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PLIGHT OF LOUISIANA'S SPECKS

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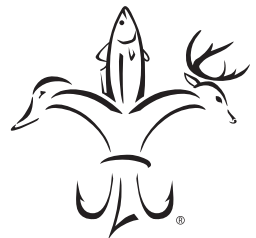
The future of speckled trout isn't looking too good, as biologists' surveys come to light and show a shrinking population in Louisiana waters. Cover photo by Chris Berzas.

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Louisiana
SPORTSMAN
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SUBSCRIPTIONS OR SUBSCRIPTION ISSUES, CALL 1-855-223-3599
 Monday thru Friday, 6 am to 11 pm
 Saturday & Sunday, 8 am - 5 pm CST

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

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MISSISSIPPI FLYWAY FLOODING WRECKS CROP PRODUCTION

WOES A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD FOR WATERFOWL AND HUNTERS

By Darren Digby

The record rains and flooding that plagued lower Mississippi Flyway hunters this past waterfowl season has continued to impact residents and businesses well to our north, even as we get into the heart of summer. Though an undoubtedly serious matter, something our residents know all too well, it may also include a couple of silver linings for both waterfowl and those that pursue them in the Bayou State.

Based on early reports, record rainfall and flooding has served to improve conditions on the breeding grounds in key states such as the Dakotas, Minnesota and Iowa. Runoff from melting snows combined with repeated rounds of torrential rains have breathed new life into wetlands that struggled to hold water the past few years. As a result, breeding ducks should find improved conditions for reproduction this summer.

Additionally, the extreme rainfall has resulted in significant delays to Midwest farmers getting crops planted. According to data released in early June by NASA Earth Observatory, the continental U.S. has had its 12 soggiest months since modern record-keeping began 124 years ago.

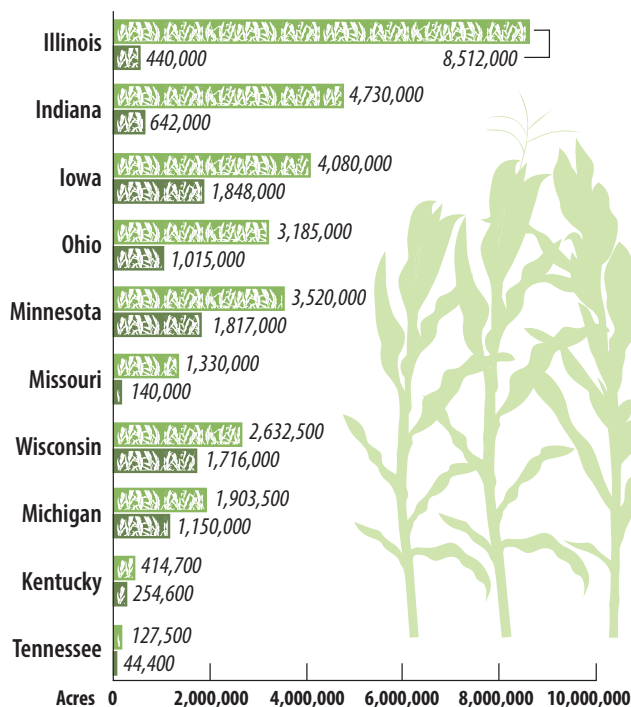
FLOODED FIELDS CONTINUE TO HAMPER PLANTING EFFORTS

Indeed, a winter and spring that was a boon for waterfowl habitat has turned out to be a bane for farmers, as soggy or flooded fields continue to hamper planting efforts for this year's crops.

Though this is unfortunate news for those of us who love

MISSISSIPPI FLYWAY CORN ACRES LEFT TO PLANT

Comparing Week 20 **2019** vs **2018**





Extreme amounts of winter rainfall, snow melt and spring rains and the resulting flooding will provide waterfowl with plenty of breeding habitat but put farmers in a jam.

to include corn on the plate, it's a potential positive sign for Louisiana hunters citing the act of flooding unharvested corn and other agricultural crops as a reason for delayed or reduced migrations of waterfowl. Whether the impacts of this practice are, in fact, significant or minimal, southern hunters aren't likely to complain should crops not make it into the fields this year, or at the very least not at peak yields.

As of early June, farmers were still well behind the pace for typical planting schedules for corn crops throughout key producing states such as Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska. In fact, 2019 has marked the slowest pace in U.S. Department of Agriculture records dating back to 1980. For example, at May's end, only about 58 percent of the Midwest's corn crop had been planted; in a typical planting season, 90 percent of the crop in the ground. Into the first week of June, only an average of 67 percent had been planted among 18 key corn-producing states.

RECORD NUMBER OF FIELDS WILL NOT GET PLANTED

For some farmers, the last date for proper crop development and peak yields has now passed, leaving significant acreage unplanted for the summer growing season. Some agricultural experts were predicting in early June that a record number of acres that will go unplanted this year, an estimate that could reach nearly 6 million acres that are usually in production.

The adage "It's always something" is certainly in play, as reduced corn acreage will surely result in higher prices at the supermarket; however, it may encourage a few more birds to make it down this way come fall. ■

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THIS SPECKLED TROUT SHOULD HAVE NEVER BEEN THERE!

Charlie Brown of Clinton caught this 8-pound trout in a canal near Chauvin, a spot where he's not used to catching specks.

CLINTON ANGLER SAYS IN 30 YEARS, HE'S NEVER CAUGHT BIG TROUT IN HIS REDFISH HONEY HOLE LIKE HE DID MAY 17

Anglers trying to plan their fishing trips on the “perfect weather day” can attest that it has been almost impossible to do lately. In fact, the weatherman forecasted May 17 to be such a day — calling for clear skies and calm winds. But alas, as has happened more often than not this spring — winds steadily increased that morning soon after daybreak along the Louisiana coast, thwarting the best-laid plans of local fishermen.

Charlie Brown of Clinton was at his camp in Montegut and planned to go fishing. He normally would have headed down to Cocodrie and fished the barrier islands but winds had whipped up the waves in Terrebonne Bay to uncomfortable levels.

FISH CAUGHT LESS THAN A MILE FROM THE MARINA

So Brown headed for his fall-back spot — a rock-lined canal that empties into the bay. The change of plans put the fish of a lifetime in his boat. Brown ended up catching an 8.02-pound beast of a speckled trout in a spot he least expected, less than a mile from Sportsman's Paradise Marina below Chauvin.

“I was just trying to put a few redfish in the boat,” said Brown, who said there was really nothing special about the way he was fishing that day. He had his normal redfish rig tied on: a live

shrimp under a popping cork with a 30-pound mono leader and a No. 2 Kahle hook.

Brown, 48, who has fished the area all his life, noticed that the water was unusually clear as he trolled along the rocks.

THEN ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE

“We were pitching to the rocks and reeling it in 10 to 20 feet when the big fish hit,” Brown said.

As soon as the speck surfaced, all hell broke loose.

“I’ve fished that canal for 30 years, but I’ve never seen a trout that big come out of there. You don’t even go there looking for trout, that’s not what I came for,” he said.

Brown described the canal as being lined with rocks and dropping off to around 12-feet deep in the middle, with a hole about 30 feet deep near the mouth.

Although Brown admits that overall, it was a slow day — but he wouldn’t change a thing. His trophy fish is now at the taxidermist. He also caught five other big trout in the same canal that day — all between 2 and 4 pounds, all healthy and all full of eggs. ■

BIG SPECK PATTERN IS DEVELOPING

By Ann Taylor

Are big specks making a comeback along the Louisiana coast? And are the thousands of rock jetties being built to prevent erosion attributing to the increase?

It sure seems as though anglers are catching more fish weighing 7 pounds or better — many along these rocks.

These newest additions to the Louisiana coastline are worth investigating for any angler who wants to catch a trophy trout, because they are very attractive to large specks, which are rather lazy feeders. Specks prefer places where they can remain hidden and safe and have their food served to them, which is why these breakwater jetties provide the perfect setup.

So next time you're looking for a trophy trout, try fishing the rocks.

Greg Kleinpeter of Baton Rouge did just that and was rewarded with a 6-pound, 11-ounce beauty. He was fishing the new limestone rocks west of Empire; he ran through oyster fields to fish the rock jetties.

"Those structures help hold and provide shelter for spawning fish," he said. "She had just spawned and could have easily weighed close to 9 pounds full of eggs."

Greg caught his trophy on live shrimp under a cork. ■



Gary Kleinpeter of Baton Rouge caught this 6-pound, 11-ounce speck off the rock jetties near Empire.

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Baton Rouge brothers Alex Maciasz (left) and charter skipper Joey Maciasz hold two cubera snapper destined to place in the Louisiana Top 10 Fish Records List. The cubera at left weighed 85 pounds and was caught by Luke Hodges. The one at right is holding weighed 100.5 pounds and came after a near 30-minute battle by Jeff Thompson to get it in the boat in mid-May.



GIANT CUBERAS CAUGHT IN EUGENE ISLAND AREA

By Joe Macaluso

Editor's note: this story is reprinted with permission from the Baton Rouge Advocate.

If there's an offshore adventure to be had at this time of year, then Joey Maciasz is one of a handful of men to guide you there.

Maciasz is from Baton Rouge but spends most of his time at Moran's Marina in Fourchon, and that's only when he not out on

the briny deep.

And, this guy likes deep.

With red snapper, amberjack and gray triggerfish off the target list for offshore charter skippers, the alternatives are to hunt for other species.

For the past handful of months, Maciasz has targeted wahoo, and the good winter and early spring run this species offers off

Louisiana's coast.

Oh, and there's yellowfin and blackfin tuna, too, but he has made a living this year on the wahoo.

Until the second week of May.

Maciasz likes to explore relatively untouched waters, and, around here, that means heading to an area known as Eugene Island. It's in waters deep enough

continues >

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GIANT CUBERAS CONTINUED

to hold lots of fish, has enough oil platforms to hold fish, but is far enough from the usual Grand Isle, Fourchon, Cocodrie and Vermilion Bay launching spots, just getting there an adventure — which is why you don't see more boats there.

Scuba divers have known about the area for years, and they spend days offshore during major fishing rodeos to pick "rodeo" fish for the leaderboard.

All of which brings us to early May: Maciasz and his brother Alex hired out for the trip to Eugene Island's rigs in search of grouper.

Big grouper, giant Warsaws and other subspecies, are more plentiful there than in other more heavily fished locales.

Like other offshore skippers, they know the offseason red

snapper and amberjacks live there, too, and that's why they started out like they did.

Maciasz said they started out with sardines threaded onto a Mustad 12/0 circle hook with two pounds of weight at the end of the line.

Two pounds?

Yep. They were fishing in 340 feet of water, and the extra weight not only gets the rig down to those depths faster, but the speed also helps get the bait past hungry, out-of-season fish.

Then came the surprise; "The first fish of the day was the smaller one, about 85 pounds; the bigger one closely followed," he said.

Smaller? Bigger?

Cubera snapper. It's the largest snapper species in the Gulf of Mexico, and the 100½-pounder Luke Hodges reeled in after a 30-minute battle came after Jeff Thompson landed an 85-pounder.

While it's likely other offshore adventurers have landed cuberas, Maciasz's trip is the first in years to document landing a cubera, much less landing two on the same trip.

"Both fish made one huge run, then slowly came on the way to the boat," Maciasz said, adding that both fish have been sent, with proper applications, to the Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association's Fish Record Committee.

It's the first applications sent for this species since 2007, and Maciasz believes, when certified, the catches will rank fifth and ninth on the state's Top-10 Fish Records List — and will be big start for his Down the Bayou Charters adventures for the remainder of the year. ■



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Billy Banks with his Majestic
9.45-pound last-minute
D'Arbonne lunger.

LAST MINUTE BASS TAKES FIRST PRIZE

By Kinny Haddox

With about 30 minutes left to fish in the annual 24-hour Majestic Bass Tournament marathon on Lake D'Arbonne, held the first weekend of June, Billy Banks landed something to take to the scales that woke up everybody quicker than a 16-ounce cup of dark roast caramel Macchiato.

It was a 9.45-pound largemouth bass that claimed the \$1,500 first prize against almost 200 other anglers fishing for hourly and overall prizes. Banks weighed in the big one with just minutes to spare at the end of the 24-hour event. It blew away the rest of the field, which was catching mostly 5- to 6-pounders that are more common this time of year.

SUNRISE BASS

To catch one almost 10 pounds is almost unheard of in summer-like, hot weather, tournament director Dale Taylor said. "We had just made a move to a new area with some docks that



had big lights by them to fish the final hour," Banks said. "There was a fisherman by one of them, but he left. When he did, we eased up in there, and my son, Wesley, decided to stop and change baits. I moved up front and tossed my big, red plastic worm up in the brush pile, and the fish nearly took the rod out of my hand. I yelled for him to 'Get the net. . . This is the one.'"

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He landed the fish about 5:15 a.m., just as the first light of day was peaking over the eastern treeline. Catching the big fish was special, because he knew it was the winner, but also because of the time he got to fish with his son, who is one of the top anglers on the University of Louisiana-Monroe bass fishing team.

"I remember not long ago when Billy Banks sat in the back of the boat and coached his son, Wesley, to a great finish in the Majestic," Taylor said. "Things came full circle this morning when Billy, fishing with Wesley, pulled that beautiful 9.45-pound bass out of D'Arbonne for the big bass win."

Banks' catch was three pounds heavier than runner-up Frank Henry's 6.25-pound bass and Daniel Taylor's 6-pounder. The younger Taylor, Dale Taylor's grandson, won the "stringer challenge" with five bass weighing 23.32 followed, by Henry with 21.76, good weights for early June.

The Taylors spent countless hours chasing bass together the past few years and that family story line played out more than once in this tourney.

NIGHT FISHING WAS KEY

The younger Taylor said the daytime fishing was slow, so he went in and took a late afternoon nap and to hit it hard at night. His success came around lights on the banks where fish would stage in deep water and move up to feed. He caught his biggest fish on a 10-inch black/red flake worm.

"On D'Arbonne, under the lights, it basically becomes a food-chain type bite," he said. "First, insects and baitfish start to come up under the light, then small fish feed on them, then the big fish follow and feed on the little fish." ■

Daniel Taylor (right) and Frank Henry with some of their biggest bass in the big-stringer division.



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Wendell Young of Eunice displays a gold catfish with pink whiskers, fins and tail. It was taken April 30 on a trotline baited with live bream in Indian Creek Reservoir in Rapides Parish near Woodworth. It weighed more than 5 pounds.



RARE CAT CAUGHT IN INDIAN CREEK RESERVOIR

ANGLER RELEASED THE UNIQUE FISH BACK INTO THE WATER.

By Chris Berzas

Like many other Acadiana prairie anglers, 66-year-old Wendell Young of Eunice has spent a lifetime fishing for catfish. “As soon as I was able to hold a rod and reel, I was out there with my dad fishing and setting lines near Schooner Bayou and the Intracoastal Waterway south of Kaplan,” Young said. “We would often camp near the drawbridge off Schooner Bayou and cook fresh catfish — frying fillets and also cooking them in our traditional couvillon.”

That’s a well-seasoned, deep-red tomato gravy that anglers in southeast Louisiana also colloquially refer to as catfish “court-bouillon.”

During these years, Young and his family caught just about every species of catfish Louisiana waters provide: spotted (flat-head), blues, channel cats, pollywogs, white humpback catfish and all the others.

“I’ve also taken albino blue catfish — white bodies with pink eyes,” he said.

But Tuesday, April 30, he ended up unhooking a catfish with coloration he had never observed before.

“It was a weird one,” he said.

From Sunday, April 28, to Friday, May 3, Young and Eunice’s Bert Miller fished the clear waters of Indian Creek Reservoir in Rapides Parish near Woodworth.

“We arrived Sunday evening, allowing us enough time to bait a 15-hook trotline with bream and set it between two stumps in a cove where we had taken catfish before,” Young said. “I find that it is best to bait the lines close to dusk, as you hook less garfish.”

On Monday morning, the line delivered a 35-pound spotted cat along with a channel catfish of 5 pounds. The rest of the day Young and Miller caught crappie — 10 fish ranging from 12 to 14 inches — on dark-bodied tube jigs with chartreuse tails along grasslines and structure in various locations in the reservoir.

“I remember the waters being so clear that we could see the sac-a-lait come up through the grass and hit the jigs,” Young said.

The next morning, a 10-pound spotted cat was the first fish

taken off the trotline.

“Next was the weird catfish,” he said. “It was a gold color, and I could tell right away it was a blue cat by the way the head was shaped, and its whiskers were heavier. There were no spots on its skin.

BLUE CAT?

“I’m 99.9 percent sure it was a blue cat.”

Upon closer inspection, Young noted pink fins, whiskers and v-shaped, deeply forked tail. It weighed more than 5 pounds.

“My thinking is that the fish is a variation of an albino catfish, although it didn’t have pink eyes,” he said. “When you look really good at its pink tail, you can see the deep fork.”

Young put the catfish in the livewell, and after fishing for sac-a-lait for a while, he decided to release his fish back into the lake.

UNIQUE FISH

“It was a unique fish,” Young said. “I didn’t want to eat it, and I haven’t seen any mounted catfish. That’s why I decided just to let it go.”

A photo of the fish was eventually examined by Jody David, District 6 Inland Fisheries Biologist Manager with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

“I would have had to actually examine the catfish to identify it properly,” David said. “Looking at the picture, it could have been a blue cat. We don’t see a lot of them, as they are uncommon.”

By Friday, the anglers had enough of fishing. In that time, they caught eight catfish in five mornings: including a 12-pound flathead take. One small pollywog was taken and released; it was the only catfish caught on a noodle.

Their best sac-a-lait out of eight to 10 taken daily was 15 inches long.

“All good sac-a-lait, but not great numbers,” Young said. “But I’ll never forget that gold, blue cat.” ■

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Download the free "CRCL – Fish for Data" app, find out more info at CRCL.org, and go fishing!

ANGLERS INVITED TO DOWNLOAD FREE FISHING APP

From News Reports

The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana (CRCL) has developed an app that allows anglers to contribute their catch data.

The CRCL-Fish for Data app is a way for anglers to connect their fishing experiences to the changing environment and contribute data that helps explain those connections.

It is no surprise to anyone who spends time on the coast that things are changing — wetland habitat is becoming open water, storms are causing greater flooding, and as we are opening the Bonnet Carre spillway for an unprecedented second time in the same year, it is quite clear that shifting weather patterns are changing the environment and how we interact with it.

Talk to a longtime Louisiana angler about their experiences fishing and you'd be hard-pressed not to hear stories of how fishing is changing.



It's becoming more and more difficult to make a limit of specks in some areas while many more reds are being landed in other areas.

Changes in species, size and effort are linked to changes along the coast.

The data app is a way to document anglers catches in a manner that we can analyze to gain a better understanding of our

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changing coast.

The app also provides a way to collect those experiences and connect it to the changing environmental conditions that directly relate to a good or bad fishing trip.

An angler simply has to download the app; upload a picture from the next fishing spot; and provide the number, species and size of the catch.

CREATE A PERSONAL LOG BOOK

The app provides the angler with all available environmental conditions related to the time and location of the catch (tide, salinity, wind, temperature, pressure, etc.), and it creates a personal "log book" — no sharing of your fishing spots — that can be referenced when deciding where to target on their next trip.

Over time, the data that anglers contribute to this effort can help tell a more complete story of how fishing is affected by changes like increasing land loss in some areas, projects that rebuild marsh and restore the banks of bayous in other areas, changes in weather patterns, and other events like hurricanes and oil spills.

If you love fishing in "Sportsman's Paradise" then you should have this app on your phone to contribute this valuable data that will help us all gain a better understanding of how our fishing is changing as the coast experiences change.

Download the free "CRCL-Fish for Data" app, find out more info at CRCL.org, and go fishing! ■

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ZWOLLE ANGLER LANDS 'PERFECT 10' AT TOLEDO BEND

Glover's big largemouth bass bit a V&M Swamp Hog near San Miguel

By Patrick Bonin

You might say the third time was the charm for Justin Glover, a 34-year-old angler from Zwolle. He flirted with his first-ever double digit bass twice this year up at Toledo Bend, catching a 9.58-pounder in January, and following that up with another near-miss for a bass that weighed 9.75 pounds in April.

Fishing in the San Miguel area on May 13, Glover's persistence paid off when he finally lipped in a "Perfect 10" — a big fish that weighed exactly 10.00 pounds at Keith's Toledo Bend Tackle in Hemphill, Texas.

"That was my third one I went to go weigh in, and the third one struck gold," he said.

Glover had launched at daybreak and was enjoying a pretty solid day on the water when the big fish inhaled his Texas-rigged, back/blue V&M Swamp Hog at about 8 a.m.

"I knew it was a big fish," he said, noting it bit in 5 to 10 feet of water. "My first thought was it might have been a trash fish, because it had a motor. Once I got to see it, I knew it was a big one.

"It swirled one time, and the rest of the time that joker was just digging. It was running pretty hard."

After a couple laps around the boat, Glover, who was fishing alone, lipped the big fish and headed to Keith's, where the largemouth measured 25 inches, with an 18¼-inch girth.

Justin Glover, of Zwolle, shows off the 10-pound largemouth bass he landed May 13 in the San Miguel area of Toledo Bend.



The weigh-in was definitely a little tense, with the digital scale bouncing between 10-pound glory and yet another near miss.

"It was flickering back and forth, and then it locked in on 10," Glover said with a chuckle. "I said, 'Hey, I'll take it!'"

And his timing couldn't have been better.

Since the 10-pounder qualified for entry into the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program and was released back into the reservoir, Glover will collect his complimentary mount this Sunday at Cypress Bend Park with all of the other winners after the Big Bass Splash weigh-in. It was fish No. 42 for the lunker program season, which started last summer.

"It definitely was a true blessing," Glover said. "It's always one when you catch a fish that big, but this one was a pretty special deal." ■



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LACASSINE REFUGE GIVES UP 11.5-POUND LUNKER

By Brian Cope

Aaron Granger of Lacassine caught an 11.5-pound bass in Lacassine Refuge on May 14 while fishing a weightless fluke in California 420 color. After taking a few photos, he released the fish.

Granger caught the big fish around 7:30 a.m. on an Okuma Helios rod-and-reel combo while working the lure at a medium speed just below the surface near an island of grass. It was his third catch of the day. It was also his last catch.

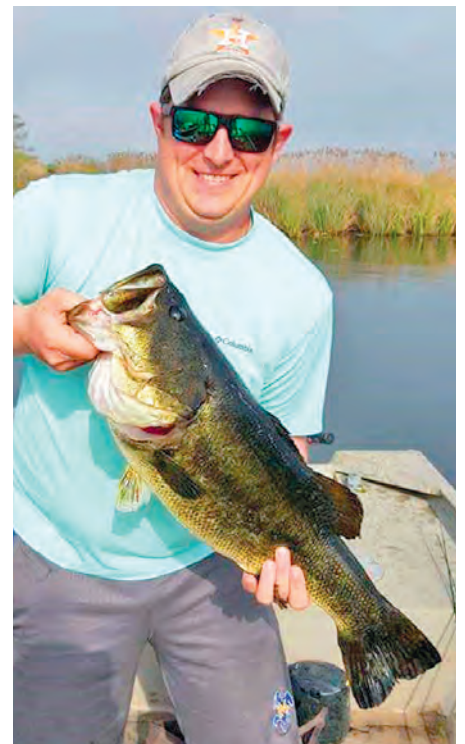
"The fishing was a little slow. I had only caught two small bass before the big one hit. They were both about 8 inches long. After I caught the big one, I just couldn't fish anymore. I was so keyed up from it, and I had captured video of it with my GoPro. I couldn't wait to get home and watch the footage," he said.

Granger, who works as a quality control lab analyst for Sasol North America, was fishing alone and said he wasn't sure exactly how to land the fish. He initially grabbed his push pole by mistake before picking up his net and scooping the fish up.

Granger fishes Lacassine Refuge often. And he said it is full of trophy bass. He caught an even larger one last year.

"My personal best is an 11.88-pounder. I caught it about a year ago, very close to where I caught this one," he said. ■

ABOVE: Aaron Granger of Lacassine caught this 11.5-pound bass in Lacassine Refuge on May 14. **RIGHT:** Granger's biggest bass to date is this 11.88-pounder he caught off the bed using a motor oil-colored lizard.



Fisherman Tuffy Spells with the surprise catch.



SPELLS STRIKES "GOLD" IN THE OUACHITA RIVER

By Kinny Haddox

Tuffy Spells has been fishing the Ouachita River and its backwaters for bream, bass, catfish and crappie for more than 50 years. He's also been commercial fishing almost that long and has seen a lot of strange things.

But what he caught in one of his nets Memorial Day weekend surprised even him. It looked at first like a giant goldfish, but it was a 20-pound, bright orange Koi (pronounced "coy"). He said he has never seen anything like it.

"I've caught some strange things in the past, but there is no question this is the strangest," he said. "I've never caught one like this before, and I don't know how it could have gotten there. I'm sure glad I caught it during the daytime, because I don't know what I would have thought if it had been at night."

A biologist who examined photos of the fish confirmed it was a koi and it was probably released into the river by someone who had raised them in an ornamental pond years ago. Common carp and the fancier koi are both in the same family, and they can live as long as 20 years. No age estimate was available on this fish.

This fish was caught in the backwater off the Ouachita River near the Felsenthal Lock and Dam area. Like most Louisiana waters, the Ouachita is well above major flood stage and has inundated thousands of acres of land around the river. It is expected to stay that way for weeks. The Ouachita runs through Louisiana from the Arkansas state line joining the Tensas River to form the Black River near Jonesville. It is the 25th-longest river in the United States.

Koi is an informal group of Japanese carp, with varieties marked by bright coloration, patterning and large scales. Major colors include black, red, orange, yellow and cream. They feed off invertebrates filtered off of muddy lake and river bottoms. ■

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actual truckloads of gear to be sold at closeout prices. If that isn't enough, there is a full roster of speakers and educational seminars planned featuring some of the biggest outdoor celebrities and most accomplished hunters and anglers in the world.

Stay tuned to www.louisianasportsmanshow.com for more details as the show approaches. ■

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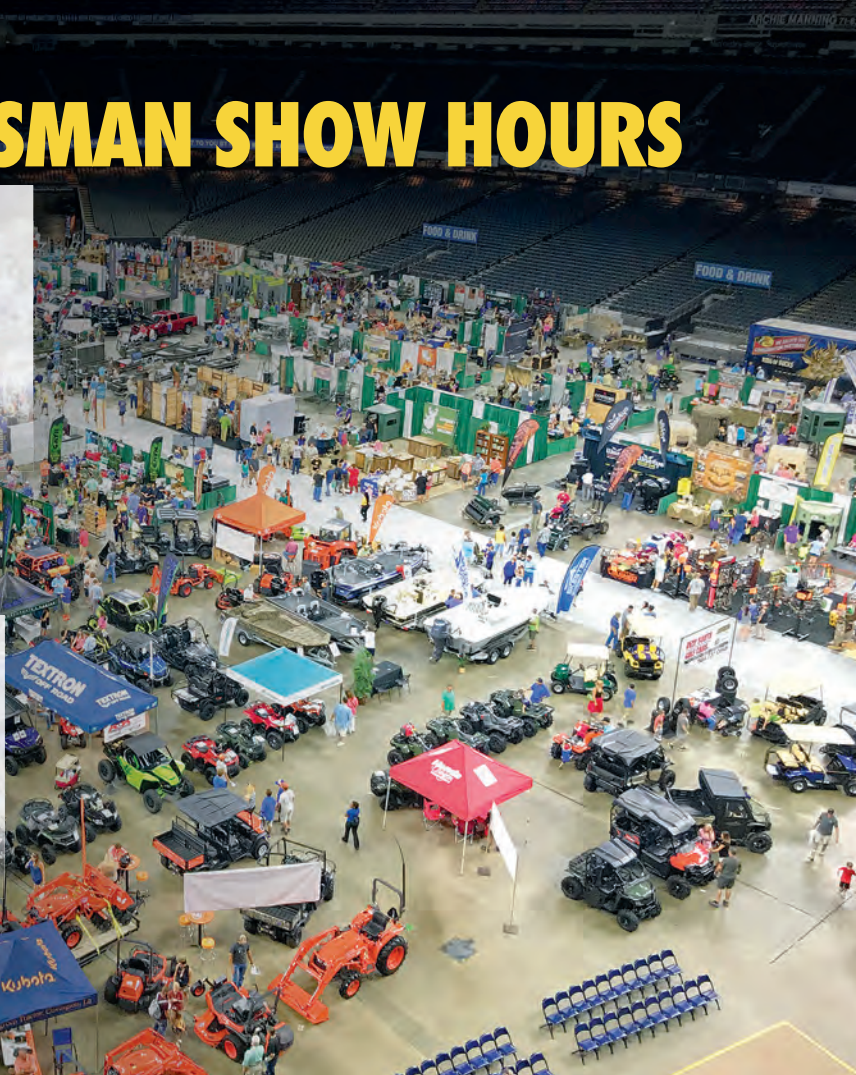
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Food-service establishments in Louisiana will have to identify foreign-caught shrimp and crawfish.



WHAT ARE YOU REALLY EATING?

LOUISIANA RESTAURANTS TO DISCLOSE USE OF FOREIGN SHRIMP AND CRAWFISH

From News Reports

In a move to protect Louisiana consumers from “the health risks associated chemicals and residues in imported seafood,” the Louisiana Senate unanimously passed House Bill 335 (34-0), requiring restaurants to disclose whether they serve imported shrimp or crawfish.

The bill, authored by Rep. Jerry “Truck” Gisclair (D-Larose), previously passed the Louisiana House unanimously. It now heads to Gov. Jon Bel Edwards for his signature.

The bill, which was strongly supported by the American Shrimp Processors

Association (ASPA) on behalf of the entire wild-caught domestic shrimp industry, is a major victory for consumer transparency. The U.S. Government does not regulate seafood disclosures at the restaurant level, and Louisiana is taking the lead with this law requiring seafood origin information.

Any food-service establishment serving imported crawfish or shrimp must now display on their menu, or with a paper clip addition to the menu, that the crawfish or shrimp are foreign. Those who do not use a menu will have to display a prominent sign with the same information near the entrance. The Louisiana Department of

Health will enforce the provisions of the bill through its food-service health inspection programs.

“The U.S. has very limited capacity to inspect the billions of pounds of imported shrimp entering our borders each year. In 2015, only 0.1% of imported shrimp were inspected for the presence of illegal veterinary drugs used in most foreign aquaculture,” said Dr. David Veal, executive director of the American Shrimp Processors Association. “At the same time, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a growing public-health problem impacted by persistent exposure to these drugs.” ■

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A rip line is a well-defined line of grass or trash that acts as a nursery for many baitfish and juvenile sportfish. It is also a distinct dividing line between green and clear-blue water, and it often marks a noticeable temperature change, with warmer water on the blue side. Rip lines tend to fluctuate day to day, so if you can find someone at the docks who has fished one recently, you may be able to get some idea on how far out it can be found. Twenty to 30 miles would not be uncommon. Apps like RipCharts and Hilton's to which you can subscribe can also be helpful for finding rip lines.

If you find a rip, slow-troll 5 to 7 knots with artificials on the bluewater side, and watch for grass on your line. With live bait, stay slower — 3 to 5 knots — or you'll drown your bait. You can bait with dead ballyhoo, rigged to swim like live bait, or troll subsurface shaky baits like a Russelure or Rapala, or smaller, plastic jigs for smaller "chicken" dolphin that will hit just about anything.

Mahimahi can be a bit crazy once they're in the boat, so watch for hooks. You won't need to gaff small dolphin, but be careful when gaffing larger fish, as they tend to flail near the boat. ■



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CATAHOULA LAKE APPEAL

Louisiana's attorney general has appealed a lower court decision that could restrict public access to Lake Catahoula and its waterfowl.

HEADS TO SUPREME COURT

By Kinny Haddox

On Friday, May 31, Jeff Landry, Louisiana's attorney general, officially filed an appeal with the state supreme court to overturn a previous judicial decision that denies public access to one of the state's most historic and important waterfowl hunting and research sanctuaries: Catahoula Lake.

At issue is a ruling from the Third Circuit Court of Appeals in December 2018, declaring that the area known for centuries as Catahoula Lake was actually a stream and not a lake. Therefore, the adjacent landowners, not the state, are the owners of the majority of the lake's inundated water bottoms.

Almost every written document about the area refers to it as a lake, as borne out in this description on Wikipedia, today's modern on-line encyclopedia: "Catahoula Lake is a large freshwater lake located in La Salle Parish and Rapides Parish of central Louisiana, United States. Catahoula Lake is the largest, natural freshwater lake in the state, covering just over 46 square miles (120 km²). It is owned by the State of Louisiana and managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries."

LARGEST FRESHWATER LAKE IN LOUISIANA

The "Statement of the Case" appeal summary, filed by the attorney general's office, states in part, "Catahoula Lake is the largest natural freshwater lake in Louisiana, and it has been treated as a publicly owned lake since before statehood in 1812.

"Eleven United States General Land Office surveyors and countless 19th century officials and eyewitnesses documented a vast lake spanning what is now the border between Rapides and LaSalle parishes in Louisiana.

"The legal effect of this historic recognition is that the State of Louisiana owns Catahoula Lake up to its ordinary high-water mark, its citizens have access rights to the lake for recreation, and its agencies have access to the lake for wildlife habitat management. In 1972, when the United States completed water-control structures on and around Catahoula Lake, its classification as a lake did not change.

"The only thing that changed was the exact timing of the fluctuations in the water levels. For the first time in more than 200

years, in 2016, Judge Boddie, sitting ad hoc in the Ninth Judicial District Court, used an incomplete legal analysis to remove from the public domain 42 square miles of land, gifting to the plaintiffs thousands of acres of property for which they hold no title, on which they have never paid property taxes, and to which they made no claim of ownership until 2006.

"This conversion of a public lake to private property in the face of over-whelming evidence to the contrary is an absurd result that cannot stand. This case arises from the United States' construction of a congressionally-authorized navigation and wildlife conservation project nearly a half a century ago that comprises several water control structures."

DEFENDING THE RIGHTS OF SPORTSMEN

Landry issued the following statement:

"In the Crooks case, our office is defending long-standing Louisiana law and the rights of sportsmen to access our bountiful waters.

"If the Louisiana Supreme Court does not overturn the lower court's clearly erroneous decisions, the public risks losing access to prime hunting and fishing locations throughout Louisiana, primarily in the central and northern region."

The head of Louisiana's Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Jack Montoucet, supports overturning the previous ruling.

"The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries stands in strong support of the state's effort to reverse a court decision that could devastate the opportunity of Louisiana citizens to fish, hunt or recreate in much of the Catahoula Lake area," Montoucet said.

"This ruling is contrary to over 200 years of public access on Catahoula Lake. And, if it stands, it will forever change what has traditionally been a treasured resource.

"To remove Catahoula Lake from public access could negatively affect waterfowl in the state, because it would limit LDWF's ability to manage water levels that are key to habitat management."

A schedule for the appeal to be reviewed has not been set.

Observers say this case is much broader than just Catahoula Lake and could affect dozens of areas where historic public access could be blocked by court decisions. ■

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H&H LURE CO., HUMPHREYS CELEBRATE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF PROVEN BRAND

LURE OF MAKING FISHING TACKLE HOOKS
HUMPHREYS IN 1959.... THE REST IS HISTORY

By Don Shoopman
The Daily Iberian

Bill Humphreys Sr., an icon in the artificial-lure manufacturing business, remembers that when boys were 6 years old in his hometown they were given a fishing rod and a gun, as he had 76 years ago.

Thanks to Humphreys and the H&H Lure Co. he started in 1959, countless youngsters were able to get their hands on an Original H&H Spinner, and later, as they grew up, they got the revered H&H Cocahoe Minnow. It would be neat to know just how many anglers, young and old, caught their first fish on something produced by Humphreys over the past six decades.

H&H Lure Co., 60-percent saltwater fishing tackle and 40-percent freshwater tackle — plus a plethora of accessories — celebrated its 60th anniversary in June and continues celebrating the milestone

in July and the rest of 2019. Humphreys, 82, was pleased to talk about the progress of the company that had a humble beginning, then mushroomed into a worldwide brand.

H&H Lure Co. grew and grew and grew some more, particularly after it entered the saltwater fishing side of making artificial lures, he said. Today, it produces more than 25,000 items, plus private brand/OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) products for several tackle companies. An OEM makes equipment or components that are then marketed by its client, another manufacturer or a reseller, usually under the reseller's own name.

The Baton Rouge company also makes terminal tackle, push poles, marsh anchors, trotlines, decoy weights and many other accessories for the outdoors.

Bill Humphreys stands outside the second-hand bread truck he bought in 1959 to launch a wholesale sporting goods business that he eventually closed for a tackle business he believed had a more promising future. Sixty years later, his H&H Lure Co. is a worldwide brand with products in stores across the country, including Academy Sports+Outdoors and Bass Pro Shops.

FAMILY-OWNED FROM BEGINNING

Humphreys is proud of his company, his family and his loyal employees. Family members in the business include his wife, Tommy Ritef Humphreys; his son, Billy Humphreys Jr.; a daughter, Tommie Maranto, and a grandson, Stephen Miclette Jr. Miclette, representing the third generation, is director of operations who joined H&H 11 years ago after graduating from Southeastern Louisiana University.

"I've been real blessed with the family, one that works with you. To start with one lure and build up with this... I had no idea it would grow up to this. It just blossomed out. We did the legwork," Bill Humphreys said from H&H headquarters in Baton Rouge, 12 buildings on North Dual Street that serves as a distribution center now.

Ah, the legwork. He worked 16 hours, seven days a week in the early years. He recalls going on the road across Louisiana, into Mississippi and around east Texas pitching H&H Lures, as well as the many promotions at stores in those states where people were invited to come meet artificial-lure manufacturer Bill Humphreys.

There's a photo of him, 150 pounds soaking wet, 20 years old, smiling and standing tall in 1959 next to his second-hand bread truck he bought and converted into a traveling market, "Humphreys' Wholesale Sporting Goods Baton Rouge, La."

How did it all begin?

Humphreys, from Baton Rouge, fished and hunted as much as he could as he grew into manhood. That probably wasn't as much fishing and hunting as he would have liked because, well, he was busy.

"I did a little of everything," he said.

BUSY YOUNG MAN WITH REALISTIC DREAMS

He had two newspaper routes while he was in high school and took on a third from his good friend, the late Jim Taylor, who started playing high-school football as a junior at Baton Rouge High School and then starred at LSU before a career with the Green Bay Packers that led to the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Humphreys and Taylor remained friends after they graduated from high school. Taylor died in October 2018 at 83.

continues >



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H&H LURE CO. CONTINUED

Humphreys also sold soft drinks in Tiger Stadium while future Pro Football Hall of Fame quarterback Y.A. Tittle was tossing the football around for LSU. Tittle died in October 2017 at age 90.

All the while he was throwing newspapers and selling soft drinks in Tiger Stadium, Humphreys said he knew wanted to get into the sporting goods business.

"I had this opportunity. I knew exactly what I wanted to do in high school," he said.

First, however, Humphreys competed for two in track and field at the University of Houston. Then he returned to Baton Rouge and enrolled at LSU, where he studied ½ years.

He also married a young woman named Tommy Ritef, who he started dating in the ninth grade. They celebrated their 63rd wedding anniversary on June 2.

**MRS. HUMPHREYS
'A GENIUS,' SON SAYS**

Tommy Humphreys was the first to help him get the business on its feet. At age 81, she is still the company's head bookkeeper.

Billy Humphreys said, "My parents worked extremely hard ... a lot of blood sweat and tears. My mother's a genius. They didn't

have money, and she made this work."

About that business startup in June 1959. The company's founder had \$2,000, his share of the inheritance after the death of his father, and, with the help of his father-in-law, the late Al Ritef — who signed for the loan — he borrowed another \$2,000.

That was his stake in the wholesale business in which he sold sporting goods and fishing tackle, specifically the Original H&H Spinner, which the company proudly notes was the first spinner in America. After a few years, he said, he realized that in all of his travels and sales, he was competing against himself much of the time, so he gradually phased out the wholesale business to focus on making artificial lures. Fishermen have been happy ever since

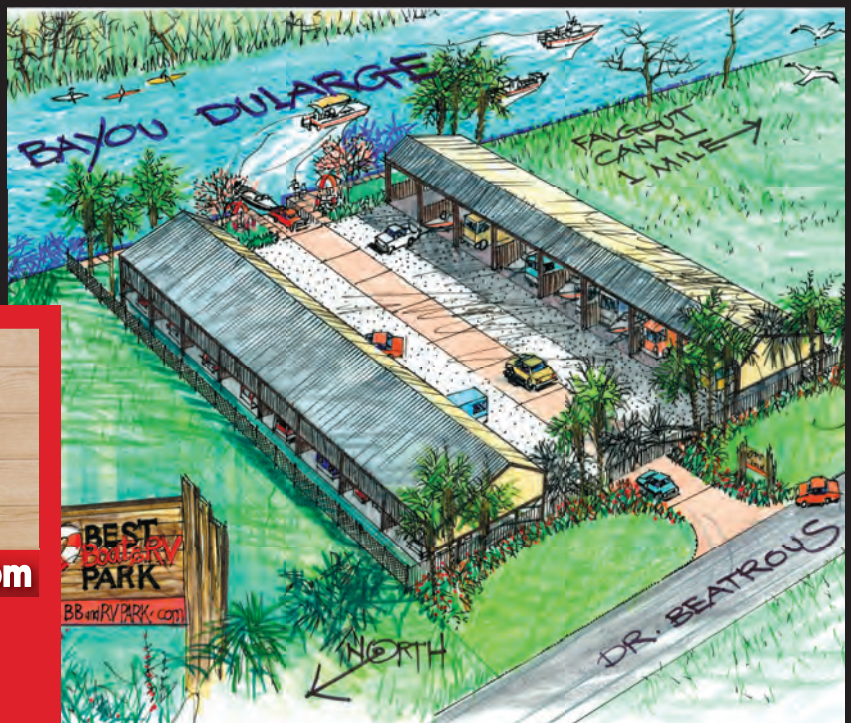


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From left, Billy Humphreys Jr., H&H Lure Co. vice president and in charge of national sales, Bill Humphreys Sr., H&H Lure Co. founder, and Steve Miclette Jr., H&H Lure Co. director of operations, are shown at the 2017 ICAST at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla. On July 10-12, H&H Lure Co., started in June 1959, returns to the ICAST to proudly unveil its 60th anniversary logo.

— fish not so much.

"I knew it would be better because I could go as far as I wanted to. When box stores started coming, they'd look for sinkers, hooks and whatever, which they knew I had from the sporting goods business. I had the knowledge," he said.

HARD WORK SHOWS TO THIS DAY

Billy Humphreys, who graduated from LSU in 1983, paid a glowing tribute to his father.

"He had worked so hard, he made it easy for me as a young 22-year-old to walk into those accounts and sell products on a cold call. They didn't know me, but they knew H&H," he said, remembering his first trips to Shreveport, Dallas and elsewhere in the South.

"It was H&H country, and the competition wasn't nearly as fierce as it is today," he said.

Billy Humphreys, 59, the only son among four children born to the Humphreys, is the vice president and in charge of national sales who joined the company in 1980. He does what has to be done.

"I wear a lot of hats," he said. "If a truck was out there on the dock now, I'd get a forklift if no one was around."

What had to be done early in the younger Humphreys' career was shift factory operations to Honduras, where the company

stayed 15 years. But the back-and-forth shipping of raw material and product, the freight and labor, came at a high cost.

Bill Humphreys made lifelong friends during the stay in the Honduras, some who are scheduled to visit the U.S. in July to help him celebrate the 60th anniversary over the July 4 holiday at his beach house in Gulf Shores, Ala., before attending the ICAST show in Orlando, Fla., July 10-12. That's where the company will unveil its new brochure with the logo "Celebrating 60 Years of Manufacturing Quality Fishing Tackle" on the cover.

BILLY JR. TAKES MANUFACTURING TO CHINA

Billy Humphreys initiated the company's presence at what has grown to five sites in China.

"I had some friends in China. They said, 'Why don't you come over here?'" he said.

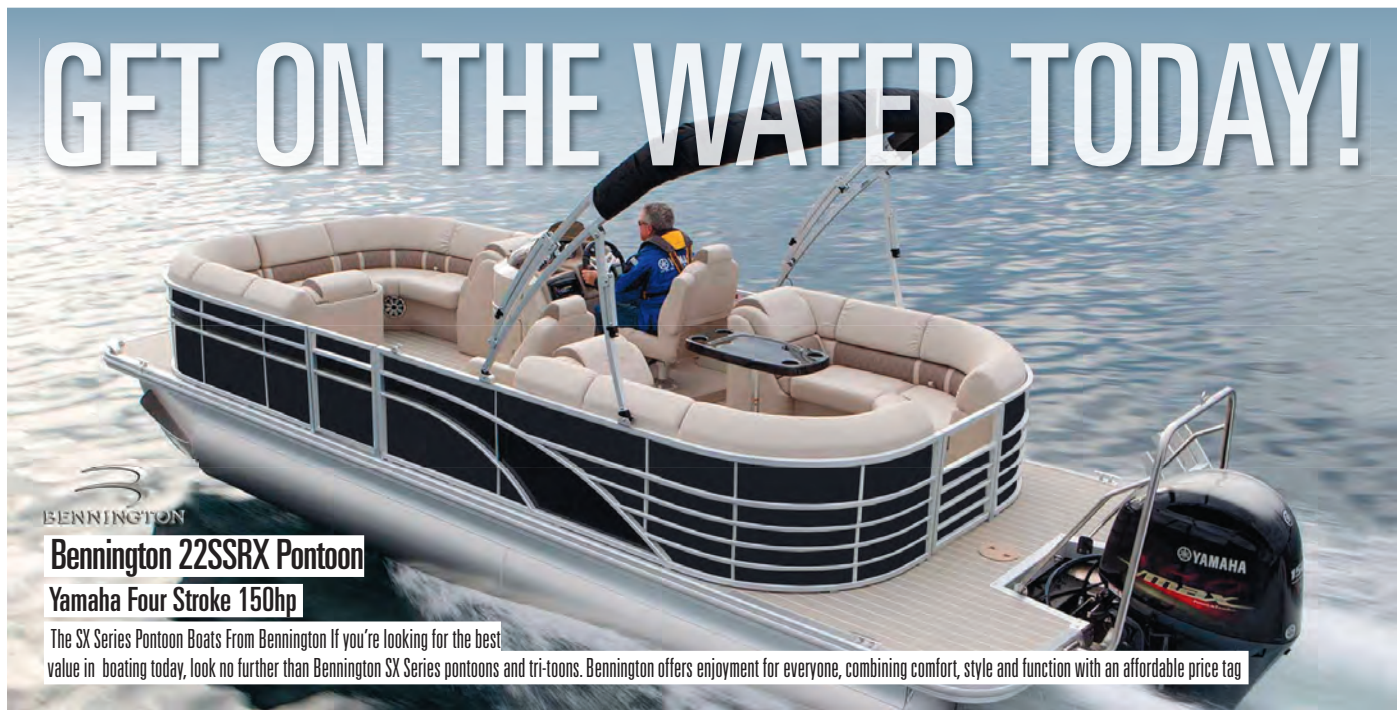
The Humphreys worked diligently over there to ensure quality control at the factories, starting with the precise way to paint jigheads. Over the past decade, Billy Humphreys has made an estimated 100 trips to China, he said.

"It's been a fun business," he said.

His father shares that sentiment. And appreciates the company's indelible, historic mark on fishing.

"Well, the H&H (Spinner) is still around. That's the first spinner of that type, the first safety pin type," Bill Humphreys said. "I'm also proud of the H&H Cocahoe." ■

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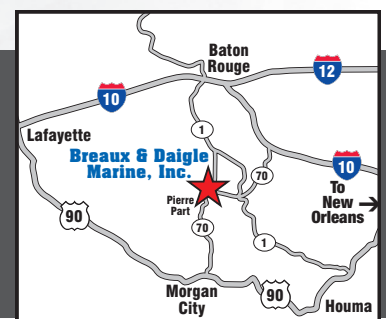
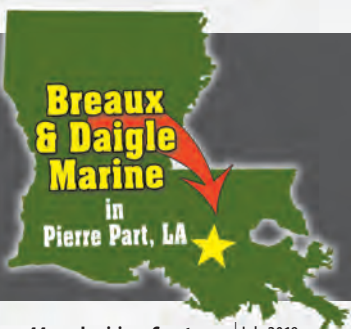


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LEAKED STOCK REPORT
SHOWS PLIGHT OF

LOUISIANA'S SPECKS

By Chris Berzas

**CURRENT DATA MAY SIGNAL
FUTURE CHANGES IN CREEL,
SIZE LIMITS FOR FISHERMEN IN
THE SPORTSMAN'S PARADISE.**



An inadvertent leak by a member of Louisiana's Wildlife and Fisheries Commission has made public data that showed serious problems with statewide estimates of spawning stock biomass, spawning potential ratio and fishing mortality of Louisiana's official state saltwater fish: the speckled trout.

"We sent these out to the Commission members as a tentative agenda item before the March meeting," said Patrick Banks, assistant secretary of fisheries with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. "We knew the stock assessment showed overharvest, and we were trying to make sure we informed them as early as we could."

According to Banks, the agency yanked the planned presentation of these figures to the Commission before its March 7 meeting due to errors found in the data.

"As we were checking numbers, we found mistakes in our preliminary analysis," he said. "We had to rerun the model without the errors. The numbers changed in stock assessment, but they continue to demonstrate we have exceeded our thresholds.

"We are just not seeing biomass increase, and fishing mortality continues to be above limits of concern," Banks said. "Our bottom line did not change."

LDWF planned to send the revised analysis to other biologists in Gulf Coast states — Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Texas — for peer review during the week beginning May 20.

"I'm expecting it will take four to five weeks to get their comments," Banks said. "I am not anticipating major feedback, and I hope that two weeks after we receive these comments — we will be at a point to bring this to the Commission officially."

Banks said the agency will present the review to the public by late summer or early fall.

"We then hope to get from the Commission the kinds of regulatory changes they prefer: possible changes in creel limits, length limits, size limits or a combination of slot and creel limits," he said. "It's a matter of deciding which one or set of changes that offer the best bang for the buck in getting the stocks up again."

Once the Commission decides which steps to take, they will be presented at statewide public hearings to receive comment from fishermen. The changes could go into effect sometime in 2020.

PRELIMINARY FIGURES UP NEXT ➤



PRELIMINARY FIGURES

In order to interpret the following figures, it is important to understand that it is a preliminary analysis and numbers have changed due to the errors.

"I won't comment on how much, especially since these will be out for peer review," said Harry Blanchet, a fisheries biologist administrator for LDWF. "Some of the trends we're seeing are in the same direction, but the scales may change."

"We are using maximum sustainable yield (MSY) in order to maximize the yield — as much harvest as we can not to affect recruitment."

Recruitment is usually defined as the number of young speckled trout surviving to enter the adult stage and/or the fishery.

In Figure 1, SBB refers to spawning stock biomass: the combined weight of all speckled trout in Louisiana waters that are capable of reproducing.

LDWF estimates that the number of reproducing trout has dropped steeply since 2013 to approximately 3 million pounds in 2019. Trout SSB was as high as an estimated 11 million pounds in the 2000.

Blanchet would not comment on the target (yellow) line or the limit (red) line on the figure, other than to say that the limit line refers to the lowest SSB observed in 1989.

"The target is set above what we consider to be a comfortable distance that SSB is unlikely to get below," he said. "This is based on variance . . . on a philosophy where according to the graphic (the limit) is the 5.7 million pounds of spawning female trout in 1989."

In Figure 2, SPR refers to spawning potential ratio: a percentage representing an estimate of the stock's potential to spawn with fishing pressure compared to spawning without fishing pressure.

After years of studying the population of speckled trout in Louisiana waters, a conservation standard of 1% SPR has been traditionally set.

In an MSY model, anglers can harvest trout at or above the conservation standard. Many other states manage trout populations and fishing pressure at an optimal yield (OY) standard set at 10 to 15% above their conservation standard, providing a margin of safety against significant increases in fishing pressure.

According to the figure, the current SPR is at 5% for 2018, 13 percentage points below the 18% conservation standard. The 5% SPR may be too low, but Blanchet would not commit to offering revised data.

Regarding the target and limit lines, it is unclear whether this scale represents a new range of SPRs that spawning trout populations would fall in before new management decisions are warranted. Blanchet had no comment on that speculation.

The new SPR percentage range may also reflect a change in the state's philosophy moving forward to manage Louisiana's speckled trout as chiefly a recreational gamefish species, apart

Figure 1

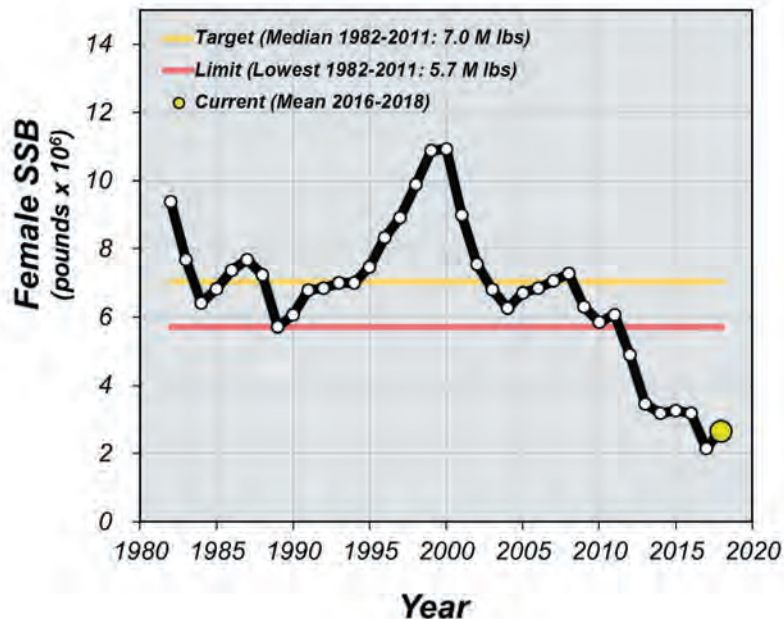
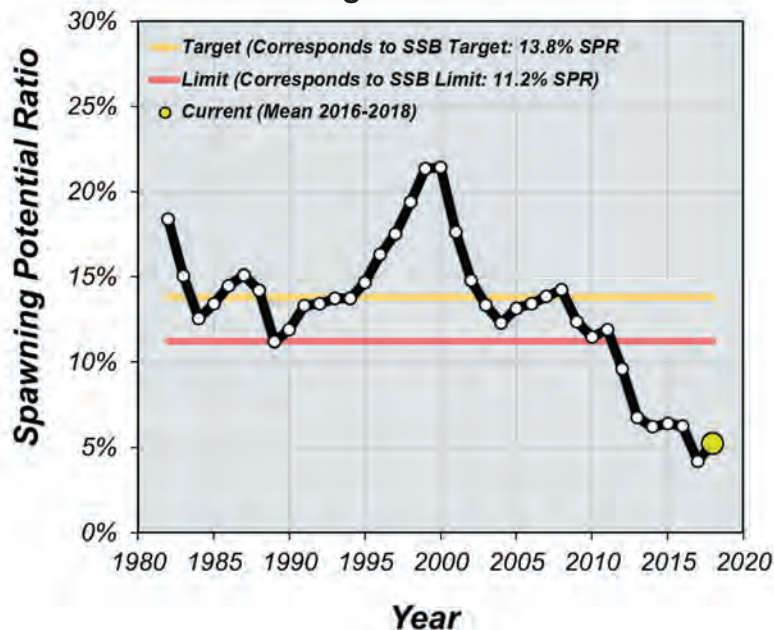


Figure 2

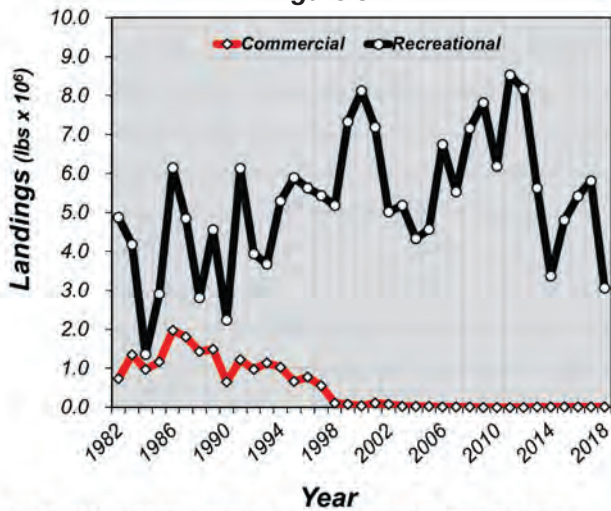


from the commercial/recreational model of the past.

Figure 3 looks at recreational and commercial landings of speckled trout over the years. In 2018, recreational anglers landed an estimated 3 million pounds of trout, 5 million pounds below 2012 levels.

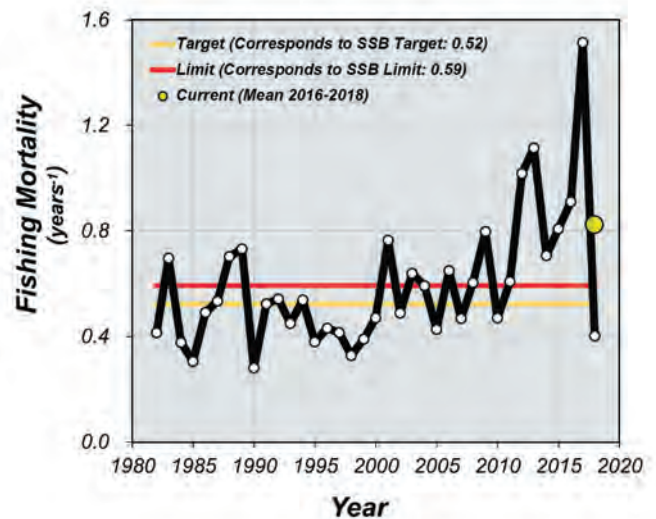
Commercial landings for speckled trout continue but are limited to approximately a dozen remaining rod-and-reel, commercial anglers who were grand-fathered into the 1997

Figure 3



Note: 1982-2013 recreational landings values are MRIP data back-calculated to LA Creel. 2014-2018 landings values are LA Creel values.

Figure 4



law designating Louisiana's speckled trout chiefly a game-fish species.

Fishing pressure — and mortality — have continued to rise significantly, as indicated in Figure 4. This dramatic increase has persisted despite the drop in recreational landings illustrated in Figure 3.

Taken together, the increase in fishing pressure and decline in recreational landings may give credence to seasoned anglers' reports of limited success in catching numbers of speckled trout and fish of quality in the Lake Pontchartrain basin, the Venice area and the Calcasieu estuary. Such reports have increased over the past five years.

Figure 5 illustrates that the proportion of older speckled trout in the population is at the lowest level ever recorded. These numbers are derived from data sets gathered by samples taken twice a month by gill nets in five coastal areas: the Pontchartrain basin; the Barataria basin; the Terrebonne/Timbalier basins; the Vermilion/Teche/Atchafalaya basins; and the Mermentau/Calcasieu/Sabine basins.

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Figure 5

Proportion Age-3 and Older Population

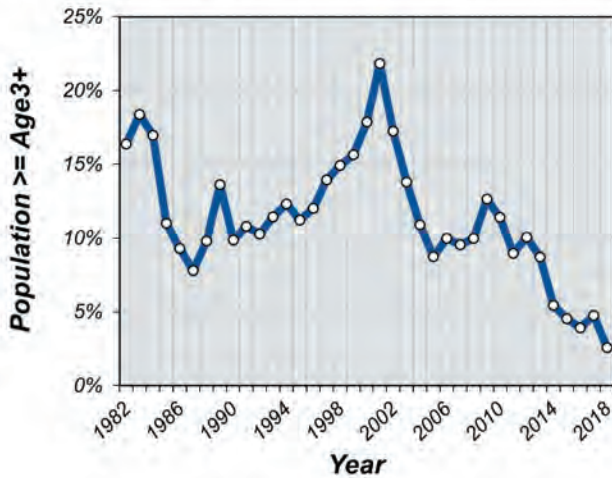
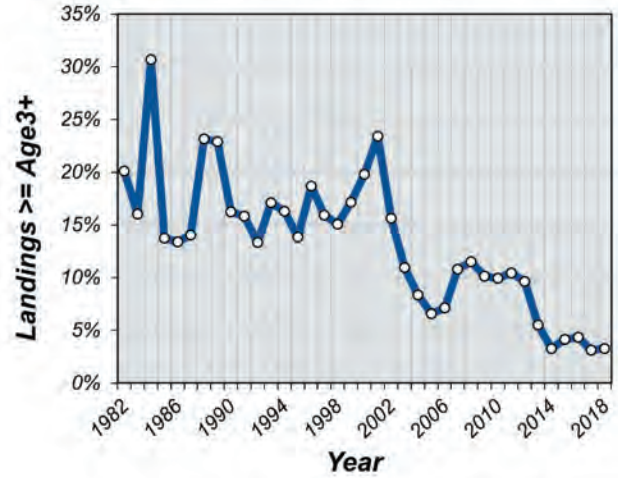


Figure 6

Proportion Age-3 and Older Landings



In 2001, statistics suggest that the proportion of trout 3 years old or better was at a high of an estimated 22%, compared to approximately 3% in 2018.

This same pattern exists in harvest data from anglers obtained by the old MRIP and LA Creel, where the same 3% proportion was recorded for 2018, down from a high of 31% in 1984.

The proportion of older age-classes of trout are very important to researchers as low percentages often signal high fishing pressure. Also, older female trout may drop 10 times more eggs than younger females.

It is noted that speckled trout spawn several times between April and August. The presence of older, female trout is important to recruitment, and managing for higher numbers of older fish may help increase stock numbers in the ecosystem.

Since speckled trout spawn multiple times during the same season, they are very resilient to short-term flooding events that affect spawning success, but more research is needed to study the impact of long-term freshwater flooding events.

It's remarkable that numbers of speckled making it into adulthood have been consistent from 1983 to 2018 as Figure 7 suggests. Speckled trout are a resilient species, and even the current drop in biomass and SPR percentage do not signal anything close to "threatened" or "endangered" status in Louisiana waters.

Trout appear to be an estuary-specific species, non-migratory, as tagging and acoustic telemetry studies in Louisiana, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama and Texas have indicated. They are born, live and wander around the same waters and make surf runs outside, but close to the same estuaries where they were taken and tagged. Very few tagged trout show up in neighboring estuaries. One extremely rare exception was noted; one tagged fish was caught near Grand Isle after having been initially tagged in Florida, some 315 miles away.

Figure 7

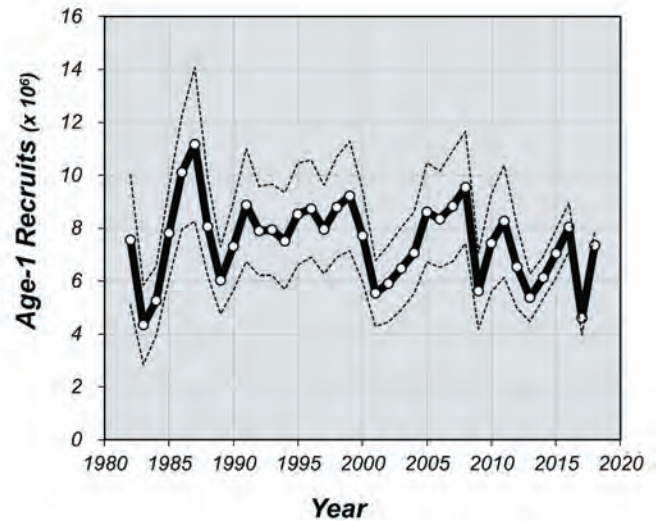
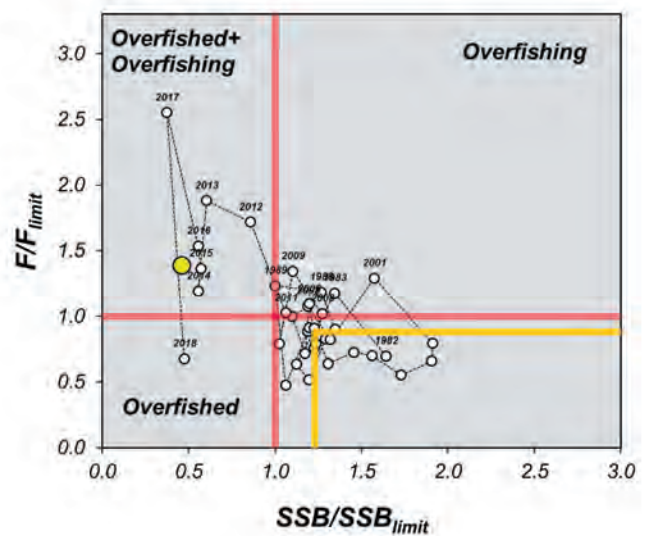


Figure 8



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These findings argue against a “tiderunner” theory for speckled trout, which suggests that trout populate inland lakes, bays and marshes from populations living in the Gulf of Mexico.

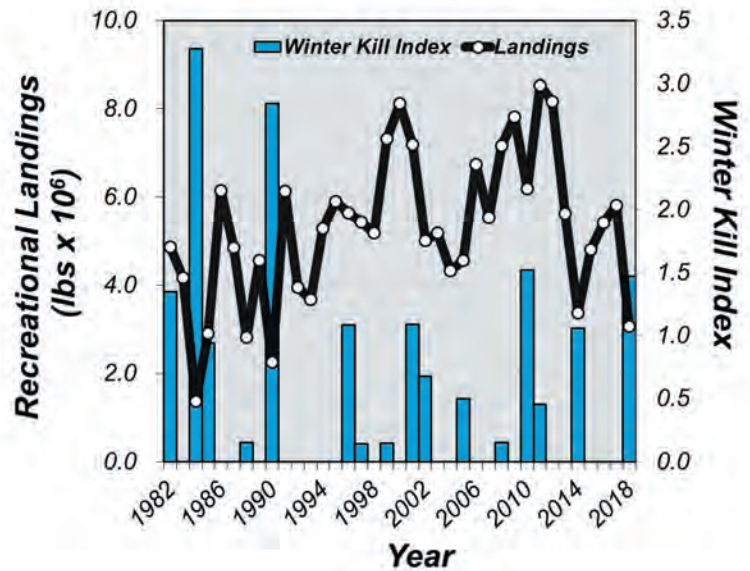
It is difficult to interpret Figure 8, although it appears to suggest speckled trout have been overfished since 2012. Again, revised data may suggest that the vertical red line may move right or left either, increasing years of overfishing or eliminating some years.

LDWF biologists also presented an experimental winter-kill index covering the years 1982 to 2018. “Joe West took a look at some research from other states that reported winter kill,” Blanchet said. “We used that to come up with a ‘surrogate’ . . . not an ecosystem assessment.

“And it’s on a sensitivity run . . . something to look at adding a parameter to consider the effects of hard winters on speckled trout.

“We also sent this index out for review to members of the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council,” he said.

Figure 9
Winter Kill Index



CHANGES COMING FOR ANGLERS?

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IS THE GRASS ALWAYS GREENER ON OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE?

Here are regulations with which other Gulf Coast states manage speckled trout.

FLORIDA

Zone-by-zone restrictions.

Northwest Zone (Escambia County through Fred Howard Park Causeway near Pasco County), five fish daily, with a 15- to 20-inch slot limit and one fish daily more 20 inches or longer. From May 11, 2019 through May 31, 2020, all speckled trout caught must be released in waters between the Pasco County-Hernando County line and Gordon Pass in Collier County.

Northeast Zone (Flagler through Nassau counties): six fish daily, with a 15- to 20-inch slot limit, with one fish daily 20 inches or more.

Southeast Zone (Miami-Dade County at Card South through Volusia County) and **Southwest Zone** (Fred Howard Park Causeway through Monroe County line at Card Sound): four fish daily with a 15- to 20-inch slot limit, with one fish daily 20 inches or larger. From May 11, 2019, to May 31, 2020, all speckled trout caught must be released in waters from the Pasco-Hernando county line through Gordon Pass in Collier County.

ALABAMA

Effective Aug. 1, six fish daily, with a 15- to 22-inch slot limit. Only one fish over 22 inches may be kept

MISSISSIPPI

A 15-fish daily limit and 15-inch size limit was adopted in 2017.

LOUISIANA

A 25-fish daily creel limit and 12-inch size minimum except in specified areas of Cameron and Calcasieu parishes, where the daily creel limit is 15 fish with no more than two over 25 inches per day. The specified areas are: south of I-10 from the Texas-Louisiana boundary east to its junction with LA Highway 171, south to Highway 14, south to Holmwood, and then south on Highway 27 through Gibbstown south to LA Highway 82 at Creole and south on Highway 82 to Oak Grove, then due south to the western shore of the Mermentau River, following this shoreline south to the junction with the Gulf of Mexico, and then due south to the limit of the state territorial sea.

TEXAS

In waters north of FM 457 in Matagorda County, 10 trout per day. In waters south of FM 457, five trout per day. Fish must be in a 15- to 25-inch slot, with no more than one larger than 25 inches in the creel per day.

Effective Sept. 1, 2019, the five-fish creel limit and 15- to 25-inch slot limit will be coastwide, including the Texas side of Sabine Lake. ■



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CHANGES COMING FOR ANGLERS?

Due to the high fishing mortality and reduced stocks in the recent assessment, anglers will see changes in trout regulations since the trends have remained the same, even with a corrected, revised analysis, according to Banks.

Speckled trout are managed in south-central and southeastern Louisiana with a 25-fish daily creel limit and a 12-inch size minimum. In western Louisiana — the Mermentau/Calcasieu/Sabine basins — anglers may keep only 15 trout daily, with a 12-inch size minimum and no more than two fish per day longer than 25 inches. That regulation was implemented to try and retain large speckled trout and create quality trout fisheries in Calcasieu and Sabine lakes.

All other Gulf Coast states offer more-conservative harvest restrictions and standards. It must be understood, however, that Louisiana encompasses more habitat for speckled trout than other states, possibly enhancing rapid stock recovery.



Louisiana has the most-liberal creel limits on speckled trout of any Gulf state, but that may be about to change.

Size limits are often used by fisheries managers to protect recruitment. A 12-inch minimum size protects speckled trout long enough that they have at least one spawning season before they are legal to harvest. Size limits could be extended to allow trout to spawn in successive years.



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Slot restrictions, on the other hand, are also often used in conjunction with creel and length limits to try and grow more adult trout into quality status and increase spawning opportunities, while limiting numbers of adults harvested above the slot. Slot restrictions can also be utilized to target year-classes of speckled trout within slot ranges.

What will Louisiana anglers face in 2020?

Neither Banks, nor Blanchet provided any hints about future creel, length or slot restrictions, other than Banks saying that recommendations will be presented to the LWF Commission this fall.


“We will make these recommendations to the commission based on science,” Banks said. “We will then consider public comment and eventually move forward with changes.”

About the possibility of LDWF recommending different regulations on a basin-by-basin or zone-by-zone basis, both said it was too early to know.

“Five years from now, when we have a good history with collecting this data through LA Creel, then we’ll be able to do that,” Blanchet said.

Any upcoming changes will likely be mandated on a statewide basis, or with different regulations set for the western part of the state. ■

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Recent research from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries shows there's been a substantial decline in population samples and recreational landings of speckled trout 3 years or older. Fisheries managers are still shoring up the numbers, but the drastic increase of high fishing mortality on Louisiana speckled trout populations is alarming.

The good news is that speckled trout in general are prolific spawners, producing millions of eggs each year, which is why the species can recover very quickly under

the right conditions.

Research in Texas and Georgia shows that older, female trout may drop as many as 10 times more eggs than younger females on an annual basis. And as trout are "multiple spawners" — spawning eight to 11 times during the season that spans from April to October in Louisiana waters — that difference is greatly magnified.

Also, older females may spawn more frequently than younger ones.*

WHEN DO TROUT SPAWN?

UP NEXT >

By Chris Berzas

**RESEARCH SHOWS THAT
OLDER FEMALES DROP AS
MANY AS 10X MORE EGGS**

SPECKLED TROUT

SPAWN GAME

Will Drost



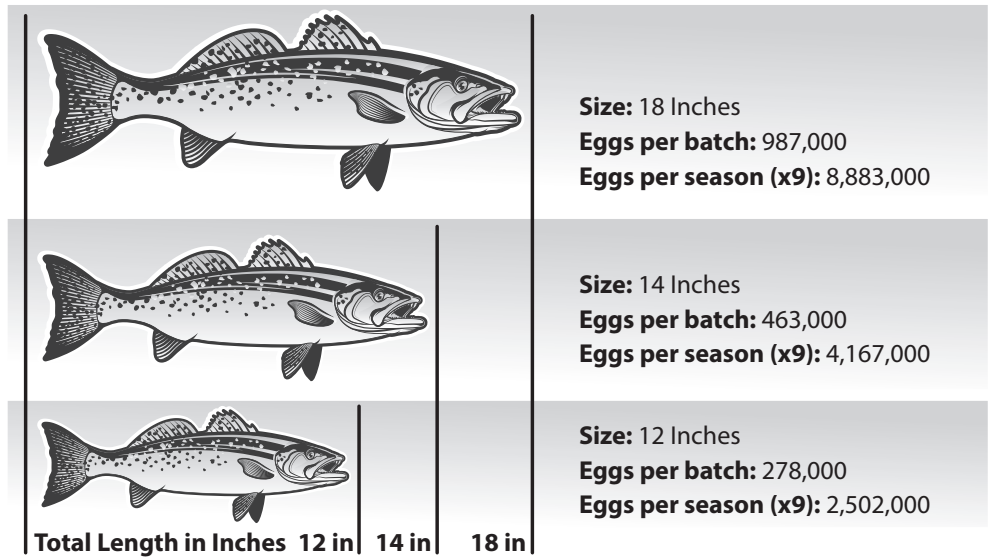
WHEN DO TROUT SPAWN?

According to research, the speckled trout spawn peaks in midsummer, July and August, in the middle of the spawning season.

But a review of the “Louisiana Gamefish Records” kept by the Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association illustrates that April and May are also important for trophy trout seekers. Three of Louisiana’s top 10 trout were taken in April, and four in May. The presence of these trophy sow trout may also indicate that April and May are two very important spawning months in Louisiana.

Unfortunately, the LDWF did not report on the number of viable eggs an individual female trout delivers, saying that the results were inconsistent.

Speckled Trout Egg Production



An individual speckled trout will spawn multiple times during the spawning season (April to October). These estimates are included in the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission’s regional speckled trout plan and are based on research from Texas.

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EGG NUMBERS BASED ON TEXAS RESEARCH

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission's regional speckled trout management plan is based on research from the neighboring state of Texas. Texas biologists estimated 1,089 +/- 529 eggs per gram of body weight per batch (spawn) for Texas coastal areas.

Multiplying that number by 9 shows the drastic difference in egg-laying between a 12-inch fish laying 2.5 million eggs in a season and an 18-inch fish that lays nearly 9 million eggs in a season.

The number of eggs continues to increase exponentially with size and then begins to decline as a trout reaches "old age" of 5 to 7 years.

ESTIMATES ARE CONSERVATIVE

The figures presented below are somewhat conservative estimates of numbers of eggs per spawn for different-sized trout based on the Texas data. Also, batch sizes produced by speckled trout have also been shown to be particularly individualistic and vary even in the same waters. Environmental conditions such as salinity levels also affect numbers of viable eggs per batch.

In the state of Georgia, anglers are asked to voluntarily release speckled trout over 18 inches to increase the recruitment of trout along the Atlantic coast. The program is called "Speckled Trout R.O.E." — a handy acronym for "Release Over Eighteen."

In response to the significant drop of older trout in Louisiana waters, the LDWF could influence recruitment by extending length limits and/or placing a limit of how many trout may be kept over a specified length in 2020.

Anglers in Louisiana may also voluntarily release trout over 18 inches on their own accord in an effort to increase spawning stock biomass. ■

** Much of the information in this article was taken from: "The Spotted Seatrout Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico, United States: A Regional Management Plan," Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, March 2001).*

GROWTH

The growth rate of speckled trout differs among males and females, with females growing faster:

AGE	MALE	FEMALE
1	9 inches	8 inches
2	14 inches	17 inches
3	17 inches	20 inches
4	18 inches	23 inches
5	18 inches	24 inches
6	19 inches	25 inches
7	19 inches	26 inches
8	20 inches	27 inches
9	21 inches	27 inches
10	21 inches	28 inches

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Running in Circles

By Rusty Tardo

Follow this route and you'll put trout and redfish in your boat all along the way

The plan was to meet at Basson's Boat Launch in Galliano, where Captain Mike "Rippin Lip" Guidry would be waiting with his brand new bay boat, along with Captain T-Man Cheramie. The three of us were heading out to "run the circle" that these two guides follow to load up with speckled trout and redfish this time of year.

Cheramie, who has been guiding for 30 years, said he'll run this route throughout the summer, making exceptions only for special trips into other waters at a customer's request. Guidry, who has been guiding for almost 20 years, said he'll do the same because he consistently catches fish all along the route. Besides their 50 combined years of experience guiding

fishermen, these two often partner up to fish in competitions such as the ISA Tour, ESPN's Redfish Cup and the LA.WL&F Tournaments, so I was confident we'd catch fish.

What I wasn't confident in was the weather. I'd already canceled and rescheduled two trips due to monsoon-like rains and high winds. Now, the rains had subsided, but the winds stayed strong, and Bob Breck's Fox-8 forecast predicted 15- to 20-knot winds and 3- to 5-foot seas for the day. It was either cancel a third time, or do the best we could under the circumstances.

We chose the latter and hoped for the best.

continues >>>

FISHING THE WIND

Cheramie was confident.

“We’ll run the circle and fish the protected sides of the lakes, and we’ll catch fish, I’ll guarantee it,” he said.

Guidry fired up the outboard, and the brand-spanking new bay boat got underway. He took us down through the Sulfur Mine and south past Pointe Aux Chenes to Lake Chien. You can cut 20 minutes off the boat ride by launching at the Pointe Aux Chenes Marina, but Basson’s was closer for us by car, so we launched there.

“The circle begins at Lake Chien, then into Lake Felicity, south into Lake Raccourci and the Fornation Islands, back up Lake Raccourci all the way to Gray Duck, and sometimes over to Little Gray Duck, and from there back to the dock. It’s a big circle, and where we start depends on the wind direction,” Cheramie said.



• **ABOVE:** When a decent-sized redfish smashes your topwater, you can't help but smile. **RIGHT:** T-Man Cheramie doesn't fish a particular spot. Instead, he looks for what he calls the T-Man Trinity — clear water, moving water and baitfish.



On a decent day, that is, a day with light winds from any direction, you can start wherever you choose. But on very windy days, you choose where to begin depending on the direction of the winds.

"You want to fish the lee side, the calmer side of the lakes. On a strong west wind, we begin our running of the circle from the east side and start in Gray Duck. On a strong east wind, like today, we'll run it from the west side beginning in Lake Chien," Guidry said.

THE KEY TO FINDING THE FISH

On the morning's stiff east wind, Guidry idled to a stop along the east side of Lake Chien and dropped the trolling motor. The plan was to fish near the shallow shoreline where both speckled trout and redfish like to congregate and chase baits in pockets and coves. In such shallow water, stealth is vital to success.

We started working our baits near a point, and tossed both toward and away from the bank.

"What we fish is not a particular spot, but conditions," Cheramie said. "The key is to find decent water, moving water, and signs of bait in the water. That's the T-Man Trinity — find that and you'll find fish," he said.

continues >>>

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Guidry used a remote control to steer his trolling motor and brought us closer to the shoreline, but still far enough away that I couldn't reach it with a long cast. From that distance, the water was calm enough to fish, even with the howling winds. Not only was it calm enough to fish, it was calm enough to use topwater baits, which was our plan for the morning. Guidry had on a solid chartreuse color, while Cheramie and I used bone-colored topwaters, his a MirrOlure She Dog and mine a larger Top Dog. These guys don't get to use topwater baits on their normal charters because the goal then is to put fish in the boat; a goal best accomplished using live baits or soft plastics under a cork. But on trips with no customers aboard, the goal is strictly to explore and have fun, and nothing in coastal fishing is more

speck or red or drum or flounder don't inhale it," he said. "Or a catfish," Cheramie said, laughing as he reeled in a hefty gaff-top.

FAVORITE PLASTICS

If you prefer fishing soft plastics, Guidry has a few favorites. He likes the Matrix Vortex baits in either shrimp creole, purple haze or blazin hornet colors, and he strings them on a 1/4-ounce jighead and hangs them under a popping cork he makes at home. His "Guidry Popper" is made with flexible wire leader with barrel swivels crimped on both ends, and a typical weight, stopper and beads, and it works as well or better than any you'll buy at the store.

"I don't make them to sell, just to use," he said. "And they work



thrilling than having a big fish explode on your topwater bait. We worked that initial area over pretty thoroughly, and managed several "blow ups," but no real hooksets. The fish were slapping at our baits, and one knocked my topwater about a foot out of the water, but they were not really committing to the bite. We changed tactics and fished under corks for a few minutes and boated a few trout on both live bait and soft plastics. Guidry said live shrimp fished in these areas will virtually guarantee fish in the boat.

LIVE BAIT BACK UP PLAN

"Always bring the live stuff when it's available. I know it's expensive, but it still the cheapest part of your fishing trip. Just automatically factor it into your overall expense and consider it a necessity. Then hang one under a popping cork and see if a

- By focusing on lee sides of points and islands, T-Man Cheramie and Mike Guidry know they can catch fish even on breezy days.

great whether fished with live bait or plastics," he added. We boated a half-dozen specks or more with live bait under our corks but decided to move farther down into Lake Chien to continue running the circle, and to look for bigger fish, hopefully fish that would hit our topwater baits.

LAKE CHIEN

Lake Chien is large, and its shoreline has many great cuts and coves to explore, and we found fish at every stop. Our tactic never varied: use the trolling motor to sneak in, because bigger fish are easily spooked. Try to drift as much as possible,

continues >>>

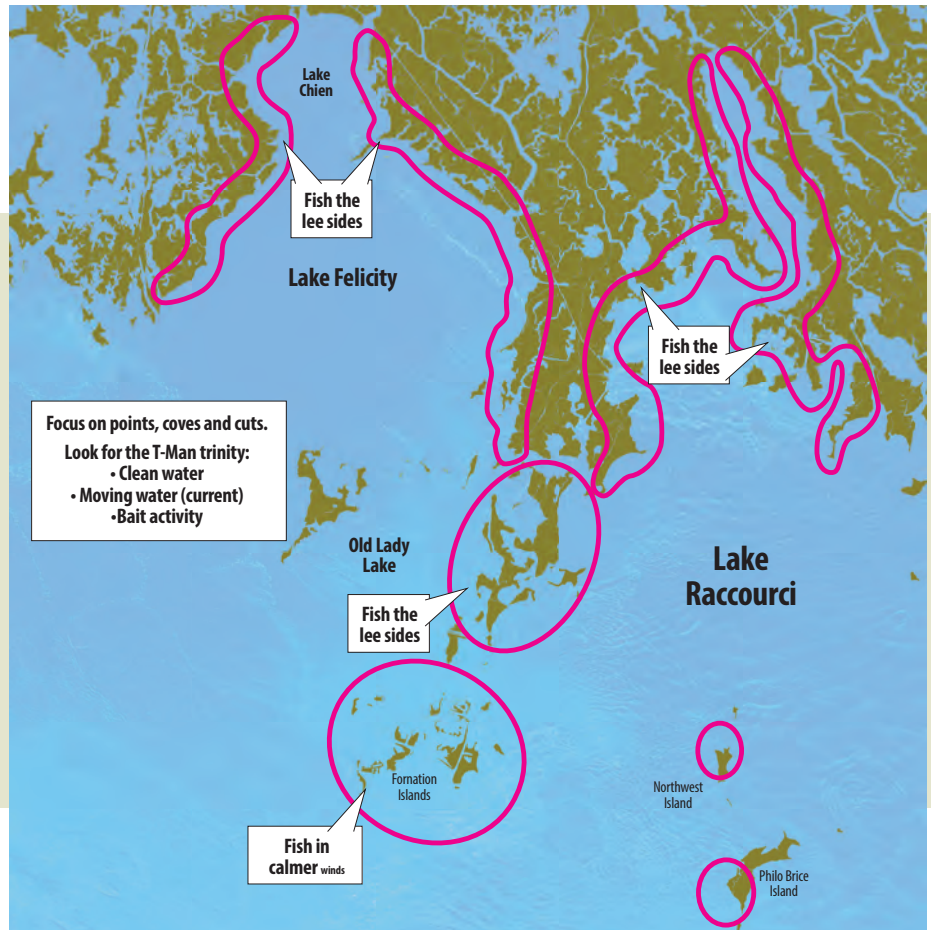
DESTINATION INFORMATION

The "Circle" is accessible from Basson's Boat Launch, Pointe Aux Chenes Marina or Bayou Blue Marina in Larose.

Maps: Standard #28B covers most of the area. The extreme south tip below Felicity Pass is covered in Standard Map #38

Guides: Besides T-Man Cheramie and Mike Guidry, several other guides operate in the area. Check with local marinas or see Guides & Charters in the Classifieds section.

Accommodations: Check with the guides or local marinas.



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because it's quieter than trolling, and fish topwaters. And we finally found fish willing to smack the topwaters, though they weren't the 3- to 5-pound fish we hoped to bump into.

We got hit consistently by some average-sized trout and by a few that couldn't even pass the 12-inch test. It amazes me how aggressive and voracious a predator a speckled trout is; they'll attempt to devour a fish nearly half their size. And then the gaff-tops started hitting our topwaters. We got two-at-a-time hook-ups, with specks slamming us in between, and while it was a lot of action and a lot of fun, our goal was to find trout, and bigger trout, so we moved again.

"We're committing a fishing-guide sin, leaving biting fish to go look for fish," Cheramie said. "If we stay here and fish under a cork, we'll load the box with trout. We'll have some junk fish in the mix and some undersize specks to throw back, but there's a ton of bait in here and a ton of keeper-size trout to catch," he said, pointing to schools of small baitfish throughout the large cove.

LAKE FELICITY

Our next stop was Lake Felicity, where we again found fish, but the water wasn't nearly as clear. Our original plan was to



- Capt. Mike Guidry said live shrimp will
- virtually guarantee fish in the boat.

head out to the Fornation Islands, but under the extremely windy conditions, Cheramie said it would be a waste of time.

"We've been catching some beautiful trout at the islands, but these winds will have the water so rough and so muddy, it'll be unfishable," Guidry said. "On a calm day you can bounce around the various islands; start at Fornation and move to Northwest Island, Philo Bruce, Casse-Tete, Calumet.... You'll catch some nice trout out there. I even fish out there on south winds because you can find calm water on the north sides.

"But when I head out there or I fish the structure in Raccourci, I also like to take live croakers or live pogies, and I fish them free-lined. The big mama trout will inhale them," he said.

LAKE RACCOURCI

Since none of the islands were on our itinerary that day, we took the short cut through Felicity Pass and made the bumpy ride to the east side of Lake Raccourci to search for the T-Man Trinity; clear water, moving water and baitfish.

But that trinity was hard to find. We'd find decent water with no bait, or bait in very stained water, and the winds were now blowing a steady 20 miles per hour. Guidry moved us several more times, and we took refuge from the winds in the coves on the broken shoreline where there are so many places to fish you couldn't exhaust them all in a month of Sundays.

Fortunately, the reds were in the coves, and they'll eat a top-water bait as readily as will a trout. And when a decent-sized redfish smashes your topwater, you've got a whole lotta fun on the end of your line.

The initial impact is startling; they hit with such ferocity it can pull a lazily attended rod right out of your hands. Then you let 'em run and reel in during the time between runs until you

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wear them down.

Somewhere along the route, I lost my bone-colored topwater due to a faulty knot. We later recovered it, but in the meantime, I had switched to a black body/chartreuse head She Dog that the bull reds seemed to like. They crashed at it and swirled on it and knocked it around, but for some reason they wouldn't commit to chomping down on it enough to let me hook them. The bone-colored She Dog Cheramie was casting produced, as did the chartreuse topwater Guidry fished. We played some catch-and-release, and we moved again to complete the circle.

GRAY DUCK

"We catch a lot of bull reds in here," Cheramie said as we headed toward Gray Duck. "Reds 35 to 38 inches long are not uncommon. That puts them in the 15- to 18-pound class and even heavier. That's a lot of redfish on the end of your line."

"Gray Duck has some great coves, cuts, bayous ... all great places to fish, and you just work off of points and cuts, like we've been doing," Guidry said. "If the wind would have been blowing from the west, we'd have fished the same area and run the same route, but we'd have started at Gray Duck and run the opposite way and fished the opposite shoreline. That way we'd still be fishing the calm side so the wind wouldn't be such a factor."

If we'd been out to load the boat with trout, we could have.

We'd have limited out before we left Lake Chien and never completed the circle. But we'd have to have been fishing live bait under corks. Not that anything is wrong with that; I actually love to fish that way. But we said from the start this was a run-the-circle day and a topwater day, and we still managed a nice box of fish under very windy conditions. So, if the forecast is for stiff winds, there's no need to stay home and just hope for better weather. Go run the circle. You'll load the box before you make it all the way around.

QUICK TIPS:

- There is live bait now available at the bait shop by the gas station in front of Basson's. Cheramie buys live minnows and said the trout and reds can't resist them.
- Cheramie said he normally does not fish under the birds in the summer, but this year he's catching trout up to 3 pounds under them. Don't pass them up.
- Guidry said the time to run the circle is NOW!

Captain Mike Guidry can be reached at 985-637-4292.

Captain T-Man Cheramie can be reached at 985-677-6294.



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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BACK TO THE BEACH

Anglers are catching trout, reds out of this popular St. Bernard Parish port despite the spreading fresh water

Vickie Venable of Terry, Miss., got this 6 ½-pound, 26-inch long speck on a live shrimp near Shell Beach.

The areas that Shell Beach anglers normally fish this time of year have gotten pounded from two directions by water that's fresher than Arthur Fonzarelli on prom night.

A record-high Mississippi River has been spewing the stuff through every orifice, including Mardi Gras Pass and the Bonnet Carre Spillway while it was open. For Shell Beach anglers, that means the water is curling up from the former to the south and pushing in from the latter to the north, according to veteran guide Capt. Jacques Laboureur.

"If the spillway hadn't been opened, and we just had to deal with Mardi Gras Pass, we'd be all over the Biloxi Marsh, but from Point Lydia all the way up to Isle au Pitre, it's all fresh," he said in early June. "The oyster guys are just trying to hurry up and harvest. They're trying to get them out of there so they don't lose them."

WHAT LIES BENEATH

Sounds like gloom and doom, and the world is coming to an end, right? Well, it's

not. Laboureur and the rest of the Shell Beach fleet are putting plenty of speckled trout and redfish in the boat, but they're having to do things a little bit differently.

Almost every day, Laboureur has been heading to Breton Sound, but he's not scanning for the factors that are normally so important to him. For one thing, he's thrilled when he finds clean water, but he doesn't even bat an eye if it's putrid.

"You're fishing, and the water is dirty, and you've got hyacinths floating past you, so you can't not fish a place because it looks (bad)," he said. "You've got to stop and work it."

Also, he's not as concerned with finding bait on the surface, simply because that water up top is frequently so bad. That means he's not even trying any technique that works the top of the water column. He's getting down to the domain of sheepshead, croakers and pinfish — in addition to speckled trout.

"Buy a little extra bait, because you're probably going to burn through it," he said. "Literally everything I've been catching has

been directly on the bottom — not on the fall. Your bait has to be on the bottom, and that means a lot of trash fish.

CAROLINA RIGS KEY

"Right now, everything we're catching is on Carolina rigs, and I expect that will follow through August."

The speckled trout Shell Beach anglers have been boating aren't the bruisers for which Breton Sound is known, but they've been concentrated, thanks to the river water.

"We're not exactly catching great fish out there," Laboureur admitted. "We're catching 13- to 15-inch fish. We used to call those Eloi trout or (Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet) rock trout back in the day. At this point in the game, we're just glad to catch them."

Laboureur said he's simply running the wells and platforms in Breton Sound to find fish. Hotspots literally change by the day.

The Chandeleur chain has also been productive, and the fresh water has resulted in at least one positive there.

"Typically, we have to deal with a bunch

of sharks," Laboureur said. "We bring extra hooks. But I don't think I've caught but one shark this year, so we'll see if that changes."

REDFISH REVIVAL

Though the interminable river flow has shuffled the deck for speckled trout, it's actually been a boon for redfish, Laboureur said.

"The redfish seem to be loving the fresh water," he said. "They've gone absolutely (crazy)."

Laboureur said the productive July pattern for reds couldn't be easier, even though it's impossible to predict what size fish you'll catch.

"The redfish are going to be more toward the bordering bays," he said. "They're not going to be in the duck ponds. They'll be more in places like Lake Machias, Lake Fortuna, Black Bay, Oak River Bay — those edge bays. The interior stuff just gets too warm."

"It'll stay that way until September when everything cools off, and then they'll move back in."

To catch them, Laboureur baits his clients with live shrimp under popping corks.

"If we get into a bunch of babies, which is something we've been dealing with a lot this year, I'll put plastic on," he said. "Once you get them riled up, they'll hit whatever."

"We're catching everything from undersized fish all the way up to bulls. Whenever you try to catch the bulls," Laboureur laughed, "you get nothing but babies, and when you want some small eaters, you get nothing but bulls."

One place that's been a disappointment so far this year, however, for both speckled trout and redfish, has been both the short and long rocks of the MRGO, Laboureur said.

"I'm hoping this July that the river will finally crest and come down, and we can finally get some consistency out of the rocks," he said. "The fish have to show up there eventually." ■

— Todd Masson



Capt. Jacques Laboureur is finding lots of fresh, muddy water in Breton Sound, but the speckled trout are still there, swimming in the salty stuff underneath.



Breton Sound speckled trout haven't been as consistently big this year, but there are still some bruisers in the mix.

Photos by Capt. Jacques Laboureur

Lake Jean
Louis Robin

Lake Coquille

Lake of Second Trees

Lake Athanasio

Lake Machais

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FISHING ROCK JETTIES, OLD-SCHOOL STYLE

By John McQueen

Not everyone has the luxury of decades of experience locating intricate and productive incongruities along the bottom of bodies of water.

Searching for them on depth finders can seem like looking for a needle in a haystack, not to mention the best time is when the water is calm and fishing is optimal.

Harold Renfroe, a retired school teacher who fishes the rock jetty sections on both sides of Grand Isle and the beach between Elmer's Island and Belle Pass, doesn't even have a depth finder on his boat, an old V-hull designed long ago for walleye fishing in deep, choppy water.

NO GPS? NO PROBLEM!

He also doesn't have a trolling motor or GPS onboard.

Instead, he relies on a razor-sharp memory — sometimes with the help of a camera — a lot of tackle, a specially rigged golf umbrella and a roll of toilet paper in finding the hidden treasures located beneath the brine.

"It's an old-school way of doing things," Renfroe said. "My father and grandfather used to fish in the bay, and they would triangulate spots. My way is a little different, but it hasn't failed me yet."

"I wouldn't say I catch more than most good fishermen out there, but I can hang with a lot of them."

No sounder, no GPS and no trolling motor means lots of casting to find spots on the rocks that, while they might not end up being end-all speckled trout and redfish holes, are a little different than the typical stretch.

Cheap, ½-ounce jigheads begin the process, and a sturdy anchor ends it.

"I make long casts about 10 feet off of a stretch of rocks and gradually work my way out," Renfroe said. "I try to make every cast as far as I can to cover as much ground as possible, but also to make them really close to the same distance."

"If there's a hole in your pattern by just 10 or so feet, that might be two or three rocks in a pile you miss. That really can be a good spot."

Renfroe uses spinning tackle exclusively to avoid backlashes. Because he's actually looking to get the jig hung up, he uses 8-pound mono for maximum casting distance and so it will easily break when he's satisfied he's located a pile of submerged rocks just off the jetty he's working.

And that's when things get interesting.

>>> FISHING ROCK JETTIES



It's no secret that jetties attract trout, which hide in the rocks and feed on bait washing by.

X MARKS THE SPOT

"I'll go ahead and motor up to (the spot) a safe distance, take a wad of wet toilet paper and throw it up on the (visible) rocks (near the submerged hotspot). I'm trying to get one that land flush on a good rock so that I can see it. Then I'll take a picture of it," said Renfro.

Renfro said people would be surprised how long a well-formed and well-placed handful of toilet paper will last.

"If it sticks in the morning and you have a nice, hot day with no storms, it'll dry out and stay there for a season," he said. "Eventually, it'll go away, but by then, I usually have it burned in my memory. And if it doesn't, I've got a picture of it."

Renfro's choice for fishing the rocks is a shallow, sliding-cork rig with either a live croaker or live menhaden. The goal is to get it as close to the bottom as possible without fouling on the rocky bottom.

Of course, doing that takes experimentation with the depth at which the live bait is presented

And experimentation causes a lot of lost tackle.

"Especially with croakers, if you give them a chance to

continues on page 76 >>>

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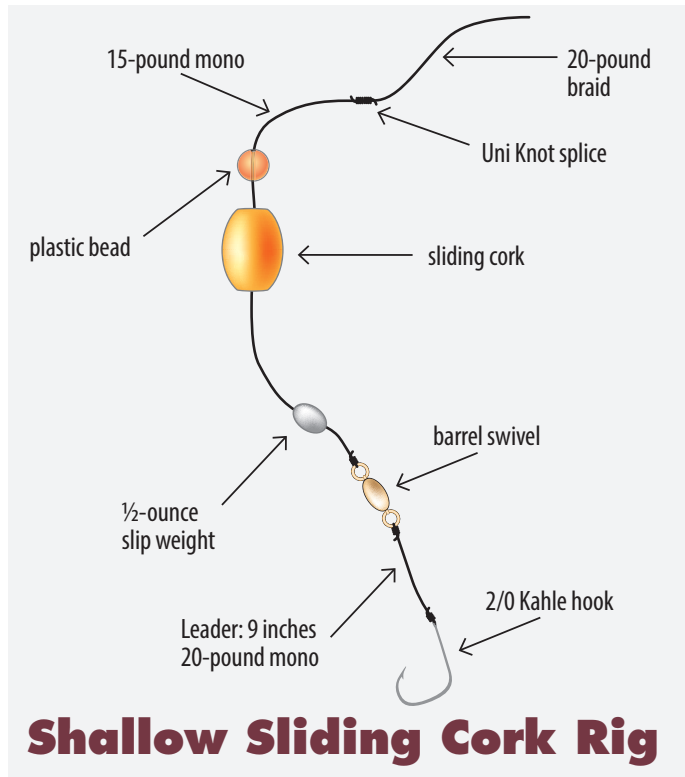
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>>> FISHING ROCK JETTIES

continues >>>

swim into those rocks, they're going to do it," Renfroe said. "And that's going to very quickly be a lost bait. It's a method I'm at peace with, but, yeah, there's a lot of retying."

His reel of choice is a Shimano 2500 series loaded with 6-pound PowerPro braid and a medium-light action spinning rod.

The light line is important because it provides "good overall strength and you can chunk it a long way," Renfroe said. "It also breaks off fairly easy."

A ½-ounce weight is a little lighter than most, he said, but he's dealing with much shallower water than most sliding-cork users.

"I'm almost always going 6 feet or less," he said. ■



John McQueen has written about and wandered about the woods and waterways of south Louisiana for 15 years. A native of Baton Rouge and resident of New Orleans, he counts an 8-pound speckled trout caught on a topwater bait as his biggest accomplishment behind the raising of his daughters.

TROPHY TROUT ROCKS ARE A GAMECHANGER



The Empire jetties have been producing trout like these for Capt. Lloyd Landry for decades.

By John McQueen

Captain Lloyd Landry told a story of one of his favorite spots in the entire Buras/Empire system, a place where a once-in-a-lifetime speckled trout is almost always a possibility, no matter how nasty the spring/summer weather is or how dirty the water.

"I had a guy not too long ago who wanted to catch a big trout and said he would do what it takes to do it," he said. "The wind was blowing off the Gulf, the water was dirty, but I told him there's one spot where I thought he could do it."

Landry was referring to a large, flat rock located just off the main line of the jetty in about 2 feet of water on the edge of a tangle of smaller rocks and rebar.

"I've probably caught 15 trout (weighing) 6 pounds or better off of it," he said. "And I've done it even in the worst conditions, if guys are willing to put in the work. That man sat there, and I told him to cast in the same spot over and over again until I said it was enough."

"He cast at least 50 times, lost a bunch of jigs and caught a few 15- to 18-inch fish — nice fish for that day."

The angler kept at it, even though the fish weren't the size for which he was looking.

"Then he finally got what he wanted after an hour," Landry said. "That fish weighed 6 pounds, 8 ounces."

The charter captain said it's important to work the structure well.

"What happens is, those fish just wait there for some bait to get washed over that rock, where they're disoriented," Lloyd said. "They'll slip up on top (of the rock) real quick for an easy meal and just ease back into position."

Editor's Note: Capt. Lloyd Landry IV of Outcast Fishing Charters can be reached at 504-912-8291.

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SPECKLED TRUTH

Chris Bush

The author landed this nice speckled trout on a Megabass Darksleeper, a Goby-type soft-plastic bait. **BELOW:** Ned rigs are mushroom-shaped jigheads that allow soft plastics to stand upright when in contact with the bottom.

THREE NEW TRICKS FOR MORE BIG TROUT

NED RIG, DARKSLEEPER, S-WAVER 120 HAVE POTENTIAL TO FOOL TROPHY SPECKS

Chris Bush

I think it's safe to say our fishing world is changing, and since it's summer, ICAST, the world's largest sportfishing trade show, looms in the future, scheduled for July 9-12 in Orlando, Fla.

Designers, manufacturers and anglers gather to view, reveal and introduce technological advances before they can be purchased in the mainstream market.

I bring this up because I'm going to discuss three lures that meet the definition of ICAST's intent: view, reveal and introduce. Having fished these on plenty of trips, I can confidently write they all have high production value, as well as big-fish potential.

THE NED RIG

Year after year, this simple setup produces tremendous results on heavily pressured fish when downsizing is appropriate. A mainstay in almost every freshwater angler's arsenal, its transition to inshore saltwater fishing is virtually flawless.

The rig is remarkably simple and includes a jighead and soft-plastic lure. Unlike traditional jighead styles — round, aspirin or arrow — it features a "mushroom" profile. Simple as it may

seem, this jighead allows the bait to stand straight up when in contact with the bottom. Additionally, pairing it with smaller soft plastics gives great fishability and heavily pressured fish a less-invasive offering.

I prefer the Owner Blockhead in the 1/16- and 1/8-ounce sizes, but Z-Man also makes a NED Lockz HD jighead, and I prefer those in the 1/8- and 1/4-ounce sizes for heavier-tide and windier situations. Soft-plastic selections being endless, I prefer ZMan's Finesse TRD and Trick Shotz, mainly because they are buoyant and compact. For fishing purposes, this is a jig, and I fish it as such — making one or two twitches, then letting the bait sink to the bottom while maintaining contact with the lure. Bites can be very subtle, but they can also be very big since many large summer trout are looking for smaller, quick offerings.

MEGABASS DARK SLEEPER

Newest of the three to market, this Goby profile soft plastic made by Megabass has unlimited inshore potential. Unlike many all-in-one swimbaits, it has an exaggerated set of dorsal fins that act

as weed guards and allow an angler to fish grassy or rocky substrate virtually unscathed. Although they are made in three different sizes, the 3-inch is the most versatile. Production weights vary depending on the length of the bait, but the 3/8- and 1/2-ounce are perfect for most, if not all, inshore situations. If you're like me and initially thought the offered



weights are too heavy, I can tell you, the fishability of the 3/8-ounce is comparable to a traditional 1/8-ounce jig and soft plastic, while the 1/2-ounce fishes more like a 3/16-ounce bait. In terms of technique, fish this lure as you would any soft plastic/jighead combination. Keep your



Megabass Dark Sleeper

rod tip elevated and give the bait two or three twitches, letting the bait sink while maintaining contact with your lure. Most hits, if not all, come on the fall, and since it's a compact offering, a majority of the hooksets occur on the inside of the mouth, particularly the cheek. This bait was designed to target smallmouth bass in clear, northern lakes, so the reduced visibility of most inshore estuaries renders this bait the perfect croaker silhouette.

RIVER2SEA S-WAVER 120

I dare you to walk into any tackle shop on the California coast and mention the word "glide bait". What I would imagine taking place is a store clerk offering a myriad of samples and customers producing copious numbers of pictures of large bass with jointed baits longer than most human forearms. With that said, I took it upon myself to test the West Coast success and apply it to the Gulf Coast, particularly for large trout. After overcoming a large learning curve, I found these baits to be very effective and very versatile.

I chose the River2Sea S-Waver 120 mainly because of the price point and size.

Most glide baits are produced in small batches. In other words, they are expensive. The S-Waver is one of the cheaper alternatives, yet it is still \$15.99, but if you are serious about targeting big fish, these baits provide that option. The 120 is 4 3/4 inches long and weighs 1 3/16 ounces. Since, I wade the majority of the time I'm fishing, use lighter rod and reel combos, the 120 still falls in that option window and won't give me shoulder fatigue. Heck, Corky Fat Boys weigh almost a full ounce.

The options for fishing this bait are endless, but know that I found a long, exaggerated walk-the-dog cadence to be most effective. What makes this lure so effective is the long, sweeping side-to-side motion. It's great for shallow flats or a topwater alternative on lighter tide/calm days. I find the only downside to these baits is the clumsy/loud entry into the water. Additionally, almost exclusively fish these lures on braid or 100-percent,



River2Sea S-Waver 120

pure fluorocarbon, with nothing less than a medium-power/extra-fast action rod. Not only will the bait run true, but hookup-to-land ratio goes up exponentially with slightly heavier tackle. Don't ask me how I know!

Technology is giving some very creative lure producers endless possibilities, and as the angling world continues to change, it doesn't hurt to keep an eye out for those crossover lures that may give you the edge on big fish in your estuary. So keep plugging and remember, 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 Truth.

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7 STEPS TO CLEAN TROUT

The quickest way to clean specks — or most any fish

Admit it: The worst part of a fishing trip is not finding speckled trout, but cleaning the day's catch.

Yeah, we all say it's part of the experience, but few people really like getting their hands full of slime and fish guts.

So it's important to get the job done as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

That's where these seven steps come in. I first learned it by watching guides in Venice, La., and soon discovered that it's a way to work around the rough bellies of reds and specks.

Now it's the only way I clean pretty much any fish except panfish (which, honestly, are not that difficult).

And once you get the steps down pat, they all seem to flow together almost as a single, continuous movement.

You'll burn through the day's catch, get the fish in the freezer and clean up in time for dinner.



1) With the cutting edge of the knife turned towards the tail, insert the knife through the fish just below and slightly behind the pectoral fin.



2) Smoothly extend through the length of gut cavity to near the anal vent.



3) Lay the fish on its side and make a vertical cut to the backbone behind the head of the fish.



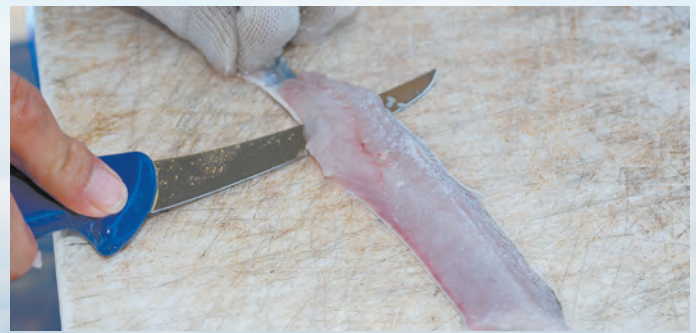
4) Turn the knife blade to face toward the tail and, hugging the backbone, cut down the length of the fish to separate the fillet from the carcass.



5) Remove the fillet and set it aside. Its edges should be smooth and straight. If it is raggedly, the knife needs honing.



6) Turn the fish over and repeat the filleting procedure for the remaining side. Then cut out and discard the rib cage from the fillet.



7) With a fingertip, pinch the fillet, skin-side down to the cleaning surface, and with the other hand use the blade to gently cut or scrape the flesh from the skin.

This trophy trout attacked a Matrix Mullet, a topwater proven to fool even the smartest trophy trout.

THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO WHEN FISHING TOPWATERS

PATIENCE IS KEY TO MORE HOOKUPS, GUIDE SAYS

By Patrick Bonin



Nothing is more exhilarating than catching speckled trout on topwater lures — and nothing is more maddening than repeatedly missing fish that are blowing up on your bait.

It's tough to figure out how a fish can avoid the treble hooks that snare you just about every time you reach into your tackle box, but Capt. Theophile Bourgeois said patience — even though it's awfully hard to practice — is crucial.

“Nine out of 10 times, the first hit on topwater is the trout's tail. She slaps it or rolls on it,” said Bourgeois, who owns Bourgeois Charters in Lafitte. “When everybody sees that, they jerk it — and then school's out.”

DON'T WATCH THE LURE

His solution is simple: He tells his customers to not even look at the lure as

they work it across the water's surface.

“I tell them to turn their heads and don't look at the bait,” Bourgeois said, chuckling. “When a big trout hits that bait, and they're looking at it, they're going to jerk it.”

Bourgeois like bone-colored Bomber Badonk-A-Donks when he wade-fishes for trophy trout on the Chandeleur Island chain off the southeast Louisiana coast.

HOW TO CONVINCE THE FISH

“With a big trout, I've had my bait go 8 or 10 feet straight up in the air. When it comes down, then it's game on,” he said. “Then it's up to you to convince that fish the lure is some good stuff, which might entail twitching it one-two, and then stopping. Or maybe waiting a couple of seconds, then one twitch and stop.”

If that doesn't entice a trout into biting, Bourgeois changes his presentation.

GET ERRATIC

“If that fails, I get real erratic, and I try to move the bait as much as I can without covering any distance,” he explained. “I can make it twitch six or eight times in a 1-foot span.”

“An average person twitches it six or eight times, and they've covered 6 feet. They've pulled it out of the zone, and she's gone.”

Another key to remember when working topwater lures is to set your drag correctly, he said.

“I like to set my drags really light,” Bourgeois said. “It's a big fight, because if you set the drags tight they're known or pulling the hooks out their mouths.” ■



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Want to catch redfish in that 16- to 27-inch “slot” for tournaments, like Gerrit “T-Blu” Landry of Patoutville does while competing in the Lydia-based Southcentral Fishing Association circuit or July’s Iberia Rod & Gun Club Saltwater Fishing Rodeo out of Cypremort Point?

Go to the grass.

Finding redfish in the grass and getting them to bite is one thing. Then, getting 2 to 8 pounds of fighting-mad redfish out of the grass, which is plentiful along the shoreline of Marsh Island, takes a timely, strong hookset. Landry and his father, Gerry, of New Iberia, demonstrated that one windy day on their way to limiting out with several ideal “slot” redfish — including one of an almost perfect size.

How does an angler get two good slot-sized redfish — two is the limit for many redfish tournaments — in the boat when it counts? Catching numbers increases the odds, according to Gerrit.

“You can be catching fish, but as far as the right one, that’s luck. It helps when you’re catching a bunch. You catch the first big one early in the morning, then you’re chasing the second one the rest of the day,” he said.

**HERE’S WHERE REDS
THAT WIN TOURNAMENTS
LIKE TO HANG OUT**



SLOT MACHINE

By Don Shoopman

FINDING A PLACE TO FISH UP NEXT >



FINDING A PLACE TO FISH

Landry spoke as he guided his boat from Quintana Canal Boat Landing through rough water across Vermilion Bay about an hour after sunrise to go out of Southwest Pass. High east winds had changed his original plan to fish grass beds around South Point on the southern shoreline of Marsh Island, the northern edge of the Gulf of Mexico.

After rounding the west end of Marsh Island, he pointed the bow to grass beds near Long Point. Vermilion Bay's water looked like chocolate milk because of runoff from the Atchafalaya River. The color was somewhat better along the southern shoreline of Marsh Island.

"That's what we've been fishing in all year. This ain't horrible. It's a lot better than (Vermillion) bay was," said Landry, who, along with other fishermen, can't wait for the water to clear and the salinity to rise.

"Absolutely. With the river like it is, that might not be this year. (But) I think July or August, we should get a little clear or salty water," he said.

The Landrys prefer targeting redfish in the grass along the shoreline on the Gulf side of Marsh Island.

"They've got a lot of good grass here and they're fat," said Gerrit Landry, a production operator for Texas Petroleum who

Before heading out to the south shoreline of Marsh Island, Gerrit "T-Blu" Landry casts for live mullet in the Quintana Canal.

will turn 39 this month. He's also been working as a fishing guide since October 2018, when he got his charter captain's license, as the owner of Gotta Have Faith Charters.

"The last couple of years, the way I work, I've got extra time. I figured, 'Why not?'" he said.

Landry is putting years of fishing experience to use after starting at a young age with his father, who was an avid offshore fisherman with two offshore boats until about three years ago.

"He's been fishing with me since he was big enough to follow me," Gerry Landry said, including scuba diving and spearfishing together when his son was younger.

Gerry Landry, 63, who trained "hog dogs" most of his life and has hunted hogs for three decades, retired a few years ago as a production manager for Tech Oil Products. As of mid-May, he was waiting on his charter captain's license to join his son's charter business.

They made a formidable team, a patient team, even when they didn't have a decent bite for the first 2 or 2½ hours on the water because the tide was stuck at its lowest point.

CHANGING OF THE TIDE HELPS

Around 8 a.m., a time when half-hearted bumps were the norm for bites, Gerrit Landry said, "Yeah, the tide's supposed to come up about 10 o'clock. It ought to turn on a little bit. I think we're at the bottom of the tide. It's slow. We're waiting for a little tidal movement. It's tough. It's tough. You've got to slow down and fish. We're going to get them. We've just got to find a little pile."

As the tide began to rise and water started moving along the north edge of the Gulf of Mexico, the action began after a move



to another grassy shoreline area near The Mounds. As predicted a couple hours earlier, those bumps turned into bites.

Soon the bites became more frequent, and the first few redfish were stacked in the ice chest.

"They might be just starting to bite. They ain't playing with it. Two to a point. We're getting better," Gerrit said.

"When we get to five to a point, we're doing good," his father said.

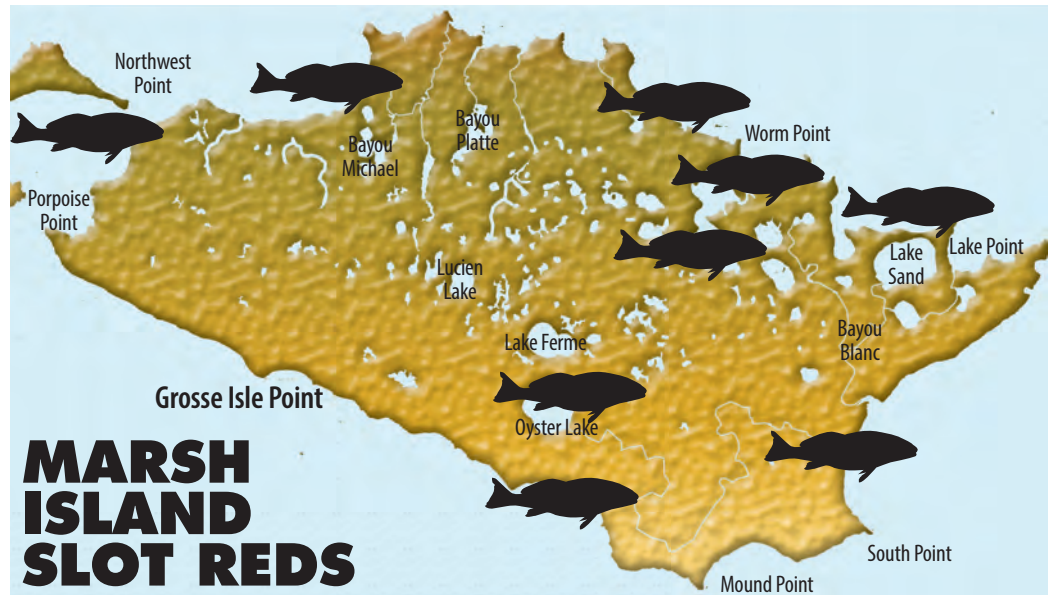
While some fishermen prefer a spinning outfit, Gerrit Landry sticks with a baitcasting outfit featuring a Daiwa Coastal TWS saltwater baitcasting reel. Occasionally, he said, he reverts to a spinning outfit.

"With these new Daiwas I'm using, if you set them right, you can cast into the wind," he said, proving it time after time as he fished, noting he also has a Daiwa Tatula at the ready but the Coastal is "just a little bit bigger."

The reels are loaded with 65-pound Daiwa J-Braid all the way from fishing reel to the hook, even if he's using a leader. He doesn't use monofilament or fluorocarbon for a 12- to 16-inch leader or line connecting the popping cork to the leadhead jig, just the J-Braid.

His fishing rods of choice are 7-foot-3 and 7-foot-2, medium-heavy Duckett rods. With those sticks, he said, "I'll just flip them in the boat."

The Landrys relied on two soft plastics — Get'Em Shads in Shrimp on the Run and J.B. Golden colors, respectively — on ¼-ounce Get'Em jigheads. Each jig cast to the grass was tipped with a fresh hunk of shrimp.



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PERFECT "SLOT RED"
UP NEXT ➤



Gerrit "T-Blu" Landry and his father, Gerry, show off nice "slot" redfish caught fishing grass lines on the south shoreline of Marsh Island.



THE PERFECT "SLOT RED"

The perfect "slot" redfish was their eighth redfish of the day, after a well-placed cast by Gerrit Landry.

The Highwater titanium popping cork plummeted below the surface with an audible plop, the loudest of the day, on a solid bite. Gerrit Landry set the hook hard.

"Oh, that's a MAN! Did you heard that cork?" he said, leaning back on the redfish, which wasn't coming in peaceably. It had serious intentions of swimming away from the boat, but Landry changed its mind and its course.

Soon, it filled the net after being scooped by his father, and they both looked in deep appreciation at a 26¹⁵/₁₆-inch redfish, the perfect size for a redfish tournament, a fat one that weighed between 8 and 8¹/₂ pounds.

"That's how it usually happens. You catch a fish like that (in a tournament) about 2:15," he said.

Gerrit enjoyed the battle.

"If they pull drag on these reels, the way I've got them set, yeah, you've got a tournament fish," he said. "Oh, that felt good. That fish right there will make your day."

One exactly that size made his day on March 30 in the first Southcentral Fishing Association tournament of the year out of Quintana Canal Boat Landing. It weighed 8 pounds even and won the Calcutta, leading his boat to a third-place finish in the 26-boat field, representing some of the best redfish fishermen in Acadiana.

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“That’s how it was the first tournament. The 8-pounder was the first fish of the day,” he said.

Gerrit credited the popping corks for adding a little more motivation for the redfish to bite.

WHY USE A POPPING CORK?

“I think that cork aggravates them. When they hit it, they drill it,” he said.

A few minutes later, his father caught a 23½-inch redfish. After it was safely in the box, Gerry said, “I don’t know if they get mad at the cork, but I know when they hit it they’re not in a good mood.”

One of the redfish the elder Landry caught bit hard twice and he swung and missed each time. He avoided striking out on the next cast to the same spot when he hooked and boated a 23-inch redfish.

Gerry laughed and said, “I was just fattening him up those first two (bites), showing him the buffet.” ■



Gerry Landry, scoops up a redfish hooked and battled by his son, Gerrit “T-Blu” Landry.



Don Shoopman fishes for freshwater and saltwater species mostly in and around the Atchafalaya Basin and Vermilion Bay. He moved to the Sportsman’s Paradise in 1976, and he and his wife June live in New Iberia. They have two grown sons.

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Since my son was onboard, the worst expletive I could muster was a gruff, “Dad gum it!”

I’m normally slow to anger and even slower to speak, but this was the third fish I had lost in less than 10 minutes.

“You can’t get frustrated,” Capt. Lane Zimmer told me as he grabbed my line to tie on another hook. “That’s part of fishing this way. You’re going to lose fish.”

GET CHUMMY WITH **MANGROVES**

By Chris Ginn

“That’s why I bring a bunch of hooks and a bunch of bait.”

My main problem was that many of the mangrove snapper that inhaled my pieces of Spanish sardines made beelines to the barnacle-encrusted legs of the oil rig.

I never would have thought 10-pound fish could be so hard to turn.

Because I could not turn these three, our 50-fish limit was in serious jeopardy. We only needed six to wrap it up, and I had just lost half of them.

Thankfully, the other anglers on board were much more skilled at catching mangroves and had bumped us three fish closer.

But to hear Zimmer — who guides for redfish and speckled trout (504-415-8006) out of Lafitte and fishes mangrove snapper only for fun — explain it, the fact that we were staring at 47 mangroves on ice was an accomplishment in and of itself.

IT’S HARD TO FOOL THESE FINICKY FISH

“These are finicky, finicky fish,” he said. “They seem like they would be so easy to catch, but they’re probably one of the most difficult to catch.”

Mangrove snapper seem so easy because anglers can literally pull up to a rig and watch them swarming after a few bits of chum.

But watching and catching are two entirely different things.

My son, Matthew, and I had met up with Zimmer, his brother, Joey

This Lafitte guide relaxes by heading out of Grand Isle to catch mangrove snapper, one of the most-persnickety fish in the Gulf. Here’s how he catches regular multi-person limits.

Zimmer, and their cousin, T.J. Roussell, to see if we might be able to scare up a few lemonfish.

Lane Zimmer knew I was not a huge fan of offshore fishing, so he assured me we would be within sight of the Grand Isle water tower and Port Fourchon all day long.

“We don’t have to go far,” he assured me. “The only issue we might have is that we’re fishing the Monday right after the Grand Isle Tarpon Rodeo.”

“I would imagine these close rigs have seen a boat or two the last couple of days.”

After checking to see which would be the best way to set up on the first rig, Zimmer concluded that the wind and the tide were canceling each other out; therefore, he wound up hooking to the rig and leaving one motor in reverse to keep us away from the structure.

**CHUMMING
THE RIGHT WAY**
UP NEXT >





Position your boat downcurrent from the rig you're fishing so your bait chunks can sink naturally.

CHUMMING THE RIGHT WAY

Joey Zimmer, who owns Z's Tackle in Lusher, immediately unboxed some frozen Spanish sardines we had picked up only minutes before at Grand Isle's Bridge Side Marina and started tossing cut-up pieces into the water at the base of the rig.

I watched the pieces of chum slowly disappear — each one gently washing away from the rig in the slowly moving tide.

Lane Zimmer threaded a piece of sardine onto my son's hook and instructed him how and where to throw it.

"Pull in your slack," I told him upon noticing the giant bow in his line and the pile of line floating on top of the water.

"No, don't pull up your slack," Zimmer countered. "That's the last thing you want to do with these mangroves. You want your bait to look exactly like the chum we just threw out.

"You pull up your slack, and your bait is going to look different enough that these fish won't touch it."

I've heard some fishing stories before, but was Zimmer really indicating that mangrove snapper could tell a piece of chum with a hook was different from a piece of chum without a hook?

"Yes, that's exactly what I'm saying," he said. "These are some of the smartest fish in the Gulf of Mexico. You don't fish for them the way you want to fish; you fish for them the way they want you to fish."

For Zimmer, fishing for mangroves the way they want him to fish means doing everything in his power to make the Spanish sardine on his hook look exactly like the Spanish sardine floating freely in the water.

Apparently, this is the difference between showing up at the dock with 50 mangroves rather than just five.

HOW TO OUTSMART THE SMARTEST FISH IN THE GULF

"Limiting out on mangroves with five people on the boat — you've got to know what you're doing to do that," Zimmer said, pitching his bait toward the rig. "The guys that know what to do? Yes, they'll catch them.

"But a lot of boats with five guys might get lucky to catch 20 or 30 fish. And the guys that come out here with heavy tackle and fish the bottom will luck up and catch a handful."

The rigs we were fishing were hardly seven miles from Grand Isle; Zimmer called them the Grand Isle 22 Block. Depending on which structure we fished, the water depth ranged from 50 to 60 feet.

"They're definitely not a secret," Zimmer said. "Anybody with a good bay boat can run out here on a calm day and get in on the action. That's why I say these are some of the smartest mangrove snapper in all of Louisiana: the fishing pressure is



high enough they learn how to not get caught."

Many anglers making the short run to these rigs might bring along 7/0 hooks, 80-pound leaders, swivels and big weights. Zimmer packs 3/0 hooks, 40-pound leaders, no swivels and no weights.

Anglers fishing the big, heavy gear might wind up catching a few red snapper, a lemonfish or two, bulls reds, black drum and some sharks, but any mangrove snapper they catch will be out of sheer luck.

"Mangroves can see all that stuff," Zimmer said. "And they're smart enough to figure out which piece of chum has a hook in it. If they see your big hook, swivel or line, they won't hit it.

"If they can tell your piece of chum isn't falling like all the rest, they won't hit it."

Ideally, Zimmer likes to hook up to a rig on the downcurrent side and toss a few handfuls of chum under the edge of the rig. As the current washes the chum away from the base of the rig, mangroves follow it out to the point where they are easily spotted under the water.

Then, because his knot might tend to catch on the last rod eye, Zimmer pulls out enough line to clear the connection from the eye and hand-tosses his Spanish sardine toward the rig.





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That gives your bait enough time to float down with the chum," Zimmer said. "It's going to fall a little bit faster no matter what you do, so I try to make it kind of pendulum back away from the rig so that it comes down right in the middle of the frenzy where they're feeding on the chum I just threw in the water."

This scenario partly played out as we bounced around from rig to rig.

For some reason, the mangroves were deeper than Zimmer expected, and we never really saw the big schools of them feeding on the chum. They were there, but we had to really wait them out and let our bait fall way out of sight.

"It's probably a combination of the pressure from the Tarpon Rodeo and the water color," he said as we stopped at one last rig to try to finish out our limit with six more mangroves.

"What you've got to realize is that when it's dirty like this, there's a line down there that separates the dirty water on the surface from the clean underneath. That's where these fish like to hang out, and it must be a little deeper today than it normally is — must be down around 15 feet today."



HOW TO CATCH LEMONFISH WHILE

MANGROVE SNAPPER FISHING

When fishing for mangroves, Capt. Lane Zimmer always keeps a few rods at the ready in case he spots a curious lemonfish cruising the surface.

"Take that last rig we fished today," he said. "That was a perfect example of how this typically plays out. We got the mangroves fired up with the chum, and all that activity got that lemonfish fired up, too."

"He wanted to come see what all the fuss was about."

Notoriously curious, lemonfish, aka cobia, can be anywhere from the bottom to the surface, and they are known for coming up to investigate any strange noises or commotion on top of the water.

"When we spot one, everything stops, and we focus entirely on the lemonfish," Zimmer said. "We try to keep him excited by throwing more chum out because once he loses interest, he's gone."

Zimmer said a lemonfish at the surface will eat a bait put in front of it 99 times out of 100.

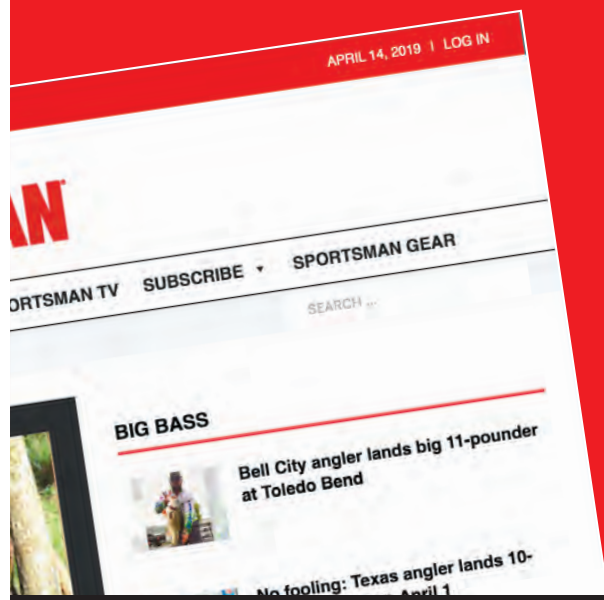
"We lost that fish because we hooked it on a mangrove rod, which had the drag locked down," Zimmer explained. "Had we hooked it on one of the rods I keep ready for lemonfish, we would have probably landed it, because the drags were set right."

Zimmer's lemonfish outfits are typically spooled with 80-pound fluorocarbon line and a big 5/0 hook on a conventional reel rather than a spinning reel. And instead of a piece of cut bait, he'll hook on an entire Spanish sardine. ■

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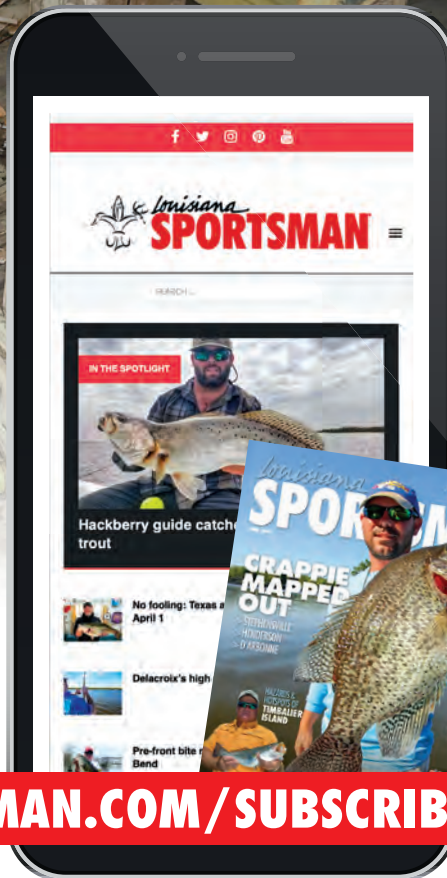
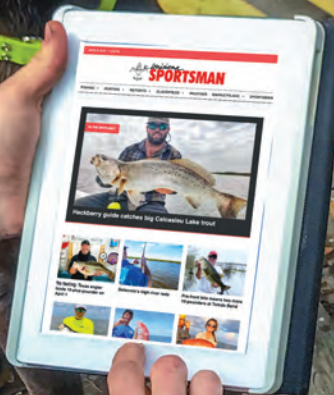


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A 10-fish limit of mangrove snapper for multiple anglers is nothing to sneeze at in Louisiana's Gulf waters.

On this last rig, the perfect scenario played out. A giant school of mangroves came out from under the rig to feed on the chum. The Zimmer brothers and Roussell landed three quick fish before a curious lemonfish demanded our attention.

After playing with the lemonfish to keep it excited, Roussell hooked and fought it a few short minutes before it broke off. Down but not out, we turned our attention to catching three more mangrove snapper.

"I think they've figured us out," Zimmer lamented as he watched me lose three fish while the rest of the mangroves turned their noses up at our baits. "You might not believe this, but after watching a few of their buddies getting jerked out of the water, they're not going to eat anything that looks different than the chum we're throwing out."

That's about the time Zimmer scolded me about getting frustrated.

"(If y)ou fish like this, you've got to have some patience, and you can't get frustrated," he said. "We went through almost 50 hooks today, and we caught almost 50 fish — only three short our five-man limit."

Yep — three short of our five-man, 50-fish limit. Dad gum it! ■



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Capt. Lane Zimmer has battled mangrove snapper enough to have seen all the highs and lows that come with going after these smart fish inhabiting oil rigs close to Louisiana's coastline.

The most important lesson he's learned is that to consistently fool mangroves, he has to make his presentation as invisible as possible.

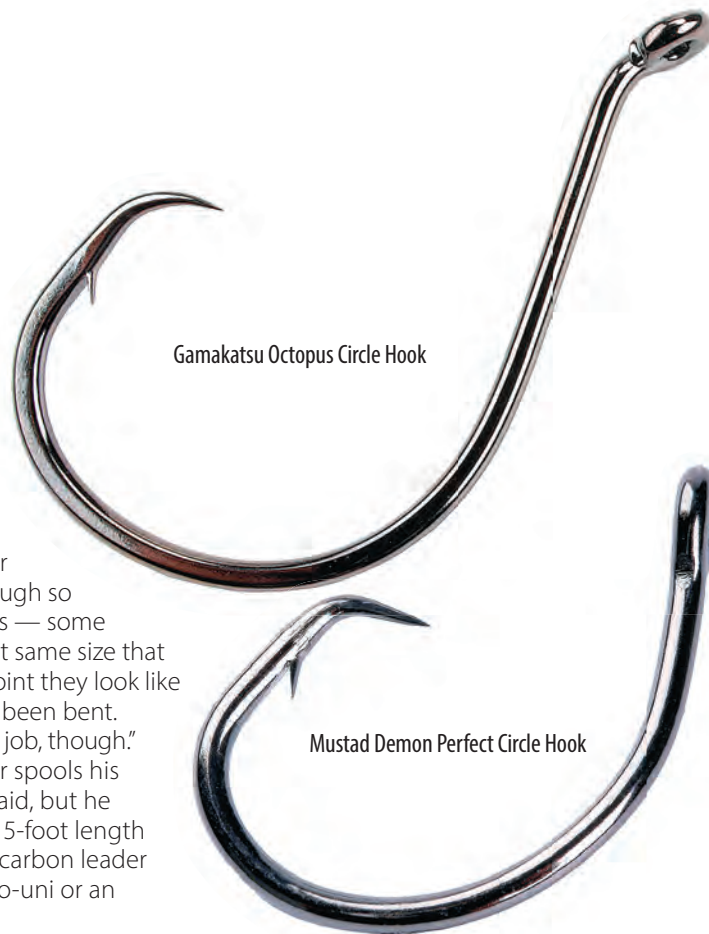
"I've come up with a system that works for me through a lot of trial and error," Zimmer said. "And the way I've learned what works is paying attention to what doesn't work."

Case in point: He started out fishing big hooks before realizing he had to change to smaller hooks. Then, he fished thin-wire hooks before learning that he had to fish thicker hooks.

"The two I use now are the 2/0 Gamakatsu circle octopus hook and the 3/0 Mustad UltraPoint Demon Perfect 1x circle hook," Zimmer said. "I've gone through so many over the years — some not as strong at that same size that straighten to the point they look like they've never even been bent."

"These two do the job, though."

As for line, Zimmer spools his reels with heavy braid, but he always ties about a 5-foot length of 40-pound fluorocarbon leader using either a uni-to-uni or an



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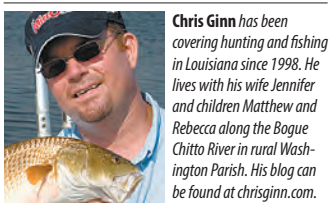
Albright knot connection. "I start with 40-pound (leader) and adjust from there," Zimmer said. "If they don't hit 40-pound, I know I've got to go smaller. If I think it's dirty enough for me to go up to 50-pound, I will — but only if they keep biting. "The fish will tell you what they want."

Zimmer uses fluorocarbon because it has as close to the same light refractive index as water, which means it virtually disappears underwater.

And believing mangroves can spot coils of line in the water, he ties one end of his leader to a boat cleat and jerks on it to straighten it out.

But even all of this isn't enough to satisfy Zimmer. That's why he takes the time to hide his hooks inside pieces of Spanish sardine. Rather than thread his hook straight through the eyes, he'll run it through the eyes and then bury it inside a little slot he makes in the meat.

"By the time I'm done, I'm fishing a bait that is as natural as I can make it," Zimmer said. "And that's the only way I've learned to consistently catch these finicky mangrove snapper." ■



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

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TOLEDO BEND: FISH LILY PADS FOR SUMMER BASS

My go-to pattern in late spring and summer the past year or so is a real shady one, considering there is very little underwater vegetation remaining at Toledo Bend compared to the heyday of punchin' the acres of hydrilla. There is one plant that is flourishing, offering ambush points, cover and shade to bass, and that is the lily pad. Folks, fish are going to the lily pads like there's no tomorrow.

Last year, I smacked them consistently on plastic frogs when I started zeroing in on lily pads in 2½- to 6-foot depths. I have stayed on them so far this year, and I've have been having oodles of fun catching solid bass in and around lily pad fields on Carolina-rigged, dark-colored Zoom Super Flukes. For some reason, they haven't turned on to the plastic frogs through the end of May.

I was out all three days of Memorial Day Weekend with two anglers from Kansas City, Mo., the same men who were with me catching bass after bass on plastic frogs last year in the lily pads. To get away from the crowd, I went to the Texas side the second day and, sure enough, the bite was on using C-rigs in the lily pads. We had a blast. At least three bass that were hooked were in the 4- to 6-pound range.

Want to know how other fishermen I had around me? None. Zero.

Lily pads began paying off in the spring. The pads themselves were about 5 to 6 inches in circumference by then. The main thing is, they grow over hard bottoms, and that's where bass prefer to spawn.

In the summer, lily pads get bigger — 12 to 14 inches in diameter — and the size of the lily pad fields grows. They're everywhere. Baitfish, including bream, hang around. Bream are bedding in them.

COVER IS KEY

The lily pad fields offer more cover than anything else in the lake, although there are hydrilla beds in isolated places.

Usually, when the heat of summer hits the region, bass anglers head out to 20- to 22-foot depths and rely on their marine electronics. There probably will be a lot of bass deep, no doubt about it, and they can be caught on Carolina-rigged soft plastics, big crankbaits and football-head jigs. However, finding those bass doesn't mean you'll catch them because, it seems, they bite when they want.

I'm going to stay in the lily pads this summer. The bite has been there all day, at certain times stronger than other times. What happens in the dog days of summer? Will the lily pad bite be as consistent when it gets full-blown July? I don't know. There's the possibility the bite slacks off in the middle of the day, but who knows? Or it could be early and late, for the most part, in lily pads 5- to 7-feet deep.

Nick Terry shows off a 6½-pound bass he caught May 31 while fishing in and around lily pads at Toledo Bend with John Dean. Lily pads should hold the key to getting bit in July, according to Dean.



Just park the boat with an anchor or Power Pole and fan-cast around the boat.

BAITS TO USE

I'll use a Carolina rig with a ½-ounce weight, lighter than I usually use, to fish the lily pads. I'll have 40-pound Power Pro braid spooled on the reel and a 2½-foot leader with the same braid.

The thing about hooking and landing sizeable bass in the lily pads is you've got to strong-arm them from the get-go because of the lily pad stems. As soon as a bass bites, you've got to bear down, turn its head, keep its head up and get it coming to you. Those three big ones we had on May 31 didn't get in the boat because they weren't horsed in, as they say. It's like fishing in a jungle, and the trees are the stems.

I'm pretty sure the bass hanging out in the lily pads will bite other artificials in addition to C-rigs. Plastic frogs, lightly weighted Flukes and even weedless spoons like the old Johnson Silver Minnow ought to get them fired up, too. I can't wait until bass start hammering the plastic frogs on top.

Crappie fishing should be very good in July as they leave the shallows and head for brush tops and other structure in 25-foot depths. As of the first of June, many of them were suspending 10 to 15 feet deep over brush tops.

Jigs have been accounting for quantity and quality. Crappie also are being caught on minnows.

Hey, everybody, be safe on the water and have a happy July 4.

I've been guiding on this lake most of my life. July should be a prime time to catch bass in the lily pads. Give me a call at 936-404-2688. ■

— John Dean

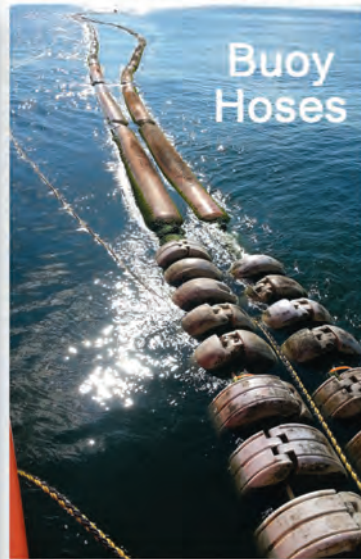
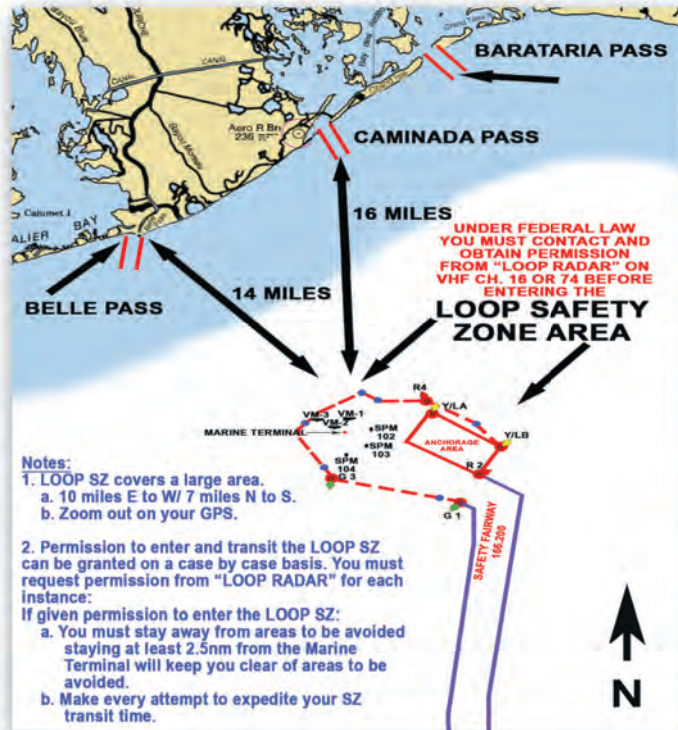


John Dean has been guiding on Toledo Bend most of his life. If you'd like to join him on a trip, give him a call at (936) 404-2688.

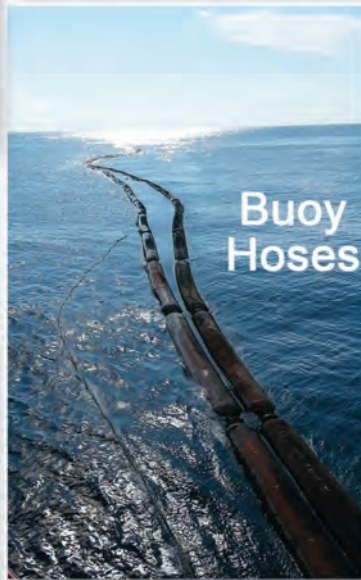


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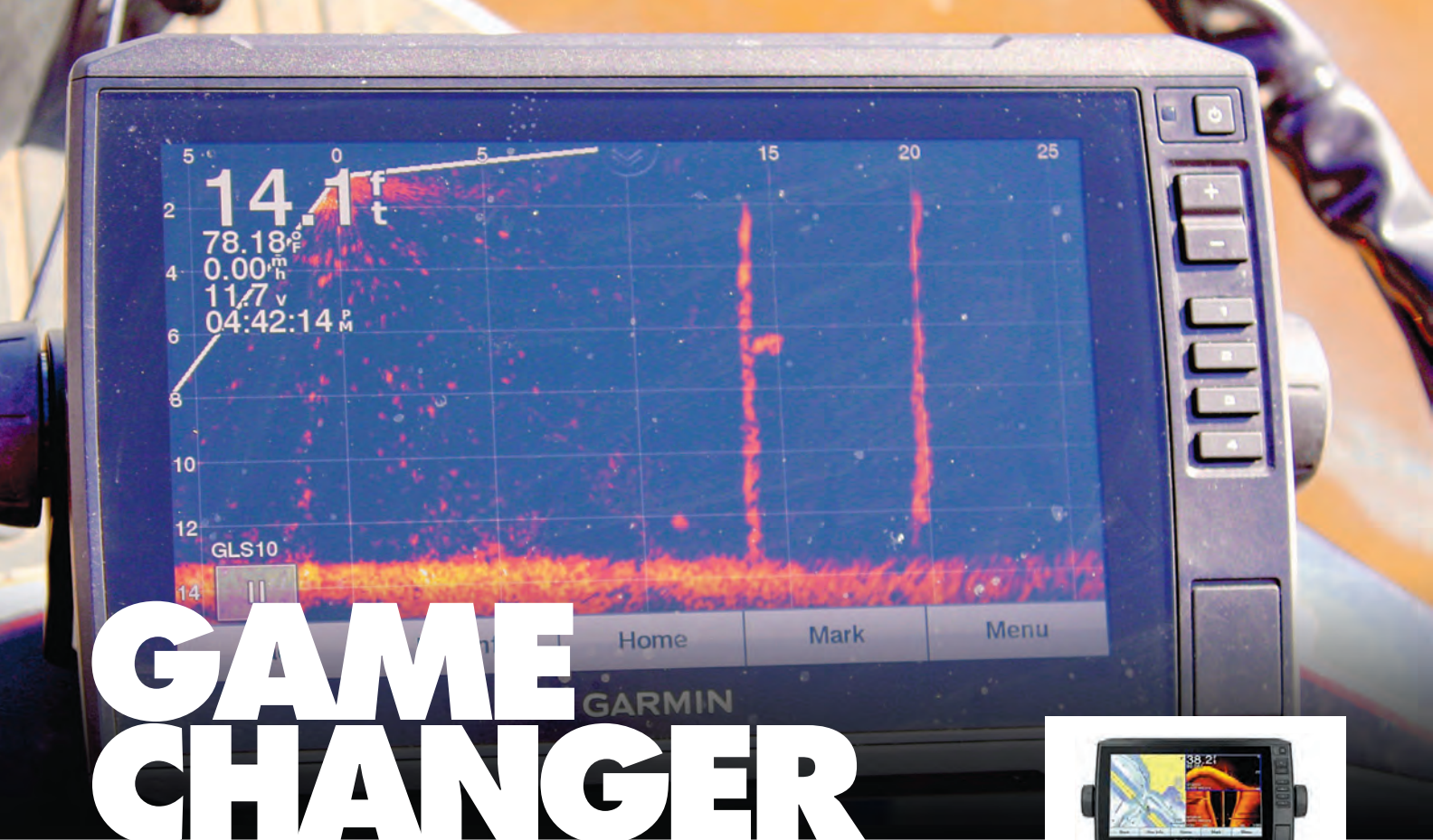
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GAME CHANGER

New LiveScope gives anglers extreme advantage in catching fish. *By Kinny Haddox*

Lost count at 15 the number of times Nick Young used the word “unbelievable” as he talked about and demonstrated the new LiveScope technology that has netted unbelievable interest in the crappie-fishing world.

“The greatest thing about LiveScope is that it can be set to be forward facing. It lets you see the structure and the fish before you even get to them, 10 to 20 feet out in front of the boat,” Young said. “That is important; you get to present the bait better because you see right where the fish is sitting in relation to the structure. There’s no more guessing whether there is structure or fish there and exactly how deep they are. It’s unbelievable.”

UNBELIEVABLE TECHNOLOGY

“Another thing, it allows you to put the bait right in front of the fish and keep it there,” he said. “Crappie are finicky, and if you are looking at traditional sonar, most of the fish might show as 6 feet deep. You fish for those, but there also may be fish 4 feet deep or 8 feet deep.”

With LiveScope, you can see all of those fish and make sure your bait is exactly the right depth. That’s because you can even see your bait going down. It’s not a guessing game anymore. It even lets you see the size of the fish before you fish for them.”

YOU PROBABLY ALREADY KNOW WHAT HE SAID NEXT.

“It’s unbelievable,” said Young, a guide on Lake D’Arbonne.

While the LiveScope, a product of Garmin, is probably easier to use in deeper water, Young said it can be used anywhere.

“You can see fish on a live cypress tree in 3 foot of water without a problem. You can basically tell whether it’s a smaller fish or a larger fish, and you can present your lure to it before spooking it because, once again, you see the fish before you even get close to it,” he said. “We fished for spawning fish on the trees and out on the flats from 3 to 20 feet deep and have had the same results using LiveScope.”

continued >



SO, WHAT'S THE COST?

A new LiveScope system for your boat can cost between \$3,500 and \$6,000, based on the size and complexity of your unit’s display screen.

A good, basic 9-inch unit is Garmin’s ECHOMAP Plus 93sv Panoptix Livescope system Chartplotter with Panoptix Livescope System. The unit and transducer, lake data card, cables and cords, taxes and installation runs around \$3,500. The price goes up with larger units, but if you can install it yourself, you can also save a few hundred dollars.

Earlier this year, the price wasn’t as big a concern as the availability. The units have been so popular that they were on back order from most vendors for four to six weeks.

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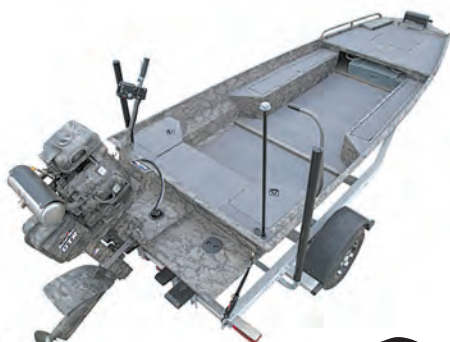
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The equipment works in pretty much any type of conditions: clear water, muddy water, still water or current, Young said. “The only problem comes if the wind is blowing too hard and you try to fish with your boat bouncing in big waves. That makes it hard to get a clear picture because the transducer is bouncing up and down.

“Don’t get me wrong; it isn’t the end all of crappie fishing,” he said. “You can still catch plenty without it. It’s just another tool, but it’s a good tool. There are times when you can’t use it, like when the fish are scattered and you are long-lining, because then the lures are out behind the boat.”

Young looks forward to using the LiveScope in the summer because the fish scatter more and are often hard to find and catch. This technology will help make sure he can present bait at exactly the right depth, “right on the fish’s nose”

Using the LiveScope, anglers can distinguish between small crappie and their slab-sized brethren before catching them.

as he said.

“That’s really important once the water temperature hits 92 degrees, because they get a little lethargic. They won’t chase a bait like the rest of the year,” he said. “But they’ve gotta eat. At least with LiveScope, you know for sure there are fish there and exactly how deep they are and how they are relating to tops and stumps and other structure.”

HOW DIFFICULT IS THIS TECHNOLOGY TO USE?

“Not hard whatsoever,” Young said. “It’s the easiest-to-use depth finder I’ve ever had. You take it out of the box, hook it into the unit, and within a couple of hours of use, you can start understand what you are seeing. After about two days, you can start telling the difference between big fish and little fish, and you can learn quickly what kind of fish you are seeing, simply by the way they relate



to the structure. It’s been the best learning tool I’ve ever had in more than 20 years of fishing.”

WAIT, THERE IS A CATCH.

“For everything the LiveScope will do, it will not catch fish for you,” Young said. “If they don’t want to bite, it

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This actual screen view from a LiveScope shows a school of fish around a tree.

THAT DOESN'T SEEM FAIR!

Welcome to Louisiana Sportsman Jeopardy.

Category: Crappie Fishing for \$400

Answer: "Well, that doesn't seem fair."

Question: What is The Panoptix LiveScope scanning sonar system?

That is correct! Okay, it hasn't hit the popular television show "Jeopardy" yet, but the first response to hearing about or seeing Garmin's new LiveScope depth finder technology in action is almost always, "that doesn't seem fair."

Why? This "depth finder" doesn't just let you see the bottom, how deep the water is, water temperature, fish signatures, etc., like other depth finders. It shows structure and fish in real time. You can even see the fish in motion, swimming around a treetop or stump. Wait, it gets better. The big red "blips" are the big fish. The little red "blips" are small fish.

Wait, we aren't finished. When you drop your jig in the water, you can even see it sink down on the screen. You can lower it right in front of the fish and actually see the fish swim up and eat the bait. No kidding.

That really doesn't seem fair. But only if you are a fish. Fishermen have taken to it like a duck to water. The best descriptive comparison I can come up with is that the view you get is much like that of the 3D ultrasound that doctors use to show pregnant women their unborn babies. You can see the face, the fingers, the feet, etc. One side note here: the LiveScope is NOT good enough YET to let you know if the crappie is a boy or a girl.

I've got to admit, using LiveScope isn't as easy as it seems. Like any electronics, you have to learn what it can and can't do, learn to fine tune it for different conditions and then spend lots of time looking at the screen to know what you are seeing.

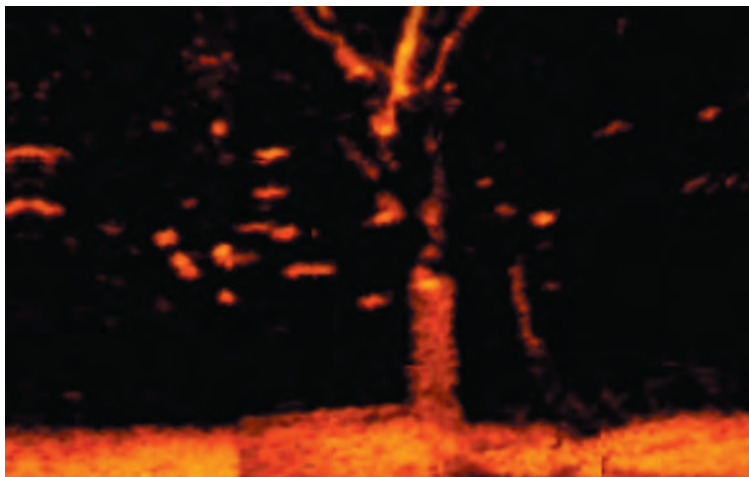
The first time I fished in the front of the boat with a

LiveScope, my partner pointed out a treetop full of fish, showed me how to watch the jig go down and then said, "Look, one is swimming up to your jig". The fish did swim up to the jig, grabbed it and started swimming off.

"Aren't you going to catch him," my partner asked.

I was so busy watching everything on TV, I forgot I was fishing and actually had a real fish on the line.

Perhaps the most remarkable story I've heard first-hand about the capability of the LiveScope came in this spring's Crappie Masters Louisiana State Championship on Lake D'Arbonne. The big fish of the tournament was a 2.60 pound crappie.



The way it was caught was remarkable.

The fisherman recounted the story at the weigh-in. He had seen the big crappie on the LiveScope and fished for it for several minutes when it finally bit, but hit short. He only had the fish on for a few seconds and it got off. He continued to watch the fish and followed it as it swam about 50 feet to another treetop and stopped. He waited a few minutes, then dropped the jig back down in front of the slab. Thump. It bit again and this time he landed it.

Well, that doesn't seem fair. ■

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Even big slabs like these caught by Nick and Jock Young weren't enough to beat competitors using a LiveScope in the Crappie Masters State Championship.



doesn't matter what you do. I tell my clients all the time, just because we are seeing all kinds of fish doesn't mean we will catch everything we see. There is no 'Bite Button' on the LiveScope that you can just push and make crappie bite. The fish still makes the ultimate decision."

When fishing is good, Young fishes five to seven days a week, and for the most part, it has changed the way he fishes. It has also helped him get younger fishermen more interested in fishing.

"Normally, when I take clients with kids and we are catching fish, it's fun when the fish are biting, but today's youngsters get bored fairly quickly," Young said. "But this is a game changer. Kids love watching the LiveScope and seeing everything going on down under the boat. Most kids are into video games, and it's just like a video game, only with live action. They'll sit glued to it, watching when you pull up to a stump, lower the bait down and stop it. When a fish starts swimming up to bite the bait and then he hits it, they go crazy. They love it."

It isn't just the kids, either. How could any fisherman not get a bit

giddy doing that?

Young not only guides full-time on Lake D'Arbonne, but in addition to taking you fishing, he will teach you the LiveScope basics, if you are interested.

"One of the coolest things I've seen is when you have a fish swim up to the bait and look it over, then just sit there," Young said. "Sometimes they'll swim back away, but if you can get two fish looking at it, one of them is going to bite it every time. It's kind of like they don't really want it, but they aren't going to let the other one get it first."

"Like I said, it is just a tool, but it's an important one," he said. "I think it will do more to change crappie fishing than anything since the invention of the electric trolling motor."

Unbelievable. ■

You can contact Nick Young at D'Arbonne Lake Guide Service on Facebook, by email at Nicholas.Young22@aol.com or by calling 318-243-8646.



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

LEARNING THE HARD WAY

Nick Young didn't have to actually fish with a LiveScope to know he needed one. He learned that when he walked off the platform of the 2019 Crappie Masters Louisiana State Championship on Lake D'Arbonne earlier this spring with the third-place check in hand.

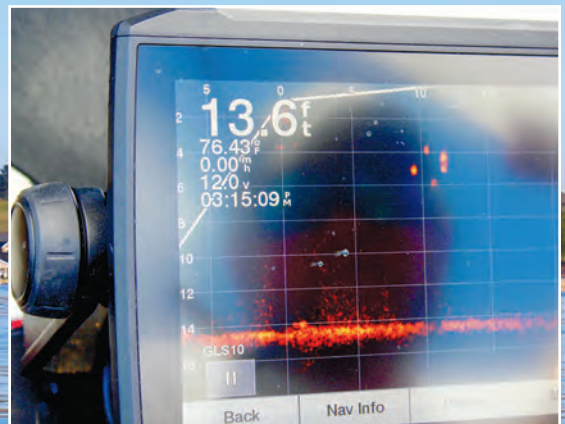
As defending champions, that wasn't the check he and his dad, Jock, wanted. It became painfully obvious the two teams that finished in front of him had an advantage. They had LiveScope on their boats, and both credited it with helping them find bigger fish and staying on them until they bit.

"The last day, we fished 20 to 50 yards away from each other on the same stretch of timber," Nick Young said. "I was having to catch every fish I could, and every once in a while, come up with a big one. They were using the LiveScope and were fishing tree to tree, only stopping when they saw the big ones on the scope. I was having to guess at whether they were 6 or 7 or 8 feet deep. They were able to drop the bait right on the fish's nose.

"We only had about three hours to fish before the wind came up and blew us off the spot. That concentrated time on the big fish that they had was the difference. While I was catching and culling, they were basically just catching big ones. I caught lots more fish, but they caught more big ones. That advantage put them over the top."

How sure was Young that was the difference? He went home and ordered his new LiveScope that night before he went to bed. ■

LiveScope technology lets fishermen see a live view and locate schools of fish in open water (right) before the boat gets on top of the fish, giving anglers a distinct advantage.





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SMACKDOWN HOTEL

Toledo Bend's slab sac-a-lait have transitioned to deeper structure along the Sabine River channel. Here's where and how to catch Louisiana's cherished and official state freshwater fish.

Many's Zack Gagnard was on target after experiencing a couple of weeks catching limits of sac-a-lait (crappie) in deep brush piles in Toledo Bend waters.

So on May 28, Gagnard, a 29-year-old guide with **Elite Guide Service** had no misgivings whatsoever about fishing deep at midlake near Lowes Creek and the Indian Mounds.

"The fish were there," Gagnard said. "We launched at 9 a.m. and fished some natural structure 30 feet deep and had 29 in the boat by 11. We caught the remaining 21 at a brush pile, ending the trip with 50.

"The fish were mostly black crappie ranging from ½ to 1¼ pounds with one white: a 1¾-pounder."

Gagnard (318-308-7574) was fishing small and medium shiners when using a 6-foot crappie rod and spinning reel combo. His reel was spooled with 15-pound braid with a 6-inch fluorocarbon leader. He used a ¼-ounce egg sinker to get the shiner down to the structure.

Near Negreet, Cajun Lures' Zachary Dubois also found sac-a-lait and a few other species on main-lake brush piles in 30 feet of water the afternoon of May 25.

"On my sonar unit, I noticed the fish were bunched tightly, and we had to keep our jigs in one small spot," said Dubois, 27, from Kaplan. "There was also a school of white bass next to the brush pile.

"By the end of the day, we caught sac-a-lait, white bass, Kentucky bass and largemouths using salt-n-pepper and opening night Cajun Slim Jimmys and some shiners," he said.

Dubois also uses light spinning tackle, fishing his Slim Jimmys on ½-ounce jigheads, adding a No. 7 crimp weight to his line above the hook to get his offering down deep.

"Some of the sac-a-lait were nice, measuring 14 inches," he said. "But we also had many small ones. We would catch three to four fish on one pile, then move on to another and catch three to four more until we had a mess of fish."

JUST THE BEGINNING

Having spent more than just a few years fishing Toledo Bend, both Dubois and Gagnard know this is just the beginning. From now through mid-July, Toledo Bend's immense sac-a-lait population will move to both natural and man-made structure along the main-river channel that runs north to south on Toledo Bend. These fish will be found deep in depths ranging from 12 to 30 feet of water.

"From now on to the middle of July, anglers will be able to come to Toledo Bend and catch all the crappie they want," Gagnard said.

Chris Berzas



In July, bream begin suspending in schools above the crappie on brush piles and other natural structure along the main channel. These can be taken in good numbers tight-lining a weighted cricket to the depths.

"And in July, bream will also show up in schools situated just above the brush piles," he said. "You can catch a bunch of them tight-lining crickets to where they are sitting."

But it's the sac-a-lait that is of major interest; on any given day in June, there will be more anglers fishing sac-a-lait than bass.

"There have been plenty of crappie and white bass taken at day and at night under the Pendleton Bridge over the past month, even with the rising lake level," said Villis Dowden, a fisheries biologist with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

"Bridge pilings No. 8 to No. 12 have always been favorites for anglers, as they have the old-style feed pallet tree structures clustered around the bases," he said. "As the water warms into late June, pilings No. 14 to No. 19 always fish better, with their placement in slightly deeper water.

"Right now, the majority of lights under the Louisiana side of Pendleton Bridge are currently out, and the Sabine River Authority has been trying to make some repairs for quite some time. The rough weather has been their main setback, but I know they'll get to them.

"Many anglers fishing the public reefs at night are using those floating, green-light fish attractors and catching quite a few fish," Dowden said.

As lagniappe for Toledo Bend sac-a-lait anglers, Dowden said net samples that began last fall have recorded higher numbers of larger crappie compared to the many younger fish taken in previous years.

TOP PUBLIC ARTIFICIAL REEFS

Man-made brush piles found along the edges of the river channel are often set out by anglers and guides to enhance the lake's natural habitat, as well as attract and hold crappie.

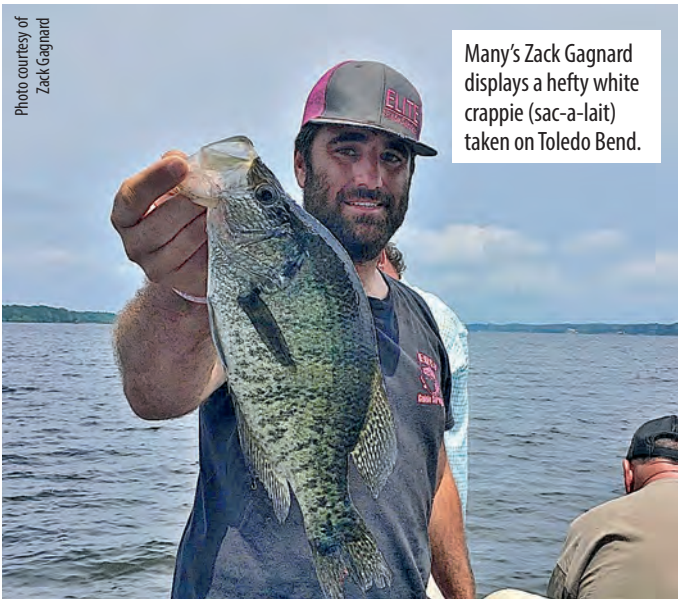
Once set, these structures can be easily located again along the main channel with a sonar unit or by precise GPS coordinates.

Plenty of public artificial reefs have been set out by both the LDWF (east side) and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (west side) A few are quite productive for sac-a-lait, white bass, yellow bass, bream and largemouths. Gagnard, Dubois and Dowden recommended these artificial reefs:

There are three sections under the Pendleton Bridge. These include the following (from the Louisiana side):

- Pilings 2-12: GPS Coordinates N 31.46850° W 93.71259°
- Piling 13: GPS Coordinates N 31.48557° W 93.71422°
- Pilings 14-27: GPS Coordinates N. 31.48537° W 93.74157°

Photo courtesy of Zack Gagnard



Many's Zack Gagnard displays a hefty white crappie (sac-a-lait) taken on Toledo Bend.



Zachary Dubois of Kaplan has been catching quality black crappie at mid-lake in Toledo Bend.

Chris Berzas

Other artificial reefs include the following (LDWF artificial reefs):

- Megastructure 1: GPS Coordinates N 31.19825 W 93.57508
- Boon's: GPS Coordinates N 31.35968 W 93.64302
- Turtle Beach: GPS Coordinates N 31.40886 W 93.65217
- Lanan (west of Pendleton Bridge): GPS Coordinates N 31.51867 and W 93.673274

On the Texas (west) side, those placed by the TPWD are:

- Lowes Creek: GPS Coordinates N 31.23589 W 93.41279
- Indian Mounds: GPS Coordinates N 31.20061 W 93.40721

Anglers only need a functioning cellphone with a GPS

coordinate mapping app to locate these reefs. Also, nighttime anglers may find some lighting under bridges not working but portable green-light fish attractors are a popular option.

Anglers are reminded the daily creel limit for crappie on Toledo Bend is 25 per angler – not 50 as found in most all other waters in Louisiana. On Toledo Bend Lake, the crappie possession limit is 100.

There is no length limit on crappie at Toledo Bend. ■

— Chris Berzas

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11 TIPS

for mopping up on postspawn crappie

Tim Bye shares
his tried-and-true
sac-a-lait tactics

One spring day, Tim Bye was working a turnaround while the Internet was abuzz about big catches of spawning crappie.

Hearing that so many of his favorite fish were being caught made him want to go fishing, but he wasn't too broken-hearted.

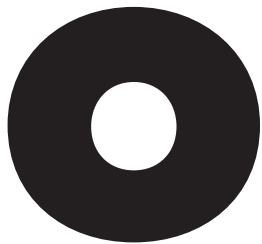
You see, Bye doesn't even like fishing the spawn.

Yeah, that's right: This south Louisiana angler would rather wait until after crappie finish their spawning rituals and move out.

So once winter had turned to spring and other anglers' minds turned to bream or bass, Bye was back on the water, fishing as much as possible.



post-spawn crappie tips



h, and he was catching consistent stringers of crappie.

Without live bait.

That's because he knows fish still feed in the postspawn —if you know how to target them.

Here are his tips to putting together enough fish for dinner:

#1 JUST GO FISHING

"Fish are always eating," Bye said. "That's what they do."

So, instead of sitting at home complaining about the conditions, get out and figure out how to make fish bite.

#2 GET THERE EARLY

"Usually, my day is done by 9:30, 10 o'clock," Bye said.

He said warming water temperatures will slow the bite, but that's fine because he usually has plenty of fish in his livewell by that time.

#3 FISH MOVING WATER

"It sets fish up," Bye said.

At that point, all you need to do is figure out where the fish prefer to hang out.

"If they're on one side of the tree, they'll be on every tree on that side," Bye said.

On Bye's home waters along coastal Louisiana, tides create that water movement. But when the tide is slack or he's fishing Toledo Bend or Texas' Lake Livingston, where tidal flow is non-existent, he said water movement remains a must.

In that case, look for places wind is moving water.

"You just want water movement, however it is created," Bye said.

The only caveat is that too much wind can shut down the bite because it batters the trees and laydowns on which fish orient.

When the wind kicks up, he "fishes under the wind," which basically means moving around points to work the water protected from the big blow. There's still enough water moving, but the water is calmer.

#4 DON'T CAMP OUT

"A lot of people sit in one spot, but if you want to catch the numbers, you have to move," Bye said.

Indeed, on a trip to Lac Des Allemands west of New Orleans, Bye fished much like he was targeting bass: he kept the boat moving through the flooded cypress trees and laydowns, stopping only when he got a bite.

#5 USE YOUR TROLLING MOTOR SPARINGLY

Bye lets the breeze or tide push him along so he can be as stealthy as possible. In fact, he as often as not reaches out and pushes his boat away from likely crappie-holding timber instead of using his trolling motor.

#6 FISH DEEPER WATER

Once the spawn is over, fish pull out of the shallows. The exact depth depends on the particular body of water, but even on the



Don't rely on the cover you see to determine where to drop your crappie jig. Imagine what the underwater cover you can't see looks like and fish accordingly.

relatively shallow Lac Des Allemands, Bye never fished shallower than 3 feet — and that was pushing it.

The key is to keep the jig just above the bottom, which means Bye is often moving his cork up and down to accommodate the changing water depths.

#7 DON'T JUST FISH WHAT YOU SEE

"You don't fish what you see," Bye said. "You fish what you visualize."

In other words, when you see a treetop sticking out of the water, you should determine where the main trunk of the fallen tree is. That's where you want to fish.

"I fish the main base of the tree," Bye said. "Go to Cabela's and look at where those fish are sitting: They're under the main base of those trees."

In fact, even when he sticks a jig into the visible limbs of a treetop, he's not really fishing those limbs.

"You want to fish the main (trunk) of the tree," he said. "That's where the fish will be."

#8 FISH THE SHADOWS

While there are exceptions to this rule, it's generally a good bet that crappie will be keeping out of the sun. And that actually helps narrow down the amount of water to fish as shadows become more distinct when the sun moves above the horizon.

#9 USE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

Bye exclusively uses 9-foot crappie poles of the Berkley and B'n'M persuasion, matched with spincast reels.

"You can jig it. You can pitch it. You can fish deep," he explained. "A lot of people use those short poles with sliding

continued >

G3

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post-spawn crappie tips

continued >

Catching post-spawn crappie is a matter of pulling out of extremely shallow water, finding deeper water with cover, and approaching likely spots quietly to avoid spooking them.



corks, but I don't think you can get the action on that jig like you can with the 9-foot poles."

At the same time, rods longer than 9 feet are just too long.

"You have too much rod," Bye said.

His setup is especially handy when working flooded cypress knees and laydowns, where it's important not to pull a jig across.

"You have to learn to move it up and down," Bye said. "You can't pull it across; you'll get hung up."

#10 USE ENOUGH WEIGHT, BUT NOT TOO MUCH

Bye ties a crappie jig to the terminal end of his line, but he also adds a small split-shot weight about 6 inches up the line.

"I want that bobber to stand up," he said. "If you take the (extra) weight off, the bobber won't stand up."

Of course, you can add too much weight.

"Too much weight, and it pulls the bobber under," he said.

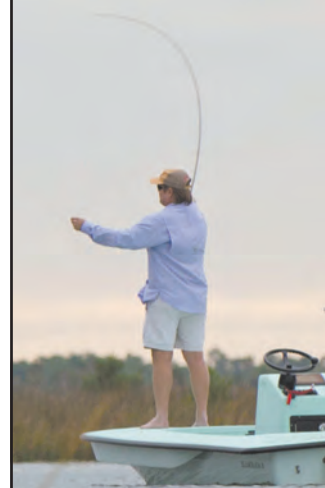
#11 COLOR DOESN'T MATTER

Bye rarely uses live bait, confident instead that he can catch fish with his Panfish Assassin plastics. He favors salt-and-pepper silver phantom, but he's convinced color doesn't really make a difference.

"It's just preference," he said. "When they're biting, you can catch them on a bare jig." ■



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8 TIPS FOR GREAT BREAM FISHING

Try out this veteran angler's ideas and fill that cooler with slab-sized sunfish

By Jerald Horst

Bass fishermen might be happy with a few bites in a day, but fishing for bream is about numbers. Filling the box.

And veteran angler Freddie McMullen of Monroe has learned how to up his odds of success.

HERE ARE EIGHT OF HIS TIPS:

#1 Catching bull bream is largely a matter of finding their spawning beds in the shallows near the lake edge. This is best done early in the spawning season before aquatic plant growth obscures the outlines of the nests. Once the beds are located, male bluegill will use them all season; almost as quickly as some males are removed, others occupy the spots.

Early in the season, the beds are more densely populated, and it is easier to “git on ‘em.” Bed fishing later in the season demands more movement because the fish are more scattered.

#2 Be stealthy. Approach bream beds with a trolling motor or paddle rather than a big motor. Don't bang around in the boat and make noise.

#3 Don't fish too close to the boat. McMullen said he sees people all the time with cane poles or big reels and heavy line. The fish don't bite as well because the boat's proximity scares the fish. You can also cover more water with ultralight rods and reels than with cane poles or heavier reels.

#4 Keep needle nose pliers handy. Even big, bull bluegills have small mouths, and a swallowed hook is difficult to get out.

#5 Near the end of spawning season, some male bream get what McMullen calls “poor.” They are skinny and run down from fighting with other males for nesting space instead of feeding. Others develop sores on their skin.

McMullen keeps them all. He knows the lesions on scuffed-up fish are only skin deep, and that skinny bream taste as good as fat ones.

#6 Add some kind of moist vegetable, such as potatoes, celery or carrots, to cricket cages. The crickets get both food and water from them that will keep them alive and alert.

#7 McMullen is a big fan of wax worms, partly because they stay on the hook longer. Leftover wax worms can be stored for several months in a refrigerator.

#8 Bream fishing doesn't have to be an all-day job. Some of the best fishing can take place after 3 p.m., when the heat of the day has passed. Two guys who know what they are doing, McMullen said, can easily catch 60 to 100 bream in an afternoon. ■



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APEX PREDATOR

Joshua Chauvin

The author untangled this big choupique under the water at a running cut into the Mississippi River.



MISSISSIPPI MOTHER LODE

FALLING RIVER WATERS CAN BRING UNEXPECTED TREASURES WHEN LIMB-LINING THE TRENASSES.

The Mississippi River may be experiencing record flooding this year, but it's bound to come down. As the water leaves the swamps and river ponds, the fast-moving, bubbly outflow from the temporary streams creates perfect locations to hunt one of my favorite fish, the choupique.

High water can really spread out the fish, but these drain-offs are what concentrates the fish. Right when the natural banks begin to expose themselves is when the rest of the trapped waters flow through the tiny gaps connecting to the river.

RIVER MONSTERS

I grew up catching choupique, aka bowfin, in the swamp to make patties, but it wasn't until I started setting limb lines in the big waters of the Mississippi River and its oxbows that I started catching really big choupique that commonly exceed 10 pounds. I now stick to setting my lines in the river because it's where all types of fish grow extra-large.

I most enjoy going on foot-only missions or using my 8-foot kayak unless my wife or some kids want to join; then, we

take a larger boat.

Still, with the bay boat, I'm getting out to set and retrieve most of the lines in the water. A kayak doesn't flip as easily as a pirogue when battling large fish in the deep-water currents.

The 100-percent bank mission just takes this task up to an extreme challenge. These river banks are usually lined with huge rocks or steep, nearly straight-up muddy banks. Climbing up those tall, soft mud banks is a challenge, but doing it while bringing a big fish to the truck is extra tough.

I only keep enough fish to eat, so with the size of these river fish, that usually doesn't take very many. The rest I just catch and release for the sport of seeing what's lurking out there.

I'm often targeting flathead catfish on these missions at other types of locations, but I always find a few running cuts to seek out the bowfin.

FAVORITE BAIT

My favorite bait is live bream hooked through the back or huge, live crawfish hooked through the tail. The live bait

will often result in a few flathead catfish every trip, even in my choupique spots.

Getting live bait by land or kayak can be a challenge during the summer heat. I use a large ice chest with iced water and an aerator in the back of my truck. Then, I transport the fish in a small floating minnow cage by hand or tied to the kayak.

When that isn't an option, fresh-cut bream chunks work very well. Choupique don't seem to be too picky about what they eat. Just be sure to pick a tough bait that stays on the hook well.

DENIZENS OF THE DEEP

Big blue and channel cats and tasty gaspergou often come up from the depths to these shallow-running cuts at night to feed in the trenasses. The biggest soft-shells and snapping turtles visit looking to feed as well.

I set my limb lines on limber roots and limbs that are strong and have some flexibility. I try to set my lines late in the evening or at night. Gar will steal most of the baits if left during the daylight

This big catfish was tangled and too large to get in the author's kayak, so he went diving and swam the monster to the bank.



hours. Also, on nighttime sets, I'm on the lookout for big river bullfrogs to jump on. Alone at night, setting the lines in the river and the slop mud, is what I consider a peaceful evening of relaxation.

ADRENALINE RUSH

It's the next morning that the real adrenaline takes place. There's nothing like seeing that limb or root tugging. Still, be prepared on slack lines that look untouched; often, they go berserk when you pull, awakening the creature below.

Sometimes, the fish can be pulled up without any issue, but usually, they are tangled underneath. That's when I dive down to feel around and see what's hooked.

I start by using my foot to see if it's a big alligator gar or turtle before sticking my hand down the leader into awaiting jaws. Alligator gar may have the biggest teeth, but the choupique have super-sharp teeth and gill plates to watch out for. Luckily, the bigger catfish's stickers are dulled down, so I bear hug those to

the surface.

Even though I'm a great swimmer, since I'm often alone and near the deep, strong current, I always wear my fanny pack inflatable life vest, a dive knife on my calf and a backup tiny, folded knife on a lanyard for when I get in the water.

RIVER GEAR

Having a long push pole rigged with a gaff hook helps bring up the tangled debris and fish all together. However, getting in the water and untangling the fish by hand makes the trip the most fun and ensures a landed fish once my hands get hold down below.

I use heavy duty 8/0 to 10/0 circle hooks

with heavy, braided nylon twine of at least 250-pound test or more. I rig most of my heavy duty lines Carolina-style by using about an 12- to 18-inch leader tied to a large, strong swivel. Above the swivel, I use 8 to 12 ounces of weight from old, broken cast-net weights threaded on with a knot above the weight to keep them in place.

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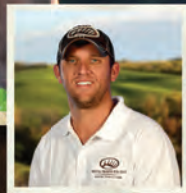
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APEX PREDATOR

continued



Getting muddy is all part of the fun when catching choupique without a boat using limb lines.

The strong river current means a lot of weight is needed to keep the bait down and keep it from washing up against the bank or staying at the surface. The circle hook and swivel is very important to keep the fish from twisting off.

I try to set lines about 3- to 6-feet deep, directly under a limb. Since that's not always possible, I keep some longer, suspension-rigged lines with me, too.

These longer lines have a heavy railroad spike or nearly 16 ounces of weight tied to the end. I use them with the same leader, hook and swivel combo, but tied halfway up. When using live bait, having the bait suspended away from brambles is very important.

Most of my spots are in rarely visited locations, so instead of wasting time tying complex knots and having to remember each branch my lines are on, I use pool noodles on the ends. They only require a few wraps and quick single overhand knot to stay on the limb. This makes setting and untying to the limb a quick 5-second task, which allows me to save time and set many more lines.

A couple years back, I did an article and video on swim noodling to get the big flathead and blue cats from under the water which can be found here: <https://www.louisianasportsman.com/fishing/freshwater-fishing/apex-predators-extreme-noodling-swim-fishing-for-big-cats/>

FINDING THE FISH

When driving in the truck or boat or jogging, I'm always looking for birds. Just like speckled trout fishing by spotting diving seagulls, where they have flocks of any long-legged birds standing in the drain-offs, they have big fish feeding there as well.

To find these running trenasses online, carefully search Google Earth during the lowest river level dates and seek the dried out light colored run-offs. Once found, use gps imagery of higher river levels to dates on rivergages.com to see how that location correlates to various river levels. This way no time is wasted checking spots when on the water.

The deeper cuts have the longest fishable time as the river drops. The more narrow the cut the better odds I have since my few lines are concentrated within the run off. Fishing right next to the deep drop off into the river is where I try to set lines.

BRING YOUR BASS POLE

Also bring a bass pole. The bass tend to stack up at many of these cuts, and a limit can be had in no time if the bass are there. The river may be muddy, but when the clean, swamp water is rushing out, there's a perfect mixture for feeding bass that school up during the summer. I pack

a telescopic travel rod-and-reel that fits into my backpack on these long hikes.

One time, I was fishing a running trenasse where I had set some limb lines. After catching a nice bass, suddenly my 6/0 hook set into one of the biggest alligator gar I've ever seen. The monster, which was more than 6 feet long, swam straight just under the surface, acting as if the tight drag it was spooling didn't even phase this submarine of a fish, swimming out into the river. Needless to say, the 65-pound braid suddenly popped.

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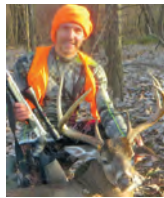
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BELOW: When taking kids with you, or if the water is too cold, the same action can be had from the boat but landing deep tangled fish is not easy.



river cuts in the summer, catching fish is nearly a guarantee; the question is just what type and how big of a monster will you have hooked. If looking for a way to stay cool in the heat of summer try giving this ultimate wading-style limb lining mission a go. ■



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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CRUISING FOR Catfish

By Brian Cope

CATCH A COOLER FULL OF DELICIOUS CATFISH USING THIS EASY AND INCREDIBLY RELAXING JUG-LINE TECHNIQUE

When Jeff Caldwell's friends pressed him to get his new boat on the water, he thought about different types of fishing he'd like to use it for. He came up with an unconventional — but highly effective and relaxing — method of catching catfish.

Caldwell decided he would use his boat to jug-line for catfish. He and his friends have had a blast ever since. And they've eaten plenty of catfish nuggets in the process.

DIY JUGS UP NEXT >



DIY JUGS

Jug-lining isn't a new form of fishing, but newer materials have made it easier and more effective. Like many anglers, Caldwell and his friends build their own jugs.

Caldwell starts with a 10-foot section of PVC pipe that's skinny enough to slide into the hollowed part of a foam pool noodle. He cuts it into eight sections each 15 inches long.

He roughs up a 12-inch section of the PVC pipe, applies glue to it, then adds the pool noodle to the glued area. Next, he drills a hole through both ends of the PVC. Then, he slides a short section of size 48 tarred and twisted nylon twine from Catahoula Manufacturing through one hole, and he ties a square knot inside the PVC. This forms a loop at one end of the pipe.

On the other end of the pipe, he slides the twine through a 2/0 barrel swivel before forming the square knot inside the PVC.

Now, he takes a 12-foot section of the same twine and ties it to a 150-pound test snap swivel. He snaps that swivel onto the PVC's loop that does not have the barrel swivel attached. This 12-foot section is finished off with a weight he makes using a 16-ounce Solo cup, concrete mix and a heavy-duty metal eyelet he makes from discarded political sign stands.

On the opposite end of the jug, a 2-foot leader of the same twine is tied onto the ball bearing swivel. Then, a 12/0 Mustad circle hook is tied to the other end of that leader. With the weight tied to one end of the jug on a 12-foot leader and the hook tied to the other on a 2-foot leader, the jug stays in place, while allowing the bait to move about relatively freely with the current and wind. It also allows a fish to move away with the bait and hook itself before feeling any resistance.

BEST BAIT

Caldwell said the most effective bait has been small sections of pork butt soaked in Italian dressing. The catfish like them, and they stay on the hook better than commercially-made stinkbaits.

Once on the water, the boat operator watches the display of the boat's electronics. He's mainly looking for sloping areas that offer catfish easy access to both deep and shallow water. When he sees a good spot, he tells the others to toss out a jug line, then he marks it on the boat's GPS.

"Marking it on the GPS gives us a good reference point. Sometimes a good fish will move the jug away, but having that initial reference spot makes it fairly easy to find," Caldwell said.

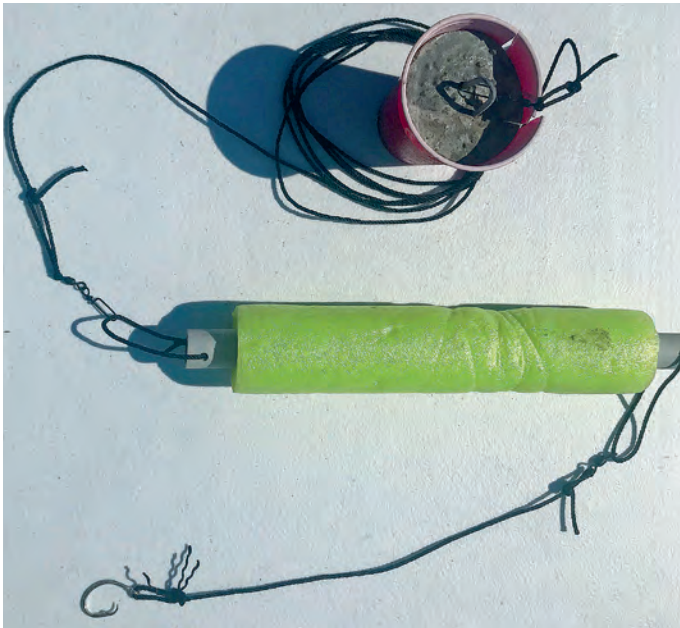
CHECK-IN TIME

On their first night of fishing, they dropped the "jugs" off just before nightfall, then went back to check them at daybreak the next morning. He said that was a mistake.

"It was difficult to find them. That allows any hooked fish too much time to move the jugs away," he said.

Jeff Caldwell's pool-noodle jug-lining for catfish has become a productive hobby for he and friends aboard his boat.





LEFT: A section of PVC pipe, a section of pool noodle, a homemade weight, twine and a hook make up a Jeff Caldwell catfish "jug."
RIGHT: Plenty of catfish will bite a piece of bait suspended naturally under a float. But don't leave the bait too long before checking.



"Now we start in the evenings between 5 and 7 p.m. We drop 24 jugs off. Once we put the last one in the water, we may eat a snack or ride around a few minutes, and then we start checking them," he said.

Having handheld lights helps once the sun goes down, and Caldwell said he plans to add reflective tape to the weighted

ends of all his jugs to make finding them in the dark even easier. "That will also help us always grab the weighted side of the jug. And that makes it more difficult for the fish to get away when we are lifting the jugs," he said.

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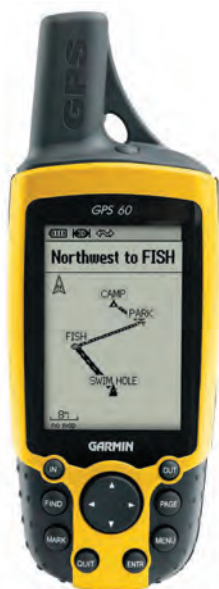
They once had to rescue one of their hooked fish from a gator, so he suggests pulling the jugs up with a boat hook. And they've had some jugs damaged by gators, which seem curious enough about the floating objects to sink their teeth into.

But one thing they've never done while jug fishing is left the water without enough catfish to make the trip worthwhile.

"It's a very relaxing way to fish. You aren't constantly casting and reeling or watching a bobber the whole time. Once the jugs are in the water, you can ride around and sight-see, watch the birds, eat a snack, have a conversation, and simply enjoy spending time with friends in a relaxing way. It's fun to check the lines and see what you've caught too, and when the night is over, we've always got plenty of fish," he said. ■



Good, eating-sized catfish are the norm on an overnight, jug-fishing outing.



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- Ranger Spray Lined trailer w/ swing tongue
- Aluminum Wheels
- Aluminum Spare Tire
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2019 RANGER Z518 / MERCURY 150 PRO XS



Stock# RG107. **SALE \$41,000**

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- Mercury 150 ProXS 4-Stroke
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- Aeration System w/ Remote Pumpout
- Foot Throttle
- Remote Drain Plug
- Jack Plate
- Trim Lever
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- Lighting Package
- Minnkota Fortrex 80, 45" 24V Trolling Motor Upgrade
- Transom Saver

Built to dominate the 18-foot class, the all-new Ranger® Z518 stands alone in terms of all-out performance, economy and features. We've maximized inner storage space up front with a pair of 8-foot rod boxes, a gelcoat-lined, insulated in-deck cooler and included a large starboard gear box. The oversize casting deck and 95-inch beam betrays the boat's size and offers a stable and silent platform. A foam-filled core and our strategically placed pultruded fiberglass material deliver unshakable solidity and a one-piece feel throughout. The helm carries a full complement of gauges, flush-mounted electronics. Integrated LED navigation lights, a recessed trolling motor foot pedal and SRS Soft-Ride Seating bucket seats round out this angler-centric rig and make it far outperform its budget-friendly price tag. From daylight to dusk, the Ranger Z518 delivers features and value like none other.

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The 1910 Bay Max is a truly affordable package with all the features. Hydraulic steering, dual live wells, 2 locking rod lockers and aft deck flip up seating are just a few. The shallow draft hull that can handle the rough stuff is designed to run with a Yamaha 115 HP 4 stroke for the best value in the business.

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PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

Chris Holmes



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.

KAYAK KRABBING

Pull. Pull. Pull.... That chant was repeated dozens of times as crab nets were hoisted from the bottom of a local bayou. As the nets come up, the crabs try to escape, so the harder you pull, the force of the water helps keep them from getting out of the net. There's nothing worse than seeing a No. 1 male launch himself over the rim just before you can get him in the basket.

Kayaks are usually the last vessel that comes to mind as a crabbing boat; however, with a little planning, they make it easy and exciting.

Making kayaks looking like miniature versions of what you'd see on *Deadliest Catch*, two dozen crab nets were stacked on the bow, and foam bait trays filed with cut chunks of turkey necks were at the ready.

BAIT UP BEFOREHAND

It is easier and saves time if you bait-up for the first round before you leave shore. Neatly stack the nets by rotating where the corks sit so that they do not sit directly on top one another. This helps keep the stack level and more compact. Although you can use more, two dozen nets are easily managed and make for optimum soak time between running your strings.

Try to pick a day with good tidal movement. Crabs feed better when the water is moving, and it helps disperse the scent of your bait to lure them to the nets.

Store-bought chicken and turkey necks are inexpensive and readily available. I prefer turkey necks, because they are larger and can be bought pre-cut into perfect-size portions. Another advantage of turkey necks is that the bait pin in the net can be inserted through the middle of the bone itself, which helps feeding crabs from stealing it.

Fish heads are another good bait. When cleaning speckled trout, I pack all my heads into gallon ziplock bags and freeze for later crabbing use. Simply mark the number of heads on the bag so you'll know how many baits you have. Fish heads should be pinned through the eyes to keep them in place.



CONTINUES >



After a few runs, the crabs start to add up. A plastic top on the basket helps keep them shaded from the sun and keeps them from climbing out as it gets full.



INSIDER TIP:

DON'T USE REDFISH

Don't use redfish heads. As one of their natural predator, crabs won't go anywhere near a net baited with a redfish head. Using quality nets is a must. Get some that are coated with trawl dip and use quality stainless-steel bait pins. I prefer about 10 feet of line and colored corks to identify your nets as well as make them easier to see as you run your string.

When setting out the first string, start downwind/downcurrent as you move along. The reason for this is evident as you go back to pick up the first nets. It is much easier to use the wind or current as a brake to paddle/pedal into perfect position. You are able to pull the nets straight up without going past them. Keep a basket in the rear tankwell so the nets can be pulled and the crabs emptied by simply turning around in your seat.

Make sure the basket has a solid lid to keep the sun off of the crabs and keep them from crawling out as the basket fills up.

Get a quality pair of stainless crab tongs to help wrangle any crabs that fall into the cockpit. There are no more tense moments than when angry crabs are scurrying near your feet or worse, your nether region. Keep your tongs attached to a leash, as they are invaluable and you do not want to drop them overboard.

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

Keep about 30 yards between nets. This helps you thoroughly fish an area without the nets competing against one another. If the nets are pre-baited, it won't take long to get that first string set out.

Let the nets soak a good 15 to 20 minutes before making the first pick-up. After that, you should be able to run them in a continuous rhythm as the time taken to remove crabs and re-bait when necessary allows for ample soak time during each run. Bait is cheap. Make sure to re-bait when it gets well-eaten or washed-out looking. Fresh bait can make the difference between having several crabs in a net versus an empty one.

Make mental notes of which nets seem to be doing better and adjust your string as you go. A depth finder is great for judging the bottom and finding where you want to set the nets. As you progress, see what depths seem to be doing better than the others. Move your nets accordingly and don't be afraid to stack them and move to a different location if necessary.

Most areas of south Louisiana saltwater or brackish waters have good populations of crabs. They even tolerate fresher areas fairly well. Look for areas where folks regularly crab off the side of the road and try the opposite bank where there is no land access.

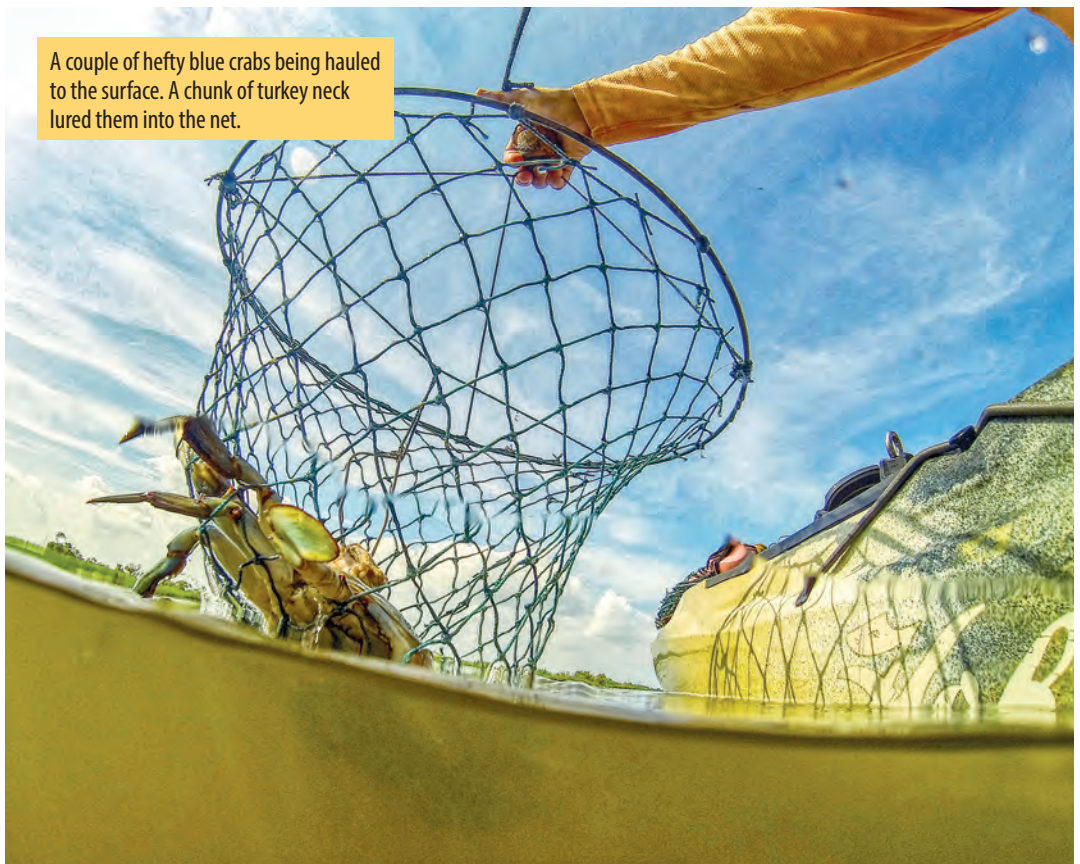
LOOK FOR CRAB TRAPS

Crab traps are a sure sign of a good area as commercial crabbers know where to set them. However, to avoid confrontation, do not set your nets right next to someone's traps. Try the other side of the bayou or spread the nets out between traps.

When the day is done, place the crabs in a cool, shady place while waiting for your boiling pot to get going. Take that time to spread out each net on the driveway and thoroughly hose them down. Let them dry in the sun and then stack for the next outing.

It might not be Alaska or the Bering Sea, but you will feel like Captain Sig when you take your kayak on a *Deadliest Catch* adventure to a local bayou and come home with a basket full of delicious Louisiana blue crabs. ■

A couple of hefty blue crabs being hauled to the surface. A chunk of turkey neck lured them into the net.



LEGAL RECREATIONAL CRABBING WITH NETS:

There is no license required for any person using crab nets or lines. Anyone harvesting crabs on WMAs or refuges must possess either a basic recreational fishing license or Wild Louisiana Stamp.

There is no recreational minimum-size limit for blue crabs. The possession limit is 12 dozen crabs, per person, per day. Certain WMAs and state and federal refuges may have different possession limits.

No person may possess adult female crabs in the berry stage (i.e., carrying the eggs or young attached to the abdomen). All crabs taken in the berry stage must be returned immediately to the waters.

The season is open year-round, except for certain announced closures. There will be a Sept. 9-Oct. 13 fall prohibition on the recreational take or possession of mature female blue crabs in the fall of 2019. However, this prohibition could be removed depending the results of the 2019 blue crab stock assessment. Please make sure to check the regulations for updates. ■



A couple dozen quality crab nets, a pair of tongs and some turkey necks are all you need to have a great kayak crabbing adventure.

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SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope

Sheepshead like this one are often caught around docks, where the fish search for food among the barnacles that grow on the wooden structures.



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: SHEEPSHEAD

'CONVICT FISH' ARE SOME OF THE TASTIEST FISH IN THE GULF

Brian Cope

Sheepshead, *Archosargus probatocephalus*, are a strangely named fish. Along with that, they have teeth that look strangely out-of-place. The teeth are much larger and more mammal-like than those of most other fish.

Nevertheless, these fish are sought after by many anglers for their sporty fight as well as their tasty table fare. They are difficult to catch, and most successful sheepshead anglers devote a lot of time to specifically targeting them, rather than just fishing for whatever is biting.

Sheepshead are somewhat oval-shaped, much like a freshwater bluegill, but sheepshead grow much larger and are more elusive. They have a silverish-green to gray body with five or six dark vertical bars that run all the way from the dorsal fins to the bottom of the fish's body. They have a well-defined lateral line that runs horizontally from the rear of the gill plate

down the center of the body toward the tail.

A sheepshead's dorsal fin has 12 spines and 11 soft rays. The spines are very sharp and should be avoided by anglers. They have slightly forked tails. Inside their mouths are four wide teeth on both sides of the jaw that resemble incisors. They also have numerous molar-like teeth, depending on the fish's age and health.

These fish use their teeth to crush and grind invertebrates that commonly live around concrete, metal, and wooden structures. Their diet is made up of mussels, clams, oysters, barnacles, crabs, shrimp, and occasionally, small fish. They consume a good deal of algae as well, but fisheries biologists aren't sure if that is by choice, or if they just happen to eat the material while foraging for their favored foods.

Observant anglers often spot sheeps-

head swimming around pier pilings, bridge supports and other debris. They are looking for, and eating, whatever they can find among the barnacles.

Some sheepshead stay inshore year-round, and many move between offshore, nearshore, and inshore structures, usually in the fall and early spring. Anglers catch them throughout the year on sunken trees, bridge and pier pilings, rock jetties, reefs, wrecks and livebottom. Some anglers report catching them in shallow, open water around oyster mounds.

Fiddler crabs serve as one of the top baits for sheepshead anglers. Mussels, clams, and shrimp are also good bets. A small number of anglers fish for sheepshead with artificial lures like Cranka Crabs, Coco the Crab, Savage Gear's 3D Crab and Gulp! crab lures.

Rather than casting and reeling in, sheepshead anglers typically fish directly

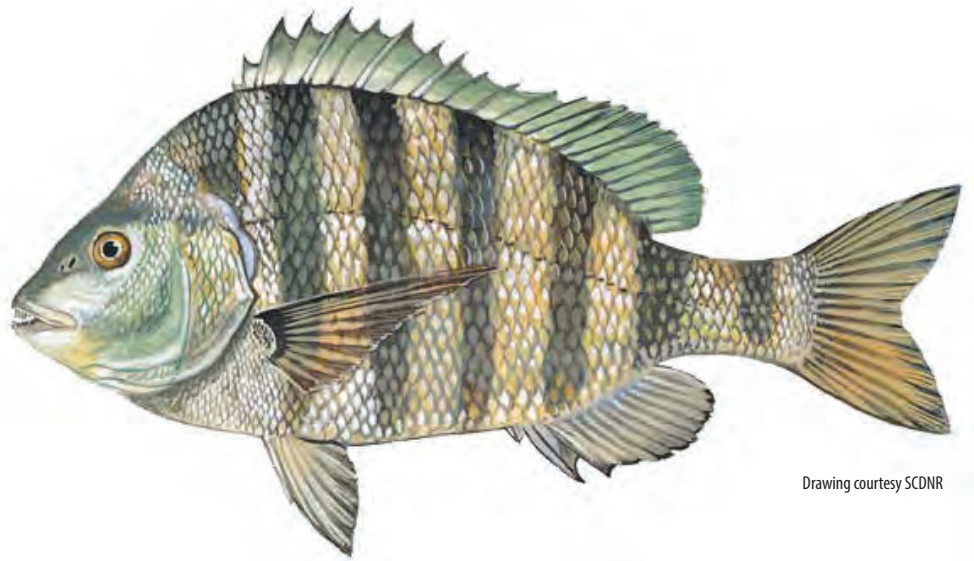
below their position. The fish has a very quick bite that is difficult to detect. Many beginning sheepshead anglers hear the term “set the hook before the fish bites” when talking to more experienced sheepshead specialists.

Sheepshead are often confused with spadefish and black drum. They are most commonly misidentified as black drum, which also have dark vertical bars and are often caught in close proximity to known sheepshead hotspots.

Some nicknames for sheepshead include convict, convict fish, bait thief, toothy bream, sheep bream, sea bream, and saltwater bream.

Mississippi’s state record is 19 pounds, 10 ounces and was caught in 1966 by Roy Groue, Jr.

Louisiana’s state record sheepshead has stood since 1982 when Wayne J. Desselle caught a 21.25-pound fish in waters near New Orleans. Desselle’s catch is also the



Drawing courtesy SCDNR

current world record sheepshead.

The fish’s name is interesting for more than just its uniqueness. It can be pronounced and spelled as either sheepshead or sheephead. Both are acceptable according to American English dictionaries and fisheries manuals. ■



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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STICKS AND STRINGS

Sammy Romano

Rogue's bowstrings are single color only to avoid inconsistencies that often appear in the dyes in multi-colored strings. **BELOW:** Strings and cables are the first components on your bow you should examine when preseason practice approaches.

LET ROGUE STRING YOU ALONG

BOWSTRING MANUFACTURER ENTERS MARKET WITH QUALITY PRODUCT YOU'LL NEED

As summer sets in, many hunters' thoughts turn to the upcoming early archery seasons.

While a lot of them daydream of cooler fall days in the woods, very few begin to practice this early. Whether you start practicing or not, it's time to check your bow and bring it to your local pro shop for any needed maintenance, especially if you need to replace your string and cables.

Your bow's string set is the engine that propels your arrows toward the target. It is also often the weakest link; it fails first, and this causes untold numbers of hunting trips to be missed or cut short.

Most manufacturers recommend replacing your string set a minimum of every two years with average use, while people who shoot way more than average should replace theirs once a year. Obviously, if a string or cable shows extreme wear or nicks and frays, it should be replaced immediately regardless of its age.

Modern compound bows contain a massive amount of stored energy, even when at rest. Not only can a string or cable breaking cause damage to parts of your bow, but it can also cause severe injury to the archer. Don't push your luck riding a damaged string, replace it at once to avoid even costlier repairs or worse.



Your string and cable(s) serve a vital role in the performance and accuracy of your bow setup; this is no place to cut corners. A little extra money spent up front will lead to fewer tuning issues and maintenance down the road. Higher-quality strings and cables have tighter servings that don't space, "creep" less and have fewer peep-rotation issues than bargain strings do. This better quality is due to better construction processes, as well as better materials. It's a lot like cooking, where you need both technique and quality ingredients to prepare an outstanding meal.

ROGUE STRINGS: A RISING STAR

For the past several years, we have been installing primarily string sets by Rogue Bowstrings in our pro shop. I have found their quality to be outstanding, as well as their customer service. Their exacting attention to detail and how quickly they fill orders sets them apart from other manufacturers. Rogue offers string sets in a rainbow of color options, and at different price levels to accommodate any archer's budget. They are big enough to produce top-quality and innovative

strings, yet small enough that they always treat you like family. Joey Hershberger Rogue's chief operating officer, said Rogue got started in December 2016. Although it is a newer manufacturer, all of its employees came from within the string industry, forming an all-star lineup. String and cables are built to order and to exacting specifications, then quickly shipped to the customer. Rogue offers string sets from its R-15 — a great entry level string set — to its new R-21, its flagship.

R-21: THE NEXT LEVEL OF STRINGS

Earlier this year, Rogue introduced its R-21 string, a proprietary blend of materials resulting from collaboration between Rogue and BCY.

"We always wanted our own blend of materials, and through an extensive, multi-level testing process partnered with BCY, we feel we have found the perfect blend in R-21," Hershberger said. "Compared to 452X, for example, which tends to fuzz more, increases hand shock and often slows the bow down 5 to 8 feet per second from factory specs;

"R-21 is resistant to fuzzing, cushions the shot and maintains factory speeds. Not only that, it has a much-higher tensile strength in a thinner material, allowing the use of more strands for added strength. Whereas 452X has a single strand tensile strength of 100 pounds, R-21 boasts a tensile strength of 120

pounds. This is further compounded by the fact the strings often have as many as 28 strands. When this is factored in, the R-21 string has a tensile strength that is 560 pounds stronger. That's a huge advantage whether hunting or target shooting."

R-21 is available in nine solid colors — black, red, blue, pink, white, fluorescent green, fluorescent orange, silver, and tan — and is offered as a single-color string only, to avoid inconsistencies caused by varying thicknesses of dyes that would lead to unbalanced strings, according to Hershberger.

If you are due to change your string set, I encourage you to give R-21 some serious consideration. String sets can be ordered from any pro shop that is a Rogue dealer, or by contacting Rogue Bowstrings at 866-9-STRINGS or www.rogue-bowstrings.com. ■



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.

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ASTRO TABLES

Astro Tables is far more effective than "moon tables" because it takes into account critical solar energies as well as lunar.

The "Best Days" column is based on the ever-changing positions of the sun and the moon, rating each day on a scale of 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more solar/lunar influence that day is experiencing (see "Value" column or corresponding black bars).

The two Primary periods (Moon Overhead and Moon Underfoot) vary in length from one hour to three-and-one-half hours, depending on a number of important lunar cycles, such as how close the moon is to the earth that day and how high its orbit is. The solar symbols alert you to when a Primary period overlaps a major solar period (eg: Dawn, High-Noon, and Dusk). The secondary periods of Moonrise and Moonset last about one hour each... 30 minutes before and after the listed time. (See key at bottom of each month for more detail.)

Astro Tables is a quick-reference version of its parent publication, the **PrimeTimes Wall Calendar**, which is recommended for those wishing more complete data on the best days and times to go fishing and hunting for the entire year (see "Available Products" below).

PrimeTimes forecasts are based on solar/lunar research at a leading college of astrophysics and our own research pond/wildlife area. Annual data is supplied by the U.S. Naval Observatory. All times are adjusted to the center of your time zone and for Daylight Saving Time.

AVAILABLE PRODUCTS:

The 2019 PrimeTimes Wall Calendar. \$13.95 (plus \$4 s&h). Know the best days, best times, and their relative strengths for all of 2019 with this information-packed, full-color, 11-inch by 17-inch, graphic peaks

and-valleys forecaster. Includes rise and set times for the sun and moon, space to log your catches, "Timely Tips," plus fish and game symbols showing you each month's don't-miss periods. Also includes exclusive summary charts revealing the best and worst days of 2019, the year's best periods, a look ahead at 2020, and more. Comes with FREE 2019 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for \$8.95, plus \$3 s&h.

Book: "How to Know When to Go" by Rick Taylor. \$14.95 (plus \$4 s&h). 100 pages, 43 illustrations. A comprehensive look at the main factors influencing fish and game activity periods, plus how to devise an effective when-to-go game plan using any year's PrimeTimes calendars. Individual assessments of bass, panfish, deer, turkey, and more.

2019 Ultimate PrimeTimes software for PCs. \$29.95 (plus \$3 s&h, or no s&h if downloaded from web). The world's best forecaster allows you to fine-tune the peak times to your exact location, quarry, and even weather. Too many features to list here, including making your own App. For more details, please call us or visit our web site (see below).

SPECIAL PACKAGE OFFERS:

- #1: **Wall Calendar, Astro Tables and "How to Know..." book...** \$19.95 (plus \$5 s&h).
- #2: **Same as #1, plus Software...** \$47.95 (plus \$6 s&h).
- #3: **Same as #2, minus book...** \$38.95 (plus \$5 s&h).

Send to: PrimeTimes 2019 - Dept. LS - 2487 NW 75th Ave., Ste. 100 - Ankeny, IA 50023

For credit/debit card orders, call **515-964-5516**, or go online to **primetimes2.com** and click **Catalog**.

2019 JUL		BEST DAYS			
POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	VALUE	
Mon 1	██	██	██	██	92
Tue 2	██	██	██	██	97
Wed 3	██	██	██	██	88
Thu 4	██	██	██	██	78
Fri 5	██	██	██	██	65
Sat 6	██	██	██	██	56

Sun 7	██	██	██	██	52
Mon 8	██	██	██	██	54
Tue 9	██	██	██	██	60
Wed 10	██	██	██	██	45
Thu 11	██	██	██	██	37
Fri 12	██	██	██	██	34
Sat 13	██	██	██	██	42

Sun 14	██	██	██	██	50
Mon 15	██	██	██	██	59
Tue 16	██	██	██	██	63
Wed 17	██	██	██	██	53
Thu 18	██	██	██	██	43
Fri 19	██	██	██	██	34
Sat 20	██	██	██	██	31

Sun 21	██	██	██	██	34
Mon 22	██	██	██	██	37
Tue 23	██	██	██	██	45
Wed 24	██	██	██	██	59
Thu 25	██	██	██	██	52
Fri 26	██	██	██	██	49
Sat 27	██	██	██	██	53

Sun 28	██	██	██	██	65
Mon 29	██	██	██	██	77
Tue 30	██	██	██	██	88
Wed 31	██	██	██	██	93

25 50 75
AVERAGE

For more, visit primetimes2.com

LUNAR PERIODS

TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED

MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT	
4:56 am	10:31 am - 1:57 pm ☀	7:35 pm	10:56 pm - 2:22 am	☾
5:50 am	11:28 am - 2:58 pm ☀	8:38 pm	11:53 pm - Midnight	☾ NEW
6:51 am	12:32 pm - 3:58 pm ☀	9:35 pm	Midnight - 3:23 am	☾ HIGH
7:58 am	1:35 pm - 4:55 pm	10:26 pm	12:57 am - 4:23 am	☾ Perigee
9:08 am	2:41 pm - 5:47 pm	11:12 pm	2:00 am - 5:20 am	☾
10:19 am	3:43 pm - 6:35 pm	11:51 pm	3:06 am - 6:12 am	☾
11:27 am	4:46 pm - 7:18 pm		4:08 am - 7:00 am ☀	☾
12:35 pm	5:44 pm - 8:00 pm	12:28 am	5:11 am - 7:43 am ☀	☾
1:40 pm	6:44 pm - 8:40 pm ☀	1:02 am	6:09 am - 8:25 am	☾ HALF
2:45 pm	7:42 pm - 9:20 pm ☀	1:36 am	7:09 am - 9:05 am ☀	☾
3:48 pm	8:37 pm - 10:03 pm	2:10 am	8:07 am - 9:45 am	☾
4:51 pm	9:35 pm - 10:47 pm	2:47 am	9:02 am - 10:28 am	☾
5:51 pm	10:31 pm - 11:33 pm	3:26 am	10:00 am - 11:12 am	☾
6:49 pm	11:25 pm - 12:23 am	4:10 am	10:56 am - 11:58 am	☾
7:43 pm	12:17 am - Midnight	4:58 am	11:50 am - 12:48 pm ☀	☾ LOW
8:32 pm	Midnight - 1:15 am	5:49 am	12:42 pm - 1:40 pm ☀	☾ FULL
9:15 pm	1:06 am - 2:08 am	6:44 am	1:31 pm - 2:33 pm	☾
9:53 pm	1:52 am - 3:00 am	7:40 am	2:17 pm - 3:25 pm	☾
10:27 pm	2:34 am - 3:50 am	8:36 am	2:59 pm - 4:15 pm	☾
10:58 pm	3:13 am - 4:41 am	9:31 am	3:38 pm - 5:06 pm	☾ Apogee
11:27 pm	3:48 am - 5:30 am	10:26 am	4:13 pm - 5:55 pm	☾
11:56 pm	4:22 am - 6:20 am	11:21 am	4:47 pm - 6:45 pm	☾
	4:56 am - 7:08 am ☀	12:16 pm	5:21 pm - 7:33 pm	☾
12:24 am	5:29 am - 7:59 am	1:12 pm	5:54 pm - 8:24 pm	☾ HALF
12:54 am	6:05 am - 8:51 am ☀	2:10 pm	6:30 pm - 9:16 pm ☀	☾
1:26 am	6:44 am - 9:44 am ☀	3:09 pm	7:09 pm - 10:09 pm ☀	☾
2:02 am	7:28 am - 10:40 am	4:12 pm	7:53 pm - 11:05 pm	☾
2:44 am	8:16 am - 11:38 am	5:15 pm	8:41 pm - 12:03 am	☾
3:34 am	9:10 am - 12:40 pm	6:19 pm	9:35 pm - 1:05 am	☾
4:32 am	10:11 am - 1:41 pm	7:19 pm	10:36 pm - 2:06 am	☾ HIGH
5:37 am	11:17 am - 2:39 pm	8:14 pm	11:42 pm - Midnight	☾ NEW

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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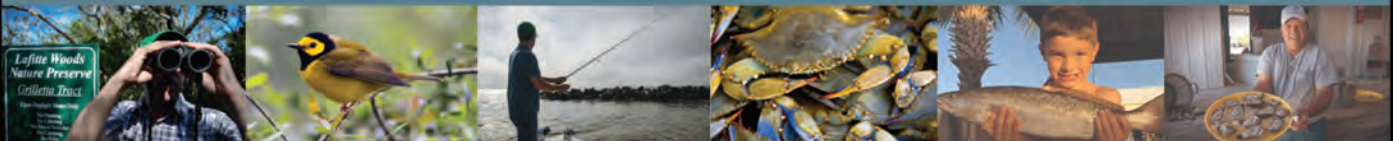
GRAND ISLE EVENTS:

July

- July 5 - Ducks Unlimited Banquet, Grand Isle Community Center
- July 6 - Annual Fireworks and Band at 10:00 p.m., Bridge Side Marina
- July 12-13 - Blue Boot Rodeo, Sand Dollar Marina
- July 18-20 - Louisiana Dental Rodeo, Sand Dollar Marina
- July 19-20 - Inaugural sky high fishing rodeo, Bridge Side Marina
- July 25-27 - Grand Isle Tarpon Rodeo, Tarpon Rodeo Pavilion Sand Dollar Marina

August

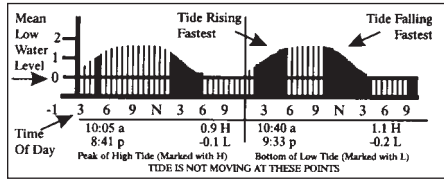
- August 2-3 - Salty Kids Rodeo, Sand Dollar marina
- August 3 - Mike Bourgeois (Big Daddy) Memorial Rodeo, Bridge Side Marina
- August 17 - Dufrene Building Rodeo, Bridge Side Marina
- August 24 - Ride the Bull Kayak Fishing Rodeo, Bridge Side Marina
- August 29-Sept 1 - Bloody Decks Rodeo, Wake Side Marina
- August 30-Sept 1 - 59th Original Grand Isle Original Redfish Rodeo, Bridge Side Marina



TOWNOFGRANDISLE.COM



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.

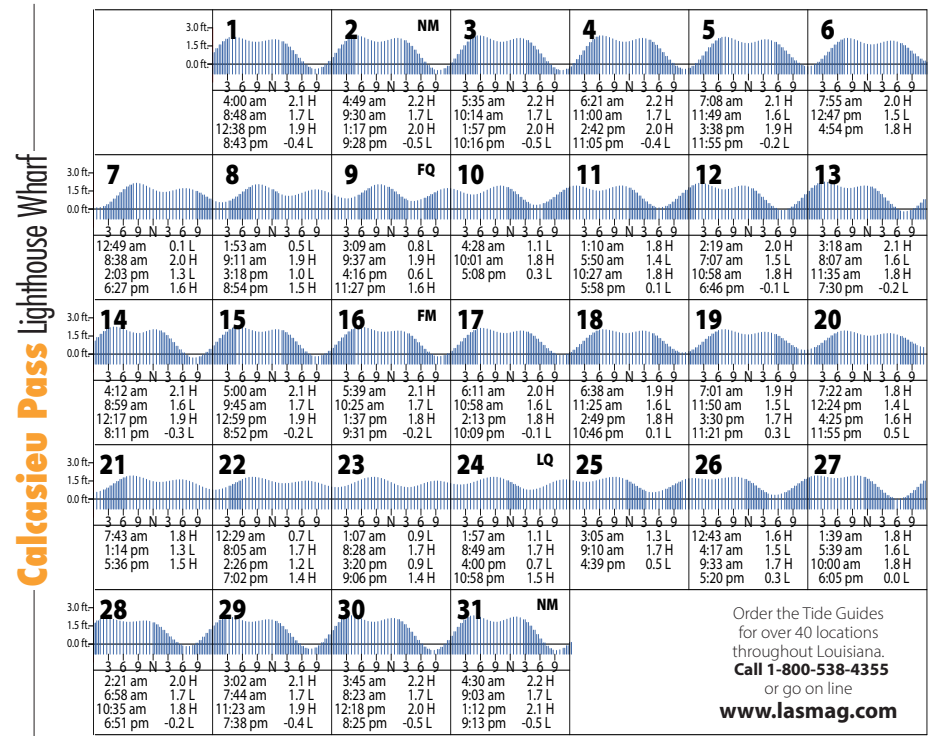
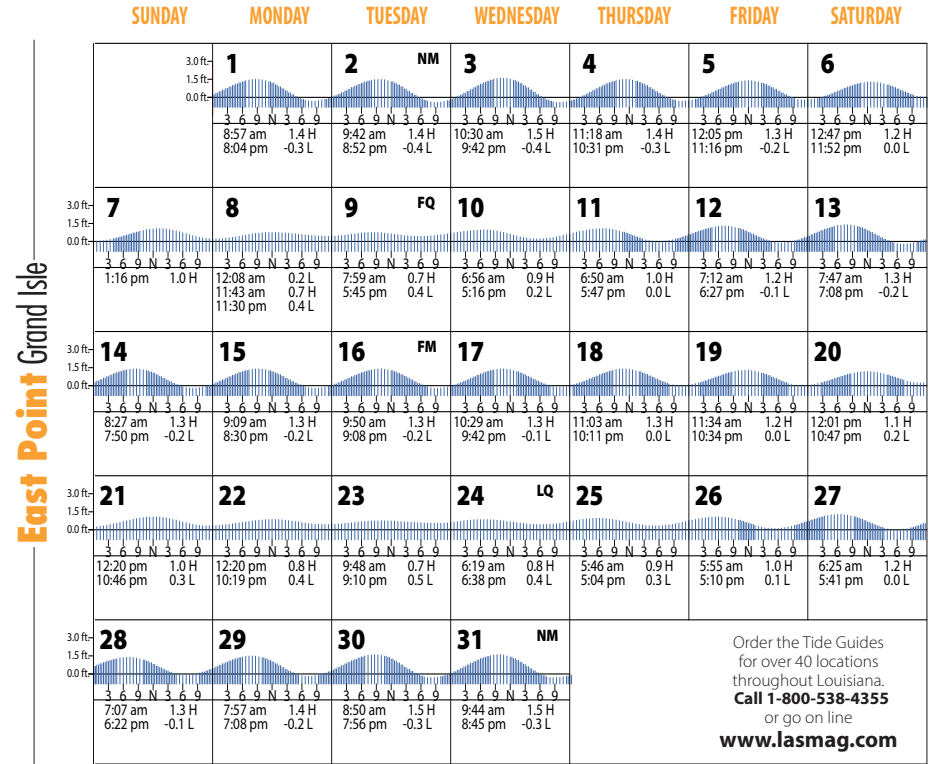
Tide Corrections

East Point, Grand Isle HIGH LOW

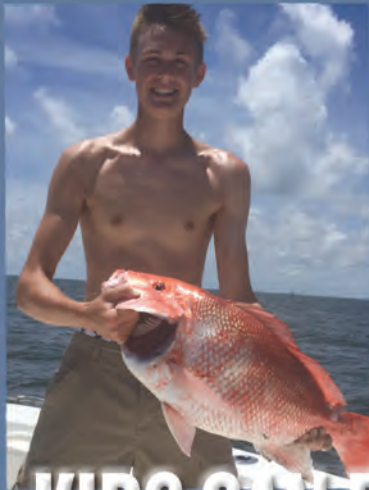
Barataria Pass	+1:00	-0:10
Bastian Island	+0:41	+0:12
Bay Gardene	+2:51	+2:44
Bayou Bonfouca	+9:59	+10:11
Breton Islands	+0:54	+0:48
Caillou Boca	+0:40	+0:48
Caminada Pass	+0:20	+0:12
Chandeleur Light	+0:37	+0:34
Chef Pass	+5:17	+5:07
Cocodrie	+1:22	+1:33
Comfort Island	+1:34	+0:54
Delacroix Island	+3:42	+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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FISHING REGULATIONS



2019

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[^])

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
Grouper* Gag [^] & Black [^]	24" TL	4/day (aggregate)*
Scamp [^]	16" TL	
Nassau & Goliath	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
Yellowfin [^]	20" TL	
Red [^]	20" TL	
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
Seatrou, 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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LAND FOR SALE

- **223 Acres in Jefferson County, MS** - this beautiful wooded tract lies in the Lorman area and has frontage on Jessamine Ridge Rd. The terrain is rolling hills and hollows and the timber is mixed ages of pine and hardwood. There's a pond on the north side of the property next to the camp site. Asking price is \$3,000/acre.
- **1030 Acres +/- Jefferson Co.** This tract lies in South Central Jefferson County and has frontage on Hwy 33 and McNair Road. The property can be split into two tracts approximately (700+/-) at \$2650/acre, and (330+/-) at \$2500/acre with the final acreage to be determined by a licensed surveyor. The terrain in this area is very gentle rolling hills to flat land and the timber consist of mainly mature pine and hardwood. There is approximately 50 acres of pasture land on the south side of the property as well as numerous food plots, campsites, and a nice pond. The deer and turkey hunting in this area is excellent. List Price \$2600/acre for the entire property.
- **416.5 acres in Jefferson County, MS** - this beautiful property is located in the Red Lick area and has frontage on MS-552. The terrain varies from level to rolling hills and hollows and timber is mostly hardwood. There's a 4-5 acre lake by the small country house which is currently being used as a camp. Asking price is \$2,900/acre.
- **17 Acres in Jefferson County, MS** - this tract is set up and ready to go! It lies in the Rodney area and offers a 600 sq ft cabin that is surrounded by huge pecan trees and has frontage on Rodney Rd. This land is also set up with two plots and box stands. Asking price is \$94,500!

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The NEW Louisiana Sportsman TV features experts of their fields to bring you the most exciting and informative hunting and fishing video content out there. This month on Louisiana Sportsman TV, Greg Hackney will be showing you some tips and tricks for bass, Capt. Charlie Thomason will be highlighting inshore techniques, Hampton Rutland will take you along on his duck hunting adventures and much more! Tune in every week on Cox Sports Television Thursdays at 6:30pm, Saturdays at 8:30am, and Sundays at 9am. Also subscribe to our Youtube Channel [youtube.com/sportsmantv](https://www.youtube.com/sportsmantv) to see our video segments posted to the web.

This Month On SPORTSMAN TV

This month of Louisiana Sportsman TV will feature some incredible duck hunting action, recipes you can cook at camp, Captain Charlie Thomason's inshore fishing tips, and Greg Hackney's how-to's for bass fishing.

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Cheyenne McLain



Bert Breaux

ABOVE: This red snapper was caught June 1 by Bert Breaux of Lafayette out of Cocodrie, fishing with menhaden down 150 feet.

LEFT: Cheyenne McLain with a red snapper caught out of Port Fourchon over the opening weekend.



Jasper LaSalle

Jasper LaSalle, 17, landed this 18-pound red snapper using pogie chunks between 150 to 200 feet on June 2, 2019. He was fishing from a 22-foot Triton center console out of Venice.



Courtney Forvendel

Courtney Forvendel with a snapper caught at the Midnight Lumps on June 1 using squid and pogeys.



Wyatt & Mia

Wyatt Pearson and Mia Ahles with some snapper caught during the opening weekend in Grand Isle.



(Left to right) Kelly Delahoussaye, Webster Terrebonne, Maddi Terrebonne, Amelia Terrebonne, Julian Terrebonne and Delina Harrison-Terrebonne were rig fishing out of Pass a Loure where they caught a limit of red snapper and and amberjack.



Tara Lathrop

Tara Lathrop lifts up a big red snapper she caught while fishing out of Grand Isle.



Annie McAdam

Annie McAdam poses with her first red snapper.



Kendall Reed

Kendall Reed with a snapper she caught out of Pecan Island.



Lawrence Plaisance

Lawrence Plaisance with a red snapper caught while fishing out of Port Fourchon aboard the "Gon Pacon."



Bill White

LEFT: Bill White of Dallas, Tex., holds up a 13-pound snapper.



Katie McAdam

RIGHT: Katie McAdam from River Ridge caught this red snapper while fishing out of Venice. She was using frozen pogie on a circle hook.

Hunting/Fishing
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Christian Lamarque

Christian Lamarque of Frisco, Tex., caught this 10-pound red in Little Lake out of Lafitte while fishing with his dad and grandfather.



Brian & Peyton Hawkes

Brian and Peyton Hawkes enjoyed catching their limits of redfish on Lake Calcasieu.



Shelby Crowder

Shelby Crowder shot this 170-pound buck, with an 11½-inch inside spread, on Dec. 2, 2017, at Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge.

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Luke Miller

Luke Miller of Central caught 5 fish for 10.11 pounds out of Bayou Black and was the winner of the 11-14 age group in the Jr. Southwest Bassmasters April tournament.



Avery Loper

Avery Loper took his first deer on Dec. 6 in Fayette, Miss., just 5 weeks after having brain surgery to remove a tumor.



Rhett Cornett

Rhett Cornett caught this 9.6-pound bass in Toledo Bend using a white trick worm.

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Kaylyn Thornton

Kaylyn Thornton of Lafayette poses with a mess of teal on her first duck hunt.



Reece Hoyt

Ten-year-old Reece Hoyt of Lafayette traveled up to Plain Dealing to nail his first doe.




Leslie Pitre



Veronica Landry

Veronica Landry took this beautiful turkey on her first solo turkey hunt in St. Tammany Parish on April 7, 2019. It weighed 16.68-pounds, had a 10-inch beard and its two spurs measured 1-inch and 7/8-inch.

Leslie Pitre caught her first tagged redfish in Joe's Cove in Hackberry.




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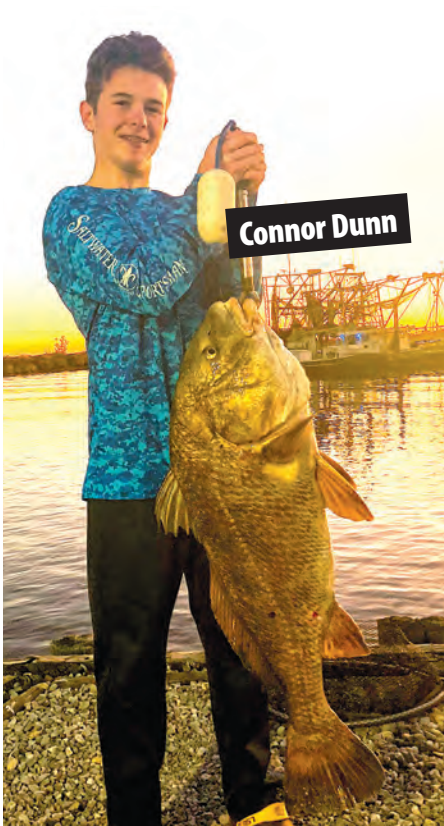
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Connor Dunn

Connor Dunn with a bull black drum caught fishing out of the Hopedale Marina with his dad, Colin, and uncle, Heath Martin, on Jan. 5.



Karen Bazor

Karen Bazor caught this 16 1/2-inch, 3-pound crappie while fishing with her daddy and mom off the Pearl River near Bogalusa.



Micah & Caleb Magee

Micah (left) and Caleb Magee caught these reds fishing in Grand Isle with Pa Pa Ray in July of 2018.



Drew Smith

Drew Smith, 9, poses with his first deer taken at Fort Polk WMA with the help of his dad, Dustin Smith.

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Joseph Digiovanni used a chrome/blue Rat-L-Trap to catch this 8-pound bass from a pond in Loranger.



Andrew Boleyn killed a fallow button buck in Bronte, Tex., on Dec. 10.



Aiden Gernard shot a monster 8-point that scored 14, and Allie Gernard shot a 7-point on a family hunting trip in Mississippi. They are photographed here with their parents, Ryan and Kristy.

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Justin, Alton & Nicolas Ryan

Justin Martin, 17, (left), Alton Martin Jr., 84, and Nicolas Ryan Bell, 21, with dogs, Dixie Lee and Martin's Southern Belle, had a pretty great squirrel hunt in Rapides Parish.



Alaina C. Currie

Alaina C. Currie was 11 when she killed her first Texas buck thanks to Trinity Outdoors Disabled Adventures and many sponsors that provided the hunt of a lifetime.



Emma Boquet

Emma Boquet, 11, had an awesome trip in the Bayou Black area fishing for bass, perch and goggle-eyes.



Kayleigh Mehrtens

Kayleigh and Joanne Mehrtens caught these nice reds on a fishing trip to Delacroix.



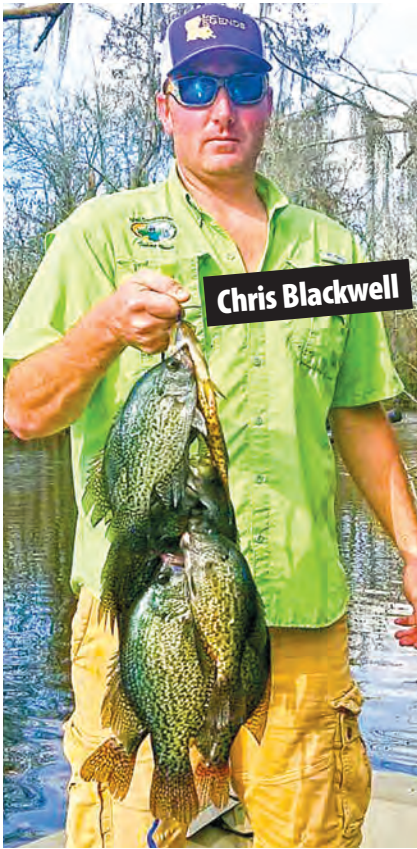
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Chris Blackwell

Chris Blackwell with sac-a-lait caught in St. James Parish in early February.



Tessa Oliver

Tessa Oliver, 9, killed her first deer, a nice 8-point, on family property in Texas this past Thanksgiving.



Thomas Robinson

Thomas Robinson of Hoover, Ala., was fishing out of King's Camp in Empire when he hooked his first speckled trout, first redfish, first "hardhead" and first bull red. Thomas was fishing with his pawpaw, Tony Robinson.

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**TRY
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AFTER DARK

By Phillip Gentry

WAITING UNTIL THE SUN GOES DOWN PROVIDES MORE SUMMER FISHING OPPORTUNITIES

As summer heat and recreational boat traffic make daylight hours less than hospitable to the serious angler, many turn nocturnal in pursuit of crappie, stripers, catfish and other fish that readily bite after hours. Many also view night-fishing as a traditional summer pastime, spending the night on the water with friends and family sharing time between bites.

How you go about night fishing can spell the difference between a successful outing and just losing sleep. Keep these five steps in mind to help insure your success.

LIGHTING

Whether or not you intend to use lights to attract fish to your bait, having proper lighting is critical to night-fishing success. Being able to see to navigate, prepare rigs, unhook fish and fix the inevitable mishap that arises will require the ability to see. If using batter-operated lights, make sure they are fresh and charged. Some anglers rely on portable generators, which may be noisy but insure you don't lack for lighting power.

When possible, rig rods during the daylight and carry spares.

TACKLE

In the event of a malfunction, it's easier to swap a rod than fix a problem. Rod holders make it much simpler to stay organized and keep lines spaced apart when fishing with multiple rods. Keep repeated-use items like hooks, weights, nets and pliers within easy reach so you can find them in the dark.

ORGANIZE

Most night-fishing occurs from a stationary position. Arrange anglers' things so each has space to move, be comfortable and tend to rods without having to step over or around obstructions. Clear pathways so each angler can freely move about the boat without tripping over items.

ANCHORING

Whether using an anchor or tying off to fixed objects like trees or bridge pilings, make sure your anchor points are secure. Keep anchor lines clear in the event that weather, conditions or simply moving to another spot makes it necessary to move.

LOCATION

Regardless of your quarry, fishing at night typically involves intercepting fish as they move from deep water to shallow in search of food. Target areas that provide a variety of depths in close proximity. Other considerations to keep in mind are structure, current, thermoclines and the presence of baitfish.



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