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LIFE IN THE
FAST LANE



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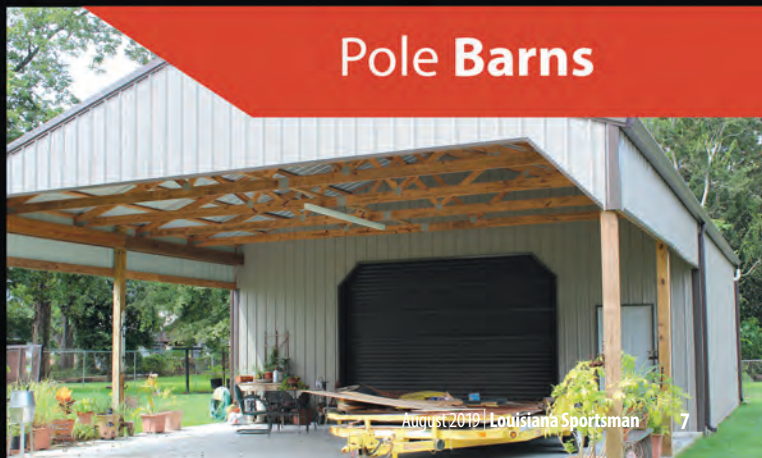
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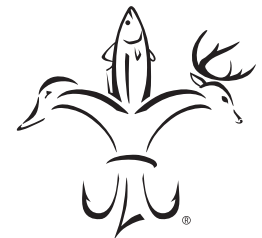
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Northlake Christian School's Christopher Capdeboscq and Sam Acosta won the 2019 TBF/FLW High School Fishing National Championship on Pickwick Lake.

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Photo by Charles Waldorf

NORTHLAKE CHRISTIAN WINS TBF/FLW High School national title

From News Reports

Northlake Christian School's fishing team of Christopher Capdeboscq of Covington and Sam Acosta of Madisonville caught three bass weighing a total of 9 pounds, 7 ounces on the final day of competition, June 21, to win the 2019 TBF/FLW High School Fishing National Championship on Pickwick Lake.

The duo's three-day total of nine bass weighing 35 pounds, 12 ounces gave them the win by a thin, 1-ounce margin over the second-place team of Colin McCullough and Justin Hamlin from Alabama's Cedar Bluff High School.

Capdeboscq and Acosta each won a four-year scholarship worth \$40,000 to Kentucky Christian University.

Capdeboscq said the final day's mostly calm, sunny conditions were less favorable than the previous two days' cloudy skies and moderate winds. Developing options for both scenarios, he said, was essential to his team's success.

"We had a really good one-two punch going this week, which was good for whether the bite was on fire or it was slow," Capdeboscq said. "Sam was dragging a ¾-ounce Strike King Jointed Structure Head with a Zoom Magnum Trick Worm, and I was deep cranking with a 6th Sense Cloud 9 C20. The crankbait would get them fired up when they were feeling it, and it would catch all the big ones."

Capdeboscq said that using lighter line — 12-pound-test Seaguar Tatsu fluorocarbon — was key to getting his crankbait to maximum depth and keeping it in the strike zone.

The pair also tried to fish less-pressured, offshore areas.

"Everybody's fishing ledges this time of year, so we just tried to find stuff that got less pressure," said Capdeboscq. "Creek intersections, main-river ledges. I've never practiced so hard for a tournament, but we found enough stuff to get us by, and that's what we did."

A field of 215 teams competed in the event, which launched from McFarland Park in Florence, Ala.

The top 10 teams were:

- **1. Northlake Christian School**, Covington, La.: Sam Acosta, Madisonville, La., and Christopher Capdeboscq, Covington, La., nine bass, 35-12, \$40,000 Scholarship x2.
 - **2. Cedar Bluff School**, Cedar Bluff, Ala.: Colin McCullough, Cedar Bluff, Ala., and Justin Hamlin, Fort Payne, Ala., nine bass, 35-11.
 - **3. North Augusta High School**, North Augusta, S.C.: Nathan Boatwright, Warrenton, S.C., and Dustin Williamson, Aiken, S.C., nine bass, 35-5.
 - **4. Lawrence County High School**, Lawrenceburg, Tenn.: Walker Brown, Loretto, Tenn., and Jon David Bedford, Lawrenceburg, nine bass, 33-7.
 - **5. North Mississippi Student Anglers**: Hayze Hutzell, Pelahatchie, Miss., and Dalton Smith, Brandon, Miss., nine bass, 32-11.
 - **6. McCracken County High School**, McCracken County, Ky.: Hunter Valerius and Sarah Morehead, Paducah, Ky., nine bass, 32-6.
 - **7. Harmony High School**, Harmony, Fla.: Grady Johnson and Dawson Turner, St. Cloud, Fla., nine bass, 31-12.
 - **8. Grand Rapids High School**, Grand Rapids, Minn.: Nick Dumke and Easton Fothergill, Grand Rapids, nine bass, 31-5.
 - **9. Marietta BassMasters**, Marietta, Ga.: Brooks Anderson and David Britt, Marietta, nine bass, 28-11.
 - **10. Clay High School**, Green Cove Springs, Fla.: Dalton Barnard and Parker Stalvey, Green Cove Springs, six bass, 21-8.
- Complete results and photos from the event can be found at FLWFishing.com. ■

EPIC BLUE MARLIN BITE IN THE GULF

FOG CUTTER WINS FIRST LOUISIANA BILLFISH CLASSIC WITH 4 BLUES IN ONE DAY

By Patrick Bonin

Chris Hall has been on lots and lots of blue marlin trips in exotic locales all over the world — but none as wildly successful as he and his crew experienced a couple of weeks ago in his own backyard in the Gulf of Mexico.

Hall, who owns Bayou Marine Electronics in Chalmette, was on *Fog Cutter*, his 60-foot Hatteras sportfisher, with Paul Ippolito, Sammy Gowland, Andre Hebert and Captains Caz McKenzie and Daryl Arnold.

Competing in the inaugural Louisiana Billfish Classic, they headed out of Cypress Cove Marina in Venice on June 13 for a 120-mile trek to the Neptune rig in pursuit of small blackfin tuna to use for live bait.

They didn't have any luck around Neptune, but things changed early that day when they made a move over to the Mad Dog platform, caught more bait and started a slow drift.

ON A ROLL

"At 7:30 a.m., a line went off, and we were hooked up," Hall said. "It was a weird bite because the fish stayed down for over an hour. Finally, she came to the surface; it was a huge blue marlin in the 600-pound range."

After the big marlin was caught and released, a quick move to a nearby drill ship set the stage for blue marlins Nos. 2 and 3, this time trolling artificial lures.

"That (second) one went crazy and was all over the top of the water," Hall said.

These two were landed and released in short order, then *Fog Cutter* headed back to Mad Dog for more blackfin and another



Four blue marlin landed and released in one day? That's what happened on one boat in the inaugural Louisiana Billfish Classic in June.

slow troll with live bait just before 7 p.m.

It wasn't long before the fourth fish was hooked up and landed, capping off a truly epic day in the Gulf.

"This was another big blue, and we were able to get her to the leader just before dark. We estimated this fish was in the 400-pound range," Hall said. "I've been billfishing for 35 years in the Gulf and lots of other marlin meccas, and this was by far the best blue marlin trip in my lifetime."

HISTORY MAKING

Hall, a member of the New Orleans Big Game Fishing Club, said in talking with other club members, he has yet to find anyone who has matched the *Fog Cutter's* special day.

"It's a pretty historic, old club," he said. "I don't know that anyone else has actually documented a four-blue marlin day in the

history of the club. I might be wrong, and the club goes back a number of years, but so far we've got three fish documented. So I'm trying to make the case for a *Fog Cutter* club record.

"And all of these catches and releases were video-documented for the Louisiana Billfish Classic, so it's official. There's money on the line. It's real and it's documented — it's authentic."

Two other boats competing in the Classic also landed four marlin, but the *Fog Cutter* caught all its fish first on the first day, which wound up good enough for first place in the marlin division and a payday of more than \$36,000.

In all, 34 participating boats caught and released 31 billfish during the Classic, which was headquartered out of Hurricane Hole Marina in Grand Isle. ■

The two tagged snapper weren't the only fish the Caitlin Domingues caught on June 14, but they were certainly the most special, and worth a bounty of \$300 from the tagging facility.



TWICE AS NICE:

ERATH ANGLER CATCHES TWO TAGGED RED SNAPPER ON SINGLE FISHING TRIP

By Brian Cope

Caitlin Domingues of Erath had a big day on June 14, fishing with her father around drilling rigs in the Gulf of Mexico out of Don's Boat Landing in her hometown.

She caught two tagged red snapper, and when helping clean the fish later, she was shocked to see that the tags were numbered consecutively.

One fish was tagged with No. 2570. The other was tag No. 2571.

Who knows what the odds are of catching a tagged fish? It certainly happens, but many anglers fish a lifetime and never catch one. The odds of catching two in one day are surely long, and the odds of those two being numbered consecutively must be astronomical.

WHAT ARE THE ODDS?

Jim Domingues, Caitlin's father, has been fishing the same area for more than 30 years, and he is still in disbelief about his daughter's catches.

When she caught the first fish, she told her dad something was hanging out of it.



The tag numbers were inside the fish, so they weren't discovered as consecutive until cleaned.

"She told me there was something hanging out of the fish. My cousin was fishing with us, too. He looked at it and said, 'That's a tag.' I was just tickled for Caitlin, but man I just can't say

how shocked I still am about her catching the second one.

"I've never caught a tagged fish. I was just tickled to see her catch one," he said. "But when she caught the second one, I just couldn't believe it. And then when we saw that they were numbered consecutively — I'm just still in disbelief. That's just amazing to me."

The father and daughter did some research and learned that the tags were from an Auburn University tagging trip on May 9, 2018, out of Pecan Island. The two fish were caught and tagged 17 minutes apart that day. Caitlin Domingues caught them within 30 minutes of each other.

"I asked the guys at Auburn University, 'What are the odds of that happening?' They couldn't even begin to guess," Jim Domingues said.

CLAIM THE BOUNTY

Caitlin Domingues caught the two red snapper on dead menhaden, fished on the upside of the drilling rigs in water that was about 100 feet deep.

After cleaning the fish, they sent the tags, along with measurements of the fish, to Auburn's research facility at Auburn. Each one of those tags carried a \$150 bounty.

"I'll be taking Caitlin again, and she'll have enough money to pay for gas for the trip," Jim Domingues said. ■



These two red snapper caught 30 minutes apart on June 14, 2019, were tagged 17 minutes apart by Auburn University in May 2018.

GO GIANT OR GO HOME



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Kaplan's Fuzz Fontenot caught this 39-pound flathead catfish on 6-pound test line.

ULTRALIGHT ANGLER GETS BIG SURPRISE

KAPLAN ANGLER'S LIGHT-TACKLE ADVENTURE ENDS WITH HUGE CAT

By Brian Cope

When Fuzz Fontenot of Kaplan went chinquapin fishing with his brother Eddie at Chatham's Caney Lake in May, they were using ultralight fishing gear with 6-pound test line. They caught their share of the tasty panfish, but Fontenot also caught something much bigger. He hooked and landed a 39-pound flathead catfish.

"It was a four-day trip, from Thursday through Monday," Fontenot said. "I'd been wanting to fish this one spot that had a lot of slime and weeds on the surface. Those chinquapin like to get under all that stuff, so I wanted to get my night crawler right on the edge of it. My brother had been telling me not to do it, thinking I'd get hung up. But by Sunday afternoon, I

decided it was worth a try."

TOO TEMPTING

Almost as soon as he made his cast, he felt like he was hung up, just as his brother had warned him.

"I said 'I'm hung up,' but when Eddie looked, the line started moving. He said 'You're not hung up; you've got a fish,' and then I saw that it was a big catfish," Fontenot said. "We were worried about the line being so light, and I was using a micro reel. I fought the fish for probably 10 minutes or so. Eddie said he was going to jump in and grab the fish, but then some other anglers in a nearby boat saw us and offered us a net. That was a big help."

They netted the fish and measured it at



45 inches long with a 25-inch girth. They took it to nearby Hooks Marina to weigh it on certified scales.

TOP 10

"It weighed 39 pounds even," Fontenot said. "My brother thought there might be a state-record for line class, so I did all the paperwork to get the fish certified. I found out Louisiana doesn't keep line-class records, but my fish is in the Top 10 for flatheads in the state." ■

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Jared Weaver's huge ling, which weighed 91.45 pounds, is the biggest ever entered in a CCA-LA STAR tournament.

ABBEVILLE MAN BOATS HUGE LING, LEADS CCA STAR COBIA CATEGORY

By Brian Cope

Jansen Weaver of Abbeville caught a 91.45-pound ling, aka cobia, on June 14 while fishing with his future father-in-law out of Don's Boat Landing in Erath. His catch is leading the ling division of the CCA Louisiana STAR Tournament.

Weaver was fishing aboard the *Steady Current*, Joey Comeaux's 36-foot Yellowfin, around a dozen or so anchored shrimp boats when he caught the fish.

"We were snapper fishing and having good luck around the shrimp boats," Comeaux said. "The fish congregate around those boats, which often sweep their by-catch off their decks and chum up the water. We had caught some snapper and some other ling just bouncing jigs off the bottom from one shrimp boat to the next. And then Jansen saw a big ling."

Weaver was casting a 6-ounce jighead dressed with a curlytail grub on a Shimano Saragossa 10000 reel spooled with 80-pound braided line. They'd already boated a 53-pound ling, and when Weaver saw the next one, he knew it was much bigger.

"I was driving the boat, just keeping us off of the shrimp boats, and I asked him if it had any size to it. He said, 'It's way bigger than the last one,'" said Comeaux.

"I could see it real clearly, and I asked him (Comeaux) to back the boat a little bit," Weaver said. "I dropped the jig down right in front of the ling, and a jack crevalle grabbed it. I reeled it in and unhooked it, then tossed the jig right back to the last place I'd seen the ling,"

After jigging the lure just once or twice, Weaver said the fish struck. And while ling are known for epic in-the-water

battles, this one did not appear to realize it was hooked until it was much too late.

"It was really weird. It didn't act anything like what a ling normally does when it's hooked," Weaver said. "I turned the reel handle maybe five or six times, and it was at the boat. One of the other guys gaffed it, and we hauled it aboard," said Weaver. "As soon as it hit the deck, it spit the hook."

"That fish came in green. Then he started fighting once he got on the boat, but it was too late then," Comeaux said. "Jansen got the lead in the STAR tournament, and there's still some time left for somebody else to take over, but I feel pretty good about his catch. It's the largest ling ever recorded during a STAR event in Louisiana.



I hope it holds up for him."

Comeaux said that fish made a good day of fishing even better. They caught their fill of snapper and ended up with a total of five ling. And if Weaver's ling keeps the lead through Labor Day, they'll have another \$5,000 in fishing gear from CCA-LA. ■

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Clay Peltier of New Iberia prepares to leave the Big Dam along Bird Island Bayou in Marsh Island.



SHRIMP AT THE WEIR

GOOEY BAIT, CAST NETS MAKE FOR SUCCESS By Don Shoopman

New Iberia's Clay Peltier has walked the two weirs along Bird Island Bayou in Marsh Island with cast net in hand for many years to catch shrimp for his redfish and speckled trout trips in and around Vermilion Bay.

Peltier isn't the only one who frequents the weirs. Hundreds of boaters stop by the Big Dam Weir or The Belly Weir, a smaller weir, or both, in their quest to load the ice chest with shrimp, crabs, baby croakers, finger mullet and shad, and some also use the visit to catch flounder or redfish.

LIVE BAIT SHRIMP

Why take the time and effort to cast-net for shrimp, croakers, mullets and shad to use as live bait?

"Depending on who's fishing, live bait is always the right color," Peltier said. "Live bait will help you find fish if you're fishing with people who are just not experienced at fishing with artificials. They'll be more productive and enjoy the day a lot better."

At Marsh Island's designated weirs, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries regulations allow people to catch and keep 25 pounds of shrimp per boat during the shrimp season and 10 pounds per boat in the offseason. Peltier said he once

was advised by LDWF Enforcement Division agents to beware of the possession limit. If you bought 10 pounds of shrimp at a bait shop and hauled in 20 pounds cast-netting during the shrimp season, you are over the possession limit.

The public is also permitted to cast-net for shrimp and fish for crabs at another weir, the Gordy Weir in Worm Bayou.

The only way to access Big Dam Weir and The Belly Weir is by boat. The nearest boat launch is Quintana Canal Boat Landing off LA319 at Cypremort Point.

BEST SHRIMP IN FALL

Peltier, 74, said cast-netting for shrimp at the weirs is best in the fall, not so much in July, but there are other draws that keep people coming to the Big Dam Weir and The Belly Weir.

Despite a drop-off in the cast-netting shrimp harvest, the Big Dam remains a top destination in July and August. Peltier has seen as many as 15 boats there on a Saturday or Sunday, which is one reason he prefers to go to the weirs in midweek.

Why the crowd? While baitfish such as croakers and mullets can be caught in cast nets, the lure is crabs, which can be caught only with hand-lines or drop nets, 12

dozen per boat per day, per LDWF regulations. A trip to the weir fuels countless crab boils at the Point and across Acadiana.

"When they're running, that brings a lot of families here. They even bring beach umbrellas, settle for the day and let the kids run around," Peltier said.

Jeff Marx, an LDWF biologist based in Lafayette, agreed: "The weirs are a popular area, especially for shrimping and crabbing."

The Big Dam Weir is 6 feet wide and 120 feet long. The structure was closed after the storm surge from Hurricane Rita destroyed the old wooden platform/walkway in September 2005. It was replaced with FEMA funding at a cost of \$49,400 and completed June 25. The fiberglass grating platform is nonstick and considered safer for that reason and because it is cleaner; the LDWF said before the weir was reopened to the public in time for the July 4, 2006.

Peltier targets shrimp like a pro when he goes to the weirs, mostly The Belly Weir.

"I usually do better at the smaller dam," Peltier said, pointing out that it's more compact and off the beaten path. "It is, and there's not as many people. I like the little dam better," he said.

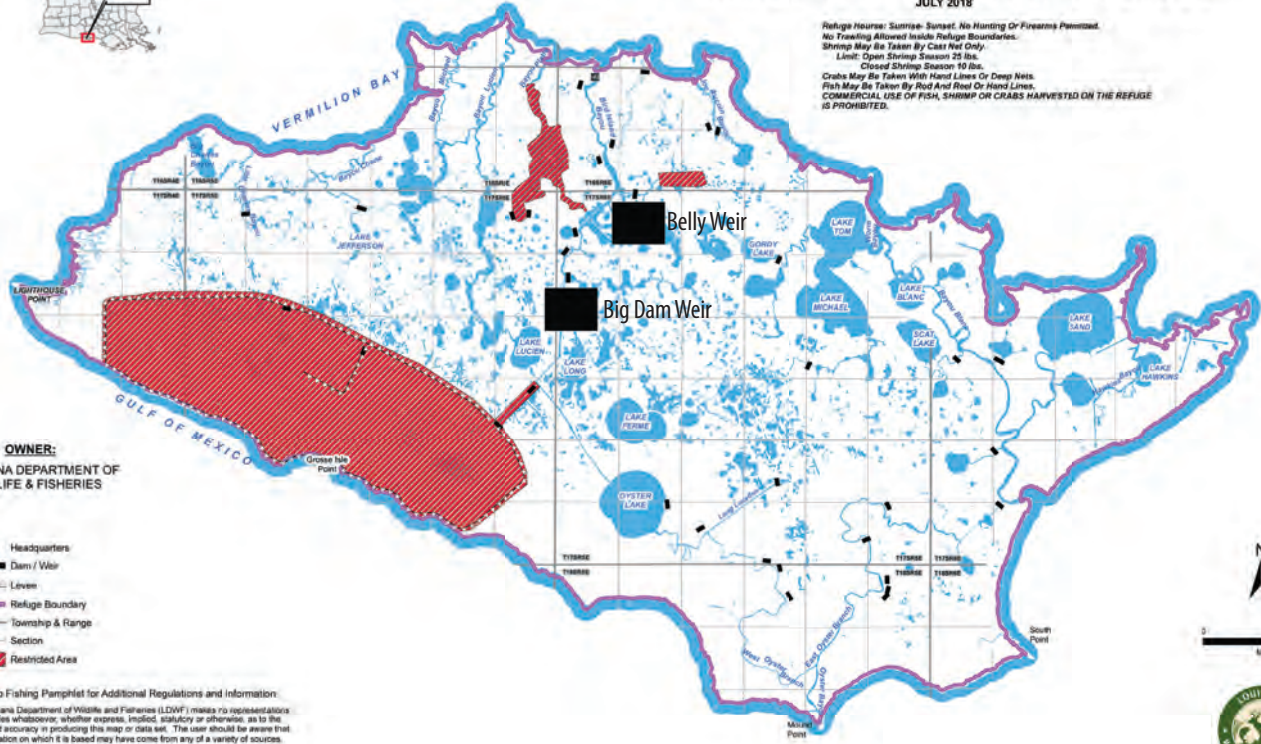
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 Limit: Open Shrimp Season 25 lbs.
 Closed Shrimp Season 10 lbs.
 Crabs May Be Taken With Hand Lines Or Deep Nets.
 Fish May Be Taken By Rod And Reel Or Hand Lines.
 COMMERCIAL USE OF FISH, SHRIMP OR CRABS HARVESTED ON THE REFUGE IS PROHIBITED.



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- Headquarters
- Dam / Weir
- Levee
- Refuge Boundary
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- Section
- Restricted Area

Refer to Fishing Pamphlet for Additional Regulations and Information.
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This mixture of fish meal, flour and water, dumped into the water, will attract shrimp for cast-netting at the weirs inside Marsh Island.



Clay Peltier prepares to throw a cast net at the Big Dam along Bird Island Bayou in Marsh Island.



A sign at the Big Dam lists the rules and regulations for cast netting and crabbing.

BAIT IS KEY

Peltier is prepared when he goes to a weir to cast a net. Some of the things needed are a laundry basket, 5-gallon bucket, cast net and some bait.

Bait? Peltier and other successful cast-netters won't leave home without it.

He makes the bait, which is used like fishing chum, at home. He buys fish meal at a feed store, mixes it with an equal amount of the cheapest flour you can get and water to the desired consistency, puts it in a Ziplock bag and freezes if he's making it ahead of time. "It looks like a blob. A big pile of poop is what it looks like," Peltier said.

At the weir, Peltier makes a few test casts with the cast net "to see if they've got any shrimp there." If shrimp are present, he'll open the Ziplock bag and squeeze about half of the goo into the water. Let the area set for about 15 minutes, trying other locations during that time, then go back and cast net the area.

Peltier said he uses a cast net with a ring for a reason.

"See this ring? It's good for people who have trouble throwing it," he said.

When shrimp are running at the weirs, he has no trouble throwing it and hauling in shrimp to catch speckled trout and redfish. ■

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Bank-fishing opportunities abound on urban bodies of water stocked as part of LWDF's Community Fishing Program.



PUBLIC PONDS: BANK FISHING'S BEST-KEPT SECRET

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The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries oversees the stocking of fish in community fishing locations throughout the state as part of the Community Fishing Program.

These bodies of water offer good fishing to anglers, even if they don't have a boat. Each body of water must meet certain criteria to be included in the program.

As part of the program, the LDWF reviews bodies of easily-accessible water that are located in close proximity to a populated area. If these potential fishing holes can be developed

into a quality fishery, offer public parking, restrooms and bank-fishing access, the LDWF will partner with the community to stock fish there. Currently, 11 locations are regularly stocked as part of this program.

In the summer, the LDWF stocks channel catfish in these waters. During the winter, rainbow trout are stocked, offering an even more unique fishing experience. Rainbow trout can survive the winter due to the higher oxygen levels of colder water, but they can not live long enough for anglers to catch them if stocked during the summer.

These are the current community fishing holes that are a part of the Community Fishing Program:

- **Girard Park - Lafayette**
Channel catfish were most recently stocked on June 3, 2019
 - **BREC's Burbank Park - Baton Rouge**
Channel catfish were most recently stocked on June 5, 2019
 - **Kiroli Park - West Monroe**
Channel catfish were most recently stocked on June 4, 2019
 - **Turner's Pond - Minden**
Channel catfish were most recently stocked on June 4, 2019
 - **William T. Polk City Park Pond - Vidalia**
Channel catfish were most recently stocked on June 5, 2019
 - **Purple Heart Memorial Park Pond - Ragley**
Channel catfish were most recently stocked on June 3, 2019
 - **Grambling City Park Pond - Grambling**
Channel catfish were most recently stocked on June 4, 2019
 - **Southside Regional Park - Fabacher Field - Youngsville**
Channel catfish were most recently stocked on June 3, 2019
 - **Elmore D. Mayfield Park - Ruston**
Channel catfish were most recently stocked on June 4, 2019
 - **Sidney Hutchinson Park - Walker**
Channel catfish were most recently stocked on June 5, 2019
 - **Zemurray Park - Hammond**
Channel catfish were stocked most recently on April 23, 2019 ■
- Brian Cope




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LDWF INCREASES NUTRIA BOUNTY PRICE WILL GO UP \$1

From News Reports

The Coastwide Nutria Control Program (CNC) bounty will be raised to \$6, up from \$5, when the season begins Nov. 20, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries announced.

The increase is to make the take of nutria more lucrative for hunters and trappers enrolled in the program.

"Protection of our coast is of the upmost importance," said Amity Bass, an LDWF biologist. "The Coastwide Nutria Control Program plays an important part in keeping down the number of this invasive species that destroys our marshes. We hope the increase in the bounty will incentivize hunters and trappers to go after more nutria."

The program was established in 2002 to



LDWF has increased the bounty on nutria from \$5 to \$6 for the season that begins Nov. 20.

combat nutria in coastal Louisiana. Its goal is to remove up to 400,000 nutria each season to reduce marsh damage. The season runs each year from Nov. 20-March 31.

Participation requires a trapping license, completion of the CNC application and designation of property or properties to be harvested, along with landowner information and signature.

Public properties are available, and

instructions for registering these properties is in the application packet. All registered properties must be within the program boundary area, which is all of coastal Louisiana, bounded on the north by I-10 from the Texas state line to Baton Rouge, I-12 from Baton Rouge to Slidell and I-10 from Slidell to the Mississippi state line. ■

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**By John Smith
Smith Shanklin Sosa, LLC
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Insurance is one of the best ways to protect these investments in the event something goes wrong, but what is actually covered by insurance? Let's look at some scenarios to help figure that out, because the last thing you want to do is find out you are not covered when you need it the most.

LIABILITY POLICY

Generally, liability coverage provides insurance coverage for you or anyone driving your vehicle, boat, ATV, etc., with your permission, except anyone who is specifically excluded from coverage. Liability insurance is intended to protect others from some harm you accidentally caused. Your liability insurance will not pay for your damage.

Liability coverage will only pay up to the amount of the policy. If you have a 50/100/25 policy, that means the insurance company will pay up to \$50,000.00 per accident to any one person who makes a claim.

The insurance company will pay up to \$100,000.00 per accident, no matter how many people are involved in the accident. Let's say four people make claims under the policy. The insurer will pay up to \$100,000.00 to resolve all four claims, no matter how much the claims are worth. In this case, the claimants will have to split up the \$100,000.00. How they do that will depend on the nature of their claims.

Under the 50/100/25 policy scenario, an insurer will pay up to \$25,000.00 for property damage claims made by others, not the insured.

COMPREHENSIVE COVERAGE

Comprehensive/collision coverage means that the insurer will pay damages up to the amount of the policy limits for damages caused by fire, theft, hail, flood, etc.

If you accidentally damage your vehicle/boat/ATV, the insurer will pay damages up to the amount of the policy to repair the vehicle. If the repairs exceed the cost of repairing the vehicle, they may pay to "total" the vehicle/boat/ATV.

However, regardless of the value of the vehicle, the insurer will only pay up to the policy limits. The insurance company will only pay the fair market value of the vehicle, regardless how much



You love your ATV, but do you know how much insurance coverage you need on it, and what the insurance will cover?

you think the vehicle is worth. Custom rims, stereo, lifts, electronics, etc., generally do not substantially increase the value of the vehicle/boat/ATV.

Some insurance companies offer additional policies for additions and upgrades to insured vehicles. It's a great idea to keep receipts and take photos of upgrades, so at least you can substantiate your claim for upgrade costs.

Your vehicle insurance will not cover damages to a trailered vehicle that you own if you caused the damages. Let's say you are trailering your boat and you accidentally hit another vehicle with the boat. Your automobile liability insurance will cover the damages you caused to the other vehicle, but not the damages to your boat. You will have to rely on your comprehensive/collision coverage to fix your boat under that scenario.

If you own an ATV and think your homeowner's policy will always protect you, think again. A homeowner's policy has specific exclusions to ATV coverage. Some homeowner's insurance policies only cover claims for accidents that occur on the homeowner's property.

If you haul your ATV to the camp, it may not be covered by your homeowner's policy. The best way to ensure coverage is to have a separate liability/comprehensive/collision policy on ATVs and UTVs. Sometimes, the value of a bike does not justify the cost of a comprehensive policy, but liability coverage is a must-have if you let others borrow your bike or you ride a lot around others.

LEASE INSURANCE

Hunting lease insurance is required by most landowners. They want to be protected in the event of an accident while on the property, and they want the people leasing the property to pay for it. Most hunting lease liability policies name the property owner as an "additional insured" under



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

ALGAE BLOOM INVADES MS WATERS

MAGNOLIA STATE BEACHES CLOSED,
FISHERMEN TAKE A HIT-AND-MISS

By Bobby Cleveland

The same root cause of the flooding of Mississippi's South Delta region — a high Mississippi River — has created issues for people on the Gulf Coast, a couple hundred miles to the south, specifically, a blue-green algae bloom that caused coastal beaches to be closed to swimming and brought a warning against eating seafood from affected waters.

"At one point this spring, similar to three of the last five years, we were thinking that releasing river water through Bonnet Carré spillway would benefit our fishing on the Mississippi Coast," said angler James Carr of Bay St. Louis. "Then, it kept on coming east and became a problem. Later, it became catastrophic, moreso for commercial fishermen and especially the oyster industry. Then came the blue-green algae outbreak, and the coastal waters were closed to swimming and we were warned not to eat fish or seafood from those waters.

"As a recreational fisherman, I first thought we'd see more speckled trout pushed from Pontchartrain and the marsh over our way from Louisiana," Carr said. "That has happened a lot in recent years, but this year, they've kept the spillway running — and with more gates open for a longer time. We're seeing the downside.

"The trout that resettled in the Mississippi Sound have been either further east toward Alabama or further offshore south of the barrier islands. I've been running about 20 miles further than I normally have to go to find fish. At least out there, the blue-green algae isn't a problem."

According to scientists, the blue-green algae bloom occurs in water with low-salinity levels, a problem in Mississippi this year due to Bonnet Carré.

A blue-green algae bloom caused by an intrusion of polluted, freshwater into the Mississippi Gulf Coast has caused closings of many beaches.

Scientists at the University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Laboratory lay the blame of the toxic algae outbreak squarely on the Bonnet Carré Spillway's extended use. It has pushed polluted floodwaters from the Mississippi River into the Gulf, feeding an outbreak of cyanobacterium, commonly known as blue-green algae. It can cause rashes, diarrhea and vomiting in humans that contact the algae, leading the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality to close all beaches on Mississippi's main shoreline to swimming in late June and early July. The beaches along the barrier islands were not impacted and stayed open.

As you would think, the impact on tourism appears dramatic, although the financial numbers won't be available for months. "Eyeballing it, it's pretty obvious it has hurt bad," Carr said. "I drove Highway 90 from Waveland east to Pascagoula over the holiday weekend, and you'd see little groups of people here and there on the beaches, but not the hundreds and thousands normally seen over the fourth of July. None of them were in the water. I usually wade-fish off the beaches two or three days a week this time of year, but this year, I have not gone once.

"I've done most of my fishing on the south side of the barrier islands, but I started to see (fewer and fewer) fish at Cat Island (the west end of the coast, nearest the source of fresh water) in May and June. I have fished more at Ship and Horn, which requires either trailering my boat over or making longer runs." ■

PLENTY OF FISH, BUT FEWER FISHERMEN, MISSISSIPPI SALTWATER GUIDES SAY

One coastal industry hurt by misinformation about the algae bloom and the freshwater incursion has been charter fishing, but most captains say they've never quit catching fish.

"Where we were catching them changed, and what we were catching changed, but the action was always good, just like always," said Sonny Schindler of Shore Thing Charters of Bay St. Louis. "Freshwater incursion doesn't affect all species the same. Speckled trout — sure, they are very saltwater conscious, and they will leave when salinity drops. You have to move with them.

"Redfish, not so much. They can tolerate a lot of freshwater. They won't up and leave, and the Biloxi Marsh, which is south of the algae but closer to the area impacted by (Bonnet Carré spillway), has produced redfish all through this period. Another species that has been consistent is sharks. People like to catch them."

The big problem, guides agreed, was the what the public knew about the algae bloom. People were slow to book trips, and some cancelled trips already booked due to the warnings about eating fish.

One captain said that the problem was in associating the bloom with the entire Gulf of Mexico, when only the beaches were impacted.

"We don't fish the beach lines," Clay Necaise of OutKast Charters told *The Clarion-Ledger*. "We go out 20 miles to catch fish, and I'm not seeing any (algae) out there." ■

— Bobby Cleveland



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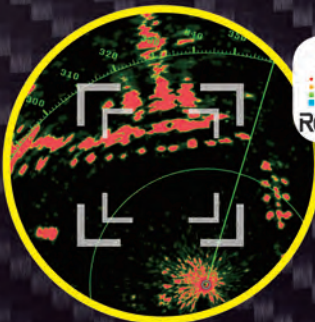
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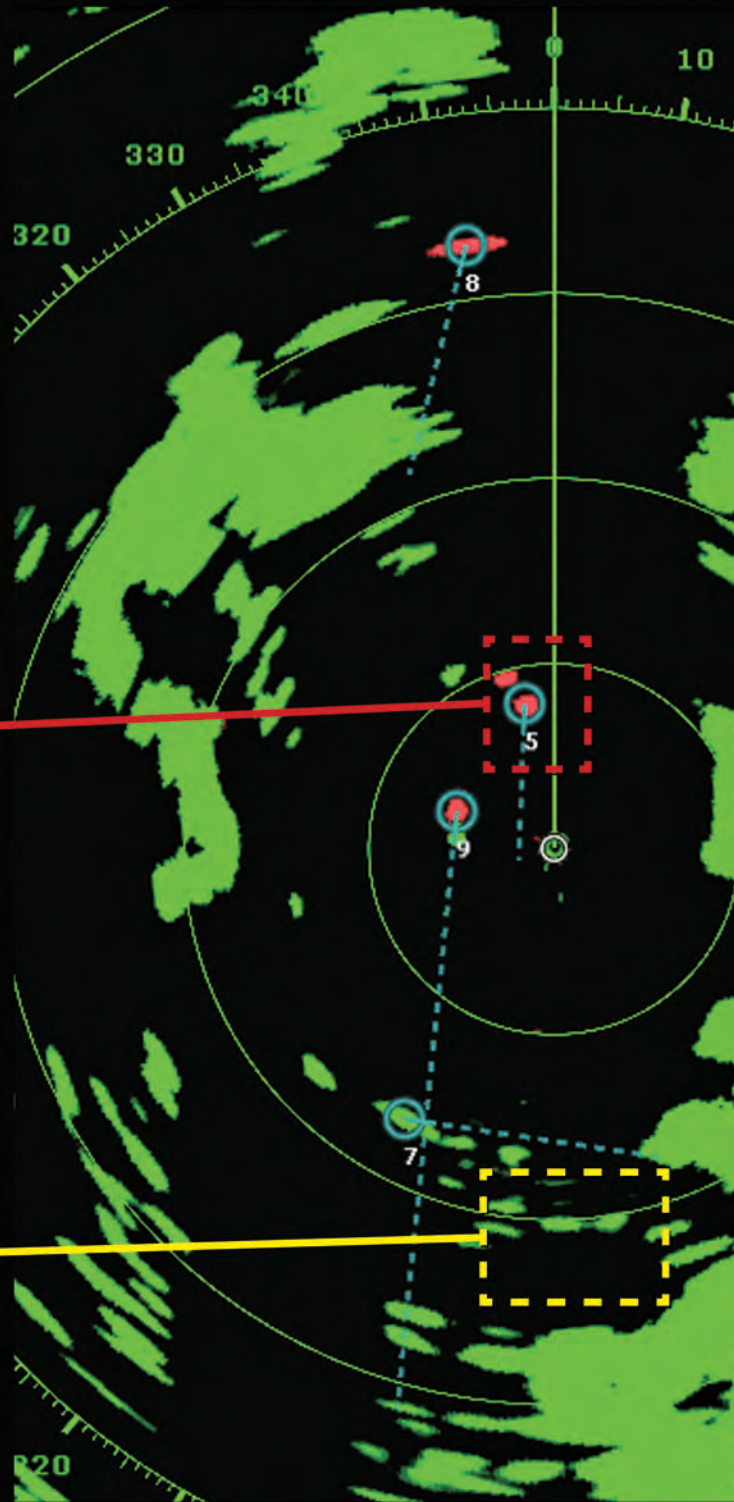


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A man wearing a grey baseball cap and a blue t-shirt is smiling broadly while holding a large, greenish-brown bass. The fish is held vertically, and its mouth is open, showing a large, colorful lure with a red and black body and a green and red tail. The background consists of tall green grasses and a clear blue sky with some light clouds.

Welcome to the jungle

Pulling bass up through the thick stuff at Venice is a lot of work — and oh-so-much fun.

By Todd Masson

Axl Rose wrote the lyrics to *Welcome to the Jungle* in the mid-1980s while visiting a friend in Seattle, but inspiration for the song actually came from an encounter he had with a homeless man in New York.

Trying to scare Rose, then a young runaway, the man yelled, “You know where you are? You’re in the jungle, baby; you’re gonna die!”

Though certainly less morose, anglers fishing south of Venice with Jeff Bruhl have probably had similar feelings. A nuclear pharmacist by trade, Bruhl sheds his smock every year at this time, throws on a fishing T-shirt and hacks his way into the thickest, meanest, nastiest stuff that Ol’ Man River’s supercharged, nutrient-laden waters have sprouted along its roiling banks.

continues >>>

Welcome to the jungle

Rather than a machete, Bruhl's tool of choice is a heavy flipping stick threaded with thick line and tipped with a weight so stout it seems better suited to be shoved down the barrel of a musket. He's there for the bass, the big ones that are arrogant in their certainty they've found just the right hiding spot, the only one on the river entirely impervious to predators.

This time of year, Bruhl regularly humbles them.

August marks the month most years when bass fishing begins to go bananas along the cane stands that seem endless and eternal south of Venice. The reason is the height of the Mississippi River. Heavy storms and snow melt across the Midwest shoot it skyward in the spring, and all that water continues to work its way down during the first half of the summer.

By August, however, the crops up north are tall and lush, and the riverbanks are verdant. All that vegetation sucks up the falling rainwater before it can reach the river, and that means, way down here in the Bayou State, the Mississippi becomes a relative trickle.

That's bad news for the bass, but really good news for Bruhl. The fish that spent most of the past eight months so far back

in the jungle it would take a bucket truck to harvest them are now within reach. They're frequently still in the thick stuff, but now on the edge of open water that supports boats like Bruhl's 20-foot Gator Trax.

TRACKING THE RIVER, TIDES

To know when the time is right, Bruhl begins tracking the height of the river in July.

"You've got to look at the New Orleans gauge," he said. "Five feet is good, 4 feet is better, 3 feet is the best. It really doesn't get too much lower than 3 feet, but as the river keeps falling, it just keeps getting better and better.

"If you plan on coming in August or September, you need to always check the gauge."

But that's not the only important factor. Tide direction and height can be critical in Venice, Bruhl said.

"I want to go down and fish at the bottom of the tide," he said. "Sometimes you can't do that. You might not be able to get down there until the afternoon, and the tide's rising. But ideally, if you can fish the morning, you want the tide to bottom out about 10 or 11 a.m.

continues >>>





Bass that have spent most of the year in unreachable places in the 'jungle' of vegetation around Venice are finally within range of anglers late in the summer.

Welcome to the jungle



When the water level drops and bass move out to the edges of the cane, the fishing is great.

“You don’t necessarily need to have a big, wide range. The range is not quite as important, just as long as it’s a half-foot to a foot, and low tide is about the middle of your fishing trip.”

Not only does a falling tide pull bait out of the backwaters, it conspires with the low river to stack the odds in anglers’ favor.

“Even if the river’s at 4 feet, a low tide might lower the water another 6 inches, which forces the bass along a lot of banks to come to the edge of the canes,” Bruhl said. “So when you flip your bait in, you’re flipping where the fish are sitting. If the river’s at 5 feet, and the tide is up, they might be 3 feet in back of the canes, where you can’t really reach them.”

PUNCH IN AT THE BANK

Productive banks vary considerably with the height of the river and tide, Bruhl said.

“You want a bank that has some depth right along the edge of the canes, maybe a foot or two of water, but 6 inches into the canes, you want it to be dry land,” he said. “Not every bank is like that.

“If you go enough to Venice, you’ll understand that at 4 feet, there might be some banks that are really good, but they’re not good at all at 5 feet. You have to move around and find that certain scenario that’s good at that river height and tide height.”

In addition to depth, Bruhl likes a combo platter of roseau, hyacinths and hydrilla. He’ll use pegged 1-ounce tungsten weights teamed with black/red flake, watermelon/red or

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Jeff Bruhl has tackle sleeves that are labeled "Venice," and he never touches them except for this time of year. What's stuffed inside of them, in addition to heavy

tungsten weights and a vast assortment of hooks, are some fairly ugly baits.

Bruhl is a bargain-bin tackle shopper, but he saves the funky, gnarly lures he picks up for Venice.

"These fish are just so aggressive down here, they'll hit anything," he said during a trip to Venice last September. "If I find some baits on clearance for like 99 cents a pack, I'll buy all I can find, and put them in my Venice box."

It's a smart move because on a typical day at the mouth of the Mississippi, an angler might go through 40 or 50 soft-plastics. Many of the bites, obviously, will be from bass, but crabs, bream and redfish also tear them to shreds.

If Bruhl is fishing a tournament or just wants the best odds possible, he'll go with a Havoc Pit Boss or Havoc Change Up, but if he's fun-fishing, those baits stay tucked away in other sleeves.



Missile D-Bomb

Havoc Pit Boss



Havoc Change Up

Gary Krouse, a Baton Rouge angler, however, is particular in his bait choices, even down in Venice.

He's partial to Missile D-Bombs and Creme ST Craws teamed with punch skirts, and he likes to experiment each trip with different weights.

"Sometimes a slower fall and quieter entry can make a big difference," he said. ■



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Welcome to the jungle

Jeff Bruhl derricks a nice bass out of the cane that lines much of the water around Venice.

orange-tipped Havoc Pit Bosses or Havoc Change Ups to punch through the hyacinths and hydrilla and slide into the tangle of canes that so often hold fish.

“When they’re aggressive on a good day, you’re going to feel a solid thump,” Bruhl said. “If you get a nibble-nibble-nibble, most of the time, that’s bream. But when you slide it down there, and on that first fall, you feel a thump, that’s always good because that means they’re eating (well), and you can rear back, set the hook and turn that fish’s head up so you can yank him up through all that vegetation.

“On days when it’s more of a mushy bite, and you can’t tell for sure if something hit you, they might pull you up under a cane, or if you’re not sure, you’ll hesitate, and then when you do set the hook, the fish is pointed down into the cover, and you can’t get him out.”

That’s especially true considering the size of the fish that call Venice home. Bruhl has caught some 5-pounders in the area, and has had days when he’s caught multiple 3-pounders. He’s also fished with anglers who have caught 7-pounders.

continues >>>

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"The chances for big fish increase as the river falls," he said. "Those big fish, they're not coming out until they have to. They've got a home somewhere, and that's where they're staying."

Sometimes, the river and tides get so low, those fish and others can't even access the canes. That's when fishing can get really stupid, Bruhl said.

"The absolute best is when the water's so low that you don't have to punch," he said. "You just throw a 1/8-ounce weight, and you don't have to peg it. You throw just around the base of the canes. There's nothing to hang up on.

"That's the best fishing there is, because you're going to get lots of bites, and you aren't going to miss many fish."

But most of the time, there's going to be some type of punching involved, and that ain't exactly a bad thing. In fact, Bruhl rates it as his favorite style of bass fishing.

"It's a real physical style of fishing," he said. "It's right up there in your face. You're



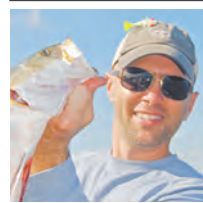
A bulky creature bait fished on a Texas rig is the ticket to punching through the vegetation and drawing strikes from nice bass.

flipping it in there, and all of a sudden, something thumps it, and the water explodes, and you're trying to get him out of the canes and into the boat.

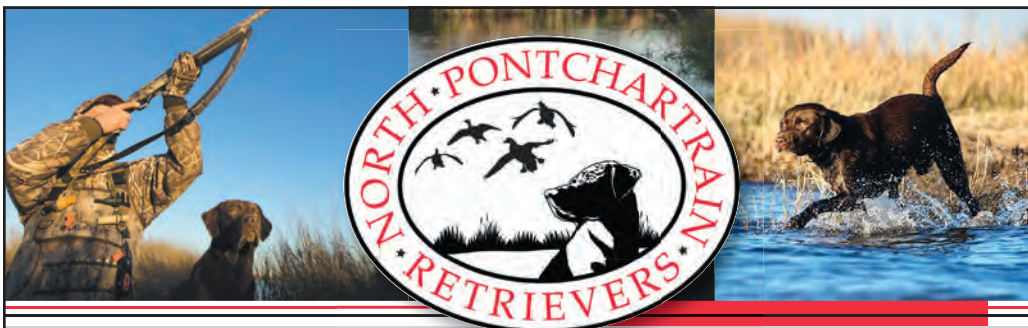
"There's no net involved. If he weighed 500 pounds, you wouldn't get a net. You don't have time to. If you stop to get a net, he's going to get back in the cover, and you're going to lose him. So you're trying to flip a 5-pound bass in the

boat, and it's just fun."

Welcome to the jungle, baby. You may not die, but you'll probably feel like you've gone to heaven. ■



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



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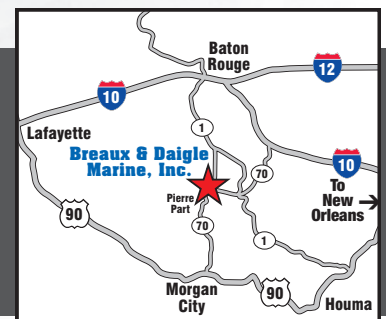
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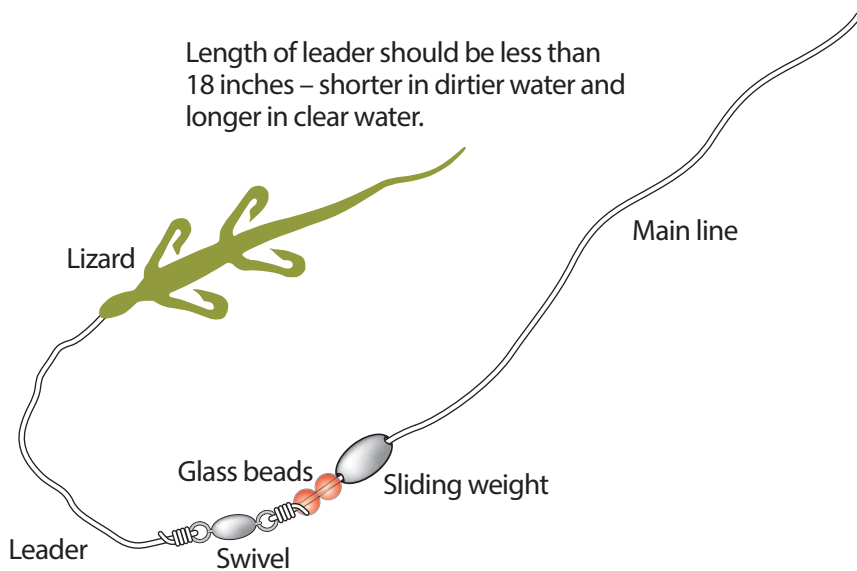
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ADVANCED GRIGS

When bass are deep, there's no better way to coax them into biting than dragging a big chunk of plastic on a Carolina rig past their noses.

Length of leader should be less than 18 inches – shorter in dirtier water and longer in clear water.



When bass move out of their cool-weather haunts in shallow water, Carolina rigs are perfect tools with which to dredge up fish from the depths, and main-lake points are great targets for these bottom-fishing rigs.

But bass pro Tommy Biffle said there's more to success than just pulling up to any old point and dragging your favorite soft-plastic bait behind a 1-ounce weight.

"Usually, the long, skinny points are the better ones," Biffle said. "You also don't want to throw a Carolina rig on the ones with a lot of chunk rock, so I look for those that have a gradual slope."

He said graphing this bottom structure helps pinpoint exactly where fish are hanging out — a feat made easier than ever with today's side-scan and bottom-scan electronics — and then it's just a matter of positioning the boat and dragging his Biffle-O Lizard through the bass.

But if you haven't stepped up your sonar game, you can still catch a lot of fish Carolina-rigging those gradually sloping points.

"If you don't have a good graph, throwing up shallow and working it down the point will work," he explained.

And when bass move to ledges along old creeks and river channels, Biffle said it's best to look for some structure change as opposed to long, straight stretches.

"I look for bends, intersections where another creek meets the river channel and old road beds," he said. "Bends are natural gathering points for (bass), and intersections give them another way to get (to the bends)."

In these instances, he works his Carolina rig perpendicular to the contour break.

"I just let (the lizard) fall straight down," Biffle said. "If it's a shallow ledge, I'll let it fall to the bottom. If there's a big depth change, you might not let it fall all the way to the bottom."

If your weight hits the bottom, it's time to reel in and make another drag, he said.

"The fish are going to hit it as it falls, so you have to pay attention to where the bait stops falling," said Biffle, who varies the length of his leaders according to water clarity.

"In dirtier water, I want the lizard down closer to the weight because that weight is what tricks them," Biffle said. "With a shorter leader, when fish come to look at that weight dragging across the bottom, they can still see the lizard."

Clear water mandates longer leaders to separate the lure from the weight; however, Biffle rarely uses a leader longer than 18 inches.

"If you go too long, it makes it harder to cast the rig," he said. "Plus, I just don't think it has to be that long." ■

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OTHERS STRUGGLE.**

By David A. Brown

In a word-association game, “finesse” and “heavy” would not typically be connected.

However, there exists a strategic melding of the two concepts in which “heavy finesse” tactics can yield big results in the bass-fishing world.

More of a concept than a specific rig, this style of bass fishing is a problem solver — an opportunity maker, of sorts.

As Darold Gleason, a guide on Toledo Bend Reservoir, points out, heavy finesse fishing is more about tweaking, retooling and retrofitting than creating something new and novel.

“When I think of ‘heavy finesse,’ I may throw a Carolina rig on 15- to 17-pound line with a 1-ounce weight, but I’ll throw a trick worm on the back of it, which to me is more finesse,” Gleason said. “Instead of throwing a creature bait, which is big and bulky, I’ll throw a (smaller) worm.”

Gleason said this setup is a good bet on days when the bite has gotten tough or he’s in the mid-day lull; you know, when he’s seeing fish on his electronics, he’s tried other presentations that didn’t work, but he’s convinced the fish will still bite.

Likewise, instead of drop-shotting on spinning gear with

8-pound line, Gleason might use a baitcaster with a beefier drop-shot on 14-pound line, a heavier weight and a 10-inch worm.

“If I’m getting a lot of fish pecking at my Texas-rigged worm, and I’m missing the bites, a lot of times I think they’re suspended a foot or two off the bottom, and they’re pecking at the weight as it goes by them,” Gleason said. “I’ll go to a heavy drop-shot rig to get the bait off the bottom just enough to get the worm in front of them.”

Probably the most-widely used of the finesse rigs, a drop-shot’s conversion to heavy finesse duty merits deeper examination.

For starters, bass pro Larry Nixon, who cut his teeth on Toledo Bend, said he’ll use a drop-shot in lakes with off-colored water. Decreased visibility allows anglers to conceal heavier tackle, while leveraging the greater water displacement of a big worm, creature bait or craw body.



Breakaway drop-shot weights allow you to fish this finesse rig in heavy cover with less risk of losing the entire rig.



HOW TO GET BOTTOM RIGS UNHOOKED

WHEN BASS FISHING

Some anglers, like Arkansas bass pro Stetson Blaylock, refer to heavy drop-shot tactics as “power-shotting” — essentially the strategy of blending power-fishing with the poster child for light-line techniques.

It’s less about stealthy drops and long waits while reluctant fish make up their minds. Rather, it’s simply a presentation style used to cover water and show the fish a different kind of look.

This is not to knock thin line and light spinning outfits, but bait-casting gear with line stout enough for flipping and spinnerbait duty serves well the objectives in which power-shotting applies.

In short, you want to get the fish away from cover and heading topside ASAP.

Over inhospitable bottom, power-shotting offers the benefit of minimal contact with entangling cover. Whereas a Texas-rigged soft-plastic bait or a jig might hang up, a power-shot — particularly one with a slender, cylinder-style weight — will typically slip across or through any threatening snags while keeping the bait visible and accessible.

Blaylock rigs his weedless baits to further minimize snagging concerns.



Heavy cover requires stout tackle, but not necessarily a big bait.



If the heavy finesse strategy has a hang-up, then we’ve punned our way into the explanation: hang-ups, snags, entanglements.

The fact is, beefed-up finesse rigs might tempt us to leverage presentations around cover or structure with a taste for tackle.

Ideally, stouter baitcasting gear and heavier line will enable us to pull snagged rigs free, but bass pro Larry Nixon can power-shot with rarely the need to break off.

After tying on his drop-shot hook, he’ll attach his sinker with a 1½-inch brass wire stem with a swivel on one end. Tying the tag end of his drop-shot leader to the swivel, he’ll run the wire’s tag end through a slip sinker and uses needle nose pliers to loop the wire so it holds the weight.

If the rig snags, Nixon’s heavier baitcasting outfit will straighten the wire, and all he loses is the sinker.

Nixon’s wire accessory is no longer commercially offered, but homemade versions can be made with wire found at home-improvement stores.

Saving money on tackle is good, but saving time not having to tie on another complete rig means less downtime — a key benefit when he finally coaxes those tough fish to bite.

“This is the best drop-shot rig ever invented,” Nixon said. “It will not straighten out unless you get hung up and pull really hard.

“You can straighten it out and just get your wire back.” ■

"Keeping that bait off the bottom just allows those fish an easier way to see it coming, rather than just dragging it right on the bottom like a Texas rig," Blaylock said. "And it's just a little different approach. It's not so much about what it does; it's just about giving them a different look.

"If you're fishing (deeper water) and you're catching them on a crankbait, those fish are more than likely suspended. If you take that power-shot and cast it out there, a lot of times they'll have it before it ever hits bottom."

In terms of presentation diversity, Nixon said an up-sized drop-shot does a good job of



A creature bait on a light Carolina rig creates an enticing presentation.

replacing a big Texas-rigged worm or jig for targeting fish near the bottom.

"The heavier application works when you get a lot of fishermen on a lake and everybody is fishing offshore structure with big worms, jigs, crankbaits and all that stuff — and all of the sudden, the fish get hard to catch," he explained. "That's when you can go to 12- or 15-pound line and a big drop-shot — a heavy one, like a 3/8- or 5/16-ounce weight — and go right behind people and catch fish."

On pressured waters, Nixon knows it doesn't take long to educate resident fish. Once they've seen enough of the standard mix, they will tend to shy away from the familiar. This is where power-shotting a big bait can work wonders.

"One day, they may bite a Texas-rig, and then the next day they won't touch the thing," Nixon said. "You fish two or three days in a row, and it changes every day. When those fish get beaten up pretty badly, you have to switch on them."

Other power-shot pluses include better castability and a quick fall rate, both of which can get your bait into tight quarters where a lighter rig might struggle with lesser precision. And while tradi-

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tional light drop-shots rely on persistence, the power-shot's faster fall often triggers reaction strikes.

"You can be just as effective with 15- to 20-pound line and flipping (a power-shot) shallow in heavy cover," Blaylock said. "It works really well in bushes — you just have to shorten your leader so you're not tangled up as much.

"If I'm pitching a drop-shot around heavy cover, I don't usually go over a 6- or 8-inch leader. If you're going to throw it offshore, you might go up to 12 inches. You just have to get out there and experiment with it."

As Gleason noted, the heavy finesse concept might be your primary tactic or a follow-up, depending on the scenario. He'll adjust during a day, as needed.



Where crawfish abound, try drop-shotting a craw bait.

But if a previous day's results clearly indicate bass have soured on a traditional presentation, he might start the next morning with a heavy finesse look.

"With these heavy finesse techniques, it's something you have in your arsenal," he said. "You try to have a rod rigged up for it, if you know the conditions are lining up for it."

Whenever you think a situation might call for a heavy finesse rig, Gleason suggests giving it 20 to 30 minutes to see if it makes a difference for you.

If it doesn't do the trick, it's a safe bet that the fish are just not interested. Call it a negative feeding mood, but no sense belaboring the situation.

At that point, it's probably best to relocate and give those heavy finesse rigs a new stage on which to display their fish-tempting appeal. ■

**OTHER HEAVY
FINESSE TACTICS**
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A full-time freelance writer specializing in sport fishing, David A. Brown splits his time between journalism and marketing communications (www.tightwads.com).



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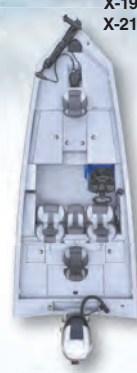
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OTHER HEAVY FINESSE BASS-FISHING TACTICS

Drop-shots aren't the only finesse rigs that can be beefed up to provide bass a bite-enticing curve ball. Here are some other options:

• **Shaky heads.** A lead jighead designed to stand a hook upward when resting on the bottom, the shaky head is a classic finesse tool for docks, natural wood and any places slow, steady presentation is needed.

However, swapping the usual skinny finesse worms for a 5- to 6-inch Senko or a big ribbontail worm instantly expands the profile and offers the fish a bigger package in the same delivery form.

• **Better with a bullet.** Swimming a Senko around grass and lily pads might be considered a finesse approach, when compared to the intrusive tactics of pitching jigs and Texas-rigged creature baits into the vegetation.

However, making that finesse presentation a little heavier with a bullet weight on the Senko's nose changes the dynamics by allowing it to run deeper.

• **Piling wrap.** Bass pro John Murray has a creative technique for fishing drop-shots around bridge pilings in current.

When wind, waves or river current pushes a drop-shot past the target zone too quickly, he'll harness situational dynamics to create an enticing ruse.



David Brown



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Adding a nail weight to the tail of a wacky rigged stickbait adds to casting distance and bait action.

Basically, Murray casts his drop-shot across the piling's upcurrent face, lets the water pin the rig against the structure and then drifts past the piling a couple of yards.

With his line basically at a right angle, the drop-shot's small worm or grub creates the presentation of a baitfish nibbling algae off the piling.

The reason this one qualifies for heavy finesse is the braided line and 15-pound fluorocarbon leader needed to hold up to the piling's rough surface.

• **Drop swimming.** Bass pro Mark Maderos adds an aggressive flair to his drop-shot rig. It's the same basic concept as power-shotting — heavier weight and a hefty creature bait or swimbait on the hook — but the difference is presentation.

Maderos isn't pitching in and out of cover: he's casting and swimming his drop-shot along grass lines, docks and other likely bass haunts.

• **Nail it.** Wacky rigging a finesse worm or a soft stickbait is a year-round favorite in the finesse ranks, but one simple addition graduates this setup to the heavy ranks — a nail weight.

Slipped into the worm's head, the nail weight not only makes the bait sink faster — and with a nose-first posture — but it also



David Brown

increases casting distance and presentation speed.

Essentially, the added weight adds the element of power-fishing to your finesse rig. ■



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Toledo Bend: it's right at night

Best August bass action is after dark

Catch bass and beat the heat. Both are doable in August, arguably the hottest month of the year at Toledo Bend. All you have to do is plan your late-summer bass fishing trips between sunset and sunrise.

Toledo Bend always has been a real, real good night-fishing lake. The bassing success has been keeping serious fishermen up at night, so to speak. Last August was awesome, and it should be great again this year.

Bass clubs and even some organizations schedule night tournaments on Toledo Bend, which is shared by Louisiana and Texas. Many start their contests an hour or so before sunset, which gives bass fishermen a window for that oft-magical time before the sun goes down.

FULL-MOON FISHING IS BEST

The best time to fish after the sun goes down is during the full moon, which will be Aug. 15 this year. So prime time other than that night is two or three days before and two or three days after.

Fishing in the dark is made easier these days with the advances in marine electronics and mapping units that make it much easier to move around. Remember, though, it's a stump-filled lake, so be extra careful driving around and practice boating safety even more than you do during daylight hours.

Making night-fishing even more appealing are the various lighting products available on the market, such as black lights and LEDs. Crappie fishermen have been keeping up with and taking advantage of the marine electronics and the lighting during nocturnal hours for many years at Toledo Bend.

Whether you're bass fishing for fun or in competition, the chance to catch quality and quantity is ever-present in the dark, away from the maddening crowd and the suffocating heat. The chance has multiplied over the past several years because of the continued construction of docks and piers around the lake, giving bass more cover than they use already in the peppergrass and pads.

TARGET SHALLOW PEPPERGRASS

Too shallow, you say? We're dealing with a substantial topwater bite — topwaters and plastic frogs — in the peppergrass that extends from south to north, east to west, even during the day the first week of July. We have a situation, a fairly high lake level at 170.92, where the bite could and should be good in August, especially at night, in the peppergrass and lily pads.

Why? I think the lake still will be in the 170s.

I know the prevailing pattern over the years has been to fish deep, where there might be considerable bigger bites. Still, I definitely would start shallow in the hour or so before day turns to night and stay there until the bass tell you it isn't happening. As long as the shallow bite continues, I wouldn't leave it.



Brandon Michaels lips a 3½-pound bass he caught on a plastic frog in the peppergrass the last week of June at Toledo Bend. Brandon was fishing with his father, Tony Michaels, and guide/columnist John Dean. Bass like this one can be caught day and night in August, Dean says, particularly at night to beat the heat.

Topwater poppers and "walk-the-dog" type artificials, plus black and dark-colored plastic frogs and plastic worms, are top choices at night. Ditto for black buzzbaits and spinnerbaits.

The key at night in the shallows hinges on the presence of baitfish such as bream and shad, which are so prevalent now in the peppergrass. As long as the baitfish are there, the bass will hang around.

DOCKS OFFER GREAT BASSING

Hundreds of docks present a viable alternative to the peppergrass. They're everywhere. Ninety percent of them have brush piles, and a lot of them have lights.

Dock fishing at night has been strong for a couple summers. Consider that bass are pretty much dock-oriented anyway and you've got a strong argument to get on the docks flippin', pitchin', working square-bill crankbaits, topwaters and, recently, glide baits. The latter have come up huge around docks and marinas.

Docks have been productive all year, ever since the marina and dock construction ramped up over the past 10 years.

For those who choose to fish deep, the 22- to 25-foot depths around brush piles and other structure, drag a Carolina-rigged soft plastic, or drop a drop-shot soft plastic or a football jig on them. Those are the three primary artificials for triggering bites deep.

If you want to catch bass in August, I've been guiding on this lake most of my life and you're more than welcome in my boat. Give me a call at 936-404-2688. ■

— John Dean



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



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By Todd Masson

IF YOU THINK THE TROPHY TROUT TRAIN HAS ALREADY PASSED BY, THINK AGAIN. HERE ARE TWO PLACES TO TARGET AND SEVERAL TECHNIQUES TO USE.

NEVER TOO LATE

Among anglers who target trophy speckled trout, August gets less respect than Rodney Dangerfield in a room full of ADD kids. Poll 100 big-fish chasers about their favorite month, and 80 will say May. The other 20 will flip the calendar to April, June or even February.

But August isn't likely to be anyone's top choice. It is sometimes torturous to fish in the eighth month. We'd complain about the heat if we could only breathe the stifling air. Besides that, speckled trout begin to scatter in August, with younger fish making the trek toward inside waters that will support them in the fall and the big brutes abandoning the seasonal spawn and becoming loners.

The dreaded transition will likely begin sometime this month, but the good news for anglers is there are still some monsters to be had, particularly in the first half of August. Just ask Tony Bruce. In 2015, the fisherman from Zachary landed a 6.8-pound speckled trout that won him a boat in the STAR tournament. When was that fish caught? Aug. 7.

BIG BOYS IN BRETON
UP NEXT >



BIG BOYS IN BRETON

An incredibly successful tournament and rodeo angler in his own right, Kris Robert makes his living guiding out of Slidell, and that means most years, his favorite trophy trout hotspot is awfully close to home.

"If I've got some clients, and they're fishing a rodeo, and they're like, 'Look, we're not worried about numbers; we just want size,' my first thought is, with the spillway not opened, I'd probably say, 'We're going to go to L&N and catch the tide right. We're just going to fish those deep holes (20 feet or more), where the water's flowing,'" Robert said. "In a normal year, those fish are starting to jam up in there, trying to make that transition in August and September."

But this year is less normal than a January hurricane, so Robert's Plan B is Breton Sound.

"I'm going to find deep water and flowing water," he said. "Those are the two most-important elements in August."

They're available all over Breton Sound, and many around visible oil-field structures. Robert will hit those occasionally, especially early in the week, but on weekends, he's fishing only stuff that doesn't breach the surface of the water.

"You want to fish something that's hard to find," he said. "Those big trout are big for a reason. They're not going to hang around where people are chucking anchors and pounding on them consistently. They're going somewhere else, where there's the least

amount of boat traffic or fishing pressure they can find."

Locating that type of place requires lots of hours staring at a depth finder or making friends with other trophy trout anglers.

"You hang around with enough people or do enough research, you hear about boats that got sunk, offshore wrecks or shell piles," Robert said. "That's the type of stuff you want to fish. You always hear people talk about the Dope Boat or the Pogie Boat. A lot of people don't know where they're at, so they don't get as much pressure as the stuff that's visible."

"We went the other day to the Pogie Boat, and it's probably about 18 feet of water there. So it's deep, there's water flowing from the Gulf into the Sound and vice versa, and obviously there's structure. That's where those big fish congregate."

But simply finding an area that's likely to hold trophy trout isn't enough. As with many things in life, timing is everything, Robert said.

"If you want exclusively big fish, they're only going to bite right at daylight and right before sunset," he said. "The only time during the day you've got a good chance for big trout is during the swapping tide. You get the tide swapping or start slowing down, that first 30 minutes or so, they'll feed again."

"They're no different than us. When it's hot, you don't really feel like stuffing your face. You just want to get where it's cool and relax. They're the same way. They'll just lay up all day."

But when they **ARE** feeding, they're actually pretty easy to catch, Robert said.

"In August, the fish are spawned out, so they're looking to eat," he said. "They're just crushing everything that comes through there."



Robert will offer live croakers or live jumbo shrimp — 10- to 16-count — and he likes them rigged a particular way. “When I’m fishing big trout — and this does make a difference — a Carolina rig is the best way to go because the bait is free-flowing in the current,” he said. “Those big trout have been around a while and have seen a lot of things. If a bait is kind of constricted, it doesn’t look natural. So I like a Carolina rig with a long leader so that bait can just do what it does.”

Robert will use a ½- to 1-ounce egg sinker, depending on the current, and a long, 20-pound fluorocarbon leader. He also likes a surprisingly small hook, a No. 8 treble.

“I want a hook you can hide,” he said. “I want that fish to be able to suck that bait up and get it down in its throat. I’d rather them swallow that bait so I know they’re not getting off as opposed to using a Kahle hook and hoping he gets hooked in the side of the mouth or somewhere.

“If I’m fishing a rodeo, I’m going to keep the fish anyway, so I’m not worried about him swallowing it.”

COCODRIE CONUNDRUM

UP NEXT >

Kris Robert likes to hit visible structure like oil rigs during the week, but he’ll fish only submerged cover on weekends.



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COCODRIE CONUNDRUM

When it comes to trophy-trout production, this south-central Louisiana port lives in the shadows of giants to the east and west — Calcasieu Lake and Venice. But the big-fish production there is actually underrated, according to Chris Macaluso, director of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.

Every summer, Macaluso fishes rodeos out of both Cocodrie and Grand Isle, and he's figured out that certain places south of the former hold numbers of fish, while others feature just a few lunkers.

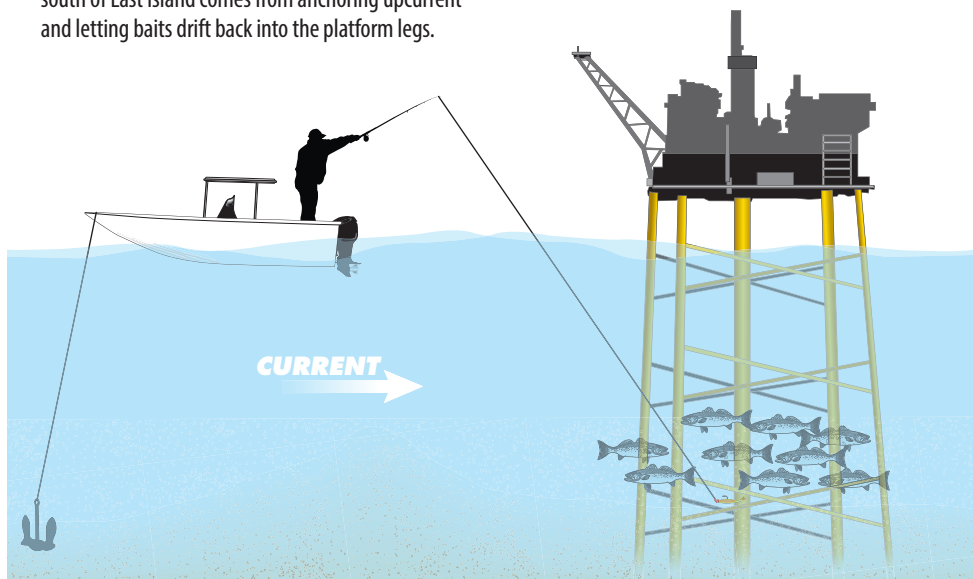
"There are some rigs out in front of Last Island that stretch all the way from in front of Wine Island all the way to Racoon," he said. "They're in 20 to 30 feet of water. That's where I always look first when the conditions are right.

"There are a couple in particular right out in front of Last Island that are only two or three miles in front of the island. They always hold some big fish, but that time of year, they're also going to be loaded up with bull redfish and other things that are going to beat you up, but they're really good places to look."

Before he hits those platforms searching for trophies, though, Macaluso invests hours in his prep time.

"The trouble in Cocodrie is not necessarily finding fish that can win you a rodeo; the trouble is finding the right bait," he said. "You don't necessarily need live bait to go try, but it wouldn't hurt. And finding good-sized croakers or mullet is kind of up to you. You're probably not going to be able to buy

Chris Macaluso says the most-frequent action at the rigs south of Last Island comes from anchoring upcurrent and letting baits drift back into the platform legs.



the size bait you need."

Macaluso loves a livewell full of big croaker and mullet, but he also totes along a tackle box stuffed to the gills with baits no school trout angler would ever consider using.

"I throw big swimbaits and soft-plastics, like 7-inch Gulp Jerk Shads, big Zoom bass baits or H&H Queen Cocahoes," he said. "You need that bigger profile for those big fish. You might catch one on a small bait, but your chances go way up with those bigger baits."

While most anglers crowd around visible structure in Breton Sound, Capt. Kris Robert uses his electronics to find underwater structure, like shipwrecks.



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Exactly how Macaluso presents those baits depends on the conditions he finds, but he tries just about everything before abandoning a platform.

"Sometimes they're suspended," he said. "Generally, what we'll do is just poke around and fish different corners of the rig — fish the downcurrent side, fish the upcurrent side. Sometimes it's better to anchor upcurrent and fish the bait down into the rig; sometimes the fish will be on a particular corner, depending on the tide. You can rig-hook and try to fish them that way. It just depends on the day.

"I would say your most-consistent action is going to be anchoring upcurrent and drifting the baits back down into the rig, but I've also caught a lot of nice fish tying to the downcurrent side and throwing the bait up into the rig with a big, heavy jighead."

Macaluso said August doesn't scare him at all. He actually kind of likes the month, with the exception of one popular area.

"I've caught nice trout in late summer all over Cocodrie," he said. "I'll tell you where I wouldn't go, though, is Lake Pelto. They're just not in there that time of year. The water's shallow, and it's been hit hard pretty much all spring and summer." ■



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



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LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman

Charleigh Champagne, the 2½-year-old daughter the daughter of Matrix owner Chas Champagne, admires a huge speckled trout that fell for a Matrix Rip Shad.

MATRIX RIP SHAD TARGETS THE 'TWEENER' DEPTHS

JERKBAIT TRIGGERS SPECKLED TROUT BITES FROM LOUISIANA TO FLORIDA

Chas Champagne of Slidell continues to expand the line of Matrix Shad artificials that saltwater fishermen covet in their efforts to catch speckled trout and other fish in and around the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean.

His latest entry into the market will be the Matrix Rip Shad, a hard-body jerkbait, already a favorite of his and guides in Louisiana and Florida. The company is rolling out several artificials in the coming months that have been proven before hitting the market.

Champagne said the Rip Shad will likely be available on shelves this month.

"We've been working on that about a year," he said.

Another of the eight new products

scheduled to hit the market within six to eight months is the Matrix Monster, a 5-inch version of the Matrix Shad that should target speckled trout, bull reds, jack crevalle, lemonfish and even tarpon.

A JERKBAIT NEED

Champagne, 36, a graduate of St. Paul's High School and University of Southern Mississippi, said the Matrix Rip Shad was born out of necessity, i.e., to cover that depth between 2 feet and 6 feet. The Matrix Minnow, the second hard bait made by Matrix Shad, has been picking off beaucoup speckled trout at its optimum depth on the retrieve ever since its debut.

The Matrix Minnow runs about 6 feet deep, which is ideal for many areas. However, while on a fishing trip in 2018,

Champagne found himself wanting something that covered shallower depths.

"Last summer, when I was throwing the Matrix Minnow in Florida over some shallow grass beds, I was catching grass consistently. I wanted to make something for the shallows," he said.

"When it hits the water, it's floating. When you rip it down, it dives about 3 feet," he said, adding that, during a pause in the action, it rises slowly to the surface.

"It'll be great to fish 2 to 6 feet of water over shells, grass," he said, having tried



Don Shoopman fishes for freshwater and saltwater species mostly in and around the Atchafalaya Basin and Vermillion 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.

Matrix Rip Shads fill the niche as Matrix owner Chas Champagne continues "to make something for every situation."

it out fishing prototypes at the Rip Shad at the MRGO and in Florida. "I've been personally fishing with them about six months."

After prototypes became available in December and January, Champagne used Matrix Rip Shad, which are armed with heavy duty, black-nickel No. 6 hooks that are rust- and corrosion-resistant, to catch speckled trout on the MRGO rocks that border Lake Borgne, then returned in the spring to shallow areas in Florida.

"When I went back to the grass flat in Florida, we were very pleased with it. That's when we pulled the trigger (on the production schedule)," he said.

TESTING GROUND

Champagne knew he had another winner, because if a speckled trout nails an artificial lure in the Sunshine State, they will nail it anywhere, because of the clean, salty, water and the amount of fishing pressure, the number of baits those fish see off the Florida coast.

Champagne sent some Rip Shads to several guides who fish 200 days or more each year, including Josh Lim of Pensacola, Fla., who owns Lim-It-Out Charters. As fate would have it, Lim caught a 26-inch speckled trout 10 minutes after he started fishing with it.

"He was SO excited. His word in Florida is good as gold. I knew if he liked it, everyone would," Champagne said.

continues >>>








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LURE REVIEW

continued

“Like I said before, some of the smartest speckled trout and redfish are in Florida. When you can catch 10 (speckled trout) a day over there, that means it works. It’s effective.”

The Rip Shad, which weighs $\frac{5}{16}$ -ounce, will be produced in five colors: purple passion, orange crush, goldie knox, cool breeze and glass shad.

His company’s goal is to make as many baits in a few colors rather than a few baits in many colors.

Josh Lim of Pensacola, Florida, who owns and operates Lim-It-Out Charters, smiles as he holds an ol’ yellowmouth he caught on a Matrix Rip Shad.



“We try to make something for every situation. That way we have something for everybody,” he said.

It started around 2010 when Champagne introduced what emerged as the wildly popular 3-inch Matrix Shad. Later, he introduced a 2-inch Matrix Shad for sac-a-lait fishermen, and at the request of so many saltwater anglers who venture to near-offshore and offshore waters, he is bringing out the Matrix Monster.

“We’ve got a 4-inch (Matrix Shad) coming, too,” he said.

For more information on the Matrix Rip Shad and other Matrix Shad products, go to www.matrixshad.com. ■

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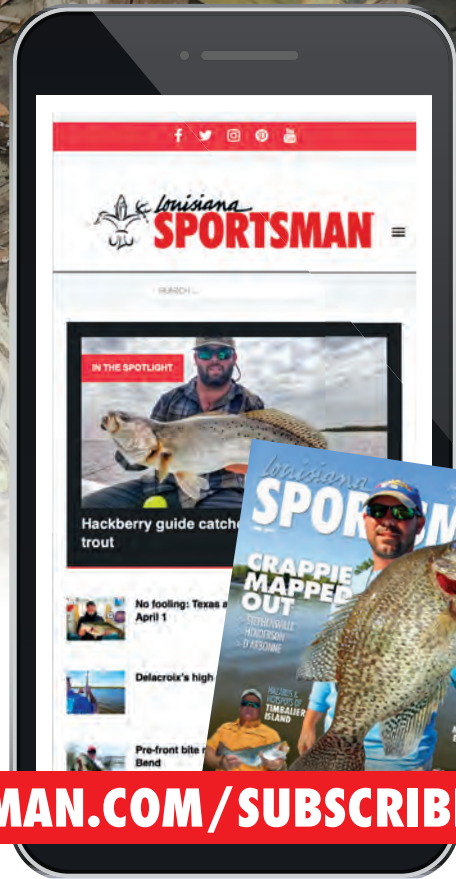
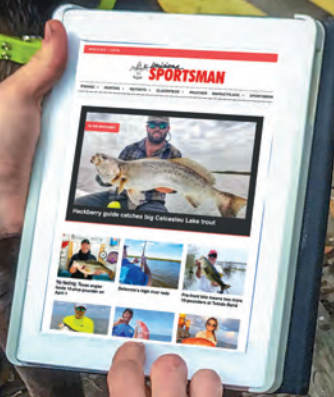
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SPECKLED TRUTH

Chris Bush

Take notes on which lures worked this past year, and when, and put that knowledge to good use next time out.

WHAT LURES WORKED FOR YOU AND WHEN?

KEEP THOSE BAITS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Christopher Bush

Fishing is a cyclical process, and those who are consistently successful understand that process.

What it often boils down to is figuring out the pattern, in a certain time of year, and dialing in presentation through lure selection. As I do most every year, I take off during the heat of the summer. What often ensues is a bit of preparation for the next winter wading season, but also a time of reflection. During this time, I look at the lures in my wade boxes and consider why they were successful. Here is a summary of what I noticed to hopefully help you prepare for the latter months of the year.

• **MirrOlure MirrOdine (17 MR), MirrOdine XL (27 MR).** These baits consistently produced throughout the year. I've thrown them in all four seasons and they have easily become a confidence bait. January and February were really good months for me, then it slacked off, only to pick back up in the end of May and into June. The colors that were most successful were: greenback (18), pink/chartreuse speckled trout (C17MR-ECTR) and blue back/silver sides white belly (27MR-EB).

• **MirrOlure SoftDine, Custom Corky SoftDine XL.** When searching for a slightly more-subtle presentation with

less flash than a MirrOdine, I've found the SoftDine a fantastic alternative. Like the MirrOdine, this bait provides the capability to produce in all seasons and does so for me regularly. My top producing colors were: bayou/green back (49), pink/silver (08) and chartreuse/silver white belly (91). In addition, when searching for larger bites with larger bait present, primarily mullet, I'll throw the SoftDine XL. My confidence colors stay in line with the first three, except I love two custom colors in Custom Corkys: bay mistress and double bubble.

• **Rapala Shadow Rap Shad, Shadow Rap.** Similar in functionality and fishability, these two baits were incredibly effective on big fish from December to February. The long, exaggerated pause I would employ simply drove the big fish crazy during colder temperatures or days with a slight warming trend. As we moved into spring, these baits lost some of its effectiveness, but they have produced for me on a year-round basis. My favorite colors in both models are blueback herring, bone, haymaker and halloween.

SOFT PLASTICS

Last but not least, the unending versatility of having soft plastics in the box. Slowly but surely, I'm throwing

larger profiles, but I haven't completely dismissed smaller soft plastics (under 4 inches) from my arsenal. For smaller profiles, I've found that a NED Rig (Owner Blockhead and ZMan Finesse TRD) can be super productive. For more traditional-style swimbaits, Matrix Shad, Down South Lures or the Slayer Inc SST on a round or aspirin-style jighead produce year-round and simply produce bites. These can be great search baits; once you find the fish, upsize or switch techniques to entice the larger fish.

On the larger side of the soft-plastic spectrum, I've found that the KWigglers BTS (Ball Tail Shad) to also be super productive. Paired with a lighter jighead, this bait and profile gives a distinct glide that allows you to fish shallower more efficiently. Another large, soft-plastic bait that perpetually produces is the 6-inch Flap'n Shad from Gambler. These can be effective on both a traditional jighead as well as a swimbait hook. The elongated profile and pliability allow you to present



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 his knowledge on his website, Speckled Truth.

a bait with tremendous action. The only down side is they are softer, and as a result, they only last a few fish. My favorite colors of the KWigglers are lagunaflauge and mansfield margarita, and my favorite colors of Flap'n Shad are coolade and night train.

FANTASTIC FATBOYS

Wow, where do I begin?! Paul Brown Fatboys are my perennial favorites and yet another way to target bigger bites. Know that these are, without a doubt, my confidence baits when it comes to targeting one big bite. Attributes like a healthy profile and an exaggerated wobble descent allows me to really pick apart an area I feel is holding larger-than-normal fish. My color selection varies widely, especially given water conditions. However, I find that Texas chicken (98), black back/silver sides/pink belly (11) and black back/gold sides/orange belly (09) are what I gravitate to the most.



The author's favorites include Paul Brown Fat Boys (top), a variety of soft plastics (above) and MirrOdines (right).

So as we gear up for another full fall fishing season, I encourage you to really reflect on what has and has not been productive. Simply learning from what works and when can bolster your consistency; it may lead to a lot more success in the future.

Tight lines, God bless and remember to take what you need and release the rest. ■



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COCODRIE SPECKLED SMACKDOWN

NO SHORTAGE OF TROUT IN TERREBONE PARISH

While anglers on the southeastern end of Louisiana are grinding their teeth over the scarcity of speckled trout caused by the freshwater deluge from the Lake Pontchartrain Spillway, anglers in the Cocodrie area are unaffected and enjoying the best speckled trout action they've seen in years.

Capt. Tommy Pellegrin of Custom Charters (985-851-3304) said the whole area is teeming with the freckled fish.

"Right now, the action is incredible," Pellegrin said. "We've usually got our limits by 9 to 9:30 in the morning, and often even before that."

"The trout are actually everywhere from the Ship Channel and throughout Lake Barre and Terrebone Bay, at every wellhead, island, reef and point. I tell everyone the easiest thing to do is just look for the birds and fish under them. You'll find some birds feeding over gafftops, but there are plenty trout under other flocks. And it doesn't have to be a big flock of birds. We're catching fish where we see just one or two birds diving, because where they're diving, shrimp are jumping."

Pellegrin said all the trout are smaller this time of year, so you'll have to cull through the undersized fish, but there's plenty keeper size in the mix.

"I love seeing so many smaller fish because that means we'll have a fantastic fall and spring also," he said.

Pellegrin said right now the winds and tides don't much matter, and while live shrimp is always a good idea, the smaller specks will inhale plastic as well.

"Carlis over at Outlaw Baits has live shrimp, and we're also using the Berkley Rattle Shrimp in the coastal candy color with great success, and we fish everything under a popping cork," he said. "As for winds and tides, we're catching fish on incoming and falling tides, and even on slack tides. And they're eating up bait on winds from all directions, and even on windier days as long as you can safely fish, you'll find them." ■

— Rusty Tardo



Cocodrie anglers are catching plenty of speckled trout while anglers in other areas of Louisiana are shut out.

Photos courtesy Capt. Tommy Pellegrin



The early morning trout bite around Cocodrie has been fantastic, with plenty of limits in just two or three hours.

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Summer is in full swing, and many anglers are juggling family, travel and work, while still looking for the time to fish. Summer is both a time of freedom and confinement to traffic jams, long lines at anything touristy and launching ramp chaos. We say that our lives are fast in summer, but this is nothing compared to how fast a speckled trout lives, literally speaking. Physiologically, it lives faster in summer than in winter.

WHAT IS METABOLIC RATE AND WHY SHOULD ANGLERS CARE?

Metabolism in biology is a measure of the chemical reactions happening inside cells as they extract and use energy. As an angler, my interest is in the metabolic rate, which is a way to track the frequency of these chemical reactions. Understanding metabolic rate is not just academic, it's a practical way to predict fish behavior.

For creatures like humans and fish, the chemical reactions in cells related to energy extraction and energy use are

reactions involving oxygen. So the amount of oxygen a fish uses is a measurement of a fish's metabolic rate. Oxygen use is measurable; it provides us a handle to open a window on fish behavior.

Measuring the amount of oxygen used by fish can't be done from your boat, but don't worry, biologists have performed many studies on oxygen consumption by fish in controlled environments, which we can use for our purposes. Biologists do these tests by putting fish in a tank and measuring the change in dissolved oxygen in the tank as it is used up by the fish. Remember the last time you killed your bait because you didn't know the aerator died or the circulation pump stopped? Same experiment, except you weren't measuring the oxygen in the water.

THE EFFECT OF WATER TEMPERATURE ON METABOLIC RATE UP NEXT >

UNDERSTANDING FISH METABOLISM FOR BETTER SUMMERTIME SPECKLED TROUT FISHING



By Jon Miller

LIFE IN THE

FAST LANE



THE EFFECT OF WATER TEMPERATURE ON METABOLIC RATE

While biologists have studied the metabolic rate of fish under many environmental conditions, the one of most interest to me as an inshore angler on the Gulf Coast is water temperature.

Biologists have established that metabolic rate increases with water temperature. As we know, fish are cold-blooded, so their body temperature is always the same as the temperature of the water around them. Simply said, the higher the water temperature, the more oxygen fish need, and the more food they must eat.

You may have already verified this principle in your bait bucket, because you know that in summer, if you put a frozen water bottle in the with your shrimp, they won't die as quickly. Lowering the water temperature slows their metabolic rate, which slows their breathing and need for food, while reducing the stress induced by a high metabolic rate.

On Louisiana's Gulf Coast, the water temperature ranges from a low around 50° F to a high of 90°. Figure 1, which was created with data from a 2014 research paper, *Water Temperature, Fundamentals of Environmental Measurements*, shows the relationship between metabolic rate in aquatic organisms and water temperature.

As you can see, the metabolic rate at 90° F is four times the rate at 50°. As we know, the metabolic rate sets the amount of food that fish must eat in a given time period, so redrawing the data as food consumption vs. water temperature in Figure 2 is meaningful to anglers.

METABOLIC RATE IN WINTER

As we see above, the low water temperatures in winter will significantly reduce a speckled trout's respiration and digestion rate. The information I found on digestion rates suggests that, in moderate water temperatures, a speckled trout will digest a full stomach in around 3 days. Therefore, when the water temperature drops from 70° F to 50° F, the metabolic rate will slow to about 50% of what it was, and the digestion rate will be reduced. If we assume the digestion rate will decrease by roughly the same ratio as the metabolic rate, the trout in 50° F water may only need to eat every four or five days.

If the water temperature drops too much, the lowered metabolic rate will result in immobilization of trout and eventual

Figure 1

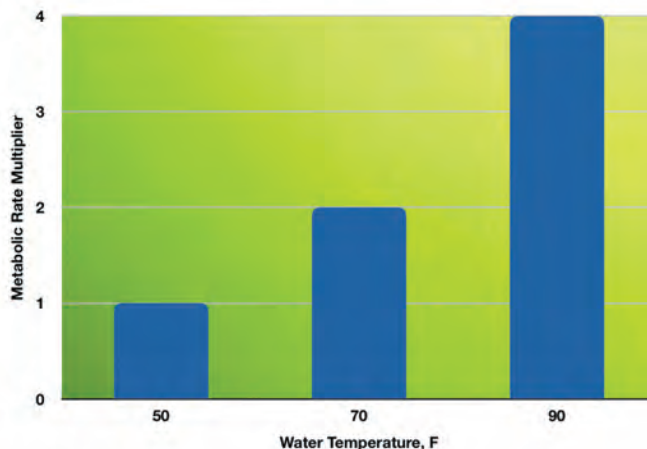
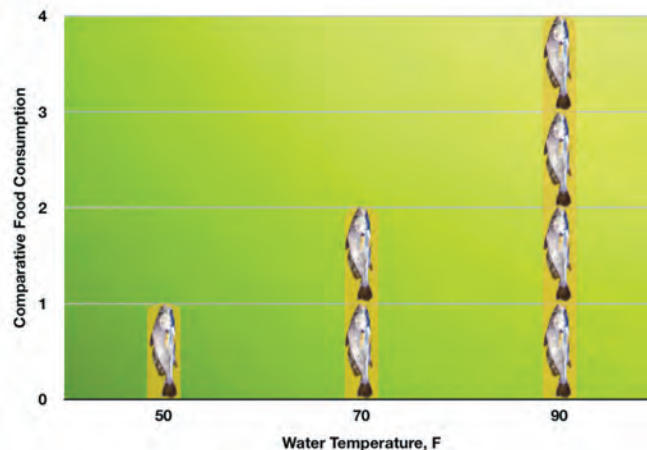
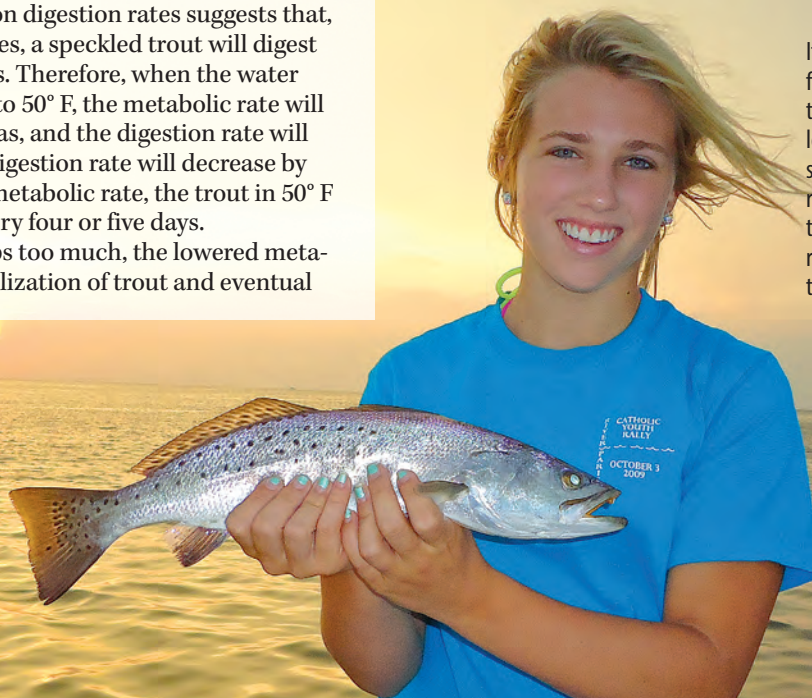


Figure 2



It takes longer in colder water for fish to digest the food in their stomachs, so there is less need to feed. **ABOVE:** A speckled trout's metabolic rate rises appreciably as the water temperature in its home area rises, requiring much more food to keep the fish alive.



death. Timothy O'Donnell reports in the paper, *Effects of Cold Winters on the Genetic Diversity of an Estuarine Fish, Spotted Seatrout*, that Florida speckled trout have died when subjected to a water temperature less than 45° F for more than 24 hours.

So, when a strong winter cold front makes the water temperature plummet, it may seem to us like the trout have left the area, but in actuality, they are still there, just chilling. Most trout are caught due to hunger-driven feeding, so with the cold water suddenly reducing their digestion, there is little need for them to strike at a bait.

My fishing buddy and I have been inspecting stomachs of trout for the past couple of years, and most are empty when we catch them. If there is food, then it's relatively fresh. That's why I think trout will not start feeding until their stomachs are empty and conditions for feeding are reasonably good. If this is true, it's likely that in very cold weather, trout may only feed once a week, and then only in the best conditions. That theory fits pretty well with the inconsistent catching pattern I have experienced when the water temperature drops to the low 50s.



Chris Ginn

**METABOLIC RATE IN
SUMMER**
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METABOLIC RATE IN SUMMER

So now we get to the matter at hand: what will be the feeding behavior of speckled trout in the heat of summer?

Summer is a dynamic period for speckled trout, and in many ways, much more dangerous than winter. Trout are forced by their spawning function out into water with a higher salinity level, where, despite the high predation risk, they must leave protective cover to feed frequently. When the water temperature reaches 90°, data says that a trout's metabolic rate is roughly four times its metabolic rate in winter, requiring them to fill their stomachs every day or two.

In addition to feeling hungry quite a lot, the high water temperatures will increase the trout's physiological function, which I imagine is like having a continuous caffeine buzz or worse. Remaining in water that is too hot will eventually cause a fish to go into shock because of their high physiological function. This state will result in a drop in feeding and lead to death.

If that was not dire enough, hot water holds less oxygen than cold water, and so summer speckled trout may find less available oxygen at a time when their respiration function is



Higher water temperatures in summer increase a trout's metabolic rate and force it to feed four times more often than it feeds during the winter, so its stomach will rarely be empty.

elevated. Plus, there are a number of other changes that occur in warm water, each of which can be toxic to fish. Like I said, summer is a dynamic and dangerous time in the life cycle of speckled trout, so how do they survive?

WHAT TO CONSIDER IN SUMMERTIME

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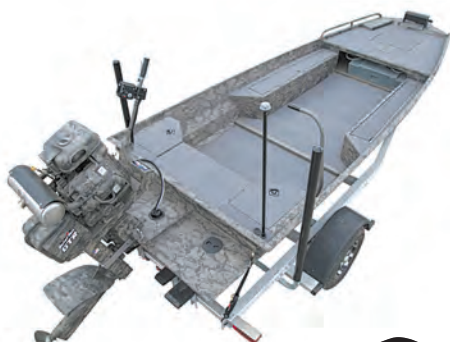
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Speckled trout can't feed shallow during the summer except near dawn and dusk because of scorching water temperatures.



WHAT TO CONSIDER IN SUMMERTIME

Despite surface water temperatures that often reach as high as 90° F, trout are able to survive and even grow. To do so, they must retreat to areas with cooler water where they can calm down and where their physiological function drops.

You have probably noticed that on a sunny, hot, summer day, trout often feed in the early morning in shallow water, but when the sun starts to feel like an open oven door, the shallow-water bite slows. Since trout must eat frequently in summer, they can't depend on feeding only in the morning, so sustained feeding will also happen at other times, but where the water temperature is cooler.

Cooler water can be found deeper, at night, and in clear areas. Speckled trout are primarily a sight-feeding species, so night-

feeding generally happens under lights and around the full moon. Clear water is typically cooler than water with high suspended solids, because solids absorb heat from solar radiation more efficiently than the water molecules themselves.

A common place to find trout in deeper water is around oil and gas rigs. In the sounds and bays, these rigs can be in 7 to 12 feet of water; the trout will hang out on the bottom where the water is coolest. The rigs are good habitat, because in addition to being in deeper, cooler water, there is structure to hold bait and structure to provide protection from large predators.

Because of the frequency at which trout need to eat in summer, they have to stay in areas that are holding a significant amount of bait. Therefore, if you are looking to catch limits of trout, look in areas with evidence of large amounts of bait. Big pods or schools of baitfish can be directly seen swimming or jumping, and indirectly by feeding birds, nervous surface water, and the splashing of feeding predators.

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BAIT SELECTION FOR SUMMER SPECKLED TROUT FISHING

Live bait, specifically shrimp, is the most popular summer bait in Louisiana and is considered by some anglers as the only way to catch speckled trout in summer. Live shrimp is most-often fished 2 to 3 feet under a popping cork or with a sliding cork in deeper water, such as around rigs.

Shrimp can also be fished on the bottom on a Carolina rig or similar rig, but this method is often plagued by hardhead catfish. Be prepared to buy more live shrimp on summer than winter trips, because in addition to speckled trout, you will be feeding a variety of unwanted characters.

Also, keeping shrimp alive when the thermometer hits 90° can be challenging. If you use an aerated baitwell or bait bucket, one trick to prolonging the life of shrimp is to add a frozen water bottle every hour or two. Do not put ice directly into the bait bucket, because it will lower the salinity.

If your baitwell only circulates water from

outside to supply oxygen to the bait, it will struggle to survive on hot, summer days. In this case, consider adding an aerator and a means to cool the water.

Artificial baits also catch fish in summer and have a few attractive differences from live shrimp. For one, they are pleasantly incapable of dying. They are also more selective at attracting gamefish.

I find swimbaits fished under popping corks and topwater stickbaits to be the most-productive, shallow-water artificial baits in summer. Around rigs, ¼- to ¾-ounce swimbaits thrown into the pilings can be very effective.

When using this technique, give the swimbait time to hit the bottom before beginning your retrieve. For an added confidence booster, try adding a bait-strip product like Fishbites onto your swimbait hook. The natural chemicals released by this product can increase speckled trout strikes. Even for the diehard live shrimp angler, having a pack of swimbaits and bait strips could save your fishing on a day when the ladyfish are around to lick your bait clean. ■



Trout are suckers for live shrimp during the summer, but because they're feeding more often, they can be fooled by artificials, too.



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



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WIN COASTAL

BULLFIGHTS

LATE IN THE SUMMER, ANGLERS OFTEN TARGET BULL REDFISH, EITHER IN TOURNAMENTS OR JUST FOR FUN. HERE ARE SOME DO'S AND DON'TS TO REMEMBER WHEN ENGAGING IN THESE BULLFIGHTS.

By Chris Berzas

ONE BIG FISH.

That's what many anglers will be searching for in August during a few tournaments that have bull redfish as a category — or even the one big fish you can keep.

August is a great month to search for redfish, as many of the larger specimens — 27 inches and larger — will be heading through the passes into the Gulf of Mexico, where they will take part in the annual spawn lasting through October.

To assist competitors and others who target these thrilling bullfights, three seasoned anglers offer some helpful do's and don'ts for enjoying your trips anywhere along Louisiana's coast.

DO'S UP NEXT >

DO'S

- **“Do fish shallow-water rigs, right offshore, especially this year,”** said Capt. Sal Gagliano with Southeast Charters (504-782-7593). Gagliano said that bull red anglers usually head for the passes, but if you're fishing Venice, you may have to run a bit farther due to the record high waters of the Mississippi River. “Saltwater is heavier than freshwater,” he said, “and I am finding redfish on the bottom of the shallow rigs.”
- **“Do use live croakers,”** Gagliano said. “Croakers swim to the bottom and hang there. Redfish absolutely love them. I'll also fish for bulls with live pogies on a Carolina rig.”
- **“Do fish the passes, especially in the Grand Isle area,”** said Capt. Daryl Carpenter with Reel Screammers Guide Service (225-937-6288). “The redfish will be hanging on the shelf of those passes, so fish the drop-offs.”
- **“Do also use artificial lures,”** Carpenter said. “I had some customers who used SteelShad Lures (lipless crankbaits) you don't normally see around here. They used the 5-inch versions and caught a great number of redfish.” Other artificials that work well for big reds include Strike King's Red Eye Shad, spoons, spinnerbaits and plastics of all sorts. In the shallows, the use of a loud, clacking popping cork has been noted to entice redfish to aggressively attack cracked crabs and artificials.
- **“Do fish rock structures, especially rock jetties,”** said Phil Broussard of Paradise Lodge and Charters on Calcasieu Lake (337-274-0788).
- **“And do fish during tidal movement, both incoming and outgoing,”** Broussard said. “You will have to move around to find the big reds, as they will be in different places with the varying tides.”

DON'TS UP NEXT ➤



Target bull reds on the bottom in the water you're fishing; it's cooler down there, and saltier.



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Big reds are powerful fish; make sure your tackle is heavy enough, and use circle hooks for an easier release.

DON'TS

- **“Don’t skip on the tackle,”** Gagliano said. “At a minimum, use 30-pound braid for bulls, spooled to 4000 series spinning reels on medium-heavy rods. These fish are strong, and you want to be able to make sure you get them to your boat, especially during a tournament.”
- **“Don’t fish dirty water,”** he said. “Find the cleanest water you can, which mean you may have to travel a bit farther the closer you are to the Mississippi River.”
- **“Don’t use straight-shank hooks,”** Carpenter said. “Use circle hooks, as they increase the chances that bulls will be released alive 99.9% of the time, in my experience.”
- **“Don’t waste the fish,”** he said. “After some of these tournaments, we see dead floating fish in Grand Isle. There are many ways nowadays to clean bulls and cook them to be quite edible.” In Louisiana, there is a favorite saying: “Cook some rice.” Big redfish meticulously cleaned, with bloodlines and fat carved away, fare quite well in well-

seasoned, roux-based tomato sauce gravies known colloquially as “court-bouillion” or “couvillion” depending on your area’s vocal traditions. There are many such recipes offered online.

- **“Don’t fish the shallows,”** Broussard said. “In August, the majority of your bull redfish will be in deeper waters in Passes and along ship channels.”

KEEP BULLS ALIVE

Carpenter’s concerns about fishing for bull redfish are shared among many veteran anglers. Perhaps the model for keeping them alive during tournaments is the use of chase boats as accomplished during Louisiana CCA’s annual Ride the Bull kayak fishing tournament. During that tournament, boats ferry anglers’ bull reds to the official weigh-in site at Bridge Side Marina in Grand Isle.

“We do all we can to keep these big fish alive,” said Rad Trascher, Louisiana CCA’s tournament director for Ride the Bull. “We have well-oxygenated tanks, with cool, rejuvenating waters at Bridge Side Marina, along with the professional assis-

tance of personnel with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

“We have multiple chase boats, so we are pretty quick to get to anglers who have just taken a big redfish.”

For more information regarding the tenth Ride the Bull tournament, scheduled Aug. 23-24, visit ccalouisiana.com/new1/allevnts/ride-the-bull-kayak-tourney.

Anglers are reminded that Louisiana’s redfish limits are five per day, with a 16-inches total length minimum and only one fish over 27 inches allowed daily. Anglers cannot possess redfish of any size in federal waters. ■



Chris Berzas has been a freelancer featured in newspapers, magazines, television and DVDs since 1989.



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Summer Rig Bounty

Cooler water plus lots of structure equals fish magnets for Louisiana anglers

By David A. Brown



When calm days allow easy runs throughout the Delta's nearshore rigs, anglers in skiffs and bay boats will find a wide array of light-tackle action on structures of various size and design.

More than a day-saver or last-ditch option, Capt. Billy Wallbaum of Boothville's Paradise Plus Guide Service views these towering structures as downright priorities. In fact, some of his business is summer-rig driven. "You gotta go to them; they are indispensable in the summer," he said. "During the summer, as long as the winds allow, I will catch my biggest trout of the year on nearshore rigs. I have customers that I only see a couple of times a year because they know the possibility of what can go on at those rigs."

So what's the attraction? For starters, leaving the marsh and coastal shallows often means departing bath-water conditions. Particularly on calm days, long hours of solar heating can make the skinny areas almost unbearably hot, with low dissolved-oxygen levels.

Head to deeper water, and you'll find cooler environments with more oxygen that appeal to summer fish. Past that, there's no overstating the value of something different.

"Several times, I've been in the situation where there are several boats sitting on the islands (in Breton Sound) and maybe they're catching them; maybe they're not, but the fishing pressure forces you to go try different stuff," said Capt. Ross Montet of Cajun Fishing Adventures in Buras. "Bigger fish are typically smarter, so they tend to isolate more. They'll be in smaller groups.

"You'll have mostly school-size trout on the islands, but they start getting smarter as they get older, so those bigger ones typically move out to the rigs."

WHO'S HOME

Capt. Anthony Randazzo, owner of Paradise Plus Guide Service, offered this encouraging outlook: "The sky is the limit when fishing around nearshore rigs during the summer."

Closer to shore in the 6- to 10-foot range, Randazzo looks for large redfish keeping company with the trout. Other possibilities include flounder, sand trout, ladyfish, sheepshead, black drum and jack crevalle. Farther out, in 25 feet of water or more, you can add bluefish, Spanish mackerel, cobia and tripletail to the mix.

Montet adds mangrove and red snapper to his list. With the latter's ridiculously brief federal season, recreational anglers appreciate significantly longer access to these tasty fish, along with their dark brown cousins, on rigs in state waters: inside 9 nautical miles.

Summer river conditions are usually fairly moderate, but an excessively dirty flow will keep the blues, mackerel and spadefish in deeper water, while big winds churning coastal waters can have a similar effect on these species. Beyond that, Wallbaum said to pay close attention to the variables of tide, wind direction, sky conditions, barometer, etc. as they will reveal repeatable patterns.

"There's not a specific set of conditions; you just have to fish those structures over and over and over and keep a log as to what you catch there in the conditions," he said. "For example, if you have a rolling tide, I don't think they eat as well; they're fighting the water until it

continues >>>



SUMMER RIG BOUNTY

slows down as it comes toward the slack of the low or high tide.

“And then, you have to look at water clarity — where’s the wind blowing the dirty water? I want the cleanest water I can find, if I’m fishing deep — over 10 feet.”

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

When it comes to selecting rigs, there are two schools of thought, both meriting consideration. First, smaller, unassuming rigs attract less traffic, so while they may not hold huge numbers of fish, their residents are typically less pressured and, therefore, more cooperative.

On the other hand, larger, more-complex structures offer the benefit of more mass in the water. Not only does that mean more places for fish to

continues >>>

Tripletail are a regular visitor to the rig structures in nearshore Gulf waters off Louisiana’s coast.

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Which rig to fish? The smaller one might not get as much fishing pressure, but the bigger one has more structure in the water and more places for fish to hold. Smaller structures are best on slow tides; bigger rigs break up heavy current better.



inhabit, but also great water dynamics.

“If the tides are strong, I like a bigger rig to have more legs in the water to break up the current, but if the tides are weaker, you can fish smaller structures,” Wallbaum said. “I have some that are simple well heads and some that are (more complex structures). It just depends on the situation.”

Montet offers this thought: “I like the bigger structures, especially the ones that have additional structure in the water, like piers or an old generator that fell into the water. With the small rigs, you’re bouncing a lot. You might only be at one for a few minutes, but the bigger rigs give you more to fish.”

That said, wind direction dictates the savvy angler’s day plan. Knowing what to expect for the morning run, as well as the mid-day and afternoon hours, helps you pick a handful of rigs in the lee.

Notably, this is more than a navigational safety and comfort concern. That stuff’s clearly important, but as Wallbaum points out, working with the wind has a great impact on your ability to effectively approach the fish.

“If I’ve got a south or west wind, I’m going to go to Breton Sound. If I’ve got a north or east wind, I’m gonna go to West Bay,” Wallbaum said. “I try to let the land knock down the wind as much as I can to make it calmer.”

“People don’t realize how much your boat noise can affect a trout bite. They think, ‘I’m up at this rig, and it’s making all kind of noise.’ Well, that rig was making noise when the fish swam up to it, but then a boat pulls in and it’s bouncing up and down — kaboosh, kaboosh. It’s a different noise, and it freaks them out.”

Similarly, idling up to a shallow rig with the outboard motor running and clumsily slapping a rig hook on the structure also creates more commotion than many fish — especially ultra-wary trout — will tolerate. A better course of action, Wallbaum said, would be to shut down at least 50 feet from the rig and use your trolling motor to quietly ease into position.

Side-scanning sonar can be a rig angler’s best friend by showing you what’s holding where and significantly cutting down

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SUMMER RIG BOUNTY

Approach rigs quietly and with care; trout can be ultra-wary, especially those on the larger side.

your search time. One of the most-important variables for any rig is bait, and only structures with a steady food source will consistently hold fish. Thus, spotting bait schools bodes well for your success.

HOW TO HOOK 'EM

Most days, you can't go wrong with medium-heavy spinning outfits, braided line, 20- to 30-pound fluorocarbon leaders and jigs for trout and redfish, mackerel, bluefish, cobia and even the big black drum and jack crevalle that frequent nearshore rigs. Easy to cast and availing to multiple presentations, from vertical hops to swimming retrieves to long, pendulum-style falls, jigs also allow you to quickly change body style and/or color to dial in what the fish prefer.

Wallbaum likes to mix up his presentations with paddletails in 3- to 6-inch sizes and eel bodies. Randazzo suggests keeping assorted sizes of jigheads to control the lures' rate of fall in various winds and currents. Large bucktail jigs with plastic trailers, he said, are great for cobia.

"On very calm days, we even experience incredible early morning topwater action here," Randazzo said. "It is not uncommon to occasionally yo-yo a jig spinner with a soft-plastic minnow and crabs close to the bottom when reds are present."

Another reaction bait tactic: trolling a rig's perimeter with lip-less crankbaits is a good way to bring hungry fish charging out



KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE SKY

Along with baits, terminal tackle and a landing net, add "weather watching" to your summer rigs checklist. Amid the rod-bending revelry of summer rig fishing, take precautions to keep everyone safe and comfortable. That starts with generous layers of sunscreen and lots of drinking water, but don't overlook the pleasant solace of a larger rig's cooling shadow.

Thankfully, summer offers a lot of calm mornings that allow anglers to run where they please, fish what they want and simply pay attention to what can be a rapidly changing scenario. Pop-up storms are the bane of coastal missions that venture just far enough from the passes to risk challenging return runs should the boom-and-flash show commence.

"Obviously, in southern Louisiana, you can't predict the weather," warned Capt. Ross Montet. "You have to watch the radar so you know what's going on. You don't want to be out there and have a squall pop up."

As Montet said, typical, summer, high-pressure conditions bring relatively stable weather through the afternoon, when predictable showers occur. Low-pressure systems, he said, are troublemakers given to frequent temper tantrums.

"The wind will usually be up a little higher; you'll have spottier showers in the morning, midday or afternoon," he said. "Some days are a complete rain-out, and you'll want to stick inside."

"The good thing is that rain water will actually cool the surface temperature, which can make your inshore bite last longer. It can even be good while the rain is coming through. I tell my people, as long as there's no lightning, we can fish as long as you want, but if it starts lightning, we gone."



Big cobia will take up around rigs; bucktail jigs tipped with a soft-plastic trailer are usually the ticket to getting a strike.

King mackerel will hang around nearshore rigs late in the summer, especially if there's a lot of bait in the area.



from the shadows. Mark each bite and note that multiple shots on the same spot indicates you've found the grouping point where targeted jig casts should prove productive.

Note: Mackerel and bluefish often grab the same baits fished for trout, reds and others; but if those toothy fish start clipping off your baits, add a trace of wire leader to minimize your losses.

If you like natural baits, Randazzo said Carolina-rigged or free-lined live shrimp or menhaden produce well around nearshore rigs. Montet will also fish live baits under slip-cork rigs when he's targeting suspended fish.

For snapper, Montet prefers a heavy spinning rod with a fast tip and a 4500- to 6500-class reel loaded with 80-pound braid with about 4 feet of 30- to 60-pound fluorocarbon leader. He'll fish live or cut menhaden, cut mullet or speckled trout bellies from the cleaning table.

"With live bait, the hook placement is less important, but if I'm fishing cut bait, I want to make sure that hook 100% disappears," Montet said. "The perfect cut bait would be about 1-inch square, and that's about an ounce or two of weight. If we use trout bellies, they don't sink as fast."

Montet's deployment strategy harnesses the power of the water to influence his bait's position. He'll cast to the downcurrent side of a rig leg where the water rushing past the structure

grabs his bait and forces it down. Casting to either side means a randomly drifting bait, but hitching a ride on those eddies helps him reach deeper without additional fish-spooking weights.

"The whole time I'm doing this, I keep my spool wide open," he said. "Let the current pull it down, pull it down, pull it down. You know instantly when you have a fish because you'll see that line speeding out of your spool.

"When that happens, you close your bail, set the hook and then run to the back of the boat to try and get him out of there. When you're fishing the rigs, the first thing those fish want to do is go right back into it." ■



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

A large advertisement for Cottonmouth Boats. The background is a photograph of a green aluminum boat on a river, surrounded by lush green vegetation. The boat has a motor and various equipment on board. The text "Cottonmouth BOATS" is written in a large, stylized font across the top left. On the right side, there is a green diagonal banner with white text that reads "HANDCRAFTED ALUMINUM BOATS FOR THE ALL AROUND OUTDOORSMAN". At the bottom, there is a black banner with white text that reads "EXPERIENCE THE BITE.COM" and "225.478.8709".

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PLAN BEELINER

These tasty fish a great second option for red snapper fishermen



For regular offshore anglers, catching a limit of red snapper is about as challenging as picking up an itchy rash while trolling Amsterdam's red-light district. Such quick success leaves many out on the big water staring at the horizon, wondering what they can do next.

But Capt. Paul Guidroz of Tuna Time Charters doesn't stress a moment this time of year when his holds are full of all the reds the law will let him keep. He simply turns his attention to a smaller and even more plentiful cousin of red snapper, vermilion snapper, known colloquially as beeliners.

The agreeable fish are always a hit with customers.

"They're excellent table fare, and they don't tear up your gear as much as, say, red snapper or mangrove snapper," Guidroz said. "They're not as big, so they're not as likely to pull you into the rig, but they're still fun to catch. Clients like them because they're so good to eat.

"It's another fish to put in the box when you go offshore."

And they can flat-out fill up a box. Louisiana's regulations allow anglers to keep 10

beeliners each, as long as the fish measure at least 10 inches. Those are liberal limits that keep anglers entertained for hours.

The year's eighth month isn't the peak of the beeliner run, but fishing is still excellent, Guidroz said.

"It's always better in the spring, but it's still quite good in August, particularly in the early part of the month," he said. "They move a little bit deeper this time of year."

In early August, the fish may be as shallow as 150 feet, but by the end, they're typically down around 400 feet, Guidroz said.

"On rock piles, I like to fish them dead on the bottom," he said. "On rigs, I like to fish them maybe 100 feet off the bottom."

Guidroz will mark the fish with his electronics, and instruct his clients how far they should drop their baits.

"We use anywhere from 16 to 24 ounces of lead, depending on the current," he said.

Even in the deepest of the beeliner zone, heavier weight isn't needed because the fish are targeted with much lighter gear than that used for red snapper.

"I like 80-pound main line with smaller circle hooks and smaller baits, whether it's

squid, pogies or sardines," Guidroz said.

His hooks of choice are No. 5 Mustad Demon circle hooks.

Once a bait gets down to the fish and one decides to munch it, that's when the fun begins. Beeliners are exceptionally competitive, Guidroz said, and they get jealous when they see their neighbors filling their bellies.

"The main thing with beeliners is, once you find the school, you really need to keep fishing," he said. "You need to keep baits in front of them. As long as you keep fishing, you're going to keep catching them. If you stop, they'll really slow down, and they might stop biting entirely.

"They school up really thick," he said.

The fish are so cooperative that Guidroz often targets them first, even when red snapper season is open, because he knows he'll likely bump into a few reds while he's targeting beeliners. Once the beeliner limit is reached, he frequently doesn't have to move the boat to fill his red snapper limit as well.

"They're often in the same zone," he said. "What we do when we want to eliminate

OPPOSITE PAGE: The author (third from right) and some friends caught their limits of vermillion snapper while fishing with Capt. Paul Guidroz in May.

the beeliners and catch only the reds, we'll use bigger gear and bigger baits — something the beeliners can't really get in their mouths. You might feel them hitting it, but when a red (snapper) comes along, he'll just suck in the whole bait."

Both species are excellent table fare, but beeliners are much more delicate than reds and have to be treated differently, Guidroz said.

"It's a softer, flakier meat than red snapper or mangrove snapper, so I cook them less time," he said. "They're in the pan a lot less time than a red or mangrove."

ARE YOU LEGAL?

Offshore regulations these days are more complex than Einstein's Theory of Relativity, and that certainly applies to vermillion snapper. Each angler may keep 10 fish measuring at least 10 inches, which seems simple enough, but it's a bit more complicated than that.

For regulation purposes, beeliners are part of a reef-fish aggregate that includes lane snapper, almaco jacks, grey triggerfish and tilefish. Anglers may keep no more than 20 of those fish combined, even if the limits for any one species are not yet met.

The only exception is during a multi-day charter trip, when each client may be in possession of a two-day limit of beeliners and other reef fish.

There is no closed season for vermillion snapper. ■
— Todd Masson



Once beeliners are found, they quickly come over the gunwale.

Todd Masson



Right now, limits on vermillion snapper are still quite liberal.

Todd Masson



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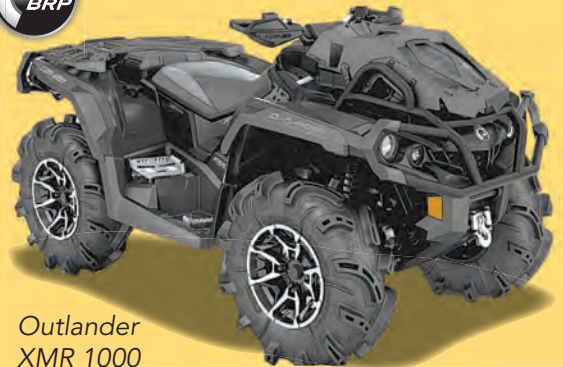
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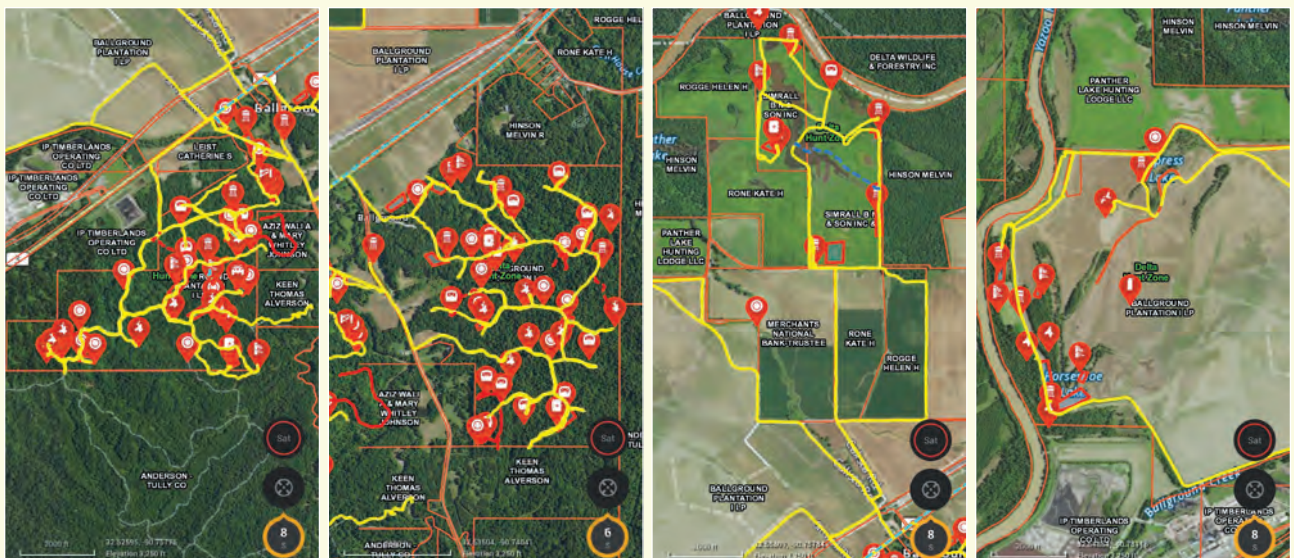


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WHERE THE BIG ONES WALK

It is a well-known fact that nutrition is the key for growing trophy white-tails in Louisiana.

By David Moreland

White-tailed deer can be found throughout Louisiana, from northern Caddo Parish southward to the mouth of the Mississippi River in Plaquemines Parish. This includes all habitat types; bottomland hardwood forests, pine forests, mixed pine/hardwood forests, swamp forests and coastal marshes.

The state wildlife agency's restocking efforts in the 1950s and 1960s made it possible for Louisiana to be blessed with this important resource. >

Deer hunting is the No. 1 hunting activity in North America, providing game departments with much-needed revenue.

This is why the issue of chronic wasting disease is so important; CWD could dramatically reduce hunting recreation in this country and greatly reduce much-needed revenue for wildlife management work, both game and non-game.

For the most part, the entire state has a good deer population. Landscape changes, particularly urbanization, have created issues for deer in some areas.

Changes in timber-management practices have also taken a toll on deer numbers. The change from a mixed pine/hardwood forest to a forest dominated by pine timber has had an impact on deer numbers across the state. In the early days, the bottomland hardwood forest parishes had the highest deer numbers, but as land clearing in those parishes reduced deer habitat, the piney woods parishes became important.

Restoration of bottomland forests in recent years is creating more habitat in these parishes and harvest numbers are beginning to reflect this.

TROPHY DEER DEMANDS

When it comes to producing trophy bucks, typical deer that score 160 or more points and non-typicals that score 185 or more points (based upon the Boone and Crockett Club scoring system), it is clear that only certain parishes have the ability to consistently grow them. Nutrition is the key for ant-

ler growth, and many parishes simply cannot provide this nutrition.

Simply feeding of corn will not provide the quality nutrition needed for growing large antlers. Feeding corn during fall and winter on habitat where native mast is limited will keep deer fat and healthy and in good shape going into spring green-out. Antler growth takes place during the spring and summer, and bucks need nutrition that is high in protein — and feeding corn will not do this.

Marsh habitat and swamp forest habitat does not provide the nutrition



A real Boone & Crockett Club buck could potentially show up in any parish, but there are certain parishes where they show up every year. This 160-class buck in Desoto Parish was never killed.

necessary to grow bucks with trophy racks. Supplemental feeding with a protein feed will offset the lack of nutrition in native habitat, but it is very expensive and primarily used in deer pens and shooting preserves.

Forest-management practices that promote dominant stands of pine timber do not provide deer with the necessary nutrition to grow big antlers. Supplementing with food plots does improve nutrition, but most clubs and landowners do not and cannot do this on a large-enough scale to really have an impact on the deer herd.

Table 1- **Top 20 Typical Louisiana Whitetails, 1990-2019**

Parish	Year	Score
Avoyelles.....	1998	181½
Tensas.....	1995	179½
St. Landry.....	2001	179½
LaSalle.....	1996	179½
Concordia.....	1996	177½
Caddo.....	1998	177½
Rapides.....	1997	177
St. Mary.....	2011	176½
Avoyelles.....	2018	175¾
St. Mary.....	1981	175
Avoyelles.....	2003	174¾
Tangipahoa.....	1992	174¾
Grant.....	1999	173¾
Madison.....	2016	173¾
EBR.....	2015	173¾
Avoyelles.....	1998	172
W Feliciana.....	2003	171¾
Tensas.....	2016	171½
Concordia.....	2016	171¼
Bossier.....	1994	171¼

Table 2- **Top 20 Non-typical Louisiana Whitetails, 1990-2019**

Parish	Year	Score
Tensas.....	1994	281½
West Feliciana.....	1998	228¾
Tensas.....	2010	227¾
Avoyelles.....	2017	226¾
Red River.....	2005	223¾
Tensas.....	2007	219¾
Grant.....	1995	213¾
Rapides.....	2003	210¾
Avoyelles.....	2011	209¾
Madison.....	2012	206¾
Claiborne.....	2009	206¾
East Feliciana.....	1983	203¾
West Feliciana.....	1994	203¾
Concordia.....	2013	200¾
Red River.....	2001	199¾
West Feliciana.....	2018	198¾
Grant.....	2006	197
Webster.....	1997	195¾
St. Landry.....	2013	193¾
West Feliciana.....	1991	192¾

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Mixed pine/hardwood forests can provide the nutrition needed, if the timber is being properly managed and the hardwood component makes up a least half of the forest stand.

For the most part, consistent production of true, trophy class bucks is limited to the parishes in the Red River and Mississippi River drainage system. This fertile crescent, with its bottomland hardwood forests and associated agricultural crops, provides the nutrition needed to grow bucks with big antlers: acorns and hardwood mast during fall and winter, soybeans and grain crops during spring and summer and winter wheat during fall and winter.

This region of Louisiana is similar to states in the midwest where hunters go to kill a true trophy deer.

BELOW I-10

I have been keeping track of the trophy buck kill for many years, and the data clearly points out which parishes con-

This buck was 3½ years old, an adult, but the nutrition needed to grow a nice rack is lacking in the swamp forests of Pearl River WMA.

sistently grow trophy bucks. The top buck I have in my books for Cameron Parish is a 138% typical; a nice buck that many would mount, but far short of the 160-inch mark.

In 1963, a non-typical buck scoring 167 was killed in Terrebonne Parish, a little short of the 185 mark. For Vermillion Parish, I have a 116% buck that was killed with a bow; a nice deer but not what would be considered a true trophy based on the Boone & Crockett scoring system. It is clear from the our state records that marsh habitat is not the place to go for a trophy.

In our swamp forest habitat, St. John has produced several 140-class bucks. Salvador WMA in St. Charles has produced a 120-class buck. There was a nice, non-typical buck killed in Lafourche Parish in 2013 that scored 169% non-typical, again, short of the 185 mark.

The swamp habitat comes up short in trophy buck production. I hunt the swamp forest on Pearl River WMA, and believe me, one will not kill the new state


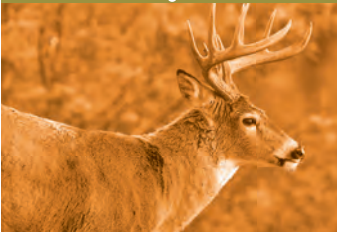




record in that area.

Except for a few trophy bucks killed in the Atchafalaya Basin south of I-10, a hunter needs to stay north of the interstate if he wants to kill a true trophy buck. There are a handful of Booners in the books from St. Mary and St. Martin parishes, but don't expect the next state record to come from the lower basin.

FLORIDA PARISHES

The Florida parishes in southeast Louisiana have been credited with a few


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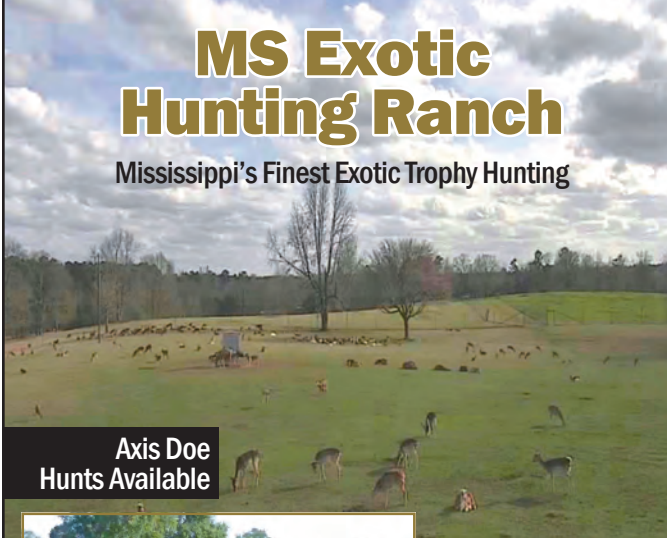
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true Boone & Crockett deer from past seasons, but this is an area that has really been impacted by landscape changes.

Dairy farms and associated farming activity have disappeared; farming for the most part ended in 1985, and urbanization has really taken a toll, especially after Hurricane Katrina. Changes in forest management, with forests becoming dominated by pine timber, have reduced the ability of this region to produce trophy bucks.

A buck that scores 130 B&C should be considered a top-end buck, and clubs and landowners that pass up adult bucks that score 12 to 130 thinking they are going to get bigger are making a mistake. East Feliciana Parish grows quality deer, like the 146% typical and the 163% non-typical killed this past season. Again, these are exceptional deer and not the norm for this region.

NORTHWEST, CENTRAL LOUISIANA

Northwest and Central Louisiana have produced B&C bucks in the past and still do. One problem is that the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries does not get many of these bucks officially scored each year, so the data is lacking for this region.

The parishes that border the Red River drainage produce trophy deer, as evidenced by the 170% typical buck killed in Natchitoches Parish this past season. Bossier Parish has the No. 1 typical buck, a 184% inch trophy killed in the 1960s. Loggy Bayou WMA has produced a few 150-class bucks and is a good area for public land hunters.

National forest land in Central Louisiana provides opportunity on public lands, but a 130-class buck is probably the top end for this habitat. Forest management on national forest lands is geared to long-leaf pine restoration, which is not considered trophy deer habitat.

WHERE THE BIG ONES WALK

For a hunter looking for areas that consistently produce trophy class bucks, the alluvial soil parishes bordering the Mississippi River are the places to go.

As previously mentioned, the bottomland hardwood forests, with associated farmland containing high quality forage crops, is the place in Louisiana where the big ones walk.

A glance at the state records confirm this. Just visit the LDWF website (<http://www.wf.louisiana.gov/hunting/la-big-game-recognition-program>) and check them out. If a hunter wants to kill a true Boone & Crockett buck, this is the region of the state to go.

Table 1 shows the top 20 Louisiana bucks, and Table 2 shows the top 20 non-typical bucks. It clearly points out which parishes consistently grow trophy deer.

The parishes of Tensas, Madison, Avoyelles and Concordia lead the list of typical and non-typical B&C bucks. These parishes

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The parishes with bottomland hardwood forests and associated farming such as these soybeans provide the nutrition needed to grow big antlers.



ishes consistently win big buck contests every year. Look at the top bucks at the Sportsman Show this year; the 175%-inch typical McPherson buck, killed in Avoyelles Parish, took top honors. Three other trophy bucks were killed in Avoyelles, along with bucks from Concordia, Madison, Tensas and Pointe Coupee parishes.

In 2018, Amanda Smith took top honors at the show with a 226%-inch non-typical buck killed in Avoyelles. Other parishes where quality bucks were killed last season include: St. Landry, West Baton Rouge and Richland.

Hunters who do not have land to hunt

have opportunity to hunt B&C bucks on numerous WMAs and refuges in the bottomland hardwood habitat.

Tensas NWR, Big Lake WMA, Richard Yancey WMA and Lake Ophelia NWR are just a few where trophy deer have been harvested. The key is to hunt the food sources big bucks are eating and to hunt during the rut, when these bucks begin chasing the does.

It must be said that a Boone & Crockett deer is really somewhat of an oddity, an animal that represents less than 1 percent

of the annual buck kill in Louisiana.

Clubs and landowners that develop management plans to only harvest B&C bucks are going to be sorely disappointed. A B&C buck could show up in any of these parishes, but based on the record data, there are specific parishes where it happens more frequently.

In 2007, I made the statement that our next state-record typical would come from Avoyelles Parish, and within the next 10 years, This did not happen, and a close look at the records show that not many high scoring bucks have been killed since 2010. This led me to say a couple of years ago that a new state record may never happen, due to changes in the deer habitat in the state.

Another factor is that Louisiana deer hunters are getting older; the baby boomer generation has been the driving force for basically all hunting activities over the past 20 years, and we are slowing down. The focus now seems to be on passing along the hunting tradition to the next generations, which is more important than a record buck. ■

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David Moreland is a former wildlife biologist with LDWF, having served as the State Deer Biologist for 13 years and as Chief of the Wildlife Division for three years. He and his wife Prudy live in Baton Rouge and own property in East Feliciana Parish.

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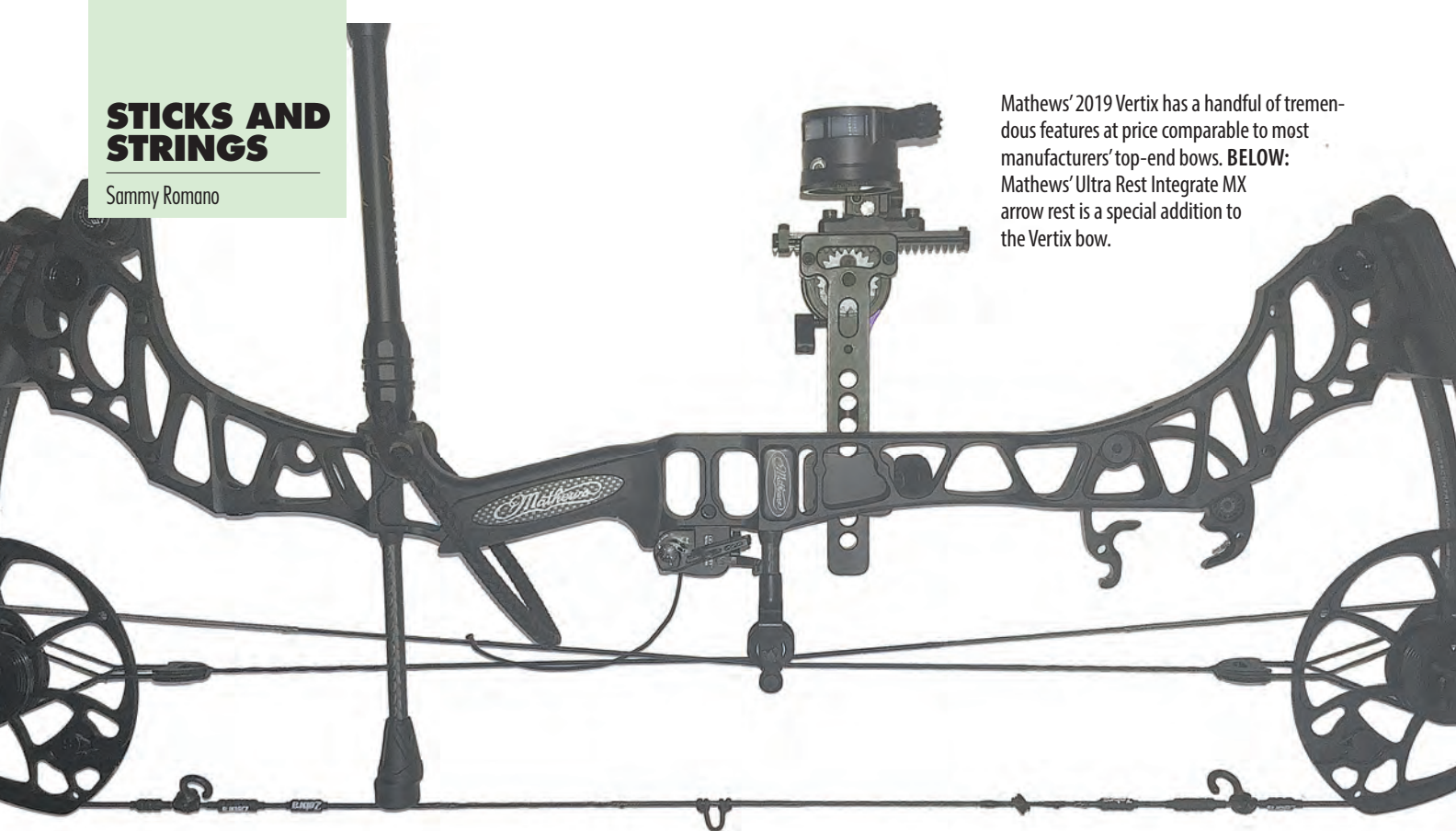


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STICKS AND STRINGS

Sammy Romano



Mathews' 2019 Vertex has a handful of tremendous features at price comparable to most manufacturers' top-end bows. **BELOW:** Mathews' Ultra Rest Integrate MX arrow rest is a special addition to the Vertex bow.

MATHEWS' VERTIX IS A BOW TO CHERISH

TOP-DRAWER FEATURES MAKE THIS 2019-MODEL BOW A PLEASURE TO SHOOT

Mathews archery is responsible for many innovations found throughout the archery industry, such as roller-cable guards, harmonic damping, perimeter weighted cams, and longer, short-limb designs.

For 2019, they continue this tradition of innovation. While Mathews always brings a strong offering to the marketplace, this year, they really pulled out the stops. The new Mathews Vertex offers several features never seen before, including Switchweight technology, and an integrated arrow-rest mounting system — all on a frame that is extremely fast, quiet, smooth and with extreme shootability. This bow is a perfect blend of all of these features, and offers something for almost any hunting application.

Given the price of today's bows, most archers only own one, making it more important than ever for that bow to fill many roles. With a 30-inch axle-to-axle

length, the Vertex bow is an ideal length for any type of hunting. It is short enough to be extremely maneuverable in a tree stand or ground blind, yet, due to its long riser length, it is extremely forgiving. This bow will be equally at home hunting white-tailed deer in Eastern hardwoods, or on a spot-and-stalk Western big-game hunt in more open terrain. With a brace height of 6 inches, it offers blistering arrow speeds of up to 343 fps (IBO), but is still forgiving of mistakes.

The heart and soul of any modern compound bow is its cam system. When designing the 2019 Vertex, Mathews used its proven Crosscentric cam system, but with the addition of new Switchweight technology for a slam dunk. This revolutionary new technology allows the shooter to change peak draw weight to 60, 65, 70 or 75 pounds without using a bow press by simply changing the cam modules.

By contrast, other compound bows



on the market require a new set of limbs and the use of a bow press, making this both difficult and expensive. Draw length and let-off can also be changed by changing modules, all without affecting efficiency. In theory — since I have noticed most Vertex bows run approximately 5 pounds over on draw weight — this gives the shooter the ability to adjust one bow from 50 to 80 pounds of draw weight by using a combination of changing modules and adjusting the limb bolts.

In an age of increasing prices, Mathews has held steady on its retail prices. While most other manufacturers have raised the MSRP of their high-end bows by \$100 or more, Mathews has not. With an MSRP of \$1,099, the Vertex is reasonably priced compared to other manufacturers' flagship bows. That, coupled with its unique features, flexibility and excellent shootability make this bow a no-brainer for many prospective buyers.

The Vertex is offered in Realtree Edge, Black, Stone, Optifade Elevated II, Optifade Subalpine as well as Ridge Reaper Forest and Ridge Reaper Barren. Mathews offers matching accessories in these patterns. For a small upcharge, custom-colored strings and cables are an option, and Mathews has a bow-builder option on its website that allows consumers to visualize how their custom bow will look when completed.

One of the more interesting features of the Vertex is its integrated arrow-rest option. In collaboration with QAD, this is a first-of-its-kind arrow rest and mounting

continues >>>



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REGISTRATION TIME

7:30AM - 9:30AM	Duck Call
7:30AM-12:30PM	Speckle-Bell
10:00AM	State Duck Calling Contest
1:00PM	Goose Calling Contest
	Boys/Girls & Men/Women compete together

GOOSE CALLING AGE DIVISIONS

Junior Division	16 years old and under
Senior Division	17 years old and older

DUCK CALLING AGE DIVISIONS

Junior Division	13 years old and under
Intermediate Division	14-16 years old
Senior Division	17 years and older

Contestants must be a Louisiana resident. Verification of birth date and residency may be required.

REGISTRATION FEES

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Gueydan Duck Festival Open Two Man Meat Duck..	\$50
Louisiana State Duck Calling Contest	\$50
Louisiana State Intermediate Duck	\$35
Louisiana State Junior Specklebelly Goose.....	\$35
Louisiana State Specklebelly Goose	\$35
Louisiana State Junior Duck	\$35
Gueydan Duck Festival Junior Open Duck Meat ..	\$35
Gueydan Duck Festival Open Duck Meat	\$35

TWO CATEGORIES: Speckle-Belly Goose and Duck.

The contestant will only be allowed to call in his or her age division. There will also be a Two Man Meat contest.

Winners in the duck calling division will be eligible to represent Louisiana at the World Duck Calling Contest in Stuttgart, AR in November. Winners are also eligible to receive a \$300 expense aid for competing in the World Contest.



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STICKS AND STRINGS

continued

system. Like all QAD arrow rests, the Ultra Rest Integrate MX arrow rest offers complete capture with a fall-away feature. What separates it from other arrow rests of its kind is a machined-aluminum launcher, and the way it mounts onto a machined dovetail on the riser of the Vertex. This is a Mathews exclusive, although I expect other manufacturers will soon follow suit. This feature offers a lower profile, as well as micro adjustable windage and elevation, plus “lockdown” to eliminate launcher bounce-back for perfect fletching clearance every shot.

The Vertex also features the Engage grip system, which is, in my opinion, the best grip Mathews has ever offered. This grip has a narrow throat to minimize bow torque, and its ergonomic design is extremely comfortable in the shooter’s hand. The Vertex is also the smoothest, quietest bow Mathews has ever produced. Although it weighs 4.67 pounds, it balances almost perfectly neutral. That, plus the fact that it uses Mathews’ patented EHS

3D damping system to virtually cancel any noise and vibration, makes a heavy stabilizer unnecessary. The Vertex is 20% smoother than the Triax, which was unbelievably smooth and quiet. This is a quantum leap in smoothness that has to be experienced to be believed.

If you’re in the market for a new bow this year, the 2019 Mathews Vertex is well worth considering. It features versatility, speed, quietness, and performance — all at a lower price than most other manufacturers’ high end bows. Stop by your local Mathews retailer to test-shoot one and experience this amazing bow for yourself. ■



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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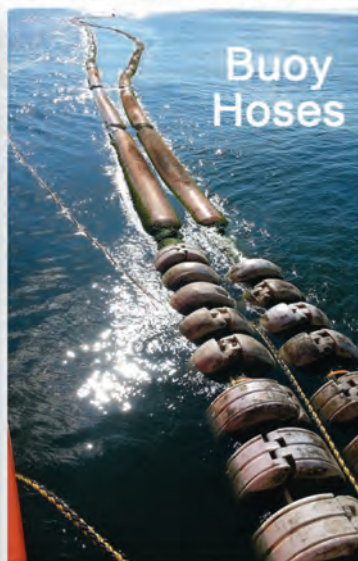
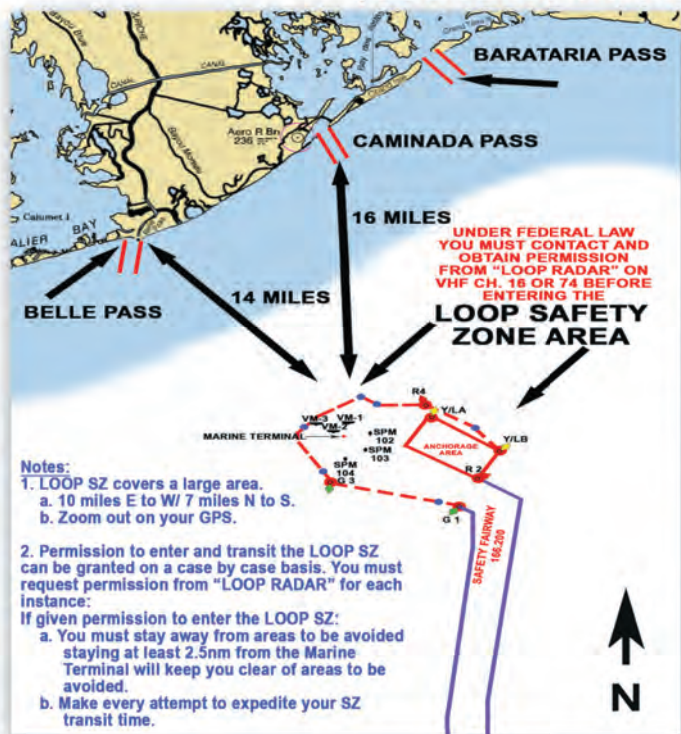
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Whitetail checklist

By David Hawkins

Louisiana's deer season is still a ways off, but it's time to start getting things lined up for the promise of opening day.

The start of deer season is just around the corner, so it's time to start getting things at the camp ready. Here are some suggestions:

It was a hot day for baling hay, but any day that is right for making hay is going to be a little on the hot side in the South. Clyde Risher stopped for a moment in the shade of an oak and searched the limbs for the coming crop of acorns. Deer favor acorns, and Clyde is a dedicated deer hunter. For him — and thousands like him — deer season never closes, only the days when it's legal to shoot them end.

continues >>>





As July transitions into August, whitetail fawns dropped in July begin to travel with their mothers. For hunters such as Risher, a farmer who is in the field most every day, the sighting of the first fawns is a key to determining the first rut for the coming season. That's important because bucks will lose their inhibitions and make themselves available targets.

"When a fawn is born they have little or no scent," Risher said, "or that is what I was told by a deer biologist ... at a seminar about deer. For about two weeks, the mother visits the fawn and feeds it, perhaps move it as it gains strength. So when I start seeing fawns following their mothers, I can count backward the 190 to 210 days, minus the time it lay still, and I have the probable date of the first rutting period."

According to Risher, if the first fawn is spotted July 15, then the fawn probably dropped around July 2. Split the difference on gestation and count back 200 days, and you can be pretty confident the doe was bred around the last week of November.

Not exact science, but a good starting place.

START A JOURNAL

Veteran hunter Tommy Hemphill has targeted deer for most of his life, and in the past few decades, he has discovered the importance of keeping a hunting journal. It contains notes about deer sightings, behavior, how those behaviors correlate with moon phases and solunar tables.

"It's not something that will help the hunters who have never done one," he said. "But it's never too late to start. I record the first food I see deer favoring, then the next and then the next. One example is soft mast. Persimmons begin to fall in September, unless we have a dry summer.

The persimmons on my place are gone by mid-October. The honey locust pods are the next to go. By this time, the first acorns begin to fall.

"Deer know all these times and places as well as you know your own kitchen and pantry. Having a journal allows hunters to select a stand that is likely to produce a sighting."

Hemphill has found that solunar tables indicating major and minor activity times are quite accurate when averaged. Naturally, droughts, hurricanes, habitat removal or enhancement and hunting pressure add to the mix. Based on his journal, Hemphill begins searching for mast well before the opening of archery season, because promising food sources, even if they will be gone before the season opener, attract deer. Trail cameras record the deer visiting the food sources and give the hunter some indication of herd numbers and conditions before the first arrow flies.

continues >>>

☑ **Whitetail checklist**

FOOD PLOTS

Most hunters accept establishment of food plots as a broadly beneficial practice for multiple wildlife species. Rabbits, deer, turkeys, songbirds and even predators are attracted to these green patches.

For deer, they are a sure attractant.

In terms of existing food plots that just need to be replanted, August and September stand out as the most-opportune time for this activity.

“Assuming a food plot has already been established, soil testing completed and proper pH maintained, the choice of a planting becomes pretty academic,” said Bronson Strickland of Mississippi State University. “An excellent mix, the one that I use, is this: 30 pounds of oats, 30 pounds of wheat, 12 pounds of crimson clover and 5 pounds of arrowleaf clover per acre. This will feed deer for a good five months.”

Strickland said that hunters who want to add rye should be sure to add cereal rye, such as Elbon Rye and never just rye grass.



Oats

A good application of fertilizer will increase natural browse.

will be the first of the seed to grow, followed by the wheat and clover. Strickland considers this a good general mix for most all soils when properly prepared.

“Several years ago, the (Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks) and Pennington Seed developed a Mississippi Mix that does well in most soils in the state, and offers a broad spectrum of forbs and grasses for a wide variety of wildlife,” said Chad Dacus, with the Mississippi State University Extension Service. “The mix contains wheat, oats, crimson clover and arrow leaf clover. This combination, with ample moisture, will provide deer a good level of nourishment during the winter stress period and well into the spring green-up.”




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NATURAL BROWSE

Fertilizer has become a costly commodity over the past few years as the cost of production and transportation have soared. Still, where field and forest edges allow, fertilizer will add to the nutrients in native browse. Some companies are using chicken litter, the cake that remains in a commercial chicken growing house when the birds are removed, and treating it to create an organic fertilizer. The price for a 70-pound bag is about half the price of commercial chemical fertilizer such as 13-13-13. Look for it at locations that sell organic gardening supplies.

Chicken farmer Andy Wedgeworth has used this organic fertilizer on his food plots. He said the organic material boosts growth and lasts longer than commercial fertilizer.

continues >>>

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STAND PLACEMENT, SELECTION

Late summer and early fall is a good time to move stands. Hunters know stands become stigmatized because deer begin to associate people with the structures. Hemphill has favorite shooting houses and tree-stands that deer have learned.

“(Deer) step out of the woods, and the first thing they do is look at that stand to see if there is anybody in it,” he said. “Instead of moving the stand, I just made a dummy and put a hat on it. They get used to seeing a hat in the stand, so when I’m there, it looks just like it always does.

“I guess, all this said, any changes to stands need to be made early, so the deer can become acclimated to the changes before season begins.”

BOOTS ON THE GROUND

In a military sense, boots on the ground indicates the number of soldiers required to get a job done. For the deer hunter, it should signify the number of hours walking, looking, checking browse and available mast crops.

Hunters should be able to read the woods, seeing where deer have been without seeing the tracks. Dropping are, of course, a dead giveaway, but so is a browse line. Plants such as green briar, honeysuckle, strawberry bush and even young oaks will show the evidence of browsing.

Notice where weeds like ragweed have flourished; the better the soil, the greater the palatability, and the greater the palatability the greater the chances deer will browse there in the summer as well as in the winter when the weeds have turned brown.

Trail cameras cannot be out too early. Capturing images of bucks as they grow antlers is fun and educational. Antlers in velvet always seem larger than when dried, but the drying process marks a change in a buck’s hormone levels. Bucks will rub the drying velvet against trees and bushes to remove it from the hardened bone antlers.

Locating these rubbing sites is a good way to locate a buck’s probable core area. This core area is perhaps the most-important find a hunter can make. Since it is a place where the buck feels safe, has escape routes and good bedding cover, he is apt to be found there all during his life, unless he or the cover is removed. ■



David Hawkins is a freelance writer living in Forest, Miss. He can be reached at hawkins2209@att.net.

Get your stands located and hung well before the season.

CRANKING UP CR@PPIE

WHEN SLABS REACH THEIR SUMMER HAUNTS IN DEEPER WATER, IT OFTEN TAKES A VIBRATING, RATTLING CRANKBAIT TO DRAW A STRIKE. HERE'S HOW TO GET ONE.

By Dusty Wilson

There's a good reason why more anglers aren't catching crappie on crankbaits: they haven't tried yet.

Although crappie are often viewed as a fish that needs to be finessed with tiny jigs or minnows, they'll eat anything they can fit in their mouths, and the sweltering summer temperatures that can make them lose their appetites leaves them wide open to the reaction strike that a crappie-sized crankbait triggers.

>



Dusty Wilson

Eddie Moody, a long-time crappie-fishing guide, knows this first-hand. Moody, who prefers long-line trolling to tight-lining or pitching individual baits, believes the vibration and rattle of crankbaits are superior for drawing a reaction strike compared to typical jigs and minnows.

“It’s like having a dog that you’ve raised from a puppy,” said Moody, “and you sneak up and startle him. His first reaction is to snap, no matter how long he’s known you; it’s Mother Nature’s way.

“Crankbaits are better in the summer for reaction strikes, because you can get the bait down where you want (it) at a higher speed. With a jig, you have to slow down to make it drop. You get above a mile an hour pulling cranks, and they don’t have time to stop and think — they react.”

Not only does trolling crankbaits draw more strikes, higher speeds give an angler an opportunity to cover more ground.

“You can put in an 8-hour trip in 4 hours,” Moody said. “I usually troll between 1 mile per hour and 1.5. If it clouds up, I’ll back off the speed for 15 minutes or so and let the baits rise. But I never go under 0.8 with cranks because they won’t have any action. The sun changes trajectory so fast this time of year that it’s hard to get a stable bite at the same depth for more than an hour.”

Moody regards a cloudy day as a troller’s paradise because

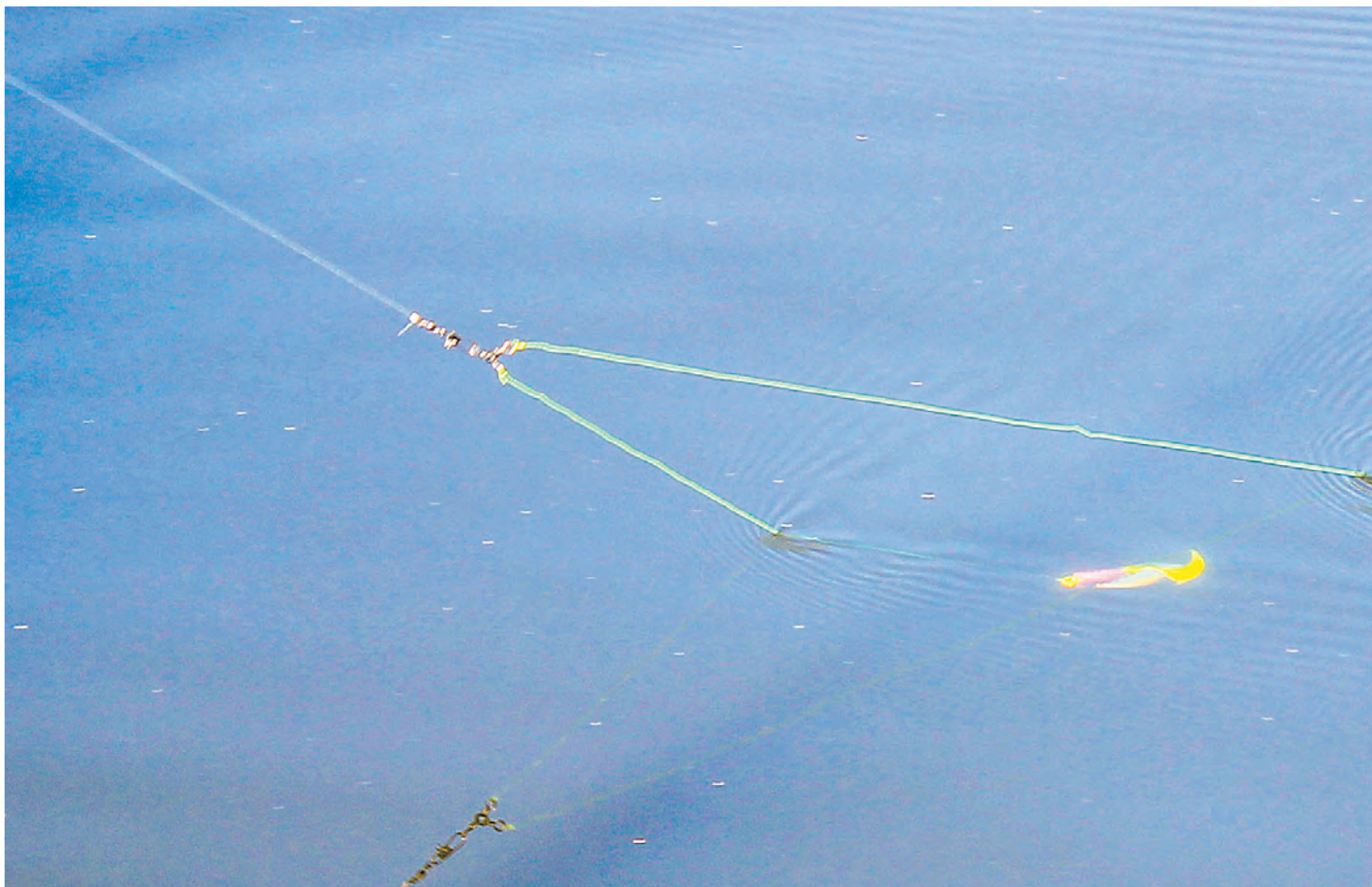
the fish will suspend higher in the water column and will be more active. Also, they will be scattered throughout an area instead of hugging tight to brush. But this changes quickly with fluctuating light and water temperatures, and Moody will speed up and slow on a bright, sunny day, according to the fish he marks on his sonar. He would rather have his lures 2 feet above the fish than 6 inches below.

To combat the changes in target depths, Moody covers the water column with crankbaits that dive at different depths, and he sprinkles in a couple of Roadrunners for good measure, using a No. 12 snap swivel on the crankbaits for a quick switch-out if a depth becomes hot.

“My crankbaits run from 4 to 12 feet deep,” said Moody, “maybe 16 if it’s hot and extra bright. That’s running 2-inch, 3-inch, 3½- and 4-inch baits on the deeper end. I’m usually doing this with a 10-rod spread: six straight crankbaits, two three-way rigs with a jig running in conjunction, and two ¼-ounce Roadrunners.”

To cover a wide swath of water, Moody runs a 12-foot rod straight out from both gunwales on either side of the transom, like outriggers. A rod holder mounted on the transom holds 4 more rods: two 6½-foot rods that angle out slightly and two 10-foot rods that angle up on either side of the motor. Two rods will run off either side, typically an 8-footer in front and

continues >





Dusty Wilson

MAKE CRAPPIE DO A DOUBLE-TAKE

According to guide Eddie Moody, a difference in depth of a few inches can have a big impact in crappie fishing, and giving the fish something they're not used to seeing can be the difference in getting bit or not.

Those are two reasons why Moody experimented with putting out a few extra baits in his crankbait trolling spread — but not on separate rods. He introduced a No. 6, three-way swivel to his rigs and enhanced his crankbait bite.

It all goes back to Moody's dog analogy. Startle a resting dog, and he's liable to bite, but if two people sneak up on him, he might get really excited. To a three-way swivel, Moody ties a leader about 24 inches long that goes to a crankbait, and he adds another 18-inch section of leader tied to a jig or Roadrunner-type lure.

The crankbait pulls the rig down to its running depth, and the jig flutters below it. Not only does the added bait offer more presence, but it allows for changing the running depth and covering a tiny differences in depth between the other baits.

"You can use the jig to fine-tune a crankbait," said Moody. "The more or less weight you use, the deeper or shallower it will run. I can also tie a longer leader on one of the jigs, and it'll run that much deeper. That can make a big difference sometimes. Plus, it'll tame-down some of the cheaper crankbaits that I use. It takes out the erratic wobble and make it run true.

"Sometimes, I'll use a straight jig and a curlytail grub and sometimes a Roadrunner, trying to hit all the variations I can, but usually sticking with a 1/16- or 1/8-ounce head. If the fish want to change up depths or baits, I want to have something for them." ■

A three-way swivel allows crappie fishermen to troll a crankbait at a certain depth and drag along a second lure in slightly deeper water. **ABOVE:** Summer crappie are less likely to go on feeding speers, so the reaction bite that a crankbait draws is easier to predict.

SUMMER CRAPPIE



Dusty Wilson

a 5-footer behind. The deepest baits will run off the bow to act as curb feelers, signaling the bottom bouncing that encourages Moody to slow down. Baits running off the stern should be 60 to 80 feet behind the boat, giving fish a chance to settle down after the trolling motor buzzes over their heads. Moody prefers to place shallow-running baits next to deeper-running baits to prevent tangling.

“I don’t use any particular colors,” Moody said, “but I like something with a little flash, usually the ones I find in the bargain bin at Walmart. Fire tiger, a crawfish pattern or blue are all good choices. I put out a variety and let the fish tell me what they want. It’s strange to see the same bait being hit by color, but you will see them favor a bait by the depth it’s running.”

Crappie are most likely main-lake residents in August, but

Crankbaits of various sizes enable anglers to cover different water depths. Baits of different color fished in the same spread will uncover slabs’ daily preferences.

Moody still finds success trolling inside the mouths of some of the deeper creeks in addition to main-lake points and pockets. Red-clay banks on the shoreline are a good sign.

Generally, he targets water from 16 to 25 feet deep, but crappie will be suspended from 4 to 6 feet under the surface down to the thermocline, starting out on the shallow end of the spectrum in the morning and progressing deeper throughout the day.

Moody makes certain to pass over any of the 2,500 brush piles he has marked that come near his trolling routes. Crappie often hover over the top of the brush, and the brighter the day, the closer they will be to the brush. As he passes over, he takes careful note of the height of the cover and the running depth of his crankbaits. If necessary, he eases off the trolling speed to guide the plugs safely over. ■

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Dusty Wilson of Raleigh, N.C., is a lifelong outdoorsman. He is the manager of Tarheel Nursery in Angier and can be followed on his blog at InsideNCFishing.com.



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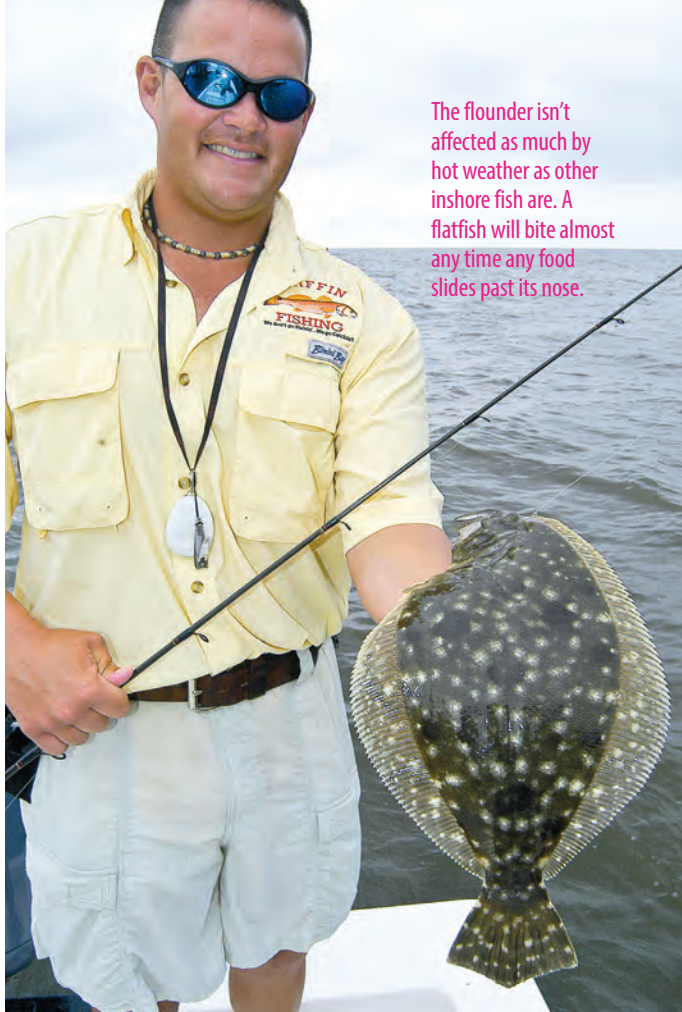
FLOUNDER TRIPLE PLAY

Find a ditch, a dock and an oyster bed — all in the same immediate area — and you've got the makings of a great place to catch a late-summer flounder.

By Dan Kibler

[continued >](#)





The flounder isn't affected as much by hot weather as other inshore fish are. A flatfish will bite almost any time any food slides past its nose.

FLOUNDER TRIPLE PLAY

Dale Collins knows the equation for great late-summer flounder fishing. First, he said, you find a little ditch that's draining an area of marsh into a larger waterway. Second, you find a boat dock or pier next to the ditch. Third, you find an oyster bed near the first two.

The combination of those three, according to Collins, a veteran guide and flounder expert, "is a gift from God."

Ditches draining a marsh draw flounder and other predator fish on a falling tide because all of the bait and shrimp are pulled out by the current. That sets the table for big flatfish, and the current has a second major plus.

"If you've got a little current running out of there, (a flounder will) there with his nose in the mouth of that ditch, because he can stay there for a long time with that water running through his gills; it's easier for him to breathe," Collins said. "If you don't have any current, he's got to move around more."

The boat dock provides an ambush spot, plus shade, for a flounder. And the collection of oyster rocks will attract all kinds of bait and crustaceans, further setting a flounder's buffet.

"I'll fish live bait or a Gulp bait at the mouth of a little ditch or under a dock," Collins said. "As far as live bait, I like a 4-inch mullet minnow, but you've got to feed it to him before you set the hook — wait a little bit."

"I'll fish a Gulp bait on a ¼-ounce jighead. I'll fish it on as light a head as I can, because I think most people fish too fast."

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Dale Collins looks for flounder to be set up in areas with certain features. This one came from under a dock.



Dan Kibler

Collins said if he's working the mouth of a ditch or drain, he tries to position his boat so he can cast directly into the opening. "If the water is pulling to one side, I'll set up for that, but I want to cast right into the middle (of the drain) and fish it out," he said. "If there are points on either side of the ditch, I'll fish across those, too."

If he's fishing a dock, he's more interested in getting his bait back under the platform and working it back to the boat. Because flounder make their own ambush points by settling down into the sand on the bottom, positioning close to pilings isn't quite as important as it would be if he was looking for redfish.

One good thing about flounder, Collins said, is that if you put a bait or lure in front of them, they aren't terribly picky.

"I've fished times when it was hard to get bait, and I caught flounder on five different live baits," he said.

That doesn't mean he just camps out.

"I won't fish a spot very long unless I catch a fish," Collins said. "If I catch a fish, I won't fish it more than five minutes if I don't catch another. I'll move to my next ditch or dock."

Collins said he's constantly amazed by the kinds of places he finds flounder.

"They'll get in water in places where you can't get your boat," he said. "I've see them way up in the marsh grass while gigging, in only 2 or 3 inches of water. That's all they need." ■



Dan Kibler is editor of Mississippi Sportsman. He has been covering outdoor issues full-time since 1985.

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- August 24 - Ride the Bull Kayak Fishing Rodeo, Bridge Side Marina
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SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brian Cope

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: AFRICAN POMPANO

OFFSHORE BATTLERS ARE WELCOME IN ANY ANGLER'S BOAT BUT ARE RARELY TARGETED

African pompano, *Alectis ciliaris*, are saltwater fish that are usually caught in deep, offshore waters around wrecks and artificial reefs. They are found in warmer oceans throughout the world, including the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.

This species has a deceiving name. Though it bears a slight resemblance to Florida pompano, the African pompano is a member of the jack family, along with jack crevalles and amberjacks.

These fish have flattened bodies similar to those of Mahimahi and other jacks. They are silvery in color, with shimmering sides and a pattern of chevrons that range from very faint to quite dark. They have very blunt, steeply-sloped heads. They appear to have smooth skin with no scales, but they actually have many tiny, tightly-packed scales.

African pompano change fairly drastically as they age. When young, these fish have very long, thin, hair-like filaments growing from their dorsal and anal fins, filaments that are often longer than the fish itself.

When flared, they give off an appearance similar to a jellyfish. Fisheries biologists believe this is to ward off predators until the fish is large enough to survive on its own. As the fish ages, the filaments disappear completely.

Juvenile African pompano are sometimes caught in estuaries along the coast, but they usually leave these areas at a

Nice-sized African pompano are caught regularly, but the biggest members of the species will approach 50 pounds.



fairly young age and move into deeper, offshore waters.

WEATHER WATCHERS

Interestingly, these fish seem heavily influenced by adverse weather conditions. An example is when a major hurricane built off the coast of North Carolina in the mid-1990s. Before that

storm, African pompano where considered a rare catch off the North Carolina coast, but a huge influx of the species was observed directly after that storm. And ever since then, these fish continue to show up in much bigger numbers than they ever did before the hurricane.

Anglers very rarely target African pompano specifically. However, they are welcomed by-catches of fishermen seeking snapper and grouper. And for anglers targeting those bottom species, African pompano are not a huge surprise, though fishermen are usually happy to catch them.

Their diets mostly consist of crab, shrimp and smaller fish. They are known to turn away food that is dead, seeming to prefer live food more strongly than most other species.

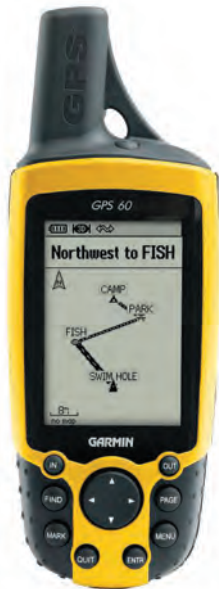
Mississippi's state-record African pompano was caught in June 1997 by Lawrence Pichon. His fish weighed 36 pounds, 4 ounces.

Louisiana's state record for the species was caught by Michael Phillips off S. Timbalier Blk. in June 2003. That fish weighed 40.60 pounds.

The fish are known as great table fare, and they are hard fighters when hooked on rod and reel. The average size of these fish is 10 to 30 pounds, and they grow up to 50 pounds. ■



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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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.

ARE YOU A MASTER KAYAK ANGLER?



Steve Neece recently caught this sailfish in Delray Beach, Fla., fishing with Deep Blue Kayak Fishing Charters. Steve is an Elite Angler in the BCKFC Master Angler program. With the addition of his sailfish and a shark he caught on the same trip, he is one species away from attaining Master Angler status.



There is no shortage of kayak fishing tournaments available to challenge anglers and help them become better fishermen. However, some of the competitions are intense and somewhat intimidating, especially for those new to the kayak fishing scene.

While the vast majority of saltwater tournaments focus on trout, redfish and flounder, there are a few in locations with easy offshore access that step it up to include fish like red snapper, king mackerel, tuna and even sailfish. Of course, freshwater tournaments generally concentrate on largemouth bass. There is no doubt that entering tournaments help you to become a better kayak angler.

In addition to popular inshore tournaments that feature awards for catching a Cajun Slam — trout, redfish and flounder — the Bayou Coast Kayak Fishing Club offers a unique event that allows members to challenge themselves to successfully catch a wide variety of different species. The BCKFC's Master Angler program is a tiered, friendly competition whereby members achieve graduating levels of accomplishment based on the number of qualifying different species they catch and enter.

The club has created a list of many popular species, both salt and freshwater, from across the country. Minimum qualifying lengths are assigned to species and difficulty and/or uniqueness of the catch. Photographic entry submissions are made using a ruler, tape measure, etc. For example, the minimum qualifying length for a speckled trout is a respectable 24 inches, while the minimum qualifying length for an amberjack is 20 inches. Some species that contain several sub-species, are generically classified, such as snapper wherein any snapper meeting a 16-inch minimum will qualify.

CONTINUES >

PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

continued

Entries are electronically submitted to the program committee for approval via the club's web-forum. Once a qualifying species is caught, there is no need to pursue a bigger member of the same species. However, the club plans to add a list of club records, so anglers can submit subsequent catches if they are longer than the current longest fish in a particular species.

There is no entry fee, but participants must be a club member in good standing at the time of their catch and entry. No prizes are awarded, except the satisfaction and bragging rights that come with climbing each level of the chart on the way to achieving Master Angler status and perhaps even the title of Ultimate Angler. There are plans underway to allow participants to purchase shirts or hats to designate their accomplishment as a Master Angler.

The tiers start off slowly, requiring only three qualifying species to earn the designation of Advanced Angler. Add a few more species (five to six), and those kayak anglers move up to the rank of Expert Angler. Any member catching seven to nine different species rises to the rank of Elite Angler. To reach the coveted title of Master Angler, participants must have entered a minimum of 10 qualifying species. Beyond that, the club designates the member with the highest total number of different species as the club's Ultimate Angler. That title is continuously held until another member surpasses that total.

Entries are limited to fish caught in United States waters and must be caught in a kayak without the use of a mother ship. The current list of qualifying species contains 30 saltwater and 25 freshwater fish. However, participants may submit one "other" species per year for consideration by the program officials. If the unlisted species is deemed sufficient to qualify for the program, the angler is given credit for an additional species. Suggestions are also welcomed for potentially adding additional species/qualifying lengths to the permanent qualifying list.

There is no catch-and-release requirement, but photographs must contain the fish, the angler's kayak and a common measuring device. However, recognizing that states have varying laws, the committee can make exceptions to allow entry for certain unique situations. For example, the minimum qualifying length for a tarpon is 24 inches. However, Florida law prohibits removal of any tarpon 40 inches or longer completely from the water. Therefore, the program committee reserves the right to make judgment calls on acceptance if an angler submits a photo of a tarpon landed along side of the kayak. Likewise, it is not advisable to bring some large, dangerous species onto the kayak, such as sharks or barracuda. Therefore, the committee can allow entry as long as there is good photographic proof of the catch, which appears to reasonably meet the minimum length requirement.

The BCKFC Master Angler program is as much about

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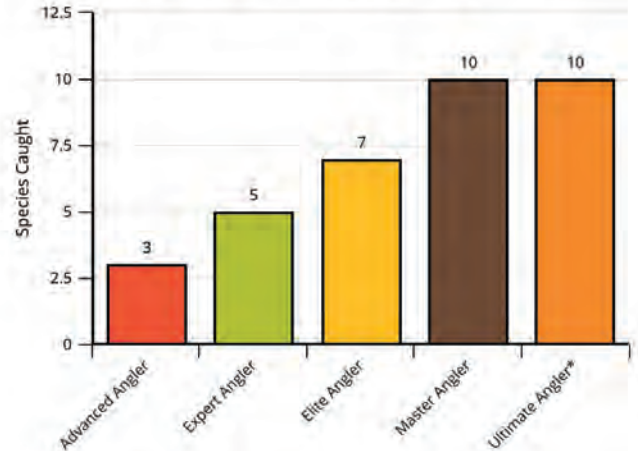
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Sharks do not have to be brought on board the kayak and can be exempt from measuring under the program rules. This shark clearly exceeds the 48-inch minimum and will be entry No. 9 for Steve Neece in the BCKFC Master Angler program.



BCKFC Master Angler



Advanced 3-4, Expert 5-6, Elite 7-9, Master 10 plus, *Ultimate Angler-Club leader with the total most species 10 or more

challenging yourself as it is a friendly competition amongst fellow club members. Each time a new qualifying species is caught, the kayak angler gains additional experience and confidence. The program also encourages branching out of one's comfort zone to pursue different species and learn new techniques. To learn more about the Master Angler program, join BCKFC and see the current stats, go to: www.bckfc.org. ■

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THIS JOHNSON BAYOU COOK SHINES

The night before making a raid on big, Sabine Lake trophy speckled trout, fishing guide Robbie Trahan treated me to some Johnson Bayou cooking.

Few Louisianans know the location of Johnson

Bayou, a remote Cameron Parish marsh community. Badly treated by one hurricane after another, the once-thriving small town located on the cheniere of Blue Buck Ridge, is now comprised mostly of fishing and hunting camps.

Only 27 miles from the Texas border and a lot closer to Port Arthur, Texas, than to Lake Charles, La., it's not surprising that local culture carries a strong Texas influence.

Robbie is a perfect example: The name Trahan is pure Cajun (as is much of his cooking), but he draws

with a pronounced East Texas nasal twang that is distinctly not Cajun.

As for his name, he doesn't pronounce it Cajun-style. "Cajuns pronounce it TRAH-hahn; we say TRAY-han," "We are kind of all mixed up over here," he explained.

The lean, highly animated man grew up in Johnson Bayou, but as a result of the repeated hurricanes he has retreated to Sulphur. He still maintains a camp on family land in Johnson Bayou that serves as a base for his guiding service.

He and his wife Tonya, a Cameron Parish native, cook at home, but at the camp Robbie is the king cook.

He claims to have learned how to cook by watching his mom Vickie in her kitchen and his dad Randy cook at hunting camps. He also kept an eye on the cooking at the Point Pleasant Hunting and Fishing Club, where he once worked as a guide.

"If you live down here, you learn a little from everyone," Trahan explained. "Friends and family like to get together to cook, especially wild game and seafood. Both are so easily available here.

"I like cooking wild game, especially ducks.

"My mom is an awesome cook. She cooks everything, but I really like her garfish patties and garfish courtbouillon.

Garfish is a big deal here; we actually have a garfish rodeo. Whoever catches the three biggest gar wins." ■



Robbie Trahan specializes in cooking seafood and wild game he harvests.



Jerald and Glenda Horst are the authors of six excellent books on Louisiana seafood — *The Seafood Bible: Shrimp*, *The Seafood Bible: Crawfish*, *The Seafood Bible: Crabs*, *The Seafood Bible: Oysters*, *The Seafood Bible: Fish: Volume 1* and *The Seafood Bible: Fish: Volume 2*. Jerald and Glenda may be contacted at gerald@rockinghorst.com.



SEA SHEPHERD'S PIE

This dish is a perfect example of how Robbie Trahan fuses the cuisines of Texas and South Louisiana. Shepard's Pie is definitely not Cajun, but the infusion of crawfish is.

"I got the idea for this when I made a shepherd's pie with beef," Robbie said. "I got to thinking: How can I use seafood? Then I ate a boiled crawfish po-boy: boiled crawfish, potatoes and corn — pretty much the same thing.

"This is the first time I tried this."

He sounded both hopeful and cautious. He shouldn't have worried; it was good, and it was original.

A note: The ingredient list doesn't provide for any salt and pepper, as the seafood pour-and-boil mix should provide enough. More may be added, but with care.

PREPARATION:

Add the potatoes to a large pot of water over high heat. When the water comes to a boil, add the seafood boil and the corn. Drain the water when the potatoes are tender to a fork. Sauté the onions and mushrooms in 3 tbsp. butter until tender,

INGREDIENTS:

5 pounds potatoes, peeled and chunked into 2-inch pieces
½ cup Crawfish, Shrimp & Crab pour and boil mix
2 12-ounce bags frozen sweet corn
2 medium onions, coarsely chopped
1 pound sliced baby bella (crimini) mushrooms
4½ tbsp. butter, divided
2 tbsp. olive oil
1 pound smoked pork sausage, cut into ¼-inch rings
2 12-oz. bags crawfish tail meat
Shredded mozzarella cheese to taste



about 15 minutes. Add the remaining butter to the potatoes and corn, and mash them. Oil a 14-inch baking pan with the olive oil. Assemble the dish by layering half of the sausage in the pan, followed by a layer of half of the potatoes, then a

layer of half of the onions, and a layer of all of the crawfish. Top with layers of the remaining sausage, potatoes, and onions. Sprinkle mozzarella cheese over top of dish and bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. Serves 8.



INGREDIENTS:

1½ lb. fish fillets
¼ cup lemon juice
2 1¼-ounce pkgs. taco seasoning
1 16-ounce can refried beans
1 8-ounce. bag shredded Mexican Style Four Cheese Blend, divided
1 12-ounce jar red taco sauce of your choice, divided
¼ pound butter
3 medium bell peppers, slivered
3 medium onions, slivered
2 tbsp. vegetable oil
1 15-ounce pkg. tortilla wraps
8 ounce. sour cream
¼ head iceberg lettuce, shredded
1 large tomato, diced

PREPARATION:

Place fish, lemon juice and 1 package of taco seasoning in a bowl, and mix well to coat the fillets. Set aside. Put beans, 1 cup shredded cheese, ½ cup taco sauce and ¼ cup water in a small saucepan and stir to mix well. Heat over low heat while the other ingredients are being prepared. Melt the butter in a large frying pan. Add half the onions, half the bell pepper and the vegetable oil, and cook over high heat for 10 minutes, stirring often. Push the onions and peppers to the edges of the pan, and add the fillets to the center of the pan, moving the onions and peppers as necessary to accommodate them. Top the fish with the remaining onions and peppers, and cook uncovered over high heat for 10 minutes. Flip the fish, onions, and bell peppers over. The fish fillets will break apart, but that is OK. Cook 3 minutes, and then sprinkle the remaining package of taco seasoning over the fish and stir in. Cook 5 more minutes. Heat the tortillas for 30 seconds in a microwave oven to soften them. Make the tacos by spreading a dollop of sour cream across the center of an open tortilla, followed by a spoon of beans, the fish flakes, lettuce, tomato cheese and more taco sauce to taste. Fold each tortilla over to serve. Serves 6.

ROBBIE'S QUICK FISH TACOS

"This is something we cook on the fly when we come in from fishing," Trahan explained. "Redfish is a favorite, but we use any fish. An old-time friend of ours from duck guiding days, Greg 'Paw Paw' Williams, came by the camp once after I cooked it.

"I said, 'Try my fish tacos.' He said, 'What? I don't fish with cacahoes.' Then he called them

cocahoe tacos, not fish tacos. Since then, my uncle Mike Boudreaux uses that nickname for them. He loves them, and every time he comes to the camp, he requests them."

This recipe is all about the taste, Trahan said.

"Because the fish fillets break up, it isn't a pretty dish, but it is very flavorful," he said. ■

Andrew Duval, 17, of Patterson with a red snapper caught 120 miles into the Gulf from Berwick.

USE A SNELL KNOT FOR MORE OFFSHORE HOOKUPS

By Patrick Bonin

GUIDE GIVES STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Sometimes little things can make a big difference in fishing, and Capt. Tommy Pellegrin firmly believes snelling circle hooks offshore has a direct correlation to the number of fish coming over his gunnels.

And as an added bonus, the owner of Custom Charters in Houma said he can tie a “quick snell” with a leader in a matter of seconds.

In essence, the knot is tied to the shank of the hook rather than the eye, providing leverage to embed the barb in the fish’s mouth when the hook is set.

To tie the knot with a leader like Pellegrin does, check out the series of photos with step-by-step instructions.

“The key is the line has to come out of the eye of the hook toward the barb side when you tie it,” Pellegrin said. “You’ll never see me tie a regular knot on a circle hook. A lot of people just tie a straight-up knot and I’m not going to lie — that works.

“But if you want to increase your hooksets, learn how to snell.”

Non-stainless steel circle hooks are required when fishing with natural baits for reef fish offshore, but Pellegrin snells other hooks with success, as well.

“The same technique works for wide-gap hooks used with minnows and shrimp for speckled trout,” he said. “The wide-gap hook works a whole lot better with the snell.”

Pellegrin’s offshore setup usually consists of 60-pound Berkley ProSpec line with a 4-ounce egg sinker and a 150-pound swivel tied to 100-pound leader with a 6/0 Mustad Ultrapoint circle hook.

“This knot is actually pretty much one of the really true

‘100-percent’ knots,” the captain said. “The only way to break monofilament is to overstress it or you tie a bad knot and the tighter the knot gets, the more it pinches down and it eventually just cuts itself off. Other than that, you have to cut it with teeth or knives or whatever — that’s the only two ways that



Step 1: Insert one end of your leader through the eyelet so that it lays across the back side of the shank, opposite the barb, making sure the tag end is the same length as the shank of the hook.



Step 2: Make four to six clean wraps, starting at the eye and moving down the shank of the hook.



Step 3: Pass your line back up through the eye of the hook, making sure it exits the eyelet on the barb side. Tighten up, but DO NOT trim the tag end along the shank.

monofilament will break.

"With this knot, the actual pull line that your power is going to your rod with is outside the wraps. So the wraps get tighter and tighter, but they just grab the hook."

During his years of fishing, Pellegrin has come to believe tying a snell knot is a sure-fire way to hook up with more fish.

"I've proven this so many times on my boat with people who want to tie their own stuff," he said. "They'll tie a regular knot on and they'll catch fish, but they'll miss more, and the ones I'm tying will hook up more."

"It's amazing how much difference that it makes; it's just one of those little tricks."

It's also a fun way to prank unsuspecting friends, he said.

"If we want to mess with somebody, we'll tie a snell backwards and have the line come out of the back side of the hook," Pellegrin said with a chuckle. "They'll get bites left and right and they'll have fish pulling, but that hook just won't set."

"They can't figure out what's wrong. It just totally messes them up." ■

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Sawyer Elizabeth Mumford, 7, shot her first deer on opening morning of the early youth season, Oct. 27, 2018, at her family's hunting club in Jackson.



FIND FOOD SOURCES FOR OPENING-DAY SUCCESS

EXPERT SAYS EARLY BOW SEASON IS KEY TIME FOR TROPHY KILL

By Dan Kibler

With the opening of deer season approaching in a few weeks, hunters need to start finding the major food sources that whitetails are using, set up stands along the trails they take to that food and then stay the heck away until opening day.

Those are some of the things that are on the to-do list that veteran Matt Arey keeps in his head.

Arey, a pro bass fishermen and former deer-hunting guide, said everything he does is geared toward that first week of the season, because its timing puts an awful lot of factors in his favor.

"I put out minerals through the summer, and I'll have trail cameras out on the three farms I've got to hunt, but now I'll start looking for muscadines and persimmons; those are very big things around here in the early season," Arey said. "We've also got a lot of good browse in some 5-, 6- and 7-year-old cutovers, a lot of honeysuckle and blackberries.

"I will put my stands out a minimum of two to three weeks before the season opens, leave them up and not come back until opening day."

Arey won't hunt directly over the food sources, opting to keep his stands a few hundred yards from the soft mast along trails deer use to get from bedding areas to the food.

"I like to hunt little corners, pinch points, travel corridors between bedding areas and the food sources I find," he said.

"How far back depends on the kind of habitat you have; our

terrain around here is so diverse. We hunt farms that are almost all fields with a few woodlots, to almost all cutover."

Arey, who concentrates on bowhunting, said the other big factor that makes the first part of the season so important is how predictable bucks are.

"The first two weeks of the season, I concentrate mainly on hunting bucks due to the fact that they're in a consistent summer pattern, still in their bachelor groups, and because food sources are so important," he said. "Where we are, gun season doesn't come in (for a long time), so the best times to hunt are the first two weeks of bow season and ... right in the middle of the rut." ■

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Andrew Suffrin pictured with his son, Drew, after a mangrove snapper trip out of Grand Isle over the July 4 weekend.

TOP 3 TIPS TO MOP UP ON MANGROVES

EQUIPMENT, WEATHER AND PROPER TECHNIQUE KEYS TO MEAT HAUL

By Patrick Bonin



Every summer, when July and August roll around and Tommy Vidrine can tear himself away from catching hammer speckled trout at Grand Isle for a while, he heads offshore in pursuit of another hard-fighting fish.

He's after mangrove snapper, and he said now's the best time of the year to catch them.

"July and August are probably the best for mangrove. Right now, they get greedy, greedy," said Vidrine, an independent contractor for Aflac who lives in Baton Rouge. "It's not uncommon to go out there and murder them if you have the right setup — and a little bit of knowledge and skill."

To that end, Vidrine shared his Top 3 tips and tactics to help you mop up on mangroves this summer.

Use the right equipment

Vidrine favors a Carolina rig to deliver live pogies and croakers to the depths where mangroves lurk around offshore rigs.

"We use 80-pound braid and I put a 1- or 1½-ounce lead weight on top of a swivel, with about a 4-foot, 50-pound fluorocarbon leader," he said. "That's about the biggest I can tie really good on a small hook. If you get too heavy with the leader, it's hard to tie a little hook on."

If he's targeting smaller mangroves in the 2- to 3-pound range at closer-in rigs in 30 to 40 feet of water out to about 3 miles, Vidrine downsizes his hook to a small 1-inch, 1/0 J-hook. But he beefs up hooks when he heads to depths greater than 100 feet.

"If you want to get the wolves like I call them — the 6-, 8- or 10-pounders — you have to go to 70 to 100 feet of water minimum," he said. "Then I use a 4/0 or 5/0 circle hook. That way you don't have to set the hook, you let the fish hook himself. When they bite, people have a tendency to want to set the hook and lift it, but you can't do that. You have to wait until that rod is almost bent in half, then you lift up and reel."

"People that go out there that aren't experienced miss a lot of fish because they jerk it when they feel that pull."

The right rod is also critical, he said.

"You need a nice, offshore rod that's not too limber, because you have to be able to horse them out of the rigs," he said.

"Another thing that's important, especially if you're fishing with your wife, is a hard-plastic fighting belt. My wife, as small as she is, gets all the leverage she wants pulling on that fish with the belt that clips

around you — not the tie-on.

"It makes all the difference in the world if she's reeling in a 10-pound mangrove in her being able to handle the fish or having to pass it to me. The belt is very important unless you're a big bulky man who wants to be macho."

Go only in the right conditions

Vidrine heads offshore in a 24-foot bay boat, so the right weather is crucial for him to even attempt a trip.

"I like to go when the tide is not too strong — that's my favorite time," he said. "But I look at the seas, No. 1. One- to 2-foot seas with a 5 to 10 mph wind are ideal to be comfortable out there."

"It seems like when it's slick calm, that's when I really smoke them."

If possible, he likes to head out when the moon is small, too.

"Every time I go around a full moon, it seems like I get a lot of sharks. I can hardly get my bait in the water," he said. "It's like it puts them in a frenzy. I think the moon has a lot to do with sharks."

Proper techniques

Vidrine said live bait is crucial to consistently catch more fish — he's partial to croakers and pogies (menhaden).

"The pogies catch all the big fish," he said.

"If the water is clear, I think they'll come out 30 or 40 feet away from the rig if they see that pogy struggling on that fluorocarbon line with a small hook. They're not always in the rig like people think. But if you're fishing with dead bait, make sure to hide the hook."

Free-lining is obviously tough with any tidal movement at all, so Vidrine prefers to deliver the live bait directly down to where the mangroves are gathered via the Carolina rig. But how far down is that?

"If the water is clear, I always say let your bait down until you can't see it anymore. When it disappears, that's about where you want to be," he said. "Sometimes you can see 30 feet down. When it's that far, they're going to be deeper because they're a little shy. When the water is murky, they might be only 15 feet from the top."

Adjusting your drag is also vital to success, Vidrine said.

"Tighten your drag all the way down. Those first 2 or 3 feet when you have to turn his head are very important," he said. "So I put the drag all the way down. I'm just trying to get them out of there, and if you're close to the rig, I keep the drag tight. If you can get off the rig a little bit, you might not have to horse them so fast."

Vidrine isn't a fan of chumming because of the sharks it attracts, but he's definitely not afraid to try all sides of a rig to locate mangroves.

"It's like selling — there's not one right way to do it," he said. "You can try the easiest way first, which is down current with the rig hook. But I'll try up current, and even go on the side of the rig and run my motor if I have to."

"I like trial and error." ■

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The key to putting fish in the boat is understanding where they will be, and checking tidal flow at crab pots can help narrow down that search.



THE BEST TIDE INDICATOR

LET CRAB TRAP FLOATS GUIDE YOU TO YOUR FISHING SPOT, GUIDE SAYS

By Patrick Bonin

When Chas Champagne, creator of the Matrix Shad soft-plastic lure, heads out in pursuit of fish, he often relies on a tried-and-true, real-time indicator of tidal movement near his favorite fishing locations.

But he doesn't use his electronics or even consult online tidal prediction websites to do it.

So how does he pull it off?

He simply checks out a few crab traps on the way to his spot for the day.

"As soon as you launch, find crab trap floats set in tidal flows," Champagne said. "Run your boat toward your spot next to the first few crab traps you see, and get a read from how the current is breaking off the float and rope."

Now you're armed with real-time tidal info including current strength and direction for the spot you had in mind — which might not actually be the best place to fish for the day.

"I can't tell you how many times I have come out of the pass, making a beeline for the exact spot we killed them at the day before, and see the crab floats swinging in a different direction," Champagne said. "I don't care how many we caught the day

before, if the tide is wrong for that spot, it's wrong.

"I'll hook the boat right there and head for the spot that the tide and wind are telling me that day."

Champagne said it's better to rely on the information you're presented with out on the water to make an educated decision about where to target rather than where other anglers say they've been catching.

To help, he suggested keeping logs and notes of your fishing activity.

"If you caught fish in a spot on a light, falling tide at a water temp of 65 degrees, you can bet your bottom dollar they'll be back there in that situation almost every time," Champagne said. "But don't scratch your head for too long after you catch 75 trout in a spot just 24 hours earlier, and then wonder where they went when you go back the next day and catch only three with a different tide direction or speed.

"Just keep in the back of mind that as soon as the tide returns to what it was when you were catching, the fish will probably be right back at it." ■

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TIPS FOR SLABS AFTER DARK

By Phillip Gentry

Like any type of modern fishing, the details of your setup and presentation can often spell the difference between a so-so night and a great night on the water. Follow these tips to help you make the best of your night-fishing trips for crappie.

CHECK YOUR DEPTH

During the summer, a maximum water depth may not apply, but for night-fishing during the summer, a minimum of 10 to 12 feet of water is recommended. The best areas will be adjacent to a creek or river channel that has fish holding around nearby structure.

SEE THE LIGHT

Two light systems will assist in attracting and catching crappie. An ambient light system will help with seeing rods, baiting hooks and unhooking fish. Use as little light as possible to avoid attracting insects. A submersible lighting system is used to attract baitfish. Green is a popular color, and some models can even be submerged.

THE RIGHT ROD

Rod lengths from 6 to 9 feet work best, especially under bridges where overhead clearance might be a problem. Use rods long enough to reach outside the light to catch fish in the shadows. Painted or glow tips will assist in seeing bites.

Crappie will bite at night, especially if you follow a few guidelines.



Phillip Gentry

LIVE-BAIT TIME

Though jigs will also work, live bait typically gets the nod for stationary, vertical fishing. If using store-bought minnows, try to match your baits with the size of the natural bait. Where legal, consider cast-netting bait from the lake to use for night fishing.

THERMOCLINE TRICKS

Though crappie may hold below a thermocline, most active feeding will take place in current areas where there is no thermocline, or just above the thermocline. You can determine the depth of the thermocline by increasing the sensitivity on your sonar and looking for a thin horizontal line. ■

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FIELD NOTES

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Slinky weights, built with large split-shot or buckshot pellets stuffed into paracord and sealed inside, are much less likely to hang up when dragged across the bottom for catfish.

Phillip Gentry

SLINKY UP ON CATFISH

HOMEMADE TROLLING WEIGHT IS THE TICKET FOR SUMMER CATFISH

By Phillip Gentry

Winter and spring catfishing generally involves site-specific fishing tactics such as anchored down, cut-bait fishing. However, from late June through November, catfish move around a lot, due to a number of factors, and one of the best ways to target them is to drift or troll.

Such is the case on Mississippi's Lake Mary Crawford, where catfish react to changing water currents, baitfish movements and any number of factors that affect food sources.

Since catfish are most productively targeted on or near the bottom, trolling for catfish may sound like an invitation to retie often and cuss a lot. To counter this, veteran catfish anglers employ a homemade trolling rig that places baits within reach of the bottom, yet still resists snags.

"The key to trolling or drifting is to use a Slinky weight," said veteran angler Chris Simpson. "A lot of catfishermen make them by inserting 00

buckshot pellets into a 6-inch length of nylon paracord. It's hollow, and you squeeze the shot into it like a sock."

After heat-sealing the ends of the cord to hold the shot in place, a snap swivel is punched through one end of the weight and the main line slides through the eye of the swivel. A barrel swivel holds the weight away from the hook with a 3- to 4-foot leader in between. About midway down the leader, a 2-inch Styrofoam crappie float is attached. The float raises the baited hook off the bottom, just above head level to a prowling cat, while the Slinky weight holds the rig to the bottom and pulls over underwater structure without snagging.

On days with adequate wind, anglers can start their drifting runs upwind and drift across open sections of the lake. Days without wind require the use of a trolling motor to move the boat at .5 to .7 miles per hour. ■



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STICK A TOOTHPICK IN IT

By Craig Holt

One of the best tools a bass fisherman can have, especially during the summer when fish live largely in deep, cool, oxygenated water, are toothpicks — and not to clean peanut butter from an angler's teeth.

What's the deal with toothpicks? For years, fishermen would "peg" the bullet weights used on Texas rigs with a toothpick, jamming the sharp end of a pick into the hole where the line threads through the weight. After breaking off the rest of the pick, fishermen had a bullet weight that wouldn't slide up the line — a big aid in being able to cast longer and more accurately.

The next problem solved by toothpicks is the time spent readjusting or putting new soft-plastic lures on hooks after a bite. Often, a fish that hits a soft-plastic bait might not be impaled on the point of the hook, but it would pull the worm or lizard back off the hook.

Using the tip of a toothpick, pushed through a soft-plastic bait and the eye of the hook, will help keep a Texas-rigged bait from sliding down. Break off both ends of the toothpick just outside the worm's margins.



Dan Kibler

"Got a solution for that one," said veteran guide Maynard Edwards. "I like to use this with a jig-and-pig, but you also can use it with creature baits."

Edwards' solution to prevent bass from ripping or tearing off jig trailers is to insert a piece of toothpick sideways through the head of the soft-plastic bait, then break it off even with each side of the lure. When he slides the trailer on the jig's hook, he makes

sure the point goes in below the toothpick in the lure's body. That way, the toothpick will be in place and help keep the trailer from tearing off.

When it comes to Texas-rigging soft plastics, he'll thread the bait all the way up on the hook, then push one end of a toothpick through the plastic and through the eye of the hook and break it off. That helps keep the bait from being pulled down on the hook.

"It keeps the hook from pulling free (from the lure), and you can cast (jigs) farther," he said. "You also don't fling (soft plastics) off the hooks so much." ■



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oils, dirt, old grease and leaves a thin, non-greasy coating that prevents rust and corrosion on engine blocks, hose clamps, locks, latches, hinges, down riggers and moving parts on trailers. Clenzoil Marine & Tackle will also preserve and protect wood accents on boats.

MSRP is \$17.99

For more info, visit: www.clenzoil.com



FRABILL'S TROPHY NET HAUL SERIES

The first connection between fish and angler — the hook and knot — is tremendously important, and so, it seems, is the final connection: the net.

Frabill debuted its Trophy Haul Net series this spring, with several features that should thrill all fishermen: an oversized, triangle-shaped handle that won't slip or spin out of your hand, a big net bag constructed of Frabill's patented Conservation netting that will make it easier to control and land fish, and a net bag control ring that gives anglers complete control of the net during landing.

In addition, the Power Extend Trophy Haul Net has a three-stage LED light mounted under the yoke handle to provide illumination during low-light fishing situations.

The Standard and Power Extend nets come in three different net sizes: 18"x21", 21"x24" and 24"x27". The Standard net comes with a 48-inch handle; the Power Extend net has a telescopic handle that extends from 48 to 72 inches.

MSRP for the Standard net is \$79.99, for the Power Extend, \$129.99.

For more info, visit: www.frabill.com

SHIMANO'S SLX DC 150 BAITCASTING REEL

Shimano's line of baitcasting reels just got a lot more impressive at the ICAST trade show in early July with the introduction of its Digital Control (DC) braking system in a reel, the SLX DC 150, that's within reach of more anglers' budgets.

The reel features Shimano's SLX low-profile style with the same I-DC4 digital brake control system already featured on the Curado DC series, a system that flattens out the learning curve for anglers new to baitcasting reels,

helping eliminate the backlashes so many experience.

The SLX 150 DC is offered in both right- and left-hand retrieves, and in three gear ratios: 6.2-to-1, 7.4-to-1 and 8.5-to-1.

MSRP is \$189.99.

For more info, visit: fish.shimano.com



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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	2 of 4 grouper total
Atlantic Sharpnose & Bonnethead shark@	None	1/day
Other sharks (except prohibited species)@	54" FL	1/day/vessel/aggregate
King Mackerel*	24" FL	3/day
Spanish Mackerel*	12" FL	15/day
Striped mullet	None	100 pounds/day
Black seabass	None	None
Hogfish	14" FL	5/day
Seatrot, 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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Don't miss SPORTSMAN TV!

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, we've got Hampton Rutland taking us on some awesome duck hunts, Humberto Fontova and Chef Nathan Richard will be cooking it up in the kitchen, Captain Charlie Thomason will be breaking down inshore fishing techniques, and Greg Hackney will show how he targets bass in Louisiana. Come go with us.

Cox Sports Television Thursdays - 6:30 pm, Saturdays - 8:30 am, Sundays - 9:00 am

▶ You can catch any episode you missed on [louisianasportsman.com/sportsmantv](https://www.louisianasportsman.com/sportsmantv)

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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, and look ahead at 2020, and more. Comes with FREE 2019 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for \$8.95, plus \$3 s&h.

Book: "How to Know When to Go" by Rick Taylor. \$14.95 (plus \$4 s&h). 100 pages, 43 illustrations. A comprehensive look at the main factors influencing fish and game activity periods, plus how to devise an effective when-to-go game plan using any year's PrimeTimes calendars. Individual assessments of bass, panfish, deer, turkey, and more.

2019 Ultimate PrimeTimes software for PCs. \$29.95 (plus \$3 s&h, or no s&h if downloaded from web). The world's best forecaster allows you to fine-tune the peak times to your exact location, quarry, and even weather. Too many features to list here, including making your own App. For more details, please call us or visit our web site (see below).

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2019 AUG		BEST DAYS		VALUE
POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCL	
Thu 1	██	██	██	83
Fri 2	██	██	██	71
Sat 3	██	██	██	57
Sun 4	██	██	██	48
Mon 5	██	██	██	44
Tue 6	██	██	██	45
Wed 7	██	██	██	52
Thu 8	██	██	██	39
Fri 9	██	██	██	31
Sat 10	██	██	██	29
Sun 11	██	██	██	27
Mon 12	██	██	██	36
Tue 13	██	██	██	46
Wed 14	██	██	██	55
Thu 15	██	██	██	60
Fri 16	██	██	██	52
Sat 17	██	██	██	44
Sun 18	██	██	██	37
Mon 19	██	██	██	35
Tue 20	██	██	██	38
Wed 21	██	██	██	41
Thu 22	██	██	██	50
Fri 23	██	██	██	63
Sat 24	██	██	██	56
Sun 25	██	██	██	53
Mon 26	██	██	██	54
Tue 27	██	██	██	64
Wed 28	██	██	██	74
Thu 29	██	██	██	83
Fri 30	██	██	██	86
Sat 31	██	██	██	72

25 50 75
AVERAGE

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LUNAR PERIODS					
TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED					
MOON RISE	PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD	MOON SET	PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT		
6:47 am	12:23 pm - 3:35 pm	9:03 pm	Midnight - 3:04 am	☉	●
7:59 am	1:27 pm - 4:27 pm	9:47 pm	12:48 am - 4:00 am	☉	● Perigee
9:11 am	2:32 pm - 5:14 pm	10:26 pm	1:52 am - 4:52 am	☉	●
10:22 am	3:35 pm - 5:57 pm	11:02 pm	2:57 am - 5:39 am	☉	●
11:30 am	4:36 pm - 6:38 pm	11:36 pm	4:00 am - 6:22 am	☉	●
12:36 pm	5:34 pm - 7:20 pm		5:01 am - 7:03 am	☉	●
1:41 pm	6:33 pm - 8:01 pm		5:59 am - 7:45 am	☉	● HALF
2:45 pm	7:30 pm - 8:46 pm	12:11 am	6:58 am - 8:26 pm	☉	●
3:46 pm	8:26 pm - 9:32 pm	1:26 am	7:55 am - 9:11 am	☉	●
4:44 pm	9:21 pm - 10:19 pm	2:08 am	8:51 am - 9:57 am	☉	●
5:39 pm	10:13 pm - 11:11 pm	2:55 am	9:46 am - 10:44 am	☉	● LOW
6:29 pm	11:04 pm - 12:02 am	3:45 am	10:38 am - 11:36 am	☉	●
7:13 pm	11:49 am - Midnight	4:38 am	11:29 am - 12:27 pm	☉	●
7:53 pm	Midnight - 12:55 am	5:33 am	12:14 pm - 1:20 pm	☉	●
8:28 pm	12:33 am - 1:45 am	6:29 am	12:58 pm - 2:10 pm	☉	● FULL
9:00 pm	1:11 am - 2:37 am	7:25 am	1:36 pm - 3:02 pm	☉	●
9:30 pm	1:48 am - 3:26 am	8:20 am	2:13 pm - 3:51 pm	☉	● Apogee
9:58 pm	2:23 am - 4:15 am	9:15 am	2:48 pm - 4:40 pm	☉	●
10:26 pm	2:56 am - 5:04 am	10:09 am	3:21 pm - 5:29 pm	☉	●
10:54 pm	3:31 am - 5:53 am	11:04 am	3:56 pm - 6:18 pm	☉	●
11:25 pm	4:04 am - 6:44 am	12:01 pm	4:29 pm - 7:09 pm	☉	●
11:59 pm	4:40 am - 7:36 am	12:58 pm	5:05 pm - 8:01 pm	☉	●
	5:22 am - 8:28 am	1:58 pm	5:47 pm - 8:53 pm	☉	● HALF
12:37 am	6:05 am - 9:25 am	2:59 pm	6:30 pm - 9:50 pm	☉	●
1:22 am	6:57 am - 10:23 am	4:01 pm	7:22 pm - 10:48 pm	☉	● HIGH
2:14 am	7:53 am - 11:23 am	5:02 pm	8:18 pm - 11:48 pm	☉	●
3:14 am	8:55 am - 12:21 pm	6:09 pm	9:20 pm - 12:46 pm	☉	●
4:22 am	9:59 am - 1:19 pm	6:50 pm	10:24 pm - 1:44 am	☉	●
5:33 am	11:06 am - 2:12 pm	7:37 pm	11:31 pm - Midnight	☉	●
6:47 am	12:12 pm - 3:02 pm	8:18 pm	Midnight - 2:37 am	☉	● NEW & PERIGEE
8:00 am	1:17 pm - 3:49 pm	8:56 pm	12:37 am - 3:27 am	☉	●

ANY LUNAR PERIOD IS ENHANCED WHEN IT OVERLAPS A KEY SOLAR PERIOD. THE BEST OF THESE OVERLAPS ARE DESIGNATED BY THE SUN SYMBOLS:
☉ = DAWN ☉ = HIGH NOON ☉ = DUSK

WHILE THE LESSER MOONRISE AND -SET OVERLAPS (ABOUT 30 MIN. BEFORE AND AFTER THE LISTED TIME) ARE DESIGNATED BY BOLD BLACK TYPE.

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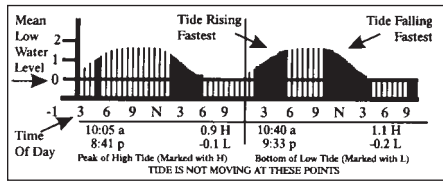
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Fish feed most actively when the tide is moving. Louisiana Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most-active feeding periods each day in the Tide Guide. Just fish those times indicated in black. To find the best time to fish your favorite honeyhole, find the spot under Tide Corrections that is closest to the area, and add or subtract the time from the corresponding daily prediction.

Tide Corrections

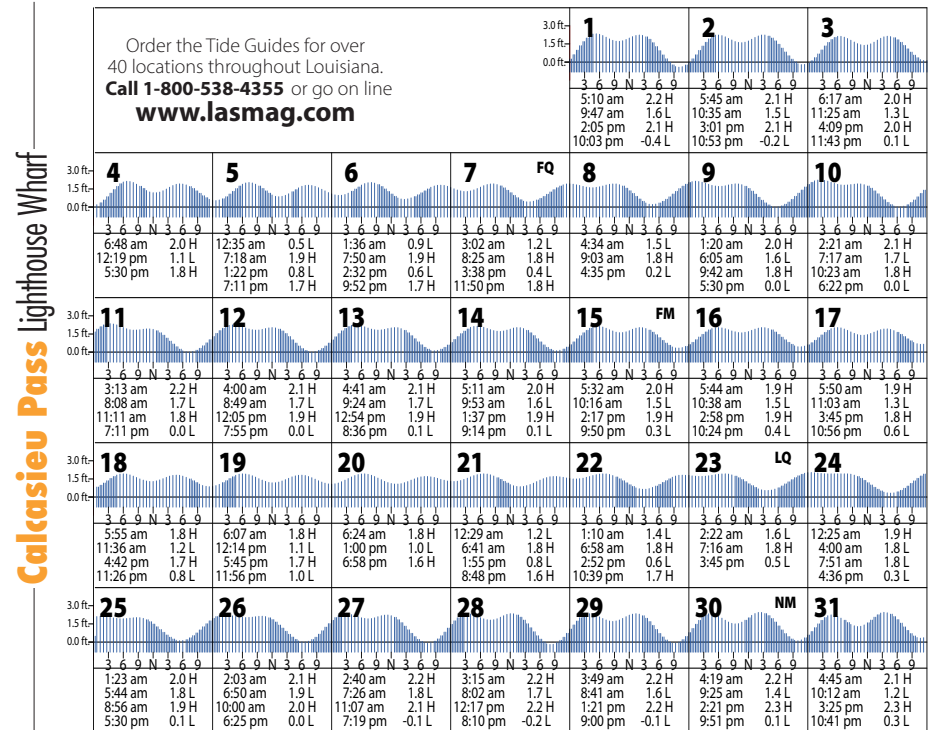
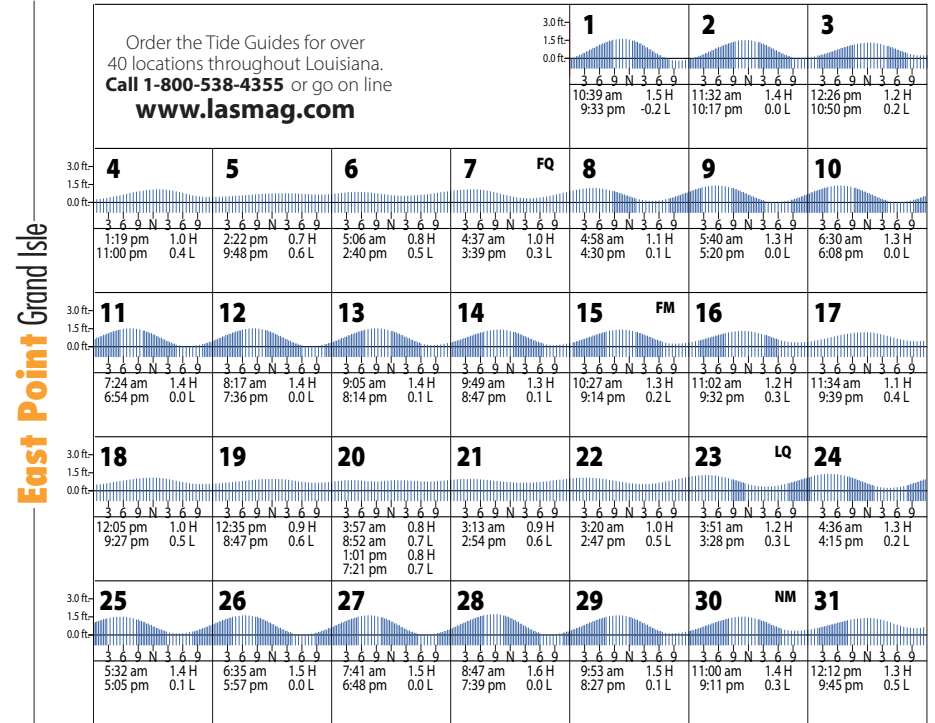
East Point, Grand Isle HIGH LOW

Barataria Pass	+1:00	-0:10
Bastian Island	+0:41	+0:12
Bay Gardene	+2:51	+2:44
Bayou Bonfouca	+9:59	+10:11
Breton Islands	+0:54	+0:48
Caillou Boca	+0:40	+0:48
Caminada Pass	+0:20	+0:12
Chandeleur Light	+0:37	+0:34
Chef Pass	+5:17	+5:07
Cocodrie	+1:22	+1:33
Comfort Island	+1:34	+0:54
Delacroix Island	+3:42	+3:31
Empire Jetty	-1:03	-1:45
Four Bayou Pass	+2:18	+0:17
Gardner Island	+0:40	+0:47
Grand Pass	+1:48	+1:16
Head of Passes	-0:48	+0:00
Hopedale	+4:17	+4:56
Independence Island	+2:29	+1:59
Jack Bay	+1:59	+1:28
Joseph Bayou	-0:36	-1:37
Lafitte	+1:45	+2:51
Long Point, Lake Borgne	+2:28	+2:11
Manila Village	+2:32	+3:13
Michoud Substation	+5:24	+5:02
New Canal (Bucktown)	+10:34	+10:49
North Pass	-0:31	-0:37
Paris Road Bridge	+5:53	+5:58
Pelican Islands	+2:26	+2:26
Pointe a la Hache	+3:12	+3:01
Port Eads	-0:17	-1:37
Raccoon Point	-0:03	-0:20
Shell Beach	+4:32	+4:25
Ship Shoal Light	-1:54	-1:50
South Pass, Miss. R.	-1:13	-1:20
Southwest Pass, Miss. R.	-0:38	-1:33
Tchefuncte River	+10:23	+11:01
Timbalier Island	+0:19	+0:23
Wine Island	+1:08	+1:02

Calcasieu Pass, Lighthouse Wharf HIGH LOW

Cote Blanche Island	+4:33	+3:40
Eugene Island	+1:49	-0:39
Lighthouse Point	+0:58	-0:53
Mermentau River ent.	+0:20	+0:25
Point Au Fer	+1:53	-1:02
Point Chevreul	+3:16	+0:30
Rabbit Island	+2:01	-0:36
Shell Island	+3:08	+0:45
South Point	+1:55	-0:33
Southwest Pass, Vermillion Bay	+1:42	+0:51
Weeks Bay	+3:58	+3:56

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY



Louisiana Sportsman
BEST CATCH



Jacob Magee



Anthony Hopkins



Ivan Strayham



Cole Legnon



Matthew Guiffreda



Dylan Hymel



Spencer LeJeune



Alexis Bailey



Tana Cararas



Sarah Giles

Hunting/Fishing
SCRAPBOOK

Eric (left) and Mark Hardy each bagged a beautiful buck on family property near Arnaudville. Their family manages their 1,000 acres of fair-chase property and strive only to shoot mature 5-year-old bucks.



Andrew Palmisano killed his first buck on Dec. 8 in Concordia Parish on family land.



Steve Webb with neighbors Federal Credit Union, Kirk Lejeune with Louisiana Valve Source and Dennis Hartner, retired from Entergy, with trout caught fishing the barges at Fourchon and East Timbalier at the end of June.

The Crappie Psychic, LLC

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The advertisement features a man in a green shirt holding a large crappie. To his left are two packages of "Crappie Trailers" from "The Crappie Psychic, LLC". One package is green and labeled "Lagniappe" and "12ct", while the other is yellow and labeled "Lagniappe" and "10ct". Both packages mention "Flavored with Our New Psychic Sauce!". At the bottom, there is a green banner with white text: "Call 985-790-0862 or visit www.thecrappiepsychic.com to find a retailer near you! thecrappiepsychic@yahoo.com".

GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

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



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Averi Desormeaux

This 10-point buck was taken by Averi Desormeaux, 14, of Delcambre at the Priour Ranch in Mountain Home, Tex., on Dec. 28, 2018.



Riley Robinson

Thirteen-year-old Riley Robinson holds her catch from Lake Claiborne.



Hunter Lee Theodore Thomas

Hunter Lee Theodore Thomas, 5, hooked his first redfish 2,000 feet off Falgout Canal on May 26. The 16½-inch red was tagged by the SC Marine Game Fish Tagging Program.

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Bella Nievas

Bella Nievas with a dolphin caught June 24, 2019.



Hunter Andras

Hunter Andras with a giant warsaw grouper.

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Mallory O'Brien Talley

Mallory O'Brien Talley with some great red snapper caught down in Venice.



Chandler Woods

Chandler Woods, 18, of Kenner shot this cinnamon teal opening weekend of the second split in Venice while hunting with his friend Grey Dyason.

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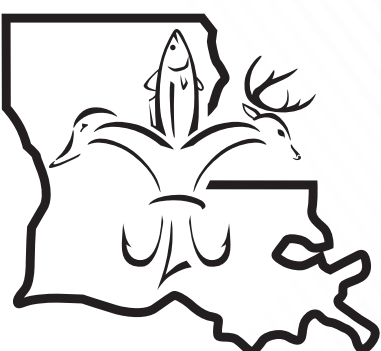
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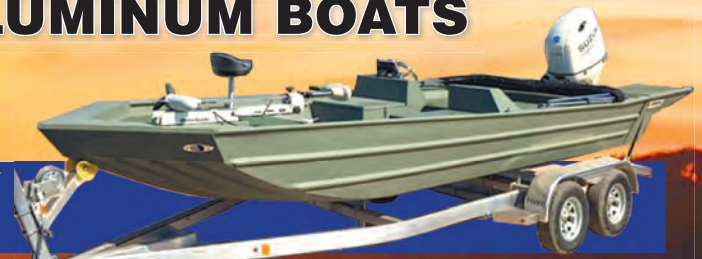
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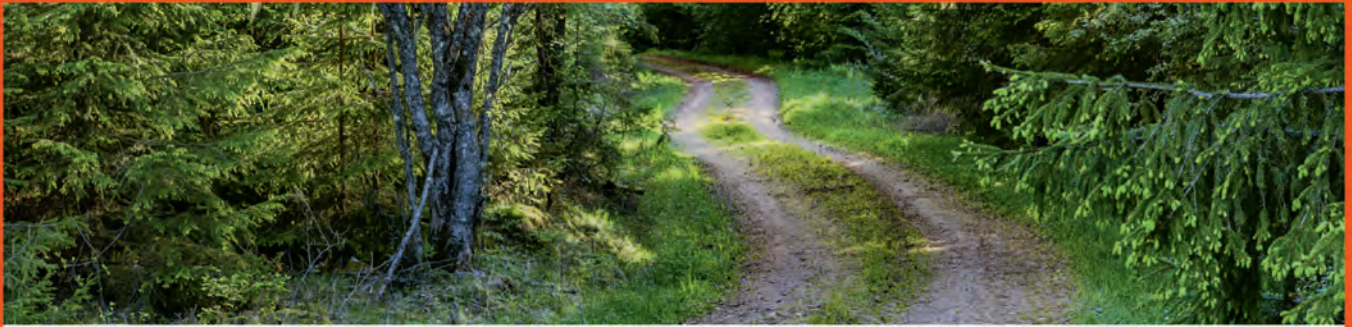
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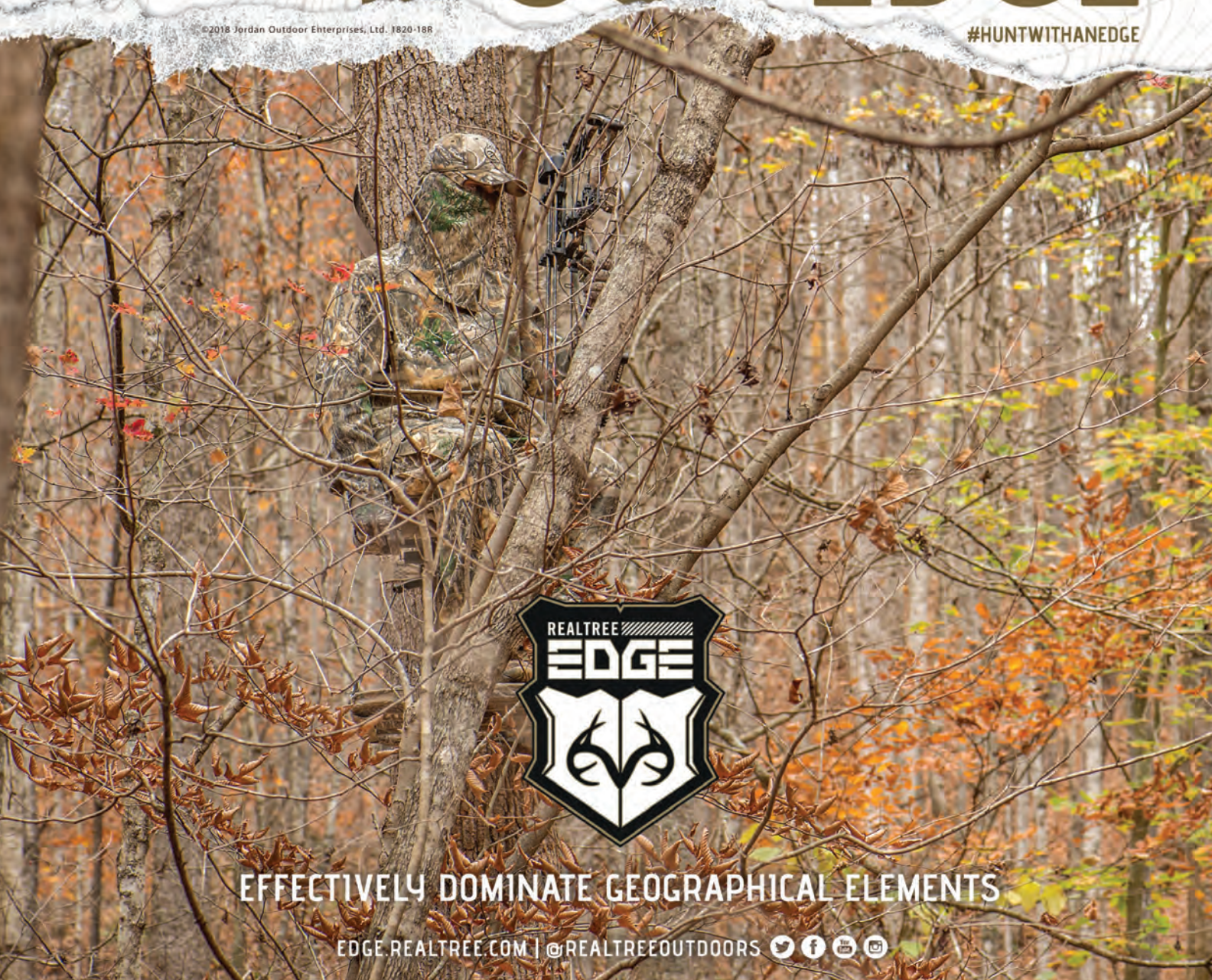
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