Electric Association Rodeo, Sand Dollar Marina

June

- June 1 - Casa of Lafourche, Bridge Side Marina
- June 5-8 - Swollfest Rodeo, Sand Dollar Marina
- June 10-16 - Louisiana Billfish Classic, Hurricane Hole
- June 15 - Hartgrove Foundation Rodeo, Bridge Side Marina
- June 21-22 - LA Pipeline Association Rodeo, Sand Dollar Marina
- June 21-22 - Creole Classic Fishing Tournament, Bridge Side Marina
- June 28-29 - Wounded War Heroes Rodeo, Bridge Side Marina



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RED SNAPPER

OUTLOOK



Photos by Capt. Troy Wetzel

TIPS, TACTICS & TARGETS

By Rusty Tardo

The long awaited opening of red snapper season is finally upon us, and anglers across the state are eager to once again reel in what some consider the filet mignon of the gulf.

Capt. Troy Wetzel of Louisiana Offshore Fishing Charters (504-701-3474), based out of Venice, says it should be an awesome season.

“The big commercial boats have brought in some great catches of large red snapper, so that is a very good sign of a great season ahead,” he said.

THE 2019 SEASON

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission will open recreational red snapper season on Friday, May 24 in both state and federal waters. The season will run weekends only (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday including the Monday of Memorial Day and the Thursday of Fourth of July) with a daily bag limit of two fish per person and a 16-inch total length minimum size limit.

Last year the season was open 7 days a week beginning May 25, 2018 with a daily bag limit of two fish per person and a 16-inch total length minimum size limit. That closed on July 8 and reopened on July 13 of 2018 as a weekends only (Fri-Sun) season which closed on Aug 12.

Just as did last years season, the private recreational season will run concurrently in both state and federal waters up to 200 nautical miles outand federal waters.

WEST DELTA UP NEXT >



WEST DELTA

Capt. Troy usually takes Red Pass out of Venice Marina and runs the 9-10 miles out to the Gulf of Mexico. From there its 12-15 miles out to 60-90 feet of water on the West Delta side, where you want to begin trying any of the rigs you see. The West Delta region is huge, covering around 1000 square miles of open water including the south extension, so there's no shortage of rigs to fish.

"Early in the season you should catch some nice fish at the nearby rigs, but you're also likely to catch quite a few juveniles in the process. Personally, I head farther out to deeper water about 24 miles out, to water at least 200 to 220 feet deep, for bigger fish in the 15-20 pound class," he said.

REEFS

Rigs aren't the only places to target red snapper. Capt. Troy says some of his best catches come not from rigs but reefs, both natural and artificial.

"I fish both reefs and rigs and am successful at both. The rigs anybody can see, so it's good to have the coordinates of some underwater reefs to try when the rigs are crowded or just not producing," he said.

Natural reefs in Louisiana are essentially uneven bottom contours that provide habitat for reef fish. The Louisiana Artificial Reef Program (see Artificial Reefs on the LDWF website for coordinates) created over 70 artificial underwater reefs by using parts of over 400 decommissioned

rigs in the offshore waters, including many in the West Delta area in waters ranging from 135 to 270 feet deep. The Coast Guard requires a minimum of 85 feet of clearance over the top of these sunken rigs, which meant they could only be placed in water at least 100 feet deep. Access is therefore limited to offshore boats.

TACTICS

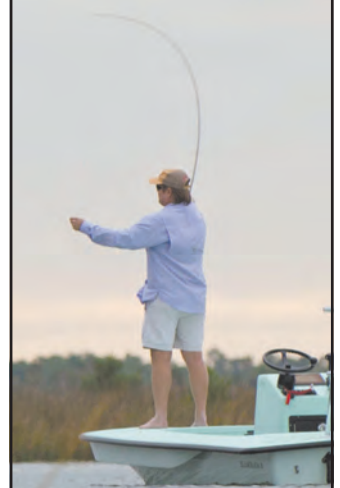
Whether fishing reefs or rigs, Capt. Troy says his tactics are the same.

"I always use dead bait, either pogies or any cut bait, and drop my line all the way to the bottom, using a 16 or 20 ounce weight, and at least a 3 foot leader. First I give it a chance right on the bottom. If nothing bites, I crank up 5 or 6 turns and try there. Still nothing, I give it 5 or 6 cranks and try there. Red snapper can hold just about anywhere along the water column so keep trying till you find them," he said.

FASCINATING FACTS UP NEXT >



Capt. Troy Wetzel usually fishes West Delta rigs and reefs 12-15 miles out of Red Pass in 60-90 feet of water.



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Louisiana's State Record is 50 pounds but the average fish caught in the gulf is less than 10 years old.

FASCINATING FACTS

- Red snapper can grow to about 40 inches long
- Red snapper can weigh up to 50 pounds (the official Louisiana state record is a 50 pound fish — the biggest of any gulf state — caught in June of 1996. The Texas record is a 40 pound fish caught in 2014, the Alabama record is 44 ¾ pounder caught in 2002 and Florida's record is a 46 ½ pounder)
- Red snapper can live to be over 50 years old, though the average fish caught in the gulf is less than 10 years old
- The older the female red snapper is, the more eggs it will produce. A female reaches its peak productive years at about age 20, when it produces up to 1 million eggs per season

DON'T FORGET REDFISH

Capt. Troy says whenever you head offshore, always make it a point to bring some redfish gear along as well.

"I always fish the rocks along the mouth of the river on my way in for some big reds, just a bonus after a great day offshore," he said.

RED SNAPPER REQUIREMENTS

- All anglers must possess a valid Louisiana Basic and Saltwater Recreational Fishing License
- All anglers must possess a Recreational Offshore Landing Permit (ROLP) to fish for red snapper in state or federal waters.
- The ROLP is available free at the LDWF website.



- Exception: All anglers on a charter boat are covered by the charter captains ROLP

BOAT REQUIREMENTS – STATE REGULATIONS:

All offshore anglers fishing for red snapper or any reef fish species are required to have the following gear aboard each boat:

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Snapper anglers are required to have a de-hooking device and venting tool on board when fishing for red snapper.



- Non-Stainless Steel Circle Hooks when fishing with natural baits for reef fish.
- Dehooking Device. At least one dehooking device is required and must be used to remove hooks embedded in Gulf reef fish with minimum damage. The hook removal device must be constructed to allow the hook to be secured and the barb shielded without re-engaging during the removal process. The dehooking end must be blunt, and all edges rounded. The device must be of a size appropriate to secure the range of hook sizes and styles used in the Gulf reef fish fishery.
- Venting Tool. At least one venting tool is required and must be used to deflate the swim bladders of Gulf reef fish to release the fish with minimum damage. This tool must be a sharpened, hollow instrument, such as a hypodermic syringe with the plunger removed, or a 16-gauge needle fixed to a hollow wooden dowel. A tool such as a knife or an ice-pick may not be used.

The venting tool must be inserted into the fish at a 45-degree angle approximately 1 to 2 inches (2.54 to 5.08 cm) from the base of the pectoral fin. The tool must be inserted just deep enough to release the gases, so that the fish may be released with minimum damage.

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Capt. Troy Wetzel of Louisiana Offshore Fishing Charters can be reached at 504-701-3474 or check his website at www.captaintroywetzel.com.



Rusty Tardo grew up in St. Bernard fishing the waters of Delacroix, Hopedale and Shell Beach. He and his wife, Diane, have been married over 40 years and live in Kenner.

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CHANGING PLACES

WITH THE CLOSING OF PORT EADS, THE NEW ORLEANS BIG GAME FISHING CLUB MOVES THEIR HOME PORT TO CYPRESS COVE MARINA

By Brian Cope

Despite having to find a new home port due to the closing of Port Eads Marina, the New Orleans Big Game Fishing Club expects 2019 to be another great year for their anglers and activities.

Port Eads was the historic home of the New Orleans Big Game Fishing Club, said club president Charlie Caplinger. From now on, their tournaments will be fished out of Cypress Cove Marina in Venice.

"We are certainly sad and disappointed to see Port Eads close. It's been our historic home, and after it was destroyed, we continued to use it once it was reopened. It was a good stopover, a good place to fuel up, a good place to get a meal and spend the night. The fishing will be more difficult without it," he said.

Port Eads closed in late February, mostly due to the South Pass filling in with silt.

"It's not being dredged and it continues to silt in. We used

Port Eads back in December during a Wounded Warriors event and had no problem, but the river was flooded which helped us, and from what I understand, the channel that we used then is much different now. Some boats have run aground in recent weeks, and it's become a danger as well as an inconvenience," Caplinger said.

RICH FISHING GROUNDS CALL

Although the loss of Port Eads will impact the fishing tournaments, Caplinger said the club is excited about the new tournament season. Membership is up this year to about 180 members, and with the rich fishing grounds, he expects anglers will have another strong year.

"The closure of Port Eads isn't going to stop us from fishing. We've got a new clubhouse at Cypress Cove Marina in Venice. We're going to fish just as hard out of there as we have ever fished," he said. >

Membership is up this year to about 180 members, and with the rich fishing grounds, Caplinger expects anglers will have another strong year.

2019 TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

- **Opening Season Tournament**
May 17-18, 2019
- **Regular Tournament - Cajun Canyons**
May 31 - June 1, 2019
- **Ladies Invitational Tournament**
June 15-16, 2019
- **4th of July Youth Tournament**
June 28-29, 2019
- **Regular Club Tournament**
July 12-13, 2019
- **Faux Pas/Grand Isle Tournament**
July 26-27, 2019
- **New Orleans Invitational Billfish Tournament**
August 8-11, 2019
- **Regular Tournament**
August 23-24, 2019
- **Gulf Club Cup Tournament**
September 6-7, 2019
- **Season Closing Tournament**
September 20-21, 2019

All tournaments will be fished out of Cypress Cove Marina in Venice.



Cypress cove marina welcomes New Orleans Big Game Fishing Club with open arms. all of the tournaments this season will be fished out of the marina which is located in Venice, LA.

TOP: Club President Charlie Caplinger and crew aboard his boat "Rebellious". **Bottom:** Cypress Cove Marina and Lodge offers everything you need to enjoy Louisiana's offshore fishing, including an onsite store and restaurant to assure that you will have the supplies need for your trip and a hot meal waiting when you return.



The impact will be felt, however, and Caplinger said the anglers who will feel the most pain are those coming from out of state. Port Eads was a refuge for them in so many ways, and the next closest port for them is 22 miles

away in Venice. "It's an inconvenience for us. That may be understating its impact on us. But it's those coming in from Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida that will really feel the pain. They typically leave their home ports

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and fish their way to Port Eads where they would refuel and replenish, spend the night, and then fish their way back home. Not having that option will place the burden on them of having enough fuel to fish both ways. And that's on top of not having the options for food, sleep, etc., at Port Eads. They will feel the pain in a major way," he said.

Caplinger said anglers remain hopeful that some solution will allow the reopening of Port Eads in the future. But for now, the New Orleans Big Game Fishing Club, which was established in 1961, will settle in to their new home port at Cypress Cove. ■



Brian Cope of Edisto Island, S.C., is a retired Air Force combat communications technician. He has a B.A. in English Literature from the University of South Carolina and has been writing about the outdoors since 2006. He's spent half his life hunting and fishing. The rest, he said, has been wasted.

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SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: SWORDFISH

Swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*), often referred to as broadbills or broadbill swordfish, are highly sought-after by offshore anglers around the world. They are one of the more mysterious and elusive species of fish and are often pursued by anglers at night. These fish spend most daylight hours very deep, perhaps due to their sensitivity to light. At night, they move up in the water column, much closer to the surface.

Swordfish are listed as members of the billfish family, but this classification is somewhat deceiving. Although they share many similarities with sailfish and marlin, sword-

fish are actually the sole member of the Xiphiidae family.

Although they aren't often seen near the surface during daylight hours, on rare occasions they can be seen basking in the sun on the surface or making huge leaps out of the water. Biologists believe they are trying to rid themselves of pests like remoras or lampreys that attach to swordfish and other species.

Swordfish are isolated creatures. They do not travel in schools but choose to swim alone or in distant proximity of other swordfish.

Until recently, anglers and scientists believed swordfish fed only at night; however, research has shown



Iquique, Chile | May 7, 1953 | 1,182 pounds | Louis Marron

Courtesy of IGFA

that they do feed during the day as well. They stay much deeper (down to 2,000 feet) during the daytime, but anglers have learned how to catch them in deep water with the aid of very heavy weights and glow sticks or L.E.D. lights located near the bait. It's not uncommon for anglers to use 10 pounds of weight on a single line.

Many anglers still fish for swordfish at night, when the fish commonly move up to within 300 feet of the surface.

Common baits for swordfish are squid and whole fish, either live or dead. Some artificial lures are also used; they usually have built-in lights.

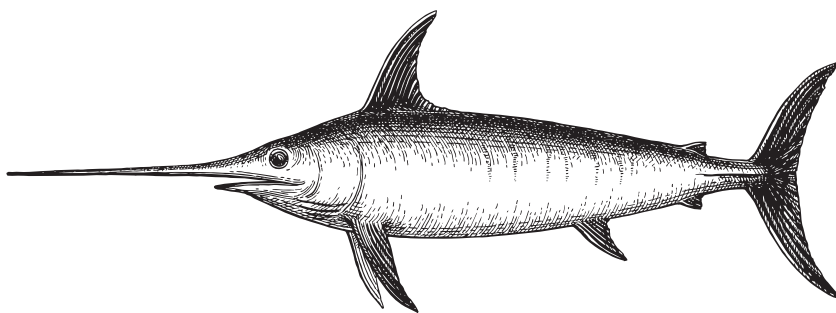
Spawning for swordfish usually takes place in water that is warmer than 75degrees, most often during spring and summer.

Swordfish get their name from their wide, sword-like bill. It is shaped unlike than those of other billfish, which have relatively thin and pointed bills. While their bills are sometimes used to slash at prey, swordfish mostly rely on their speed to chase down meals. Their bills are very sharp, however, and have been known to slice through wooden-hulled boats after being harpooned by fishermen.

These fish are hearty fighters, and hooking one often results in a battle that lasts for several hours. Outdoor writer Zane Grey, who fished for and wrote about swordfish in great detail, once reported fighting a swordfish for 5 hours, then observing the fish chasing down and eating flying fish, apparently unaware and unfazed that it was even hooked.

The Louisiana state record, a 310-pound swordfish, was caught in 1980 by Thomas Dantin. He caught the fish in Mississippi Canyon.

Mississippi's state record is 242.54 pounds; it was caught by Scott Cothran in 2017. Cothran caught



the fish aboard the boat *Pay Dirt* during the Mississippi Gulf Coast Billfish Classic and won \$376,075 and a Nissan Titan.

The world-record swordfish was caught off the coast of Chile in 1953. It weighed 1,182 pounds and was caught by Louis Marron. ■



Brian Cope is a retired Air Force combat communications technician. He has been writing about the outdoors since 2006. He's spent half his life hunting and fishing. The rest, he said, has been wasted.

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1 ¼-cup size chunk of frozen Crawfish Pureé
1 10-oz. can of condensed golden mushroom soup
Cajun/Creole seasoning to taste
1 lb. crawfish tailmeat
1 bunch of green onions, tops only, chopped

Barry Toups is a soft-spoken man with a mild Cajun accent, who says his passion is entertaining people.

He lives in one wing of his Crawfish Haven/Mrs. Rosie's Bed & Breakfast (337-652-8870), 4 miles north of Kaplan in rural Vermilion Parish. The century-old white Victorian home is set on his 53-acre crawfish farm, and was formerly the life-long residence of Rose Blanchard Robichaux.

From the second week in November to June 1, he escorts his B & B guests, as well as day-visitors on the boat with him as he runs his commercial crawfish traps. Part of the catch is boiled at the B & B for the guests. >



Besides tasting delicious, this crawfish étouffée is a quick dish to prepare. **INSET:** Barry Toups does all the cooking at Crawfish Haven, his Kaplan bed and breakfast.

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He also offers Cajun meals at the B & B. Two-night guests get crawfish étouffée or chicken and sausage gumbo, served with rice, sweet peas and a warm potato salad.

If that's not enough, he offers cooking classes for groups of 4 to 8 people. With hands-on participation, participants learn how to make scratch Cajun meals.

"Most of my cooking skills came from the hunting camp. I watched those old men cook, and my mom Edna was a good cook too."

Barry was recognized for his expertise in seafood by being appointed in 2018 to the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board to represent the crawfish industry. ■

CRAWFISH ÉTOUFFÉE

"I can have this dish ready in less than an hour. My momma started me with this. My aunts just used onions, but my mother used cream of mushroom soup. Then I tested golden mushroom condensed soup. It had a better taste and a better color. The finished dish looks better.

"I started cooking étouffées in competition in 2018. I cooked them twice and came in third in the Lake Charles Dreams Come True Benefit and first in the Kaplan High Chorus and Piano Seafood Cookoff.

PREPARATION: Serves 4.

Melt butter in a large pot. Stir in frozen seasoning blend over medium heat to thaw. Add pureé and soup. Stir to thoroughly blend. Simmer 20 minutes until the onions in the seasoning blend are soft. Add the crawfish, stir and simmer 15 minutes. Add green onion tops before serving. Serve over rice.



Barry adds a chunk of frozen Crawfish Pureé, his "secret weapon," to every crawfish étouffée he makes.

TURTLE SAUCE PIQUANT UP NEXT >



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.



SEAFOOD BIBLE

continued

TURTLE SAUCE PIQUANT

INGREDIENTS:

- ½ cup Savoie's Old Fashioned Light Roux
- 16 oz. frozen Pictsweet Farm Seasoning Blend
- 1 10-oz. can Rotel Original Diced Tomatoes and Green Chilies
- 1 15-oz. can tomato sauce
- 3 heaping tbsp. tomato paste
- 3 bay leaves
- 1 heaping tsp. pickling spice
- 2 ½ lb. bone-in turtle meat
- Cajun/Creole Seasoning

The turtle meat in Barry's sauce piquant is cooked long enough to be falling-off-the-bone tender.

HOW TO MAKE IT!

“Every day for Father’s Day, for my father Robert, who is 79, we cook turtle sauce piquant and fried frog legs. For those family members who don’t eat turtle or frogs, I cook a redfish sauce piquant. “I started playing around with the recipe 20 years ago until I got what I wanted. This sauce

can be frozen to use with meat or fish later.”

Barry stresses cooking time for the dish. After adding the tomato products, he tapped the lid of the pot, “If I ate this now, it would upset my stomach. After cooking for 4 hours, it’s delicious and I can eat all I want. Long cooking is important.”

PREPARATION: Serves 6.

Heat 1 qt. of water to boiling in a large pot. Stir in the roux over medium heat until dissolved. Add water as needed to keep the level constant and the roux from burning. When the consistency of the liquid is creamy, stir in the seasoning blend. Add the Rotel tomatoes, the tomato sauce, the tomato paste and the bay leaves. Stir to blend. Put the seasoning blend in a tea ball strainer and add it to the sauce. Bring it to a boil and reduce heat to simmer. Cover and cook for 1 ½ hours. Stir occasionally to prevent sticking. Season the turtle meat to taste with Cajun/Creole seasoning and add it to the sauce. Simmer for 2 hours or until the turtle meat is tender. Add water, if needed. Serve over rice.

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APEX PREDATOR

Joshua Chauvin



USE PAINT BRUSHES TO STEALTH UP TRAIL CAMERAS

Spring is when I finally take my trail cameras out of the woods and paint new ones bought on clearance for the upcoming season. Since I only hunt public land, I've always use cheap cameras. I look for three very important features in a trail camera: quietness, no-lights and coloration.

I've been running dozens of cameras annually, upgrading with newer ones as some get destroyed or stolen. Every season, I get hundreds of different bucks on film. This allows me to only hunt the places visited most by mature bucks in the two dozen or more units I scout.

A common theme is when mature bucks notice a camera, they seldom return. Often, when a daytime buck notices a camera, he becomes nocturnal at that location. Sometimes, he'll come back, but he closely watches the camera, looking for the non-natural feature that alerted him. Spooked a second time, a buck is gone for good.

I usually have several cameras in an area, so I often know when a buck leaves or stays.

WHAT SCARES PUBLIC LAND DEER?

• **Light.** Nowadays, blackout cameras are very common, so I won't buy a camera that doesn't have this feature. Sure, you'll sacrifice some nighttime range, but to avoid spooking the buck is worth it. Some bucks may not mind the flash of a red LED light. In my experience, however, more often than not, it'll send smart bucks running for the hills. The lights also can give away a hidden camera position to thieves.

• **Camera sound.** Loud cameras that make a click to record will instantly spook an animal. Sometimes, they'll sprint off. Sometimes, they'll stay for multiple sets to investigate. Then they leave the area for good.

I was frustrated for years with noisy cameras constantly breaking and others hav-

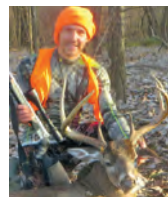
ing horrible, over-sensitive triggers. I put cameras in thick locations to hide them from people. Also, these dense tangles are where public-land animals move best, so a sensitive trigger is not helpful around all the brush when the wind blows. The wide-spreading sensors of some more-expensive cameras have performed poorly in these brushy areas.

I'm looking to scout many areas in the cheapest way possible.

CHEAP CAMERAS THAT DO THE JOB

The good news is some of the cheapest cameras have proven to have all the qualities I like.

I first snatched up some Wildgame



Joshua Chauvin is a health-focused ultramarathon runner who goes on solo, manual-powered public-land adventures focusing on hunting big game and large fish by using challenging methods and weapons. He enjoys self-filming and sharing the tactics and details from his expeditions to help others learn from his unique techniques.

This photo shows 10 trail cameras — nine the author painted himself and one unpainted.

Innovations Cloak cameras a few years back. I was surprised at how durable they were after using more than a dozen in Colorado and in the humid Louisiana heat for two years. I even left a bunch in the Rocky Mountains over the winter. The next year, they all fired up without a flaw. I was impressed.

The cameras have great battery life and are simple but effective. They have a less-than-one-second trigger for both video and picture mode with hardly any false captures of moving brush. Many other cameras had the same fast picture-taking ability, but they took nearly 3 seconds to start in video mode; this often missed anything that passed by. I love video mode for capturing fighting bucks and chase scenes during the rut.

I found that the Wildgame Innovations Nano model had a trigger that was too under-sensitive. However, all the same great features in the Cloak versions came on with their Terra models as well.

I've been able to find the Cloak and Terra 6, 7, 8 and 10 GB models all for less than \$33 each with free shipping and no sales tax by searching eBay and Google Shopping for deals that sporadically pop up.

SHOP POSTSEASON

The deals are frequent after the season when places clear out the previous year's inventory for upgraded models. These Cloak and Terras do have the slightest noise, but rarely is it loud enough to spook an animal unless it's practically standing next to the camera. For the low price, it's worth the trade-off.

I find the cheapest SD cards by buying them in large lots on eBay. Inexpensive, Class 4 cards work well with my cameras. Also, I find bulk AA alkaline batteries online. They last just as long as the name brand ones for a quarter of the name-brand price.

DIY CAMOU

I notice that animals aren't spooked by my painted trail cameras once they look in their direction. However, I've had the plain black, green or grey ones, and had animals spook after spotting them.

Unfortunately, many cameras on sale are often non-camouflaged. There's no need

continues on page 146



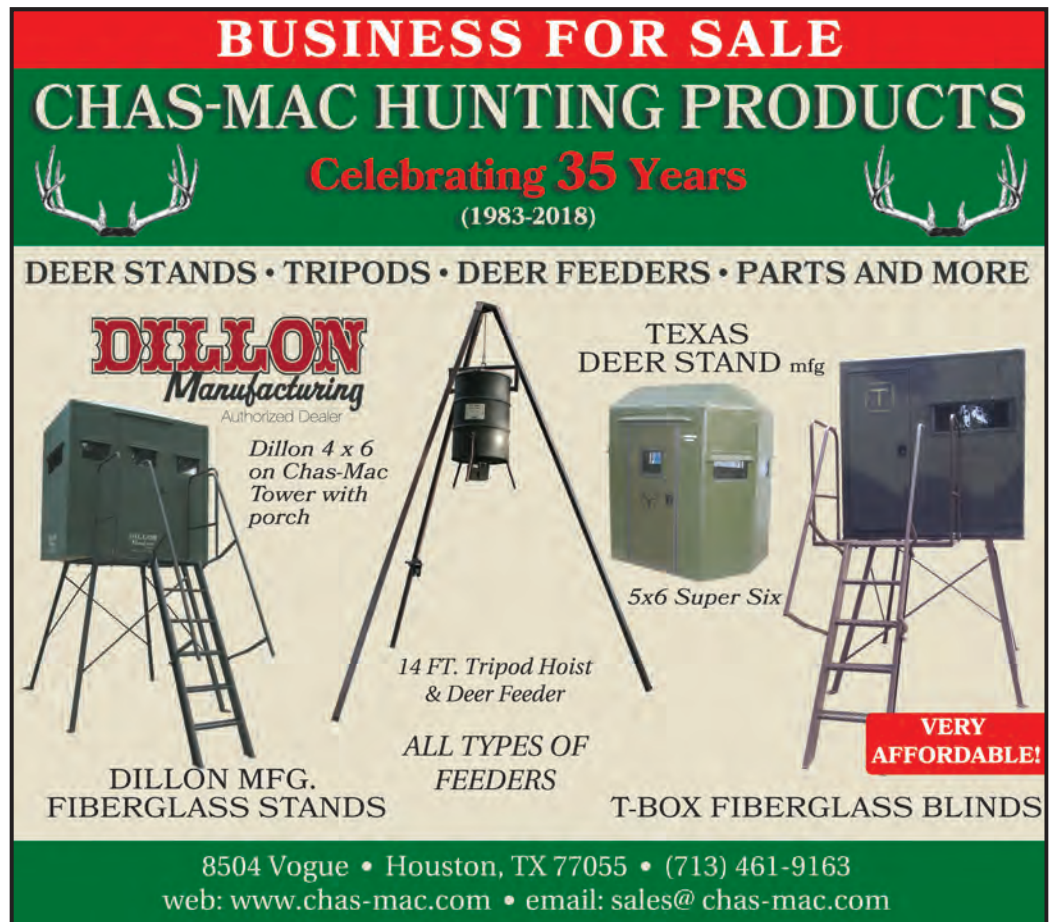
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APEX PREDATOR

Joshua Chauvin



This buck looking at the author's self-painted camera wasn't spooked and returned many times.

to spend more money on expensive models. You can paint the cameras yourself for only pennies in cost.

I use small paint brushes to paint them mostly grey, like the majority of trees I set them on. I take white paint and stir in black to create various shades of grey. I paint on some browns and mix a touch a

black to darken the browns. Then, I finish with a small amount of green, adding in some black to get the desired tone.

Deer seem to not notice and not be bothered by my camouflaged cameras when they look at them. Most important, camouflage matters to keep cameras hidden from thieves, and also from bears and elk,

which both like to destroy cameras.

I've set numerous cameras on carcasses in Colorado and popular bear locations in Louisiana. Bears have looked right at my camouflaged cameras and walked on by, but when the same bears saw my non-camouflaged cameras nearby, they were instantly demolished.

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RED LIGHTS ANGER BEARS

Keep in mind, if the camera has a flashing red light or makes a loud noise, the elk or bear angrily attacks it, no matter the color pattern.

The main reason I paint my cameras in the spring is for the smell factor. I'm very picky about my scent-control measures when hunting. I've had big bucks bust me downwind when not taking precautions. Vice versa, I've taken several nice bucks that came from downwind when I did take extreme scent-control measures, so I take the same approach with my cameras.

BEWARE OF PAINT SMELL

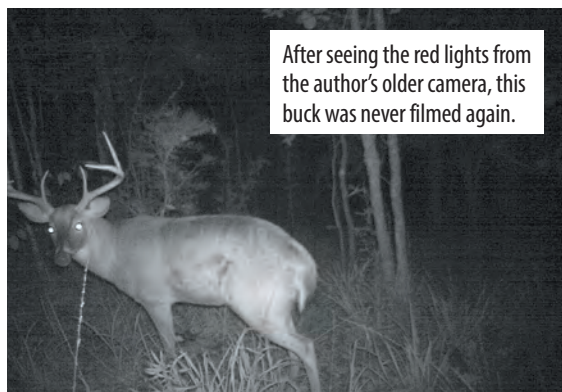
I paint my cameras and leave them in a covered outdoor area for months to allow the scent to fade away. I make sure to wash my camera-setting backpack and camera straps in scent-free clothes wash and leave my bag outside for months as well. Bears also have remarkable smelling ability, which is another reason to take the scent-control methods.

Sure, gluing real tree bark, moss or leaves to the camera makes it even more stealthy. However, I found this to be impractical, as most of it fell off during my long hikes. I'm resetting dozens of cameras over many different locations all-year long. Also, most glues have an unnatural smell, so I wouldn't want to glue on the extra cover when I set them.

All of these measures may seem extreme to some, but my deer-hunting success has skyrocketed in the past few years with an ability to not only find bucks, but to keep from alerting them of the surveillance without spending top dollar. ■



A blackout camera never alerted any of these bucks, and they returned often to feed.



After seeing the red lights from the author's older camera, this buck was never filmed again.

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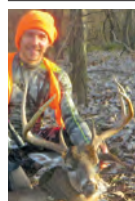
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Joshua Chauvin is a health-focused ultra-marathon runner who goes on solo manual-powered public land adventures focusing on hunting big game and large fish by using challenging methods and weapons. He enjoys self-filming and sharing the tactics and details from his expeditions to help others learn from his unique techniques.



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Heaviest speckled trout in Western Region wins:
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Heaviest speckled trout in Western
Region wins: \$2,500 Travel Voucher
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and released alive
Heaviest speckled trout wins:
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Heaviest sheepshead in Western Region wins:
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Heaviest speckled trout wins:
16' Weldbilt with 40 hp Mercury
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These regulations are unofficial. For official regulations, always check the Department of Wildlife & Fisheries pamphlet and/or the federal pamphlet. www.wlf.louisiana.gov

SALTWATER

STATE REGULATIONS (0-10.357 miles^Δ)

FISH Species	Minimum Length	Bag Limit (per person)
Greater Amberjack*~	34" FL	1/day*
Lesser Amberjack, Banded Rudderfish*	14-22" FL	5/day (aggregate)
Yellowfin Tuna	27" CFL	3/day
Bluefin Tuna	73" CFL	1 per vessel per year*
Bigeye Tuna	27" CFL	None
Blue Marlin	99" LJFL	None
White Marlin	66" LJFL	None
Sailfish	63" LJFL	None
Swordfish*	29" CL or 33 lbs. DW	5 per vessel per trip
Cobia (ling or lemon fish)	33" FL	2/day
Drum, Black	16" TL	5/day#
Drum, Red (redfish)	16" TL	5/day#
Flounder, Southern	None	10/day
Groupers* Gag ^Δ & Black ^Δ	24" TL	4/day (aggregate)*
Scamp ^Δ	16" TL	
Nassau & Goliath	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
Yellowfin ^Δ	20" TL	
Red ^Δ	20" TL	2 of 4 grouper total
Atlantic Sharpnose & Bonnethead shark@	None	1/day
Other sharks (except prohibited species)@	54" FL	1/day/vessel/aggregate
King Mackerel*	24" FL	3/day
Spanish Mackerel*	12" FL	15/day
Striped mullet	None	100 pounds/day
Black seabass	None	None
Hogfish	14" FL	5/day
Seatrout, Spotted (Speckled Trout)	12" TL*	25/day*
Red Snapper*	16" TL	2/day*
Other Snapper		5 mutton in 10 snapper aggregate
Mutton Snapper	18" TL	
Cubera, Yellowtail, Gray (mangrove)	12" TL	10 in aggregate*
Queen, Blackfin, Silk, Wenchman	None	
Vermilion Snapper	10" TL	
Schoolmaster, Dog, Mahogany	None	None
Gray Triggerfish [†]	15" FL	1/day in aggregate
Lane Snapper	8" TL	
Almaco Jack, Goldface Tilefish, & Blueline Tilefish	None	20/person/day in aggregate*
Blackline Tilefish, Anchor Tilefish	None	
Tripletail	18" TL	5/day

CFL = curved fork length LJFL = lower jaw fork length CL = carcass length
 DW = dressed weight LJTF = lower jaw to tail fork FL = fork length

FRESHWATER

FISH Species	Minimum Size Limit	Bag Limit (per person)
Crappie	None	50/day*
Buffalo Fish	16" TL	25/day
Freshwater Drum (Gaspergou)	12" TL	25/day
Channel Catfish	11" TL*	***
Blue Catfish	12" TL*	***
Bowfin	16" TL	None
Flathead Catfish	14" TL*	***
Crawfish	None	150 lbs./day
Paddlefish	30" max LJFL	2*
Shad	None	50 lbs./day
Black Bass (largemouth & spotted)	None*	10/day*
Striped Bass or Hybrid Striped Bass	**	5/day*
Sturgeon	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
White Bass	None	50/day*
Yellow Bass	None	50/day*

* see exceptions in pamphlet. ** no more than two may exceed 30 inches.
 *** catfish limit is 100 in aggregate; however, 25 fish in aggregate may be undersized.
 # only one fish may exceed 27 inches. @Shark season is closed between April 1 and June 30.
 ^ Closed season for gag grouper Jan. 1 - May 31. Closed season for black, red, yellowfin, yellowmouth & scamp grouper from Feb. 1 - March 31. ~ Greater amberjack season is open Aug. 1 - Oct. 31. * Closed season on gray triggerfish May 11, 2019 - March 1, 2020.

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Adam Covington

This deer was killed in Red River Parish by Adam Covington.



Olivia, Carlee & Dana

Olivia, Carlee and Dana Saluto's family redfish trip to Lake Catherine was very successful.



Sam Redd

Sam Redd caught his first crappie while fishing with his paw paw, Phillip Watkins, at Pickensville, Ala., on the Tombigbee River.

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Charles Dalton

This 41-inch, 30-pound bull red was caught and released at the Wreck in Black Bay by Charles Dalton of Mandeville on Nov. 24, 2018.



Aaron Olivier

Aaron Olivier killed this 8-point in Allen Parish during primitive weapons season with his .35 Whelen.



Celia Brignac

Celia Brignac caught her first rainbow trout at Forest Park on a Mepp's spinner.



Paxton, Caden, & Peyton

Paxton, 5, Caden, 10, and Peyton Jolie, 5, caught this mixed bag in Chalmette on live shrimp under a cork.



Lena Schild

Lena Schild, 5, was fishing in a friend's pond in Central when she caught her first bass. Now she's hooked for life!

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Callen, Lucas, Louis & Rhett

Callen and Lucas Schramm and Louis and Rhett Phillips stop for a photo after a successful hunt at the Lacassane Club.

RIGHT: Trent Derouen and Mason Mendoza took a trip with Full Draw Bowfishing and shot this redfish that was 46 inches long and weighed 35.7 pounds.



Rene Ragas

Rene Ragas caught this trout in Venice in August.



Trent & Mason



Thomas Watkins

Thomas Watkins with a 2-pound crappie caught while fishing with his dad Phillip.

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Joe Talbot

Joe Talbot, 87, killed this 170-pound 6-point on Dec. 22 in East Feliciana Parish.



Cameron Dworak

LSU student Cameron Dworak of New Orleans caught this Warsaw grouper 80 miles south of Fourchon on Nov. 17, 2018.



Henry Gootee

Henry Gootee, 10, shot his first duck, a blue-winged teal, on the fly this past December in Caernarvon.



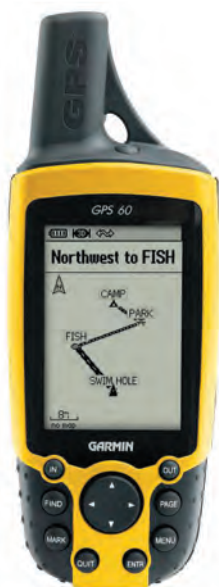
Elizabeth & Colbie

Elizabeth Shierling and Colbie Cleveland had a successful night bow fishing on Aug. 25, 2018 at Dularge.

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- Vermillion Bay
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Victoria Villere

Victoria Villere killed her first turkey on April 7 on a hunt with her boyfriend, Landon Fonda, in Washington Parish. The gobbler had a 10 ¼-inch beard, 1 inch spurs and weighed 18 pounds.



Larry Thomas

Larry Thomas holds up two 5+ pounders he caught out of Lake Des Allemands. He was fishing a black and blue jig football jig and a Delta lures Thunder jig.



Cory Mier

Cory Mier poses with a cooler full of crabs that were caught in Grand Isle.



Chris Blappert

Chris Blappert killed this fine 8-point on Valentine's Day in Lumberton, Miss.



Sam Pousson

Sam Pousson of Church Point with a nice pond bass he caught on a day off from school. He snagged this beast with a Funk Buster under spin with Cajun Lures Mad Minna on his new Denali Pryme rod.



Avery Andrews

Avery Andrews poses with her first deer, a 6-point, killed Oct. 27, 2018 in Livingston Parish.

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RIGHT: Read Areingdale of Alexandria celebrated his 16th birthday with a trip to Saskatchewan, Canada, to shoot ducks and geese.



**Read
Areingdale**



**Charlotte
Mercier**

Charlotte Mercier of Lockport pulled in quite a few reds like this one in and around Catfish Lake.



Jonathan Tolar

Jonathan Tolar holds up a big 30-pound, 40 1/4-inch red from a trip to Grand Isle.



Laura Goudeau

Laura Goudeau and her husband Rooster were hammering some monster Toledo Bend sac-a-lait last year.



Gabe Malone

Gabe Malone caught this redfish in Golden Meadow near Lake Cheniere.



Benjy Roscoe

Benjy Roscoe from Tiago landed this 31-inch redfish in Big Lake using a gulp on Dec. 21, 2018.



Hughes Desormeaux

Hughes Desormeaux with the 11-point he took in St. Landry Parish on Dec. 29, 2018.

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.

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2019 MAY	BEST DAYS				VALUE
	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	
Wed 1	██	██	██	██	45
Thu 2	██	██	██	██	58
Fri 3	██	██	██	██	72
Sat 4	██	██	██	██	80
Sun 5	██	██	██	██	73
Mon 6	██	██	██	██	66
Tue 7	██	██	██	██	58
Wed 8	██	██	██	██	55
Thu 9	██	██	██	██	57
Fri 10	██	██	██	██	62
Sat 11	██	██	██	██	72
Sun 12	██	██	██	██	60
Mon 13	██	██	██	██	53
Tue 14	██	██	██	██	50
Wed 15	██	██	██	██	56
Thu 16	██	██	██	██	62
Fri 17	██	██	██	██	71
Sat 18	██	██	██	██	74
Sun 19	██	██	██	██	61
Mon 20	██	██	██	██	48
Tue 21	██	██	██	██	36
Wed 22	██	██	██	██	30
Thu 23	██	██	██	██	29
Fri 24	██	██	██	██	29
Sat 25	██	██	██	██	36
Sun 26	██	██	██	██	47
Mon 27	██	██	██	██	40
Tue 28	██	██	██	██	39
Wed 29	██	██	██	██	42
Thu 30	██	██	██	██	45
Fri 31	██	██	██	██	59

25 50 75
AVERAGE

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LUNAR PERIODS					
TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED					
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT		
4:55 am	9:52 am - 11:54 am	4:57 pm	10:17 pm - 12:19 am	☉	☾
5:25 am	10:27 am - 12:45 pm	5:54 pm	10:52 pm - 1:10 am	☉	☾
5:54 am	11:02 am - 1:38 pm ☀	6:52 pm	11:27 pm - Midnight	☉	☾
6:26 am	11:40 am - 2:30 pm ☀	7:52 pm	Midnight - 2:03 am	☉	NEW
7:01 am	12:23 pm - 3:25 pm ☀	8:54 pm	12:05 am - 2:55 am	☉	☾
7:40 am	1:08 pm - 4:24 pm	9:57 pm	12:48 am - 3:50 am	☉	☾
8:24 am	1:59 pm - 5:21 pm	11:00 pm	1:33 am - 4:49 am	☉	☾
9:15 am	2:52 pm - 6:22 pm		2:24 am - 5:46 am	☉	HIGH
10:13 am	3:52 pm - 7:18 pm		3:17 am - 6:47 am	☉	☾
11:15 am	4:52 pm - 8:14 pm	12:56 am	4:17 am - 7:43 am ☀	☉	☾
12:21 pm	5:54 pm - 9:06 pm ☀	1:46 am	5:17 am - 8:39 am ☀	☉	HALF
1:29 pm	6:56 pm - 9:52 pm ☀	2:31 am	6:19 am - 9:31 am ☀	☉	☾
2:37 pm	7:57 pm - 10:37 pm	3:11 am	7:21 am - 10:17 am	☉	Perigee
3:44 pm	8:57 pm - 11:19 pm	3:48 am	8:22 am - 11:02 am	☉	☾
4:51 pm	9:57 pm - 11:59 pm	4:23 am	9:22 am - 11:44 am	☉	☾
5:57 pm	10:56 pm - 12:42 am	4:57 am	10:22 am - 12:24 pm	☉	☾
7:03 pm	11:56 pm - Midnight	5:33 am	11:21 am - 1:07 pm ☀	☉	☾
8:09 pm	Midnight - 1:24 am	6:10 am	12:21 pm - 1:49 pm ☀	☉	FULL
9:12 pm	12:54 am - 2:10 am	6:50 am	1:19 pm - 2:35 pm ☀	☉	☾
10:12 pm	1:52 am - 2:58 am	7:34 am	2:17 pm - 3:23 pm	☉	☾
11:07 pm	2:49 am - 3:47 am	8:22 am	3:14 pm - 4:12 pm	☉	☾
11:57 pm	3:42 am - 4:40 am	9:14 am	4:07 pm - 5:05 pm	☉	LOW
	4:33 am - 5:31 am	10:08 am	4:58 pm - 5:56 pm	☉	☾
12:41 am	5:18 am - 6:24 am ☀	11:03 am	5:43 pm - 6:49 pm	☉	☾
1:20 am	6:00 am - 7:16 am ☀	11:59 am	6:25 pm - 7:41 pm ☀	☉	☾
1:55 am	6:39 am - 8:05 am ☀	12:55 pm	7:04 pm - 8:30 pm ☀	☉	HALF & APOGEE
2:27 am	7:16 am - 8:54 am ☀	1:50 pm	7:41 pm - 9:19 pm ☀	☉	☾
2:56 am	7:50 am - 9:46 am	2:45 pm	8:15 pm - 10:11 pm	☉	☾
3:25 am	8:26 am - 10:34 am	3:42 pm	8:51 pm - 10:59 pm	☉	☾
3:54 am	9:00 am - 11:26 am	4:39 pm	9:25 pm - 11:51 pm	☉	☾
4:25 am	9:37 am - 12:19 pm	5:39 pm	10:02 pm - 12:44 am	☉	☾

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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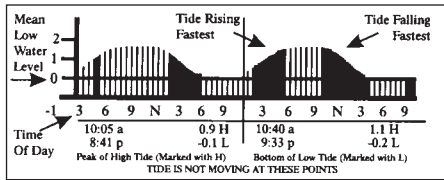
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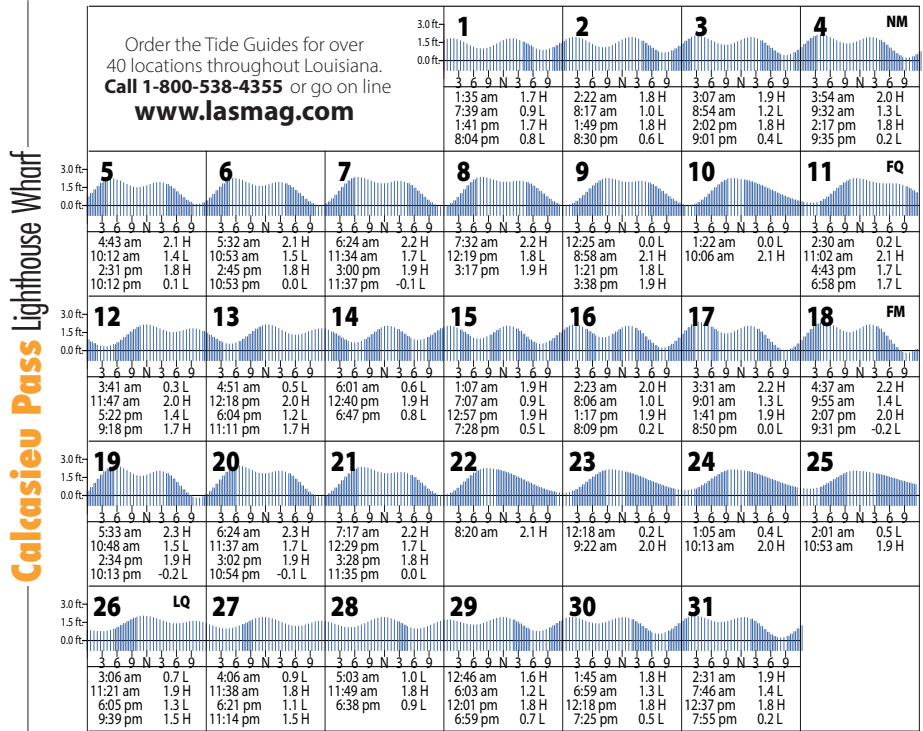
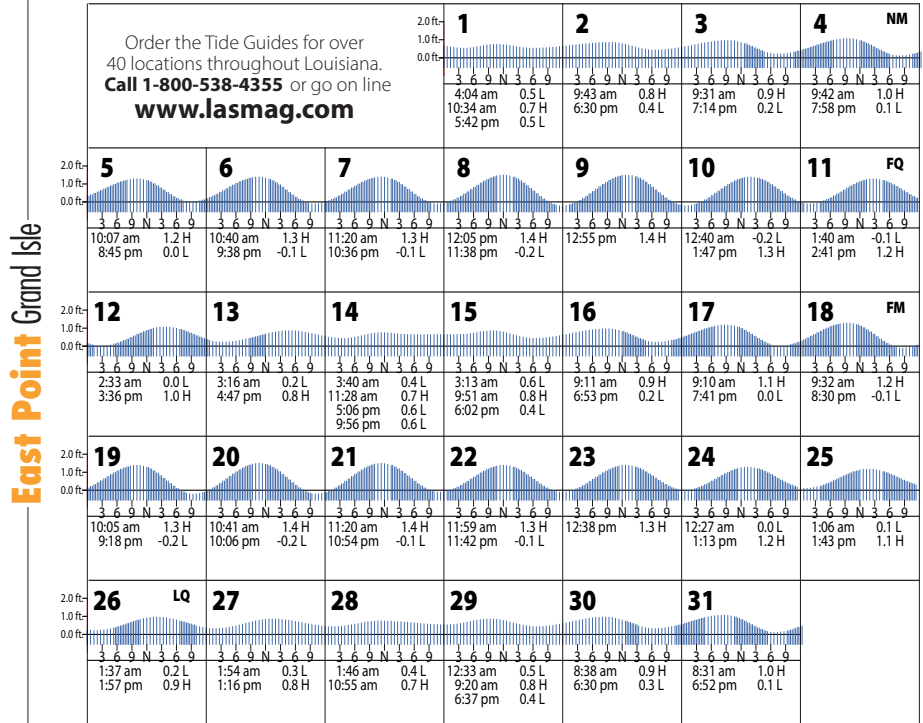
How to use the **SPORTSMAN** Tide Guide



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



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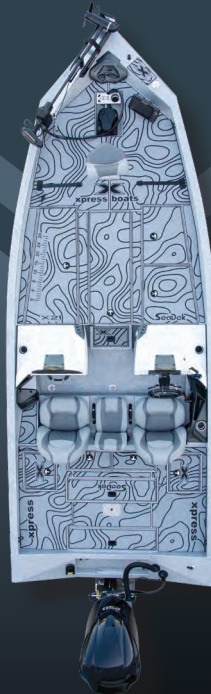
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