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27

WMA PREVIEW  
2019-2020

81

TROPICAL STORM  
TRADE-OFF

# Louisiana CONTENTS

Volume 39 | Number 9 | September 2019

## FEATURES:

### 27 WMA PREVIEW 2019-2020 cover story

Long periods of flooding make for plenty of question marks for deer hunters on affected WMAs. But for ducks, the more water, the merrier. Here's a survey of top public-hunting areas in Louisiana.

>>>By Don Shoopman

### 47 A SCOUT IS....

Deer hunters should be prepared to figure out where whitetails will be when bow season opens, and knowing food sources and approaching trails will give you a leg up.

>>>By Phillip Gentry

### 65 PRESEASON WORK

For a good season in the field, scouting isn't the only thing you need to do before hunting season arrives. Get yourself in shape for the effort you'll be putting forth.

>>>By Bill Garbo



### 81 TROPICAL STORM TRADE-OFF

Storms and hurricanes that go somewhere else along the Gulf Coast do a whole lot of good for the fishing in south Louisiana.

>>>By Todd Masson

### 111 CHASING THE DREAM

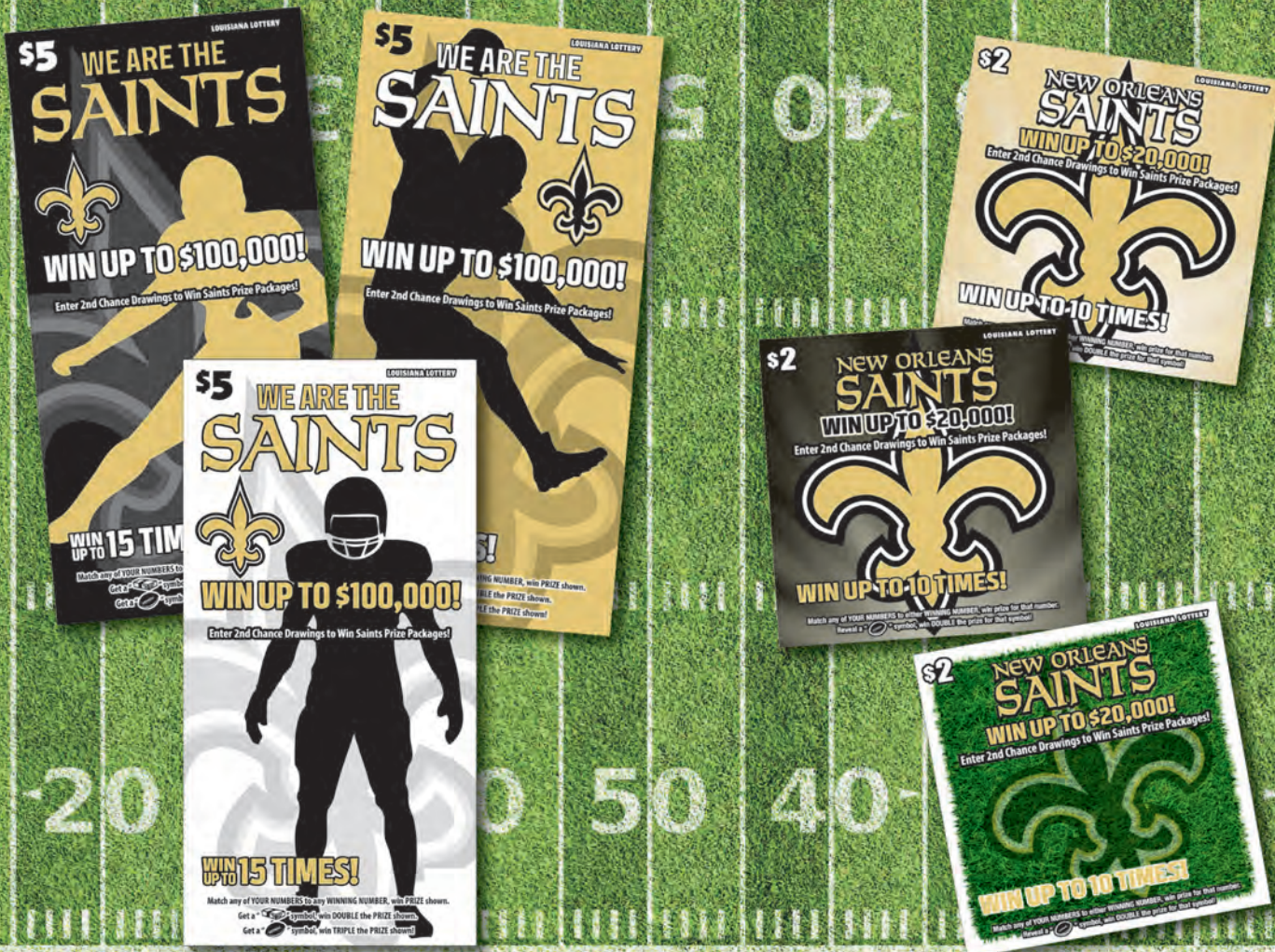
Louisiana anglers can hang with anyone, but they're only beginning to make a big impact on national tournament trails.

>>>By Kinny Haddox

## FISHING HOTSPOTS:

- 88 Biloxi Marsh
- 98 Shell Beach
- 100 Lake Calcasieu
- 104 Grand Isle
- 124 Atchafalaya Basin
- 128 Toledo Bend
- 144 Lake Verret
- 146 Lake Ouachita

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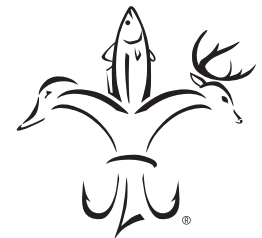
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OUTDOOR UPDATE:

**10 TOLEDO BEND BASS, GOOD ACORN CROP, CANEY LAKE BASS, BUSSEY BREAK WORK, GARMIN WINS, ALLIGATOR TAGS**

PLUS

**24 EAGLE LAKE CRAPPIE REGS**

ON THE COVER:



Where are Louisiana's best public-hunting areas? Our WMA Forecast should lead you in the right direction for deer, ducks and small game.

COLUMNS:

- 54 STICKS & STRINGS** By Sammy Romano
- 72 GAME WARDEN** By Keith LaCaze
- 74 APEX PREDATOR** By Joshua Chauvin
- 92 SPECKLED TRUTH** By Chris Bush
- 96 LURE REVIEW** By Don Shoopman
- 106 GUEST COLUMN** By Chas Champagne
- 130 PADDLES 'N PUDDLES** By Chris Holmes

DEPARTMENTS:

- 150** Hunting/Fishing Scrapbook
- 154** Hunting Regulations
- 156** Sportsman Astro Tables
- 157** Sportsman Tide Guide
- 160** Louisiana Guides
- 160** Sportsman Classifieds
- 162** Advertiser Index

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**Volume 39 | No 9**



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# Outdoor UPDATE



Scott Eastman of Lake Charles reeled in this 11.48-pounder with a Texas-rigged, black-emerald Zoom Ol' Monster worm on July 21 at 4:30 a.m. during a night-fishing tournament.

All photos courtesy of Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program

# NIGHT-TIME BASS BONANZA EXPLODES AT TOLEDO BEND

By Patrick Bonin

## 7 LUNKERS, 10 POUNDS AND UP, LANDED IN JULY

**W**ithout a doubt, the thermometer indicated it was a typical, blistering hot July in Louisiana — but some big bass apparently felt like it was still springtime up at Toledo Bend.

who reeled in an 11.48-pound monster at about 4:30 a.m. on July 21 during a Lake Charles Hawg Hunters night-fishing tournament. Eastman was targeting the south end of the lake with his son-in-law, Jamie Parkes.

Seven hawks weighing 10 pounds or more were entered in the Bend's Lunker Bass Program, which awards anglers who catch and release double-digit fish back into the reservoir with a complimentary replica mount.

"We were sitting in 7 or 8 foot of water, throwing out into 25," said Eastman, who had tied on a black-emerald, Texas-rigged Zoom Ol' Monster worm. "I came off some wood or something, and I felt kind of like a tick. ... When I tightened it up a little bit, I said, 'That's a fish!'"

"When I set the hook, I was like, 'That's a good fish.' I didn't really know how big she was because it was dark until Jamie got ready to net her."

The pair had a great night on the water — Parkes landed one better than 8 pounds — and the pair won the event with a five-fish stringer that topped 30 pounds.

Kaleb Lasyone, 25, of Dry Prong, actually got things started on July 2 when he landed his first-ever double-digit bass — a 10.69-pounder — also night-fishing along the south end of the reservoir.

"I had a couple good nights. The next night, I caught an 8.24," he said, noting fish were likely moving out of deep water and coming up at night to feed near points he was targeting.

Lasyone caught his lunker about midnight in about 15 feet of water on a black/blue V&M Wild Thing worm Texas-rigged with a ½-ounce weight.

"I actually thought I had just a 5- or 6-pounder, and reeled it up and went to flip it in the boat," he said. "When I got her about half-way up, I couldn't get her up — that's when I knew she was big."



Kaleb Lasyone of Dry Prong caught this 10.69-pound bass on July 2 about midnight on the south end of the reservoir with a black-and-blue V&M Wild Thing worm Texas-rigged with a ½-ounce weight.

Lasyone made contact with Buckeye Landing, where an employee met him at around 1 a.m. to certify the fish, which was 25½ inches long with a 17¾-inch girth. A side note: Lasyone's fish was previously caught in April 2015 by Stephen Remedies; it tipped the scales then at 10.22 pounds.

Sidney Matthews, 64, of Florien, kept the momentum going on July 5 near Housen when he caught a 10.63-pound bass — his fifth double-digit fish and fourth from Toledo Bend.

"We caught it late in the evening," Matthews said. "We were fishing a tournament that started at 7 o'clock, and that was the first fish we put in the boat, at 10 minutes after 7."

Matthews used a plum-colored, Texas-rigged 10½-inch River Bottom Baits worm to fool the lunker.

"We were sitting in 35 feet of water, and that fish came out of 6 feet of water," he said. "That's where the fish was located."

Matthews and his partner went on to take third place in the event with 23.8 pounds, along with Big Bass honors.



Sidney Matthews of Florien landed his fifth double-digit bass when he snared this 10.63-pounder in the Housen area on July 5.



George Herr of Many caught this 10.13-pounder in the Patroon area on a Texas-rigged redbud Zoom Trick Worm on July 11.



Patrick Green of Leesville didn't win Big Bass honors despite landing this 10.33-pound monster on July 5, but he and his brother, Robert, took first place in the tournament with a four-fish bag that tipped the scales at almost 25 pounds.

Patrick Green, 50, of Leesville, was actually fishing in the same Tackle Box tournament as Matthews when he landed his own lunker. Green's fish weighed-in at 10.33 pounds, so, unfortunately, he didn't win big bass honors that night — but he made up for it by winning the team event with his brother Robert with four fish that tipped the scales at 24.89 pounds.

Green was fishing in the Negreet area around 7:30 p.m. when the big bass hit a Texas-rigged junebug Zoom Ol' Monster worm.

"I was sitting in about 30 feet of water," he said. "As soon as I started reeling it in, I knew it was pretty big."

They immediately went to Buckeye Landing to weigh-in the big bass, so they lost some valuable fishing time. But the brothers more than made up for it, reeling in a 6- and a 5-pounder later in the evening to ultimately take top honors for the tournament.

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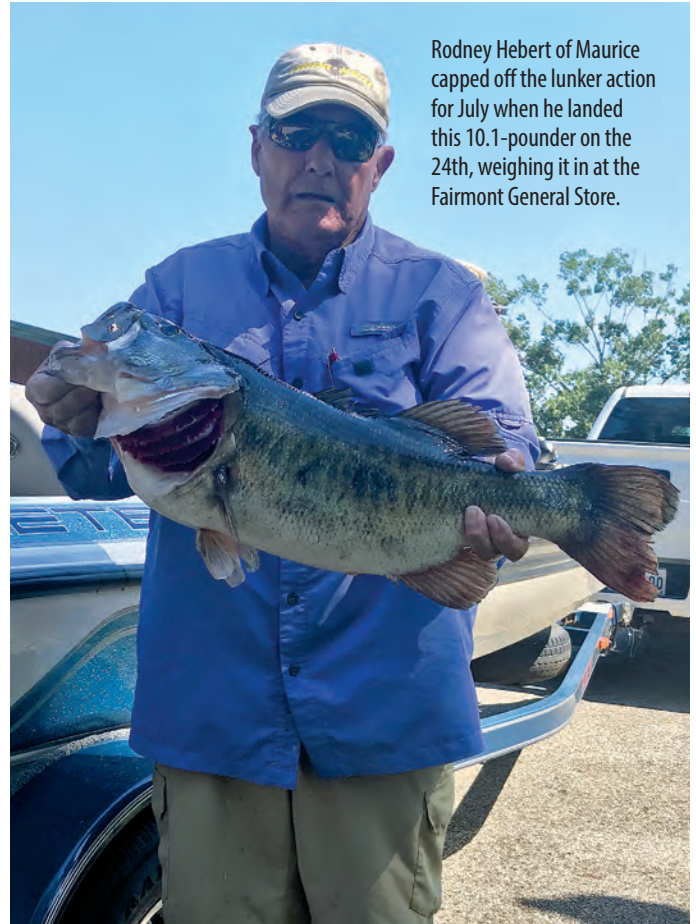
Timothy Guidry of Sulphur caught this 10.15-pound monster on July 3.



George Herr, 63, of Many, caught a 10.13-pounder on July 11 near Clear Creek in the Patroon area on a Texas-rigged redbud Zoom Trick worm at the first place he stopped that morning. Herr said his boat was positioned in about 14 feet of water, and the fish was about 9 feet deep.

It was Herr's fourth Toledo Bend lunker, but his first since 2015. His fish was previously caught this past February by Kyle Alexander; it weighed 10.41 pounds at that point.

Rounding out big-bass action for July, Timothy Guidry of Sulphur landed a 10.15-pounder on July 3, and Rodney Hebert of Maurice landed a 10.1-pound lunker on July 24. ■



Rodney Hebert of Maurice capped off the lunker action for July when he landed this 10.1-pounder on the 24th, weighing it in at the Fairmont General Store.

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# WILL ACORNS FLOURISH IN 2019?

By David Moreland

**F**rom what I am seeing in East Feliciana Parish, 2019 could be another year with plenty of acorns in the woods during hunting season.

Last season was a good one for both white oak and red oak acorns. On Pearl River WMA, I focused on the big cow oak acorns in the swamp, and it paid off with an adult buck and several hogs.

We found that white oak acorns were being eaten by deer in East Feliciana from October through January. There seems to be a belief among hunters that acorns will spoil, but this is not true. White oak acorns will often sprout and begin developing a root, but deer still eat them.

Acorns will sustain a deer herd through the fall and winter keeping them fit and healthy during the rut, but an abundant mast crop will also provide food for deer well into spring and summer. In fact, deer collections on Sherburne WMA documented deer eating striped oak acorns in August. Acorns are not high in protein, so they are not the food needed to grow antlers, but the nutrition from acorns keeps the deer fat and healthy.

## IMPORTANT MAST

The importance of acorns is often downplayed by some biologists, because they are not the food that deer need during spring and summer to grow antlers and help with fawning. Protein from quality forage and browse provides this nutrition, and if the forest is being managed correctly by maintaining a good hardwood component, quality browse will be produced.

But these biologists follow the idea that mast is not needed in order to promote



In the piney woods of Louisiana where oak trees are sparse, deer readily eat corn.

forestry practices that produce a dominant pine forest. Consequently, hardwood species are removed to produce the pine forest. Some hardwoods are kept along the creek drains, but this is not sufficient to maintain the herd quality. This is evidenced by the data produced by LDWF that shows the physical condition of deer in Louisiana's pine forests compared to forests with a good hardwood component. These biologists suggest intensifying forage plantings and feeding deer to help improve nutrition.

Most hunting clubs in our piney woods habitat cannot grow the amount of forage needed to replace the browse that has been eliminated. However, clubs can feed deer, but most of this is feeding corn during the fall and winter. It is readily apparent from stomach samples collected from deer on these hunting clubs that deer eat corn, and there really is not much hardwood mast available at all for them.

## SOFT MAST HELPS

A good, hardwood forest not only produces hard mast — acorns and pecans — but also soft mast — fruit produced by hardwood trees that includes pears, mayhaws, persimmons, crab apples, blackgum, black cherry and many other species. Persimmons and pears are important for hunters to focus on during bow season.

A good crop of pears is growing in Clinton this year. The pecan crop is also very

good. Pecans are not only an important food of deer but are readily eaten, of course, by squirrels and bears. Deer hunters in the bottomland forest habitat and on the public lands, refuges and WMAs in the Mississippi River drainage parishes should scout for sign around the pecan trees.

Many people say that a good mast crop only happens every three to five years, but I know for certain that for the past four years, there has been an excellent crop of cow oak acorns on Pearl River. Likewise, the past four years have been good for white oak acorns. White oaks flower in the spring and produce acorns the same fall. Red oaks, on the other hand flower in the spring, but the acorn does not mature until the second year. Since oak flowers are wind-pollinated, good weather during the flowering period is critical for acorn production. Cold and rainy weather interferes with pollination. Summer droughts can also impact acorn production, but for the most part, Louisiana, with its Gulf Coast weather, does not get the hard freezes that presents problems for oaks.

## DIVERSIFY OAKS

One way to avoid total mast failures is to have and maintain a good diversity of oak species, along with other hardwood trees, in your woods. Having both red oaks, white oaks and pecans can offset the problems of mast failures.

Forest researchers are working on re-establishing the chestnut tree in the forest

Pecans will be available for wildlife during the 2019 hunting season.

landscape. This was an important tree when Europeans first came to North America. It was important for wildlife, and the early settlers also discovered it was fit for human consumption. However, these trees disappeared because of a disease, the chestnut blight.

On our small property, I have planted some Dunstan chestnut trees, and they are beginning to produce fruit. It will be a major accomplishment if a tree is developed that produces fruit and is resistant to the blight.

The last total mast-crop failure I can remember was in 1993. A late-winter freeze in the spring of 1992 killed the white oak acorn crop that year, and then Hurricane Andrew destroyed the red oak acorn crop that was to develop in 1993. The storm also damaged the white oak limbs and created issues for those trees. In the fall of 1993, there were no acorns, and the cattle farmers had problems with deer coming out and eating up their winter pastures.

The overcup oak is in the white oak group and is found in the bottomland and river bottom habitats of the state. I have always found this to be a good tree for squirrel hunting. Cow oak and white oak acorns are readily eaten by deer, and hunters should scout the woods for these trees. Now is the time to get the binoculars and start looking at oak branches for developing acorns. When acorns are available, deer will be eating them, and visits to the feeders might be few. Of course, in the pine-dominant woods, corn is the food item that is most available. Hunters and landowners who do have a good hardwood component can save money and rely on the acorns for their deer-hunting success. ■



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# NO VACATION FOR CANEY LAKE BASS

## AQUATIC VEGETATION HAS GIVEN LAKE NEW LIFE

By Kinny Haddox

It's the middle of summer, but there's no vacation for the big largemouth bass on Louisiana's premier lunker lake, Caney Lake in Jackson Parish.

Corey Harris can tell you that, and he can prove it.

One point of fact is the 9.14-pound bass he caught to win the recent Caney Lake Majestic Big Bass tournament and the stringer of five fish weighing 24.53 pounds that took the big stringer award. Need another witness? Harris fished earlier with Hunter Freeman, the 2018 FLW College Fishing National Champion and now an FLW touring pro and caught a stringer of five fish weighing 36 pounds. That's a once-in-a-lifetime catch, but a 25- to 28-pound stringer is easily possible these days.

The point of Harris' catch isn't about tournaments or big stringers, it is that this is a great time to catch big fish. The big bass in Caney haven't packed up and gone anywhere just because it is hot.



Corey Harris with the 9.14-pound bass that won the recent Caney Majestic tournament.

"Catching a 10-pounder, now that's kind of random," he said. "You've got to get a little bit lucky. But the 5-, 6- and 7 pounders? You can pattern them and have a ball catching big fish."

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## FISH THE GRASS

One of the main reasons is the grass. Aquatic vegetation has found its way back into the lake and can be found in almost every area now.

"That's the key," Harris says. "They are starting to use the grass again, more than ever. You can catch fish almost anywhere, but the bigger fish and bigger groups relate to points. That can be a land point, a point in the grass or a point on an underwater hump or ridge."

Harris narrows down the best bait to one — a 10-inch Zoom worm in any color that has some green in it, from green pumpkin to watermelon green. He rigs it Texas-style and fishes it slowly across the bottom.

But not just anywhere.

"You still need to use your electronics to find the fish and find out where they are on the points," he said. "The shad migrate around these points at various places and depths from 10 to 20 feet, according to the time of day, and your electronics can help you pinpoint that. Without it, you can catch some, but not many unless you get lucky."

## RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Harris never rules out the luck factor, either. In fact, he wouldn't have caught the 9-pounder that won the last tournament without some luck — bad luck that turned out good.

He was fishing with his brother, who overslept. When his brother didn't get there, he called and found out he was 30 minutes away, so he just eased the boat off the bank and fished a spot to keep busy. On the second cast, he nailed the 9.14.

"That was just divine intervention," he said.

Harris has one more tip. He doesn't like to do it, but some big fish and big limits are caught around boathouses and some points at night. Again, he recommends a big worm, but for night-fishing, the best place to concentrate is piers and boat-houses, with or without lights. ■

Hunter Freeman with a huge Caney grass-bed bass.



Another summer lunker landed by Corey Harris.

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While much of Bussey Brake Reservoir is empty, big pockets of water like this one have been stocked with fish and will provide a good breeding stock to maintain great fish populations.

# BUSSEY REBIRTH PROJECT NEARING COMPLETION

By Kinny Haddox

**A** fishing pier. A pump. A big pile of dirt and rock. And some water. Lots of water. That's what's left to complete one of the decade's most-anticipated outdoor projects in north Louisiana: the rebirth and reopening of the 2,200-acre Bussey Brake Reservoir north of Bastrop in Morehouse Parish. Built in the late 1950s, the lake was a prime fishery for bass, bream, crappie and catfish for more than 50 years before age, lack of structure and overpopulation of trash fish made it unproductive.

The list is short, but the main ingredient is installation and operation of a new pump to fill the reservoir from Bayou Bartholomew, which runs beside the lake. If work goes as planned, the pump should be in action early this fall, and the lake filled enough to open to the public by early 2020.

Over half of the lake has been empty for several years, allowing thick, new growth on the lakebottom, which will make it almost like a brand-new reservoir when it is reflooded.

## WINTER CRAPPIE

"The contractors are about halfway through with the new wave break in front of the main launch area and the new fishing pier," said Ryan Daniel, a biologist with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries in Monroe, who is overseeing the rebirth. "The new wave break will make the lake safer, and in the hole, they've also dug a deep pit there that should hold winter crappie just like the old deep hole in front of the main dock used to."

The new pump should be completed this month, Daniel said. It will take a few months to fill the lake, but once there is enough water to safely launch boats, the LDWF will open it up.

Here's another bit of good news. Bass, some over 3 pounds, were stocked in 2016. Other bass, bream, and crappie have been stocked at fingerling sizes the past several years. Some of these are already catchable-size fish.

## NEW PIER

Daniel has big plans for the lake. Boat lanes are already marked with pilings, and a new, handicap-accessible pier will next to the boat dock. Daniel said they are also looking at putting in a kayak

An aerial view of the main dock area shows the area where most of the remaining work is being undertaken.



or small-boat access area on the south end of the lake. Size and creel limits will be managed to provide fun fishing and maximize the sustained populations of gamefish.

"The area is a WMA and will be equipped with a self-clearing kiosk," Daniel said. "Only a fishing license or Wild Louisiana stamp are necessary to use the WMA. No hunting is scheduled yet, and there will be no camping."

Daniel estimates that more than a million dollars has been spent on the restoration, mostly Sport Fish Restoration funds generated by taxes on sporting goods.

## THE GOOD, OLD DAYS

Many a Louisiana sportsman learned how to bait a hook or land a bass in the "good old days" of Bussey Brake. When it was first opened, there were no other big reservoirs in the state. Bussey was a trendsetter.

The catches were phenomenal. It was the showplace of the LDWF working to manage the lake with International Paper.

Construction of the fishing pier at the main Bussey dock is about halfway to completion. Notice the trees and undergrowth in the background, which will provide excellent habitat for fishing when the lake is reflooded.



Harry Hawthorne with a stringer of Bussey bass in this vintage 1960's photo.

Famous anglers like Bill Dance came and fished it. Grits Greshman, an outdoor writer and TV personality, did photo shoots and filmed shows there.

It was part of growing up in Morehouse Parish. I grew up fishing there with my parents, when only aluminum boats and trolling motors were allowed.

For fishermen, Bussey was as big a part of growing up in Morehouse Parish as going to school or to work. I grew up fishing there with my parents, when only aluminum boats and trolling motors were allowed. I spent many a day on the lake after stopping by Witherington's Amoco and Bait Stand, where I used to buy 100 crickets, a bag of ice, two gallons of gas, a Dr. Pepper and a Mars bar for \$1.00 on the way to Bussey.

And they just put it on my tab. ■

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Crappie pro Dan Dannenmueller demonstrates the new Garmin Force trolling motor and a new Garmin scanning sonar unit at the 2019 ICAST show.



Photo courtesy of Garmin

# THE 'FORCE' IS WITH GARMIN AS ICAST "BEST OF SHOW"

By Kinny Haddox

## New trolling motor make waves

**N**early 1,000 manufacturers gather and showcase their new products at the annual ICAST show in Orlando, Fla. Many enter at least one new product in a competition for the coveted "Best of Show" award. Awards are given in 29 categories, but then one, big overall winner is chosen. When the last ballot is cast, only one product can net that win.

The new Garmin "Force" trolling motor won that honor at the 2019 show in July, and you don't have to be a Jedi to use the exciting new features and technology. This is Garmin's first entry into the trolling-motor market and the second year in a row for Garmin to take the top show award; Live Scope depth finder system took that top award in 2018.

The vision of pairing the two obviously

led voters to examine the product closely, and they found what a few, select anglers who have actually had the opportunity to test it before it hit the market already knew. The power of the Force is evident.

One of those anglers is pro crappie angler Dan Dannenmueller, a member of Garmin's Pro Staff, and regular participant in Louisiana crappie events.

"It's an amazing product," Dannenmueller said. "It has 30% more thrust than any other freshwater trolling motor, and more power means less power drain. I witnessed no response delays and had fewer adjustments and more control on maintaining positioning. The quiet operation is a huge plus. The motor is brushless, which is one of the keys. There is no noise when turning the motor. Look, I've seen fish react this year on LiveScope when a noise comes from the old trolling motors. This motor's stealth will improve our fishing."

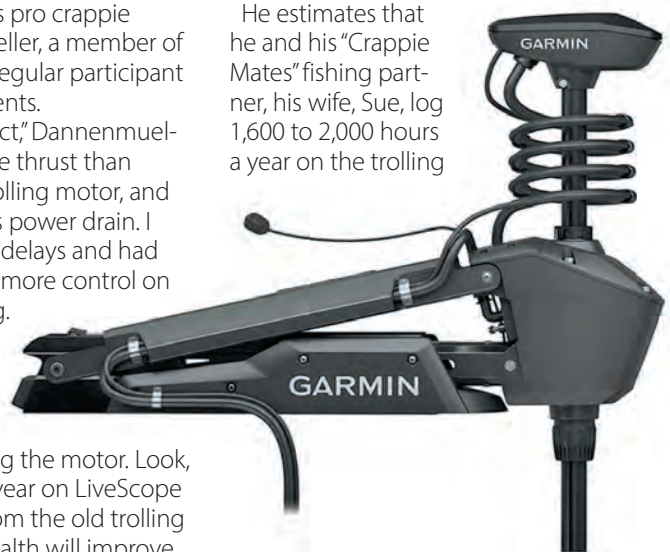
While Force operates with almost undetectable levels of sonar and steering noise, it's also the first trolling motor to include built-in, industry-leading Garmin CHIRP traditional and Ultra High-Definition ClearVü and SideVü scanning sonars.

WiFi operated hand-held and foot-pedal remote controls can be used from anywhere in the boat. Perhaps the motor's most unique feature is "motion control," which allows the motor to operate following hand movements of the controller after depressing a special button on the hand-held. It's like playing Nintendo with your trolling motor. And there are no cables to

break, bend or get in the way.

"I've honestly never seen this capability in any trolling motor except this one," Dannenmueller said. "It perfectly follows your motions with no delays."

He estimates that he and his "Crappie Mates" fishing partner, his wife, Sue, log 1,600 to 2,000 hours a year on the trolling



motor, so it's easy to see why he is excited about the product, but he says it will benefit anybody.

"Whether a fisherman goes once a year, or frequently, either in tournaments or just for pleasure, the Force provides easy and ready to use controls. Having a quiet, powerful and fully integrated set of capabilities is powerful. It allows you to easily make the most of your time on the water doing what you are there for — catching fish."

Only a few units are available now, but consumers should expect better availability later in August and into the fall. Retail pricing is expected to run somewhere between \$3,100 to \$3,500. ■



Only one can claim the "Best of Show" each year. This year it is this new Garmin Force trolling motor.

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# ALLIGATOR LICENSES AVAILABLE ONLINE

Louisiana sport hunters can now obtain alligator licenses online and from authorized license vendors.

From News Reports

**T**he Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has started offering alligator sport-hunting licenses online and from authorized license vendors beginning Aug. 1. Previously, the sports-hunting licenses were only available at LDWF field offices.

The license allows individuals the ability to harvest alligators while being guided by a licensed hunter possessing alligator tags from LDWF. An alligator sport-hunting license is \$25 for Louisiana residents and \$150 for non-residents.

"Our aim at LDWF is to make all licenses as easy to purchase as

possible," said Jack Montoucet, LDWF's secretary. "We're glad to be able to offer our alligator sport-hunting license now online and through our other vendors. We hope the public will take advantage of this convenience."

Alligator hunting season begins in Louisiana's east zone Aug. 28 and in the west zone Sept. 4. Each zone remains open for 30 days from the opening date.

To purchase a license online, go to <https://la-web.s3licensing.com/>. ■

# ALLIGATOR HIDE TAG WILL BE CHEAPER

From News Reports

**T**he Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission approved a Notice of Intent to reduce the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries alligator hide tag fee from \$4 to \$3 for the 2020 and 2021 calendar years during its Aug. 1 meeting in New Orleans.

The reduction was in response to a request from the Louisiana Alligator Farmers and Ranchers Association as it seeks to fund efforts in support of Louisiana's alligator industry. Currently, a \$4 fee is collected by LDWF for each alligator hide shipped out of state. Each dollar gained from the tag reduction will be directed by industry participants to efforts to keep the alligator market secure and competitive.

"This is an opportunity for LDWF to support an industry that is a vital part of the Louisiana economy," said Jack Montoucet, LDWF's secretary and a former alligator farmer. "They're not asking to reduce the tag fee permanently, only for two years. This will provide the alligator industry with the resources needed to make

sure they are able to continue to do business globally."

Louisiana's alligator population continues to thrive since it was threatened in the 1960s and 1970s. Estimates had the population at a low of about 100,000 in Louisiana in 1963. Today, that number is about 2 million in the wild. An estimated 300,000 additional alligators are on alligator farms in Louisiana. The alligator was removed from the Endangered Species List in 1987.

The primary reason for the rebound in Louisiana was LDWF's sustainable use "Marsh to Market" program, which continues today. When consumers buy alligator products, they are actually helping the species to flourish in Louisiana. Much of the money derived from purchasing alligator products goes back into LDWF's alligator program, which benefits not only the animal but also the coastal habitat where it dwells.

To see the full NOI, go to <http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/action-items>. ■

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Crappie regulations for Eagle Lake in Madison Parish could become permanent on Oct. 1.

# CURRENT CRAPPIE REGULATIONS MAY BECOME PERMANENT ON EAGLE LAKE

From News Reports

**T**he Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission passed a Notice of Intent to make the current crappie regulations on Eagle Lake in Madison Parish permanent. Eagle Lake is located in Northeast Louisiana and is a shared border water with Mississippi.

The Commission made this decision after a recommendation from Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries biologists, which recently completed a thorough population assessment and evaluation of an angler-opinion survey conducted by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. Eagle, a border-water oxbow, is managed jointly by the two states.

The daily creel limit of 30 fish in the aggregate and 11-inch minimum length requirement was set to expire on Oct. 1, 2019. After a public comment period, the Commission will review all feedback and finalize the rule. The public is encouraged to comment.

A declaration of emergency is necessary to maintain current regulations until the notice of intent is finalized.

Interested individuals may submit comments relative to the proposed rule to Ryan Daniel, Biologist Manager, 368 Centurylink Drive, Monroe, LA 71203 or via email at rdaniel@wlf.la.gov prior to October 4, 2019. ■



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**W**ith more than a million acres enrolled in the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' Wildlife Management Area program, hunters in the Sportsman's Paradise really do have a paradise of available outdoors opportunities.

As the opening of 2019-20 hunting seasons approach, here is a look at what public lands around the state have to offer.

**HAMMOND REGION >**

By Don Shoopman

# WMA PREVIEW 2019-2020

LONG PERIODS OF FLOODING MAKE FOR PLENTY OF QUESTION MARKS FOR DEER HUNTERS ON AFFECTED WMAS. BUT FOR DUCKS, THE MORE WATER, THE MERRIER. HERE'S A SURVEY OF TOP PUBLIC-HUNTING AREAS IN LOUISIANA.

## HAMMOND REGION

## WATERFOWL

Shotguns roar long and loud when duck hunting is in season on the **Biloxi Marsh WMA**, and many of the shots come from out-of-staters who know how good the waterfowl hunting can be on the 35,644-acre area in St. Bernard Parish.

“**Biloxi** is one of the premier duck-hunting destinations in southeast Louisiana,” said biologist Jillian Day of the LDWF, who is stationed in Hammond. “People will travel great distances to come down here. I’ve had several phone calls from people out of state that are asking about it and want to know what the rules and regulations are.”

Day, a 10-year LWDF veteran, said the draw for ducks — provided they come down — and duck hunters is “plenty of waterfowl habitat.” **Biloxi Marsh WMA** has numerous bayous, sloughs and pot-holes that waterfowl utilize.

Also, she said, the area is a low, brackish to saline marsh with widgeon grass being the main submerged aquatic vegetation. And as of late July, duck food development and habitat conditions are promising at **Biloxi** and the other WMAs in the Hammond Region.

“We had only minor impacts from (tropical storm/hurricane) Barry,” Day said. “**Maurepas Swamp, Manchac, Joyce and Pearl River WMAs** saw high water associated with storm surge, but that receded fairly quickly after the storm made landfall. A few trees were blown down across the region, but nothing significant.”

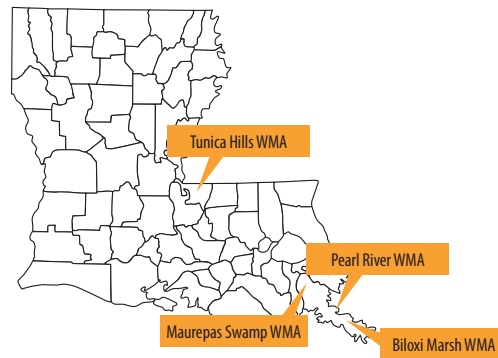
Day advised duck hunters to consult the 2019-20 hunting pamphlet for legal shooting hours on **Biloxi WMA** and all areas in the Hammond Region.

A few other WMAs in the region offer fair to good duck hunting, depending on the weather and duck migration.

**Pearl River WMA** is another popular duck-hunting destination in southeast Louisiana. The central part features cypress/tupelo swamps, and the upper region has mixed pine hardwoods and bottomland hardwoods. Last season, based on self-clearing permits, 1,473 ducks were harvested in 2,160 hunter efforts.

Day said the area routinely has high

The sprawling Maurepas Swamp WMA offers some great habitat for rabbits — much of it only accessible by boat — and these hunters had a big day afield.



waterfowl harvest numbers because of its abundance of wetland habitat. That enhances its popularity. Plus, the area is near New Orleans and Northshore.

**Manchac WMA** is one of the better waterfowl hunting areas in the Lake Pontchartrain basin, Day said. The section known as “The Prairie” is an open freshwater pond with broken marsh. A large section of The Prairie is a limited-access area (paddle-in only) and has plenty of submerged aquatic vegetation.

## DEER

If hunters want big deer, meet the challenge of hunting **Maurepas Swamp WMA**, which sprawls across Ascension, Livingston, St. John the Baptist, St. James and Tangipahoa parishes. Access to prime areas is difficult, to put it mildly.

“That makes it tougher but it also makes it one of the benefits,” Day said. “You’re talking about 120,000 acres you can hunt on. That spreads them out. Anybody who wants to hunt the area can get in a boat. That’s one of the things about it.”

For example, she said, if a deer hunter

sees a boat in an area, he or she can move down or up the bayou, and nobody will walk in on him or her because it’s an inundated cypress/tupelo swamp.

The deer herd thrives in the watery world of **Maurepas Swamp WMA**. They move agilely and stealthily without problem because their hooves are shaped a little different than other deer located on higher ground.

“They’re a little wider and a little shorter,” she said.

There are high ridges available during high-water periods.

The swampy environment also benefits the herd because deer can get away from pressure.

“They flourish out there. They’re tough animals, for sure. They make it,” she said.

Last season, 143 deer were harvested in 2,808 hunter efforts, based on self-clearing permits.

That WMA’s deer-hunting success was followed by **Tunica Hills WMA**, 81 deer in 1,571 hunter efforts, and **Pearl River WMA**, 56 deer in 1,571 hunter efforts.

Day said that **Tunica Hills WMA**, which has one of the more fertile, productive

# HAMMOND REGION

## PROS

**Tunica Hills WMA's** south tract is the site of timber stand improvement, which should put sunlight on the ground to enhance browse conditions for deer. Some approved timber prescription has been marked, and harvest opportunities will be explored.

**Pearl River WMA** is one area where prolonged flooding will have a positive effect — mast-crop improvement. When trees are stressed, they put more effort into their mast production to ensure species survival.

**Manchac WMA** is benefitting from biological and chemical control measures to reduce hyacinths and giant salvinia. It's a never-ending battle, and early surveys show invasive plant coverage is average, a big win for managers.

**Lake Ramsey WMA** should benefit from prescribed burns by The Nature Conservancy this year. The prescribed burn regimen is necessary for the habitat type to continue to be productive.

## CONS

**Pearl River WMA** has been plagued by prolonged flooding the past several months, water conditions that forced several closures on the area at different times. Browse availability may be impacted. Recruitment may be reduced in the long term.

**Tunica Hills WMA's** timber-stand improvements were delayed due to the closure of the Port Hudson Mill. While additional efforts for timbers sales are being explored, LDWF staffers have conducted small scale TSI work to keep early successional habitat on the ground. Also, the area's feral hog population is increasing. ■

habitats in the region, will have a change in the season structure for the primitive-weapons season in an effort to gain more biological data from the area's deer herd.

## RABBIT/SQUIRREL

The **Maurepas Swamp WMA** is also a consistent producer of squirrels and rabbits on its more than 120,000 acres.

Most of the area is accessible by boat only. Still, it routinely ranks first in rabbit and squirrel harvests in the Hammond Region, Day reported.

Last season, 89 rabbits were harvested in 487 hunter efforts, and 1,611 squirrels were bagged in 1,111 hunter efforts, according to self-clearing permits.

"This WMA is a consistent producer of squirrels and we expect the same for the upcoming season," she said.

The region's top squirrel harvest last season, however, was recorded on **Pearl River WMA**, where 1,689 squirrels were taken in 1,592 hunter efforts.

"As the understory on the northern third of the WMA continues to open up, there is still plenty of understory and early successional habitat. There are plenty of squirrels in the area and we expect to have another successful season," Day said

At **Tunica Hills WMA**, 332 squirrels were harvested in 320 hunter efforts last season. The area has an abundance of mature oaks and other mast-producing trees that offer prime squirrel habitat.

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- 50 +/- ac. – Macon Front Rd. w/flooded timber for ducks, 23 ac. CRP pays \$1,669 & 7 ac. shallow lake. \$144,000. Call Bill.
- 120 +/- ac. – Select cut hdwd. timber loaded with deer & great duck potential. \$210,000. Call Bill.
- 82 +/- ac. of fine hdwds. for excellent home/campsite. Nice bottoms for ducks and fine habitat for deer. Adjoining CRP and farmland. \$217,300. Call Bill.
- 108 +/- ac. of approximately 20 yr. pine plantation. Needs thinning. Hdwd. bottoms for ducks/deer. \$286,200. Call Bill.

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**Jefferson Davis Co.** - 23 +/- ac.; **Lawrence Co.** - 277 +/- ac.;  
**Pearl River Co.** - 40 +/- ac., 1,549 +/- ac., 139 ac., 110 ac., 61 ac., 60 ac.  
& 50 ac., 133 +/- ac.; **Rankin Co.** – 11 +/- ac., 13 +/- ac., 15 +/- ac., 44 +/- ac.,  
48 +/- ac., 65 +/- ac. & 131 +/- ac.; **Rankin & Simpson Cos.** - 123 +/- ac.;  
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**Yazoo Co.** - 92 +/- ac; **Washington Co.** 35 +/- ac.

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## LAFAYETTE REGION

## DEER

As Tony Vidrine and hundreds of deer hunters look forward to hunting season, they are relieved one of the top WMAs in the Lafayette Region was spared from something that would have decimated the wildlife population on **Sherburne Wildlife Management Area**.

A decision to open the Morganza Spillway's floodgates because of record high water in the Mississippi River would have released countless gallons of water over downstream lands, including **Sherburne WMA** north of I-10 in St. Martin, Pointe Coupee and Iberville parishes. The U.S. Corps of Army Engineers twice postponed the decision to open the floodgates, then scrapped the action entirely in mid-June.

No one was more relieved than Vidrine that the floodgates stayed closed. A 35-year veteran biologist with LDWF, he was bracing for the worst: a flood across the area devastating to wildlife, because he saw the deadly after-effects when the spillway was opened in 2011 and put the area under 7 to 10 feet of water.

**Sherburne WMA** still hasn't recovered fully. A full 30% of the deer herd — 1,600 deer — died in the man-made flood, unable to make it to high ground. Only 20% of the turkey population survived, and it has yet to recover. Rabbits perished.

Visions of the aftermath were rekindled. Fortunately, it didn't materialize again, and **Sherburne WMA** enters the season as, once again, a top area to kill deer in the Lafayette Region.

Other WMAs in the region have experienced problems this year. **Richard K. Yancey WMA**, regarded as the other of the top two deer-hunting areas in the region, and **Grassy Lake WMA** had severe backwater flooding from late winter through mid-July. Where floodwaters reached, there will be a reduction in browse availability, Vidrine said. When the floodwaters recede, those areas may recover in time for vegetation to respond, he said.

**Sherburne WMA** had no major flooding, and browse availability was at least fair on the main part, Vidrine said. That's why so many people are ready for it to

give up beaucoup deer this season, there and **Richard K. Yancey WMA**.

"Those areas are bigger areas and have got a good deer herd. **Richard K. Yancey** is one of the better areas in the state as far as deer herds are concerned," Vidrine said.

"**Richard K. Yancey** has consistently been one of the most-popular deer hunting areas in the state because of the big buck potential it offers. We are expecting a good deer harvest this season.

**Sherburne** continues to see improvements in the deer herd since the 2011 Morganza flood event, along with habitat improvements on some small section of the area, should contribute to good hunting on the WMA."

Four components of a successful deer-management program make those two areas prime WMAs for deer hunting, he said: age, herd density, habitat and genetics.

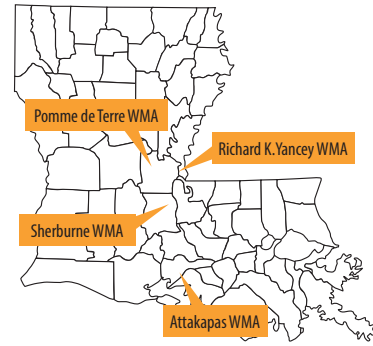
In 2018-19, based on managed hunts in addition to self-clearing permit information, the harvest numbers showed one deer harvested for 36 hunter efforts on **Thistlethwaite WMA**, one deer harvested per 143 hunter efforts on **Sherburne WMA**, and one deer harvested per 92 hunter efforts on **Pomme de Terre WMA**.

## SQUIRRELS

It's a small area, but, man, **Attakapas WMA** sure gives up a lot of squirrels every season. According to bag checks and self-clearing permits, hunters averaged 1.4 squirrels per hunter effort last season. The previous season, the number was 2.4 squirrels per hunter effort on the 27,000-acre WMA on the extreme western side of the Atchafalaya Basin.

"Some of these areas, like **Attakapas**, don't get a lot of use, and they have one of the highest averages per hunter. A lot of local hunters use these some of these areas," Vidrine said.

"**Attakapas** has consistently, over the years, averaged greater than one squirrel per hunter effort. This is likely attributed to habitat and lower hunting pressure,



## LAFAYETTE REGION

## PROS

There have been no disease outbreaks on any areas in the past year. CWD test results during the past hunting season all came back negative.

Logging efforts on **Sherburne WMA**, which was spared major flooding, has fair browse availability on a majority of the area. Also, logging on portions of the U.S., Fish and Wildlife land, will greatly enhance browse production in the logged areas.

## CONS

**Richard K. Yancey WMA** (and **Grassy Lake WMA**) experienced significant backwater flooding from late winter to mid-July, which will result in a reduction of browse availability in those areas. RKY WMA's understory habitat in the batture area also will be impacted by the flooding Mississippi River. However, water made recede and those areas may recover, if it falls early enough for vegetation to respond.

Feral hogs continue to be a nuisance on **Richard K. Yancey WMA**, **Sherburne WMA** and **Thistlethwaite WMA**. LDWF personnel continue to trap hogs during the non-hunting season to try to control the hog population. ■

as **Attakapas Island** is only accessible by boat, but it is one of the only public areas in the southern Atchafalaya Basin."

However, the region's most-popular spots for squirrel hunting, based on overall harvest and number of hunters, are **Richard K. Yancey WMA** and **Sherburne WMA**, he reported. Hunters should scout forests with mature hardwoods producing hard mast while still offering some soft mast-producing trees

Jacey Parker killed this 9-point, 204-pound trophy on opening weekend on a WMA in Grant Parish. The buck's spread was 20½ inches.



such as sugarberry. All of the areas are inhabited by fox squirrels, with gray squirrels also found in the bag at a good rate.

**DUCKS**

After what he described as poor to fair success on many of the Lafayette Region WMAs last season, Vidrene is hopeful there is considerable improvement in 2019-20. He urged waterfowlers to take advantage of lottery hunts at the **Sherburne WMA's** South Farm, where on-site drawings are on Tuesdays and Thursdays and pre-selected drawings on Saturdays.

If ducks arrive in the Sportsman's Paradise for 2019-20, the top three areas will be **Richard K. Yancey WMA**, **Sherburne WMA** and **Pomme de Terre WMA**, he reported. Each of them offers a unique duck-hunting experience.

At **Richard K. Yancey WMA**, the greentree reservoir, flooded batture area and the many shallow-water lakes provide excellent habitat for migrating ducks.

**Sherburne WMA** offers many opportunities, particularly at the South Farm, which is managed for waterfowl with water manipulation via control structures, herbicide applications and mechanical treatments in the units to grow quality duck foods. In 2018-19, natural duck food production was at its best, but the ducks weren't there. Good duck food production is anticipated again. Other areas to try there are des Ourses Swamp, Duck Lake, low-lying areas and the bayous.

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# LAKE CHARLES REGION

## DEER

Bowhunters who like an extra edge in the woods this season will take advantage of a recent report from Wendell Smith, LDWF biologist for the Lake Charles Region.

The **Fort Polk WMA's** Zion Hills and Mill Creek areas received no hunting pressure from bowhunters last season because they were closed to military training. **Fort Polk WMA** is a 105,545-acre WMA in Vernon Parish, a military training facility that requires hunters to check to see if areas they want to hunt are open.

"A lot of that was closed last year for military training, and it's got a real good population of deer that wasn't hunted last year. That's music to a bowhunter's ears," said Smith, a 30-year LDWF veteran. "Bowhunters all over the state will be interested. There's a lot of people looking for opportunities for bowhunting."

There's definitely a golden opportunity waiting for them at Zion Hills and Mill Creek on the **Fort Polk WMA**. Smith suggested scouting that area, looking for signs and rubs, before going after the deer with a bow and arrow because the area is large.

"It's pretty good-sized. It goes all the way up to the top of the WMA," he said. "The more you scout, the better your odds will be for bringing home the venison."

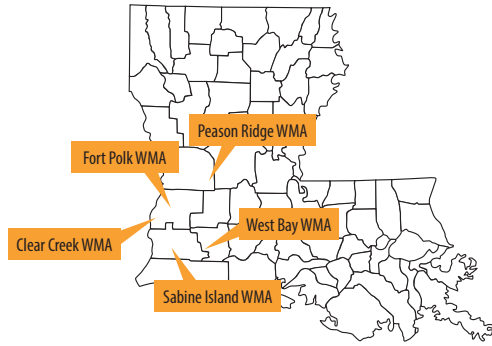
**Fort Polk WMA** had close to 600 deer harvested during the 2018-19 season, based on self-clearing permit information, followed by **Peason Ridge WMA** with 330. Since then, prescribed burning on the properties in Vernon, Sabine and Natchitoches parishes is expected to produce excellent early successional habitat for all wildlife, consumptive and non-consumptive, Smith reported.

The region's deer harvest count last season included 257 at **Clear Creek WMA** and 242 at **West Bay WMA**.

"Clear Creek and West Bay (have) got a healthy population of deer. We're seeing fawns there," Smith said. "This year should be good, weather permitting."

Ah, the weather bugaboo. Smith pointed out that 40% to 50% of the deer are killed on opening weekend.

"If there's bad weather, you're 40% down before the season. (But) some years, when you get good, cold, still weather, you can knock them down," he said.



WMAs are great squirrel-hunting spots. Brecken Figueiredo, 8, from Ville Platte, killed his limit last season on Dewey Wells WMA.

# LAKE CHARLES REGION

## PROS

**Vernon Parish WMA** and **Peason Ridge WMA** deer herds show favorable lactation rates this year, and deer weights suggest a healthy herd.

**Clear Creek WMA's** road system is in good shape to allow hunters access to the WMA. Also, the area has six self-clearing permit stations to make access easy.

**West Bay WMA** is flat, which makes dragging a harvested deer easier across the area.

**Sabine Island WMA's** excellent mast production should lead to a high squirrel population.

**Marsh Bayou WMA** and **Walnut Hill WMA** both allow the

use of squirrel and rabbit dogs the entire hunting season and dog training is allow June 1 through Aug. 31.

## CONS

With a majority of pine plantations of different ages, younger stands are thick and may limit visibility on **Clear Creek WMA**. Also, hilly terrain makes it a challenge to drag a harvested deer out of the area.

**West Bay WMA's** roads are prone to flooding in heavy rainfall. Boggy conditions will prevail.

**Sabine Island WMA** is accessible only by boat and hunters must use hip boots/waders to cross sloughs. Hunter need to bring a GPS. Also, the area's many young pine plantations limit visibility. ■

## SQUIRRELS

Excellent mast production should produce an even larger squirrel population on **Sabine Island WMA**, the most under-hunted area in the region, according to Smith.

Limits of squirrels are common in the area, where access is by boat only. Squirrel hunting should be even better this season because the mast crop was a bumper one and squirrels should have been eating well ever since, he said.

"If you like to hunt squirrels, there are a lot of them there. There are a lot of squirrels, but you've got to have a boat, waders and a damned good compass because you can get lost easy. I'd leave the compass at home and bring a GPS," Smith said.

Unfortunately, **Sabine Island WMA** had limited squirrel hunting success last season because of the flooded Calcasieu River. Still, a harvest of 145 squirrels was reported during limited hunting there.

**West Bay WMA** rivals **Sabine Island WMA** as a top squirrel-hunting destination. Last season, 1,320 squirrels were reported harvested on the expansive WMA. Also, 563 squirrels were harvested on **Fort Polk WMA**, and 245 squirrels went in the bag on **Peason Ridge WMA** last season, according to self-clearing permits.

## WOODCOCK

As popular as the region's WMAs are for deer, squirrels and ducks, an ever-increasing number of hunters are heading there with hopes of taking aim at woodcock that migrate to southwest Louisiana.

"I get more and more calls from people who have dogs who want to hunt woodcock, which usually show up in November," Smith said, noting the woodcock harvest was "excellent" last season at **Clear Creek WMA** and **West Bay WMA**.


"They always do well on Clear Creek," Smith said.

Woodcock migrate this far whether there is a freeze up north or not, he said. However, a wet late fall and winter is critical, because the ground has to be soft for the timber-doodles to peck for worms; they can reach as deep as 2 inches underground.

Jump-shooting the tasty gamebird is what makes it a thrilling hunt. Trained dogs are the key.


"I think people who have dogs they train, they would have a good opportunity at **Clear Creek** and **West Bay**," Smith said. "I get calls from Wisconsin, Michigan, even one from California, who want to know if it's worth bringing their dogs down. There's guys from Louisiana who know that. I sent them to **Clear Creek** and **West Bay**."

## MINDEN REGION >



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## MINDEN REGION

## DEER

Czerny Newland, a 37-year LDWF veteran who is biologist for the Minden Region, said if deer hunters want a shot at a trophy animal, travel to **Bayou Pierre WMA** or **Loggy Bayou WMA**. The latter also doubles, along with **Bodcau WMA**, as an area with the best success rates for harvesting deer.

A mild, wet summer should create good habitat conditions. Deer quality is excellent, and numbers are good throughout the region, he reported, including sightings of fawns in July.

"If weather conditions continue to be favorable, antler growth, body weights and fawn survival should be good, creating the potential for an above average deer season in northwest Louisiana," Newland reported.

The region also dodged a bullet when (tropical storm/hurricane) Barry entered and exited the second week of July. "Our area received essentially no impact from Barry," he said.

What Newland and hunters worry about is drought, the greatest factor influencing habitat conditions in the region, he said. Severe drought conditions often occur in July and August, a time especially critical for deer. Does are under stress from nursing, and drought compounds the stress. The period also is a critical time for fawn growth and antler development. And, he said, if a drought

starts late and continues into the fall, it would impact the upcoming season as well as 2020-21. So hunters are crossing their fingers, hopeful a drought doesn't set in late this summer.

**Bodcau WMA**, a 33,766-acre area in Bossier and Webster parishes, is a good place to get away from the crowd. The long, narrow area features diverse habitat, from upland pine to cypress/tupelo bottoms.

Last season, the harvest numbers showed that 2,092 hunters checked by LDWF staffers killed 231 deer with a firearm, while 499 bowhunters checked killed 10. In 2017-18, **Bodcau WMA** gave up 276 total deer to 1,686 hunters.

Newland said the most-successful deer hunters, year-in and year-out, target the transitional zones, the edges of the different habitats.

Newland pointed out all Minden Region WMAs offer deer-hunting opportunities, although only bowhunting for deer is permitted on **Bayou Pierre WMA** and **Soda Lake WMA**. The harvest numbers on those areas last season were 18 for the 347 hunters checked on **Bayou Pierre WMA** and 10 for the 369 hunters checked on **Soda Lake WMA**.

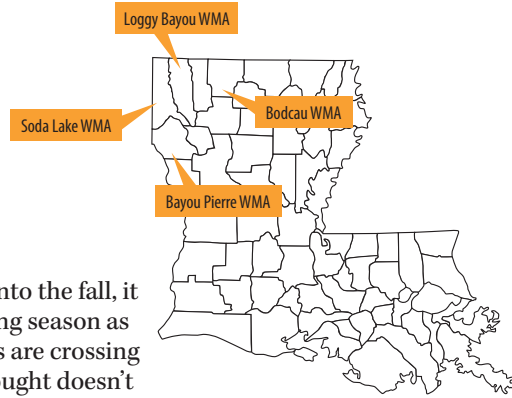
Newland has said in the past that bowhunters gravitate to those two areas because they like the fact they don't have to compete against gun hunters.

an above-average deer season in northwest Louisiana.

## CONS

The 2018 mast crop wasn't a complete failure, but it was below average. Squirrel production is largely dependent on the previous year's mast crop, which means a subpar squirrel hunting season is likely in the region.

Based strictly on observations, the rabbit population appears to be below average. Rabbit populations are cyclical, and the region is in the recovery stage of the population cycle, which means it should be a few years before peak rabbit numbers are reached again. ■



Rick Leblanc killed this beautiful 10-point buck on Sherburne WMA last season on Jan. 5.

## DUCKS

Waterfowl hunting is very popular, Newland reported, with one of the leading destinations the spacious **Bodcau WMA**, where last season, LDWF staffers checked 978 duck hunters who harvested 756 ducks, most of them wood ducks, gadwalls, teal and mallards.

Duck hunting also has plenty of potential each season at **Loggy Bayou WMA**, where 303 ducks were killed by 397 hunters who were checked.

**Bayou Pierre WMA's** duck hunting is limited to lottery hunts. In addition to the regular and youth lottery hunts, a blind for wheelchair-bound outdoorsmen is available. For more information, call 318-371-3050.

Waterfowl hunting is not allowed on **Soda Lake WMA**.

Newland advised hunters that water

## MINDEN REGION

## PROS

A tornado earlier this year caused extensive damage to trees on **Bodcau WMA**. Loss of trees during the June twister, however, will be a blessing, as it results in improved browse production for deer and rabbits for the next few years.

Early field reports indicate good fawn production. A wet, mild summer to date has created good habitat conditions, which benefit antler growth, body growth and fawn survival at a critical time, so there is a potential for

levels influence duck-hunting success greatly on **Bodcau WMA** and **Loggy Bayou WMA**. Water levels are determined by rainfall, he said, noting that both WMAs have water-control structures to assist in holding water, but they have no pumping capabilities. When water levels are favorable and new flights of ducks stop by, duck hunting in those areas is fair to good.

## SQUIRRELS

With its variety of habitats — upland hardwoods, piney woods and bottomland hardwoods — the most-popular WMA for squirrels and squirrel hunters is **Bodcau WMA**, according to Newland.

The variety of tree species ensures that at least one, and possibly several, mast crops are available each season for squirrels, he reported.

How good can the squirrel hunting be? LDWF staffers checked 1,429 hunters and 1,655 squirrels last season.

At **Loggy Bayou WMA** last season, 397 hunters had 303 squirrels checked in. At **Soda Lake WMA**, 54 squirrels were checked along with 95 hunters.

The Minden Region's predominant species is gray squirrel, with a few fox squirrels. All WMAs in the region allow dogs for squirrel hunting during specified periods.

On **Soda Lake WMA**, however, small-game hunting is limited to falconry only on the west side of the WMA, west of Twelve Mile Bayou, he said, because the WMA is relatively small and close to a residential area. Small-game hunting with firearms is permitted on the east side of the tract.

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# MONROE REGION

## DUCKS

A drawdown for the second-straight year has biologist Mitch McGee of LDWF very excited about the waterfowl hunting prospects this season at legendary Wham Brake on **Russell Sage WMA** near Monroe.

He said hundreds of duck hunters know the 3,000-acre impoundment holds a lot of ducks each season, if the ducks are down.

McGee said the drawdown will have a great impact in the upcoming duck hunting season on the partially “natural” impoundment less than 45 minutes from Monroe. Wham Brake, acquired by LDWF in 2013, is levied most of the way around and eventually drains into Bayou Lafourche.

“I’m excited this year on Wham Brake,” he said. “We’re initiating a drawdown on that impoundment, taking the water out to get good soil to germinate and grow plant life.”

He has said the key is to stimulate most-soil plants to come up; it takes 90 to 100 days to make a seed.

“We’ll start putting water on it early to mid-November, start putting boards in and stagger that through November,” he said. “We had a good drawdown last year, but the high water really hurt,” he added, noting the duck harvest was excellent despite the high water.

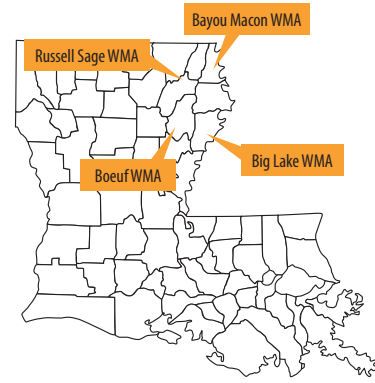
“Providing an abundant food source will, hopefully, attract waterfowl to the WMAs throughout the season despite high hunting pressure,” he said.

Based on past experiences, McGee said duck hunters often shoot more ducks from the mid-morning hours and later, after the crowd thins out.

Typically, the special teal season in September offers plenty of successful duck-hunting opportunities. Veteran hunters have said over the years that birds normally can be found in potholes in the grass and coffee beans along the shoreline on the north end when the water’s up, but when it’s low, the success rate is often better in the more-open areas of Wham Brake.

Wham Brake benefitted greatly from an enhancement project that was completed in June 2017.

Ryan Schaefer and Mike Donavon show off a limit of late-season ducks from Pass a Loutre WMA, killed over decoys hand-carved by Richard Schaefer.



To help duck hunters, regulations were changed on **Russell Sage WMA** and **Boeuf WMA** to allow electric-motorized vessels on certain units that were restricted to non-motorized vessels in 2018-19. McGee urged waterfowlers to consult each WMA’s regulations for details on the changes.

Otherwise, back-to-back years of flooding in February and into the growing season may not bode well for many greentree reservoirs on the region’s other WMAs, McGee reported.

## DEER

While **Russell Sage WMA**, **Boeuf WMA** and **Big Lake WMA** get a lot of the attention for good deer hunting, don’t overlook **Bayou Macon WMA** in East Carroll Parish, McGee said.

It is an area where habitat conditions were improved last year, the season reflected the improvement with the harvest of many deer, including some big bucks.

“Timber harvests last year should improve habitat in coming years for deer hunters,” McGee said. “It’s just got a good population of deer: fair numbers and quality deer. They kill some good bucks up there every year, some good bucks in the 140- to 150-pound range.”

An either-sex managed hunt this season on the nearly 7,000-acre **Bayou Macon WMA** probably will appeal to deer hunters who want to hunt deer before the Thanksgiving hunt Nov. 23-24.

“Somebody looking for an area before the holiday, that’s a good area to try out,” he said.

Where to go? McGee said most of the successful hunts are south of Highway 2 and north of Shrock Road, as well as south of Shrock Road, where staffers have planted hardwoods.

## SQUIRRELS

Squirrel hunters have got to try **Big Lake WMA** some time this season. “Squirrels are always sought-after

# MONROE REGION

## PROS

Lactation rates on areas across the region have been stable for the past five years, typically averaging 65% to 85% for 2½- to 3½-year-old does. Also, body weights for bucks and does have remained stable since 2015.

**Big Lake WMA, Boeuf WMA and Russell Sage WMA** all have large amounts of mature bottomland hardwood forest that serves quality squirrel habitat. Each has an abundance of mast-producing trees, the major food sources in fall and winter. The mast crop was above average last year, which should lead to above average squirrel hunting.

**Boeuf WMA and Russell Sage WMA** provide vast acreage for duck hunters in areas managed specifically for waterfowl. Both have received extensive flooding this spring, and once

the water levels start to recede, management will start the dewatering process on the waterfowl impoundments, where food will be readily available.

## CONS

Most WMAs experienced extensive flooding this spring, and some areas have been inundated for several months. The flooding could negatively affect habitat conditions, including browse availability, turkey nesting success, etc.

Back-to-back years of flood events during February and the growing season may not bode well for many of the greentree reservoirs in the region. GTRs provide critical habitat for over-wintering and resident waterfowl species. Research shows a static flooding regime results in low forest density and a drastic decrease in red oaks preferred on GTRs. ■

there,” McGee said. “At the beginning of the year, a lot of squirrels are harvested, and late in the year, a lot of people hunt with dogs.”

Some of **Big Lake’s** 19,231 acres that offer prime squirrel hunting include areas around Hog Lake, one of the natural areas where timber isn’t harvested and full of old stands of trees; around Buckshot Trail and off Roaring Bayou, he said.

Other top squirrel-hunting harvests come from **Boeuf WMA and Russell Sage WMA**, where there are acres and acres of mature bottomland hardwood forest with quality squirrel habitat. Acorns, pecans and some soft-mast species are the major food sources in the fall and winter, and all three have an abundance of mast-producing trees.

“Squirrel populations fluctuate with hard-mast yields, and since the mast crop was above-average last year, hunters should enjoy more success this upcoming season,” McGee reported.

Last year’s mast crop was favorable across the region, and this fall appears to be setting up for a good red oak crop because last year’s mast survey showed numerous young red oak acorns being formed.

## PINEVILLE REGION >



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# PINEVILLE REGION

## DEER

Biologist Cliff Dailey of LWDF is holding his breath in the months before deer season opens on the **Dewey W. Wills WMA**.

On the one hand, you have the proven, 63,901-acre WMA in LaSalle, Rapides and Catahoula parishes that is frequented by more hunters each season and sets the pace for deer harvested in the region. It has everything: bottomland hardwoods, slough and cypress brakes and plenty of nuttall, willow and overcup oak among old, dying trees that, combined with timber harvests, have created canopy gaps responsible for briar thickets so beneficial for deer. No wonder hunters harvested 454 deer last season.

On the other hand, Dailey has seen first-hand and fretted as **Dewey W. Wills WMA** has been flooded since January. It's the longest period of flooding since 1973, and according to one deer biologist who has been keeping track, the longest stretch ever.

Dailey said on the lower half of the area, approximately 50,000 acres, has been under at least 5 feet of water for six full months as of mid-July. He and his staff are concerned, because the flood will impact browse and lactation rates adversely in the white-tailed deer herd. For example, fawn recruitment is expected to be below average.

"It's not all roses this year," Dailey said. "We're going to learn a lot and observe how wildlife recovers from a flood like this.

"We're kind of taking it one day at a time. We'll go out and see how the deer are responding.... It's going to be a real test to how resilient game and wildlife are."

**Dewey Wills WMA** has high spots in the impacted areas that some deer use as stopping points before hitting the road, he said, which is encouraging. And LDWF employees have seen fawns on the ground, some in good shape, some in bad shape.

The overall picture puts deer hunting season in a different light.

"I'm kind of anxious to see what happens. The last five years, the deer herd has been trending up. Hopefully, it can withstand a flood of this nature and kind of come back and rebound in a short period," Dailey said.

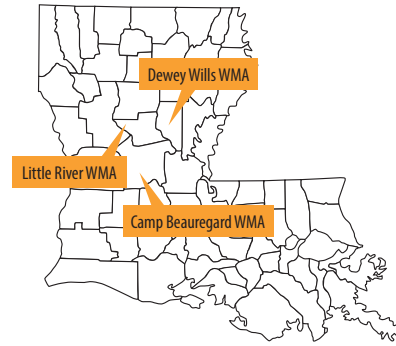
In 2017-18, 418 deer were reported killed on **Dewey Wills WMA**. Last season, the number was even higher.

If deer hunters are interested in downing a quality buck, they should head to **Camp Beauregard WMA**, where there is a mix of upland pine areas and lower creekbottom hardwood areas.

Last season, 111 deer were harvested there, including some quality bucks. The success rate for Thanksgiving managed hunts are among the best on any WMA.

Who so many bigger bucks? The WMA has mast-producing species such as water oak and white oak across the area that provides a highly desired winter source.

Deer hunters will be glad to know the majority of **Camp Beauregard WMA** was unaffected by the major spring and summer flood.



Rodney Housley killed this 10-point buck last Thanksgiving morning as it chased a doe on public land in Vernon Parish.

## DUCKS

More than 1,000 ducks were bagged last season, according to self-clearing permits, on **Dewey Wills WMA**, once again proving the popularity of the area for waterfowl and duck hunters, according to Dailey.

The go-to place on the WMA is the Greentree Reservoir, approximately 400 acres with maintained potholes that provide hunting sites for the public.

Another **Dewey Hills WMA** destination frequented by duck hunters is the Intermittent Impoundment north of the Diversion Canal between Hunt Road and Louisiana 28 East. It is designed to flood the Muddy Bayou watershed to create up to 3,000 acres of green tree habitat during the winter.

The impoundment, though, isn't pumped. It relies solely on rainfall for winter flooding.

The majority of that impoundment is a "limited access area" that restricts the use of motorized vessels or vehicles from Nov. 1-Jan. 31. Potential users should consult the 2019 WMA map for details.

**Little River WMA's** waterfowl harvest in 2018-19 was 131. Backwaters from Little River provide most of the duck hunting opportunities on the WMA.

## PINEVILLE REGION

### PROS

**Dewey Wills WMA's** mast crop results last year were above average. The deer herd was in good physical condition, and the percent of lactating was very high.

**Little River WMA's** prescribed fire rotation continued this year, improving habitat for game and non-game species by reducing the mid-story competition in upland pine stands to allow beneficial food plants to grow. Several new fire breaks created around timber stands can be utilized for walking trails.

**Elbow Slough WMA's** dove field are in great shape. There should be an abundance of milo and browntop millet for the doves.

### CONS

Ninety percent of the **Dewey Wills WMA** has undergone major flooding since late winter, the longest duration for flooding in its existence. Low lactation rates in white-tailed deer is associated with late summer flooding. There may be a low recruitment of fawns. The bottomland hardwood timber has been stressed from floodwaters and has the potential for disease and death in some area, although it shouldn't be widespread.

**Alexander State Forest WMA's** deer population is low compared to other WMAs. Herd has room for expansion and resources available to stay healthy. ■

## SQUIRRELS

Opening weekend for squirrel hunting is a BIG deal on **Dewey Wills WMA** and **Little River WMA**. It's a long-standing tradition, a time when outdoorsmen like to camp and get out in the woods early.

What squirrel hunters face on opening day this season, though, is an uncertainty on **Dewey Wills WMA**, which boasted by leaps and bounds the highest amount of squirrels reported harvested in the region last season: 4,066.

The past two mast crops were above-average, which usually means a great squirrel hunting season in the making, but prolonged flooding probably will have a negative impact on squirrel populations, Dailey said.

"We're kind of waiting to see. We haven't been able to get out and look. I'm sure we lost squirrels," he said.

If the squirrel hunting isn't favorable at **Dewey Wills WMA**, squirrel hunters should make their way to **Little River WMA**, where 290 were reported killed last season, down from 583 in 2017-18). It has upland pine and bottomland hardwoods and often offers great squirrel hunting opportunities with little competition, i.e., far less pressure.

**COASTAL & NON-GAME  
RESOURCES DIVISION >**

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# COASTAL & NON-GAME RESOURCES DIVISION

## DEER

Louisiana hunters often associate the WMAs in the Coastal & Nongame Resources Division as some of the best areas to knock down ducks in the Sportsman's Paradise.

Others realize they are prime areas for hunting deer, both quantity and quality. No one knows that more than Vaughan Campbell, an LWDF biologist who has managed the CNR division for the past 2½ years.

Those great deer-hunting WMAs are led each season by the **Atchafalaya Delta WMA**. Vaughan notes that while the deer harvest has “trended down” there, the average still is pretty darned high for the past five seasons: 136 harvested by bow-hunters alone each of those seasons, according to self-clearing permits. The five-year average deer harvest there entering last season was 152.

Will a prolonged high-water event, Atchafalaya River flooding for more than six months, adversely affect the Atchafalaya Delta? And will flooding do the same to **Pass-a-Loutre WMA**, another top destination at the mouth of the Mississippi River?

It remains to be seen, but there are higher “spoiler islands” where deer take refuge on the **Atchafalaya Delta WMA**, he said. The river's height will be a plus in the long run, because it carries sediment that drops and forms more delta.

“One of the positives with the high river for **Pass-a-Loutre** and the **Atchafalaya Delta** is they are getting dirt down there and a lot of dirt,” which will be beneficial, Campbell said.

Atchafalaya's Main Delta — 15,000 acres of marsh habitat — is open for only adult archery hunts and annual youth lottery gun hunts.

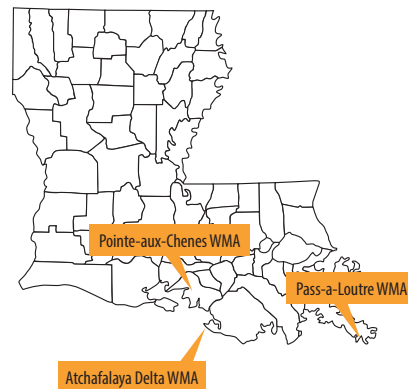
“**Atchafalaya Delta** will most always be the premier coastal area due to its numerous acres of higher-elevation spoiler islands at the Main Delta, which serve as great semi-upland deer habitat,” he said. “Approximately 82 deer were harvested by bowhunters and youth hunters.

“We expect a harvest similar to previous years for the 2019-20 season. **Atchafalaya Delta** staff continue to maintain shooting/access lanes on Big Island, which provide good conditions for deer and hunters.”

Big deer almost always show up in the harvest. Last season, on the **Atchafalaya Delta WMA** 10 deer were taken with at least one main antler beam 15 inches or longer; six deer had at least one antler base of 4 inches or more in circumference, and 12 deer were 8- to 10-pointers.

Here's a list of the larger bucks harvested in 2018-19 at **Atchafalaya Delta WMA**:

- 180-pound, 8-point buck with a 13½-inch inside spread;
- 170-pound, 9-point buck with a 14½-inch inside spread;
- 165-pound, 5-point buck with a 10½-inch inside spread;
- 160-pound, 9-point buck with a 16½-inch inside spread;
- 150-pound, 10-point buck with a 16½-inch inside spread;
- 150-pound, 8-point buck with a 12¾-inch inside spread.



## COASTAL AND NON-GAME RESOURCES DIVISION

### PROS

**Atchafalaya Delta WMA** and **Pass-a-Loutre WMA**, will benefit from extended high-water levels of the Atchafalaya River and Mississippi River, respectively, because they will increase delta splay development and create more waterfowl habitat.

**Pass-a-Loutre WMA** will benefit from “significant improvements” to several of its campgrounds over the next several years, including more docks, elevation of three campgrounds and, possibly, enlarging one campground. Also, several new crevasses are planned that will give hunters improved access to the interior and create better habitat for waterfowl.

**Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA**, a popular destination for dove hunting (5.02 average doves per hunter, based on self-clearing permits, on opening day 2018-19), is looking good conditions-wise and doves were using the fields in July. The outlook is good if conditions stay the same and there is no excessive rainfall.

### CONS

**Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA** and Montegut Units have below average submerged aquatic vegetation because, biologists believe, of high water turbidity and salinity. Unmanaged areas east of Grand Bayou have below-average SAV production and continue to deteriorate because there little protection from salinities and high tide.

**Salvador WMA's** waterfowl habitat has declined the past several years because increasing waterfowl hyacinth, salvinia and emergent vegetation growth reduced shallow, open-water habitats favored by ducks. Continued reduction likely will lead to reduction in waterfowl numbers, a long-term concern for the WMA. ■

**Pass-A-Loutre** is the second-best bet for harvesting a trophy buck, Cambell said. Only bucks can be harvested there. Two of 11 reported harvested last season were 8-pointers weighing 190 and 175 pounds.

Participation can be a bit low at times because of its remoteness and accessibility, but it is a “great place to hunt deer” for those who are willing to put in the effort, Campbell said, noting that staffers continue to maintain shooting lanes at the Reservoir and wildlife openings across the WMA.

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## DUCKS

Average waterfowl success — or better — is expected on many of the CNR Division's WMAs, including **Pass-a-Loutre WMA**, **Atchafalaya Delta WMA** and **Salvador/Timken WMA**. At **Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA**, waterfowl usage is suspected to be the lowest in the PAC Unit due to reduced amounts of available food.

“**Pass-a-Loutre** and **Atchafalaya Delta** WMAs are always popular duck-hunting locations due to the high productivity and attractiveness of deltaic marshes to waterfowl. These two areas will probably be the premier coastal areas for the 2019-20 season if hurricane/tropical storm activity is low during the summer and fall of 2019,” Campbell reported.

Duck hunters can see the productivity in the numbers based on 11 bag checks and not for the entire season:

- **All WMAs combined:** 4,103 hunter efforts/1.9 ducks per hunter effort;
- **Atchafalaya Delta WMA:** 1,540 hunter efforts/2.0 ducks per hunter effort;
- **Pass-a-Loutre WMA:** 665 hunter efforts/3.3 ducks per hunter effort;
- **Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA:** 1,573 hunter efforts/1.4 ducks per hunter effort;
- **Salvador WMA:** 235 hunter efforts/0.5 ducks per hunter effort;

The table is being set just right, barring tropical weather systems, he said, noting habitat conditions have been good this summer on most coastal WMAs due to high river stages

and tides and the lack of major hurricanes or significant tropical storms the past seven years. Those high river stages accelerated wetland creation and subsequent waterfowl habitat development on active deltas, he said.

Also, flooding temporarily reduces submerged aquatic vegetation and many SAVs are important food sources for waterfowl.

## SQUIRRELS

Campbell said **Pointe-aux-Chenes** and **Lake Bouef** WMAs are the only coastal WMAs that have noteworthy populations of squirrels, and that squirrel hunting is most popular on the Point Farm Unit of Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA.

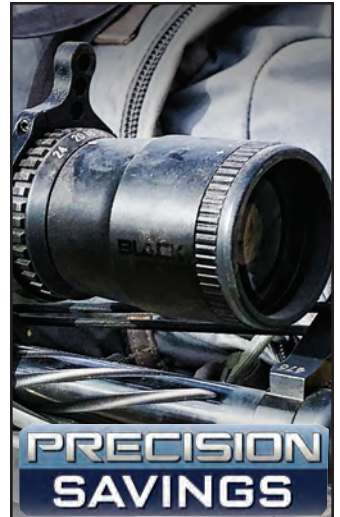
Point Farm, he said, is approximately 1,500 acres of forested habitat, including more than 500 acres of hardwood trees planted in past mitigation projects. Also, current management activities by staff, such as maintaining shooting/access lanes, provide improved conditions that help squirrels and hunters, he said.

“Each year, habitat conditions for squirrels improve at Pointe-aux-Chene WMA’s Point Farm,” Campbell reported. ■



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

Pass-a-Loutre and Atchafalaya Delta WMAs should provide public-land duck hunters and their Labs with plenty of action.



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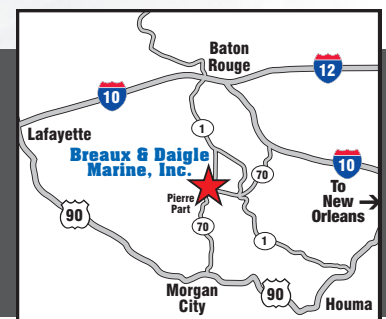
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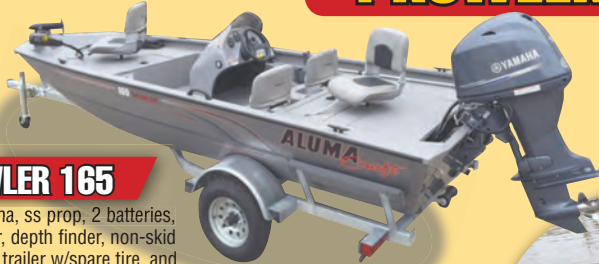
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# A Scout is...

Deer hunters should be prepared to figure out where whitetails will be when bow season opens. Knowing food sources and trails approaching them will give you a leg up.

By Phillip Gentry

**P**erry Ross of Big Creek, Miss., never thinks of deer hunting as a seasonal sport. At 55, he's got nearly 50 years under his belt in the woods, and for him, there's the offseason and the on-season — but it's always deer season.

Ross hunts huge parcels of land in Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas as part of his business, Ross Trophy Outfitters, but he's always got something cooking at home by the time the opening day of

archery season rolls around.

Ross believes deer season actually begins the day the previous season ends. He understands that not every deer hunter keeps such a strict regimen, and he had some tips for hunters who are late to the party.

"If you watch deer hunting on TV, you see hunters headed out into the cold to hunt; that's not (home)," he said. "This is hot-weather hunting for the first part of the season, and you have to plan and hunt differently because of that."

continues >

## A Scout is...

**W**ith a month to go until the fun starts, many deer clubs are rushing to get food plots in the ground. Ross said they are important for nutrition and antler development, and they can be hunted over, but along the Gulf Coast, food plots typically aren't a big draw during daylight hours until much later in the season.

"You are much better off during the preseason identifying the places that have oak flats," he said. "Water oaks and pin oaks will drop first, and then you'll get white oaks and red oaks and whatever else is available. Your better deer tend not to hit food plots or baited areas until after dark."

Ross (662-983-9304) said identifying the No. 1 food source deer will use on a property — oak trees — will provide clues about where to hunt. Some hunters will throw up a ladder stand with a clear view of several trees in close proximity; Ross wants to back up and find trails leading to those oaks, which requires spending some quality time on the ground scouting.

"As hunters, we do a lot to educate deer about how we hunt them," Ross said. "We put up trail cameras, and we go in there every day and check them. When a good buck does show up on camera, he knows you better than you know him."

Having hunted in wide-open ranges as well as thicker forests, Ross said Southern deer rely on their sense of smell a lot more than sight or hearing. At times, deer may not believe what they see if they can't attach a scent to it. Because of that, how a hunter approaches an area is critical anytime he steps in the woods.

"When I'm preseason scouting, whether that's using a program like X-maps or just a hand-held map, I'm looking for likely bedding areas and then for pinch points or edges between the bedding area and those oak flats," Ross said. "I'm also planning my approach to those areas, even the first time I walk in. I want to make sure I'm going in downwind and not leaving a bunch of scent behind to educate those deer."

While other hunters are busy building and putting up stands, Ross ([www.rosstrophyoutfitters.com](http://www.rosstrophyoutfitters.com)) prefers the versatility of a climbing stand or a portable lock-on. If he has an area he likes from his scouting, he keeps in mind the two most-likely wind scenarios he'll face — southwest or north winds — and he makes sure he's identified areas to place his stand for the daily conditions when he goes to hunt.

"We get a lot of southwest winds in the early season, so I want to make sure I have my area planned out for a southwest stand," he said. "When the weather changes, we get north winds for a few days, so I also want to plan for that."

Like other hunters who are out hanging and checking trail cameras before the season, Ross will use game cameras to collect information, but his take on them is more pro-active than most.

"First of all, you're going to need more cameras than you think," he said. "I'm trying to identify a trophy buck's core area, so when you see them, then look for the travel route he's using and back down that trail to his bedding area."

continues >

Hunters need to locate stands to take into account the predominant southwest wind early in deer season, plus the occasional north wind.



Phillip Gentry

# No matter the weapon, practice

While you're getting the land and your knowledge of it in shape, don't forget about re-honing those shooting skills. Whether you hunt with modern firearm, bow or primitive weapon, putting practice time in at the range is a great idea.

Les Smith has his property set up for some long shots, even out to the 400-yard range.

"We've got some permanent shooting houses where we can see 400 to 500 yards," he said. "That kind of shot isn't for everyone, but if you don't practice at that range, you'll never make that shot when it counts."

While having a steady rest and reliable equipment are keys to accurate hunting, toning muscle strength for bow season is a real asset for archers like veteran hunter Chuck Wilson.

"I try to shoot year-round, but I get my bow out at least two months ahead of time, so by late July or August, I start shooting 15 or 20 shots in the afternoon after work," Wilson said. "I don't just stand and shoot, either. I get out one of my ladder stands and move it around and try to think of real-life shots I may have to make, like shooting to my weak side or behind me or leaning out to shoot around a limb. That way I know I can make a tough shot or if I need to wait for a better one." ■



Phillip Gentry

Spending time at the range or in the backyard shooting your bow and/or gun will help you make that critical shot once the season opens.

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## A Scout is...

**R**oss has a warning for hunters who fall in love with a buck they find on camera: everything changes once the velvet comes off. He said a good buck is likely to move once the season arrives. He believes this is God's way of making sure the buck isn't inbreeding. You can kill him, he said, but you have to do it quickly.

"The good news is that some good buck on another property will leave there and is likely to show up where you're at," he said. "That's why identifying the core area is important. Get in there and hunt him before the mating season changes everything."

A final tip on preseason scouting and even seasonal scouting with cameras is to check them every six or seven days instead of daily. If you have a camera at a baited area, check it when you put out new bait. If it's close to an area you are hunting, take a card with you on the hunt and pull the old card on your way out.

Ross summed up his thoughts on being late to any piece of property, both in joining a club and on the day of the hunt. He tells the story of being a new member in a big club. When opening day arrived, all the members drove out to their stands in their side-by-sides, hunted until 10:30 and came back for breakfast. Ross had done his scouting and figured out likely escape routes once the hunting pressure increased, and he used that knowledge to kill a nice buck every opening day for several years.

"I took a climber and went in the long way, well before daylight," he said. "I had figured out where the deer were approaching other stands and where they would go once things got hectic. The second thing I did was stay in the woods well past 10 o'clock. Once everyone else packed up and began to leave, they pushed the deer right to me, and I had 15 to 20 nice bucks to choose from.

"Most of the time, especially in a big club, you have to be smarter than the deer — as well as smarter than the competition." ■

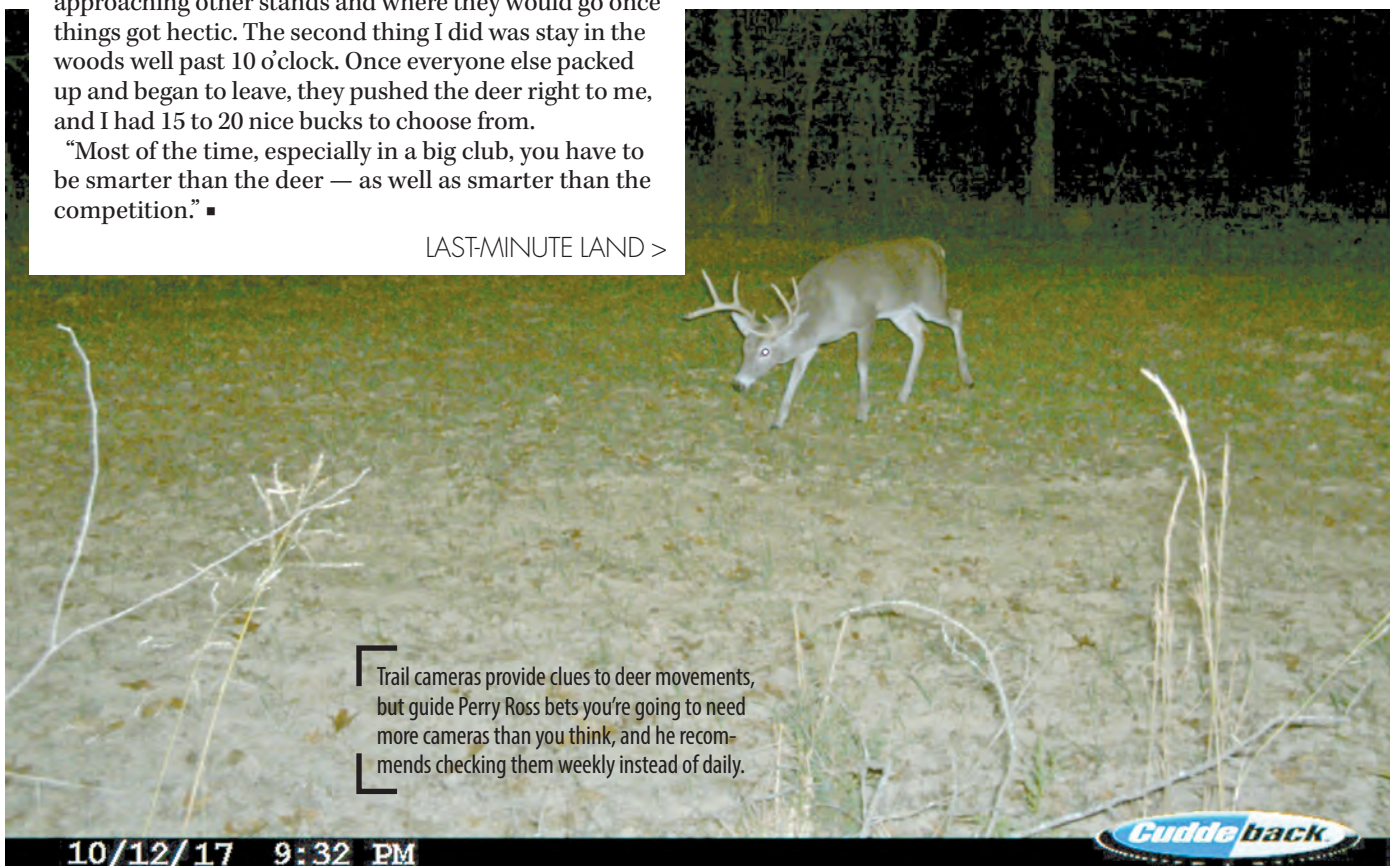
LAST-MINUTE LAND >



Locating a big buck's core area helps hunters avoid being left behind when the buck changes patterns, looking for does.



**Phillip Gentry** is a freelance outdoor writer and photographer who says that if it swims, walks, hops, flies or crawls he's usually not too far behind.



Trail cameras provide clues to deer movements, but guide Perry Ross bets you're going to need more cameras than you think, and he recommends checking them weekly instead of daily.



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A Scout is...

# Last-minute land: go deep, stay late

Most hunting clubs or landowners look for new members or leases during the summer. Word-of-mouth is the more common way that openings get filled, but some larger clubs or tracts may advertise in the newspaper, want ads or even online on social media pages.

However, if you've ever been a member of a large club, you've probably witnessed last-minute openings that were hard to fill. That being said, it pays to network with other hunters and let people know if you're looking for a new place to hunt.

"We have around 15 members in a big tract I hunt," said hunter Ron Smith. "The lease comes due in June, and nearly every year, there's somebody that says they're going to pay their dues and then something comes up. I don't know how many times we're in September looking to fill at least one spot."

Public land seems to get a bad rap, but while you may not be able to build stands or plant food plots on WMAs, taking the time to learn public land means you'll never have to be without a place to hunt.

Succeeding on public land or on private lands that are new to you have basically the same requirement — hunt deeper and longer.

"I hunted public land for many years," Smith said. "It was always my experience that most hunters didn't hunt very far from the truck, and they



Ronnie Galliard

Getting in on a lease or hunt-club land late in the preseason doesn't have to hurt your chances of taking a big buck.

would be gone after about 10 o'clock in the morning. People get spoiled, but the deer don't just vanish after the morning hours. That's actually a pretty good time to have somebody spook one to you." ■



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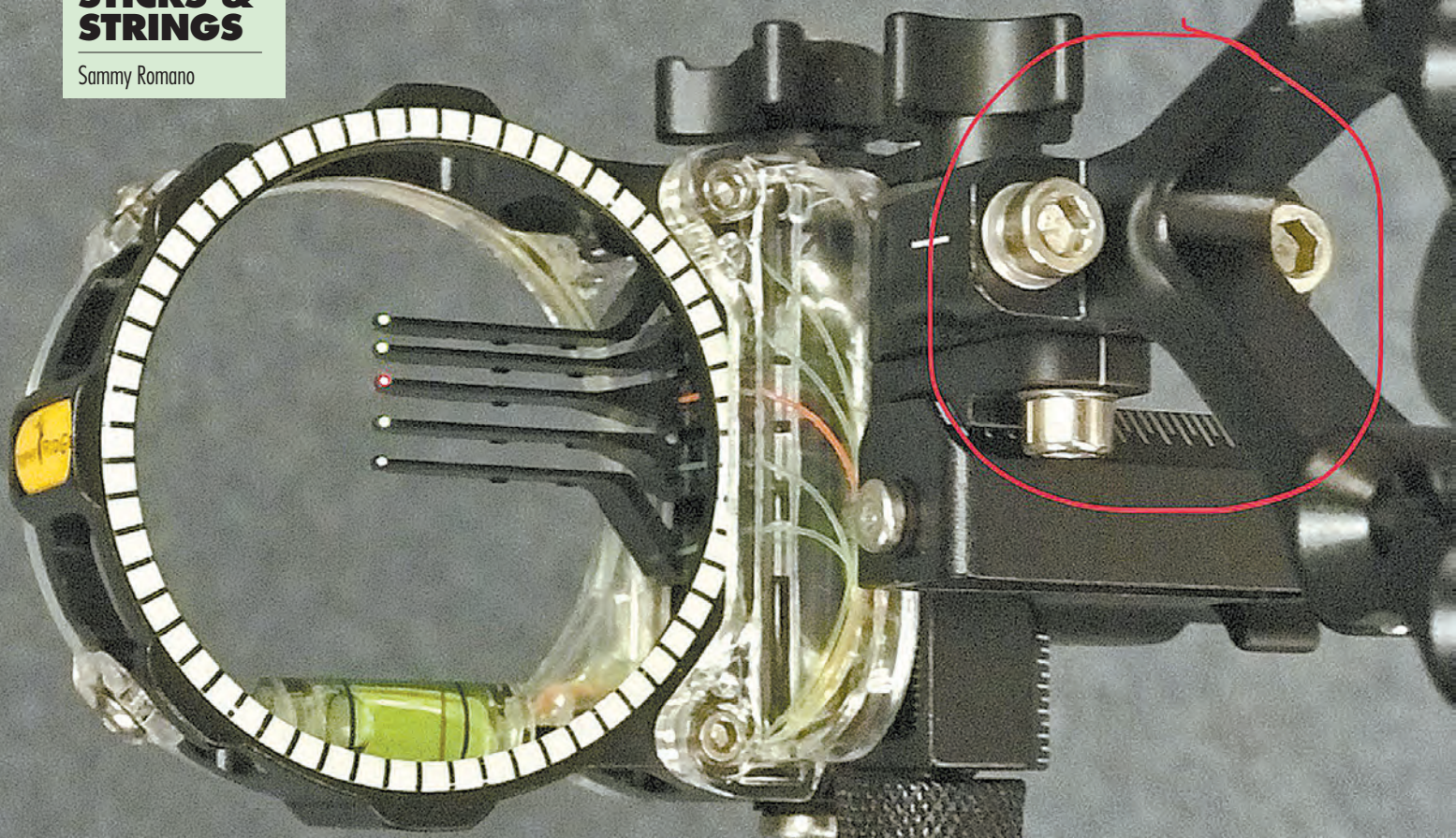


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## THE AXIS OF ACCURACY

LEVEL THREE AXES ON YOUR BOW'S SIGHT OR RISK MISSES ON LONGER, ANGLED SHOTS AT DEER

**P**roperly setting up a modern compound bow is a detail-oriented and often-tedious process. In order to obtain maximum accuracy, many hours of setup and tweaking are required.

While today's archers are much more knowledgeable when it comes to tuning their bow for perfect arrow flight, many still don't realize how critical it is to properly level all three axes of their bow's sight. Failure to do so can result in severe misses, especially when shooting at longer distances or at steep angles uphill or downhill.

An axis is an imaginary line around which an object rotates. A compound bow's sight has three axes. It is critical that all three are leveled to obtain the most accuracy possible.

### THE FIRST AXIS

The first axis is best described as a line parallel to the ground running from left

to right in front of the bow. This is the least-important axis. This axis is set from the factory on many sights; however, sights that use a scope aperture mounted on a sliding or threaded rod will require this axis to be leveled. Rotate the scope aperture towards or away from you until its face is parallel to the bow's string.

### THE SECOND AXIS

The second axis refers to the level of the sight head and the pins. The simplest explanation of this axis is that it runs through the archer's line of sight and rotates like the hands of a clock. This is the axis archers spend the most time leveling, and is definitely the most important. Failure to properly set the second axis will cause the archer to cant the bow when leveling the sight level. This will cause the pins to run diagonally, which will cause arrows to hit left or right of the target at longer distances. This problem will worsen progressively as the distance

of the shot increases. Most of today's better sights offer some type of second axis adjustability. Even if your bow's sight doesn't have an adjustment for the second axis, this can be adjusted by shimming the sight mounting bracket itself.

### THE THIRD AXIS

The most-misunderstood and overlooked axis is the third axis. This axis runs top to bottom through the head of the sight, perpendicular to the ground. Picturing the sight head as a door hinge, opening and closing away from and towards the archer, provides the best analogy for the rotation along the third



**Sammy Romano** is a lifelong hunter who has worked in the archery industry for more than 24 years. His expertise includes compounds and crossbows. He can be reached at [samboka31@aol.com](mailto:samboka31@aol.com).

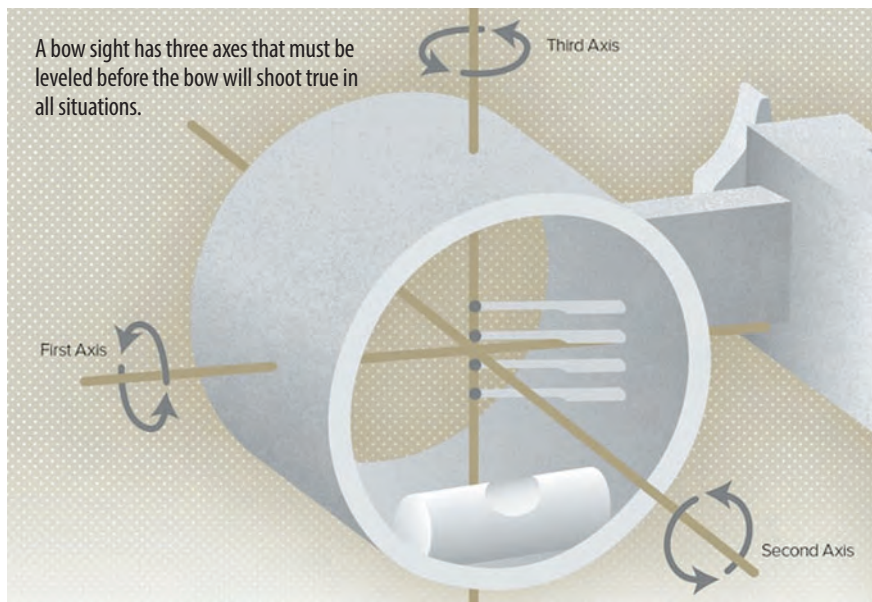
**OPPOSITE PAGE:** The red circle indicates the adjustment screws used to adjust the second and third axes on your bow's sight.

axis. When taking uphill or downhill shots at angles of 45 degrees or greater and distances longer than 20 yards, this adjustment is absolutely critical to avoid left or right misses. This can make a difference of nearly a foot in windage at 50 yards or a steep angle. Most high-end sights offer third axis adjustability; I wouldn't purchase one that doesn't.

To properly level the sight's third axis, make sure to level the second axis beforehand. The bow should then be placed in a bow vise. Next, install a temporary level on the bow's riser and level it to match the sight's level. The bow should then be rotated forward while keeping the temporary riser level's bubble centered. If the third axis is not properly adjusted, the sight's level bubble will run off to one side as the angle increases. Adjust the third axis until both the sight level and riser level are centered all the way and the bow's riser is parallel to the ground. Achieving this usually requires trial and error and several adjustments.

Once your bow is properly tuned and all three axes of your sight are properly leveled, the bow is ready to be sighted in. Many times, properly tuned bows that inexplicably shoot to the left or right have sights that weren't properly leveled to begin with.

I hope this explanation of why and how to level sight axes helps some archers who are struggling to dial in their bows. This can be a complicated and somewhat intimidating process, and if you aren't comfortable doing it yourself, as always, I recommend bringing your bow to a pro shop that offers this service. Most pro shops offer sight-leveling for a reasonable fee, and they can save valuable time by doing it quickly and properly. Whether you're not sure if your sight is leveled or if you know it isn't, have this done today to get the most from your bow setup. ■



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A few subtle adjustments to a bow's sights and servings — and a few arrows slung at a target — can get you tuned up for the beginning of archery season for deer.

# HOW TO QUICK-TUNE YOUR BOW FOR HUNTING

## ENSURE YOU'RE SET UP FOR THAT OPENING-DAY SHOT

**W**ith bow season starting up in the coming weeks, it's past time to shake the rust off and ensure you're ready when that deer steps out at 30 yards on opening morning.

Even if you've been shooting on a regular basis, it's a good idea to take a few minutes to tune the bow.

And archery expert Shawn Padgett said it's not all that difficult — in fact, he shares what he calls a “quick tune” on a Youtube video.

The first thing you need to do is create a target face with a large piece of white paper, placing a strip of black electrical tape in the center of the target.

“Now, take your arrow and put it on your bow. Kind of eye-ball the height of your rest; make sure it's pretty horizontal from your nocking point through your rest,” Padgett said.

The next step is to compare the string and the riser; the string should be positioned roughly in the center of the riser.

Now it's time to take a shot with the bow.

Place your target face on the target block with the black line positioned horizontally, pace off 10 yards and shoot at the center of the black tape.

“Move your sight until you are dead in the middle of that black line,” Padgett said.

Once satisfied that you have the sight set correctly, move back to 20 yards and take a shot.

“Use the exact same pin. Shoot to the exact same spot in the line,” Padgett said. “By doing this, what you're seeing is if your nocking point is at the right height.

“(With the) speed of the bows today, you should not lose

anything from 10 to 20 yards.”

If the impact points of the 10- and 20-yard shots are different, you need to adjust the nocking point.

For example, Padgett said if the impact point at 20 yards is a half-inch lower than the 10-yard shot, the nock is a little high.

“That's why your arrow hit a little bit low,” he said.

So how do you fix this issue?

Padgett said nocking loops make it easy to adjust the point at which your arrow will be nocked.

“If you look at the serving on your string, you'll notice it is done in one direction or the other ... and you can take your nocking loop and take it one rotation up or down,” he said.

If the 20-yard arrow hit lower than the 10-yard shot, the nocking loop should be turned so the serving screws down the string — effectively lowering the nocking point.

Then it's time for another shot at the black line from 20 yards.

“... (Y)ou might need one rotation, or you might need two rotations, but by doing this, what you're going to find is that you're going to hit in the center of that line at 10 and 20 yards,” Padgett said. “What this has done is set your nocking point at the exact right spot.”

Next, it's time to work on what he called the “center shot.”

First, turn the target face 90 degrees, so the black line is vertical on the target block.

“Go back to 20 yards, and shoot at ... that line,” he said. “Move your sight pin accordingly, left or right.”

Once you're striking the line in the center, move back to 40 yards for your next shot.

"You can either use your 20-yard pin and aim at the top of the (paper) or move a pin up and make a 40-yard pin," he said.

If your arrow strikes left or right of the black line, adjustments must be made.

"If you hit ... 2 inches left, you know you have to move your pin just a touch to the right," Padgett said. "Move it a little bit, make your next shot."

"What you're trying to accomplish is (that at) 20 to 40 yards, you want to be in this line."

Once you've accomplished that, you can set up the rest of your pins.

Turn the target face 90 degrees so the line is again horizontal.

"You know your 20-yard pin is good, so move your 30-yard pin, stand at 30 yards and shoot at this horizontal line," Padgett said. "Once you're in there, move back to 40 yards, 50 yards and so on."

That's it. Your bow should be properly tuned.

"I think if you guys try this out, it's going to make it a lot easier to tune your bow, you're not going to spend countless hours in front of a paper tuner getting frustrated and mad," Padgett said.

"Give it a shot, and see if it doesn't improve your shooting." ■

*Editor's Note: This still doesn't replace having your bow properly tuned from the start.*

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# TOP 5 TIPS FOR OPENING DAY OF DOVE SEASON

By Patrick Bonin

**K**elly Neuville, owner/general manager of Buckfins-N-Feathers in Broussard, shared a few key tips to keep in mind in preparation for the opening day of dove season.

## 1 YOUR GUN MUST BE CLEANED AND WORKING PROPERLY, AND THE PLUG MUST BE IN PLACE

Nothing dampens opening day like a gun that won't fire when the barrage begins, so clean it up and make sure it's good to go.

And be sure your plug is inserted; that will be one of the things enforcement agents with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries will be checking.

## 2 BUY THE RIGHT AMMO AND ENOUGH TO GET YOU THROUGH YOUR HUNT

"I like shooting No. 8, high-power because it's a better spread with more, smaller BBs," Neuville said. "It does less damage to the birds and puts more BBs on them."

## 3 USE THE RIGHT CHOKE IN YOUR GUN

Typically, on opening weekend, the doves won't be as high as they will later in the season.

"I would say improved cylinder to modified would be the way to go," Neuville said.

continues on page 61 >



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"Drake has a short-sleeved shirt called the Vented Wingshooter," Neuville said. "It's 100% polyester instead of cotton, and it will keep you cooler early in the season."

## 5 GET A GOOD BUCKET, SWIVEL SEAT FOR MORE COMFORTABLE HUNTING

"I like the bucket seats because you can put your shells and a little ice chest inside, and it swivels," he said. "Find some shade if you can, and bring along plenty of water, a good, wide-brimmed hat and some sunglasses."

Opening day hunters on private land can begin hunting doves one-half hour before sunrise, but on LDWF-leased fields and WMAs, shooting time begins at noon. ■

Your equipment means almost as much as your shooting prowess when opening day of dove season arrives.



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Louisiana's early teal season arrives Sept. 14 and lasts until Sept. 29. The daily limit is six ducks per hunter.

# TOP 4 TEAL TIPS TO BAG MORE BIRDS

Photo courtesy Cody Obiol

## LOUISIANA SEASON SET TO OPEN ON SATURDAY, SEPT. 14

By Patrick Bonin

**L**ouisiana's teal season is set to open on Saturday, Sept. 14 — a day many duck hunters probably circled on their calendars last January when they headed home from their blinds one final time.

It's a great opportunity to knock the dust off your shotgun and do some warm-weather duck hunting before deer, squirrel, rabbit and quail seasons ramp up later this fall.

Capt. Cody Obiol has guided teal hunts along the Mississippi River for years with Cajun Fishing Adventures in Buras, and he shared his top four tips to help you knock down more birds when the season arrives.

### 1. GET YOUR MOJO WORKING

Obiol likes to hunt smaller ponds and shallower holes for teal, so he keeps his decoy spread to a minimum — but he doesn't leave home without his motorized blue-winged Mojos.

"Mojos are crucial to me for teal season," Obiol said. "I like two Mojos and about 14 to 16 decoys — that's what I hunt over just about all of teal season. When it comes to Mojos, blue-wings can't take it. They love it. I don't use a Mojo any other time (besides) than teal season."

He also throws out a few more female dekes in his spread.

"Teal don't have any color this time of year," he said. "Your female decoys mimic the ducks a lot better than your males do."

### 2. KEEP YOUR BLIND SIMPLE

Obiol typically doesn't go overboard camouflaging and brushing his blind for teal season.

"I try not to get too big with it, because they move so fast — you don't want grass in your face trying to swing on a teal," he said. "I usually build mine out of some willow branches, but I don't really do the whole roseau-thing for teal."

"I don't find concealment is as important as in duck season. I've

teal-hunted in a white T-shirt on a last-minute swing out there, and they'll come in. You just want to cover yourself up a little bit and have something you can tuck behind."

Just make sure whatever brush you choose is green — and will stay that way through the 16-day season, he said.

"You don't want to bring something dead out there and build a brown blind. You want to make sure everything you're putting in the ground is green," Obiol said. "That's important, because that will stick out if you have a couple of brown bushes against a green background."

### 3. EQUIPMENT: LESS IS MORE

Remember, on most mornings, temperatures will start off in the mid-70s and only increase from there, so the lighter you pack, clothing-wise and for the hunt, the better off you'll be.

"When it comes to teal hunting, I stay simple," he said. "I bring a whistle, a teal call, shells and my shotgun. Other than that, I don't get too crazy with it."

"Just try to stay cool and keep out of the mosquitos, because I think it's going to be bad this year. I have a feeling it's going to be an extra-hot one."

### 4. AIM AT ONE BIRD

Anyone who's been buzzed by a flock of blue-winged rockets knows this one is sometimes hard to do in reality, but Obiol said it's the key to knocking down more birds and wrapping up your limit.

"People get excited when there are flocks of 10 or so ducks coming in, and they just shoot into the flock," he said. "The biggest thing is to shoot at one bird. Don't shoot into the flock and try to drop two or three of them."

"Pick a bird and shoot that one, then go to the next one." ■



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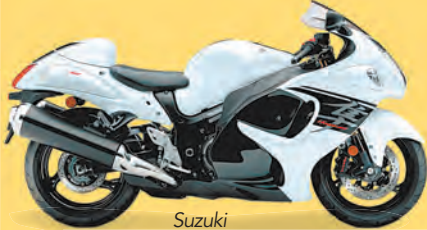


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A person wearing camouflage clothing and a cap is climbing a tree using a climbing device. The person is seen from the back, looking towards the right. The background shows a dense forest with green trees and a clear blue sky. The title 'PRESEASON WORK' is overlaid in large white letters on a black background.

# PRESEASON WORK

FOR A GOOD SEASON IN THE FIELD, SCOUTING ISN'T THE ONLY THING YOU NEED TO DO BEFORE HUNTING SEASON ARRIVES. GET YOURSELF IN SHAPE FOR THE EFFORT YOU'LL BE PUTTING FORTH.

By Bill Garbo

**T**hose of us who hunt and recreate in the great outdoors will soon be climbing trees, pulling bow strings, carrying knapsacks and rifles and hiking up and down hill and dale.

If you are not already in "hunting shape", it is not too late to start exercising and training. Just remember, the most-important way to get in shape is to identify your goals and tailor your training to achieve them. For best results, the goals you set need to be relevant to your particular outdoor interests.

Not only will getting yourself in shape make you a better, happier and probably more successful hunter, regular physical activity can produce long-term health benefits. Regular exercise and resulting physical fitness helps build stronger bones and muscles and increases a person's overall energy level. It's important to start slowly and set small achievable goals. It is safer this way and will set you up for success.

**IT IS A SERIOUS MATTER >**



The author does an exercise called “planks” to enhance overall core strength.

to speed up and intensify their efforts to maintain physical capabilities, but most people tend to slow down and become more sedentary. This is a recipe for disaster when it comes to general health and to the physical abilities necessary to safely and successfully hunt and recreate in the outdoors.

## THE BREAKDOWN

Twilbeck breaks down getting properly fit to hunt into four areas of emphasis: endurance, core strength, flexibility and diet — the four pillars of fitness. For an exercise program to promote “functional fitness”, it needs to replicate real-world activity. There is a definite difference between working out

## STRENGTH VS. ENDURANCE

Experts recommend:

- For cardiovascular (endurance) training, you should exercise at least 30 minutes per session, five or more days a week.
- Strength training should be performed two to three days a week with an emphasis on core and functional exercises.

to get in “beach shape” and working out to get in “hunting shape.” Getting in beach shape is more about appearance, while getting in hunting shape is all about function and overall condition to achieve better performance in the field. I am far from a bodybuilder, but even at my age, I can still safely climb tree-stand ladders and scale trees. It is all because of my year-round adherence to Twilbeck’s four pillars of fitness.

**ENDURANCE** ➤

## IT IS A SERIOUS MATTER

We all hear stories or have personal experience with hunters hurting themselves or even dying while in the pursuit of game. Many of these injuries and deaths could have easily been prevented with some preseason preparation. Preparing physically is every bit as essential as planning where to put tree stands and sighting in your bow. Some accidents are inevitable, but often, hunters are just not physically prepared for what is — and let’s not kid ourselves — an activity that can be brutally physical at times. Most of us grew up hunting and enjoying the outdoors, but the vitality of youth all too soon transitions to middle age and then to old age. There is absolutely no reason to slow down or curtail your hunting passion as you age.

Yes indeed, what we are talking about here can be challenging and take some time out of your week, but it will pay off long-term. So, if you are not already exercising regularly, be sure and talk to your family physician before beginning an exercise program.

## PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

To get the best advice on just what to do and not do, I consulted a friend, Travis Twilbeck, who has degrees, training, and experience in Exercise Science and Sports Medicine. He helped set up my personal training regimen, which I do for about two hours at least three times per week. It has worked wonders for me physically and overall health-wise. At 71, I can still do most everything outdoors that I ever did as a younger person, because I have been regularly exercising and lifting weights for many years. Regrettably, as people age, they actually need

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## ENDURANCE

To create or increase stamina and endurance, start moving. It can be as simple as walking or jogging around your neighborhood. You can go for a hike or climb up flights of stairs carrying a weighted rucksack or belt-pack. You can ride a bicycle or go to a gym and walk or jog on a treadmill.

## CORE STRENGTH

When you are hiking from your vehicle or ATV to your hunting spot, you will be carrying all sorts of gear and often wearing heavy clothing and boots. The weight you are carrying over and above your body weight adds up fast when you factor in a rifle or shotgun with ammunition that will alone easily weigh 10 to 15 pounds. For bowhunters, drawing a bow with a proper draw weight for hunting requires upper body strength.

Then, if your hunt is successful, you will be pulling or carrying the weight of a dead animal back to your vehicle or ATV. Core strength training is a vital part of getting fit for hunting.

## CARDIO IS IMPORTANT

Cardio training is important. Cardio exercises to improve your stamina and endurance can include:

- Hiking with a weighted pack to simulate field conditions.
- Biking on a stationary or regular bicycle.
- Walking: use sidewalks and paths, especially ones with hills.
- Jogging: if your knees are up to it, this is the old standby.



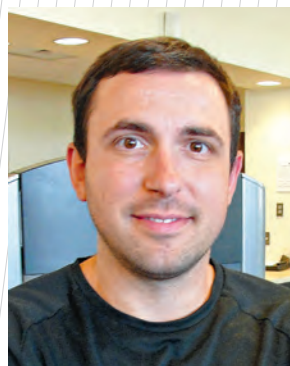
Bill Garbo

## AN EXERCISED LIFE

Travis Twilbeck grew up in Paris, TN, where he began his love of sports and fitness while playing multiple sports in high school.

He went on to receive a bachelor's degree in Kinesiology and Exercise Science from Mississippi College, where he also worked on the athletic training staff. He has since continued to

gain knowledge in the field and obtained a master's degree in Exercise Science, conducting research and specializing in cancer exercise therapy. He is a certified exercise physiologist through the American College of Sports Medicine and holds credentials in Exercise is Medicine.



Travis Twilbeck

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Bill Garbo

# CORE WORK EXPANDS THE BASE

As we age, most of us tend to neglect core strength training. Consider doing the following:

- Carry heavy objects or wear a weighted rucksack up and down hills and inclines.
- Use an elastic band to increase muscular strength.
- Attach a rope to an old truck tire and drag, pull or flip it to simulate field conditions.
- Use free weights and resistance-machine training at a gym. To build muscle endurance, use lower weights and more repetitions.

# YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

A good healthy diet should be based on:

- Eating lean protein and avoiding processed meats.
- Eating lots of vegetables and fruit.
- Cutting back on foods containing refined sugar.
- Drinking plenty of water. A minimum of 64 ounces (1/2 gallon) of water per day is recommended for proper body function.

## FLEXIBILITY

Stretching to become more flexible goes hand-in-hand with strength training. While hunting, you will be stepping on and off of logs, stumps and rocks, all while humping up and down hills and hollows. You cannot do this safely without core strength, flexibility and balance.

## DIET

Diet and exercise are key components of getting in shape. According to some experts, a

general rule-of-thumb is that if weight loss is one goal of a getting-fit plan, 75% of your effort should be diet and 25% should be exercise. Also, alcohol consumption, especially the night before a hunt, can be a safety problem as well as cause dehydration, which can seriously reduce a hunter's physical performance. ■



Bill Garbo is a petroleum engineer and avid whitetail hunter from Madison, Miss. He has lived and hunted out west and taken numerous big game species, but hunting big old mature southern whitetail bucks is his favorite pursuit by a country mile.

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## GAME WARDEN

Keith LaCaze

The author and his son discovered this deer, dead of unknown causes on their hunting lease. LDWF was notified and the head was submitted for CWD testing. **INSET:** It is believed that CWD is more prevalent among deer raised in penned-in enclosures, where most deer urine for attractants is obtained.

# TAKING STEPS TO STOP CWD



**T**he latest effort to stop the spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD) took place on July 1, 2019, when the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission passed a declaration of emergency modifying an existing ban on deer-urine products. The ban is in effect for the 2019-20 hunting season, beginning Sept. 1.

It reads as follows: "It is unlawful to use or possess scents or lures that contain natural deer urine or other bodily fluids while taking, attempting to take, attracting or scouting wildlife, except natural deer-urine products produced by the manufacturers or entities that are actively enrolled and participating in the Archery Trade Association (ATA) Deer Protection Program, which have been tested using real-time quaking induced conversion and certified that no detectable levels of CWD are present and clearly labeled as such."

CWD is neurodegenerative, destroying brain tissue in most deer species, including moose, elk, mule deer and white-tailed deer. Infectious and always fatal, it is part of a group of diseases known as

transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TESs) and is similar to mad cow disease. Its irreversible damage to the brain causes salivation, emaciation, neurological symptoms and death. It is caused (and spread) by misfolded proteins called prions shed by infected animals. The prions contaminate soil, are absorbed by plants and spread to other deer when plants are consumed.

Prions are durable and last indefinitely, which is why deer urine poses a risk.

Before shopping for approved, ATA-certified deer urine, be advised that as of Aug. 1, none is currently on store shelves, but those in the know expect the deer-urine industry to produce certified products in the near future, possibly as early as a couple of months from now. In the interim, hunters should look for synthetic deer-urine products labeled as such. The new deer-urine regulations are included in the 2019-20 hunting regula-

tions pamphlet. Flyers will be available from license vendors as well.

## EXISTING CWD REGS

This regulation joins others already in effect in Louisiana. The ban on importation of live deer or other cervids has been on the books for years. In 2018, regulations prohibiting the import, transport or possession of any cervid carcass or part of a cervid carcass originating outside of Louisiana were adopted. There are exceptions, allowing Louisiana hunt-

The LDWF has pamphlets and other information available regarding its decision to ban natural deer urine and scents during the upcoming deer season.

## WHAT CAN HUNTERS DO?

Hunters concerned about CWD might consider not using supplemental feeds. Feeding and bait stations increase the chance of spreading diseases among deer, including CWD. Supplemental feeds also attract unwanted guests such as feral hogs, another disease carrying threat to deer.

LDWF urges hunters to work on improving the native forage base. Prescribed burns, control of undesirable vegetation and fertilization of preferred browse and mast-producing trees all improve habitat. Food plots are also a better alternative to corn or other supplemental feeds. LDWF's biologists will provide plenty of helpful recommendations.

## VIGILANCE

Keep an eye on conditions and herd health. Visit your hunting area in the offseason or place game cameras along trails or around food plots. Get an idea on fawn production and take note of any deer in poor condition or showing other signs of potential illness. Watching antler development and growth is fascinating and lets us know where potential shooter bucks may be found during bow season.

My son and I were riding through our hunting lease in July when we discovered a dead doe. She appeared to be an otherwise healthy 1-year-old and had not been dead for more than a few hours. The location ruled out road kill, and we found no visible injury or signs of trauma. I notified the private lands biologist who requested we collect the head for testing for CWD. It was turned over to him and we are awaiting test results, though we don't suspect CWD at this time.

I have heard it whispered that CWD is probably already present in Louisiana and we just have not found it yet. Let's hope not and do everything we can to keep it that way. ■

ers to import parts from cervids taken in other states. They include cut and wrapped meat, boned-out meat or quarters with no part of the spinal column or head attached, and clean skull plates with antlers. The hunting regulations pamphlet contains a complete listing.

Also in 2018, the LWFC prohibited supplemental deer feeding in East Carroll, Madison and Tensas parishes. This action was also a declaration of emergency in response to the discovery of a buck testing positive for CWD in Mississippi's Issaquena County, which borders northeast Louisiana.

All commission actions in response to the growing CWD threat are part of LDWF's CWD Response Plan. It is designed "to monitor and curb the potential spread of CWD into Louisiana."

CWD has been discovered in 25 states, including Texas, Arkansas and Mississippi. It is no joke, and neither are actions wildlife agencies are forced to take in efforts to stop the spread of CWD. ■



Retired Wildlife Enforcement Lieutenant Colonel Keith LaCaze spent 34 years with the LDWF beginning in 1977. LaCaze is happily married to wife Mitzi and the father of two children.

# ATTENTION DEER HUNTERS

## NEW NATURAL DEER URINE REGULATIONS

Effective Sept. 1, 2019

**NEW REGULATIONS**  
New regulations have been implemented in an effort to reduce the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). It is unlawful to use or possess scents or lures that contain natural deer urine or other bodily fluids while taking, attempting to take, attracting or scouting wildlife, except natural deer urine products produced by manufacturers or entities that are actively enrolled and participating in the Archery Trade Association Deer Protection Program, and which have been tested using real-time quaking induced conversion (RT-QuIC) and certified that no detectable levels of CWD are present and is clearly labeled as such.

<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; margin-right: 5px; color: green; font-weight: bold;">✓</div> <div style="font-weight: bold; color: green;">APPROVED</div> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural deer urine labeled as "CWD Not Detected" and ATA certified.</li> <li>Synthetic deer urine that is labeled as synthetic.</li> </ul>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin-right: 5px; color: red; font-weight: bold;">✗</div> <div style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">PROHIBITED</div> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural deer urine that has not been tested and labeled as "CWD Not Detected."</li> </ul>
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**ABOUT CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE**  
Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) has been detected in free-ranging and captive herds in 26 states, but not in Louisiana. CWD has been detected in deer urine and remains on the landscape for an indefinite period once introduced. Due to the continued threat of CWD entering Louisiana, precautionary steps are being taken to minimize introduction of the disease. New testing procedures have been made available to producers of deer urine that can detect the presence of CWD in urine-based products, thereby significantly decreasing the risk of using the tested product within the state.

CWD is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy disease characterized by spongy degeneration of brain tissue resulting in emaciation, abnormal behavior, loss of bodily functions and death in members of the deer family. CWD is transmitted via oral ingestion of infectious prions which are shed through saliva, urine, feces and decaying carcasses. The prions are ingested by deer as they are exposed to infectious soil, plants or other materials. Hunters in Louisiana can help prevent the spread of CWD by complying with the new natural deer urine regulation.

Please visit the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries website for more information  
[WWW.LWF.LA.GOV](http://WWW.LWF.LA.GOV)

This notice appears in our publication, Sportsman, 8100 Old Orchard Road, Metairie, LA 70002. The notice is published weekly, except on the first of each month. The total cost of all notices appearing in this publication for 2019 is \$10,000.00. The notice is published by MCM Lumber Co., 4546 Highway 357, Opelousas, LA 70570. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is providing information about the Deer Urine Regulation. The notice is provided to you as a courtesy. For more information, please contact the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, 8100 Old Orchard Road, Metairie, LA 70002. © 2019 Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. All rights reserved.

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## APEX PREDATOR

Joshua Chauvin

The author harvested two huge rattlesnakes and a hog for some grilled snakechops and porkchops.

# RATTLESNAKES MAKE A DELICIOUS DINNER

SNAKES ARE A REGULAR FIND ON SUMMER DAYS AFIELD; KNOW WHICH ONES YOU CAN TAKE

**V**enturing into the woods during the hottest months can produce some delicious foods, but it's also when the most-dangerous animals are active. Yet nothing will stop me from my fun, summer activities like daytime frogging, wade-fishing secluded river ponds, scouting for deer, harvesting fruits and hunting mushrooms.

Last year, I was able to harvest the two biggest rattlesnakes I have ever laid eyes on in one day, while seeking mushrooms and hogs. Or should I say, they laid eyes on me. However, I struck first to get two beautiful hides and some of the tastiest wild meat available.

I've had most of my many close encounters with angry mother bears with cubs during the summer when they are roaming around, not used to seeing people in the hot months. It's now to the point where it is actually uncommon to not see a bear in a full day of exploring. The major problem during the summer is that the undergrowth is so thick, by the

time a bear is spotted, it's often less than 20 yards away.

This past April, I heard some strange noises up above me while in a cutover during a bow hunt for turkeys. Before I even had a chance to see what was up in the tree, I heard the eerie clacking-jaw noises of the mother bear who was standing on her back legs. The first noise was cubs in a treetop above. I saw that same group of bears several times that week. I found a hen turkey on a nest, but I never saw any gobblers.

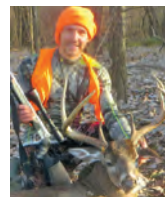
## DRY-LAND GATORS

Don't expect the water creatures to stick to their aquatic lagoons during the warm months. I often see alligators just sitting in the middle of the dry woods and on trails. Usually, they are on hog paths, waiting for a piglet. Last summer, I ran right next to one while chasing hogs in the middle of the woods on a daytime frogging trip. I never knew that big 8-footer was sitting there until I watched my headcam video a week later.

Usually, alligators won't mess with me when I'm wading in the water, frogging during the daytime. Last year, however, I had a massive alligator hidden under duckweed explode up and snap at me when I stepped right next to it walking in knee-deep water. Both of those gator videos can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHV9qMdYts8>

Once, while I was stalking hogs about 10 yards from a pond, a big alligator charged through submerged shrubs and onto the water's edge, very angry at me. At first, I thought it was a large hog exploding from cool water until all the earth being moved was coming my way. I later found out that gator had babies nearby, which is when they really get aggressive.

Still, it's the snakes that present the big-



Joshua Chauvin is a health-focused ultramarathon runner who goes on solo manual-powered public land adventures focusing on hunting big game and large fish by using challenging methods and weapons. He enjoys self-filming and sharing the tactics and details from his expeditions to help others learn from his unique techniques.

gest threat, in my opinion. Nothing is scarier than when I accidentally step on vipers without seeing them because I only wear old running shoes. It's the highly camouflaged copperheads that remain hidden the best, but those moccasins blend in very well, too.

Back during my high-school and college years, I used to catch and sell lizards, snakes, turtles, beetles and frogs. I'd go alone every night to most-distant swamps where others didn't go to fill my cages with critters. Busting through shoulder-high briar patches and going in waist-deep water, I came home bloodied and bitten up from head to toe nightly. My legs looked like I had third-degree burns year-round from the hundreds of pickers that stuck me nightly.

## GOOD SNAKE LUCK

Fortunately, in the days before I used a cell phone — when no one knew where I was venturing off to — I was never bitten by a poisonous snake. However, getting bit by non-poisonous snakes was a nightly occurrence, often several times a night, because snakes yielded the highest pay. Still, it was all the stinging and biting bugs that hurt the most, especially the dreaded wheel bug.

I only sold non-poisonous snakes, so the only poisonous snake I'd ever harvest was a canebrake rattlesnake, because those are one of my favorite foods. Still, it was the water moccasins that always came within inches of me since I was often walking in ditches looking for tree frogs. Catching lizards sleeping in all of the tall brush at night meant there was no way to see what you were stepping on beneath the branches, which was scary since I only wore old shoes. Wearing boots was pointless since I had to cross many canals that were 6 feet deep.

Stepping on snakes is one thing, but reaching into rotten logs and feeling a snake always freaked me out even more. But that was the only way to dig out the big beetles I would sell. Snakes don't appreciate someone's hands reaching into their lair and breaking it apart. Still, catching hundreds of beetles from a single, rotten stump or tree made for some fun days on the job.

Luckily, when it comes to rattlesnakes, they alert you before you step on them — well, usually! On my first day of hog hunting during last year's September shotgun

nutria season, a massive rattler as long as I am tall didn't make a sound as I walked right over it. I jumped away quickly when I realized what I was walking over, as it began to coil up into a striking position.

I couldn't believe I didn't get to down a hog that day after several close pig encounters. But to my excitement, I came across another giant canebrake rattler that afternoon. This was a beautiful, silver-colored one that alerted me first by rattling its 15 buttons.

The next day, I struck down a nice sow hog for a picture taken with the snake hides that I tanned myself.

I got another rattler for the pot a couple of weeks later while hunting pigs. Amazingly, I found a shed and caught a nice snapping turtle after downing a hog. That was one productive weekend.

The pigs aren't really any danger unless I walk up on their nest. When I see a big pile of brush stacked several feet high, I become extremely cautious. The only times I've been charged by an unwounded pig is when I've accidentally stumbled across their nest.

continues >



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# APEX PREDATOR

continued

I've seen many piglet nests, which are easiest to notice in palmetto woods. The sow will pile up chopped off palmetto leaves for her young. If the pile of leaves is still green, it's time to watch your backside.

Be sure never to harm king snakes, since they eat poisonous snakes. Last summer, I saw one swallow a water moccasin that was nearly the same size as the king snake. King snakes do sell for a lot of money and aren't as aggressive as others I have caught, so I used to love finding them. However, they still leave a good mark when they bite you.

## REGULATION DETAILS

Remember, WMA hog-hunting regulations are not only listed in the hunting pamphlet, but many of the details on the specific crow and nutria seasons allowing public-land pig hunting are listed in the trapping pamphlet. The WMA raccoon and opossum regulations aren't listed in the hunting pamphlet but are in the trapping pamphlet. The details on recreational snake regulations are found in the huge several hundred-page Title 56 and Title 76 documents. Authorities who studied the

documents and listed the specific codes told me canebrake rattlers are legal to harvest for food. Keep in mind that eastern diamond back rattlesnakes, along with many others, are illegal to harvest. It's always best to make a phone call when needed to find out any specific regulations.

Still, I never feel I ever need to carry any type of weapon for protection in Louisiana. Next month I go to Colorado, where I bear hunt alone. Being awakened by a bear near my tent and stalking those big bruins with my recurve and no firearm is always more frightening than anything I've experienced in the South. However, not having to worry about stepping on snakes up there is nice.

In Louisiana, I leave all snakes alone unless I'm going to eat them, so luckily, it's only the biggest canebrake rattlers that have to fear me. In the coming weeks, I'll be on the hunt for giant purple muscadines, maypops and golden chanterelles, but also hoping to hear a dinner bell rattle beneath my feet. ■

This was the biggest rattlesnake the author ever harvested; it made for many delicious meals.



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Southern black widow spiders are easily identified by the black, marble-shaped body and red, hourglass markings. **INSET:** Damp, enclosed places like a pit blind that's been empty since last duck season are places you can expect to meet spiders.



# AN 8-LEGGED THREAT

## BLACK WIDOWS COMMON IN WARM-WEATHER HUNTING By Darren Digby

**H**unters are accustomed to dealing with the critters so commonly encountered in their outdoor pursuits. From slithering serpents to biting flies, they are always on the lookout for things that seek to inflict pain — or worse — upon being inadvertently threatened. After all, there are spray repellents to keep the mosquitoes and other flies at bay, and snake encounters are typically avoided by an alternate path.

It's no surprise that spiders are a common culprit for hunters' annual ailments in the field, some even resulting in hospital visits. A single bite can result in serious ramifications if left unidentified or untreated. Besides, there's just something about the 8-legged type that so often puts a special fear into the boldest of outdoorsman.

It is this very feeling that struck me with a vengeance the first time I lifted the lid on an Avoyelles Parish pit blind lid to find the underside littered with what appeared as shiny black marbles with legs. Upon closer inspection the marbles were identified to be the Southern black widow, *Latrodectus*

*mactans*, complete with a number of their tell-tale egg sacs.

Though the initial reaction may have prescribed setting the whole pit ablaze, cooler heads prevailed to dispatch all visible with a boot heel followed by a thorough application of insecticide for good measure. Over the course of preparation for the subsequent waterfowl season as well as in the initial month of the season while still mild, more than 30 widows were killed in a single pit blind.

Information published by the University of Florida's Department of Entomology and Nematology advises that bites from the Southern black widow and its other variations are common. Symptoms of a bite are often described as flu-like, with potential for headaches, chills, nausea, fever, hypertension, shortness of breath, cramping, muscle pain and severe abdominal pain. Similar symptoms are often observed from the bite of a Brown Recluse spider as well.

While the initial sighting of the tell-tale round black abdomen and red hour-glass may be particularly jarring, bites for otherwise healthy adults may be addressed



Photos by Darren Digby

with pain-management medications as well as general wound care to prevent infection. Only in the event of a particularly severe reaction would antivenin be administered, and most bite victims recover within a couple of days.

According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers, approximately 2,200 people are bitten in the United

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States by black widows every year; however, there hasn't been a fatality since 1983.

Unfortunately, when hunters head afield, spiders have an affinity for the same places, including pit blinds, as I've discovered on multiple occasions. Deer stands, sheds, garages, wood piles and other dark places are prime habitat for a widow to make a home, as well as other spider species common to our region.

Shaking out shoes and boots stored outdoors before slipping on is also recommended, especially that pair of knee boots or waders that have hung in the shed for the entire offseason. For hunters heading out this month to brush teal blinds or prepare stands for early bow season, wearing gloves can also go a long way in preventing a bite.

When it comes to eradication, be sure to choose a treatment that is specific to spiders, as the active ingredient in many sprays can be minimally effective on them, despite performing well on insects. Homemade vinegar solutions are reported to be effective as well, without the chemical dosing. Including liquid soap in the homemade mixture helps with adhesion to your target, be it preventative application in likely habitats or directly upon the spiders themselves.

Though the symptoms of an untimely bite can be managed, a bit of awareness and prevention can go a long way in keeping the arachnids from your favorite fall locales. Next time you slide that pit blind lid or swing open the box stand door, keep an eye out for black marbles that seem strangely out of place. ■



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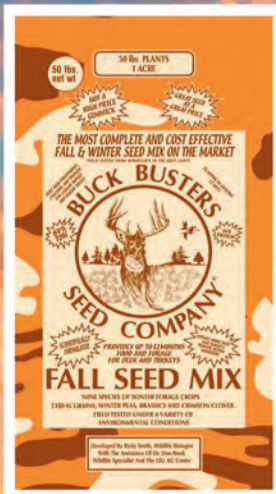


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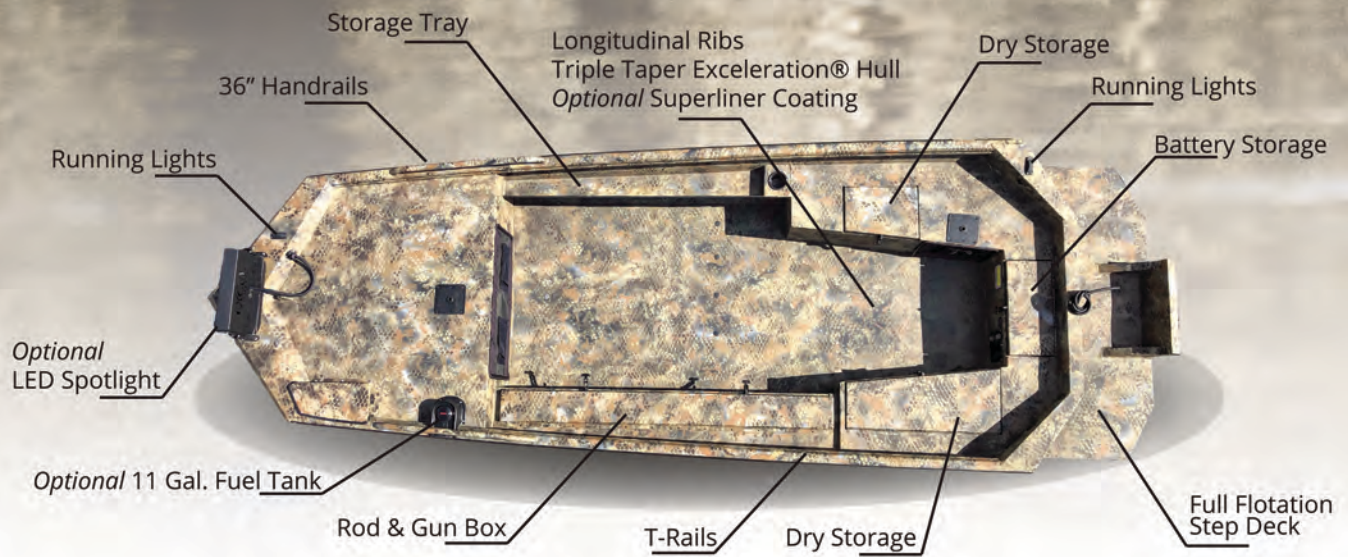
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# Tropical storm trade-off

By Todd Masson

Storms and hurricanes that go somewhere else along the Gulf Coast do a whole lot of good for the fishing in south Louisiana.

Tropical storms and hurricanes usually improve Gulf Coast fishing because of the influx of water with high salinity levels.

**F**or south Louisiana residents, Sept. 10 is a day that's both feared and celebrated. That's the date, historians tell us, that more tropical systems have existed in the Atlantic Basin than any other date.

Leading up to Sept. 10, the region climbs a devilish roller coaster of destruction, with higher potential for storms each day than the day before. Worried residents watch newscasts and surf the internet, scanning for any twist that might suck up warm ocean waters and turn them into Mother Nature's pinwheel of death.

After that date, though, the ride no one wants to be on begins to head downhill. The chances for tropical activity are still sky-high, but each day provides a bit more safety and security than the one prior.

continues >>>

## Residents just have to get past Sept. 10.

In all actuality, the Louisiana coast is missed by storms more years than it's hit. Even those that enter the Gulf are more likely to go somewhere else, simply because we're a relatively small percentage of the linear coast.

But that doesn't mean we don't feel impacts from storms that race to Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida or even Mexico. Our shingles may all stay intact, and all our trees may remain standing, but along the coast, even distant storms leave their mark.

Most often, that's in the form of elevated tides, and in September, those "storm surges" usually set in motion a chain of events that lead to some really good fishing.

That was certainly the case last year when Tropical Storm Gordon lurched into the Alabama coast in early September. Classes were canceled across southeast Louisiana in anticipation of the storm, but residents surely wondered why. Throughout the approach and landfall, skies were clear and winds were light out of the east, then the north.

Along the coast, however, tides were 2 feet above normal. That flooded a few docks, and although it may have been inconvenient for tennis-shoed anglers, the surge provided a big-time payoff, according to Corey Gradwohl, a Delacroix guide.

"The fishing changed overnight with Gordon," he said. "All of a sudden, there were redfish everywhere we went.

"Tropical storms, in general, make the fishing awesome. They bring the salinity level way up, and the bait gets pushed in. The fishing gets really good, because the fish follow the bait."

Gradwohl said he and other guides went from fishing all day for limits of reds to catching them in the first hour of the day, often at their first stop.

It's often shrimp that seem to get pushed in with tropical events, Gradwohl said, but last year, it was mullet. They were simply everywhere when the storm was blowing in water, and they never left once it retreated.

"It's always a really good sign if you see shrimp in the interior marsh, but it doesn't have to be shrimp," Gradwohl said. "They eat mullet, too."

Fishing is great while storm tides are high and after they retreat, Gradwohl said, but he fishes very differently depending on water level.

continues >>>



In high-water conditions, guide Corey Gradwohl fishes points in Delacroix waters, especially with live shrimp he hooks through the head (above right).



## What you need to know

The popular port of Delacroix is located in St. Bernard Parish, just about as far east as you can get by car in Southeast Louisiana.

Water access is provided at either of two marinas, Sweetwater and Serigne's, both of which charge \$10 to access their backdown ramps. Both marinas offer fuel, ice, drinks and limited tackle and food. Sweetwater also features lodging.

**“W**hile the water’s up, you want to get where you normally can’t get,” he said. “Push way back into the ponds that are normally too shallow. Get in there, and get real tight to the grass. The fish will be right up against it.

“Once it starts to fall, the bait gets sucked out, and the fish just wait on it.”

In either situation, Gradwohl targets the fish with live shrimp about 2 feet under Four Horsemen corks. When the water’s up, he throws the bait as close to the edge of the spartina as he can, often casting onto the grass and dragging it off. When the water’s lower, however, he’ll fish as far as 10 feet off the shoreline.

But he almost always focuses on points.

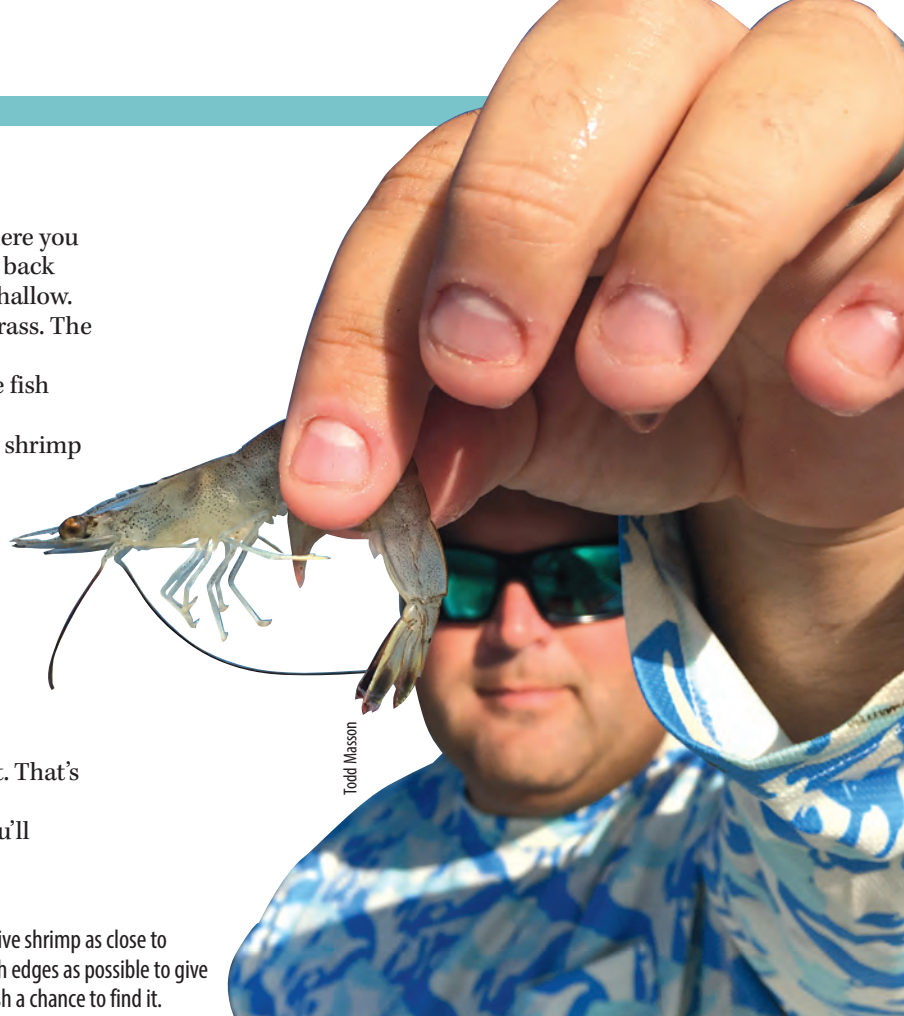
“You definitely want to find moving water; there’s no doubt about that,” he advised. “Redfish are entirely tide-driven, so you want to find some good, hard points with tide going across them. You’ll have bait moving across that point. Throw right up on that point. That’s where the fish will be.

“Fish every side of the point. Make just a few casts. You’ll know it if they’re there.”

But don’t camp in one spot too long, he advised.

continues >

Fish live shrimp as close to marsh edges as possible to give redfish a chance to find it.



Todd Masson

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## Bass also a great option

The fishing during or after a storm surge can often be so good that anglers will catch their limits of redfish within minutes. That can leave them wondering what else to do.

A good option in the Delacroix area is to target bass.

September isn't exactly prime time for the green fish, but they will definitely bite this month, according to guide Corey Gradwohl.

He targets them first thing in the morning by throwing frogs or buzzbaits over matted grass. As the sun gets higher, he moves to areas with sparser grass and throws weedless gold spoons, like Johnson Silver Minnows.

Even in September, it's easy to catch a few, and limits are certainly not unheard of. They become even more likely in the months ahead, Gradwohl said.

"The bass fishing will get better as we get closer to fall and that water cools a little bit," he said. ■



Bass will hit buzzbaits at Delacroix in September; fish them over matted grass.

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"E ven if you make a cast and catch a fish, if you don't catch another one in your next 10 or 20 casts, move," he said.

"Don't sit in one spot, especially this time of year. Those fish are on the move. They're very active. So you want to move a lot as well."

Gradwohl said some points will deliver just a handful of fish, while others will produce 20 or more. And productive points change by the day. He seldom catches significant numbers at a particular point two days in a row.

There are also no magic destinations, Gradwohl said. Literally, the entire marsh will be holding fish, although some areas will certainly be better than others on a particular day.

He recommended newcomers try Grand Lake, Lake Batola, Pointe Fienne and Lake John.

"If the water level's high, push back into the marshes along those lakes," he advised. "You'll see fish back there tailing and pushing. If it's normal height or lower, fish the shorelines, focusing on the points."

Don't waste time sitting on spots that aren't productive. Reds are mobile, and you should be, too.



Todd Masson

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No one wants to see Gulf Coast residents get hit by a tropical storm or hurricane, but unfortunately, it's the rent we pay for living in such an incredible part of the world. Storms are going to come, and someone's going to bear the brunt of them.

You may feel a bit like Nero, fiddling while Rome burns, but Mother Nature delivers a whole lot of good with the bad. You might as well take advantage of it. ■



**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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# BILOXI MARSH REDS

## have never quit biting, guide says

**T**he Lake Pontchartrain Basin has had quite a unique year, with multiple Bonnet Carre Spillway openings. That might scare the average angler away, but that's fine with Capt. Justin Bowles, who targets September redfish in the Biloxi Marsh. "So far, the Biloxi Marsh redfishing has stayed about (typical), and I would assume it's going to stay the same," he said.

That means really, really good fishing for Biloxi Marsh anglers. One thing Bowles, of JB Fishing Charters, does is fish slightly deeper areas this time of year because of the scorching heat. "In August and September, when it's really hot, I normally find the fish more in the bigger bays and ponds with a little more depth," said Bowles, who targets reds with H&H gold spinners teamed with limbo-slice colored Matrix Shad.

"If I see them moving at the spinnerbait and they're not taking it, I'll keep a craw rigged to throw behind it," he said. Bowles uses a 5/16-ounce weight in front of his Texas-rigged craw.



Guide Justin Bowles said redfish of all sizes have been biting this summer in Biloxi Marsh, and there's no sign of a change coming.

Photo courtesy Justin Bowles

"I like to use something heavy that I can cast far," he said. "I think being able to cast it further in shallow water is more important than the actual weight."

When working a Texas-rigged bait, Bowles (985-969-2036) goes along in the marsh making casts toward the shoreline, rather than toward the open water.

"I sort of just drag it," he said. "I don't really pop it like you would a jig. I'm normally casting toward the bank and dragging it a ways off."

"When I get it halfway back to the boat, I'll reel it up. If there is low water, I'll fish it further off the bank. I find the fish won't be right up on the bank."

Bowles said one of the keys is to set your alarm clock early and get off the water early.

"I like to get out as early as possible and usually fish 'til about 10 or so," he said. "You pretty much have what you're going to catch by 10."

If Bowles could hand-pick the conditions, he said he would choose a slight amount of breeze.

"I would want a little bit of wind because it's so hot," he said. "I still want to make it across Lake Borgne, but I would prefer maybe a 10 mph wind or so whenever I'm actually in the marsh fishing to drift the boat and keep me not as hot."

The redfish run the gambit on size, according to Bowles. "That's one thing about the Biloxi Marsh; you can catch a 16-incher, and then you can catch a 27-incher on the next cast," he said. "I find that you don't really get on certain schools that are one size." ■

— Joel Masson

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Chris Bush

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# NOSE-HOOKED SOFT JERKBAITS

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WHEN FISHING GETS TOUGH

Christopher Bush

**C**hances are, wherever you are, you are fishing in the month synonymous with transition: September. Aside from fish being unpredictable, weather conditions provide a sneak preview of an imminent fall season.

In all honesty, trophy trout are hard to come by this month, but 30 days stand between you and, in my opinion, 60 days of the most productive fishing of the year. To prepare for that time, I want to discuss a technique that may provide tremendous value when water temperatures begin their descent: nose-rigged soft-plastic jerkbaits.

About three years ago, I was introduced to this technique by a good friend and angler, Kyle Perry. Like me, Kyle is an officer in the U.S. Air Force and, as a result, fishes different parts of the United States. Right now, he's in northern California, where he regularly fishes the California Delta and Lake Berryessa for remarkably large bass. When he heard about this technique, he was quick to pass it on so I could discover its potential on

the inshore side of things. Simply put, it didn't disappoint.

## SO WHAT IS IT?

For all intent and purposes, it's a modernized Banjo Minnow — for those of you who remember the lure sold on TV several years ago. The rig consists of an small Owner CPS coil spring, a 1/0 Octopus or drop-shot hook, a soft-plastic jerkbait of your choice and either a 1/32- or 1/16-ounce VMC or Eagle Claw nail weight as necessary.

Getting started, take the coil spring and screw it into the nose of the bait to the point where it is fully embedded in the plastic. Then, take the hook and thread it through the top loop on the CPS, catching some of the plastic with the hook point on entry and exit. What this gives you is an anchor point on the nose of the bait and secures your lure so it doesn't come off when casting or on the retrieve. The nail weights can be applied to provide the appropriate sink rate or help you out casting on windy days or fishing in heavy current.

## WHAT DOES IT DO?

Again, drawing comparisons to the infamous Banjo Minnow, it presents an extremely erratic, side-to-side motion with a very subtle fall. This can be great in a number of situations, but I've found it to be more successful on highly pressured fish in clearer water. Also, it compliments a topwater bite extremely well when fish aren't fully committed. The rate of fall can be adjusted using the nail weights, but I've found that the lighter, the better. In other words, do not add weight if it can be avoided.

## PROS AND CONS

Start with the ultimate pro: big fish like it. Fishing for years in Florida, I caught

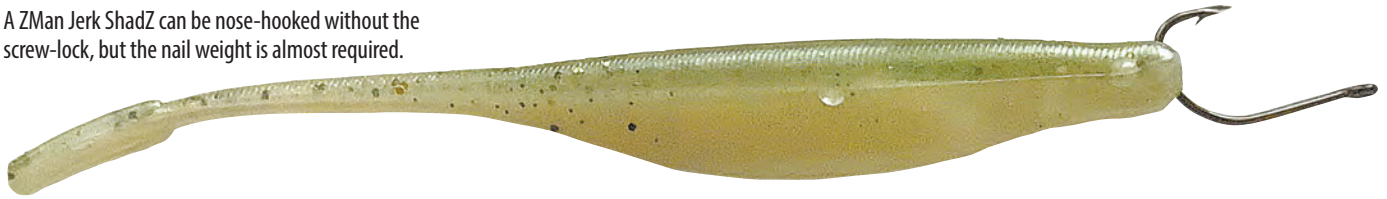


Chris Bush is an Air Force officer and a licensed charter captain, husband and father. He spends his time targeting big speckled trout and sharing knowledge on his website, Speckled Truth.

A nail weight, Owner CPS and 1/0 Octopus hook are the makings of a nose-hooked jerkbait rig.



A ZMan Jerk ShadZ can be nose-hooked without the screw-lock, but the nail weight is almost required.



more of my big trout on this rig than any other. The soft entry doesn't spook shallow fish, and the action is extremely natural. And, using an exposed hook in the nose of the bait allows you to get away with minimal terminal tackle. Said a different way, you can downsize your leader because you don't have to set the hook as forcefully. Also, going light with your terminal gear allows you to make extremely long casts, again increasing your stealth and minimizing your presence.

The main con to the rig is longevity.

Expect a maximum of three to four fish on one soft-plastic bait, simply because when the fish commits, it's often a head shot. On the hookset, the lure often rides up the line, which mangles the nose of the bait, and for most soft-plastic brands, there generally isn't very much plastic there to begin with. This makes it difficult to reestablish an anchor point without compromising the action, so the best thing to do is swap out the soft-plastic bait, which can be time consuming because you have to remove the CPS

and thread into a new tail.

## WHICH SOFT PLASTICS?

Most companies have in their lineups a jerkbait of some kind, so really it's a matter of which brand you like to use. That said, I've established confidence in a few brands, mainly because of density, action and profile.

Slayer and Zoom make a myriad of different colors in traditional jerkbait styles.

continues >



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## SPECKLED TRUTH

continued

Slayer's Sinister Twitch Bait, or STB, and the Zoom Super Fluke are both 5 inches long and offer great action and color profiles, but giving weight to longevity, I prefer the STB.

The MirrOlure Provoker and Cajun Zydeco Shad have some similar, yet different qualities. Both are 5 inches long, but instead of the forked tail, they both have a single darter-style tail, with more action. The differences between the baits is the Zydeco Shad has more of a potbelly, which causes more of a horizontal fall. The Provoker's fall is led by its nose, so it's more vertical. That said, the Provoker has more surface area around its nose, which makes it easier to insert the CPS.

Lastly, the 5- of 7-inch ZMan Jerk ShadZ or the 6-inch Mann's Hardnose provide great, larger profiles. I also like both because they offer unique qualities. The JerkshadZ is made of Elaztech, which allows you to skip using the CPS — making it quicker to change lures — and it offers a slower fall. That said, you have to use a nail weight with the ZMan because, without it, the lure will not sink.

The Hardnose is traditional plastic, but as the name suggests, the nose is hard. As a result, once the CPS is secured, it can last upwards of 10 fish because it doesn't tear up as easily as other soft plastics. Keeping that in mind, there is some rigidity to the bait, so the action isn't as good, but it still produces. Last, they are hard to find, and the colors are pretty limited, so if you can find and buy them, I suggest you

do it in bulk.

## PARTING SHOTS

This technique is great for wary fish, especially in clear water. That said, I've noticed a few other things I'd like to leave with you. First, always use a loop knot and always insert the tag end through the eyelet on the side of the hook opening. This will increase the rate at which you land fish exponentially, mainly because it deals with the hook rotation in the fish's mouth on the hookset.

Always set the hook to the side instead of vertically. Again, this deals with the hook rotation in the fish's mouth; you'll find the hook in the corner of the mouth almost every time. And I always throw it on spinning tackle. I use a Shimano NASCI 3000 spooled with 20-pound/6-pound Suffix 832 on a 7-foot, medium-action Laguna Liquid rod. This allows me to make extremely long casts, provide the walk-the-dog action and set the hook once the fish commits.

Like anything in the fishing world, simplicity lends success. So I encourage you to try this simple technique when fishing gets tough or fish aren't responding to traditional offerings. It can be the difference between success and failure. ■



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## LURE REVIEW

Don Shoopman



An angler shows a speckled trout hooked and landed on a Pencil Popper.

# 'PUNY' PENCIL POPPERS

**A** Jacksonville, Fla., fisherman has been smiling ear to ear ever since Cotton Cordell Lures downsized one of his favorite artificial lures for speckled trout: the Pencil Popper.

"They always had a real big one. It was fine for tarpon or big (jack crevalle), but a little too big for trout and redfish," Chris Holleman said.

Holleman was talking about the 7-inch Pencil Popper, a 2-ounce topwater known, at least in and around Florida, for putting fish in the boat. Ditto for the 1-ounce, 6-inch model.

Holleman, a Cotton Cordell pro staffer, had clamored for years for an even smaller model and got it when the artificial lure manufacturer recently introduced the C64, a 4½-inch, ¾-ounce Pencil Popper. It's been game-on ever since and bad news for speckled trout, redfish, stripers, bass, musky and especially snook.

"Snook require a more durable lure like this one. It's likely to become a favorite among snook enthusiasts," Holleman said.

## MAKE LONG CASTS

There are multiple reasons for its success, he said.

"Basically, in my opinion, it's the longest-casting, topwater walk-the-dog style lure that there is. It's very well-balanced. It seems to pick out the big trout in the bunch," Holleman said.

How does he know? Holleman, 48, is a 13-year veteran game warden for the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission who also guides part-time and loves to throw the smaller, silver/black back Pencil Popper into mullet milling on the surface along the St. John's River, the Intracoastal Waterway and all of its tributaries.

"Typically, where I throw it is in the middle of schools of mullets already getting crashed by trout," he said. "Fish seem to pick that out among all those mullet. Oh, yeah."

Pencil Poppers are notoriously effective as walk-the-dog-type topwaters. They have something else going for them, too, he points out, noting that the concave mouth catches and throws water to cre-

ate a disturbance on the surface.

## WALKER/POPPER

"We can walk, it but it also has a concave head and pops, too," Holleman said.

Pencil Poppers sport solid hardware, including black nickel No. 2 treble hooks and strong split-rings. Tarpon are known to straighten hooks and split-rings on some walk-the-dog topwaters, but not the Pencil Popper, he said.

For sure, it's a go-to artificial lure for Holleman, who specializes in light-tackle inshore fishing trips for his Blue Cyclone Inland Charters.

"I particularly like to throw it over the top of oyster mounds as the tide is falling, right before they uncover, and then right when they first cover up (on a rising tide). Then, we have a lot of marsh grass islands to fish. It also works well around spoil outlets," he said.



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

His favorite time to coax speckled trout into biting is early in the morning or as the sun goes down and, he said, at night, when he catches bigger trout around spoil islands and other structure.

"I do a lot of night fishing. They're going to find that lure," he said.

Pencil Poppers have given Holleman and others plenty of thrills. He used to throw a bone Zara Spook religiously until he got his hands on the Pencil Poppers.

The 4½-inch Pencil Poppers apparently are gaining more and more popularity along the Florida coast.

## MORE THAN A TROUT LURE

"They've always been well known for striped bass fishing. Now that we've got one, I'm sure the word will get out," he said.

"It's a great lure if you get into big jack crevalle. It's sturdy, and it holds up,"

For more information on the C64 Pencil Popper and other Cotton Cordell Lures, visit [www.CottonCordellLures.com](http://www.CottonCordellLures.com). ■



Fishermen now have three sizes of Pencil Poppers to choose from (top to bottom): 4½, 6 and 7 inches.

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## FISHING THE FRINGES FOR FRECKLED FISH

A September speckled trout strategy for Shell Beach

**S**o we all know of this summer's fishing woes. It was an awful summer for trout hunters, unless, of course, you fish to the east or west of the waters so adversely affected by the high river.

But now the spillway is closed, some saltier waters have had time to disperse much of the muddy river water, and things are trying to settle into some new kind of normal pattern.

Capt. Eric Olsen of Saltwater Therapy Charters (504-715-3006) is one of a team of several guides who pound the waters out of Shell Beach every day in pursuit of the speckled species as well as the spot-tail bronze beasts, and he said this summer was by far the worst he's seen.

"But that's behind us now, and that's where we want to keep it — in the rear-view mirror," Olsen said. "The positive prospect is for saltier water and better fishing ahead.

### TRANSITION TIME?

"But now we also enter into what are normally the transition months. Transition time is always challenging for anglers, but this year especially so," he said. "The action we're seeing right now is what we expected to see two months ago, so the spillway opening seems to have set our usual action back by a couple months. We wonder if the transition will be delayed, but I don't think it

will, at least not by much. After all, the freshwater doesn't stop the clock or delay the arrival of fall, and I suspect their normal instincts will kick in and send them into the transition patterns as the freshwater retreats. Will complete normalcy resume? We'll see. It'll be a period of discovery, but you can be sure we'll be pounding the water to find and follow them."

### SEPTEMBER STRATEGY

- **Fringe bays.** "I'll focus on the fringe bays, all the big bodies of water on the edges," Olsen said. "That would be Bay Eloi, The Rocks at the end of the MRGO, Lake Anastasia and up the edges of the Biloxi Marsh around Christmas Camp Lake — in that whole area. It should hold trout and reds, and live shrimp under a cork is the best bet, but the plastic bite should get better also."

- **Don't get married to one spot.** Be prepared to move around, and be prepared to travel.

"Transition trout can be one place today and somewhere else tomorrow," Olsen said. "This is a hunt, and you can't be lazy. Too many anglers park and shop and hope fish come along. From now through fall, you have to be more aggressive and ready to move when you're only catching junk fish, undersize fish or nothing at all. Give it 10 minutes to produce, then move. If you've tried several spots in the same bay and nothing is happening,





Chris Berzas

## CALCASIEU'S YELLOWMOUTHS FAT, SASSY

Calcasieu estuary south, west of Lake Charles offers great fishing for the dream trout

**T**hey're big, fat and sassy, and they'll drive you crazy. That's about the best description of the largely impressive, yellowmouth speckled trout of the Calcasieu estuary. Moving out of the depths of the Calcasieu Ship Channel in September, large speckled trout — in good numbers — will follow two bait primary bait species onto shallow flats, shell reefs and mounds: white shrimp and baitfish. And having survived the rigors of a spawn lasting approximately five months, the big lady trout will be in a feeding mood — quite hungry and voracious as they seek to fatten up before colder waters appear in December.

And two Calcasieu Estuary anglers will be feverishly after these hefty yellowmouths — each targeting these big ladies with different styles and lures that prove largely to be successful in September and during the fall.

### WHITE SHRIMP MIGRATION

"It's all about the white shrimp," said Ken Chaumont of Lake Charles, owner of Egret Baits, whose VuDu Shrimp is widely popular.

It is well known that white shrimp move from Louisiana estuarine marshes into lakes and bays before moving out into the Gulf

as water temperatures cool. Unlike brown shrimp, white shrimp invading inland lakes and estuaries are relatively large; it's not uncommon to find them up to 5 inches long before they head out to the Gulf.

"We catch some quality trout here in the fall, beginning in September," Chaumont said. "I find they are really fat at this time of the year as they gorge themselves on shrimp and baitfish."

Impressive 15-fish limits of trout ranging from 14 to 25 inches are not uncommon. Their size far exceeds the loads of smaller fish usually taken in the summer.

Using VuDu Shrimp, Chaumont will target these trout from Commissary Point and follow schools all the way north to smaller Lake Charles, running up to I-10 in the city limits as fall progresses.

In September, Chaumont will have two rods with VuDu Shrimp rigged, one a 6-foot-8, medium-light baitcasting rod with 12-pound fluorocarbon line spooled on a Shimano Chronarch for free-lining either 3¼- or 4-inch VuDu Shrimp, and the other a 7-foot, medium-light spinning rod with 12-pound fluorocarbon spooled to a Tsunami spinning reel. On the business end of this spinning equipment will be a VuDu cork set above the shrimp.

**OPPOSITE:** The large lady yellowmouth trout of the Calcasieu Estuary are quite seductive to anglers. On their September diet are white shrimp, which migrate throughout the estuary in September and during the fall.

Chris Berzas



Ken Chaumont will often keep another rod nearby with a double-rigged set of VuDu Shrimp ready when action gets fast and furious under the gulls.

VuDus are densely coated and weighted with heavy, brass balls that emit a loud clacking sound, imitating feeding behavior and attracting trout according to Chaumont, who will often keep another rod nearby with a double-rigged set of VuDu Shrimp for when action gets fast and furious under the gulls.

## PICK YOUR BIRDS

Chaumont will fish under gulls in September with some reservation.

"Smaller groups of birds are usually a sign of larger trout, and I'll stay with them as opposed to fishing under larger numbers of birds indicating many smaller fish," he said. "If the birds are hovering in one location for a while, I will cast VuDu Shrimp under the VuDu Cork. If the birds are moving fast, I will follow them and target trout by free-lining VuDu Shrimp.

"I will use a pop-pop-and-stop action when using a cork, and I'll swim the VuDu Shrimp when free-lining."

Chaumont always tries to match the size of the shrimp in the water with his artificial shrimp, moving between the 3¼- and 4-inch lures when necessary. For colors, he will throw the natural, gold or white in clear water, and root beer or magic when waters are wind-swept and murky.

Throughout the estuary, from Turner's Bay northwards to Lake Charles, Chaumont will fish scattered structure, including shell reefs, mounds and humps. Most of the shell reefs are from just south of Turner's Bay to Turner's Island. The shallows around Turner's Island will also hold good trout, especially where marsh and reeds meet the lake.

In Prien Lake and Lake Charles, anglers will locate trout at differing depths with contour variations not too far from the ship channel. In Lake Charles, there are mounds and humps scattered near the ship channel, and expansive flats on the east side and beachfront.

The best days to fish are weekdays; when small groups of birds begin working the flats and Lake Charles beachfront, the word gets out, and there is much fishing pressure on the weekends.

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## TROUT HOTSPOTS

### CALCASIEU'S YELLOWMOUTHS

continued >

## BAITFISH MOVEMENT

Baitfish are also moving out of the shallow nurseries of the Calcasieu estuary; these include pogies (Gulf menhaden), glass minnows, bay anchovies (saltwater sardines), striped mullet and in the extreme northern end of the estuary — even threadfin shad.

It's a rich buffet for these large, lady speckled trout, as Brian Windsor of Tidal Charters LLC in Lake Charles knows all too well. It's the reason he'll chiefly use suspending baits and topwaters to target larger speckled trout south to north across the estuary.

"On a good day in the fall, an angler can catch a limit of 14- to 20-inch trout with a good 4- or 5-pounder in the mix," said Windsor (337-884-9748). "I will start at Turner's or Prien Lake and fish flats close to the ship channel. As the water temperatures get even colder in the fall, I tend to stay north all the way up to Lake Charles

Photo courtesy of Brian Windsor



Caught in August, this 26-inch trout released by Lake Charles' Brian Windsor is an example of the quality of specks that will only increase in numbers as September comes around.

# CATCH MORE MEMORIES

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for the better fish.”

Windsor fishes suspending twitchbaits and topwaters on spinning equipment. His favorite September lures are suspending MirrOdines on a 30-pound mono leader attached with a Uni-Knot splice to 20-pound Daiwa J-Braid spooled on a Daiwa Fuego LT 3000 spinning reel on a 7-foot Daiwa Tatula rod.

“I can make really far casts with those MirrOdines with spinning equipment as opposed to baitcasters,” he said. “This is also very useful, as I also wade-fish for specks, on occasion, all-year long.”

Although he chiefly uses his boat when he has clients, he will wade when he is fishing for himself or scouting for trout.

It is very important that visiting anglers be aware that it is best to take up wade-fishing with experienced anglers or guides. Experienced anglers are aware of the best bottoms that can hold anglers, saving them from falls or mishaps occurring when walking over unstructured shell or soft, muddy bottoms.

“At Turner’s and Prien Lake, I will stay

close to the ship channel but venture slowly out to shallower humps and flats,” he said.

“When fishing shallow waters, I will give those twitchbaits a 4 or 5 count to hover them right off the bottom. In 6 feet of water, sometimes I will just work them 2 feet under to get strikes. It depends on what the fish want.”

Windsor likes natural or white MirrOdines in clear water and black/orange when waters are stained and murky.

“I will also fish birds — especially when I see six to 10 birds working, which indicated larger trout,” he said. “Often, in the fall, you can see larger groups of birds which usually mean loads of ladyfish and white trout or small speckled trout slightly above the length limit.

As waters cools, Windsor fishes flats, humps and shallows in Lake Charles. He will also find good fishing on the beach-front using Down South Lures: basic glow and natural when waters are clear, and magic grass (avocado) when waters are stained.

## BOAT LAUNCH LOCATIONS

For mid-lake locations such as Commissary Point, Hebert’s Landing is a great place, with ample parking, to launch.

For Turner’s Bay and Moss Lake, Calcasieu Point is the closest launch with ample parking and great fish-cleaning facilities.

When fishing Prien Lake, Prien Lake Park offers a great site with plenty of parking to launch your boat. Also, Lake Charles can be accessed from Prien Lake Park launch by traveling north along the well-marked channel. ■

— Chris Berzas



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Mike White targets big trout out of Grand Isle on three different patterns on mornings through October.

# GRAND ISLE'S TROUT SLAM CONTINUES

Morning bite is great; bull reds thrown in for lagniappe on afternoon falling tides

**F**or 50 years, Mike White has fished Grand Isle, pursuing his passion not just to catch speckled trout, but to catch big speckled trout.

"And bull reds," he said, "which are already showing up in the passes."

And now that he's retired from the marine industry, White spends his time doing just that. And he has a routine that he's honed to a science that he'll adhere to from now through mid-October.

## MORNING ROCKS

"In the mornings, I fish along the rocks just out of Caminada Pass," he said. "I'll fish a sliding-sinker rig with a live croaker using a ½- or ¾-ounce weight, and I drop it right along the edge of the rocks where the big trout like to swim. Yes, I do lose a lot of tackle, because you will snag the

rocks. But it's the price you pay to catch the bigger fish."

White said live shrimp and cork rigs might produce more numbers of fish, but he's not out just for quantity of fish but for quality.

## BEACH COMBING

"Also in the mornings, when the winds and seas allow it, I'll fish the beaches for big trout," said White, who looks for trout to always bite best on an incoming tide. He uses the same sliding-sinker rig and bait on the beach as he does on the rocks.

"The key to success on the beach is to find a rip current coming out away from the beach," he said. "The big fish like to hang out along that current, inhaling whatever bait flows out in their direction. Sometimes, I have to run all the way to

Fouchon to find the right current, but when I find it, I find the fish.

## SHUCK THE OYSTERS

"Next, I'll fish the seed oyster reefs on the east side of the bridge," he said. "I catch a lot of fish along those seed reefs, and I fish them the exact same way: Carolina rig on the bottom using live croakers.

"This is the method I'll follow from now through mid-October, when I'll put down the rods and pick up the rifles and shotguns."

## BONUS BULLS

A bonus, White said, is that he can fish the passes for bull reds in the afternoons when the tide is falling.

"Yesterday afternoon, I caught a 30-pound red on a whole crab,

Mike White with a 30-pound bull red. he caught on a whole crab fished on a Carolina rig.



Carolina-rigged using an 8/0 hook and a 4-ounce sinker," he said. "I use whole crabs for bait. I cut off their claws and cut the sharp points off their shell and fish them on the bottom.

"I used to cut the crabs in half and fish with half a crab, but the hardheads will suck all the meat out of them in no time, so I switched to whole crabs. And the method works in all four of the passes, Barataria, Coup Abel, Caminada and Four Bayou." ■  
— Rusty Tardo

Find a rip current pulling water out from the beach and you'll usually find speckled trout ganged up, feeding on what the current provides.



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A man wearing a blue t-shirt with "OREGON 8" and "TA" visible, a blue cap with sunglasses, and white shorts is smiling while holding a large speckled trout. The fish is held vertically, with its head at the top and tail at the bottom. The background shows a body of water, a dock, and houses in the distance under a blue sky with light clouds.

# WHERE DID ALL OUR BIG TROUT GO?

DOCKSIDE TV HOST WONDERS IF  
IT'S SOMETHING IN THE WATER

**OPPOSITE:** Chas Champagne of Docksider TV and Matrix Shad lures is having much more success catching trophy speckled trout on Florida's Panhandle than at home in the Pontchartrain Basin.

**T**his is a subject that many anglers across Louisiana continue to discuss and try to figure out daily.

So just where have Louisiana's big speckled trout gone?

Is it the high rivers year after year?

Maybe it's the loss of land in our estuaries. Could it be the fishing pressure?

Are limits too liberal on speckled trout? Is it the BP oil spill?

Maybe it's a combination of all of the above.

The only sure thing is that the trophy trout estuary or the entire trout fishery is down tremendously. Here at Matrix Shad, we have noticed the rapid decline over the past five years. In our backyard, the Pontchartrain Basin, I feel there are two drastic reasons. One is the closure of the MRGO, which is the main artery and direct shot of pure saltwater into the heart of Lake Pontchartrain. The other is that the spillway has opened every year lately, when it used to be every 15 years.

These two issues completely divert big speckled trout to other areas because they need quality saltwater to live, just as humans need oxygen. We still see many Louisiana trout legends continuously posting dock shots full of 2- to 4-pound trout. These are amazing catches, but ask them how many 7- to 9-pounders they've caught in the past five years, and you'll get a discouraging answer.

## CHANGE DIRECTIONS

One way to scale it is to look at how drastically the weights have dropped in the CCA STAR Trout category across the state. What used to take an 8-pound or better trout to win every year now takes a 6-pounder. Hopefully, we are in a bad cycle and can pivot out of it in a few years, but in the meantime, chasing reds in the Louisiana marshes or traveling far away from Matrix Shad's home base will be more common. Trips west to Grand Isle or to the east toward Florida will continue to happen as we patiently wait to get out of this trend.

Here at Docksider TV, we absolutely love Grand Isle, as it is a great trout fishery for small, skiff-like boats such as ours. It also is a very affordable place to fish once you get there. And we love the barrier islands deep in Breton Sound, but getting to them is challenging, especially in small boats.

Matrix Shad's headquarters are close to the Louisiana/Mississippi border. For us, heading east toward the salty waters of Florida is a little bit easier drive. It's also a very unique and challenging fishery that has sparked our interest greatly.

## FLORIDA TROUT

The fishery we have honed in on the last several years is from Orange Beach to Destin, Fla., known as Fort Morgan all the way to the Choctawhatchee Bay.

Perdido area, fishing the Perdido Bay. I realized this trip was one of the hardest in a while, but we still managed several monster trout and many more than we will catch all-year back home.

The one thing that amazes me about the Panhandle is that you can be catching nothing but 12- to 16-inch trout all morning, then BAM! a 27-inch trout of a lifetime hits your lure. And that's just how we caught our biggest of this trip and the three biggest we have ever



Less-than-ideal water conditions are the main reason, in Chad Champagne's opinion, that Louisiana's trophy trout fishery has all but disappeared.

These fisheries are wildly unique and extremely challenging, but the size of the trout lurking there is something special. On any given cast, you can hook a 25-plus inch trout. The Matrix Shad crew has caught 10 times more trout of 25 inches or more in the past five years in Fort Morgan than we have in the past seven years fishing the Pontchartrain Basin — and we fish Pontchartrain 10 times more than the Panhandle.

Traveling home from our latest Docksider TV adventure, this one in the

caught on the Panhandle.

Don't get me wrong, we have had several days on the Panhandle where almost every trout was over 4 pounds, but for some reason, our three biggest came mixed in with schooling males.

We target these gator trout almost exclusively with the Matrix Mullet topwater, backing it up with either the Matrix Minnow or RipShad if a trout swings and misses the topwater.

continues >

## GUEST COLUMN

continued

### THE NEXT FEW YEARS

I don't see this pattern changing anytime soon, so traveling to target big trout may be in our future for the next few years. We still catch some solid, big trout right behind the Matrix headquarters during the winter, but the flooding rains continue to move them out every spring. So around May each year, our traveling for big trout will begin.

Make sure to watch all our Dockside TV Panhandle episodes, especially the one entitled "Top Water Time Bombs." ■



*Capt. Chas Champagne is an avid angler, located in Slidell. He owns and operates Dockside Bait & Tackle and also manufactures his own tackle producing the Matrix Shad fishing lure and the Golden Eye jig heads.*



Truly huge, trophy speckled trout in Louisiana are only a memory for Dockside TV's Chas Champagne.



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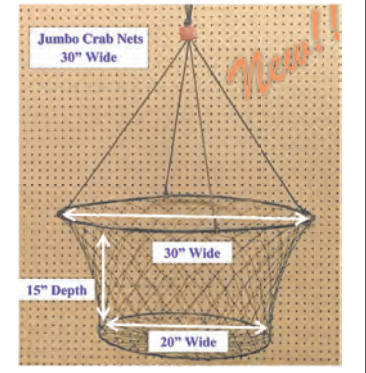
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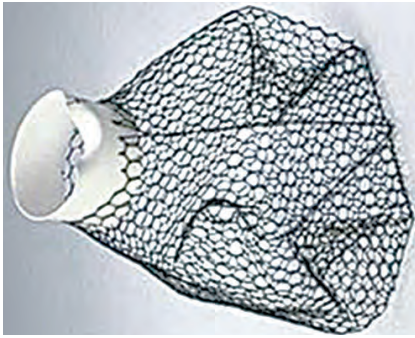


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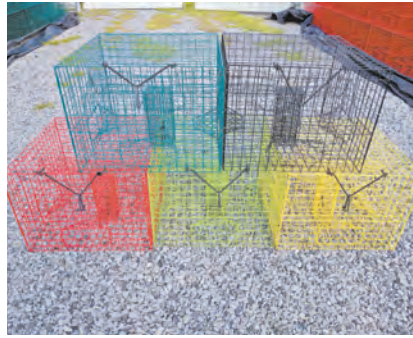
## NEW Crab Nets!



### Crawfish Pyramid Trap



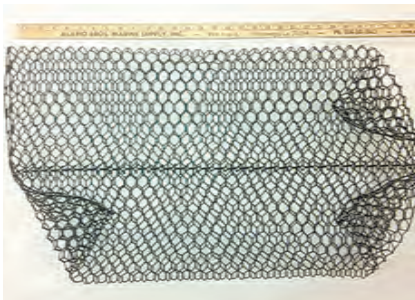
### Crab Traps



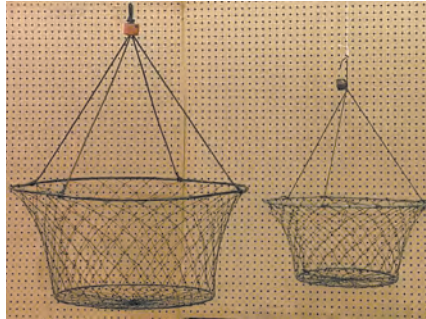
### Trawls



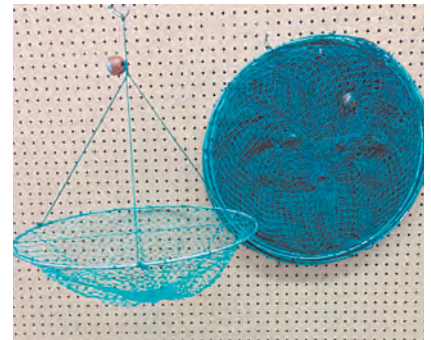
### Crawfish Pillow Traps



### Large & Small Crab Nets



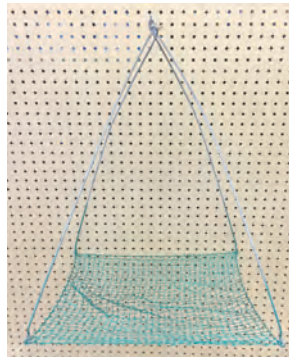
### Crawfish Nets



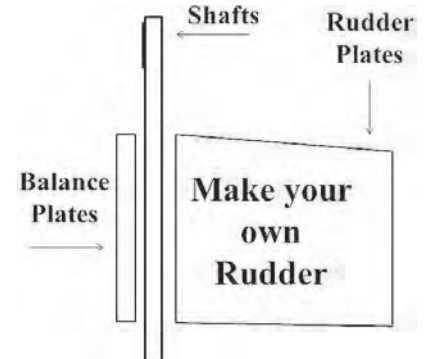
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LOUISIANA ANGLERS CAN HANG  
WITH ANYONE, BUT THEY'RE ONLY  
BEGINNING TO MAKE A BIG IMPACT  
ON NATIONAL TOURNAMENT TRAILS.

By Kinny Haddox

**F**or decades, the measure of success for a professional bass fisherman rested on making it to the Bassmaster Classic, the “World Series of Bass Fishing.” Getting there was difficult. Winning was even more difficult. Making a living at it was, well, almost impossible.

One thing was not discussed very often, but it was obvious to serious followers of pro bass fishing. There have been very few bass pros from the state that self-identifies as the Sportsman’s Paradise: Louisiana.

But things are changing.

In 2019, 48 anglers from Louisiana are regularly fishing one of the three big circuits — Major League Fishing (MLF), Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (BASS) or the Fishing League Worldwide (FLW). Even more Louisiana anglers fish smaller circuits or compete as co-anglers in bigger events.

Major League Fishing upped its game and opened the Pro Bass Tour in 2019 with 80 of the top fishermen in the country, opening up new spots for more anglers on the other circuits, and it even led those groups to make more angler-friendly changes to encourage new participation.

MLF is a made-for-television circuit where anglers don’t have to put up entry fees but still get top prize money. The initial group was by invitation and based on fish-catching results.

Greg Hackney of Gonzales was one of the 80. Hackney, 45, knew the move it was a risk, but he left this “old job” of 20 years fishing other circuits and signed on. Two other Louisiana anglers, Gerald Spohrer of Gonzales and Cliff Crochet of Pierre Part, are also 2019 MLF participants.

“The cool thing about MLF that has raised the bar in pro bass fishing,” Hackney said. “Entry fees, cost of equipment, travel and the like skyrocketed the past few years. The prize money paid to anglers did not. In MLF, there isn’t an entry fee; events are paid for through sponsors. They film all of our events and show them live from beginning to end. Fishing fans can see all the action like they are in the boat. They get to know the ups and downs of a day in the boat. Every angler gets exposure on TV. The prize money is what anglers deserve.”

“We work hard at this; it’s grueling. We fish in some conditions that are just downright nasty. Our families have made a lot of sacrifices for us to do this. What we are doing is taking the sport of pro bass fishing to the next level.”

## Hackney is already an all-star in the bass-fishing game.

He has the longest resume, with more dollar signs attached, than any other active Louisiana pro. He is the only bass angler in history who can claim to be a World Champion (He won the 2018 General Tire World Championship.), an FLW Cup champion (2009) and a BASS Angler of the Year (2014). And, he has already qualified for the 2019 MLF Championship. He has 11 wins, 84 top-10 finishes and more than \$3.6 million in career winnings. He feels strongly that there's lots more to come.

"This opens the door for a lot of new anglers at every level," he said. "I look for increased interest from Louisiana. We are already seeing that this year. Look, we've got some of the finest bass anglers in the country right here, but frankly, there just hasn't been a good financial opportunity for them.

"Establishing MLF upped the game and is making the other circuits better, too. Before this year, there were only three ways a young angler could come on the scene and make it. You had to have really good sponsors right out the chute; you had to come from a wealthy family or you had to hit the jackpot, winning right off, to survive."

"You know, the state of Louisiana has as many bass fishermen, good bass fishermen, as anybody out there. But you've got to have that dream," he said. "There's a lot of blood, sweat and tears you've got to shed. But at least now, if you have the passion, the dream, there are going to be more opportunities."

Hackney said systems are being put in place where kids can start competitive fishing in high school and college and up their

game as they move to each new level. Hackney has two sons, 18 and 15, who love to fish, but until this year, he has never talked about pro bass fishing as a career for either. He didn't want them and their families to jump through the hoops and endure the hardships he has had to. Now, if they've got the drive, they have a better chance to make a living at it, he said, especially if they are good enough to reach the major leagues at MLF.

Hackney won his first tournament at age 11. He won team tournaments fishing with his father and has won trucks, boats and \$100,000 prizes in tournaments, but he remembers the day when he knew he was going to be a pro bass angler.

"Dad took me to the 1984 Bassmaster Classic in Pine Bluff on the Arkansas River," he said. "The legendary Rick Clunn set the all-time record for pounds caught. It was my first impression of a big tournament, and when he won and got handed that check for \$40,000 for bass fishing, I said, 'Wow! He got paid that much for bass fishing?' That's what I'm going to do."

He also remembers a funny anecdote from that day that still sticks with him related to the financial mentality of fishermen.

"I'm there walking around the show, and they had one of the rigged-out Classic boats like everybody was fishing in," he said. "It was \$15,000. Some man walked up and said he was going to buy one of those and pull it home with his \$1,000 truck. I'll always remember that."

### SPOHRER WEIGHS IN ➤



Greg Hackney holds up a bass for the TV camera in a Major League Fishing event.

Major League Fishing



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## SPOHRER WEIGHS IN

Spohrer, 37, fishes the MFL circuit out of Gonzales. He sees the new trend in bass fishing as all positive and long overdue, as well. He's only in his third year as a tour-level pro, but he has already won more than \$215,000 on the water.

"We were going out to high schools and college kids and telling them they should pursue bass fishing and all the opportunities it offered. We are doing that right. But we didn't have everything straightened out at the top," he said. "MLF's Pro Tour is changing that, and I can now encourage youngsters with no hesitation. The concept is that when you reach the highest level, you don't have to pay an entry fee. The sponsorships are good enough to reward the anglers involved, and with all the TV coverage that every angler gets, you make a good living."

Spohrer never hesitated to join the new league when he had the chance. Even though there were risks, the rewards and what it is doing for the future is worth it.

"We have a three-year contract to fish and build this circuit, then it will include even more people. You'll have to earn your spot to keep it," he said.

Like Hackney, pro bass fishing fulfills a dream Spohrer has had as long as he can remember.

"This has been a passion of mine since I was old enough to comprehend what bass fishing is," he said, who left a high-paying job as a chemical plant worker near Baton Rouge to fish professionally. "When I was first big enough to go fishing, my grandfather took me to Leeville saltwater fishing; I fell in love with it. He died when I was young, and I didn't get to go anymore, but he had sparked my addiction.

"My dad didn't fish, but he would take me down the road to neighbor's ponds and lakes, and I would fish from the bank as long as they would let me, while he sat in the truck listening to the Saints game or something. Freshwater bass became the way for me to get my fishing fix. The more I saw people doing it, and the pros back in that day, the more I knew without a doubt that is what I wanted to do. I never wavered from that."

Spohrer feels there are many reasons that more Louisiana anglers haven't chased the dream of pro bass fishing full-time.

"First of all, there are a lot of the best fishermen I've ever met who have good jobs and just aren't willing to give up \$125,000 jobs to take that risk, especially the way it has been in past years," he said. "Second, a majority of the bass fishermen in Louisiana are, for the most part, one-dimensional shallow-water fishermen. That's just the way fishing is here, unless you spend a lot of time on Toledo Bend. They don't have the experience in a lot of different kinds of waters like anglers, say, in Alabama or Tennessee. You have to be versatile to be successful in pro fishing."

## CROCHET OFFERS GOOD ADVICE

Crochet, 35, agrees with Spohrer and Hackney and encourages anyone with the dream to see it through as far as they can — but adds a serious caution.

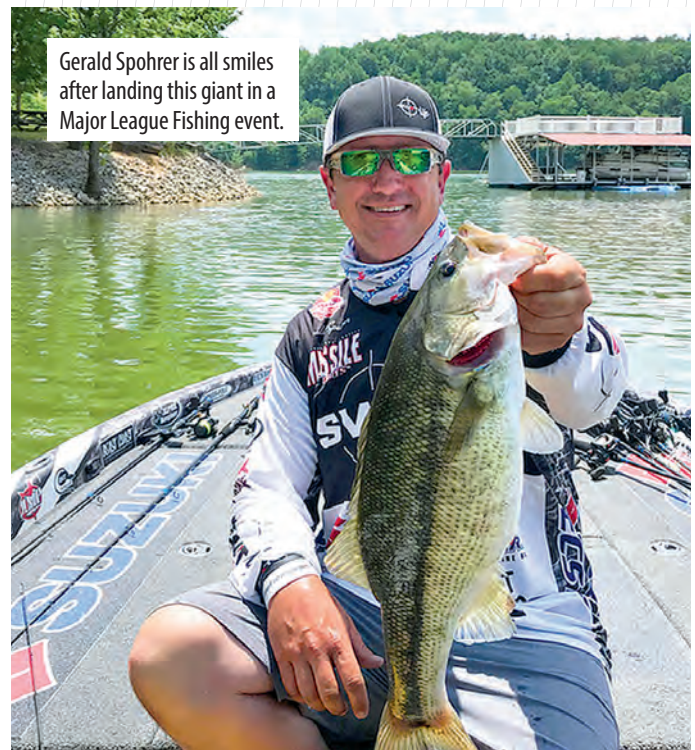
"It's great that the high school and college anglers are getting into the sport," he said. "One advantage they have is that they can see a clear path to tournament fishing. It wasn't like that when I started out. But no matter how passionate you are and

It isn't funny to pro bass fishermen out there trying to make a living catching bass, but there's an old joke about pro fishing and making a living. It goes something like this:

"There's only one way to become a millionaire as a professional bass fisherman. That's to start out as a billionaire."

Bass pro Gerald Spohrer agrees, but he is hoping some of the recent changes and additional opportunities for pro fishing will change that.

"You can't make a living just on money you make in tournaments, except in a few rare instances," he said. "It takes a lot of sponsorship help, and that is what separates a lot of folks. There are tons of great fishermen, but if you don't know how to promote yourself, the sport and your sponsors, it's very hard to make it." ■



Gerald Spohrer is all smiles after landing this giant in a Major League Fishing event.

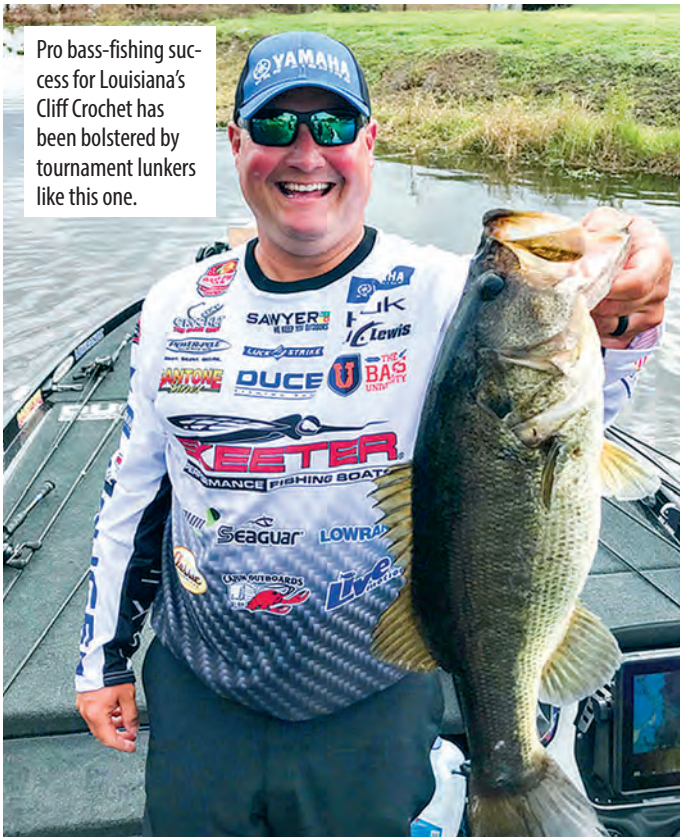
how good you can get, it still isn't easy.

"My momma and old man always encouraged me," he said. "When I was out there getting my butt kicked as a kid in the Friday night tournaments, Dad would always say to keep going, keep practicing, I was getting better, and I was just one or two fish away. Just keep grinding. That's what he said. They never said I couldn't do that or it's too far away. It's why I'm successful today."

Crochet also said that, as with any sport, youngsters need to get an education, have a backup plan and know that their dream may not work out. It's a realistic approach from a man who has won \$520,677 fishing pro tours after leaving a good job as a sheriff's deputy to chase the dream.

"Look, I've been very successful, but there are younger guys behind me right now wanting to take my place," he said. "I know that. Even with three major tours, there are still limited spots. People ask if it is harder to get to the top or stay at the top. It's always hard. It's an ultimate struggle from day to day.

Pro bass-fishing success for Louisiana's Cliff Crochet has been bolstered by tournament lunkers like this one.




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It's super hard. There's always somebody chasing the dream as hard as you are.

"Here's the deal. I know this is true for me, and I bet 100 percent of pro fishermen would say the same thing if they are honest. I look back, and it's like this: if this fish comes off or that fish comes off or somebody else fishes a spot before me on a certain day, I'm not even here."

## HERE THEY COME...

In the meantime, more Louisiana anglers are making noise on other circuits, like the state's three top anglers predicted.

Derek Hudnall of Baton Rouge made his first appearance in the Bassmaster Classic this year and finished 33rd.

BASS held its Central Open on Toledo Bend, and Darold Gleason of Many won the \$42,800 first prize. Logan Latuso and Stephen Mitchell of Trout finished third and fourth, respectively. Nick LeBrun of Bossier won the \$100,000 FLW All-American on Cross Lake.

Young guns like Brett Preuett of Monroe have joined the BASS Elites Series after huge success in college at the University of Louisiana Monroe. Former college teammates Tyler Stewart and Hunter Freeman are rookies on the FLW Tour.

It's all part of the dream, seeing more anglers from the Sportsman's Paradise bring bass to the scales and take checks to the bank. ■



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

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## LOUISIANA ANGLERS WHO ARE "CHASING THE DREAM"

Bass fishermen of all ages are "chasing the dream" of catching bass for cash and prizes. The range of events goes from club tournaments to organized regional circuits and beyond.

In 2019, that "beyond" includes three major national pro bass circuits in which 48 competitors from Louisiana are involved.

Here are those anglers, as identified by the circuits they are fishing:

### MAJOR LEAGUE FISHING (MLF)

Cliff Crochet, Pierre Part  
Gerald Spohrer, Gonzales  
Greg Hackney, Gonzales



### FISHING LEAGUE WORLDWIDE (FLW)

Randy Allen, Gilliam  
Randy Despino, Colfax

Dakota Ebare, Denham Springs  
Hunter Freeman, Monroe  
Nick Lebrun, Bossier City  
Chris Neau, New Orleans  
Drew Ratley, Shreveport  
Clark Reehm, Elm Grove  
Tyler Stewart, West Monroe



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Tyler Carriere, Youngsville  
Derek Hudnall, Baton Rouge  
Robbie Latuso, Gonzales  
Brett Preuett, Monroe  
Tyler Rivet, Raceland  
Caleb Sumrall, New Iberia

#### Open Division

Chris Babin, Raceland  
Blake Betz, Baton Rouge  
Billy Bilieaud, Lafayette



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 Darold Gleason, Many  
 Jimmy Greer, Jr., Dry Prong  
 Alex Heintze, Denham Springs  
 Homer Humphreys, Jr., Minden  
 Bo Keith III, Haughton  
 JP Kimbrough, Bossier City  
 Logan Latuso, Gonzales  
 Matthew Loetscher, Many  
 Cameron Mattison, Bossier City

Thomas McMillan, Choudrant  
 Stephen Mitchell, Trout  
 Chad Murray, Vidalia  
 Todd Murray, Prairieville  
 Dusty Nomey, Jonesboro  
 Troy O'Rourke, Natchitoches  
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- <https://www.majorleaguefishing.com/>

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## THE BEGINNING OF "THE DREAM"

Most folks laughed at Ray Scott, an insurance salesman from Alabama, when he headed out in 1967 trying to sell fishermen on the idea of professional bass fishing — putting up entry fees and fishing for money as members of a new organization called B.A.S.S. (Bass Anglers Sportsman Society).

Scott had been bass fishing on Ross Barnett Reservoir near Jackson, Miss., when he had to run to the lake bank because of bad weather. He later recalled sitting in his hotel room when he had the “brainstorm in a rainstorm” that changed modern-day bass fishing.

It wasn't long until Scott was the one laughing — all the way to the First Commercial Bank of Montgomery, Ala. Fishermen around the country were chasing bass for cash, and the sport has steadily grown over the years.

The first time I met Scott, I was a young outdoor writer with the *Monroe News Star*. I had loaded up my gear and gone to cover a tournament on Toledo Bend in the mid-1970s. When I arrived at Sammy Gill Marina near Zwolle, Scott was sitting alone on the back of an upside-down aluminum boat, talking on the pay phone. When he got off, I asked him if this was where the big bass tournament was going on. We introduced ourselves, and he told me more about where bass fishing was going than I wanted to know. I didn't even have a place to stay and ended up bunking for the weekend with Scott and Bob Cobb, the editor of *Bassmaster* magazine, in one of the old A-framed cabins. It was once-in-a-lifetime experience.

It was just the early stage of bass-fishing madness that no one could have ever dreamed of, except maybe Scott. Toledo Bend continues to be a major draw for BASS and other circuits that come to Louisiana for high-dollar bass contests.



Louisiana fishermen ended up playing a big part in the birth of the sport. In Scott's first Bassmasters Classic in 1971 on Nevada's Lake Mead, Bobby Meador of Baton Rouge was one of the qualifiers and even led the event on the first day. Meador went on to host a popular fishing TV show and even directed his own bass fishing circuit in Louisiana. Another Louisiana angler, Al St. Romain of Morgan City, also qualified for that first Classic. Both have since passed away.

The first Louisiana angler to win the prestigious Classic was 25-year-old rookie Jack Hains of Rayne, who won the 1975 event on North Carolina's Currituck Sound. In 1980, Bo Dowden of Natchitoches won the event on New York's St. Lawrence River. Both still live in Louisiana. Hains was a crop duster by trade, and Dowden ran a marine dealership.

Since that time, despite many qualifiers, no other Louisiana angler has won that titles. The Classic has come to the state numerous times, the first three on the Louisiana Delta. Davy Hite won the Classic there in 1999; Kevin VanDam won it there in 2001; Mike Iaconelli won it there in 2003 and VanDam won it there again in 2011. The tournament has been held on the Red River twice, won by Skeet Reese in 2009 and Chris Lane in 2012. ■

### EYES WIDE OPEN FIRST STEP ➤



Bo Dowden, a marine dealer from Natchitoches, won the 1980 Bassmaster Classic. **TOP LEFT:** Jack Hains of Many won the 1975 Bassmaster Classic. **TOP RIGHT:** Bobby Meador of Baton Rouge led the inaugural 1971 Classic after the first day.

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[CONTROL BREAK]

[STEP UP]

[CAN'T STOP]

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## EYES WIDE OPEN IS THE FIRST STEP TO CHASING PRO BASS DREAM

Somewhere in a small Louisiana town, in a tackle store somewhere by the bass baits or the checkout counter, there's a kid around 12 years old, quietly standing by the rods and reels asking bass fishermen who come through what they are catching and how they are catching them. The kid convinces his dad, or uncle, or neighbor to take him fishing every chance he gets. He's soaking up what he can learn from fishing magazines, YouTube videos and TV shows. His eyes are wide open to everything bass fishing.

He wants to grow up and be Cliff Crochet or Greg Hackney or Gerald Spohrer — or any number of bass anglers like them, or maybe just the local tournament bass-fishing legends he keeps hearing about. He's not chasing the dream, but it's forming in his head.

Crochet knows.

That was him 20-something years ago, and he said, truth be known, for a lot of others among today's top pro fishermen. If you want to know how Crochet,



Cliff Crochet (second from right) was once a youngster hanging out in a tackle shop, soaking up knowledge. Now, he hands it out.

from Pierre Part, got into professional bass fishing, get some food and water, set aside about three hours and listen closely

to a story that begins with a broken down 3-wheeler. And mind you, it's not the tale that fully conveys the story. It's the excitement that Crochet tells it with yet today. It's that passion that still drives him to learn that new lure, make that next cast, catch that next bass, win that next tournament.

Here's the short version.

Crochet grew up around hunting and fishing, like almost everybody in south Louisiana. But it wasn't until his 3-wheeler broke down that he turned primarily to fishing. That evening, he went into the outdoor shed, got an old rod and reel and caught a 12-inch bass at a neighbor's

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pond. He put it in a bucket to prove to his dad that he caught one. He was hooked. He liked hunting. He loved football and sports, but fishing began to get in the way of those pursuits. Bass fishing was the itch that he couldn't scratch enough to make it go away.

Bayside Tackle in Pierre Part became his new hangout, for a few minutes every few days at first, then for hours on end almost every day after school. He listened to the stories, and when things were slow, he would ask store owner Winston Michel questions like "What's this bait? How do you fish this bait? When do you use this color worm?"

The questions were unending, but he soaked up and stored every answer he got. When Michel took him and his friend, Timmy Templet, fishing, he remembered everything that happened on the water as well. Another successful local tournament fisherman, Kevin Medine, bought the store when Crochet was in high school, and it continued to be his classroom.

Medine also took Crochet under his wing on countless fishing trips. Crochet's dad put a plywood deck on a crawfish skiff and got a used trolling motor so he could have a fishing vessel. But Medine had a big fishing rig with a new motor, and he let Crochet borrow it anytime he wanted.

"It's funny looking back, but when he did that, I fished every day I could," Crochet said. "It got to the point that if he wanted to go, he had to come borrow his boat back from me to go fishing."

All along, he was hearing stories of legendary Cajun bass fishermen like Al St. Romain and Billy Fryou and dozens more who never ventured far from home but caught more bass than one could imagine.

"But that seemed all so far away," Crochet recalls. "I could never touch that. Everything I heard was second- or third-hand — or in some far-away place. But I kept fishing. Kept learning to fish. Dreaming about being part of it."

Then one day, he got to "touch" it. His dad took him to the

1999 Bassmaster Classic in New Orleans. He saw that the dream was really real. People were really doing that.

"Now I'd seen it," he said. "I still didn't know how to get there. I didn't know the path, but I knew it was real, and it was possible, and I knew now, it was here close to my house, not just something far away on TV."

Long story short, Crochet started fishing BASS Federation events in 2004. He fished other tournaments, like BFL/Walmart events and was on his way, bringing home checks on a regular basis. By 2007, he decided he was ready to step up a notch, and he tried BASS Opens for the first time. He did not cash a check, but he remembered what his dad often told him in early tournaments: he was just a cast away, a bass away, another good fishing spot away from making it. Don't give up.

And he hasn't. Not to this day. ■

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# MEET CAJUN BABY'S FAVORITE BASS LURES



Cliff "The Cajun Baby" Crochet smiles as he holds a bass he caught on a double-bladed Santone spinnerbait in the Atchafalaya Basin.

Photo courtesy Cliff Crochet

## Spinnerbait, crankbait, worm are tops

**W**hen the nation's last great overflow swamp finally falls to a fishable level, one of Louisiana's bass pros will rely on three artificial lures to catch bass in the Atchafalaya Basin.

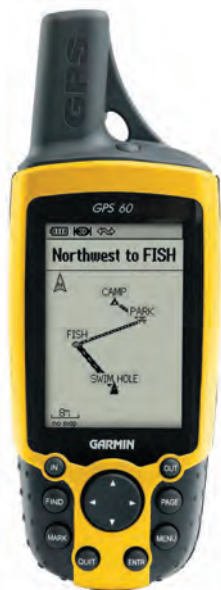
No. 1 is a spinnerbait with two Colorado blades. No. 2 is a crankbait. No. 3 is a plastic worm.

Those are about as basic and fundamental choices as could be but time-proven for Cliff "The Cajun Baby" Crochet of Pierre Part.

"Topwaters like Lunker Lures, finesse baits, you can do a million things ... but those are basic things," he said.

Like hundreds of outdoorsmen who fish for bass the Atchafalaya Basin, Crochet wonders if he is going to get to fish the vast fishery — where he won a major bass tournament that launched his pro career.

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The Atchafalaya Basin, also known as the Spillway, has been unfishably high since it rose inexplicably in October. It's been too high for anything but crawfishing ever since. As summer approached, the Atchafalaya River stage at Morgan City was at 8.19 feet, a little more than 2 feet above flood stage, and 20.1 feet at Butte La Rose, a hair above minor flood stage. With the water that high, gamefish have room to roam over more of the 800,000-acre overflow swamp, out of the reach of fishermen.

Basically, it needs to fall at least 4 feet at the Morgan City gauge and 8 feet at the BLR gauge before bass anglers venture between the West Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee and the East Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee, the latter which winds near his hometown.

"Yeah, it's been high forever. I don't know what that's about," he said.

## YEARS OF SPILLWAY EXPERIENCE

Crochet has fished the overflow swamp most of his life. "I've spent a lot of time in that Basin. I remember the first time I crossed over the levee with my dad. I took a big, deep breath," he said, recalling how as a young boy going over the levee to one of many boat landings, probably Belle River, it seemed like going up and down a small mountain.

It was then he became familiar with the basics: spinner-baits, crankbaits and plastic worms.

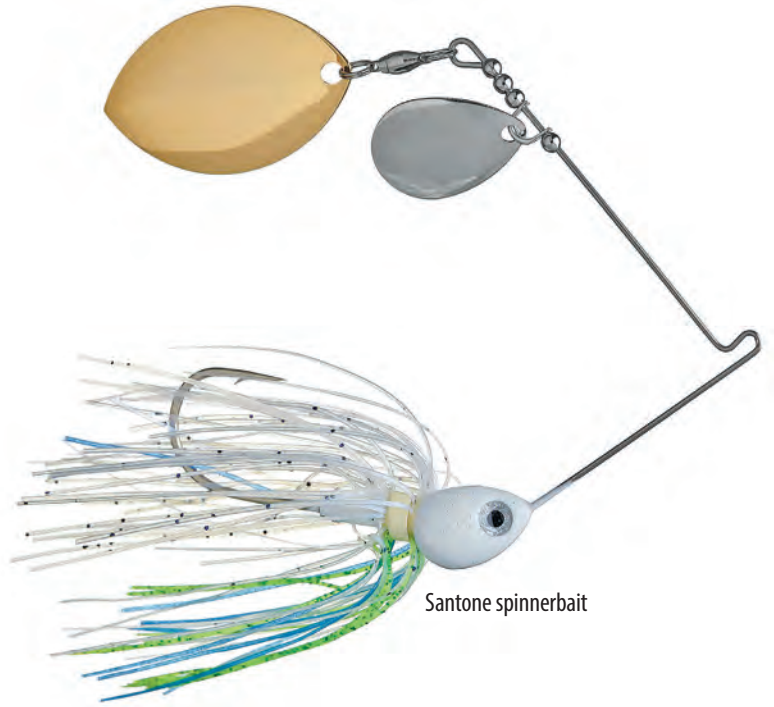
"The last 10 years fishing on a national level, I've seen tricks and tactics. These basics are awesome. Something I was taught in the '90s, you were in the '70s and all the way to the '40s. You can be as basic as you want," he said. "It sounds pretty simple. It's good to know when the water falls it can be pretty simple. You don't have to have a special bait."

Why? Because when the water falls for the first time and the bass follow it, the bite is on big-time most of the time.

"The whole deal, no doubt, when the Basin starts dropping, it's all about mixing water and points," he said. "Yeah, that is the time to catch them but you've got to have conservation in mind and do it responsibly."

### NO. 1 CHOICE IS SPINNERBAIT

Crochet plans to catch and release plenty of bass when he gets the opportunity to fish the Basin. His first choice is a ¼-ounce, double-bladed Santone Lures spinnerbait with two Colorado blades.



Santone spinnerbait

"I like double Colorado blades because you get everything; you get good vibration and good flash," he said, adding his favorite skirt color is a "Red River Special."

Most of the time, he fishes it right out of the pack and doesn't add any kind of soft-plastic trailer.

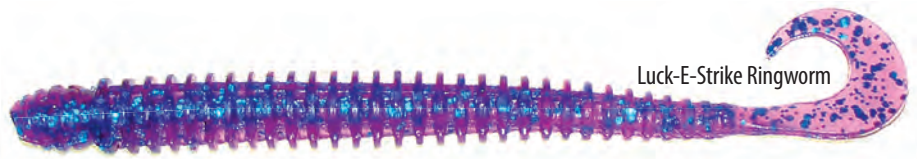
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**CAJUN BABY'S FAVORITE BASS LURES**

continued >

**SMALL CRANKBAITS ARE GREAT**

Crochet prefers a small crankbait as his second choice, either a Luck-E-Strike Rick Clunn Series 3 to probe drains and sloughs or a Luck-E-Strike Rick Clunn Smoothie. The former works the 4- to 6-foot depths, while the latter is a deep-diver. What's his favorite color? He said when the crankbait that just nailed a bass is so deep in the fish's throat you have to use needle nose pliers to extract it, "That's the right color." When it's barely hooked in the lip, "That's the wrong color."

"Color's always a question. You can drive yourself crazy," he said. That said, he's a big fan of black/chartreuse and crawfish hues.

**PLASTIC WORM: OLDIE GOLDIE**

His third choice, he said, is a no-brainer and as old as the hills.

"The last once is the most basic fishing thing of all time: a Texas-rigged plastic worm. I've been catching fish in the Basin on a plastic worm for a long, long time," Crochet said.

"Let me tell you something about the worm. Everybody's forgotten about the worm," he said, noting everybody, himself included, throws Beavers, Brush Hogs and the like.



Rick Clunn Series 3

His favorite plastic worm is a 7- to 7 1/2-inch Luck-E-Strike Baby Huey or a Luck-E-Strike Ringworm.

In summary, he said, "Here's the best thing about fishing the Basin in this whole conversation ... It's so simple, basic fishing — spinnerbait, crankbait and worm. You can't go wrong. You can't reinvent the wheel." ■

— Don Shoopman

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Brian Merrideth of Missouri holds a 6½-pound bass he caught on a Top Toad plastic frog in the summer while fishing lily pads with John Dean at Toledo Bend.



## GOING TO SCHOOL

### Toledo Bend's topwater fishing is tops

I remember one of those dog days of late summer three years ago on Toledo Bend, when a large school of ravenous bass, including 4-, 5- and 6-pounders, came up and stayed up for a few hours while I was fishing Housen Bay.

It was crazy, a good kind of crazy, bass fishing at its finest, and oh so much fun to pull bass out of that school gone mad. It can happen again any time in September on Toledo Bend — Indian Mounds, Six Mile Creek, Hurricane Creek, 1215, White Oak, anywhere on this border lake between Louisiana and Texas. It's that time of year.

While schooling bass action these days pales in comparison to the lake's heyday, it can be fast and furious enough to provide relief from otherwise challenging conditions on scorching, hot days. Schooling action has been fair to good in July, gets better and better in August and is at its peak in September.

### LOWER LEVEL REQUIRES CARE

That's good to know considering that the lake will be lower than anyone, myself included, imagined it would be. It fell about 3 inches a day through July and, barring an extra-heavy rainfall or tropical weather system, will stay around 168, that pool stage, for the rest of the summer and early winter. The Sabine River Authority stated a few years back it won't generate at the dam below 168. It drew the line at that level, which means we can expect it to be at 168 in September.

I advise boaters to be extra cautious, extra careful with the water level at or perhaps just under 168. The degree of difficulty of getting around this beautiful lake just ratcheted up a long way. Seventy-five percent of the wood in the lake is either right at or just below the surface at 168, so it is imperative to travel in the boat lanes.

How does that relate to schooling bass action? Sure, some schools still will be over 20- to 30-foot depths, but I continue to anticipate schools of bass smashing the surface by staying close to deep water but concentrating on feeder creeks, drains, going into 12-foot or so depths with flats nearby. Bass will converge on shad and push them up onto the flats.

### SCHOOLING BASS NUMBERS

Schooling bass are beginning to show up in numbers and are more widespread up and down the lake. There was a wad of them up, some big ones at that, providing some great bass-catching opportunities for an angler I know just the other day at 1215. And as I was idling this past week across White Oak, the shad were there, the bass were there and so were half-a-dozen bass boats. I kept going and let them have at it.

My go-to artificial lures any time a school of bass shows itself is any topwater bait that is clear.



Zara Spook

I've had so many good times walking a clear Zara Spook across a school of feeding bass anywhere on Toledo Bend. In fact, I'm catching schooling bass on it now, the most schooling action I've seen this year. Clear Rogues, clear Tiny Torpedos, clear Lucky 13s — you name the topwater, as long as it's clear, it can be just as effective. Also, try chrome Rat-L-Traps and square-billed crankbaits, anything chrome or flashy.

And hold on. Some of those smashing hits send your heart into your throat, I'm telling you.

### DON'T FORGET LILY PADS

There are other ways to catch bass and beat the late-summer doldrums on Toledo Bend.

For one thing, don't pass up the lily pad fields, even in 4- to 5-foot depths. They are full-diameter now, approximately 15 to 16 inches, and can carpet an area, proving plenty of shade. Whatever your favorite plastic frog — Spro, Ribbit, Top Toad or others — retrieve it around those pads. Again, hold on, and get the hawks up and coming to you in a hurry, or the lily pad stems could rob you of the fish of a lifetime.

I sure do miss the summer days when we'd focus on punching heavy grass mats in deep water. I'd spend 12 to 13 hours punching grass. But much of the grass that made this lake famous for various grass-oriented patterns is gone. It really bothers me that it's gone, inexplicably. But there are some grass beds to be found, not necessarily hydrilla and mostly milfoil, and they can be punched successfully in 7- to 8-foot depths in Housen Bay and Six Mile Creek, to name a few places.

Or, you can fish deep structure with drop shots, Carolina rigs, jigs and soft plastics.

Enjoy the transition month into fall. Be safe on the water.

If you want to catch bass in September, I've been guiding on this lake most of my life and you're more than welcome in my boat. ■



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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## 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](mailto:cholmes@att.net).

# WEEDLESS AND WEIGHTLESS

JERKBAITS ARE GREAT WEAPONS FOR KAYAK ANGLERS

One of the advantages of fishing from a kayak or other paddle craft is the ability to stealthily approach a variety of fishing situations. Sitting low to the water, there is limited shadow cast, and there is the ability to move super-slow with less vibration and pressure sent through the water to spook fish.

On a recent trip to a freshwater lake, Steve Savoye showed a technique he uses to get up close and personal hunting bass in his trusty pirogue. When tree-lined banks make it difficult to make casts without getting hung up in the overhanging tree branches, Savoye uses the pirogue to get just off the shoreline to making casting easy and more precise.

“I can get the pirogue parallel to the bank and easily pitch or side-arm cast right to where the fish are hanging,” he said.

When moving along the bank, he uses a small, hand paddle to move slowly and keep the pirogue in position to drop the cast right where he wants it.

The key technique he uses is casting unweighted, jerk shad-style baits rigged weedlessly, using a large, extra-wide gap swimbait hook.

“These jerkbaits cast well, even with no weight and have tons of action. On a 5-inch tail, I use a 5/0 EWG hook with the little cork-screw spring that screws the hook into the nose of the bait,” he said. “The big hook allows enough room for the bait to slide out of the way for a solid hookset.”

His preferred setup for this type of fishing is a small spinning reel with braided line.

“The braided line floats and makes it easier to watch the line to detect the quick strikes that happen with these shorts casts,” he said.

“I prefer high-visibility colors like white or yellow.”

If the banks are relatively clear of logs and stick-ups, tying the braid directly to the hook provides the best sensitivity and no-stretch hooksets. If abrasion is a concern, a 1-foot section of fluorocarbon leader is recommended. Keep the drag tight to avoid it giving line when setting the hook.

**CONTINUES >**





Steve Savoy uses his trusty pirogue to silently get up close to bass hanging tight to tree-covered shorelines. Tossing unweighted, weedless jerk baits, provides heart-stopping, in your face action.

## PADDLES 'N PUDDLES

continued

The action is fast and close when fishing tight to the shoreline. This bass nearly landed in Savoye's pirogue when leaping for freedom mere seconds after being hooked.



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A man in a green and black fishing shirt and cap is holding a crappie fish. To his left are three packages of 'Crappie Trailers' bait. The top package is green and labeled 'Lagniappe The Crappie Psychic, LLC' and '12ct'. The middle package is yellow and labeled '10ct'. The bottom package is pink and labeled '10ct'. All packages mention 'Flavored with Our New Psychic Sauce!' and 'Made in USA'.

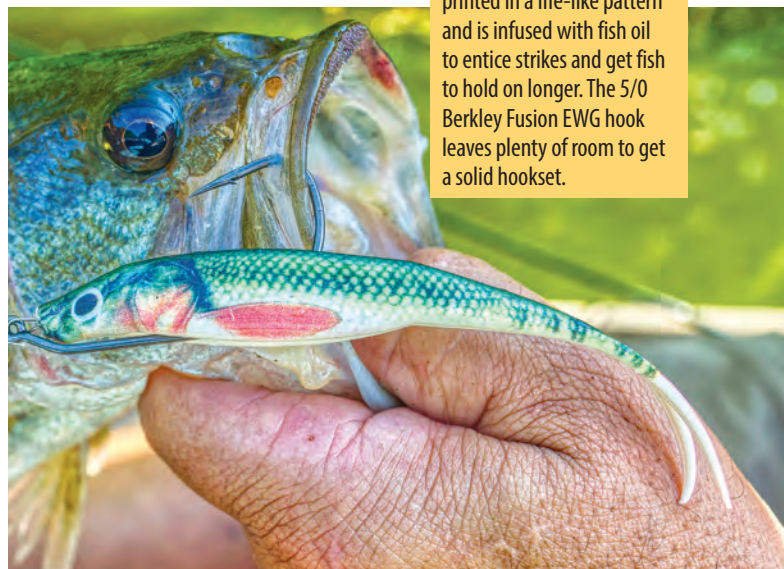
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Oftentimes, the fish are holding close to the bank where there is some shade provided by overhead trees or submerged fallen branches. These baits can easily be worked through submerged logs and sticks due to the hook not being fully exposed.

Moving slowly down a bank about 10 yards from shore, Savoye tosses the bait as close as he can to the water's edge. Often, the strike occurs before the bail can be closed.

"You have to watch the line on each cast. They often pick up the bait while there is still slack from

This jerkbait by BioBait is printed in a life-like pattern and is infused with fish oil to entice strikes and get fish to hold on longer. The 5/0 Berkley Fusion EWG hook leaves plenty of room to get a solid hookset.



the cast. If you keep your eye on the line, you'll see it moving and can take up the slack and quickly set the hook all in one motion," he said.

To get the fish to hold onto the bait those few extra seconds necessary for a solid hook-up, Savoye prefers using scented/flavored baits like Gulp! or others impregnated with some type of attractant.

"You need the fish to keep the bait in their mouth long enough to get the slack out and hammer the hook home," he said.

The action comes quickly. On a recent trip, several bass were caught, all within a split second of the bait hitting the water. The strong, large hooks come in handy when the fight begins mere yards from the boat. The close quarters and tight drags make it difficult to fight the fish for a long time, and they are often at boatside while still quite green. A landing net is much easier than trying to lip a fish that is still full of fight.

There is no need to move fast or far. Several fish were caught within a short span, some coming only a few feet from a previous successful cast. If there is no instant strike, short twitches make the unweighted jerkbait dart and dance while slowly moving it back to the boat.

Savoye is convinced that this method is much more successful using a pirogue or kayak than if using a powerboat.

"I can stay much closer to the bank and move at a snail's pace with no trolling motor noise or water disturbance," he said. "Plus, sitting so low to the water makes it easy to pitch and skip the bait under the trees and limbs." ■

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Mitchell Prokasy of Mandeville with a 39-inch cobia caught 8 miles out of Caminada Pass in Grand Isle in 60 foot of water.

# COBIA 101: TIPS FOR LEMON FISH

## TARGET SMALLER RIGS, KEEP LURES MOVING WHEN SIGHT-FISHING, VETERAN GUIDE ADVISES

By Patrick Bonin

**C**all them whatever you want — lemon fish, cobia or ling — but their firm, white meat is delicious, and September is prime time to catch them off Louisiana's coast. Their fall migration pattern puts cobia within reach for many Bayou State anglers into the fall — from the beach out about 15 to 20 miles — according to Capt. Tommy Pellegrin of Custom Charters in Houma. "Cobia migrate westward in the spring and eastward in the fall, so when they're coming through the Florida Straits and following the beach and get to the mouth of the Mississippi River, they move offshore and continue west — that's why they're so far off in the spring for Louisiana anglers. They go all the way to Mexico," Pellegrin said. "But in the fall, when they're coming back, the exact opposite happens. They're on the coast moving east, so when they pass Louisiana they're still close. They hit that cove in the West Delta and ball up there because they hit the blockade, which is the river. "That's why, in the fall, the Florida and Alabama coast doesn't get them close. They go straight across and head east; it's just the route they follow." So cobia are there — you just have to

find them. And Pellegrin shared some tips to put you on the fish.

"Use any big 8- or 9-inch curlytails with a 2-ounce jighead," he said. "For us, the best colors are chartreuse, glow and pearl.

"Target the satellite rigs versus the big giant rigs and any floating debris you come across: tie-up buoys, grass mats or anything like that. Then start looking for any fish you can sight-cast to."

Sight-casting. That's when Pellegrin says many anglers snatch defeat out of the jaws of victory. Keeping the lure moving with a fish in hot pursuit is absolutely crucial.

"If you throw a jig out, and he comes charging up to it and you stop it, he'll probably turn on it. What did you do wrong? You stopped it," he said. "If he comes charging on it to get a taste or a smell, pull it away from him. I'm not talking 10 feet away, but yank it a foot or two out of his smell-and-taste range, and he'll charge it again.

"Next thing you know, you're not fast enough — and he's going to grab it. Do not stop your bait. If he's going to bite it, he's going to bite it on the run. Technically, cobia fishing is very easy, but you have to get beyond that 'stop-and-let-them-eat' mentality to catch them consistently."

If you don't see cobia lurking near the surface, Pellegrin offered this tip to tempt the curious fish up from the depths.

"Make a slow circle around the rig in your boat — not fast, maybe 2 or 3 mph. If you're moving clockwise, there's a slick area where there's no wave wash at about 5 o'clock behind you," he said. "If a cobia is going to come up to look at you, he's going to come up in that spot.

"If nothing comes up, send your jigs down and jig them coming up."

Pellegrin speed-jigs all the way up from the bottom.

"Pull it up, and crank it down. Pull it up, and crank it down," he said. "One time when you crank it down, it's going to be moving the other way. You want to move it from the bottom to the top of the water column, because you don't know what level they're at."

If there are no fish at the surface, circling in your boat doesn't work and there's no action down deep, Pellegrin said to move to another rig and try again — the whole process shouldn't take more than 10 minutes per stop.

And if you can't hook a cobia, try catching anything at all to drum up some potential interest.

continues >

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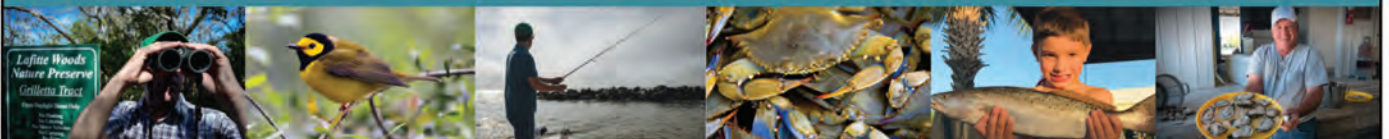
### OCTOBER

- Oct. 11-12 - Ladies Fishing Rodeo, Bridge Side Marina [grandisleevents.org](http://grandisleevents.org)

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Shireen and Karl (K-Boy) Blanchard with Shireen's lemon fish caught this summer on the beach in Fourchon. The fight on the deck was nearly as challenging as the fight on the water with the 29.65-pound ling. It's rare to catch a cobia that close to the shore, but it does happen.



When you do hook up, Pellegrin said to enjoy the fight; the fish don't usually swim back into a rig or structure. "They typically don't do like amberjack and snapper and head straight back into the cover and cut themselves off," he said. "They're more heading for open water, doing the running and jumping thing.

"They want to bull their way through whatever is chewing on their lip." According to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the daily limit for cobia is two per person, with a 33-inch minimum fork length. ■

*Editor's Note: For more information, contact Capt. Tommy Pellegrin at Custom Charters at 985-851-3304, or visit [customchartersllc.com](http://customchartersllc.com).*

**COBIA 101** continued >

"Hook anything, even if you've got to put a smaller jig out. I throw 8- and 9-inch jigs for cobia. Hook a red snapper, a bluefish, a hardtail — anything that will make action in the water," Pellegrin said. "Cobia are curious, and no matter if it's too big for them to eat, they'll come and look at it.

"Always be prepared if you're fighting a cobia and watch for trailing fish. Drop a jig on the trailer, or toss it a live pogie or croaker."

Pellegrin typically spools up with 65-pound Spiderwire braid and 3 feet of 80-pound leader when battling lemon fish. For live bait, he uses a 6/0 or 7/0 circle hook with pogies, croaker, white trout and more.

"Small hardtails are excellent, but if you use them, clip the fins. Don't clip the tail where it's bleeding; just clip the fins of the tail where he can't swim real fast," Pellegrin said. "Put him out there, and you'll get a cobia in a heartbeat.

"Hardtails are fast swimmers; the more active a bait is, the better."



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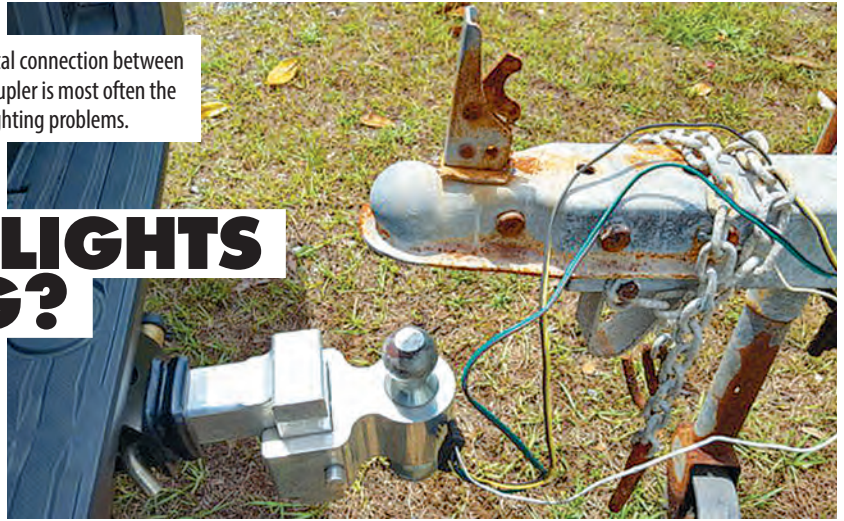
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The metal-to-metal connection between trailer ball and coupler is most often the cause of trailer-lighting problems.

# BOAT TRAILER LIGHTS NOT WORKING? TRY THIS

By Brian Cope

## MOST TRAILER LIGHTING PROBLEMS CAN BE TRACED TO ONE DETAIL



**A**n anyone who tows a boat often enough either has, or will, experience problems with the trailer's lights. Either one turn signal doesn't work, the brake lights don't work, they work intermittently or they show no signs of life at all.

A number of factors could be the culprit, and more often than not, one specific factor is to blame.

Checking the bulbs and the wiring is definitely the right place to start. Corrosion is common in both areas, and blown-out bulbs are a fact of life. It's always a good feeling to find and correct those problems, because you know what went wrong, and you know they are now fixed. But all too often, the lights just start working while you're in the middle of troubleshooting. And

while that makes you happy right away, you know the problem isn't fixed. Worse yet, you don't even know what the problem is, or how to fix it.

According to mechanic John Long, the most-common cause of trailer-lighting problems is in the grounding of the trailer.

"Just like with electricity in your home, the electrical circuit on your boat trailer has to be properly grounded to work," Long said. "A lack of grounding causes all sorts of problems. Whether the lights don't work at all, half of them work, they all work at times but not at others — the most-common cause is a lack of grounding."

A simple solution often fixes this problem

Long said even when the ground wires are hooked up properly and in good shape, grounding is still the first thing he looks

at when someone complains their lights aren't working.

"The trailer's coupler touching the ball is what grounds the trailer's lighting circuit. And this is where most problems lie. Rust on the hitch ball, rust inside the trailer coupler, paint on the hitch ball, or just caked on dirt. These are all common problems that interfere with the grounding process," he said.

Sanding the hitch ball with sandpaper or a wire brush usually does the trick, Long said, but sometimes it's simply a matter of washing off layers of dirt.

"In most everything to do with a boat or vehicle, the last thing you want is metal touching metal," he said. "But for keeping your trailer wiring grounded, that is what you've got to have. Rust and dirt creates a buffer between hitch and coupler. Get that metal touching metal, and you'll usually solve most trailer lighting problems." ■

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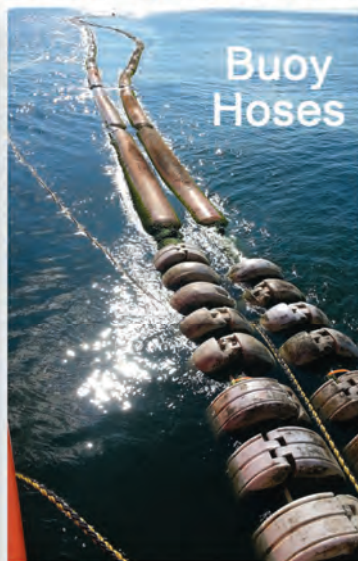
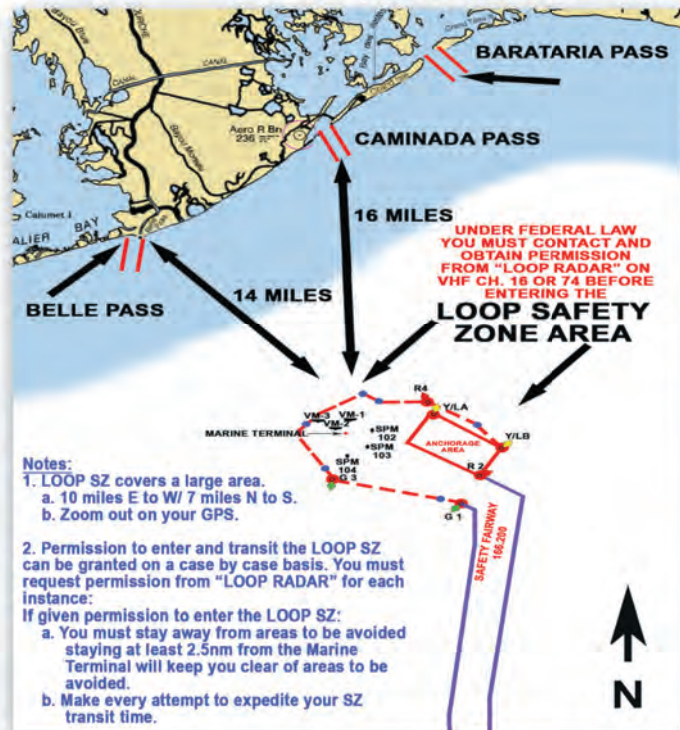
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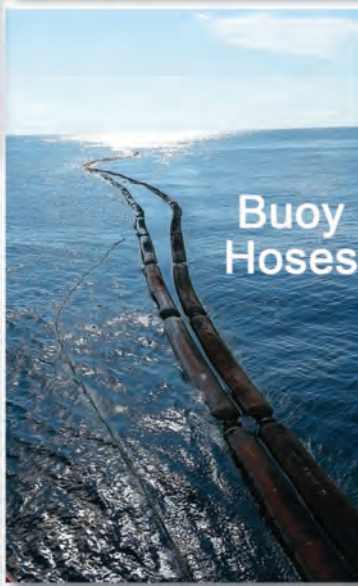
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The author with a spillway goggle eye.

# Sportsman FISHING HOTSPOTS

John Flores

## FOLLOW FALLING WATER TO GREAT BREAM FISHING

Atchafalaya, Lake Verret water levels are finally falling, and bream are biting

**A** timeline drawn to show fishing from spring to late summer in the Atchafalaya Spillway and the Lake Verret system near Pierre Part, it would reflect significant fluctuations in water levels.

According to Chris Black, owner of Bayside Tackle in Pierre Part, those variations have affected the bream fishing, which has been on and off this summer. Essentially, flood water from the Atchafalaya River and significant rain water from Hurricane Barry have been the two biggest challenges fishermen have faced.

The sinking of a barge in Bayou Chene at the end of May to prevent backwater flooding in the region led to a 2-foot drop in water level on the Lake Verret (east) side of LA 70, where good catches of bream occurred in June and early July. By contrast, the Atchafalaya Basin (west) side of LA 70 remained well above the 5-foot flood stage, at 8.3-feet in Morgan City.

Hurricane Barry made landfall the second weekend in July, and heavy rains pushed the water level up again in the Lake Verrett system. It wasn't until late July that water levels returned to normal, Black said. Once the water receded, things began to pick up.



Chris Black, owner/operator of Bayside Tackle says the Triple Tip Grub in popsicle color has been the hot bream bait the past two years.

"A guy came in at the end of July, and he had just caught a ton of chinquapins, which I hadn't heard of anybody catching a lot of this year," Black said. "He said he caught a lot of them on crickets and worms in the lake. And the guys who are catching them now say they are the biggest bream they have caught on this side in 20 years. They say you can't hardly put your hand around a lot of them."

Black said two years of high water might be one of the reasons for the good catches of larger fish.

"The water has been high in the spillway and the Verret side the last two years, when the spawn was going on, and you couldn't really fish," he said. "The spillway side should be on fire once the water recedes."

High water that overflows the banks spreads fish out so there is less competition for beds and less predation. Though anglers struggled this year, high water often means bumper catches in subsequent years.

By the first week in August, flood stage in Morgan City stood at around 6 feet and falling, and the Atchafalaya River continues to fall. As the water gets closer to the 5-foot range, bream fishing should only get better in Flat Lake, Bear Bayou, Big Jessie Bayou and the Shell Oil canals out of Adams Landing near Belle River.

Manuel Rodrigue of Pierre Part hasn't let the high water bother him. A retired angler who fishes without a depth finder said, "When the water is high, sometimes you just have to fish deeper. The structure is still there. The fish are still there. You just have to adjust and fish deeper — ain't no doubt about it. I've been fishing Bayou Come and Lake Verret. It's been really good for me, and I haven't gone anyplace else. The fish are biting right now, and it'll get better on into September."

Besides crickets and worms, Black said one of the hot baits for bream over the past couple of years has been a Triple Tip Grub in popsicle color. When tipped with a Berkeley Crappie Nibble, the combination has been extremely effective. ■

— John Flores



The author's granddaughter, Lillie Conner-Flores, shows off a good mess of Atchafalaya Basin bream.

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Veteran crappie angler Bobby Phillips shows the results of the Ouachita River getting back to a normal level, as he puts it, "right."



# OUACHITA ON THE FALL, CRAPPIE ON THE RISE

## Look in shallow water for feeding slabs

**T**his past spring, Mother Nature threw the Ouachita River system a wicked curveball, pushing floodwaters to near-record highs in the meandering waterway. It's taken a bit longer this year for the river to get right, but is getting there now.

And the crappie bite is right behind, hot on its trail. "We have started catching some really good crappie on the Ouachita," said fisherman Bobby Phillips of West Monroe. "We are about six weeks later than normal, but the river lakes and sloughs are starting to produce."

If you want to get in on the action, Phillips said, one thing has been consistent this time of year.

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"The crappie are going to be more shallow than most people would believe," he said. "Now that the river is dropping, and its hot as blue blazes, the shad are going to be right near the top, because that is where the oxygen is. Where the shad are, the crappie will follow, feeding right below them. We've been catching them 2 to 4 feet deep."

Thousands of acres of river and backwater lakes, sloughs and creeks make up the Ouachita system. Another thing that has been consistent is how to find crappie as fall approaches.

"A lot of the time, they'll be right out in the middle of the lakes and sloughs. What you have to look for is the shad flicking on the top. When the water is slick calm, you can see them pretty easy," he said. "Find the shad, rig up a spider rig and bait up. You'll catch some."

continues >

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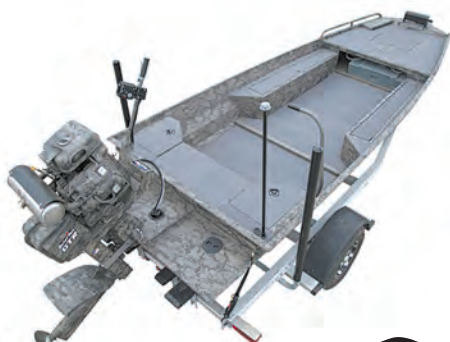
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**OUACHITA CRAPPIE** continued >

And right now, you can fish that spider rig fast. They'll catch up to it. They're hungry."

While Phillips normally fishes jigs, he has been fishing shiners along with the jigs the past week or so. The minnows obviously look more realistic than any lure because, "Hey, they are real," he said, but they are more expensive and hard to keep alive in the heat. He has also been catching fish on soft-plastic Bobby Garland lures in bluegrass color, and a red tip/blue body Patriot tube jig. Phillips puts a dab of chartreuse dye on the tail of just about any jig he puts in the water these days.

As the river continues to fall and the current slows to a minimum, fish will move out in the tops in the river as well. He reminds fishermen to fish the tops on the outside first and work their way in shallower until you locate them. That way you won't spook the fish if they are out deeper. ■

— Kinny Haddox



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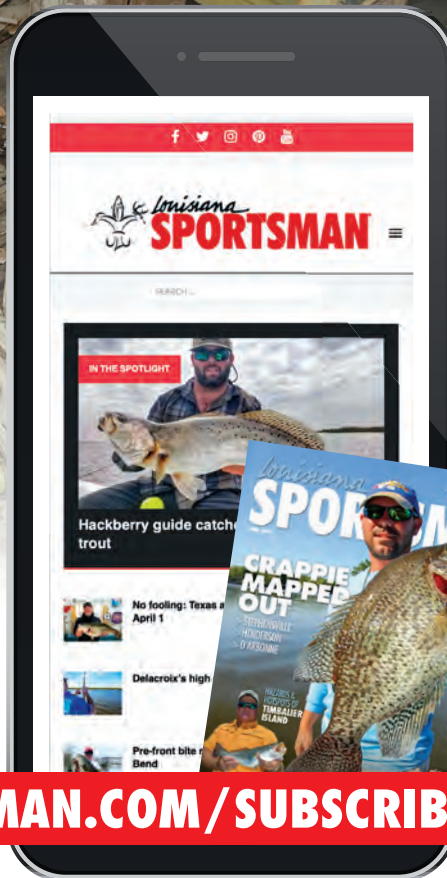
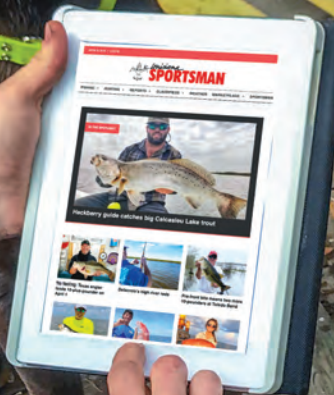


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BELOW: This 9.6-pound lunker was caught on Toledo Bend by Julie Sheets of St. Francisville.



**Julie Sheets**

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**Riley Dupont**



**Ashley Glenn**



**Paul Walker**

Riley Dupont, 6, killed his first deer, a 100-pound spike, on a youth hunt in Avoyelles Parish on Oct. 27, 2018. He was hunting with his grandfather, James Dupont, Jr.

Ashley Glenn took this 7-pointer, her first buck, with a 30/30. She was so excited she was crying.

Paul Walker caught this cat while fishing his favorite bowfishing spot in south Louisiana on May 25, 2018.



**Brandon LeJeune**

Brandon LeJeune, 9, of Cecilia harvested his first deer while hunting with his dad at a private lease just outside of Winnfield.



**Carl Vogt**

Carl Vogt caught this bull red on a live croaker at the Biloxi Marsh last summer.

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**John Schwegmann**

John Schwegmann, 11, caught this 1.2-pound bass on a spinner bait in Bayou St. John during the 2019 New Orleans City Park Big Bass Fishing Rodeo.



**Millie Saterfiel**

Millie Saterfiel and her dad Matt competed in the Crappie Fishermen United of Louisiana tournament held on Lake D'Arbonne over Memorial Day weekend. She said that if we won she was getting a new fishing pole with the prize money and the trophy was going on her desk for everyone to see. They finished in the middle of the pack but she told her dad they did their best.



**Roman Guidry**

Roman Guidry, 9, shot this buck at 12:54 p.m. after hunting over six hours in Summerfield.



**Bradyn Dauzat**

Bradyn Dauzat poses with his first deer, a 7-pointer, taken on private property in Grant Parish.



**Jared & Rhett Campbell**

Jared Campbell and his son, Rhett, with crappie, bream and catfish caught on Lake Claiborne, near Homer in Claiborne Parish.

## GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

Send us your photos, and you may appear on the pages of the most widely read outdoor magazine in the Bayou State. Send clean, sharp shots of you with your fish, deer, ducks, rabbits, squirrels, etc. to [images@LouisianaSportsman.com](mailto:images@LouisianaSportsman.com)

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

Hunting/Fishing  
**SCRAPBOOK**



**Tony, Bruce & Evan**

Tony Heyward of Denham Springs, along with Bruce McKean and son Evan McKean of Castle Rock, Colorado, with trout caught at Elmer's Island while wade fishing over Memorial Day weekend.



**Kane Jeanise**

LEFT: Kane Jeanise took this 5 1/2-year-old, 125-pound doe opening morning of the youth hunt on Barksdale East Reservation at 80 yards with a 7mm-08.



**Eric Jeanise**

RIGHT: Eric Jeanise, 12, shot his first deer with a .243 at 50 yards on private land in Bossier Parish back in November 2017.



**Keisha, Stuart, Kate & Bennet**

Keisha, Stuart, Kate and Bennet Billeaud caught their limits of red snapper out of Cypremort Point on July 4.



**Anna Mooney**

Anna Mooney poses with her 8-point buck taken in Junction, Tex., on Nov. 19, 2018.



**Jax Treuting**

Jax Treuting with his first fish caught in Delacroix.

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

**HUNTING SEASONS**

SPECIES	SEASON DATES	BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT	
<b>DOVES+</b>	(South Zone) Sept. 7 - 15	(North Zone) Sept. 7 - 29	15	45
	Oct. 12 - Nov. 17 Dec. 19 - Jan. 31	Oct. 12 - Nov. 17 Dec. 28 - Jan. 26		
<b>WOODCOCK^</b>	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31	3	9	
<b>TEAL</b> (blue-winged, green-winged, cinnamon)	Sept. 14 - Sept. 29	6	18	
<b>RAILS*</b> King & Clapper Sora & Virginia	Sept. 14 - 29	Nov. 9 - Jan. 1	15	45
	Sept. 14 - 29	Nov. 9 - Jan. 1	25	75
<b>GALLINULES*</b>	Sept. 14 - 29	Nov. 9 - Jan. 1	15	45
<b>SNIPE</b>	Nov. 2 - Dec. 8 Dec. 21 - Feb. 28	8	24	
<b>QUAIL</b>	Nov. 16 - Feb. 29	10	30	
<b>RABBIT</b>	Oct. 5 - Feb. 29	8	24	
<b>SQUIRREL</b>	Oct. 5 - Feb. 29	8	24	
	May 2 - 24**	3	9	

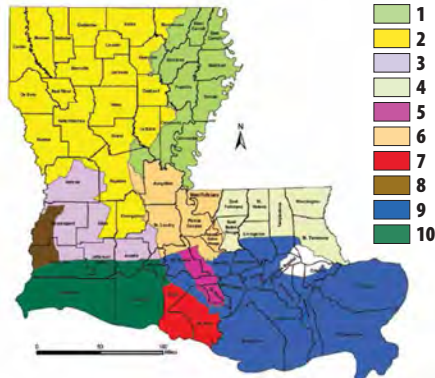
\*An extended falconry season for ducks, rails and gallinules will take place from Nov. 4 - Jan. 31. ^An extended falconry season for woodcock will be Nov. 4 - Jan. 31. +An extended falconry season for mourning doves will be Sept. 15 - Oct. 1. \*\*Spring squirrel season is CLOSED on the Kisatchie National Forest, National Wildlife Refuges, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property and some Wildlife Management Areas.

**WATERFOWL SEASONS**

	EAST ZONE	WEST ZONE	COASTAL ZONE
<b>DUCKS*, COOTS &amp; MERGANSERS</b>	Nov. 23 - Dec. 8 Dec. 14 - Jan. 26	Nov. 16 - Dec. 8 Dec. 21 - Jan. 26	Nov. 9 - Dec. 8 Dec. 21 - Jan. 19
The daily bag limit for ducks is six and may include no more than four mallards (no more than two of which may be females), two canvasback, one mottled duck, one black duck, three wood ducks, three scaups, two redheads and one pintail. Daily bag limit for coots is 15. Daily bag limit for mergansers is five, only two of which may be a hooded mergansers. The merganser limits are in addition to the daily bag limit for ducks. Possession limits for ducks, coots and mergansers is three times the daily bag limit. Youth waterfowl hunts will be held Nov. 9 and Feb. 1 in the West Zone, Nov. 16 and Feb. 1 in the East Zone, and Nov. 2-3 in the Coastal Zone.			
<b>GEESE</b> (snow, blue, Ross & white-fronted [specklebelly])	(Statewide) Nov. 2 - Dec. 8 Dec. 21 - Feb. 9	Daily bag limit for light geese (snow, blue, Ross') is 20, with no possession limit. The daily bag limit for white-fronted geese is two, with a possession limit of six.	
<b>CANADA GOOSE SEASON</b>	(Statewide) Nov. 2 - Dec. 8 Dec. 21 - Jan. 31	The daily limit for Canada geese is one per day, with a possession limit of three.	
<b>CONSERVATION ORDER FOR LIGHT GEESE</b>	(Statewide) Dec. 9 - 13 Feb. 10 - March 15		
Only snow, blue and Ross geese may be taken under the terms of the conservation order, which allows the use of electronic calls and unplugged shotguns, and eliminates the daily bag and possession limits. Shooting hours begin one-half hour before sunrise and extends until one-half hour after sunset.			

**DEER SEASONS**

**2019 - 2020 Deer Hunting Areas**



AREA	ARCHERY (Either-sex)	PRIMITIVE FIREARMS (All either-sex, except as noted)	STILL HUNT (No dogs allowed) (All either-sex, except as noted)	WITH/WITHOUT DOGS (All either-sex, except as noted)
1	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Nov. 9 - 15 Jan. 20 - 31	Nov. 16 - Dec. 6 Jan. 6 - 19	Dec. 7 - Jan. 5
2	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Oct. 19 - 25 Jan. 13 - 19	Oct. 26 - Dec. 3	Dec. 4 - Jan. 12
3	Sept. 21 - Jan. 15	Oct. 12 - 18, Jan. 6 - 12	Oct. 19 - Dec. 1	Dec. 2 - Jan. 5 (certain areas)
4	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31	Nov. 9 - 15 Jan. 20 - 31	Nov. 16 - Dec. 6 Jan. 6 - 19	Dec. 7 - Jan. 5
5	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 9 - 15 (either-sex) Jan. 20 - 31 (bucks only)	Nov. 16-17, Nov. 29 - Dec. 1 (either-sex) Nov. 18-28, Dec. 2-6 (bucks only)	Dec. 14-15, Dec. 21-22 (either-sex) Dec. 7-13, Dec. 16-20 (bucks only) Dec. 23 - Jan. 19 (bucks only)
6	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 9 - 15 Jan. 20 - 31	Nov. 16 - Dec. 6	Dec. 7 - Jan. 19
7	Sept. 21 - Jan. 15	Oct. 12 - 18 Jan. 6 - 12	Oct. 19 - Dec. 1	Dec. 2 - Jan. 5
8	Sept. 21 - Jan. 15	Oct. 12 - 18, Jan. 6 - 12	Oct. 19 - Dec. 1	Dec. 2 - Jan. 5
9	Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only) Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex)	Nov. 9-15 (either-sex) Jan. 20 - 31 (bucks only)	Nov. 16-17, Nov. 29 - Dec. 1 (either-sex) Nov. 18-28, Dec. 2-6 (bucks only)	Dec. 14-15, Dec. 21-22 (either-sex) Dec. 7-13, Dec. 16-20 (bucks only) Dec. 23 - Jan. 19 (bucks only)
10	Sept. 21 - Jan. 15	Oct. 12 - 18, Jan. 6 - 12	Oct. 19 - Jan. 5	

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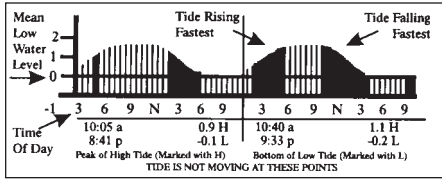
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Fish feed most actively when the tide is moving. Louisiana Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most-active feeding periods each day in the Tide Guide. Just fish those times indicated in black. To find the best time to fish your favorite honeyhole, 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

**East Point Grand Isle**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:44 pm 1.1 H 9:42 pm 0.8 L	2 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 2:15 am 0.8 L 8:34 am 0.7 L	3 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:35 am 1.0 H 11:24 am 0.5 L	4 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:57 am 1.2 H 1:17 pm 0.4 L	5 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 2:42 am 1.3 H 2:38 pm 0.3 L	6 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:37 am 1.4 H 3:45 pm 0.2 L	7 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:39 am 1.5 H 4:44 pm 0.2 L
8 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 5:47 am 1.5 H 5:36 pm 0.2 L	9 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 6:56 am 1.4 H 6:23 pm 0.3 L	10 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 8:00 am 1.4 H 7:04 pm 0.3 L	11 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 8:56 am 1.4 H 7:37 pm 0.4 L	12 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 9:46 am 1.3 H 8:03 pm 0.5 L	13 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 10:33 am 1.2 H 8:16 pm 0.6 L	14 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 11:21 am 1.1 H 8:11 pm 0.7 L
15 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:17 pm 1.0 H 7:34 pm 0.8 L	16 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:50 am 0.9 H 6:52 am 0.8 L 1:42 pm 0.9 H 6:12 pm 0.9 L	17 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:29 am 1.0 H 8:44 am 0.7 L	18 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:40 am 1.2 H 10:23 am 0.6 L	19 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:07 am 1.3 H 11:54 am 0.5 L	20 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:45 am 1.4 H 1:13 pm 0.4 L	21 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 2:35 am 1.5 H 2:24 pm 0.4 L
22 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:35 am 1.5 H 3:28 pm 0.3 L	23 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:45 am 1.6 H 4:27 pm 0.2 L	24 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 6:03 am 1.6 H 5:23 pm 0.2 L	25 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 7:26 am 1.5 H 6:15 pm 0.3 L	26 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 8:51 am 1.5 H 7:03 pm 0.4 L	27 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 10:22 am 1.4 H 7:44 pm 0.6 L	28 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:07 pm 1.2 H 8:06 pm 0.8 L
29 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:11 am 0.9 H 6:20 am 0.7 L 2:42 pm 1.1 H 7:07 pm 1.0 L	30 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 8:16 am 0.6 L 11:25 pm 1.3 H	Order the Tide Guides for over 40 locations throughout Louisiana. Call 1-800-538-4355 or go on line <a href="http://www.lasmag.com">www.lasmag.com</a>				

**Calcasieu Pass Lighthouse Wharf**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 5:09 am 2.1 H 11:01 am 0.9 L 4:40 pm 2.2 H 11:30 pm 0.7 L	2 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 5:34 am 2.0 H 11:51 am 0.7 L 6:04 pm 2.1 H	3 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:22 am 1.1 L 6:01 am 2.0 H 12:45 pm 0.5 L 8:00 pm 2.0 H	4 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:24 am 1.4 L 6:31 am 2.0 H 1:47 pm 0.4 L 10:04 pm 2.1 H	5 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:10 am 1.7 L 7:08 am 1.9 H 2:55 pm 0.4 L 11:49 pm 2.1 H	6 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:56 am 1.8 L 7:58 am 1.9 H 3:58 pm 0.3 L	7 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:12 am 2.2 H 6:24 am 1.8 L 9:01 am 1.9 H 4:59 pm 0.3 L
8 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 2:06 am 2.3 H 7:20 am 1.8 L 10:04 am 1.9 H 5:57 pm 0.3 L	9 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 2:49 am 2.3 H 7:58 am 1.7 L 11:07 am 1.9 H 6:51 pm 0.4 L	10 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:25 am 2.2 H 8:28 am 1.7 L 12:13 pm 1.9 H 7:38 pm 0.4 L	11 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:53 am 2.1 H 8:54 am 1.6 L 1:07 pm 2.0 H 8:19 pm 0.5 L	12 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:12 am 2.1 H 9:13 am 1.5 L 1:50 pm 2.0 H 8:55 pm 0.6 L	13 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:19 am 2.0 H 9:34 am 1.4 L 2:31 pm 2.0 H 9:29 pm 0.7 L	14 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:16 am 2.0 H 9:57 am 1.3 L 3:14 pm 2.0 H 10:01 pm 0.9 L
15 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:17 am 2.0 H 10:25 am 1.1 L 4:02 pm 2.0 H 10:31 pm 1.1 L	16 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:27 am 2.0 H 10:58 am 1.0 L 4:56 pm 2.0 H 11:01 pm 1.2 L	17 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:41 am 2.0 H 11:34 am 0.9 L 5:52 pm 2.0 H 11:31 pm 1.4 L	18 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 4:52 am 2.0 H 12:13 pm 0.8 L 6:56 pm 2.0 H	19 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:05 am 1.6 L 4:57 am 1.9 H 12:59 pm 0.7 L 8:35 pm 2.0 H	20 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:47 am 1.8 L 4:52 am 2.0 H 1:55 pm 0.6 L 10:22 pm 2.1 H	21 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 2:03 am 2.0 L 4:43 am 2.0 L 2:57 pm 0.5 L 11:57 pm 2.2 H
22 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:59 pm 0.4 L	23 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 12:59 am 2.3 H 5:00 pm 0.3 L	24 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 1:37 am 2.3 H 6:42 am 1.9 L 9:47 am 2.1 H 6:02 pm 0.3 L	25 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 2:06 am 2.3 H 7:09 am 1.8 L 11:11 am 2.1 H 7:02 pm 0.3 L	26 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 2:31 am 2.3 H 7:44 am 1.6 L 11:11 am 2.1 H 7:56 pm 0.3 L	27 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 2:51 am 2.3 H 8:23 am 1.3 L 1:42 pm 2.3 H 8:48 pm 0.5 L	28 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:11 am 2.2 H 9:05 am 1.0 L 2:47 pm 2.4 H 9:39 pm 0.7 L
29 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:32 am 2.2 H 9:50 am 0.7 L 3:57 pm 2.4 H 10:29 pm 1.0 L	30 3:00 ft 1.5 ft 0.0 ft 3 6 9 N 3 6 9 3:56 am 2.2 H 10:37 am 0.5 L 5:15 pm 2.4 H 11:20 pm 1.3 L	Order the Tide Guides for over 40 locations throughout Louisiana. Call 1-800-538-4355 or go on line <a href="http://www.lasmag.com">www.lasmag.com</a>				

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This lure is at home in open water, but is just as effective when reeled through heavy cover, whether that's grass lines, cypress knees, or downed trees. When rigged with a



screw-lock, weighted swimbait hook, it's great for skipping under docks or low-hanging tree limbs along banks. This lure comes in three sizes and four colors, so you can match the hatch at your favorite fishing hole.

The Fish Lab Bio Minnow ranges in price from \$7.99 to \$8.99 a pack.

For more info, visit: [www.fishlabtackle.com](http://www.fishlabtackle.com)

## PLANO EDGE TACKLE STORAGE

Building on its popular 3600 and 3700 Stowaway tackle boxes, Plano Molding Systems has recently debuted a set of 10 different storage boxes that provide everything a fisherman could want in tackle storage.

The EDGE series boxes start with a crystal-clear lid so their contents can be identified quickly, without opening. They feature a Dri-Loc, waterproof seal, a moisture barrier that can't be beat. A third new feature is a single latch that allows the box to be opened with one hand, so the box can be opened quickly and easily.

Plano's new Rustriector anti-corrosion compound is infused into the base of all EDGE boxes, preventing terminal tackle and bites from corroding. Water Wick provides further corrosion defense from a water-absorbing, desiccant divider. Vented dividers allow for air circulation within the box. Different models range in MSRP from \$19.99 to \$49.99.

For more info, visit: [www.planomolding.com/edge](http://www.planomolding.com/edge)



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No longer. Earlier this summer, Louisiana's Stacked Outdoors debuted its Stacked Ladder Climbing Sticks, a set of four lightweight ladder sticks that can be strapped to a tree trunk in sections, allowing hunters to climb up to 20 feet up on a solid set of steps.

The sticks are molded in single pieces, four of which come per set. They fit together like plastic

stacking cups and come with a carry strap that allows hunters to easily haul them into the woods — especially since a set weighs less than 10 pounds. The step sections are 21 inches long, with 17 inches between steps, and each comes with a strap that fastens it to the tree trunk.

MSRP for a set is \$149.

For more info, visit: [www.stackedoutdoors.com](http://www.stackedoutdoors.com)





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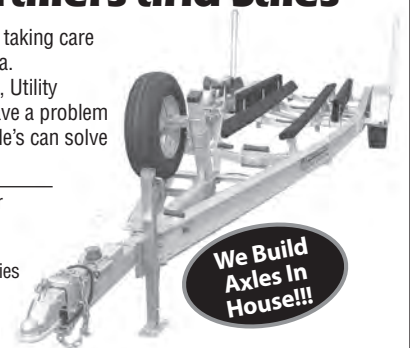
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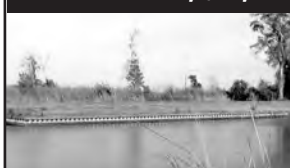
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ACE'S RETRIEVERS.....	58	FIRST SOUTH FARM CREDIT .....	167	PUGLIA'S SPORTING GOODS .....	69
ALARIO BROTHERS.....	110	FORT BEAUREGARD ESTATES .....	116	QUIRK'S WELDING LLC .....	58
AMERICAN HONDA MOTOR CO., INC. ....	70, 71	GATOR TAIL OUTBOARDS.....	3	R. SCHEXNAYDER & SONS .....	39
ANCHOR REAL ESTATE.....	58	GATOR TRAX .....	77	REALTREE OUTDOOR PRODUCTS .....	168
ARCTIC ICE.....	141	GIBSON REALTY/UNITED COUNTRY .....	33	REED'S METALS, INC.....	21
ASCENSION EQUIPMENT & RENT ALL .....	165	GO DEVIL .....	139	ROCKY BRANDS.....	9
BAKER AGRI-FOREST PROPERTIES.....	35	GRAND ISLE TOURIST COMMISSION .....	137	SCULLY'S.....	97, 156
BATTERY WORLD.....	60	H&H LURE COMPANY .....	84, 108	SEA ARK BOATS .....	85
BAYOU LAFOURCHE AREA CVB .....	87	H&H MARINE.....	12	SEA TRAC OFFSHORE SERVICES .....	80
BAYOU OUTBOARDS, INC. ....	99	HANCOCK FOREST MANAGEMENT .....	37	SEA TROUT DEVELOPERS / ACADIANA MARINA .....	99
BLACKWELL AUTOMOTIVE, INC .....	133	HANKO'S.....	121	SERVICE CHEVROLET.....	5
BLANCHARD TRAILER SALES .....	142	HENDERSON.....	16	SHIMANO AMERICAN CORP.....	119
BLANCHARD'S REFRIGERATION .....	55	HOUSEBOAT OUTLET .....	115	SMITH SHANKLIN SOSA LLC.....	4
BLUE WAVE BOATS .....	123	HUGHES WELDING AND MFG.....	59	SNAP LOCK BLINDS .....	61
BOAT STUF.....	147	HUNTERS FOR THE HUNGRY .....	138	SOUTHERN OUTDOORS & MARINE,LLC	
BOATS UNLIMITED .....	90, 91, 93	HYDRO TURF.....	101	.....	70, 120, 122, 133
BOWIE OUTFITTERS .....	151	INTERSTATE GUNS.....	134, 135	SPORTSMAN CAMO COVERS .....	15
BREAUX AND DAIGLE MARINE.....	44, 45	JERRY'S MARINE .....	13	SPORTSMAN TV .....	163
BRIDGESIDE / SAND DOLLAR.....	86	K2 MARINE .....	109	SPOTS AND SPECKS.....	115
BRYAN'S MARINE .....	17	KENT-GAMEBORE .....	59, 79	SPRO CORPORATION .....	17
BUCK BUSTERS FEED COMPANY .....	INSERT	LAKE AREA MARINE .....	94, 142	STAR BRITE, INC .....	129
C HAWK BOATS.....	121	LAKE CHARLES SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA CVB .....	25	STERLING'S UPHOLSTERY .....	103
CAJUN OUTBOARDS .....	24	LOEWER POWERSPORTS.....	155	STIHL SOUTHWEST .....	116, 127
CAMP RACK AND QUACK.....	26	LOOP LLC .....	143	SUPERIOR BAIT & TACKLE .....	117
CAPTAIN PAUL TITUS.....	124, 138	LOUISIANA LOTTERY .....	7	TERREBONNE MARINE .....	142
CAROLINA COMPOSITES, LLC.....	INSERT	LUKE'S HOGSBACK RANCH.....	76	THE CRAPPIE PSYCHIC, LLC.....	132
CASE LAND CO, LLC.....	39	M&L ENGINE, LLC .....	122	THE PROP SHOP .....	117
CCA - LOUISIANA.....	159	MARINE LIFT AND DOCK SUPPLY COMPANY.....	105	TIGER BEND OUTDOORS.....	35
COTTONMOUTH BOATS, LLC .....	57	MCM LUMBER .....	73	TIM'S MARINE .....	113
COURTESY GMC - LAFAYETTE.....	19	METRO BOATING .....	109	TOHATSU AMERICAN CORPORATION .....	94, 95
COVER'S UNLIMITED .....	146	MIKE GERALD'S TRAILER.....	76	TRACKER MARINE GROUP .....	89
COX SPORTS TELEVISION.....	75, 120, 142	MOSSY OAK PROPERTIES LAND INVESTMENTS.....	29	UNDERWATER FISH LIGHT LLC.....	102
CUSTOM CORRUGATED AND SUPPLY .....	87	MS EXOTIC HUNTING.....	33	WEYERHAEUSER COMPANY .....	41
CUSTOM MAPPING SERVICE .....	117	MUD BUDDY.....	67	WHITETAIL PROPERTIES .....	31
CWP PROSERIES.....	88	NIKON SPORT OPTICS.....	42, 43	WILCO MARSH BUGGIES, INC.....	37
DAVES BAYOU LODGE .....	51	NORTH PONCHATRAIN RETRIEVERS .....	55	WILEY X.....	52, 53
DEER VIEW WINDOWS CO. ....	35	OUTDOOR POWERHOUSE.....	64	XPRESS BY ALUMA-WELD, INC. ....	2
DIXIE RV .....	46	PARISH TRACTOR.....	23		
DOWN EAST GUIDE SERVICE.....	59, 93	PAUL GREEN & ASSOCIATES .....	57		
DUVIC'S BOATS.....	88, 145, 164	PELLEGRIN MARINE .....	126		
ENVIRON METAL, INC .....	63	PERFORMANCE OUTBOARDS SALES & SERVICE INC			
EVERARD MARKS .....	140	.....	115		
EXCEL BOATS .....	INSERT	PIKE LIBERAL ARTS HUNT .....	49		

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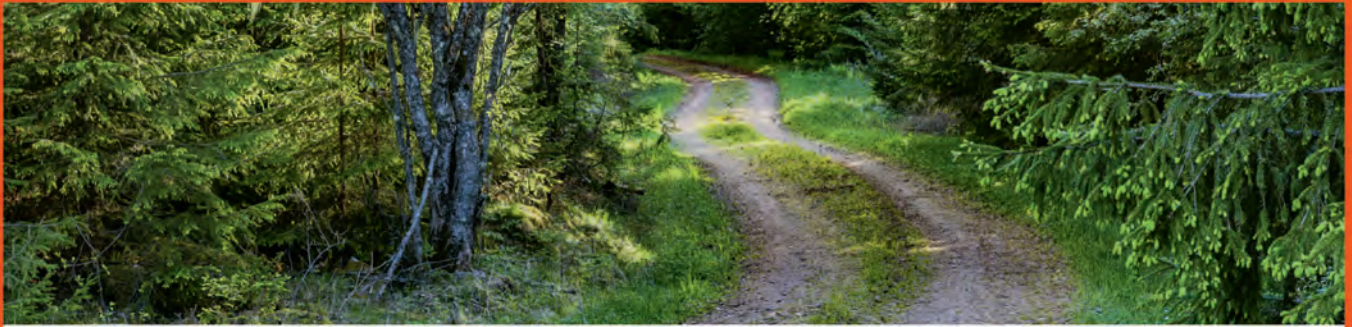
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